

Handbook for the Study of the  
Historical Jesus



# Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus

Volume 1

How to Study the Historical Jesus

*Edited by*

Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2011

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication-Data

Handbook for the study of the historical Jesus / edited by Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-90-04-16372-0 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Jesus Christ—Historicity—  
Study and teaching. I. Holmén, Tom. II. Porter, Stanley E., 1956–  
BT303.2.H364 2010  
232.9'08071—dc22

2010038765

ISBN *Vol.* 1: 978 90 04 17091 9

*Vol.* 2: 978 90 04 17092 6

*Vol.* 3: 978 90 04 17093 3

*Vol.* 4: 978 90 04 17094 0

*Set:* 978 90 04 16372 0

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

# THE HANDBOOK FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN PERSPECTIVE

TOM HOLMÉN AND STANLEY E. PORTER

A hundred years ago, Albert Schweitzer gathered the bulk of the most important (mostly German) Jesus research done during the preceding two centuries (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) within one cover and made an assessment of it. Today, to write a *summa historica* of Jesus studies is not an undertaking that one person could embark on and realistically hope to accomplish (not even two people), but requires a collaboration of a *legio* of the best minds from across many countries and cultures. Albert Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*<sup>1</sup> marked a significant milestone in historical Jesus scholarship, a movement that has continued in various forms and in diverse ways, but in all events unabated, until today. As a result, in a 1994 article, James Charlesworth, who himself has been actively involved in the recent expansion of historical Jesus study, asserted that historical Jesus study was expanding with "chaotic creativity."<sup>2</sup> While an apt and appropriate description of the condition of the times, this characterization is all the more accurate today, fifteen years later. Since its latest renaissance in the 1980s,<sup>3</sup> historical Jesus study has continued to expand, drawing into its broadening scope more and more scholars of the New Testament and cognate areas. There is an abundance of Jesus studies today that displays an almost overwhelming diversity of methods, approaches, hypotheses, assumptions, and results. While creativity and fecundity are theoretically

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906). The second edition was simply entitled: *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1913). The English translation was entitled: *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, with a preface by F. C. Burkitt (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity," in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–41.

<sup>3</sup> See M. J. Borg, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," *TheoIT* 45 (1988): 280–292.

to be welcomed, chaotic creativity works against the scholarly pursuit of orderly understanding, and the sheer mass of material threatens to overwhelm even the heartiest of participants in the quest. However, in some instances such creativity can spur on and nourish various forms of enquiry that result in unpredictable and unplanned results. The future of historical Jesus study rests with the community of scholars being able to harness this chaotic creativity to its service, and to create order out of a morass of growing detail.

What are the purposes of Jesus research? The first one is clearly an abiding academic purpose. This has always been regarded as important and has, together with the latest renaissance of Jesus study, only grown in importance. In fact, if “academic” and “historical” can be seen to correlate, many scholars would claim that this is what the study of Jesus today is all about. According to many representative Jesus questers, a main characteristic of current Jesus research is that it is being spurred and guided by an outspoken historical interest. Indeed, Jesus lies at the juncture of many interests and phenomena that are crucial to understanding great lines of historical development and that form the basis of understanding the world today. There is therefore no doubt about the great historical and academic value of Jesus research. However, several other purposes, motivations, and aspirations obviously feed into the historical pursuit of Jesus. Among these are religious, political, cultural, artistic, fictional, romantic, psychological, financial, apologetic, and simply personal reasons to engage in conversing about Jesus of Nazareth. We merely state this as an observable fact: such purposes for Jesus research exist and are being pursued in practice. Unfortunately, sometimes scholars too easily classify such purposes as either well- or ill-founded. In the post-colonial, post-Einsteinian, post-modern, post-structural (some say even post-human) etc. world of ours, who can be so clear as to be able to tell the difference between relevant and irrelevant motivations, not to speak of labeling them as either good or bad? Nevertheless, in all this it is vital to genuinely retain the concepts of historical Jesus and historical Jesus research around which the variegated conversation centers and revolves. How this happens and is realized may not be an easy or altogether straightforward thing to do.

The Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus (HSHJ) was designed to be one, important means of handling both the growing abundance and the increasing diversity of Jesus scholarship. Such is not an easy task, as we the editors have grown to appreciate in the course of creating this set of volumes. Putting the diversity on display in a



controlled, manageable, and understandable fashion, while acknowledging the numerous and diverse major issues, and ensuring that as many as possible of the important adjacent themes are recognized, has been a significant task. The HSHJ seeks to offer a convenient, even if still circuitous, route through the maze of current historical Jesus research, so that scholars and other interested parties can appreciate the broad and diverse spectrum of current opinion.

There have been a number of recent efforts to survey the history of historical Jesus scholarship, which we have taken into account in planning these volumes. Some of these publications have included individual essays that try to cover the range of major topics, although no effort to date has included as many as this set of volumes.<sup>4</sup> Several of these studies are retrospective accounts that anthologize past statements of significance in the study of the historical Jesus, but they lack the contemporary coordinating force of the HSHJ.<sup>5</sup> Even those publications that attempt to address the contemporary issues in historical Jesus research in a coordinated fashion, because of their encyclopedic nature, are unable to provide the kind of depth and even breadth of exposure that these volumes contain.<sup>6</sup> Whatever merits such previous volumes may have, and they have many, none of them is designed to accomplish the same goals as the Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus.

There are many distinguishable features of the HSHJ. This collection of four volumes of essays first of all seeks to be thorough and inclusive. We realize that there are always other opinions that could be included in volumes such as these, but we have tried to solicit and elicit as much of that diverse opinion as was available for publication. We want this collection to serve, not only as a historical encapsulation of the topics of their day, but as a worthy expression of the range of viable thought currently available in historical Jesus studies.

Besides the inclusive nature of these volumes, we have sought for HSHJ to be international in scope, not simply for the sake of diversity,

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., H. K. McArthur, ed., *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Scribners, 1969); G. W. Dawes, ed., *The Historical Jesus Quest: A Foundational Anthology* (Leiden: Deo, 1999); C. A. Evans, ed., *The Historical Jesus: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004); J. D. G. Dunn and S. McKnight, eds., *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. C. A. Evans, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (London: Routledge, 2007).

but so that multiple voices can be ably represented in the discussion. The approximately one-hundred contributors to this project come from around twenty different countries. Some countries no doubt are represented more heavily than others, and some other important nationalities may be under-represented or not represented at all. This was not by design, as our purpose from the start has been to try to free the discussion of Jesus from regional or local agendas and schools of thought.

Besides the multiplicity of voices from a wide range of places and people, in the HSHJ we have sought to free study of the historical Jesus from the trammels of a variety of other restraints. We have been conscious that study of Jesus in the past has been directly linked to particular forms and contents of higher education, and even specific methodologies, and that such study has often gone hand-in-hand with particular religious, cultural or even political traditions and histories. This set of volumes has been created to move beyond, or perhaps even rise above, such artificially imposed constraints. As a result, though ideologies will no doubt be present in the individual contributions, the volumes as a whole are not reacting or responding to any particular local or even nationally determined situation with regard to historical Jesus study. Our primary criterion in selecting and welcoming the contributors has been their expertise and their addressing a topic of relevance. Despite our best efforts, there is no doubt that most of the contributors are still “white male western Europeans and European-Americans” (as Richard Horsley states).<sup>7</sup> We accept this comment, while acknowledging also that our best efforts were put into attempts not to fall victim to this as an inevitable conclusion. Nevertheless, it is probably a realistic observation of the situation that prevails in historical Jesus studies to this day. Whether it will be different in the future, we must wait and see.

The efforts above have been undertaken so that we could focus these volumes on what we consider the most important elements in current study of the historical Jesus. In order to do this, we have divided the essays into four structured volumes.

As a result of this process of assessment, what became evident was that one of the most important sources of continued diversity in historical Jesus study is the element of methodological divergence. Methodological diversity entails the formulation of varied and disparate conscious approaches to the study of Jesus. Questions of method are inevitably confronted at the outset of any scientific or historical investi-

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<sup>7</sup> See his article in volume one.

gation, and usually indicate the significant parting of the ways between differing approaches to the same body of data. Consequently, volume one of the HSHJ is dedicated to questions of method. Realizing and being knowledgeable of the different methodological starting points in historical Jesus study not only facilitates one's determination and understanding of the results, but also gives important and necessary insight into the reasons for the results and their implications. In other words, attention to method forces us to ask the question of why it is that a particular scholar comes to a specific set of conclusions, as opposed to a different set of conclusions. In this regard, the first volume of HSHJ itself speaks volumes about historical Jesus research. In this volume, we have attempted to assemble many of the world's leading experts on methodological questions regarding the study of Jesus. They present their approaches to study of the historical Jesus as a means of introducing us to the fundamental issues at stake. This is not to deny that there is some challenging reading to be had in this volume, but within this one volume the reader has easier access than before to the range of methods currently at play in historical Jesus studies. By using this volume, scholars and students alike will be able learn about methods with which they are less familiar, compare the major features of these methods, and determine how the varied hypotheses about the historical figure of Jesus are rooted in methodological choices made at the early stages of thinking and research.

The first volume is, therefore, divided into two parts. The first part includes a wide range of distinct methodological statements by advocates of those methods. This part encompasses the methods that are distinct to historical Jesus study as it has been practiced over the last twenty to thirty years. It is here that we gain further insight into the approaches that have been adopted by a wide range of scholars who have had influence within historical Jesus study, as they have tried to define the nature and characteristics of the study and its results. Part two of this volume extends the range of methodologies to the interaction between historical Jesus study and methods that have proven themselves in other areas of New Testament and cognates studies. Some of these are the traditional methods of biblical study, while others are recent innovations influenced by the rise of various types of social-science criticism. The interface of Jesus study and these methods has provided a range of results that help to ensure that the study of Jesus will not soon grow quiescent.

The second volume of HSHJ focuses on the history and future of historical Jesus research, by identifying many if not most of the specific

issues of contention that have been raised in the broad and long history of Jesus study. This volume is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the notion of quests for the historical Jesus. One of the points of continued contention in study of Jesus is not only whether there are periods in such study, but how current study relates to previous study, in terms of both its methods and its results. Here various authors address the relation of Jesus study to the various quests that have been proposed. The second part of the volume brings to the fore questions that are being asked in the contemporary climate of historical Jesus studies. These include the questions that are currently and recurrently at the forefront of discussion, often suggesting in their questions an alternative to the course that previous research has taken. Part three of this volume addresses some of the perennial topics in Jesus research. In some ways, these are issues that are either assumed or regularly taken into account in formulating various hypotheses about Jesus. They form the convenient and necessary intellectual background for pursuing historical Jesus studies.

The third volume of HSHJ brings Jesus himself as a historical figure directly into the discussion. There are three parts in this volume as well. The first part treats Jesus in regard to primary documents of the ancient world, such as the canonical gospels, other portions of the New Testament, and non-canonical works. The second part of this volume takes the elements of the life of Jesus and exposes them to rigorous critical and scholarly scrutiny. Rather than examine Jesus in terms of how he is depicted in one of the biblical books (as in the previous section of this volume) or in terms of a particular issue, this section dissects the life of Jesus in terms of its logical and necessary components, from issues of historicity to his teaching and message, and many if not most places in between. It is in studies such as these that one realizes the importance of the previous studies and approaches for the explication of these subject areas. These topics bring to bear the variety of issues previously discussed. The third part of this volume relates Jesus to the legacy of Israel. Jesus' Jewish roots and relations have long been an essential item of discussion and contention in historical Jesus studies. In this part, various key elements of his relationship to Israel are scrutinized. The result of this set of studies is to place Jesus firmly within his Jewish context, a desideratum of much recent historical Jesus scholarship.

The fourth and final volume of HSHJ is a collection of individual studies by a range of scholars. It is a positive comment on the state of current historical Jesus study that, even with the best planning and

intention, it is difficult, if not impossible, to plan and anticipate all of the necessary topics for such a comprehensive study. Therefore, we have designed this fourth volume to include important studies that we have solicited and have had submitted for which there was no other place in the volume, but that warranted a position in a compendium of scholarship such as this handbook attempts to be. There is a wide range of valuable research to be found in this fourth volume. Some of the studies explore areas for which there has been very little previous Jesus research but in which the author shows there is a lamentable lacking and oversight in the discipline. Others of the studies take topics on the fringe of either Jesus studies or contemporary culture and try to bridge the two in creative and insightful ways. Finally, some of the studies are designed to focus on particular and specific issues that would otherwise have been overlooked in the course of this study, but that a perceptive scholar realized would make a contribution to the final product.

The results of a project such as this are many and varied. We do not doubt that many of the significant contributions to scholarship found in these volumes will establish themselves as standards in the field and continue to have warranted influence on the study of the historical Jesus. Such studies may well be found in any or all of the volumes. We further believe that there are a number of essays that will have uncovered or discovered or even re-discovered insights that have been lost or lost sight of or not yet sighted, and that will bring these into consideration on the broader canvas of historical Jesus studies. There are other essays within these volumes that have broken some boundaries and will establish themselves as new and innovative ways forward in the discussion. The problem is that it is not easy to tell which essays are which, and what the significance of each individual contribution will be. We are confident, however, that these volumes contain, as much as is possible within the parameters of such a project, a responsible and representative, and in some cases even forthright or contrarian, presentation of the current state of historical Jesus scholarship. Such scholarship is the backbone of a project such as this, and is a mainstay of how one approaches contemporary New Testament scholarship. There are essays within this collection that will prove to be seminal for study of the historical Jesus, as they force both sympathetic and unsympathetic readers to contemplate issues and perspectives in ways that were unanticipated. Such scholarship helps to pave the way forward for further research. Its place of final repose cannot be predicted or estimated.



PART ONE

CONTEMPORARY METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES





## HOW TO MARGINALIZE THE TRADITIONAL CRITERIA OF AUTHENTICITY

DALE C. ALLISON, JR.

For several decades now, multiple attestation, dissimilarity, embarrassment, and coherence have been the tools of choice for many scholars seeking to separate the authentic Jesus from the ecclesiastical chaff. One understands why: the standard criteria seem to derive from common sense. For instance, that a tradition should not be thought authentic unless it coheres with traditions otherwise regarded as genuine—the criterion of consistency—seems self-evident. Again, that we may confidently assign a unit to Jesus if it is dissimilar to characteristic emphases both of ancient Judaism and of the early church—the criterion variously known as (double) dissimilarity or distinctiveness or discontinuity—has an initial plausibility. So too does the criterion of embarrassment, according to which a fact or saying is original if there is evidence that it troubled early Christians. And who would challenge the criterion of multiple attestation, according to which the more widely attested a complex is in independent sources, the more likely it is to have originated with Jesus? This is just the old rule of journalism, that each fact should be attested by at least two witnesses.

Reflection, however, foments serious misgivings, and I for one have finally come to believe that our usual criteria are not so useful.<sup>1</sup> There is, for example, nothing objective about coherence. Two assertions that make for harmony in the eyes of one exegete may seem to clash for another. According to some, if Jesus taught his disciples to love their enemies because God loves everyone, including the wicked, then it is unlikely that he also taught anything much about eschatological judgment or hell, despite abundant testimony in the tradition to the contrary.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to what follows see my earlier discussion in *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998)—although in the interim I have become even more pessimistic.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Robinson, “The Critical Edition of Q and the Study of Jesus,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 27–52. The conviction is an old one and already appears in Percy Bysshe Shelley, “On Christianity,” in *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*,

One understands the point and even sympathizes with the sentiment. Yet what is the justification for assuming that Jesus, who was no systematic theologian or critical philosopher, must have been, to our way of thinking, consistent—especially when Q, Matthew, and Luke are, in this particular matter, not consistent? One can always, as should be obvious in this age of deconstructionism, find tensions or contradictions between two texts. Commentators since Origen have knit their brows over the presence in Paul's letters of justification by faith and judgment by works. Many have espied here a "contradiction," others a "paradox."<sup>3</sup> Whatever the resolution to the issue, Pauline theology is, in one significant respect, in seeming tension with itself. Now students of Paul are stuck with the problem because some of the relevant passages belong to undisputed letters. But who can doubt that, if those letters were instead known to be the end products of an oral tradition that mixed the teachings of Paul with the thoughts of his admirers, some critics would confidently inform us that the remarks on judgment by works, being in conflict with those on justification by faith, must be secondary, or vice versa? The thesis, although reasonable enough, would be erroneous. Likewise erroneous may be our judgments about the many tensions scholars have espied in the Jesus tradition—for example, that between the futurity of the kingdom and its presence<sup>4</sup>—and then used to eject material from its originating source.

The criterion of double dissimilarity, which like our commercials implicitly equates new with improved, is no less troublesome than the criterion of consistency.<sup>5</sup> Its recent *Niedergang* is long overdue.<sup>6</sup> As oth-

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vol. 1, ed. E. B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 246–271. See further my book, *Resurrecting Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), the excursus on "Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Historical Jesus," 100–110.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 75: "It is noteworthy and indicative of the extent to which Paul keeps within the framework of general Christian preaching, that he does not hesitate, in at least seeming contradiction to his doctrine of justification by faith alone, to speak of judgment according to one's works"; H. A. A. Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 201: Paul's invocation of the last judgment is part of a "profound paradox".

<sup>4</sup> Note Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 136–137.

<sup>5</sup> For its ideological background, see David S. du Toit, "Der unähnliche Jesus: Eine kritische Evaluierung der Entstehung des Differenzkriteriums und seiner geschichts- und erkenntnistheoretischen Voraussetzungen," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 89–129.

<sup>6</sup> See David du Toit, "Erneut auf der Suche nach Jesus: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme der Jesusforschung am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts," in *Jesus im 21. Jahrhundert:*

ers have often remarked, it can at best tell us what was distinctive of Jesus, not what was characteristic. Because Jesus lived and moved and had his being within the Jewish tradition, the criterion is not a net that catches fish of every kind: it can find only things that Jesus did not take from elsewhere. All too often, however, dissimilarity has been misused as a means of separating the authentic from the unauthentic, that is, a way of eliminating items from the corpus of authentic materials.<sup>7</sup> The result, as so many now recognize, is a Jesus cut off from both his Jewish predecessors and his Christian followers. Beyond this, and even more importantly, we just do not, despite all our labors and recent discoveries, know enough about either first-century Judaism or early Christianity to make the criterion reliable: the holes in our knowledge remain gaping. Why then pretend to prove a negative? My own judgment is that Morna Hooker some time ago persuasively exposed the flaws of the criterion of dissimilarity,<sup>8</sup> and it is a blight on our field that, upon publication of her conclusions, most of us continued to call upon dissimilarity whenever we pleased instead of letting the thing fall into its deserved oblivion.<sup>9</sup>

The criterion of embarrassment is more promising. Certainly historians in other fields have often reasoned according to its logic—as when scholars of Islam have affirmed that the so-called “Satanic verses” rest upon an historical episode because Moslems did not invent a story in which Mohammed mentions the names of three goddesses. Similarly, much of the invective in the Jesus tradition—Jesus is a drunkard and glutton, a friend of toll collectors and sinners, for instance—must preserve memories. The scope of such material is, however, quite limited. And there is yet another problem. We must face the surprising fact that

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*Bultmanns Jesusbuch und die heutige Jesusforschung*, ed. Ulrich H. J. Körtner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 114–116. Yet note that Jürgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 13–14, still considers dissimilarity foundational.

<sup>7</sup> See esp. Tom Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80. Holmén rightly argues that dissimilarity from Judaism is irrelevant if dissimilarity from the church can be established.

<sup>8</sup> Morna Hooker, “Christology and Methodology,” *NTS* 17 (1971): 480–487; idem, “On Using the Wrong Tool,” *Theology* 72 (1972): 570–581.

<sup>9</sup> The rebuttal by Reginald H. Fuller, “The Criterion of Dissimilarity: The Wrong Tool?” in *Christological Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Harvey K. McArthur*, ed. Robert F. Berkey and Sarah A. Edwards (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982), 41–48, was hardly adequate.

all of the supposedly embarrassing facts or words are found in the Jesus tradition itself. This means that they were not sufficiently disconcerting to be expurgated. This hints at the pluralism of the early church, and it suggests that what may have flustered some may have left others unperturbed. It is telling that sometimes Matthew preserves a Markan saying that Luke, out of what we must guess to be embarrassment, drops, or vice versa. Matthew, for instance, retains Mark 13:32 (the Son does not know the day or the hour) whereas Luke does not. Furthermore, the church fathers, just like Luke, found Mark 13:32 problematic: the logion limits the Son's knowledge. Should we then urge that the saying must go back to Jesus because it bothered many early Christians? Or does its preservation in Mark and Matthew show us that some were comfortable with a less-than-omniscient Jesus, and that such people could have composed Mark 13:32 and assigned it to Jesus without any anxiety? Many modern scholars, observing that the Jesus of Mark 13:32 uses the absolute "the Son" of himself, have not hesitated to judge the saying a post-Easter creation.<sup>10</sup>

Mark 12:35–37 supplies another illustration of the problem. If one were, along with some exegetes, to read this passage so that Jesus denies his descent from David, one could then urge that, as early Christians regarded Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, the passage must be informed by a real incident from the life of Jesus, despite its implicit designation of him as "Lord."<sup>11</sup> The problem with this line of arguing, however, is that one can scarcely envisage tradents for whom Jesus was the Davidic Messiah passing down a text that refuted one of their important convictions. One could maintain that they just misunderstood the passage, but then some group before them must have formulated the text, and would we not then guess that that earlier group at least did not take Jesus to be the Son of David? And why are matters different for other traditions that modern scholars think conflict with the theology of the canonical evangelists or other early Christians? That is, why not take the perceived tensions between various texts to reflect different Christian traditions rather than a disagreement between Jesus and all subsequent Christians? What justifies the tacit assumption of the criterion of embarrassment that it is more plausible to postulate instead

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 81–82.

<sup>11</sup> See Joel Marcus, *Mark 9–16*, AYB 27A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 847–848.

that early Christians handed down traditions that they misunderstood or found uncongenial?

Even the principle of multiple attestation is not immune to criticism. The more frequently a complex is attested, the more congenial, one naturally infers, it was to early Christians. But the more congenial a complex was to early Christians, surely the less likely it is, for the critical, skeptical historian, that Jesus composed it. Conversely, the less congenial a tradition, the more likely its origin with Jesus and the less likely its multiple attestation.<sup>12</sup> Here the criterion of multiple attestation is in a tug-of-war with the criterion of dissimilarity: they pull the same unit in opposite directions. Some look at the many Son of man sayings and insist that, given the title's frequent appearances in the Jesus tradition and its relative scarcity outside of it, Jesus must have used the idiom. Others have inferred, in part because of the great quantity of sayings, that some segment of the early church must have had a Son of man Christology, and that the relevant sayings reflect its ideology, not the outlook of the historical Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

This rapid survey of objections to the standard criteria shows why I believe that they are not equal to the task for which they were invented: they are promises without fulfillment. One might suppose that some support for my skeptical view can be gathered from the recent contribution of Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter.<sup>14</sup> Their very helpful work is surely the most extended and most judicious exploration of our criteria to date, and in many respects they are critical. Yet in the end Theissen and Winter seem to offer but a revised version of criteria already known.<sup>15</sup> Although they take themselves to be dismissing the criterion of dissimilarity, what they are in fact dismissing is only the criterion of double dissimilarity, that is, dissimilarity from both Judaism and the church. They still defend the proposition that "those elements within the Jesus tradition that contrast with the interests of the early Christian sources, but are handed on in their tradition, can claim varying degrees of historical plausibility."<sup>16</sup> This does nothing to circumvent

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<sup>12</sup> See further Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 24–27.

<sup>13</sup> For a survey of opinion, see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, SNTSMS 107 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Burkett himself seems to deny that Jesus spoke of "the Son of man."

<sup>14</sup> Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> See the helpful review by Tom Holmén in *JTS* 55 (2004): 216–228.

<sup>16</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Quest*, 211.

the decisive objection that “we do not know enough about Jesus to allow us to construct a clear account of the primitive church because we do not know enough about the primitive church to allow us to construct a clear account of Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> Perhaps it is our professional pride that blinds us to the obvious, which is that our knowledge of early Christianity is, like our knowledge of early Judaism, woefully incomplete. Maybe one can, with a holographic plate, reconstruct the whole image from a part; but it is otherwise with our fragmentary knowledge of the early church.

Theissen and Winter also promote what they call the “coherence of sources,” which focuses on recurrent themes in different streams of the tradition. Although this proposal is promising and related to the one I shall make below, it becomes obscured by their twin contentions that “what Jesus intended and said must be compatible with the Judaism of the first half of the first century in Galilee,” and that “what Jesus intended and did must be recognizable as that of an individual figure within the framework of the Judaism of that time.”<sup>18</sup> Although it would be foolhardy to disagree with these generalizations, they are simply too large. The synoptics contain very little that cannot be made to fit within first-century Galilean Judaism, about which, despite the relevant extant texts and on-going archaeological discoveries, we still know so little. Again we are victims of our own ignorance. In the end, then, the proposals of Theissen and Winter, which they fuse together under the label of “the criterion of historical plausibility,” are like a trap in a forest that catches only the occasional passerby: their suggestions at best work on just some items; most of the tradition remains beyond firm evaluation. No one would deny that a reconstructed Jesus should be plausible within his Galilean environment and not look too much like a Christian. Yet recognizing these two circumstances is not going to enable us to peer across the darkness of two thousand years and discern if he did or did not speak about a coming Son of man, or whether the pigs really did run over the cliff.

Given that the work of Theissen and Winter, although the best we have on its subject, still comes up far short, my own judgment is that we should not be trying to refine our criteria but should rather be marginalizing them and experimenting with other methods. I find it

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<sup>17</sup> F. Gerald Downing, *The Church and Jesus: A Study in History, Philosophy and Theology*, SBT 2.10 (London: SCM, 1968), 51.

<sup>18</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Quest*, 211.

disappointing that a scholar as wise as Jacques Schlosser can be fully aware of the limitations of our criteria, urge that they are less “proofs” than ways of introducing some rigor into our work, and yet not attempt to offer much substantial in their place.<sup>19</sup> It is time to quit making excuses for them, time to move the standard criteria from the center of our discussion to the periphery. It is not that this or that criterion is problematic or needs to be fine tuned but that the whole idea of applying criteria to individual items to recover Jesus is too often unworkable and so of quite limited utility.

Let me bolster my contention that it is time to move on to other things by briefly defending seven propositions: (i) that Jesus said X or did Y is of itself no reason to believe that we can show that he said X or did Y; conversely, that he did not say X or do Y is of itself no reason to believe that we can show such to be the case; and the criteria do not contain within themselves any promise of what percentage of the tradition can be traced to its source, and in practice that percentage turns out to be small; (ii) our criteria have not led us into the promised land of scholarly consensus, so if they were designed to overcome subjectivity and bring order to our discipline, then they have failed: the hopelessly confusing parade of different Jesuses goes on; (iii) the fact that the criteria can be in conflict with themselves, that is, that some criteria can favor the authenticity of a unit while other criteria favor the inauthenticity of the very same unit, demonstrates their unreliability; (iv) running units through the gauntlet of the traditional criteria presupposes that there is a clear distinction between what is authentic and what is not, which is a very misleading proposition; (v) most of us have not consistently heeded the criteria we claim to heed anyway; (vi) our criteria are not strong enough to resist our wills, which means that we tend to make them do what we want them to do; (vii) when we focus on criteria for individual units we can easily lose the more important larger picture, which is the place to start and the place to end.

i. The gap between what happened and what we can discover to have happened is much larger than we care to imagine. Aristotle seemingly preferred to speak of Pythagoreans in general instead of Pythagoras in particular because he found it too hard to extract the historical philosopher from the apocryphal material assigned to him. Might not

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<sup>19</sup> Jacques Schlosser, *Jésus de Nazareth* (Paris: Agnès Viénot Éditions, 1999), 79–89.

an analogous circumspection be called for from historians of early Christianity? Maybe the Canadian mounted police can claim, “We always get our man,” but we all know that some crimes go unsolved; and why should we think that contributing apocryphal material to the Jesus tradition is a deed that we can, two thousand years after the fact, regularly detect?

It is the fragmentary and imperfect nature of the evidence as well as the limitations of our historical-critical tools that should move us to confess, if we are conscientious, how hard it is to recover the past. That something happened does not entail our ability to show it happened, and that something did not happen does not entail our ability to show that it did not happen. I emphasize this assertion, obvious and trite, because too often those who wield the criteria come to definite conclusions. This makes me suspicious, for my experience is altogether different. Time and time again I have looked at a complex and weighed the arguments on both sides—and there are almost always arguments pro and con, indeed good arguments pro and con—and been unable to come up with more than: Well, Jesus could have said it, but it might also come from the church.

Consider Mark 9:43–48, the series of sayings warning against sins of the hand, foot, and eye: “If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire, etc.” This does not satisfy the criterion of multiple attestation: there is no parallel in Q, M,<sup>20</sup> L, or John. There is, however, a Christian parallel in Col 3:5 (“Put to death then the members that are on the earth”) and an amazingly close Jewish text in *b. Nid.* 13b: “Have we here learned a law as in the case where R. Huna [really] cut off someone’s hand [see *b. Sanh.* 58b]? Or is it merely an execration? Come and hear what was taught: R. Tarfon said, ‘If his hand touched the membrum let his hand be cut off upon his belly.’ ‘But,’ they said to him, ‘would not his belly be split?’ He said, ‘It is preferable that his belly shall be split rather than that he should go down into the pit of destruction.’” In both Mark and *b. Nid.* 13b the hand that sins should be cut off. In both this act of mutilation is preferable to going to “the pit of destruction” or “Gehenna.” And in both

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<sup>20</sup> Although some assign Matt 5:29–30 to M or Q, this is far from clear; see W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, 1991), 1:523.



the thought is expressed in the “better . . . than” form.<sup>21</sup> So the criterion of dissimilarity hardly establishes the authenticity of Mark 9:43–48. One also cannot obviously invoke the criterion of embarrassment to any effective end here, so all we seem to be left with is coherence. Some would argue that this is fulfilled because Jesus was morally earnest, used hyperbole, called for uncompromising self-sacrifice, and invoked eschatological judgment as a motive for right behavior. Others, however, would observe that coherence by itself is a pretty weak indicator; and if, in addition, they are among those who believe that all the other references to eschatological judgment are secondary, then they will return the same verdict here. The Jesus Seminar, which regards the cutting off of bodily members as excommunication and so reflective of an ecclesiastical context, does not color our unit red or pink but gray.<sup>22</sup>

My own strong intuition has always been that Mark 9:43–48 is from Jesus, but if I am honest I am not really sure what arguments I can muster to persuade others of this.<sup>23</sup> I can say that the language is vivid and shocking. My mind’s eye sees a bloody stump and an empty eye socket when it encounters these words—from which it follows that if Jesus did say something like Mark 9:43–48, it would stick in the memory. But this begs the question: Did he really speak it?

As I have over the years worked through the tradition, I have ended up with three piles of materials. There are some traditions that obviously betray themselves as secondary because they are redactional or clearly contain post-Easter convictions (e.g. Matt 3:15; 28:18–20). There are other traditions that are almost certainly historical either because Paul and the gospels agree on the point (e.g. the prohibition of divorce [1 Cor 7:10–11] and the instruction that missionaries live by the gospel [1 Cor 9:14]) or because church invention is wildly implausible (e.g. the accusation that Jesus was a glutton and drunkard). But those two piles are relatively small. The vast majority of traditions—the golden rule (Matt 7:12 = Luke 6:31 [Q]), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), the command not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing (Matt 6:3), the parable of the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1–12), the healing of a leper (Mark 1:40–45), etc., etc.—are neither obviously of pre-Easter origin nor obviously post-Easter

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<sup>21</sup> See further Will Deming, “Mark 9.42–10.12, Matthew 5.27–32, and *b. Nid.* 13b: A First Century Discussion of Male Sexuality,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 130–141.

<sup>22</sup> Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 86.

<sup>23</sup> For my best attempt see Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 187–188.

fictions. They can only be classified as “possibly authentic.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, my experience has taught me that applying our criteria to the various units leaves us uncertain about most of the material we are dealing with.

ii. Many have remarked upon the diverse conclusions of scholars publishing books and articles on the historical Jesus. The diversity perhaps bothers me less than some others, because I do not think that we are scientists, and I do not expect consensus on any large matter within the humanities. The point here, however, is that our criteria, which we employ to help take us a bit beyond our subjectivity, so that we might be more like those in the so-called hard sciences, do not appear to bring any uniformity of result, or any more uniformity of result than would have been the case had we never heard of them. Dissimilarity, multiple attestation, coherence, and embarrassment have been used to concoct many different sorts of figures. One might place the blame on the users rather than the tools, but the bad results—all the diversity requires that some are writing bad history—are due to the tools as well as the users. Does anyone seriously believe that, if we could only further refine our criteria, some sort of authentic consensus about something important would finally emerge?<sup>25</sup> Certainly doing history, which is an art requiring imagination and conjecture, cannot be identified with the mechanical observance of rules.

iii. What follows from the fact that our criteria are often in conflict? Let me offer an illustration. One can attribute the words of Jesus at the Last Supper to the church on these grounds: (a) they come from the church’s liturgy and so do not satisfy the criterion of dissimilarity; (b) they do not fit a Palestinian environment, for no Palestinian Jew would have spoken of others eating his body or drinking his blood; and (c) they interpret Jesus’ death as an atonement, which not only gives Jesus clear foreknowledge of his fate but also places upon it a meaning otherwise scarcely attested in the Jesus tradition; in other words, it flunks the criterion of consistency. Yet these arguments are seemingly balanced by others: (a) the words of institution are attested in Paul, in Mark, and in an independent tradition in Luke; so we have

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<sup>24</sup> For this category see Eckhard Rau, *Jesus—Freund von Zöllnern und Sündern: Eine methodenkritische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2000), 69–74.

<sup>25</sup> But Dennis Polkow, “Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 336–356, leaves me with this impression.

early and multiple attestation; (b) it was Jesus' habit to say shocking and outrageous things for the sake of effect, and one may interpret the words about eating and drink in that light; and (c) the eschatological content of Mark 14:25 ("I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God") harmonizes with Jesus' expectation of martyrdom within the context of his eschatological *Naherwartung*. All of which is to say: multiple attestation points one way (for), the criterion of dissimilarity the opposite way (against), while coherence points both ways at once (for and against). There are of course additional arguments in the literature, and it goes without saying that they too do not all point exclusively in one direction rather than another.

How should we respond to this disparity, or to similar cases—including Mark 9:43–48, discussed above—in which the criteria do not speak with united voice? One could I suppose argue that we should simply do the math. If, for instance, three criteria favor authenticity and one criterion favors inauthenticity, we should go with the former. Such an unimaginative, mechanical approach would, however, not speak to the issue of an apparent tie, as in the case of the Lord's Supper. One might, alternatively, urge that one criterion carries more weight than another. Again being mechanical, maybe multiple attestation is more important than dissimilarity, or coherence than embarrassment.

But all this would be to miss the obvious, which is this: if the criteria point in different directions for the very same unit, then they are just not reliable indicators. What more proof does one need? If Jesus said something and yet there are a couple of criteria that go against this conclusion, or if Jesus did not say something attributed to him and yet there are a couple of criteria indicating that he did say it, we have demonstrated that our criteria are not dependable.

iv. Sorting the tradition with the standard criteria presupposes that there is a clear distinction between an authentic item and an inauthentic item. But everything is instead a mixed product, that is, a product of Jesus and the church.<sup>26</sup> Mark tells us that Jesus came into Galilee

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<sup>26</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 58–60; Ferdinand Hahn, "Methodologische Überlegungen zur Rückfrage nach Jesus," in *Rückfrage nach Jesus: Zur Methodik und Bedeutung der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, ed. Karl Kertelge, QD 63 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 29–30; Jürgen Habermann, "Kriterienfragen der Jesusforschung," in "... was ihr auf dem Weg verhandelt habt." *Beiträge zur Exegese und Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Müller, Christine Gerber, and Thomas Knöppler (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001), 23.

proclaiming the good news of God and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (1:14–15). What do we make of this unit? Many now reasonably ascribe it to Markan redaction. But those of us who believe that Jesus (a) taught in Galilee, (b) thought that the time of Satan’s rule was coming to its end,<sup>27</sup> (c) proclaimed the imminence of the kingdom of God, (d) called for repentance, and (e) associated his ministry with the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah<sup>28</sup> might well regard Mark 1:14–15 as a fair summary of Jesus’ proclamation. So even if it is redactional and not from Jesus, it rightly remembers some things and so is a witness to who he was. Put otherwise, Jesus contributed as much to Mark 1:14–15 as did the evangelist.

Consider also Matt 4:1–11 = Luke 4:1–13 (Q), the temptation story. Most modern scholars have rightly judged this to be unhistorical, an haggadic fiction produced through reflection upon scripture. Yet whoever composed it clearly did so in the knowledge that Jesus was (a) a miracle worker who (b) sometimes refused to give signs, (c) thought himself victorious over demonic forces, (d) was steeped in the scriptures, (e) had great faith in God, and (f) was a person of the Spirit. So what we seem to have in Q 4:1–13 is an illustration of the obvious fact that historical fiction can instruct us about history.<sup>29</sup> The story, which narrates events that probably never happened, nonetheless rightly catches Jesus in several respects. Here the inauthentic incorporates the authentic.

The point of all this is just to underline how facile is the usual assumption that a complex originated either with Jesus or with the early church.<sup>30</sup> But this insight is lost when everything is viewed through

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<sup>27</sup> For this interpretation of Mark 1:15, see Joel Marcus, “‘The Time Has Been Fulfilled!’ (Mark 1:15),” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards, JSNTSup 24 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 49–68.

<sup>28</sup> For the dependence of “believe in the good news” upon Deutero-Isaiah, see Bruce D. Chilton, *God in Strength: Jesus’ Announcement of the Kingdom*, SNTU B.1 (Freistadt: F. Plöchl, 1979), 92–95.

<sup>29</sup> See further my article, “The Temptations of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 195–214.

<sup>30</sup> There may be a parallel here with a Pauline conundrum. John Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, New Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 35, has written: “It turns out... that the differences are not large between Paul himself writing this letter [Colossians], Paul writing with the aid of a secretary, Paul authorizing an associate to write it, and the letter being composed by a knowledgeable imitator or pupil of Paul. Perhaps with our intense concern to demarcate ‘Paul’ from ‘non-Paul’ we are working with an artificial or anachronistic notion of individual uniqueness: was Paul completely different from his contemporaries and associates, or did he typically work with others, influencing them and being influenced by them? Have we created

criteria which attempt to sort fiction from nonfiction, as though all the later additions must be misleading or be bad interpretation. It could well be the case, and I think it is the case, that much in the tradition is strictly nonhistorical yet helpfully informs us about Jesus. It is thus foolhardy to ignore it—and emphasis upon the criteria hides this important fact from us.

v. We have often been guilty of not consistently following the methods we claim to follow. The words about turning the other cheek, loving one's enemy, and going the extra mile, Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 (Q), supply an instructive illustration. With very few exceptions, almost all scholars working on the gospels believe that this extended composition or collection preserves some things Jesus said, that it gives us his spirit, that it preserves something importantly characteristic about him.

Yet this conviction, that Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 derives from Jesus and is distinctive of him, a conviction common for the last two hundred years at least, and one with which I do not disagree, has survived despite the popularity and indeed predominance of the criterion of dissimilarity, a criterion which many scholars have in other cases used to eliminate or cast doubt upon materials attributed to Jesus.<sup>31</sup> The criterion of dissimilarity should of course never have been used to exclude material as well as to include material; but the only point here is that scholars who have used it in this way on some sayings have not done so when examining this passage.<sup>32</sup> The teaching common to Matthew 5 and Luke 6 is, to illustrate, comfortably at home in the early church. It sounds very much like what Paul, without attributing his words to Jesus, has to say in Rom 12:14, 17, 21; 1 Cor 4:12; and 1 Thess 5:15. It is also closely related to the complexes in *Did.* 1.3–5; *1 Clem.* 13:2; and Polycarp, *Ep.* 2.2–3.<sup>33</sup> So half of the criterion of dissimilarity—distance from the church—is hardly satisfied in this case: Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 closely resembles several early Christian texts.

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a Paul of utter uniqueness in line with the peculiarly modern cult of the individual? Whether by Paul, by a secretary, by an associate or by a pupil, Colossians is clearly a 'Pauline' letter."

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 196, 200.

<sup>32</sup> An exception: J. Sauer, "Traditionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu den synoptischen und paulinischen Aussagen über Feindesliebe und Wiedervergeltungsverzicht," *ZNW* 76 (1985): 1–28.

<sup>33</sup> See further Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 86–92.

The passage also seemingly fails to pass the test of dissimilarity from characteristic emphases within Judaism. The following appears in *b. Šabb.* 88b and *b. Git.* 36b: “Our rabbis taught: Those who are insulted but do not inflict them, who hear themselves being reviled and do not answer back, who perform [religious precepts] out of love and rejoice in chastisement, of them the Scripture says, ‘And they who love him are as the sun when he goes forth in his might [to shine upon all]’” (*Judg* 5:31). This is indeed very close to the synoptic texts attributed to Jesus, so close that it cannot be unrelated. Similarly, Jesus’ imperative to be merciful because God is merciful (*Luke* 6:26; cf. *Matt* 5:48) has parallels in *Tg. Ps.-J.* on *Lev* 22:28 (“My people, sons of Israel, just as I am merciful in heaven, so will you be merciful on earth”) and *y. Ber.* 5:3 = *y. Meg.* 4:10 (“R. Yose b. R. Bun said: ‘It is not good to imply that God’s traits [are derived from his attribute of] mercy. Those who translate [*Lev* 22:28 as follows:] ‘My people, sons of Israel, just as I am merciful in heaven, so will you be merciful on earth: A cow or a ewe you will not kill both her and her young in one day’—that is not good, for it implies that God’s traits [are derived from the attribute of] mercy”). A tradition common to *Sifra* *Leviticus* 200 and *t. Sotah* 9.11 is also relevant: “‘And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Rabbi Akiba said: ‘This is the great principle in the Torah.’ Ben Azzari said: ‘This is the book of the generation of Adam, when God created man he made him in the likeness of God (*Gen* 5:1) is an even greater principle.’” Clearly the point of this last is that whereas Akiba’s great principle fails to specify the scope of “neighbor,” Ben Azzari’s proof text, just like Jesus’ command to love enemies, goes one better and envisages all of humanity.

There is yet another strong parallel, a pre-Christian text, *Let. Aris.* 207, which contains this advice for a king: “As you wish that no evil should befall you, but to share in every good thing, so you should act on the same principle towards your subjects, including the wrongdoers, and admonish the good and upright also mercifully. For God guides all in kindness.” Using *Luke*’s text for the comparison, one can see the parallels at a glance:

*Golden rule*

*Luke* 6:31: “As you wish that people would do to you, do so to them”  
*Let. Aris.* 207: “As you wish that no evil should befall you, but to share in every good thing, so you should act on the same principle towards your subjects”

*Mercy/kindness*

Luke 6:36: "Be merciful"

*Let. Aris.* 207: "admonish the good and upright also mercifully"

*God as model of universal mercy/kindness*

Luke 6:35: God raises the sun on the evil as well as the good

*Let. Aris.* 207: "God guides all in kindness"

*No restriction on human mercy/kindness*

Luke 6:32–34: "If you love those who love you...?"

*Let. Aris.* 207: "act on the same principle towards your subjects, including the wrongdoers"

The common coalescence of themes is undeniable.

It would seem, then, that the criterion of double dissimilarity might have discouraged scholars from assigning Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 to Jesus, or at least have given them some doubt about its foundational character. One can certainly cite many instances where critics have cited Jewish and Christian parallels to cast doubt on the Jesuanic origin of this or that utterance in the synoptics. Yet almost without exception this has not happened with Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36. Norman Perrin, who was quite capable of using the criterion of dissimilarity to jettison items from the original tradition, did not do so here. He wrote: "That Jesus challenged his followers in these terms is not to be doubted and, indeed, is never doubted."<sup>34</sup> One wonders, Why not? It cannot be because of multiple attestation, for there are no variants to Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 in Mark, M, L, or John; and the parallels in Paul—our earliest literary witness to the tradition—are not attributed to Jesus. Furthermore, one could wield the criterion of coherence to make a case against Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36. If Jesus fervently attacked the scribes and Pharisees, as so many traditions indicate, how could he have counseled charity for enemies? And if he believed that God was good to the unjust as well as to the just, how could he often speak of eschatological judgment and warn of some flunking the final assize? On the whole, the traditional criteria do not obviously support the near universal conviction that Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 goes back to Jesus.

It is intriguing that, despite all the parallels that are known to everyone, some have argued that Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 does indeed satisfy the criterion of dissimilarity if we just look a bit further: (a) the precise words, "Love your enemy," do not appear in any ancient Jewish

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<sup>34</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 148.

source; (b) Christian texts before the third century also fail to quote those words;<sup>35</sup> (c) Paul's usage lacks the utopian, eschatological dimension present in Matthew and Luke.<sup>36</sup> All this is true enough, yet the upshot is not a clear verdict in favor of Matt 5:38–48 = Luke 6:27–36 going back to Jesus; rather do we have here a lesson about the ambiguity of dissimilarity. One can always discern dissimilarities between two different texts—otherwise they would be the same text. So it is no surprise that, if one looks at something in the Jesus tradition long enough, one will usually be able to find ways in which it differs from all other early Jewish and early Christian texts (just as one can almost always find parallels if one hunts long enough). One can also undertake the same exercise with the sentences in other ancient sources. How then do we determine what differences are significant and which not? I cannot see that this question has been seriously raised, much less answered—and precisely because it cannot be answered. In the present case, why does the lack of an exact parallel to “Love your enemies” outweigh all the extensive parallels that we do find? Or should we conclude that only “Love your enemies” goes back to Jesus? But this hardly works given that it is an integral part of a unit that in its entirety rewrites Leviticus 19.<sup>37</sup> We seem to be left in a muddle.

vi. While it is true that “formality has its place in guiding one along suitable paths of argument” and that “most of us need some guidance,”<sup>38</sup> the use of criteria to cast a scientific aura over our questing for Jesus is not very effective, for our criteria are sufficiently pliable as to be unable to resist our biases and prior inclinations. So when we use them, they can become a mask for our own preconceived ideas. In other words, we can go through all the motions and yet end up with precisely what we wanted or expected. The criteria then become justification *ex post facto*, although we hide the fact from ourselves and from others. If we would examine ourselves honestly, could we confess that, when we sit down to look at a unit, we really have a completely open mind and do not know ahead of time which way we want the criteria to move that

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<sup>35</sup> Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, “Das Liebesgebot Jesu als Tora und als Evangelium,” in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus: Für Joachim Gnilka*, ed. Hubert Frankemölle and Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 194–230.

<sup>36</sup> Holmén, “Doubts,” 67–70.

<sup>37</sup> Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Intertextual Jesus: Scripture in Q* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 29–38.

<sup>38</sup> D. V. Lindley, A. Tversky, and R. V. Brown, “On the Reconciliation of Probability Assessments,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, series A, vol. 142, no. 2 (1979): 177.



unit, to Jesus or away from him? Here I recall some words Harvey McArthur once wrote:

It may be that the most creative scholars do not carry out research by establishing rules and then obeying them. When they encounter an item of evidence their total knowledge of the situation is brought into play, and suddenly this new item falls into place with a little click in one or another of the available slots. The rules of the game, or criteria, then serve as rationalizations for what has happened. For the outsider they serve also as a check on the plausibility of the almost unconscious decision made by the creative researcher.<sup>39</sup>

This evaluation is on target. Our criteria are typically rationalizations we employ to keep a clear conscience as we defend an image of Jesus we had come to believe in before wielding criteria. This is largely why two different scholars applying the same criteria to the same saying or event often come up with different results, and why all the discussion and attempted refinement of criteria over the last several decades have brought us no closer to wide agreement on very much of importance.

How do we really develop our images of the historical Jesus? Surely not by using criteria in an unbiased fashion. Imagine with me a young graduate student in a department of religion. She becomes convinced, let us say, that Albert Schweitzer's reconstruction of Jesus was close to the truth—or, as the case may be, not close to the truth—because a revered professor, whose arguments she has not the means to rebut, persuades her of this. Once her paradigm about Jesus is in place, a cognitive bias will also be in place. We all see what we expect to see and want to see—like highly prejudicial football fans who always spot more infractions committed by the team they are jeering against than by the team they are cheering for.<sup>40</sup> If we hold a belief, we will notice confirming evidence, especially if we are aware that not everyone agrees with us. Disconfirming evidence, to the contrary, makes us uncomfortable, and so we are more likely to miss, neglect, or critically evaluate it.<sup>41</sup> We do not see things as they are but as we construe them to be. After a period of time, then, one might anticipate that our graduate

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<sup>39</sup> Harvey K. McArthur, "The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research," *ExpTim* 82 (1971): 119.

<sup>40</sup> See Albert H. Hastorf and Hadley Cantril, "They Saw a Game: A Case Study," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 49 (1967): 129–134.

<sup>41</sup> See Charles G. Lord, Lee Ross, and Mark Lepper, "Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (1979): 2098–2109. They begin by claiming that people who hold strong opinions on complex issues "are likely to examine

student will have collected her own evidence for her professor's belief and become all the more persuaded of its correctness. As soon, moreover, as she communicates her views in public fashion, say by tutoring undergraduates or publishing a paper, she may be set for life—especially as one's self-perception as an expert, the psychologists tell us, typically enlarges self-confidence.<sup>42</sup> The prospect of embarrassment from publicly admitting error can make it hard to admit error to oneself, to undertake the difficult cognitive task of rearranging data into a new pattern after one has long been looking at an old pattern.

Now at some point our student will have run across discussions of the criteria of authenticity and will have begun to fret about them. My claim is threefold: first, serious attention to criteria will have arisen only at a secondary stage of reflection, after a bias in favor of a particular Jesus was already in place; second, her conclusions about the criteria will not change her mind about Jesus; third, her own use of the criteria will confirm her prior inclinations.

Moving from the hypothetical, my guess is that my graduate student fairly represents a large number of real-life New Testament scholars. Speaking candidly for myself, my own Jesus was apocalyptic and millenarian by the time I was twenty. I have learned much since then and nuanced my position, but that position remains basically the same. In my own case, my picture of Jesus was developed long before I much worried about the details of method, and long before I went on record as espousing this or that view of the criteria of authenticity. Moreover, and as one would cynically expect, the method that I developed later led straight to a Jesus congenial to the judgments of my youth. This I find disturbing, and my history cannot be atypical. Surely no one started with method. The implication seems to be that developing and deploying our criteria serve less to help us make truly new discoveries than to help us to confirm inclinations already held in advance.

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relevant empirical evidence in a biased manner. They are apt to accept 'confirming' evidence at face value while subjecting 'discomforting' evidence to critical evaluation, and as a result to draw undue support for their initial positions from mixed or random empirical findings" (2098). On p. 2108 they affirm that "once formed, impressions about the self, beliefs about other people, or theories about functional relationships between variables can survive the total discrediting of the evidence that first gave rise to such beliefs. . . . Beliefs can survive the complete subtraction of the critical formative evidence on which they were initially based." These should be sobering thoughts for all of us.

<sup>42</sup> James V. Bradley, "Overconfidence in Ignorant Experts," *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society* 17 (1982): 82–84.

We are all very biased observers, and given how biased we are, it is no wonder that our criteria so often give us what we want. We try to get a leash around the various units so that we can then drag them toward or away from our reconstruction of Jesus—which is already in our minds before we employ our criteria. If it were otherwise, I doubt that the judgments about Jesus would be as diverse as they are. This takes me to my final complaint.

vii. Fishing for Jesus in the sea of tradition using criteria of authenticity wrongly privileges the part over the whole. When we look back upon our encounters with others, our most vivid and reliable memories are often not precise but general. I may, for instance, not remember exactly what you said to me last year, but I may recall approximately what you said, or retain what we call a general impression. It is like vaguely recollecting the approximate shape, size, and contents of a room one was in many years ago—a room which has, in the mind's eye, lost all color and detail. After our short-term memories have become long-term memories they suffer progressive abbreviation. I am not sure I remember a single sentence that either of my beloved grandparents on my father's side ever said to me. But I nonetheless know and cherish the sorts of things that they said to me.

All of this matters for study of the Jesus tradition because it goes against universal human experience to suppose that early Christians, let us say, accurately recorded many of Jesus' words—they may well have—but somehow came away with false general impressions of him. If the tradents of the Jesus tradition got the big picture or the larger patterns wrong then they also got the details—that is, the sentences—wrong. It is precarious to urge that we can find the truth about Jesus on the basis of a few dozen sayings deemed to be authentic if those sayings are interpreted contrary to the general impressions conveyed by the early tradition in its entirety. If Jesus was, for example, either a violent revolutionary or a secular sage, then the traditions about him, which on the whole depict neither a violent revolutionary nor a secular sage, are so misleading that we cannot use them for investigation of the pre-Easter period—and so we cannot know that Jesus was either a violent revolutionary or a secular sage.<sup>43</sup> Here skepticism devours itself.

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<sup>43</sup> On the problem of using "secular" with reference to Jesus, see further Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 19–23.

But what is the alternative to skepticism?

The early Jesus tradition is not a collection of totally disparate and wholly unrelated materials. On the contrary, certain themes and motifs and rhetorical strategies are consistently attested over a wide range of material. Surely it is in these themes and motifs and rhetorical strategies, if it is anywhere, that we are likely to have some good memories. Indeed, several of these themes and motifs and strategies are sufficiently well attested that we have a choice to make. Either they tend to preserve pre-Easter memories or they do not. In the former case we have some possibility of getting somewhere. But in the latter case our questing for Jesus is not just interminable but probably pointless and we should consider surrendering to ignorance. If the tradition is so misleading in its broad features, then we can hardly make much of its details.

Consider, as illustration, the proposition that Jesus and his disciples saw his ministry as effecting the defeat of Satan and demonic spirits.<sup>44</sup> This conviction is reflected in sundry sources and in divers genres—parables, apocalyptic declarations, stories of exorcism, etc.:

1. The temptation story, in which Jesus bests the devil; Mark 1:12–13; Matt 4:1–11 = Luke 4:1–13 (Q)
2. Stories of successful exorcism; Mark 1:21–28; 5:1–20; 7:24–30; 9:14–20; Matt 12:22–23 = Luke 11:14 (Q); Matt 9:32–34; cf. the passing notices of successful exorcisms in Mark 1:32, 34, 39; 3:22; Matt 8:16; Luke 13:32
3. Jesus' authorization of disciples to cast out demons; Mark 3:15; 6:7; cf. 6:13; Matt 7:22; Luke 10:19–20
4. Saying about Satan being divided; Mark 3:23–27; Matt 12:25–27 = Luke 11:17–19 (Q)
5. Parable of binding the strong man; Mark 3:28; Matt 12:29 = Luke 11:21–22 (Q); *Gos. Thom.* 35
6. Story of someone other than a disciple casting out demons in Jesus' name; Mark 9:38–41
7. Declaration that Jesus casts out demons by the finger/Spirit of God; Matt 12:28 = Luke 11:20 (Q)
8. Report of Jesus' vision of Satan fall like lightning from heaven; Luke 10:18

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<sup>44</sup> With what follows cf. C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 92–110.

Even John has sentences that forward this theme:

9. Announcement that the ruler of the world has been driven out; John 12:31; 16:11 (cf. 14:30)

One infers from all this material not only that Jesus was an exorcist but also that he and others saw his ministry in its entirety as a successful conflict with Satan. This holds whatever one makes of the individual units, at least some of which (for example, the temptation story) are difficult to think of as historical. What counts is not the isolated units but the patterns they weave, the larger images they form. Indeed, even if one were, against good sense, to doubt the truth of every individual story and saying just listed and count them all creations of the community, one might still reasonably retain a certain faith in the whole of them taken together and suppose that the recurring motif tells us something about Jesus' ministry.

One can draw an analogy here with medical experiments. Taken by itself, even perfectly devised double-blind, randomized trials count for little. What matters is replication. And in areas where issues are particularly controverted, what finally matters is meta-analysis, the evaluation of large collections of results from numerous individual studies, including those with possible design flaws. It is the tendency of the whole that counts, not any one experiment or piece of evidence. It should be the same with questing for Jesus. We should proceed not by looking at individual units microscopically but by gathering what may be called macro samples of material. We might even find that collectives display features or a Gestalt not discernible in their individual components. For example, one could not generalize about Jesus' relationship to the Pharisees from one controversy story; but from a collection of such, some generalizations might be drawn. Similarly, consider the proposition that Jesus had a pre-Easter follower named Peter. Let us say that, after examination of all the relevant materials, someone decides that every single story or saying in which he appears is a creation of the community and without pre-Easter foundation. What would follow? While the evidence would be consistent with denying to Peter a pre-Easter role or even doubting his historicity, those would be rash conclusions. Joseph was surely the name of Jesus' father, even if none of the stories in which he appears is historical. Similarly, it would probably be wisest to take Peter's frequent appearance in various complexes from various sources as best explained on the supposition that, despite all the legendary elements, Jesus did have a follower named Peter.

The motif of victory over Satan and the presence of Peter throughout the early sources, canonical and extra-canonical, are only two of a large number of recurring themes and motifs and items. To cite some of great importance: God as a caring father;<sup>45</sup> the requirement to love, serve, and forgive others;<sup>46</sup> special regard for the unfortunate;<sup>47</sup> the dangers of wealth;<sup>48</sup> extraordinary requests and difficult demands;<sup>49</sup> conflict with religious authorities;<sup>50</sup> disciples as students and assistants;<sup>51</sup> and Jesus as miracle worker.<sup>52</sup>

It is not naive or precritical to urge that we should probably regard all of these as being rooted in the teaching and ministry of Jesus. Either the tradition instructs us that Jesus often spoke about God as a father,

<sup>45</sup> The canonical data on God as father are collected in Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, SBT 2.6 (London: SCM, 1967), 11–65. The *Gospel of Thomas* uses “Father” often of God—e.g., 3, 40, 44, 50, 79, 83, 98, 99.

<sup>46</sup> See Matt 5:43–44 = Luke 6:27–28 (Q); Matt 7:12 = Luke 6:31 (Q); Matt 5:45–48 = Luke 6:32–36 (Q); Matt 6:12–13 = Luke 11:4 (Q); Matt 18:15, 21–22 = Luke 17:3–4 (Q); Mark 9:35; 10:41–45; 12:28–34; Matt 5:23–24; 6:14–15; 18:23–35; 19:19; 23:11–12; 25:31–46; Luke 10:25–28, 29–37; 13:15–17; 22:24–26; Acts 20:35; John 13:1–35; 14:15–17; 15:12–17; *Gos. Thom.* 25, 26, 48, 95; *Gos. Heb.* according to Jerome, *Comm. Eph.* 5:4; etc.

<sup>47</sup> See Matt 5:2–6 = Luke 6:20–21 (Q); Matt 11:4–5 = Luke 7:22 (Q); Matt 9:32–33 = Luke 11:14 (Q); Matt 20:16 = Luke 13:30 (Q); Matt 22:1–8 = Luke 14:15–24 (Q); Mark 1:40–45; 2:15–17; 3:1–6; 5:1–20, 25–34; 7:31–37; 8:22–26; 9:14–29; 10:46–52; 14:3–9; Matt 25:31–46; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6, 12–14; John 4:1–38; 5:2–9; 9:1–12; 13:29; *Gos. Thom.* 54, 69; etc.

<sup>48</sup> See Matt 5:3 = Luke 6:20 (Q); Matt 5:40, 42 = Luke 6:30 (Q); Matt 10:9–10 = Luke 10:4 (Q); Matt 6:22–23 = Luke 11:34–36 (Q); Matt 6:25–33 = Luke 12:22–31 (Q); Matt 6:24 = Luke 16:13 (Q); Mark 1:16–20; 2:14; 4:19; 6:8–9; 8:34–37; 10:17–31; 12:41–44; 14:3–9; Matt 13:44–46; Luke 6:24–26, 33–34; 11:41; 12:13–21; 14:12–14; 16:1–9, 10–12, 19–31; *Gos. Thom.* 36, 42, 54, 56, 63, 64, 78, 81; P. Oxy. 655; etc.

<sup>49</sup> See 1 Cor 7:10; 9:14; Matt 5:38–43 = Luke 6:27–30 (Q); Matt 7:1–2 = Luke 6:37–38 (Q); Matt 8:18–22 = Luke 9:57–60 (Q); Matt 10:37–38 = Luke 14:26–27 (Q); Matt 5:32 = Luke 16:18 (Q); Matt 18:21–22 = Luke 17:3–4 (Q); Mark 1:16–20; 2:14; 6:8–9; 8:34, 35; 9:42–48; 10:11–12, 17–27; Matt 5:33–37; 19:10–12; 23:9; Luke 14:12–14, 23, 28–33; *Gos. Thom.* 42, 55, 95, 101; P. Oxy. 1224; etc.

<sup>50</sup> See Matt 23:1–2, 4–7, 13, 23, 25–28, 29–36 = Luke 11:39–52 (Q); Mark 2:15–17, 23–28; 3:1–6; 7:1–23; 12:13–17, 18–27; 14:53–65; Matt 15:12–13; 23:8–12, 15, 16–22; Luke 11:37–38, 53–54; 13:10–17; 14:1–6; 16:14–15; 18:9–14; John 4:1–3; 7:32, 45–52; 9:13–34; 11:45–53; 18:1–32; *Gos. Thom.* 39, 102; P. Oxy. 1224; etc.

<sup>51</sup> See Matt 5:3 = Luke 6:20 (Q); Matt 8:18–22; 10:1–14; 11:21–22 = Luke 9:57–10:15 (Q); Matt 19:28 = Luke 22:28–30 (Q); Mark 3:7–12; 4:10; 6:6–13, 35–41; 7:17–23; 8:27–38; 9:30–41; 10:10–12, 23–31; 13:1–37; Matt 10:5–6, 23, 40–42; 13:36–43, 51–52; 15:12–13; 16:17–19; Luke 9:51–56; 10:17–20; 11:1–2; 22:35–38; John 4:2; 6:60–71; 11:7–16; 13:1–17; 26; *Gos. Thom.* 6, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22, 24, 37, 43, etc.

<sup>52</sup> See Matt 8:5–9, 13 = Luke 7:1–10 (Q); Matt 11:2–5 = Luke 7:18–22 (Q); Matt 10:7–8 = Luke 10:9 (Q); Matt 12:22–30 = Luke 11:14–20 (Q); Mark 1:21–28, 29–31, 32–34, 40–45; 2:1–12; 3:1–6, 22; 5:1–20, 21–43; 6:30–44, 47–52; 7:24–30, 31–37; 8:22–26; 9:14–29; 10:46–52; Matt 9:27–31; 14:28–33; 26:53; Luke 13:32; 14:1–6; John 2:1–11; 5:2–9; 9:1–12; 11:28–44; etc.

showed special regard for unfortunates, and had disciples who followed him around, or the tradition is so corrupt that it is not a useful source for Jesus and the quest for him is hopeless. I admit that this conclusion is contained in my premise, which is that memory, if anywhere, must be in the larger patterns; but then nothing but this premise allows research to proceed.

It is in favor of what I am saying that scholars often conduct business as though what I am saying is true. They do not eliminate the Kingdom of God sayings or Jesus' use of "father" for God from the teachings of Jesus or the exorcisms from the ministry, despite their failure to pass the criterion of double dissimilarity. They continue to assign these items to Jesus I suspect simply because they are so frequently attested across most of the tradition. This is not a question exactly of multiple attestation—a particular saying or event being attested at least more than once in more than one source—but rather of recurrent attestation, by which I mean a theme or motif that is repeatedly attested throughout the tradition. Surely this is why we are confident that Jesus spoke about God as "father" and of the eschatological utopia as "the kingdom of God." By the same token, this is why we do not regard the baptismal command in Matt 28:18 as authentic. Nowhere else does Jesus speak of ritual baptism or sound like a proto-Trinitarian. The truth is that one could, if so inclined, urge that Matt 28:18 satisfies the criterion of double dissimilarity: Jewish sources certainly nowhere speak of baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and (aside from Matthew) first-century Christian sources also here fail us: they rather know of baptism in the name of Jesus. Yet this would be a specious argument for the authenticity of Matt 28:18.

The main point to take away from this discussion is that if we have memory in the tradition, then the first and most likely place to look for it is not in individual sayings that our traditional criteria seemingly endorse but in themes and motifs—as well as in rhetorical strategies such as the use of parables and hyperbole<sup>53</sup>—that recur across the sources. This must be our foundation, if we are going to think in these terms. This judgment certainly does not, let me emphasize here, imply that individual sayings and events do not go back to Jesus. I am rather making a statement about our own inability to authenticate most of the smaller bits out of which the whole is made. I doubt that we can very

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<sup>53</sup> See further Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 49–50.

often mount much of a demonstration that this or that saying goes back to Jesus even if it does, or that he did this or that thing even if he did, or that this or that event happened to him even if it did. For the most part, I think the most we can safely do is to try and answer such questions as, Did Jesus say this type of thing? or Did he do this type of thing?

If the isolation of major, recurring themes and motifs and rhetorical strategies is where the reconstruction of Jesus ought naturally to begin, if it is to begin anywhere at all, we will need to correlate those themes and motifs and rhetorical strategies with whatever circumstances about his life we can recover with assurance, examples of which are: his rough dates (ca. 7–5 BCE–30/33 CE), his baptism by John the Baptist, his (last or only?) journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, his arrest and condemnation at the hands of the Romans, and his crucifixion. Whatever knowledge we have of his first-century Jewish world—although again I wish to emphasize this is quite imperfect—also belongs here.

There is one further thing that the evidence allows us to do. This is to posit a general religious type for Jesus, which we can do without recourse to the criteria of authenticity or disputable tradition-histories. For the last hundred years perhaps most New Testament scholars have approached the sayings of Jesus with the paradigm of Jesus as apocalyptic prophet. I am among those who buy into this paradigm, and I have on several occasions set forth my reasons for so thinking.<sup>54</sup> Let me here offer a summary of some of them:

i. Passages from a wide variety of sources show us that many early followers of Jesus thought the eschatological climax to be near. Consider the following, from six different first-century Christian writers:

- Acts 3:19–21: “Repent, therefore, and turn to God so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets.”
- Rom 13:11: “Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers.”

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<sup>54</sup> Dale C. Allison, Jr., “A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology,” *JBL* 113 (1994): 651–668; idem, “The Eschatology of Jesus,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism*, 3 vols., ed. John J. Collins and Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1998), 1:267–302; idem, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1–171; idem, “Jesus Was an Apocalyptic Prophet,” and “Response,” in *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate*, ed. Robert J. Miller (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2001), 17–29, 83–105.



- 1 Cor 16:22: "Our Lord, come!" (a traditional formulation; cf. Rev 22:20).
- Heb 10:37: "In a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay."
- Jas 5:8: "You must also be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near."
- 1 Pet 4:17: "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God..."
- Rev 22:20: "The one who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.'"

We also know that, in the pre-Easter period, Jesus himself was closely associated with John the Baptist, whose public speech, if the synoptics are any guide at all, featured frequent allusion to the eschatological judgment, conceived as imminent (see Matt 3:7–12 = Luke 3:7–17 [Q]). Jesus indeed was baptized by John. Obviously then there must have been significant ideological continuity between the two men.<sup>55</sup> So, as many have observed again and again, to reconstruct a Jesus who did not have a strong eschatological or apocalyptic orientation entails discontinuity not only between him and people who took themselves to be furthering his cause but also between him and the Baptist, that is, discontinuity with the movement out of which he came as well as with the movement that came out of him. Is not presumption against this?<sup>56</sup>

ii. The canonical gospels, traditions in Acts, and the letters of Paul are united in relating that at least several pre-Easter followers of Jesus, soon after his crucifixion, declared that "God [had] raised Jesus from the dead" (cf. Mark 16:6; Acts 2:24; Rom 10:9; 1 Thess 1:10) or vindicated him by "the resurrection of the dead ones" (Acts 4:2; cf. Rom 1:4). Their combined testimony on this matter is not doubted by anyone, so we may ask why people made this claim, why they affirmed the occurrence of an eschatological event. The best explanation is that several influential individuals came to their post-Easter experiences, whatever they were, with certain categories and expectations antecedently fixed, so that they already, because of Jesus' teaching, envisaged the general

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<sup>55</sup> More than usually admitted: Dale C. Allison, Jr., "John and Jesus: Continuity and Discontinuity," *JSHJ* 1 (2002): 6–27.

<sup>56</sup> This is an old and popular argument; the earliest appearance of it that I can recall is in Heathcote William Garrod, *The Religion of All Good Men* (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1906), 138. John Dominic Crossan, although he does not accept my conclusions, candidly recognizes the strength of this particular argument: "Assessing the Arguments," in *Apocalyptic Jesus*, ed. Miller, 122–123.

resurrection to be imminent.<sup>57</sup> This is why “resurrection” was for many the chief category by which to interpret Jesus’ vindication.

iii. According to Mark 15:33, when Jesus died there was a strange darkness (cf. Amos 8:9–10). According to Matt 27:51–53, there was also a strong earthquake (cf. Zech 14:5) and a resurrection of the dead (cf. Ezekiel 37; Zech 14:4–5). According to John’s Gospel, Jesus’ death was “the judgment of the world” (12:31) and brought down the reign of Satan (16:11). According to Paul, Jesus is “the first fruits of those who have died” (1 Cor 15:20)—a metaphor which assumes that the eschatological harvest is underway, that the resurrection of Jesus is only the beginning of the general resurrection of the dead. Given its multiple attestation in Paul, the synoptics, and John, the habit of associating the end of Jesus with eschatological motifs must go back to very early times.<sup>58</sup>

What explains this habit? The best answer is that, while Jesus was yet with them, his followers—as Luke 19:11 plainly tells us—“supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately” (cf. Acts 1:6). They foresaw apocalyptic suffering followed by eschatological vindication, tribulation followed by resurrection.<sup>59</sup> So when Jesus was, in the event, crucified and seen alive again, his followers, instead of abandoning their apocalyptic hopes, did what one would expect them to do: they sought to correlate expectations with circumstances. This is why they believed that in Jesus’ end the eschaton had begun to unfold, and why early Christian texts associate the death and resurrection of Jesus with what appear to be eschatological events.<sup>60</sup>

iv. The Roman world of the first century was, in the words of Helmut Koester, “dominated by prophetic eschatology,” and the apocalyptic writings of Judaism, which share “the general eschatological spirit” of the Roman imperial period,<sup>61</sup> put us in touch with a type of eschatology that was well known in Jesus’ time and place. Not only did the sacred collection itself contain apocalyptic materials—for example, Isaiah 24–27, Daniel, Zechariah 9–14—but portions of *1 Enoch*, some of the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles*, and the *Testament of Moses* were in circulation in Jesus’

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Walter Schmithals, “Jesus und die Apokalyptik,” in *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie*, ed. Georg Strecker (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1975), 67–68.

<sup>58</sup> See further Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>59</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 136–151.

<sup>60</sup> See further Allison, *End*, 142–162.

<sup>61</sup> Helmut Koester, “Jesus: The Victim,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 10–11.

day; and the decades after Jesus saw the appearance of *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. His time was also when the Dead Sea Scrolls, so many of which are charged with apocalyptic expectation,<sup>62</sup> were presumably being composed or copied and studied. The point, reinforced by Josephus's remarks on the general popularity of the apocalyptic book of Daniel (*Ant.* 10.268), is simply that the sort of eschatology that Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer and many after them have attributed to Jesus was indeed flourishing in Jesus' day. Social and political circumstances were perhaps ripe for the production of a millenarian movement; in any event the sense of an imminent transformation appears to have been shared by many. We can make the inference from the New Testament itself. For in the words of Barnabas Lindars, "the rapid expansion of Christianity would really be inexplicable except against the background of a widespread feeling amongst Jews of the day that they were living in the End Time. For it is . . . only because of the pre-understanding of the Bible in this eschatological sense, attested not only in Qumran and apocalyptic, but also to some extent in rabbinic sources, that the church's application of the whole range of Old Testament to Jesus could be felt to be a plausible undertaking and find acceptance."<sup>63</sup> The point for us is this: to propose that Jesus thought the end to be near is just to say that he believed what many others in his time and place believed.

v. Several New Testament texts compare Jesus with some of his contemporaries. In Matt 11:18–19 = Luke 7:33–34 (Q) Jesus compares his own ministry with the ministry of John the Baptist. In Mark 6:14 Herod Antipas says that Jesus is John the Baptist risen from the dead. Mark 8:28 reports that "people" thought Jesus to be like John the Baptist. And according to Acts 5:35–39, Rabbi Gamaliel compared Jesus and his followers with Theudas and his movement, as well as with Judas the Galilean and his movement. Now John the Baptist, Theudas, and Judas the Galilean were moved by eschatological expectation or hope for Jewish restoration. John proclaimed a near end—even Origen recognized that John's words in Luke 3 most naturally refer to "the end of time"<sup>64</sup>—and was thought of as a prophet. Theudas claimed to be a prophet,

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<sup>62</sup> John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>63</sup> Barnabas Lindars, "The Place of the Old Testament in the Formation of the New Testament," *NTS* 23 (1976): 62.

<sup>64</sup> Origen, *Hom. Luke* 23 SC 87, ed. Crouzel, Fournier, and Périchon, 312.

acted as a new Moses, and was viewed as a threat by the Romans. Judas the Galilean, according to Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5, sought independence for the Jewish people with the help of God. What follows? The comparisons in the canonical gospels and Acts, most of which are attributed to outsiders and which would be unlikely to have been generated by insiders, would be natural if Jesus was remembered as an apocalyptic prophet who proclaimed that God's kingdom would replace the Roman kingdom. They are not easily explained if he was not so remembered.

The five arguments just introduced are straightforward and powerful. They involve neither special pleading nor any questionable argumentation. They are, moreover, mutually reinforcing. That Jesus was baptized by an eschatological prophet and had among his followers people who proclaimed a near end, that certain followers of Jesus proclaimed his resurrection soon after the crucifixion, that his passion and vindication were associated with eschatological motifs, that many first-century Jews expected an apocalyptic scenario to unfold in their near future, and that our sources compare Jesus with others who believed in such a scenario or at least expected God soon to rule Palestine—these indisputable facts together tell us that Jesus held hopes close to those Weiss and Schweitzer attributed to him.

Where does all this leave us with respect to the many sayings and stories that stubbornly remain in the “possibly authentic” category? I believe that we need to admit that, as historians of the Jesus tradition, we are story-tellers. We can do no more than aspire to fashion a hypothetical narrative that is more persuasive than competing narratives, one that satisfies our aesthetical and historical sensibilities because of its apparent ability to clarify more data in a more satisfactory fashion than its rivals. Such a narrative will inevitably draw upon the various individual sayings and events to illumine points, but we will have to give up pretending to authenticate most of them. That is, “possibly authentic” sayings and events will serve us, not as foundations to build upon, but rather as illustrations of the apocalyptic paradigm and the larger patterns across the documents.

## FOURTH QUEST? WHAT DID JESUS REALLY WANT?<sup>1</sup>

ERNST BAASLAND

Is it possible to find a new approach to Jesus research? After approximately 250 years of such research and at a point of time where the extent of such research has never been greater, it seems indeed difficult to find a new approach. Nevertheless, I do believe it is both feasible and necessary to single out a direction for the Jesus research in the years to come. This paper provides a sort of program and a few indications about such a direction, shedding some light also on the predecessors of this approach.

The trace or clue to finding this direction is to inquire about the purpose of Jesus, Jesus' motive—in other words asking the question, what did Jesus want? Influential people have a sort of program or vision. If they do not have an agenda, we become rather skeptical and assume a hidden agenda. Therefore we look carefully for words which express their program. According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus does very clearly express his visions and wishes. In this article a more comprehensive study of Mark is not possible, where I have to examine the possibilities for finding the intention (purpose/vision) of Jesus. I try to discover the very purpose of Jesus through three steps of argument:

1. arguing from research-history, in order to show that this question is neglected,
2. tracing a methodological perspective, showing how necessary this question is,
3. developing some suggestions based on the Gospel of Mark.

### 1. *A View of the History of Jesus Research*

#### 1.1. *The Start of the Research History, Focusing the Aims of Jesus*

From the perspective given in this paper, Jesus research started out very promisingly. Since A. Schweitzer's famed inventory of Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> The article is based on a paper given in August 2002 in the Jesus seminar at the SNTS meeting in Durham, England.

research<sup>2</sup> it has been a commonplace to say that Jesus research begins with H. S. Reimarus. There was indeed Jesus research also before that time,<sup>3</sup> and one may argue that the contribution of the Machiavelli-admirer Reimarus was not intensely groundbreaking. Nonetheless, Reimarus was the very first to intensively put forth the question—what did Jesus (and the disciples) want?<sup>4</sup>

The follow-up to Reimarus's work, however, was greatly overdue. The critics of Reimarus's work did not focus on the same question. They tried to find a different battleground, that of source criticism. Thus another 201 years would pass before the next book on this topic arrived, *The Aims of Jesus*, written by the Canadian Ben Meyer.<sup>5</sup> I shall return to this book at a later stage in this article.

Reimarus/Lessing provoked a debate that shocked not only conservative Christians but also liberals. Consequently, both directions now pursued a new groundwork for the existing research, and that foundation was found in source criticism. On the basis of sound scientific backing, the Gospel of Mark was considered the oldest such source. Since the Gospel of Mark more often than the other evangelists alludes to the emotions of Jesus, the research conducted principally centred on the inner life of Jesus, arguably to the extent where the researcher assumed the role of a psychiatrist, more so than what the sources actually permitted. From a historic, theoretical perspective, there was a peculiar mixture of explanations based on motives and explanations resting on psychological virtues.

Schweitzer was early on critical of the psychological explanations. Moreover, W. Wrede had convinced Schweitzer that the Gospel of Mark did not reflect the historical Jesus, but rather the theology of the ancient church. He therefore wanted to provide research with an entirely new point of departure and, like Reimarus, Schweitzer focused on a direction leading to explanations based on motives. Already at the age of 25 he claimed to have discovered Jesus' true intention. While doing his obligatory military service in the idyllic surroundings of Guggenheim, Schweitzer read the "Commissioning of the Twelve" in Matthew 10. All of a sudden it struck him that the true vision of Jesus

<sup>2</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906).

<sup>3</sup> W. P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> *Vom Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger* (1778). Introduction and translation by George Wesley Buchanan as *The Goal of Jesus and His Disciples* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979).

was to preach the supernatural kingdom of God, as opposed to a political and military kingdom, and to promote this message through the disciples.<sup>6</sup> According to Schweitzer, this was what Jesus really wanted. Jesus did not want to communicate a praiseworthy message about brotherly love and societal change, as the liberal theologians claimed.

Schweitzer's interpretation was inadequate from a methodological perspective. His research was, however, auspicious in the sense that he put the question of Jesus' motives and intentions back on the agenda. Odd as it may seem, Schweitzer's book actually somewhat benumbed the progress of Jesus research. In fact, so much so that the period from 1901–54 is labeled the No-Quest phase.

### 1.2. *The Historical Jesus Research in the Twentieth Century*

W. Barnes Tatum<sup>7</sup> has proposed the following sequence: Pre-Quest (before 1778), Old Quest (1778–1906), No Quest (1906–1953), New Quest (1953–85) and Post-Quest (1985–2000), whereas G. Theissen (and A. Metz)<sup>8</sup> presented a similar but different sequence: Critical Jesus-Quest (1774–1830), Liberal, optimistic Jesus research (1830–1901), The crisis of the Life of Jesus research (1901–1950), New Quest (1950–1980) and The so-called “Third Quest” (1980–).

A. Schweitzer and R. Bultmann spread, indeed, reluctance and pessimism concerning the results of Jesus research, but did not stop the production of scholarly Jesus books. In fact, more than 500 books on Jesus were published in this period. Only within the Bultmann school was it somehow noteworthy, as the “New Quest” became an important effort in New Testament scholarship. The name and the whole effort has primarily been linked to Bultmann's student (and critic), Ernst Käsemann. Käsemann's programmatic lecture in 1953 used the title “Neue Jesusfrage.” The label “New Quest” was, however, coined by James M. Robinson in his programmatic essay in 1959.<sup>9</sup> “New Quest” relates

<sup>6</sup> *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis: Eine Skizze des Lebens Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1901).

<sup>7</sup> *In Quest of Jesus* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982; Nashville: Abingdon Press 2nd ed., 1999). On this basis many reviews of Jesus research have been written, and Jesus research in the last century is thus pictured as three waves: *Old Quest* (-1920), *New Quest* (1950–1980), *Third Quest* (1985–2000).

Like the waves in the ocean Jesus research went through ups and downs, and the peaks of the waves came in the 1880's in the 1950's and in the 1990's.

<sup>8</sup> *Der historische Jesus* (1996). Translated as *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959).

naturally to “Old Quest”, which indeed was the very intention behind the New Quest. The New Quest gave a different and better approach than the Old Quest. In the research conducted after 1954, attention was centered on the classic historic question of what it is that we know for certain about Jesus. That at least was Käsemann’s starting point, but G. Bornkamm, E. Fuchs and G. Ebeling moved a step further by trying to trace the links between the teaching of Jesus and the preaching of the Kerygma,<sup>10</sup> which to a certain extent raises the question of Jesus’ intentions.

The representatives of the New Quest claimed, however, that the quest was “based upon new premises, procedures and objectives,”<sup>11</sup> but the question remains whether there is any difference between the “New Quest” and the premises put forth in some of the Jesus books from the period of 1920–50, i.e. the books of Bultmann and Dibelius. In my opinion, no striking difference can be traced.<sup>12</sup> However, some obvious features show the differences between the Old Quest and New Quest:

- No “Life of Jesus” in the sense of a biography can be written;
- No “Life of Jesus” in the sense of psychology (inner life) of Jesus can possibly be reached;
- No optimism concerning reaching the goal of the basic reality of the life of Jesus (i.e. the concept of L. Ranke: “was eigentlich gewesen ist”);
- The use of form criticism became crucial in the New Quest;
- The reconstruction of the personality of Jesus is impossible.

From this perspective, the question of Jesus’ intentions became rather dubious, and was indeed neglected by the representatives of the New Quest.

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<sup>10</sup> G. Bornkamm, in his famous book *Jesus von Nazareth* (Stuttgart: Urban, 1956), saw Jesus’ “Unmittelbarkeit,” his vision of God and man without any apocalyptic or casuistic argumentation whatsoever. For E. Fuchs, e.g., in *Jesus: Wort und Tat* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), the way Jesus showed compassion for sinners, expressed in words and acts, as the core and as the bridge to the preaching of righteousness. G. Ebeling saw Jesus’ faith as the trust in God which transformed even death into hope, in “Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und das Problem der Christologie,” *ZThK* 36 (1959): 14–30.

<sup>11</sup> Bornkamm, *Jesus*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Theologie und Methode: Eine historiographische Analyse der Frühschriften Rudolf Bultmanns* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1992), 423–433.



In the so-called No Quest period, ongoing Jesus research continued after 1950, although not to the same extent. It is one of the many paradoxes in scholarship that more Jesus books came out in the No Quest period than in the New Quest period. Particularly outside German scholarship and apart from the Bultmann school (e.g., J. Jeremias, E. Stauffer, L. Goppelt, O. Betz)<sup>13</sup> Jesus research flourished. Scholarship in the UK remained largely uninfluenced by German discussions. Broadly speaking, in the eyes of the Bultmann school this scholarship was uncritical, whereas the English scholars found a number of exaggerations and overstatements in German scholarship. German scholarship more or less excluded the christological titles as keys to understanding Jesus. Apart from C. H. Dodd,<sup>14</sup> and a few others, the opposite is the case in British scholarship (e.g., W. Manson,<sup>15</sup> T. W. Manson,<sup>16</sup> V. Taylor,<sup>17</sup> C. D. F. Moule,<sup>18</sup> and others<sup>19</sup> emphasised different titles).

In the years around 1960 there came a major shift in American scholarship. Reaction from the previous period was still present in the 1950's through H. Cadbury, J. Knox<sup>20</sup> and other representatives of the Chicago-school, such as E. Goodspeed. In the 1960's the dialogue within German and European scholarship became more intense. The universities in the USA started to recruit more professors from Europe (H. Koester, D. Georgi, N. A. Dahl, H. D. Betz, and others), and many American scholars (e.g. J. M. Robinson, R. H. Fuller) entered into dialogue with Jesus research within the Bultmann school. In the 1960's and 1970's there was relatively little to report on American Jesus research,<sup>21</sup> and this opened up the gap to be filled by the Third Quest in the 1980's.

<sup>13</sup> *Was wissen wir von Jesus* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1967).

<sup>14</sup> *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1970).

<sup>15</sup> *Jesus the Messiah* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943).

<sup>16</sup> *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931; 2nd ed., 1935); and H. D. A. Major, T. W. Manson, and C. J. Wright: *The Mission and Message of Jesus* (New York: Dutton, 1938; 1946).

<sup>17</sup> E.g., *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (London: Macmillan, 1953).

<sup>18</sup> *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>19</sup> C. J. Cadoux, *The Historic Mission of Jesus* (London: Lutterworth, 1941); H. E. Turner, *Jesus: Master and Lord* (London: Mowbray, 1953); R. H. Fuller, *The Mission and Achievement of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1954); I. H. Marshall, *The Work of Christ* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1969/1981).

<sup>20</sup> *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967; repr., 1999).

<sup>21</sup> J. Reumann, *Jesus in the Church's Gospels: Modern Scholarship and the Earliest Sources* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968); I. H. Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977). It was particularly important that J. A. Fitzmyer and R. E. Brown opened up a new type of scholarship, not only at the Catholic seminaries.

On the European continent, French (e.g., M. Goguel,<sup>22</sup> X. Léon-Dufour,<sup>23</sup> L. Cerfaux, E. Trocmé)<sup>24</sup> and Scandinavian scholarship (e.g., A. Fridrichsen,<sup>25</sup> H. Riesenfeld,<sup>26</sup> B. Gerhardsson, N. A. Dahl)<sup>27</sup> made substantial contributions to Jesus research, and from the German Catholic universities many important impulses were created (e.g., by R. Schnackenburg, F. Mussner, A. Vögtle, W. Trilling).<sup>28</sup> Generally speaking, Jesus research outside the Bultmann school had in mind not only the reconstruction of the historical facts but also somehow the intentions of Jesus.

In the 1980's and particularly through the organizing of the "Jesus Seminar" in 1985, the "Third Quest," a new wave of historical Jesus research, developed, in which the overriding question was what we know for certain about the historical Jesus.<sup>29</sup>

The representatives of the Third Quest gave indeed some new premises for the discussion compared with the New Quest:

- Skepticism about the criterion of dissimilarity;
- Emphasizing more the Jewishness of Jesus;
- Using archaeology;
- Using models from sociology and social anthropology, and emphasizing the socio-cultural setting for Jesus, particularly the Galilean and also the Hellenistic context;
- Using Q as a main witness;
- Using the *Gospel of Thomas* (i.e. extra-canonical writings) extensively.

<sup>22</sup> *Jésus et les origines du christianisme* (Paris: Payot, 1932/1950; 1946; 1947).

<sup>23</sup> *Les évangiles et l'histoire de Jésus* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1963).

<sup>24</sup> *Jésus de Nazareth vu par les témoins de sa vie* (1971). Translated as *Jesus as Seen by His Contemporaries* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973).

<sup>25</sup> *Vem ville Jesus vara? Kristustrons historiska grundval enligt nutida bibelforskning* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1931). A. Friedrichsen's Jesus book has the title "Who Did Jesus Want To Be?" and in a number of articles he raises the question: "Does Jesus want to be the Messiah?"

<sup>26</sup> *Jésus transfiguré* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1947).

<sup>27</sup> *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1974); *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> *Fragen der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> The Third Quest has been reviewed by M. J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994); B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995); B. Holmberg, *Människa och mer: Jesus i forskningsens ljus* (Malmö: Arcus, 2001).

In spite of the disputed voting procedure on the authenticity of the Jesus traditions, the research gave many new impulses and insights, particularly through the focus on the socio-historical environment<sup>30</sup> and the Jewishness of Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Some were inspired by the works of G. Theißen who gave the sociological perspective a new foundation,<sup>32</sup> and by G. Vermes who gave new insights into the Jewish background of Jesus.<sup>33</sup> The Third Quest was from the very beginning a disparate movement (i.e. in the evaluation of authenticity, of the importance of the *Gospel of Thomas*, of the degree of Hellenistic impact on Judaism in the time of Jesus). They moved in different directions when it came to methodological approaches and to the actual theological interpretations.<sup>34</sup>

However, generally in the Third Quest one claimed to have a purely historical approach, denying any dogmatic interest. For most, but not all scholars, this filtered out the question of the intentions of Jesus as a part of the historical question.

### 1.3. *A Sidewalk in the Research History: Scholars Focusing on the Aims of Jesus*

Both the New Quest and the Third Quest concentrated on the reconstruction of the historical Jesus, asking primarily: What did Jesus say,

<sup>30</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991); idem, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994); F. G. Downing, *Christ and the Cynics: Jesus and Other Radical Preachers in First Century Tradition* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); M. Borg, *Conflict: Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Mellen, 1984); idem, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987); R. A. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements of the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston, 1985).

<sup>31</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); idem, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane, 1993); J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vols. 1–3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991/1994/2001); J. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism* (New York: Garden City, 1988); idem, ed., *Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus in Early Judaism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums* (Munich: Kaiser, 1977). Translated as *The First Followers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1978); *Studien zur Soziologie des Urchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1979). Translated as *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

<sup>33</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospel* (London: Collins, 1973); idem, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993).

<sup>34</sup> Some of the main tendencies are: (a) *Jesus as a unique Jewish-Hellenistic (Cynic) wisdom teacher* (J. D. Crossan, F. G. Downing, B. Witherington III, S. Patterson, L. Vaage, E. Schüssler Fiorenza), (b) *Jesus as a marginal Jew, doing signs and wonders* (J. P. Meier), or *having a policy of compassion* (M. Borg), (c) *Jesus as a Galilean* (R. A. Horsley, S. Freyne), a Galilean peasant (J. D. Crossan), (d) *Jesus preaching the restoration of Israel* (B. Meyer, E. P. Sanders, P. Fredriksen).

what happened, who was Jesus? Other scholars deal more extensively (mostly implicitly though) with the issue of Jesus' intentions:

- Particularly in the research that dealt with the Jewish roots of Jesus, scholars were forced to approach the question of understanding the intention of Jesus within a Jewish framework. Although light was not shed on the question of motive, this research set sound premises for an eventual proper understanding of this question. The question is at least implicitly raised in J. H. Riche's book *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism*.<sup>35</sup>
- Many books on "synoptic theology" often tended to reveal more about the intention of Jesus than books that directly debated the historical Jesus. It may be argued that this is bound to happen when one focuses on the totality of Jesus' preaching and on the inner correlation of Jesus' preaching, while concurrently attempting to analyze the inner correlation of Jesus' deeds and words.
- Scholars who focus on the social history are forced to deal with the question of Jesus' intentions. After (however, also before)<sup>36</sup> 1968 some scholars gave a political interpretation of Jesus' intentions mostly based on the following facts: the cleansing of the temple, the sword word, the zealot among the disciples, the events leading to crucifixion and the very fact of a Roman crucifixion.

Concerning the question of Jesus' intentions, the contributions from representatives of the Third Quest have been minor at best. In spite of the title, even M. Borg's book *Jesus, A New Vision*<sup>37</sup> does not really face this question. Somehow independently of the efforts of the Third Quest, Ben Meyer raised the question about the purpose of Jesus in a philosophical and methodological fashion. Meyer claimed that Jesus' intention was to *restore* Israel. This point of view was, in turn, adopted by E. P. Sanders,<sup>38</sup> and the line back to books underlining the Jewish roots of Jesus is clear. However, Sanders is also trapped by the classic and necessary question: What do we know for certain about Jesus?

<sup>35</sup> (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980).

<sup>36</sup> S. G. F. Brandon gave new arguments for the political interpretation of Jesus' intentions. His interpretation was rejected in very thorough analyses by O. Cullmann, M. Hengel, R. T. France.

<sup>37</sup> The content is more expressed in the rest of the title, *Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985) and more so in his book *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993).

A. E. Harvey<sup>39</sup> opened up a broader perspective on Jesus' intentions, using the perspective of the constraints of history: Every man meets the constraints of his time and context, and Jesus met the political and religious constraints of his time. On this basis Harvey can raise the question of both Jesus' and his *adversaries'* intentions (in contrast to Reimarus who focused only on the intention of Jesus and his disciples).

The efforts of Meyer, Sanders and Harvey are on a broad basis followed up by N. T. Wright.<sup>40</sup> Meyer and Wright seem to see their effort as within the framework of the New Quest and Third Quest, even though they disagree with many of the premises in the two quests. Many of their methodological considerations and the way of questioning are indeed close to what I in this paper call the "Fourth Quest."

#### 1.4. *A Perspective on the History of Jesus Research*

The Old Quest, the New Quest, and the Third Quest all aspired to conduct their research on an unmitigated historic-scientific foundation.<sup>41</sup> The effort in all three quests was and is to answer the question: What facts can Jesus research deliver? The three quests aim to sort the undisputable facts about the historical Jesus. One assumes the role of an observer who distinguishes the real and historical from more recent supplements. The individual standards and assumptions of the researcher were not to be amalgamated with such research. Indeed, Ranke's old conception of the ideal historian,<sup>42</sup> one who is able to discern what really happened independently of his or her own perspective, is still alive in New Testament research—even though Jesus research is an example of the very opposite. If there is any field of research where individual and trendy ideas are able to sneak in and take a place, it is in Jesus research.

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<sup>39</sup> *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1992); *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1996); *The Original Jesus* (Oxford: Lion, 1996); *The Challenge of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2000). B. Holmberg pushes Jesus research in the same direction, *Människa och mer: Jesus i forskningsens ljus* (Malmö: Arcus, 2001), 192–194.

<sup>41</sup> For a different approach see Gerd Theissen and A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), operating with five periods in the Jesus research. Also G. Theissen and D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 1–3.

<sup>42</sup> For a critical evaluation, see W. P. Fuchs, "Was heisst das: 'bloss zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen ist,'" *GWU* 30 (1979): 655–667.

Bultmann reflected on a deeper level than the assumption of an observer and a subject-object perspective. He was well aware that the researcher is a participant, a part in the process who affects the object being studied. In his source-critical and form-critical work *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* he indeed sorted out the historical from the unhistorical traditions. In his book *Jesus* (1926) he focused more on the intentions of Jesus, sometimes using “unhistorical traditions” to illuminate these intentions. Thus, Bultmann’s *Jesus* book is one of the predecessors to the Fourth Quest.

In my study of Bultmann’s methodology I go a step further and show that the perspective of the researcher appears on the two main levels of historical methodology:

- even at the *contemplation of sources* (*Quellenkunde / Quellenbeurteilung*) there is a correspondence between (pre)assumptions about Jesus and the evaluation of the sources. I myself have documented this in my studies of the methodology Bultmann used in *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*.<sup>43</sup>
- even more so when the *theory of history* (*Geschichtstheorie*) is applied (or not). Up to now, these aspects have hardly featured in the debates within Jesus research. In this paper, I wish to contribute to the discussion one aspect of the theory of history, viz. explanations.

In a forthcoming study I argue that the historians leave their observer role most clearly on a third level of historical methodology:

- the *presentation of history* (*Geschichtsschreibung*), a stage that exegetes generally overlook but one that in recent times has received much attention from historians.<sup>44</sup> Since this aspect is particularly important, I shall deal with it in this paper.

I am convinced that an analysis of this level of historical methodology gives a new perspective on the history of Jesus research.

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<sup>43</sup> Baasland, *Theologie und Methode*, 162–400.

<sup>44</sup> J. Rüsen, *Für eine erneuerte Historik* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1976).

### 1.5. *The Presentation of the Jesus of History seen from Hayden White's Categories*

Much of the research of history consists of presenting the reconstructed history and, as the British historian Hayden White has shown,<sup>45</sup> the political perception belonging to the historian is inclined to color his or her presentation of history. White argues that such researchers tend to utilise the various literary styles, including tragedy, satire and comedy, when presenting history.

Emplotment	Explanation	Ideological Implication
Tragedy	Mechanistic	Radical
Satire	Contextualist	Liberal
Comedy	Organicist	Conservative
Romance	Ideographic	Anarchist

It is not difficult to see that historians use the above mentioned literary styles when they write history.

A *tragedy* operates within the category of “necessity”: Something has to happen, events unfold according to a given direction as if obeying a law. The old Greek tragedies contain some of this fatalism and Reimarus, D. F. Strauss, A. Schweitzer, R. Bultmann and most other scholars with a hypercritical evaluation of the gospels tend to see the life of Jesus from the perspective of tragedy. Despite Jesus’ own intentions, Jesus moves inevitably towards his death.

The Gospel of Mark is seemingly written in the form of tragedy. The event unfolds with a heavy inner necessity. Towards the end of the gospel Jesus cries out: “Father, Father, why have you abandoned me?” The fact that the Gospel of Mark also deals with another matter, namely the resurrection narratives, is somehow overlooked by both Reimarus and Schweitzer.

A great many Jesus books are written in the form of *satire*: Jesus’ intention is often portrayed as noble and good, but events took a different turn. Indeed, all the noble intentions safely guided him towards a meaningless death, and the church, in turn, emerged and created a

<sup>45</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 29–31; also in his book *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 66–68.

theology that was incompatible with Jesus' own motives. This is the central focus of attention in the numerous discussions of the topic: What was Jesus and what has the church made him into?

This question was raised early on by Reimarus and, at this point, there is a certain cohesion between the radical and liberal Jesus research. Both of these fields claim that events unfold differently from what the main character had expected. The situation thus forcefully creates solutions that often are contrary to intentions.

This is the very difference between these two directions and a history writing in the category of *comedy*, which many scholars tend to label as a more conservative history writing. Here the transformation that took place through the death and resurrection of Christ is not overlooked. The differences are viewed from the perspective of continuity. There is a bridge, not a breach, between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of the church. Therefore, more conservative writers of history lean towards the form of comedy.

Comedy, moreover, must of course be understood in the most banal sense of the word, as a play dominated by (entertaining) comedy. Within the field of literature, a comedy is a story that ends on a higher level than its starting point. Tensions are released, and this in turn brings about reconciliation and a form of higher unity. I, for one, would certainly write a Jesus book according to this form. However, in order to prevent the decision to choose this form from appearing random, the reasons behind such a decision need to be established. I shall do this in a rather pretentious manner by outlining a fourth direction in Jesus research and, furthermore, I shall also propose a methodology and provide a framework for a "life of Jesus."

## 2. *Methodological Considerations*

### 2.1. *Is it Possible to Find Jesus' Intention?*

It is quite audacious to claim that we are now in need of a new round of life of Jesus research. However, I am convinced that there indeed exists a need to further explore the historical Jesus that I encounter through the theory of history, a search which at the same time allows the historical, sociological and the theological perspectives to blend into the essential question: What did Jesus really want? What was Jesus' intention?

The very question of "intention" is not very precise. The frequently used terms like aim, goal, intention, vision, mission, etc., are only occasionally



defined. The difficult task of definition need not surprise us. People do have a will to do different things. They have a variety of intentions, different motives and motivations for doing things, and a variety of plans and goals, etc. Often one's aims and intentions change through the years. Hardly anybody will speak about one's intention, and for a historical person it is even more difficult.

In the case of Jesus, theological or ideological premises are at stake and often intermingled in historical research:

- Some would argue: Jesus was in essence without will; he was bound by a divine plan that had to be followed. Such an argument is basically a presupposition, and is also in contrast with the pattern of thought in the Old Testament. It is a very consistent element in the scripture that God's plan changes according to people's responses. The same pertains to Jesus. If people had reacted and responded differently, the destiny of Jesus would also have been different.
- Others embrace a completely opposite point of view: Jesus was exposed to several random occurrences in the way that we are. In other words, incidental situations are essentially more determinative than the intentions of the individual. However, such approaches are not very productive. We need to presume that Jesus' intention to a large extent is reflected in Jesus' own words and deeds.

One may object against this task that this approach has too much in common with the struggle in the Old Quest for finding Jesus' self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*) or the inner life of Jesus. One must indeed avoid the psychological and otherwise subjective hypotheses in the Old Quest, which should be possible at this more developed stage of scholarship. Nonetheless, one must concede that it is not easy to answer the question at hand. Indeed, endeavours to provide an answer to this very question tend to yield more subjective answers than any other questions raised in Jesus research. Consequently, we are in need of a new method.

## 2.2. *Methods in Jesus Research*

Jesus research is still based on a methodology that is somehow different from the methodology in the science of history. In New Testament scholarship one has developed two main tools: A cluster of "methods" (literary, form, tradition and redaction criticism) differently understood

and applied, and a list of criteria of authenticity,<sup>46</sup> also applied and understood in various ways. Both the methods and the criteria are in some respect strange in comparison with the methods used in the science of history. The problem with using a different methodology from general historical research is a challenge, and New Testament scholars must give their methods and results a better explanation or try to approach the current methods in general historical research. In this article I prefer the second option, but in this article I focus on only some aspects of the theory of history (*Geschichtstheorie*). The investigation of sources (*Quellenkunde / Quellenbeurteilung*) has of course vital importance for Jesus research, and must in the future be analyzed more in the categories of general history theory.<sup>47</sup> However, in a relatively short article I have to focus on the topic of general historical theory, which is overlooked in New Testament scholarship and might be a helpful tool in Jesus research.

### 2.3. *Explanations of Motive are Essential in the Theory of History*

The following distinctions are normally made within historical research:

- Causal explanations, covenant laws
- Motive explanations
- Functional explanations

In Jesus research, the first and last explanations have dominated.

#### *Causal explanations*

The most basic explanation for historians is that of giving *causes* for different events, and these kinds of explanations have indeed dominated the study of early Christianity.<sup>48</sup> In Jesus research, however, one rarely discusses this type of explanation. Therefore, explanations of causes tend to enter the research scene in more direct fashion, often in the shape of classification. When Jesus acted or preached the way he did, an explanation is to be found in his background, and Jesus is explained by means of classifications. The “causal explanations” are widespread in

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<sup>46</sup> I.e., K. Kertelge, ed., *Rückfrage nach Jesus*, QD 63 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974); and my book *Theologie und Methode*, 230–261; and more extensively in Theissen and Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung*.

<sup>47</sup> I give a review in my book *Theologie und Methode*, 163–191.

<sup>48</sup> C. G. Hempel’s groundbreaking article, “The Function of General Laws in History,” *Journal of Philosophy* 39 (1942): 35–48, gave impulses to many different debates. Examples from New Testament scholarship are given in my book *Theologie und Methode*, 390–400.

Jesus research. Sometimes they are very loosely introduced when scholars claim that Jesus is “influenced by,” “dependent on,” often so that Jesus is seen in the light of well-known parties: Jesus is a zealot, is influenced by Qumran, is a Pharisee, a Cynic preacher or a Galilean village preacher.<sup>49</sup> The problem with all classification is the openness of mostly all the categories mentioned here.

### *Functional explanations*

In the Third Quest the *functional explanations* play a central role.<sup>50</sup> Theissen made the first attempt to incorporate such explanations in his book *The Sociology of the Jesus-movement*.<sup>51</sup> He suggests the following outline:

	Isolation/protest	Protest	Adaptation
Disintegrated	Immigrants	Thieves	Beggars
Integrated	Qumran	Zealots	Pharisees

According to Theissen, Jesus has elements from all of these methods of reaction, and he gives good reasons for this. Generally, however, in the “Third Quest” the functional explanations tend to be more simplistic: One assumes, and even postulates, certain needs that Jesus both reflects and responds to. For instance: Social grief leads to Jesus’ social message, political suppression leads to a zealous attitude, religious crisis leads to religious reformation.

### *Motive explanations*

There exists, however, only a weak undercurrent in the research that deals with *explanations of motive*, as we have shown, following the path through 200 years (from Reimarus to Ben Meyer) of

<sup>49</sup> J. Reumann gives in his article “Jesus and Christology” in *New Testament and Its Interpreters*, ed. E. J. Epp and J. D. MacRae (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 501–564, esp. 521–523, a comprehensive list of possible categories: 1. Apocalyptic Messiah. 2. Great teacher. 3. Existentialist rabbi. 4. The Church’s resurrected Lord. 5. The prophetic Suffering Servant-messiah. 6. Essene-like Teacher of Righteousness. (7. Sacred Mushroom.) 8. Nazorean scheming Messiah. 9. Political revolutionist. 10. Pacifist. 11. Marxist-atheist interpretation. 12. Romantically involved pro-feminist. 13. The Magician. 14. A Jew, a Hasidic *tsaddiq*. The list shows how differently the cause-category functions.

<sup>50</sup> On a broader basis, see G. A. Cohen, “Functional Explanations, Consequence Explanation, and Marxism,” *Inquiry* 25 (1982): 27–56. Also W. Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957).

<sup>51</sup> Quoted from the German edition *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung* (Munich: Kaiser, 1977), 32–46.

Jesus research. B. F. Meyer still approached the question about intentions to some extent from a psychological perspective, using R. Collingwood's distinction between "actions" (intention, inside) and "events" (terms of bodies, outside).<sup>52</sup> However, I also intend to eventually move slightly beyond Ben Meyer, i.e., to avoid a psychological or even philosophical misunderstanding of the concept of "intentions."

There is indeed a fundamental difference between:

- intentions an acting person has, and
- intentions observed by an outside person.

An outside person will most often assume different intentions from the acting person himself. Our task is, however, as far as possible to reach the intentions of the acting person.

In general and from a historical point of view, this task is very difficult to investigate:<sup>53</sup>

- a person can have both open and hidden motives, and
- not every intention will be fulfilled in acts,
- a person can have more than one intention, and
- the aim can change during his lifetime.
- every motive/intention will meet limitations. Some historians distinguish between subintentional causality (a person's intentions are restricted by his background) and suprainentional causality (a person's intentions are restricted by his contemporaries and social context).<sup>54</sup>

As we see, motives are often complex in character, and a motive of an acting person has to be related to causality, and motive is often a cause for certain acts and situations.

From a theological point of view, some would argue that Jesus was in essence without will. An historian must always be on the lookout for a person's motive, seeking out the reasons for acting the way the historian does. The people that the historian consults and works with may have

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<sup>52</sup> *The Idea of History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3rd ed., 1970), a distinction supported by R. Bultmann, *Geschichte und Eschatologie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), 155–163. Also P. Gardiner, *The Nature of Explanation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), esp. 46–50.

<sup>53</sup> Gardiner, *The Nature of Explanation*, 113–140.

<sup>54</sup> J. Elster, *Strong Feelings: Emotion, Addiction and Human Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

other motives and this creates the tension through which history is played out. For this very reason, we cannot avoid the following questions, even though they may be the most difficult ones to answer:

- Did Jesus' adversaries also have noble motives?
- To what extent did Jesus make his motives known, or did Jesus in fact have "a hidden agenda"?
- If Jesus was not a regular human being but God's son, do we have any chance of grasping the true motives of Jesus?

Indeed, this last point of view may have contributed to creating a barrier to other relevant and necessary questions pertaining to Jesus' motives and intentions:

- his vision and wishes;
- his starting point and agenda;
- his preferences and premises;
- his situation, problems and debates among his contemporaries (his "constraints");
- his structure of thought.

#### 2.4. *Seeking a Consistent Methodology*

We should therefore move to give a foundation for a possible new wave of Jesus research, trying to find a more unifying and more consistent methodology. Further research has to integrate many of the insights and premises from both the New Quest and the Third Quest. There are however two common and disputable assumptions in the two quests.

1. The effort of reconstructing a "critical minimum." The research follows two different steps: first reconstructing the authentic sayings, the "critical minimum," then understanding who Jesus is or what he wanted. E. Käsemann and E. P. Sanders, as influential members of the two quests (and many representatives of the Third Quest), aspired to conduct research on an unmitigated historic-scientific foundation in order to sort the undisputable facts about the historical Jesus.

2. The literary approach common to the two "Quests."<sup>55</sup> This is not an approach which starts with the phenomenon of orality. Bultmann's

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<sup>55</sup> R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, eds., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

*Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* was the very foundation for the New Quest as a highly literary approach, although the book was meant to be a form history for oral traditions.<sup>56</sup>

In both the New Quest and the Third Quest the Q-material comes in the first place in the reconstruction of the historical Jesus, and both treat Q as a literary source or rather as literary sources (Q<sup>1</sup>, Q<sup>2</sup>, Q<sup>3</sup>).

In addition there are various problems related to the two quests.

3. The Jewishness of Jesus was neglected in the New Quest, but has in the Third Quest (programmatically for example in E. P. Sanders) been important for the understanding of Jesus. The Jewishness of Jesus has to be a common premise in future research.

4. Consequently one has to give a better list of criteria used in the Jesus research. The main criterion in the New Quest, the criterion of dissimilarity, is correctly avoided in the Third Quest. The Third Quest has, however, neglected a further discussion of this topic.

5. The importance of the *Gospel of Thomas* must reach a higher level of agreement. The *Gospel of Thomas* was neglected in the New Quest and has become very important in the Third Quest, particularly in the “Jesus Seminar” branch of the Third Quest.

6. The very different conclusions about key issues like the evaluation of the apocalyptic teaching of Jesus are a problem for scholars. Can future scholarship give premises and methods which produce less diverse interpretations?

## 2.5. *What about the Criteria of Authenticity?*

There is plenty of material to be found in the gospels at which we shall now take a closer look. First, however, allow me to make a final

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<sup>56</sup> See my extensive investigation in *Theologie und Methode*, 163–165, 180–182, 192–220, 262–303.

Also E. Güttgemanns, *Offene Fragen der Formgeschichtlichen Methode* (Munich: Kaiser, 1970). In his presidential address at the SNTS meeting in Durham 2002, J. D. G. Dunn was re-envisaging the early transmission of the Jesus tradition in “Altering the Default Setting: Re-envisaging the Early Transmission of the Jesus Tradition,” *NTS* 49 (2003): 139–175. He argued for “altering the default setting” of the literary presuppositions, stressing that the Jesus tradition was a living tradition. He assumes five characteristics of oral culture to be relevant also for the transmission of Jesus; 1. Oral performance is different from reading a literary text. 2. Presupposes a performer/story-teller/teacher. 3. Essentially communal in character. 4. Subverts the idea(l) of an “original” version. 5. Oral tradition—a combination of fixity and flexibility, of stability and diversity. It is interesting to compare Dunn’s lecture with H. Riesenfeld’s famous lecture at SNTS in 1957; see *The Gospel Traditions and Its Beginnings: A Study in the Limits of Formgeschichte* (London: Mowbray, 1957). He argued very similarly, but presupposed stronger the rabbinic parallels, and these parallels were thoroughly worked out by B. Gerhardsson in *Memory and Manuscript*, ASNU 22 (Lund: Gleerup, 1964).

methodological remark: While many of the old criteria of authenticity have been abolished, two of these have renewed relevance:

1. The criterion of coherence: All that is repeated in different forms of Jesus' words and, moreover, is illustrated through the acts of Jesus, must be historical.
2. The criterion of consequence: All that explains the emergence of the Jesus tradition, that Jesus is the only teacher, Jesus' death, as well as the emergence of the ancient congregation and the first Christian mission, must be historical.

In other words, research must also consider Jesus' actions when it wishes to say something about the motives and intention of Jesus. Jesus' intention must explain the following:<sup>57</sup>

- Jesus' death (including the motives of other participants, Jews and Romans, for wanting to get rid of Jesus):
- Jesus' actions in the temple, often referred to as the cleansing of the temple, must be explained: Was this a significant deed for Jesus and, if so, why?
- Jesus' meals with various groups, and finally the Last Supper with the ones closest to him parallel with the Jewish Passover meal;
- Jesus' miracles;
- Jesus' extensive teachings;
- Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist;
- Jesus' association with synagogue and temple.

Some researchers will claim that some of these characteristics are unhistorical. Based on the criteria of coherence and consequence, however, they become historically conceivable.

### 3. *Some Suggestions about Jesus' Intentions Based on the Gospel of Mark*

It is possible to start or end up with the Messiah question, as many scholars do who in a limited manner seek to find Jesus' intentions.<sup>58</sup> I think, however, that this question has to function more as a control.

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<sup>57</sup> For this type of argument, see N. A. Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991).

<sup>58</sup> G. Lohfink, *Wie hat Jesus Gemeinde gewollt?* (Freiburg: Herder 1982), has a limited approach, but has many observations relevant to the question of the intention of Jesus.

In the first place we have to find indirect evidence. In order not to let a specific method but rather the argumentation itself direct us, we choose an inductive path. What kind of indications do we find in the Gospel of Mark?

In this article I have to limit myself to putting forward some suggestions (without any deeper argumentation and without any discussion with other scholars)<sup>59</sup> and I have to focus on four observations.

### 3.1. *Agenda Words*

We must start by looking for words expressing Jesus' visions and wishes and in the Gospel of Mark we immediately come across them:

Mark 1:15: καὶ λέγων ὅτι  
Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ·  
μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ

This is immediately followed up by Jesus' call to the first disciples:

Mark 1:17: καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,  
Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου

These agenda-words are seldom labeled as unhistorical (leaving aside the formulation πιστεῦετε ἐν). Most scholars deal of course mostly with the content of these important words. The very fact, however, that Jesus formulated agenda words in which he utters his visions and program, is of particular interest in the present context.

The keyword "God's kingdom" is indeed a very significant feature in Jesus' teaching, and in spite of its openness for different interpretations, the term has a semantic core, which is also the core of Jesus' vision. The semantic core is the following pattern:<sup>60</sup> Here Jesus introduces us to another (apocalyptic/eternal) reality. People are drawn into a kingdom which belongs to God, where God alone is king.

<sup>59</sup> Some aspects are more elaborated in my article "Markus als Volkserzähler," in H. Gehrke, M. Hebler, and H.-W. Stork, eds., *Wandel und Bestand: Festschrift Bernd Jaspert* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1995), 15–32.

<sup>60</sup> Exhaustive analysis is given by B. Chilton, *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom* (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979); M. Hengel and A. Schwemer, eds., *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum und Christentum und in der hellenistischen Welt* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991). For a brief review of my own semantic interpretation: "Basileia tou theou: Jesu Verkündigung vom Reich Gottes," in *Reich Gottes und Kirche*, ed. H. Foerster, Veröffentlichungen der Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg B.12 (Erlangen: Martin-Luther-Verlag, 1988), 15–35.



God's kingdom/the kingdom of heaven is now offered as a gift and, at the same time, is a dynamic power. Jesus' mission was to present the coming of this kingdom, to offer it as a gift, to demonstrate its power through powerful words and deeds. Jesus' power was, however, demonstrated through powerlessness so that the power of love would be victorious.

The agenda words in Mark 1:14–17 correspond to the programmatic words in Mark 8:31–33. Most scholars tend to divide the Gospel of Mark into two main parts and at the beginning of the second part (8:26–28) Mark puts another agenda word:

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected. (Mark 8:31).

The historicity of this logion is disputed, particularly the reference to the resurrection (“after three days rise again”). The extraordinary saying about a suffering of the Son of Man fits, however, into the pattern given in the following agenda word, which (apart from the phrase ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου) is generally recognized as a Jesus-saying:

Mark 8:35: ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσει τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔνεκεν ἐμοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου σώσει αὐτήν.

As in the first part, a main agenda word is accompanied by a call for others to follow his calling. Jesus provides us with a new sense of belonging through the radical call for others to follow.

### 3.2. *The “I”-sayings*

When attempting to grasp Jesus' motives and intention, it is necessary to take a particularly close look at the words through which Jesus according to the gospels implies what he wants. There are, in fact, a substantial number of words directly from Jesus indicating his intention.

In the synoptics alone, for instance, one may find approximately 70 words where Jesus places an emphasis on “I,” and many of these are formulated “I have come to,” “I have been sent to.” In Jesus research, words such as these have received remarkably little attention, in spite of the fact that a number of them are seen as historical even in the very critical tradition criticism.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> E. Arens, *The HΛΘON-Sayings in the Synoptic Tradition: A Historico-Critical Investigation*, OBO 10 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1976). R. Bultmann focused on these words in *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 161–176 (see my critical review in *Theologie und Methode*, 246–248, 271–273, 290).

In Mark two types of “I have come to”-words are to be found:

1. Words indicating that Jesus would preach to and eat with groups or company one would not immediately associate with him:

Mark 1:38: εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ἐξῆλθεν

Mark 2:17: οὐκ ἦλθον καλέσαι δικαίους ἀλλὰ ἁμαρτωλούς

Mark 10:45: καὶ γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἦλθεν διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι καὶ δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν.

The last saying has of course been disputed from a historical perspective, particularly the phrase λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν. The pattern that Jesus sees himself as a servant and powerful preacher, however, appears to be more general, and conveys Jesus’ own intentions.

2. Words marking Jesus’ unity with his disciples:

Mark 9:37: Ὃς ἂν ἔν τῶν τοιούτων παιδίων δέξηται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐμὲ δέχεται· καὶ ὃς ἂν ἐμὲ δέχεται, οὐκ ἐμὲ δέχεται ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀποστείλαντά με.

Similar sayings in Matt 10:40 and Luke 10:16 reflect the other side of the (coined) “follow me” sayings. Jesus identifies himself with the people he calls into discipleship.

Outside the Gospel of Mark we find two other types of “I”- sayings:

- Sayings showing him as a true Jew (Matt 5:17; 15:24)
- Sayings showing his radical demands (Luke 12:49–50; Matt 10:34–36)

The “I”-words in Mark are in effect only an elaboration on what has been called Jesus’ vision. A few contours, however, become even clearer:

- We see a new and unexpected God’s people, a group including publicans and sinners alongside more righteous individuals;
- Jesus turns our judgment scale upside down. The servant becomes the master, the powerless become powerful, the poor get rich, the weak strong.

### 3.3. *Jesus’ Way of Teaching: Challenges and Questions!*

As we know, the Gospel of Mark contains very few speeches and words of Jesus compared to the other evangelists while it, at the same time, more often stresses that Jesus taught and lectured (διδασχῆ, διδάσκειν κηρύσσειν etc. are frequently found in Mark).

However, even though we do not hear much about the content itself, Jesus' form of rhetoric nonetheless becomes clearer. Different areas of the research conducted throughout the past century have fairly stated that the form is essential in the way the content is understood. In the Gospel of Mark, the form is quite clear, and according to Mark two ways of learning (appellatives and questions) are characteristic:

1. *The Challenges, appellatives.* A few examples are found already in the beginning of the Gospel:

Mark 1:15: μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

Mark 1:17: Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.

Mark 1:25: Φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ.

Mark 1:44: Ὅρα μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἶπης, ἀλλὰ ὑπαγε σεαυτὸν δεῖξον τῷ ἱερεῖ καὶ προσένεγκε περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου ἃ προσέταξεν Μωϋσῆς, εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.

I shall halt here, although I could keep going through the entire Gospel of Mark. This form is yet another expression of Jesus' unwillingness to theorize. Jesus wanted to move people. Jesus wanted people to understand what he himself so clearly illustrated: that words and deeds go hand in hand.

2. *The Questions.* Jesus wanted people to question their actions. Thus, he often asked his listeners questions they had to answer:

Mark 2:8: Τί ταῦτα διαλογίζεσθε ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν;

Mark 2:19: Μὴ δύνανται οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ' αὐτῶν ἐστὶν νηστεύειν; ὅσον χρόνον ἔχουσιν τὸν νυμφίον μετ' αὐτῶν οὐ δύνανται νηστεύειν.

Mark 2:25: Οὐδέποτε ἀνέγνωτε τί ἐποίησεν Δαυὶδ ὅτε χρεῖαν ἔσχεν καὶ ἐπέπεισεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ

Mark 3:4: Ἐξεστὶν τοῖς σάββασις ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι; οἱ δὲ ἐσιώπων.

Indeed, we could go on like this up to Jesus' final words, again in the form of a question:

Mark 15:34: Ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθاني; ὅ ἐστιν μεθερμηνεύομενον Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;

A few similarities may actually be found between Jesus and Socrates, for example in the way that they wanted to set people in motion. The way in which people thought had to be set in motion, and Jesus does this by asking simple, yet challenging and key questions. It is not incidental that even the parables of Jesus often end up posing a question.

The challenges and questions are not arbitrary forms. The forms are very much related to his vision statements, the challenges go from and the questions lead to his vision. Many of these questions and appeals will incite an internal revolution. Due to the fact that many appellatives and questions deal with the theme of purity, we can illuminate Jesus' vision of an internal revolution through these sayings.

*Form and content: The concept of purity as an example*

K. Berger<sup>62</sup> and other scholars have in more recent times pointed to the contradiction between, on the one hand, a restrictive and, on the other, an attacking concept of purity. It was easy for a Jew to believe that sacredness and purity come from within. With his attacking concept of purity, Jesus represents something entirely new.

Within this context one must also understand the cleansing of the temple. Jesus asks (Mark 11:17): "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? (But you have made it a den of robbers)."

There are many ways in which this event may be understood:<sup>63</sup>

Zealotic	Priestly	Restorational	Prophetic	Christological
Protest against those who cooperate with Romans	Renewal of the old cult	Condemnation of the present cult and appeal for an eschatological renewal	Call for repentance and opening up for new people	Replace the temple and its cult with his atonement

The event itself is not intelligible and Jesus does not at this point explicitly provide us with any clues as to his vision. However, when examined in a correlation with Jesus' words and deeds, only the last three interpretations are relevant. From the perspective of the attacking concept of purity, on other hand, the last two appear the most conceivable.

### 3.4. *The Theocentric Orientation*

Did Jesus have personal ambitions, did he have underlying human intentions (political, social, religious), or did he not want to follow

<sup>62</sup> "Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer," *NovT* 30 (1988): 231–262.

<sup>63</sup> All five interpretations have a long history. E. P. Sanders has, however, in his recent books renewed the restoration theory, whereas J. Ådna in his book, *Jesu Kritik am Tempel: Eine Untersuchung zum Verlauf und Sinn der sogenannten Tempelreinigung Jesu, Markus 11, 15–17 und Parallelen*, WUNT 2.119 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 376–432, has given the christological interpretation a new foundation.

God's will? The fact that the contradiction God-human plays a key role in the Gospel of Mark has been given far too little attention,<sup>64</sup> and we need an extensive exegetical investigation of at least three types of sayings:

- Sayings of Jesus, in which he stresses that God's will is the sum and substance:

Mark 3:35: ὃς ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, οὗτος ἀδελφός μου καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν.

- Sayings about Jesus' agenda that correspond to God's will:

Mark 14:36: Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will (οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ).

Mark 15:34: ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, Ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθاني; ὁ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με; (also Mark 12:14).

- Sayings about the difference between God's will and the will of human beings:

Mark 8:32: He rebuked Peter: "Get behind me Satan", he said, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων

Mark 9:31: Ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων

The Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus' intention was to fulfill God's will and plan. This happens even though other individuals had completely different motives.

The listed features are clearly typical for the Gospel of Mark. However, all three synoptic gospels have the same features, but not as predominantly as in Mark. Matthew and Luke convey the traditions from Mark, but in the material that is peculiar to Matthew and Luke, we have fewer occurrences of the listed characteristics.

A "multiple attestation" does not necessarily prove that the features are historical. But even if we use Bultmann's critical view of the tradition as an "Occam's razor," most of the instances mentioned here are perceived to be historical. Bultmann evaluates seven of the "I-words" as historical.<sup>65</sup> This strengthens my argument in this article that the intention of Jesus can be reconstructed, and the question about what

<sup>64</sup> John R. Donahue, "A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark", *JBL* 101 (1982) 363–394.

<sup>65</sup> *Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition*, 164–168, and my analysis—also of Bultmann's growing skepticism, in *Theologie und Methode*, 246 ff.

Jesus really wanted can in light of recent research and with a better methodology be given a clear answer.

#### 4. *Conclusion: The Need for a 'Fourth Quest'*

The history of Jesus research shows that every new wave levels out and the scholarly effort reaches certain impasses. The "Third Quest" is definitely at this stage, and needs to be replaced by a "Fourth Quest." I have attempted to outline this fourth path in Jesus research. The article has endeavoured to argue the following:

- That it is both possible and of scholarly importance to search for Jesus' motive and intention;
- That a revised methodological foundation is needed;
- That a cluster of forms and contents give us an obvious pattern of thought, which is the very core of Jesus' intention;
- That Jesus research thus far has not come far enough on this point and a broad effort in a "Fourth Quest" movement can move Jesus research into a new path.

This research can be based on the following principles:

- Using methods which are not specific to New Testament scholarship but in common with methods used in general history;
- having a methodology for investigating motives;
- emphasizing the criteria of consequence and consistency;
- emphasizing the Jewishness of Jesus in a Hellenistic environment;
- using archaeology and
- combining social anthropology, sociology, narrative analysis and rhetorical criticism;
- using both Mark and Q as primary sources;
- focusing on the intentions and the vision of Jesus.

Based on these principles Jesus research will concentrate on Jesus' focus, his program and vision, which he accomplished in both words and deeds. Through this way of questioning, the "Fourth Quest" might give us not only a new wave, but a new era in Jesus research.

## THE SEARCH FOR JESUS' SPECIAL PROFILE

JÜRGEN BECKER

### 1. *The Problem*

In a strictly private and anonymous manner, on the basis of rationalistic theology, a professor in Hamburg began to share the first *Leben Jesu* with a limited circle of readers. After the author's death, G. E. Lessing published his posthumous papers, without however revealing his name; a century passed before D. F. Strauß identified the unknown scholar as H. S. Reimarus. Reimarus could have no idea of the impact his observations *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger* ("On the goal of Jesus and of his disciples") would make. From this modest rivulet, a mighty stream has grown by stages, becoming ever more diversified, especially in the last generation, so that today there is no continent, (almost) no religion, no Christian denomination or confession, no important cultural or societal trend, and no professional group producing academic literature, poetry, music, or films, which is not involved in this undertaking. It is impossible for one single person to have an overview of this staggering plurality.

Many presentations of Jesus discuss the methodological path that their authors have taken, and this essay will focus exclusively on this aspect. When we look for innovative statements in the contemporary scene, it is natural to turn to the authors who belong to the so-called "Third Quest."<sup>1</sup> The dynamism in this most recent trend in the historical investigation of the life of Jesus has given a new impetus to pluralism, but it has also taken over a number of epicenters of discussion, including the following:

*First, the study of new sources and the extension of the field of research, e.g. by taking into account the agrapha and those gospels which have become apocryphal, the texts found at Qumran and Nag Hammadi, the archaeological discoveries in the Mediterranean area (including epigraphical texts), and the history of the territory of Galilee and Judea.*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the overviews in Cilliers Breytenbach, "Jesusforschung: 1990–1995," *BThZ* 12 (1995): 226–249; Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994); and Mark A. Powell, *How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

*Secondly, new methodological approaches*, e.g. the discussion of the gospels from the viewpoint of literary history, which studies the stages of development in various directions; investigations of the structure of ancient societies from the perspective of social and cultural history, including cultural anthropology and similar specific fields; and a discussion of the criteria to be applied in the search for the oldest material about Jesus and in making differentiations within this material.

*Thirdly, the new evaluation of traditional problems*, e.g. the relationship between written texts and orality; the investigation of Q; the option in favor of a Jewish understanding of Jesus; and the (frequent) detachment of research into Jesus from the history of Christianity.

*Fourthly, a perspective on Jesus suggested by contemporary questions*, e.g. feminism, gender research, and the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

This overview indicates where the methodological focal points lie. We shall now look at the most important of these.

## 2. *The Sources*

Like the Baptist and other early Jewish prophets, Jesus and his circle of disciples worked in a non-literary context, and this is why we have no written testimony from Jesus or his circle comparable to that which we possess for Josephus or Philo, the Teacher of Righteousness, or Bar Kochba. According to Luke 4:16–30, Jesus could read; but this probably reproduces Luke's own view, since it is he who elaborates Mark 6:1–6 here and introduces this motif. Luke relates that Jesus was handed a scroll of Isaiah in the *synagogue*. At any rate, the way in which early Judaism treated the Hebrew Bible excludes the possibility that Jesus and his circle had parts of the Bible in their private possession and carried these texts around with them. This means that Jesus' knowledge of the Bible is the work of his memory; it does not involve literary quotation. Nor did the disciples of Jesus express themselves in literature (cf. Acts 4:13). Attempts to claim them as authors must be judged unsuccessful: when the headings of early Christian literature present names from the group of Twelve, these attributions are intended to guarantee the authority of the works in question. They tell us nothing about the authorship. In other words, Jesus lived with his disciples in an *oral culture*.

This accords with the observation that the narrative sections in the gospel literature do not have the style of first-person or eyewitness accounts, but are expressed in the way that those who are not themselves



eyewitnesses draw up an account and tell this to others. This is not the case with the transmission of logia in the gospels. Here, we frequently find the first-person style, with Jesus as the speaker, and this makes it more likely that we can come close to Jesus' own words here, even if we encounter problems when we seek to test this possibility—since it is clear that even the transmission of logia, no matter how stable this may have been in individual cases, is embedded in literature which is chronologically and personally remote from Jesus' activities (which for the authors of this literature belong to the past).

What testimony do we in fact possess when we study Jesus? We find *Roman information* after 100 CE in Pliny the Younger, Tacitus, and Suetonius. They tell us very little about Jesus: they inform us that he lived, when he lived, and where he lived, and that he was executed under Pilate.

The *Jewish literature* is likewise unhelpful for our task: the two passages in Josephus (*Ant.* 18.63–64; 20.200) are disputed,<sup>2</sup> and are probably Christian interpolations. At any rate, the more important passage, in *Ant.* 18, can be ascribed to Josephus only if one excises the Christian clauses. The only argument in favor of doing so is their Christian character; but since the passage is otherwise syntactically smooth and well structured, this is not the best of arguments. Nor do we have any early rabbinic statements about Jesus from the Tannaitic period.<sup>3</sup> In sum, this is a meager harvest.

The historian is thus compelled to rely exclusively on the *Christian testimonies*. Since the biblical canon cannot function as a limitation on historical research, we must in principle take heed of:

1. the four canonical gospels;
2. the gospels which later became apocryphal;<sup>4</sup>
3. the transmission of individual scattered traditions about Jesus from various sources;<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 1988): 90–102; Dieter Sänger, "Auf Betreiben der Vornehmsten unseres Volkes," in *Das Urchristentum in seiner literarischen Geschichte: Festschrift Jürgen Becker*, ed. Ulrich Mell and Ulrich B. Müller (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 1–25.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung*, EdF 82 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> Dieter Lührmann, *Fragmente apokryph gewordenen Evangelien*, MThSt 59 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Including some additions in manuscripts of the canonical gospels, e.g., after Luke 6:4 and John 7:53–55.

4. individual pieces of information in early Christian writings apart from the gospels.<sup>6</sup>

This sequence indicates their relative importance. Point 4 refers to a small quantity of data which the gospels in point 1 can confirm in some instances. Although the number of traditions under point 3 is extensive, a closer examination shows that only a few merit serious consideration when an historical methodology is applied to the study of Jesus. One who ignores these traditions will not be overlooking any otherwise unknown aspect of the figure of Jesus.

This is not the case with point 2. It is regrettably true that, with the exception of the Nag Hammadi texts, these gospels are fragmentary and hence hard to date. It is particularly difficult to get a sufficiently clear picture of the concept which guides their presentation; at most, one can attempt a vague estimate of the processes of reception, e.g. of texts from point 1. This is why many scholars are right to criticize the high evaluation and early dating which have been proposed by J. D. Crossan.<sup>7</sup> Things are different with the gospels discovered at Nag Hammadi, since the favorable conditions of transmission offer a better basis for an interpretation.

This is particularly true of the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>8</sup> Here too, however, the arguments in favor of an early dating are weak, since it ought to be possible for scholars to agree that the final stage of the tradition and the final redaction have an ascetic, early gnostic character and that the synoptic influence is obvious in some passages. This means that the *Gospel of Thomas* in its present form must be dated to the period after the synoptics were written. The autonomous arrangement of the logia makes it clear that the *Gospel of Thomas* cannot have borrowed its structure from the synoptics, but is independent of them. An examination of the individual logia and the smaller groups of logia shows that they too in general bear witness to an independent history of reception, but the question how far this development

<sup>6</sup> I.e., information which is not influenced by the canonical gospels, e.g., Acts 2:36; 3:13; 18:25; Rom 1:3; 1 Cor 1:13, 17–18; 11:23–25; 1 Thess 2:14–15; 1 Tim 6:13; Rev 11:8.

<sup>7</sup> John D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), with an overview of scholarship on pp. 122–124. Cf. also Christopher Tuckett, "Thomas and the Synoptics," *NovT* 30 (1988): 132–157; Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 75–128; Risto Uro, ed., *Thomas at the Crossroads: Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

reaches back into the history of Christianity is a matter of vigorous controversy. It can only be discussed on the basis of individual instances. We can sum up the discussion as follows: there has been no scholarly consensus about attributing to Jesus any logion in the *Gospel of Thomas* which offers material not found in the synoptics, since such an attribution is possible only via a series of hypothetical arguments. There is a greater likelihood of success in the case of some parallels to the synoptics, where one can discuss whether the better version survived in particular formulations, sentence structures, or omissions in the *Gospel of Thomas*—but such examples are not numerous, and the substantial results for the reconstruction of Jesus' preaching are modest. There is no instance in which entire groups of logia from the *Gospel of Thomas* could be made the starting point of an account of the preaching of Jesus. This means that the *Gospel of Thomas* will not play a primary role in our discussion of methodology.

This leaves us with the texts under point 1 as the basis for our investigation. In this group, *John* has a position apart, since it offers a type of proclamation which is fundamentally different from that of the synoptics. The Johannine perspective is incompatible with the synoptics, since the one who is sent, who comes from the Father and returns to him, makes himself the subject of his own proclamation in a dualistic world and (with the exception of John 3:3,5) ignores the entire proclamation of the synoptic Jesus, who said that he brought the realization of the rule of God. Since *John* is the Gospel with the most highly developed christology, we must decide in favor of the synoptics. This position has been broadly accepted since H. J. Holtzmann. Some breaches in the dam have been made recently,<sup>9</sup> but the choice is ineluctable: either Jesus spoke logia such as John 6:35; 10:30; 11:25–26; and 14:2–3, 6, which are embedded in the christology of the one sent by the Father, or else (as in the synoptics) he interpreted and brought about the reign of God.

It is difficult to explain the genesis of the special development in the Johannine circle, but we must assume that such a development took place, since all the recognizable traditions about Jesus outside the canonical gospels, where these can be dated to the first two generations of earliest Christianity, accord with the synoptic type of logia, whether they are given a literary form (as in Paul) or can be traced back to this period (e.g. Jas 5:12 = Matt 5:33–34.). How are we then to explain the Johannine phenomenon? This must be connected with the understanding

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<sup>9</sup> Klaus Berger, "Kriterien für echte Jesusworte," *ZNT* 1 (1998): 52–58.

of the Spirit that is expressed in John 14:16–25, i.e. with the emphasis on the immediacy of the Son in the Spirit. The other Christian groups took a different path. They too believed that the Spirit was the voice of Christ, who gave the communities the ability to bring the Jesus tradition up to date and to give this a new form; but the link to the historical Jesus remained much more stable.

In addition to a small number of parallels to the synoptics, John's transmission of the words of Jesus also includes narrative parts which are similar to the synoptics. Here—especially in the tradition about John the Baptist, in some miracle stories, and in the passion narrative—we find information which may possibly correct the synoptic accounts; at the very least, these cases must be discussed. Nevertheless, it remains true that one who wishes to see the basis which makes it possible to approach the activity of Jesus will choose the *synoptics*.

These are not mutually isolated, independent witnesses. The well known *two-source theory* remains the best account of their interdependence.<sup>10</sup> This affirms that Mark is the first gospel, most of which was taken over by Matthew and Luke, who retained the sequence of Mark's narrative. They also integrated in independent and various ways the so-called logia source (Q, for the German word *Quelle*) into their own narratives, once again respecting its sequence; each evangelist also integrated special material into his concept. The two-source theory does not resolve all the problems, but we can come to terms with some of these if we assume that Matthew and Luke found their pre-texts in somewhat different forms. Without going into details here, I note that the other attempts to explain the close relationships between the synoptic gospels have not achieved a consensus, and that they have created more problems than they solved.

This limits the group of texts which constitute the basis for historical research into Jesus to Mark, Q, and the special material in Matthew and Luke, as well as some pieces of information in John. The next step must be to give a more precise description of Mark and Q, because it is these texts which decide the “window” we use when we look at Jesus.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed., 1996), 200–214.

### 3. *The Activity of Jesus as the Event which Initiates the End-Time*

Until the European Enlightenment, it was universally accepted that, apart from a few uncertain details which were in any case insignificant, the gospels presented the facts about Jesus' life. The Enlightenment prompted a controversial debate about the extent to which the criticism of dogma must also be applied to the gospels. Must one not subject the early Christian sources themselves to a critical inquiry? One result of this discussion (which continues even today) is that we must clarify methodologically the specific manner in which the gospels relate history.

In their discussion of this question, scholars concentrate on Mark, where they try out recent theories about the nature of history and concepts drawn from the contemporary theory of literature. So many varieties of this kind of investigation flourish today that some have felt the need to point out its problematic aspects.<sup>11</sup> One cannot object to a discussion of methodologies *per se*, but one must ask whether these new methodologies actually take us anywhere. And we are in fact entitled to doubt this, since often all that these theses do is to select a new understanding of history or a new literary theory with its conceptual roots in today's culture as a means of approaching ancient texts, without recognizing the inherent problem: viz. that the culture of classical antiquity was based on different principles. One who does this reduces the ancient texts to mere instances for the application of the modern theory *x*. And this proceeding scarcely differs from the rationalism of the past which submitted the miracles in the gospels to the court of its own understanding of reason, and did not bother to examine the presuppositions on which the understanding of reality was based in classical antiquity.

Let me give two examples of this procedure. The gospels present an understanding of history which sees a person, who is described in numinous terms, bringing about the last days and continuing to determine this epoch. On such a view of reality, the reign of God which comes into being through Jesus is not merely a way of living in the immediate present, i.e. a plan for society. It determines God's eschatological relationship to the world, which results in a reordering of the world. One who understands this theological complex only as the dream of an individual,

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<sup>11</sup> Andreas Lindemann, "Exegese für Theologie und Kirche," in *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, UTB 2475 (Tübingen: A. Francke, 2003), 64–71, at 69.

and then dismisses it as irrelevant (because reality can be defined only in societal terms),<sup>12</sup> no longer allows the texts to say what they want to say. We must deal with this foreignness of the texts in such a way that they are described correctly and are then treated as contributions to a discussion of the understanding of reality.

Similarly, most modern theories about literature take for granted an understanding of authorship, of the mode of production, and the manner of reception which is common in the study of texts today; but the ancient world did not share this understanding. For example, contemporary theories are based on the following approach: *one* author creates a *new and homogeneous* text, and *individual* recipients everywhere in the world *read* this text by discovering its unified textual genres, its plots, and its many internal relationships through the act of reading (which may be repeated if necessary). In classical antiquity, however, in addition to the never very numerous group of writers and those with a literary education, there also existed the widespread phenomenon of many-layered texts which came into being through the reinterpretation of individual traditions, of collections, or of texts which had taken on a literary form, so that these became “sources.” These were given new literary contextualizations in a new, larger text—but not even this text was regarded as sacrosanct. Its appearance could be changed by means of additions and revisions. I have already mentioned that Q circulated in various versions. Mark too was still open for revisions, as is indicated by the minor agreements and the material found only in Mark. The canon of the prophets and early Jewish literature offer many examples of this kind of textualization. This is how traditions take on a written form. Texts grow in a variety of ways within a community, and they belong to this community as a whole. The authors and revisers withdraw into anonymity. In principle, one who accepts the two-source theory includes the synoptic gospels in this literary category, despite the fortunate circumstance that they are the product of a far less complex history than for example the Book of Isaiah, and that their authors, especially Luke, are in fact very similar to “authors” in the classical sense. Recipients such as the Christian communities “overlook” or dismiss as irrelevant those signs of literary growth which remain. Nor do they have an overview of the lengthy texts in their totality, since they usually hear (and seldom

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Crossan, *Jesus*.

themselves read) selected parts of a work—and they do not read these with the eyes of modern literary critics, but perceive them as a substantial strengthening of their own faith-convictions.<sup>13</sup> Authors (or groups of authors) who are aware of this will not write in the same way as Umberto Eco. These are indicators of another different understanding of texts than that found in the modern period. However, exegetes who apply modern textual theories often fail to interpret texts on the basis of the ancient understanding of texts, and to reflect on the cultural difference between then and now.

Let us now come to *Mark* itself! *Mark* is a narrative text,<sup>14</sup> with one single person at its center. Does this make *Mark* a biography in the ancient sense? If one answers in the affirmative, the historical value of *Mark* must be discussed on the analogy of the ancient biographies. However, biographical elements on their own do not automatically make the gospel one sort of biography. Scarcely anyone today would deny that the gospels contain (popular) biographical traits,<sup>15</sup> but *Mark* is not simply telling the story of a figure who can be set alongside other outstanding persons in world history: He is telling the story of a figure who is absolutely exceptional, since Jesus occupies an exceptional christological position (*Mark* 1:1; 14:62–63). His appearing on the scene is due to the divine plan and promise (1:2–3), and this event is eschatological, because it brings about the irruption of God's eschatological reign. This divine sovereignty is established definitively by means of the expulsion of demons, healing, the forgiveness of sins, and meals eaten in common (1:14–15). This establishes a caesura vis-à-vis the past; and for all future time, this Son of God with his activity remains the central figure of

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<sup>13</sup> On this, cf. Jürgen Becker, "Das vierte Evangelium und die Frage nach seinen externen und internen Quellen," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Ismo Dunderberg et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 203–241, at 234–236.

<sup>14</sup> On recent research into narrative, cf. the overview by Katrin Zuschlag, *Narrativik und literarisches Übersetzen* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr, 2002), 9–108.

<sup>15</sup> On the discussion, cf. Albrecht Dihle, "Die Evangelien und die biographische Tradition der Antike," *ZThK* 80 (1983): 33–49; Ferdinand Hahn, ed., *Die Erzähler des Evangeliums*, SBS 118/119 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985); Dirk Flickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, TANZ 22 (Tübingen: Francke, 1997); Detlev Dormeyer, *Das Markusevangelium als Idealbiographie von Jesus Christus, dem Nazarener*, SBS 43 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999); Reinhard von Bendemann, *Zwischen Doxa und Stauros*, BZNW 101 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 354–356, with further bibliography; Paul-Gerhard Klumbies, *Der Mythos bei Markus*, BZNW 108 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002); Michael E. Vines, *The Problem of Markan Genre*, SBLAB 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

the end-time, thanks to his glorification by God (13:14–16; 14:62–63). Within the end-time, he calls together the group of disciples through whom the foundation of the community is prepared. He lays down norms for the path that the community's life is to take in the end-time (Mark 7; 12). We may call this christological concept the *event which initiates the end-time*. It goes far beyond the *bios* of an ordinary human person, for the point of this concept is precisely to demonstrate the absolute exclusiveness of this figure. The notion of a christological event which initiates the end-time has its presuppositions in classical antiquity in the Greek idea of an *arkhê*, viz. an event in primal time which is handed on as a mythical narrative which manifests contemporary reality.<sup>16</sup> The conviction is that what happened before time began is present again and again as that which allows the present-day world and history to come into being. Obviously, the history of Jesus is not an event in primal time which would generate mythical interpretations, and it is also true that the Hellenistic-Roman world no longer lived directly in the sphere of myth. But it was precisely this that made it possible to employ the interpretative power of mythical thinking in another way, in order to interpret reality.

Vergil's fourth *Eclogue* offers an illustrative example of how *contemporary* history is understood as *arkhê*. In this encomium of the ruler, Vergil describes how, at the imminent birth of a child, a scion sent forth from the heights of heaven will enter into contemporary history. He is announced beforehand by the Sibyl. His appearing makes the age of the world the golden age, i.e. the end-time in which the whole of reality will be changed for the better. His dominion brings definitive peace to the world. Let us prescind from the question whether Vergil is indulging in poetic exaggeration here; all that matters is the observation that if we examine the form which Vergil and Mark give to what they have to say, we find that their interpretation of reality is structured in the same way. In order to show how one particular event signifies a fundamental transformation of the world, the present (or a very recent past) is interpreted as the story of a beginning which is to leave its mark on the future. Because of the similar understanding of reality, the Middle Ages saw Vergil as the pagan prophet who had foretold the birth of Jesus.

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<sup>16</sup> On this, cf. Kurt Hübner, *Die Wahrheit des Mythos* (München: C. H. Beck, 1985), 135–137. On the fundamental questions involved here, cf. Klumbies, *Mythos*, whose methods and exegeses have however prompted much criticism.



In Vergil, this interpretation is the poetically exaggerated expectation of a son who will be born to the ruler. In the case of Mark, however, one cannot simply say that he has evaluated Jesus in this way only *post eventum*, nor that he employs the style appropriate to an exaggerated encomium, since all he does, in harmony with earliest Christianity, is to develop post-Easter elements that are basically presented by Jesus himself.<sup>17</sup> The tradition of Jesus' logia shows in an impressive manner that he understood his activity on behalf of God's sovereignty as a constitutive condition for the inauguration of the end-time (Luke 11:20), and that this activity meant a caesura vis-à-vis all previous history (Matt 11:11; 13:16–17). Ancient expectations were now being fulfilled (Matt 11:4–6). The harvest that will pass over into the definitive state of salvation is the fruit of his activity (Mark 4:26–32), and it is his will that establishes the norms for life under the eschatological rule of God (Matt 5:44–45). In other words, there is a decisively important continuity between Jesus and the post-Easter community.

The thesis sketched in the previous paragraph would certainly repay elaboration, but all we can do here is to ask how Mark tells the story of Jesus from this perspective. In principle, all Christians after Easter were absolutely convinced that Jesus' public ministry had been carried out in the radiant light of the events which had just taken place. This means that no account of this history, which centers on one single person, can omit the biographical dimension of Jesus' life; accordingly, many narrative conventions of classical antiquity are represented in the gospels. However, the gospels contain more than this. It is impossible to tell this story without understanding the life of Jesus as an *arkhê*, an event which constitutes an origin, and this dimension demands to be taken into due account in the presentation of "the events which have happened" (cf. Luke 1:1). Mark is therefore under a double obligation in his interpretation of the figure of Jesus, viz. the biographical perspective and the perspective of the *arkhê*. Both of these together ensure that an account is given of the salvific eschatological presence of God in the historical reality of Jesus. Both of these together are the Gospel, viz. a narrative, with a biographical orientation, of the christological origin of the end-time.

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<sup>17</sup> I have set this out in greater detail in my book *Jesus von Nazaret*, de Gruyter Lehrbuch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 21–36.

We can now go on to clarify how Mark (and earliest Christianity as a whole) forms, transmits, and *contextualizes* traditions about Jesus from this perspective. As a general rule, we may say that the interesting point is not precisely when or where, in what particular circumstances or with what intentions Jesus did something or other. In this area, we tend to find a conventional mode of narration which concentrates on the typical features of events. This can be seen very clearly in the miracle stories, where chronological dates or indications are often either lacking or imprecise. Geographical information is less concrete than in Josephus; often, one looks for it in vain. No evangelist gives us an itinerary that makes sense.<sup>18</sup> There is only a small quantity of circumstantial data that could scarcely have been invented. The formalizing tendency means that one must be very cautious about attributing an historical value to the brief information about the “setting” of scenes. In far too many cases, we learn little about the persons involved: the enemies of Jesus are simply there, a group which acts like a single person, and the disciples are frequently mere “extras,” an undifferentiated unit. Even in the case of Jesus, the protagonist of the story, it is often assumed that everyone knows who he is and why he appears in a particular scene. And all this means that those elements in the gospels which we include under the heading of “the biographical dimension” are not to be simply equated with the historical activity of Jesus.

The important aspect is rather the *future* of Jesus’ activity, i.e. those elements in his activity which became constitutive of the end-time: to what extent is he the central figure of the end-time? This is why the gospels concentrate on his words and deeds *ad extra*, rather than on his private sphere, and on the striking events rather than on the things he did every day. His character, his consciousness, or his hidden ponderings are unimportant. All that is related is the view from outside. We see his dealings with other people in the public sphere.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nor do we find in Q the idea that Jesus’ path to Jerusalem was already planned. It is only Mark and John who offer competing information about this; but both already presuppose the knowledge of Jesus’ death.

<sup>19</sup> The question posed by Ulrich Luz, “Warum zog Jesus nach Jerusalem?” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 408–427, moves on terrain on which I cannot erect any hypothetical constructions. I too would love to know the answer to his question, but the knowledge provided by our sources gives no answers here: it leaves us only with questions.

All that is of interest is the *total outcome* of his public life, and this is why one will look in vain for any development in Jesus during his ministry. With his baptism, he is fully “the Son of God,” and only this total view is significant. We should also note that Mark, Q, and John are completely uninterested in his life before this event; and although Matthew and Luke relate infancy narratives, they do not cover the gap between the small child and the adult man. Besides this, Matt 1–2 and Luke 1–2 are legends which arose at a late date and contribute nothing to an historical consideration of Jesus.<sup>20</sup> The collective memory of the communities knew nothing about the childhood and youth of Jesus, and even for the period between his baptism and death all we can do is to trace the total perspective in such a way that we see the typical, recurrent aspects of his activity (miracles, table fellowship, an itinerant life with the Twelve) and read his words in the “static totality” of a “systematization.” The only access to Jesus for the historian lies on the path dictated by this perspective; but the historian can lend greater clarity to what he or she sees here through knowledge of Jewish and Hellenistic history, society, culture, and religion. This is why the investigation of this terrain has such great potential. It is indeed absolutely essential. And this means that the historian knows much more about Jesus than we can ever learn about many other figures of classical antiquity.

The earliest Christians, guided by their culture, imposed a structure on Jesus' activity by means of two headwords: what Jesus “did” and what he “said” (Luke 24:19; Acts 1:1; John 15:22). The activities of a person are arranged under the headings of his *actions* and his *words*, as we see in the praise of the fathers Moses, Nathan, Solomon, Elijah, and Elisha (Sir 44–46.). Using this distinction, one can vary the emphasis: now the one aspect, now the other. Whereas Mark gives a privileged place to Jesus' actions, Matthew and Luke (as well as John) place the primary accent on his words. This emphasis is related to the goal which the author chooses for his narrative—it does not entail a theological devaluing of the other aspect. This is not the case with the *Gospel of Thomas*, however, which places such a consistent emphasis on the perennially valid contents of the words of Jesus that even implicit indications of time and place and historical reminiscences of Jesus' activity are eliminated.

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<sup>20</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Maria: Mutter Jesu und erwählte Jungfrau*, BG 4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 94–196.

This gospel goes to work methodically: now, the historical place of Jesus is accidental and unimportant.<sup>21</sup>

The situation in Q is different again. Like Mark, Q begins with a biographical introduction to Jesus' appearance in the public sphere, and then concentrates on the tradition of logia, which however speak so distinctly of Jesus' deeds and the end of his life that it is only by means of these that we can describe the connection of the rule of God with Jesus' thaumaturgic actions and his table fellowship. There is one other striking difference vis-à-vis Mark: Q speaks only indirectly of Jesus' death (Q 11:47–52; 13:34–35) and exaltation (11:29–30; 12:8–9). Instead of Mark's tripartite division of the public activity of Jesus (initially with the Baptist; Jesus' activity in Galilee; the trial and death in Jerusalem), Q has a twofold structure (the narrative initial event; the public preaching) in which the Baptist's discourse about judgment at the beginning forms an *inclusio* with Jesus' discourse about judgment at the end. Q's concept is thus independent of Mark's.

The appearance of the Baptist at the beginning of Q is more than just a customary biographical introduction. It is also intended to be read as a christological event which inaugurates the end-time, since John is the forerunner (Q 7:27), and that which is new posits a breach between John and Jesus (7:29; 10:23–24). The past and the time of Jesus are related to one another as the time of promise and the time of fulfillment (7:22–25), and this means that Jesus' activity is constitutive of the end-time. Q thus constructs its christology on the same basis as Mark. Although Q gives preference to the tradition of Jesus' words, since it intends to present the missionaries to Israel with their code of conduct and their preaching as an authoritative directive from Jesus, it remains oriented to the activity of Jesus as a whole, and makes no move (unlike the *Gospel of Thomas*) to detach Jesus from his own specific history.

What I have said here about Mark and Q can be applied to the other gospels too. They all intend to describe the history of the beginning of the end-time by relating the significance of this event as something that constitutes the future. This gives us a double advantage, which is not to be underestimated, when we attempt to investigate the historical reality of Jesus. *First*, we are not dependent on one single source, but can assem-

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<sup>21</sup> On the differences between Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*, cf. Schröter, *Erinnerung*, 459–486.

ble from several texts the knowledge about Jesus which was preserved in the early Christian communities. If we had to reconstruct Jesus' activity with the aid of Mark alone, the picture would be much more meager than in our present situation, where we have Q, Mark, and the material found only in Matthew and Luke. *Secondly*, we can compare and evaluate the autonomous material in these textual strata. For example, we can assess the limitations of the way in which each source looks at Jesus; we can uncover the processes of reinterpretation and contextualization in the various ways in which the same material is treated, and even transfer these insights to material to which we have no parallels. By means of comparisons, we can shed light in many cases on the options which govern the reception of the tradition in the texts, thereby distinguishing between the interpretation and the antecedent material which is interpreted. This means that we know more, both quantitatively and qualitatively, than one single source offers us. Naturally, even such comparisons do not allow us to ask meaningfully how Jesus "really" was. But if we can set up a conversation between the texts, we can differentiate within the ensemble of our sources and attempt with good reason to come closer to the historical Jesus.

Up to this point, we have discussed the historian's approach to Jesus on the basis of the literary texts which were composed more than one generation after Jesus. The question is whether the historian must be content with this constellation. Is it possible with the aid of form and tradition criticism to shed light on the period between the death of Jesus and the composition of Q and Mark? This brings us to a central problem in today's scholarly discussion.

#### 4. *The Oral Phase of the Tradition*

The form-historical method of Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann won virtually complete acceptance in Germany, and spread (with some modifications) to other countries too. In recent years, exegetes have discussed three areas which suggest a rethinking.

1. The inherent presuppositions of the form-historical method are often criticized, with the intention of calling into question this method as such.
2. Text-linguistic and literary-historical methods propagate an approach which looks at the text in its present form and function;

questions of its origin are declared irrelevant or impossible to determine. Indeed, such questions are sometimes explicitly forbidden.

3. It is claimed that ethnological investigations of oral traditions arrive at different conclusions from those assumed by form criticism. It is alleged that oral tradition is so fluid that it can no longer be perceived as a stable tradition, and this means that it can no longer be investigated as a process of interpretation.

In the *first case*, the questions concentrate on the connection of the fixed form with its social function (the *Sitz im Leben*) and on the intention to reconstruct as far as possible a *pure original form* from the tradition. Let me only remark here that many genres have in fact either no special *Sitz im Leben*, or more than one, since they are used in a multi-functional way. It is also correct to point out, with regard to the synoptic tradition, that scholars often reached the “pure” original form only by declaring on insufficient grounds that particular elements in the text entered it at a later date. Mixed forms and broken-off forms do not *per se* entitle us to engage in decomposition. They can have a charm of their own, and we often find them in literary and oral contexts. Besides this, these two criticisms are an invitation to improve form criticism. They do not pose a fundamental question mark against it, for here too the classic rule applies: *abusus non tollit usum*.

In the *second case*, we have the new methodologies which understand the work of an author *synchronically* and *in a manner immanent to the work itself*, and which seek to define the relationship between author and reader synchronically. Here, the diachronic provenance of the texts is declared unimportant; the very question may be dismissed as meaningless. *First*, however, it is worth asking whether the alternative between synchronic and diachronic may not distract from the gain in methodological understanding which these methodologies provide; certainly, one is led to doubt the benefits of these new approaches when one sees how much energy is spent on the construction of hypotheses which apply a synchronic perspective to smooth out those difficult points in the text which had led earlier scholars to conduct diachronic investigations. The sober verdict must be that synchronic and diachronic exegesis must accept each other’s objections—for otherwise, too many hypotheses must be constructed, and surely no one wishes to build towers of hypotheses reaching up to heaven merely for the sake of an exegetical principle. Just as synchronic work on the text tends to declare everything that disturbs coherence as a clever arrangement by the

author, so diachronic analysis tends to take everything that disturbs a smooth text as an invitation to a diachronic analysis. Checks and balances from the other approach can minimize the inherent tendencies here. *Secondly*, the synchronic and diachronic procedures both employ the same investigative path, in epistemological terms; it is only the specific questions that differ. The diachronic question looks for the traditions and sources which are implicit in the text, while the synchronic question looks for the implicit author and his readers. Neither implication is prompted directly by the text; neither implication exists independently of the text. Rather, they are extrapolated by a hypothetical calculation. Those who follow the same procedure ought in fact to cooperate with each other. *Thirdly*, the sheer variety of synchronic methodologies and results, which is increasing all the time, is itself a corrective to the high assessment of the potential of these methodologies to yield results. The relativities of the old methodologies no longer look quite so faded. And this makes it possible to live in a common relativity and a complementary coexistence.

This is all the more important, because early Christian authors and recipients were not ahistorical monads who were linked to each other only once, by means of one synchronous moment of communication. Mark and his communities belong together in a communicative fellowship which had already existed for a long time, and both share in the collective knowledge about Jesus. Mark makes a selection from this knowledge and writes his Gospel as a new interpretation of Jesus. The community understands this text by comparing the substance and manner of Mark's work with its own knowledge, thereby experiencing both well known matter in a new narrative form and new matter. Naturally, the example of Mark can be applied to all the gospels. Let us imagine that Q was known to the Matthean community, because this concept had been used in missionary work among this group. The community will react to Matthew by noticing how this author gives a new form to the material from Q. If we assume that every community also knew oral units with a stable form and autonomous contents which gave information about Jesus, the same will be true with regard to this community knowledge: when they hear a gospel in which such traditions are contextualized, the community will recall the familiar material and notice the new interpretation. In literary production and reception of this kind, however, it is vital not to neglect the diachronic question, because otherwise we would pay insufficient attention to the dialogue between author and reader, which would be left in an unhistorical abstraction.

A further consequence is that one could not entirely acquit Mark of the old charge of form criticism, viz. that he is a “collector.” There can be no doubt that there is something qualitatively new in the composition of a gospel, but we can still see how “collected” traditional material has preserved a relative autonomy, thanks to the signs of weak contextualization in Mark and to the many tensions in his arrangement of the material.

One can accept such arguments, yet still remove the sting from the questions of literary criticism and the history of tradition, e.g. by asserting that although it is possible to reconstruct the essence of Q, since we can reconstruct this source from *two* independent gospels, this is a positive exception, since there is no hope of reconstructing sources from only *one* surviving text. The answer to this position involves two steps.

Q is not in the least an exception in the sense described in the preceding paragraph. In the case of the narrative connection which links the activity of John the Baptist to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry at the start of Mark, Q, and John, we have in fact three independent variants of the narrative.<sup>22</sup> The next step is therefore to test whether we have an early narrative complex here; this would at any rate be older than Q and would give a deep insight into the prehistory of the gospels. The same is true of the end of Jesus’ life. Mark and John, independently of each other, have passion narratives which converge in the sequence of scenes and in individual details. The reshaping in John means that the common basis is not so easy to identify as in the case of Q, but here (unlike the long middle section in Mark) we have a sequence of scenes where one logically follows the other. Their chronological and substantial sequence cannot be altered. In other words, one scene is not simply added on loosely to the next; they could not have a different order. Ought not the next step to be an investigation of the contours of an early passion narrative? The exegete who follows this path to the beginning and the end of Jesus’ life has one considerable advantage: he can see that long before Mark and Q, the interpretation of the story of Jesus was structured by the two public events which marked the beginning and end of his ministry. In other words, the restriction of attention to what we might call the “publicly discernible Jesus” is an option that goes back to the period before Mark.

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<sup>22</sup> On this, cf. Jürgen Becker, *Johanneisches Christentum: Seine Geschichte und Theologie im Überblick* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2004), section 7.1.



Naturally, the reconstruction of an older compositional complex from one single text is more hypothetical than the cases we have just considered. But we are not justified in dismissing this *a priori* as generally impossible—for that is a dogmatic assertion. Here, we must judge each case on its own merits. The debate about the strata in Q,<sup>23</sup> which almost inevitably generates further hypotheses about the history of earliest Christianity and the ministry of Jesus, shows how complex the discussion of the diachronic history of an individual text can be. There is scarcely anyone who doubts that Q came into being by stages, but this process is very difficult to grasp, because we can no longer define precisely the contents and wording of Q, which probably still possessed textual flexibility in the period when Matthew and Luke incorporated it into their gospels.<sup>24</sup> It is one thing to describe the contours of a source that has been incorporated into a text which survives—but it is a different task to take a source which has been approximately reconstructed and then analyze this into various strata. We have a better starting point for an investigation of Mark, where we possess the text, than in the case of Q. The possibility of recognizing pre-Markan collections such as groups of three (Mark 4:3–8, 26–32) or two (Mark 6:32–52; cf. John 6:5–21) involves a hypothetical quality that we can assess. This is also true of the suggestion that the basis of Mark 13 is an independent apocalypse.

Another strategy for defining the boundaries of diachronic investigations appeals to *ethnological studies* of the oral transmission of traditions. The primary fields of study here are Homer, the mediaeval epics, and the Serbo-Croat region, and this brings us to the *third* question mark which has been posed against form criticism. These researches are relevant to the assessment of the synoptic tradition because of the thesis that those who proclaim texts in oral cultures do not produce variants on an original form, but generate new products each time using already-existing structures and formulaic phrases. These new creations cannot be understood on the model of the transmission of a stable antecedent text: rather, they are evanescent phenomena of the moment. An original

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<sup>23</sup> The proposal by John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), which he had often presented in earlier publications, has given rise to much scholarly discussion.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the cautious remarks about the conclusions of the International Q Project in Paul Hoffmann and Christoph Heil, eds., *Die Spruchquelle Q: Studienausgabe Griechisch und Deutsch* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002).

form does not exist.<sup>25</sup> If we accept this as an appropriate analogy which offers a convincing explanation of how we are to evaluate oral traditions wherever these occur—and hence also applies to the synoptics—the result is that we can no longer subject the oral tradition to analysis. The search for an original form is the search for a phantom.

Let us be clear about what this means. Only the literary level of the texts would be a relevant resource for the construction of a picture of Jesus. With the aid of a general historical theory, e.g. about the role of memory in narrative, or by means of a simple hypothesis, one could formulate a general verdict about the historical reliability of Mark or Q in this instance; or else one could abstain from any historical judgment. But it would no longer be possible to get behind the gospels themselves.

At this point, we must demand to know why the results of these ethnological studies should be preferred to all the individual analyses of the synoptic gospels and every detailed insight into the milieu of the first Christians, especially when we bear in mind that it is always difficult to use analogies. And we must demand an explanation of why it should be taken for granted that researches from quite different cultural spheres should tell us what was the case in earliest Christianity. Those who posit this are implicitly presupposing that history—in this instance, the oral culture of all peoples—always and exclusively follows the same laws. And this is contradicted by the historical experience of plurality, contingency, and mutability.

If researches into orality are to be applied to the study of Jesus and earliest Christianity, the following conditions must be satisfied.

1. At the beginning of the formation of a tradition, there should be a person whose message has precise contents.
2. This tradition should consist of a “taciturn” and briefly formulated transmission; it should not have an epic breadth.
3. In general, the transmission should not be addressed to people from a large cultural sphere; it should involve a milieu of small social forms.
4. The group of active transmitters of the tradition should not be too large, and they should remain in contact with one another.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Werner H. Kelber, “Anfangsprozesse der Verschriftlichung im Frühchristentum,” *ANRW II* 26.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 3–62; idem, “Jesus and Tradition,” *Semeia* 65 (1995): 139–167; idem, “Markus und die mündliche Tradition,” *LingBibl* 46 (1979): 5–58; Schröter, *Erinnerung*, 40–59.

5. The transmission of the tradition should be measured in terms of two (or at most three) generations.
6. Both the group of transmitters and the community must regard the person at the origin of the tradition as an authority whose normative significance is certain; in this way, the tradition will enjoy high respect and will provide an important orientation for the life of the group.

Under these conditions, ethnological research soon proves to be unhelpful in providing analogies. And this means that we are once again free to look for analogies to the synoptic tradition.

When we look for *possible comparisons* which could meet the conditions set out in the preceding paragraph, we must consider prophets, philosophers, teachers of wisdom, and physicians; in the particular case of Judaism, we have prophets and teachers of wisdom who also had pupils and groups that handed on their teaching. These protagonists, with the traditions which circulated under their names, express themselves in rhythmic language in which the poetical form and the well thought-out contents are mutually related, and one basic idea finds pointed expression. This form is typical: in very few words, it takes hold of the hearers directly, unerringly, and purposefully. Such words are like "goads for oxen" and "nails firmly fixed" (Qoh 12:9–11), they are "seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6) or "a burning oven" (Sir 48:1). The addressees' attention is to be caught, and they must be able to retain these words in their memory. The more pointed the formulation, the more stable is the transmission; variant forms will be few. The community hands on the aphorisms which the wise proclaim (Sir 44:5, 15). We read that the prophets themselves ensured that their message would be preserved (Isa 8:1, 16; 30:8; etc.). Fixing something in one's memory and handing it on to others was a basic aspect of education and existential orientation in antiquity, both in professional work and in life in general. Traditional cultures live much more on the basis of preservation than of individual innovation.

When we look at the time of Jesus and the prophecy in his days, we see that the Baptist before him (Matt 3:7–10 par.) and Jesus ben Haniah after him (Josephus, *War* 6.300–301) expressed their distinct message by summarizing it concisely in a rhythmic language with few words. These have analogies in the Old Testament prophets and are good examples of the unity of form and contents which fashioned a genre that could be preserved and handed on to others.

There can be no doubt that the first community believed that Jesus had spoken in the same way. The transmission and reception of the Jesus tradition may have been a many-sided process involving every possibility from verbatim preservation, actualization, and selection to the new production of logia;<sup>26</sup> but Paul is evidence at an early date that the tradition which was known as Jesus tradition always possessed a special authority (cf. e.g. 1 Cor 7:10–11, 25). In keeping with this, all the gospels look back on the total impression that Jesus made on his contemporaries and portray this as an impression of compelling authority (Mark 1:22, 27 par.). The answers he gave in disputes reduced the other party to silence (Mark 12:34 pars). It is true that this picture of Jesus reflects the horizon of the earliest community, but an examination of affirmations such as Matt 5:21–22, 27–28; Luke 9:58, 60, 62; 11:5–6, 11; 13:21–22 makes it clear that Jesus himself spoke with authority. An authoritative tradition does not necessarily and exclusively lead to a verbatim transmission of his words, but the authoritative character ensures a basic tendency to preservation, just as we see in Old Testament prophecy.

This judgment is confirmed when we look at the contents of the tradition in the gospels. Let me exemplify this by means of three phenomena. In the transmission of tradition, there are enough cases where the community clearly felt that one particular tradition displayed a successful unity of form and substance; this was not reshaped, but was expounded by adding a commentary (Mark 4:3–8, 13–20; 7:14–15, 17–23; Luke 16:1–7, 8–13). This shows another way of treating tradition than the act of continual generation involved in the presentation of variable material. And the best explanation of the phenomenon of the double reworking of individual traditions is the hypothesis of a basis in stable oral tradition. All the synoptics offer examples of how one tradition is contextualized with slight variations in two passages in one and the same gospel (Mark 9:35 and 10:43–44, or Matt 5:29–30 and 18:8–9). John too is a witness to the shaping and rounding off of tradition. The attempt to demonstrate that the traditions in John 2–12 which are close to the synoptics

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<sup>26</sup> I remain unconvinced by the attempts of Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 2nd ed., ASNU 22 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1964); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 2nd ed., WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1984); and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 44–46, to use the transmission of the rabbinic tradition as a model for the praxis of Jesus and his disciples. I find no hard evidence in the synoptics for such an institutionalization of the transmission of tradition. On the contrary, the breadth of variation in the Jesus tradition argues against this idea.

derive directly from those gospels is unconvincing,<sup>27</sup> and the agreements between John and the other gospels in miracle narratives and the transmission of logia must be explained in terms of the history of tradition. These are indicators of a very solid and stable Jesus tradition which remains relatively fixed even in the Johannine group in which the formation of tradition otherwise allowed itself great freedoms.

If we assume that the classic form and tradition criticism had the correct approach to an understanding of the oral tradition in the synoptics, we can trace the path back to Jesus much more precisely and concretely, paying greater attention to individual cases. Naturally, this path is not free from difficulties; but it offers a greater possibility of making historical judgments than the approach which boldly moves directly from the literary level to draw direct conclusions about Jesus' activity.

Let me mention three special problems on this path. Once again, we have the problem of *perspective*, i.e. the limitation of the tradition to specific sectors. It is obvious that Jesus did not only speak in rhythmic words—but these are the only words to which we now have access. Conversations with the disciples or at mealtimes and discursive addresses to large gatherings have not been handed on, clearly because it was not possible to hand these on. And this is why the evangelists are obliged later on to compose dialogues (Mark 8:27–38), conversation at meals (Luke 14:1–24), or public discourses (Matt 5–7), using rhythmic materials. Nor can we assess how complete this “formed” tradition is. At any rate, the processes of selection which we can observe in the evangelists suggest that some traditions were lost. We can however attempt to get a holistic view of Jesus on the basis of what survives, and I believe that such an investigation permits us to present the basic outlines of what Jesus did and said.

We have discussed the oral tradition, which concentrates on the logia—for it is obvious that Jesus did not create any narrative *miracle tradition*. In other words, he did not create an account in the first person singular of miracles such as we find at Matt 8:5–13; Luke 7:1–10; and John 4:36–53. All we possess here are third-person accounts, which the community thought worth handing on because they were stories about Jesus. They were also capable of being handed on, because their conventional mode of narration, their almost identical structure, and the brevity of their

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<sup>27</sup> Becker, “Das vierte Evangelium,” 209–227.

presentation could be committed to memory. This allowed them to have their share in the process of preservation, actualization, selection, and production. However, a conventional act of narration like this always entails a distance from the specific activity of Jesus.

When we analyze the Jesus tradition in this way, we encounter a further problem, viz. the *transition* from the western Aramaic which Jesus spoke to the Hellenistic Greek of the communities. Languages represent a culture, and this is why the transition from one language to another means stepping into a new world. How reliably did the Christians translate traditions about Jesus? The Semitic tendencies in the Greek of the synoptics suggest that bilingual persons with Aramaic as their mother tongue undertook this transformation: in other words, they thought in Aramaic and translated this into Greek, and this may be regarded as a pointer to a relatively correct translation. In view of the scanty evidence of Hellenistic influence on the Galilean region, we must dismiss the idea that Jesus and his disciples possessed the bilingual competence necessary in order to be active as translators.<sup>28</sup> We should envisage Jewish Christians of the first generation who were familiar with Greek, rather than Galilean eyewitnesses of Jesus' public ministry.

Let us conclude by asking what is our goal, when we try to identify small units (genres) which were transmitted by word of mouth? The aim is to shed so much light on the processes by which the Jesus tradition was transmitted that the entire process of transmission, with its driving forces of preservation, interpretation, and new creation, takes on clearer outlines, and that we can describe as exactly and as amply as possible the material which stands at the origin of this process. This tradition-critical work will look primarily at the history of those units which have a rounded-off form and contents, without however forgetting that even traditions which have been extensively reworked and came into being at a late date may contain headwords, semantic fields, motifs, modes of argumentation, and basic ideas which accord well with the original material.

Once this work has been done, we must look for criteria which we can apply to the material which stands at the origin of the process of tradition, in order to identify those traditions which have best preserved the activity of Jesus.

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<sup>28</sup> Eric M. Meyers, "Jesus und seine galiläische Lebenswelt," *ZNT* 1 (1998): 27–39.

### 5. *The Discussion of Criteria*

In the light of the available sources, which criteria allow us to draw close to Jesus? Here, today's scholarly debate is marked by profound disagreements. Space prevents the discussion of every position. Let us begin with three fundamental questions.

1. Some scholars ask: Ought we not to abandon the search for a catalogue of criteria for differentiations in the material about Jesus?
2. Who has the burden of proof, and who is obliged to propose criteria which support his claims?
3. What kind of criteria ought these to be?

In the *first* question, doubt is expressed about the *functional capacity* of all criteria, because we keep on finding instances where the criteria are unhelpful. There is also a great danger of circular argumentation. This means that one ought, at least for the time being, to do without the criteria and their application.<sup>29</sup> However, criteria are not mathematical formulae which invariably lead as a matter of course to unambiguous results when they are applied to the complexity of history; and no historical research can do without circular arguments. In principle, criteria minimize a subjective arbitrariness and allow others to understand a scholar's argumentation. One who dispenses with criteria is inevitably even harder pressed to justify the positions he takes.<sup>30</sup>

Another variant develops the basic principle of Rudolf Bultmann that the preaching of Jesus belongs only to the presuppositions of faith, by applying rather crude criteria of selection to excise whole blocks of tradition. All that is allowed to count as early material is the tradition of Jesus' logia, which however can no longer be analyzed by means of positive criteria. Accordingly, all we can do is to sketch the basic outlines of Jesus' preaching, without making any differentiations in the texts of the logia. We should accept this bleak result with equanimity, since faith lives from the kerygma, not from the historical Jesus.<sup>31</sup> This position is based on antecedent decisions which are no longer shared by everyone.

<sup>29</sup> This is proposed by Berger, "Kriterien."

<sup>30</sup> The truth of this proposition can be demonstrated without any great difficulty: it suffices to read Klaus Berger's book *Wer war Jesus wirklich?* (Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> This is the position taken by Walter Schmithals, "Gibt es Kriterien für die Bestimmung echter Jesusworte?" *ZNT* 1 (1998): 59–64.

It so smoothly executes a program which has been decided in advance that the texts themselves have no chance of making their objections heard. And this makes the reader suspicious, since the outcome is nothing other than what was posited *a priori*.

Finally, we meet the claim that it is impossible to apply criteria of authenticity to get back to the historical Jesus, since these are based on an understanding of history which needs to be revised: it is an illusion to think that we can get behind the texts to investigate historical reality.<sup>32</sup> When one dispenses with criteria, however, all one can do is to postulate historical recollection without making any differentiations, since one no longer has any means of distinguishing between good recollection, literary fiction, or false recollection. We can exemplify this by means of the beginning of Mark, Q, and John. These texts contain three variants of a relatively stable narrative structure. There are striking differences between the variants—what are we to take as historical recollection here? Or may we no longer pose such a question, since that would mean a relapse into a positivistic understanding of history? On the other hand, who has the right to forbid a comparison of the three texts, if such a comparative study also includes questions about construction, fiction, error, and good recollection? The question: “Who was Jesus *really*?” is indeed positivistic, but this label cannot be attached to the study of whether and how it is possible to get some approximate knowledge of Jesus in these three variants.

The *second* question is always posed when a scholar presupposes in principle and *a priori* the *faithfulness* of the tradition and asserts that the burden of proof lies on those who do not share this judgment.<sup>33</sup> For methodological reasons, however, one can admit only an argumentation which (a) judges the value of a tradition by means of the analysis of individual texts, and (b) begins *without* a conclusion, and presents the conclusion only at the end of the investigation.

The *third* question discusses whether *individual phenomena* such as linguistic observations (Aramaisms), striking verbal statistics and

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<sup>32</sup> This is the view of David S. du Toit, “Der unähnliche Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 89–129. His position has a forerunner in Erhardt Gütgemans, “Erzählstrukturen in der Fabel von Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s ‘Zauberflöte,’” *LingBibl* 31 (1974): 1–42. For Gütgemans, Jesus is only a literary figure in narrative structures.

<sup>33</sup> This question has been frequently discussed, e.g., by Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie 1: Die Verkündigung Jesu*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1973), 46; and Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 44–46.



rhetorical traits (phrases such as the *amen* at the beginning of a sentence, typical words such as *Abba*), genres (parables, antithetical forms), or double transmissions which are formally symmetrical and are constructed in such a way that they are mutually related although their contents differ, can be employed as criteria.<sup>34</sup> The answer must be negative, since even if we assume that these phenomena originated with Jesus, we cannot exclude the possibility that the early communities simply imitated them; and some of these suggestions are not free of ambiguity, since it is not certain that they did originate with Jesus. Nevertheless, this discussion is valuable, because it supplies arguments which can help evaluate the process of transmission in individual cases, and thus allows us to assess better the path that leads to the oldest traditional material about Jesus.

However, criteria ought not to designate individual phenomena. Rather, they should define the *tendency* of scholarly argumentation. They must be open in principle to the transmission as a whole, and guarantee a general *equal treatment*. Three current proposals seek to meet these conditions.

1. The oldest stratum of the Jesus tradition is identified on the basis of the age of the literary context in which an item is found and the frequency with which it is attested in independent sources. This stratum as a whole is acknowledged to have the greatest proximity to Jesus. *De facto*, one other criterion is employed in this procedure, viz. the harmonious insertion into the context of classical antiquity.<sup>35</sup>
2. Orientation is sought in various combinations of the criteria of "difference" and "coherence."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> On this, cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 16–17; Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung*, NTOA 34 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1997), 8–19. For lists of such phenomena, cf. Jeremias, *Theologie*, 19–45; T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 54–56; Petr Pokorný, "Lexikalische und rhetorische Eigentümlichkeiten der ältesten Jesustradition," in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 393–408; Marius Reiser, *Die Gerichtspredigt Jesu*, NTA NF 23 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1990), 194–196.

<sup>35</sup> Crossan, *Jesus*, argues for this position.

<sup>36</sup> This discussion of this approach goes back to the beginnings of research into the historical Jesus. It was formulated with particular clarity by Ernst Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," *ZThK* 51 (1954): 125–153, at 142, and has appeared since then in many variants. A particularly helpful overview is given by Dieter Lührmann,

3. This second bifurcated possibility is integrated into a holistic unity and a new approach, drawn from the theory of history, is taken: this leads to a “criterion of historical plausibility” which embraces both the aspect of continuity and the perspective of individuality.<sup>37</sup>

Before we examine these proposals, let me mention one fundamental problem, viz. that all criteria are expressions of a particular understanding of reality. To put this more specifically: the criteria reveal something of the way in which those who propose them understand history. Everyone who interprets history, with or without a catalogue of criteria, is in the same situation: he always treats historical reality from a concrete position. This is inevitable, but one can employ criteria to guide the process of historical research, by using them as a control on one's work. Three possibilities of this kind ought to play a role in research into the historical Jesus.

*First*, the history of the church and of our culture can lead us to “establish contact” between Jesus and our own world in such a way that we pay too little attention to the distance between then and now. Many scholars have noted that the Jesus of J. D. Crossan is reminiscent of one particular Californian culture, but he is not alone here. The contemporary discussion of Jesus by scholars in the USA often displays a Jesus who reflects basic traits of American society. This may well be why they prefer a “sapiential” Jesus to an “eschatological” Jesus<sup>38</sup> and emphasize the shape which Jesus gave to society rather than his theological message.<sup>39</sup> Since religion is a “private matter” in today's culture, and eschatology is something alien, the portrait of the historical Jesus is drawn (whether automatically, or with a conscious intention) on the basis of these antecedent

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“Die Frage nach Kriterien für ursprüngliche Jesusworte—eine Problemskizze,” in *Jésus aux origines de la Christologie*, ed. Jacques Dupont, BETL 40 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 59–72. Cf. also the overview by John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991); Becker, *Jesus*, 17–19; Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 28–174; Jürgen Habermas, “Kriterien der Jesusforschung,” in “... was ihr auf dem Weg verhandelt habt”: *Festschrift Ferdinand Hahn*, ed. P. Müller et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 15–26; du Toit, “Der unähnliche Jesus,” 96–100.

<sup>37</sup> This is proposed by Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 175–217.

<sup>38</sup> These scholars postulate a sequence from an eschatological (apocalyptic) John the Baptist via an exclusively sapiential Jesus to an eschatological early Christian community, but this is unconvincing.

<sup>39</sup> Jesus' message has a primarily religious character. It concerns the sovereignty of God which is being realized through him, and this implies aspects of a new fellowship of life. Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 122–398.

decisions. These examples are conspicuous, but they are not in the least exceptional. This is why we must make use of a list of criteria in order to promote respect for that which is historically different and to underline as strongly as possible the need for the interpreting subject to examine carefully what he is doing.

This is why I am reluctant to use the word "plausibility," since its general usage alludes too strongly to the acceptance and reception of a thesis. It is perfectly clear that the rationalists found the rationalistic picture of Jesus plausible! Today, however, we realize that that picture of Jesus is inappropriate. The opposite position would be to emphasize, not the reception, but the perception of history as something "foreign." This would allow us to see the antithesis between historical plausibility and plausibility in terms of reception, and this may even signify a greater closeness to the historical truth.

*Secondly*, criteria are helpful when they keep in mind both the original conditions of an historical phenomenon and its later consequences. Jesus is perceived as an historical person only where he is interpreted in view of his religious, cultural, and social *home* and also in view of *the impact he made on history*. And both these contexts are marked by continuity and innovation. We cannot integrate Jesus totally into Christianity and make his Jewish roots a matter of indifference; nor can we interpret Jesus exclusively in a Jewish context and strip him of the impact he made on history. The second path was the option taken by Reimarus, viz. to understand Jesus wholly on Jewish terms and detach him from earliest Christianity. There are too many pictures of Jesus up to the present day which follow Reimarus, even if only in the mild form which refuses to submit to the "crosscheck," i.e. the question whether and how the picture of Jesus which they have constructed could be understood as the historical foundations on which earliest Christianity is based. This allows them to paint an arbitrary portrait with a freedom inappropriate to genuine historical study, and the result is an inability to explain the subsequent historical impact made by Jesus. To sum up: criteria must serve the double aim of understanding Jesus' relationship to Judaism under the dialectic of continuity and innovation, and of identifying a relationship between Jesus himself and his impact on history.

*Thirdly*, theories of history and society are very fashionable at the moment. They are often applied without nuances, as if they were rigid laws. We must however be aware that all these theories are relative. It is not a good idea to base one's conclusions on one theory alone, instead of relying on basic insights which are drawn from the *total* discussion of

the historical and societal dimension of reality and are capable of generating a consensus. Similarly, it is inappropriate to degrade texts to the status of mere *exemplifications of a theory*. This is why criteria should draw attention to those elements which cannot be subsumed under a theory, or which can be integrated into it only with difficulty. In this way, they permit us to observe the theory itself from a critical distance.

This indicates how we should judge the proposals about a list of criteria. In the *first* case, two observations—which already had a supplementary function in the discussion of authenticity—have been raised to the status of decisive criteria. But early attestation is no automatic proof of closeness to Jesus: it is possible that new Jesus traditions were formed immediately after Easter, and it is always possible that a later tradition comes substantially closer to Jesus than an early tradition. Frequent attestation may be due to the interests of the community, and thus be an indicator that the community has formed a particular tradition; a unit of tradition which is attested only once, and is inherently awkward (i.e., incompatible with the community situation), may point us directly to Jesus himself. Nor does the combination of these two criteria improve the situation, for simple reasons of logic. The situation changes somewhat where one can appeal to other, substantial reasons for positing that one particular tradition is close to Jesus, and then support this argument by demonstrating early and/or multiple attestation, since this is then an additional indicator. One who does not wish to appeal to this additional factor loses nothing, since the real justification for the claim lies elsewhere. We should also note that this proposal consists of criteria which offer no help in achieving the three desired effects of intensification.

This is not the case with the *second* and *third* proposals. The second is the most widespread, but its linguistic and substantial unclarity has led to criticism. The most important objections are the following: 1. The descriptions of difference are based on a limited knowledge of Judaism and are therefore problematic. 2. The term “difference” (“underivability” or “dissimilarity”) is often left without a precise definition, and opens the way to historical images (e.g. the idea of a “personality who leaves his mark on history”) which must be criticized. 3. Historical dissimilarity has often been elevated to the status of an essential difference. The next step is to assert that this “difference” guarantees the special quality of Christianity: in other words, an historical judgment becomes a christological judgment. 4. Critics allege that the emphasis on “difference” encourages anti-Judaism. Since Jesus can at best have been only marginally Jewish, his reconstructed figure embodies a concealed dogmatics. In

view of this criticism, the third proposal holds that the second proposal must be abandoned. It takes over important aspects of the second proposal and attempts to obviate the criticism by a new approach. It argues that historical plausibility must be demonstrated in two contexts. (a) This plausibility must be seen primarily in the sense of a contextual correspondence to Judaism: no matter how individual the figure of Jesus may have been, he can only have said and done things that other figures within Judaism could have said and done. He belongs in the center of Judaism.<sup>40</sup> (b) The other primary context for the discussion of plausibility is the "awkwardness" which goes against the stream of earliest Christian history.<sup>41</sup>

In our evaluation of these two proposals, we begin with the criticism that has been leveled at the second proposal. Limited knowledge is a basic problem of all historical work. If one were to infer from this that it is impossible to describe the basic outlines of the figure of Jesus, one would either have to give up this historical investigation or else state how severe the limitation would have to be before one abandoned the task. I believe that our knowledge of early Judaism is not in fact so poor. The second argument implies that whoever speaks of "difference" must define his understanding of this term; but the implication is that it would be better to dispense with it altogether. We may at any rate say that "difference" designates the *personal profile which is embedded historically* in the context of Jesus' life and in the subsequent history of the impact he made. This includes the special contents of his preaching and his activity, and of course the particular reasons which led to his crucifixion and the events surrounding it. Jesus worked in concrete historical circumstances and attracted considerable attention of various kinds. If the criterion of "difference" is understood in this way, I fail to see how it can reasonably be accused of proposing dogmas, or condemned as anti-Jewish.

It is possible to guard against the misuse of this criterion when it initiates the process of investigation, but is not misunderstood as the exclusive goal of a total interpretation. Proverbs in many languages affirm that the first step is the hardest, and this applies also to the initial search for aspects of the individual profile of Jesus. When one assembles a jigsaw puzzle, one begins by looking for striking segments with strongly

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<sup>40</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 139, 183–188, 212–213.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 176–180.

individual features; then one finds other pieces which fit onto these; it is only at the end that one integrates less readily distinguishable pieces. The advantage of beginning in this way, i.e. with the individual profile of Jesus, is that we do not level his special characteristics, as we would if we began by comparing him with a type (the itinerant Cynic preacher, the teacher of wisdom, the apocalyptic teacher, or the Pharisee) and thus seeing him in the context of general historical phenomena. It is of course meaningful to compare Jesus with existing types. But this should be done only after his individuality has been identified.

The beginning requires a continuation, and this is guided by the *principle of coherence*, which states that the individual characteristics which we have identified at the outset are complemented by less striking elements and by general aspects, where this makes sense. The total outcome is always a mixture of the general and the individual.

This indicates the point at which (despite a large measure of agreement) I diverge from the third proposal. There are two reasons for this. *First*, the term “plausibility” (like “difference”) covers a large spectrum of variations. Let us assume that the plausibility envisages not just an emotional assent on the part of the addressees, who are to identify with what the text says, but also a substantial conviction which is open to examination. Let us also assume that the phenomenon which must be interpreted is not a collection of fictional texts, but the history which is preserved in these texts, and that the argumentative interpretation of this history must convince the addressees. We must then ask: What kind of arguments can one use to create this plausibility? Substantial criteria are required if we are to answer this question, and this brings us back to the second proposal about the list of criteria.

The *second* reason is connected with the asymmetrical approach in the two fields of the historical impact made by Jesus and the context in which he lived. If one emphasizes the primary importance of looking for conformity to the Jewish context, because Jesus belongs in the center of Judaism, one has defined in advance the results of one’s investigation—and this approach is every bit as “dogmatic,” methodologically speaking, as the approach of the scholar who declares in advance that Jesus was a marginal figure in Judaism. One will also face problems in dealing with Jewish Christianity. This too belongs in the Jewish context, but a different approach is used in studying it: the primary interest is in identifying the “awkward” things that run against the stream, rather than in identifying its conformity to its historical context. In addition to this methodological criticism, one must also bear in mind the substantial collisions

in the life of Jesus which the gospels relate, as well as the continuation of conflicts in Jewish Christianity which led to the deaths of Christians,<sup>42</sup> and the decision (unparalleled in early Judaism) by the Antiochene community, only half a generation after the death of Jesus, to leave Judaism, and the decision of the “council” at Jerusalem to respect this step. No doubt, each of these pieces of information must be analyzed separately. But a considerable expenditure of energy on arguments and hypotheses is needed, before one can neutralize these texts in such a way that Jesus unquestionably belongs in the center of Judaism. An outcome decided in advance is thus unacceptable, not only from a methodological perspective, but in substantial terms: a method must leave open the substantial results to which it leads. Naturally, Jesus had Jewish parents. He understood himself all his life as a Jew. He died as a Jewish provincial. But why should we exclude *a priori* the possibility that Jesus lived on the margins of Judaism, or that he tested out the margins of Judaism here and there—especially since those margins were not rigid boundaries? Is he allowed to be an outsider only in his way of life, but not in his convictions? Did he not show that he was capable of distancing himself, e.g. in his relationship to John the Baptist and to his own family clan?

The discussion of criteria has taken the path from the literary sources to the traditional material which is close to Jesus and to the evaluation of this material. It thus presents the prolegomena to a portrait of Jesus of Nazareth, and we could now begin to paint this portrait. This cannot be done here; let me only note that the goal of such a portrait would be to take a middle path between historical skepticism and an excessive confidence in the historical reliability of the gospels.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For the details, cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 73–91, 410–421, 425–431.

<sup>43</sup> This essay was completed in November 2003. English translation: Brian McNeil.





# THE HISTORICAL JESUS: HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS AND REMAIN INQUISITIVE

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH

Who was Jesus? What was his purpose? What was his essential message? What reliable historical information do we have concerning him? Did he attempt to establish a new religion that would be different from the Judaism he knew? Why was he crucified? Did the Palestinian Jesus Movement not end with his death, as reflected in the dashed hopes of Cleopas: “We had hoped that he is (or was) the one about to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21)?

A new study of Jesus began about 1980. In contrast to the previous study of Jesus it is not confessional or theologically motivated. It seeks to ask questions using the highest form of scientific precision and honesty. Some results are disappointing, others are possible or probable. Experts in Jesus research are not expected to agree but to discuss methods and conclusions, and in the process, by keeping an eye on questions, to improve research.

There is a broad consensus among Jesus research experts that we can know a considerable amount about the historical Jesus, and far more than just the fact that he died on a cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. Thanks to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient Jewish texts not shaped and modified by Christian scribes, and the international renewed study of the Old Testament apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, as well as the often amazing and unexpected discoveries made by archaeologists, it has become clear that what Jesus did and said makes eminent sense within pre-70 Palestinian Judaism. This discovery of Jesus’ actions and authentic teachings also reveals considerable continuity from his time to the time of the evangelists.

## 1. *Introduction: Five Phases*

The five phases of the study of Jesus of Nazareth are as follows:

26–1738	Worship of Jesus as the Christ
1738–1906	The Old Quest of the historical Jesus

1906–1953	Some denigration of the historical search for Jesus
1953–ca. 1970	The New Quest of the historical Jesus
1980–present	Jesus research

The study of the historical Jesus was not always a study. Interest in Jesus began as worship of him as the Christ and the assumption (or proclamation) that the intra-canonical gospels were composed by Jesus' disciples or the followers of Peter or Paul. Phase One covered the years from 26, when Jesus probably began his public ministry, to 1738. A. Schweitzer attributed the origin of the "Old Quest" to Reimarus (1694–1768),<sup>1</sup> but surely the English Deists are the real precursors of critical Jesus study. The works of John Locke, Matthew Tindal, and Thomas Chubb shaped the world's culture as they sought a "reasonable Christianity." In London and in 1738 Chubb published *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted*. Chubb discovered that Jesus' true message was the imminent coming of God's Rule (the Kingdom of God) and the true gospel was to be found in Jesus' preaching of good news to the poor.<sup>2</sup>

In 1835 D. F. Strauss composed the first "life of Jesus": his *Das Leben Jesu* (*The Life of Jesus*).<sup>3</sup> The worship of Jesus was shifting in many cities in the West to a quest for what can be known reliably about the Jesus of history. The Old Quest (1738–1906) was clearly motivated by theological concerns. Many of the authors assumed they could write a biography of Jesus, and the attempt to do so was motivated frequently to provide such a life for those in the pews of the church.

In 1906 A. Schweitzer showed that the results of so-called critical research on Jesus in the nineteenth century was simply the announcement of having found what was desired or assumed.<sup>4</sup> Schweitzer's influence caused a moratorium on the Quest for Jesus in many circles. Most

<sup>1</sup> See the convenient collection of Reimarus's fragments: Reimarus, *Fragments*, ed. C. H. Talbert, trans. R. S. Fraser (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985; issued previously by Fortress, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Hugh Anderson and Walter Weaver for many conversations on Jesus and the English Deists. See esp. Anderson, ed., *Jesus* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), 10–11. Also see Weaver, "Who Killed the Old Quest? Reshaping a Paradigm," to be published in a forthcoming volume in the Faith and Scholarship Series (published by Trinity Press International).

<sup>3</sup> D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. P. C. Hodgson, trans. G. Eliot, *Lives of Jesus* (1835; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906). The English translation appeared in 1910, was translated by W. Montgomery, and was entitled *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of*

scholars who have assessed this period assume that Schweitzer's influence was universal and that he not only influenced all scholars but they were convinced by him. This is certainly true of the Bultmannian School and the life of Jesus published by H. Conzelmann.<sup>5</sup> In England Schweitzer's influence was barely noticeable in many universities. Books were written on Jesus as if Schweitzer had never published his work or that he was simply incorrect. Notable among the books on Jesus written by English scholars are T. W. Manson's *The Teaching of Jesus* (1931)<sup>6</sup> and C. H. Dodd's *The Parables of the Kingdom* (1935).<sup>7</sup>

Even in Germany the life of Jesus by M. Dibelius, published in 1939,<sup>8</sup> and his book on the Sermon on the Mount (1940),<sup>9</sup> and the numerous books by A. Schlatter—especially his *Die Geschichte des Christus* (2nd edition appeared in 1923)<sup>10</sup> and *Kennen Wir Jesus?* (1937)<sup>11</sup>—proceed on the assumption that one can know much about the historical Jesus and that such knowledge is essential for authentic faith.

Nevertheless, in contrast to the nineteenth century and the period since 1980, the era from 1906 to 1953 is singularly devoid of a fascination with the Jesus of history. That era was shaped by Bultmann, Barth, Brunner, and Bonhoeffer, as well as Tillich—they simply were interested in Christian theology and built their theological edifices on the “Christ of faith.” None of these giants in theology were interested in archaeology, historiography, or a search for the Jesus of history behind the Christ of the gospels. These theologians were not so much influenced by Schweitzer as by the effects of “The Great War,” as World War I was

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*Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*. Also see the translation of Schweitzer's second, larger edition of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. J. Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> H. Conzelmann, *Jesus*, ed. J. Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of Its Form and Content* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963; 2nd ed., 1931).

<sup>7</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Collins, rev. ed., 1961).

<sup>8</sup> M. Dibelius, *Jesus*, trans. C. B. Hedrick and F. C. Grant (London: SCM, 1963; English ed., 1949).

<sup>9</sup> M. Dibelius, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1940). Dibelius's warning rings clear again today: in the face of the danger of a world that is denying Christian values “a vague Christian idealism is insufficient as a basis for the witness we must bear” (143).

<sup>10</sup> A. Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus* (2nd ed., 1923; 3rd ed., Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1977, with a foreword by H. Stroh and P. Stuhlmacher). Also see the publication of Schlatter's essay edited with a foreword by R. Riesner: Schlatter, *Jesus—der Christus* (Giessen: Runnen Verlag, 1978).

<sup>11</sup> A. Schlatter, *Kennen Wir Jesus?* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 4th ed., 1980, with a foreword by H. Stroh).

called (and is called in many parts of Great Britain today), by the Great Depression, and by the Nazis. One may report that a partial denigration of the historical Jesus continued from 1906 until 1953.<sup>12</sup>

In 1953, E. Käsemann demonstrated before Bultmann and his other students that the intra-canonical gospels do contain reliable information regarding the historical Jesus, that we do know more about the historical Jesus than Bultmann and most of his followers assumed, and that such knowledge is relevant for authentic Christian faith.<sup>13</sup> The “New Quest of the Historical Jesus” continued from 1953 until sometime in the seventies.

In 1980 a new trend can be discerned to have emerged. It is a scientific study of Jesus in his time, in light of all relevant data, literary and non-literary—including archaeology and topography. While the Old Quest, New Quest, and even the partial moratorium on the quest, were all motivated by theological agendas and concerns, “Jesus research” (or the Third Quest) began without such allegiances.<sup>14</sup> Thus, this more scientific study of Jesus is led by Jews (such as D. Flusser<sup>15</sup> and G. Vermes<sup>16</sup>), by liberal Christians (such as E. P. Sanders),<sup>17</sup> by more conservative thinkers (as M. J. Borg,<sup>18</sup> N. T. Wright<sup>19</sup> and J. D. G. Dunn<sup>20</sup>),

<sup>12</sup> See the insightful study by W. P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> E. Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague, SBT 41 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964), 15–47.

<sup>14</sup> As G. Theissen and D. Winter state, a “grounding in scholarly historical study rather than theological considerations is typical of the approach of the Third Quest.” Theissen and Winter, *The Quest of the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. E. Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 164.

<sup>15</sup> D. Flusser with R. S. Notley, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2nd ed., 1998).

<sup>16</sup> See esp. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); idem, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). See esp. idem, *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane, 2000); idem, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane, 2003); idem, *Jesus in His Jewish Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); idem, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984); idem, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994; 1995).

<sup>19</sup> N. T. Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992); idem, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 (London: SPCK, 1996); idem, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> For the latest, see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

by Roman Catholics (such as the priest J. P. Meier<sup>21</sup> and the free-thinking J. D. Crossan<sup>22</sup>), and by others not so easy to categorize (including G. Theissen,<sup>23</sup> B. Chilton,<sup>24</sup> P. Fredriksen,<sup>25</sup> and myself<sup>26</sup>).<sup>27</sup> Today, it is no longer possible to say that Jesus research is primarily scientific (no one ever claimed it was purely scientific). Many experts in this field of research are able to work with scientific rigor and also affirm the essential need of this scientific and historical research for Christian faith today. A consensus may be discerned among these experts in Jesus Research: there is continuity from the teachings of Jesus to the preaching by his earliest followers. The study of Jesus now flourishes so that a new journal has been launched: *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (2003–).

I would want to push the historical influence further back. Bultmann claimed that Jesus' teaching was a presupposition of New Testament theology. I perceive the issue quite differently. The ideas developed within Second Temple Judaism fundamentally shaped Jesus' message and self-understanding, and are the presuppositions of Jesus. Likewise, New Testament theology is founded on Jesus' words about God and about himself. Those who wish to remove from the historical Jesus eschatology and apocalyptic thought are not adequately informed: these ideas are regnant in Jesus' traditions and they are pregnant for us today in a world terrorized by suicide bombers.

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<sup>21</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009).

<sup>22</sup> In particular, see J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> See G. Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); idem, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, with A. Merz, trans. J. Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Note esp. B. Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> See esp. P. Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> Notably, Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1988); idem, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> An annotated bibliography on most of these books, and others, is found in Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 223–423; idem, ed., *Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus in Early Judaism* (New York: The American Interfaith Institute and Crossroad, 1991), 271–279.

## 2. *The Four Gospels: How Were They Composed and Why Were They Chosen?*

### 2.1. *How Were the Intra-Canonical Gospels Composed?*

In the fourth century BCE, Alexander the Great, who was taught by Aristotle, united the western world and established Greek culture as the ideal and the Greek language as the *lingua franca*. Although Jesus' native speech was Aramaic, and most of his teachings were in Aramaic, the intra-canonical gospels were composed in Greek. Clearly, behind the Greek gospels one can detect Aramaic sources, which are certainly oral and perhaps (at times) written tracts.

#### *Caveats*

Some caveats are necessary. The focused research of New Testament experts has disclosed the following discoveries:

1. We do not know who composed "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke," or "John."
2. Tradition regarding the authors of the gospels is late and appears for the first time about one hundred years after Jesus, in the second century CE.
3. It is not clear if the titles given to the intra-canonical gospels belong to the text of the documents, as some experts contend (viz. Hengel)<sup>28</sup> or were added later, most likely after 150 CE (as Koester concludes).<sup>29</sup>
4. The author of Luke admits that he was not an eyewitness to Jesus' life (Luke 1:1–4). Only the Gospel of John claims to have an eyewitness to Jesus' life and teachings.<sup>30</sup>
5. We do not have one fragment of the New Testament from the first century. The earliest fragment of any intra-canonical gospel is P52. It contains words from the Gospel of John and dates from perhaps 125.

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<sup>28</sup> M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 74. For more reflection and research, see Hengel, *Die johanneische Frage*, WUNT 67 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1993), 205.

<sup>29</sup> H. Koester, *Ancient Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

<sup>30</sup> See Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995).

6. Three of the four intra-canonical gospels portray Jesus' life with the same perspective; the synoptics are Mark, Matthew, and Luke; the latter two depend on Mark, according to almost all New Testament scholars. The Gospel of John presents a different perspective.

### *Probing Questions*

A study of the four intra-canonical gospels awakens in the reader some inconsistencies. Note the following questions:

- Was Jesus born in Bethlehem [Matt, Luke] or Nazareth [Mark, John]?
- Were wisemen [Matt] or shepherds [Luke] at Jesus' birth [or neither]?
- Was Jesus baptized by John the Baptist [Mark] or not [Luke 3:19–21]?
- Was Jesus' ministry one year [Mark, Matt, Luke] or three [John]?
- Was Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God [Mark, Matt, Luke] that was offered in challenging parables or was it about "I am" proclamations [John]?
- Is the Lord's Prayer authentic to Jesus [only in Matt and Luke and different]?
- Did Jesus lament in Gethsemane [esp. Luke] or not [John]?
- Did he carry his own cross [John] or did Simon of Cyrene carry it for him [Mark, Matt, Luke]?
- Were Jesus' last words "My God, my God, why . . . ?" [Mark] or "it is finished" [John]?
- Were his first resurrection appearances in Jerusalem [Luke, John] or Galilee [Mark, Matt]?
- Did Magdalene [John] or Peter [Paul (1 Cor 15), cf. Matt 28:9] see the resurrected Jesus first?

### *Shaping of the Gospel Tradition*

Today Protestants, Jews, and Roman Catholics have basically agreed on how the intra-canonical gospels took shape. At the beginning, of course, are Jesus' life and his teachings (c. 6 BCE to 30 CE). These were remembered by those who knew him and were shaped by teaching (*didache*) and proclamation (*kerygma*) in the Palestinian Jesus Movement (any reference to a "church" is anachronistic). Some early tracts of Jesus' traditions were probably written since such documents seem to explain the clustering of parables (Mark 4) and miracles (Mark 6:30–56) in the Gospel of Mark. A Signs Source may lie behind the Gospel of John. A lost document containing sayings of Jesus probably was used by Matthew and Luke. All these documents antedate the intra-canonical gospels. They probably took shape between 30 and 50 CE.

The first written gospel seems to be the Gospel of Mark, which was composed in the late sixties or early seventies. The Gospel of John has evolved through numerous editions. The first one may antedate 70 CE. Matthew was composed around 85. The “final” edition of John is dated about 95. The composition of Luke-Acts is usually dated around 80–90, though some experts now are suggesting perhaps between 90–110.

*Key Question.* A key question is now central in the study of all gospels and in Jesus Research. Scholars are sharply divided as they seek to answer this question: “How much tradition and how much addition shape the Jesus traditions in the gospels?” The minimalists claim that the evangelists have given us only their own editing of Jesus traditions. The maximalists contend that the evangelists have almost always preserved the message of Jesus and that Jesus’ own voice (*ipsissima vox Iesu*) can be heard in some passages. Clearly, in my judgment, the intra-canonical gospels are edited accounts of what Jesus said and did, but that edition is possible only because of the presence of tradition. The synoptics present somewhat accurately Jesus’ fundamental message (as I shall indicate later).

## 2.2. *Why were Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John Chosen?*

We have no clear and direct evidence of how and why four gospels were chosen. There was no church council that voted on what should be included and what should be excluded. Obviously, apostolic authorship or authority was important in many centers in which Christianity was influential. In such areas practice by the leaders and the average Christian was important as they chose the gospels that were “true.” Such a rule (= canon) to define and shape faith was necessary, since dozens of gospels were circulating by about 200 CE. The names of some of these extra-canonical gospels are the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Judas*, and the *Gospel of Mary*.

Some of the criteria for deciding what is authoritative (or canonical) reflect a growing recognition by the masses of the accepted gospels. Frequently, custom and not theological insight was dominant. For example, Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, about 180 CE claimed that it was essential to have four gospels since there are four winds: “It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are, since there are four directions of the world in which we are, and four principal winds...” (*Adv. Haer.* 3.11.8). One should note that much earlier Adronicus in Athens demonstrated that there are more than four winds and that Irenaeus included in his canon as “Scripture” the *Shepherd of Hermas*.



The limits of the canon were not defined in many areas until the Middle Ages. While the Festal Letter of 367 by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, defines a canon that is virtually identical to that used today in the West, it was not definitive in the fourth century. The Revelation of John was not accepted by the Greek Orthodox Church until about the tenth century. And this apocalypse is not “canonical” in the Syriac vulgate (the Peshitta).

### 3. *Is it Possible to Obtain Reliable Information Regarding Jesus of Nazareth?*

How does one discern Jesus’ own traditions among the Jesus traditions preserved by the evangelists? In particular, how do we assess Jesus’ unique teachings?<sup>31</sup> This has been a vexing problem for New Testament specialists. They have often worked on Jesus traditions by focusing only on the New Testament. Yet, only a historian of Judaism of the first century CE can answer the questions we are now raising.<sup>32</sup> When one does not know early Jewish theology that antedates 70 CE, one can easily claim that certain expressions and concepts, such as the Son of Man theology and the Rule of God (the Kingdom of God), were created by Jesus or his earliest followers. These terms and concepts are now clearly evident in pre-70 Jewish thought; the Son of Man in *1 Enoch* 37–71 (which is certainly Jewish and pre-70) and the Rule of God in many documents (viz. in the *Angelic Liturgy*).

Uniqueness does not lie in what is not found in a thinker’s context. Uniqueness resides in what words have been chosen and which words are stressed. A cluster of words, or concepts, indicates the creativity of thinkers who are always constrained by the images, symbols, concepts, terms, and words used by those in their own time and culture. Hence, Jesus’ unique words were shaped by contemporary Jewish thought and

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<sup>31</sup> One of the best ways to discern and comprehend Jesus’ uniqueness is to focus on a question and explore it without seeking Jesus’ uniqueness. A good example of this methodology is found in T. Holmén’s “Jesus, Judaism and the Covenant,” *JSHJ* 2.1 (2004): 3–27. Holmén discovers (and I think correctly) that “Jesus was rather detached from the covenant thinking of his contemporaries” (26).

<sup>32</sup> See esp. the comments by Bultmann in *The Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 1:26 (“Only the historian can answer this question. . .”). Bultmann went on to stress that faith as a personal decision “cannot be dependent upon a historian’s labor.”

especially by the interpretation of scripture by his fellow Jews. Jesus' words in turn shaped the minds of those who composed the gospels.

Many scholars commence with assuming that a Jesus-tradition is inauthentic until proven authentic. This tends to interject into scientific research a bias against authenticity. Should we not rather assume a tradition is authentic until evidence appears that undermines its authenticity? Does not this position better reflect the intentionality of the evangelists? Should we ignore the fact that within a few decades of Jesus' death his followers (some of whom were certainly eyewitnesses to what he said and did) attributed the examined saying to him?

Hillel-traditions are almost always written more than two centuries after he lived. The Jesus-traditions, in contrast, originated in and took a written form in the century in which he lived.<sup>33</sup> Learned persons claimed in the first century and even before 70 CE that Jesus had said and done what is recorded in Mark and the earliest sections of Matthew, Luke, and John. And the communities of the evangelists included those who contended that a witness to Jesus was trustworthy (cf. John 19:35, 21:24, and 1:14b).

The question, nevertheless, remains as to how much historical veracity we acknowledge to be with such witnesses. In my judgment, Jesus' earliest followers were often gifted and well trained. They were not poor ignorant peasants or rustic fishermen as earlier critics assumed. I am convinced that we need to pay more heed to the context in which a Jesus saying appears. It is often within a few decades of his life and the author is living within a polemical ambience in which it would be foolhardy to fabricate traditions. The honesty of the evangelists is apparent in their report that Jesus had been crucified and that Peter had denied him.

A perception of the polemical ambience in which the Jesus traditions took shape helps us comprehend the process of transmission. Yet, we should avoid an assumption that there was a "college" of scholars in Jerusalem in the thirties and forties who were authenticating Jesus' traditions. We should not fail to observe that the evangelists certainly did take incredible liberties in shaping the Jesus tradition.

We need to avoid all indications that are positivistic. Almost always suspicions about inauthenticity appear. That is, it soon becomes readily apparent to the attentive researcher that traditions about Jesus often are

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<sup>33</sup> See Charlesworth and L. L. Johns, eds., *Hillel and Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).

shaped by the belief in his resurrection. The transmitters of tradition and compilers of the gospels were never interested first and foremost in giving us an un-interpreted life of Jesus. They proclaimed the one who had been the consummate Proclaimer.

We also have come to recognize that the human does not have the ability to present a life of someone without interpretation. Most of us would admit that even if such an impossibility might be possible that we would not be interested in it. It would be as dull and dead as many of the papyri and ostraca that I have studied. There is little interest for me in a saying such as the report that “Qausyehab, crushed wheat: 6 *seah*, 1 *qab*.”<sup>34</sup> I really have little interest in finding out who is “Qausyehab” and why it is important to report that he crushed some wheat.

As most of those who study the intra-canonical gospels, I am interested in learning something significant about Jesus. And I do not want simple reports that he was able to crush some wheat. I need reliable and meaningful information regarding Jesus’ message and actions. What did he say and how do his actions help us comprehend what he intended to accomplish?

How does a scholar move from what Jesus really taught (*ipsissima verba Jesu*) to the voice of Christ speaking to the believer (*ex ore Christi*)? It is clear that the evangelists did not ask such questions and did not make distinctions necessary today. Already by about 100 or 125 in the *Odes of Solomon* there is no distinction between *ex ore Christi* and poetic compositions by a Christian Jew. The Odist moves from his own words to Christ’s words without any clear indication that another speaker is being represented.

Scholars are aware that all extant gospels are edited versions of Jesus traditions. No one should wish to confuse what evangelists thought with what Jesus taught. Hence, criteria for discerning within the gospels the deeds and sayings of the historical Jesus have developed.<sup>35</sup> What are the most reliable methods for discerning Jesus’ own traditions from the Jesus traditions recorded by the evangelists?<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> See I. Eph’al and J. Naveh, *Aramaic Ostraca of the Fourth Century BC from Idumaea* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 66; see the facing plate.

<sup>35</sup> See esp. Theissen and Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*. Also see the important contributions to B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, NTTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> Those methods not discussed now include an exhortation to search (cf. Matt 9:12–13; Matt 20:22; and Mark 10:38) and low Christology (esp. Jesus’ claim that “something

1. *Dissimilarity.* Sayings of Jesus that are dissimilar to early Jewish thought or cannot be attributed to Jesus' followers likely derive from Jesus himself (this is, of course, my own definition of the method). R. Bultmann used a form of this criterion,<sup>37</sup> and N. Perrin called it the "strongest" method for discerning Jesus' own traditions among the Jesus traditions.<sup>38</sup>

The problem with this method is obvious; the net is too loose. Much authentic Jesus data is lost by focusing only on dissimilarity. It is clear today that Jesus was a Jew, deeply influenced by his own religion. He also had followers who were devoted to him and significantly influenced by his teachings and actions. Jesus' parables are some of his most obvious creations; yet, parables abound in early Judaism. He crafted beatitudes, but beatitudes are now found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (viz. 4Q525). Some critics imagine that the Lord's Prayer was fashioned by Jesus' followers who knew he referred to God as "Abba," Father; yet the Lord's Prayer is in many places identical with early rabbinic prayers.<sup>39</sup>

Despite these recognitions, the criterion of dissimilarity is one of our strongest methods. It should be employed with perception and with knowledge of early Judaism, the Palestinian Jesus Movement, and in light of other methods.

2. *Embarrassment.* This method notes that some sayings and deeds of Jesus were an embarrassment to the evangelists. The polemical ambience of the transmission of Jesus traditions is important. The gospel record developed with the proclamation that the crucified Jew was the Messiah. The proclamation was often directed to those who had rejected his teachings and had seen him publicly humiliated.

Certain sayings and historical events were embarrassing to Jesus' followers. As we observe how the record was embarrassing to the evangelists we discern that a saying or action is most likely authentic. Our proof

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greater than Solomon is here" [Matt 12:42 and Luke 11:31] and why do you call me good? [Mark 10:18]), and explanatory expansion (cf. John 12:33).

<sup>37</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), see esp. 17; also see idem, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 40. For a penetrating study of Bultmann, see Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, 104–105.

<sup>38</sup> N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper, 1967), 38.

<sup>39</sup> See the contributions in Charlesworth, M. Harding, and M. Kiley, eds., *The Lord's Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

is often evident in Matthew and Luke's editing of Mark. For example, Jesus' claim that God's Rule (the Kingdom of God) would dawn while some of his hearers were still alive was an embarrassment to Matthew and Luke so that they were forced to edit and alter the meaning of Mark 9:1. Only Mark clearly reports that John the Baptist baptized Jesus (Mark 13:32). Luke, for example, places John in prison so as to avoid the embarrassing claim that John was thereby superior to Jesus, since the superior almost always baptizes the inferior (the polemic against the followers of John the Baptist also shapes the narrative in John 1–4).

I am convinced that the two most important criteria for authenticity are the criterion of dissimilarity to the christology and theology of the members of the Palestinian Jesus Movement, and the criterion of embarrassment to his followers. That is, if a saying or act is dissimilar to his followers' way of thinking or embarrassing to them, then it most likely did not arise with them. Since it is attributed to Jesus by the evangelists it may well have originated with him.

3. *Multiple attestation.* A third major criterion is multiple attestation. That is, a saying or action attributed to Jesus preserved in two or more independent primary sources is more probably original to Jesus than if it were found in only one source. Thus, it becomes clear by studying Mark, John, and the *Gospel of Thomas* (which in my judgment does contain some sayings of Jesus that are free from the editing [redaction] of the intra-canonical evangelists) that Jesus' teaching was shaped by Jewish apocalyptic thought and was eschatological.<sup>40</sup>

Yet, multiple attestation also has its limits. Sometimes it is clear that an authentic saying of Jesus was misunderstood, misleading, or embarrassing, and was then omitted by others. The best example seems to be regarding the seed growing secretly which is found in Mark 4:26–29 but not in Matthew, Luke, or John (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 21).

4. *Coherence.* Why is this parable of the seed growing secretly probably authentic? Because of the criterion of coherence. That is, the saying is coherent to many sayings already discerned to be authentic to Jesus, including the apocalyptic and eschatological thrust of Jesus' message.

It has become widely acknowledged by Jesus scholars that a biography of Jesus is impossible.<sup>41</sup> As we search the sources for reliable traditions

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<sup>40</sup> See esp. the definitive study on Jesus' apocalyptic and eschatological message by D. C. Allison, "The Eschatology of Jesus," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. J. J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 1999), 1:267–302.

<sup>41</sup> Two works stand out, in my view, as admirable portraits of Jesus' life and teaching.

that may originate with him, we should always remember that *Mark*, whoever he was, *never knew Jesus*. That means he could not appeal to his own memory for clarifying when and where Jesus said or did something. The earliest evangelist (known as Mark) was forced to create an order for Jesus' life. Mark's task may be compared to the attempts of someone who had broken a woman's pearl necklace and was forced to put the pearls back in the original order. That is as impossible as it was for Mark to recreate the order of Jesus' traditions.

What is possible for us today? First, we must not let our own wishes and desires dictate methods or conclusions. If we ask honest questions then we must honestly seek to answer them. That means being true to the questions without regard to any possible answer. Otherwise we deceive ourselves into thinking we are honest. If our method is not informed and honest we become incapable of learning what are the most probable answers.

### 3.1. *Actions*

Was Jesus a revolutionary? In the sixties there was a keen interest in Jesus and revolution; obviously the tenor of the age (and anti-establishment) sparked this interest. The leading, and popular, books included S. G. F. Brandon's *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967), and O. Cullmann's *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (1970).<sup>42</sup> Brandon claimed that Jesus was a political revolutionary. Cullmann claimed he was not. What are the most important data to ascertain an informative answer?

Those who conclude that Jesus was a political revolutionary emphasize the following positions:

1. From Herod's death in 4 BCE to 66 CE, when open revolt exploded, Palestinian Jews grew increasingly more hateful of Roman occupation. Jesus died in 30, and his crucifixion indicates that at least some thought he was politically motivated.

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They are G. Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. I. and F. McLuskey with J. M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); and C. H. Dodd's *The Founder of Christianity* (New York: Collier Books, 1970). It is no accident that both scholars were balanced in their approach and wrote the work near the end of a career characterized by historical erudition and perception. Each knew the sources and requisite methodology.

<sup>42</sup> S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967); O. Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

2. The pregnant apocalyptic eschatology produced a militant attitude (cf. the *War Scroll*). Some of the revolutionaries are known by name, e.g. Theudas, who is mentioned in Acts and Josephus's works.
3. Jesus was associated with John the Baptist who was killed by Herod Antipas.
4. Simon Zelotes was one of Jesus' disciples, and the Zealots were active by at least 6 CE.
5. Judas was called "Iscariot," because the Greek *sikarios* means an "assassin." That Judas was attracted to Jesus indicates that "assassins" were among his group.
6. Peter had a sword in Gethsemane and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest.
7. Jesus taught that there is no king but God, and he demanded absolute allegiance to God alone. He warned that one could not serve two masters.
8. Jesus taught the "Lord's Prayer" and told his followers to pray "thy kingdom come on the Land as in heaven."
9. Jesus taught his followers to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." Jesus knew that his followers would comprehend that this demanded open revolt against Roman oppression and occupation.
10. Jesus said, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34).
11. Jesus also told his followers that two swords are "enough" (Luke 22:38).
12. Jesus was against the "establishment" and received spies from Jerusalem.
13. Jesus was accompanied by "crowds" that were politically dangerous.
14. According to the Fourth Evangelist, Jesus was hailed "king" after the feeding of the 5000.
15. Jesus went triumphantly to Jerusalem at Passover, the most volatile time.
16. Jesus was crucified; that is, the Romans concluded he was a danger to Rome. The Emperor Tiberius and Prefect Pontius Pilate had him killed between two "thieves" who were revolutionaries.
17. The title on Jesus' cross hailed that he aspired to be "King of the Jews."
18. The evangelists' editing reveals the attempt to shift the blame for Jesus' death to "Jews"; this indicates their attempt to remove Jesus' anti-Roman message.

19. Josephus's account about Jesus discloses that Jesus was one who disturbed the peace.

These nineteen points have led some experts to conclude that Jesus was a failed revolutionary. Christian theologians who have been influenced by such reasoning conclude that Christians must forget the Jesus of history and hold only to the Christ of faith.

Other scholars conclude differently, by looking at the same data and interpreting it differently. They contend that Jesus knew the dangers of political revolution and warned against it. These are their arguments:

1. Jesus' teachings are clearly anti-revolutionary.
2. He taught his followers to turn the other cheek and to love their enemies.
3. Jesus stressed a theological, not a political, thought in the Lord's prayer: "thy kingdom come on earth as in heaven"; thus, Jesus did not desire revolt but peace on earth.
4. Jesus warned the revolutionaries: "all who take the sword will perish by the sword" Matt 26:52 [*bis*].
5. Jesus exhorted his followers to take the soldier's pack two miles (not the required one mile).
6. Jesus told his disciples to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; the coin he referred to contained Caesar's portrait.
7. Jesus knew Roman soldiers were young and human, and he had cordial relationships with a centurion.
8. Jesus and his followers could not be Zealots since this group within Judaism did not appear before 66 CE.
9. Judas' name "Iskariot" derives from the name of his village, Iskariot.
10. Jesus' statement "For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" (Luke 23:31) indicates that Jesus compared himself to wood that would not burn and unlike the hot heads who wanted revolt against Rome.
11. Jesus expected to be stoned by Judeans, not crucified by Romans.

How can we adjudicate between these two hypotheses? Was Jesus a political revolutionary or not? First, we should perceive that politics and religion are intertwined in early Judaism and within the Palestinian Jesus Movement. Second, it is relatively certain that Jesus chose twelve disciples and thus envisioned a new Israel. Thus, the question becomes, 'what kind of a revolution did Jesus have in mind?'



There is no simple solution to a question that is based upon such complex data. And moreover, these sources are available only in a highly edited (redacted) form. Two observations seem certain to me: Jesus could not have been oblivious to the political ramifications of his life and teachings, and he refused to lead a militant revolution.

Let us review the judgments of those who were leaders in this hot debate that exploded in the sixties. In *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967), Brandon argued that an investigation is necessary “in the light of the new evaluation of the Zealots, but that it also will help in understanding the historical Jesus, who chose a Zealot for an apostle, and who died crucified between two men, probably Jewish resistance fighters, who had challenged Rome’s sovereignty over Israel” (xiv). In *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (1970), Cullmann retorted with the argument that Jesus is “much more radical” than the Zealots, his “goal and norms are ‘not of this world,’ as is the case for the Zealots” (57).

Scholars are almost all now convinced, over thirty years later, that Jesus was not a Zealot and he did not strive to lead a rebellion against Rome or support such a revolt. Why? There are three areas to review.

First, today we have a much better understanding of Jesus’ time, thanks to a more careful study of scripture, the discovery of early Jewish texts, and the startling discoveries by archaeologists. The high priest when Jesus was crucified was Joseph Caiaphas. He was the last high priest appointed by Valerius Gratus, and he held the high priestly office for almost twenty years (18–36 CE). That means he continued in office and had political power only because he pleased the Romans. Caiaphas was certainly trusted by the Roman authorities. Any attempt to understand the motives behind Jesus’ crucifixion should be informed by the fact that the Roman governor and the high priest had some political bond after Judea became a Roman province in 6 CE.

The Zealots as a group or sect did not appear within Judaism until the revolt began in the sixties.<sup>43</sup> Josephus is our main source for this information, and he was not only an eyewitness but a participant in the revolt. Thus, since there were no “Zealots” prior to the sixties, neither Jesus’ disciples nor he can be perceived to be Zealots.

Some of the tensions that led to the revolt of 66–73/4 were certainly operative during the time of Jesus. The revolt, however, was a result of

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<sup>43</sup> See D. M. Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution, 6–74 CE: A Political History Based on the Writings of Josephus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

many political and sociological developments that postdate Jesus. The prefects became procurators during the early 40's, and the procurators without provocation destroyed some Jewish villages. The Romans failed to relate sensitively to the upper echelon of Jewish society. Over 10,000 workers were out of work in and near Jerusalem in the mid 60's when the renovation of the Temple was completed. The bandits and wild men that appeared sporadically during the time of Jesus became more desperate. The harsh methods of punishing riots known during the time of Pilate (26–36 CE) became more exacerbating to Jews. Of course, the influence of apocalypticism may have become more militant during the first half of the first century CE (cf. *Testament of Moses*).

Second, we have a more informed appreciation of the process of editing of the intra-canonical gospels. Brandon was correct to point to the pro-Roman tendencies of the evangelists. That, however, does not warrant the conclusion that the Jesus portrayed in them camouflaged a militant Zealot called Jesus. How Jesus was crucified indicates that the Romans judged him to be seditious; but it does not indicate that Jesus was a militant Zealot.

Third, scholars who are trained to interpret New Testament texts recognize the arguments that support the first hypothesis, that Jesus was a revolutionary; but they have indicated in numerous ways why the insights supporting the second hypothesis are more learned and carefully balanced. In particular, for me, Jesus' statement that aligns him with green wood and disassociates him from the dry wood makes best sense when interpreted in light of his claim that he who lives by the sword will die by the sword (coherency principle; Matt 26:52).

Jesus was then, not "a Jewish Resistance leader of a type not unique in this period," as H. Maccoby thought;<sup>44</sup> he was a revolutionary in a spiritual sense. This point is made, not by a Christian theologian; it is developed by a leading Jewish historian. In *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism* (1992), D. Mendels wisely points out that according to Matt 22:41–46, "Jesus dissociates himself publicly from David, who was viewed as a political, nationalistic king."<sup>45</sup> In *Images of Jesus Today* (1994)

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<sup>44</sup> H. Maccoby claims that the evangelists distorted the political dimensions of Jesus' life and teaching, and that Jesus' claim to be the Messiah and arguments for the Kingdom of God disclose that he was a Jewish resistance fighter. See Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea: Jesus and the Jewish Resistance* (London: Orbach and Chambers, 1973), esp. 124.

<sup>45</sup> D. Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 228.

Mendels concludes that “one thing is certain, that Jesus thought neither of the Heavenly Kingdom, nor of himself, in terms of a king with an army, servants, conquests, and territory. He wanted to be some kind of spiritual king, not a physical and political one.”<sup>46</sup> In *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Resistance in Roman Palestine*, R. A. Horsley correctly shows that Jesus did not himself advocate or organize “the kind of armed rebellion that would have been necessary to free the society from the military-power of the Roman Empire.”<sup>47</sup>

Jesus was a revolutionary. He was involved in religion and politics, but he was mistakenly crucified as a political revolutionary because of the time, Passover, and his popularity among the Jews that aroused crowds. These became mobs which threatened social norms and peace. Jesus led a movement that sought to renew Israel as did the prophets centuries before (esp. Isaiah and Jeremiah). The Jesus of history was a bold man of incredible integrity, vision, and dedication to God.

### 3.2. Sayings

What was Jesus’ method of teaching and what was his fundamental Message?

1. *Means: The Parables.* Jesus’ speech was simple and direct. He preferred to clothe his theological reflections in pictorial speech. His sayings were typically shaped into parables which often, but not always, make one major point of comparison. Almost everything in his parables is true to normal life and nature. A remarkable realism characterized his thought and mental pictures. As C. H. Dodd stated, Jesus could have said “beneficence should not be ostentatious.” But he used language that was real and hence permanent in a fertile mind. So, Jesus said, “when you give alms, do not blow your trumpet.”<sup>48</sup> As Theissen and Merz report, “It is generally agreed that the parables are the characteristic form of Jesus’ teaching.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, parables are one of the major means of discerning the authentic teaching of Jesus.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Mendels, “Jesus and the Politics of His Day,” in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver, Faith and Scholarship Colloquies 3 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 98–112; the quotation is on pp. 106–107.

<sup>47</sup> R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 321.

<sup>48</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (London: Nisbet, 1936), 16–17.

<sup>49</sup> Theissen and Mertz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, 316.

<sup>50</sup> One should be aware of a danger. Parables were illegitimately transferred to Jesus, as we know from the study of the transmission of the *Apocryphon of Ezekiel*.

Parables were not invented by Jesus. He inherited them from both ancient scripture and contemporary Jewish thought. A parable may be discerned in Nathan's story which helped David to realize he was guilty within a law that is above the king (cf. 2 Sam 12:1–7). Parables invite the attentive one to become involved and make a judgment that will unexpectedly include the one judging. Parables are frequently found in rabbinic writings and appear in early Jewish texts, such as *The Parables of Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37–71).

Jesus' parables can be organized into three classes, according to length. The shortest are mere figurative sayings (*Bildwörter*). Examples are "make yourself purses that do not wear out," "if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit," and it "is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom."

Parables are sometimes of medium length. They tell a mini story (*Gleichnisse*). Some of the best examples are the following:

No one lights a lamp and puts it under the bushel, but on a lamp stand; then it gives light to all in the house. (Matt 5:15)

Why do you see the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother let me take out the splinter that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? (Luke 6:41)

The longest parables are stories that are well known. Among these are short stories such as parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Costly Pearl, and the full blown parables such as the Prodigal Son, Good Samaritan, and Laborers in the Vineyard

The parables are like windows into Jesus' mind. He tried to help his hearers, who included common folk (*am ha-aretz*), to perceive abstract ideas and concepts through pictures and images familiar to them. Thus, Jesus' parables are not so much focused on making one point; they create a world of meaning and invite the listeners to enter this world, and usually make a personality altering decision. Jesus' mind perceived truth not in abstractions but in concrete images. It is clear that Jesus was a poetic genius imbued with prophetic insight and a gift for engaging language.

2. *What was Jesus' fundamental message?* It was the proclamation of the dawning of God's Rule (the Kingdom of God). Perrin claimed that this concept—the Rule of God or the Kingdom of God—was not found within Judaism and was thus unique to Jesus. Perrin was not adequately informed of early Jewish thought. God's Kingdom, The Rule of God or "the Kingdom of God" appears in numerous Jewish documents that

slightly antedate Jesus; even the expression “the Kingdom of our God” is found in the *Psalms of Solomon* 17.4.<sup>51</sup>

What is the key question that is raised among scholars by Jesus’ proclamation of the coming of God’s Rule? It concerns the time of this cataclysmic event. A. Schweitzer argued that Jesus’ view was thorough-going eschatology.<sup>52</sup> Jesus looked to the future. C. H. Dodd argued that Jesus held a “realized eschatology”; that is, Jesus believed that God’s Rule was actively dawning in his own time. I would argue that Dodd overreacted to Schweitzer, and that Jesus himself experienced a realizing eschatology.<sup>53</sup> As the dawning of a new day precedes the rising sun, so Jesus thought about the breaking into the present of God’s future day. His teaching is often a mixture of realizing eschatology and futuristic eschatology (as in Qumran’s *Thanksgiving Hymns*). As B. Chilton states in his superb study of Jesus’ proclamation of God’s Rule (Kingdom of God), “in that his vision included a hope for the future, it was irreducibly eschatological.”<sup>54</sup>

Does that mean Jesus knew when the hour of God’s Rule would dawn? An answer would depend on how one understands the relation between Mark 9:1, which attributes to Jesus the belief that some of his associates would not die until God’s Rule was present in their midst, and Mark 13:32, which indicates that only God knows the time of the fulfillment of God’s Rule.

I take both statements to be authentic to Jesus. Mark 9:1 did not occur and so both Matthew and Luke were forced to edit it. Mark 13:32 also seems to be authentic to Jesus since it attributes ignorance to Jesus. Both of Jesus’ statements seem authentic because they were an embarrassment to his followers and the evangelists. One should also note that Uriel must confess to Ezra that an archangel often does not have the knowledge that a human requires (*4 Ezra*).

We have seen that Jesus’ authentic message was fundamentally eschatological.<sup>55</sup> His parables and teachings, and the prayer he taught (the

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<sup>51</sup> Charlesworth, “The Historical Jesus in Light of Writings Contemporaneous with Him,” ANRW II 25.1 (1982): 451–476.

<sup>52</sup> Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

<sup>53</sup> Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*.

<sup>54</sup> B. Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus’ Vision of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 142.

<sup>55</sup> For a different perspective, see M. J. Borg, “Jesus and Eschatology: A Reassessment,” in *Images of Jesus Today*, 42–67.

“Lord’s Prayer”), contain the perspective that the present time is impregnated with the power of the end of time. Rather than draining the present of meaning, Jesus’ proclamation charged the present with power and meaning. All time, past and present, was focused on the immediate present.

#### 4. *What can be Known about the Historical Jesus and with What Degree of Certainty?*

What then might be known historically about Jesus? To answer this focused question succinctly I shall present a list, with an indication of where the historical datum might be placed on the spectrum of probability, since the historian’s approximation to certainty is a mere “highly probable.” The spectrum is thence as follows (from the least to the most certain): barely conceivable, conceivable, possible, probable, and highly probable.

As I have already indicated, the intra-canonical gospels took shape within decades of Jesus’ death. They reflect the years in which Jesus’ traditions—that is, the traditions that originated with him—evolved or developed into Jesus traditions that reflected the need to proclaim the Proclaimer, as Bultmann and many New Testament specialists have showed. Many of the most cherished traditions in the Jesus story were created by the needs of the Palestinian Jesus Movement. They thus did not originate with Jesus and are fabricated Jesus traditions (that is, words and actions illegitimately attributed to Jesus).

As David Friedrich Strauss pointed out in his *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, which appeared in 1835, some of these Jesus traditions are myths that developed out of three human perspectives. First, some originated as philosophical or theological truths. Second, others evolved from poetic imaginations. Third, some, perhaps many, were grounded in real historical events, and these were of such momentous importance they are possible to relate only via myths. We commence, then, by looking at the legendary portrayal of Jesus and move towards the relatively reliable historical information about Jesus of Nazareth.

##### 4.1. *The Story*

This section lists the legendary and perhaps mythological aspects of Jesus’ life and teaching that are full of meaning christologically but probably did not happen historically as described. These aspects of the

Jesus story were most likely composed to celebrate Jesus as the Christ or Son of God. In assessing these invaluable dimensions of the Jesus traditions, we should remember that his followers were an insignificant sect that was persecuted, and some members even martyred, by the dominant priestly establishment in Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, there are truths in myths; in fact truth often demands such a vehicle.

The virgin birth derives from mythological traditions found in Jewish as well as Roman traditions. It is not found in Mark or John. The genealogies are the creation of scribes. It is conceivable that there may be some historical facts behind them. They are not found in Mark or John. It is unlikely that wise men attended Jesus' birth. This story is found only in Matthew.

Luke's unique story of the singing of a heavenly chorus is pure embellishment. It seems relatively certain that Jesus' exodus from Egypt, in Matthew, was created out of the conviction that scripture so indicated he was God's son. It is unique to Matthew and reflects his narrative style and theological tendency.

The story of Satan's temptation is most likely fabricated out of ancient biblical traditions. Since it is placed in the wilderness (Mark 1:12) it might be a theological means of narrating how Jesus was *prepared* for his life work, since in biblical theology "wilderness" denotes the place of preparation.

Legends and myths probably created the account of Jesus' speaking with Wisdom in the Temple as a youth.<sup>57</sup> The story is unique to Luke. Mythological reflections have created the idea that Jesus turned water into wine. The story is found only in John and the account does not describe any action by Jesus that would cause water to become wine.

Christological reflections have led to the contention that Jesus walked on the water. The purpose of the story is to draw attention to Jesus and is thus motivated by christology and not history.

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<sup>56</sup> I am convinced that we can use the word "sect" in describing three Jewish groups: the Samaritans, the Essenes (including the Qumranites), and the Palestinian Jesus Movement, but we need to jettison the often pejorative overtones of a "sect." These three Jewish groups were "sects," because they separated from the larger body, were perceived as different from the larger social group, and were persecuted by some representatives from that larger body. See R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Community as Sectarian Movements," in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 1–23; B. Wilson, "The Sociology of Sects," in *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 89–120.

<sup>57</sup> B. Witherington urges us to contemplate Jesus in light of the Wisdom traditions; see his *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994).

The Transfiguration serves to elevate Jesus' status and is mythological christology. That is, the motive behind the story is not history; it is christology and celebration.

It is improbable that Jesus raised Jairus's daughter, the widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus from the dead. Such stories elevate Jesus and seem to reflect the early kerygma (proclamation) that stressed his divine or messianic qualities.

Christology has created the account of Jesus' calming of the storm and sea. Again, the motive is to proclaim Jesus as lord of the cosmos.

It is improbable that Jesus established the institution of the Eucharist as described in the synoptics. The liturgies in early Judaism and in the Palestinian Jesus Movement certainly helped shape this account.

Beliefs in Jesus as the charismatic miracle worker probably created the accounts of his feeding 4000 and 5000. Surely, the motive is not history; it is christology and motivated by "The Great Man" sociology.

The needs of the confessing community seem to have created the accounts in which Jesus predicts he will be crucified. If Jesus predicted his crucifixion, then why do his disciples seem so ill-prepared for the event? If he predicted his crucifixion, then how does one explain the dire scene in Gethsemane and Jesus' cry from the cross? The gospels at this point were clearly written from the resurrection faith and backward to the crucifixion and then to the early years of Jesus.

Unbridled enthusiasm has led to the expansionistic descriptions of Jesus' resurrection appearances (esp. John 21). These accounts clearly reflect the resurrection faith of Jesus' followers. The resurrection faith of Jesus' followers was one of the main catalysts for proclaiming the "good news" and writing the gospels.

One should not evaluate these elements as if they are not important. They reveal the importance, and historicity, of the belief in Jesus' resurrection by his followers (cf. Rom 1:1-6).

#### 4.2. *A List of Possible Aspects of Jesus' Life and Teaching*

In contrast to the former category, some aspects of Jesus' life are relatively reliable historically. Historians have successfully shown that numerous sayings and actions of Jesus are less creations of the evangelists, or Jesus' followers, and more a dimension of Jesus' history. I shall now present my list of the most important ones.

1. Jesus may have been born in Bethlehem, despite Matthew's and Luke's use of scripture to prove it.



2. He was most likely related to the Baptist and could have been of priestly lineage.
3. He may have been a Davidian. At least three strata (Paul, Matthew, Luke) preserve this tradition.
4. He possibly went to Jerusalem for his Bar Mitzvah, since he was very Jewish.
5. Jesus may not have been a “carpenter,” and his parables connect him more with farming and fishing. This conclusion derives from studying all four gospels, and examining the important variant in Mark 6:3.
6. It is conceivable Jesus may have worn a *tsitsith* (cf. Num 15:39 “You shall have it as a fringe...”), and conceivably a phylactery. The woman with a hemorrhage seems to have touched Jesus’ fringe garment (Matt 9:20, Luke 8:44; cf. Mark 6:56 and Matt 14:36). If he wore a *tsitsith* then he most likely wore a phylactery, at least on special religious occasions.
7. It is perhaps likely that he spent all night in prayer dedicated to God (Luke 6:12). The habit is clearly stated in Luke, reflected in Mark, and explains the sleeping disciples in Gethsemane on Jesus’ last night.
8. It is possible that Jesus had a messianic self-understanding; and it is conceivable that he may have considered he was the designated Messiah. These aspects of his life permeate virtually all sources. Jesus’ messianic self-understanding may entail that he therefore could not proclaim it or acknowledge it; only God knows and can disclose who is the Messiah (*Pss. Sol. 17, 4 Ezra*).
9. Despite the embellishments in the triumphal entry, Jesus may have entered Jerusalem on an animal and with public fanfare. The action makes sense in terms of our study of pilgrimages and sociological studies of Jerusalem at Passover time in Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup>
10. Some members of the Sanhedrin were perhaps behind his arrest, but they may not have contemplated his death. The evidence is again well attested by the gospels and comments by Josephus.
11. It is only barely conceivable that Jesus contemplated a place for Gentiles in his community. It is not impossible that the stories

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<sup>58</sup> Still one of the best studies of life in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus is J. Jeremias’s *Jerusalem during the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

about the Syrophoenician woman and the centurion indicate some change in his attitude to Gentiles. But Peter's inability to defend himself in Acts (a book that is pro-Gentile) with the inclusion of the centurion, remains a major obstacle against the hypothesis that Jesus eventually included Gentiles.

12. It is barely conceivable that Jesus predicted the Temple's destruction when he overturned the tables of the money changers.

#### 4.3. *Relatively Certain Aspects of Jesus' Life and Teaching*

Thanks to careful research by scholars in Germany, France, Sweden, England, Israel, and the United States, and since the end of the seventeenth century, we can report that some aspects of Jesus' life and teaching are relatively certain.

1. Jesus was born in Palestine, probably in or near Nazareth. He was never called Jesus of Bethlehem but frequently Jesus of Nazareth.
2. Nothing can be known with any probability about the years before his public ministry. The intra-canonical gospels and Josephus make no mention of his childhood or youth.
3. He was probably not born into a poor family. If he knew scripture as well as his contemporaries claimed, he must have spent vast amounts of time studying, and that is not possible if he was a peasant.
4. Unlike many learned persons (notably Polybius, Philo, Paul, and Josephus), Jesus did not travel widely. It is highly improbable that he left "the Land of Israel," or ancient Palestine.
5. Jesus joined John the Baptist, who was probably his teacher. The traditions preserved in the intra-canonical gospels, and especially Mark and John, have proved to be relatively reliable regarding Jesus' relation with John the Baptizer.
6. If the Fourth Gospel preserves reliable historical information about Jesus' early ministry, he led a baptist movement for an indeterminate amount of time.
7. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer. The embarrassment in many places in the New Testament about this episode confirms its historicity.
8. Jesus probably interpreted Isa 40:3 differently from John the Baptist and the Qumranites. Unlike them he did not think a Voice had called him into the wilderness. For Jesus, the Voice was calling from the wilderness.

9. He left the wilderness and taught on the outskirts of cities and villages.
10. Jesus was charismatic, an eloquent speaker, and powerfully influenced many Jews.
11. Jesus was gifted as a story teller and poet.
12. He spoke with uncommon authority and directly, without citing authorities.<sup>59</sup>
13. He was not a student of Hillel, and was certainly not the Righteous Teacher of Qumran.
14. He was politically anti-revolutionary and he was not a Zealot,<sup>60</sup> but it is also absurd to assume, or to conclude, that Jesus had no political agenda.<sup>61</sup> After all, John the Baptist was beheaded by a Herodian ruler and Jesus was put to death by the command of a Roman governor.
15. Jesus was often invited to elaborate dinners, and knew the joy of companionship and wine.
16. Some Pharisees admired him, sought his company, and probably warned him about problems.
17. Other Pharisees sought to entrap him, especially those from Judaea and Jerusalem.
18. Jesus taught in Galilee and Judaea, and probably in Samaria.
19. He performed miracles, notably the healing miracles, because his opponents affirmed that point by explaining how he was able to do miracles. They said he was possessed of a devil or was the Devil. For the evangelists, Jesus' miracles revealed that he had been sent to them by God.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> As R. Riesner points out, the messianic authority-motif is a pre-Easter part of Jewish theology. See Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 2nd ed., 1984), 352. Also see Riesner, "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. H. Wansbrough, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 187–209.

<sup>60</sup> For an informed study of Jesus and the revolutionaries of his day, see R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987).

<sup>61</sup> See esp. two major books on Jesus and politics: E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule, eds., *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism*, esp. 209–242. Mendels demonstrates how the concept of kingship changes in the period from 63 BCE to 135 CE.

<sup>62</sup> See especially P. Fiebig, *Jüdische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911); and R. Heiligenthal, *Werke als Zeichen*, WUNT 2.9 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1983).

20. Jesus spoke primarily Aramaic, but he knew Hebrew, Greek, and a little Latin.
21. The beatitudes in Matthew and Luke probably derive ultimately from Jesus. Beatitudes have been found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (as well as in *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch*); hence this manner of speaking was not created by his followers.
22. His favorite means of speaking was in parables and they ring true to his intentionality; that is, God's Kingdom was now dawning in the present. Jesus' parables are closest to those of the Pharisees. It seems evident that only Jesus and the Pharisees used parables in significant ways as a means of teaching.<sup>63</sup> We derive the conclusion that Jesus' favorite form of teaching was the parable from the synoptics and the *Gospel of Thomas*.
23. Jesus most likely taught a love command that was unique. Jesus elevated the concept of love and made it central in his teachings; he even seems to have taught that his followers should love their enemies. Ironically, perhaps, the best elucidation of this point is by the Jew David Flusser in his chapter "Love" in the revision of his *Jesus*.<sup>64</sup> We arrive at this solid conclusion by studying all four intra-canonical gospels, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the letters of Paul (esp. 1 Cor 13).
24. Jesus probably quoted only scripture that is now canonized, but he was influenced by other sacred Jewish writings.
25. He was obsessed with God. He did not proclaim himself, but was emphatically monotheistic.
26. Some of his statements indicate that he probably thought the Kingdom would dawn in his lifetime (Mark 9:1). Yet, as shown earlier, Jesus probably did not know the precise time of the end of time (Mark 13:32).
27. Jesus certainly demanded absolute commitment to God's Rule. This point readily appears from the study of the intra-canonical gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas*.
28. He probably taught a form of the Lord's Prayer. Since the differences between Matthew's and Luke's versions of the Lord's Prayer

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<sup>63</sup> See S. Safrai, who rightly states, Jesus "employed educational techniques such as the parable that were common only in Pharisaic teaching. . . ." See Safrai, "Jesus and the Hasidim," *Jerusalem Perspective* 42, 43, 44 (January/June 1994): 3–22.

<sup>64</sup> D. Flusser with R. S. Notley, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997; aug. ed., 1998); see esp. "Love," 81–92.

- are numerous and significant, it seems to follow that Matthew and Luke, at this point, derive from two independent sources.<sup>65</sup>
29. Jesus most likely thought he was “the Son of God,” but it is far from clear what that meant to him. This title is found in his parables and in other early strata, including the Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers in two independent sources, Mark and the *Gospel of Thomas*. Jesus’ self understanding of himself as “God’s Son” must not be confused with the Nicene formula.<sup>66</sup>
  30. Unlike the Qumranites Jesus had low, even no, social barriers and virtually no requirements for “admission” into his group.
  31. At least during portions of his ministry he included only Jews; and it is barely conceivable, at best, that he thought his mission also included Gentiles.
  32. Jesus included women in his group, and probably broke with many in his culture about their status in society. This conclusion derives from studying the intra-canonical gospels, especially the Gospel of John.<sup>67</sup>
  33. Jesus probably never broke the Sabbath according to the Torah, but he certainly broke Sabbath legislations developed by some of the Jewish groups or sects.
  34. Jesus was a very devout Jew. In fact, he was more Jewish than Philo, who mixed Jewish traditions in the caldron of Greek ideals and myths, and Josephus, who explained Jewish theology as if it was like Greek philosophy.
  35. Jesus may have been married;<sup>68</sup> he certainly was close to Mary Magdalene. Why did the Fourth evangelist have Jesus say to Mary, “Do not touch me?” (John 20:1)? The text is usually mistranslated, “Do not hold me.”
  36. It is virtually certain that Jesus chose twelve disciples. Otherwise it is inexplicable why his followers would have created that tradition and placed Judas within it. Thus, it is possible that Jesus had

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<sup>65</sup> See the chapters in Charlesworth, Harding, and Kiley, eds., *The Lord’s Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era*.

<sup>66</sup> For further reflections, see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*, 131–164.

<sup>67</sup> Among the many excellent books on the subject of Jesus and women is B. Witherington’s *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, SNTSMS 51 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>68</sup> For the argument that Jesus was married, see W. E. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), esp. 13–14, 187.

more than a mere spiritual revolution in mind. This conclusion derives from the application of the criterion of embarrassment.

37. It seems likely that James and John, the sons of Zebedee, requested thrones beside him. The embarrassment of the tradition is obvious when one sees how Matthew shifts Mark's request from them to their mother.
38. Jesus did not found the "church," but he probably called into being a special eschatological group. This conclusion is apparent from a study of the intra-canonical gospels, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and Josephus.
39. His disciples seemed to misunderstand him, and Peter most likely denied him. Again, multiple attestation tends to prove this conclusion.
40. Jesus' involvement with the Baptist, who was killed by the political ruler named Herod Antipas (4 BCE–39 CE), and his crucifixion, according to the Roman governor's orders, prove that some leaders saw him as a political person and threat.
41. Jesus probably developed a view of purity that was diametrically opposed to that espoused by the leading priests in the Temple, notably Annas (6–15 CE) and Joseph Caiaphas (18–36 CE), who were influenced by the rules for purification that can be found, for example, in the *Temple Scroll*, col. 50. These rules took the laws in the Torah (Old Testament) and exaggerated them so that the average Jew could not afford them.

It is also evident that the Galilean Jesus intentionally—and thereby polemically—opposed some of the purity laws being promulgated by the priestly establishment in Jerusalem, as indicated by Mark 7:1–23.<sup>69</sup> Archaeological excavations in Lower Galilee and Judea reveal *miqvaoth* (Jewish ritual baths) that are sometimes massive and often numerous, and stone vessels (cups, plates, pitchers, and large vessels [cf. John 2:6]). These *miqvaoth* and stone vessels are fashioned—often at great expense—for the observance of the Jewish rules for purity that began to develop shortly before the time of Jesus. The gospels record that Jesus was tested in Galilee, even persecuted, by Pharisees and scribes sent out from Jerusalem by the priests in authority (cf. Mark 7:1).

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<sup>69</sup> I continue to be impressed with M. J. Borg's claim that Jesus substituted "mercy for holiness as the paradigm for Israel's collective life." Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus*, 261.

42. Jesus taught in the Temple and admired it.
43. Jesus probably revered most aspects of the cult in the Temple. He probably called the Temple “my Father’s house” (John 2:26). The evidence indicates that his followers were created by and did not originate such traditions. For example, after Jesus’ death Peter and John ascend to the Temple “at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour”<sup>70</sup> (see esp. Acts 3:1).
44. Jesus went to Jerusalem in order to fulfill the injunction of the Torah and to celebrate Passover in the Holy City. That seems to be an obvious inference from a study of the intra-canonical gospels and a perception of Jesus’ Jewishness.
45. He probably overturned the tables of the money changers, and it is conceivable that he was protesting some excesses of the cult and the excessive demands for ritual purity. This interpretation makes best sense of all the data we possess, especially the Jewish writings from the time of Jesus.
46. It is highly probable that he thought he might be murdered. He seems to think he may be *stoned* outside Jerusalem as had the miracle worker named *Honi*, but it is unlikely that he ever contemplated he would be crucified. This insight seems to derive from the texts that suggest he had an intuition he might be stoned, and from a study of the four gospels and the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>71</sup>
47. It is probable that Jesus feared the coming danger and death when he prayed before his arrest, looking down on the Temple from the Garden of Gethsemane.
48. It is not absolutely certain that Judas “betrayed” him. The witness of the Fourth Gospel must be neither ignored nor exaggerated. Since the authorities obviously were able to recognize Jesus, Judas did not betray Jesus’ identity, but then what did he betray?
49. During his Last Supper Jesus probably celebrated a meal with Passover in mind and said something similar to that found in Paul (1 Cor 11:23–25 [v. 26 is Paul’s addition]), but stressing the dawning of God’s Rule and the importance of the Twelve within it.<sup>72</sup> Obviously, central to his words was a plea to remember him:

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<sup>70</sup> The “ninth hour” is also the hour when Jesus died, according to Mark (15:34). How much theology has shaped that tradition?

<sup>71</sup> For further reflections, see Charlesworth, “Jesus’ Concept of God and His Self-Understanding,” in *Jesus within Judaism*, 131–164.

<sup>72</sup> See the similar reflections in P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 115.

“Do this in remembrance of me.” The remembrance of the pre-crucified figure is central to the Eucharist. We know this from a study of the traditions in Paul’s authentic letters and the four intra-canonical gospels.

50. Jesus was condemned to die from crucifixion by Pilate who was most likely staying in Herod’s palace in the Upper City of Jerusalem, as the three names *praetorium* (the governor’s residence), *lithostroton* (the large public elegantly stone pavement), and *gabbatha* (the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *lithostroton*) signify.<sup>73</sup>
51. He was tied or nailed to the cross by Roman soldiers.<sup>74</sup> We obtain this information from the four intra-canonical gospels, from archaeological research, and from early traditions in the *Gospel of Peter*.
52. Jesus seems to have died confused and his last words were most likely “My God, my God, why...?” The criterion of embarrassment helps at this point.
53. After Jesus’ crucifixion his followers fled. Some probably went back to Galilee (John 21). Many who were earlier bonded to him most likely looked back on his life and admitted “we had hoped” (the Emmaus story in Luke 24:[12]13–27). The embarrassment of his followers and multiple attestation lift this point to a very high level of probability.
54. It is possible, but faith is necessary to affirm, that Jesus was raised by God. Some leading Jews, especially Lapide and Flusser, contemplate this confession as possible historically.<sup>75</sup> The resurrection faith of Jesus’ followers makes sense in light of early Jewish theology (esp. Dan 12, 4Q521 *On Resurrection*, and the *Amidah*). Belief in Jesus’ resurrection by God is well attested in the intra-

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<sup>73</sup> Still vividly memorable are the days spent with P. Benoit in the Old City of Jerusalem. During that time he convinced me that these three terms must refer to Herod’s Palace and not to the Antonia Fortress. See Benoit, “Praetorium, Lithostroton and Gabbatha,” in *Jesus and the Gospel*, trans. B. Weatherhead (New York: Seabury, 1973), 1:167–188.

<sup>74</sup> See the study by J. Zias and Charlesworth in Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

<sup>75</sup> P. Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, trans. W. C. Linss (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1983); Flusser, *Jesus*, 175–177 and in private conversations. Contrast Bishop Spong’s contention that the resurrection is built on out-dated cosmology. J. Spong, *This Hebrew Lord* (New York; Seabury, 1974), 164–166, 179–181.



canonical and extra-canonical gospels, Paul, and other very early sources.

55. Mary Magdalene, not Peter, was probably the first to see him after the resurrection.<sup>76</sup> The criterion of embarrassment and the tendencies of the sources help us comprehend this probability. That is, the New Testament theologian as well as the New Testament historian should perceive that the tradition regarding Magdalene's experience of the resurrected Jesus is primary and was later replaced by the tradition regarding Peter. Those who proclaimed the crucified was the Messiah would be publicly ridiculed by the claim that a woman made the confession and not the leader of Jesus' group.

Summary. It has been difficult to resist the temptation to turn each entry in these three lists into a separate study. The three lists contain some new discoveries and perspectives that appeared unexpectedly as I focused on the levels of assurance that might be possible regarding the fruits of Jesus Research.<sup>77</sup>

#### *5. How Do My Conclusions Compare with Those Offered by Other Experts?*

With E. P. Sanders, D. Flusser, G. Vermes, and N. T. Wright—as with many other specialists in Jesus research—I wish to stress that Jesus' life and teachings must be understood within the world of Second Temple Judaism, that we can know a lot about him, and that what we are learning makes eminent sense within what is now clear regarding early Jewish thought and practice. With virtually all scholars who are focusing on Jesus research, and not motivated by questing for a Jesus that is attractive to faith, I conclude that Jesus' message is deeply indebted to Jewish apocalyptic thought and is fundamentally eschatological. One needs to obtain a balance between noting that Jesus' message must not be confused with that of the evangelists and the perception that there is continuity between Jesus and them.

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<sup>76</sup> For further reflections and data, see Charlesworth, "Is It Conceivable that Jesus Married Mary Magdalene?" (in press).

<sup>77</sup> The reader may find some insights by comparing my list with one published by Sanders in his *Jesus and Judaism*, 326–327.

With B. Chilton I am persuaded that topography is important and the place where Jesus was with John the Baptizer is precisely the spot that ancient traditions associate with Elijah's ascent into heaven. Perhaps here in such a spot so electric with imagined ascents, Jesus and the Baptizer might have had "apocalyptic moments." Chilton also seems correct to suggest that Jesus had problems with the charge that he was a *mamzer* (not so much a "bastard" as one who could not prove to the demanding Jewish authorities that he had a certified Jewish father and mother).<sup>78</sup>

I was surprised to discover that Jesus most likely chose twelve men (my research is thus in harmony with the independent discoveries of Sanders and Meier). With J. P. Meier, and many others, I conclude that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer. I am convinced that Meier incorrectly jettisons the use of the so-called apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of the New Testament in understanding Jesus' message. While I am sensitive to J. D. Crossan's inclusion of the extra-canonical gospels, I think he exaggerates their importance.<sup>79</sup>

While I find much that is appealing and pioneering in Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*, I must part company with him when he claims that "the Fourth Gospel" has "been effectively knocked out of the quest" (p. 41). I sense a breakup of the scholarly consensus that the Gospel of John is irrelevant for Jesus research and that it contains valuable records of pre-70 Jerusalem and the historical Jesus. Quite surprisingly, during the millennium celebration in Jerusalem, focused on Jesus and archaeology, numerous archaeologists voiced the opinion that the Fourth Gospel is full of valuable details and insights that are essential for reconstructing the social setting of Jesus, his life and his teachings.<sup>80</sup>

I find too anachronistic or misleading both Crossan's claim that Jesus should be portrayed as a Mediterranean peasant and the title of Meier's volumes that Jesus was a marginal Jew. I do not think a study of the economics of Galilee permits us to imagine peasants.<sup>81</sup> Small farms and

<sup>78</sup> See my further reflections in "Jesus and Psychobiography" (in press).

<sup>79</sup> See Charlesworth, "Research on the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* II 25.5 (1988): 3919–3968, esp. 3934–3940.

<sup>80</sup> See Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>81</sup> See the methodological problems in reconstructing ancient economies by M. I. Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, Sather Classical Lectures 43 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); D. E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 8 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986); E. W. Stegemann and W. Stegemann, "The Economic Situation of Ancient Mediterranean Societies," in *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr.

fishing villages do not suggest a “peasant” economy, if we understand a “peasant” as one who is a rustic of limited economic means. In contrast to Judea, the major means of commerce in Lower Galilee was the barter system, and one could avoid taxations by swapping commodities, such as olives and fish which were plentiful. It is also clear that there were many different cultures in the Mediterranean area.

Likewise, to portray Jesus as a “marginal” Jew, as placarded in the title (but not the contents) of Meier’s volumes, suggests that Jesus was not deeply religious and a devout Jew and that he was on the fringes of Jewish society. Yet, it has become obvious to many experts that Jesus was a devout Jew and belongs within the mainstream of early Jewish thought, sharing insights and commitments especially with Pharisees (like Hillel) and also with Essenes, as well as with the baptist groups, the Samaritans, the mystics, the Enoch groups, and Jews who were not highly educated.

I am impressed how much of a consensus has developed among some of the leaders in Jesus Research. From different perspectives the leading experts in the study (not search) of the historical Jesus are convinced that scholars today have far more reliable historical knowledge about what Jesus said and did than our teachers had been willing to admit.

## 6. Conclusion

During much of the nineteenth century it has been vogue to report in the academy and in the seminary—but certainly never in the church—that we know practically nothing about Jesus. This was the conclusion of Bultmann and his influential school in Germany and America. About all that could be known was the sheer isolated fact that Jesus had existed and been crucified. Notice these words of Bultmann:

I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.<sup>82</sup>

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(Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999), 15–52. While the economy of Palestine, especially Lower Galilee, was simple—agrarian and pastoral—the success of farming and fishing allowed for reserves necessary to observe the sabbatical year. See E. Gabba, “The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3:94–167, esp. 107.

<sup>82</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 14.

When I have cited this passage from Bultmann scholars have told me I misquoted Bultmann. They were convinced that Bultmann claimed only that we could know almost nothing about Jesus' personality.

I cannot agree with Bultmann that the "early Christian sources show no interest" in Jesus' life, while I would agree that they were not interested in his personality—that is, in the modern psychological meaning of the term. Bultmann developed this position before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Codices and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and so the question arises what difference they make. For Bultmann they did not make a difference.

For me they do make a significant difference. I would stress two points: Among the Nag Hammadi Codices the *Gospel of Thomas* is clearly a source for Jesus research. And while the Dead Sea Scrolls are not "sources about Jesus"—that is, none of the Dead Sea Scrolls mention Jesus or any of his disciples—they are "a source" for this research, providing terms, perspectives, and methods of interpreting scripture that help us understand him.<sup>83</sup>

A moratorium on the quest of the historical Jesus is the hallmark of the Bultmannian School; yet we should not forget the inconsistencies in some of Bultmann's work. While he did stress that faith requires only the givenness of Jesus (the *dass*) he did write a major book on Jesus. In this book he argued that we can know quite a lot about Jesus' teaching concerning the coming of God's kingdom and about the will of God.

Since 1980, "Jesus Research"—as noted at the outset—is the technical term that defines the work of many New Testament scholars, such as E. P. Sanders, J. Meier, G. Vermes, D. Flusser, D. Mendels, and myself. We are not primarily interested in, or blinded by, theological concerns. In contrast the term "the Third Quest of the historical Jesus" characterizes the work of some New Testament scholars, like M. J. Borg, who are seeking to discern Jesus' meaning for Christian faith.<sup>84</sup> While the distinction between historians and theologians in Jesus Research was evident in the eighties, it is not so clear today, as more and more scholars are interested

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<sup>83</sup> Most of these are discussed in Charlesworth, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*.

<sup>84</sup> See Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. The Christian and theological content of the book derives from the lectures Borg presented to a conference of the United Church of Christ. For a succinct and sensitive critique of Borg and others in the Jesus Seminar, see L. R. Donelson, "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," *Insights* (Spring 1997): 3–13, 47. For a scathing dismissal of the Jesus Seminar, see L. T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

in the study of the historical Jesus in terms of secular history and the theology of the evangelists.

Of course, I am also interested in theology, but I am aware of how too often, over the past 200 years, theological issues contaminated historiography. Literary and non-literary studies have given us many valuable insights into the historical Jesus. Jesus is not some unknown person hidden behind the confessions in the gospels.<sup>85</sup> Along with many scholars, I have concluded that we know more about Jesus than about almost any other first-century Jew, with the exceptions of Paul and Josephus, both of whom—unlike Jesus—wrote numerous epistles or books. We certainly know far more about Jesus than his near contemporary Hillel.<sup>86</sup>

Some Christians—especially Roman Catholics<sup>87</sup>—are shocked to learn that Jesus actually lived and was a Jew from Galilee. Others find such conclusions difficult to relate to their contention that Christianity is pure theology untainted by historical issues. For Jews, Jesus research, let alone the quest, can be irrelevant. For others, like D. Flusser in his *Jesus* (1997, 1998), Jesus' message and life are powerful and perhaps the greatest moments in the history of religions.

The process of learning is not to move from questions to assured results. The educated person is one who begins to grasp how much can never really be known about the past. The savant is one who has moved from rather insignificant questions to a world of questioning. Historians will never be able to provide data and insights that will cause all readers to answer in similar fashion such questions as “Who was Jesus? What was his purpose?” A surprising consensus has developed, thanks to two hundred years of intensive historical research, that Jesus' fundamental message was centered in the proclamation that God's Rule (the Kingdom of God) was beginning to dawn during his life and ministry. Many specialists in Jesus research agree that we do have reliable historical information concerning a man from Nazareth called Jesus the Son of Joseph. He certainly did not attempt to establish a new religion that would be different from the Judaism that nurtured him. He set in motion a new movement for the renewal of Judaism that was similar to other

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<sup>85</sup> See the same point made by J. Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 10.

<sup>86</sup> See the chapters in Charlesworth and Johns, eds., *Hillel and Jesus*.

<sup>87</sup> I know this not from reading books but from talking to Roman Catholics who are disillusioned about the church's failure to teach them what might be known, historically and sociologically, about Jesus.

renewal movements within Judaism that likewise—in various ways and with different intensities—stressed the intensification of Torah observance: the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Enoch groups, and the freedom fighters.<sup>88</sup>

We need to continue to explore such questions as these: “Why was he crucified? How and in what ways was Jesus influenced by contemporary Jewish ideas? How reliably do the evangelists report pre-70 Jewish thinking? Who was the first Christian?” Such questions have ushered in a new phase of Jesus research.

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<sup>88</sup> G. Theissen drew attention to these renewal movements; I have added the Enoch groups that were influential within Palestinian Judaism from about 300 BCE until 70 CE, at least. See Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

# METHOD IN A CRITICAL STUDY OF JESUS

BRUCE D. CHILTON

## 1. *Aim*

Confusion has inhibited critical understanding of Jesus.

Within the study of the New Testament reference to Jesus is unavoidable; the effort of neo-orthodoxy to rely on the “Christ of faith” trumping “the historical Jesus” has failed.<sup>1</sup> The only decision to be made is how reference to Jesus is to be developed, not whether it can be avoided.

Since the Enlightenment it has been evident that the Jesus of the canonical texts is not identical with the Jesus of Christian doctrine, although some scholars still try to square history with the circle of faith.<sup>2</sup>

Familiarity with Judaism is rudimentary within New Testament research; some scholars still assert that any similarity with a rabbinic institution must be attributed to Jesus, rather than his followers (who—it is supposed—were non-Judaic Hellenists<sup>3</sup>). Yet figures in history are generally of significance owing to their distinctiveness among their contemporaries. If Jesus were indistinguishable from other rabbis of his period, it seems unlikely he would be an object of study, much less of worship.

Still less defensibly, some scholars persist in assuming that any similarity between Jesus and Judaism must be a late import, ignoring the

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion, see *Redeeming Time: The Wisdom of Ancient Jewish and Christian Festal Calendars* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 1–20. (For the purpose of this article, authorship is attributed to the present writer unless otherwise indicated.) As ever in scholarship, there are attempts to revive eclipsed fashions; see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> See Leander E. Keck, *Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), and the review in *TJT* 19 (2003): 80–82; B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, *NTTS* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994; paperback, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See Geza Vermes, *Jesus in His Jewish Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), and the review in *Int* 58, no. 2 (2004): 210. For a survey of similar attempts and efforts to correct them, see “Jesus and Judaism,” *New Blackfriars* 63 (1982): 237–244; “Jesus within Judaism,” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Part Two, Historical Syntheses*, ed. J. Neusner, *HO* 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 262–284.

depth of the analogies between Judaic sources and Christian writings of all periods and all stages of their composition.<sup>4</sup> The teachers we call rabbis were masters (to varying degrees) of parable and exposition and judgment and ethics and purity and health and healing and other aspects of covenantal wisdom. It has long been commonplace in the field to acknowledge that the formalism of a rabbinate, including a concern for succession and a notion of a syllabus to be mastered by disciples, only prevailed with the emergence of rabbis as the basis of systemic redefinition of Judaism in the period after 70 CE.<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that there are analogies between the gospels and Judaic literature, including literature of the rabbinic period, and that Jesus is called “rabbi” more than any other name in the gospels.<sup>6</sup> The dating of all the sources, and the relationships among the documents, naturally need to be taken into account, but the fact of comparable materials remains.

Comparison has been thwarted, however, by a positivist approach to literary sources that is in its way as crude as a positivist approach to Jesus. Attention has been limited to the issue of whether the gospels borrow from Judaic literature. That limitation is further obscured by referring to this concern as a search for “parallels,” although the very definition of parallel lines is that they do not meet at all. Our discipline’s continuing affliction with obscurantist language reveals its difficulty of coming to terms with Judaism.

In fact, borrowings between Christianity and Judaism go both ways insofar as the written evidence attests.<sup>7</sup> Whether borrowings occur from

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<sup>4</sup> See John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991). His book may be read as an extended attempt to construct a portrait of Jesus without reference to Judaism. “Jesus within Judaism” criticizes this approach.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. H. Lapin, “Rabbi,” *ABD* 5: 600–602. As a matter of interest, we might note that the earlier article of P. Parker (“Rabbi, Rabbouni,” *IDB* 4:3) comes to much the same conclusion. See also *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1984), also published with the subtitle, *Jesus’ Own Interpretation of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1984), 34–35; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, *ABRL* 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> See “Judaism,” 398–405; “Rabbinic Traditions and Writings,” 651–660; “Targums,” 800–804; in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Howard (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992); *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); “Jesus, A Galilean Rabbi,” in *Who was Jesus? A Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. P. Copan and C. A. Evans (Louisville: Westminster; John Knox, 2001), 154–161.

<sup>7</sup> “The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History,” written with P. R. Davies, *CBQ* 40 (1978): 514–546; “Isaac and the Second Night: A Consideration,” *Bib* 61 (1980): 78–88;



document to document is usually not provable, since the proportion of writings that has survived is small, and the relationship of written sources to substantial interaction among teachers (Christian, Judaic, and others) is unknown. In any case, the adjudication between what is “borrowed” and what is “original” has proven susceptible to apologetics.

What we can ascertain is that there are analogies between the gospels and Judaic literature. These analogies might be matters of comparable thought or expression, of common cultural reference (for instance, to the Temple), of mutual exegesis (of Isaiah, say), or of joint usage of a tradition that links them (the proverbial truth that you are measured with the measure you measure with, for example).<sup>8</sup> However analogies are characterized, no finding for or against what is usually called the historicity of the gospels can be buttressed by observing them, but the simple fact of a relationship with Judaic literature has been well established.

The gospels refer back to Jesus as their source, but there is no “historical Jesus” in the sense of a person whose deeds and character are accessible by means of verifiable public evidence. Expectations of that positivist kind have been disappointed for more than a century, but for the most part history is no longer defined in that reductionist way in any case.<sup>9</sup>

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“Irenaeus on Isaac,” in *Studia Patristica* XXIII, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 643–647; “John xii 34 and Targum Isaiah lii 13,” *NovT* 22 (1980): 176–178; *Targumic Approaches to the Gospels: Essays in the Mutual Definition of Judaism and Christianity*, Studies in Judaism (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 81–84.

<sup>8</sup> See “Targumic Transmission and Dominical Tradition,” *Gospel Perspectives* 1 (1980): 21–45; “A Comparative Study of Synoptic Development: The Dispute between Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums and the Beelzebul Controversy in the Gospels,” *JBL* 101 (1982): 553–562; “Sennacherib: A Synoptic Relationship among Targumim of Isaiah,” in *Targumic Approaches to the Gospels*, 163–177, and *Society of Biblical Literature 1986 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 544–554; “Reference to the Targumim in the Exegesis of the New Testament,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers*, ed. E. H. Lovering (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 77–82; “Four Types of Comparison between the Targumim and the New Testament,” *JAB* 2 (2000): 163–188.

<sup>9</sup> See “Biblical Authority, Canonical Criticism, and Generative Exegesis,” in *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, BIS 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 343–355. An exception to this general rule is the program of “The Jesus Seminar”; see R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*, eds., (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993). The volume’s dedication to Thomas Jefferson makes its Enlightenment perspective evident.

Only the literarily historical Jesus is a fact of reading. We cannot understand the documents unless we identify the Jesus they believe they are referring to. That Jesus, of course, is an object of their belief. He becomes historical for us in the literary sense when we discover that we must suppose facts about Jesus (for example, his teaching of the kingdom with an eschatological meaning<sup>10</sup>) in order to explain the generation of a given text. *For that reason, Jesus is a figure of critical history to the extent, and only to the extent, that he permits us to explain how certain texts arose in their mutual relations and in their literary and cultural milieus.*

Literary comparison of the New Testament with other sources (Jewish, Hellenistic, Ugaritic, Egyptian, or Persian) by itself does not solve “the problem of the historical Jesus,” but it can proceed in a way which does not exacerbate it, and which may be productive for further analysis. Finally, the “historical Jesus” is a variable in the overall equation of how the New Testament arose; for that reason, comparative study with other sources may be expected to provide that variable with more specific value than is possible in positivistic assertions about Jesus. That next stage of comparison, historical rather than literary, involves inference on the basis of the sources that refer to Jesus.

## 2. *A Generative Exegesis: Six Types of Eucharist in the New Testament*

A generative exegesis maintains a particular focus among the many critical questions that arise in the course of reading. The issue of generation is: in association with what practices and in which communities did a text arise, so as to attest those practices, their emotional valences, and the meanings attributed to them? That issue is cognate with the task of sorting out the purposes, development, and dating of ancient Judaic literature, and the analogies it offers can prove helpful.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God: Studying the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> See “Varieties and Tendencies of Midrash: Rabbinic Interpretations of Isaiah 24:23,” *Gospel Perspectives* 3 (1983): 9–32; *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum*, JSOTSup 23 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982); *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus, and Notes*, AB 11 (Wilmington, DE: Glazier; Edinburgh: Clark, 1987); “Shebna, Eliakim, and the Promise to Peter,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner, P. Borgen, E. S. Frerichs, and R. Horsley (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 311–326; “Commenting on the Old Testament (with Particular Reference to the Pesharim, Philo, and the Mekhilta),” in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing*

In the case of the Eucharistic texts of the New Testament, the diversity of extant witnesses alerts us to the possibility that a variety of practices and communities might be reflected. The breadth and depth of the textual distribution invite us to take up the case of Eucharistic praxis here.

For over a decade, I have developed an account of the development of Eucharistic praxis within primitive Christianity, beginning with

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*Scripture, Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 122–140; “Recent and Prospective Discussion of *Bar Enash*,” in *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding: Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox*, ed. J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, and N. S. Sarna, *Brown Judaic Studies* 173 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 119–137; “A Coin of Three Realms: Matthew 17:24–27,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl, and S. E. Porter, *JSOTSup* 87 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 269–282; “[*hos*] *phragellion ek skhoinion* [John 2:15],” in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. W. Horbury (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 330–344; “The Son of Man: Human and Heavenly,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynek*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. van Belle, and J. Verheyden, *BETL* 100 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 203–218, also published in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Religious and Theological Studies*, ed. J. Neusner, *South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism* 81 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 97–114; “Typologies of Memra and the Fourth Gospel,” *Targum Studies* 1 (1992): 89–100; “Jesus and the Question of Anti-Semitism,” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, ed. C. A. Evans and D. A. Hagner (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 39–52; “God as ‘Father’ in the Targumim, in Non-canonical Literatures of Early Judaism and Primitive Christianity, and in Matthew,” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans, *JSPSup* 14 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 151–169; “Reference to the Targumim in the Exegesis of the New Testament”; “Salvific Exile in the Isaiah Targum,” in *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, ed. J. M. Scott, *JSJSup* 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 239–247; “Two in One: Renderings of the Book of Isaiah in Targum Jonathan,” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* 2, ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, *VTSup* 70.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 547–562; “Prophecy in the Targumim,” in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity*, ed. R. M. Berchman, *South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism* 163 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 185–201; “The Brother of Jesus and the Interpretation of Scripture,” in *The Use of Sacred Books in the Ancient World*, ed. L. V. Rutgers, P. W. van der Horst, H. W. Havelaar, and L. Teugels (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 29–48; “Yochanan the Purifier and His Immersion,” *TJT* 14, no. 2 (1998): 197–212; “The Targumim and Judaism of the First Century,” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, part 3, *Where We Stand: Issues and Debates in Ancient Judaism*, vol. 2, ed. J. Neusner and A. J. Avery-Peck, *HO* 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 15–150; “Jesus und die Frage der Antisemitismus,” in *Studien zu einer neutestamentlichen Hermeneutik nach Auschwitz*, ed. P. Fiedler and G. Dautenberg, *SBAB.NT* 27 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999), 31–52; “Temple Restored, Temple in Heaven: Isaiah and the Prophets in the Targumim,” in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. J. M. Scott (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 335–362; “John the Purifier: His Immersion and His Death,” *Teologiese Studies* 57:1–2 (2001): 247–267; “Theodicy in the Targumim,” in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Antti Laato and Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 728–752.

the contributions of Jesus as a conscious practitioner of Judaism. I engaged initially with the work of anthropologists of sacrifice, in order to assess Jesus' position in relation to the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> My principal concern was to evaluate Jesus' attitudes toward and his actions within the Temple itself. But in the course of the work, I saw the direct connection between Jesus' last meals with his followers and his action in the Temple. The Eucharist emerged as a surrogate of sacrifice. Encouraged by several scholars, notably Bernhard Lang, I then undertook an exegetical study<sup>13</sup> in order to detail the evolution of the texts within the typical practices of the first Christians.

Here I wish briefly to explain the six types of Eucharist attested within the New Testament that I have identified on exegetical grounds. These types characterize the particular groups that produced them. The types attest fluidity in ritual acts, different constituent communities, and distinctive accounts of meaning. Even Jesus, on my reading, developed not one but two types of Eucharist during his life.

The Mishnah, in an effort to conceive of a heinous defect on the part of a priest involved in slaughtering the red heifer, pictures him as intending to eat the flesh or drink the blood (*m. Para* 4:3). If Jesus' words are taken with their traditional, autobiographical meaning, his Last Supper can only be understood as a deliberate break from Judaism. Either Jesus himself promulgated a new religion, or his followers did so in his name, and invented "the Last Supper" themselves. Both those alternatives find adherents today among scholars, and the debate between those who see the gospels as literally true reports and those who see them as literary fictions shows little sign of making progress.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992). See also "The Purity of the Kingdom as Conveyed in Jesus' Meals," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1992 Seminar Papers*, ed. E. H. Lovering (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 473–488; "A Generative Exegesis of Mark 7:1–23," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 3, no. 1 (1996): 18–37; "Jesus' Dispute in the Temple and the Origin of the Eucharist," *Dialogue* 29, no. 4 (1996): 17–28; *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity and Restoration*, with Craig A. Evans, AGJU 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); "Jesus, Levitical Purity, and the Development of Primitive Christianity," in *The Book of Leviticus: Composition and Reception*, ed. R. Rendtorf and Robert Kugler with S. S. Bartel, VTSup 43 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 358–382.

<sup>13</sup> *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles*, NovTSup 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Lang himself has taken up my theory and extended it into an analysis of later practices and theologies in B. Lang, *Sacred Games: A History of Christian Worship* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997). Professor Lang and I have both contributed to the recent volume edited by Albert Baumgarten, *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*, NumenSup 43 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

But in either case, the nagging question remains: if the generative act was indeed anti-sacrificial (whether that act was literal or literary), how did the cycles of traditions and the texts as they stand come to their present, sacrificial constructions?

The gospels are composite products of the various social groups that were part of Jesus' movement. When we place Eucharistic practices within the social constituencies that made the gospels into the texts we can read today, we can understand the original meaning Jesus gave to the Last Supper, and how his meaning generated others.

The Last Supper was not the only supper, just the last one. In fact, "the Last Supper" would have had no meaning apart from Jesus' well-established custom of eating with people socially. There was nothing unusual about a rabbi making social eating an instrument of his instruction, and it was part of Jesus' method from the first days of his movement in Galilee.

Many sorts of meals are attested in the literature of early Judaism. From Qumran we learn of banquets at which the community convened in order of hierarchy; Pharisees took meals within fellowships at which like-minded fellows would share the foods and the company they considered pure. Ordinary households might welcome the coming of the Sabbath with a prayer of sanctification over a cup of wine, or open a family occasion with a blessing over bread and wine.

For Jesus, eating socially with others in Israel was an enacted parable of the feast in the kingdom that was to come. The idea that God would offer festivity for all peoples on his holy mountain (see Isa 2:2–4) was a key feature in the fervent expectations of Judaism during the first century, and Jesus shared that hope, as may be seen in a saying from the source of his teaching conventionally known as "Q" (see Matt 8:11 = Luke 13:28, 29<sup>14</sup>):

Many shall come from east and west,  
and feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob  
in the kingdom of God.

Eating was a way of enacting the kingdom of God, of practicing that rule. As a result, Jesus accepted as companions people such as tax agents

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<sup>14</sup> Because my interest here is in the traditional form of the saying, prior to changes introduced in Matthew and Luke, I give a reconstructed form; see *God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom*, SNTU 1 (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979; repr., Biblical Seminar 8, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 179–201; *Pure Kingdom*, 12–14.

and others of suspect purity, and received sinners at his meals. Meals for him were signs of the kingdom of God, and all the people of God, assuming they sought forgiveness, were to have access to them.

Jesus' practice coincided to some extent with the Pharisees', although his construal of purity was unusual. Given the prominence accorded wine in his meals,<sup>15</sup> we might describe the first type of his meals—the practice of purity in anticipation of the kingdom—as a meal of sanctification, a *kiddush* of the kingdom. Indeed, there is practically no meal of Judaism with which Jesus' meals do not offer some sort of analogy, because the meal was a seal and an occasion of purity, and Jesus was concerned with what was pure. Both the nature of his concern and the character of his meals were distinctive: Israel as forgiven and willing to provide of its own produce was for him the occasion of the kingdom. That was the first type in the development of the Eucharist.

Jesus also brought his teaching into the Temple, where he insisted on his own teaching of purity. The incident that reflects the resulting dispute is usually called the "Cleansing of the Temple" (Matt 21:12–13 = Mark 11:15–17 = Luke 19:45–46 = John 2:13–17). From the point of view of the authorities there, what Jesus was after was the opposite of purification. He objected to the presence of merchants who had been given permission to sell sacrificial animals in the vast, outer court of the Temple. His objection was based on his own view of purity: Israel should offer, not priest's produce for which they bartered, but sacrifices that they brought into the Temple. He and his followers drove the animals and the sellers out of the great court with the use of force.

Jesus could not simply be dispatched as a cultic criminal. He was not attempting an onslaught upon the Temple as such; his dispute with the authorities concerned purity within the Temple. Other rabbis of his period also engaged in physical demonstrations of the purity they required in the conduct of worship. One of them, for example, is said to have driven thousands of sheep into the Temple, so that people could offer sacrifice in the manner he approved of (see *Besah* 20a–b in the Babylonian Talmud). Jesus' action was extreme, but not totally without precedent, even in the use of force.

The trigger of Jesus' arrest by the authorities of the Temple was not only his raid in the great court, but also the new meaning he imputed

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<sup>15</sup> See the order of wine followed by bread in 1 Cor 10:16; Luke 22:19–20; *Did.* 9.1–5, and the particular significance accorded the wine in Mark 14:25; Matt 26:29; Luke 22:18.

to his meals after that incident. He continued to celebrate meals as a foretaste of the kingdom, just as he had before. But his bid to change Temple praxis having failed, Jesus said of the wine, "This is my blood," and of the bread, "This is my flesh" (Matt 26:26, 28 = Mark 14:22, 24 = Luke 22:19–20 = 1 Cor 11:24–25 = Justin, *1 Apology* 66.3).

In Jesus' context, the context of his confrontation with the authorities of the Temple, his principal point was that, in the absence of a Temple that permitted his view of purity to be practiced, wine was his blood of sacrifice, and bread was his flesh of sacrifice. This meaning of "the Last Supper," then, actually evolved over a series of meals after Jesus' occupation of the Temple. During that period, Jesus claimed that wine and bread were a better sacrifice than what was offered in the Temple: at least wine and bread were Israel's own, not tokens of priestly dominance.

In essence, Jesus made his meals into a rival altar, and we may call such a reading of his words a ritual or cultic interpretation. This second type of Eucharist offered wine and bread as a mimetic surrogate of sacrifice. The cultic interpretation has two advantages over the traditional, autobiographical interpretation as the meaning Jesus attributed to his own final meals. The first advantage is contextual: the cultic interpretation places Jesus firmly with the Judaism of his period and the final dispute of his life, and at the same time accounts for the opposition of the authorities to him. The second advantage is the explanatory power of this reading: the cultic interpretation enables us to explain sequentially four subsequent developments in the understanding of Eucharist within earliest Christianity.

The third type is that of Petrine Christianity, when the blessing of bread at home, the *berakhah* of Judaism, became a principal model of Eucharist. A practical result of that development was that bread came to have precedence over wine, and Acts refers to the ritual as the "breaking" of bread (see Acts 2:42–47). The circle of Peter conceived of Jesus as a new Moses, who gave commands as Moses did on Sinai, and who also expected his followers to worship on Mount Zion in memory of the covenant.

As compared to Jesus' practice (in its first and second stages), Petrine practice represents a double domestication. Adherents of the movement congregated in the homes of their colleagues, rather than seeking the hospitality of others. Further, the validity of sacrifice in the Temple was acknowledged. Both forms of domestication grew out of the new circumstances of the movement in Jerusalem and fresh opportunities for worship in the Temple; they changed the nature of the meal and the memory of what Jesus had said at the "Last Supper."

The fourth type of Eucharist, which I associate with the circle of James (the brother of Jesus), pursued the tendency of domestication further. The Eucharist was seen as a Seder, in terms of meaning and chronology (see Mark 14:12–16, and the contradictory timing indicated in vv. 1–2). So understood, only Jews in a state of purity could participate fully in Eucharist, which could be fully recollected only once a year, at Passover in Jerusalem among the circumcised (see Exod 12:48). The Quartodeciman controversy (concerning the timing of Easter) of a later period, fierce though it appears, was but a shadow cast by a much more serious contention concerning the nature of Christianity. The Jacobean program was to integrate Jesus' movement fully within the liturgical institutions of Judaism, to insist upon the Judaic identity of the movement and upon Jerusalem as its governing center. Nonetheless the Jacobean "Last Supper" does not supplant the other types of Eucharist in the New Testament.

Paul and the synoptic gospels represent the fifth type of Eucharist. Paul vehemently resists Jacobean claims, by insisting Jesus' last meal occurred on the night in which he was betrayed (1 Cor 11:23), not on Passover. He emphasizes the link between Jesus' death and the Eucharist, and he accepts the Hellenistic refinement of the Petrine type that presented the Eucharist as a sacrifice for sin associated with the Temple (see, for example, Rom 3:25).

In the synoptic gospels the heroism of Jesus is such that the meal is an occasion to join in the solidarity of martyrdom.<sup>16</sup> The synoptics insist by various wordings that Jesus' blood is shed in the interests of the communities for which those gospels were composed, for the "many" in Damascus (Matt 26:28) and Rome (Mark 14:24), on behalf of "you" in Antioch (Luke 22:20). The synoptic strategy is not to oppose the Jacobean program directly; in fact, the Passover chronology is incorporated (producing internal contradictions). But any limitation of the benefits of Eucharist to circumcised Israelites is superseded by the imperative to join Jesus' martyrdom and its sacrificial benefits.

The feeding of the five thousand—understood as occurring at Passover—is taken up in John 6 in a fully paschal sense. Jesus identifies himself as the *manna*, miraculous food bestowed by God upon his people. Paul had articulated the motif (1 Cor 10:1–4, an analogy

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<sup>16</sup> I would not deny that a sense of impending martyrdom suffused Jesus' last meals with his disciples; see *Rabbi Jesus*, 253–268. The elevation of that sense to the predominant meaning, however, appears to me a later development.



that trumps the claims of the Jacobean circle), but John develops it to construe the Eucharist as a Mystery,<sup>17</sup> in which Jesus offers his own flesh and blood (carefully defined to avoid a crude misunderstanding; John 6:30–58). That autobiographical reading of Jesus' words—as giving his personal body and blood in Eucharist—had no doubt already occurred to Hellenistic Christians who followed synoptic practice and appreciated its sacrificial overtones.

The Johannine practice made that meaning as explicit as the break with Judaism is in the Fourth Gospel. The sixth type of Eucharist can only be understood as a consciously non-Judaic and Hellenistic development. It involves participants in joining by oath (*sacramentum* in Latin, corresponding to *mysterion* within the Greek vocabulary of primitive Christianity; John 6:60–71) in the sacrifice of the Mysterious hero himself, separating themselves from others. Eucharist has become sacrament, and involves a knowing conflict with the ordinary understanding of what Judaism might and might not include.<sup>18</sup>

“The Last Supper” is neither simply Jesus' “real” Seder nor simply a symposium of Hellenists to which the name of Jesus happens to have been attached. Such reductionist regimens, which will have the gospels be only historical or only fictive, starve the reader of the meanings that generated the texts to hand. The engines of those meanings were diverse practices, whose discovery permits us to appreciate the richness of tradition. A generative exegesis of Eucharistic texts may not conclude with a single meaning that is alleged to have occasioned all the others. One of the principal findings of such an approach is rather that meaning itself is to some extent epiphenomenal, a consequence of a definable practice with its own initial sense being introduced into a fresh environment of people who in turn take up the practice as they understand it and produce their own meanings. The sense with which a practice is mediated to a community is therefore one measure of what that community will finally produce as its practice, but the initial meaning does not determine the final meaning.

Eucharist was not simply handed on as a static tradition. Eucharistic traditions were rather the catalyst that permitted communities to

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<sup>17</sup> See Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 78–79, 167–168.

<sup>18</sup> In this regard, see Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), reviewed in *Shofar* 22.3 (2004): 150–152.

crystallize their own practices in oral or textual form. What they crystallized was a function of the practice that had been learned, palpable gestures with specified objects and previous meanings, along with the meanings and the emotional responses that the community discovered in Eucharist. There is no history of the tradition apart from a history of meaning, a history of affective response, a history of practice: the practical result of a generative exegesis of Eucharistic texts is that practice itself is an appropriate focus in understanding the New Testament.

### 3. *Sources of Meaning*

A generative exegesis properly focuses on the issue of meanings itself, but the corollary concerns of cultural milieu and the agency of sources cannot be avoided. Consequently, circles of meaning have already been characterized: dominical, Petrine, Jacobean, synoptic and Pauline, Johannine. By means of inference, it is possible to speculate on the periods in which their traditions emerged, how they interacted, and (in some cases) who the likely tradents were.

The Eucharistic teachings of Jesus did not, it goes almost without saying, exert a direct influence upon the text of the gospels. They were already incorporated, and given a new meaning, within a cycle of narrative catechesis associated with Peter and his fellow “pillars.” The Petrine cycle must have been available in Aramaic by ca. 35 CE, in time for Paul to be informed of it at the time of his visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18). But the very name “Peter” attests early translation into Greek, in association with the wide field of activity that apostle ploughed. The Petrine cycle substantially included the initial call of the first disciples, the healing of Jairus’s daughter, the confession at Caesarea Philippi, the Transfiguration, the Eucharist, and the struggle in Gethsemane. By design and in fact, the Petrine usage of narrative for the purpose of catechesis established a paradigm in the primitive church; the synoptic gospels are a monument to that narrative strategy.

The purpose of the Petrine teaching of the Eucharist is indicated by the sense of “covenant” in Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24. “New covenant” in Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25 represents a Hellenistic phase of the Petrine cycle. The reference to the covenant represents the meal as under the type of Moses’ covenantal sacrifice of sharings (Exod 24), so that Jesus is accorded foundational importance, but any perception

of competition with the Temple is avoided. Towards the same end, the “memorial” in Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 25 links Jesus’ action to what is immolated on the altar for the purpose of a sacrifice such as Moses offered.

Passover became the principal association with Eucharist in the circle of James. However emphatic the association (Matt 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–17; Luke 22:7–14), it is also artificial (see Matt 26:1–5; Mark 14:1, 2; Luke 22:1, 2, 15, 16), an example of interpretation by addendum. In a stroke, the meal was more tightly linked to the liturgical year than it ever had been before, and its only possible occasion was in Jerusalem. The dominical and Petrine meals were repeatable anywhere and frequently. The Jacobean transformation of what is now a last Passover could only truly be enacted “between the evenings” of 14 and 15 Nisan, and in the vicinity of the Temple, where the paschal lambs were slain.

What was produced within James’ circle was not an independent cycle, but substantial recastings of the Petrine cycle and the source of sayings known as “Q.” Both the Petrine cycle and the Jacobean revision of that cycle were known in Antioch prior to the council in Jerusalem that took place ca. 46 CE (see Galatians 2). The Jacobean revision itself may be dated ca. 40 CE, since it went through some development before Paul became acquainted with it in Antioch, although he was not apprised of it at the time of his visit with Peter ca. 35 CE.

The source of Jesus’ sayings known as “Q” has contributed little to the Eucharistic texts as they may be read today. But Jesus’ wistful statement that he had greatly desired to eat the Passover (but could not), attested only in Luke 22:15–17, manifests no incorporation within the Jacobean program. In its earliest phase, “Q” was a collection of sayings in the nature of a mishnah which a rabbi’s disciples might learn, virtually contemporaneous with the Petrine cycle. In the present case, the mishnaic source confirms that, prior to the Petrine cycle, Jesus was understood to refer to the wine before he referred to the bread. From its origins in Jesus’ movement as instruction of the twelve, the source known as “Q” developed in the environment of Syria in a markedly apocalyptic direction.

The Jacobean revision of the Petrine cycle was promulgated in Greek by Joseph Barsabbas and Silas in Antioch (see Acts 15:22–33). After 70 CE, “the little apocalypse,” a Syrian addition to the Jacobean revision, was composed; it is a response to James’ martyrdom and the Temple’s destruction. The compiler may have been Silas, who under a

more current form of his name (Silvanus) was involved in several sorts of apocalyptic speculation (cf. 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Pet 5:12). In any case, the Jacobean revision of the Petrine cycle would have included (prior to any apocalyptic addendum) the insistence that the twelve alone could provide the sense of the parables, a collection of such parables, a note of Jesus' rejection by his own neighbors, a commissioning of the twelve, and the paschal interpretation of the Eucharist within a more anecdotal story of the passion than the Petrine cycle had offered.

The primitive cycles or revisions of tradition (Petrine, Jacobean, instructional ["Q"], and apocalyptic) were amalgamated into the Hellenistic catechesis reflected in the synoptic gospels, probably first of all in Antioch. The most likely exponent of the unified catechesis is Barnabas. His standing is consistent with the wide acceptance of the synoptic tradition, and the greater accommodation to Jacobean influence in the synoptics as compared to Paul would be characteristic of Barnabas. But the synoptic Eucharist addresses the needs of its overwhelmingly Hellenistic constituency, in presenting the Last Supper as a well-ordered symposium, a sacrifice for sin that offered its benefits to all who joined themselves to the heroic martyr's witness.

The synoptic catechesis was a paradigm that was then developed and published in Rome (Mark, ca. 73 CE), Damascus (Matthew, ca. 80 CE), and Antioch itself (Luke, ca. 90 CE). The spine of each gospel is the narrative catechesis of the Petrine cycle, supplemented by Jacobean revision of that catechesis, the apocalyptic addendum of Joseph Barsabbas and Silas, and the instruction of the twelve with its addenda ("Q"). Their similarities and differences are best understood as functions of the particular sort of catechesis (preparation of catechumens) that was current in each community. No gospel is simply a copy of another; rather, each represents the choices among varying traditions, written and/or oral, and the development of those traditions that had taken place in a given locality.

*Thomas* (from Edessa, during the second century) represents a different ordering principle, based upon the mishnaic genre of the instruction of the twelve, rather than the Petrine catechesis. The same cannot quite be said of John. Although there is formally no counterpart of the Last Supper, the substance and theology of the synoptic tradition (if not of the synoptic gospels themselves) are reflected. Neither John nor *Thomas* represents a single source of Jesus' teaching, but both docu-

ments show that the genre of instruction proved to be a useful vehicle of theological reflection.

The identification, tracing, and dating of documents and sources is evidently a matter of inference. The procedure of reading, from text through its levels of generation, differs from the historical logic of starting at the beginning. But a generative exegesis uses the ordinary criteria of redaction criticism—diction, syntax, and meaning—in order to sort out one string of tradition from another.<sup>19</sup> The result looks more like strings than the beads or atoms of an earlier, form-critical orientation, because no assumption is made that we know what the shape of tradition was before we encounter it in its written form.<sup>20</sup> Within the assessment of their relationships, reference to Jesus is only appropriate sporadically, within the generative patterns discerned. That reference may be sharpened with reference to Jesus' cultural environment.

We are presented in our principal sources (the gospels of the New Testament and *Thomas*) with ways of seeing Jesus within the communities that each gospel was intended for. Identifying the view of Jesus each one takes, we can infer how Jesus must have acted to produce that view of him, together with the distinct views of him the other sources take. We are dealing, not only with four or five documents, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and *Thomas*, but with the groups of followers of Jesus that produced materials for those documents.

Use of the so-called criteria of authenticity represents an obstacle to knowledge, because they are not criteria, and they do not measure authenticity as far as Jesus is concerned. They are refugees from the time when the existence of precise "forms" of tradition was taken as established in some schools of thought.<sup>21</sup> Remove that assumption, and it is obvious that (1) we have no categorical assurance of how traditions developed (so: the "criteria" are not criteria), and further that (2) the relationship among traditions measures their development, not historical data concerning Jesus (so: "authenticity" is not measured).

The issue of how Jesus stands in relation to the gospels cannot be resolved by imagining Jesus on the one hand, and four or five authors

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<sup>19</sup> See *Profiles of a Rabbi: Synoptic Opportunities in Reading about Jesus*, BJS 177 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> See *God in Strength*, 11–23.

<sup>21</sup> For treatments of this and related questions, see B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*: NTTS 78.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999) and B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, NTTS 78.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

composing documents on the other hand. Between Jesus and the texts there were groups of teachers, each of which generated its own view of Jesus. We need to address the generative question—how did the texts emerge?—by attending to how Jesus must have acted and how communities much have reacted to their memory of him and their own circumstances in bringing their gospels to voice. The unfolding of the sources themselves is a fascinating question, but our concern here is a step beyond that and at the same time a narrowing of the generative concern: what we must infer of Jesus within his Jewish environment to explain how the texts emerged in their variety and in their agreement.

#### 4. *Material and Social Contexts of Jesus*

Until recently Jewish Galilee has been as mysterious as Jesus himself. A largely oral culture, as resistant to change as it was to the Romans who occupied it, Jewish Galilee condemned itself to silence from the point of view of history.

In 1997, a book appeared that conveys the range of excavations that have been conducted recently in Galilee.<sup>22</sup> That evidence underscores the isolation of rural Galilee from Hellenistic urban culture, and attests the cultural integrity of Galilean Judaism. This characterization complements much literary evidence.<sup>23</sup>

Galilean villages persistently attest a great concern for purity, the definition of who belongs to Israel and of how contact with those outside Israel should be regulated. Stone vessels for purificatory washing are typically found. They are characteristic of Jewish practice, and quite unlike vessels for cooking or the large cisterns used to store water for drinking. They are more persistent in Galilee than the *miqveh*, the stepped bathing pool, or the synagogue, but all of them have been found, and they lead to the conclusion that Jewish Galilee had established institutions and practices that question any supposed assimilation within Greco-Roman culture.

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<sup>22</sup> Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough, eds., *Archaeology and the Galilee: Texts and Contexts in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Periods*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 143 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> See Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 67–70.

All these finds have shattered the myth of a purely Hellenistic Jesus living in an urbanized Galilee.<sup>24</sup> Until a synagogue was found in Galilean Gamla, it was routinely claimed that synagogues were only a post-Christian institution.<sup>25</sup> Before *miqvaoth* were discovered in several towns, bathing was often dismissed as purely the elitist practice of aristocrats and Pharisees in Judea. Indeed, it was often said that Jesus spoke Greek, rather than Aramaic, but the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls shows that Aramaic was used during the first century and earlier, and the discovery of scrolls near Qumran establishes that the usage of Aramaic persisted until the second century CE.

The archaeological Galilee is a Jewish Galilee, as far as Jesus and his movement are concerned; philo-Roman urban enclaves such as Sepphoris are notable for their absence from Jesus' itinerary in the gospels. Archaeological and textual scholarship has revolutionized how we should think about Galilee and about Judaism, and that means the once fashionable (and in some circles, still fashionable) picture of Jesus as an Athenian in Jewish dress must change.

Various forms of Judaism vied with one another, both in Israel and the Diaspora, and in their competition they shared a kindred hope: the hope that God would personally and actively intervene on behalf of his people. That was just the hope that Jesus articulated when he announced, in the Galilean dialect of Judaism, the kingdom of God. His dialect of Judaism was one among many, and they were to varying degrees Hellenistic (as well as Egyptian and Ethiopian and Latin and Libyan and Persian, among other cultural influences). Judaism was an international religion during the first century, and it is impossible to reduce it to a single cultural form.

Galilee produced Jesus, not just in the happenstance of his life, but at the center of his religious identity. Once we have understood his environment within the context of Galilee, we can place him within the

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<sup>24</sup> As is very forcefully shown, for example, by Horsley in *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee*. More recently, the same point has been made by Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000). This is a much more critical work than John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001). See "Review Essay: Archaeology and Rabbi Jesus," *BBR* 12.2 (2002): 273–280.

<sup>25</sup> For what archaeology has now taught us about synagogues and *miqvaoth*, see D. Urman and P. V. M. Flesher, eds., *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, SPB (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).

unfolding of his unique religious vision. By properly evaluating that, we will see him in his distinctiveness, and at the same time appreciate the fundamental commonality of Judaism and Christianity.

Jesus was Jewish not only in the circumstances of his life, but in his dedication to that identity. Confronted with the increasing certainty that he was to die for his beliefs, Jesus taught his followers a carefully crafted teaching (a *kabbalah*) of suffering. *Kabbalah* refers particularly to a discipline of the vision of God that can be passed on from one person to another, and Jesus' characteristic *kabbalah* made human hardship into a crucible for experiencing the divine. His development of that *kabbalah* made the gospels possible, and perhaps made Christianity inevitable.

### 5. *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Jesus*

Development is the proper perspective of biography. In the case of Jesus, his religious impact will never be understood until we can identify what the pivots of transition were in his unlikely journey from a Galilean boy accused of irregular birth<sup>26</sup> to a popular rabbi who challenged the operation of the Temple in Jerusalem, directly confronting both the high priest of the time and the representative of Rome's power in the process. How was that possible, and why should the shameful result of that confrontation, Jesus' crucifixion, have resulted in the conviction that God had raised him from the dead?

Development is key to addressing all such questions. The focus cannot be just what is usually called "the life and teaching of Jesus." Typically, scholarly studies deal only with the public side of his activity in the year or two prior to his death. This has been justified on the basis of the foreshortened perspective of time in the gospels, but that is a function of their catechetical purposes, not a concern for history. The result is that Jesus becomes a two-dimensional icon: there is the height of his teaching and the breadth of his action, but no depth of character. Now that we know more about Judaism and about Galilee, we no longer have to accept that situation. Rather, we can understand how he emerged as the figure he did, how he developed and changed over time, and how his activity set in motion the generation of the relevant sources.

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<sup>26</sup> See "Jésus, le *mamzer* (Mt 1.18)," *NTS* 46 (2001): 222–227.



But why speak of *kabbalah*, and then link that to Jesus? The “Kabbalah,” as that term is commonly used, refers to a movement of Jewish mysticism from the twelfth century through the Renaissance (in its classic flowering).<sup>27</sup> Its focus was on the mystical union with God, in a way analogous to the paths advocated by Christian mystics such as Julian of Norwich and Johannes Eckhart. Its character included an intellectual discipline, literary focus on the precise wording of the Torah, and even an academic rigor in the description of the divine spheres into which the initiate was to enter with great care. What relation might that have to a rabbi of the first century from Galilee, whose attainments did not include the ability even to write, and whose references to the Hebrew Bible were so imprecise as to indicate he was illiterate?

Although *kabbalah* indeed can be used with a restrictive meaning, its underlying orientation is nothing other than the approach of God’s *Merkabah*, the heavenly chariot throne from which divine power and wisdom emanated for the ordering of all creation. The conception of that *Merkabah* is much more ancient, profoundly rooted in the theology of Israel, than the development of kabbalistic techniques during the Middle Ages and later. Indeed, the ascent to the divine throne is older than Israel itself.

From Mesopotamia, from the twenty-third century BCE and the fifteenth century CE, stories are told of kings and courtiers entering into the palace of heaven and receiving visions and empowerment there.<sup>28</sup> Israel learned these royal traditions from Babylon and converted them into prophetic authorization, especially during the time of Ezekiel (in the sixth century CE). Ezekiel himself related his classic vision of the throne of God as a chariot, a *Merkabah*, and what is usually called *Merkabah* mysticism derives from his vision (in Ezekiel 1). After Ezekiel, at least part of the *Book of Enoch* and the book of Daniel (ch. 7) detailed this vision further, and by Jesus’ time fragments from Qumran demonstrate the rich development of these traditions.

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<sup>27</sup> See Gershom Scholem, “Kabbalah,” in *EJ* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 10: 489–653 and the fine introduction of Joseph Dan in *The Early Kabbalah: The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 1–41. Among many more recent works, reference should be made to Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); Elliott R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> See Bernhard Lang, “Die grosse Jenseitsfahrt,” *Paragana* 7, no. 2 (1998): 24–42, here 32; Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 182–187; and James D. Tabor, “Heaven, Ascent to,” *ABD* 3: 91–94.

The book of Genesis says of Enoch only that “he walked with God, and he was not” (Gen 5:22). This disappearance is taken in the *Book of Enoch* as a sign that Enoch enjoyed a vision by ascent into the multiple heavens above the earth, and was authorized to relate its wisdom to Israel, indeed to act as an intermediary to the angels who had disobeyed God. From Ezekiel, through Daniel and Enoch and on to John and Jesus, there is a growing tradition, a *kabbalah* (something received), which reflects a deep commitment to the disciplined practice of the vision of God’s throne. The fragments of *Enoch* at Qumran are found in Aramaic, which suggests that the book was used, not just by the Essenes (who tended to guard their sectarian documents in Hebrew), but by a wider audience, which included the Essenes.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the *Book of Enoch* is also quoted at a later stage in the New Testament, so that there can be no doubt of its widespread use. Another work found in Hebrew at Qumran and widely attested elsewhere, the *Book of Jubilees*, also presents Enoch as a figure of revelation: he himself knows the Torah later communicated to Moses by angelic communication.

The development of these traditions is obviously not independent: there is a successive building and borrowing from one to the other. The ascent to the divine throne was an aspiration that was “received” or “taken,” one source from others. To “receive” or to “take” in both Aramaic and Hebrew is expressed by the verb *qabal*, from which the noun *qabbalah* is derived, and the noun is used in both Mishnah and Talmud to refer to ancient tradition, including the Prophets and the Writings within the Bible of Israel (as distinct from the Torah).<sup>30</sup> What is *qabaled* might be any sort of authoritative tradition, but it is tradition concerning the *Merkabah* that is our concern here. When Paul wishes to underline that authority of his teaching concerning the Eucharist, he says, “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered over to you,” and he goes on to speak both of Jesus’ last meal with his followers *and* its significance and correct observance (1 Cor 11:23–33). The sources of Paul’s authority include what he learned from primitive Christians (especially Peter, see Gal 1:18), but more importantly what he calls the *apokalypsis*, the uncovering, of Christ Jesus (Gal 1:12). That disclosure occurred in a supernatural realm, the third heaven, the paradise to

<sup>29</sup> For an introduction and translation, see E. Isaac, “1 Enoch,” *OTP* I: 5–89.

<sup>30</sup> See the article by Cecil Roth appended to Scholem’s *EJ* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 10: 653–654.

which Paul says he was once snatched up, where he was told unutterable wisdoms (2 Cor 12:1–4<sup>31</sup>).

The confidence of Paul that this ascent was a self-evident aspect of his authorization that his readers would appreciate invites us to look back, to seek traces of the *Merkabah* in the gospels. As in the case of treating generative exegesis, only a couple of examples can be cited here, which emerge from my long-standing collaboration with Jacob Neusner and from my narrative treatment of Jesus.<sup>32</sup>

Traces of the *Merkabah* are perhaps plainest in Jesus' baptism, and in what that reception of the Holy Spirit produced in him. That takes us back to Jesus' association with John called the "immerser" (the *baptistes* in Greek).

From the writings of Josephus, we know that John was not the only such figure; Josephus refers to his own study with another immerser, named Bannus.<sup>33</sup> Pilgrims' local *miqvaoth* (immersion pools, if they even had access to one) might not correspond to the Pharisaic design, and would be much less luxurious than those of the Sadducees, less elaborate than those of the Essenes. But John offered them purification in God's own water, and the assurance that this was the science of Israel's true purity. Then what they faced in Jerusalem was less daunting; the claims and counter claims of various factions would be put into perspective by the confidence that one had already been purified by God's own living waters.

Immersion, for John, was no once for all act, as in later Christian baptism. In the practice of the primitive church, after the resurrection, believers felt that they received the Spirit of God when they were immersed in the name of Jesus. That conviction was only possible after the resurrection, because it stemmed from the belief that Jesus was alive and at the right hand of God, so as to be able to dispense divine spirit. In Peter's speech at Pentecost (the Magna Carta of baptismal theology), Jesus, having been exalted to the right hand of God, receives the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and pours it out on his

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<sup>31</sup> See Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 542–554; B. Chilton, *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> See *Comparing Spiritualities: Formative Christianity and Judaism on Finding Life and Meeting Death*, with Jacob Neusner (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); *Rabbi Jesus*.

<sup>33</sup> See Josephus, *Life* 11. For a discussion of John and Bannus and their methods of purification as related to Jesus, see *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing: His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1998).

followers (Acts 2:33). Once received by a Christian, that Spirit did not come and go. Subsequent immersion could not top up a lack of Spirit. A Christian lived in the power of God's Spirit; its influence might increase or decrease, but the fact of its presence was irrevocable. But in John's practice, as in Judaism as a whole, purification was a routine requirement, and people might return to John many times, and they naturally engaged in many forms of purification other than John's, whether in their villages or at the Temple. Impurity was a fact of life, and therefore so was purification. But John was there in the wilderness to attest that the natural, living water provided by God would achieve acceptability before God, provided that immersion was accompanied by repentance.<sup>34</sup>

But for the *talmidim* of John, this continual immersion—as well as the immersion of others—was more than a matter of simple repentance. Within that activity, there was an esoteric meaning. John conveyed a definite understanding of the final significance that his purification for Israel offered. The sources are plain: for John, immersion brought one to the point that one could understand what God was about to do with Israel. As John himself expressed it, immersing oneself in water prepared one to receive the Spirit of God himself, which was to drench all Israel with its sanctification. The key to John's preparation for God himself lies in the wording attributed to him, "I immerse you in water, but he himself will immerse you in Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8; see Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). Within the context of Christianity after the resurrection, those words are fulfilled by what the risen Jesus endows the believer with; but that assumes Jesus' identification with God at that point, because only God himself can give of his own Spirit. Within the context of John the immerser, however, what is at issue is the purification that prepares the way for divine Spirit. The link between purification with water and the vindicating presence of God's Spirit is explicitly made in the book of Ezekiel, the same book that is the *locus classicus* of the *Merkabah* (Ezek 36:22–27):

Therefore, say to the house of Israel: So says the Lord, the LORD: Not for your sake am I acting, house of Israel, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the peoples you came to. I will sanctify my great name, although profaned among the peoples among whom you have profaned it, and the peoples will know that I am the LORD, says the Lord,

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<sup>34</sup> See Joan Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism: Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

the LORD, when I am sanctified among you before their eyes. I will take you from the peoples, and gather you from all the lands, and bring you to your land. I will sprinkle on you clean waters and cleanse you from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put in your midst, and remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. My Spirit I shall put in your midst and I will make you walk according to my statutes and keep my judgments and do them.

The close and causal connection between water and Spirit here has led to the insight that we have here an important scriptural precedent of John's immersion.<sup>35</sup>

John practiced a *kabbalah* of envisioning the throne of God, which backed up his practice of immersion. He and his *talmidim* saw the Spirit of God before the *Merkabah*, ready to drench Israel, just as Israel was drenched in the waters of purification. The careful discipline of these *talmidim*, their repetitive, committed practice, their sometimes inadequate diet and exposure to the elements all contributed to the vividness of their visions of God's throne. John Allegro suggested some years ago that the ingestion of psychotropic mushrooms was a part of this discipline.<sup>36</sup> While the influence of herbs and grasses, as well as mushrooms, on people's psychological state cannot be discounted, the greater influence of these visions was the *kabbalah* itself, its intentional recollection and envisioning of the throne of God. From Qumran a fragment praises God as the apex of a heavenly panoply:

He is God of gods of all the heads of the heights and king of kings for all eternal councils.<sup>37</sup>

The foundation of *kabbalah* is putting the intent of the mind into envisaging the heavenly throne.

<sup>35</sup> See Otto Böcher, "Johannes der Täufer," *TR* 17 (1988): 172–181, 175. This insight, suggested to me by Bernhard Lang, is worked out more fully in *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing*.

<sup>36</sup> J. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity within the Fertility Cults of the Ancient Near East* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970). His suggestion that "Jesus" was simply a name for a mushroom assured Allegro a frosty reception, and his attempt to see Jesus as entirely mythical (indeed, hallucinatory) reads as a desperate attempt not to place him within an historical context. Nonetheless, his approach still finds a hearing; see Carl A. P. Ruck, Blaise Daniel Staples, and Clark Heinrich, *The Apples of Apollo: Pagan and Christian Mysteries of the Eucharist* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), and the review in *The Classical Bulletin* 78.2 (2002): 261–263.

<sup>37</sup> The fragment was found in the fourth cave from near Qumran (its designation is 4Q403 frg. li). E. Glicker Chazon of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem showed me a copy.

Jesus' skill in this vision made him one of John's most prominent *talmidim*, but it also led to Jesus' break with John. The gospels all relate the baptism of Jesus in a way that adumbrates baptism in early Christianity. But they also refer to the particular vision of Jesus, which not every baptized Christian could or did claim (Matt 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–13 Luke 3:21–22).

As Jesus was immersed for purification, he came to have an increasingly vivid vision, of the heavens splitting open, and God's spirit coming upon him. And a voice: "you are my son, beloved; in you I take pleasure." Each of these elements is resonant with the Israelite *kabbalah* of the divine throne.

The heavens are viewed as multiple, hard shells above the earth, so that any real disclosure of the divine must represent a rending of those firmaments. But once opened, Jesus' vision is not of ascending through the heavens, as in the case of Enoch, but of the Spirit, as a dove, hovering over him and descending. That image is a vivid realization that the Spirit of God at creation once hovered over the face of the primeval waters (Gen 1:2), as a bird. The bird was identified as a dove in rabbinic tradition, and a fragment from Qumran supports the association.<sup>38</sup> The Spirit, which would one day come to Israel, in Jesus' vision was already upon him, and God took pleasure in him as a "son."

Jesus' vivid experience within his practice of John's immersion, a persistent vision occurring many times, may be contrasted with a story about Hillel, an older contemporary of Jesus. Hillel was held in such high esteem that he was thought worthy to receive the Holy Spirit. That estimate appears all the more exalted, but also strangely wistful, when it is borne in mind that the rabbis held that the Spirit had been withdrawn since the time of the last prophets of Scripture. These motifs are drawn together in a rabbinic story:<sup>39</sup>

Until the dead live, namely Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit has ceased from Israel. Yet even so, they made them hear *bath qol*. An example: the sages gathered at the house of Guria in Jericho, and they heard a *bath qol* saying, There is here a man who is predestined for the Holy Spirit, except that his generation is not righteous for such. And they put their eyes on Hillel the elder, and when he died, they said of him, Woe the meek man, Woe, the faithful disciple of Ezra.

<sup>38</sup> See Dale C. Allison, "The Baptism of Jesus and a New Dead Sea Scroll," *BAR* 18.2 (1992): 58–60.

<sup>39</sup> *Tosefta Sotah* 13:3. For a discussion, see *Profiles of a Rabbi*, 77–89.

With the withdrawal of Spirit until the prophets live again, God's favor is made known by an angelic echo, a *bath qol* ("daughter of a voice"). But the poignancy of this story is that, for all Hillel's merit, the Spirit itself is withheld. Jesus' approach to the *Merkabah* by means of John's *kabbalah* had opened the prospect that the gates of heaven were open again for the Spirit to descend upon Israel.

Another case where stories concerning divine voices find resonance in the New Testament is the Transfiguration (Matt 16:28–17:8; Mark 9:2–8; Luke 9:27–36). The narrative structure is reminiscent of Moses' ascent of Sinai in Exodus 24. At the close of that story, Moses is said to ascend the mountain, where God's glory, as a cloud, covered it (v. 15). The covering lasted six days (v. 16), which is the amount of time between the Transfiguration and the previous discourse in both Matthew (17:1) and Mark (9:2). After that time, the Lord calls to Moses from the cloud (Exod 24:16b), and Moses entered the glory of the cloud, which is like a devouring fire (vv. 17–18). Earlier in the chapter, Moses is commanded to select three worshippers (Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu) together with seventy elders, in order to confirm the covenant (vv. 1–8). The result is that just these people (v. 9) see the God of Israel in his court (v. 10) and celebrate their vision with a meal. The motifs of master, three disciples, mountain, cloud, vision and audition recur in the Transfiguration.

Other details in the presentation of the story cohere with Exodus 24. Matthew 17:2 uniquely refers to Jesus' face shining like the sun, like Moses' aspect in Exod 34:29–35. In more general terms, Mark's reference to the whiteness of Jesus' garments also establishes a heavenly context. A variation in Luke is more specific and more interesting. Luke puts a distance of eight days, rather than six, between the previous discourse and the Transfiguration. Although that has baffled commentators, in rabbinic interpretation that variation is meaningful. In the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (Exod 24:10–11), Nadab and Abihu are struck by God, because their vision contradicts the principle that "man will not see God and live" (Exod 33:30). But their punishment (narrated in Num 3:2–4) is delayed until the *eighth* day.

In this heavenly vision two figures of rabbinic tradition who were understood not to have tasted death, Moses and Elijah, also make their appearance. Elijah, of course, is the primordial prophet of the *Merkabah*. Elijah's *talmid*, Elisha, sees Elijah taken up into the heavens with God's "chariot of fire and horses of fire" (2 Kgs 2:11; the term for "chariot" here is *rekhev*, simply the masculine form of the feminine *Merkabah*).

At least from the time of Josephus, Moses was also held to have been taken up alive into the heavenly court.<sup>40</sup> Taken together, then, Elijah and Moses are indices of Jesus' access to the heavenly court. Peter's apparently inept suggestion to his rabbi, of building "lodges," also corresponds to the enclosure for God's glory on earth which Moses is commanded to build in the chapters of Exodus after chapter 24. Taken as a whole, the Transfiguration at its generative moment attests Jesus' introduction of his *talmidim* to a vision of the divine throne comparable to his own at his baptism.

Jesus' conscious framing of a *kabbalah*, an approach to the divine *Merkabah* for himself and for his own *talmidim*, naturally includes an understanding of his own identity. All three synoptic gospels have Jesus propelled by the Spirit into the wilderness, in order to be pressed to the limit by Satan (Matt 4:1; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1), and Matthew and Luke both include three itemized temptations at this point (Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). In all three, the sense is conveyed that one's possession of the Spirit of God in baptism brings one into conflict with the primordial source of resistance to that Spirit. That catechetical logic is at odds with the simple observation that Jesus can only be tested with these particular temptations near the end of his life, by which time he had actually experienced power in various idioms.

After the story of his temptations,<sup>41</sup> Luke alone has Jesus return "in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). There can be no question, then, but that at this paradigmatic moment, as Jesus commences his public activity, the issue of the Spirit is uppermost in the reference to Jesus' divine identity within Luke. The inauguration of this activity takes place—only in Luke—by means of an appearance in a synagogue in Nazareth, where his citation of the book of Isaiah is pivotal (Luke 4:14–30).

The utility of this passage within the overall structure of Luke-Acts has led to the finding that it has been synthesized by the editorial work that went into those two documents. And the utility of the passage within Luke-Acts cannot reasonably be denied. The entire pericope, from v. 14 until v. 30 in Luke 4, sets up a model—of reading Scripture in a

<sup>40</sup> See *Ant.* 4.326. For further discussion, see "The Transfiguration: Dominical Assurance and Apostolic Vision," *NTS* 27 (1980): 115–124; "Transfiguration," *ABD* 6: 640–642.

<sup>41</sup> The story of itemized temptations is the contribution of the source called "Q"; for an account of the contents of "Q," cf. *Pure Kingdom*, 107–110.



synagogue, enjoying some success but then violent rejection, a rejection that leads to a turning to non-Jews—which corresponds to the pattern of presentation of Paul and Barnabas in the book of Acts, especially at Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:13–52.<sup>42</sup> Together, Luke 4 and Acts 13 set out a pattern for the church of Luke-Acts. The name “Antioch” is a key to the importance of the latter passage, just as the verb “to anoint” in the former passage is profoundly evocative. The two are as if violins in an orchestra set at a quaver distance, at which one instrument causes the other to resonate. For Luke-Acts, Paul and Barnabas resonate with the purpose, program and authorization of Jesus himself.

The words cited from Isaiah begin, “The Lord’s Spirit is upon me, forasmuch as he anointed me.” Here, then, is the specification of how the Spirit has been with Jesus since the moment of his baptism. The Spirit is his anointing. Jesus is Messiah because the Spirit is upon him, and the text from Isaiah becomes an itinerary of his activity.

Just here, however, the *dissonance* between Jesus’ own typical activity and the text of Isa 61, cited by Luke, becomes evident. The simple facts are that Isa 61:1, 2 refers to things Jesus never did, such as releasing prisoners from jail, and that Jesus did things the text makes no mention of, such as declaring people free of impurity (see Matt 8:2–4; Mark 1:40–45; Luke 5:12–16). This dissonance cannot be a Lukan creation, because the pattern of the gospel is to make the correspondence to the Septuagint in biblical citations as close as possible. As the text stands, moreover, a change from any known form of the biblical text results in a lost opportunity to relate directly to the activity of Jesus, as well as introducing an element of greater dissonance. The phrase “to bind the broken of heart” is omitted from the citation, and wording similar to Isa 58:6, a reference to setting the oppressed at liberty, has been inserted.

Although Luke’s gospel presents the wording—evidently inspired from Isaiah—as a routine reading in a synagogue, it evidently was not so in the tradition prior to Luke. Jesus’ “citation” is no citation at all, but a freer version of the biblical book than could have been read. The wording of the passage in the Old Syriac gospels (in a language closely related to Jesus’ indigenous Aramaic) is freer still:

The spirit of the Lord is upon *you*,  
on account of which he has anointed *you* to message triumph to the poor;

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<sup>42</sup> I have worked out this correspondence in some detail in *God in Strength*, 123–156.

And he has sent me to preach to the captives release, and to the blind sight  
—and *I* will free the broken with release—  
and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

The oddities Luke preserves are present, together with what has been homogenized in Luke: the radical change in pronouns.<sup>43</sup> By speaking these words, Jesus portrays himself as responding to a divine charge: “The spirit of the Lord is upon you, on account of which he has anointed you to message triumph to the poor.” Then he emphatically accepts that charge: “And he has sent me to preach to the captives release, and to the blind sight—and I will free the broken with release—and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Both the charge and the emphatic acceptance are produced by the signal changes in pronouns, which are italicized above. They are part and parcel of a conscious alteration of the language taken from the book of Isaiah, an alteration that voices the text in a way that makes it akin to the baptismal *bath qol* and the *bath qol* at the Transfiguration.

The alteration is typical of Jesus’ style of employing scripture, especially the book of Isaiah (and especially in a targumic form).<sup>44</sup> His aim was to use the scripture as a lens of his own activity on behalf of God, such that the wording focused on how God was active in what he said and did, without suggesting a complete fit between the text and what Jesus referred to. The scripture was a guide to the experience of God in the present, but that experience was more important than the text, and could be used to refashion the text.

Clearly, the association of Jesus as Messiah with the Spirit gained currency after and as a consequence of the resurrection, as we have already seen. But its currency is very difficult to explain, as Marinus de Jonge points out, if “Jesus himself avoided this designation and discouraged his followers from using it.”<sup>45</sup> Some consistent usage of messianic language would likely have been in the background of Jesus’ teaching for the term to emerge as the primary designation of Jesus. In that Luke’s gospel was composed in Antioch around 90 CE in a community in which both Greek and Aramaic were spoken, it is the most likely source among the synoptics to have indicated what this background might have been. The tight connection between the Spirit of God and the verb “anoint,”

<sup>43</sup> For a full discussion, see *God in Strength*, 157–177.

<sup>44</sup> See *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible*, 148–198.

<sup>45</sup> Marinus de Jonge, *Early Christology and Jesus’ Own View of His Mission: Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 101.

as in Jesus' reference to Isaiah 61 in Luke 4, provides us with just the indication that fills out the picture of the development of early Christian usage. Anointed by the Spirit of God, Jesus viewed himself as enacting and articulating the claims of God's sovereignty ("the kingdom of God"). His teaching indeed does not spell out the content of being "Messiah" by means of a precise program drawn from biblical or pseudepigraphic literature, but it does relate the Spirit to his own activity, and in Luke 4 that relationship involved explicitly messianic language.

The Lukan presentation is precisely what makes the form of the "citation" of Isaiah 61 all the more surprising. As a Lukan invention, the reference would have accorded with the Septuagint. Indeed, the Old Syriac gospels provide an insight into the shape of the reference to Isaiah 61 by Jesus before it was partially accommodated to the Septuagint within the Lukan presentation. The fractured reference to Isaiah 61 focuses Jesus' messianic identity on the issue of the Spirit, and that was the point of departure for the development of primitive christology.

Luke provides us with a centered view of Jesus' christology, focused on the Spirit of God. Within the recent study of Jesus, two discarded pictures of his christology have emerged again, and I would suggest in closing that they are likely to be discarded again. The first stresses the undoubted importance of the political challenge to the identity of Israel within the first century. Jesus then becomes the "Davidic messiah," a ruling figure who sets up his throne in association with the Temple.<sup>46</sup> This, despite the portrayal of Jesus in the Temptations as rejecting a picture of such rule, and despite his own rhetorical question, "How do the scribes say the messiah is David's son?" (Mark 12:35, together with Matt 22:42; Luke 20:41). That question assumes a tradition of identifying the Messiah and the ben David, but it also—and obviously—refutes it.<sup>47</sup> Any messianic theology inherently involved a political dimension, but to make that dimension the only index of meaning runs against the grain of Jesus' contention that Davidic and messianic claims were not simply identifiable. Another view, derived ultimately from Albert Schweitzer's picture of Jesus as a failed apocalypticist, imagines Jesus as personally taking on himself all the conditions of the covenant with Israel, in a desperate attempt to get God to fulfill the covenantal

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<sup>46</sup> For a sophisticated argument to this effect, see Richard A. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 105–145.

<sup>47</sup> See "Jesus ben David: Reflections on the Davidsohnfrage," *JSNT* 14 (1982): 88–112.

promises.<sup>48</sup> This, despite the fact that the term “covenant” within sayings of Jesus only appears in a single case, in what seems to be a liturgical addition to the meaning of the cup of wine in the context of his last meals in Jerusalem. Peter and Paul were undoubtedly theologians of this covenant, because they had directly to face the issues of who was and was not of the people of God. Jesus, however, does not appear to have confronted that question in covenantal terms.

But once Jesus’ approach to the *Merkabah*, on the basis of his endowment with Spirit, is seen to be the pivot of his experience and his program of activity, his care in defining how he was and how he was not messiah acquires its sense. His messianic identity was a function of his self-consciousness and the awareness of his *talmidim* that his *kabbalah* offers the vision of God in his glory because divine Spirit makes that vision possible. The historical Jesus is a reading of all the available evidence that permits us to explain, in religious terms, the emergence of Christianity out of Second Temple Judaism.

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<sup>48</sup> For this neo-orthodox re-reading of Schweitzer, see N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993).

## CONTEXT AND TEXT IN HISTORICAL JESUS METHODOLOGY

JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN

The classic distinction between the *Jesus of history* and the *Christ of faith* has never been for me either informative or normative. That distinction, separation, or even opposition may be the conclusion of historical research but how can it be the presumption with which it begins? Short of *a priori* prejudice, how do I know before I begin that the Christ of faith is not exactly the same as the Jesus of history? Short of *a priori* bias, how do I know that there was not historically a *Jesus of faith*, that is, an individual who made fundamental claims about the meaning of his life and the destiny of his people?<sup>1</sup> That classic distinction may once have been necessary to release historical research from dogmatic constraint but, having served that inaugural purpose, it should now be honorably buried.

By the historical Jesus, therefore, I mean our best present reconstruction of that individual's life within the accepted procedures of historical study. No more and no less. *History is the past reconstructed interactively by the present through argued evidence in public discourse.* That is still my definition.<sup>2</sup> *Interactive* research is distinct from, on the one hand, *narcissistic* research and, on the other, *positivistic* research. *Narcissism* is an illusion claiming to see the past while only seeing the reflected present. *Positivism* is a delusion claiming to see the past without any interference from its own viewing eyes. *Interactivism* is our destiny. It is a conversation between past and present in which neither should ever be monologue but both form a constant dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, how can John P. Meier take as his fifth criterion for deciding historicity that "of Rejection and Execution"—how does one know that Jesus was rejected and executed before one begins research? That can be, at best, a retrojective confirmation showing that reconstructed life and reconstructed death are coherent and even unified (that is, if they are). See vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (1991), 177, and vol. 2, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (1994), 6, in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday). Furthermore, criteria, no matter how many or how correct, are ambiguous unless organized into a method based on a methodology.

<sup>2</sup> *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 20.

That is why methodology is so important. Unlike an ordinary conversation in which the dominant partner may at least be interrupted by the other one, the past can only be as interactive as our historical conscience will allow. Method is *how* you do something and methodology is *why* you do it that way and not some other way. The function of methodology is at least to give interactivity an honest chance, at least to let the past challenge the present from the silence of its grave. There are times we can only get alternative perspectives on the same event. And there are always alternative perspectives even when we do not hear them. But history as argued public reconstruction is possible because it is necessary. We reconstruct our past to project our future. And it is, unfortunately, *not possible not* to do it. In historical study or on jury duty.

Finally, I presume that every scholar must have a position on all those questions of dependence and independence among intra-canonical and extra-canonical gospel texts raised within the last two hundred years. For example, I agree that Mark and Q are the basic sources for Matthew and Luke. On still disputed matters, I consider that John has its own independent saying and miracle tradition but that the Gospel's start with John the Baptist and end with Death-Resurrection are under synoptic influence; and that the *Gospel of Thomas* is basically independent from the canonical gospels.<sup>3</sup> If two hundred years of scholarship had concluded that the four canonical gospels were completely independent versions, my methodology would be completely different. That would probably demand a presumption, for example, that the best data was to be found where all four agreed. But, to the contrary, my methodology presumes texts that are especially characterized not by independent trajectories but by a dependent stream of tradition.

### 1. *Formal Procedures and Material Investments*

My methodological basis is to separate *formal procedures* from *material investments* so that they can be debated separately. It is possible for others to agree on the former, on the latter, on both, or on neither. By formal procedures I mean something like due processes in legal proceedings.

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<sup>3</sup> I disagree with any attempt to ignore all those preliminary decisions. N. T. Wright has claimed that one can and should "bypass" all those problems and simply work with the four canonical gospels as independent sources. For our debate about methodology, see J. D. Crossan, "What Victory? What God? A Review Debate with N. T. Wright on *Jesus and the Victory of God*," *SJT* 50 (1997): 345–358; N. T. Wright, "Doing Justice to Jesus: A Response to J. D. Crossan: 'What Victory? What God,'" *SJT* 50 (1997): 359–379.

In terms of *formal procedures*, I propose these five steps and, in what follows, the term “text” can be taken orally and/or scribally:

1. The separation and double-blind study of historical context and gospel text in which neither can influence decisions about the other.

2. The study of context before text: the historical context of Antipas’s Galilee in the 20’s should be established before the study of the Christian gospel texts.

3. The study of context without text: that historical content should be established apart from any Christian gospel. Since a Christian gospel, from its nature and purpose as “good news,” always involves a highly creative reinterpretation of given tradition, the context of the 20’s–90’s CE are collated steadily and progressively together. In such a situation, and as a safety precaution, the context of the historical Jesus should be established totally without Christian gospel information. We would know, for example, from Josephus, Tacitus, and later Roman sources that Jesus was a Galilean who died under Pilate and that furnishes the contextual place and time as Antipas’s Galilee between 26 and 36 CE.

4. The establishment of context by an interdisciplinary and interactive model of cross-cultural anthropology at the most general level, Judeo-Roman history at the intermediate level, and Galilean archaeology at the most specific one.

5. Turning from context to text but still within formal procedures, how do I determine the data-base of the historical Jesus to be studied against that context? This is surely the hardest part of any method and it is often simply avoided in recent research on the historical Jesus. On the one hand, because of my double-blind principle I cannot simply choose whatever traditions seem best to fit with that already-established context. On the other, I cannot simply study the synoptic Jesus and call it the historical Jesus.<sup>4</sup> There is only one way I can establish that data-base in a somewhat “objective” fashion and that is by asking these two questions. (1) What are the earliest units of tradition one discerns

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<sup>4</sup> With all extra-canonical gospels avoided and John bracketed, the data-base is often simply the undifferentiated mass of the synoptic tradition so that, in effect, the historical Jesus cannot be other than the synoptic Jesus. That is implicit for N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, whose indexes give 25 columns of synoptic references but only 1½ columns of Johannine references (London: SPCK, 1996), 717–726. It is explicit for James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making*, whose indexes give 57½ columns of synoptic references but only 8½ columns of Johannine references (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 987–1009, but who also says programmatically that “my concern is always with the Gospel (primarily synoptic tradition)” but in oral and scribal interaction (335).

in terms of dating by sources? (2) Do those earliest units cohere closely with that pre-established context?

In asking these questions, I am emphatically aware of the following factors. (1) The earliest unit of tradition is not in itself any more original or authentic than the latest one. A Jesus-quotation in John may be even more historical than one in Paul but I cannot decide that in any individual case except by some *a priori* presumption. I am simply trying to avoid the “subjectivity” of such a decision. Earliest means earliest, no more and no less. (2) The earliest unit discernible, even if accepted by all, may not get us back to the 20’s with the historical Jesus. It is utterly possible, for example, that our earliest data might stem from the ending 30’s or starting 40’s when the experience of Caligula’s statue and Agrippa I’s ascendancy could have restated or recreated the entire Jesus tradition in answer to those most serious threats. I ask, as an open question, do your earliest textual data cohere closely with your established contextual situation? If the answer is no, then the historical Jesus of the 20’s is lost forever behind the gospel-screens of the 40’s to 90’s. If the answer is yes, then that is the best historical research can accomplish with evangelical data.

Finally, then, I turn to make my own *material* investments within those *formal* parameters. I repeat that somebody else may reject those preceding steps and, even if they accept them, negate their proposed investments. I simply challenge my colleagues to make that formal/material distinction or rebut it and, if it be accepted, to adopt or adapt, refine or replace it with their own earliest texts.

## 2. Context

My first principle is to bracket later Christian text and begin with original historical context. The four canonical gospels are, as they openly and correctly state, “gospels” and not histories or autobiographies (even within the ancient meanings of those terms). In other words, they take the data of the 20’s and make their “good news” relevant to different times and places, individuals and communities, in the 70’s, 80’s, and 90’s CE. There is therefore a quite deliberate and appropriate conflation of context between the first and last quarters of that century.

Granted such material, my first methodological move is to bracket completely all gospel information and focus on context from an exclusively extra-Christian standpoint. Accepting from Jewish and Roman



sources that Jesus died under Pontius Pilate (26–36 CE) and was called a “Galilean,” I focus context as follows. *Prepare a description, as thick as possible, on life under Herod Antipas, in Lower Galilee, in the 20’s CE but without using any Christian texts.* To do that I create an interdisciplinary and interactive matrix from a base-layer of cross-cultural anthropology, a medial-layer of Roman-Jewish history, and an upper-layer of Galilean archaeology. All of that works from the more general at the bottom to the most specific at the top.

### 2.1. *Cross-Cultural Anthropology*

This is simply the most general foundation for my reconstructed context and I take the following three elements as constitutive for that foundation.

First, working within the cross-hairs of ecology and technology, the Roman Empire was an agrarian, as distinct from either a horticultural or industrial empire.<sup>5</sup> Deep soil and iron plow vastly increase the agricultural productivity of such an empire along with increasing urbanization of the environment, scribalization of the administration, and monetization of the economy. All of that vastly increases the social discrepancy between the *haves* and the *have-nots* as a widening chasm opens up between the aristocracy and the peasantry.

Second, agrarian empires may be distinguished into traditional and commercializing ones.<sup>6</sup> The point is whether they maintain an ancient division between *haves* and *have-nots* or seek to maximize their landed possessions by various methods of commercialization. Example would be the reduction of freeholders into tenant farmers and the consolidation of family farms into steward-run agribusinesses. The point is that as commercialization rises, so also does resistance. A peasantry, having experienced change for the worse, may think about change for the better—even for some utopian ideal or eschatological dream.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Based on Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966). For example: “One fact impresses itself on almost any observer of agrarian societies, especially on one who views them in a broadly comparative perspective. This is the fact of *marked social inequality*” (210, with italics original).

<sup>6</sup> Based on John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). For example: “Lenski’s... agrarian societies include societies where merchants have become so powerful that they are no longer purely *traditional* but *commercialized* or more or less modern, like the late Roman empire... I distinguish *traditional* aristocratic empires from more or less ‘modern’ *commercialized*, colonial, and industrial societies” (20–21, italics added).

<sup>7</sup> Kautsky, *Politics*, 318: “Only the changes to which commercialization subjects peasants makes them capable of believing that they can bring about social change.

Third, open violent rebellion is but the iceberg-tip of normal everyday resistance to oppressive situation.<sup>8</sup> Only the former may achieve mention in the literate history of male aristocracy but the latter is always there to sustain the dignity and integrity of the downtrodden. You act dumb, you do not understand, you go slowly, and you perform works of minor sabotage. You tell symbolic stories, you sing disguised songs, you celebrate religious hopes. You imagine a king of justice, a God of righteousness, a future imminent or distant but always utopian. Your ideal world is a mirror-image opposite of your everyday one.

When dealing, therefore, with that increasing discrepancy between the *haves* and *have-nots* in agrarian empires and especially with resistance sparked by commercialization, I watch for all and every form of non-violent resistance and do not restrict opposition to violent revolt.

## 2.2. *Judeo-Roman History*

On top of that cross-cultural basis, I place a layer of Judeo-Roman history interactive with it and guided by this over-riding question. From the post-exilic return to the arrival of the Romans there was only a single revolt against imperial control over the Jewish homeland and that under the supreme provocation of Greco-Syrian religious persecution. Why, then, were there four major rebellions in the first 200 years of Roman imperial domination—in 4 BCE under Augustus, 66–74 CE under Nero and Vespasian, 115–117 CE under Trajan, and 132–135 CE under Hadrian? What went so spectacularly wrong with the Roman program of *urbanization for commercialization* in the Jewish homeland—even from the Roman point of view?

### 2.2.1. *The Roman Empire*

Rome was the world's first territorial empire.<sup>9</sup> A *dominational* empire, like Persia, maintained a strong center protected by the army and, as long

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Having suffered adverse changes, they can demand favorable ones, and these may now go far beyond the restoration of older forms of exploitation all the way to communistic utopias.”

<sup>8</sup> Based on James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Subsistence and Rebellion in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976); “Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition,” *Theory and Society* 4 (1977): 1–38, 211–246; *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Based on Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986–). See especially vol. 1: *A History of Power from the Beginning*

as the periphery paid tribute and avoided revolt, it ran its own affairs. But a *territorial* empire, like Rome, placed its legions on the periphery and organized all within that military screen into a unified operation. In other words, for better and for worse, Rome interfered much more intensely in local affairs, lives, customs, and traditions.

Rome greatly increased and tightly integrated the four strands of social power better than any earlier empire. *Military* power was based on those peripherally-based legions with their all-weather networks of well-paved roads (no mud) and high-arched bridges (no flood). Notice, for example, that Josephus's description of a legionary's kit involved far more construction tools than military weapons.<sup>10</sup> *Economic* power marched in lock-step with military power. Not only legionary forces but commercial interests moved through those Roman ports, along those Roman roads, and over those Roman bridges. Also, legionary wages and expenditures monetized the periphery. *Political* power involved a highly self-conscious aristocratic class in which provincials could become not only Roman senators but even Roman emperors and patronal relationships structured the entire process. *Ideological* power or Roman imperial theology was, finally and most importantly, the theoretical glue that held that whole world together. Augustus, for example, was Divine, Son of God, God, and God of God. He was Lord, Redeemer, Liberator and Savior of the world. In texts and inscriptions, images and structures, Rome's program was *first victory, then peace*, or: *peace through victory*. Its mantra was, more fully: *religion, war, victory, and peace*.<sup>11</sup> Violence, in other words, has always been the drug of choice for human civilization.

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to A.D. 1760 (1986), 1–33, esp. 250–300. I also presume much from these two books: Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); and Geza Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, trans. David Braund and Frank Pollock (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> Josephus, *War* 3.95, on the ordinary legionaries: “the regiments of the line [carry] a javelin and oblong buckler; the[ir] equipment further includes a saw, a basket, a pick and an axe, not to mention a strap, a bill-hook, a chain and three days' rations, so that an infantry man is almost as heavily laden as a pack-mule.”

<sup>11</sup> For Roman imperial theology, see Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro, Jerome Lectures 16 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990). For its opposite, see Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Power and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004); also Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2004).

I emphasize most strongly that Rome was no more and no less than the normalcy or even the cutting-edge of civilization in its Mediterranean place and first-century time. But throughout all of human history, civilization has been hierarchical inside and imperial outside. “Civilization was a complex whole of insulating and caging factors,” in the words of Michael Mann, “emerging fairly suddenly together. . . . in four literate, urban, and ceremonially centered groups that seem to have arisen independently of one another” along irrigated alluvial rivers in Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China.<sup>12</sup> Opposition to Rome or to any other empire, therefore, was and is either superficial or fundamental. By *superficial*, I mean resistance from those who would replace one empire by another, replace *their* rule by *our* rule. By *fundamental*, I mean resistance against any imperial rule, that is, against the insistent violence, injustice, and oppression of civilization itself.

### 2.2.2. *The Jewish Tradition*

In that first century CE, Jewish tradition did not present a monolithic response to the challenge of Greek cultural internationalism or Roman political imperialism. On the one hand, it advocated collaboration as Josephus argued that God had given imperial power to Rome, to the Flavian dynasty, and to Vespasian as the Messiah.<sup>13</sup> On the other, it advocated resistance both violent<sup>14</sup> and non-violent<sup>15</sup> to that imperial ascendancy and it did so by command of the same God that demanded collaboration. There was, however, one element deep in that tradition placing the Jewish God and the Roman Empire on an inevitable collision course.

The tradition insisted that God was one of “justice and righteousness,” that is, a God not only of personal and individual justice but especially of structural and systemic justice, a God not just of retributive justice

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<sup>12</sup> Mann, *Sources*, 74. That is not, by the way, a philosophical statement about human nature but an historical one about human civilization. “The general capacities of human beings faced with their earthly environment gave rise to the first societies—to agriculture, the village, the clan, the lineage, and the chiefdom—but not to civilization, stratification, or the state. Our thanks, or curses, for that are due to more particular historical circumstances” (40).

<sup>13</sup> On Jewish collaboration: *War* 5.378, 412; on the Roman Empire: *War* 2.390; 5.367; on the Flavian dynasty; *War* 5.2; on Vespasian as Messiah: *War* 6:312–313.

<sup>14</sup> The Sicarii, for example: *War* 2.254–257 and *Ant.* 20.164–165, 208–210.

<sup>15</sup> Against Pilate’s iconic standards in Jerusalem, 26 CE, in *War* 2.169–174 = *Ant.* 18.55–59; and against Caligula’s divine statue in the Temple, 40–41 CE, in *War* 2.185–203 = *Ant.* 18.261–309; Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 203–348.

but especially of distributive justice, a God who demanded that all get a fair share of an earth that belonged only to God. That distributive justice applied first and foremost to the Land of Israel itself. Since land was the very material basis of life itself, “the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants” (Lev 25:23).<sup>16</sup> Without that special safeguard, there would be those “who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land” (Isa 5:8).

In Torah, God’s distributive justice is very much concerned with mortgaging and foreclosing on land as the obvious circumvention of the inability to buy and sell it. This shows up in forbidding interest, controlling collateral, remitting debts, freeing slaves, and reversing dispossessions.<sup>17</sup> In the Prophets, we often speak of *social* justice but it is fundamentally a matter of *divine* justice, a matter of their insistent attempt to hold Israel faithful to its covenant with a God of distributive justice.<sup>18</sup> Most significant is their refusal, in the name of God, ever to allow worship as a replacement for justice; to be holy as God was holy meant to be just as God was just. Worship was empowerment for justice and was impossible in a state of injustice.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, in Psalm 82, for example, all of that is extended from the land of Israel to all the world. The Supreme God indicts the sub-divinities that rule the world for not maintaining global justice, they seem unaware that that was their function, and, because of that, “all the foundations of the earth are shaken” (82:5).

If, in other words, any first-century Jew took those covenantal traditions seriously, their God would be in absolute conflict with the normalcy of Roman imperial policy. God: the land belongs to me and must be administered justly. Rome: the land belongs to us and will be administered imperially. That clash in fundamental theology may be the best explanation for those multiplied revolts in and around the Jewish

<sup>16</sup> The classic example is Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kgs 21:1–15.

<sup>17</sup> (1) Interest: Exod 22:25; Deut 23:1; Lev 25:35–37; (2) Collateral: Exod 22:26–27; Deut 24:6,10–11; (3) Debt: Deut 15:1–2, 7–11; (4) Slavery: Exod 21:2, 7–11; Deut 15:12–15, 18; (5) Dispossession: Lev 25:8–13, 23, 29–31.

<sup>18</sup> Amos 2:6–8; 5:7, 10–12; 8:4–7; Hos 4:1–3; 5:10; 12:7–9; Isa 3:14–15; 5:7b–9; 33:14–15; Mic 2:1–2; 3:1–3; 6:10–12; 7:2; Jer 4:4; 5:26–28; 22:3, 13–17; Ezek 18:5–9; 34:4, 16–17; 45:9–12; Zech 7:9–10.

<sup>19</sup> Amos 4:1, 4–5; 5:21–24; Hos 6:6; Isa 1:10–17; Mic 6:6–8; Jer 7:5–7, 26:2–6.

homeland in Rome's first 200 years there. But, of course, that puts God against the normalcy of civilization as incarnated then in the Roman Empire. It was not at all that Rome was particularly brutal or savage. It was simply that its territorial nature made it intrude more efficiently and cooperatively into local political and economic realities.

### 2.3. *Galilean Archaeology*

This final layer of the interdisciplinary and interactive contextual matrix is extremely important. If the variable of commercialization is correlative with the variable of resistance and if Romanization worked by urbanization for commercialization, did all or any of that apply to Lower Galilee in the 20's CE? I focus first on the rule of Herod the Great as King of the Jews, second on the rule of Herod Antipas as tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and finally on Herod Antipas as actual and potential King of the Jews.

#### 2.3.1. *Herod, Caesarea, and Jerusalem*

Apart from the city of Rome as one giant project, the two greatest constructions in that contemporary world were undertaken by Herod the Great in the generation before Jesus. One was his creation of the great city and all-weather port of Caesarea on his country's mid-Mediterranean coast.<sup>20</sup> It was "Herod's show-piece city; it was a major outlet to the Mediterranean, home for the Judean navy, the largest harbor in the Mediterranean. It rearranged trade patterns in the area."<sup>21</sup> That harbor "was composed of three basins, one inside the other... the outer basin, the largest of the three [around 25 acres], was created by constructing two breakwaters to enclose a vast area of open sea—an engineering operation that was the first of its kind in history."<sup>22</sup>

Another giant construction project was the enlargement of the Temple courts to include a court of the women and a court of the Gentiles.<sup>23</sup> It was a "truly staggering" project<sup>24</sup> as "the area of the enclosure," at 35–36 acres, was "exceptionally large, compared with other well-known

<sup>20</sup> Josephus's descriptions are in *War* 1.401; *Ant.* 15.380–425.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, Studies on Personalities of the New Testament (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 178.

<sup>22</sup> *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Ephraim Stern, Ayelet Lewinson-Gilboa, and Joseph Aviram, 4 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta; New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 287.

<sup>23</sup> Josephus; descriptions are in *War* 1.408–414; *Ant.* 15.331–337; 16.136–141.

<sup>24</sup> Richardson, *Herod*, 185.

sacred enclosures in the classical world” and the “construction of such a large artificial area in a hilly region, where building conditions were far from favorable, was remarkable.”<sup>25</sup> Those two projects were not unconnected. That huge court of the Gentiles meant that thousands of pious pagan pilgrims or curious pagan tourists could come in through Caesarea’s great port and go up to Jerusalem’s great temple. Herod had managed not only to commercialize the land but also the religion of his people. He had succeeded where Antiochus IV Epiphanes had failed utterly. He had commercialized Jerusalem and nobody, as far as we know, had protested.

Here, however, is the most striking point. Herod had, as just seen, thoroughly commercialized Judea. He had also built temples to *Roma et Augustus* at Caesarea Maritima in Judea, Sebaste in Samaria, and Panias, later Caesarea Philippi, in the far north of his kingdom. In other words, he had more or less skipped Lower Galilee altogether. It was certainly part of his realm but, after its initial resistance to his ascendancy, he undertook no major construction there either to avoid provocation or to exact punishment. In other words, Romanization by urbanization for commercialization only began strongly in Lower Galilee under Herod the Great’s son and local heir, the tetrarch Herod Antipas.

### 2.3.2. *Antipas, Sepphoris, and Tiberias*

First, in 4 BCE at the start of his rule, Antipas, according to Josephus, “fortified Sepphoris to be the ornament of all Galilee, and called it Autocratoris”<sup>26</sup> in honor of the emperor who recorded in his *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, “I was twenty-one times saluted as *imperator*,” that is in Greek, *autocrator*, or in English, *victor* or *conqueror*.<sup>27</sup> Earlier, again according to Josephus, but so far without any confirming archaeological evidence, Roman legionary forces from Syria “captured and burnt the city of Sepphoris and reduced its inhabitants to slavery.”<sup>28</sup> Whatever the final decision on that point, it is certain that Antipas (re)built Sepphoris as his capital city along Roman lines as best he could with his limited resources.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *New Encyclopedia*, 737.

<sup>26</sup> *Ant.* 18.27.

<sup>27</sup> Peter A. Brunt and J. M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: The Achievements of the Divine Augustus* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 19.

<sup>28</sup> *War* 2.68 = *Ant.* 17.289.

<sup>29</sup> Apart from the article on Sepphoris in the *New Encyclopedia*, 1324–1345, see the following studies: Stuart S. Miller, *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris*, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1984); Eric M. Meyers, Ehud Netzer, and Carol L. Meyers, “Sepphoris, ‘Ornament of all Galilee,’” *BA* 49 (1986): 4–19; Stuart S. Miller, “Intercity Relations in Roman Palestine: The Case of Sepphoris and

Second, around twenty years later and twenty miles to the east, Antipas created a new city on the mid-western shore of the Sea of Galilee. He called it Tiberias after the new emperor and its planning must have started upon Tiberius's accession in 14 CE. It replaced Sepphoris as the new capital of Antipas's territories.<sup>30</sup> Josephus notes that the city was built on a graveyard making its inhabitants "unclean for seven days" according to Jewish Law in Num 19:11–16 and that its palace "contained representations of animals" against Jewish Law in Exod 20:4.<sup>31</sup> None of that sounds very credible since Antipas, who ruled successfully for 43 years, was usually sensitive to such details. Those accusations were more likely evidence of popular opposition to Tiberias's very existence (urban libel, as it were) rather than proof of Antipas's provocative location of his city and decoration of his palace.

The constructions at Sepphoris and Tiberias were the minuscule Galilean counterparts of those gigantic Judean constructions at Caesarea and Jerusalem. They were, of course, but pale shadows and feeble miniatures of those world-class projects and could not be compared with them except as their almost trivial extensions. Still, and on however small a local scale, Romanization by urbanization for commercialization began in Lower Galilee under Herod Antipas in the generation of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> That process must also be specified even more exactly. The

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Tiberias," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 12 (1987): 1–24; Eric M. Meyers, Ehud Netzer, and Carol L. Meyers, *Sepphoris* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992); Stuart S. Miller, "Sepphoris, the Well Remembered City," *BA* 55 (1992): 74–83; Eric M. Meyers, "Roman Sepphoris in Light of New Archeological Evidence and Recent Research," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992 [Papers from the First International Conference on Galilean Studies in Late Antiquity, Kibbutz Hanaton, Lower Galilee, Israel, August 13–15, 1989]), 321–338; James F. Strange, "Six Campaigns at Sepphoris: The University of South Florida Excavations, 1983–1989," in *Galilee*, ed. Levine, 339–355; Rebecca Martin Nagy, Carol L. Meyers, Eric M. Meyers, and Zeev Weiss, *Sepphoris in Galilee: Crosscurrents of Culture* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns; Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1996); Eric M. Meyers, "Sepphoris on the Eve of the Great Revolt (67–68 CE): Archaeology and Josephus," in *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures*, ed. Eric M. Meyers, *Duke Judaic Studies* 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999 [Papers from the Second International Conference on Galilee in Antiquity, Duke University, Durham, and the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, January 25–27, 1997]), 109–122.

<sup>30</sup> In Josephus's *Life* 37, the rebel faction in Tiberias claimed "that their city had always been the capital of Galilee, at least under its founder, Herod the tetrarch, whose intention was that the city of Sepphoris should be subordinate to Tiberias." That, they said, was only reversed under Nero due to the pro-Roman stand of Sepphoris.

<sup>31</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.168 = *Ant.* 18.36–38; *Life* 65.

<sup>32</sup> For general background, see Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).



creation of Tiberias as Antipas's new capital by the start of the 20's CE meant that his commercialization was now extended to the lake itself. He was not there for view or breeze but, having learned to multiply loaves in the rich valleys around Sepphoris, he now intended to multiply fishes in the rich waters of the lake. By the 20's, it must have been impossible to fish, launch, catch, or beach without tetrarchal taxes and, even then, those catches might have had to be sold to Antipas's fish-factories to be dried, salted, or made into sauce.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, I cite that ancient Galilean boat as a symbol but not of course as a proof of those economic pressures around Antipas's lake. It was nursed along with a keel half of good and half of bad timber and with planks made with bits and pieces of various woods. Then, when it was finally no longer viable, it was stripped of everything salvageable—including every single nail—and pushed offshore to sink in the mud.<sup>34</sup> But what exactly was Antipas's overall purpose? What can we conclude from the archaeological data?

### 2.3.3. *Herod, Antipas, and Kingship*

First, just before his death Herod the Great made two contradictory modifications of his will. He first named Antipas as his royal heir but later changed it to Archelaus, both sons by the Samaritan Malthace.<sup>35</sup> Upon Herod's death, Antipas counter-claimed against Archelaus and received wide support in Judea and Rome but, ultimately, Augustus gave half the kingdom to Archelaus as ethnarch and one quarter each to Antipas and Philip as tetrarchs.<sup>36</sup> In other words, in 4 BCE, Antipas failed in his plans to succeed his father as King of the Jews.

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Apart from the article on Tiberias in the *New Encyclopedia*, 1464–1473, see also Michael Avi-Yonah, "The Foundation of Tiberias," *IEJ* 1 (1950): 160–169; Yizhar Hirschfeld, "Tiberias: Preview of Coming Attractions," *BAR* 17.2 (March–April 1991): 44–51; idem, *A Guide to the Antiquity Sites in Tiberias* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> Compare the rather unlikely entrepreneurial economic interpretation in Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men," *BR* 15.3 (June 1999): 22–27, 48–49, with the much more likely imperial economic interpretation in K. C. Hanson, "The Galilean Fishing Economy and the Jesus Tradition," *BTB* 27 (1997): 99–111.

<sup>34</sup> Shelley Wachsmann, "The Galilee Boat: 2,000-Year Old Hull Recovered Intact," *BAR* 14.5 (September–October 1988): 18–33; *The Sea of Galilee Boat: An Extraordinary 2000 Year Old Discovery* (New York: Plenum, 1995); Shelley Wachsmann et al., *The Excavations of an Ancient Boat in the Sea of Galilee (Lake Kinneret)*, *'Atiqot* (English Series) 19 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1990).

<sup>35</sup> The former will is in Josephus, *War* 1.646 = *Ant.* 17.146; the latter one is in *War* 1.664 = *Ant.* 17.188, sons by Malthace in *War* 1.562 = *Ant.* 17.20.

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.14–38, 80–100 = *Ant.* 17.219–249, 299–323.

Second, under Augustus and maybe especially after the exile of his brother Archelaus in 6 CE, Antipas remained rather quiet. But with Augustus's death and Tiberius's accession he began, as mentioned above, to plan a new capital city named Tiberias and to expand his tax-base by commercializing both land and lake. My interpretation is that Antipas wanted to accomplish under Tiberius what he had failed to achieve under Augustus, namely, to become King of the Jews by Roman appointment. That interpretation is confirmed by two moves made by Antipas, an external one for his Roman masters and an internal one for his Jewish subjects.

Third, for external consumption among his Roman peers, when the Roman legate Vitellius met to negotiate a treaty with the Parthian Artabanus, Antipas "gave a feast for them in a luxurious pavilion which he constructed in the middle of the river" Euphrates.<sup>37</sup> Antipas as international statesman!

Fourth, for internal consumption among his Jewish subjects, Antipas married a Hasmonean princess. His father, Herod the Great, had also created a Hasmonean-Herodian axis by marrying Mariamme but he later executed her and her son Aristobulus.<sup>38</sup> The latter's daughter Herodias married Herod Philip who was, like Antipas, a son of Herod the Great but by a different wife. "Falling in love with Herodias," says Josephus, Antipas "broached to her the subject of marriage,"<sup>39</sup> and each abandoned their former spouses. Whatever about sexual love, the social logic was very clear and I interpret it as Antipas's continuing move to become King of the Jews. Notice, by the way, that Antipas had planned that marriage with Herodias before making a visit to Rome and concluded it on his return. What was he doing in Rome at that point?

Finally, to confirm that preceding analysis of Antipas's long-term plans, when Herodias's brother Herod Agrippa I was given the territory of her ex-husband Herod Philip with the title not of tetrarch but of king, she and Antipas appeared before the new emperor Gaius Caligula to ask for a similar rank. But Agrippa I accused him of storing arms towards some anti-Roman conspiracy and Gaius exiled them both to either Gaul

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<sup>37</sup> *Ant.* 18.102.

<sup>38</sup> Mariamme in *War* 1.443–444 = *Ant.* 15.230–231; Aristobulus in *War* 1.550–551 = *Ant.* 16.394.

<sup>39</sup> *Ant.* 18.110.

or Spain.<sup>40</sup> Josephus blames everything on Herodias—it was all her idea and her fault. But he also thinks that Antipas simply wanted to become “king” of his own territories just as Agrippa I was now “king” of Philip’s former domains. I omit his blame-the-woman and am convinced Antipas and Herodias had bigger plans. Antipas admitted, for example, about his arms-buildup but that was surely not to revolt against Rome but to prepare for his new role as King of the Jews. In any case, it was all over, Tiberius was dead, Gaius was emperor, Antipas and Herodias were in exile, and Herod Agrippa I became King of the Jews.

### 3. *Text*

The data-base I test against that context is the earliest dated materials in the Jesus tradition. I determine that inventory with two presuppositions. First, Q exists and should be dated to the 50’s CE. Second, anything in Q and in one or more independent sources is earlier than Q. I insist that nobody can avoid such decisions about sources and dependencies. Even to avoid those questions entirely is to make a decision and adopt a position. In the limited space of this article, I exemplify with three cases involving Q and independent materials, one small, one larger, and one very large indeed.

#### 3.1. *Jesus and the Prohibition of Divorce*

For a single isolated saying, this is an excellently attested one. It is found in Q at Matt 5:31–32 = Luke 16:18, in Paul at 1 Cor 7:10–11, and in Mark 10:2–12 = Matt 19:3–9. “Granted the limited scope of this essay,” said John Meier in a recent article, “I simply accept the consensus of scholars that the historical Jesus, in some way or other, in some formulation or other, prohibited divorce (and remarriage).”<sup>41</sup> That is probably the best way to put it in any case. What was retained originally in oral memory from Jesus was a strikingly absolute proscription against divorce itself let alone remarriage afterwards. That at least is the logic of that Gen 2:24 citation in Mark 10:6–7 = Matt 19:4–5.

But even as that was transmitted in different forms, sources, and formulations, it was also muted back from original radicality to relative normalcy. Matthew added the qualification of “except for unchastity”

<sup>40</sup> *War* 2.182–183 = *Ant.* 18.240–255.

<sup>41</sup> John P. Meier, “The Historical Jesus and the Historical Law: Some Problems within the Problem,” *CBQ* 65 (2003): 52–79, esp. 64–79; citation from 69 n. 38.

to both his Q source in 5:32 and to his Markan source in 19:9. Paul added the qualification of an unwilling pagan married to a Christian believer in 1 Cor 7:15. Both those exceptions allow not only divorce but remarriage. How could the tradition retain an absolute prohibition from Jesus recorded in three independent places but also negated with exceptions in two of them? Does that indicate a certain understanding of Jesus' purpose? Put another way, why did Jesus ever issue that absolute proscription? Was there rampant divorce among his contemporary Galilean peasantry? Or does something else in that context of Galilee make better sense of this text from Jesus? What about Antipas?

Almost everything had gone wrong for Antipas, not only externally with regard to his Roman masters<sup>42</sup> but internally with regard to his Jewish subjects. They had libeled his new city and its new palace and they had attacked his Hasmonean connection. That was not just one more political divorce and marriage so typical among both the Julio-Claudian emperors and the Herodian rulers. It was vital that his subjects accept Herodias, grand-daughter of Mariamme, as the new Mariamme (notice those many babies named Mary in that first-century Jewish homeland). And then came two recalcitrant prophets not just to accuse him personally but to destroy him socially, to endanger the Hasmonean-Herodian conjunction he and Herodias had carefully planned.

John the Baptist criticized the marriage as illegal in Mark 6:17–18 = Matt 14:3–4 = Luke 3:19 according to the Jewish law of Lev 18:16, “You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother’s wife; it is your brother’s nakedness.”<sup>43</sup> Such a criticism might have been brushed aside by a Herodian ruler at another time or place—Herod the Great, for example, had made Henry VIII seem both monogamous and merciful. But within Antipas’s plans for Herodias as a popular Hasmonean queen and for Antipas-Herodias as a renewed Herodian-Hasmonean combination, that criticism would have been intolerable, would have destroyed the entire program of internal Jewish acceptance for himself as next King of the Jews. John was imprisoned and executed.

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<sup>42</sup> He had been defeated in battle by Aretas IV for having divorced his daughter to marry Herodias, according to *Ant.* 18.113–115; and he had angered Vitellius by sending details of that Roman-Parthian treaty to Tiberius on his own authority, according to *Ant.* 18.104–105.

<sup>43</sup> Josephus made the same judgment in *Ant.* 18.136: Herodias “taking it into her head to flout the way of our fathers, married Herod, her husband’s brother by the same father, who was tetrarch of Galilee.”

Jesus' criticism was just as bad and went even deeper. It appealed not to law but to creation and had God forbid divorce itself, forbid not just the remarriage but its very basis in a double divorce. That criticized the whole normalcy of imperial, royal, and aristocratic marriages and divorces as political alliances. Jesus himself was probably saved from reprisal by Antipas's shrewd analysis of how many popular prophets he could execute within any given period of time. Recall that Antipas's defeat by Aretas IV was regarded by "some of the Jews" as a "divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed the Baptist."<sup>44</sup>

Finally, that conjunction of context and text may *possibly* be confirmed by one other consideration. In a recent article, John Meier denied that either the texts of the Qumran scrolls or the debates between the Houses of Hillel and Shammai help us to understand Jesus' prohibition.<sup>45</sup> But that omits completely the royal realities of Hasmonean and Herodian normalcy that form the context for any and all of those texts. Divorce and remarriage is forbidden the ideal future king in the *Temple Scroll* and all Essenes in the *Damascus Document*.<sup>46</sup> And the House of Shammai is stricter than that of Hillel not just in legal matters as internally juridical but as externally socio-political as well. All of that is specifically confrontational with the Hasmonean-Herodian use of divorce and remarriage for political and imperial purposes.

I suggest, therefore, that Jesus' prohibition of divorce was not directed at the local peasantry for whom it may well have been an economically unlikely event but at Antipas himself as part of popular resistance to his royal plans for palace (illegal!), city (illegal!), and marriage (illegal!). It was an intuitive understanding of this limited focus that allowed Matthew, Paul, and Christianity after them to add exceptions and make interpretations to what *prima facie* looks like an absolute prohibition.

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<sup>44</sup> *Ant.* 18.116.

<sup>45</sup> Meier, "Historical Jesus and the Historical Law," 52–79. He concludes that, "With Qumran and the Mishna out of the picture, Jesus' prohibition of divorce seems to come out of nowhere in Judaism and to go nowhere in Judaism. Even its reception in Christianity is ambiguous, where Paul in 1 Corinthians 7, makes history in first-generation Christianity by being the first to create some 'wiggle room' around the problem" (79).

<sup>46</sup> Meier notes that, in the latter case, "Many commentators, with an eye to the lifestyles of the rich and powerful in Israel, suggest that polygyny is the primary, if not the only, target. If any type of divorce is censured, it seems to be divorce plus remarriage during the lifetime of the first spouse" ("Historical Jesus and the Historical Law," 73). Divorce and/or remarriage was probably more an aristocratic actuality than a peasant possibility.

### 3.2. *Jesus and the Radicalization of the Golden Rule*

I turn next to a cluster of sayings that, in my judgment, appears independently both in Q as Luke 6:27–36 = Matt 5:39b–48; 7:12 and the *Did.* 1.2c–5b. That independence is, once again, a position to be accepted, rejected, but not ignored. In other words, one must decide for independence,<sup>47</sup> dependence,<sup>48</sup> or some mixture of both situations.<sup>49</sup> And, as always, if one is wrong on that decision, one is wrong on all that follows from it—for each of those alternative positions. These are the six sayings that appear in both Q and the *Didache* and in augural teaching positions in each case:

Q/Matthew 5	Q/Luke 6	<i>Didache</i> 1
The Other Cheek (39b–41)S	Love your Enemies (27–28)P	The Golden Rule (2c)S/n
Give without Return (42)S	The Other Cheek (29, 35a)S	Love your Enemies (3ac)P
Love your Enemies (44)P	Give without Return (30, 35b)S	Better than Sinners (3b)P
Better than Sinners (46–47)P	The Golden Rule (31)P/p	The Other Cheek (4b)S
As your Father (48)	Better than Sinners (32–34)P	Give without Return (5a)S
The Golden Rule (7:12)P/p	As your Father (36)	As your Father (5b)

<sup>47</sup> Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didaché: Instructions des apôtres*, Études Bibliques (Paris: Gabalda, 1958); Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier, *La doctrine des douze apôtres (Didaché)*, SC 248 (Paris: Cerf, 1978); Jonathan Draper, “The Jesus Tradition in the *Didache*,” in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 5, *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 269–287; Willy Rordorf, “Does the *Didache* Contain Jesus Tradition Independently of the Synoptic Gospels?” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Henry Wansbrough, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press [JSOT Press], 1992), 394–423; Ian H. Henderson, “*Didache* and Orality in Synoptic Comparison,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 83–306; Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* (New York: Newman Press, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> (1) Dependence on the synoptic tradition: Christopher M. Tuckett, “Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache*,” in *The New Testament in Early Christianity: La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 197–230. (2) Dependence on Q: Richard Glover, “The *Didache*’s Quotations and the Synoptic Gospels,” *NTS* 5 (1958–1959): 12–29. (3) Dependence on the synoptic tradition but only for *Did.* 1.3b–2.1: Helmut Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65 (Berlin: Akademie, 1957); Bentley Layton, “The Sources, Date and Transmission of *Didache* 1.3b–2.1,” *HTR* 61 (1968): 343–383.

<sup>49</sup> Clayton N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, VCSup 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1989); Kurt Niederwimmer, *Die Didache*, Ergänzungsreihe zum kritischegetischen Kommentar über das Neue Testament: Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

First, the cluster's six sayings appear in different arrangements as Matthew and Luke reshape that inaugural address from Q within their own new compositions. Second, on the one hand, *The Other Cheek* and *Give without Return* always appear as a set and, on the other, *Love your Enemies* and *Better than Sinners* may have been a set in Q and is such in the *Didache*. Third, some of the sayings are singular (=S) while others are plural (=P) and that patterning is similar in all three versions for those sets just mentioned—the former set is singular, the latter plural. My conclusion from that patterning is that Q and the *Didache* are performancial variations on a written document, not an oral tradition. I do not think oral recall would have maintained that disjunction of tenses. Fourth, *The Golden Rule* also appears as either plural (=P) or singular (=S) and as either positive (=p) or negative (=n). Finally, therefore, I propose that there existed behind those Q and *Didache* clusters, a small written catechism which radicalized *The Golden Rule* by using those other sayings as commentary on it.

There are four points of major importance about that catechism. It is profoundly non-violent as it advocates non-violence even under attack, non-violence not only by non-attack but even by non-defense. It is non-violence based on the character of God. It is utterly eschatological but in a present rather than a future or even imminent sense. It proposes a here-and-now share-life in total opposition to the normalcy of Roman greed-life. It is, therefore, not just about non-violence but, presuming non-violence, it is about *positive life-style resistance*<sup>50</sup> to the normalcy of human civilization as then and there incarnated in Rome's Antipas, Antipas's Galilee, and Galilee's lake. It is about living within the Kingdom of God here and now on earth and not just hereafter in heaven.

### 3.3. *Jesus and the Proclamation of the Kingdom*

This final and most important example presupposes once again the existence of Q but also the independence of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

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<sup>50</sup> Think of Jesus' programmatic *living in the Kingdom* under and against the Roman Empire as a parallel to Václav Havel's programmatic *living in the truth* under and against the Soviet empire. His two essays *The Power of the Powerless* from October 1978 and *Politics and Conscience* from February 1984 are both available in *Living In Truth: Twenty-Two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, ed. Jan Vladislav (London: Faber & Faber, 1987), esp. 89, 92, 93, 99, 104, 113, 137–138, 153. For general commentary see Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York: Henry Holt [Metropolitan Books], 2003), 186–215.

That last point can, of course, be debated but, as I see it, nobody can escape such preliminary source-decisions—to affirm, deny, or ignore them are all decisions.

There are, calculating most conservatively, 37 units of tradition independently present in Q and *Thomas*.<sup>51</sup> By calculating most conservatively I exclude from this inventory any units in the *Gospel of Thomas* with parallels only in Luke or only in Matthew even though some (many? most? all?) of such units may have been in Q as well.<sup>52</sup> I refer to that

<sup>51</sup> (1) *Ask, Seek, Knock*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 2 (P. Oxy. 654.5–9) = 92:1 = 94; (b) Q/Luke 11:9–10 = Matt 7:7–8. (2) *When and Where*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 3:1–3 (P. Oxy. 654.3:1–3) = 51 = 113; (b) Q/Luke 17:23 = Matt 24:26. (3) *Hidden Made Manifest*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 5:2 (P. Oxy. 654.29–30) = 6: 5–6 (P. Oxy. 654.38–40); (b) Q/Luke 12:2 = Matt 10:26. (4) *The Golden Rule*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 6: 3 (P. Oxy. 654.36–37); (b) Q/Luke 6:31 = Matt 7:12. (5) *Mission and Message*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 14:4; (b) Q/Luke 10:4–11 = Matt 10:7, 10b, 12–14. (6) *Peace or Sword*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 16; (b) Q/Luke 12:51–53 = Matt 10:34–36. (7) *Eye, Ear, Mind*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 17; (b) Q/Luke 10:23–24 = Matt 13:16–17. (8) *The Mustard Seed*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 20; (b) Q/Luke 13:18–19 = Matt 13:31–32. (9) *Knowing the Danger*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 21:5–7 = 103; (b) Q/Luke 12:39–40 = Matt 24:43–44. (10) *Speck and Log*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 26 (P. Oxy. 1.1–4); (b) Q/Luke 6:41–42 = Matt 7:3–5; (11) *Open Proclamation*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 33:1 (P. Oxy. 1.41–42); (b) Q/Luke 12:3 = Matt 10:27. (12) *Lamp and Bushel*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 33:2–3; (b) Q/Luke 11:33 = Matt 5:15. (13) *The Blind Guide*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 34; (b) Q/Luke 6:39 = Matt 15:14b. (14) *Strong One's House*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 35; (b) Q/Luke 11:21–22 (= Matt 12:29); (15) *Against Anxieties*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 36 (P. Oxy. 655, col.i.1–170); (b) Q/Luke 12:22–31 = Matt 6:25–33. (16) *On Hindering Others*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 39:1–2 (P. Oxy. 655, col.ii.11–19) = 102; (b) Q/Luke 11:52 = Matt 23:13. (17) *Have and Receive*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 41; (b) Q/Luke 19:26 = Matt 25:29. (18) *All Sins Forgiven*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 44; (b) Q/Luke 12:10 = Matt 12:32. (19) *Trees and Hearts*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 45; (b) Q/Luke 6:43–45 = Matt 7:16–20. (20) *Greater Than John*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 46; (b) Q/Luke 7:28 = Matt 11:11. (21) *Serving Two Masters*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 47:1–2; (b) Q/Luke 16:13 = Matt 6:24. (22) *Blessed the Poor*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 54; (b) Q/Luke 6:20 = Matt 5:3. (23) *Hating One's Family*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 55:1–2a = 101; (b) Q/Luke 14:25–26 = Matt 10:37. (24) *Carrying One's Cross*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 55:2b; (b) Q/Luke 14:27 = Matt 10:38. (25) *Taken or Left*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 61:1; (b) Q/Luke 17:34–35 = Matt 24:40–41. (26) *Father and Son*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 61:3; (b) Q/Luke 10:22 = Matt 11:27. (27) *The Feast*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 64; (b) Q/Luke 14:15–24 = Matt 22:1–13. (28) *Blessed the Persecuted*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 68 = 69:1; (b) Q/Luke 6:22–23 = Matt 5:11–12. (29) *Blessed the Hungry*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 69:2; (b) Q/Luke 6: 21a = Matt 5:6. (30) *Harvest Is Great*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 73; (2) Q/Luke 10:2 = Matt 9:37–38. (31) *Treasure in Heaven*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 76:3; (b) Q/Luke 12:33 = Matt 6:19–20. (32) *Into the Desert*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 78; (b) Q/Luke 7:24–27 = Matt 11:7–10. (33) *Foxes Have Holes*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 86; (b) Q/Luke 9:57–58 = Matt 8:19–20. (34) *Inside and Outside*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 89; (b) Q/Luke 11: 39–40 = Matt 23:25–26; (35) *Give without Return*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 95; (b) Q/Luke 6:30, 34, 35b = Matt 5:42. (36) *The Leaven*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 96:1–2; (b) Q/Luke 13:20–21 = Matt 13:33. (37) *The Lost Sheep*: (a) *Gos. Thom.* 107; (b) Q/Luke 15:3–7 = Matt 18:12–14.

<sup>52</sup> Thus, for example, Stephen J. Patterson, from whom—with gratitude—I took this idea, counts those Q/*Thomas* parallels at 49 units—many more than my minimalist list in the preceding footnote. See his “Wisdom in Q and Thomas,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott, and William Johnston Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 187–221. Helmut Koester had also noted that those Q/*Thomas* parallels may be “possibly as many as forty-five, if one includes the Q-Mark overlaps and those sayings



complex of 37 units as the *Common Sayings Tradition* and it constitutes about one third of each document.<sup>53</sup> Since there is absolutely no evidence of a common order for those 37 units in the two documents, I presume general oral tradition rather than any written source-text behind them. They are, in fact, our best glimpse of a large complex of orally retained tradition still visible behind the texts into which it eventually disappeared.

Since I seek to stay as close to the “objectively” earliest data, I leave aside any attempt to analyze either Q<sup>54</sup> or the *Gospel of Thomas* into earlier and later strata.<sup>55</sup> I focus only on that *Common Sayings Tradition*. Within that inventory, granted present limitations of space, I focus here on one extremely important unit: *Mission and Message in Gos. Thom.* 14:4 and Q/Luke 10:4–11 = Matt 10:7, 10b, 12–14. My reasons for privileging this unit are fourfold. It cuts across the distinction of word and deed in the

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that Luke may have drawn from Q, although there are no Matthean parallels.” See p. 55 in his “Q and Its Relatives,” in vol. 1 of *Gospel Origins and Christian Beginnings and Gnosticism and the Early Christian World: In Honor of James M. Robinson*, ed. James E. Goehring, Charles W. Hedrick, and Jack T. Sanders, with Hans Dieter Betz, 2 vols, Forum Fascicles 1–2 (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1990), 49–63.

<sup>53</sup> To be more exact: 28% or 37 out of 132 units in the *Gospel of Thomas* have parallels in Q and 37% or 37 of 101 units in Q have parallels in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

<sup>54</sup> John Kloppenborg has insisted, quite correctly, that his stratification of Q into earlier and later layers is not a question of tradition-history but simply of composition-history: “To say that the wisdom components were formative for Q and that the prophetic judgment oracles and apophthegms describing Jesus’ conflict with ‘this generation’ are secondary is not to imply anything about the ultimate tradition-historical provenance of any of the sayings. It is indeed possible, indeed probable, that some of the materials from the secondary compositional phase are dominical or at least very old, and that some of the formative elements are, from the standpoint of authenticity or tradition-history, relatively young. Tradition-history is not convertible with *literary history*, and it is the latter which we are treating here.” See his *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 244–245.

<sup>55</sup> April D. DeConick has proposed earlier and later strata in the *Gospel of Thomas* in which “kernel sayings” were developed by “multi-authors who layered the text with new source materials over a lengthy period of time.” See p. 180 in “The Original *Gospel of Thomas*,” VC 46 (2002): 167–199. She concluded that “just over fifty percent of the sayings in the kernel gospel are paralleled in Q. Not even one saying with a Q parallel, however, can be found in the later layers. This also cannot be coincidence. It suggests to me that the sayings in the kernel *Gospel of Thomas* are some of our oldest witnesses to the Jesus traditions” (198). On the one hand, she is surely correct that “it is not until the later layers of Thomas that we find the non-apocalyptic (or better: ‘de-apocalypticizing’) materials introduced into the kernel in order to reinterpret the strong eschatological hopes” (195). On the other hand, the later and non-kernel interpretations in *Gos. Thom.* 3:1–3 = 51–113 do have a parallel in Q/Luke 17:23 = Matt 24:26. The question is what exactly is that common unit denying and what is it thereby affirming—is it all eschatology or only some specific forms of that hope.

Jesus tradition—it is, in fact, a word about deed, a saying about doing. It has an independent parallel in Mark 6:7–13 = Matt 10:1, 8–10a,11 = Luke 9:1–6 and, in integrating their Q and Mark sources, Luke keeps them somewhat separate while Matthew conflates them into unity. But that triply independent sourcing means that anything in Q and *Thomas* or Q and Mark is part of that earliest layer of the Jesus tradition on which I focus as my text. It is also reflected in Paul at 1 Cor 9:14 and 10:27 as well as in the *Did.* 11.(3)4–12 and 1 Tim 5:18b. It shows clearly that Jesus had not only a vision and theory of the Kingdom of God but also a program and practice for participation in its present actualization.

### 3.3.1. *Eating and Healing*

This double-theme is common to all three of the major independent sources: (1) *Gos. Thom.* 14:4b has “eat what they set before you, heal the sick among them.” (2) Q appears in Luke 10:7–9a as, “remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide.... eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there.” (3) Mark commands that, “wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place” (6:10) and narrates how “they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them” (6:13). In copying his Markan source, Luke adapts that as “to heal” and to “stay” (9:2, 4). In other words, they bring healing and receive eating in return.

The theme of rejection is also mentioned, by the way, in those three sources: “if they do not receive you...” (*Gos. Thom.* 14:4a, Q Luke 10:6, 10 = Matt 13–14; Mark 6:11).

### 3.3.2. *Kingdom of God*

This theme was explicit in Q/Luke 10:9 = Matt 10:7, not present in *Gos. Thom.* 4:4. but implicit in Mark 6:12, “so they went out and proclaimed that all should repent.” That recalls Mark 1:15’s summary of Jesus’ message that, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” Luke, for example, correctly adapts Mark’s “repent” as “he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God” (9:2) and concludes that, “they departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere” (9:6).

### 3.3.3. *Staff and Violence*

The items not to be worn by them or taken with them fall generally into two classes: some emphasize absolute inter-dependency with those whom they heal and with whom they eat; and others emphasize their

absolute defenselessness. They are not only non-violent in not attacking others, they are non-violent even in not defending themselves from attack. None of this is in the *Gospel of Thomas* but Q has “no staff” in Luke 9:3 = Matt 10:10.

Mark, in flat contradiction, says that Jesus, “ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff” (6:8). In other words, Mark knew and changed that earlier prohibition. Indeed, a staff for a journey would be so normal that Mark’s permission would be enough even by itself to presume some prior prohibition. The same, of course, goes for the change from “no sandals” in Q/Luke 10:4 = Matt 10:10 to “sandals” in Mark 6:9.

The absolute and programmatic non-violence, be it offensive or even defensive, of that “no staff” has been muted back to the defensive normalcy of “staff” in Mark. But, as in that preceding sayings cluster, so also in this selected example from the *Common Sayings Tradition*, the incarnated and communal program of Jesus is that one can and must enter the Kingdom of God here and now on this earth by forming a community that shares in mutuality the basic spiritual power of healing and the basic physical power of eating. That rebuilds Jewish society upwards from an equal and non-violent base in positive alternative and not just negative opposition to the hierarchical and violent normalcy of Roman imperialism (and all human civilization) working from the top downward.



## REMEMBERING JESUS: HOW THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS LOST ITS WAY

JAMES D. G. DUNN

*Jesus Remembered*<sup>1</sup> was the product and climax of some thirty years of engagement with what is almost universally known as ‘the Quest of the Historical Jesus.’ During the course of the research for the book itself I became increasingly dissatisfied with three key methodological presuppositions which have determined the course of the Quest, all three of them more or less from its inception. In reaction I found it necessary to engage in the Quest from a different starting point, with a different perspective on the source material, and with a different objective in analysing that material. These three protests and proposals are somewhat scattered and easily missed or lost to view in the scope and detail of the volume (900 pages!). In this essay I will attempt to bring them to clearer view, though it will be understood that the relative brevity of the essay permits neither the detail nor the nuance of the larger volume. Nevertheless, the attempt to focus more sharply on the three protests and proposals may help to make the methodological issues clearer and to highlight their importance. Each of my protests is double-barreled. My proposals do not fall into such a neat repeating pattern.

### *Protest One*

My first protest is directed in the first place against the assumption that ‘the Christ of faith’ is a perversion of ‘the historical Jesus’; that *faith is something which prevents a clear historical view of Jesus*. The objective of the first phase of the Quest was to find the *man* behind the *dogma*, the *historical* Jesus, the *real* Jesus. The assumption was that the real Jesus must have been *different* from the Christ of faith. The real Jesus was obscured by layers of faith and dogma, hidden behind the Christ of the

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<sup>1</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003). This chapter summarizes the main points of the three lectures published as *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker; London: SPCK, 2005).

creeds, the God-man, the second person of the Trinity, the Pantocrator, like an original masterpiece obscured by layers of later 'improvements' and centuries of pollution. The Quest was motivated by the conviction that these layers of dogma could be stripped away to reveal a more human Jesus, a Jesus more believable by 'modern man.'

The first to pose the antithesis between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith in these terms was D. F. Strauss<sup>2</sup> in his sharp critique of Schleiermacher's *Life of Jesus*.<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher's lectures had been based primarily on John's Gospel, particularly the discourses of Jesus in that Gospel, and had been delivered thirty-two years earlier, prior to Strauss's own *Life of Jesus* in which Strauss had seriously questioned the historical value of the Johannine discourses.<sup>4</sup> So Strauss's reaction to the publication of Schleiermacher's lectures was predictable.

Schleiermacher's Christology is a last attempt to make the churchly Christ acceptable to the modern world... Schleiermacher's Christ is as little a real man as is the Christ of the church.

The illusion... that Jesus could have been a man in the full sense and still as a single person stand above the whole of humanity, is the chain which still blocks the harbour of Christian theology against the open sea of rational science.

The ideal of the dogmatic Christ on the one hand and the historical Jesus of Nazareth on the other are separated forever.<sup>5</sup>

Strauss, then, marks the beginning of the devaluation of the historical value of John's gospel which has been a principal feature of the Quest for well over a century. And the critical determinant was that John's gospel expressed so clearly the developed *faith* of the early church: John presents the Christ of faith rather than the Jesus of history.

If Strauss insisted that John should be placed on the faith side of the history/faith divide, the later nineteenth-century liberals were equally insistent that Paul should be placed on the same side. According to Adolf Harnack, Jesus had preached a simple gospel centered on the

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<sup>2</sup> D. F. Strauss, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History* (1865; ET: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> F. D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Life of Jesus* (1864; ET: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

<sup>4</sup> D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835–1836; 1846; ET: 1846, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 365–386. The decisive consideration for Strauss was the fact that the style of speech in the gospel was everywhere the same, whether that of the Baptist, or of Jesus, or of the evangelist himself, pointing to the conclusion that the style, both of speech and thought, was that of the evangelist (385).

<sup>5</sup> Strauss, *Christ of Faith*, 4, 5, 169.

fatherhood of God, the infinite value of the human soul, and the importance of love. It was Paul who had turned the religion *of* Jesus into a religion *about* Jesus. It was Paul who had transformed the simple moralizing message of Jesus into a religion requiring redemption by bloody sacrifice.<sup>6</sup> Here again it was faith, the faith already of the first Christians, which had begun to obscure the clearer outlines of the historical Jesus.

The late nineteenth-century liberals were not worried about dating so early the beginning of the process whereby faith had progressively obscured the lineaments of the historical Jesus. For they were confident that in the synoptic gospels, in Mark in particular, they still had direct access to the mind (messianic consciousness) and message of Jesus himself. William Wrede punctured that confidence in a rebuttal which largely determined the attitude of critical scholarship to the synoptic gospels for the rest of the twentieth century. He argued that the motif of 'the messianic secret,' so integral to Mark's gospel, was clear evidence of a later, faith, perspective on Jesus; for example, the designation of Jesus as 'Son of God' by demoniacs already expressed *Christian faith* in Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

In short, then, faith pervaded the New Testament writings and their presentation of Jesus. No single gospel could be set over against the others as more historical and less theological. This critical perspective thus established a century ago has continued to dominate the way the gospels are approached and the use made of them in the quest of the historical Jesus. Subsequent to Wrede, Bultmann simply abandoned the Quest (at least for the life and personality of Jesus)<sup>8</sup> and focused attention on the kerygmatic Christ. To be sure, his disciples insisted that faith too was interested in the historical Jesus, but could never quite manage to cut a through way round the roadblock of faith. It was not simply that the writers of the New Testament expressed their faith in and through their writings. It was more the case that the Easter message, Easter faith, had so transformed their apprehension of Jesus that everything they said about Jesus expressed that faith. As Gunther Bornkamm, the classic expression of the so-called 'second quest of the historical Jesus' put it:

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<sup>6</sup> A. Harnack, *What Is Christianity?* (1900; ET: London: Williams & Norgate, 1901).

<sup>7</sup> W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (1901; ET: Cambridge: Clarke, 1971).

<sup>8</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (1926; ET: New York: Scribners, 1935), 8.

We possess no single word of Jesus and no single story of Jesus, no matter how incontestably genuine they may be, which do not embody at the same time the confession of the believing congregation, or at least are embedded therein.

In every layer, therefore, and in each individual part, the tradition is witness of the reality of his history and the reality of his resurrection. Our task, then, is to seek the history *in* the Kerygma of the gospels, and in this history to seek the Kerygma.

Nothing could be more mistaken than to trace the origin of the gospels and the traditions collected therein to a historical interest apart from faith... Rather these gospels voice the confession: Jesus the Christ, the unity of the earthly Jesus and the Christ of faith.<sup>9</sup>

If the second questers tried to retrieve the situation, the latest phase of the Quest as represented by the Jesus Seminar marks a reversion to the simplifications of the liberal quest, compounded by the radical scepticism of Wrede and Bultmann. For Robert Funk, the leading spokesman of the Seminar, the task is as it was 150 years ago: to rescue Jesus from Christianity, to free the historical Jesus from the prisons in which faith has incarcerated him.<sup>10</sup> The method is straightforward: whatever resonates with early Christian faith can be discarded.<sup>11</sup> The desired result is a Jesus amenable to questers' values and prejudices.<sup>12</sup>

In short, then, throughout the history of the quest of the historical Jesus, leading participants have all accepted as a methodological given the twofold proposition: that Christian (post-Easter) faith pervades all our chief sources for the life and mission of Jesus; and that this faith prevents the present-day quester from seeing Jesus as he was, or even as he was seen by his disciples pre-Easter. It is against this twofold proposition that I direct my first protest.

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<sup>9</sup> G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956; ET: London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960), 14, 21, 23.

<sup>10</sup> R. W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 300.

<sup>11</sup> R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); see, e.g., the references to the Jesus Seminar in the author index of Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 959.

<sup>12</sup> More extensive criticism in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 58–65.



*Proposal 1*

In direct contrast to this deeply rooted suspicion of faith as a barrier to and perversion of any historical perspective on Jesus, my proposal is that *the quest should start from the recognition that Jesus evoked faith from the outset of his mission and that this faith is the surest indication of the historical reality and effect of his mission.*

One thing we can be sure about: that Jesus made an *impact* in and through his mission. There were people who became his disciples; this we can be sure of, since otherwise no one would have remembered this Jesus or have wanted to do so, and he would have quickly disappeared in the soon gathering mists of history. The fact that Jesus made disciples is generally recognized. What has not been given sufficient recognition or weight, however, is the effect of this impact. These disciples encountered Jesus as a life-transforming experience: they followed him; they left their families; they gave up their livelihoods. Why? Because they had believed Jesus and what he said and taught. Because they believed in Jesus. They entrusted their lives and futures to him. Such a response cannot be denied the characterization 'faith.' Their discipleship was a faith commitment, already before Easter. Of course it was not yet Easter faith. And Easter faith transformed the pre-Easter faith. But the faith of discipleship was still faith.

The point is obvious. The earliest faith of the first Christians is not a hindrance or barrier to our perceiving the reality of what Jesus did and said and the effect he had. On the contrary, the impact thus made by Jesus is itself the evidence needed by those who want to appreciate the character and effectiveness of Jesus' mission. But what of the challenge posed by Bornkamm? Has that evidence been diluted or overlaid by the subsequent post-Easter faith? To some extent the answer must be Yes. But the second part of my first proposal is that *the original impact of Jesus' mission on his first disciples is, nevertheless, still clearly evident in the tradition preserved by the synoptic gospels.*

Here I draw particularly on a neglected article by Heinz Schürmann to the effect that the beginnings of the sayings tradition in the gospels must lie in the pre-Easter circle of disciples, and thus, as Schürmann added, with Jesus himself.<sup>13</sup> The claim can easily be documented. Consider

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<sup>13</sup> H. Schürmann, "Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition: Versuch eines formgeschichtlichen Zugangs zum Leben Jesu," in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 342-370.

only the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) or the parallel material in the Lukan Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17–49): the beatitudes, the call to love the enemy and not retaliate, the demand to give to those who beg from you, the warning against judging others, about the speck in someone else's eye and the log in one's own, the tree known by its fruits, the parable of the wise man and foolish man. Which of these shows traces of post-Easter embellishment or perspective? Arguably one or two, but not the bulk of them. Of course, within the present gospels they are retold within a gospel context, that is, as part of a story climaxing in Jesus' death and resurrection (Bornkamm's chief point). My point, however, is that their form and content show no signs of being originated or shaped by post-Easter faith. Who, for example, in a post-Easter context would have deemed it sufficient to challenge disciples to build their lives on Jesus' teaching (Matt 7:24–27/Luke 6:47–49) rather than on Jesus Christ himself (as in 1 Cor 3:11)? In other words, here we have *material which has been given its still enduring content and shape prior to the rise of Easter faith*.

The difference between the two perspectives, the one against which I protest and the one I propose, is well illustrated by their different responses to the hypothetical Q document. Two features of this document are generally agreed among Q specialists. One is that the traditions generally assigned to this document have a marked Galilean character, as indicated by the story of the centurion's servant (Matt 8:5–13/Luke 7:1–10) and the woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt 11:21–24/Luke 10:13–15), and illustrated by the characteristically agrarian setting of many of the traditions, assuming the daily reality of debt, day labourers, absentee landlords and the like. The other is the lack of a passion narrative, such a prominent motif in all four canonical gospels. From one perspective the explanation of these features is obvious. Assuming that the character of the Q document tells more about its own provenance and the faith of its compilers than about Jesus, the features point to communities/churches in Galilee which did not know the passion narrative or were even opposed to a gospel which climaxed in the crucifixion of Jesus, as in Mark.<sup>14</sup> From my perspective the more obvious explanation for these features is that *the Q material first emerged in Galilee and was given its lasting shape there prior to Jesus' death in Jerusalem*. That is to

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<sup>14</sup> See particularly J. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), chs. 4 and 5.

say, it expresses the impact made by Jesus during his Galilean mission and before the shadow of the cross began to fall heavily upon either his mission or the memory of his teaching.

The third part of my first proposal is the straightforward corollary that *we can discern Jesus from the impression he left on/in the Jesus tradition*. Here I wish to take up in my own terms the protest made against the nineteenth century Quest by Martin Kähler. His protest is embodied in the title of his famous essay, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus*.<sup>15</sup> Kähler's point was that 'the historical Jesus' was a creation of the questers. The gospels themselves do not give enough information to write the sort of Life of Jesus to which the nineteenth-century questers aspired. Lacking that information, they had to fill in the gaps from another source, a fifth gospel—themselves, their own values and aspirations. Hence the 'so-called historical Jesus.' In Kähler's view the gospels give access only to the *geschichtliche Christus*, the 'historic Christ,' that is, Jesus recognized in and by his historical significance.

It is at this point that I part company with Kähler, since by the 'historic Christ' he meant the preached Christ, that is, Christ seen in his post-Easter significance, the crucified and risen Christ seen through the eyes of post-Easter faith. But his protest can be reformulated to express the outcome of my first proposal. That is to say, if we take seriously the undeniable fact that Jesus made an impact on his first disciples, and that that impact is still clearly recognizable in the content and form of the traditions by which Jesus' teaching and practice were remembered, then two things follow.

One is Kähler's point that *we cannot realistically expect to find a Jesus different from the Jesus of the Jesus tradition*. Welcome as it would be for a historian, we simply do not have any other substantive sources for Jesus' mission.<sup>16</sup> We have no first hand testimony from Caiaphas or from Pilate. We do not know how Jesus impacted others. What we *do* know is how he impacted his *disciples*. If we want to strip away all faith from the traditions as part of our critical analysis of these traditions, we condemn ourselves to impotence and failure; for nothing will be left. If we want to find a Jesus who did not inspire faith, or who inspired

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<sup>15</sup> M. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1892; ET: Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

<sup>16</sup> Further details and discussion in my *Jesus Remembered*, ch. 7.

it differently, we chase a will-o'-the-wisp. But if we take seriously the evidence of the faith-creating impact of Jesus it becomes a means to our even now being able to discern the effect of Jesus' mission and during his mission.

The other is that *by means of and through this impact we can discern the one who made the impact*. As one can discern the shape of the seal from the mark it leaves upon the paper, so we can discern the shape of Jesus' mission from the impression he left on his first disciples. Not the 'historical Jesus,' as though he was some objective artefact which we could prise from the traditions and from whom we could then brush off the dirt (faith) of the intervening ages. But the '*historic Jesus*,' the one who left the impact still evident in the gospels, the one who transformed fishermen and tax collectors into disciples. For historians who want to understand better the ways in which and the reasons why Christianity emerged, what more could be desired as outcome for 'the quest of the historical Jesus'?

### *Protest 2*

My second protest is against a twofold assumption which has been more pervasively determinative of the findings of the Quest than is usually appreciated. The first assumption is that *the only way to understand both the relation of the traditions in the synoptic gospels and the earliest transmission of the Jesus tradition is in literary terms*. My protest is against the assumption that the processing of the tradition of Jesus' teaching and activities from its first hearers to the written gospels has to be conceived almost entirely, or even exclusively, as a process of copying and editing earlier written documents.

This should be plain to anyone who is familiar with the history of the Quest. Inextricably interwoven with that history is the progress of gospel criticism. The two have gone hand in hand, often to the disadvantage of both. An obvious first step in the Quest was to ascertain what were the sources for the information about Jesus provided by the gospels. Source criticism was conceived for the most part, and in effect almost exclusively, in terms of written documents. The relations between the synoptic gospels, which obviously overlap to a considerable extent in the material they use, were most readily conceived in terms of evangelists using each other's gospels or a common written source now lost. A synopsis demonstrated that one evangelist must have been dependent

on another, by copying or abbreviating, or expanding, or otherwise editing his source. The dominant solution to the synoptic problem was and still is the ‘two-*document* hypothesis’—Mark as the earliest gospel, Matthew and Luke drawing on Mark and on a sayings source (Q).<sup>17</sup> B. H. Streeter’s authoritative treatment of the synoptic problem cautioned against studying the synoptic problem “merely as a problem of literary criticism,” but in the event resolved the question of Matthew’s and Luke’s additional material in terms of two further writings (M and L)—hence the “four *document* hypothesis.”<sup>18</sup>

The main alternatives offered to the dominant two-document hypothesis have been those of William Farmer<sup>19</sup> and Michael Goulder.<sup>20</sup> Both continue to exemplify a modern mind-set which can conceptualize the history of the Jesus tradition only in terms of copying or editing an earlier written source. And the re-emergence of interest in the Q source in the last twenty years has likewise operated entirely from the working hypothesis that Q was a document written in Greek. The most influential analysis of Q, by John Kloppenborg, has even found it possible to stratify the hypothetical Q document into three layers or editions, Q<sub>1</sub>, Q<sub>2</sub> and Q<sub>3</sub>.<sup>21</sup> In short, the challenge of tracing the tradition history of the gospel materials, and thus of finding the earliest or most original information for any historical account of Jesus’ mission, has been conceived purely as a problem of literary dependency and resolved in the same terms.

The second assumption which I wish to protest against is the assumption that *oral tradition functioned like written tradition*; or that *it is no longer possible to say anything about the oral phase of the gospel tradition*; or that *only written tradition is reliable*. It is not entirely true that the literary paradigm for analyzing the Jesus tradition has completely dominated the analysis of the history of that tradition. Voices were raised early on in favour of recognizing an oral period for the tradition, even

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<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (ET: Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 146–151; Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 295–309.

<sup>18</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924), ch. 9 (quotation from 229).

<sup>19</sup> W. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>20</sup> M. Goulder, *Luke: A New Paradigm*, 2 vols., JSNTSup 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), in his attempt to dispense with Q (particularly vol. I ch. 2).

<sup>21</sup> J. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). For critique see my *Jesus Remembered*, 147–160.

oral sources for the gospels. And form criticism emerged in the 1920's as an attempt to penetrate behind the written sources into the oral period.<sup>22</sup> The trouble was that the most influential exponent of form criticism, Rudolf Bultmann, assumed that oral and written tradition were transmitted in the same way. He conceived the whole tradition about Jesus as "composed of a series of layers."<sup>23</sup> The conception was of each layer being constructed on the basis of the preceding layer—a conception no different in effect from that of successive editions of a document. But is such a way of conceptualizing oral tradition and transmission realistic? Bultmann apparently never saw the need to ask such a question.

Others have assumed that oral tradition and transmission would have been so fluid, and anyway are now lost behind the relative fixity of the written traditions of the gospels, that it is no longer possible to reconstruct any tradition in its oral phase and not worth the trouble to try.<sup>24</sup> Since it is actually technically possible to explain *every* divergence in the synoptic tradition in terms of *literary* editing, then what need have we of any further hypothesis? Others take the modern standpoint that oral material is unreliable and only written material is reliable. Consequently it becomes important for them to argue that the writing down of Jesus' teaching began very early, even already during his mission.<sup>25</sup> Matthew, the tax collector, is the most obvious candidate for the role of a literary disciple (one who could read and write), who, conceivably, could have taken notes during Jesus' preaching and teaching sessions. What has obviously not been sufficiently appreciated is the fact that in the ancient world the prejudice was reversed: written material was not trusted, because it could be so easily lost, or destroyed, or corrupted in the copying; much preferable was it to have the teaching or story firmly lodged in one's own mind, retaining the living voice of the teacher.

The consequences of these assumptions are extensive and of a seriousness too rarely recognized. For if there was an 'oral period' at the

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<sup>22</sup> E.g., R. Bultmann (with K. Kundsinn), *Form Criticism* (1934; ET: New York: Harper Torchbook, 1962), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 12–13.

<sup>24</sup> See particularly B. W. Henaut, *Oral Tradition and the Gospels: The Problem of Mark 4*, JSNTSup 82 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

<sup>25</sup> See particularly A. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, BS 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 223–229; also E. E. Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 24, 32, 352.

beginning of the history of the Jesus tradition, lasting, say, for about twenty years, and if it is not possible to penetrate into that period with confidence, and if oral tradition is inherently unstable and unreliable, then the quest of the historical Jesus is confronted with *a yawning and unbridgeable gulf* between the tradition as we still have it and the Jesus to whom it bears witness. Here and there we may find some sayings or a motif which reaches out some way over the gulf, but the questers who rely on them to inch back towards 'the historical Jesus' are likely to suffer a severe attack of critical vertigo, and the chances of establishing a firm link on the other side of the gulf become ever more tenuous the further they try to reach back.

This is the burden of my second protest against the traditional assumptions which have governed the quest of the historical Jesus. The literary mind-set of the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries has conditioned the very way in which we conceptualize the processes by which the Jesus tradition first emerged and was initially transmitted. We think in a box of literary dependency, of copying and editing. And we are the more confident of the results of our analysis of that tradition because they are so containable within the box. But the box is one constructed by the fifteenth century invention of printing and it prevents us from seeing outside of its containment. We shut out the reality of what an oral society must have been like, and have failed to think through the character of the traditioning process in an oral society. We think that the results of reconceptualizing the processes of oral transmission would be destructive of our grasp of the tradition's 'authenticity' because of orality's inherent instability. And the outcome is that we cut ourselves off from the Jesus we want to rediscover and hear again afresh in his own terms.

### *Proposal 2*

In direct contrast to the blinkeredness of the literary paradigm, I affirm, first, *the necessity of taking the oral phase of the history of the Jesus tradition with all seriousness*. And second, in direct response to any resignation before the difficulty of gaining real access to the tradition in its oral phase, I maintain that it *is* in fact *possible to envisage the oral phase of the Jesus tradition*.

First, it is necessary that we *do* make an attempt to envisage the way an oral society functions, not least in regard to the traditions it regards

as important. For first-century Palestine certainly was an oral rather than a literary culture. Those who have inquired most closely into the subject tell us that literacy in Palestine at the time of Jesus would probably have been less than 10%.<sup>26</sup> And even if we can argue that a Jewish society would have prized the skills of reading and writing more highly than others, the increase in percentage may not have been very great. The reason why we read so much about ‘scribes’ in Palestine, as well as more widely in the ancient world, is because literary skills were the prerogatives of a relatively small group of professionals. We have to assume, therefore, that the great majority of Jesus’ first disciples would have been functionally illiterate.<sup>27</sup> And even allowing for the possibility that one or two of Jesus’ immediate disciples were able to read and write (Matthew) and may even have kept notes of Jesus’ teaching, it remains *overwhelmingly probable that the earliest transmission of the Jesus tradition was by word of mouth.*

Second, the extensive study of oral communities and of how oral tradition functions has been greatly advanced over the latter decades of the twentieth century. Classic treatments of Yugoslavian epics, of folklore and of oral tradition for example in Africa,<sup>28</sup> have given us a clearer idea of what it must have meant to live in a community where information, knowledge and wisdom were all or mostly retained within an oral framework of memory and tradition in and on behalf of the community. I found Kenneth Bailey’s accounts of his more than thirty years experience of

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<sup>26</sup> Recent estimates are of less than 10% literacy in the Roman Empire under the principate, falling to perhaps as low as 3% literacy in Roman Palestine; see particularly W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); M. Bar-Ilan, “Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries CE,” in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, ed. S. Fishbane and S. Schoenfeld (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1992), 46–61; C. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Kloppenborg properly reminds us that “literacy” itself admits of various levels: signature-literacy; the ability to read simple contracts, invoices and receipts; full reading literacy; the ability to take dictation; and scribal literacy—the ability to compose (*Excavating Q*, 167).

<sup>28</sup> Particularly A. B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); J. M. Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991); J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); I. Okpewho, *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character and Continuity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); A. Dundes, *Holy Writ as Oral Lit: The Bible as Folklore* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).



the oral culture of Middle East village life particularly insightful.<sup>29</sup> From this material I deduce five important characteristics of oral tradition and oral transmission.<sup>30</sup>

1. *Oral performance is different from reading a text.* The reader can pause in the reading for reflection, can turn back to check something, can look forward to anticipate the outcome. The reader can take the book away and read it again. The editor can take the literary manuscript and make changes to the text, and so on. Nothing of this is possible for the hearer of an oral tradition being retold. The hearing is an event, not a thing; the individual hearer cannot press a pause button or put the performance into reverse. It is evanescent, past and gone, and cannot be taken away for later perusal, or returned to for checking. It is not a written text which can be revised or edited. This very basic fact at once compels us to adopt a very different attitude towards the Jesus tradition in its pre-literary state. What was happening to the tradition in that important phase of its history? Was every performance different in content and character from its predecessors? Did changes occur then which significantly altered or randomly transformed the tradition prior to its being written down? At the very least, recognition of the oral phase of the traditioning process should cause us to look twice at explanations of differences between the synoptic traditions which rely exclusively on a literary model.

2. We can assume a *communal dimension* for oral tradition. Contemporary literary criticism inclines us to think of an individual author writing with a view to being read by an individual reader—hence such terms as ‘implied reader’ and ‘reader response.’ We can think without effort of the sole reader at a desk or curled up on a sofa having a one-to-one encounter with the text. But oral tradition is characteristically community tradition. This was recognized by the pioneers of form criticism in the 1920’s but its significance was lost to sight by those locked into the literary mind-set. Here Bailey’s anecdotal accounts are helpful, as he envisages village communities gathering in an evening to share news and to recall and celebrate tradition that was important to them—what he calls the *haflat samar*. So present day attempts to

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<sup>29</sup> K. E. Bailey, “Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 34–54; also “Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *ExpTim* 106 (1995): 363–367.

<sup>30</sup> I draw here on my “Altering the Default Setting: Re-envisaging the Early Transmission of the Jesus Tradition,” *NTS* 49 (2003): 139–175 (here 150–155); repr. in *A New Perspective on Jesus*, 79–125.

envisage the earliest disciple groups need to remember that there would have been no newspapers, no radio or television or cinema screen to provide a focal point for the gathering, and in most cases no scrolls of Torah or prophet to be read or consulted, but only the shared memories of what Jesus had said and done and shared experiences of their discipleship. Furthermore, as the community's tradition, it was not the property of any individual, to modify or develop at will. Where the tradition was important to the community, to its identity, there would be a natural concern to maintain the community-determining character of the tradition through all its varied performances.<sup>31</sup>

3. At the same time it is also important to note that an oral community designates or recognizes *particular individuals* to bear the main responsibility (on behalf of the community) to retain and recite the community tradition as appropriate on occasions when the community came together. In the absence of dictionaries or encyclopedias, the bard, or apostle, or elder, or teacher would serve as the community's resource, the storage cistern for the community's reserves of story and wisdom built up and handed down over the years.<sup>32</sup> Luke almost certainly has this sort of thing in mind when he refers to "the apostles' teaching" in Acts 2:42. And the prominence of teachers (e.g. Acts 13:1; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28–29; Gal 6:6; Jas 3:1) and of tradition (e.g. Phil 4:9; Col 2:6–8; 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 3:6) in the earliest communities points clearly in the same direction. For the 'tradition' would be the particular responsibility of the 'teachers,' and since it was the Jesus tradition which really marked out the assemblies of the first disciples, a large part of that responsibility must have included the rehearsal and performance of the Jesus tradition at such assemblies.

4. In the performance of oral tradition we find *a characteristic combination of stability and diversity, of fixity and flexibility*. In the words of E. A. Havelock, "Variability and stability, conservatism and creativity,

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<sup>31</sup> Although I entitle my study of Jesus *Jesus Remembered*, my interest here and in that volume is in the way the *tradition* of Jesus emerged, not in theories of 'collective or social memory.' For interaction with Bengt Holmberg and Samuel Byrskog on the latter subject I may refer to my response to their critiques of *Jesus Remembered* in "On History, Memory and Eyewitnesses," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 473–487.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., E. A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), speaks of an oral "encyclopedia" of social habit and custom-law and convention (57–58).

evanescence and unpredictability all mark the pattern of oral transmission—the “oral principle of ‘variation within the same.’”<sup>33</sup> There is the same story, or the story of the same event; it is the same teaching, in substance at least; but the telling of the story, or the repeating of the teaching may be very diverse, the diversity determined by such factors as the circumstances of the occasion, or by the desire of the teacher to bring out a particular emphasis or point. A modern parallel is the punch-line joke—itsself as near as we may be able to come to modern experience of oral tradition. The build-up to the punch line can be wholly diverse, but if the joke is to ‘work,’ the punch line has to be ‘word-perfect’ and delivered with due attention to the timing. And this is what we find repeatedly in the synoptic tradition of Jesus’ mission: the same story, but told differently, and often with inconsequential difference of detail; the same teaching, but often in different wording and set in different contexts. It is this feature of the synoptic tradition which has always intrigued me about the Jesus tradition, and I have found no better explanation for it than in terms of performance variation, “variation within the same.”<sup>34</sup>

5. A final important characteristic of orally performed tradition is that there is *no original version* equivalent to an original edition of a written text. That there was an *originating* event in the mission of Jesus, or a particular teaching which he gave, I have no doubt, at least in most cases. But the witnesses would have seen and heard differently; the event or words would have impacted them differently. And their reporting or sharing of that impact would have been different. So there probably would not have been a single original version of any specific tradition; original/originating *event* is not to be confused with original *report* of the event. And if Jesus had given the same teaching or parable more than once, and in different terms (one thinks, for example, of the parable of the talents/pounds—Matt 25:14–30/Luke 19:11–27), then there may never have been a single original/originating form of words. The immediate corollary has extensive repercussions. For it at once indicates that the search for an original version, as though that alone was ‘authentic’ or ‘historical,’ is misguided. Likewise, diverse

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<sup>33</sup> W. H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 33, 54; quoting E. A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 92, 147, 184, *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Examples in my “Altering the Default Setting,” 160–169, and throughout *Jesus Remembered*.

forms of particular traditions are in principle not a problem, they do not constitute a 'contradiction,' they are not proof that the tradition has (been) developed away from 'the true.' On the contrary, they probably represent well the ways in which the Jesus tradition was performed in disciple groups and churches, and *from the first*.

What I envisage, then, for the beginning of the Jesus tradition, is that those whose lives were transformed by the impact of Jesus' mission, who became disciples, including those who did not literally follow Jesus, would have shared their experiences when they came together, talking among themselves. In such gatherings the impact made by what Jesus did and said would have been put into words, and the oral tradition of these doings and teachings would thus begin to take shape—essentially the shape which it still has in its enduring form. As already noted above, the enduring forms of so much of Jesus' teaching still bear the stamp of his Galilean mission, prior to the climax in Jerusalem. That stamp must have been given to it in such disciple gatherings, no doubt with the chief disciples (the twelve) having a prominent say in the basic shaping of the tradition. And no doubt the performance tradition after Jesus' departure would have become more varied. But if I am right, the tradition was varied from the first, and the variations which have been preserved in the now-written texts seem again and again to be no different in kind from the variations which we can safely hypothesize as characteristic of the performance tradition from the first.

In other words, it *is* possible to penetrate back into the oral period of the Jesus tradition. For the bridge being pushed over the gulf does not come only from one side. The impact made by Jesus on the disciples, and expressed more or less from the beginning in oral tradition, means that the bridge can in effect be constructed from the other side as well. So long as we do not allow ourselves to be enticed and misled by the will-o'-the-wisp of an 'original version,' and are content with recognizing a clear but diverse impression made by Jesus still evident in the tradition as we now have it, then we can be much more confident than before of gaining a clear sight of the one who made that impression.

### *Protest 3*

My third protest is against the working assumption that *the Quest must look for a Jesus who was distinctive or different from his environment*. Not only would 'the historical Jesus,' it was assumed, be different from 'the Christ of faith,' but he must also and nevertheless have stood out

from his fellows. Now, I do not wish to play down the distinctiveness of Jesus. That Jesus made a distinctive impact is my own first proposal, an impact attested in the content and character of the Jesus tradition itself. But the assumption to which I object here is that only if Jesus can be *distinguished from his context* is he worthy of our attention (he cannot surely have been just another Jewish teacher); only if his message was different from that of other teachers can we be sure we have the authentic voice of Jesus (and not just the accumulated wisdom of Jewish sages).

This assumption has in part been a sad corollary to Christianity's long and disgraceful history of anti-Semitism. Until recently, Christian biblical scholarship simply reflected that anti-Jewish tendency, by consistently downplaying or denigrating the continuity between Jesus and his native Judaism. As Susannah Heschel observes, liberal theologians painted "as negative a picture as possible of first-century Judaism" in order "to elevate Jesus as a unique religious figure who stood in sharp opposition to his Jewish surroundings."<sup>35</sup> A classic example is Ernest Renan, who wrote: "Fundamentally there was nothing Jewish about Jesus"; after visiting Jerusalem, Jesus "appears no more as a Jewish reformer, but as a destroyer of Judaism... Jesus was no longer a Jew."<sup>36</sup> And Albrecht Ritschl drew a line in the sand, which was not decisively questioned for most of the twentieth century, when he pronounced that Jesus' "renunciation of Judaism and its law... became a sharp dividing line between his teachings and those of the Jews."<sup>37</sup> The neo-liberal quest of the last two decades has not been so brash in its anti-Judaism. But a guiding presumption that Jesus was not, could not have been, influenced by Jewish apocalyptic thought, and a tendency to align him more with Hellenistic Cynic critique of establishment ethos and religiosity, produced a not greatly different result—a Jesus more recognizable by (and acceptable to) those concerned to find a non-particularist philosophy and life-style.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> S. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), here 9, 21. See also H. Moxnes, "Jesus the Jew: Dilemmas of Interpretation," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Festschrift H. Räisänen*, ed. I. Dunderberg et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 83–103.

<sup>36</sup> Heschel, *Abraham Geiger*, 156–157.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>38</sup> Notably B. L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); and J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

My own much used example of the dismaying trend to distance Jesus from his Jewish context is the word *Spätjudentum*; this was a common way of referring to the Judaism of Jesus' time well into the second half of the twentieth century, and it still occurs in some German textbooks. Why should late Second Temple Judaism be described as 'late Judaism'? It is not simply that the term is ridiculous, in view of Judaism's continuing history; if first-century Judaism is 'late Judaism,' what on earth do we call twentieth or twenty-first century Judaism?! But the issue is much more serious than a verbal *faux pas*. For the term actually encapsulates Christianity's historic denigration of Judaism. It expresses the theological view that Judaism's function was solely to prepare for the coming of Christ, of Christianity. As soon as Christ came, Judaism's role was complete. As soon as Christianity was established, Judaism was finished. Hence *late* Judaism, for from that perspective first-century Judaism was the *last* Judaism! The protest at this point is long overdue.

A second working assumption follows. If first-century Judaism was so marked by false religiosity, legalism and hypocrisy, if it was merely preparatory for the climactic revelation which came through Jesus, then the Jesus whom the Quest should be looking for would be different from that; he would stand out against his environment. Hence the concern of the Quest, as renewed in the 1950's, to find a *distinctive* Jesus. This working assumption came to particular expression in *the criterion of dissimilarity*.<sup>39</sup> To be recognized as a saying which derived from Jesus, the saying had to show itself dissimilar from first-century Judaism; the logic being that a saying which expressed concerns typical of Judaism might have been derived from Judaism; the assumption being that to be recognizable at all, Jesus had to be distinctive. In consequence the Quest majored on finding particular sayings which could not be attributed either to Judaism or to the later church(es), and which therefore stood out as different, or which would have been too embarrassing for Jew or Christian to attribute to Jesus had he himself not uttered it.<sup>40</sup>

Hence the typical concern of the second questers to find some saying which would meet this criterion and which could serve as the sure base on which to build a convincing reconstruction of the historical

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<sup>39</sup> Classically defined by N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 39.

<sup>40</sup> The criterion of embarrassment has been given some prominence by J. P. Meier, *The Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 168–171.

Jesus. Since the kingdom of God and son of man motifs are so well embedded in the Jesus tradition, a typical objective in the second half of the twentieth century was to find which saying was most secure, and to build out from that. Good examples from the post-Bultmannian generation were the assumption of H. E. Tödt and Ferdinand Hahn that Luke 12:8–9 was the most secure of the Son of Man sayings,<sup>41</sup> Werner Kümmel's argument that Mark 9:1 clearly indicated Jesus' expectation that the coming of the kingdom was imminent,<sup>42</sup> and Heinz Schürmann's conclusion that the Lord's prayer for the kingdom to come (Matt 6:10/Luke 11:2) is the surest way into Jesus' understanding of the kingdom.<sup>43</sup> But the whole attempt was wrong-headed in that a single saying or motif could never provide a sufficiently substantial base on which to build a substantive reconstruction of Jesus' message. It was like building an inverted pyramid, with a resultant and unavoidable tendency for the construction to topple over at the first probing of the base. Or to change the metaphor, the claims and counter-claims regarding different sayings were always liable to lead the Quest into a quagmire from which it would be difficult to extricate itself.<sup>44</sup>

### *Proposal 3*

Once again in direct contrast, my proposal is that the quest of the historical Jesus should come at the task from a different angle.

In the first place *we should look first of all for the Jewish Jesus rather than the non-Jewish Jesus*. This does not mean that we should make the opposite assumption that Jesus' mission was wholly in conformity with the Judaism of his day. Controversies with at least some Pharisees are a prominent theme in the Jesus tradition, and Jesus was crucified with

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<sup>41</sup> H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (1963; ET: London: SCM, 1965), 42, 55–60; F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963; 1995), 24–26, 32–42, 457–458. A. Vögtle, *Die 'Gretchenfrage' des Menschensohnproblems*, QD 152 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), continued to regard Luke 12:8–9 as the key to unlocking the problem of 'the Son of Man.'

<sup>42</sup> W. G. Kümmel, "Eschatological Expectation in the Proclamation of Jesus," in *The Future of our Religious Past: Festschrift R. Bultmann*, ed. J. M. Robinson (ET: London: SCM, 1971), 29–48 (here 39–41).

<sup>43</sup> H. Schürmann, *Gottes Reich—Jesu Geschick: Jesu ureigener Tod im Licht seiner Basileia-Verkündigung* (Freiburg: Herder, 1983), 135, 144.

<sup>44</sup> I echo a comment to the same effect of E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 131.

at least the acquiescence of the Jewish authorities. But against that we must recall that Jesus was brought up as a pious Jew in Galilee, reciting the *Shema*, observing the Sabbath, attending the synagogue, respecting the Torah. The *a priori* that Jesus belonged within Judaism is a more secure starting point for any quester than the assumption that he must have differed from Judaism. On this point I am wholly at one with what I regard as the main thrust of the so-called 'third quest of the historical Jesus,' as illustrated, for example, by the work of E. P. Sanders, James Charlesworth and N. T. Wright.<sup>45</sup> The old question, 'Was Jesus the last Jew or the first Christian?', speaks not only of the traditional Christian denigration of Judaism ('the *last Jew*'), but also forces the question into an unnatural polarization which is neither historical nor helpful in the Quest. The points of continuity are as important as the points of discontinuity and their importance for Christian self-understanding as well as for Jewish/Christian relations should not be ignored.

In the second place, we would be much wiser to seek out the *characteristic* Jesus, rather than the distinctive Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The logic here is straightforward: any material within the gospels which is characteristic through and across the gospels is likely to reflect characteristic features of Jesus' own mission. It is, of course, quite possible that particular elements within the Jesus tradition, or particular stylistic features reflect the way the tradition was performed and retold by some highly influential apostle or teacher. But motifs, emphases and stylistic features which run throughout the tradition in the various branches which have come down to us or which we can still discern are most obviously to be attributed to a single originating or shaping force. And the only real candidate for that role is Jesus himself. Here my proposal obviously ties back into the first two, since what we are obviously talking about is the characteristic impact made by Jesus on those who initially formulated and began to pass on the tradition of Jesus' mission.

It is not at all difficult to nominate the features of the characteristic Jesus as reflected in the characteristic motifs of the Jesus tradition. Characteristic forms, best exemplified by parables and aphoristic sayings, most probably reflect Jesus' own style; whatever else he did, he

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<sup>45</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; J. H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996).

<sup>46</sup> I here follow the advice of L. E. Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 33.



was a parabolist, a teacher of wisdom. Characteristic (and distinctive) idioms, such as “Amen” and “son of man,” most likely reflect Jesus’ own speech mannerisms. Characteristic motifs like the “kingdom of God” and exorcisms most probably reflect characteristic emphases of Jesus’ own preaching and activity.<sup>47</sup> It would be flying in the face of all historical probability to doubt that Jesus spoke in parables or had a well founded reputation as a successful exorcist. The phrase “the son of man” is so distinctive of Jesus’ speech that it beggars belief to argue, as some have, that the whole idiom was retrojected into the Jesus tradition—and that, *ex hypothesi*, by a community which otherwise shows no evident interest in the term! Likewise the attempt to play off one emphasis in the kingdom of God tradition against the other, the kingdom as already present and the kingdom as yet to come, flies in the face of the deep-rootedness of *both* emphases in the Jesus tradition, and tells us more about modern impatience with emphases which we find hard to reconcile than proper respect for characteristic features of the Jesus tradition.

Recognition that a characteristic theme in the synoptic tradition is best seen as reflecting a characteristic theme of Jesus’ mission does not mean that every element in that theme is an unelaborated memory of Jesus’ teaching and activity. A characteristic motif is likely to have been extended in the retellings of the tradition, precisely because it was characteristic. The historical value of a *characteristic feature* of the Jesus tradition will not depend on the historicity of *particular* sayings or narratives. At the same time, the fact that a particular saying or action attributed to Jesus belongs to a characteristic feature of the tradition of Jesus’ mission increases the probability that the particular item does record something that Jesus said or did. That is to say, the burden of proof shifts against those who insist on approaching every element of the Jesus tradition with a systematic scepticism. Nor, contrariwise, does my proposal imply that we can be wholly confident of the detail of what Jesus said or did in any specific teaching or event. Bearing in mind my earlier proposals, it is important to remember that what we see of Jesus, we can see only through the eyes of diverse witnesses, and that what we hear of Jesus we can hear only with the ears of assemblies who listened to such retellings and recitals of the Jesus tradition.

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<sup>47</sup> For fuller details I refer in each case to my *Jesus Remembered*: see subject index, “Parables of Jesus,” “Jesus, wisdom of,” “Amen,” “Son of Man,” “Kingdom of God,” “Jesus, exorcist.”

Nevertheless, the point of my proposal is that *the characteristic emphases and motifs of the Jesus tradition give us a broad, clear and compelling picture of the characteristic Jesus.*<sup>48</sup> A Jesus who called Israel to repentance and disciples to faith, one through whose ministry the blessings of God's final reign were experienced, one who was heard as speaking for God and with the authority of God, and one who antagonized the priestly authorities and was crucified by the Romans. I could go on, but hopefully enough has already been said to indicate how extensive is the portrayal of Jesus which results, a portrayal which sits firmly within the diversity of first-century Judaism, which has clear outlines and emphases, and which goes a long way to explaining how the impact of Jesus and his mission set in motion a movement whose impetus has never waned.

In conclusion, not least of value in approaching the Jesus tradition in the ways I have advocated is that we thereby gain much more of a sense of that tradition as living tradition. The memory of what Jesus said and did as formulated in the Jesus tradition was not regarded as a kind of sacred relic, to be shut up in some reliquary or encased in perspex to be venerated and carried in procession before reverent assemblies. It was their life-blood, their living breath. It enabled them to re-experience the remembered Jesus, to hear him afresh and to witness for themselves what he had said and done. It was living because they lived by it and it enabled them to live lives of discipleship.

The classic examples, which exemplify the difference between the old way of questing for Jesus and the way advocated above, are the Lord's Prayer and the words of the Last Supper. Typical of the traditional Quest is to treat these as written texts, to assume that they were known only as written texts, to separate away as much as possible of the faith which preserved these texts, to inquire after their (written) sources and the redaction which has brought them to their present shape, and to look for the distinctive features of each by setting it over against the typical features of Jewish prayer and Passover tradition. But to assume that Matthew or Luke only knew the text because they had access to

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<sup>48</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Collins, 1971), expressed my point well: "The first three gospels offer a body of sayings on the whole so consistent, so coherent, and withal so distinctive in manner, style and content, that no reasonable critic should doubt, whatever reservations he may have about individual sayings, that we find here reflected the thought of a single, unique teacher" (21–22).

a written text (Q or Mark), and had not known the words until they read them in written form, simply attests a blinkeredness of historical imagination on the part of those who cannot extricate themselves from the literary mind-set. It is much more plausible that these words were known *because they were used regularly* within the gatherings of Jesus' disciples from earliest days, more or less from the first as part of the embryonic liturgy by which the first churches called to memory and re-enacted two of the most important elements of the heritage passed down from Jesus. Rather than to be regarded as cadavers suitable only for clinical dissection, the differing traditions and the developing traditions, as attested not least in the manuscript tradition of these texts, should have been seen as evidence of traditions much used and much beloved, whose development still bears witness to the symbiotic relation between the living tradition and the living church. The fact that precisely these texts, the Lord's Prayer and the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist, continue to develop, with differing forms familiar in the various liturgies of Christian worship now current, and still with their origins in the Jesus tradition clearly recalled, simply confirms that the tradition can retain its living character without losing its roots down through many generations.

This suggests in turn that those who still experience the Jesus tradition as living tradition may well be best placed to appreciate the initial stages of the traditioning process, that it is the ear of faith which is likely to hear the gospels most effectively, and that the living quality of the Jesus tradition is most likely to be experienced by those who in effect sit with these early assemblies in sharing their memories of Jesus and in seeking to live by them.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> For further discussion of oral tradition in relation to the historical Jesus, see J. D. G. Dunn, "Social Memory and the Oral Jesus Tradition," in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity*, ed. S. C. Barton, L. T. Stuckenbruck, and B. G. Wold, WUNT 212 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 179–194; idem, "Eyewitness and the Oral Jesus Tradition," *JSHJ* 6 (2008): 85–105; and idem, "Kenneth Bailey's Theory of Oral Tradition: Critiquing Theodore Weeden's Critique," *JSHJ* 7 (2009): 44–62 (in response to T. J. Weeden, "Kenneth Bailey's Theory of Oral Tradition: A Theory Contested by Evidence" *JSHJ* 7 [2009]: 3–43).



# JESUS-IN-CONTEXT: A RELATIONAL APPROACH

RICHARD A. HORSLEY

## 1. *Introduction*

In attempting to develop a more genuinely historical approach to Jesus of Nazareth as an historical figure in his historical context I am finding it necessary to question and often abandon some of the basic assumptions, methods, and concepts of standard theologically based New Testament scholarship. This is an uncomfortable position for one who earnestly desires to engage colleagues in critical discussion. Yet hopefully at least some of my revered colleagues will be open to some serious consideration of the implications of recent research on subjects that impinge on the historical Jesus and to some serious rethinking toward what might be more defensible historical assumptions and methods. Recent investigations of a number of interrelated subjects and issues in the history and literature of peoples under the Roman Empire are challenging us to question and in key cases abandon some of the most basic assumptions, scholarly constructs, and approaches of our academic field, biblical/New Testament studies.

In my own research and writing I have been struggling to come to grips with these recent investigations and their implication for the understanding of gospel literature as sources, the historical context of Jesus' mission, and the mission of Jesus of Nazareth. All of my recent major projects have had a dual purpose. The subject matter and issues involved in these projects are important in themselves: to acknowledge the presence of the Judean and Galilean peasants who constituted the vast majority of the populace and the distinctively Israelite renewal movements they mounted against their rulers; to examine what we do not know and might be able to know about Galilee, including from archaeological explorations as well as textual sources; to understand the earliest gospel texts, Mark's gospel and the Q speeches, in their own integrity as oral-derived texts performed in group contexts; and to understand how the Israelite tradition operated in popular oral communication as well as among scribal circles. In addition to these subjects being important in their own right, however, all of these research projects are

also building-blocks toward a more comprehensive relational and contextual approach to the historical Jesus. Given the limitations of an article, I will be able only to sketch some of these components of a relational and contextual approach to the historical Jesus below, and will refer to these other projects and publications where my fuller researches and reflections can be found.<sup>1</sup>

Many involved in what has been called the “third quest” for the historical Jesus surely think of themselves as engaged in a genuinely historical inquiry by comparison with the heavily theological discussions among the Bultmannian German Lutherans of the “new quest.” If we look at the concepts in which the supposedly historical inquiry of the “third questers” is conducted, however, it is still heavily determined by Christian theology. Participants in the “quest” are now more “ecumenical” than before, since Catholics and conservative Protestants as well as liberals have joined the quest. But the terms of discussion are still Christian, indeed western Christian. This is understandable since, in the academic division of labor, study of Jesus and the Christian gospels developed as part of New Testament interpretation, a basic area of theological education. Those with a burning interest in Jesus were, also understandably, Christian theologians, clergy, and laity. Because of the western European separation of religion from politics, however, Christian theology was confined mainly to religion, and Jesus became, by definition, mainly a religious figure. In the Christian theological construction of religious history, Jesus functioned as the pivotal figure in the epoch-making shift from “Judaism,” as the parochial and overly political

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<sup>1</sup> All of my earlier projects on Jesus, the gospels, the historical context in Roman Galilee and Judea, and critical approaches to them turn out to have been building-blocks for the relational and contextual approach to the historical Jesus that I am now attempting to develop. In addition to many articles, these include the following books: *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*, with John S. Hanson (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1985; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995); *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q*, with Jonathan Draper (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2001); *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007); and *Jesus in Context: Power, People and Performance* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008). Instead of a detailed apparatus of notes below, I will try to give appropriate short references to my pertinent fuller exploration for each section in this sketch for those who might be interested.

religion, to “Christianity,” the universal and spiritual religion. Because of the dominant influence of bourgeois individualism, Jesus was understood mainly in individual terms, compounding the Christian doctrine that he was a unique human being. Influenced, as well as placed on the defensive, by the Enlightenment rationalism that came to dominate western European culture, moreover, theologically rooted interpreters of Jesus tended to retreat from his divine derivation and miraculous actions to his teachings as the only secure basis for a “historical” Jesus who could be intelligibly discussed. Jesus’ teachings were, accordingly, abstracted from their gospel containers, like individual artifacts taken from an archaeological site and displayed in museum cases.

These key theological determinants persist in recent interpretation of “the historical Jesus” even when the discussion has become more complex and sophisticated. Jesus is still more or less confined to the religious sphere. The political-economic context in which he taught and the political implications of his teachings may be acknowledged, but little or no attention is given to a potential political role. Jesus is still discussed mainly in terms of a religious context and religious issues, those of “Judaism.” Since the jolt of the Holocaust Christian scholars are more likely to allow that Jesus was a “Jew,” but they still assume that significant historical reality in ancient Roman Judea, Samaria, and Galilee can be thought of as “Judaism.” Jesus is still understood mainly as an individual. The third quest thus perpetuates what is more of a theological quest than a genuinely historical one. Moreover, although his activity as an individual healer of individuals is discussed seriously in recent decades, Jesus is interpreted mainly as an individual teacher/revealer of individuals. This is done by focusing on the individual teachings of Jesus, individual sayings or “pericopes” taken out of literary contexts, which are the principal guides to their original social context, and displayed like artifacts to be rearranged and interpreted—by the modern “Jesus-scholar.” This procedure is, of course, still rooted in the standard way the scriptural texts of the gospels and other biblical books have long been analyzed and interpreted in New Testament studies.

None of the various “historical Jesuses” constructed by this procedure, however, can have been a historical figure in first-century Galilee. The separation of religion from other aspects of life such as politics and economics is a distinctively modern western development. Pretending that Jesus was (only) a religious figure thus tends toward an anachronistic modern reductionism and domestication. The Christian concept “Judaism” is similarly a modern Christian construction. As Jewish and Israeli historians begin to recognize the diversity of groups and the

complex historical realities of Judean, Samaritan, and Galilean society under Roman rule, they must resort at least to the plural, "Judaisms," including various versions of "sectarian Judaism." Attempting to accommodate the political realities some scholars now write in terms of "nation" and "nationalism," apparently not realizing that these too are modern western developments that then spread to other regions of the world during the anti-colonial struggles. To approach Jesus as a more complete historical figure in a more complete historical context, therefore, it is necessary to shift to historically valid assumptions and by-pass or cut through standard Christian theological constructs of religion as separate from politics and economics and of Judaism. Similarly, an individualistic Jesus without at least communicative interaction with other people and genuine engagement with the historical conditions cannot have been historical. Real people, including religious revealers, do not run around uttering isolated aphorisms. Genuine communication, especially communication of lasting significance for groups of people, happens in concrete historical contexts. Figures come to have historical significance by communicating and acting in concrete historical contexts.

To begin to imagine what a more historical approach to a significant historical figure might consist of, we can look to how regular historians proceed. It is difficult to imagine historians approaching highly significant historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King or Joan of Arc as individual teachers of individuals, i.e., by focusing on their individual teachings, short statements or stories separated from literary context. To begin with, historians attempt to assess their sources critically, on their own terms in the historical situation to which they belong. Documentary/literary context and historical/social context are crucial in evaluating information given in the sources. Then, since history and historical figures are contextual and relational, we can imagine (from the historical treatments we have read and without going into details in a given case) that historians would develop a contextual and relational approach. At the risk of oversimplification, I can imagine summarizing such an approach in terms of five interrelated aspects or factors. First, there is need for significant historical leadership to emerge in highly problematic situations, in *situations of historical crisis*. It does not matter what the leader is "really like" as a person or precisely what s/he said in a particular place. Rather, and therefore second and third, what matters is the way *the leader and followers* interact such that the leader's basic/general message and/or actions resonate with followers (and perhaps generate a movement) in the crisis situation. Fourth, the



interaction of leader and followers/movement, moreover, happens in terms of a particular *cultural tradition* out of which the leader speaks and acts and the followers resonate. Fifth, the leader and followers interact in terms of *roles* or offices that are determined by the historical situation and cultural tradition in which they are acting.

That is about the most concise way I can currently summarize the complex contextual and relational multidisciplinary approach I am now attempting to develop for further historical inquiry into Jesus-in-movement-in-context. If further justification is needed for making a shift away from theologically determined assumptions, concepts, and procedures towards those that are standard in general historical inquiry, the reasons and advantages are primarily three. First, continuing to use standard theological terms and discourse privileges concepts developed subsequent to the New Testament documents and diverts our understanding of the gospel sources from the historical context in which they originated. Second, taking the theological doctrine of the incarnation seriously implies that we should seek a full understanding of Jesus in concrete historical context. Accordingly, third, if we are seriously interested in approaching and reconstructing a historical figure in historical context, then we must move to the ordinary language of history.

Moving toward the ordinary language of history from theological discourse also has serious political-economic and hermeneutical implications. The more we recognize the diversity and divisions in ancient Judean and Galilean society and the imperial power relations in the Roman Empire generally, along with the political-economic-religious conflicts dramatized in the gospel sources, the more difficult it will be to domesticate the gospel sources and Jesus as if they belonged to us. Most of the scholars engaged in research on and interpretation of Jesus (as illustrated in the list of contributors to this volume) are white male western Europeans and European-Americans who, by education and income, belong to the cultural elite. As recent academic self-criticism has made clear, we have been trained in intellectual disciplines and ideologies that are the products of western European academics during the heyday of western colonialism and imperialism. Increasing recognition that the gospels are the ancient equivalent of “third world” stories about a leader among a people subject to imperial rule will make it more difficult to proceed as if the gospels and Jesus somehow belong to us. This will presumably mesh with the hermeneutical and political-religious agenda of those of us concerned to illuminate and alleviate the conditions of subject peoples. It will also, of course, make all the more important a further

hermeneutical concern to explain and mediate the implications of historical research on Jesus-in-context for those heavily invested in domesticated constructions of Jesus.

Let me now sketch the complex contextual and relational approach further in four successive steps that combine some of the interrelated facets outlined just above.

## 2. *The Problematic Historical Context*

It tells us something, but not very much, when Jesus is located in a scheme of social stratification as a “peasant,” one who reached out to “expendables” further down the ladder. Besides not telling us very much, however, those classifications do as much to obscure as to explain Jesus in his historical relations. It would be more appropriate to say that generally speaking Jesus, along with those “expendables,” belonged to the (Galilean) peasantry or peasant society. Neither Jesus nor those expendables, however, were peasants strictly speaking, since they were not (or no longer) supporting themselves and rendering up a portion of their crops by working the land. How and why had they been forced off the land, yet still in interaction with those who were still working the land, may be far more significant historical information. A structural-functional approach such as that of Lenski begs the all-important question of the power relations between the productive Galilean peasantry among whom Jesus lived and worked, on the one hand, and the high priestly, Herodian, and imperial rulers whose wealth and power depended on the resources they extracted from the peasants, on the other. Schemes of social stratification, moreover, rarely ask the historical question of the changing conditions of the peasantry, whether they were able to maintain their subsistence living or were slipping under, much less ask questions about the cultural traditions according to which peasants evaluate their exploitation. Classifications of social stratification, even analyses of political-economic structure, moreover, usually do not examine fundamental social forms and the effects of historical changes impacting them. While comparative studies of political-economic structure and social forms may be helpful in posing historically appropriate questions, however, reconstruction of the conditions of and for Jesus and the movement(s) he catalyzed must be done from literary and archaeological sources for Roman Galilee and Judea in the broader context of the Roman Empire.

### 2.1. *Political-Economic Structure (not just stratification) and Power-Relations*<sup>2</sup>

Literary sources and archaeological evidence agree that the political-economic structure in which religion was embedded involved a decisive divide, indeed a gaping gulf, between the rulers and the ruled in late Second Temple (early Roman) Judea and Galilee. The increasingly magnificent mansions of the high priestly families in the Upper City of Jerusalem were funded by resources they derived from the Judean peasantry. Herod the Great funded his massive building projects, the imperial cities of Caesarea and Sebaste as well as the grandly rebuilt Temple, from taxation of his subjects. Antipas depended on revenues taken mainly from Galilean villagers to rebuild the fortress city of Sepphoris as his jewel and, within twenty years, yet another capital city dedicated to the emperor Tiberius. Josephus repeatedly reminds us how the wealthy and powerful elite despised and abused the very peasantry on whose economic exploitation their positions of power and privilege depended. It is not clear that the Herodian rulers ever enjoyed any legitimacy among Judeans and Galileans; they were “kings” by the power of Rome, not the grace of God. Also evident in Josephus is how the high priestly families steadily lost any legitimacy they might have had from occupying the august high priestly offices, partly because they were the appointees of the Herodians and Romans. When active opposition to the Jerusalem and Herodian rulers erupted, however, as at Herod’s death in 4 BCE, the Romans simply restored the imperial order by brutal force of arms.

Josephus’s accounts and several references in the gospels make clear that the Pharisees and high ranking scribes served as staff and representatives of the temple-state through which the Romans continued to “govern” and tax the Judean populace. One of their principal roles was as the “most accurate” interpreters of “the law” according to which the high priestly regime “governed” the people and extracted revenues. That the most prominent Pharisees appear as integral figures in the high priestly junta that took over control after the initial phase of the great revolt in the summer of 66 CE indicates that the Pharisees were far more than a pious eating club at the time of Jesus. It is also significant that most residents of the city of Jerusalem would have made their living serving the needs of the Temple and the high priestly families in some

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<sup>2</sup> Fuller exploration of various aspects of the following section in *Jesus and the Spiral; Sociology and the Jesus Movement*; and *Galilee*.

capacity or another. The people of Jerusalem were thus economically dependent on the Temple apparatus as the center of the Judean economy. The dynamics of their relations with the Herodian, high priestly, and Roman rulers, however, was still such that they periodically mounted protests and outright resistance.

It is thus historically reductionist and obscurantist to continue to discuss the historical Jesus in terms of his engagement with “Judaism.” That essentialist modern Christian construct simply obscures important political-economic-religious conflicts in which Jesus and his movement(s) may have been involved. It prevents us from investigating and interpreting the issues involved in Jesus’ mission and the prophetic declarations he made and actions he took. Ironically our sources are far more precise in historical terms than our conceptual apparatus often allows us to discern. Since the dominant conflict was the structural one of the power relations between rulers and ruled, it is diversionary to perpetuate the old dichotomy of cultural essentialisms, Judaism versus Hellenism. Cultural conflict was an important aspect of the dominant historical conflict, but it was embedded with and inseparable from the dominant political-economic-religious conflict. Neither Jesus and his movement(s) nor contemporary Galilean and Judean movements and groups can be understood simply as “Jewish” cultural reaction to the incursions of “Hellenistic” culture. Nor can Jesus’ mission be understood as an attempt to transcend a parochial “Jewish” culture in the direction of a more cosmopolitan and universal “Hellenistic” culture—even in its latest packaging in terms of Jesus having been a “countercultural” (Jewish) “Cynic” “sage.”

## 2.2. *Fundamental Social (Political-Economic-Religious) Forms: Temple-State, Village, Family*<sup>3</sup>

Scholars trained in theology and faithful church-goers are understandably interested primarily in the religious dimension of Jesus’ mission. But historically religion was embedded in political-economic-community life. Insofar as religion was inseparable from economics and politics, Jesus dealt with far more than religion. His focus in the Lord’s Prayer, for example, was economic, concerned with subsistence bread and the cancellation of debts. Similarly, in contrast with the individualism of

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<sup>3</sup> Fuller exploration in *Galilee and Jesus and the Spiral*.

modern western life, historically persons were embedded in the fundamental social forms of family and village community. Most of most people's lives were involved with production for and the reproduction of the family, ideally on the land that comprised its inheritance (a gift from God). Much of family life involved interaction with other families in village communities comprised of a smaller or larger number of families. Interaction among families involved certain modes of cooperation and mutuality as well as frequent tensions and conflicts. Cooperation in matters such as water supply and mutual support as well as tensions and conflicts were managed by local village assemblies, called *synagogues* in the gospels and contemporary Judean literature (*knesset* in rabbinic literature). These forms of local self-government and cohesion in the semi-independent village communities met once or twice a week for prayers, delegation of task-forces, e.g., to repair the water-works, and appointment of courts to settle local conflicts.

Investigation of gospel sources to understand the historical mission of Jesus depends heavily on understanding what was happening in these fundamental social forms in which the people among whom he worked lived their lives. According to the canonical gospels at least, Jesus carried out his teaching and healing in village assemblies and delegated his envoys to stay with and receive support from families while they worked expanding his mission of preaching and healing/exorcism in village communities. We would thus expect that his teaching and healing had something to do with what was happening to people's lives that were embedded in those fundamental forms of family and village.

The other basic social (political-economic-religious) form, more remote from the lives of most people, was the Temple in Jerusalem. Most basically the Temple, along with the priesthood, was the institution at the center of the religious political-economy of Judea (and at times other areas of Palestine), to which the people were expected to give their tithes and offerings. The Temple and the pilgrimage festivals celebrated there also supposedly provided symbols and expressions of the unity of the Judean (and more widely the Israelite) people. Practically, physically, of course, only a fraction of the Judean people could participate in any one of the festivals at one time. And the vast majority of what went on in the Temple sanctuary, the daily sacrifices and offerings, was ritual witnessed only by the priests who conducted the rituals. Nevertheless, the people, including often at least some Judean peasants from nearby villages as well as Jerusalemites, cared enough about

what went on in the Temple to protest vociferously and repeatedly. Although we have little evidence for earlier, from at least the time that Jesus took action in the Temple, popular protest and serious conflict was ever more frequent and beyond the capacity of the priestly aristocracy and even the Roman governor and his military to control easily. As noted, the high priestly incumbents, initially put in place by Herod and then appointed by the Roman governors, increasingly lost their legitimacy. And, of course, Herod had begun the massive rebuilding of the Temple in grand Roman-Hellenistic style, at great cost to the peasantry. A significant indicator of the increasing opposition to the high priestly incumbents was the emergence at mid-century of a terrorist group (the *sicarii*) among scribes and teachers who supposedly worked for and represented the temple-state. They began assassinating high priestly figures during festival times, apparently to counter their collaboration with the Roman authorities and abuse of the people. But they are only extreme activists in a more general sense of disillusionment with the Temple and its incumbent high priestly families. Most Judean literature in late second temple times is sharply critical of the high priests and, to a degree, of the Temple itself.

Clearly it makes little sense to continue to think in terms of “Judaism,” as if there were a unitary “religion” in which “the Jews” all participated. Nor does it make any sense to think of some sort of Jewish “nationalism,” or to think of the high priests as “leaders.” At the time of Jesus, the temple high priesthood did not unite the people—unless it was against their illegitimacy and predatory behavior. Nevertheless, Jerusalem and the Temple had become the symbolic center or “capital” of Judea and, to a degree, Israel, even if that symbol worked ambiguously for a people who viewed it ambivalently. Perhaps the most obvious conclusion to draw from this brief sketch of political-economic-religious structure, power-relations, and basic social forms in Roman Palestine is that we need to understand how historical developments impacted the basic social forms in which people’s lives were embedded such that anyone would be interested in a preacher and healer such as Jesus. After all, with all due respect to Albert Schweitzer, John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ visions of divine judgment and the kingdom of God did not just come “out of the blue” by otherworldly inspiration, but also in response to problematic circumstances that set up intolerable tensions and discontents, and yearning for restoration as well as revelation.

### 2.3. *Historical Developments—Including Regional Differences between Galilee and Judea*<sup>4</sup>

The historical developments that conceivably make the greatest difference for how we investigate and understand Jesus and his mission concern the distinctive history of Galilee in second temple times, a history that is related to but different from that of Judea and Jerusalem. Merely to acknowledge the reality of that different history raises numerous questions that have heretofore gone unasked as well as unanswered. For example, since the Holocaust, Christian scholars have finally been more willing to think of Jesus as a “Jew,” as belonging to “Jewish society.” Besides being vague, however, those are problematic terms historically. As indicated again and again in the histories of Josephus, Jesus’ contemporaries of Israelite heritage who lived in Palestine apparently thought of themselves and each other in more regional terms: Judeans, Samaritans, and Galileans (perhaps somewhat as many residents of the UK think of themselves as English, Scottish, Welch, etc). Outsiders such as the Romans apparently thought of all in the area (previously) ruled by Herod the Great as “Judeans”—hence executed Jesus of Nazareth as “king of the Judeans.” The high priests in Mark, on the other hand, mock him as “king of Israel,” which usage meshes with the later rabbis, who understand the people generally as “Israel.” If we trust our gospel sources, including legends of infancy, Jesus was known to be from Nazareth, a village near Sepphoris, and to have carried out much of his mission among Galileans. He was thus not a Judean proper, but a Galilean. And that is no insignificant piece of information if we attend to the different regional history of Galilee during second temple times.

Galilee and Galileans were presumably independent of Jerusalem rule for many centuries, supposedly from the time that the ten northern tribes rebelled against the Davidic monarchy in 922 BCE until the Hasmonean high priestly regime took over the area a hundred years before Jesus was born. That is, Galileans had cultural traditions of rebellion and independence from Jerusalem rule. Galileans were not under the Jerusalem temple-state established by the Persian regime, presumably had no direct exposure to scrolls of Judean literature (such as the books of the Torah and Prophets) composed by scribal circles of the temple state

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<sup>4</sup> On various aspects of the following section see the relevant chapters of *Galilee; Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs; Jesus and the Spiral*; and the more recent treatment in Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

at some point under the Persian or Hellenistic empires, and did not participate in the Maccabean revolt that became a watershed event for many Judeans in the early second century BCE. According to the only evidence available, only after the Hasmoneans conquered the Idumeans to the south and the Samaritans to the north, did they expel the Itureans from Galilee and force the inhabitants “to live according to the laws of the Judeans” (in 104 BCE). Galileans remained under Jerusalem rule during the chaotic decades of Alexander Jannaeus’s foreign conquests and brutal suppression of domestic revolts, and the prolonged attempts by the Romans to quash civil war among rival Hasmoneans. They resisted Herod’s conquest of his realm for three years. And they joined in the widespread revolts at the death of Herod in 4 BCE. Thereupon the Romans appointed Herod Antipas as ruler of Galilee. Galilee was thus no longer under the direct jurisdiction of the Jerusalem temple-state during the lifetime of Jesus.

Galileans had thus been drawn under the same Jerusalem rule as their Israelite cousins in Samaria and Judea. This may well have revived and enhanced their sense of belonging to the people of Israel. Yet Galileans, living at considerable distance from Jerusalem, could hardly have participated much in the pilgrimage festivals celebrated in the Temple. During the chaotic decades of Jerusalem rule prior to Herod the Great, moreover, it is quite unclear how the Jerusalem authorities would have “socialized” Galileans in the semi-autonomous village communities into “the laws of the Judeans.” It seems difficult to imagine that Galileans would have developed much of an attachment to the Temple and the scrolls of the written Torah during the century prior to the birth of Jesus. These historical events and circumstances, however, provoke the question (to be addressed briefly below) of just what the cultural tradition of the Galileans may have been and how it may have been related to that embodied in the proto-scriptural scrolls laid up in the Temple in Jerusalem or left in jars in caves by the Qumranites in the Judean wilderness. They should also provoke the question of why, when Galilee was no longer under the jurisdiction of the Temple, Jesus would have marched up to Jerusalem to confront the Temple authorities, as portrayed at least in the canonical gospels.

The next most important historical development for understanding Jesus’ mission is surely the Roman conquest and imperial rule of Galilee and Judea, for two major reasons. While initially not all that destructive, repeated Roman attempts to “pacify” Judea and Galilee wrought considerable destruction of villages, slaughter and enslavement of the popu-



lace, and further terrorization of the remaining people by crucifixion of rebel leaders. Recent genocide in Bosnia and Kosovo has heightened our sensitivity to the lasting effects of collective trauma such as that wrought by Roman armies in the region of Magdala in 53–52 BCE and that of Sepphoris in 4 BCE, i.e., precisely areas of Jesus' origin and activity.

The lasting effects of repeated Roman and Herodian conquest, moreover, were compounded by the disintegrative effects of economic pressures on families and village communities, the basic social forms in which people's lives were embedded and supported. Once the Hasmonean regime had freed the Jerusalem high priesthood from obligation for imperial tribute, Judeans and subsequently Galileans as well remained subject to only one layer of rulers and taxation. The Roman conquest brought a second layer and the demand for tribute on top of tithes and offerings to the Temple. The Roman appointment of Herod the Great then in effect established a third layer of rulers and taxes, since Herod maintained the Temple and high priesthood intact as instruments of his rule. Multiple layers of rulers and their demands for revenues would have placed serious pressures on the ability of families to reproduce themselves while also satisfying the demands of multiple layers of rulers for revenues.

These effects of multiple layers of rulers and taxation were further compounded in Galilee by the Roman imperial imposition of Antipas. For the first time in their history, Galileans now had their ruler living directly in Galilee, and not at considerable distance. That greatly enhanced the ability of the regime to collect taxes efficiently from the villages of Galilee, nearly every one of which was within sight of one of Antipas's new capital cities. And Antipas needed every measure of grain, oil, and wine he could extract from his Galilean and Perea subjects to fund those massive building projects engineered within the first twenty years of his reign and Jesus' lifetime. Economic conditions of the Galilean peasantry must have been deteriorating more steadily under Antipas than under his father, generating precisely the indebtedness and hunger that Jesus seems to presuppose and address in many gospel traditions. Is it conceivable that working toward greater precision on historical developments at the time of Jesus might enable us to address questions such as why Jesus' mission and the emergence of Jesus movement(s) occurred just at the time and in the place they did?—as well as, of course, questions that we have already raised but cannot yet answer adequately, such as how Jesus' teaching and activities address the circumstances of Galileans' lives?

From the “underside” of history, where Jesus and his movement were located, as the people’s response to imperial invasion and the disintegrative effects of the imperial impact, came repeated popular resistance unmatched elsewhere in the Roman Empire. It could easily be argued that what was driving history in Roman Palestine in the period around the time of Jesus was not the ruling elite who usually comprise the subject of history, but the resistance to the imperial order by popular revolts and movements, with the elite regularly in the position of reacting to popular initiatives. The period is framed by widespread popular revolts in the Maccabean Revolt, the revolts against Herod in 40–37 and again in 4 BCE, prior to Jesus’ mission and movement, and the great revolt of 66–70 and the Bar Kokhba Revolt afterwards. During and in between those revolts occurred many popular movements, including the many that took one of the two distinctively Israelite forms of “prophetic movements” and “messianic movements.” Thus Jesus and his movement(s) must be understood to belong to a period of extensive and intensive resistance to the Roman imperial order in Judea and Galilee. The movements of distinctively Israelite form and their leaders, moreover, may offer important cases of similar responses to the same circumstances for a basis of potentially helpful comparison and contrast. Furthermore, these movements may provide evidence for the cultural pattern(s) adapted by Jesus and his movement(s).<sup>5</sup>

### 3. *Cultural Context and Tradition*

Roman imperial rule, including that of the Herodian and high priestly aristocracy, was not merely a matter of Roman military might and brutality. And popular resistance in revolts and movements was not motivated solely by the poverty and hunger of the people. Both domination and resistance had important cultural dimensions and motivations. Recent researches in several related connections, however, have pulled the rug out from under previous assumptions that Israelite cultural tradition can be directly accessed by merely reading the books of the Hebrew Bible. It has simply been assumed that “the Jews” were a “people of the book,” that most were literate, and that they had access to a stable written text of “the Law and the Prophets.” Those assumptions have all now proven to be ungrounded. Many of the basic assumptions, concepts, and

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<sup>5</sup> See further *Hearing the Whole Story*, ch. 10.

approaches of biblical studies in general and our approach to the gospels and “the Law and the Prophets” as sources and to how we move from texts to the historical Jesus have been thrown into question or simply rendered obsolete.

### 3.1. *Orality and Literacy*<sup>6</sup>

As a few pioneers in New Testament studies have pointed out in the last few decades, communication in ancient Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, as in the Roman Empire generally, was predominantly oral. Wider recent research now makes this unavoidably clear. Literacy in the Roman Empire was confined to about 15% of the population, with a far lower rate in rural areas. Contrary to older assumptions about “the Jews” being a “people of the book,” the literacy rate in Judea and Galilee was far less, perhaps less than 10% or 5%. Villagers, who were the vast majority of the populace, had little need for literacy, which was confined largely to scribal circles. Scrolls, which were extremely cumbersome and expensive, therefore relatively rare, were deposited in the Temple, with some in the possession of scribal groups. But, as recent research is explaining, even scribal circles, such as the Pharisees, the Qumran *yahad*, and the rabbis, cultivated their most cherished “texts” orally. They did not so much read from the text inscribed on scrolls as recite from the same text “inscribed” on memory. And texts were memorized by oral recitation, somewhat as described in later rabbinic texts.

### 3.2. *The Multiformity and Instability of the (Proto-)Scriptures*<sup>7</sup>

Given that both literacy and the availability of written texts were limited and confined mainly to elite scribal circles it is perhaps not surprising to learn that the written text of the books that only later were canonized as the Hebrew scripture was still multiform, unstable, and developing in late Second Temple times. Close examination of the scrolls of books of the Pentateuch and the Prophets found among the Dead Sea Scrolls concludes that such texts still co-existed in multiple versions none of

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<sup>6</sup> See further the important researches in William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Martin Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Jesus in Context*, chs. 3, 4; the implications for Q and Mark are drawn in *Whoever Hears You Hears Me* and *Hearing the Whole Story*.

<sup>7</sup> See especially Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Origins of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); implications for late second-temple times in *Scribes, Visionaries*, chs. 5, 6.

which had yet come to be stabilized in wording. In addition to the variant versions of the Pentateuch and Prophets still circulating among scribal circles, also found at Qumran were different versions of Torah, alternative law-books that are not simply “rewritten Torah,” such as the Temple Scroll and 4QMMT. It is thus clear that the Hebrew scripture had not yet come into any stabilized form and written text. Different versions of Israelite cultural tradition clearly still coexisted and perhaps competed, even in elite scribal circles.

### 3.3. *Popular Tradition and Elite Tradition*

There was thus no stable text of the Hebrew scriptures, much less scrolls available and the ability to read them available to the peasantry at the time of Jesus. This is compounded for Galilean villagers who were not even introduced to “the laws of the Judeans” until a hundred years before Jesus’ birth. Their lack of literacy, however, does not mean that peasants are ignorant, that they lack cultural tradition. Peasants of Israelite heritage, Galileans as well as Judeans, were deeply rooted in their cultural tradition. We can discern Israelite tradition’s formative role in the emergence of several movements that were all in various ways patterned after the same memories of earlier acts of deliverance led by Moses and Joshua or modeled on the acclamation of the young David as the messiah to lead the people’s resistance to outside rulers.

To begin to understand how Galilean and Judean villagers were rooted in Israelite tradition it may help to adapt a distinction developed by anthropologists and sociologists to understand similar societies in which the ordinary people and the elite have different versions of their cultural tradition. I have found most helpful a suggestive theoretical and cross-cultural study by James C. Scott that explains how peasants in many different areas of the world cultivate and act out of what he and others call “little traditions,” which differ in varying degrees from the “great traditions” cultivated by their rulers. The “little tradition” is comprised by the distinctive patterns of belief and behavior valued by the peasantry, while the “great tradition” is the corresponding patterns among the society’s elite, sometimes embodied in written documents.<sup>8</sup>

In a society such as Second Temple Judea these variant traditions were parallel, with considerable overlap and considerable interaction. What

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<sup>8</sup> James C. Scott, “Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition,” *Theory and Society* 4 (1977): 3–32, 159–210; implications for ancient Judean texts and Jesus in context in *Scribes, Visionaries*, chs. 4, 5, 6; *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, ch. 5; and *Jesus in Context*, chs. 3, 7, 10.

we know as the books of the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomic history had taken up stories, victory songs, “common law,” and legends that had originally been cultivated among the Israelite peasantry, such as ancestral narratives, exodus legends, the Song of Deborah and stories of Elijah and Elisha. Insofar as a “book of the law” may well have been, at points, recited aloud to the people assembled in the Temple courtyard, law-codes and histories composed in scribal circles would, in turn, have reached and influenced villagers. As Josephus explains and an episode in Mark reflects, one of the responsibilities of the Pharisees was to promulgate rulings not written in the books of Moses, rulings that, depending on their relations with the high priesthood, were included in the state law of the temple-state. “The laws of the Judeans” imposed on the Galileans by the Hasmonean regime and the scrolls of the various textual traditions of the Pentateuch left behind by the scribal-priestly community at Qumran should be understood as partial embodiments of the Judean great tradition based in Jerusalem. The little tradition, even more pluriform, since cultivated orally over a long span of generations in village communities, would have focused on memories important to the people’s cultural identity, struggles for subsistence, and conduct of local community life. The many local customs mentioned in passing in rabbinic literature are probably reflections of the latter. Judean villagers, having lived for centuries under the official tradition (“laws of the Judeans”) sponsored by the Jerusalem temple-state, would have been relatively better acquainted with it. Galilean villagers, having come under Hasmonean rule and “the laws of the Judeans” only a hundred years prior to the birth of Jesus, would have been relatively less acquainted with the great tradition based in Jerusalem. But the Galileans apparently were solidly grounded in the Mosaic covenant and its principles. My close examination of the incidents in Josephus previously claimed as evidence of the “Torah” in Galilee showed instead that the Galileans in each of these cases were acting to defend one of the basic “commandments” of the Mosaic covenant, not more focused rulings of scribally composed law codes included in the Pentateuch.<sup>9</sup>

Because much of the popular (little) version of Israelite tradition paralleled and overlapped with the official (great) version based in Jerusalem, the differences would have resided in the way events or stories or celebrations were understood and acted upon. For example, the

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<sup>9</sup> *Galilee*, 147–157.

celebration of the exodus from bondage in Egypt in the Passover festival had long since been centralized in Jerusalem. For the high priests and their representatives this celebration functioned as a way of centralizing revenues in Jerusalem, unifying the people by focusing celebration of their legend of origins on the Temple, and maintaining order in the society. But for the ordinary people who went up to the Temple for the festival, judging from Josephus's accounts, the celebration focused their attention on liberation from foreign rule, and often led to demonstrations that threatened to get out of control. In response the Roman governors posted Roman soldiers on the porticoes of the Temple courtyard—which would only have exacerbated the conflict between the popular celebration of their past liberation from foreign rule and the threatening presence of armed foreign troops above their heads to maintain order in the ruling institution now backed by their foreign rulers (*Ant.* 20.108).

Since there was no stable and standardized written scripture yet and since both literacy and written scrolls would have been rare among popular movements, it seems unwarranted to continue thinking of our gospel sources as “quoting” or “interpreting” scripture. Yet the existence of “scripture” in the Temple or in scribal circles, even particular books, was known among popular circles, even if they did not have access to or knowledge of the precise written text. The rich allusions and references to great cultural heroes and heroines, famous places, memorable events, and prophetic oracles in (oral-derived) gospel texts such as Mark and Q, however, can be understood instead in terms of the continuing interaction between great and little traditions. This enables us to discern how Israelite tradition was being contested, between “the scribes and Pharisees” on the one hand, and the stories and speeches of Jesus cultivated in communities of Jesus followers, on the other.

### 3.4. *Cultural Patterns*<sup>10</sup>

The instability of the scriptural text among scribal circles in late Second Temple times presents a startling contrast with the way we have all been trained in biblical studies. With our focus on biblical verses, “pericopes,”

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<sup>10</sup> See further *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, esp. chs. 9–10; *Hearing the Whole Story*, esp. chs. 8 and 10; *Bandits, Prophets, Messiahs*, chs. 3–4; and *Jesus in Context*, chs. 6, 7.

Jesus “sayings,” and even more narrowly on particular words and “titles,” we are clearly working on the assumptions of print culture. Now we must recognize that our assumptions based on print culture are anachronistic and inapplicable to how Israelite tradition was operating at the time of Jesus. Prominent among the inapplicable assumptions and approaches is our focus on particular verses in particular chapters of the Bible. As indicated repeatedly in rabbinic rulings, elite literate circles (although probably working orally) appropriated their cultural tradition in separate statements, even phrases. As indicated in both rabbinic literature and in the gospels, the tradition could be referenced by adaptation of a particular proverb or line of prophecy into a new context. What we have been missing because of our focus on chapter-and-verse, however, is broader cultural patterns. The appearance of such broad cultural patterns as the Mosaic covenantal structure that are attested in certain extended passages in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 20, Joshua 24) and then reappear, somewhat adapted, in the *Community Rule* and *Damascus Rule* from the Dead Sea Scrolls, should have alerted us. Having been trained to work with written texts we are understandably reluctant to allow any possibility outside of what is written in a text we can see. But there is no reason why people who communicate orally cannot also follow and perpetuate distinctive cultural patterns. I argued some time ago that this is what we see behind and in the popular prophetic movements and messianic movements, patterns still detectable from Josephus’s accounts of the actions taken by popular prophets and their followers. More recently I have argued that we can discern a Mosaic covenant pattern similar to that in the *Community Rule* in certain speeches in Q, elaborated and more obvious in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount. It may seem like more of a stretch, but I have also suggested that in the overall plot and sequences of episodes of Mark’s story (read/heard as a whole story) we can detect adaptations of some of those same cultural patterns, of the prophetic and messianic movements and of the Mosaic covenant. Being open to broader cultural patterns underlying and implicit in the gospel sources and in contemporary Judean literature and in Judean, Samaritan, and Galilean movements corresponds closely with the shifts I believe we need to make in the way we read, or rather hear, and use gospels and gospel materials as sources for the historical Jesus (see below).

#### 4. *Leader-Follower/Movement Relations: Roles and "Scripts"*<sup>11</sup>

At the center of research on and reconstruction of "the historical Jesus" has been a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between the gospel sources and Jesus. The gospels do not provide (reliable or unreliable) information (or a record) of what Jesus said and did, but of what resonated and continued to resonate with his followers in their performance of stories about him and representation of his speech. The gospel sources provide not evidence for Jesus himself, but rather for the effects of the interaction between Jesus and those who responded to him. The standard approach of focusing on isolated sayings or pericopes/stories in order to evaluate what might be "authentic" bits of evidence for what Jesus himself said or how he acted is inappropriately individualistic. It imposes anachronistic modern assumptions about an individual separate from social relations. It is influenced also by Christian concerns that Jesus must be a unique person, who is not constituted by (or, god-forbid) reducible to social relations. But Jesus was historically significant, and remembered and represented, only insofar as he had a particular impact on other people, who took significant historical action.

Leaders generally make a significant impact and take historical action by acting in particular roles or offices in relation to followers and/or a broader movement or society. Abraham Lincoln was not a significant historical figure merely as an Illinois farmer or lawyer. He was elected Senator and then President of the US and took significant action in that office at a time of major crisis. In the cases of popular leaders such as Jesus, they do not step into formally institutionalized office, but do step into recognized social roles. We come right to the threshold of recognizing this in New Testament studies insofar as we inquire whether Jesus was an "eschatological prophet" or was given the "title" of "messiah" or "son of man." Now the title of "President" may well have been assimilated into Lincoln's public persona during his lifetime, and certainly became part of his historical persona after his assassination. But it is important to remember that a public or historical persona is relational, indeed is constituted by interaction between the one who serves in the office or acts in the role and the followers. It is not particularly signifi-

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<sup>11</sup> See the provisional sketches in *Jesus and Empire*, ch. 3; *Hearing the Whole Story*, ch. 10; and *Jesus in Context*, chs. 6, 7.



cant historically that Jesus may have uttered a certain saying. Significant is that his speech or action resonated with followers such that they experienced restoration to whole personal and communal lives, took action for themselves and others, revitalized community relations, gained a sense of hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. We are not searching for Jesus the individual in himself, but for Jesus-in-relationship, Jesus-in-interactive-role(s).

A focally important aspect of a relational and contextual approach to Jesus is attempting to discern what interactive roles he was playing or in which he was being placed by his followers/movement(s). The potential roles that Jesus may have adapted or in which he may have been placed were given in the cultural tradition out of which both Jesus and his followers were working and were determined by the social structural power relations in Judea and Galilee. It is important then not to mistake ideas articulated in Judean scribal literature such as the *Psalms of Solomon* for roles in popular movements, and not to project what may be roles mainly at an aristocratic or scribal level, but not among the peasantry. We would have to find compelling reason to posit a role among the peasantry for which we have no evidence.

Were we to apply such criteria for the question of the interactional roles that Jesus may have adapted, then many of the currently discussed roles or titles must disappear from the discussion—if we are after Jesus-in-relations-in-historical-context. Apocalypses (Daniel; Enoch literature, etc.) were composed in scribal circles. Strictly speaking we have no evidence of “apocalypticism” among peasant movements. Although scribally-produced apocalyptic literature adapted many prophetic themes and motifs, we have no evidence of an “apocalyptic prophet” even among scribal circles. “Apocalyptic prophet” is apparently a modern scholarly construct, not an ancient Judean or Galilean popular role. Similarly, “eschatological prophet” is a modern scholarly construct. The wisdom book of Jesus ben Sira gives us fairly rich evidence of the role of the sage at the level of scribal circles working for the priestly aristocracy or temple-state. Although there is much evidence of *sabia*, or wise women, among European peasants of the late Middle Ages, no evidence available as yet offers evidence of a sage at the popular level among Galilean and Judean peasants. Strictly speaking, it looks like there was no such role to be adapted.

Scarce as the evidence for the Judean and Galilean peasantry is, there is nevertheless enough to detect a few roles that were very much alive in popular circles. Josephus’s accounts of the prophets Theudas and “the

Egyptian” are evidence of prophets like Moses and/or Joshua who led movements of renewal of Israel at the popular level. The credibility of this role is enhanced by parallel evidence from the scribal level, in the “prophet like Moses” in Deuteronomy and the Moses-like portrayals of the Righteous Teacher in Qumran literature. Josephus’s accounts of Jesus ben Hananiah (and perhaps of John the Baptist) provide evidence of oracular prophets among Judean (and Galilean) peasants. Moreover, the accounts in Josephus and rabbinic literature of popularly acclaimed “kings” or “messiahs” such as Judas son of Hezekiah, Simeon, and Athronges in 4 BCE, Simon bar Giora during the great revolt, and Simon bar Kokhba, leader of the Bar Kokhba revolt, provide convincing evidence for the role of popular messiahs leading movements of independence and renewal. More of a stretch is to move from textual references to Elijah to a confident positing of a role such as a new Elijah. The most convincing evidence for such a role, since Elijah’s memory must have been derived originally from northern popular tradition, would be the gospels themselves, which understand both John the Baptist and Jesus in terms of Elijah. It is difficult to judge how to use references to the future role of Elijah, such as that by Malachi, a Judean prophet closely attached to the Temple, and Ben Sira, the Judean scribe who lavishes praise on the Oniad high priests. The combination of these elite and popular indications of the memory of Elijah and his role in gospel traditions may be sufficient to project a role of a prophet like Elijah, one very much like that of Moses and Joshua.

That Mark, Q speeches, Matthew and John all represent Jesus so prominently as resembling or imitating Moses and Elijah in both his actions and his speeches makes it all the more inviting to reason back toward Jesus’ adaptation of such roles. His prophetic pronouncements against the Temple and high priestly rulers are reminiscent of that other, later peasant prophet Jesus son of Hananiah; and several of his prophetic pronouncements clearly take traditional Israelite prophetic forms. Yet Jesus of Nazareth’s role(s) surely transcend that of an oracular prophet like the son of Hananiah. And Mark’s ambivalence about, Q’s avoidance of, Jesus in the role of a (popular) messiah suggest some confusion in that connection, perhaps tension between Jesus and some of his followers.

##### 5. *The Gospels as Historical Sources*

As integral components of the Christian Scriptures, the canonical gospels belong to today’s Christian churches in the north Atlantic countries

where most “Jesus-scholars” reside as much as they did to the church councils that canonized them in late antiquity. As sources for the historical Jesus-in-movement-in-context, however, they do not belong to us. This became vividly evident to me when two Zulu ministers who had already received a European-oriented theological education in South Africa took courses with me at Harvard Divinity School in the early 1990’s. At the beginning of the term it was evident from their comments in class discussions that they understood the Gospel of Mark as a European text that had come to Zulu people as part of European colonization. Not until later in the term did it finally hit them that Mark’s story might be more of a “third world” story that had originated among other imperially-ruled people. Historical-critical study of biblical texts had the stated intention of allowing biblical literature its own integrity in its own historical context of origins and/or composition. Yet biblical scholarship has remained a prisoner of its own cultural assumptions to a considerable degree and in key determinative ways. If we are to use the canonical and other gospel literature as historical sources, then they must be allowed to stand in their own historical reality and context.

The critical editions of the Greek texts of gospels that we use in standard New Testament study are the creations of modern scholars, the products of modern print culture and its assumptions. Intensive meticulous scholarly effort has been expended to ascertain the “original” “reading” of discrete words and phrases of each verse in the gospels. Translations from the Greek are then printed, not only codified by chapter and verse, but formatted in paragraphs that have titles (sometimes even in Greek and bi-lingual editions). Such formatting corresponds with the deeply ingrained habits in biblical studies of focusing on individual verses or sayings of Jesus and/or on pericopes, which are often weekly scripture lessons. This approach was reinforced in the last generation by the “New Criticism” that many gospel scholars had learned in their college study of literature, an approach that focused on close reading of text-fragments of poetry or prose. In this same tradition of biblical study, study of “the historical Jesus” tends to be heavily influenced by form criticism (even if in reaction to it), in which it was simply assumed that the basic unit was the individual saying or story. Perhaps the most telling illustration of the assumptions and approach that dominate this standard use of the gospels as sources is the persistent understanding of “Q” as, by definition, “the Synoptic *Sayings* Source” or the “*Sayings* Gospel”—not to mention the unquestioned assumption that its original text can be reconstructed by a team of expert scholars from the parallel sayings in Matthew and Luke. The gospels are thus treated as containers of

individual sayings and (pronouncement or healing) stories, which are the basic units that (potentially) contain the words of Jesus or information about the words and actions of Jesus, the focus of scholars' examination.

This focus on text-fragments understood on the assumptions of modern print culture is, ironically, closely linked with a modern individualistic "copy and save" model of memory and transmission of the "oral tradition" of Jesus' sayings and stories (which is also conceived on a print-culture model). The teachings of Jesus as individual sayings delivered to individuals were supposedly remembered and transmitted (repeated to other individuals) for many years before they were finally written down in their current gospel containers. The "form-history" as originally developed by Bultmann and Dibelius did include the function of synoptic gospel units of tradition in a particular *Sitz im Leben* (der Kirche). In recent scholarship on Jesus, even that supposed ecclesial context has been left largely unattended. Oral transmission is imagined basically as abstracted from social context, i.e., from a context in the fundamental social forms of family and village community (or a movement based in them). (The extreme form of this approach even imagines a handful of individuals who had abandoned family, yet who somehow engaged in some vague kind of "group-formation" of new communities—which sounds more like Paul.) A vivid example of how the transmission of Jesus traditions is understood according to the "copy and save" model of memory is the procedure of the Jesus Seminar: those who tend to trust copy-and-save transmission vote 'red' or 'pink,' while skeptics tend to vote 'gray' or 'black,' with the ballot determining the "authenticity" of Jesus' sayings and actions.

These assumptions and this standard procedure, seriously problematic in a number of respects, have three closely related fatal flaws that make them inappropriate for historical investigation. First, by trusting in the questionable modern "copy-and-save" theory of memory, they effectively by-pass the process of *communication* in which Jesus' teaching and practice would have become significant to others, and would therefore have been repeated and repeatedly retold. Jesus' teachings would have been remembered only insofar as they were significant to, resonated with, other people in particular contexts. Help may be available from other fields of study, however. Sociolinguistics can help us understand communication as a social/relational process involving not simply a speaker but hearers in an immediate social context and a larger cultural context. Recent studies in social/cultural memory can help us

understand memory also as a social/relational process in which a continuing community of rememberers is actively involved.<sup>12</sup>

Second, it seems highly doubtful that anyone, including Jesus, can communicate in individual sayings or aphorisms. Such fragments are something less than genuine units or messages of communication, without indication of meaning context. Focusing on individual Jesus-sayings as abstracted artifacts is thus a dead-end street that will not lead to the historical figure. The units or messages of communication must have been larger than individual sayings or (pronouncement or healing) stories. They must have been at least the length of short speeches, such as the “mission discourse” or the “Beelzebul discourse,” or sets of healing and other episodes (in and behind Mark 4–8). I am still struggling even to address this question. Again help may be available from other fields of study such as sociolinguistics and cross-cultural studies of oral tradition. It may be that, until we have persuasive criteria to discern intermediate-length units such as short “discourses,” we must focus mainly on complete “texts” such as the whole story of Mark’s Gospel or the whole sequence of speeches in Q.

Third, however, the assumptions and procedure of standard studies of Jesus do not allow the gospels their own integrity as texts. The Gospel of Mark, for example, far from being a mere container of sayings and brief “stories,” is a sustained narrative of Jesus engaged in multiple conflicts, with the Pharisees and chief priests and the Roman governor, with the unclean spirits and Satan, and even with his own disciples. The narrative proceeds in a series of brief episodes. As the narrative proceeds, however, earlier episodes anticipate subsequent episodes and appear in a different perspective as a result of subsequent episodes. Matthew’s and Luke’s gospels, which most believe followed Mark’s narrative, are more complex stories that both incorporate the same speeches of Jesus as well as distinctive material of their own. Recent literary analysis of the synoptic gospels and John have helped us appreciate the gospels as

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<sup>12</sup> Important in these connections are M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978); Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); now being applied to synoptic gospel materials in articles by Werner Kelber, Alan Kirk, and Richard Horsley in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, ed. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, Semeia Studies (Atlanta: SBL, 2005); and Horsley, *Jesus in Context*, chs. 5, 6, 7.

whole stories with settings, characters, and plots. Most of this analysis, however, has been working on the model and assumptions of modern prose-fiction written by individual authors and mass-printed for private reading. Modern assumptions and models, for example, of authorship, plot development, and character development do not fit ancient stories such as the gospels. On the other hand, some are finally beginning to recognize that Q, the “source” from which many believe that Matthew and Luke derived their parallel speech-materials, is not a collection of sayings but a sequence of Jesus-speeches on various subjects such as mission, the Pharisees, and anxiety about subsistence. This can be seen by critical comparison with the newly discovered *Gospel of Thomas*, which is a collection of (pairs of) sayings and parables, with its own distinctive hermeneutics of meditation-and-enlightenment.

What assumptions are valid for the gospels in their own historical context? Because we are only recently becoming aware of some of the most fundamental aspects of the communication situation in antiquity, the following discussion is necessarily somewhat tentative. Nevertheless, sufficient basic research has been done recently to enable us to draw some conclusions on fundamental points.

Most basic is to recognize that communication in ancient Galilee, Judea, and all areas of the Roman Empire was overwhelmingly oral. Thus even where written copies of texts were available, they were recited orally in a group setting. Even more among non-literate ordinary people, texts were recited or performed in group settings. Closely related recent research has explained that composition of texts was not only done for performance but was often integrally related with performance. To put it starkly for those of us accustomed to the assumptions of print culture, composition was usually a separate operation from transcription, which was often done by dictation (as known from Paul's letters). In the historical context of their composition, therefore, the gospels were performed in group settings, even if/after they existed in written form.

Although, as biblical scholars devoted to interpretation of the sacred *text*, we are woefully unprepared to understand the gospels as oral performance, recent studies and theory of “oral derived texts,” oral performance, and oral tradition offer some suggestive possibilities for fruitfully rethinking our approach. Studies by classicists, medievalists, anthropologists, and theorists on oral and epic poetry have borrowed heavily from sociolinguistic theory and the ethnography of performance. Theory developed by John Miles Foley in particular fits handily with the

relational-contextual approach to ancient history sketched above.<sup>13</sup> Oral performance, with or without a written text, is highly relational and embedded in social context and cultural tradition. Performance involves a performer and hearers, who participate in and contribute to a performance through their interaction with the performer. The performer sings or narrates a *text*, the performance takes place in a *context* (place, group, occasion, etc.), and the performance of the text resonates with/in the hearers by metonymically (part for whole) *referencing the tradition* in which they (and the performer) are rooted. Our standard approach to Jesus sayings has been to establish the “what” of the meaning of given sayings. Meaning, in oral performance, is *not* a *what*, but a *significant relationship* between *text* and *audience* in a *context* and the *cultural tradition* in which they live. Or more adequately stated, we are looking for the work done in oral performance as the *text* resonates with the *audience* by *referencing the cultural tradition*. This way of approaching the gospels provides us some criteria for sorting out what the units of communication may have been and for appreciating the meaning generated in the audience in its historical context. This may become clearer with some further reflection on the various facets or components of oral performance.<sup>14</sup>

### 5.1. *Text (The Message in Communication)*

A “reader” or performer recited a particular *message*, in a particular context, which resonated with an audience out of their common cultural tradition. Even in modern print culture it is evident, on a moment’s reflection, that the meaningful unit of communication is the overall message of which particular statements are components. Ironically the scholars who spent so much time and energy isolating and studying particular “sayings” of Jesus would be the first to insist that their statements should not be “taken out of context” in their articles or books, which form the overall message they want to communicate. We can get a bit closer to “texts” that were performed or read aloud to groups, such as Q and the Gospel of Mark, however, by analogy with oral performances of “oral derived texts” in other societies where oral communication

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<sup>13</sup> See esp. John Miles Foley, *Imminent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> See further *Whoever Hears You Hears Me; Hearing the Whole Story*; and *Jesus in Context*, chs. 3, 4.

prevailed. Old English poets or South Slavic singers of epics, for example, insisted that their “words” were not only and not primarily individual statements or lines, but a speech, a scene, or a whole song or narrative poem. By analogy, we might imagine that both particular speeches (such as the mission discourse) in Q and the overall sequence of speeches (Q as a whole), and perhaps the particular episodes as well as the overall story in Mark, were “texts” (meaningful messages).<sup>15</sup>

We may gain another angle on the issue from a study of Lutshootseed narrative (Salish people in the Puget Sound area). Of the rich collection of stories and songs among the people, most of which were known by a given storyteller, the storyteller would never tell all of them on one occasion. Also, different story tellers and even the same story teller had different versions of a given story. By analogy we might suggest that Q and Mark represent particular “texts” composed from a far wider and richer repertoire of Jesus-speeches and Jesus episodes known in the Jesus-movement(s) and that the parallel speeches/episodes of the Beelzebul, mission, and ‘followers on trial’ discourses found in Mark and Q were different versions of particular components of that wider repertoire of Jesus-speeches and episodes.<sup>16</sup>

Yet another set of observations about comparative performances opens another dimension to our potential understanding of what constitutes the “text” in the case of our Q and Mark sources for Jesus-and-followers. South Slavic singers and other performers, while insisting that they were singing the exact same “text” with no variations, in fact presented different length recitations and variations in the wording and length of particular episodes while maintaining the same basic overall story-line across different performances. This has two important implications for Q and Mark as “texts.” First, it suggests that even though particular component speeches of Q and particular episodes in Mark could have constituted basic messages or units of communication in themselves on occasion, they would usually have constituted components of a larger message/text of which Q and Mark are examples (the only ones known to us). That is, component speeches and episodes were usually combined in some way and had their meaning in connection with others in a sequence or narrative. Second, it is the overall story in Mark and a full series of speeches in Q that were the basic or most important texts,

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<sup>15</sup> See *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*, 163, and references there.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibid.*, 167–168, and references there.



messages, and units of communication. Standard study of the synoptic gospel tradition and investigations of the historical Jesus focused on isolated sayings and “pericopes,” strive to establish and then interpret the precise wording of each in itself. All the factors we have considered, however, indicate that meaningful communication is carried or evoked by “texts”/messages that are much larger and more complex than individual sayings. We are thus led to focus in almost the diametric opposite way as standard study of the synoptic tradition. That is, we must focus on the overall series of speeches in Q and the overall story in Mark, in order to understand not only “the whole picture” but also the way each component of the overall series or story functioned in and constituted the whole picture.

### 5.2. *Context (of Communication)*

A performer recites and an audience hears a message in a particular context. In fact, context determines what is to be communicated and context cues the audience into hearing what is communicated in a certain way. At a funeral we expect to hear music and discourse appropriate to a funeral and the presiding priest or minister prepares a message of consolation and eulogy. The term “register” is often used for the mode of communication appropriate to a particular context. At a protest demonstration we would not expect to hear words of praise for the target of the protest. Complex texts, however, may have a variety of sub-contexts at different times or levels. For example, in overall celebration of the mass or a church worship service, within the overall context of worship, are several sub-contexts of praise, confession, words of assurance, hearing of the word, preaching, and the offering of and by the people. As the worshippers shift from one sub-context to another, the register of the message changes accordingly. Something similar happened in civil rights rallies, the different sub-contexts as the appropriate setting for singing freedom songs, remembering fallen comrades, or hearing an inspiring exhortation to continuing struggle. We can detect something similar with regard to the sequence of speeches in Q. The context of the overall series of speeches must have been community meetings of a Jesus movement. Within those meetings, however, must have been sub-contexts, such as a commissioning of envoys as the sub-context of the mission discourse or preparation for group prayer as the sub-context of the short speech on prayer (including the Lord’s Prayer). The context for hearing the Gospel of Mark must have been community meetings of a Jesus movement.

In attempting to understand the gospels in historical context and as sources for Jesus-in-context, however, we must surely consider a much wider context of communication. The gospels, Q and Mark in particular, were the communicative products and media of a recently arisen, dynamic and growing movement. For the movement to have begun in the first place and to have rapidly expanded the message must have resonated with people who formed or joined the movement and must have continued to resonate with the people who continued in the movement. We must thus consider the historical social context as well as the community-movement context. For example, beyond the immediate context of the mission discourse in the movement's meeting to commission envoys to expand Jesus' project of preaching and healing in village communities, we must consider the historical context (crisis) that led them to begin and continue sending out such envoys. Or, more broadly, besides the community meetings in which the Gospel of Mark was recited, we must consider the historical crisis in response to which the gospel originated and which it continued to address, in which expanding numbers of people resonated to that text in expanding communities. We want to understand why it resonated with certain people at a certain historical crisis.

### 5.3. *Tradition*

The text/message resonates with the hearers by referencing the cultural *tradition* out of which they live. This is true to a degree with any communication, including much in writing. But it is perhaps the most important key to understanding oral performance of "texts." Even those of us whose lives are spent predominantly in print culture have experiences that illustrate what is usual in oral communication. Hearing (on the radio or TV) even a brief "sound-bite" of Martin Luther King's voice saying, in his inimitable preaching style, "I have a dream" or "I have been to the mountain-top," evokes memories of the whole civil rights movement and era for Americans who lived through the 1960's. For those deeply involved in the struggle for civil rights hearing King voice those phrases may evoke even deep feelings, vivid memories of particularly tense confrontations, the death of colleagues in the struggle, and a recommitment to the values represented by the freedom movement. Hearing JFK's voice saying "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" evokes similar memories and feelings in many Americans old enough to have lived in the early 1960's.

And even an orally voiced written text of Abraham Lincoln saying “Four score and seven years ago” evokes in memory not only the larger text of the Gettysburg address, but a whole important segment of American cultural tradition. What all of these examples illustrate is how a performed “text,” even a fragment from a whole, resonates in the hearers by referencing the hearers’ cultural memory and tradition.

The key to how the text resonates with the hearers by referencing the cultural tradition is that a part stands for the whole, “metonymically.” “I have a dream” evokes the whole African American struggle for civil rights. When the Gospel of Mark tells of Jesus making sea crossings and performing feedings in the wilderness when no food was available it evokes in those hearers familiar with Israelite tradition the whole tradition of Moses leading the exodus and arduous journey of Israel through the wilderness toward its land. Even before the audience hears that Moses and Elijah appeared with the transfigured Jesus on the mountain, the text of Mark has given the audience unmistakable clues that Jesus is a prophet like Moses and Elijah leading a renewal of Israel. This illustrates how the text resonates with the audience by evoking its cultural memory, the shared body of tradition in which it is rooted (or has recently become rooted). Or, to state that more comprehensively than its surface cognitive dimension, the portrayal of Jesus making sea crossings and wilderness feedings evokes, by referencing the hearers’ shared Israelite cultural tradition, the confidence or trust/faith that Jesus was another prophet like Moses who was carrying out a new deliverance of Israel from foreign oppression.

Again we are developing an approach virtually the opposite of that previously pursued by standard study of the gospels and “research” into the historical Jesus. Although scholars of the historical Jesus were students of the Enlightenment in their rationalistic assessment of the gospels as historical sources, they retained much of their basic theological commitment. In traditional Christian theology, Jesus was the agent or mouthpiece of revelation. Under the influence of Enlightenment Reason, revelation was understood especially in terms of teachings. Revelation, of course, meant something new, something that had not been heard or known before. And insofar as modern scholars and readers focused on the isolated sayings of Jesus in themselves, abstracted from the context and relationships in which they were embedded, that meant the sayings-in-themselves had to be new—and somehow revelatory (a tall order!). Almost by definition Jesus’ teachings had to be new over against “Judaism” (and the subsequent “early church”). Thus, using the

criterion of “dissimilarity” Jesus-scholars researched Jewish literature not to understand Jesus’ teachings in their historical context, but rather to set the “authentic” sayings over against “conventional” Jewish norms, customs, and other cultural content.

A relational-contextual approach to Jesus-in-movement in no way excludes revelation. That would be as reductionist as pretending that Jesus was only religious. In a relational-contextual approach, however, revelation is understood relationally-historically. Revelation would be not something new in itself, but would be revelation about (a new possibility in or dimension of) the historical situation to people in that situation, e.g., the difficult circumstances with no apparent way out that the people are facing. In the gospel texts and, presumably, in Jesus’ speech and action, revelation was that God was acting to change the situation and to change the people in that situation, so that they can act. A relational-contextual approach, rather than separate certain Jesus sayings-in-themselves from the Israelite tradition that comprised an important aspect of the historical context, attempts to discern how the text of Mark or Q references Israelite tradition in a way that provides revelation for people involved in the problematic historical situation.

This suggests that the key for modern readers’ appreciation of gospel materials is to become as familiar as possible with the Israelite tradition (as well as the context) out of which the historical audience (implied in the text) heard the text. Only if we as modern readers make the connection between text and metonymically signaled references to Israelite tradition can we construe the text within the range of possibilities it implies. This gives special importance to the question of what cultural tradition consisted of for the audience of the gospels and, behind them, for the audience of Jesus, and how we can gain access to it.

As should be clear by now, in the standard terms of New Testament studies, using the gospels as sources for the historical Jesus (-in-movement) will require what would commonly be called analysis of the historical context, viewpoint, and hermeneutics of every document to be used. This places a great burden on understanding the gospels themselves in their respective historical situations (contexts of performance). For this we can draw on previous investigation and analysis of gospels (including literary criticism). But those must be complemented by analysis of their provenance informed by the new researches sketched above.

### 6. *Moving from Gospels as Sources to the Historical Jesus*

In the remaining space I can only draw some implications from the above discussion and merely outline some of the steps that might be taken to move from the gospels as sources to the historical Jesus (-in movement-in-context).

Since complete gospel documents provide the meaning-context of their respective components (episodes, speeches), they must be taken as whole stories and sets of speeches, with each component understood in the context of the whole (in contrast with the procedure of the Jesus Seminar and other critical liberal scholars). Each gospel source (Matthew, Luke, John, *Thomas*, Peter, etc., as well as Mark and Q, used as illustrations above) will thus offer certain representations of Jesus-in-mission/movement-in-context. Those representations can then be evaluated in their own historical context, then compared and contrasted against the background of what we know of the historical context of Jesus-in-mission in Galilee and Judea. This might be characterized as a series of “triangulations” from broad general portrayals in whole oral-performed texts.

Understanding the gospels as oral performance and in terms of social memory leads toward a greater sense of both the continuity and the discontinuity between Jesus in his movement in historical context and the various gospel narratives and speeches in their respective situations. The old problem of transmission simply disappears into the ongoing process of social memory and repeated performance, insofar as Jesus-speeches and episodes continued to be remembered and performed only insofar as they were relevant to and resonated in similar and new situations. Once we recognize the complicating dimensions of the historical context of Jesus, the relational reality of Jesus’ mission and movement, and the gospels as sources, we cannot simply return to standard assumptions, concepts, and procedures. And it will take many years and sensitive analyses and studies even to begin to formulate an adequate approach to Jesus-in-movement-in-context that is both contextual and relational.



## SOURCES, METHODS AND DISCURSIVE LOCATIONS IN THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

JOHN S. KLOPPENBORG

### 1. *Why the Quest?*

“The historical and substantive presupposition for modern research into the life of Jesus is emancipation from traditional Christological dogma on the basis of the principle of reason.”<sup>1</sup> So began Hans Conzelmann’s classic entry in the third edition of *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (1959), which offered a brief portrait of the historical Jesus based on the results of the post-Bultmannian ‘New Quest of the historical Jesus.’ In a few pages Conzelmann chronicled the progress of the quest from D. F. Strauss’s overthrow of dogmatically-based pictures of Jesus, through the late nineteenth-century liberal search to discover the “personality” of Jesus as a religious genius, to his own day when the tools of redaction criticism joined with source and form criticism to permit a more responsible investigation of the Jesus of history.

The collapse of dogmatically-grounded portraits of Jesus had in fact begun at least a half a century before Strauss’s *Das Leben Jesu: Kritisch bearbeitet*<sup>2</sup> with the *Fragmente* of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), whose skeptical method combined synoptic comparison of the four gospels with a concerted effort to locate Jesus within the world of Second Temple Judaism as it was then known.<sup>3</sup> Reimarus’s results are well known: the evangelists had fabricated fantastic and contradiction-riddled accounts of their hero, a rather unexceptional apocalyptic prophet and preacher of repentance, whose body the disciples had stolen and invented the tale of his resurrection and the prediction of an imminent glorious

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<sup>1</sup> H. Conzelmann, “Jesus Christus,” *RGK* 33 (1959): 620; *Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 5.

<sup>2</sup> (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835–1836). Translated by G. Eliot as *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. and introd. P. C. Hodgson, Lives of Jesus Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

<sup>3</sup> H. S. Reimarus, *Fragmente des Wolfenbüttelschen Ungenannten*, ed. G. E. Lessing (Berlin: Sandersche Buchhandlung [C. M. Eichhoff], 1774–1778; 4th ed., 1835); *Fragments*, Lives of Jesus Series (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

return. Although most of the details of Reimarus's thesis were quickly repudiated, he had succeeded in two important respects. The contradictions to which he so forcefully drew attention made it clear that even if it was not a matter of outright deception, the gospel accounts could no longer be harmonized into a coherent picture and used naively as the basis for later Christian dogma—since credible Christian beliefs could hardly be founded on deceptions or vagaries. And the dissonance between the gospels' accounts of Jesus and contemporary Jewish beliefs raised the possibility that a significant gap existed between the historical Jesus and the gospels' representations. Thus Reimarus had driven two wedges, one between the gospels and Christian dogma and another between the historical Jesus and his first biographers.

Reimarus's essays were not only bold but timely. Lessing, who published the seventh of the "anonymous Wolfenbütteler's" *Fragmente* ("Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger") ten years after Reimarus's death, accompanied the essay with a rejoinder where he advanced his own theory of gospel composition, which took into account the internal disagreements that Reimarus had interpreted as signs of falsification and which presented the evangelists as essentially reliable narrators.<sup>4</sup> Lessing in effect used Reimarus's devastating attack on the foundations of Christian dogma and the credibility of the gospel accounts to allow him the space to advance his own views, which showed significant sympathies with Reimarus's criticism of naive use of the gospels by dogmatic theology and which acknowledged the critical problem of divergence in the gospel tradition without resorting to Reimarus's drastic solution.

The struggle to disentangle historical scholarship on the gospels from ecclesiastical and dogmatic agendas and the endeavour to produce a historically defensible portrait of Jesus continued throughout the nineteenth century, so that by the publication of Schweitzer's *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1906) most of the key (German) contributors to the Quest claimed that at the levels of presupposition and method, the Quest observed a strict separation between historiographic goals and theological interests in Jesus. Of course it is often doubted that this separation was as strictly observed as advertised. But the wedges that Reimarus had driven between dogma and the gospels and between the gospels and Jesus remained and

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<sup>4</sup> G. E. Lessing, "Neue Hypothese über die Evangelisten als bloss menschliche Geschichtsschreiber betrachtet," in *Theologischer Nachlass* (orig., 1778; Berlin: Voss, 1784), 45–72, translated as "New Hypothesis Concerning the Evangelists Regarded as Merely Human Historians," in *Lessing's Theological Writings* (London: Black, 1956), 65–81.



Lessing's proposal to treat the evangelists as "merely human historians" prevailed as a scholarly paradigm.

Although the 'New Quest of the Historical Jesus,' of which Conzelmann's Jesus book is an example, is now sometimes treated as a theologically-driven quest,<sup>5</sup> this was certainly not Conzelmann's view, as the quotation that opens this chapter makes clear. On the contrary the tools of source, form and redaction criticism and application of the principle of dissimilarity on the one hand afforded a prophylaxis against the historian's theological inclinations (since the criterion filtered out those features of the tradition that agreed too closely with later Christian affirmations) and on the other, allowed the historian to distinguish reliable Jesus tradition from later accretions and thus to construct a credible portrait. Nevertheless, Conzelmann argued that fortuitously the advent of new historical criticism was able to solve a theological problem, by closing the chasm that had been opened by form criticism, between the historical Jesus and the faith-infused tradition of the early Jesus movement. Without denying the very significant transformations of the Jesus tradition that occurred during the process of oral transmission and with the redactional activities of the evangelists, Conzelmann argued that material continuities could nonetheless be traced from the beliefs of the early Jesus movement back to the *Existenzverständnis* of Jesus.

The messianic portrait of dogmatics seems in its essential features to be traced back to Jesus himself. Faith thereby appears to have gained a historical foundation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ernst Käsemann's seminal essay, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" ("Das Problem des historischen Jesus," *ZTK* 51 [1954]: 125–153, translated as "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, SBT 41 [London: SCM, 1964], 15–47) indeed began with a theological problem: that the nature of Christian theological beliefs means that "we cannot do away with the identity between the exalted and the earthly Lord without falling into docetism and depriving ourselves of the possibility of drawing a line between the Easter faith and myth" (34). Käsemann nevertheless proceeded to sketch a new picture of the historical Jesus, not based on the *assumption* of continuity between the 'earthly' Jesus and post-Easter confessions, but on the basis of a historiographic criterion, the criterion of dissimilarity: "when there are no grounds either for deriving a tradition from Judaism or for ascribing it to primitive Christianity, and especially when Jewish Christianity has mitigated or modified the received tradition, as having found it too bold for its taste" (37). That the criterion of dissimilarity may itself betray some theological bias should not be allowed to obscure the point that Käsemann did not think that he was beginning with dogmatic assumptions. Rather, his was a historical inquiry with *theological relevance*. Käsemann's declaration has been construed, nonetheless, as a "very definite theological agenda" (N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 2, *Jesus and the Victory of God* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1996], 23) and contrasted with the "Third Quest's" "attempt to do history seriously" (84) and "pursuit of truth—historical truth..." (87).

<sup>6</sup> Conzelmann, *Jesus*, 10.

Today the situation has not changed much, at least as far as overt claims are concerned. No one seriously engaged in the quest of the historical Jesus admits to employing methods expressly informed by theological affirmations (although accusations that others' reconstructions are burdened with theological baggage abound). In this respect the revolution initiated by Reimarus and Lessing is complete, so that the claims of dogmatic theology regarding Jesus are disallowed from the outset in the quest of the historical Jesus. But just as Conzelmann recognized a coherence between the *results* of the New Quest and the tenets of dialectical theology, it should be obvious that interest in the historical Jesus, whether in the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first century, is driven by the conviction that the exercise of discussing what can be said responsibly of Jesus continues to have conceptual, political, or social relevance. Otherwise it would be difficult to account for the flood of books on Jesus, or the vehemence and even acrimony with which the debate is conducted.<sup>7</sup>

The role of theological interest has been understood variously by recent authors. Wright suggests that a significant difference between the 'New Quest' and the so-called 'Third Quest' (from which he distinguishes the works of the Jesus Seminar, Crossan and Mack as continuations of the New Quest)<sup>8</sup> is that representatives of the Third Quest "have no united theological or political agenda, unlike the quite monochrome New Quest and its fairly monochrome renewal."<sup>9</sup> Apart from the final

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<sup>7</sup> Compare T. Holmén, "A Theologically Disinterested Quest? On the Origins of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus," *ST* 55 (2001): 188: "I would contend that theological interest is actually the source from which the pursuit of studying Jesus substantially originates today. It may also be that the whole 'renaissance in Jesus studies,' which has become known as the 'Third Quest,' has from the outset been generated by theological motives." This is probably a fair statement provided that 'theological' is meant broadly and includes theoretical, conceptual, and socio-political interests.

<sup>8</sup> See Wright, *Jesus*, 28–82, 84, who contrasts the skeptical legacy of Wrede, with whom he identifies the Jesus Seminar, B. Mack, J. D. Crossan, and M. Borg, with the apocalyptic legacy of Schweitzer: G. B. Caird, S. G. F. Brandon, O. Betz, M. Hengel, G. Vermes, B. Meyer, B. Chilton, J. Riches, A. Harvey, G. Lohfink, M. Borg (listed as a borderline figure between the New Quest and the Third Quest), E. P. Sanders, D. Oakman, G. Theissen, R. Horsley, S. Freyne, J. Charlesworth, B. Witherington, J. Meier, and M. de Jonge. I use the term 'Third Quest' only because it seems to have some currency at the moment. As will become clear, I do not think that the way the 'Third Quest' has been defined vis à vis earlier or contemporaneous quests will survive scrutiny. On this point, see S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 51–55, for an incisive criticism of Wright's term.

<sup>9</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 89. The final clause, insofar as it applies to Mack, members of the Jesus Seminar, Crossan, and Borg, is both stunning and utterly unsupported by

clause, this seems an apt assessment. The New Quest was associated with a relatively small group of students of Bultmann who embraced dialectical theology and insights taken from the later Heidegger; only the word ‘agenda’ is misleading, for Käsemann, Conzelmann and their colleagues would have distinguished sharply between the theological legitimacy and relevance of the Quest, and its historiographic methods and assumptions. It is also true that those whom Wright includes in the so-called ‘Third Quest’ represent rather diverse interests and confessional backgrounds. But it is overly optimistic to assert that the “diverse backgrounds” of practitioners of the Third Quest provide a sort of system of checks and balances so that the Third Quest is no longer in danger of drifting “around the archipelago of theologically-motivated methods and criteria,”<sup>10</sup> since practitioners of the ‘Third Quest’ with a few notable exceptions<sup>11</sup> eschew any reflection on the conceptual or theological significance of their views.<sup>12</sup>

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argument or evidence. It would be difficult to posit anything remotely approximating a “monochrome” theological set of views common to Mack, Funk, Crossan, Borg, Scott, Cameron, Smith, Miller, Hoover, etc.

<sup>10</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Crossan (not considered by Wright to be representative of the ‘Third Quest’) has discussed theological and ideological issues in various of his publications: *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995); “What Victory? What God? A Review Debate with N. T. Wright on *Jesus and the Victory of God*,” *SJT* 50 (1997): 345–358, and in *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation on the Work of John Dominic Crossan*, ed. J. Carlson and R. A. Ludwig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994). Similarly Borg, in M. J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), and Wright, *Jesus*, 8–9, 117–121, 659–662, on which see C. Marsh, “Theological History? N. T. Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of God*,” *JSNT* 69 (1998): 87–88: “Wright’s claim is this continuity [between Jesus and Christian interpretation] is fully historically legitimate, and for that very reason theologically significant (pp. 661–662). The Jesus of history/Christ of faith split is so disastrous, he declares, because it fails to enable people to draw the necessary theological conclusions from the historical evidence available. Perhaps; but at this point I wonder whether his own critical realism has not slipped into a form of the nineteenth-century positivism which he goes to such lengths to oppose. However much Wright may claim that he is merely constructing a comprehensive hypothesis (on critical-realistic lines), one of the driving forces of his undertaking appears clearly to be to maximize the historical data available, in the defence of theological assertions (made in the first century, even if not today) point for point. Even if this is not historical positivism, it is certainly theological positivism in the nineteenth-century sense” (emphasis original).

<sup>12</sup> Ironically, it is those whom Wright excludes from the ‘Third Quest’—scholars associated with the Jesus Seminar—who have been the most active in thinking about ideological investments in the quest of the historical Jesus: R. J. Miller, ed., *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2001); “Can the Historical Jesus Be Made Safe for Orthodoxy? A Critique of *The Jesus Quest* by Ben Witherington III,” *Journal of Higher Criticism* 4.1 (1997): 120–137; *The Jesus Seminar and Its Critics*

Although a few such as Crossan, Borg and Wright are prepared to consider the relationship between the results of historical scholarship and theology—or in my terms, to consider what might be at stake conceptually in historical scholarship—the majority of recent researchers seem to welcome a complete divorce. Thus Evans describes as one of the advances of the Third Quest that it “is not driven by theological-philosophical concerns” and that consequently “Life of Jesus research is characterized today more by an interest *in history than in faith*.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Theissen claims as distinguishing characteristics of the Third Quest the “(re-)emancipation of the historical quest for Jesus from the field of theology and Christology” and its secular-historical orientation.<sup>14</sup>

But if we are to avoid the suspicion of historical positivism, such declarations ought to be nuanced. Theissen’s own survey of the genesis of the Third Quest shows that far from being a matter of purely historical interest, scholarship on the historical Jesus belongs to several larger

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(Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999); J. S. Kloppenborg, “A Dog among the Pigeons: The ‘Cynic Hypothesis’ as a Theological Problem,” in *From Quest to Quelle: Festschrift James M. Robinson*, ed. J. Asgeirsson, K. deTroyer and M. W. Meyer, BETL 146 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 73–117; J. S. Kloppenborg and J. W. Marshall, eds., *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism, and the Historical Jesus: Subtexts in Criticism*, JSHJSup 1 (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004). Robert Funk, in fact, distinguishes the ‘Third Quest’ from the ‘Renewed Quest’ on three grounds: (a) whether the quest takes seriously a distinction “between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of the gospels”; (b) whether the quest limits itself to canonical sources; and (c) whether “anything is at risk in the quest. Are any of the Christian claims about Jesus immune to historical investigation? The scholar for whom nothing in the creed or in church dogma is at issue is a pretend quester” (*Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996], 64–65). It is doubtful that all of those included in Wright’s list of the ‘Third Quest’ (above, n. 8) could be included in Funk’s implied ‘pretend quest’; but it seems fair to say that little is at stake theologically in the quest for either Wright or Witherington; neither makes a sharp distinction between the historical Jesus and the representation of Jesus in the gospels; and neither strays outside of canonical sources.

<sup>13</sup> C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 11, 12 (emphasis original).

<sup>14</sup> G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for a Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002), 142–143. Similarly, J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism* (Philadelphia: The American Interfaith Institute; New York: Crossroad, 1991); *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1988; London: SPCK, 1989), 26–27. John P. Meier (*A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 6) acknowledges his own confessional location but treats it as a potential problem of bias (“My greatest temptation... will be to read back anachronistically the expanded universe of later church teaching into the ‘big bang’ moment of Jesus’ earthly ministry”) and endorses a strict Thomistic separation of what is known on the basis of historical research and what is known by faith.

theoretical projects. The recovery of Jesus' identity as a first-century Palestinian Jew, begun with Klausner's *Jesus of Nazareth* and reiterated forcefully by such recent authors as Vermes and Sanders, does important conceptual work both in the context of post-Shoah theologizing of western liberalizing Christian churches and in the context of modern Jewish efforts at reconceiving the collective past.<sup>15</sup> A Jewish Jesus is a bulwark against the supersessionism that infected much of Christian theologizing and which led to the demonizing and, ultimately, the extermination of Jews. A Jewish Jesus is also a significant figure of Second Temple Judaism who might contribute to Jewish identity no less than Yohanan ben Zakkai or the Teacher of Righteousness or Eleazar ben Ya'ir. Those treatments of Jesus that emphasize his identity as a 'peasant' (or at least as one of the non-élite, colonized and exploited underclass), despite many significant disagreements, patently belong to a larger field of discourse concerned with issues of social power, stratification, class struggle, colonialism and the arts of resistance.<sup>16</sup> And the debate over whether and in what respect Jesus held apocalyptic beliefs, in particular about his own role and identity, plays a significant role in the larger conceptual debate over Christian claims to the ultimacy of Christian claims and the incommensurability of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> To claim that historical

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<sup>15</sup> Among the most influential books by Jewish scholars emphasizing Jesus' Jewish identity: J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching*, trans. and preface H. Danby (New York: Macmillan, 1925; repr., 1927; 1929); G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973); *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); H. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1985); D. Flusser, *Jesus*, collaborator R. S. Notley (Jerusalem: Magnes, the Hebrew University, 1997). For non-Jewish scholars: E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); J. H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism; Jesus' Jewishness*; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, vol. 1, *Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 2, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994); T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> E.g., R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991); W. R. Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994); L. E. Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus' First Followers According to Q* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994); W. E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> On the latter, see J. P. Galvin, "I Believe... in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord": The Earthly Jesus and the Christ of Faith," *Int* 50.4 (1996): 373-382, and especially his comments on Crossan's Jesus. On apocalypticism in general, see J. S. Kloppenborg, "As One Unknown, Without a Name: Coopting the Apocalyptic Jesus," in *Apocalypticism, Antisemitism, and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Kloppenborg and Marshall.

Jesus scholarship belongs to these larger conceptual fields is *not* to make any claim about the personal motivations of those scholars who engage in this form of scholarship. I have little or no direct knowledge of their motivations nor would knowledge of those motivations have much relevance to our debate. Rather, it is to notice the relationships between certain trends in historical Jesus scholarship and contemporary thinking about identity, difference, the mechanisms of social power, colonialism, racism, and so forth. The quest of the historical Jesus continues to do conceptual work in the context of these broader conceptual frameworks, just as in the nineteenth century the Quest functioned in the contexts of a struggle to redefine the nature of (religious) authority and the articulation of the autonomy of reason.<sup>18</sup>

My claim is also not that recent Jesus scholarship is in fact an essentially apologetic enterprise whose *results* are dictated by *a priori* 'theological convictions' about Jewish-Christian relationships, or the politics of exploitation, or Christian claims to ultimacy, or the nature of religious authority; modern Jesus scholarship is not any more overtly apologetic than the Old Quest or the New Quest. Most scholars have strained to avoid adopting explicitly theological starting points or theologically-freighted criteria. Rather, the point is that it is naive to suppose that Jesus scholarship is not interested in, and driven by, larger theoretical (though not necessarily theological) concerns, whether individual scholars expressly acknowledge such concerns or not. It is in fact such humanistic concerns that make it worthwhile discussing the historical Jesus in the first place.

The fact that historical Jesus scholarship is 'interested' also means, as T. Holmén has rightly observed, that the scholar's interest will often if not inevitably have a substantive effect on the selection and application of historical criteria. Although Holmén describes this as "a *predetermined theological viewpoint* . . . influenc[ing] the reasoning,"<sup>19</sup> I think it better to

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<sup>18</sup> See on this G. W. Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question: The Challenge of History to Religious Authority* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Holmén, "Theologically Disinterested Quest," 188 (emphasis added). Holmén argues that both Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*) and Bruce Chilton ("Jesus within Judaism," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, part 2, *Historical Syntheses*, ed. J. Neusner, HO 1. [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 262–284), in reacting to the invidious application of the criterion of dissimilarity that rendered Jesus too dissimilar to Judaism, move too far in the opposite direction and disallow any tradition that displays dissimilarity. "This is understandable, perhaps even acceptable to some extent, but cannot be characterized as 'purely historical' or 'theologically disinterested'" (182). Similarly, he observes that the rigorous application of the other side of dissimilarity (dissimilarity from

treat the phenomenon as the normal shaping of the scholar's operating procedures by the general discursive field within which she moves, rather than treating it as a matter of 'predetermined' outcomes.

What this implies is that rather than declaring the most recent Quest to be free of theological (or theoretical) interests and thereby falsely implying a purely antiquarian 'objective' interest in the figure of Jesus, it would be preferable to ask a scholar to make clear, along with her approach to sources, criteria and procedures, the broader discursive field within which her Jesus scholarship is situated, that is, to explain what theoretical 'work' historical Jesus scholarship is doing.<sup>20</sup> Is that field informed by the theological problematic of continuity created by dialectical theology, as it was for Käsemann or Conzelmann? Or by the Shoah and the history of inhumanity to the Jews? Or by Marxist and post-Marxist political analysis? This is not a simple request; it is far easier to recognize the discursive fields and ideological frames of earlier generations than one's own. It is relatively simple to see, for example, German *Kulturoptimismus*, Romanticism and the celebration of human progress as the context in which Harnack's *Das Wesen des Christentums* was penned; or to relate the so-called 'no Quest' period of Bultmann and Dibelius to the situation immediately after World War I, characterized by the collapse of this optimism, by the profound sense that the world was no longer at humankind's disposal, and by the influence of dialectical or neo-orthodox theology. If the contemporary quest of the historical Jesus is to make substantial theoretical progress, it must become self-aware of its own location(s) in human discourse, explain how it matters to speak of the historical Jesus,<sup>21</sup> and eschew the pretended claims to 'objectivity' and 'neutrality.' To this point I shall return at the end of this essay.

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later Christian beliefs) by the Jesus Seminar "means that the quest for the historical Jesus must challenge the Christian doctrine" (185). Finally, he observes apropos of Wright's Jesus that "seeing how nicely [Wright's] enterprises, among others, succeed in fulfilling the agenda of conservative Christianity, refuting some of the more radical findings of this and the previous quest and recognizing, further, that at least a part of that success comes from incoherent thinking that materializes in uncritical attitude[s] towards the sources, it seems evident that theological predilections are at work" (188).

<sup>20</sup> On the problem of 'objectivity' as a method of understanding, see T. Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> This self-awareness, presumably, must not be framed in insular Christian terms, but as public discourse. Funk (*Honest to Jesus*, 298) observes: "If what we have to say about Jesus does not matter to those outside the precincts of traditional Christianity, it probably will not matter at all, at least not for the long term."

## 2. *The Sources of the Jesus Tradition*

The starting point for reconstructing the historical Jesus is clearly the early 'Jesus tradition'—the bulk of literary sources (for we have nothing else) containing sayings of Jesus and reports about Jesus. There is general acknowledgement that these sources bear the impress of their tradents and redactors and therefore should not be used naively, even though some recent authors appear to use these sources more credulously than others. There are several methodological issues connected with the use of the Jesus tradition, however.

1. A first methodological problem arises from the sheer bulk of sayings ascribed to Jesus and stories told about him. Crossan's inventory of the Jesus tradition (both sayings of Jesus and anecdotes about Jesus) comprises more than five hundred items and contains materials from both intra-canonical and early noncanonical gospels.<sup>22</sup> Especially noteworthy in the latter category are items from the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Egerton Gospel* and P. Oxy. 1224. No one would seriously propose a portrait of Jesus based on the whole of this inventory, especially since there are many conflicting sayings and stories within this set of materials. The critical issue is how to define the corpus of Jesus traditions so as to ensure that significant data are not omitted from consideration, but also that the portrait of Jesus is not skewed by irrelevant or idiosyncratic materials.

The simplest and least legitimate expedient is to dismiss noncanonical sources, a strategy common in German scholarship.<sup>23</sup> Gnifka, for example, acknowledges that a few authentic sayings of Jesus have been

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<sup>22</sup> J. D. Crossan, *Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition*, Foundations and Facets: New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) lists 502 discrete sayings, some of them multiply attested, while his later inventory of the "Jesus tradition" (which includes stories as well as sayings) contained 522 items. See Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 434–450.

<sup>23</sup> The most notable exceptions are T. Zöckler, *Jesu Lehren im Thomasevangelium*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1999); H.-M. Schenke, "On the Composition History of the Gospel of Thomas," *Forum* 10.1–2 (1994): 9–30. The most important influence in the rejection of the pertinence of the *Gospel of Thomas* is W. Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen: Zugleich ein Betrag zur gnostischen Synoptikerdeutung*, BZNW 29 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1964). Schrage's argument was that *Thomas's* Coptic showed dependence on the Coptic translations of the New Testament. Yet Schrage's later study of the Oxyrhynchus fragments ("Evangelienzitate in den Oxyrhynchus-Logien und im koptischen Thomas-Evangelium," in *Apophoreta*:



preserved in intra-canonical writings outside the gospels (e.g., Acts 20:35), in text-critical variants to the gospels and Acts,<sup>24</sup> and in the Apostolic Fathers,<sup>25</sup> but dismisses more substantial collections of sayings such as the *Gospel of Thomas* as products of fantasy and heretical (gnostic) developments.<sup>26</sup> Schnackenburg's treatment of the evangelists' representations of Jesus sidesteps extra-canonical gospels by declaring that the traditions contained in these second-, third- and fourth-century documents cannot be compared with those in the four intra-canonical gospels,<sup>27</sup> while Becker simply declares that noncanonical gospels are of little assistance in the discussion of the historical Jesus.<sup>28</sup> Other scholars do not even discuss the noncanonical gospels as sources or proceed as if they were simply irrelevant.<sup>29</sup>

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*Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. W. Eltester and F. Kettler, BZNW 30 [Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964], 251–268) showed that these displayed less similarity to the Greek texts of the gospels, inviting the obvious inferences that either the process of translation of Greek *Thomas* into Coptic was accompanied by an assimilation of its sayings to Coptic versions of the gospels, or that mutual assimilation occurred during the translation of gospels (both intra-canonical and extra-canonical) into Coptic.

<sup>24</sup> For a convenient tabulation, see J. Delobel, "The Sayings of Jesus in the Textual Tradition," in *Logia: Les paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus: Mémorial Joseph Coppens*, ed. J. Delobel, BETL 59 (Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1982), 431–457.

<sup>25</sup> H. Köster, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957); J.-M. Sevrin, ed., *The New Testament in Early Christianity: La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif*, BETL 86 (Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1989).

<sup>26</sup> J. Gnillka, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 12–25, esp. 15.

<sup>27</sup> R. Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 323.

<sup>28</sup> J. Becker, *Jesus von Nazareth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 11–12 treats the matter in a single sentence: "In general the discussion of [noncanonical] sources, apart from the four canonical gospels, has led to the result that it is sometimes possible in individual cases to clarify the exegesis of the synoptics with their help, but taken as a whole this tradition is of little help in the depiction of the proclamation of Jesus." Becker (*ibid.*, 12 n. 15) notes that Crossan holds a different view but does not engage Crossan in any meaningful way.

<sup>29</sup> P. Grelot (*Jésus de Nazareth, Christ et Seigneur*. Tome 1 [Paris: Cerf, 1997], 215, 264) cites the *Gos. Thom.* twice, but only to note that it contains parallels to synoptic sayings. Wright (*Jesus*, 47–48) notes Crossan's use of *Gos. Thom.* and refers copiously to the gospel at many points throughout his treatment (see 728 s.v. "Gospel of Thomas"). But since he never engages the source-critical issue of whether *Thomas* preserves early independent tradition, his citations of *Thomas* play no critical function in his argument whatsoever. At no point do *Thomas's* sayings make any difference. Wright's treatment of the *Gos. Thom.* in *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1992), 435–439, likewise avoids the issue of source criticism.

The dismissal of the noncanonical gospels is troubling for several reasons. First, it confuses a theological category (canon) with a historiographic category (materials bearing on an historical figure). There are no *a priori* grounds for supposing that noncanonical gospels are less reliable historically simply because, for whatever reasons, they did not find their way into the Christian canon. Nor is it justified to suppose that intracanoncial documents are more historically reliable simply because they came to be regarded in the late second century as *theologically* authoritative. Second, the fact that the manuscripts of noncanonical gospels are second century or later is true but irrelevant. The earliest manuscript of the *Egerton Gospel* is from the early second century, precisely the same time as our first scrap of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>30</sup> The earliest manuscripts of the *Gospel of Thomas* (P. Oxy. 1; 655) and the *Gospel of Peter* (P. Oxy. 2949; 4009) date from about 200 CE, or about the same time as our earliest manuscripts of Matthew and Luke.<sup>31</sup> The latest manuscript attestations for gospels are for Mark (early III CE), P. Oxy. 840 (III or IV CE), the Fayûm Gospel (P. Vindob. G 2325; III CE), P. Merton 51 (III CE) and P. Oxy. 1224 (early IV CE), although Irenaeus's citations of Mark bring the *terminus ad quem* for Mark to the late II CE. Needless to say, those who dismiss the *Gospel of Thomas* do not dismiss the intracanoncial gospels merely because their first manuscript attestations come from the late second or early third centuries. Yet *Thomas* and *Peter* are routinely brushed aside on just these specious grounds. Third, even if noncanonical gospels were composed (say) in the early second century, the traditions they embody might well be considerably earlier, just as the traditions contained in Matthew and Luke, composed towards the end of the first century or beginning of the second, nonetheless contain historically reliable data. Finally, to observe, as Gnilka and others do, that the *Gospel of Thomas* is influenced by gnostic thought—an assertion which is itself debatable<sup>32</sup>—settles nothing at all, since *all* of our

<sup>30</sup> P. Egerton 2 (before 150 CE); a second fragment of the *Egerton Gospel* is found in P. Köln V 608 (III CE). P52 (time of Hadrian) is the earliest attestation of the Fourth Gospel; but see the article of A. Schmidt, "Zwei Anmerkungen zu P. Ryl. III 457," *APF* 35 (1989): 11–12, who suggests a later date for P52 on palaeographical grounds.

<sup>31</sup> *Matthew*: P104 = P. Oxy. 4404 (second half of the second century); P64, 67; P77 = P. Oxy. 2683 + 4405 (late II CE); P103 = P. Oxy. 4403 (late II/early III CE); P101 = P. Oxy. 4401 (III CE); *Mark*: P45 (first half of III CE); *Luke*: P75 (early III CE); *Gos. Peter*: P. Oxy. 2949 (late II/early III CE); *Gos. Thom.*: P. Oxy. 1 (ca. 200 CE); 655 (early III CE); P. Oxy. 1224 (early IV CE).

<sup>32</sup> See S. L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom* (New York: Seabury, 1983).

gospels betray the theological influences of their editors. It is normal to take into account the theology of an evangelist and to adjust for it when isolating historical tradition; in this regard the *Gospel of Thomas* is no different from any other gospel.

In contrast to these hasty, even *a priori* dismissals of noncanonical gospels, North American scholarship has with some exceptions<sup>33</sup> adopted a more careful position. Sanders suggests that “only some of the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* are worth consideration.”<sup>34</sup> Meier devotes an entire chapter to *agrapha* and apocryphal gospels, but concludes that upon analysis these documents offer nothing new or authentic that is independent of the intra-canonical gospels.<sup>35</sup> Meier’s conclusions regarding both the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Gospel of Thomas* are based on an argument that these documents betray knowledge of the redactional elements of the synoptics and therefore must be posterior to them.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> E.g., L. T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 89; and Ben Witherington (*The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995]), who cites R. J. Bauckham’s (“Gospels [Apocryphal],” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green and S. McKnight [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992], 286–291) “balanced” comment to the effect that *Thomas* is substantially *independent* of the canonical gospels, but then concludes “it is my own judgment that only very rarely does *Thomas* provide an earlier form of a saying that is also found in the Synoptics” (49). He also suggests (without discussing any texts) that “of the sayings in *Thomas* that have no parallels in the Synoptics, a few may be authentic” (49; emphasis original). This admission is both ironic and moot: Witherington chides the Jesus Seminar for overrating the *Gos. Thom.*, but the Jesus Seminar did not consider *any* of the sayings in *Thomas* lacking a synoptic parallel to be ‘red’ (undoubtedly authentic) and treated only two (sayings 97 and 98, both parables) as ‘pink’ (probably authentic). But Witherington’s conclusion has no force, since whatever he says about the authenticity of the sayings in the *Gos. Thom.*, it does not figure in his portrait of Jesus at all.

<sup>34</sup> E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993), 64. Similarly, James H. Charlesworth, in “Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans, NTTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 478–533, citing the cautiously positive evaluation of some sayings in the *Gos. Thom.* by B. Chilton, “The Gospel According to Thomas as a Source of Jesus’ Teaching,” in *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, Gospel Perspectives 5 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 155–175.

<sup>35</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 112–166, esp. 139–140. Meier’s position, however, is quite moderate: “I will always keep one eye on the sayings in this Gospel [the *Gos. Thom.*] as a check on my own interpretation of the data in the canonical Gospels. Even if the *Gospel of Thomas* represents only a gnostic reworking of the synoptic tradition, what *Thomas* does to that tradition may highlight certain aspects of it that otherwise might be overlooked.”

<sup>36</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 123–139; “Dividing Lines in Jesus Research Today: Through Dialectical Negation to a Positive Sketch,” *Int* 50.4 (1996): 357, referring to the work

The issue that Meier raises—whether the *Gospel of Thomas* reflects the editorial features of the synoptics—is the pertinent one, but Meier’s conclusions can be disputed. All of the instances he cites of *Thomas’s* alleged knowledge of Matthean redactional features<sup>37</sup> involve Matthean special material where it is not possible to say with certainty that these are Matthew’s redactional creations. Indeed, Meier equivocates, saying that “some of the M passages *may* be Matthew’s own redactional creations,” that they “*sound* suspiciously Matthean,” and that they are “*possibly* redactional.”<sup>38</sup> Similarly, *Thomas’s* agreement with Lukan special material proves nothing about dependence unless one can establish that Luke *created* these sayings. On the other hand, where it is possible to control Matthean and Lukan redaction, such as in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1–12 || *Gos. Thom.* 65–66), *Thomas’s* version of the story not only lacks all the elements of Matthean and Lukan redaction; it also lacks the elements that C. H. Dodd long ago suspected as *Markan* editing: Mark 12:5, which disrupts the folkloric triad of three sendings; the designation of the son as ἀγαπητός (Mark 12:6); and the probable

of C. M. Tuckett, “Thomas and the Synoptics,” *NovT* 30.2 (1988): 132–157; see also idem, “Q and Thomas: Evidence of a Primitive ‘Wisdom Gospel?’ A Response to H. Koester,” *ETL* 67 (1991): 346–360; B. Dehandschutter, “L’Évangile de Thomas comme collection de paroles de Jésus,” in *Logia: Les Paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus*, ed. Delobel, 507–515; “Recent Research on the Gospel of Thomas,” *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, ed. F. VanSegbroeck, C. Tuckett, G. VanBelle, and J. Verheyden, BETL 100 (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 1992), 2257–2262.

<sup>37</sup> Meier (*Marginal Jew I*, 135) cites Matt 6:1–18 / Sayings 6, 18 (sayings on almsgiving, prayer and fasting); Matt 13:47–50 / Saying 8 (the parables of the net); Matt 13:44 / Saying 109 (the parable of the treasure); Matt 13:44–46 / Saying 76 (the parable of the pearl); Matt 18:20 / Saying 30 (“where two or three are gathered”); Matt 10:16b / Saying 39 (the proverb about being shrewd as snakes); Matt 15:13 / Saying 40 (the uprooting of foreign plants); Matt 13:24–30 / Saying 57 (the parable of the weeds); Matt 11:28–30 / Saying 90; Matt 7:6 / Saying 93.

Meier adds saying 33 (Q 12:3), 34 (Q 6:39), 99 (Matt 12:50; cf. Mark 3:35), all of which have Q or Markan parallels. None of these latter texts is decisive: in the case of Saying 33, the International Q Project (IQP) reconstructs Q with Matthew rather than Luke, which means that *Thomas* agrees with both Matthew and Q, not with an element of Matthean redaction; in the case of Saying 34, the differences between *Thomas* and Matthew are much more extensive than the one point of similarity (the use of a conditional) (see S. J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, Foundations and Facets: Reference Series [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1993], 34); and in the case of Saying 99, the agreement of *Thomas* with Matthew in the use of “my father” (*paiewt*) rather than “God” (so Mark) is scarcely significant, since *Thomas’s* ordinary term for God is “my father.”

For the IQP text of Q, see J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, and J. S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, Hermeneia Supplements (Leuven: Peeters; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000).

allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 12:9b).<sup>39</sup> *Thomas* also lacks the details in Mark 12:1 borrowed from Isa 5:1–7 which, because they are irrelevant to the narrative itself, Jeremias regarded as secondary enhancements that allegorize the parable.<sup>40</sup> In this case at least, it is very difficult to maintain that *Thomas* knew the synoptics, since then it would be necessary to make the unlikely supposition that *Thomas* also identified and excised all elements of Matthean, Lukan and Markan redaction. The more probable hypothesis is that *Thomas* is here independent of the synoptics.

This conclusion of course should not automatically be extrapolated to the *Gospel of Thomas* as a whole, much less to other noncanonical gospels. Since the *Gospel of Thomas* has a complex transmission history, involving early Greek and later Coptic recensions, one has to reckon with the possibility that versions of sayings from the intra-canonical gospels influenced the transmission and/or translation of *Thomas*, just as early manuscripts of the intra-canonical gospels already display the scribal tendency to harmonize one gospel with another. It should be kept in mind that the Coptic version of *Thomas* dates from the same time as Codex  $\aleph$  and B, both of which also display some harmonizing readings. That Coptic *Thomas* contains both readings independent of the synoptics and readings harmonized with the synoptics should not surprise us. The sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* (and other noncanonical gospels) must be examined *individually* to determine the extent of interference from the synoptic gospels. And they must be subjected to the same tests of authenticity that are applied to the synoptic sayings. Such examination has indeed made a strong case that the *Gospel of Thomas* does contain *some* independent material, including *some* authentic Jesus tradition.<sup>41</sup> Such material provides another window on the early Jesus tradition.

<sup>38</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 135 (emphasis added).

<sup>39</sup> C. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (London: James Nisbet, 1961) 98. On the secondary nature of Mark 12:9 (missing in *Thomas*), see J. S. Kloppenborg, "Self-Help or *Deus Ex Machina* in Mark 12:9?" *NTS* 50 (2004): 495–518.

<sup>40</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed. (based on 8th 1970 German ed.; London: SCM; New York: Scribner's, 1972), 70–71. On the Septuagintal character of the Isaian allusions, see J. S. Kloppenborg, "Egyptian Viticultural Practices and the Citation of Isa 5:1–7 in Mark 12:1–9," *NovT* 44.2 (2002): 134–159. Both Mark and *Thomas* associate a quotation of Ps 118:22–23 with the parable, but *Thomas* treats it as a separate saying, introduced by "Jesus said" while Mark integrates the quotation into the parable itself. Patterson (*Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 50–51) rightly regards *Thomas*'s loose association as more primitive than Mark's more elegant form.

<sup>41</sup> See F. T. Fallon and R. Cameron, "The Gospel of Thomas: A Forschungsbericht and Analysis," *ANRW* II 25.6 (1988): 4195–4251; C. W. Hedrick, "Thomas and the

The inclusion of noncanonical materials in the database raises the possibility that some sayings or stories completely unattested in the intra-canonical gospels might contribute to a portrait of Jesus and indeed might decisively affect it. In practice, however, only a very small number of such sayings have survived scrutiny and even these do not introduce a radically new perspective on Jesus.<sup>42</sup> The more important effect of considering noncanonical gospels is to underscore through multiple attestation the widespread currency of certain sayings or aspects of Jesus' teachings. In doing so, they also provide an indication of the extent to which some sayings already known from the synoptics have been subordinated to other interests in the intra-canonical gospels or even filtered out of later portraits of Jesus, perhaps because they did not fit the tendencies of the theologies of the second and subsequent centuries.

Crossan's use of the *Gospel of Thomas* neatly illustrates the point. Crossan begins his discussion of the reign of God in Jesus' preaching with two multiply attested sayings, the saying about children and the kingdom, which has four independent attestations (*Gos. Thom.* 22; Mark 10:13–16; Matt 18:3; John 3:1–10) and the blessing of the poor, with three independent attestations (Q 6:20b; *Gos. Thom.* 54; Jas 2:5). These two units exemplify for Crossan a fundamental aspect of Jesus' view of the kingdom as a "Kingdom of Nobodies"—a view of the kingdom in sharp contrast to the triumphalistic views espoused in some other sectors of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>43</sup> These sayings units are foundational in Crossan's treatment precisely because multiple independent attestation indicates their wide impact on independent streams of gospel (and other) compositions, even if each gospel interpreted the sayings somewhat differently. When one turns to scholars who ignore or downplay noncanonical gospels—Sanders, Meyer, Gnilka, Witherington and Wright<sup>44</sup>—the contrast with Crossan is striking. While all of these authors cite Q 6:20b (though only passingly), Mark 10:13–16 and its parallels are not used at all as part of an effort to characterize Jesus' view of the reign of God.

Synoptics: Aiming at a Consensus," *SecCent* 7.1 (1990): 39–56.

<sup>42</sup> See above n. 33, on *Gos. Thom.* 97, 98. Funk (*Honest to Jesus*, 331) adds to these only *Gos. Thom.* 42 ("Become passersby") on which the Jesus Seminar was evenly divided (and hence treated it a "gray").

<sup>43</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 265–276.

<sup>44</sup> B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979). On Witherington, see above

The effect of ignoring Mark 10:13–16 is noteworthy. By itself Q 6:20b can be read as an expression of the expectation that God will intervene in the near future on behalf of the poor and oppressed.<sup>45</sup> But when Q 6:20b is interpreted alongside Mark 10:13–16, what becomes more visible is the contrast between statuses: the rich (who are usually thought to be blessed) *versus* the poor, and adults and other persons with status *versus* insignificant, non-statused persons. Thus, the kingdom as characterized by Q 6:20b and Mark 10:13–16 is not just about God’s eventual elevation of the poor and lowly, but an implicit *threat* in the present to the customary valuations of hierarchy, wealth and power. Crossan’s “Kingdom of Nobodies” includes a critical nuance that is lacking in the more usual constructions of the Kingdom based on Q 6:20b. Without using noncanonical gospels to import *new* sayings, Crossan’s procedure allows him to lift up authentic *intra-canonical* sayings which, because of their radical character, are in danger of being ignored by those who base their portraits solely on the intra-canonical gospels.

2. A second problem also has to do with the relationship among sources. In an earlier era influenced by form criticism, gospel material was treated rather indiscriminately, as if the order of composition of the gospels did not matter much. This was due to the assumption of form criticism that the evangelists contributed little to the gospels apart from the juxtaposition of individual units of tradition. With the advent of redaction criticism, the editorial contribution of the evangelists became more important and, with it, the issue of the synoptic problem potentially took on new significance.

The degree to which solutions to the synoptic problem have been influential on historical Jesus scholarship has varied widely. For Schweitzer (a student of Holtzmann), the saying that played a fundamental role was Matt 10:23, an unparalleled saying which, from a compositional view, was secondary to Matthew’s combining of Mark with Q. Even Käsemann’s groundbreaking 1954 essay that inaugurated the so-called New Quest of the historical Jesus—written at the beginning of the era of redaction criticism—took as paradigmatic Matthew’s antitheses, which are largely if not completely the product of Matthew’s editing of Mark, Q and his own special material.<sup>46</sup> In other historical Jesus scholarship

n. 33; on Wright, see n. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Meier (*Marginal Jew II*, 317–336), who, unlike Sanders, Meyer, Gnilka, Witherington and Wright, gives Q 6:20b considerable attention and makes it a fundamental part of his characterization of the kingdom.

the special Lukan parables played a dominant role while Mark and Q are given second position.

Dieter Lührmann once observed that despite the very widespread acceptance of the two-document hypothesis, with its corollaries of the priority of Mark and Q, historical Jesus scholarship has turned again and again to Matthew's portrait of Jesus and privileged the Matthean issues of Jesus and the Torah.<sup>47</sup> This methodological inconsistency has been faced in some of the newer wave of historical Jesus scholarship. Integral to the fabric of Crossan's method is careful attention to stratigraphy and source criticism. He disciplines himself by a rigorous adherence to the principle of multiple, early, and independent attestations of traditions about Jesus. This means that traditions attested in several *independent* documents (e.g., Mark and Q and the *Gos. Thom.*) are weighted more heavily than singly attested materials (e.g., the Lukan Parable of the Good Samaritan). His attention to stratigraphy, which parcels out the tradition into several strata, is expressly connected to his acceptance of the two-document hypothesis and of the essential independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the synoptics. Whether one agrees with these source-critical judgments or not is not the point here; rather, the point is that for Crossan, the synoptic problem has affected his understanding of the Jesus tradition in a way that it did not in earlier generations of historical Jesus scholarship and some contemporary Jesus scholarship.<sup>48</sup>

The influence of source criticism can also be seen on E.P. Sanders' recent *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. Sanders does not adhere to the two-document hypothesis but instead adopts a version of the Mark-without-Q hypothesis, which asserts Markan priority but holds that Matthew used Mark and that Luke used both.<sup>49</sup> This helps to account for the fact

<sup>46</sup> Above, n. 5.

<sup>47</sup> D. Lührmann, "Die Logienquelle und die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus" (Unpublished paper presented at the Fall 1991 Meeting of the Westar Institute, Edmonton, Alberta, October 24–27, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> Although B. L. Mack's *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) was intended as a book on Mark (despite widespread misreadings that took it to be a book on Jesus), Mack's brief treatment of Jesus (53–77) took source criticism seriously in a way not seen since the time of Harnack. See further, B. L. Mack, "Q and a Cynic-Like Jesus" (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the C.S.B.S., Ottawa 1993), in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. W. E. Arnal and M. Desjardins, *Etudes sur le christianisme et le judaïsme/Studies in Christianity and Judaism* 7 (Waterloo, ON: Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion/Corporation canadienne des sciences religieuses by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 25–36.

<sup>49</sup> This is sometimes called the Farrer hypothesis, or Farrer-Goulder hypothesis. For a justification of "Mark without Q," see J. S. Kloppenborg, "On Dispensing with Q?"



that Sanders' book follows essentially the outline of Mark (although he is far from uncritical in his use of Mark). Similarly, William Farmer's *The Gospel of Jesus* privileges Matthew in what he says about Jesus for the reason that Farmer advocates the Two-Gospel hypothesis, which places Matthew first, makes Luke directly dependent on Matthew, and Mark a conflation of Matthew and Luke.<sup>50</sup> The point here, again, is not whether either the Mark-without-Q or the Two-Gospel hypothesis is an adequate description of synoptic relationships; I do not think that they account for the data as adequately as the two-document hypothesis. But both Sanders and Farmer have taken seriously their own source-critical convictions in a way that most others have not.<sup>51</sup>

3. A final comment on the sources of the Jesus tradition brings us back to the issues of extragospel sources and the synoptic problem. Elsewhere I have suggested that a method of 'triangulation' be employed, judging various modern construals of the significance and character of the Jesus tradition against the interpretive commonalities of traditions that appear independently in multiple streams of tradition.<sup>52</sup>

This presumes that usage of the Jesus tradition was essentially conservative—conservative not in relation to macrosocietal values but in relationship to usage in the Jesus movement. That is, while Mark and Q, for example, might (and in fact do) deploy sayings (or stories such as the Temptation account) somewhat differently, it would require

Goodacre on the Relation of Luke to Matthew," *NTS* 49.2 (2003): 210–236.

<sup>50</sup> W. R. Farmer, *The Gospel of Jesus: The Pastoral Relevance of the Synoptic Problem* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> It is important not to confuse taking solutions to the synoptic problem seriously (i.e., not basing a portrait of Jesus on what in terms of a compositional theory is redactional and tertiary), with a naive use of synoptic problem conclusions (i.e., that on the two-document hypothesis only Mark and Q, or the earliest compositional strata of Mark and Q, need be considered in a portrait of Jesus). Elsewhere I have insisted that composition history should not be confused with tradition history, i.e., that one should not confuse conclusions about, e.g., the composition history of Q with the issue of what in Q goes back to Jesus: *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, *Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987; 2nd ed., Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 245; *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 351–352. Similarly, J. Schröter, "Anfänge der Jesusüberlieferung: Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu einem Bereich urchristlicher Theologiegeschichte," *NTS* 50 (2004): 75: "Daß die Frage nach den Anfängen der Jesusüberlieferung von der Lösung des synoptischen Problems zu unterscheiden ist, ist weithin anerkannt und wird durch das hier Dargelegte noch einmal unterstrichen. Frühe Stufen der Jesusüberlieferung können sich in verschiedenen, kanonisch ebenso wie apokryph gewordenen Schriften finden."

<sup>52</sup> J. S. Kloppenborg, "Discursive Practices in the Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann,

more effort to overcome the inertia of received usage and interpretation and to give to a saying of Jesus or anecdote about Jesus a radically different meaning.<sup>53</sup> I do not mean to say that reinterpretations—even significant reinterpretations—were not possible and did not sometimes occur; only that we should *a priori* expect more by way of continuity than discontinuity.<sup>54</sup> The corollary of this is that when one observes two or three *independent* deployments of a saying of Jesus, each offering the same general construal, it would be perverse to conclude that the ‘original’ meaning differed substantially from the view taken in two or three independent textualizations.

A case in point is the macarism concerning the poor, which occurs in Q 6:20, *Gos. Thom.* 54 and in a refracted form in Jas 2:5. Meier offers a futuristic interpretation of the Q beatitudes which borders on anti-Pelagian: God alone “acts in the end time to establish his kingdom...; humans can only wait for it”; the kingdom will indeed reverse the plights of the poor and downtrodden, but this reversal will be God’s gratuitous act. The proclamation of the kingdom does not imply any program of social or political resistance.<sup>55</sup> By contrast, Marcus Borg sees Q 6:20b as a challenge to “the connection between righteousness and prosperity made by conventional wisdom”<sup>56</sup> and thus regards it as a saying which quite directly engaged social and political values and implied an alternate program. Indeed, Borg suggests that the Jesus group, organized around

BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2001), 149–190.

<sup>53</sup> M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Viking; London: Chatto & Windus, 1978), 145, comments on the ‘control’ an audience exerts on composition: “one rule of oral composition before an audience is that the poem must satisfy the requirement of verisimilitude—I do not say truth—over which the audience exercises extensive control.” See also F. G. Downing, “Word-Processing in the Ancient World: The Social Production and Performance of Q,” *JSNT* 64 (1996): 29–48.

<sup>54</sup> Compare B. T. Viviano, “The Historical Jesus in the Doubly Attested Sayings: An Experiment,” *RB* 103.3 (1996): 367–410, esp. 408, who suggests an approach to the historical Jesus by isolating and analyzing 31 Mark-Q overlap texts. Viviano makes several important observations, for example, that the substantial overlap between Mark and Q indicates that the “Jesus tradition was more carefully controlled than, say, the lives of Byzantine saints” (where much more variation is attested between independent versions of a saint’s life).

<sup>55</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 330–331. “If the unhappy are paradoxically happy, it is precisely because of the imminence of the kingdom of God, because God is about to seize his rightful rule over his rebellious creation and people and set things right. The beatitudes make no sense without, indeed demand as their proper context, Jesus’ proclamation of the imminent coming of the kingdom of God... We begin to see why Jesus was not interested in and did not issue pronouncements about concrete social and political reforms, either for the world in general or for Israel in particular. He was not proclaiming the reform of the world; he was proclaiming the end of the world.”

<sup>56</sup> M. J. Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San

the “politics of compassion,” is unlikely to have been characterized by gross economic inequities among its members.<sup>57</sup> Patterson and Crossan give a yet more radical reading, but one that is clearly more consonant with those of Borg and Horsley than with Meier. The beatitude in Q and the *Gospel of Thomas* is an instance of countercultural wisdom and cultural critique.<sup>58</sup> Q 6:20b belongs to a cluster of sayings that variously valorize the poor, expendables and degraded, criticize wealth and employ a series of dubious metaphors by which to describe the kingdom: weeds, leaven and ill-gotten treasures. This kingdom was not simply a hope for the future but entailed a concrete set of social practices and countercultural behaviours.

We are fortunate to have three textualizations of the first beatitude, Q 6:20b (21–23, 27–35), *Gos. Thom.* 54 and Jas 2:5. The *Gospel of Thomas* has three of the four Q beatitudes (*Gos. Thom.* 54, 69b, 68, 69a), although they are not serialized in the way they appear in Q 6:20b–23 while Jas 2:5 appears to allude to the saying, although not in its form as a beatitude.<sup>59</sup> What is important to note is that while none of the three independent inscriptions of the beatitude propose quite the radical interpretation assigned it by Patterson and Crossan, each suggests a rhetoric of social critique (*pace* Meier). Moreover, there is no reason to think that imminent eschatological beliefs are part of the framework of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and in the case of James the point of James’ argument in 2:1–13 is not to endorse a futuristic eschatology but to encourage a social practice *in the present* that is based on a reevaluation of values.<sup>60</sup> Q itself uses the beatitude in the context of a larger argument encouraging specific transformative behaviours: reevaluation of enmity, insult, victimization and requests for loans (Q 6:27–35), concluded with the appeal to a god whose children are known by the fact that they emulate the generosity or mercy of God (6:35). Thus whatever one might think of Q 6:20b in isolation, in the rhetorics of Q 6:20b–35, Jas 2:1–13 and the *Gospel of Thomas* it is not about an apocalyptic fantasy of reversal of economic states brought about solely by God’s future action; rather, it belongs to the elaboration of a critique of existing social states and the proposal for an experiment in transformative behaviour.

Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 136.

<sup>57</sup> Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision*, 137. Similarly, Horsley, *Spiral of Violence*, 248–251.

<sup>58</sup> Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 207, 220; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 273–274.

<sup>59</sup> See P. J. Hartin, *James and the “Q” Sayings of Jesus*, JSNTSup 47 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 149–150; D. B. Deppe, “The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James” (D.Th. diss., Free University of Amsterdam; Ann Arbor, MI: Bookcrafters, 1989), 89–91.

I have no interest in playing future eschatology against a present eschatology or in arguing that these sayings are exclusively one or the other. There are no doubt unrealized (i.e., future) aspects to the kingdom, especially in Q 6:20b and Jas 2:5. The point is, rather, that the blessing of the poor, as it has been inscribed in the rhetorical practice of several distinct groups in the Jesus movement, is used to articulate a critique of existing structures and to undergird alternate patterns of behaviour. That at the Jesus level this saying was meant as a bald affirmation of the “gratuitous nature of God’s eschatological saving action” is not logically impossible; but that is *not* the way we encounter it in independent and early discursive formations. It is these early deployments, I suggest, that serve as the most reliable guide to any hypothetical earlier uses.

What I am proposing here is an approach to the Jesus tradition which attends to the rhetorical inscriptions of sayings and stories in later documents—not merely the canonical gospels, but in other texts of the early Jesus movement—and which uses these inscriptions as an index of earlier, perhaps dominical usage.

### 3. *The Criteria and their Application*

For most of the last quarter of the twentieth century it was Norman Perrin’s designation and enumeration of the criteria of authenticity that set the agenda for discussion.<sup>61</sup> Perrin, a student of Jeremias and strongly influenced by Bultmann, stressed the importance both of Aramaic as the linguistic environment of Jesus, a preoccupation of Jeremias, and of the necessity of reconstructing a history of the Jesus tradition, the legacy of Bultmann. But Perrin’s main criteria were ‘dissimilarity,’ which isolated a small core of highly distinctive materials, and ‘coherence,’ logically dependent upon dissimilarity, which allowed for an expansion of this small core by materials that cohered with the dissimilar sayings and accounts. Perrin was more dubious that multiple attestation would help much when it came to sayings of Jesus, but allowed that multiply attested motifs (e.g., Jesus’ association with sinners) likely pointed to authentic tradition.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> For details of the argument, see Kloppenborg, “Discursive Practices,” 180–186.

<sup>61</sup> See D. Polkow, “Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards, SBLSP 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 336–356.

<sup>62</sup> N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967),

At least three different problems have dogged the application of Perrin's criteria.

### 3.1. *Tradition-history*

The first concerns both the reconstruction of a tradition history of each saying and story and judging the extent to which a particular saying or story is dissimilar from the characteristic interests of the early Jesus movement. There is still general agreement that it is necessary to discount material that is, in Sanders' words, "too much with the grain" of the editorial interests of the evangelists.<sup>63</sup> For example, a saying such as Mark 13:10, predicting a Gentile mission, is so congenial with Mark's interests that they cannot easily be ascribed to Jesus. But what of Mark 7:24–30, which includes a derogatory saying about Gentiles (Mark 7:27) but which concludes with Jesus granting a Gentile request for an exorcism? Sanders argues that at least the saying, Mark 7:27, is "highly probable" as an authentic saying, and uses this to support his contention that while Jesus may have occasionally encountered Gentiles, his primary orientation was to Jews. In its consideration of the entire Markan pericope, the Jesus Seminar "concluded that there was probably a historical core to Mark's version," although curiously they raised more doubts about the saying itself.<sup>64</sup>

While the saying by itself seems to be "against the grain" of Mark's interests, it may be wondered whether the saying ever had an existence apart from the story in which it is embedded. Funk and Hoover, summarizing the earlier discussion of the Jesus Seminar of the saying alone (Mark 7:27), observed that it is nowhere attested as an independent aphorism.<sup>65</sup> If the saying is indeed inseparable from the context, then the story taken as a whole is not so uncongenial with Mark's interests,

39–49. —

<sup>63</sup> E. P. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 304–315.

<sup>64</sup> R. W. Funk and The Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do?* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 96–97. The report indicates that the fellows of the seminar thought it unlikely that Jesus' followers would have invented a story in which Jesus was outwitted by a woman, but were dubious about the geographical setting, the saying in Mark 7:27, and whether the original story attributed the success of the exorcism to the woman's wit or to her trust in Jesus. This creates an apparently contradictory situation, however: the argument for authenticity pertains to the nature of the exchange between Jesus and the woman and *presupposes* that she is non Jewish; yet the particulars of the exchange (Mark 7:27) and its setting (in a Gentile region) are doubted.

<sup>65</sup> R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?* (San

since in the end a Gentile wins Jesus' favour. Indeed, this is just what Meier argues: Mark 7:24–30 fits very well with Mark's overall framework in Mark 7, which concerns the relationship of Gentiles to Jews, and "carries the heavy freight of later Christian theology, specifically a theology of mission."<sup>66</sup> In particular, Meier sees the affirmation of Mark 7:27, ἄφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα, as reflecting Paul's missionary dictum, "first to the Jews, then the Greeks."<sup>67</sup> Thus while some sayings straightforwardly can be assigned to later stages of the tradition of the Jesus movement and show themselves to be too congenial with its interests to be treated as authentic, it is much more difficult in other cases to decide whether a saying is indeed 'against the grain' and therefore belongs to an early, dominical stratum, or in fact served the interests of later tradents. And here we cannot appeal to multiple attestation to show that the story had any significant pre-Markan circulation.

Recent scholarship on Q has raised another problem pertaining to writing a history of the tradition and the test of dissimilarity. The Twelve Thrones saying in Q 22:28–30 has often been ascribed to the historical Jesus on the basis of dissimilarity. Dupont's reasoning is typical:

Le logion qui nous occupe reflète cette situation, qui va se modifier après Pâques; se rapportant à un jugement d'Israël, corrélatif à une mission concernant Israël, il se rattache à une période qui n'est plus celle de l'Église primitive et de la première expansion du christianisme. Cet "archaïsme" est une garantie de sa valeur historique.<sup>68</sup>

As is well known Matt 19:28 || Luke 22:28–30 figures importantly in Sanders' reconstruction, since it buttresses his contention that Jesus anticipated the restoration of Israel.<sup>69</sup>

Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 70.

<sup>66</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 660.

<sup>67</sup> Wright (*Jesus*, 192, 195, 445, 533) treats both the exorcism and the saying as authentic without argument. Similarly, Horsley, *Spiral of Violence*, 252 (on Mark 7:27). B. Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 124–126 does not comment on Mark 7:27 but argues that Matt 15:24 and Matt 10:6 are not likely to have been the creations of Matthew because they are "at odds with the universalist thrust of the First Gospel." Matt 15:24 is, however, a Matthean addition to the Markan story (7:24–30) and patterned on Matt 10:6. Sanders and Davies (*Studying*, 311–312) treats Mark 7:27 as authentic but Matt 10:6 and 15:24 as nonauthentic.

<sup>68</sup> J. Dupont, "Le Logion de douze trônes (Mt 19, 28; Lc 22, 28–30)," *Bib* 45 (1964): 355–392. This argument is followed by G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 277. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98–106, treats the saying because of its use of the term "twelve." He considers Matthew's ἐπὶ δώδεκα θρόνους to be original, arguing that Luke deleted δώδεκα because of embarrassment about the betrayal of Judas.

But the saying, which probably concluded Q,<sup>70</sup> is also deeply embedded in the rhetoric of Q as a document. As a saying promising a forensic role to the followers of Jesus vis à vis the people of Israel, this saying is at the intersection of several rhetorical developments. First, threats of judgment are prominent in the redactional framing of the document, appearing at the beginning (Q 3:2, 7–9, 16–17), in redactional transitions (e.g., 10:12; 11:49–51), and variously throughout (10:13–15; 11:31–32; 11:49–51; 13:28–29, 34–35).<sup>71</sup> Since Q opens with John’s judgment saying threatening the “children of Abraham,” the mention of the Twelve Tribes in Q 22:28–30 represents an *inclusio*. Second, Q 22:28–30 recapitulates and extends the motif of the judgment of “this generation” or Jesus’ contemporaries that has been voiced at several points: Q 7:31–35; 10:12, 13–15; 11:31–32; 11:49–51. The saying, in fact, is part of a subtle logic in which the judgment of John’s Coming One, who in Q 7:18–22 is identified with Jesus, is transferred to Jesus’ followers, whom Q has already identified as representatives of Jesus (Q 10:16). Finally, Q 22:28–30 functions as the conclusion of a smaller cluster of sayings (17:23–24, 26–27 [28–29] 30, 34–35, 37; 19:12–26) which begins by evoking terrifying spectres of a judgment and destruction that cannot be anticipated, calculated, or rationalized.<sup>72</sup> Q 22:28–30 provides the rhetorical counterbalance for these spectres by assuring Jesus’ followers (ὕμεῖς οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντές μοι) that they, like those who “bring forth fruit worthy of repentance” (3:8), will not suffer the fate of 17:26–27 and 19:24 but will share corregency with Jesus.

While it is true that Q 22:28–30 is not congenial with the interests of Matthew or Luke insofar as it reflects a situation prior to “l’extension universelle de la mission,” this saying is completely congenial with the interests of Q, whose horizon of interest does not extend much beyond Jewish Palestine and which uses Gentiles either as negative stereotypes or as rhetorical instruments to shame Jews. The fact that the expression of judgment fits so well with Q’s redactional framing ought to raise

<sup>69</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98–106. Similarly, Horsley, *Spiral of Violence*, 199–208.

<sup>70</sup> E. Bammel, “Das Ende von Q,” in *Verborum Veritas: Festschrift für Gustav Stählin zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. O. Böcher and K. Haacker (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), 39–50.

<sup>71</sup> For details, see Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 118–122, and earlier, the influential study of D. Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969).

<sup>72</sup> The terrifying nature of Q’s conclusion is often overlooked. See J. S. Kloppenborg, “Jesus and the Parables of Jesus in Q,” in *The Gospel behind the Gospels: Current Studies*

serious suspicions about the authenticity of the saying.<sup>73</sup> Thus it is not only necessary to ask whether a particular saying is congenial with the interests of the synoptic evangelists or dissimilar to them, but also to ask the same question about intervening strata of tradition such as Q. Q can no longer be treated as a neutral repository of sayings of Jesus but must be treated analogous to Mark, taking into account Q's own editorial tendencies and discounting any sayings that are too much "with the grain" of Q's interests.<sup>74</sup>

### 3.2. *The Criterion of Dissimilarity*

A second problematic area concerns the criterion of dissimilarity (also called "discontinuity" [Meier] or "uniqueness" [Sanders]).<sup>75</sup> This criterion isolates materials that are dissimilar, both to the characteristic emphases of contemporary Judaism and of primitive Christianity. Thus, for example, the injunction "let the dead bury the dead" in response to a request of a would-be follower first to bury his father (Luke 9:59–60) is shocking in the context of Second Temple Judaism (and, indeed, the Mediterranean world). It is hardly a piece of common lore taken over from the culture and placed on Jesus' lips, and it would hardly have been formulated by the early Jesus movement, which displayed no inclination to challenge contemporary burial practices.

Closely related to dissimilarity is Meier's criterion of "embarrassment," which looks for materials that proved embarrassing to early Christians—e.g., the fact that Jesus was baptized by John—and which the evangelists tried to rationalize in various ways. The embarrassment felt by the evangelists is a good indication that such traditions would not have been invented by early Christians but came from Jesus himself. The criterion of dissimilarity and embarrassment isolates a small set of highly distinctive materials—indispensable for any portrait, but insufficient in themselves for a comprehensive picture of Jesus.

on Q, ed. R. A. Piper, NovTSup 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 295–300.

<sup>73</sup> For details, see Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 118–153.

<sup>74</sup> Thus I reject entirely Meier's characterization of Q as a "grab bag" (Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 181; repeated in Meier, "Dividing Lines in Jesus Research Today: Through Dialectical Negation to a Positive Sketch," 358). Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 178–180, tries to justify this view by exaggerating the disparities within Q, in contrast to much recent Q research of *all stripes*, which has stressed the overall coherence of the collection. For a survey, see J. S. Kloppenborg, "The Sayings Gospel Q: Literary and Stratigraphic Problems," in *Symbols and Strata: Essays on the Sayings Gospel Q*, ed. R. Uro, Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran Julkaisuja, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 65 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 1–66.

<sup>75</sup> Polkow, "Method and Criteria," 347–350; Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 171–174; Sanders



There are two concerns related to the criterion of dissimilarity, one having to do with its applicability in certain cases, and the other to its appropriateness in the first place. Among those who accept the validity of the criterion there are important disagreements over whether particular sayings qualify. For example, many critics treat Mark 7:15 (on what defiles) as authentic because it stands out so sharply in the context of the dietary practices of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>76</sup> But the decision turns both on the interpretation of the saying and how much dissimilarity the critic is prepared to allow Jesus. Both Funk and Witherington, for example, understand Mark 7:15 to be an explicit rejection of *kashruth*, and Witherington even thinks that Jesus declared portions of the Torah to be invalid.<sup>77</sup> Mark's Gentile community, which did not observe *kashruth* in the first place, would have had no reason to invent the saying and the saying is hardly a commonplace placed on Jesus' lips. Hence for Witherington the saying meets the criterion of dissimilarity. Sanders also takes the saying to be about *kashruth* (as Mark plainly does) but concludes that the saying is "too revolutionary" to have come from Jesus.<sup>78</sup> Thus the debate seems to be about the extent to which Jesus could have been explicitly and programmatically at odds with contemporary Second Temple practice.

Other scholars, however, accept Sanders' key point that an explicit rejection of food laws by Jesus would render the later controversy in Acts 15 and Galatians 2 unintelligible, but argue either that the saying

and Davies, *Studying*, 316–323; Funk, *Honest to Jesus*.

<sup>76</sup> M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984; repr., Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 96–99; Witherington, *Christology*, 63–65; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 262, 436; Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 173; Funk and Hoover, *Five Gospels*, 69; B. Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God*, SHJ 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 123; Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 204, 246–247, 330; Wright, *Jesus*, 397; Gnllka, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 215–217.

<sup>77</sup> Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 204–206; Witherington, *Christology*, 63–64. Both suggest that this reading of Mark 7:15 is not contradicted by the controversy in Acts 15 and Galatians (see below), suggesting that some of Jesus' sayings were not immediately understood by his disciples. Wright (*Jesus*, 396) also sees the matter as directly touching food laws: Jesus insisted that "genuine purity is a matter of the heart, for which the normal laws of purity... are irrelevant."

<sup>78</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 28. In *Jesus and Judaism* (266) he argues that the later positions of the "false brethren" of Galatians would be unintelligible had Jesus actually made a statement such as Mark 7:15, and in *Studying*, 314 he adds that the saying is not multiply attested (but see *Gos. Thom.* 14!). Holmén ("Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Reconstructing the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 28 [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 72–73)

only reflects an intramural debate with the Pharisees rather than a frontal attack on *kashruth*<sup>79</sup> or that without intending a rejection of purity laws, the saying is part of a critique of the Pharisees' "legalistic morality."<sup>80</sup> Borg suggests that Mark's interpretation misses the real point, which is to deny the equation of holiness with separation. The saying challenges Pharisaic table fellowship.<sup>81</sup> For Crossan, Mark 7:15 was not directed exclusively at the Pharisees, although it surely would have offended them. Rather, it belongs to a nexus of sayings having to do with open commensality (Q 14:16–24; Mark 2:16–17a; Q 11:39–41)—a practice that inevitably negates hierarchies and social distinctions.<sup>82</sup> Chilton regards Mark 7:15 as part of a larger discursive formation having to do with the anxieties triggered by the fact that Israel found herself in the midst of Gentiles. In this context, the saying counsels against separatism and is designed to *assure* Jews that their purity is not compromised by contact with Gentiles, since the "contagion of impurity was a matter of what one did, not one's contacts."<sup>83</sup> Hence the saying presupposes rather than rejects *kashruth*. For Borg, Crossan and Chilton the saying is not about whether Jesus was "for" or "against" the Torah, but rather has to do with the meaning of holiness (Borg), a vision of a nonhierarchical kingdom (Crossan), or the identity and purity of Israel among the nations (Chilton) which *only later* modulated into a more abstract theological debate about the Torah. Thus for Borg, Crossan and Chilton, the saying is still dissimilar, but it does not partake in the stark dissimilarity that persuades Witherington and that Sanders finds incredible.

Theissen has drawn attention to a more general problem with the criterion of dissimilarity, namely its tendency to set Jesus over against 'Judaism' and to conceive of any conflict as "conflict with Judaism" rather than "conflict within Judaism."<sup>84</sup> Indeed one can find many statements concerning Mark 7:15 that display just this tendency. Bultmann treated Mark 7:15 as a conflict saying that "express[es] in parable-form

argues similarly to Sanders.

<sup>79</sup> Flusser, *Jesus*, 60.

<sup>80</sup> Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 216.

<sup>81</sup> Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics*, 97–99.

<sup>82</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 263: although the first generation of Christians could debate whether "Jesus was for or against the ritual laws of Judaism... [h]is position must have been, as it were, unclear... [H]e did not care enough about such ritual laws either to attack or to acknowledge them. He ignored them, but that, of course, was to subvert them at a most fundamental level."

<sup>83</sup> Chilton, *Pure Kingdom*, 80–82, here 81.

the attitude of Jesus to *Jewish piety*<sup>85</sup> while for Käsemann the saying points to a man who

is striking at the presuppositions and the plain verbal sense of the Torah and at the authority of Moses himself . . . , who is removing the distinction . . . between the *temenos*, the realm of the sacred, and the secular, and it is for this reason that he is able to consort with sinners.<sup>86</sup>

Both statements illustrate the way such sayings as Mark 7:15, interpreted in as confrontational a fashion as possible, are attributed to Jesus and then employed to elevate him above 'Judaism' and the Torah of Moses, both reified and objectified as monolithic entities.<sup>87</sup> It should be obvious how implausible and anachronistic such views are, rather like trying to set Socrates against "Athenianism."

One of the major advances of many recent treatments of the historical Jesus is rejection of earlier urges to set Jesus against 'Judaism' or to imagine Jesus as programmatically opposed to Jewish practices. There is indeed every reason to suppose that Jesus kept *kashruth*. In an inland peasant economy where swine are not raised, where shellfish are unavailable, where meat consumption is in any event low, where trading zones for staple foods are restricted (and hence a low probability of purchasing foodstuffs from non-Jewish producers),<sup>88</sup> and where culinary habits are traditional rather than innovative—cream sauces for meats would not even be imagined!—, it is not in fact an easy matter to violate *kashruth*. Considerations of pure and impure foods arise principally in situations where there is a real possibility of commercial contact with Gentiles and the possibility of eating impure foods—which is precisely the situation reflected in Acts 10–11, 15; Galatians 2 and in such Mishnaic tractates as *Hullin* and *Bekhoroth*, which treat situations of buying animals

<sup>84</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Plausible Jesus*, 167–171, 180, and *passim*.

<sup>85</sup> R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 147 (emphasis added).

<sup>86</sup> Käsemann, "Problem," 39. Similarly, Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 150: "Mark 7.15 is, therefore, completely without parallel in either rabbinic or sectarian Judaism, and, more than this, it completely denies a fundamental presupposition of Jewish religion: the distinction between the sacred and the secular."

<sup>87</sup> A salutary study of the subtleties of Mosaic discourse which rejects such reification can be found in H. Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, JSJSup 77 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>88</sup> The high costs of overland shipping made for relatively closed economies, where most goods and services were marketed within 25 km. of their site of production. This is confirmed by the distribution patterns of pottery from Kefar Hananya (D. Adan-Bayewitz and I. Perlman, "The Local Trade of Sepphoris in the Roman Period," *IEJ* 40.2–3 [1990]: 153–172). On long-distance trade in general, see M. I. Finley, *The*

from Gentiles. There is little to suggest that such concerns formed part of Jesus' horizons. To be sure issues of the purity of *individual* foodstuffs and situations affecting individual foodstuffs were debated; but that is *not* what Mark 7:15 is about. Rather, Mark 7:15 rejects the entire notion that food can defile.<sup>89</sup>

The phrasing of Mark's saying should not be ignored: it does not say that 'what comes from inside' is more defiling than 'what comes from outside or even that 'what comes from outside' does not render unclean; it says that these *cannot* render unclean (οὐδέν ἐστιν ἕξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν). Despite this frontal rejection of *kashruth*, Theissen mitigates its force by observing that the aphorism is not connected by an imperative. Thus the saying represents a kind of mental reservation that Jesus had with respect to *kashruth*; but,

one can share this conviction and nevertheless observe the commandments about cleanness, not because of the unclean and clean qualities of things and foods, but out of respect for a tradition or in order to avoid scandal.<sup>90</sup>

Such an account, however, leaves the saying in Jesus' mouth without any practical force or application and Theissen would have to assume that it was transmitted, again without any practical application, until Mark's day when it was recognized as usefully applying to the issue of the relation of Gentiles to Jews. Interestingly, we have no grounds for supposing that it was used in connection with the controversy in Acts 10–11, 15 and Paul knows nothing of it in Galatians 2. But the idea of a saying being transmitted orally which has nothing but speculative or abstract content is difficult indeed to embrace and violates the notion of oral censorship that Theissen has elsewhere stressed.

The other remedy has been suggested by Dunn, who offers a compelling tradition-historical analysis of the saying. Dunn recognizes that

*Ancient Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 126.

<sup>89</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 266: "What goes in' must surely be food itself—nothing else goes in and comes out—, and the statement does not respond to the question of whether or not Jesus' disciples should become *haberim*, laypeople who accept special purity rules. The point of the saying, in fact, is so clear that the positions of the 'false brethren', Peter and James becomes impossible to understand if the saying be considered authentic." Even sayings such as Ps-Phocylides 228 (ἀγνεΐη ψυχῆ, οὐ σώματός εἰσι καθαρμοί, "purifications are healings for the soul, not for the body") and Philo, *Spec.* 3.208–209 (ἀκάθαρτος γὰρ κυρίως ὁ ἄδικος καὶ ἀσεβής. "For the unjust and impious man is in the truest sense unclean"), do not imply an abrogation of purity rules.

<sup>90</sup> G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 366. Similarly, Theissen and Winter, *Plausible*

Mark's formulation is blunt and radical; but he argues that Matthew's redactional reformulation betrays knowledge of *another* form of the tradition, less radical insofar as it lacks Mark's ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and ὁ δύναται κοινῶσαι, and independently paralleled by *Gos. Thom.* 14.4.<sup>91</sup> He speculates that the earliest (authentic) tradition consisted of Mark 7: 1–2, 5 + Matt 15:11 which arose from Jesus' controversy with the Pharisees about handwashing and whose aphoristic answer, Matt 15:11, was not intended as a rejection of purity but rather as a "dialectical negation" which "set inward purity antithetically against ritual purity" and which "challenged the normal understanding of (Palestinian) Judaism on boundary issues, that is, on the sensitive questions of who and what were acceptable or unacceptable on religious grounds."<sup>92</sup>

Both Theissen and Dunn seek to save a version of Mark 7:15 for Jesus and to keep Jesus from crossing one of the basic markers of Jewishness.<sup>93</sup> Theissen's solution seems casuistic, predicated on a distinction between critical but non-enacted opinions Jesus held and his essentially conformist behaviour, while Dunn's solution is based on a speculative reconstruction of the earliest tradition. But to recall my earlier proposal on "triangulation" (above, p. 259), it should be noted that we have two independent textualizations of the two or three independent aphorisms, Mark 7:15 and Matt 15:11, both textualized using a Markan frame, and *Gos. Thom.* 14:4, framed as a saying on mission. *Both the synoptic and the Thomasine forms present the aphorism as having to do with the permissibility of eating non-kosher foods.* This is patent in Mark, regardless of the secondary character of the gloss in Mark 7:19b; it is true of Matt 15:11–20, despite Matthew's softening of Mark's antithetical aphorism and his omission of Mark 7:19b; and it is true of *Gos. Thom.* 14:4, which uses the aphorism as the motive clause for the injunction,

*Jesus*, 181.—

<sup>91</sup> J. D. Dunn, "Jesus and Ritual Purity: A Study on the Tradition History of Mark 7:15," in *A cause de l'évangile: Études sur les Synoptiques et les Actes: offertes au P. Jacques Dupont, O.S.B. à l'occasion de son 70e anniversaire*, LD 123 (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 261–264.

<sup>92</sup> Dunn, "Jesus and Ritual Purity: A Study on the Tradition History of Mark 7:15," 266–268, 274–275. Dunn repeats this argument in "Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate," *NTS* 48 (2002): 462–465, without including the speculation that the original tradition consisted of Mark 7:1–2, 5, 15. He concludes that "Jesus was recalled as speaking on the subject of purity, and as insisting that purity of heart is more important than ritual purity" (464).

<sup>93</sup> S. J. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, Hellenistic Culture and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 54–55,

And when you go into any region and walk through the countryside (ἡνῆχώρα), when people receive you, eat what they serve you and heal the sick among them! For what goes into your mouth will not defile you; rather, it is what comes out of your mouth will defile you.<sup>94</sup>

When all of our textualizations of the inside-outside aphorism are framed as permissions to eat foodstuffs not permitted to Jews, it seems mistaken to propose a different, less radical interpretation that is nowhere textualized. The conclusion that I draw from this is that Mark 7:15, Matt 15:11 and *Gos. Thom.* 14:4 circulated as an aphorism about eating and that they had their most natural *Sitz im Leben* in the context of debates about table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, something that can hardly have arisen in Jesus' day.

### 3.3. *Multiple Attestation*

Although Perrin downplayed the utility of multiple attestation except where it concerned multiply attested motifs, the implication of the foregoing is that the multiple attestation of individual sayings (and stories) is important in two respects. First, it serves as a counterbalance to the individual scholar's inclination to privilege certain sayings or stories—e.g., the disruption of the Temple (Sanders); the Good Samaritan (Funk);<sup>95</sup> Matt 10:23 (Schweitzer)—and make them the anchor of her reconstruction.<sup>96</sup> One of the curious facts of 'lives of Jesus' is that very often they are built around a handful of sayings and stories deemed to be key and neglect or subordinate significant swathes of the Jesus tradition even when these swathes include sayings and stories with credible claims to authenticity. Cases in point are: the saying concerning children and the kingdom, appearing in multiple sources: in Mark (10:13–16), special Matthean material (18:3), the *Gospel of Thomas* (22) and in John (3:3, 5); the parable of the mustard seed (Q 13:18–19; Mark 4:30–32; *Gos. Thom.* 20); Jesus' saying on divorce (Mark 10:11–12; Q 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10–11); and Jesus' association with toll collectors, found in call stories (Mark

59, 61–62. —

<sup>94</sup> Compare Q 10:7: ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ οἰκίᾳ μένετε ἐσθιόντες καὶ πίνοντες τὰ παρ' αὐτῶν· ἄξιός γάρ ὁ ἐργάτης τοῦ μισθοῦ αὐτοῦ. *Thomas* appears to envisage his addressees travelling in the χώρα—the hinterland outside of large towns and cities where one could not depend on one's native food customs being observed.

<sup>95</sup> Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 165–196.

<sup>96</sup> I do not wish to suggest that such choices are arbitrary; on the contrary, Sanders, Funk, and Schweitzer provided credible reasons for their choice of sayings. The point, rather, is that *alongside* these sayings, there are also other equally defensible starting points if one begins with a criterion of dissimilarity or historical plausibility, and in this respect

2:14), controversy chriae (Mark 2:16–17), aphorisms (Q 7:34), parables (Luke 18:10–13) and anecdotes (Luke 19:1–11). Yet it is only Crossan's approach, which privileges multiple and early independent attestation, that copes methodologically with this phenomenon and ensures that materials that are widely and independently attested will not only be mentioned, but will figure into the basic construction of the portrait of Jesus. While Crossan's discussion includes *all* of these multiply attested units, the saying on children and the kingdom is ignored by Sanders, Meyer, Gnilka, Wright and Meier<sup>97</sup> and the parable of the mustard seed is not discussed by either Sanders or Meier.<sup>98</sup> Funk does not treat the divorce saying<sup>99</sup> and Wright mentions it only in passing. On the other hand, Crossan's procedure means that a saying such as Luke 9:60, which Sanders and Funk treat as indubitably authentic, is not discussed at all because it is attested in only one source (Q).

Of course the mere fact that a particular motif is multiply attested does not mean every occurrence of that motif is authentic. Nor does the multiple attestation of a story or saying imply that there are not elements in those units that are redactional or secondary. But multiple attestation does indicate that the saying or motif in question is not simply the creation of the evangelist, and it shows that it was commonly enough associated with Jesus to have become part of several streams of tradition or types of sayings. The virtue of Crossan's procedure is that it carries with it a measure of objectivity<sup>100</sup> insofar as it requires the interpreter to face numerically well-attested traditions and discourages the founding of a portrait of Jesus on a singly-attested saying or story, as Schweitzer did with Matt 10:23.

the choice of one starting point over another is more difficult to defend.

<sup>97</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 353 n. 3 includes Mark 10:15 in a list of future kingdom sayings which "some critics would want to include in our initial list of sayings about the future kingdom or... that refer to entering the kingdom of God" but excludes it from consideration, apparently on the grounds that although it may go back to Jesus, "there is the further problem of determining whether the kingdom of God referred to is understood to be future, present, or possibly both." But for precisely this reason, it would seem germane to consider such sayings. Funk (*Honest to Jesus*, 334) lists Mark 10:14b as an authentic saying, but it does not figure into his analysis of the historical Jesus in the body of his book.

<sup>98</sup> It may be that Meier will treat the sayings omitted from vols. 1–3 (e.g., Q 13:18–19; 16:18; Mark 2:16–17) in his next volume; but the point remains that these multiply attested sayings are *not* used to construct the basic outlines of Jesus' teachings.

<sup>99</sup> Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 331, lists the divorce saying as authentic, but it is not integrated into his discussion of the historical Jesus.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. H. K. McArthur, "The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research," *ExpTim* 82 (1971): 116–119, esp. 118, who regards multiple attestation as the most objective

One might also argue that the materials that are multiply attested are not necessarily the most distinctive or characteristic aspects of Jesus, only what happened to be most widely disseminated. But this is in fact not the case with the blessing of the poor, the saying on children and the Kingdom, and the divorce saying, all of which would appear *also* to display dissimilarity, and so ignoring them is all the less justified.

The second contribution of multiple attestation is, as argued above, that it affords a control on the historian's imagination regarding what was the 'original' intention and significance of Jesus' sayings. As I have suggested, independent rhetorical deployments of a particular saying or story provide an index to how that saying or story was remembered. If two or three independent deployments of the saying agree in significant respects, as they do in the case of the macarism concerning the poor (see above, p. 260) and in the case of the inside-outside aphorism (above, p. 270), it is highly problematic to propose an 'original' interpretation of the saying that differs substantially. Of course, when we encounter two dramatically different deployments of a saying, as is the case of the Markan parable of the Tenants (and its successor versions in Matthew and Luke) and the contrasting version in *Gos. Thom.* 65, one must rely on other considerations to determine which (if any) more likely goes back to Jesus.<sup>101</sup> And this consideration is of no help at all in the case of singly attested materials.

In the end there is no objective or neutral application or balance of the criteria of authenticity. What we can aim at, however, is developing a series of controls to discipline the ingenuity and imagination of the historian. These controls should include (1) careful attention to the implications of solutions to the synoptic problem and, in particular, the significance of the documentary nature of Q and its redactional constructions. As the discussion of Q 22:28–30 has argued, this saying should not naively be attributed to Jesus simply because it does not obviously cohere with the editorial interests of Matthew or Luke; for it coheres rather well with the redactional framing of Q.<sup>102</sup> (2) Second, I have suggested

criticism and as the proper starting point for arguments for authenticity.

<sup>101</sup> I have sketched an approach to this problem in J. S. Kloppenborg, "Ideological Texture in the Parable of the Tenants," in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. D. Gowler, G. Bloomquist, and D. F. Watson (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 64–88.

<sup>102</sup> If other solutions to the synoptic problem are adopted (and defended appropriately), it would likewise be necessary to take the compositional implications of those solutions seriously. For example, on Michael Goulder's understanding of the Mark-without-Q hypothesis, Matthew functioned as a midrashist for Mark, and Luke copied Mark, then



that multiple attestation should be privileged methodologically and that portraits of Jesus necessarily take into account—that is, consider critically—those traditions that enjoyed the broadest circulation. This does not exclude employing the singly attested, perhaps highly distinctive sayings and stories, but it will avoid the manifest problems of beginning (and often ending) with a handful of singly attested sayings. (3) Third, rather than assume that in principle the evangelists misunderstood the sayings and stories they received—though sometimes it seems likely that they did—it is necessary to pay careful attention to their construals of those sayings and stories, and take their *consensus* seriously, when such a consensus exists. (4) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it will be necessary for the next generation of Jesus studies to engage in a more theoretically sophisticated discussion of its own location in intellectual discourse about antiquity and its significance.

#### 4. *Some Locations of Jesus Scholarship*

Some of the disagreements in scholarly reconstructions of Jesus derive from differences over the methodological issues noted above—whether one includes noncanonical gospels or not, whether one adopts the two-document hypothesis or not (and takes its implications seriously), and whether one privileges multiple attestation or dissimilarity. These disagreements account for many of the differences in current portraits of Jesus. Other variations derive from the fact that since our sources are fragmentary and since the available data have ‘blanks’ that must be filled in, the blanks can be filled in a variety of ways. There is, however, another dimension of the problem, one which has to do with the way scholars move from the isolation of authentic Jesus materials to the synthetic effort to produce a coherent portrait. This involves many decisions that are functions of theoretical, conceptual, or ideological commitments.<sup>103</sup>

Matthew, creating his own special material largely as a kind of haggadic development of materials from the Hebrew Bible. Thus, presumably, almost nothing peculiar to Luke could be ascribed to the historical Jesus. On the Two Gospels hypothesis almost nothing peculiar to Mark could be attributed to Jesus, since Mark is essentially a conflation of Matthew and Luke.

<sup>103</sup> I do not wish to suggest a uni-directional relationship between the technical phase of isolating historical Jesus tradition and the construction of synthetic portraits; in actual practice, one never comes to the technical phase *tabula rasa* and, conversely, the results of historical criticism have the potential to influence one’s ideological and conceptual

In saying this I wish to make clear that I am *not* speaking about personal commitments or about individual psychology (though a few recent reviewers seem tempted to reduce disagreements to such factors). Most of those who have contributed major works to historical Jesus scholarship are well trained scholars who employ critical methods precisely to obtain a measure of control on their own tendencies and preferences.<sup>104</sup> To reduce disagreements among scholars to personal “preferences” trivializes their work and needlessly impugns their integrity as scholars. What I have in mind instead are the larger interpretive frameworks within which portraits of Jesus are offered and the fundamental choices that define these frameworks—choices that do not derive directly from historical data. Let me illustrate.

A representative selection of current portraits of Jesus reveals differing emphases regarding several basic issues, of which I will mention three: (1) whether Jesus’ “eschatology” should be treated as a defining issue and whether Jesus expected an imminent and dramatic intervention by God and a corresponding transformation of human affairs; (2) whether the principal locus of transformation represented by the reign of God (whatever it was and whenever it was expected) should be seen as individual and personal, or whether it pertained more broadly to “Israel” or some other large entity? Related to this is the question of whether Jesus’ “reign of God” was something to be awaited more or less passively, or whether it was to be expressed in a set of social, political and economic transformations in the lives of its adherents; and (3) whether the data of the Jesus tradition should be read against the background of “Judaism” (and if so, which “Judaism”), Galilean regionalism, or the typicalities of Mediterranean peasant culture.

Put so starkly, these beg many questions of definition and represent false dichotomies. To take only the last issue: Jesus, of course, was a Jew, a Galilean, and lived in an eastern Mediterranean culture. The Torah was a key part of Israelite identity, as were the typical Mediterranean dynamics of honor and shame, patronage and the notion that all goods (material and nonmaterial) were in a limited supply. The interpretive issue, however, is which of these frameworks the interpreter chooses

commitments.

<sup>104</sup> See the remarks of Meier (*Marginal Jew I*, 6; *Marginal Jew II*, 5–6), who acknowledges that the application of the criteria of authenticity forced him to conclusions he had not foreseen. For similar remarks, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 334–335, and

to privilege as *primary*. *Nothing* in the data about Jesus tells us how to frame our reconstruction; there is no neutral or objective or self-evidently correct framework. The choice of frameworks is interpretive and a function of the theoretical issues that each interpreter sees as at stake in historical Jesus scholarship.

This point perhaps is clearest when one takes an approach to historical Jesus scholarship that is expressly cross-cultural. In *The Crucified Guru*, Thomas Thangaraj proposes to view Jesus through the lens of the concept of the guru in the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy of Tamilnadu in Southern India.<sup>105</sup> Thangaraj's "Jesus" is a teacher with disciples, but one who is neither a member of a scribal school nor a purveyor of esoteric teaching. Rather, Jesus engaged in a public project of teaching, relating to disciples on the basis of persuasion and a "loving invitation." As a "guru" he had a "praxis oriented pedagogy": he enacted his own words and enjoined followers to do the same.

There is of course no question of Jesus' *being* a guru or of invoking the language and practices of Hinduism. Thangaraj's *comparison* of Jesus with the practices of gurus, however, makes clear how the interest of the interpreter serves to focus the act of reconstruction. Without doing violence to the results of historical criticism and without forcing the evidence significantly, Thangaraj's configuration of the data allows him to address particular problems in *his* world: the inadequacy of earlier Indian approaches to christology which adapted the notion of an avatar to the incarnation of the Logos.<sup>106</sup> Viewing Jesus as a guru allows Thangaraj to underscore the soteriological significance of Jesus for an oppressed humanity. It may be that Thangaraj's description of Jesus, which highlights Jesus' practice with respect to disciples, is susceptible to the objection that it downplays other significant data, for example, Jesus' eschatology. But such data is not ignored; it is only configured in such a way as to play a role secondary to Thangaraj's focus on Jesus' praxis-oriented pedagogy.

The theoretical point has been put most succinctly by Jonathan Z. Smith in relation to the act of comparison:

Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, xxviii.

<sup>105</sup> M. T. Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Christology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994).

<sup>106</sup> Such an approach, argues Thangaraj, is inadequate both for Tamil Saivites, who reject the notion of divine incarnation, and for Tamil Christians, since it endangers Christ's

[C]omparison does not necessarily tell us how things 'are' (the far from latent presupposition that lies behind the notion of the 'genealogical' with its quest for 'real' historical connections); like models and metaphors, comparison tells us how things might be conceived, how they might be 're-described'. . . . A comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge. It lifts out and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of possible intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being 'like' in some stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which *we* 're-vision' phenomena as *our* data in order to solve *our* theoretical problems.<sup>107</sup>

Reconstruction involves acts of comparison with three dimensions. The scholar first decides which data are most reliable on the basis of the criteria indicated above. Then, she sets these data within a comparative framework (Second Temple apocalyptic Judaism; early scribalism; Mediterranean village culture; Graeco-Roman Cynicism), noting similarities and certain differences. Thus, one can conclude that Jesus was "like" a classical Hebrew prophet or a Cynic or an apocalypticist in certain specifiable ways, notwithstanding clear differences. But such a comparison is done for specific (though often unstated) theoretical reasons.<sup>108</sup> This third side in the comparative triangle, the scholar's theoretical interests, helps to render intelligible *why* a certain comparison is ventured and what interpretive interest is being served. It is necessary to insist that it is not possible (or even theoretically desirable) to work without such interests. The presence of such interests does not render the comparative work to be "subjective" or otherwise flawed. Indeed, the scholar's theoretical interests are what make the comparison productive of meaning.

#### 4.1. *Jesus and Apocalyptic Eschatology*

Much recent historical Jesus scholarship has given special prominence to a link between Jesus' preaching and imminent eschatological expectation. It is not that Jesus expected the "end of the world" in the sense of the dissolution of the cosmos; rather, the reign of God he expected

humanity and leads to a docetism.

<sup>107</sup> J. Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 14 (London: The School of Oriental and African Studies; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 52 (emphasis original).

<sup>108</sup> "[C]omparison, in its strongest form, brings differences together solely within the space of the scholar's mind. It is the individual scholar, for his or her own good theoretical reasons, who imagines their cohabitation, without even requiring that they be consenting

involved a decisive intervention of God in human history and an empirically visible (and dramatic) transformation. Among those who underscore this feature of Jesus' expectations there are disagreements as to whether Jesus can be described as an apocalypticist who (mistakenly) expected this transformation in the near future, or whether he had a less specific, but nonetheless definite, temporal expectation. Allison and Sanders are willing to embrace a Jesus who made such a mistake.<sup>109</sup> Gnilka and Meier, on the other hand, avoid the difficulty of Jesus being wrong about the coming of the kingdom by rejecting such obviously predictive sayings as Mark 9:1; 13:30 and Matt 10:23 as nonauthentic. They insist, nonetheless, on a twofold character of Jesus' preaching: first, that Jesus expected the future coming of the reign of God and second, that he also thought that reign of God was somehow being actualized or mediated in his own activities.

Other scholars, however, significantly downplay Jesus' eschatology. Borg observes that the consensus of modern scholarship rejects the authenticity of the future Son of Man sayings (e.g., Mark 8:38; 13:27; 14:62; Matt 10:23; Q 12:40; 17:24, 26–30), which formerly had been employed to illustrate Jesus' futuristic orientation. Without such sayings to provide an interpretive context, Jesus' sayings about the reign of God lose any strong connection with imminent end-expectation.<sup>110</sup> It is not that the kingdom sayings are not about a crisis, but for Borg that crisis is the "end of the world of conventional wisdom as a basis for existence, as well as the threatened end of the 'social world' of Judaism (including the threat of war and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple)."<sup>111</sup> Rather than being an apocalypticist, Borg's Jesus is a teacher of "world-subverting wisdom."

What is at stake in this debate? Schweitzer proposed an apocalyptic Jesus, basing this understanding on the apocalyptic documents of Second Temple Judaism. His Jesus was thus consistent with the supposedly thoroughly apocalyptic climate of the first century. Schweitzer's

adults..." (Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 115).

<sup>109</sup> E.g., D. C. Allison, "A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology," *JBL* 113 (1994): 651–668, who is critical both of those who embrace an imminent eschatology but who reinterpret such sayings as Mark 9:1 and Mark 13:30 in order to avoid the "humiliating discovery" that Jesus proclaimed a divinely wrought end of the world (e.g., Wright and Witherington), and of those who deny or attenuate the futuristic component to Jesus' preaching (e.g., Crossan, Borg, and Mack).

<sup>110</sup> The most obvious exceptions are Mark 1:15 and 9:1. Most scholars treat Mark 1:15 as a redactional summary, and many (including Meier) consider 9:1 as nonauthentic. Borg (*Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 54) notes that even if it is authentic (which he doubts) it is slender evidence upon which to base an entire reading of the Kingdom sayings.

Jesus, however, was a stranger to the world of the early 1900's, for at the time Schweitzer wrote apocalypticism was alien to European culture and was regarded with distaste and disdain. Even for Schweitzer, it was not the mistaken apocalypticist of the remote past who was theologically important, but the "spiritual Christ" who continued to animate the Christian church. Schweitzer's use of apocalyptic eschatology as a *descriptive* category, on the one hand, underscored the *commonalities* between Jesus and his environment, and the profound *distance* between that Jesus and early twentieth-century Christian theology, on the other. Schweitzer's historical Jesus was part of first-century culture but not part of ours.

Ironically, since Schweitzer's time a complete reversal has occurred. The terms "eschatological" and "apocalyptic"—usually stripped of their most blatantly predictive aspects—are regularly used in order to *distinguish* Jesus from his environment.<sup>112</sup> Thus, for example, Hengel's study of discipleship uses the category of "eschatological charismatic," rendering Jesus incomparable and unique within Judaism and the Hellenistic world.<sup>113</sup> But at the same time, eschatology was elevated to a central theological category by such systematic theologians as Pannenberg and Moltmann, so that Jesus' announcement of an imminent and decisive transformation of human reality happily coincides with what is seen to be at the heart of the Christian theological project. Hence, the emphasis on the eschatological orientation of Jesus serves to cement the historical

—<sup>111</sup> Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 59.

<sup>112</sup> A propos of Bultmann, Dieter Georgi observed: "Whereas for the history-of-religions school the term 'eschatological' described the foreignness of Jesus and of the early church—together with Jewish apocalypticism and other comparable ancient eschatologies—for Bultmann... the term 'eschatological' stands for the novelty of Christianity, its incomparable superiority, the uniqueness of the victorious religion, deservedly victorious. Wherever a comparison is ventured, wherever analogies lift their head, wherever challenges are heard from other religious options but the canonical ones, the invocation of the 'eschatological' is made, and the demons, the shadows have to disappear. Historical criticism thus turns into exorcism." See D. Georgi, "Rudolf Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament Revisited*," in *Bultmann, Retrospect, and Prospect: The Centenary Symposium at Wellesley*, ed. E. C. Hobbs, HTS 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 82.

<sup>113</sup> M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. J. Greig (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; New York: Crossroad, 1981), 69: "Quite certainly Jesus was not a 'teacher' comparable with the later rabbinical experts in the Law, and he was a great deal more than a prophet. Even within the characterization we have preferred, of an 'eschatological charismatic,' [Jesus] remains in the last resort incommensurable, and so basically confounds every attempt to fit him into the categories suggested by the phenomenology or sociology of religion. Consequently, the centrality, in the discussion, of the phenomenon

Jesus to contemporary Christian theological interests rather than to distance him from modern sensibilities.

John Galvin observes that the portraits of Jesus produced by Meier and Gnilka, both of whom try to balance future and present aspects of Jesus' expectations, allow traditional christological affirmations to be seen "as a plausible, though not rationally compelling, interpretation of Jesus and of the events of his public ministry."<sup>114</sup> For Galvin it is essential that there be both future and present dimensions to Jesus' message and that the message have a definitive (eschatological) character.<sup>115</sup> An historical reconstruction of Jesus that failed to include the proclamation of a unique and unsurpassable intervention by God would lack ultimacy and one that lacked any indication that Jesus saw his own activity in the present as connected with the reign of God (cf. Q 11:20) would seriously jeopardize christology. Galvin does not require Jesus to have explicitly employed christological titles; but Jesus' self-assessment as "God's definitive salvific representative" is a necessary condition of christology.

Seán Freyne is one of the rare exegetes to declare his theological interests in the historical Jesus. The insistence on the eschatological nature of Jesus' career, he says,

arises from my concern regarding the claims of ultimacy that Christian faith makes in terms of Jesus.... In the absence of an eschatological dimension to Jesus' utterances it would be impossible to see how any *christological claims* could be grounded in his earthly life, which is precisely

of the derivable nature of Jesus' authority, is fully justified" (emphasis original).

<sup>114</sup> Galvin, "I Believe," 375.

<sup>115</sup> J. P. Galvin, "From the Humanity of Christ to the Jesus of History: A Paradigm Shift in Catholic Christology," *TS* 55 (1994): 264–265. The use of eschatology in relation to "uniqueness" and Christology is explicit in Pannenberg: W. Pannenberg, "Religious Pluralism and Conflicting Truth Claims: The Problem of a Theology of the World Religions," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. G. D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 100–101: "In fact, Jesus' emphasis on the anticipatory presence of God's kingdom in his own activity (Lk 11:20) involved his own person in a way that essentially implies what later on was explicated by incarnational language and by titles like Son of God. But then, the uniqueness attributed to Jesus by the incarnational theology of the church was already characteristic of his own eschatological message and activity.... Those who relegate the claim to uniqueness to the 'deification' of Jesus in later Christian interpretation do not take seriously the eschatological finality claimed by Jesus himself.... The Christian claim to uniqueness is not based on any Christian experience. If this were so, it would be fair to argue that there are other experiences of uniqueness within world religions. But the claim to uniqueness concerning the person of Jesus is bound up with his own eschatological message, espe-

the issue that gave rise to the quest for the historical Jesus in the first place as both an ecclesial and academic exercise.<sup>116</sup>

Freyne's statement is weighty for it makes clear the theoretical interest—christology and ultimacy—which Freyne sees as being served by highlighting Jesus' eschatology. "Eschatology" stands as a cipher for finality and ultimacy. Freyne expresses hesitations about this admission, fearing that it will destroy the credibility of his historical reconstruction. It should have no such effect. In Freyne's case there is little danger of him being accused of engaging in covert apologetics or of smuggling theology into his historical analysis. But his statement clarifies why eschatology—however it is construed—has achieved so central a place in some treatments of the historical Jesus.<sup>117</sup>

In making this observation, I want it to be clear that I am not suggesting that those reconstructions which underscore the future aspects of the "reign of God" necessarily do so out of a theoretical concern for christology. Sanders, for example, stresses the future aspects of Jesus' proclamation and thinks that Jesus probably regarded himself as God's agent, but doubts that he thought the reign of God to be especially present in his own ministry or that he can be thought to be unique.<sup>118</sup> Sanders' theoretical concern seems not to be christological, however; rather it is to root Jesus and his activities firmly within Second Temple Judaism and to disallow a portrait of Jesus as "against" or "superseding" "Judaism." While Sanders might approve of Hengel's category of "eschatological charismatic," that designation makes him comparable and commensurable, not incommensurable and unique.

Eschatology can be stressed in a portrait of Jesus for a number of reasons. Some might have to do with understanding the relation between

cially the eschatological finality of God's kingdom as becoming present in his activity."

<sup>116</sup> S. Freyne, "Galilean Questions to Crossan's Mediterranean Jesus," in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. Arnal and Desjardins, 90 (emphasis added).

<sup>117</sup> It does not seem to me self-evident that christological discourse is compromised by Borg's nonapocalyptic Jesus (and Borg himself certainly does not think so). Traditional christologies, which underscore the mediational nature of Jesus' activity, might be endangered by Crossan's Jesus (who proclaims a brokerless kingdom). Galvin ("I Believe," 375) argues that Crossan's view "seems to preclude in principle any mediation of that kingdom and thus any foundation for christological doctrine," although he concedes that Crossan himself (*Historical Jesus*, 421–424) finds no contradiction in the Christian seeing in Jesus the "unmediated presence of the divine."

<sup>118</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 153, 240. Sanders (*ibid.*, 154) suggests that part of the reason that scholars emphasize the presence of the kingdom in Jesus' teaching is that thereby Jesus' message is rendered more relevant and the "problem of his mistake about



Jesus' activities and traditional christological assertions; or, they may have to do with an effort to root Jesus firmly in the life and expectations of Second Temple Judaism and thus obviate the strong tendency of New Testament scholars (at least in the past) to define Jesus over against "Judaism."

On the other hand, those portraits that do not stress future eschatology are not necessarily devoid of christological interests. Future expectations play little role in Schüssler Fiorenza's treatment of Jesus. Instead, she focuses on Jesus' liberative practice in the present, his critique of patriarchy (also in the present) and his retrieval of Wisdom theology and his role as a prophet of Sophia.<sup>119</sup> Borg, perhaps the most vocal advocate of a nonapocalyptic Jesus, offers an alternate portrait of Jesus as a "holy person," "person of the Spirit, and "charismatic wisdom prophet"—each with evident christological potential. For both Schüssler Fiorenza and Borg, Jesus' concrete engagement with social and political realities of his day is essential to any portrait of the historical figure and to any christology that flows from that portrait. The standard portrait of an apocalyptic prophet too easily disconnects Jesus from that environment.<sup>120</sup>

To observe that theoretical interests are at work in the construction of various portraits of Jesus is *not* necessarily to imply that the various reconstructions are *reducible* to those interests; it is, however, to suggest that a critical reading of those reconstructions must attend to the comparative project that is being ventured.

#### 4.2. *A Revolutionary Kingdom?*

A second obvious difference in historical Jesus scholarship concerns whether Jesus is understood as engaged in a project of corporate renewal of Israel (or some "large" entity) or whether his appeal was mainly to individual persons. Entangled with this question is another one: whether the kingdom Jesus proclaimed was to be awaited passively, or whether it symbolized a set of alternate, perhaps radical or revolutionary, postures.

the immediate future is muted."

<sup>119</sup> E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1995).

<sup>120</sup> Borg (*Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 194) suggests that the construal of Jesus as an "eschatological prophet"—and, one might add, the attempts to make Jesus incomparable—has led to theological appropriations which either rendered Jesus silent or which, *via* existential interpretation, "generated a highly individualized and internal-

Sanders argues that Jesus stood in a tradition of restorationist prophecy. In Sanders' view, the action against the temple and the calling of the Twelve were symbolic actions that pointed to the imminent restoration and renewal of Israel.<sup>121</sup> As noted above, Sanders rejects the idea that Jesus programmatically opposed the Torah. What set him off from other sectors of Second Temple Judaism was his view on repentance. Whereas repentance and observance of the commandments were normally assumed to be a precondition for entry into the Kingdom, Sanders' Jesus held that "God showed his mercy to those who heard and responded to him and his message even while they lived outside the framework of at least some of the Mosaic ordinances; that is, while they were still 'tax-gatherers and sinners.'"<sup>122</sup>

Despite the fact that Jesus' reign of God according to Sanders would involve a future renewed social order in which sinners were included and a reversal of important social values,<sup>123</sup> there is little evidence from Sanders' description that in the present the kingdom implied any social transformations. This is because Sanders thinks that the reign of God involved so dramatic a set of transformations—including the "miraculous" recreation of Israel and reconstitution of the ten lost tribes—that it would be unimaginable that Jesus could have thought that this would be accomplished by mere social and political reforms.<sup>124</sup> It is the miraculous and otherworldly nature of the coming kingdom that pushes out any meaningful anticipation of the kingdom that is less than miraculous and this-worldly. In the end, Sanders' portrait is more interested in expectations and theological *ideas*—the covenant and its restoration, repentance and divine mercy—than in social or political postures.

The same is true of Meier's Jesus. Meier thinks that Jesus' ministry had the corporate aim of reconstituting the scattered people of God and that he expected a dramatic intervention by God in which the poor would be exalted and justice established. But for Meier, Jesus expected God *alone* to act; "humans can only wait for it"; the reign of God "is a revolution

ized understanding of the message of Jesus."

<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*.

<sup>122</sup> E. P. Sanders, "Jesus, Paul and Judaism," *ANRW II* 25.1 (1982): 425.

<sup>123</sup> See esp. Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 196–204, discussing perfectionism.

<sup>124</sup> Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 176, 179, 185. Sanders is far more willing than scholars such as Meier and Gnilka to admit that Jesus expected an imminent and dramatic transformation of the world *and was wrong* (see *ibid.*, 180, 183). He is also skeptical concerning the assertions that Jesus thought the kingdom to be especially connected

wrought by God alone as this present world comes to an end.”<sup>125</sup> Thus Jesus was neither a revolutionary nor a social reformer.<sup>126</sup>

A very different portrait emerges in the works of Borg and especially Horsley. It is perhaps significant that neither emphasizes the futuristic and otherworldly character of the reign of God; indeed, Borg argues against this. Borg’s Jesus is a visionary with “world subverting wisdom” who was critical of “the politics of holiness”—a set of social and political arrangements predicated on distinctions of pure and impure. In its place, Jesus advocated “compassion as alternate paradigm for the transformation of Israel’s life.”<sup>127</sup> Jesus’ critique challenged the dangerous nationalism driven by the politics of holiness and, in this sense, Jesus’ social vision constituted a real threat to the established order.<sup>128</sup>

Horsley provides an even more nuanced reading of the Jesus tradition through the lens of the politics of agrarian societies under foreign control. Understanding the basic fault lines of Jewish Palestine to run between the taxers and the taxed, the governors and the governed, Horsley views Jesus as invoking the covenantal and prophetic traditions of Israel in support of the plight of the poor. Horsley is critical of readings that suppose that Jesus expected a “miraculous change,” arguing that these are designed to divert attention from the social and political dimensions of Jesus’ message. Since “religion” in the ancient world was not a realm separate from political and social relations, such a diversion is also anachronistic. According to Horsley, apocalyptic texts are not fantasies about future transformations but have a historical orientation and must be given a socio-political reading. They express “in ordinary language eager hopes for an anti-imperial revolution.”<sup>129</sup> Thus, for example, the prediction of the destruction of the temple and other anti-temple sayings amount to a judgment of the ruling institutions of Israel and an attack on the ruling families.<sup>130</sup> In place of a hierarchical, imperial and exploitative model of society, Jesus substituted a model of local (village) cooperation that encouraged solidarity (rather than

with his own activities (*Jesus and Judaism*, 153; *Historical Figure*, 176).

<sup>125</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 331. Further, “Reflection on Jesus-of-History Research Today,” in *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus Within Early Judaism*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Philadelphia: The American Interfaith Institute; New York: Crossroad, 1991), 84–107, esp. 90–92.

<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Witherington, *Jesus Quest*, 236.

<sup>127</sup> Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 26–27; *Conflict, Holiness and Politics*, passim. For a critique, Chilton, “Jesus within Judaism,” 270–271.

<sup>128</sup> Borg, *Jesus, A New Vision*, 180–184.

<sup>129</sup> Horsley, *Spiral of Violence*, 160.

the divisive social relations created by exploitation), debt-cancellation, local autonomy and a form of egalitarianism.<sup>131</sup>

It is unfair to both Borg and Horsley to caricature their view of Jesus as that of a “social reformer.” The term presupposes the structures of modern politics and modern compartmentalizing of “religion,” “politics,” and “economics” into discrete and separate divisions of culture—something that was not part of the ancient Mediterranean world. Both Borg and Horsley, however, see concrete social and political *implications* in the message of Jesus and hence do not postpone his “revolution” to the apocalyptic future. Whereas those who see Jesus as primarily oriented to a proclamation of a future transformation can locate the opposition to Jesus in theological *ideas*, for Borg and Horsley Jesus was a far more concrete social and political threat to established powers.

It is not difficult to see that just as theoretical concerns to relate Jesus to later christological assertions, or to the theological streams of “Judaism” are supported by reconstructions that underscore Jesus’ eschatology, so the reconstructions of Borg, Horsley and Schüssler Fiorenza are designed to address the question of how and where Jesus fit (or failed to fit) into the politics of Jewish Palestine. Part of the reason for differing configurations of the data is that the questions are different. Borg, Horsley and Schüssler Fiorenza begin with socio-political rather than theological or ideological questions. Such questions are a needed correction to the tendency of earlier generations of biblical scholars who often treated “theology” as the central aspect of texts, ignoring the intimate relationship between theological assertions and social location and treating discourse about the “reign of God,” debt/sin forgiveness, poverty, justice, food and clothing as if it could be detached from the present social and political realities.

#### 4.3. *Which Judaism?*

A third theoretical issue that informs scholarly constructs of the historical Jesus concerns the issue, which “Judaism” provides the most suitable interpretive framework for understanding Jesus: early scribalism? apocalyptic movements? Qumran? Galilean village culture? As I have suggested above, nothing tells us which one is the most appropriate; in fact different comparative frameworks are appropriate to different tasks.

<sup>130</sup> Horsley, *Spiral of Violence*, 285–317.

It is a truism that Jesus was a Jew. Most interpreters accordingly pay attention to the history and culture of Jewish Palestine at least in general terms. Most recognize important differences between the culture(s) of Palestine and those of other parts of the empire and some are aware of finer distinctions, e.g., between Greek cities and Roman cities or colonies, between autonomous (e.g., Tyre) and nonautonomous cities (e.g., Jerusalem and Tiberias) and between the cities (*poleis*), their attached city-regions and the hinterland. Sophisticated analyses now understand that we can no longer divide the Mediterranean into two cultural spheres—Jewish and Hellenistic—as earlier generations of scholars did; we must be prepared to see multiple competing cultures and layers of culture, both outside Palestine and within Jewish Palestine. Judaism in rural Galilee was not identical with the Judaism of urban elites of Jerusalem, or of rural Judaea, or of the inhabitants of Qumran, or of Caesarea Maritima, or Sepphoris and so forth. The selection of one of these cultures as the comparative framework for understanding Jesus has important consequences, both in what may become visible and in what is obscured.

To insist that Jesus be situated firmly within Second Temple Judaism reflects in part a salutary resolve to guard against the earlier tendencies to see Jesus as transcending and even rejecting fundamental aspects of “Judaism” and as somehow not, or no longer “Jewish.” The Shoah has made painfully clear the hideous consequences of supersessionist readings of the Jesus tradition. The works of Sanders and others who have underscored Jesus “within” Judaism are important efforts to rid historical Jesus studies of the toxic waste of anti-Semitism. In this regard, it must be observed that the perfectly legitimate *historiographical* goal of understanding how Jesus may have been *distinct* in his context can easily slip into caricatures of Jewish culture(s), especially when the inquiry is tied to theological concerns to make Jesus *unique*. Christian scholarship on Jesus has often been criticized as potentially or actually anti-Semitic and, more recently, some have observed that feminist treatments of Jesus’ liberative praxis are sometimes constructed at the expense of “Judaism,” which is caricatured as “patriarchal” and “oppressive.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Horsley, *Spiral of Violence*, 192, 246–284.

<sup>132</sup> A.-J. Levine, “Lilies of the Field and Wandering Jews: Biblical Scholarship, Women’s Roles, and Social Location,” in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-viewed*,

To agree that Jesus belongs to Second Temple Judaism does not, however, settle the issue of a more specific historical location. Vermes and Sanders have shown by careful comparison of Jesus' sayings with the first century antecedents of rabbinic Judaism that Jesus' views of the Torah would hardly have placed him outside the orbit of first-century Judaism. Although some have even attempted to make of Jesus a liberal Pharisee, a more compelling portrait treats Jesus as a non-Pharisaic teacher whose view of the Torah, nonetheless, was either fully within the range of Second Temple discussions of the Torah (Vermes) or largely so (Sanders).<sup>133</sup>

A seemingly divergent portrait of Jesus has been offered by Crossan and Mack, who compare Jesus with Graeco-Roman Cynics.<sup>134</sup> The comparison is not intended to constitute a claim that Jesus was "influenced" by Cynics or was a "member" of a Cynic "school." In fact, no unified Cynic "school" existed. Neither Crossan nor Mack is oblivious to differences between largely urban Cynics and the Jesus of Galilean town and village culture: Jesus and the Jesus movement had, unlike the Cynics, something of a social vision and social program.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, the *comparison* with Cynicism serves to underscore the countercultural, even "deviant" character of Jesus' activity. This portrayal represents in many ways only an extrapolation of earlier representations of Jesus as embodying "novel," "striking," "countercultural," "marginal," or "world-subverting" sayings and practices—depictions that are nearly ubiquitous in historical Jesus scholarship.

The reaction engendered by the "Cynic hypothesis" is striking in its vigor; clearly, a deep nerve has been probed. Extraordinary efforts have

ed. I. R. Kitzberger (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 329–352.

<sup>133</sup> Sanders ("Jesus, Paul and Judaism," 411–418) insists that none of Jesus' Sabbath sayings represents a challenge to the sanctity of the Sabbath; the sayings on divorce do not challenge Deut 24:1, since Jesus only makes the teachings on divorce more strict than the Torah; and Mark 7:15, which Mark takes as implying the abolition of the food laws (7:19b), is not authentic. Only Q 9:59–60 enjoins disobeying a commandment of the Torah. Vermes (*The Religion of Jesus the Jew*, 11–45) doubts that even Q 9:59–60 should be interpreted as a rejection of Torah commandments regarding the burial of the dead.

<sup>134</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 417–422; Mack, "Q and a Cynic-Like Jesus," 25–36. Strictly speaking, Mack does not write about the historical Jesus, but the character of the earliest Jesus movement. Yet he argues that "the Cynic-like data from Q and Mark are as close as we shall ever get to the real Jesus of history" (36).

<sup>135</sup> Crossan (*Historical Jesus*, xii) speaks of Jesus' "ecstatic vision and social program [which] sought to rebuild a society upwards from its grass roots but on principles of religious and economic egalitarianism, with free healing brought directly to the peasant homes and free sharing of whatever they had in return." Mack ("Q and a Cynic-Like Jesus," 34–35) argues that the Jesus movement "took a Cynic-like stance towards the world at large, but

been taken to “demonstrate” that no Cynics were present in Galilee (something that the “Cynic hypothesis” does not in fact require). Indeed, the proponents and opponents of the hypothesis often argue at cross purposes: thus, it is asserted that Jesus was a Jew, as if this somehow means that he could not have been Cynic-like. But, as William Arnal rightly observes, “the issue cannot be whether Jesus was either ‘Jewish’ or ‘cynic/Hellenistic,’ in spite of it being framed this way far too frequently; it is instead *what kind of Jew* Jesus was.”<sup>136</sup>

The assertion that “Jesus was a Jew” of course rightly locates Jesus in the history, culture and institutions of Israel. But all too often it also embodies a tacit assumption that “Jew” mean “religious Jew” and that “religion” is a discrete and bounded realm of cultural discourse, separate from social (family, village) and political structures. Thus, the assertion serves to isolate Jesus, not only from the context of the other cultural discourses of the Mediterranean, but from the social and political culture of Jewish Galilee. The Cynic comparison, by contrast, assumes that religion was “embedded” in other cultural and social forms and hence, that the tensions between Jesus and his culture which the criterion of dissimilarity isolates should not be interpreted as narrowly-defined “religious” opposition, isolated from other cultural possibilities. Without ceasing to be a Galilean Jew, Jesus may *also* have been simultaneously part of an intersecting discourse critical of certain institutions and patterns of his culture and *analogous to* (not: influenced by) Cynic criticism of Greek urban culture.<sup>137</sup> The Cynic comparison implicitly resists compartmentalization, either of “religion” with ancient society, or of “Judaism” within the ancient world, but instead attempts to locate Jesus at the conjunction of multiple intersecting discourses.

### 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this survey of methodological and interpretive problems in historical Jesus scholarship has not been to encourage readers to “pick and choose” among the various divergent portraits of Jesus, but

with respect to one another they were experimenting with a thoroughly social notion.”

<sup>136</sup> W. E. Arnal, “Making and Re-making the Jesus-Sign: Contemporary Markings on the Body of Christ,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. Arnal and Desjardins, 309 (emphasis original). I have tried to analyze the reaction to the ‘Cynic hypothesis’ in “Dog among the Pigeons.”

<sup>137</sup> See L. E. Vaage, “The Scholar as *Engagé*,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. Arnal

to understand, first, the somewhat differing methodological foundations on which such portraits are constructed and, second, the important theoretical questions that drive the quest of the historical Jesus.

While it seems unreasonable to imagine a consensus developing in the near future concerning Jesus, it is perhaps not too much to hope that continued debate will bring more agreement, even on such issues as the relevance of the *Gospel of Thomas* or the role of the synoptic problem in historical Jesus scholarship. Considerable progress has been made in recognizing the latent anti-Semitism in the application of the criterion of dissimilarity, with the result that in many recent reconstructions of the historical Jesus, Jesus is no longer quite the stranger to his own culture that he was a generation or more ago. There is even some hope that a careful application of the criterion of multiple attestation will eliminate the excessive narrowness that has affected some reconstructions of Jesus.

The other set of problems represents a more difficult problem. For until scholars are prepared to acknowledge *why* particular comparisons are ventured and *how* they enlighten particular aspects of the Jesus tradition, historical Jesus scholarship may be forever locked in a war of competing Jesuses, each having special explanatory power with respect to a given theoretical problem (the foundations of christological doctrine, the history of Christian anti-Semitism, or significance of "religion" within culture), but each seemingly, though not, I think, in fact, completely opposed to the others.



# BASIC METHODOLOGY IN THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS<sup>1</sup>

JOHN P. MEIER

## 1. *Basic Concepts: The Real Jesus and the Historical Jesus*

The historical Jesus is not the real Jesus. The real Jesus is not the historical Jesus. I stress this paradox from the start because endless confusion in the “quest for the historical Jesus”<sup>2</sup> arises from the failure to distinguish these two concepts clearly.

### 1.1. *The Real Jesus*

What do we mean when we say we want to investigate the “real” Jesus or the “real” Nero or the real anybody in ancient history? The notion of “real” is a tricky one that needs careful distinction, whether we are dealing with ancient or modern history. In historical research there are different gradations in the sense of “real.”

1. Obviously we cannot mean the *total* reality of that person, everything he or she ever thought, felt, experienced, did, and said. Even today, despite all the printed government records, TV news tapes, and biographies available, one could not know the *total* reality of, say, Richard Nixon or Ronald Reagan. Indeed, how could these individuals

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is based on chs. 1 and 6 of John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> More traditionally, one spoke of the quest “of” the historical Jesus; a major influence here is the title of the English translation of Albert Schweitzer’s classic *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung: The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1910; repr., 1968; the original title of Schweitzer’s work, first published in German in 1906, was *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* [Tübingen: Mohr]; since 1913 it has borne the title *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*). But the wording “The Quest of the Historical Jesus” can lead to a misunderstanding among the uninitiated (who is questing for whom? subjective or objective genitive?); hence the unambiguous “for.” James H. Charlesworth (*Jesus within Judaism*, ABRL [New York: Doubleday, 1988]) thinks the words “quest” and “search” are loaded, as though in a dark room we had lost something we might or might not find by fumbling around; he prefers the neutral term “Jesus research.” I agree with his point but despair of changing the speech habits of close to a century of scholars. In this essay “quest,” “search,” and “Jesus research” will be used interchangeably.

themselves—let alone anyone else—ever know their *total* reality, defined in such sweeping, all-encompassing terms?

2. Still, when it comes to modern public figures, the historian or biographer can usually assemble a “reasonably complete” picture. We will probably debate from now to doomsday the great talent and tragic flaws of Richard Nixon, but there is no debating the mountain of empirical data that public archives, military records, nightly newscasts, election tallies, presidential press conferences, Watergate tapes, congressional hearings, and presidential libraries supply *ad nauseam*. Wading through and interpreting the facts is a monumental task, but at least the facts are there. The “total reality” of Richard Nixon will continue to elude us as it eluded him. But we have and can hope to refine a “reasonably complete” portrait and record of the “real” Richard Nixon. Passionate and biased interpretations are inevitable, but the vast fund of verifiable facts does exercise some control over wild hypotheses. In this limited, sober sense, the “real” Richard Nixon—and any recent public figure—is in principle available to the historian. The real and the historical do not coincide, but there is considerable overlap.

3. Not so with Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus lived for roughly thirty-five years in first-century Palestine. Each of those years was filled with physical and psychological changes. Even before he began his public ministry, many of his words and deeds would have been witnessed by his family and friends, his neighbors and customers. In principle, these events were available at the time to the interested inquirer. Then, for the last three years or so of his life, much of what Jesus said and did occurred in public or at least before his disciples, especially those who traveled with him. Again, in principle, these events were recoverable at the time to a zealous inquirer.

And yet the vast majority of these deeds and words, the “reasonably complete” record of the “real” Jesus, is irrevocably lost to us today. This is no new insight of modern agnostic scholars. Traditionally Christianity has spoken of “the hidden years” of Jesus’ life—which amounted to all but three or four of them! The apocryphal gospels of the patristic period, mystical visions of medieval times, and modern speculation have sought to fill in the gap, but to no avail. The “real Jesus,” even in the Richard Nixon sense of a reasonably complete record of public words and deeds, is unknown and unknowable. The reader who wants to know the real Jesus should stop reading this essay right now, because the historical Jesus is neither the real Jesus nor the easy way to him. The real Jesus is not available and never will be. This is true not because Jesus did

not exist—he certainly did—but rather because the sources that have survived do not and never intended to record all or even most of the words and deeds of his public ministry—to say nothing of the rest of his life.

4. I emphasize this insight about the real Jesus not simply to revel in subtle scholastic distinctions or to set up a theological shell game I can then win on my own terms. The point I am making is true of most figures of ancient history. The life and ideas of Socrates or Pythagoras amounted to much more than we can know today. Indeed, the further back we go, usually the more meager the sources become and the less we can say. Many rulers of Babylon and Egypt are only names to us, although in their own day they loomed like giants and their impact was immense. An expert in Greco-Roman history once remarked to me that what we know with certitude about Alexander the Great can be fitted onto a few pages of print.<sup>3</sup> This simply reminds us that what really occurs in history is much broader than the history recoverable by a historian.<sup>4</sup>

5. Granted, some of the great figures of ancient history, such as Julius Caesar or Cicero, have left us a store of autobiographical writings and public records that allow some access to the “real” person. Hence we must distinguish from the mass of human beings in ancient history the special case of certain well-known public figures.<sup>5</sup> To take a clear example: in Marcus Aurelius (reigned 161–180 CE) we have the rare case of a Roman emperor who wrote down his innermost musings in

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<sup>3</sup> Some of the ancient biographers of Alexander the Great were themselves aware of the difficulty of conflicting sources and of the selectivity of their own presentations. For a sample of the ancient lives, see Diodorus Siculus, book 17 of his *Historical Library*, LCL 422 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984); Plutarch, “Alexander,” in *The Age of Alexander* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 252–334; and Arrian’s *The Campaigns of Alexander* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971). On the problem of historiography in the case of Alexander, see N. G. L. Hammond, *Three Historians of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); earlier fragmentary evidence is surveyed in L. Pearson, *The Lost Histories of Alexander the Great*, Philological Monographs 20 (New York: American Philological Association, 1960). For a recent biography, see A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); note the bibliography of both ancient sources and modern authors, pp. 295–314.

<sup>4</sup> On the application of this principle to the quest for the historical Jesus, see Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 67–71.

<sup>5</sup> To this extent, I must disagree with Marcus J. Borg’s assertion that “we can in fact know as much about Jesus as we can about any figure in the ancient world,” including Caesar (see his *Jesus: A New Vision* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987], 15 and 21 n. 29).

a book called *The Meditations*. This, plus large amounts of correspondence, official records, ancient histories, coins, and archaeology, allow the noted historian Anthony Birley to write a fairly full biography. Yet even here there are certain years in which it is unclear where Marcus was or what he was doing.<sup>6</sup>

Sir Moses Finley constantly warned us about the severe limitations historians face in studying Greco-Roman history, including even the long and glorious reign of Augustus.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Finley felt so strongly the lack of “hard” data, including reliable statistics, that he concluded that the study of ancient history is in no significant sense a science.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is wiser to distinguish between the “hard” sciences like chemistry and physics and the “soft” sciences, including the humanities, especially ancient history (softer, surely, than modern history). Ancient history is much less quantifiable, much more dependent on inference based on such rough rules of thumb as the best explanation available, the more or most probable explanation, particular criteria for judging historicity, and analogy.<sup>9</sup> At any rate, Finley’s basic caution is well advised. With

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). Complaints about the scarcity and ambiguity of sources are a common thread in most biographies of Roman emperors; see, e.g., Michael Grant, *Nero* (New York: Dorset, 1970), 14–15, 209–214; Anthony A. Barrett, *Caligula: The Corruption of Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), xv–xxiii, 244. Reading through Michael Grant’s *The Roman Emperors* (New York: Scribner’s, 1985) reminds us how little we know about many of the men who ruled the ancient Mediterranean world in the first Christian centuries.

<sup>7</sup> Moses I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models* (New York: Viking, 1985), 10–11.

<sup>8</sup> Finley, *Ancient History*, 27, 104.

<sup>9</sup> On this point, with reference to Jesus research, see the methodological discussion of Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 23–110. For more general methodological considerations on the justification of historical judgments, see C. Behan McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). In ch. 3, “Justifying Singular Descriptions: II Statistical Inferences” (45–73), McCullagh considers various mathematical formulas for quantifying historical probabilities—and the grave difficulty of applying such an approach thoroughly becomes obvious for ancient history in general and the fragmentary data on the historical Jesus in particular. Hence, I will content myself with such general judgments as “very probable,” “more probable,” “less probable,” “unlikely,” etc. To try to assign exact percentages to my assertions (e.g., very probable = 95–80 percent) and then to add, subtract, multiply, and divide percentages to arrive at the overall percentage of probability for a given judgment is to pretend to a mathematical accuracy that is not to be had when the data base is so meager.

I feel a similar unease with regard to the procedures of the Jesus Seminar sponsored by the Westar Institute of Sonoma, California (founded in 1985 by Robert Funk). A group of scholars met regularly to vote on whether Jesus actually said certain things contained in the gospels. Four categories were used: Jesus certainly said this, Jesus probably said this, Jesus probably did not say this, Jesus definitely did not say this. The aim

the exception of a relatively few great public figures, the “real” persons of ancient history—be they Hillel and Shammai or Jesus and Simon Peter—are simply not accessible to us today by historical research and never will be.<sup>10</sup>

I stress this point because scholars pursuing the Jesus of history often begin their treatments with the difficulties posed by the four canonical gospels and—especially if they are spiritual descendants of Rudolf Bultmann—with the danger of trying to legitimize faith by historical research. All that may be true, but it is necessary to begin one step further back: the difficulty of knowing anything about Jesus must be placed in the larger context of the difficulty of knowing anything about Thales, Apollonius of Tyana, or anyone else in the ancient world. David Noel Freedman has rightly pointed out that the same problem holds true for those engaged in Old Testament studies. He observes: “While no one questions that people like David and Solomon actually lived and reigned, there is not, to my knowledge, a single piece of evidence outside of the Bible to attest to their existence, much less anything about their noteworthy achievements. Neither one is mentioned in any record of any nation known to us.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, the problem is not unique to Jesus or the sources that narrate his story. Indeed, in comparison to the many shadowy figures of ancient history, it is surprising how much we can know about Jesus.

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of the project was an edition of the “five gospels” (including the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* from Nag Hammadi) which would print the sayings of Jesus in four colors (red, pink, gray, and black) to represent the four categories, ranging from certainly historical to certainly not. While these procedures both appeal to our democratic sympathies and give an air of scientific accuracy, I do not think they really add anything new to our knowledge. For over a century scholars have been exchanging opinions and papers as they debated the historicity of individual sayings of Jesus, formed various schools of thought, and then left some schools to form others. Gathering a particular group in one place to express their opinion by a vote and then printing the majority opinion in colors does not generate a fundamentally new method or new data. For the results, see Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge; New York: Macmillan, 1993); cf. also Robert W. Funk and The Jesus Seminar, *The Arts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> In one sense, the situations of Paul of Tarsus or Ignatius of Antioch come closer to those of Caesar or Marcus Aurelius in that Paul and Ignatius have both left us a number of letters written by themselves and containing autobiographical information. Needless to say, such information contains personal biases, but it nevertheless constitutes a uniquely privileged source of historical knowledge. In each case, we are aided further by biographical information (of varying quality) from later writers (Luke for Paul, Eusebius for Ignatius)—hence the paradox that the “real” Paul or “real” Ignatius is more accessible to the modern historian than is Jesus or Simon Peter.

<sup>11</sup> In a written communication to the author (letter dated Oct. 15, 1990).

To summarize the upshot of these various distinctions about “real” figures in history: (1) The total reality of a person is in principle unknowable—despite the fact that no one would deny that such a total reality did exist. This simply reminds us that all historical knowledge about human persons is limited by the very nature of the case. We may take some comfort from the thought that a good deal of the total reality of a person would be irrelevant and positively boring to historians even if it could be known. (2) For many public figures of modern history, the mounds of empirical data available make possible a “reasonably complete” portrait of the “real” person, while varying interpretations of the data naturally remain. (3) While the amount of source material is much less extensive, students of ancient history can sometimes reconstruct a reasonably complete portrait of a few great figures (e.g., Cicero, Caesar). (4) However, we lack sufficient sources to reconstruct a reasonably complete portrait for the vast majority of persons in ancient history; the “real” Thales or Apollonius of Tyana is simply beyond our grasp. It is in this last category that Jesus of Nazareth falls. We cannot know the “real” Jesus through historical research, whether we mean his total reality or just a reasonably complete biographical portrait. We can, however, know the “historical Jesus.”

### 1.2. *The Historical Jesus*

Having abandoned the naive hope of knowing the “real” Jesus by means of historical criticism, what do we mean when we say that we are pursuing the “historical Jesus” or the “Jesus of history”?<sup>12</sup> In brief, the Jesus of history is a modern abstraction and construct. By the Jesus of history I mean the Jesus whom we can “recover” and examine by using the scientific tools of modern historical research.<sup>13</sup> Since such research

<sup>12</sup> At times, a distinction between the two phrases, “the Jesus of history” and “the historical Jesus,” has been suggested. But in an area where many esoteric distinctions are already in play, I prefer to use the two terms interchangeably.

<sup>13</sup> This definition is not some arbitrary invention of mine; it is the commonly accepted one in present Jesus-of-history research. The same definition or its equivalent can be found in scholars who otherwise differ widely in their views, e.g., Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, 67; and James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, SBT 25 (London: SCM, 1959), 26. While Robinson (28–29) emphasizes—quite rightly—that “objective” historical research cannot grasp the peculiarly existential, human aspect of history (e.g., the stance and outlook from which a person acts, the understanding of existence “behind” what a person does), I am rather focusing on the frequent absence of even objective data when we try to investigate figures of ancient history. This difficulty is not one of principle but of fact: data that might once have been

arose only with the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century (Hermann Reimarus [1694–1768] being the first famous example of a “quester”), the quest for the historical Jesus is a peculiarly modern endeavor and has its own tangled history, from Reimarus to E. P. Sanders and lesser lights.<sup>14</sup> Of its very nature, this quest can reconstruct only fragments of a mosaic, the faint outline of a faded fresco that allows of many interpretations. We constantly have to be reminded that not only are there no DVDs or Sony cassette recordings of what Jesus said or did. For better or for worse, there are no Watergate tapes of Jesus’ trial before Pilate. Worse still, this marginal Jew in a marginal province at the eastern end of the Roman Empire left no writings of his own (as Cicero did), no archaeological monuments or artifacts (as Augustus did), nothing that comes directly from him without mediators. A moment’s reflection on

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available are not so today. Simon Peter knew a great deal more about the daily habits, sayings, and thoughts of Jesus than has been preserved in written documents. And what has not been preserved has been—in all probability—irretrievably lost.

<sup>14</sup> In the past it was almost *de rigueur* to begin any book on the historical Jesus with a history of modern research. Indeed, whole books have been dedicated to such a review. Besides Schweitzer’s *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, which summed up the entire history from the late eighteenth century (Reimarus) to the beginning of the twentieth (William Wrede), see the handy summary (from a conservative point of view) in Charles C. Anderson, *Critical Quests of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969); or still more schematically, John S. Kselman, “Modern New Testament Criticism,” in *Jerome Bible Commentary* 2 (New York: Prentice Hall, 1990), 7–20. A 116-page bibliography, introduced by a 111-page sketch of the chief questers, can be found in Warren S. Kissinger, *The Lives of Jesus* (New York: Garland, 1985). A more general bibliography on christology, including sections on the historical Jesus, is available in Leland Jennings White, *Jesus the Christ: A Bibliography* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1988). The most recent full review of literature since 1950 can be found in W. G. Kümmel’s *Dreissig Jahre Jesusforschung (1950–1980)*, BBB 60 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1985). This great scholar of Jesus research continues his work in recent volumes of *Theologische Rundschau* (see, e.g., “Jesusforschung seit 1981. I. Forschungsgeschichte, Methodenfragen,” *TR* 53 [1988]: 229–249). A useful annotated bibliography is supplied by Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research*, NTTS 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1989). Some trenchant critiques of the unexamined presuppositions of many “questers” can be found in Meyer’s *The Aims of Jesus* and in James P. Mackey’s *Jesus the Man and the Myth* (New York: Paulist, 1979), esp. 10–51. Further methodological considerations and caveats can be found in Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus von Nazaret: Botschaft und Geschichte*, HTKNT 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), 11–34; and Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 1–31.

It is perhaps symptomatic of a newer, different approach that E. P. Sanders does not begin his work *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) with a lengthy history of all research on the subject. Rather, in a “State of the Question” (23–58), he reviews and criticizes positions of major twentieth-century scholars. For those who would like to read the key works of major questers, these are available in English thanks to the *Lives of Jesus Series*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Philadelphia: Fortress Press).

these stark facts makes clear why my initial paradox has to be true: the historical Jesus is not the real Jesus, and vice versa. The historical Jesus may give us fragments of the “real” person, but nothing more.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the two terms, “real Jesus” and “historical Jesus,” are relatively clear-cut, even though some theologians like Hans Küng tend to confuse them.<sup>16</sup>

More ambiguous is the phrase “the earthly Jesus” or “Jesus during his life on earth.” While the four gospels do not and do not claim to portray the real Jesus with the full range of everything he ever said or did in public or before his disciples in private (see John 20:30; 21:25), and while they obviously do not provide a modern hypothetical reconstruction (the historical Jesus), they do present us with “the earthly Jesus,” i.e., a picture—however partial and theologically colored—of Jesus during his life on earth. The ambiguity of this term “earthly Jesus” lies in the fact that it can also be used, with different nuances, of the real Jesus and the historical Jesus: they too refer to Jesus on earth. The ambiguity is compounded by the fact that, to a theologian, the very phrase “earthly Jesus” may imply existence in heaven either before the incarnation or after the resurrection.<sup>17</sup> Because of this lack of clarity in the concept, I will not use “earthly Jesus” as a major category in this chapter.

One important ramification of these distinctions is that scholars should not write glibly that, in a given story, the gospels depict or fail to depict “the historical Jesus.” That is a hopeless anachronism. During most of their narrative (excluding John 1:1–18 and most resurrection appearances), the gospels portray Jesus on earth (in the sense I have

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<sup>15</sup> Hence the appropriateness of the title of John Dominic Crossan’s book, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).

<sup>16</sup> Of course, one must allow for the fact that Küng’s famous work *Christ sein* (*On Being a Christian*) was written for a wide audience. Nevertheless, in describing the Jesus we can know through historical-critical research, Küng interchanges “real” (*wirklich*), “true,” “original,” and “historical” (both *historisch* and *geschichtlich*) with abandon. This does not make for clear expression of thought, either in German or in English. For a striking example of this inter-change of terms, see his *Christ sein*, 6th ed. (Munich: Piper, 1975), 148–153 (ET: *On Being a Christian* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976], 156–161). (The reader should be warned that the English translation is not entirely reliable: e.g., the German phrase *Rückfrage nach Jesus*—roughly the equivalent of our “quest for the historical Jesus”—is regularly translated by the strange “counterquestion about Jesus.”)

<sup>17</sup> One could pursue this point further: some of the resurrection appearances present the risen Jesus as living and acting “on earth,” e.g., the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13–35; cf. Acts 1:1–5). In the Emmaus story, is the risen Jesus at the same time “earthly” insofar as he is interacting and conversing with others on earth?



just explained), not the historical Jesus.<sup>18</sup> To be sure, the gospels serve as the chief *sources* for our reconstruction of the historical Jesus; but to speak of the gospel writers as presenting or intending to present the historical Jesus transports them in an exegetical time machine to the Enlightenment.

### 1.3. *Historical and Historic*

Real, historical, earthly—these are the distinctions I shall use in an attempt to bring some terminological clarity into the murky debate about the historical Jesus. In doing this, I purposely choose not to lean on the classic distinction found in many German authors, who distinguish the “historical” (*historisch*) from the “historic” (*geschichtlich*).<sup>19</sup> The “historical” refers to the dry bare bones of knowledge about the past, with the researcher prescinding from any possible relevance to or influence on our present-day life and quest for meaning. Imagine, for instance, an expert in ancient Babylonian history, driven by nothing except a thirst for exactitude, trying to draw up a precise chronology of the reigning kings of Babylon in a given century. Such a “historical” study aims at the past as dead past, viewed with the cold eye of objective research, interested in pure, verifiable data for their own sake. The “historic,” in contrast, refers to the past as it is meaningful and challenging, engaging and thought-provoking for present-day men and women. Imagine, for instance, a black college student writing a thesis on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The young scholar might be quite careful in researching the facts; but the figure of King could never be for that student simply a datum embalmed in the past. Inevitably, the student would select, arrange, and underscore certain data insofar as they seemed to speak to the problems and promises of today.

*In principle*, this distinction of historical and historic can be applied to Jesus just as much as to any other great personage of the past. *In*

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<sup>18</sup> Curiously, Schillebeeckx uses “earthly” as a synonym for “real” after censuring its use as a synonym for “historical”; see *Jesus*, 67–68 (cf. the Dutch original, *Jezus, het verhaal van een levende*, 3rd ed. [Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1975], 54–55). (The reader is warned that the English translation of *Jesus* is often unreliable; hence the recourse to the Dutch original here.)

<sup>19</sup> Of course, in doing this German exegetes continue a learned word game played by many German theologians, namely, taking two words, one from a Teutonic root and the other from a Latin root—both of which are used more or less interchangeably in common speech—and creating a fine philosophical distinction between them.

theory, he can be made the object of a coolly distant scientific investigation, or he can be approached as the highly significant source and center of Christian thought and life down through the ages, a figure still worshiped by millions today.

Although this distinction of historical (*historisch*) and historic (*geschichtlich*) is often repeated in Jesus research (especially among those strongly influenced by the Bultmannian tradition), I remain doubtful of its usefulness for English-speaking scholars today, for four reasons. (1) After close to a century of use, the distinction remains ambiguous and varies in meaning or function from author to author, with even some Germans not observing it. (2) The distinction, while supposedly employed to facilitate objective research, often carries with it the extra baggage of theological or ideological agendas. (3) The twofold distinction does not do justice to the complexity of the situation. (4) While defensible in theory, it is useless in the real world—even the “real” world of scholars.

First of all, the distinction does not always mean the same thing or function in the same way even among the various writers who use it. Martin Kähler (1835–1912), who applied the distinction to Jesus in the nineteenth century, did so in defense of a particular kind of “critical pietism” in late nineteenth-century German Protestantism—and even he did not always observe his own distinction with strict rigor.<sup>20</sup> His

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<sup>20</sup> A good critical edition of Kähler’s pivotal work (first published in 1892), with annotations giving reactions by other scholars as well as Kähler’s responses and additions, can be found in Martin Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus*, ed. E. Wolf, Theologische Bücherei 2, 4th ed. (München: Kaiser, 1969). A translation, with a foreword by Paul Tillich and a helpful introduction by the translator, Carl E. Braaten, can be found in *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964). For further reflections on Kähler’s relation to more recent quests, see Carl E. Braaten, “Martin Kähler on the Historic Biblical Christ,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 79–105. On p. 84 of *Der sogenannte historische Jesus*, Kähler affirms the divinity of Jesus—although elsewhere he makes clear that theologians are not bound to the wording and concepts of conciliar dogmas and later systematic theology. As Otto Michel observes, Kähler thought his position on Jesus as “true God and true man” was “pre-dogmatic”; see Michel’s “Der ‘historische Jesus’ und das theologische Gewissensproblem [*sic*, probably for Gewissensproblem],” *EvT* 15 (1955): 349–363, esp. 352–353. For varying views on Kähler’s key categories of *geschichtlich* and *übergeschichtlich*, see Heinrich Leipold, *Offenbarung und Geschichte als Problem des Verstehens: Eine Untersuchung zur Theologie Martin Käblers* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1962); and Johannes Wirsching, *Gott in der Geschichte: Studien zur theologiegeschichtlichen Stellung und systematischen Grundlegung der Theologie Martin Käblers*, *Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus* 10.26 (München: Kaiser, 1963).

ultimate goal seems to have been the protection of basic traditional Christian teachings about Jesus Christ (e.g., true divinity and true sinless humanity) from the inroads of historical criticism.<sup>21</sup>

This was not exactly the driving concern of Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) when he took over the distinction in his twentieth-century synthesis of Christianity and Martin Heidegger's brand of existentialism.<sup>22</sup> Bultmann is one with Kähler in emphasizing the central Christian proclamation (kerygma) of Jesus' death and resurrection and in rejecting the historical Jesus as the basis or the content of Christian faith. Bultmann, however, pushes the distinction in a direction that Kähler would hardly have followed. For Bultmann, it makes no difference whether Jesus actually broke down and despaired on the cross;<sup>23</sup> the mere fact *that* Jesus died on the cross is sufficient for Christian faith, i.e., for the encounter between the believer and God.<sup>24</sup> While something can be known of Jesus' teaching, "we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian

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<sup>21</sup> It is often claimed that Kähler invented the historical/historic distinction. But, at least by way of negative reaction, he owes something to Wilhelm Herrmann's distinction between the basis of faith (everything about the earthly Jesus that is accessible to natural knowledge) and the content of faith (the exalted Christ); see Braaten, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, 14. Slenczka (*Geschichtlichkeit*, 281–295) points out that Herrmann's distinction is not to be equated with the distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith (275).

<sup>22</sup> See his *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1952), especially ch. 1, "The Message of Jesus," 3–32. A famous lecture on the subject became the monograph *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, 3rd ed. (Heidelberg: Winter/Universitätsverlag, 1962); a brief synopsis of the monograph appeared as "Das Verhältnis des urchristlichen Christuskerygmas zum historischen Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, 233–235; an English translation of the lecture can be found in "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, ed. Braaten and Harrisville, 15–42. An earlier form (first published in 1926) of Bultmann's thought on Jesus' teaching (with heavy existentialist overtones) is *Jesus and the Word* (London: Fontana [Collins], 1958). In general, note that at times Bultmann will use "kerygmatic" in place of "historic," an echo of his "kerygmatic" theology.

<sup>23</sup> "The greatest embarrassment to the attempt to reconstruct a portrait of Jesus is the fact that we cannot know how Jesus understood his end, his death. . . . We cannot tell whether or how Jesus found meaning in it. We may not veil from ourselves the possibility that he suffered a collapse" ("The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," 23–24).

<sup>24</sup> As Braaten points out ("Martin Kähler on the Historic Biblical Christ," 101), Kähler would not have agreed with Bultmann that the New Testament kerygma needs only the bare fact of Jesus and his cross. As R. Hermann points out in the article on Martin Kähler in the 3rd ed. of *RGG* (vol. 3, cols. 1082–1084), "a tendency to 'demythologize' was far from the mind of Kähler" (col. 1082).

sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary. . . .”<sup>25</sup> At this point, the reader may get the uneasy feeling that the historic Christ, the kerygmatic Christ, the Christ of faith exalted by Bultmann, looks suspiciously like a timeless gnostic myth or a Jungian archetype, no matter how much Bultmann stresses historicity and the identity of the crucified Jesus with the kerygma that is preached.<sup>26</sup>

Hence it is not surprising that some German theologians, notably Paul Althaus (1888–1966), sought to reclaim Kähler’s historical/historic distinction for a more conservative school of thought.<sup>27</sup> Yet, as Heraclitus observed, no one can put his foot into the same stream twice. Faced with the historical skepticism of Bultmann, and appropriating the “new quest” of Bultmann’s pupils (e.g., Günther Bornkamm),<sup>28</sup> Althaus

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<sup>25</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 14. In fairness to Bultmann, two points should be noted. First, in the text quoted, Bultmann is reacting against the excesses of the heavily psychologizing nineteenth-century “liberal lives” of Jesus. Second, Robinson (*A New Quest*, 19–22) detects a shift in Bultmann’s position, in a later article (“Allgemeine Wahrheit und christliche Verkündigung,” *ZTK* 54 [1957]: 244–254): Bultmann sees some continuity between Jesus and the Christian kerygma on the question of law and grace (251–254). Be that as it may, the article in no way changes his basic position on the *historisch/geschichtlich* distinction.

<sup>26</sup> Bultmann himself rejects the claim that he destroys the continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygma. Nevertheless, one is not encouraged when in a key essay he specifies that he will treat only the continuity between the historical Jesus and the primitive Christian proclamation “and not, between the historical Jesus and the Christ. The Christ of the kerygma is not a historical figure which could enjoy continuity with the historical Jesus” (“The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus,” 18). At the same time, even Bultmann’s great opponent Paul Althaus admits that Bultmann never went to the extreme of some theologians who, deeply influenced by German idealism, distinguished between the historical person of Jesus and the concept or ideal of a symbolic Christ: the former is not unconditionally tied to the latter and can ultimately be dispensed with. For Althaus’s criticism of Martin Werner, Fritz Buri, and like-minded theologians, see his *The So-Called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), 13–18.

<sup>27</sup> See Paul Althaus, *Der gegenwärtige Stand der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 6 (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1960), 3–19; idem, *The So-Called Kerygma and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Braaten and Harrisville, esp. 38–42, where he criticizes what he considers the undue narrowing of the meaning of *geschichtlich* in the Bultmannian camp.

<sup>28</sup> There is no reason to go into the precise positions of the various post-Bultmannians like Bornkamm and Conzelmann, since that would not alter my basic point, namely, the wide variation in meaning and use of the historical/historic distinction. For a representative sample of the post-Bultmannians, see Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Hans Conzelmann, “The Method of the Life-of-Jesus Research,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, ed. Braaten and Harrisville 54–68; idem, *Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973); Ernst Fuchs, *Studies of the Historical Jesus*, SBT 42 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964); Herbert Braun, “The Significance of Qumran

looks to historical research for the guarantee that the Christ of faith is not just another great myth of world religions.<sup>29</sup> So, while rejecting Bultmann's approach, Althaus takes a basically positive stance toward the new quest of post-Bultmannians like Bornkamm since, "by its very nature, Christian faith has a burning interest in what scientific history can know about Jesus."<sup>30</sup> One cannot imagine Kähler saying this about the German "liberal lives of Jesus" in the nineteenth century. Thus, although Althaus, in his opposition to Bultmann, seeks to remain the faithful interpreter of Kähler, the distinction between historical and historic receives a new twist.<sup>31</sup>

What makes the historical/historic distinction even more problematic is that some key scholars within twentieth-century German Lutheranism (and German Lutheranism was the source of the distinction) reject its validity or simply ignore it. Most curious is the treatment given the distinction by Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), the great chronicler and critic of the "liberal lives." On the one hand, Schweitzer shows no knowledge of Kähler or his work and does not utilize Kähler's distinction in his own presentation.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, while treating early twentieth-century disputes over the historicity of Jesus, Schweitzer notes in passing the position of G. Wobbermin, a professor at Breslau, who "goes off on a dangerous path."<sup>33</sup> Wobbermin's dangerous path is

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for the Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ*, 69–78; idem, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Man and His Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). Ernst Käsemann is widely acknowledged to be the "father" of the new quest among post-Bultmannians; his two most important essays on the topic are "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, SBT 41 (London: SCM, 1964), 15–47; and "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 23–65. See also his *Der Ruf der Freiheit*, 4th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1968). The standard survey of the "new quest" of the post-Bultmannians is James M. Robinson's *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*; note especially the section on "the ambiguous term 'historical Jesus'" on pp. 26–32.

<sup>29</sup> Note the telling use of *Gewähr* (guarantee, surety, warrant) on p. 14 of *Der gegenwärtige Stand*.

<sup>30</sup> Althaus, *De gegenwärtige Stand*, 19. Althaus hastens to add, in the spirit of Kähler, that such historical knowledge cannot be the basis of faith.

<sup>31</sup> Althaus implicitly admits his shift and the reasons for it in *The So-Called Kerygma*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> However, the great scholar of Jesus research, John Reumann, has suggested to me in an oral communication that Schweitzer may well have known of Kähler's distinction but purposely suppressed Kähler's work on the subject, so as not to disturb the pattern and development Schweitzer wanted to see in the history of Jesus research.

<sup>33</sup> The translations of the quotations about Wobbermin are my own and rest upon the text of Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, published in 1966 (vols. 77/78, 79/80; München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch), 520–521.

his “attempt” to distinguish between the historical (*historisch*) and the historic (*geschichtlich*) Jesus. The distinction is understood roughly in the sense Kähler proposed, but Schweitzer will have none of it. With sarcastic indignation he points out that the historic Jesus has been responsible for untold evils down through the ages, from the destruction of ancient culture to the very fact of the Middle Ages to Catholicism’s attempt to destroy “the many progressive achievements of the modern state.” Who would want to give up the historical Jesus for this historic figure?<sup>34</sup>

Closer to our own day, Joachim Jeremias (1900–79), one of the twentieth century’s greatest experts on the historical Jesus, simply refused to operate with the historical/historic distinction.<sup>35</sup> Thus, we are left asking ourselves: With such a variety of uses or nonuses among German scholars, is the distinction all that vital or useful among English-speaking scholars?

A second problem with the distinction is that, almost inevitably, it leads to a “good guy/bad guy” presentation. Either the historical Jesus is exalted in order to dethrone a Christ of faith that was merely a fraudulent creation of the church (so many from Reimarus to Hollenbach), or the historic Christ is extolled over the oscillating and contradictory reconstructions of the historical Jesus (so Kähler and followers, including many “dialectical” theologians like Barth and Bultmann after World War I). Granted, the distinction need not be accompanied by value judgments and theological programs, but such has been the case for about a century. All that seems to happen is that new agendas (e.g., liberation theology) replace the old ones; the game of good guy/bad guy continues.

A third problem is that the dichotomy of historical/historic, while applicable to most well-known figures of the past, does not do justice

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<sup>34</sup> In light of Schweitzer’s voluminous knowledge of the nineteenth-century literature on the historical Jesus, it is astounding that he was ignorant of Kähler’s contribution. One might speculate that, if it had not been for Bultmann’s recycling of Kähler’s distinction, the latter’s work might have been lost to large sectors of the theological world.

<sup>35</sup> Joachim Jeremias, “Der gegenwärtige Stand der Debatte um das Problem des historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. Ristow and Matthiae, 12–25 (ET: *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*, FBBS 13 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964]). At one point, the English translation misses a nuance when Jeremias implicitly equates *Historie* and *Geschichte*, instead of engaging in the Kähler/Bultmann distinction: “For the kerygma—God was in Christ and reconciled the world with himself—refers to a historical (*historisches*) event. God was revealing himself in a happening in history (*Geschichte*)” (“Der gegenwärtige Stand,” 19). (This way of putting things may also reflect the fact that, in ordinary German, *Historie* would not be used all that often, being largely an academic loanword from Latin.)

to the complexity of the case of Jesus. Norman Perrin<sup>36</sup> pointed out that a three-part distinction fits the special situation of Jesus better. (1) One can collect descriptive historical knowledge (“hard” knowledge) about a person of the ancient past called Jesus of Nazareth; this is the level of the “historical.” (2) One can then proceed to highlight and appropriate those aspects of this historical knowledge that would be significant for us today. This is the level of the “historic.” However, one could do the same thing in the case of Socrates, St. Augustine, or Sigmund Freud. Any great thinker and actor of the past can be studied on the level of cold disconnected facts and bare chronology or on the level of a meaningful synthesis of his or her thought and action, seen as relevant and challenging for people today. In that sense, one could be committed to the “program” of Socrates or Freud, one could be entranced and gripped by the person of Thomas More or Thomas Jefferson; in the same way one can be personally fascinated by the historic Jesus, whether one is a Jew, a Buddhist, or an agnostic. (3) Hence the second level must be carefully distinguished from a third level, namely faith-knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Christ, the faith-stance that prompts me to call Jesus my Lord and my Savior. This level, in the eyes of the believer, is the unique and exclusive territory of Jesus; unlike the first and second levels, it cannot be applied to other figures of ancient history.

Perrin’s three-part model seems to fit the complex situation better than the simple dichotomy of historical/historic,<sup>37</sup> but unfortunately it introduces further muddle into the already muddled terminology. As Perrin himself admits,<sup>38</sup> Kähler uses the term “historic” for what Perrin calls faith-knowledge, while Perrin restricts “historic” to the second-level knowledge

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It is characteristic that Jeremias did not regularly employ the adjective *geschichtlich* of Jesus when he described his own theological program; he rather spoke of the historical Jesus and the faith-witness of the early church. John Reumann has pointed out to me that this usage mirrors Jeremias’s own theological agenda: revelation is to be found in the historical Jesus, not in the later, post-Easter response of the Christian church.

For a full presentation of what Jeremias thought could be said about the historical Jesus, see his *New Testament Theology*, part 1, *The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1971). Interestingly, Küng has shown a similar distaste for a firm distinction between *historisch* and *geschichtlich*; see his *Christ sein*, 148–153.

<sup>36</sup> Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 234–238.

<sup>37</sup> For further comments on Perrin’s approach, see Amos N. Wilder, “Norman Perrin and the Relation of Historical Knowledge to Faith,” *HTR* 82 (1989): 201–211, with the literature cited there.

<sup>38</sup> Wilder, “Perrin,” 238.

of any past figure that is relevant to our existence today.<sup>39</sup> Complicating the picture even further is the fact that, actually, Kähler's discussion starts out with an existential meaning of "historic" similar to Perrin's second level, only to slide quickly into the use of "historic" for faith-knowledge of Jesus as the Lord (Perrin's third level).<sup>40</sup> The ambiguity inherent in the terminology thus stems from Kähler himself; indeed, it aroused strong objections in his own day.<sup>41</sup> Perrin's refinement, while justified in theory, only increases the confusion in practice.

Apart from these difficulties caused by the usage of Kähler and Perrin, there is a final problem in the distinction between "historical" and "historic" that makes its application to Jesus not very serviceable. The distinction presupposes that some scholars do or at least could study Jesus' life and teaching in detail without any interest in its impact on subsequent history or on thoughtful people today. While that may be theoretically possible in the University of Phnom Penh or for a visiting professor from Mars, is it really conceivable that a scholar in the western world—Christian, Jew, or agnostic—could approach a detailed study of the historical Jesus without a philosophical or religious interest in—or antipathy toward—the material under the microscope? Jesus continues to be studied in all parts of the world because Marxists, Buddhists, and agnostics are all intrigued—for very different reasons—by this enigmatic

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<sup>39</sup> It is intriguing that, while Perrin claims that his position is that of Bultmann, he admits that Bultmann was prepared "to describe almost all of the faith-knowledge in terms of historic knowledge" (Wilder, "Perrin," 240 n. 1). In effect, does this not grant that Bultmann's distinction was basically the twofold one of Kähler, not the threefold one Perrin is urging?

<sup>40</sup> It is remarkable how quickly Kähler leaps from the general sense of "historic," applicable to any person who has been influential in molding posterity, to the exclusivistic sense in which he applies the term to Jesus as Lord, whose influence in molding posterity consists precisely in the creation of the Easter faith in his disciples; see Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus*, 63–64. In a sense, Kähler is operating by way of theological analogy: from the use of "historic" for any influential figure of the past, relevant to us today, he moves to the uniquely influential figure of Jesus, relevant to Christianity as its only Lord. The linchpin of the analogy is that, in Jesus' case, his influence is the creation of a unique, exclusivistic faith. No doubt it is this "slide" which both opens up the possibility of a three-part distinction for Perrin and also creates difficulties for him.

<sup>41</sup> It is significant that Willibald Beyschlag, Otto Ritschl, and Ferdinand Kattenbusch all found Kähler's concept of the historic Christ objectionable because it seemed to put Jesus on the same level as, e.g., Francis of Assisi vis-à-vis later Franciscans. Kähler replied that Jesus' unique historic impact flows from the revelation of him as the Risen One; hence the historic Jesus is not to be compared with Francis of Assisi or Ignatius of Loyola as the founding fathers of the Franciscans or the Jesuits respectively. See the excerpts of the arguments in the footnotes in the German edition of Kähler's essay, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus*, 38–39 n. a.



Jew. As Bultmann never tired of saying, all of us come to the exegesis of scripture with our own presuppositions, biases, and interests. This amounts to admitting that our quest for the historical Jesus contains from the beginning something of an interest in the historic Jesus as well. Perrin's first and second levels are hopelessly intertwined in the flesh-and-blood world of human scholars.

What can and must be bracketed for the time being, for the sake of the scientific method employed, is the third level, i.e., faith-knowledge. Bracketed, I say, not betrayed. We abstract from Christian faith because we are involved in the hypothetical reconstruction of a past figure by purely scientific means: empirical data from ancient documents, sifted by human minds operating by inference, analogy, and certain specific criteria. Both method and goal are extremely narrow and limited; the results do not claim to provide either a substitute for or the object of faith. For the moment, we are prescinding from faith, not denying it, although later on a correlation between our historical quest and the stance of faith may be possible. For the time being, we will be focusing on the theoretical construct I have called "the historical Jesus," with the realization that in practice one cannot adequately disentangle him from the "historic Jesus." In reality, the one flows too much into the other. While the scholar may try to prescind from a specifically Christian or ecclesiastical commitment, a more general "existential commitment," a concern about what Jesus may mean for human life today, necessarily energizes the historical quest.

We come back to where we started: the historical Jesus is not the real Jesus, but only a fragmentary hypothetical reconstruction of him by modern means of research.

## 2. *Criteria: How Do We Decide What Comes from Jesus?*

I have elsewhere argued that, in our quest for the historical Jesus, we are dependent, for the most part, on the four canonical gospels.<sup>42</sup> Since these gospels are suffused with the Easter faith of the early church and were written from forty to seventy years after the events narrated, we are left asking: How can we distinguish what comes from Jesus (Stage I, roughly 28–30 CE) from what was created by the oral tradition of the early church (Stage II, roughly 30–70 CE) and what was produced

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<sup>42</sup> See Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 41–166.

by the editorial work (redaction) of the evangelists (Stage III, roughly 70–100 CE)?<sup>43</sup> All too often, popular books on Jesus pick and choose among the gospel stories in a haphazard way, the authors deciding at any given moment that what strikes them as reasonable or plausible is therefore historical.<sup>44</sup> More technical books usually enunciate rules for judging the gospel material (“criteria of historicity”), but the rules sometimes seem to be forgotten when the gospel pericopes are treated in detail.<sup>45</sup> In this section, I will spell out which rules of judgment (i.e., “criteria”) are helpful in reaching a decision about what material comes from the historical Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

Granted the nature of ancient history in general and the nature of the gospels in particular, the criteria of historicity will usually produce judgments that are only more or less probable; certainty is rarely to be had.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, since in the quest for the historical Jesus almost anything is possible, the function of the criteria is to pass from the merely possible

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<sup>43</sup> This is a schematic statement of the problem. The actual situation was naturally much more complex: e.g., some disciples of Jesus may have begun to collect and arrange sayings of Jesus even before his death (Stage I), and the oral tradition continued to develop during the period of the redaction of the gospels (Stage III).

<sup>44</sup> Even the fine book by the historian Michael Grant does not entirely escape this tendency; see his *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Scribner's, 1977); the appendix outlining his approach to criteria (197–204) is disappointing. Still weaker in the area of criteria is James Breech's *The Silence of Jesus: The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). While the book does at times use familiar criteria (embarrassment, discontinuity), the argument largely depends on scholarly consensus combined with aesthetic intuition about literature. The results cannot help but be highly subjective.

<sup>45</sup> This is even the case with the judicious work of Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*. The first part of the book (23–113) spells out method and “indices” of judgment with great care; but, as the book proceeds, more and more of the redactional theology of the evangelists is declared to come from the historical Jesus, leaving one wondering how useful the indices really are.

<sup>46</sup> René Latourelle (“Critères d'authenticité historique des Evangiles,” *Greg* 55 [1974]: 609–637, esp. 618) rightly warns against confusing criteria with proof. Criteria are rules or norms that are applied to the gospel material to arrive at a judgment.

<sup>47</sup> In the quest for the historical Jesus, sometimes certainty is more easily had about “secondary” circumstances than about the words and deeds of Jesus himself. For example, the converging evidence of the four gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, Josephus, Philo, Tacitus, and the Caesarea Maritima inscription (found in 1961) makes it at least morally, if not physically, certain that Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea in 28–30 CE. Even here, though, moral certitude is really just a very high degree of probability. The fact of Pilate's governorship is not absolutely or metaphysically certain, for it is not theoretically or metaphysically impossible that Josephus is mistaken or that the references to Pilate in Philo are Christian interpolations or that the Caesarea Maritima inscription is a fraud. But since any of these possibilities (not to mention all of them together) is so extremely unlikely, we are justified in considering

to the really probable, to inspect various probabilities, and to decide which candidate is most probable. Ordinarily, the criteria cannot hope to do more.<sup>48</sup>

Scholars seem to vie with one another to see who can compile the longest list of criteria.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes a subtle apologetic motive may be at

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our conclusion morally certain, especially since, in daily life, we constantly make firm theoretical judgments and practical decisions on the basis of high probability. Any talk about “proof” of authentic Jesus material must be understood within this context of a range of probabilities.

<sup>48</sup> Sometimes scholars seek to distinguish between “criteria” and “indices” or even to substitute the word “index” for “criterion”; see, e.g., Latourelle, “Critères d’authenticité historique des Evangiles”; Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 86; and Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1981), 86–96, esp. 86–87; Francesco Lambiasi, *Lautenticità storica dei vangeli*, 2nd ed., Studi biblici 4 (Bologna: EDB, 1986), 189–190. However, scholars favoring some sort of distinction do not always agree among themselves as to what constitutes the distinction. Sometimes “criterion” indicates what allows a fairly certain judgment, while “index” suggests a lower level of probability (so Latourelle; Lambiasi adds a third category, namely “motive,” an argument that indicates verisimilitude). Others use indices for individual observations relevant to the question of authenticity, while criteria refer to more general rules (so Riesner). Meyer prefers to drop the language of “criteria” in favor of “indices.” Personally, I see no great value in the various distinctions or changes in terminology. My own view is that our judgments about authenticity deal for the most part with a range of probabilities; I do not claim that the use of the criteria I propose will generate absolute certitude. Hence, I see no need to distinguish “criteria” from “indices”; the former term will be used throughout what follows.

<sup>49</sup> The reader who follows up the bibliographical references will soon discover a wearisome repetition in much of the literature. I have therefore restricted the bibliography to a few contributions that say all that need be said on the issue. In addition to the works of Latourelle, Riesner, and Meyer, see Charles E. Carlston, “A Positive Criterion of Authenticity,” *BR* 7 (1962): 33–44; Harvey K. McArthur, “A Survey of Recent Gospel Research,” *Int* 18 (1964): 39–55, esp. 47–51; idem, “The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research,” *ExpTim* 82 (1970–1971): 116–119; William O. Walker, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Discussion of Methodology,” *ATR* 51 (1969): 38–56; Morna D. Hooker, “Christology and Methodology,” *NTS* 17 (1970–1971): 480–487; idem, “On Using the Wrong Tool,” *Theology* 75 (1972): 570–581; Rudolf Pesch, *Jesu Ureigene Taten?* QD 52 (Freiburg: Herder, 1970), esp. 135–158; D. G. A. Calvert, “An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus,” *NTS* 18 (1971–1972): 209–219; Fritzleo Lentzen-Deis, “Kriterien für die historische Beurteilung der Jesusüberlieferung in den Evangelien,” in *Rückfrage nach Jesus*, QD 63 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 78–117; Neil J. McLeney, “Authenticating Criteria and Mark 7:1–23,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 431–460; Francesco Lambiasi, *Criteri di autenticità storica dei Vangeli sinottici: Rassegna storica e tentativo di sistematizzazione dei contributi di criteriologia degli ultimi venti anni (1954–1974)* (diss.; Rome: Gregorian University, 1974); idem, *Lautenticità storica dei vangeli*; idem, *Gesù di Nazaret: Una verifica storica*, *Fame della Parola* (Monferrato: Marietti, 1983), 63–68; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 81–100; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Methodology in the Study of the Aramaic Substratum of Jesus’ Sayings in the New Testament,” in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, ed. J. Dupont, BETL 40 (Leuven: Leuven University Press;

work: so many criteria surely guarantee the results of our quest! More sober scholars, instead, are no doubt seeking as many controls as possible over the difficult material. Often, however, what is naturally a single criterion is “chopped up” to create a number of criteria; and what are at best secondary, if not dubious, criteria are mixed in with truly useful ones. I agree with Occam that categories are not to be multiplied without necessity. Hence I prefer to distill five “primary” criteria from the many suggested. After we have looked at these five, we will consider five “secondary” (some would say “dubious”) criteria; some of these secondary criteria may at times offer post-factum confirmation of decisions we have already reached on the basis of the five primary criteria.

## 2.1. *Primary Criteria*

### 2.1.1. *The Criterion of Embarrassment*

The criterion of “embarrassment” (so Schillebeeckx) or “contradiction” (so Meyer) focuses on actions or sayings<sup>50</sup> of Jesus that would have embarrassed or created difficulty for the early church. The point of the

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Gembloux: Duculot, 1975), 73–102; Ernst Käsemann, “Die neue Jesus-Frage,” in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, ed. J. Dupont, BETL 40 (Leuven: Leuven University; Gembloux: Duculot, 1975), 47–57; D. Lührmann, “Die Frage nach Kriterien für ursprüngliche Jesusworte—eine Problemskizze,” in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, ed. Dupont, 59–72; David L. Mealand, “The Dissimilarity Test,” *SJT* 31 (1978): 41–50; Helge Kjaer Nielsen, “Kriterien zur Bestimmung authentischer Jesusworte,” *SNTU* 4 (1979): 5–26; Robert H. Stein, “The ‘Criteria’ for Authenticity,” in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 1, ed. R. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 225–263; Reginald Fuller, “The Criterion of Dissimilarity: The Wrong Tool?” in *Christological Perspectives: Festschrift H. K. McArthur*, ed. R. Berkey and S. Edwards (New York: Pilgrim, 1982), 42–48; Giuseppe Ghiberti, “Überlegungen zum neueren Stand der Leben-Jesu-Forschung,” *MTZ* 33 (1982): 99–115; E. Earle Ellis, “Gospels Criticism: A Perspective on the State of the Art,” in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher, WUNT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1983), 27–54; Breech, *The Silence of Jesus*, 9, 22–26, 66–85; Dennis Polkow, “Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 26 (1987): 336–356; M. Eugene Boring, “The Historical-Critical Method’s ‘Criteria of Authenticity’: The Beatitudes in Q and Thomas as a Test Case,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Rejected Gospels*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, *Semeia* 44 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 9–44. For a history of the development of thought about the criteria, see Lambiasi, *L'autenticità storica dei vangeli*, 19–110.

<sup>50</sup> While the criteria are usually aimed at the sayings of Jesus in particular, it must be remembered that they can also be applied to the actions of Jesus. In some forms of the quest, the actions of Jesus and their relation to his sayings are almost ignored. Morton Smith (*Jesus the Magician* [New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978]), E. P. Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*), and Joseph A. Fitzmyer (“Methodology,” 73) rightly protest against this one-sided emphasis. As Nielsen (“Kriterien,” 21) notes, the tradition of words and the tradition of works can act as a reciprocal check. For one reason why the sayings tradition tends to be emphasized, see Lührmann, “Die Frage,” 64–65.

criterion is that the early church would hardly have gone out of its way to create material that only embarrassed its creator or weakened its position in arguments with opponents. Rather, embarrassing material coming from Jesus would naturally be either suppressed or softened in later stages of the gospel tradition, and often such progressive suppression or softening can be traced through the four gospels.<sup>51</sup>

A prime example is the baptism of the supposedly superior and sinless Jesus by his supposed inferior, John the Baptist, who proclaimed “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”<sup>52</sup> Mysterious, laconic, stark Mark recounts the event with no theological explanation as to why the superior sinless one submits to a baptism meant for sinners (Mark 1:4–11). Matthew introduces a dialogue between the Baptist and Jesus prior to the baptism; the Baptist openly confesses his unworthiness to baptize his superior and gives way only when Jesus commands him to do so in order that God’s saving plan may be fulfilled (Matt 3:13–17, a passage marked by language typical of the evangelist). Luke finds a striking solution to the problem by narrating the Baptist’s imprisonment by Herod before relating the baptism of Jesus; Luke’s version never tells us who baptized Jesus (Luke 3:19–22). The radical Fourth Evangelist, John, locked as he is in a struggle with latter-day disciples of the Baptist who refuse to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, takes the radical expedient of suppressing the baptism of Jesus by the Baptist altogether; the event simply never occurs in John’s Gospel. We still hear of the Father’s witness to Jesus and the Spirit’s descent upon Jesus, but we are never told when this theophany occurs (John 1:29–34). Quite plainly, the early church was “stuck with” an event in Jesus’ life that it found increasingly embarrassing, that it tried to explain away by various means, and that John the Evangelist finally erased from his gospel. It is highly unlikely that the church went out of its way to create the cause of its own embarrassment.

A similar case is the affirmation by Jesus that, despite the gospels’ claim that he is the Son who can predict the events at the end of time, including

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<sup>51</sup> This phenomenon is sometimes listed as the separate criterion of either “modification” or “tendencies of the developing synoptic tradition.” What I think valid in these two suggested criteria I have subsumed under the criterion of embarrassment. For the criterion of modification, see Walker, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 48; Boring, “The Historical-Critical Method’s ‘Criteria of Authenticity,’” 21. The criterion is usually attributed to Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, SBT 41 (London: SCM, 1964), 15–47, esp. 37.

<sup>52</sup> On the baptism of Jesus as a test case for the criterion of embarrassment, see Breech, *The Silence of Jesus*, 22–24.

his own coming on the clouds of heaven, he does not know the exact day or hour of the end. Almost at the conclusion of the eschatological discourse in Mark 13, Jesus says: "But concerning that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). It is not surprising that a few later Greek manuscripts simply dropped the words "nor the Son" from the saying in Mark.<sup>53</sup> A significantly larger number of manuscripts omit "nor the Son" in the parallel verse in Matthew (Matt 24:36), which was more widely used in the patristic church than Mark—hence the desire to suppress the embarrassing phrase especially in Matthew.<sup>54</sup> The saying is simply not taken over by Luke. In John, not only is there nothing similar, but the Fourth Evangelist goes out of his way to stress that Jesus knows all things present and future and is never taken by surprise (see, e.g., John 5:6; 6:6; 8:14; 9:3; 11:11–15; 13:1–3, 11). Once again, it is highly unlikely that the church would have taken pains to invent a saying that emphasized the ignorance of its risen Lord, only to turn around and seek to suppress it.

An intriguing corollary arises from these cases of "embarrassment." All too often the oral tradition of the early church is depicted as a game of "anything goes," with charismatic prophets uttering anything or everything as the words of the Lord Jesus and storytellers creating accounts of miracles and exorcisms according to Jewish and pagan models. The evangelists would simply have crowned this wildly creative process by molding the oral tradition according to their own redactional theology. One would get the impression that throughout the first Christian generation there were no eyewitnesses to act as a check on fertile imaginations, no original-disciples-now-become-leaders who might exercise some control over the developing tradition, and no striking deeds and sayings of Jesus that stuck willy-nilly in people's memories. The fact that embarrassing material is found as late as the redaction of the gospels reminds us that beside a creative thrust there was also a conservative force in the gospel tradition.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, so conservative was this force that a string of

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<sup>53</sup> The few manuscripts that omit "nor the Son" in Mark include codex X (tenth century).

<sup>54</sup> The manuscripts that drop "nor the Son" in the Matthean version of the saying include the codices K, L, W, and the vast majority of later texts; the first scribe who sought to correct this text in codex Sinaiticus also omitted the phrase.

<sup>55</sup> As Stein ("The 'Criteria' for Authenticity," 227) notes, another indication of the conservative force of the Jesus tradition is that several of the major problems that the early church encountered never show up in the sayings of Jesus; a glaring case is the absence of any explicit pronouncement of Jesus on the question of circumcision

embarrassing events (e.g., baptism by John, betrayal by Judas, denial by Peter, crucifixion by the Romans) called forth agonized and varied theological reflection, but not, in most cases, convenient amnesia.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, the criterion of embarrassment has an importance for the historian far beyond the individual data it may help verify.

Like all the criteria we will examine, however, the criterion of embarrassment has its limitations and must always be used in concert with the other criteria. One built-in limitation to the criterion of embarrassment is that clear-cut cases of such embarrassment are not numerous in the gospel tradition; and a full portrait of Jesus could never be drawn with so few strokes. Another limitation stems from the fact that what we today might consider an embarrassment to the early church was not necessarily an embarrassment in its own eyes. A prime example is Jesus' "cry of dereliction" from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46; the words are a citation of Ps 22:1). At first glance, this seems a clear case of embarrassment; the unedifying groan is replaced in Luke by Christ's trustful commendation of his spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46) and in John by a cry of triumph, "It is accomplished!" (John 19:30).

But the matter is not so simple. True, the cry of dereliction does not fit the later theological agendas of Luke or John. But form-critical studies of the passion narrative show that the earliest stages of the passion tradition used the Old Testament psalms of lamentation, especially the psalms of the suffering just man, as a primary tool for theological interpretation of the narrative.<sup>57</sup> By telling the story of Jesus' passion in the words of these

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for Gentiles. In a letter to me dated Oct. 13, 1990, David Noel Freedman points out an Old Testament analogy. From the viewpoint of the Deuteronomistic Historian(s), Hezekiah and Josiah were the two best kings of Judah after David. Their military defeats, which raise questions about Yahweh's rewarding of the just, are not denied but rather explained theologically in somewhat contorted fashion.

<sup>56</sup> My proviso "in most cases" takes cognizance of the Fourth Gospel's suppression of the baptism of Jesus.

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Collins, Fontana, 1965), 96–103. Eduard Schweizer (*Lordship and Discipleship*, SBT 28 [Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1960], 34) holds that "to the early church the first book of the Passion of Jesus was formed by the Psalms of the suffering of the Righteous One. This is even true of the Gospel according to John. . . ." While Lothar Ruppert criticizes Schweizer for an undifferentiated, homogenized treatment of Old Testament, pseudepigraphic, and rabbinic texts, his own thesis supports the basic point I am making. See Ruppert's *Jesus als der leidende Gerechte?* SBS 59 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1972), 58: "... the motif of the suffering just man is dominant in the older form of the Passion Narrative. . . . The motif points us . . . to the tradition of the primitive community." This monograph is in turn an expanded

psalms, the narrative presented Jesus as the one who fulfilled the Old Testament pattern of the just man afflicted and put to death by evildoers, but vindicated and raised up by God. Allusions to, rather than direct quotations of, these psalms are woven throughout the passion narrative. A good example is the dividing of Jesus' garments. The words of Ps 22:19 are made part of the narrative in Mark 15:24, Matt 27:35, and Luke 23:34; only John marks off the words as a citation of scripture (John 19:24).

Therefore, it is not very surprising, from a form-critical point of view, that the dramatic first words of Psalm 22 supply the climax of the crucifixion and Jesus' last words in Mark's gospel. The cry is by no means so unedifying or even scandalous as moderns might think. The Old Testament psalms of lamentation regularly direct forceful complaints to God; their strong—to our ears, irreverent—address to God expresses neither doubt nor despair, but the pain of one who fully trusts that a strangely silent God can act to save if he so chooses. The very bitterness of the complaint paradoxically reaffirms the closeness the petitioner feels to this God he dares confront with such boldness. From the Babylonian exile to Auschwitz, pious Jews have used the words of Psalm 22 and other laments without being accused by their fellow religionists of impiety or despair.

Granted the roots of the passion narrative in the psalms of lamentation, as well as the bold address to God in those psalms—well understood by early Christian Jews but often misunderstood since—there is no reason for thinking that the earliest Christians (Jews who knew their scriptures well) would have found the “cry of dereliction” at all embarrassing. Whether or not Jesus actually spoke Ps 22:1 on the cross, the criterion of embarrassment, taken in isolation, cannot establish the historicity of those words. It is not impossible that all of the “seven last words”—including the “cry of dereliction”—represent the theological interpretation of the early church and the evangelists. The point here is that the criterion of embarrassment—like any other criterion—must not be invoked facily or in isolation.

### 2.1.2. *The Criterion of Discontinuity*

Closely allied to the criterion of embarrassment,<sup>58</sup> the criterion of discontinuity (also labeled dissimilarity, originality, or dual irreducibility) focuses

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form of the last chapter of another work by Ruppert, *Der leidende Gerechte*, FB 5 (Würzburg: Echter/KBW, 1972). Rudolf Pesch has accepted this theory in his treatment of the passion narrative in Mark; see his *Das Markusevangelium. II. Teil*, HTKNT 2.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 25.

<sup>58</sup> Allied, but not reducible to discontinuity; in this I disagree with Polkow, “Method and Criteria,” 341.



on words or deeds of Jesus that cannot be derived either from Judaism at the time of Jesus or from the early church after him.<sup>59</sup> Examples often given are his sweeping prohibition of all oaths (Matt 5:34, 37; but cf. Jas 5:12), his rejection of voluntary fasting for his disciples (Mark 2:18–22 pars.), and possibly his total prohibition of divorce (Mark 10:2–12 par.; Luke 16:18 par.).

This criterion is at once the most promising and the most troublesome. Norman Perrin hails it as the fundamental criterion, the basis of all reconstructions, since it gives us an assured minimum of material to work with.<sup>60</sup> But the criterion is not without its detractors. Morna Hooker complains that the criterion presupposes what we do not possess: a sure and full knowledge of what Judaism at the time of Jesus and Christianity right after him were like, and what they could or would not say.<sup>61</sup>

Her objection does remind us of the healthy modesty required of any historian delving into the religious scene of first-century Palestine. Yet historical-critical work of the last two centuries has made notable advances in our understanding of first-century Judaism and Christianity. Moreover, one cannot overlook the glaring difference between knowledge about Jesus on the one hand and knowledge about first-century Judaism and Christianity on the other. We do have first-century documents coming directly from the latter movements—Qumran, Josephus, and Philo for Judaism, most of the New Testament for Christianity—to say nothing of important archaeological finds. We have no such documents coming directly from Jesus. Indeed, Professor Hooker's own work on the Son of Man title presupposes that we know something about early Judaism and Christianity and can apply such knowledge to outstanding problems. No doubt our present-day judgments will need correction by future generations of scholars. But if we were to wait until we possessed a fullness of knowledge that excluded later revision, we would postpone all New Testament scholarship until the parousia.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> In his masterful essay ("The Historical-Critical Method's 'Criteria of Authenticity,'" 17–21), Boring highlights the methodological problem of whether we should speak of material that *can* be derived from Judaism or Christianity or material that *must* be so derived. I think it is preferable to speak in terms of "can."

<sup>60</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 39–43.

<sup>61</sup> Hooker, "Christology and Methodology," 480–487; idem, "On Using the Wrong Tool," 570–581. Ellis ("Gospels Criticism," 31) complains that the criterion of discontinuity assumes "that a Gospel traditioner or a Christian prophetic oracle could not have used a unique idea or expression. . . ."

<sup>62</sup> For critiques of Hooker's position, see Mealand, "The Dissimilarity Test," 41–50; Nielsen, "Kriterien," 10–11.

A more serious objection is that the criterion of discontinuity, instead of giving us an assured minimum about Jesus, winds up giving us a caricature by divorcing Jesus from the Judaism that influenced him and from the church that he influenced. Jesus was a first-century Jew whose deeds and sayings the early church revered and handed on.<sup>63</sup> A complete rupture with religious history just before or just after him is a priori unlikely. Indeed, if he had been so “discontinuous,” unique, cut off from the flow of history before and after him, he would have been unintelligible to practically everyone. To be an effective teacher (which Jesus seems to have been by almost every scholar’s admission) means adapting oneself to the concepts and positions of one’s audience, even if one’s purpose is to change those concepts and positions. No matter how original Jesus was, to be a successful teacher and communicator he would have had to submit himself to the constraints of communication, the constraints of his historical situation.<sup>64</sup> To paint a portrait of Jesus completely divorced from or opposed to first-century Judaism and Christianity is simply to place him outside of history.

Imagine, for the sake of argument, that in the sixteenth century Martin Luther had delivered all his teachings orally and that they had been written down only later on by his disciples. If we excluded from the record of Luther’s words and deeds everything that could be paralleled in late medieval Catholic authors before him or in seventeenth-century Lutheran theologians after him, how much would remain—and would it give anything like a representative portrait of Luther?

Hence, while the criterion of discontinuity is useful, we must guard against the presupposition that it will automatically give us what was central to or at least fairly representative of Jesus’ teaching. By focusing

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<sup>63</sup> The emphasis on Jesus’ connections with the Judaism of his time is common in scholarship today and is well documented by Daniel J. Harrington, “The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing Some Problems,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 1–13. It is curious that even skeptical scholars use the language of “handing on the Jesus tradition” and engage in tradition criticism. Yet if there really was a complete rupture in history between Jesus and the earliest Christians, there can be no talk of handing on tradition. However one defines the exact relationship between Jesus and the early church, it is a fact of history, disputed by almost no scholar, that shortly after the death of Jesus some Jews, including people who had been his closest followers during his public ministry, gathered together to revere and celebrate him as Messiah and Lord, to recall and hand on his teachings, and to spread his teachings among other Jews.

<sup>64</sup> This point is argued at length by A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982); see in particular 1–10. The failure to appreciate this point is one of the weaknesses of Breech’s *The Silence of Jesus* (see, e.g., 10).

narrowly upon what may have been Jesus' "idiosyncrasies," it is always in danger of highlighting what was striking but possibly peripheral in his message.<sup>65</sup> Especially with this criterion, complementary and balancing insights from other criteria are vital.

Of course, the same need for balance and correction holds true for the emphasis on Jesus' historical continuity with Judaism and early Christianity. In the case of Judaism in particular, we always have to pose the question: With what sort or branch or tendency of Judaism was Jesus "continuous" in a given saying or action? Moreover, just as we are not to decide that Jesus *must* have been discontinuous with the Judaism of his day in this or that matter, so we cannot decide a priori that he *must* have been in agreement with Judaism in all things. History does have its Luthers and Spinozas. One is surprised, for instance, to read E. P. Sanders' summary judgment on the historicity of Jesus' statement that all foods are clean (Mark 7:15). Without going into detailed arguments, Sanders simply declares: "In this case the saying attributed to Jesus... appears to me to be too revolutionary to have been said by Jesus himself."<sup>66</sup> In a sense, Sanders simply takes Perrin's view of the primacy of the criterion of discontinuity and stands it on its head. Instead of "if it is discontinuous, it must be from Jesus," we now have "if it is discontinuous, it cannot be from Jesus." Obviously, dogmatism in either direction must give way to a careful testing of claims in each case.

A further problem that often bedevils the criterion of discontinuity is a terminological one. Scholars will claim that this criterion isolates what is "unique" to Jesus. "Uniqueness" is a slippery concept in historical investigation. In some sense, Beethoven may be hailed as a "unique genius" in music, but that hardly means that individual aspects of his music cannot be found in composers like Bach before him or Mahler after him. Indeed, while it is hard enough for an individual like Beethoven to be "uniquely" different from anyone who has preceded him, it is asking far too much to require as well that he be "uniquely" different from all who follow. The gifted individual could hardly control that, and the more outstanding he was, the more likely he would be to

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<sup>65</sup> So rightly Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," 48: "Unique features are not necessarily the most characteristic features..."; cf. Boring, "The Historical-Critical Method's 'Criteria of Authenticity,'" 21. We might add that even what was strikingly characteristic about Jesus' message may not have been at the very heart of his message.

<sup>66</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 28.

have imitators.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps Beethoven's uniqueness is to be located instead in the special configuration of his personality, talent, production, and career, seen as a whole in a particular historical context, rather than in any one aspect of his work, seen in isolation.

Something similar might be said of the uniqueness of Jesus. When dealing with an individual saying or deed of Jesus, perhaps it is better to speak of what is "strikingly characteristic" or "unusual" in Jesus' style of speaking or acting, instead of claiming uniqueness at every turn. This distinction is especially important when we treat such characteristic phrases as "Amen, I say to you" or "Abba" addressed to God in prayer. Since we are not terribly well informed about popular Jewish-Aramaic religious practices and vocabulary in early first-century Galilee, modesty in advancing claims is advisable. Similarly, when we deal with the public actions of Jesus, it may be wiser to speak of "the sort of things Jesus did" (e.g., exorcisms, faith healings) instead of asserting that a particular story tells us precisely what Jesus did on one particular occasion. The same distinction can be applied to the sayings tradition taken as a whole. We can have some hope of learning the basic message of Jesus, the "kind of thing" he usually or typically said (the *ipsissima vox*).<sup>68</sup> Rarely if ever can we claim to recover his exact words (the *ipsissima verba*).

### 2.1.3. *The Criterion of Multiple Attestation*

The criterion of multiple attestation (or "the cross section") focuses on those sayings or deeds of Jesus that are attested in more than one independent literary source (e.g., Mark, Q, Paul, John) and/or in more than one literary form or genre (e.g., parable, dispute story, miracle story, prophecy, aphorism).<sup>69</sup> The force of this criterion is increased if

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<sup>67</sup> This problem was pointed out to me in a letter by David Noel Freedman, dated Oct. 15, 1990. For Freedman, to be unique, "it would be enough to be markedly different from those who preceded. What happened afterwards would not affect that status."

<sup>68</sup> See Stein, "The 'Criteria' for Authenticity," 228–229.

<sup>69</sup> The qualification "independent" is important. The mere fact that Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah is recorded in Mark, Matthew, and Luke does not satisfy the criterion of multiple attestation, since both Matthew and Luke are dependent on Mark for the basic narrative (though Matthew may be relying on a separate tradition for Jesus' praise and commission of Peter in 16:17–19). There is only one *independent* source for the core of the story. If the focus were broadened to "some sort of confession that Peter addresses to Jesus at a critical moment in the public ministry," then John 6:66–71 could be used; but we could no longer speak of Peter's confession of faith in Jesus precisely as the Messiah; both the location and the content of the confession in John's Gospel are different.

a given motif or theme is found in both different literary sources and different literary forms.<sup>70</sup> One reason that critics so readily affirm that Jesus did speak in some sense of the kingdom of God (or kingdom of heaven) is that the phrase is found in Mark, Q, special Matthean tradition, special Lukan tradition, and John,<sup>71</sup> with echoes in Paul, despite the fact that “kingdom of God” is not Paul’s preferred way of speaking.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, the phrase is found in various literary genres (e.g., parable, beatitude, prayer, aphorism, miracle story). Granted this wide sweep of witnesses in different sources and genres, coming largely from the first Christian generation, it becomes extremely difficult to claim that such material is simply the creation of the church.<sup>73</sup>

When one moves from general motifs and phrases to precise sayings and deeds, one cannot usually expect such a broad range of attestation. Still, such key sayings as Jesus’ words over the bread and wine at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22–25; 1 Cor 11:23–26; cf. John 6:51–58) and his prohibition of divorce (Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18 [= Q]; 1 Cor 7:10–11) are found in two or three independent sources.<sup>74</sup> Then, too, we may find “cross-referencing” between sayings dealing with a particular topic and actions of Jesus that also touch on that topic—e.g., sayings about the

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<sup>70</sup> Some count multiple attestation in sources and multiple attestation in forms as two different criteria. Like Polkow (“Method and Criteria,” 341), I think that they are better dealt with together under one criterion.

<sup>71</sup> Once again I must stress that I do not accept the a priori exclusion of John from consideration as a possible source for knowledge of the historical Jesus; see Walker, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 54.

<sup>72</sup> Those who accept the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas* as another independent source would naturally add it to this list (so Boring, “The Historical-Critical Method’s ‘Criteria of Authenticity,’” 13, 25–28; more cautiously, McArthur, “The Burden of Proof,” 118). For my skepticism on this subject, see my remarks on the *Gospel of Thomas* in *A Marginal Jew I*, 123–139.

<sup>73</sup> McArthur (“The Burden of Proof,” 118) claims that the following motifs are witnessed to by all four strands of the synoptic tradition (i.e., Mark, Q, M, and L): Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God, the presence of disciples around Jesus, healing miracles, a link with John the Baptist, use of parables, concern for outcasts, especially tax collectors and sinners, a radical ethic, emphasis on the love commandment, a demand that the disciples practice forgiveness, clashes with his contemporaries over Sabbath observance, sayings about the Son of Man, and the Hebrew word “Amen” used to introduce Jesus’ sayings.

<sup>74</sup> I do not bother to list the “peeling away” of additions and modifications made by the oral tradition and the final redactor, since I consider such judgments a necessary part of the use of the criterion of multiple attestation. One would like to say that such judgments are simply “preliminary criteria” that precede the use of the “primary criteria” (so Polkow, “Method and Criteria,” 342–345). But actual practice of the historical-critical method shows that all the way through the process one is constantly testing and revising one’s judgments about modifications made by the oral tradition and the redactor.

destruction of the Jerusalem temple and Jesus' prophetic "cleansing" of the temple. The example of the destruction of the temple is all the more forceful when we notice that both sayings and dramatic action are witnessed in more than one source and context (e.g., Mark 13:2; 14:58; John 2:14–22, esp. v. 19).

Harvey K. McArthur was so taken with the force of the criterion of multiple attestation that he asserted that it was "the most objective" criterion and should be given first place.<sup>75</sup> Yet even McArthur admitted that multiple attestation was not an infallible indicator of historicity. In an individual case it is not a priori impossible that a saying invented early on by a Christian community or prophet met the needs of the church so perfectly that it rapidly entered into a number of different strands of tradition.<sup>76</sup> Then, too, the mere fact that a saying occurs only in one source is no proof that it was not spoken by Jesus.<sup>77</sup> For example, the Aramaic invocation *Abba* ("my own dear Father") occurs on the lips of Jesus only once in all four gospels (Mark 14:36), yet many critics ascribe it on other grounds to the historical Jesus. Once again, we are reminded that no criterion can be used mechanically and in isolation; a convergence of different criteria is the best indicator of historicity.

#### 2.1.4. *The Criterion of Coherence*

The criterion of coherence (or consistency or conformity) can be brought into play only after a certain amount of historical material has been isolated by the previous criteria. The criterion of coherence holds that other sayings and deeds of Jesus that fit in well with the preliminary "data base" established by using our first three criteria have a good

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<sup>75</sup> McArthur, "A Survey of Recent Gospel Research," 48; idem, "The Burden of Proof," 118. He makes the statement about giving it first place in conscious opposition to Perrin's emphasis on the criterion of discontinuity. In agreement with McArthur's view is Stein, "Criteria," 230.

<sup>76</sup> G. Petzke puts it quite bluntly in his article, "Die historische Frage nach den Wundertaten Jesu," *NTS* 22 (1975–1976): 180–204, esp. 183: there is no reason to think that something is more reliable historically because it is reported "a number of times" (*mehrfach*). Petzke's use of phrases like "a number of times" and "multiple appearances in early Christian tradition" points to a weakness in his argument. Petzke does not seem to take seriously enough the weight of a plurality of early *independent* literary sources and a plurality of literary genres, all acting as vehicles of a single given tradition. At one point, with a rhetorical wave of the hand, he dismisses the question of attestation in a number of independent traditions by observing that we cannot be certain about which early Christian sources were independent. Yet he himself proceeds to analyze the story of the cure of the "lunatic boy" (Mark 9:14–29 pars.) with the tool of the two-source theory.

<sup>77</sup> So rightly Polkow, "Method and Criteria," 351.

chance of being historical (e.g., sayings concerning the coming of the kingdom of God or disputes with adversaries over legal observance). As can be readily seen, this criterion, by its very nature, is less probative than the three on which it depends.<sup>78</sup> Since we should not conceive of the earliest Christians as totally cut off or different from Jesus himself, there is no reason why they could not have created sayings that echoed faithfully his own “authentic” words. In a loose sense such derived sayings could be considered “authentic” insofar as they convey the message of the historical Jesus;<sup>79</sup> but they cannot be considered “authentic” in the technical sense, i.e., actually coming from Jesus himself.<sup>80</sup>

Despite this limitation, the criterion of coherence has a certain positive use, namely, broadening an already established data base. One must, however, be wary of using it negatively, i.e., declaring a saying or action inauthentic because it does not seem to be consistent with words or deeds of Jesus already declared authentic on other grounds. Jesus would hardly be unique among the great thinkers or leaders of world history if his sayings and actions did not always seem totally consistent to us.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, we must remember that ancient Semitic thought, much more than our western tradition of Aristotelian logic, delighted in paradoxical statements that held opposites in tension. (Even in our own day, American and European professors are often befuddled when they find out that students from Asia, while fiercely intelligent, may not subscribe to the western philosophical principle of noncontradiction.) Then, too, Jesus was a popular preacher addressing a wide range of audiences on particular occasions with great oral skill;

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<sup>78</sup> Obviously, the conclusions drawn by the criterion of coherence are as good as the data base on which they depend. Carlston, a great proponent of the positive use of this criterion, uses it to discern authentic parables of Jesus: they will fit reasonably well into the eschatologically based demand for repentance that was characteristic of Jesus' message (“A *Positive* Criterion,” 33–34). That is fine, provided one does not agree with revisionist exegetes who claim that Jesus' basic message was not essentially eschatological (e.g., Marcus J. Borg) or that repentance did not play a large role in Jesus' preaching (e.g., E. P. Sanders). Thus, one sees the vital importance of being as certain as possible about the data base created by the first three criteria before one proceeds to the criterion of coherence.

<sup>79</sup> Nielsen, “Kriterien,” 14.

<sup>80</sup> I should make clear that it is in this technical and restricted sense that I use the word “authentic” when discussing criteria of historicity; cf. Stein, “The ‘Criteria’ for Authenticity,” 228. The word must not be taken to mean that, from the viewpoint of faith, what the oral tradition or final redaction contributed to our gospels is any less inspired, normative, or true.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Hooker, “Christology and Methodology,” 483; Stein, “The ‘Criteria’ for Authenticity,” 250.

we should hardly seek in the various expressions of his teaching the type of systematic presentation expected of a written treatise.<sup>82</sup> Hence the debate between those scholars who stress the eschatological nature of Jesus' core message and those who portray Jesus teaching a wisdom tradition bereft of any eschatological slant may be misplaced. There is no reason why the preaching of Jesus may not have contained elements of both apocalyptic eschatology and traditional Israelite wisdom. Both Jesus and his contemporaries might have been surprised by the charge (a very modern academic one) that such a message would be inconsistent or incoherent. In short, the criterion of coherence has a certain positive value; but its negative use, to exclude material as inauthentic, must be approached very cautiously.

#### 2.1.5. *The Criterion of Rejection and Execution*

The criterion of Jesus' rejection and execution is notably different from the first four criteria.<sup>83</sup> It does not directly indicate whether an individual saying or deed of Jesus is authentic. Rather, it directs our attention to the historical fact that Jesus met a violent end at the hands of Jewish and Roman officials and then asks us what historical words and deeds of Jesus can explain his trial and crucifixion as "King of the Jews."<sup>84</sup> While I do not agree with those who turn Jesus into a violent revolutionary or political agitator, scholars who favor a revolutionary Jesus do have a point. A tweedy poetaster who spent his time spinning out parables and Japanese koans, a literary aesthete who toyed with first-century deconstructionism, or a bland Jesus who simply told people to look at the lilies of the field—such a Jesus would threaten no one, just as the university professors who create him threaten no one. The historical Jesus did threaten, disturb, and infuriate people—from interpreters of the Law through the Jerusalem priestly aristocracy to the Roman prefect

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<sup>82</sup> These considerations should make one wary about declaring a priori that Jesus could not possibly have spoken of the kingdom of God as both present and future or that he could not possibly have prophesied both a coming kingdom and a coming Son of Man. It is a matter of fact that the evangelists, and probably the gospel traditions before them, did just that. Nor are Paul's authentic letters totally devoid of paradoxes that strike some as blatant contradictions.

<sup>83</sup> Hence I would not say that it is simply "the resultant historical data shown by Dissimilarity..., Modification..., Embarrassment..., Incongruity..., and Hermeneutical Potential ..." (Polkow, "Method and Criteria," 340). On 341, Polkow finally lists execution as merely a variation of discontinuity (or dissimilarity); cf. Lührmann, "Die Frage," 68.

<sup>84</sup> On this criterion, see Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 97; cf. Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," 55.



who finally tried and crucified him. This emphasis on Jesus' violent end is not simply a focus imposed on the data by Christian theology. To outsiders like Josephus, Tacitus, and Lucian of Samosata, one of the most striking things about Jesus was his crucifixion or execution by Rome. A Jesus whose words and deeds would not alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus.

## 2.2. *Secondary (or Dubious) Criteria*

### 2.2.1. *The Criterion of Traces of Aramaic*

Joachim Jeremias and many of his disciples point to traces of Aramaic vocabulary, grammar, syntax, rhythm, and rhyme in the Greek version of the sayings of Jesus as signs of an authentic saying. Used negatively, this criterion would cast doubt on a saying that could not be easily retroverted from Greek into Aramaic.<sup>85</sup> At first glance, this criterion seems scientific, since it rests on a vast fund of philological data developed in the twentieth century by such experts in Aramaic as Jeremias, Matthew Black, Geza Vermes, and Joseph Fitzmyer.

Yet this criterion is not without serious problems. First of all, a good number of the earliest Christians were Palestinian Jews whose native tongue was the same Aramaic Jesus spoke. These Aramaic-speaking Christian Jews continued to exist in Palestine throughout the first century. Presumably, if Christians elsewhere in the Mediterranean world developed and sometimes created words of Jesus, Aramaic-speaking Jews in Palestine did the same.<sup>86</sup> Suppose, then, that some scholars are trying to discover an Aramaic substratum beneath a particular Greek saying in our gospels. Even if they succeed, how—simply on the grounds of the Aramaic—are they to distinguish a saying first spoken in Aramaic by Jesus in 29 CE from a saying first spoken in Aramaic by a Christian Jew in 33 CE? The mere fact that the saying has an Aramaic substratum gives no criterion for making such a distinction. The problem is complicated still further by the fact that the Jerusalem church was both Aramaic- and Greek-speaking from its beginning (cf. the Hellenists in Acts 6).

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<sup>85</sup> While Jesus may have known and even used some Greek (e.g., during his trial before Pilate), there is no indication that the sayings tradition in our gospels was rooted, even in part, in sayings spoken by Jesus in Greek (so rightly Fitzmyer, "Methodology," 87). For a general overview of languages used in Palestine at the time of Jesus, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*, SBLMS 25 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 29–56.

<sup>86</sup> For a similar observation, see Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," 43.

The translation of Jesus' sayings into Greek is therefore not something that happened only at a later stage of the tradition.<sup>87</sup>

Secondly, the mere fact that a particular Greek saying can be retroverted into Aramaic with ease—or, on the other hand, only with great difficulty—does not give us a sure indication that the saying existed originally in Aramaic or originally in Greek. One Aramaic saying might be translated with great skill into elegant Greek, the translator aiming at sense-equivalence rather than a word-for-word rendering.<sup>88</sup> Another Aramaic saying might be translated by another translator in a very literalistic, wooden fashion. The ease with which the two sayings could be retroverted into Aramaic might lead the unwary critic to judge quite wrongly that the first saying did not exist in Aramaic while the second did. Compounding the problem is that many Greek-speaking Christians knew very well the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, and could imitate the biblical Greek of the Septuagint, thus giving their original Greek composition a Semitic tone. This may have been the case with the Gospel of Luke.<sup>89</sup> Confusing the situation still further is the fact that scholars have become increasingly aware in recent decades that usages in the New Testament that we once considered “Semitisms” (i.e., vocabulary or grammar showing Hebrew or Aramaic influence) may actually reflect the normal koine Greek of the less educated level of the population.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 93.

<sup>88</sup> One must be especially sensitive to this possibility in the case of a saying that occurs only in Matthew or Luke. It is not impossible that an Aramaic saying was first translated into rough, Semitic Greek during the oral stage of the special Lukan tradition and then was given a more elegant Greek form when Luke incorporated it into his Gospel; cf. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 93.

<sup>89</sup> While not claiming to decide all instances once and for all, Fitzmyer seems to lean in the direction of explaining Luke's “Semitisms,” especially his “Hebraisms,” by reckoning “with a great deal of influence from the LXX” (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I–IX)*, AB 28 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981], 125).

<sup>90</sup> So Walker, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 44; cf. Fitzmyer, “Methodology,” 95 (citing R. M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* [New York: Harper & Row, 1963], 41); idem, “The Study of the Aramaic Background of the New Testament,” in *A Wandering Aramean*, 1–27, esp. 10–15. The question of the existence and extent of Semitisms (both Hebrew and Aramaic) in the New Testament is hotly debated today. For a short history of the debate, see Elliott C. Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax*, SBLDS 51 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), 1–25. Maloney's conclusions, summarized on pp. 244–245, show how complex and varied Semitic influence may be. In particular, he notes “that much grammatical usage in Marcan Greek which various authors have claimed to be the result of Semitic interference is, in fact, quite possible in Hellenistic Greek.... On the other hand, certain constructions which various authors have argued are acceptable in

Jeremias tries to mount a particular form of the “Aramaic argument” by pointing out that Jesus tended to deliver his teaching in Aramaic sayings that had a distinctive rhythm, that employed rhetorical tools like antithetic parallelism, alliteration, assonance, and paronomasia, and that employed the passive voice to avoid the frequent mention of God’s name (“the divine passive”).<sup>91</sup> While all this may be true, we again run into methodological problems. First, Jeremias’s argument cannot entirely avoid being circular. He can tell us what is characteristic of Jesus’ sayings only if from the start he can presume that a certain amount of sayings are authentic and then proceed to abstract from them the characteristics he lists. To be sure, such a list could legitimately arise from a lengthy process of isolating, collating, and examining authentic sayings of Jesus from a stylistic viewpoint. But such a list cannot be the starting point for deciding which sayings are authentic, for it would be presuming what is to be proven.<sup>92</sup> Second, if the list does reflect striking characteristics of Jesus’ speech, would it be all that unusual if early Christian Jewish teachers and preachers in Palestine imitated the style of their master? Or did Jesus have a monopoly on rhythmic speech and antithetic parallelism in first-century Palestine? Was Jesus the only gifted and imaginative teacher among Jews and Christian Jews during this period? The same sort of questions may be asked about the supposed “poetic” quality of Jesus’ Aramaic, all the more so since we are poorly informed about what first-century Palestinian Aramaic poetry looked like.<sup>93</sup>

At best, then, this criterion of Aramaic traces can provide additional support for an argument for historicity—but only when the material in question has already given indications of being authentic on the grounds of other criteria.

### 2.2.2. *The Criterion of Palestinian Environment*

A criterion much like the Aramaic one, this criterion of Palestinian environment affirms that sayings of Jesus that reflect concrete customs,

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Greek have been shown to be quite abnormal, or even totally unattested in Hellenistic Greek, whereas their appearance in Semitic is normal (sometimes only possible). These are true Semitisms” (244–245).

<sup>91</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, part 1, *The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1971), 3–29.

<sup>92</sup> If these linguistic characteristics were first abstracted from sayings that had been declared authentic on other grounds, and if these characteristics were then applied to a new group of sayings to judge their authenticity, we would have a form of the criterion of coherence. Even then, however, the second methodological problem I indicate in the text would remain.

<sup>93</sup> Fitzmyer, “Methodology,” 97–98.

beliefs, judicial procedures, commercial and agricultural practices, or social and political conditions in first-century Palestine have a good chance of being authentic. Put negatively, a saying that reflects social, political, economic, or religious conditions that existed only outside Palestine or only after the death of Jesus is to be considered inauthentic. This criterion is much more useful in its negative guise. To take a well-known example that applies the criterion theologically rather than socially: parables that reflect concern about the delay of Jesus' parousia, the mission of the church to the Gentiles, or rules for church leadership and discipline are post-Easter creations, at least in their final, gospel form.<sup>94</sup>

The positive use of this criterion is more problematic, for the same reasons mentioned under the Aramaic criterion. The Palestine inhabited by Christian Jews in 33 CE was not all that different from the Palestine inhabited by Jesus in 29 CE. Pilate remained prefect in Judea until 36 CE, Herod remained tetrarch in Galilee until 39 CE, and Caiaphas remained high priest until 36 or 37 CE. Basic commercial, social, and religious conditions naturally remained much longer. Hence, the Palestine reflected in sayings created by Christian Jews in 33 CE would hardly differ from the Palestine reflected in the sayings of Jesus in 29 CE.<sup>95</sup>

### 2.2.3. *The Criterion of Vividness of Narration*

In the narratives of the gospels, liveliness and concrete details—especially when the details are not relevant to the main point of the story—are sometimes taken to be indicators of an eyewitness report. Although he was not as uncritical in using this criterion as some of his followers, Vincent Taylor inclined to accept vivid, concrete details in Mark's gospel as signs of high historical value.<sup>96</sup> Faithful to the early oral tradition, Mark had the special advantage of hearing Peter's preaching.<sup>97</sup> Taylor

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<sup>94</sup> See, e.g., the treatment of Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1969), 48–66. Of course, it is possible that behind the final form of such gospel parables a scholar might discover, by means of form criticism, an earlier form without these ecclesiastical interests.

<sup>95</sup> See also the observations of Walker ("The Quest for the Historical Jesus," 44), who adds: "Many apparent reflections of Palestinian life, however, may be derived from the Old Testament or other Jewish literature or reflect merely an acquaintance of sorts with the area on the part of a writer or transmitter of the tradition."

<sup>96</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 1966), 135–149.

<sup>97</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, 148. Other conservative commentators take a similar tack; see, e.g., William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 10–12. Mark's dependence on Peter is also defended by Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 50–53.

himself is aware of the basic objection to this criterion: any skilled narrator can confer vividness on any story, however unhistorical. If liveliness and concrete details were in themselves proofs of historicity, many great novels would have to be declared history books.<sup>98</sup>

In reply to this objection, Taylor first admits that some concrete details may indeed be the result of Markan redaction. But Taylor goes on to make two points: (1) Some of the details seem to serve no point in the narrative and apparently are included by Mark simply because they were in the tradition. (2) More importantly, a number of key episodes in the gospel, episodes ripe for dramatic exploitation, are surprisingly jejune and bereft of concrete details: e.g., the choice of the Twelve (3:13–19b), the suspicion held by Jesus' family that he has gone insane (3:21), the plot by the priests (14:1–2), and the treachery of Judas (14:10–11). Taylor argues that the presence of these terse though important narratives shows that Mark did not indulge in massive creative rewriting; on the whole, some narratives are laconic and others detailed because that is the way they were in the early oral tradition that Mark has faithfully followed.<sup>99</sup>

Taylor's arguments do not seem as strong today as they might have appeared in the early 1950's. Redaction criticism and contemporary narrative criticism have taught us to appreciate Mark as a talented author who may have his own theological and artistic reasons for alternating sparse and detailed narratives.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, not all critics would concede Mark's direct dependence on the preaching of Peter. If instead Mark is simply passing on oral traditions that come to him from many sources, can we not attribute the liveliness of some pericopes to the skill of

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<sup>98</sup> What makes the question even more complex is that what we consider a key sign of a historical novel—the creation of dialogue or the use of nonhistorical characters—was permissible in ancient historical writings. Hence the lines between what we would consider history and the historical novel are blurred in ancient literature.

<sup>99</sup> This image of Mark as a conservative redactor of large amounts of early tradition has been revived and pushed to the extreme by Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, HTKNT 2.1–2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1976, 1977); see, e.g., 1:63–67; 2:1–25.

<sup>100</sup> In sharp opposition to the picture of Mark as a conservative redactor are the redaction-critical approaches represented by most of the authors in Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); and the rhetorical, narrative, and structural approaches represented by, e.g., Joanna Dewey, *Markan Public Debate*, SBLDS 48 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980); Robert M. Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes*, SBLDS 54 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986).

certain early Christian preachers or storytellers, with the irrelevant details being explained by the untidy nature of oral as opposed to written composition? *Perhaps* the vividness of narration gets us behind Mark to his oral tradition. But does it get us back to Jesus himself?

A further problem arises from the succinct narratives that Taylor also finds in Mark. The terse, streamlined nature of particular dispute stories, miracle stories, and pronouncement stories may result, not from their unhistorical nature, but from the very fact that they fit well into a particular form or genre. This neat “fit” may have caused some historical events to have been “slimmed down” to the “bare bones” of a particular genre in the oral tradition. In short, just as vividness in itself does not prove historicity, so too a pale skeletal narrative is not necessarily unhistorical.

Thus, as with the other secondary criteria we have seen so far, this criterion can never serve as the main argument for historicity. At best, it may support the impression already created by one or more of the primary criteria.

#### 2.2.4. *The Criterion of the Tendencies of the Developing Synoptic Tradition*

At this point we begin to consider criteria that, in my view, are highly questionable. The form critics like Bultmann thought they could isolate the laws of development within the synoptic tradition. For instance, as the synoptic tradition developed from Mark to Matthew and Luke, there supposedly was a tendency to make details more concrete, to add proper names to the narrative, to turn indirect discourse into direct quotation, and to eliminate Aramaic words and constructions. Bultmann suggested that, once these laws governing the transmission of tradition were discovered by analyzing changes in the synoptic gospels, they could be applied to the development of the tradition redacted by Mark and Q.<sup>101</sup> By extension, some critics have suggested, these laws might help us reconstruct original events or sayings coming from Jesus.

However, the whole attempt to formulate laws of the developing synoptic tradition and then to apply them to the earlier oral tradition is dubious. First of all, one cannot establish that such firm laws exist. As

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<sup>101</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “The New Approach to the Synoptic Problem,” in *Existence and Faith* (Meridian Books; Cleveland: World, 1960), 34–54, esp. 41–42 (= *JR* 6 [1926]: 337–362); similarly in his “The Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” in *Form Criticism*, by Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Kundsinn (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 32–35; and in his *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh [Oxford: Blackwell, 1968] 307–317 (= *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970] 335–346).

E. P. Sanders has pointed out, we can find examples of the tradition becoming longer and shorter, of discourse becoming both direct and indirect, and of proper names being dropped as well as added. The tendencies run in both directions.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, even if we could discover firm laws among the synoptic gospels, we would still be dealing with redaction of the written Gospel of Mark by two other writers, Matthew and Luke. Whether and to what degree such laws would apply to the pre-Markan oral stage of the gospel tradition is by no means clear.<sup>103</sup> In my opinion, the one negative use that can be made of a criterion based on “tendencies” is to discern the redactional tendency of each evangelist and to exclude from consideration those sayings or narratives which are massively suffused with the characteristic vocabulary and theology of the evangelist.

#### 2.2.5. *The Criterion of Historical Presumption*

This criterion brings us squarely into the debate about where the “burden of proof” lies: on the side of the critic who denies historicity or on the side of the critic who affirms it? Critics who stress the decades between the original events and the writing of our gospels, as well as the obvious cases of modifications or creations by the oral tradition or the evangelists, conclude that anyone claiming to isolate an authentic saying or action of Jesus must bear the burden of proof.<sup>104</sup> On the opposite side, critics who stress that eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry were the leaders in the early church and that in any historical investigation credence is given to early historical reports until the opposite is proven conclude that the burden of proof is on those who wish to discredit a particular saying or event as inauthentic (“in dubio pro tradito”). This is called by Neil J. McEleney the criterion of historical presumption.<sup>105</sup> If accepted,

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<sup>102</sup> E. P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>103</sup> On the whole problem of the difference between oral and written tradition, see Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). I think, however, that Kelber exaggerates the gap between the oral and written forms of the gospel.

<sup>104</sup> So Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 39: “...the nature of the synoptic tradition is such that the burden of proof will be upon the claim to authenticity” (this statement is set entirely in italics in Perrin’s book). McArthur (“The Burden of Proof,” 118–119) attempts a compromise stance: Initially the burden is on the person affirming historicity; but if a particular motif is supported by three or four synoptic sources (multiple attestation), then the burden shifts to the person denying historicity.

<sup>105</sup> McEleney, “Authenticating Criteria,” 445–448; cf. Ellis, “Gospels Criticism,” 32. McEleney’s easy and undifferentiated use of the terms “reporter” and “history” (446–447) while discussing the gospels does not inspire confidence. As Latourelle correctly

it could cut the Gordian knot in cases where the arguments are finely balanced and the final result seems to be permanent doubt.

However, common sense and the rules of logical argument seem to be on the side of critics like Willi Marxsen and Ben Meyer, who state the obvious: the burden of proof is simply on anyone who tries to prove anything.<sup>106</sup> In effect, this means that critics must allow a galling but realistic third column for a vote of “not clear” (*non liquet*). There will always be some difficult cases in which no criterion applies or in which different criteria apply but point in opposite directions. Such conundrums cannot be resolved by the *deus ex machina* of the criterion of historical presumption. In the convoluted case of the canonical gospels, such a criterion simply does not exist.<sup>107</sup>

### 2.3. Conclusion

Our survey indicates that five suggested criteria of historicity or authenticity are really valuable and deserve to be ranked as primary criteria: embarrassment, discontinuity, multiple attestation in sources or forms, coherence, and Jesus’ rejection and execution. I have stressed the limitations and problems inherent in each criterion lest any single criterion seem a magic key unlocking all doors. Only a careful use of a number of criteria in tandem, with allowances for mutual correction, can produce convincing results.<sup>108</sup>

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observes (“Critères d’authenticité,” 618), this “criterion” actually expresses an attitude of the exegete vis-à-vis the text rather than a criterion; similarly, Lambiasi, *L’autenticità storica dei vangeli*, 101, 137–138.

<sup>106</sup> See Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 83 and 277 n. 8, where he quotes Willi Marxsen, *The Beginnings of Christology: A Study of Its Problems* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 8. Hooker (“Christology,” 485) expresses herself in a similar fashion, though she tends to dismiss the whole problem as not very profitable. This commonsense approach seems preferable to the subtle distinction Lambiasi tries to make between skeptical-systematic doubt and methodological-dynamic doubt (*L’autenticità storica dei vangeli*, 229).

<sup>107</sup> Latourelle (“Critères d’authenticité,” 628) claims that the most important of the fundamental criteria, though often ignored, is the criterion of “necessary explanation” (*explication nécessaire*). Actually, instead of being a precise criterion for judging the special material of the four gospels, this “criterion” is more like the “argument to the best explanation,” which is one of the basic forms of all historical argumentation (McCullagh, *Justifying Historical Descriptions* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984] 15–44). In a similar vein, Lambiasi (*L’autenticità storica dei vangeli*, 140) considers the criterion of necessary explanation to be basically the principle of the sufficient reason, a transcendent philosophical principle. We are all attracted by calls to a “holistic” approach (so Walker, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus,” 54–56). But until we have at least a vague idea of what parts might qualify as belonging to the historical whole, a “holistic” approach remains a distant ideal.

<sup>108</sup> I have omitted from consideration two further criteria suggested by Boring (“The Historical-Critical Method’s ‘Criteria of Authenticity,’” 23–24): (1) plausible



Despite their exaltation in some quarters, the criteria of Aramaic traces, Palestinian environment, and vividness of narrative cannot yield probative arguments on their own, even when all three are taken together. They can act as secondary, supportive criteria, reinforcing the impressions gained from one or more of the primary criteria. Finally, the criteria of the tendencies of the synoptic tradition and historical presumption are, for all practical purposes, useless.<sup>109</sup>

As many a weary quester has remarked before, the use of the valid criteria is more an art than a science, requiring sensitivity to the individual case rather than mechanical implementation.<sup>110</sup> It can never be said too many times that such an art usually yields only varying degrees of probability, not absolute certitude. But, as we have already seen, such judgments of probability are common in any investigation of ancient history, and the quest for the historical Jesus cannot apply for a special exemption. Since moral certitude is nothing but a very high degree of probability, and since we run most of our lives and make many of our theoretical and practical judgments on the basis of moral certitude, we need not feel that the results of our quest will be unusually fragile or uncertain. They are no more fragile or uncertain than many other parts of our lives.<sup>111</sup>

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*Traditionsgeschichte* and (2) hermeneutical potential. (1) The criterion of plausible *Traditionsgeschichte* seeks to draw up a genealogy of the various forms of a saying. While this is a laudable goal, I do not think it a practical one for many of the sayings in the Jesus tradition. Even when attempted, the reconstruction of the tradition history must remain very hypothetical. (2) The criterion of hermeneutical potential looks at the variety of forms generated by the original form and asks what this original must have been in order to generate such variety. Again, the quest is a valid and laudable one; but, granted the paucity of data, I feel that the results must be highly subjective and hardly probative.

<sup>109</sup> The one exception here is the negative use of the criterion of an evangelist's redactional tendencies.

<sup>110</sup> So, e.g., McArthur, "A Survey," 47; Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus," 53 (who extends the observation to historiography in general); and Boring, "The Historical-Critical Method's 'Criteria of Authenticity,'" 35–36.

<sup>111</sup> I might add here that, naturally, any scholar must be in dialogue with his or her peers and be respectfully attentive to their consensus on the authenticity of various gospel material. However, I would not be willing, as Polkow is ("Method and Criteria," 355), to elevate scholarly consensus to another criterion. It should be noted in fairness to Polkow that he stresses that scholarly consensus can only be a corroborative criterion and can be used only when all else is said and done. I wonder, though, whether it is properly a criterion at all. A scholar must be prepared at any moment, because of the force of data and arguments, to go against a scholarly consensus on any issue. The heavy reliance on scholarly consensus from the very start weakens the whole approach of Breech (*The Silence of Jesus*, 9).



# JESUS RESEARCH AS FEEDBACK ON HIS WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE

PETR POKORNÝ

## 1. *What is being Debated in the Question about the Historical Jesus*

### 1.1. *The Subject of the Discussion*

The 'early quest,' which began in the eighteenth century, understood its task to involve the *rediscovery of Jesus free of any preconceptions* and especially apart from teachings about his divine nature. However, when Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) reviewed the Jesus books that were written during the nineteenth century, his conclusion about attempts to write a biography of Jesus was negative.<sup>1</sup> Most of the scholars did not resist the temptation to interpret the limited set of data from the point of view of their own ideas.

This was one of the reasons that the *New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, which was the title of a seminal monograph by James M. Robinson that was published in 1959, intentionally stressed the role of 'pre-understanding' (*Vorverständnis*) in Jesus research. Phenomenology and existential philosophy rediscovered the cognitive role of human subjectivity (the 'positive prejudice') in scholarly research, as well as in daily life. Furthermore, Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) described many biblical texts as being kerygmatic, i.e., as belonging to the sort of Christian proclamation that evokes a response from the addressee. Preconceptions (prejudices) can be mastered only when they are admitted, and only then can the singularity of the interpreted texts be recognized. Scholars engaged in the 'new quest' analyzed the Jesus tradition of the gospels, and discovered a similar analogy between the sayings of Jesus and the Easter proclamation of the church.<sup>2</sup> They explained the role of Jesus research by stating that we must study *Jesus as the key to christology*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, repr. of 2nd ed. (München: Siebenstern, 1966; orig. 1906), 620.

<sup>2</sup> Eberhard Jünger, *Paulus und Jesus*, BHTh 2 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1962), 273–275.

The new quest indirectly supported new interest in Jesus among systematic theologians (Wolfgang Pannenberg, Edward Schillebeeckx, Walther Kasper), and Jesus research began to play a role in ecumenical and inter-religious discussions. The best theological statement regarding this role of Jesus research was provided by Eberhard Jüngel (“*Extra Christum nulla salus*—als Grundsatz natürlicher Theologie?”):<sup>3</sup> If we consider Jesus to be the revelation of God, we have a practical criterion, which is applicable to all people of all cultures, for what corresponds to God’s will. According to Jüngel, Jesus’ teaching and behavior, as an authentically humanistic phenomenon, can introduce new themes into the contemporary global dialogue about human hopes and values.

The third quest, which was initiated by the Jesus Seminar that was held in California during the last two decades of the twentieth century, did not discuss the fact that the real Jesus is both a historical phenomenon and the Risen Lord of the Christian faith. Even secular scholars know about Jesus’ other dimension.<sup>4</sup> In fact, *Jesus research*<sup>5</sup> is only one dimension of efforts to interpret the person of Jesus and his impact on the present history of humanity. We have mentioned the thesis that Jesus is the hermeneutical key to christology. This hypothesis was proposed by Gerhard Ebeling.<sup>6</sup> Following the resurrection, there was a period of spiritual enthusiasm and various groups of Jesus’ followers understood his key role in different ways. It became necessary to distinguish different responses to the Christian proclamation. In 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7, the readers are invited to “test” the “spirits” (who profess to offer inspired proclamation) in order to determine whether they proclaim the Jesus who came in the flesh, i.e., the earthly Jesus who is accessible to human memory (*anamnesis, mnemosynon*).<sup>7</sup> The composition, the liturgical use,

<sup>3</sup> Originally appeared in 1977, last edition in Eberhard Jüngel, *Entsprechung: Gott-Wahrheit-Mensch* (Munich: Kaiser, 1980), 178–192.

<sup>4</sup> See Hans Küng, “Wie treibt man historische Theologie?” (1979), in *Theologie im Aufbruch*, ed. Hans Küng (Zürich: Piper, 1987), 129–152.

<sup>5</sup> See James H. Charlesworth’s detailed proposal regarding terminology in “The Foreground of Christian Origins and the Commencement of Jesus Research,” in *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 63–83.

<sup>6</sup> *Theologie und Verkündigung* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1962), 52; for a similar formulation, see Ernst Käsemann, “Sackgassen im Streit um den historischen Jesus,” in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen II*, ed. Ernst Käsemann, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 31–64, here 67.

<sup>7</sup> I think that this is what James D. G. Dunn intended to express when he wrote: “The only realistic objective for any ‘quest of the historical Jesus’ is Jesus remembered.” In *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 335.

and, later, the canonization of the gospels by the church is the most notable manifestation of this tendency. Historical criticism can also be defined as a method of remembering that uses contemporary tools and intellectual procedures. And since the impact of Jesus transcends the ecclesiastical realm, Jesus research may also serve as feedback of all the secular or non-ecclesiastical images of Jesus.

### 1.2. *Individual Themes*

The main clusters of problems and *themes* are: Jesus and John the Baptist, teachings about the Kingdom of God (including research on the Lord's Prayer), Jesus and the Law (and the Temple), Jesus' messianic self-consciousness, Jesus' symbolic prophetic acts, Jesus' miracles, Jesus' trial, Paul and Jesus, the role of Q and the *Gospel of Thomas* in Jesus research, the contributions of archeology, the earthly Jesus in ecclesiastical confessions and, I would like to add, the rhetorical analysis of the Jesus traditions.

## 2. *The Sources and Their Nature*

The main sources are of Christian origin: the synoptic gospels, the Sayings of Jesus (Q—a reconstructed source), the Gospel of John, the *Gospel of Thomas*, Papyrus Egerton 2, minor fragments of traditions (especially P. Oxy. 1224 and 840), and individual sayings of Jesus (some of which are included in individual New Testament texts, such as John 7:53–8:11, according to the majority of the Byzantine and Latin manuscripts), and the letters of Paul of Tarsus.

The following non-Christian texts can also be regarded as sources for Jesus research: Tacitus, *Annales* 15.44.3; Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 10.96; Suetonius, *Vitae/Vita Claudii* 25.4; the Letter of Mara bar Serapion and a few rabbinic sources (especially, *b.Sanh.* 43a). The *testimonium Flavianum* (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63–64) must also be mentioned since it is likely to be a Christian expansion of an original, brief notice about Jesus (see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.200).

The problem with Christian sources is that (a) they all see Jesus through the eyes of post-resurrection faith and that (b) the synoptic gospels, which contain 80% or more of the material we have to work with, are composed of sources (Mark, Q, and special sources of Matthew and of Luke [SMt and SLk that each consist of one or more sources])

which overlap in only a few cases. (Parallels between Q and Mark, Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*, and Paul and Q are especially important.) Thus, much of our material is found in only one source.

### 3. *Resultant Ways of Dealing with These Sources and the Question of Authenticity*

#### 3.1. *Jesus Research and Easter Confessions*

What we mentioned in the first paragraph (see page 333) may also be of use as we discuss the method of our research. The Jesus books were attempts to give a nomological explanation of Jesus' impact on history. According to this interpretation, Jesus was only incidentally linked to an ideology that reflected the needs of the oppressed classes of his time. That was one of the Marxist hypotheses regarding the origins of Christianity.<sup>8</sup> From this perspective, the connections between Jesus and post-resurrection christology were arbitrary. However, if we critically examine the earliest traditions, their statements about Jesus can be divided into various christological schools. This means that, at the beginning, there was no ideology. The only common denominator that could have influenced the post-resurrection confessions was the person of Jesus.

Admitting this means that Jesus research must ask: What in Jesus' teaching and life evoked such a response? We may identify this method as involving *critical reflection on the relation between post-resurrection christologies and the earthly Jesus*.<sup>9</sup>

As can be deduced from what we said in the first paragraph (see page 333), the analysis of post-resurrection christologies not only rules out the nomological interpretation of Jesus' story; it is also an important means of keeping Jesus from being swallowed by later christological theories.

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<sup>8</sup> I found the best expression of this tendency in the work of Czech Marxist philosopher Ivan Sviták, *Středověká filosofie* (Prague: Svoboda, 1955); earlier, the nomological view was represented by the work of Arthur Drews (1865–1935), *Die Christusmythe* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1924). Drews maintained that the figure of Jesus is only a construct based on myth.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Kasper, *Jesus der Christus* (Mainz: Matthias Grunewald, 1974), 168–170.

### 3.2. *Methods of Critical Research*

Since all historical research must be based on information derived from *two independent sources*, it is obvious that such texts have priority in our research. However, only part of Jesus' teachings, most of which are found in the Gospel of Mark and Q, meet this criterion.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Jesus research had to develop a methodology that could serve as a substitute for the second independent source. A generally accepted rule of historical criticism holds that the *second witness can be dispensed with if those who provided the first witness had no interest in creating such a text*. The slanderous statements about Jesus and John the Baptist that are mentioned in Luke (Q) 7:33 pars. provide a typical example of a text that includes a good deal of an authentic information. Admittedly, we must take into account the negative prejudice; however, this is clearly visible, whereas the 'positive prejudice' which has shaped our civilization is recognizable only after a critical deconstruction of the traditional post-resurrection patterns.

In Jesus research, we also use the *criterion of (double) dissimilarity*. In fact, this is a specific example of the theory concerning the authenticity of a witness who is not interested in developing the information that he has provided.<sup>11</sup> Traditions that can be derived neither from Judaism nor from the objectives of the early church must be considered to have come from Jesus.

For example, the authenticity of the intent and the main narrative structure of some of the famous parables of Jesus (such as the parable of the Merciful Samaritan [Luke 10:25–37] or that of the Prodigal Son [Luke 10:11–32]), which are found in the special Lukan source (SLk), can be supported by means of the criterion of dissimilarity.<sup>12</sup> This is how the criterion of dissimilarity may function.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a summary of the argument for the independence of Q and Mark, see Christopher M. Tuckett, "Mark and Q" in *The Synoptic Gospels*, ed. C. Focant, BETL 110 (Leuven: Leuven University Press–Peeters, 1993), 149–175, esp. 174–175.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen I*, ed. Ernst Käsemann, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 188–214, here 205; Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* 2nd ed. (1967; London: SPCK, 1976), 43–44.

<sup>12</sup> See the analysis of these parables in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 383–384.

<sup>13</sup> A pioneer in this type of research was N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963), 183.

I have paid special attention to another application of the criterion of dissimilarity, i.e., to the *analysis of the stylistic and rhetorical peculiarities of the early Jesus traditions* (see 4.5).

The criterion of dissimilarity was subjected to heavy criticism. According to that criterion, Jesus would have had constantly uttered ingenious statements and would have been permanently isolated from all traditions. Actually, his *Sitz im Leben* was that of a pious Jew living within the Hellenized Mediterranean milieu of the first century CE. He also participated in the conventional human wisdom that is expressed in proverbs (see 4.5) and used universally valid metaphors (universal anthropological ideas), such as “being lost” (to refer to a life without future), “heaven” (to refer to the key position), and so forth.

This does not mean that the criterion of dissimilarity should be abandoned. It only means that the rule of two independent witnesses, together with *positive criteria* that may compensate for the second witness (which have just been described), can and should have their necessary counterpart in the *criterion of coherence*. This is a secondary, *interpretative criterion*. A text is coherent if its individual parts (segments) make sense or have a similar meaning at a deeper (cognitive) level. This criterion can also be applied to a group of texts that are bound together by a similar theme. We can ask about their referents and examine the less documented texts to see whether they complement the content that has been found to be authentic according to the positive criteria, or at the very least, to make sure that they do not contradict it.

A special sort of criterion of coherence is the *criterion of congruence* or the criterion of *cumulative circumstantial evidence*. According to this criterion, content can be accepted as being authentic if observations deduced from other data indirectly invite similar conclusions.

We may also subsume coherence with Jesus’ social and historical setting under the criterion of coherence. This does not mean that we deny the criterion of dissimilarity; however, we must ask whether the new phenomenon was recognizable as an innovation in traditional patterns and whether it was communicable in Jesus’ setting (contextual individuality). Gerd Theissen calls this combination of positive and interpretative criteria the *criterion of contextual plausibility* (*Kontextplausibilität*).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gerd Theissen and Anette Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 117–119.



The validity of the *criterion of multiple attestation* is limited, and I would almost warn against it. If we were to use frequency as an argument, we would abandon the task of critical testing. We must also consider the singular traditions, especially if the rule of replacing the second witness (see above) is applied. In his Jesus book, J. D. Crossan does not mention the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32), apparently because it occurs only once in the synoptic tradition.<sup>15</sup> However, that parable contains a feature that is typical of Jesus' teachings and has a parallel in the 'argument,' as well as in the literary genre and structure, of the parable of the workers in the vineyard that is found in Matt 20:1–16.

The *criterion of analogy in present experience*<sup>16</sup> is not valid since it rules out any phenomena (especially Jesus' healings) which have no analogy in our *Sitz im Leben*.

In summary, data supported by the criteria of positive evidence provide basic verification, while data that fit the criterion of coherence may offer secondary information.<sup>17</sup> It is clear that if we use this method, we may discard some data that may be authentic. However, it is better to have some blank spaces in the image of Jesus than it would be to construct a face with false features. *A sound critical deconstruction is always better than a false reconstruction.*

#### 4. *A Particularization and Concretization of Conclusions that Have Been Reached up to Now*

In sketching an image of Jesus, we start by analysis of Pauline evidence and of data from the synoptic and Johannine tradition provided by the new methodologies. We will offer only a brief survey of the established evidence that is accepted by a wider group of scholars.

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<sup>15</sup> J. Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> The criterion of analogy in present experience was included in the set of criteria for historical criticism that was proposed by Ernst Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," in *Gesammelte Schriften II*, ed. Ernst Troeltsch (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1913), 729–753.

<sup>17</sup> This is the main reason for Jack T. Sanders' warning against overestimating the criterion of coherence in "The Criterion of Coherence and the Randomness of Charisma: Poring Through Some Apories in the Jesus Traditions," *NTS* 44 (1998): 1–25.

#### 4.1. *Pauline Evidence*

Paul is a meager source with regard to Jesus' life. Jesus was important to Paul as the crucified and Risen Lord. Yet, Paul's letters were written about twenty years earlier than the Gospel of Mark, and he may have obtained some first-hand knowledge about Jesus from Peter, whom he is said to have interviewed (Gal 1:18). (*Histoiresai* means to get information<sup>18</sup> [testimony]; cf. *historia*.) According to Gal 1:19, Paul also met James the Righteous, and did not hesitate to mention that James was the brother of the Lord (*ho adelphos tou kuriou*). This is a decisive argument in favor of Jesus' historicity. When Paul proclaimed that "we do not know Jesus according to the flesh (*kata sarka*)" in 2 Cor 5:16b, the "according to the flesh" must refer to the act of knowing (*ginoskein*—to know), instead of to Christ, as many older translations suggested.

Having anchored Jesus in history, we may identify additional information about his life that is included in the Pauline epistles and is also found in the gospels. Jesus was a Jew (Gal 4:4). He had at least two brothers (*adelphoi tou kuriou* [1 Cor 9:5]), one of whom was James (Gal 1:19; cf., 1 Cor 15:7). He called disciples, one of whom was Cephas (Gal 2:14; 1 Cor 9:5; cf., 15:5a), who was also known as Peter (a Greek version of the same name, Gal 2:7–8), and another of whom was John (Gal 2:9). Peter and John were part of the inner core of Jesus' followers who were known as "the Twelve" (1 Cor 15:5b). Jesus died (1 Cor 15:3) on a cross (Phil 2:8), which, at that time, was used to punish criminals. Paul knew that Jesus' cross is an offense (Gal 5:11), a "foolishness" (1 Cor 1:18); however, he insisted on its proclamation (1 Cor 1:23).

Shortly before his betrayal (and arrest), Jesus spoke about the meaning of his death during his last meal ("the institution of the Lord's Supper," 1 Cor 11:23–26). When breaking the bread, he declared that his death would be on behalf of his disciples (*huper humôn*), and when he took the cup of wine after the meal, he spoke about the new covenant in terms of his blood. Parallels with synoptic texts are apparent (Mark 14:22–25, Matt 26:26–29, and Luke 22,15–20, which is dependent on Mark and a special source of Luke; cf. Justin, I *Apol.* 66.3). Paul claimed that he had

<sup>18</sup> George D. Kilpatrick, "Galatians 1:18 ICTOPHCAI KEFAN," in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 144–149, esp. 149; J. D. G. Dunn, "The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem According to Galatians 1 and 2," *NTS* 28 (1982): 461–478; and J. D. G. Dunn, "Once More—Gal 1:18: ICTOPHCAI KEFAN," *ZNW* 76 (1985): 138–139.

received this tradition from the Lord. Since Paul never met Jesus during his earthly life, his assertion must be understood in a spiritual sense, as representing the Risen Lord's confirmation of the tradition regarding Jesus. Nevertheless, Paul used the verb *paradidonai* (to hand over) here (as well as in 1 Cor 15:1–3 where he presents the 'formula of faith'). In this case, *paradidonai* is obviously related to the chain of transmission (in Latin, *traditio*). This means that in 1 Corinthians 11, *paradidonai* has a double meaning. Paul had learned the tradition about the Institution of the Lord's Supper from Jesus' closest disciples, and the Risen Lord had confirmed that it was his living heritage (in prayer and through his epiphany).

Passages which present Jesus as being a descendant of the family of David are problematic (Rom 1:3; cf. Luke 2:4). Since such statements may have been deduced from the title 'Messiah' or from the designation of Jesus as the Son of David (Mark 10:47 par.; Matt 1:1), the expected king of the Jews (Mark 15:2,9; Matt 2:2), we cannot prove that Jesus actually came from the family of David. What can be proved is that he was considered to be the Messiah and a descendant of David by some of his followers, as well as by his adversaries. (Cf. the inscription on Jesus' cross, according to Mark 15:26 par. [John 19:19–20] and the discussion in Mark 12:35–37 par.). In John 7:42, we read a polemic against confessing that Jesus was the Messiah: "Has not the Scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem?" This must have been a strong argument against the confession that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus' adherents would not have mentioned this if it had not been necessary to respond to this issue. Their most successful answer was that Jesus is the "Lord" referred to in Ps 110:1 and, therefore, is more than a Davidic Messiah (Mark 12:35–37 par.).

We know that Paul mentioned two sayings of the Risen Lord, which were obviously rooted in the ancient Jesus tradition, when addressing the internal order of his congregations (1 Cor 7:10–11; cf. Matt 5:32 par., Mark 10:11–12 par., and 1 Cor 9:14 [9:4]; cf. Matt 10:10b par.). Since Paul distinguishes these directives from his own prophetic statements, which have been inspired by God's spirit (1 Cor 7:8, 7:10,25), they must have belonged to a clearly defined collection of sayings.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Hans W. Kuhn, "Der irdische Jesus bei Paulus als traditionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem," *ZThK* 67 (1970): 295–320, here 296–298; Nikolaus Walter, "Paul and the Early Christian Tradition" (1982), in *Paul and Jesus*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn, *JSNTSup* 37 (ET: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 51–80, here 54–55.

In 1 Thess 4:15–17, Paul makes a statement “in the name of the Lord,” i.e., supported by the authority of the Lord. This saying may, but does not necessarily, belong to the same collection. The role that Jesus’ sayings played in Paul’s arguments is supported by Luke in Acts 20:35c, where Paul is said to have quoted a saying of the Lord (an *agraphon*) in Miletus.<sup>20</sup>

But why does Paul not quote more sayings of the Lord,<sup>21</sup> especially in support of his teachings about the Christian’s liberty from the Mosaic Law?<sup>22</sup>

We know that there are other allusions to, or indirect quotations of, Jesus’ sayings that reveal a deeper knowledge of the Jesus tradition.<sup>23</sup> There is mention of *Abba* (Father) in Gal 4:6a and Rom 8:15. This has a parallel in Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36 par.), and may also be the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11:2 and Matt 6:9) in Aramaic.

Paul’s puzzling restraint in Rom 12:14, 17–21 is striking. This seems to be a *passus*, inspired by Jesus’ exhortation to love one’s enemies in Luke 6:27–29 and Matt 5:39–41 (Q).<sup>24</sup> “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21) seems to be a bold new interpretation of the exhortation to love one’s enemies (Luke 6:27–28 pars [Q]) and of the exhortation to not resist those who are evil (Matt 5:39).

<sup>20</sup> Fritz Neugebauer, “Geistsprüche und Jesuslogien,” *ZNW* 53 (1962): 218–228, here 222–223. Neugebauer argues that Pauline sayings that are attributed to the Lord are dependent on the ancient Jesus tradition; cf., M. Eugene Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Christ*, SNTSMS 46 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 12, 34, 127.

<sup>21</sup> The theory that there were two kinds of Jesus traditions, an explicit and an anonymous one, is not convincing. See E. K. C. Wong, “The De-radicalization of Jesus’ Ethical Sayings in 1 Cor.,” *NTS* 48 (2002): 181–194, esp. 194.

<sup>22</sup> There is no evidence of other direct citations of Jesus’ sayings in Paul’s writings. See Frans Neirynek, “Paul and the Sayings of Jesus,” in *L’Apotre Paul*, ed. A. Vanhoye, 265–321.

<sup>23</sup> Scholars who have dealt with this phenomenon include: Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981), 423–425; D. C. Allison, Jr., “The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 1–32 (This essay contains a list of possible quotations from the Jesus tradition that may be found in Paul’s writings); M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12:1–15:13*, *JNTSup* 59 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); Rainer Riesner, “Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung,” in *Evangelium—Schriftauslegung—Kirche: Festschrift P. Stuhlmacher* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 347–365.

<sup>24</sup> Petr Pokorný, “Römer 12,14–21 und die Aufforderung zur Feindesliebe (Q 6,27 Par.) und zum Gewaltverzicht (Q 6,29f. Par. und Mt 5,39a),” in *Dummodo Christus annuntietur: Festschrift Jozef Heriban* (Rome: Univ. Salesiana, 1999), 105–112. (This essay includes a list of secondary literature.)

It is commonly known that in 1 Cor 13:2b, Paul calls one of the best known sayings of Jesus, which refers to faith moving mountains, into question (Mark 11:23 par.; Matt 17:20 [Q]; *Gos. Thom.* 48).

Obviously, some of Jesus' sayings were used in polemics against Paul. In 1 Corinthians 4, an enthusiastic group in the Pauline community proclaimed that the Kingdom of God had already come, and that they were spiritually enjoying the promises of the Beatitudes. They already were kings who were satiated and rich (4:8).<sup>25</sup> The same pattern can be assumed to underlie the argument of the people who, according to 1 Cor 15:12, denied the resurrection (because they had already experienced it in a spiritual way). There was a spiritual struggle among various groups of Jesus' post-resurrection followers who were concerned about the interpretation of his sayings about the Kingdom of God. Paul argued against an enthusiastic (docetic, pre-gnostic) interpretation of those sayings. However, the docetic tendency is visible in some extra-canonical texts (see 4.5), and is also implicitly operative in the Johannine texts (e.g., John 5:24). Paul's reluctance to use Jesus' sayings to support his arguments may partially be influenced by the way in which some Christian thinkers used Jesus' (the Lord's) sayings to argue against Paul's interpretation of the gospel. It would have been difficult for Paul to argue against the enthusiasts' use of Jesus' sayings and to use the same weapons against his adversaries. If he had done this, Paul would have raised questions about his own firm foundation: the kerygma of the crucified and Risen Lord.<sup>26</sup>

Pauline practice has enabled us to illustrate the fact that the transmission of Jesus' sayings involved a significant amount of creativity. The sayings were gathered, selected, translated, interpreted, developed, combined, and applied to new problems.<sup>27</sup> The entire tradition was influenced by post-resurrection spiritual enthusiasm and cannot be understood in terms of its analogy with rabbinic teachings.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the dispute

<sup>25</sup> James M. Robinson, "Kerygma und Geschichte im Neuen Testament," in *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums*, ed. H. Köster et al. (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1971), 21–66, esp. 41–43.

<sup>26</sup> See Nikolaus Walther, "Paul and the Early Christian Tradition," 78–79.

<sup>27</sup> Interesting comparative material regarding the method of arguing from Scripture can be found in Pseudo-Philo, *Liber Antiquitatum*. See J. R. Levison, "Prophetic Inspiration in Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*," *JQR* 85 (1995): 297–329.

<sup>28</sup> This puts into question some of the central theses of Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ASNU 22 (Lund: Gleerup, 1964), 262–264; Birger Gerhardsson, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, CN 20 (Lund: Gleerup, 1964), 39–41;

about the underlying tradition continued; the Jesus tradition was not created *ex nihilo*. At its very core, it was based on witness, and polemics within the canon represented a struggle for an authentic interpretation of the Jesus tradition.<sup>29</sup> So-called “conservative” scholars have not only assembled useful observations; we must also take seriously their conviction that, in principle, it is possible to distinguish between the Jesus tradition and its interpretations, even if it is impossible to separate these from one another.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.2. *Jesus’ Life According to Critical Scholarship*

Widely accepted data regarding Jesus’ life include the following facts:

- Jesus was from Nazareth in Galilee. The narratives about Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem in the gospels of Matthew and Luke are legends supporting the confession regarding his Davidic origin and his messianic role. Their authenticity is theological, rather than historical. The literary nature of these texts does not allow us to use the star, the census, or Herod to date Jesus’ life.
- Aramaic was Jesus’ mother tongue; however, as a pious Jew, he also read Hebrew<sup>31</sup> and probably spoke Greek.<sup>32</sup> The gospels are dependent on several Aramaic traditions, but, as literary texts, they were written in Greek. Thus, it is not possible to use them as a basis for reconstructing their hypothetical older Aramaic layers.<sup>33</sup>

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Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*, ConBNT 34 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994), 142–149.

<sup>29</sup> According to T. Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, NTA 26 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995), 210–211, 285, some of the sayings of Jesus have been transformed into a Christian wisdom tradition—a harmonizing solution.

<sup>30</sup> For a balanced discussion, see Heinz Schürmann, “Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: EVA, 1961), 342–366, esp. 356–358; and Traugott Holtz, “Jesus-Überlieferung und Briefliteratur,” in Traugott Holtz, *Geschichte und Theologie des Urchristentums*, WUNT 57 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991), 17–30, esp. 25–27.

<sup>31</sup> John A. Emerton, “The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century A.D. and the Language of Jesus,” *JTS* NS 24 (1973): 1–17.

<sup>32</sup> Aramaic was not spoken in Decapolis. Cf., Mark 5:20; 7:31; William Sanday, “The Language Spoken in Palestine at the Time of Our Lord” (1878!), in Sanday, *Essays in Biblical Criticism and Exegesis*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, JSNTSup 125 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 80–93; R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981), 391–392; Stanley E. Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> Compare this view with that of Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources for Mark’s Gospel*,

- Jesus became a follower of John the Baptist, a prophet, and the most popular representative of the Baptist movement. (There were other such prophets; see *Sib. Or.* 4.162–167.) In addition, Jesus was baptized by John. This was a *puendum* of the early church, so that in the Gospel of Matthew John had to say: “I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?” (Matt 3:14). According to Luke 3:20–22 John the Baptist apparently was in prison when Jesus was baptized, and according to John 1:29, John even said: “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!” without baptizing Jesus at all. Jesus’ baptism by John was a turning point, probably linked to Jesus’ sense of having been given a special mission by God himself. Soon after his baptism, Jesus parted from John the Baptist, primarily because he had a different concept of salvation. This can be deduced from the total picture that we have of their teachings, and especially, from slanderous statements about them that are quoted in Matt 11:18–19 (Luke 7:33–34 [Q]). John is charged with being an extreme ascetic, and Jesus is accused of being a bonvivant (a glutton and a drunkard). John emphasized his message about God’s judgment by means of his ascetic way of life. He intended to change human beings and to prepare them for the arrival of the Age to Come by this type of “shock therapy” (cf. Luke 3:9). Baptism was an anticipation of the Last Judgment, which would come as a flood (Gen 6–9; cf. 1 Pet 3:2). Unlike John, Jesus chose a positive strategy. Like Socrates, he participated in symposia, and proclaimed some decisive sayings in such settings (Luke 7:48: “Your sins are forgiven”; cf. 19:9a).<sup>34</sup> The symposia were anticipations of the eschatological table fellowship in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14:25 par.; Luke 22:15–18; cf., Luke 14:16–24 [Q] par.; *Gos. Thom.* 64), to which people would “come from east and west, from north and south” (Luke 13:29–30 par. [Q]), where the poor would be filled (Luke 6:20 par. [Q])<sup>35</sup> and would have the gospel preached to them (Luke 7:22 par. [Q]) during a time that would be like a wedding feast (Mark 2:19 par.). In

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SNTSMS 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Semitisms are not more frequent in the gospels than in Lucian’s writings, for example.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Wolter, “‘Gericht’ und ‘Heil’ bei Jesus von Nazareth und Johannes dem Täufer,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 355–392.

<sup>35</sup> See János Bolyki, *Jesu Tischgemeinschaften*, WUNT 2.96 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 228–229.

the short metaphorical passage that precedes Luke 7:33 (Q), John's preaching is likened to mourning at a funeral and Jesus' proclamation is compared to the piping of a flute which invites its hearers to dance (7:32) as it was at the wedding feasts. According to Luke 7:33, John and Jesus are on the same side, while the other side consists of adversaries who reject both of them. Yet, the difference between Jesus and John is clearly visible.

- Jesus performed symbolic actions, similar to those of the prophets in Israel (1 Kgs 11:29–39; Jer 19:1–13, etc.). He established a group of “Twelve” from among his disciples (Mark 3:13–19 par.), thereby symbolizing his mission to reform the entire nation of Israel with its twelve tribes. Furthermore, he entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Mark 11:1–11 pars.), like the messianic king described by the prophet Zechariah (9:9). Since the donkey was no longer an animal used for battle, this was a metaphor in a double sense. The same can be said about Jesus' cleansing of the temple (Mark 11:15–17 pars.), which symbolized his anticipation of a new eschatological temple (Ezek 40:1–44:3). Jesus' table fellowship can also be understood as consisting of symbolic actions.
- Jesus performed miraculous healings and exorcisms, which, according to our contemporary criteria, could be interpreted as shamanism. They do not fit any category of healing that we know from Jesus' day or from our time; yet, they are so well corroborated that we must take them seriously (see 3.) and must leave the question of their interpretation open.<sup>36</sup>
- Jesus did not hesitate to associate with sick people, outcasts (lepers), the poor, and women, children, and foreigners (Samaritans). Women were also among his disciples (Mary Magdalene) and supporters (Luke 8:1–3).
- Some of his Jewish contemporaries considered Jesus to be the Messiah in a more or less political sense, although he did not accept this role.
- Jesus was aware of the imminent danger to his life; yet, he went to Jerusalem for the Passover, most probably, in 30 CE. He pondered the positive meaning that his death might have. (See 4.4)
- He was sentenced to death and executed on a cross like a criminal.

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<sup>36</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew II*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 617–619, cf. 516, 535–537, 617–619, 678–680, 907, and 968; Berndt Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter*, FRLANT 170 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), esp. 314–316.



In general, Jesus may be understood to have been a prophet who intended to reform Israel, like his teacher John the Baptist or the Righteous Teacher who was a candidate for the post of high priest more than one and a half centuries before. A generation earlier, Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Shammai also wanted to reform Israel, but they were teachers with no prophetic ambitions.

Jesus did not succeed in reforming Israel. His early followers tried to continue his efforts to reform Israel, but in the 70's CE, they lost the battle to the pharisaic party. The Pharisees reformed Israel in a way that, in principle, remains valid to this very day.

#### 4.3. *The Message and Teachings of Jesus*

We have already identified the Kingdom of God as being a key phrase in Jesus' proclamation and teaching (see 3.1),<sup>37</sup> as being a matter of debate in Pauline theology (see 4.1), and as conveying an understanding of eschatological salvation that was different from the one that John the Baptist preached (see 4.2).

Jesus' proclamation was not based on a new morality. In their simpler formulation in Luke 6:20–21, the Beatitudes are only a promise. The poor are blessed, not because they are better than other people, but because the announcement of their changed position provides a vivid illustration of the new social structure of the Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> The poor, the hungry, and those who weep are not mentioned incidentally: "The poor have the good news brought to them" (Luke 7:22 par. [Q]). Social deprivation surely is the worst type of on-going humiliation that human beings can experience. This has been confirmed throughout history.

It is understandable that the oppressed hate the rich. In history, this hatred has repeatedly corrupted the movements of poor people and has escalated their alienation.<sup>39</sup> Thus, a special feature of the Jesus tradition is that the promise to the poor is linked with the exhortation to love one's enemies. This love (*agape*; Hebr. *a-h-b*) is not mere sentiment; it involves wanting others to also share the hope that we have received.

<sup>37</sup> For anyone who is interested in Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God, an essential collection of material and valuable observations is the voluminous work of Jacques Schlosser, *Le règne de Dieu dans les dits de Jésus I-II* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1980).

<sup>38</sup> The "woes" in Luke 6:24–25 are a secondary, symmetrical development of the Lukan tradition, whereas Matthew's account of the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–10) is a liturgical version intended for internal use by a group which had voluntarily chosen to follow Jesus.

<sup>39</sup> Communist totalitarianism also began as a movement of the poor.

The command to “bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:28 par.; cf. Matt 6:14) is clearly related to eschatological salvation. This does not preclude admonishing one’s adversaries and preventing them from harming others; however, the adversaries are not identified with evil itself (or with the evil one). The *connection between the promise to the poor and the exhortation to love one’s adversaries* is an internally coherent structure in Jesus’ teaching,<sup>40</sup> whose import has not yet been fully appreciated.

The consequence of this tradition is that since sinners themselves are victims of the evil one, *it is necessary and possible to separate the sinner from his sin*. This is the essence of the forgiveness that Jesus extended to individual persons in the name of God (Mark 2:5–7 par.; Luke 7:47–48). It is striking that if we analyze Jesus’ exorcisms, we discover an analogous structure: the possessed are liberated from the unclean spirits (*daimonion, pneuma akatharton*) that had dominated them (Mark 5:2 par.; Matt 17:18). The sinner appears on the same plane as the sick. Every analogous act of liberation is an anticipation of the Kingdom (Matt 12:28 par.). From this perspective, there are not good people and bad people, but only individuals who are dominated by evil and persons who have been liberated from it.

The fact that Jesus expected that the Kingdom of God would soon come in fullness remains a problem. According to Matt 10:23, he expected that this would happen in a few months.<sup>41</sup> This expectation was not fulfilled. Jesus’ miscalculation has been denied because Christian teachings about Jesus developed in a semi-docetic direction, according to which Jesus was a divine being clothed in a human body. From this perspective, it is not possible to ascribe any error to Jesus. However, by exploring why Jesus achieved such critical significance in spite of his miscalculation, we can better understand the core of his teaching.

The impact of Jesus’ miscalculation can be reduced by a few observations. In the first place, the apocalyptic genre was not the only form that Jesus used to express his message. His exhortations often issued from

<sup>40</sup> For an exegetical analysis of this inherent coherence, see Petr Pokorný, “Die Bergpredigt/Feldrede als supra-ethisches System,” in *Ja und Nein: Christliche Theologie angesichts Israels: Festschrift W. Schrager*, ed. K. Wengst and G. Sass (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998), 181–193.

<sup>41</sup> The best discussion of the evidence that I have encountered is in Werner G. Kümmel, “Die Naherwartung in der Verkündigung Jesu,” in *Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte*, ed. Werner G. Kümmel, Marb ThSt 3 (München: Kaiser, 1965), 457–470, esp. 465.

the grace of the heavenly Father who makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good (Matt 5:45). This was one of the reasons that one group of scholars stressed the sapiential features of Jesus' teaching and viewed him as being a wandering Cynic and sage who quoted proverbs, initiated dialogues, used parables, discussed universal problems, and thoughtfully interpreted apocalyptic traditions.<sup>42</sup> Jesus anticipated the Kingdom through his symbolic acts (see 4.2), as well as in his parables, which not only illustrated his teaching, but were also part of the new reality.<sup>43</sup> The emphasis often shifted from expectations about the future to the present time. Where we read that the Kingdom of God has come near (in Greek *eggizein*, cf. Matt 4:17, etc.), the Kingdom's future dimension is clearly discernible; where we read that the Kingdom has come (*ephthasen*, Matt 12:28 [Q] par.; cf. "is among you" [*entos humôn estin*] in Luke 17:21, cf. Gos. Thom. 113), its present dimension is in the foreground.

The most important argument against the 'apocalyptic Jesus' is the fact that the climax of apocalyptic expectation—when Jesus' significance was expressed in apocalyptic terms—did not occur until after his death.

Some scholars have observed that the sayings about the coming of the Son of Man, which were considered to be the main argument in favor of the 'apocalyptic Jesus,' do not appear in any sayings about the Kingdom of God<sup>44</sup> and can be explained as being a later commentary on other sayings of Jesus.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, we must take seriously the fact that the

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<sup>42</sup> The most important studies of this kind include: Francis G. Downing, *The Christ and the Cynics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988); Francis G. Downing, "The Social Context of Jesus the Teacher: Construction or Re-construction," *NTS* 33 (1987): 439–451; Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); J. Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), esp. 76, 103–104; J. Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 305. A similar portrait of a 'non-eschatological Jesus' is offered by Marcus L. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1984). Critics of this interpretation stressed Jesus' involvement in the practical issues of religion (which was not typical for Cynics), his openness to the advent of an eschatological future, and his firm belief that the Kingdom of God would arrive in fullness. See Martin Ebner, *Jesus—ein Weisheitslehrer*, HBS 15 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 428.

<sup>43</sup> See Jünger, *Paulus und Jesus*, 135 ("Die Basileia kommt *im* Gleichnis *als* Gleichnis zur Sprache").

<sup>44</sup> Philipp Vielhauer presented this observation in "Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu," in *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Philipp Vielhauer (München: Kaiser, 1965), 55–91.

<sup>45</sup> See Heinz Schürmann, "Beobachtungen zum Menschensohn-Titel in der Redequelle" (1975), in *Gottes Reich-Jesu Geschick*, ed. Heinz Schürmann (Freiburg: Herder, 1983), 153–182, esp. 176, 179; Joachim Wanke, "Bezugs- und Kommentarworte" in *den synoptischen Evangelien*, EThS 44 (Erfurt: St. Benno Verlag, 1981), 108–110. (Although

designation 'Son of Man' disappears from texts that clearly originated during the post-resurrection period. New evidence from Qumran (e.g., 4QTestAmram) regarding the concept of eschatological judgment in Aramaic texts supports the theory that expectations about the Son of Man were prominent in Jesus' time.<sup>46</sup>

In summary, although expectations regarding an imminent social and cosmic change<sup>47</sup> do not lie at the core of Jesus' message, their impact cannot be denied. Jesus' followers had to deal with the delay in the "second coming" by: (a) postponing the date (Mark 13:30 par.; Mark 9:1 par.), (b) stressing its incalculable character (Mark 13:32 par.), (c) identifying the Kingdom with Jesus Christ (Luke 17:21), or (d) spiritualizing its character (the Kingdom of *Heaven*).<sup>48</sup>

The problem of the delayed *parusia* did not substantially threaten the early church; however, we must discuss it. Only when we admit Jesus' miscalculation can we learn why he nevertheless became so influential in history. The reason for this was not only the structure of the Easter confessions, which we cannot analyze in this essay, but also Jesus' own proclamation. We have mentioned Jesus' insight into critical problems of history (social problems and the question of evil); we have also discussed the fact that he addressed God as Father (*Abba*). That word does not signify a familiar relationship; instead, it points to a bond that is intensive<sup>49</sup> and respectful.<sup>50</sup> Jesus' deep personal relationship to God as

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these monographs are rarely mentioned in American research, J. P. Meier is a notable exception); Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 258–260. (This study raises questions about the titular meaning of the "Son of Man.") For persuasive conclusions, see Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Origin of the Designation of Jesus as the 'Son of Man,'" *HTR* 80 (1987): 391–407.

<sup>46</sup> Jiří Mrázek, *Transformace mesianismu v aramejských textech z Kumránu* (diss., Charles University, Prague, 1990), 36–37, 76–78.

<sup>47</sup> The monograph of E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), stressed the role played by the eschatological restoration that Jesus expected (61–63, 91, 145). A similar conclusion was drawn by John P. Meier, "Reflections on Jesus-of-History Research Today," in *Jesus' Jewishness*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 84–107, esp. 92.

<sup>48</sup> We may add e. the argument regarding the difference between human and divine time (2 Pet 3:8), which came later. In the early church there was no period that could be identified as "the" time of addressing the questions raised by the delayed *parusia*. On the one hand, there were several waves of enthusiastic expectation (including the Montanist movement in the second century), and on the other hand, there were ecstatic experiences of the immediacy of salvation (1 Cor 4 and 12; gnosticism). These were radical expressions of the two dimensions of Christian experience (i.e., the "two-sided" or "telescopic" aspects of eschatology). Jesus' miscalculation was not the main source of these.

<sup>49</sup> This should be understood as a Semitic intensification.

<sup>50</sup> Jesus lived in a patriarchal society.

the Creator, together with his openness toward the future, which has to be in God's hands ("Father . . . thy kingdom come"), served as the firm foundation, which survived the delay of the coming of the Kingdom of God and became the starting point for post-Easter reinterpretations.

No doubt, Jesus wanted to reform Israel.<sup>51</sup> However, his innovations were so radical that they not only integrated various Jewish traditions;<sup>52</sup> they also transcended the historical dimensions of Israel's identity. The bracketing of some of the rules regarding purity (Mark 7:18–23 par.) and the exhortation to love one's enemies (Luke 6:27 par.) must have been viewed as being provocative. Even the burial of the dead, which was such an important rite in the Jewish community (1 Sam 31:12; Tob 1:16–2:9) and in all human civilizations (Sophocles, *Antigone* 454–455 [*theon nomima*]), had to take a back seat to following Jesus, who had come to teach people about the Kingdom of God (Matt 8:22 [Q] par.).<sup>53</sup> The climax of these developments is represented by the declaration that many will come from east and west to eat with Abraham in the Kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be cast out (Matt 8:11–12 [Q] par.). This proclamation transcends the 'Israel-centric' vision of eschatological renewal that is common to all of the other prophets and reformers.<sup>54</sup>

#### 4.4. *Jesus' Self-Understanding and the Reason for His Death on the Cross*

Jesus was called "teacher" (*rabbi, didaskalos*), and according to Mark 14:14, he spoke of himself as teacher.<sup>55</sup> However, his self-understanding was a prophetic one. This conclusion is not only supported by Jesus' association with the prophet John the Baptist; first and foremost, it is also confirmed by his claim to be intimately related to God and to have God's Spirit. (See Luke 13:33, with "prophet" as his self-designation.)

<sup>51</sup> This is how Jesus was interpreted by E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>52</sup> After reading James H. Charlesworth's general comments about Qumran, we may conclude that, in some sense, Jesus' teaching also incorporated some aspects of Qumran's spiritual heritage: "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus" in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York etc.: Doubleday, 1992), 37–40; "Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Faith," in *Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Faith*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver, 58–72, esp. 71.

<sup>53</sup> A sentence about proclaiming the Kingdom has been added in Luke 9:60.

<sup>54</sup> Michael Wolter, "Reich Gottes bei Lukas," *NTS* 41 (1995): 541–563, here 546–548.

<sup>55</sup> Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 246–248.

The Pharisees could not accept such claims because they were convinced that the age of the Spirit had ended.

Jesus considered his time to be the era when the prophecy that Third Isaiah had articulated in Isa 61:1–3 would be fulfilled.<sup>56</sup> Jesus' idea of mission was a centripetal one: to prepare Israel for the anticipated pilgrimage of the nations to Jerusalem (Isa 11:10; Isa 60; Mic 4:1–8, etc.). That is why he concentrated on Israel's reform (Matt 10:5–6; 7:24).<sup>57</sup> He certainly had a sense that a special mission had been given to him by God, a mission higher than the prophetic one, which would be the start of a new era in salvation history (Luke 16:16 [Q] par.). However, Jesus never referred to himself as the Messiah<sup>58</sup> and, according to Mark 8:27–30 par. (cf. 33), he did not accept the designation "Messiah" from the mouth of Peter. In the parallel text in Matt 16:16–17, where Peter is praised, the disciple's statement was transformed into a typical post-resurrection confession about Jesus being the Son of God. Jesus obviously tried to dissociate himself from certain kinds of political messianism, which—by the way—have proved to be dangerous throughout human history. That is why he cannot be understood in terms of political subversion or revolution.<sup>59</sup> The tradition about the coexistence of faith in God and political power (Rom 13:1–7; 1 Tim 2:1–4; 1 Pet 2:12–17) has its roots in the question about paying taxes that is part of the Jesus tradition (Mark 12:13–17 par.; *Gos. Thom.* 100; P. Egerton 2). Jesus created an alternative social substructure which consisted of two components: he and his disciples, on the one hand, and the committed followers who supported them, on the other.<sup>60</sup> Jesus did not intend to set up a militant opposition. His program was "a religious movement with social and

<sup>56</sup> Isa 61 was a popular prophecy that was related to Jesus after the resurrection (see Luke 4:18). However, although the Beatitudes in Luke 6 (Matt 5) are inspired by Isa 61, this connection is not explicitly identified as constituting an argument from Scripture. This fact speaks in favor of the theory that Isa 61 was an authentic part of Jesus' self-understanding.

<sup>57</sup> Petr Pokorný, "From a Puppy to the Child': Some Problems of Contemporary Exegesis Demonstrated from Mark 7.24–30 Par.," *NTS* 41 (1995): 321–334, esp. 326.

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of messianic ideas in Jesus' time, see Gerber Oegema, *The Anointed and his People*, *JSPSup* 27 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); and the summary by James H. Charlesworth, "Introduction: Messianic Ideas in Early Judaism," in *Qumran Messianism*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, H. Lichtenberger, and G. S. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 1–8, and most of the other essays included in that volume.

<sup>59</sup> This idea was developed by Robert Eisler and Samuel G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967); Karl Kautsky was a Marxist philosopher who formulated a similar hypothesis in 1908.

<sup>60</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Die Soziologie der Jesusbewegung*, *TEH* 194 (Munich: Kaiser, 1977).

political commitments.”<sup>61</sup> Luke 7:22–23 (Q) par. reflects an early tradition,<sup>62</sup> which interpreted Jesus’ activity in terms of some of Isaiah’s eschatological expectations regarding social restitution (Isa 35:5; 61:1).

Critical research cannot prove that Jesus embraced the role of being the suffering Servant of the Lord (Isa 53), the Passover lamb, or the sacrifice necessary for atonement. Only one fact is certain: during the final period of his public activity, Jesus must have been aware that he was risking his life; thus, he pondered the meaning of his impending death. The words (*ta legomena*) of the institution of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23–25; Mark 14:22–25 par.; Luke 22:15–20) may have been fundamentally re-shaped as a result of their liturgical use. However, the act of sharing a single cup with everyone has no analogue in the Jewish setting. (According to the tractate *b. Pes.* 10.5, each of the participants in table fellowship had their own cup.) Therefore, Jesus’ gesture may support the theory that he was convinced that his imminent death would be significant for others,<sup>63</sup> i.e., that his personal fate would become part of his proclamation. During the same period, Jesus apparently faced the threat of death with the help of a proverb about losing and saving life, which had military origins (Mark 8:35 par.; Luke 17:33 [Q] par.; cf., Hermas, *Sim.* 9.26.3). (According to Plato, Socrates also alluded to that proverb [*Apol.* 42a].)<sup>64</sup> This saying enabled Jesus’ followers to combine post-Easter confessions regarding his resurrection with a positive (inclusive) understanding of his death (using the pattern ‘died—has been raised’).<sup>65</sup>

The reason that Jesus was sentenced to death by the Roman authorities constitutes a serious problem. The gospels try to blame the Jewish

<sup>61</sup> François Bovon, “A Review of John Dominic Crossan’s *The Birth of Christianity*,” *HTR* 94 (2001): 369–374, here 374.

<sup>62</sup> The authenticity of this tradition cannot be denied; for a discussion of this passage, see Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 8–17)*, EKK I.2 (Zürich: Benzinger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 163–170; Jörg Frey, “Der historische Jesus und der Christus der Evangelien,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 273–336, here 315.

<sup>63</sup> Heinz Schürmann, *Gottes Reich—Jesus’ Geschick* (Freiburg: Herder, 1983), 185–187; John P. Meier, “Reflexions on Jesus-of-History Today,” in *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 84–107, at 103.

<sup>64</sup> William A. Beardslee, “Saving One’s Life by Losing It,” *JAAR* 47 (1979): 57–72; Petr Pokorný, “Luke 17,33 und ein (damals) bekanntes Sprichwort,” in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Festschrift H. M. Schenke*, ed. H. G. Bethge, St. Emmel, K. L. King, and J. Schlatterer, *Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies* 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 387–398.

<sup>65</sup> Petr Pokorný, “Postmodernes Ostern im Neuen Testament,” in *Bonner akademische Reden* 82 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1999), 29–40.

leaders for Jesus' condemnation, but even if that were true, it is absolutely false to say that the Jews put Jesus on the cross. We may only say that the Jewish leaders of that time were co-responsible. It is difficult to say why Jesus was crucified as the king of the Jews since he refused to accept the role of being a political Messiah. Geza Vermes is one of the few scholars who has realized the depth of this problem. However, Vermes' answer that Jesus' contemporaries did not take him seriously<sup>66</sup> is not satisfactory.<sup>67</sup> It is more likely that the proximate reason (or pretext) for Jesus' condemnation was the act of cleansing the temple (which was a prophetic symbol [Mark 11:15–19]).<sup>68</sup> The Romans used to influence the self-administration of the Jews through their hierarchy. Thus, the priests could have used the scene in the temple as the basis for accusing Jesus of blasphemy. However, the main reason for Jesus' crucifixion was deeper: his condemnation was a consequence of his authority, precisely because his inner authority meant that *in his plan for salvation he himself had to play a decisive role*. He did not expect any messianic figure except the transcendental Son of Man, with whom he identified himself, at least as to the Son of Man's basic function as the eschatological key person.

Jesus did not philosophically accept his death with Socratic inner harmony. He may have expected that the Kingdom would arrive before his execution, or he may have thought that he would be assumed into heaven as Enoch and Elijah had been.<sup>69</sup> The fear of death that he voiced in Gethsemane is deeply human (Mark 14:32–42 par.; John 12:27; Heb 5:7–8). The framework of this pericope, which was added in the style of a *chreia*, may be a secondary element. However its content, which would never have been created by a post-resurrection community of Jesus' followers, supports the authenticity of this tradition. Unlike the prayer in Gethsemane, most of Jesus' words from the cross reflect the confession and theology of the gospel writers or of their believing communities. Only the cry of dereliction, whose depth and challenge are partially blunted

<sup>66</sup> *Jesus the Jew*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 2001), 138.

<sup>67</sup> Berndt Schaller, "Jesus, ein Jude aus Galiläa. Zur Trilogie von Geza Vermes," *EvTh* 57 (1997): 552–559, here 559.

<sup>68</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 71–73. The hypothesis that the *Gospel of Peter* is the oldest witness to Jesus' death cannot be substantiated. (See J. Dominic Crossan, especially the study entitled *The Cross That Spoke* [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988].) It is very difficult to separate the story of the cross from the *Gospel of Peter*, and it is even more difficult to date that text in the first century.

<sup>69</sup> Günther Haufe, *Jesu persönliche Zukunftserwartung und der Ursprung der ältesten Osterterminologie* (diss., Leipzig University, 1959), extract in *ThLZ* 85 (1960): 467–468.



when it is understood as being a quotation of Psalm 22, suggests that Jesus' death was the failure of his expectations and desires, as well as the complete severance of his personal relationship with God. The Kingdom of God had not yet come. However, the Easter proclamation means that at the very moment of Jesus' passivity, the authenticity of his mission is proven: he has not been forgotten, and God really is on the side of suffering and mortal human beings. According to the Easter promise, the link between Jesus and the Risen Lord of the Christian faith is the faith of Jesus, i.e., his respect for God's otherness and "good will," which, in the end, transcended his own expectations and even his own sentiments. His whole "story," not just his self-understanding, is a theological "revelation"—a parable of God in history.<sup>70</sup> This is the gospel, which lies outside the realm of exact verification and can only be grasped by means of testimony.<sup>71</sup> In spite of the distance from statements of faith that a scholar has to maintain, he must be aware of the fact that, in some sense, Jesus thrived in history.

#### 4.5. *Stylistic and Rhetorical Peculiarities of the Ancient Jesus Tradition*

In my opinion, one possible application of the criterion of dissimilarity involves using it to investigate and analyze the lexical and stylistic singularities of texts containing the oldest Jesus traditions.

For the most part, this method provides us with only indirect information; however, it may help us to see some of the features of Jesus' teaching more clearly.<sup>72</sup>

We have discussed (see 3.2) the metaphorical term the *Kingdom of God* (*basileia tou theou*) and its frequent combination with statements about its arrival. Another frequently used phrase is "to enter the Kingdom of God" (*eiserchesthai, eisproeuesthai, proagein*) (Mark 9:47; 10:15, 23; Matt 23:13 [Q]; Matt 5:20; 7:21; 21:31 [all SMt]). This expression calls to

<sup>70</sup> Used by E. Fuchs, E. Schillebeeckx, E. Schweizer, et al. This is a valid theological statement, provided that we understand the term "parable" in a metaphorical sense; see Petr Pokorný, "Jesus als Gleichnis Gottes: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer These," *EvTh* 57 (1997): 401–407 (this essay includes an overview of this issue).

<sup>71</sup> Regarding the hermeneutics of testimony, see Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutics of Testimony," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul Ricoeur (London: SPCK, 1981), 119–154.

<sup>72</sup> I attempted to launch such an investigation in my paper "Stilistische und rhetorische Eigentümlichkeiten der ältesten Jesustradition," in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 393–408.

mind the reference to entering the inherited land that is found in Josh 19:49–51<sup>73</sup> (cf. the phrase “to inherit the Kingdom of God” in Gal 5:21; 1 Cor 6:9–10; 15:50; Eph 5:5). The term “kingless race” (Hippolytus, *Refut.* 5.8.2 [Naasean Tractate]; Cod. Berol. Gnost. 3.108.13 [SJC], NHC II, 5; 125:2, 6; 127:10–15 [*Or Mundi*]),<sup>74</sup> which refers to the role of believers who are spiritual co-rulers in the Kingdom of God, appears only in later non-canonical texts. Nevertheless, Jesus’ Beatitudes bequeathed the Kingdom of God to the poor (Luke 6:20b), and he promised his disciples that, during the Last Judgment, they would be his ‘co-judges’ (Luke 22:29–30; Matt 19:28). Thus, references to the “kingless race” may reflect Jesus’ spiritual legacy. The church was reluctant to develop this theme because, according to 1 Cor 4:8, Jesus’ promise had been misinterpreted as corroborating the spiritual superiority of the elect.

Jesus’ frequent intransitive (absolute) use of the verb *pisteuein* (to believe) or of *pistis* (faith) (Luke 17:6 [Q]; Mark 11:22–23 par.) is significant since, in the church, *pisteuein* was used to introduce the Easter confession. The authenticity of this use is supported by the appearance of newly created terms, such as *oligopistos* or *oligopistia* ([of] little faith: Luke 12:28 [Q] par.; Matt 8:26; cf., Mark 4:40; Matt 14:31 [SMt]; 16:8), which obviously is a translation of an expression based on the Hebrew root *a-m-n* (see “Amen” in the Jesus sayings)<sup>75</sup> for which the Greek did not have a suitable lexical equivalent.<sup>76</sup> In some cases, *pistis* seems to be a simple confidence in miracles, a credulity (Mark 2:4–5 par.). However, an analysis of terms that express the opposite of faith reveals a deeper meaning: in this context, faith is the opposite of uncertainty, doubt, anxiety, and preoccupation with daily cares (Mark 11:23—*diakrinessthai*; Luke 12:22–28 [Q] par.—*merimnan*). Since the “Kingdom of God” is the ultimate horizon, human beings are free from the heaviest burden of worry: “Do not worry about your life” (Luke 12:22 [Q] par.).<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> In the Septuagint, *poreuesthai—embateuein*.

<sup>74</sup> Similar motifs are found in NHC II, 7; 145:14–15 (Book of Thomas the Contender); NHC V, 4; 56:4–5. (Second Apocalypse of James); NHC V, 5; 82:19–20 (Apocalypse of Adam) and Apoc 3:21.

<sup>75</sup> Matt 21:31b [SMt]; Mark 14:25; Matt 24:47 [Q] par.; cf., Joachim Jeremias, “Kennzeichen der ipsissima vox Jesu,” in Joachim Jeremias, *Abba* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 145–52.

<sup>76</sup> G. Ebeling, “Jesus und Glaube,” in *Wort und Glaube*, ed. G. Ebeling, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1962), 203–254, esp. 232–233.

<sup>77</sup> Anachronistically, Jesus’ sayings about overcoming daily cares (*merimna*) may be considered to be a kind of counterbalance to Martin Heidegger’s philosophy, in which mortality is the source of everyday human *Sorge* (cares and sorrows).

We have already mentioned the metaphoric explication of the term “Kingdom of God” in Jesus’ parables (see 4.3). Jesus’ unexpected response to neglected or even contemptible groups of people like children, sinners, and people from the ‘east and west’ serves an equally provocative role.

The ‘immoral parables,’<sup>78</sup> such as the one about the Dishonest Steward (Luke 16:1–8), the original form of the parable of the Ten Pounds (Luke 19:11–27 [Q?] par.) (the Jews did not charge interest at that time),<sup>79</sup> the parable about the Treasure Hidden in a Field (Matt 13:44; the version in *Gos. Thom.* 109 has a different aim), and the parable about a terrorist in *Gos. Thom.* 65, are puzzling. What should Jesus’ hearers learn from these bad people? Not their wickedness, but obviously their consistent and resolute acting.

It is striking how rich the language of the Jesus tradition is as a means of *addressing its hearers compellingly*. The Beatitudes are expressed in the second person (Luke 6:20b–23; *Gos. Thom.* 54, 68),<sup>80</sup> and Jesus addresses God as *Abba* (see 4.3). Other examples of the use of vivid language include hyperbolic expressions (exaggerations), like the one in the following exhortation: “If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also” (Luke 6:29 [Q] par.; cf. Matt 5:41 [SMt]); the saying about cutting off the hand and tearing out the eye (Mark 9:43, 47 par.); the caution that it is easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:25 par.); the well-documented saying about faith moving mountains (Matt 17:20 [Q] par.; Mark 11:22–23 par., but also 1 Cor 13:2b!); and the exhortation to love one’s enemies (Luke 6:27 [Q] par., P. Oxy. 1224; *Did.* 1.3).

In keeping with the Socratic method, Jesus often asked ‘*counter-questions*’ to his disciples, as well as to his opponents (Mark 3:33; 10:18 par.; 11:29 [“I will ask you one question... ”]; Mark 12:16 par., Luke 10:36, *Gos. Thom.* 18 and 43, etc.). There are also several *proverbs* and *metaphors*, belonging to both the Jewish (e.g., “It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher. . .” Matt 10:25) and the Greek traditions (e.g., “a fruitless olive tree,” “to sow on stone”). Some of these are like ‘immoral

<sup>78</sup> See Timm Schramm and K. Löwenstein, *Unmoralische Helden: Anstössige Gleichnisse Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), esp. 148–150.

<sup>79</sup> Christoph Kähler, *Jesu Gleichnisse als Poesie und Therapie*, WUNT 87 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995), 180–182.

<sup>80</sup> Beatitudes were customarily expressed in the third person; e.g., see Ps 1:1–3.

proverbs' (e.g., "Those who have will be given more; and from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away" [Mark 4:25–27]).<sup>81</sup>

The following conclusions can be deduced from these observations. In his proclamations about the Kingdom of God, Jesus modified most of the Jewish eschatological expectations of his time, and particularly transformed 'Israel-centric' eschatology. Eschatology simultaneously became more universal *and* more personal (individual). However, some apocalyptic features are incontrovertible. The Kingdom of God will usher in a supra-individual change, comparable to a harvest, an assault, a discovery, or the end of the present state of affairs. All of the exhortations to repentance and inner renewal presuppose this transformation, and thus, do not fit the theory which describes Jesus as being comparable to the Cynics.<sup>82</sup> The "immoral parables," which we just discussed, may have meaning only in the context of the imminent, supra-individual movement. The "children of the Kingdom" should be as "wise" in their mission as the wicked people are in their wickedness. They will be on the victorious side of the cosmic struggle, which the devil, the evil "strong man" cannot win (cf. Mark 3:27–28): "I watched Satan fall from heaven..." (Luke 10:18; cf. Rev. 12:7; John 12:31<sup>83</sup>). Otherwise, the exorcisms could not be successful (cf. Luke 11:19–20 [Q]).<sup>84</sup> The exhortation to love is not just any moral teaching; love is a pragmatically based, supra-ethical phenomenon. Jesus' prophetic exaggerations underscore that his eschatological message must be taken very seriously. The puzzling sayings about fire and suffering (Luke 12:49–50; *Gos. Thom.* 10, 16, 82) heighten awareness of the fact that the apocalyptic movement is focused on the

<sup>81</sup> For a list of such parables, see Petr Pokorný, "Griechische Sprichwörter im Neuen Testament," in *Bibelauslegung als Theologie*, ed. Petr Pokorný and J. B. Souček, WUNT 100 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 147–154.

<sup>82</sup> Cf., Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 482–484; for a detailed discussion of this matter, see Pokorný, "Stilistische und rhetorische Eigentümlichkeiten," 406.

<sup>83</sup> The context and content of the parallel passages rule out the interpretation which holds that Jesus used this saying to warn his disciples against triumphalism (S. Gathercole, "Jesus' Eschatological Vision of the Fall of Satan: Luke 10:18 Reconsidered," *ZNW* 94 [2003]: 38–67). It is true that the struggle continues, but the saying is not a warning about the struggle; instead, it declares that Satan has lost his power in heaven, which is the critical sphere. Thus, he has "no future."

<sup>84</sup> Michael Labahn, "Jesu Exorzismen (Q 11,19–20) und die Erkenntnis der ägyptischen Magier (Ex 8,15)," in *The Saying Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 98 (Leuven: Leuven University Press–Peeters, 2001), 617–633; Martin Rese, "Jesus und die Dämonen im Matthäusevangelium," in *Die Dämonen. Demons*, ed. A. Lange, H. Lichtgenberger, and K. F. D. Römfeld (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003), 463–475.

judgment and the fulfillment of history (Luke 12:52; *Gos. Thom.* 16). Jesus' apocalyptic gospel, which is now recognizable in only some of its features, must be interpreted, not discarded. The core of Jesus' mission is neither a higher moral or social consciousness nor a series of apocalyptic images; instead, it is focused on the victorious arrival of the Kingdom of God. In one sense, this expected victory gives positive value to all human efforts that correspond to Jesus' activities (see 1.1); yet, at the same time, this victory is being realized in a way that Jesus himself could not have imagined.

### 5. *Comparison with Others' Conclusions*

I have admitted my "positive prejudice," since that is an essential feature of hermeneutics. Furthermore, more than most other contemporary scholars, I have stressed the complex nature of the Jesus tradition, in which Jesus and his post-resurrection impact are closely linked. I have tried to fructify Jesus' "christological" dimension, while simultaneously seeking to avoid presenting a harmonizing image of his teaching and life.

I fully acknowledge archeology's contributions to New Testament studies, but texts are the main sources that we regularly have at our disposal. In my opinion, the central task of Jesus research is to reconstruct Jesus' theology and to identify its relationship to his activities. Texts are also our primary source for reconstructing of some of the facts about Jesus' life since most of the texts have an explicitly referential character.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> For an excellent discussion of the referential function of texts, see P. Ricoeur, "The Canon between the Text and the Community," in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. P. Pokorný and J. Roskovec (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2002), 7–26, here 8–9.



# THE ROLE OF GREEK LANGUAGE CRITERIA IN HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH

STANLEY E. PORTER

## 1. *Introduction*

For some historical Jesus scholars—especially those who practice what Thomas Kuhn would describe as normal science<sup>1</sup>—it may come as a surprise to discover that there is a language criterion for historical Jesus study that is not primarily concerned with Aramaic. Such scholars are accustomed to perusing lists of the so-called criteria for authenticity and finding criteria related to the use of the Aramaic language as the language-based criterion for differentiating authentic from inauthentic Jesus material. It has not always been so. In fact, there was a time in previous research even during the so-called critical period when both Greek and Aramaic or Semitic language criteria co-existed, often being utilized by the same scholars. In the intervening period, the Greek language criterion was completely overshadowed by extravagant claims for the Aramaic criterion, and the Greek language criterion did not seem to respond with robust defenders—at least until recently.<sup>2</sup>

Although I am far from being the first person to propose one or more, or even a set, of Greek language criteria for study of the historical Jesus, I have probably developed such criteria in the most robust fashion. I will expand upon pertinent developmental cruxes below, but my own development of such criteria began with my study of the multilingual milieu of the ancient Mediterranean world, including Palestine at the time of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of this research, I became convinced that, rather than there being significant Semitic (including Aramaic) influence upon the Greek of the New Testament, the Greek of the New Testament reflected the non-literary (not to be confused with

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<sup>1</sup> T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 10–42.

<sup>2</sup> The above synopsis is defended and exemplified in the discussion below.

<sup>3</sup> S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Voice*, SBG 1 (New York: Lang, 1989), 111–156; cf. S. E. Porter, “Introduction: The Greek of the New Testament as a Disputed Area of Research,” in *The Language of the New Testament: Classic Essays*, ed. S. E. Porter, JSNTSup 60 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 11–38.

sub-literary or un-literary) koine of the time, as found in a number of other contemporary authors.<sup>4</sup> I later extended this research, and became convinced that even the eastern Mediterranean, including Palestine and the Galilee region, were linguistically integrated with the complex multilingualism of the eastern Roman Empire, to the point that many inhabitants of the time, including Jews and especially a Jewish teacher, would have been functionally bilingual, to the point of using Greek for simple communication, and even possibly for extended discourse.<sup>5</sup> My task then became one of developing criteria by which such a judgment could be applied to specific instances as found in the New Testament. As a result, I developed three Greek language criteria: the criterion of Greek language and its context, the criterion of Greek textual variance and the criterion of discourse features.<sup>6</sup> These were all applied to the New Testament, and a number of passages were identified in which one could, with varying degrees of certainty, establish that Jesus spoke Greek. Since that time, I have added to the number of passages, responded to criticism, and come to believe that there is more reason than not to apply such criteria to larger passages than simply dialogues between Jesus and others.<sup>7</sup> I originally suggested that Mark 13 was one such possible passage,<sup>8</sup> and I have come to the point of positing that such a passage as the Sermon on the Mount was delivered—at least on the occasion as it is recorded in Matthew's gospel—in Greek.<sup>9</sup> Responses to these

<sup>4</sup> Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 141–156.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., S. E. Porter, “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?” *TynBul* 44.2 (1993): 199–235 (updated in my *Studies in the Greek New Testament: Theory and Practice* [New York: Peter Lang, 1996], 139–171); “Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 123–154; “The Greek Language of the New Testament,” in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. S. E. Porter, NTTS 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 99–130.

<sup>6</sup> I first proposed and developed these in S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 126–237. The second of the three criteria, Greek textual variance, was anticipated in S. E. Porter and M. B. O'Donnell, “The Implications of Textual Variants for Authenticating the Words of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 197–133; cf. Porter and O'Donnell, “The Implications of Textual Variants for Authenticating the Activities of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 28.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 121–151.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., S. E. Porter, “Luke 17.11–19 and the Criteria for Authenticity Revisited,” *JSHJ* 1.2 (2003): 201–224; “Reading the Gospels and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,” in *Reading the Gospels Today*, ed. S. E. Porter, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 27–55; “The Criterion of Greek Language and Its Context: A Further Response,” *JSHJ* 4.1 (2006): 69–74.

<sup>8</sup> Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 210–37.

<sup>9</sup> Porter, “Reading the Gospels,” 48–49. See also below for further discussion.



criteria have been mixed,<sup>10</sup> although I believe that it is generally recognized that I have—if not convinced all scholars of the validity of my ultimate conclusions—shown that it is likely if not probable that Jesus spoke Greek, at least on occasion, and that we may even have some indication of when Jesus did so.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, I wish to do several things in terms of the above criteria that I have developed. I wish to (1) trace the history and development of the criteria regarding language, both Greek and Semitic, including Aramaic, (2) develop in more detail the three criteria that I have mentioned above, and (3) then apply these criteria in some detail to new passages.

## 2. Previous Discussion of Greek and Aramaic Language Criteria

In the critical post-Enlightenment era, the indiscriminating are easily led to believe that there has only been one language criterion, that of Semitic or Aramaic language. For example, if one picks up Albert Schweitzer's major work on the development of historical Jesus discussion from Reimarus to Wrede, his section on language is devoted almost entirely to those who discuss Semitic languages. He includes, especially, F. Delitzsch, J. T. Marshall, E. Nestle, J. Wellhausen, A. Meyer and G. Dalman.<sup>12</sup> Recent discussions are not much different. There have been a number of articles and chapters that have reviewed the criteria used in historical Jesus research,<sup>13</sup> and not one of them, to my knowledge, acknowledges anything but a Semitic or Aramaic language criterion. The same is true in the several book-length treatments that have sections

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<sup>10</sup> Positive response is found, for example, in H. W. Shin, *Textual Criticism and the Synoptic Problem in Historical Jesus Research: The Search for Valid Criteria* (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), passim; S. McKnight, *Jesus and his Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 45; while a negative response is found in J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 82–83.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 257 n. 42; C. A. Evans, "Life of Jesus," in *Handbook to Exegesis*, ed. Porter, 427–475, esp. 447; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 315 and n. 289; Shin, *Textual Criticism*, 200–201; and M. J. McClymond, *Familiar Stranger: An Introduction to Jesus of Nazareth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 51–52.

<sup>12</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A. & C. Black, 1910), 270–277.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., W. O. Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Discussion of Methodology," *ATR* 51 (1969): 38–56; N. J. McEleney, "Authenticating Criteria and Mark 7:1–23," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 431–460; F. Mussner, "Methodologie der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus," in *Rückfrage nach Jesus: Zur Methodik und Bedeutung der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, ed. K. Kertelge, QD 63 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 118–147; repr.

on the criteria.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it is understandable that many would have the impression not only that there is only one language criterion, but in fact that there is only one language that was in use by Jesus and his followers in first-century Palestine. Both assumptions are demonstrably false, and merit correction.

Discussion of the development of both Semitic and Aramaic criteria and Greek criteria is warranted, to set the stage for discussion of recent developments of Greek language criteria. I will begin with a brief overview of the Semitic criteria.

## 2.1. *Semitic Language Criteria*

There are three recent stages in the development of Semitic and more particularly Aramaic language criteria that are worth mentioning. There is no doubt that there were many earlier who recognized that Semitic languages, including Aramaic, were used by the early church.<sup>15</sup> However, in the modern era, there are three quantifiable stages of significance.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1.1. *Translational Literalism*

The first stage in the development of the Semitic language criteria came about as a result of linguistic discoveries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a result of the development of comparative philology, there emerged a recognition of the genetic relationship between what came to be called the Indo-European languages, to the point of developing a

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in Mussner, *Jesus von Nazareth im Umfeld Israels und der Urkirche: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. M. Theobald, WUNT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1999), 13–42; R. H. Stein, “The ‘Criteria’ for Authenticity,” in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, vol. I, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 225–263; D. Polkow, “Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards, SBLSP 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 336–356; C. A. Evans, “Life of Jesus,” in *Handbook to Exegesis*, ed. Porter, 441–446.

<sup>14</sup> E.g., R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels*, Studies in Creative Criticism 4 (London: SPCK, 1972); R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981; 4th ed., 1994), 87–96; S. McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels*, Guides to New Testament Exegesis (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 59–69; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991–2009), 1:167–195; C. A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*, rev. ed., NTTTS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 127–146; idem, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 13–26 (these reflect his earlier article, “Authenticity Criteria in Life of Jesus Research,” *CSR* 19 [1989]: 6–31). The exception of course is my own treatment of the topic, where I am developing Greek language criteria.

<sup>15</sup> See Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 270–274; Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 111.

<sup>16</sup> The history of this debate is traced in Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 112–117; “Introduction,” 11–37; *Criteria for Authenticity*, 89–99.

complex genetic tree that traced these Indo-European languages back to their earlier forms, and culminating in the hypothesized Proto-Indo-European.<sup>17</sup> Along with this discovery came the recognition that there were other languages that were not Indo-European in nature, and that some of these languages also enjoyed genetic relationships. These languages and their relationships helped to explain a number of linguistic phenomena related to linguistic geography, such as the relationship between a number of peoples and language groups of the ancient near east. Out of this study grew an interest specifically in the language of the Jewish people, including the Jews of the first century, and more particularly the relationship between Hebrew and Aramaic as Afro-Asiatic languages.<sup>18</sup> There came to be a widespread recognition of the importance of Aramaic (or Chaldean as it was often called) for the Jewish people of the first century, while questions were also raised about the quick transformation that had occurred from a nation that spoke Hebrew to one that spoke Aramaic in the short period of the exile (from 550 BC on). This involved recognition of the relationships between these various Semitic languages, as well as the question (still unresolved) of the continuing role that Hebrew played in the post-exilic period, and in particular in the liturgical and common lives of Jewish inhabitants of Palestine in the first century.<sup>19</sup>

Discussion of the role of Aramaic in relation to study of Jesus in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, by such scholars as A. Meyer, J. Wellhausen, E. Nestle, G. Dalman, F. Blass, and C. C. Torrey,<sup>20</sup> focused upon what I am calling translational literalism. The assumption seemed

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<sup>17</sup> See D. Crystal, *Linguistics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 37–51. Cf. T. Bynon, *Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); N. E. Collinge, “Language as It Evolves: Tracing Its Forms and Families,” in *An Encyclopaedia of Language*, ed. N. Collinge (London: Routledge, 1996), 866–916.

<sup>18</sup> See W. P. Lehmann, *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 41–42; Collinge, “Language as It Evolves,” 906.

<sup>19</sup> On some of these issues, see my forthcoming paper, “The Greek of the Jews and Early Christians: The Language of the People.”

<sup>20</sup> A. Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache: Das galiläische Aramäisch in seiner Bedeutung für die Erklärung der Reden Jesu und der Evangelien überhaupt* (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1896); J. Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei erste Evangelien* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1905; 2nd ed., 1911); E. Nestle, *Philologica Sacra: Bemerkungen über die Urgestalt der Evangelien und Apostelgeschichte* (Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1896); G. Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdischpalästinischen Aramäisch* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1894); idem, *The Words of Jesus Considered in the Light of Post-biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language*, trans. D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909); idem, *Jesus-Jeshua, Studies in the Gospels*, trans. P. P. Levertoff (London: SPCK, 1929); F. Blass, *Philology of the Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1898); C. C. Torrey, “The Translations Made from the Original Aramaic Gospels,” in *Studies in the History of Religions: Festschrift C. H. Toy*, ed. D. G. Lyon and G. F. Moore (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 269–317.

to be that the Jews of the first century—at least for the sake of this linguistic exercise—were functionally monolingual. However, it was clearly recognized that the gospels themselves were in Greek. Therefore, there had to be a relationship posited between these two. The theory that emerged was one of translational literalism, that is, that there was what amounted to an iconistic relationship between Semitic and Greek usage. This theory was aided, or rather complicated, by the fact that knowledge and recognition of post-classical Greek, and in particular the koine Greek of the first century, was only gradually emerging. The discipline of classical philology, which studied the literary artifacts of the ancient world, had not yet turned its attention to non-standard and later dialects, and the documentary papyri found in vast amounts in Egypt had only recently been discovered and not yet appreciated for New Testament study.

As a result, when a reader of the Greek New Testament encountered language in Greek that was not of classical standard, it was tempting to posit that this reflected some sort of translation out of a Semitic language, and in particular Aramaic. Especially in cases where the Greek linguistic phenomena seemed particularly odd, the hypothesis posited that here was not just a literal translation, but perhaps even a literal mistranslation. These translations and mistranslations provided the material for a number of results. Some scholars were content to note Semitic and Aramaic features as they appeared in the New Testament. Others went further and were intent on retroverting the Greek of the New Testament into the original or underlying Aramaic substratum or *Vorlage*. There was some flexibility permitted in this, as there was not proportionately much Aramaic to which to compare, allowing a range of proposals to be made. Still others took this as a signal of a theological tendency at work, in that it was not believed that such poor translation could have been made, and thus these translations into Greek were made to invite an understanding of the underlying Semitic language.

### 2.1.2. *Paraphrase and Environment*

Increased knowledge of the Semitic languages and literatures led to a revision of the translational literalism hypothesis, by such scholars as M. Black, M. Wilcox, and, perhaps most importantly for this criterion, J. Jeremias.<sup>21</sup> The Targums were especially important in this regard. The

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<sup>21</sup> M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946; 2nd ed., 1954; 3rd ed., 1967); M. Wilcox, "Semitisms in the New Testament," *ANRW* II 25.2, 978–1029; and J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke

Targums, as Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible, provided both a body of literature for comparison and examples of the type of translation that occurred. There were a number of problems with using these targumic data, related to such issues as dating of the sources in terms of their original composition and the date of the manuscripts. These have only been partly addressed by recent Dead Sea Scrolls discoveries, as the amount of Aramaic from Qumran is very limited. Nevertheless, the evidence such as it was necessitated a revision in the original optimism of the translational literalism hypothesis. Examination of the comparative material revealed that it was difficult if not impossible to posit a literalistic translation of the original Aramaic into the Greek of the New Testament. This revision to the hypothesis was concurrent with developments in translational theory. Whereas translational theory itself had been dominated by a literalistic method, there came to be recognition that whereas there is literalistic translation, there is and can be other types of translation as well, ones that make it highly difficult to posit a simple one for one equation between linguistic phenomena. Examples from the targumic material and other sources showed that it was difficult to predict a particular pattern of translational transfer from source to receptor, but that translators were able to use a range of linguistic items in their linguistic repertoire when rendering the source language into the target.

The result of this recognition of linguistic complexity was twofold. The first was a recognition that the literalistic analysis of a previous period would simply not function in terms of differentiating material potentially influenced by Semitic languages. This came about through an increasing recognition of the difficulties of interlingual translation and the difficulties of testing the results in terms of ancient Aramaic. As a result, there was a modification of the claims for widespread detection of Semitic influence, to the point of recognition that in many instances the most one could assert was that a passage in the Greek New Testament may—even in passages attributed to Jesus—be only an approximation or a paraphrase of what it was that was originally written or said. The second was that there was still a persistence to attribute a number of linguistic peculiarities to Semitic influence. These peculiarities were not necessarily translational idiosyncracies, but included such phenomena as special words or phrases (e.g. “son of man,” *abba*, etc.) that indicated

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(London: SCM, 1972); idem, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 3rd ed., 1966); idem, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1971), esp. 3–37.

the underlying substratum. These peculiarities were seized upon as indicators of the authentic material that underlay especially the words of Jesus. In many ways this approach has continued to be dominant in much discussion of the historical Jesus, despite warnings to the contrary, even by those who at one time might have been expected to endorse such a hypothesis.

### 2.1.3. *Revivalism*

The paraphrase stage clearly was more nuanced and restrained in its assertions than was the previous literalistic period. However, the paraphrase stage did not lead to the kinds of advances that one might have expected. A number of other factors entered into discussion as well. These included the discovery of potentially instructive sources for discussion, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls; a greater knowledge of and appreciation of the role that Hellenistic culture played in Mediterranean life, including Jewish life in the eastern Mediterranean; a wider recognition of the development of Christianity as it spread outside of Palestine; recognition of the fact that the Aramaic hypothesis did not in fact provide the solid foundation regarding the original words of Jesus that it claimed to do but only indicated that the early church may have been an Aramaic using one; among others. Nevertheless, despite efforts to moderate the impact of the Semitic language hypothesis, there was a resistance to such a position, as if the original hypothesis had to be salvaged, even if the evidence upon which it was based (as I shall mention further below) was not as compelling as was required. As a result, there was a revival of the Semitic language hypothesis, or rather hypotheses, in a number of different forms. I will mention two of them here.

One of the revivals was a rejuvenation of the original literalistic translational equivalent hypothesis, in the work of M. Casey.<sup>22</sup> As a result of work on the various Semitic, and in particular Aramaic sources, a few scholars came to believe that there was a firmer foundation for assertion of the literalistic hypothesis. These few scholars came to believe that the evidence of the use of Aramaic as seen in the Dead Sea Scrolls, other especially inscriptional evidence of use of Aramaic, theories regarding the interlingual translational milieu of first-century Palestine, and theo-

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<sup>22</sup> M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, SNTSMS 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); "An Aramaic Approach to the Synoptic Gospels," *ExpTim* 110.7 (1999): 275–278; cf. idem, "In Which Language Did Jesus Teach?" *ExpTim* 108.11 (1997): 326–328.

ries regarding the nature of the translation process itself, provided for a secure basis for retroversion from Greek to Aramaic. There are few who are willing to revive this hypothesis directly, although the indirect potential is nevertheless present. However, as the foundation upon which this theory is founded is fundamentally flawed—the supposed new evidence is in fact quite limited and does not provide the basis for testing retroversions, and the linguistic theory that is sometimes invoked is often misstated—the results must be taken with considerable caution.<sup>23</sup>

The second approach is the invocation of the targumic hypothesis. There are a number of scholars who claim that the targumic traditions had a significant influence upon the ministry and teaching of Jesus, such as Chilton and Evans.<sup>24</sup> Even if the Targums that we now have are later, there is claimed to be substantial evidence of the use of Targums during the time of Jesus. This targumic material is invoked in a number of ways. The influence of the Targums is seen in terms of dictional correspondence, thematic correspondence, and exegetical correspondence. In the first, some of the words of Jesus are seen to reflect the wording of the Targums, when, for example, he is cited as quoting an Old Testament passage, especially in Isaiah (the Isaiah Targum is the one most widely drawn upon). In the second, going beyond simple verbal correspondence, the New Testament passage is said to reflect conceptual patterns found in the targumic material. Lastly, Jesus and others, including various biblical writers, are seen to reflect the kind of exegetical practice that is demonstrable from the targumic material. All of these factors, functioning at different levels, at different times and in different ways, are said to create the firm basis for an Aramaic hypothesis, in which it can be established how and in what ways Jesus (as well as others) taught.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, there are still a number of scholars who in effect—despite words of warning to the contrary—practice the paraphrase approach to Aramaic influence on the words of Jesus, and a growing number

<sup>23</sup> See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 164–180.

<sup>24</sup> B. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1984), 70–71, 90–137; C. A. Evans, "From Gospel to Gospel: The Function of Isaiah in the New Testament," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans, 2 vols., VTSup 70.1–2, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:651–691, esp. 667–674.

<sup>25</sup> Chilton (*Galilean Rabbi*, 71, 89–90) himself claims that the targumic tradition had an influence on the wording of Jesus' sayings. In a recent public lecture, speaking on the topic, Chilton said that he did not believe that there was direct relevance of the targumic material for the question of the historical Jesus.

who are either attempting to return to the more optimistic days of retroversion, while still others invoke the targumic approach. In effect, all of these approaches have a number of assumptions in common that provide a misleading picture of the linguistic landscape of first-century Palestine. The way in which these theories function gives the impression that there were no other languages being used in the linguistic situation of the time. In other words, the way the Aramaic hypothesis works, the assumption seems to be that any evidence that points toward linguistic interference or influence has to be attributed to Aramaic (or another Semitic language, such as Hebrew) and to Aramaic alone. Another assumption is that the sociolinguistic context would have determined that the influence would have moved from Aramaic to Greek. A third is that this movement of influence worked at all levels of language—phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis, etc.—in the same way. A fourth is that linguistic retroversion is possible in ways that can establish with some degree of meaningful certainty what the original language was—although the assumption from the start is that it was Aramaic, and now the task is simply to demonstrate this assumed conclusion.

## 2.2. *Greek Language Criteria*

Even though Schweitzer gives the impression that those who were concerned with language in first-century Palestine were primarily if not exclusively concerned with Semitic languages, in particular Aramaic, this is not true, even for those whom he discusses. One feature that becomes clear in all of the discussion of the relationship of Greek to the teaching of Jesus is that prior to the contemporary discussion there was, to my knowledge, no reference to a Greek language criterion. Nevertheless, this lack of direct reference does not mean that various construals of the evidence were not providing what is tantamount to a criterion regarding the Greek language. The discussion of various Greek language criteria so defined can also be found in three stages.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.2.1. *Textual and Contextual Assumption*

The first stage of discussion is one that assumed that Greek was a language of Jesus within a multilingual environment. During the nineteenth

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<sup>26</sup> The history of this debate is traced in Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 112–117; “Introduction,” 11–37; *Criteria for Authenticity*, 127–141; “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?” 199–235; “Jesus and the Use of Greek,” 123–154.



century, there were a number of scholars who, without necessarily derogating the use of Aramaic or another Semitic language, assumed that one of the languages of Jesus was Greek, such as Dalman and Sanday.<sup>27</sup> There were some who took the evidence further and asserted that the primary, if not the exclusive, language of Jesus and his first followers was Greek, such as Roberts.<sup>28</sup> In both cases, there were a number of factors that led a number of scholars to begin with this assumption. The first, and perhaps the most important, was that the New Testament itself, and the gospels in particular, were all written in Greek. Not only were the gospels written in Greek, the earliest evidence of them known at the time was that they were written in Greek, and had been in that form from the start. Papias's statement regarding Semitic logia notwithstanding,<sup>29</sup> all of the early indicators were that the gospels were written in Greek, and by extension the material contained in them must have been put into Greek early on, either by Jesus or his closest followers, that is, within a context in which Greek was widely used. The fact that the Greek found in the gospels and on the lips of Jesus was not in the classical dialect could serve as further support that it reflected the language of Jesus. If it was not a special inspired form of Greek given for just such a purpose, it certainly was not Greek that had been recast in classical form, and hence it had the air of authenticity. A second factor was that all of the major evidence of the early church fathers was that they were Greek speakers. Before the discovery of the papyri, which provided a new basis for comparison of the Greek of the New Testament, linguistic comparison was of necessity based upon literary sources. There were a number of literary authors who provided useful comparative language—a type of Greek that did not conform to classical standards, but was more paratactic in style—and the most abundant source of such language was the early church. Discoveries of

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<sup>27</sup> Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 1–37; W. Sanday, “The Language Spoken in Palestine at the Time of Our Lord,” *The Expositor* 7 (1878): 81–99; idem, “Did Christ Speak Greek?—A Rejoinder,” *The Expositor* 7 (1878): 368–388 (Sanday's essays are reprinted in W. Sanday, *Essays in Biblical Criticism and Exegesis*, ed. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter with S. N. Dolf, JSNTSup 225 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], 80–93, 94–107).

<sup>28</sup> A. Roberts, “That Christ Spoke Greek,” *The Expositor* 6 (1877): 81–96, 161–176, 285–299, 307–383; “That Christ Spoke Greek—A Reply,” *The Expositor* 7 (1878): 278–295; *Greek, the Language of Christ and His Apostles* (London: Longmans, Green, 1888); *A Short Proof That Greek was the Language of Christ* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1893).

<sup>29</sup> The indication is that there was no demand for such an Aramaic document. See R. O. P. Taylor, *The Groundwork of the Gospels* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 91–95 (written by G. A. Smith), esp. 92–93.

such writings as the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the *Epistle of Barnabas* as recently as in the Sinaiticus Codex (published in 1862) illustrated useful points of linguistic comparison. Even though some later church fathers self-consciously utilized a higher register of Greek, the rhetorical purposes for which they used it (along with their statements to this effect) gave an explanation for the developments in their style. A third factor to consider was the context in which the discussion took place in relation to the ancient world. Much of the discussion of the language environment of the ancient Mediterranean world was taking place in multilingual Europe. Whether one was part of the Germanic world of Northern Europe, or the Germano-Slavonic world of the Austro-Hungarian empire, multilingualism was simply the norm, with code-switching between dialects the rule rather than the exception. The recognition of this linguistic multilingualism made it easy for scholars of the time to accept that multilingualism would have been the norm in the ancient world as well, one in which Rome had conquered the Hellenistic world that had come to occupy and control the various local people groups of Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, and beyond. Thus, despite widespread failure to note scholars who take this position, there is an abundance of recognition in the late nineteenth century that Greek—even if it was not clear the type of Greek—was a possible language of Jesus and the early church.

### 2.2.2. *Koine Correlation*

The influence of some of the German scholars on study of the historical Jesus at the beginning of the twentieth century diverted attention away from discussion of Palestinian multilingualism. Such neglect took a decided turn, however, as a result of the work of Adolf Deissmann and James Hope Moulton.<sup>30</sup> Deissmann was responsible for first making the widespread recognition that the language of the documentary Greek papyri discovered in abundance in Egypt had fundamental correspondence to the language found in the Greek of the New Testament. Deissmann's work concentrated primarily on lexical correlations. Whereas previous thought had often found it difficult to understand how it was that the Greek of the New Testament used par-

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<sup>30</sup> E.g., A. Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, trans. A. Grieve (1895; 1897; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1901); J. H. Moulton, "Grammatical Notes from the Papyri," *Classical Review* 15 (1901): 31–39, 434–442; among many works.

ticular lexical items with senses that they did not have in early Greek, Deissmann showed that virtually all of the lexemes in such a list had the attested sense in the papyri. The work of Deissmann was extended by Moulton, first into Greek lexis, but, perhaps even more importantly, also into Greek syntax. The two-pronged approach was important for several reasons. The area where most linguistic shift between dialects or language varieties would be expected is in terms of the lexicon. Deissmann, and with him Moulton, showed that even in this area where one might expect Greek to be influenced by a Semitic language in a Palestinian or other Semitic milieu, the result was that the Greek of the New Testament was reflecting senses of words that were found in the independent linguistic milieu of Egypt. Furthermore, in many instances the kinds of linguistic peculiarities that had often been cited by those arguing for the Aramaic hypothesis were syntactical ones, such as a particular use of a preposition, or an unusual word order. Moulton was able to show that even in such cases the papyri bore witness to syntactical phenomena on the phrase and clause level that were not classical but also were not Semitic: they were part of the koine or common Greek that was in widespread use throughout the Mediterranean world, apparently as a result of the spread of Greek by Alexander the Great and his mercenary army and their followers, and encouraged and developed by the Hellenistic rulers and then the Roman occupation, with its need for a lingua franca. However, despite the influence of Deissmann and Moulton on the linguistic scene in both Britain and continental Europe,<sup>31</sup> the major voices of the koine hypothesis and the use of this Greek to understand the New Testament were muted with the death within a relatively short space of time (1917–37) of its two major proponents.

### 2.2.3. *Revivalism*

Within the last twenty years there has been a revival of the Greek hypothesis in terms of Greek being one of the possible languages of Jesus, and at the least one of the languages of the complex Palestinian

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<sup>31</sup> Other important advocates include H. St. J. Thackeray, *A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909); G. Milligan, *The New Testament Documents: Their Origin and Early History* (London: Macmillan, 1913); and E. C. Colwell, *The Greek of the Fourth Gospel: A Study of Its Aramaicisms in the Light of Hellenistic Greek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931).

multilingual milieu that merits further study. The revival of this hypothesis, by such scholars as Koester, Silva and Porter,<sup>32</sup> derives from a number of significant factors. These factors include, first, an appreciation for the range of evidence of the use of Greek in the eastern Mediterranean. Sometimes this use of Greek is equated with penetration of Hellenistic culture. There is no doubt that Hellenistic culture cannot be separated from what it meant to be Jewish in Palestine in the first century due to a variety of historical and related factors. However, the fact of a vibrant Hellenism in which the Jewish people participated does not necessarily mean a minimizing of Jewish practice and belief (although it clearly did in some instances). It was possible, and in fact was the case, that Jewish practice and belief occurred in Greek-speaking contexts with as much apparent fervor and vibrancy as they did elsewhere. This includes not only Egypt (as the Septuagint attests), but in Galilee and even in Palestine, as the evidence from a variety of sources and practices attest, such as Josephus. The evidence includes a variety of literary and documentary sources. The literary sources include works of Jewish literature written in Greek during this time, including in Palestine; other Jewish authors; and statements by Jewish authors about their literary practice. The documentary sources include a range of different types of inscriptions and related evidence, including papyri. The accumulation of evidence, especially when compared with the artifactual evidence for the other languages, is significant.

The second major strand of evidence concerns growth in knowledge of the factors that influence multilingualism. Recent research has paid greater attention to issues of active and passive bilingualism, the difference between functional and complete fluency or bilingualism, and the relationship between written and spoken language, along with the question of reading and writing.<sup>33</sup> There is sometimes the expectation that to say that Jesus or any of his followers knew Greek is the same as saying that they were completely bilingual. This may be true, but it could also be true that Jesus could be said to be a user of Greek if he had an active and functional fluency that allowed him to carry on conversations, even if he could not deliver an extended oration.

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<sup>32</sup> See H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, I (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 103–113; M. Silva, “Bilingualism and the Character of Palestinian Greek,” *Bib* 61 (1980): 198–219. There are also a number of classical scholars who examine the multilingual environment.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., H. Baetens Beardsmore, *Bilingualism: Basic Principles*, 2nd ed., *Multilingual Matters* 1 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1986), 1–42.

Even if he could deliver an extended oration, this would not mean that he could read. Even if he could read, it would not mean that he could write a treatise. The relationship of these multilingual factors is complex and not easily solved. When seen in these terms, making the claim that Jesus could use Greek is a modest one that demands further exploration that the Greek language criteria attempt to provide. There are also issues related to the relationships between languages, especially the influence of prestige languages upon non-prestige languages.<sup>34</sup> There has been debate about the prestige language within Palestine, and even within various ethnic communities. These discussions have tended to obscure the issue that the prestige language is the one that people wish to learn so that they can enhance their standing by linguistic means—not simply the language that they have always known or is attached to their tradition. In these terms, Greek would have been the prestige language to which those of Palestine would have had access, and that would have given them access to economic and political spheres otherwise closed to them. Once that is established, the clear tendency is for structural changes to be transferred from the prestige language to the non-prestige, not vice versa, even if there are lexical transfers both ways. A third and final factor to consider here is the early church. Several scholars in their recent work have pointed out, or perhaps repeated, that all of the early evidence indicates that Jesus and his followers would have had exposure to Greek. The early church fathers wrote in Greek, the gospels as well as the rest of the New Testament were written in Greek from the start, and any translation that would have occurred would have had to occur incredibly early, if it happened at all. This raises the question of why it happened, except if the milieu in which early Christianity found itself demanded that its important writings be in Greek, for communicative purposes. In effect, Greek has always been the language of the New Testament, and in fact of the Jesus of the New Testament.<sup>35</sup>

In a number of ways, the discussion regarding Semitic and Greek language criteria has proceeded down parallel tracks. Those who are advocates of the Semitic and in particular Aramaic hypothesis rarely give recognition to the fact that there are serious advocates of a Greek

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<sup>34</sup> See Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 154–156; *Criteria for Authenticity*, 174–176.

<sup>35</sup> See H. D. Betz, “Wellhausen’s Dictum ‘Jesus Was Not a Christian, But a Jew’ in Light of Present Scholarship,” *ST* 45 (1991): 83–110; repr. in his *Antike und Christentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze IV* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 1–31, esp. 15–16.

language criterion hypothesis. Those who are advocates of the Greek language hypothesis, especially in recent times, have of necessity had to recognize the Aramaic or Semitic hypothesis, even if they do not wish to accept it wholly or partially. Nevertheless, even though I have not gone into detail regarding this, there has been significant overlap and interaction between the two. Early advocates of the Greek language criterion were also often advocates of the Aramaic hypothesis as well. So a scholar such as Dalman can recognize that the linguistic environment of Palestine was trilingual, with Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew (probably in that order of frequency)—even though Dalman's work today is virtually only known for his influence on the Aramaic hypothesis.<sup>36</sup> Advocates such as Deissmann and Moulton recognized, especially in a work like the Septuagint, that there was the influence of Semitic languages on Greek.<sup>37</sup> They assumed that this was the case, as they made their case for the predominant influence of the koine Greek that they saw the biblical writers using. Matthew Black is often invoked as the most well-known advocate of the Aramaic hypothesis, but he recognized that there were few if any places in the New Testament that one could point to with anything approaching certainty to establish translation from Aramaic into Greek.<sup>38</sup> Even though we remain in what I would characterize as an Aramaic period of historical Jesus thought—despite scholars such as Meier advocating downgrading the criterion to a lower level of dubious or secondary criteria<sup>39</sup>—I believe that the Greek language criteria can bring insight to the discussion by not only recognizing the multilingual linguistic realities of first-century Palestine, but by providing a means of differentiating places where Greek was in all likelihood actually used by Jesus or his followers.

### 3. *Three Criteria regarding the Greek Language*

There are three major criteria regarding the Greek language that I have developed. These are not meant as criteria that replace other language

<sup>36</sup> Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 1–37.

<sup>37</sup> A. Deissmann, "Hellenistic Greek with Special Consideration of the Greek Bible," in *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, ed. A. Hauck (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 3rd ed., 1899), 7:627–639; trans. in Porter, ed., *Language of the New Testament*, 39–59, esp. 49–51, 55–56; J. H. Moulton, "New Testament Greek in the Light of Modern Discovery," in *Essays on Some Biblical Questions of the Day*, ed. H. B. Swete (London: Macmillan, 1909), 461–505, esp. 472.

<sup>38</sup> Black, *Aramaic Approach*, 274.

<sup>39</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 178–180.

criteria. To the contrary, these criteria recognize the complex linguistic milieu in which Jesus taught and acted, and attempt to bring into play those factors that are related to a Greek-language background. These criteria attempt to do justice to all of the dimensions of the multilingualism of first-century Palestine and environs. Furthermore, these criteria do not necessarily preempt other criteria used in discussion of the historical Jesus. To the contrary, these criteria fit within the panoply of the developed criteria for studying the historical Jesus. These criteria have a legitimate place within the history of historical Jesus research, and admittedly a number of limitations on their usefulness, but these criteria are not necessarily attempting to circumvent such criteria, even where they go beyond them or function alongside them. Nevertheless, these criteria are developed as independently of such criteria as is possible, so as to establish definable and separate criteria.

All of the three criteria assume that the Palestinian linguistic milieu was multilingual, and that Jesus could have spoken Greek. Here is not the place to attempt to prove what has long been recognized<sup>40</sup>—apart from by some recent New Testament scholars. The evidence is overwhelming, and includes literary, non-literary and documentary, epigraphic, and sociolinguistic evidence, along with evidence from the Greek-speaking early church. This includes Galilee. Even if Galilee, and such places as Sepphoris, were less Hellenistic than has sometimes been thought, that does not mean that Judaism was less Greek-speaking. The evidence is too pervasive and multivariate to conclude otherwise. As a result, one must consider the nature of the multilingualism. Greek was the first language for many in Palestine, but certainly a second or acquired language for many more. There were many who had a passive or receptive ability with Greek, while a significant number, especially those who were engaged in business or had significant contact with non-Jews, had active or productive capacities. The evidence indicates that, while Jesus' first language was Aramaic, he was productively bilingual, with Aramaic and Greek, and possibly Hebrew, with Greek and possibly Hebrew being acquired or second languages.<sup>41</sup> This sociolinguistic description best reflects the linguistic situation of Mediterranean life in the first century.

The assumption of this level of linguistic competence is that Jesus could have spoken Greek on occasion, and possibly even taught in it.

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<sup>40</sup> Scholars who recognize the multilingual environment of first-century Palestine are relatively numerous. See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 165–166 n. 105, for discussion.

<sup>41</sup> Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 134.

The question then becomes whether there are suitable criteria to prove that he did so on any given occasion. This formulation of Jesus' assumed ability and the possibility of productive Greek usage provides the context for discussion of three Greek language criteria.

### 3.1. *Criterion of Greek Language and its Context*<sup>42</sup>

This first criterion depends upon three stages in its definition and implementation. These three stages provide increasing specification so as to establish a level of probability regarding establishing whether Jesus did or did not speak Greek on a given occasion.

#### 3.1.1. *The Participants in an Event and their Linguistic Background*

The first stage is, in a given situation, to determine the participants besides Jesus, and on the basis of this determination to establish whether the background of such participants would have been conducive to conversation in Greek with Jesus. The participants who would have come into linguistic contact with Jesus' could theoretically have ranged from their inability to speak or even understand Greek to their being monolingual Greek speakers, and all positions in between. Geography is an important factor in this formulation, as levels of Greek usage seem to have varied according to region, as well as according to other factors. There is a range of Greek linguistic ability recognized. In Jerusalem, Hengel has estimated that 10–15 or 20% of the resident Jews spoke Greek as a first language.<sup>43</sup> Along the coastal plain, linguistic usage would have varied, depending upon the background and situation of the participant. In the Decapolis cities near the Galilee region, the percentage speaking Greek would have been highest, as these were cities with Greek foundations that attracted Hellenists. We do not know the percentage of those in these areas that spoke Greek as first or second language, but even among Jews it must have been high, as a number of Jesus' disciples were given Greek names, such as Philip, Andrew, and even Peter (by Jesus?), and Simon, Bartholomew and Thaddaeus may have had names derived from Greek.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 141–163; “Luke 17.11–19,” 210–223.

<sup>43</sup> M. Hengel with R. Deines, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1991), 55; M. Hengel with C. Marksches, *The “Hellenization” of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1989), 10.

<sup>44</sup> Hengel with Marksches, “Hellenization” of Judaea, 16–17; Hengel with Deines, *Pre-Christian Paul*, 55–56.



In my original formulation of this criterion, I cautiously worked from the standpoint that the assumption was that the primary language of a participant was Aramaic, and that, if Greek were spoken, it was a second language. I then looked for evidence that Greek may have been a functional language. This procedure had an inherently cautious approach, and resulted in conservative results. As a result, a number of potential situations were identified in which the participants, in the light of their backgrounds, may have spoken Greek to Jesus. These include Jesus speaking with:

1. Pharisees and Herodians (those connected to the Hellenistic household of Herod) though in Jerusalem (Mark 12:13–17; Matt 22:16–22; Luke 20:20–26)
2. The Roman centurion in Capernaum in Galilee (Matt 8:5–13; cf. Luke 7:1–10; John 4:46–54)<sup>45</sup>
3. Pilate, a Roman official (Mark 15:2–5; Matt 27:11–14; Luke 23:2–4; John 18:29–38)
4. A Syrophenician or Canaanite Gentile woman in Tyre/Sidon (Mark 7:25–30; Matt 15:21–28)
5. “Certain Greeks” who approached Jesus in Jerusalem (John 12:20–28)
6. A Samaritan woman in Samaria (John 4:4–26)
7. Jesus’ own disciples but in the northern Galilean region at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–30; Matt 16:13–20; Luke 9:18–21)
8. Samaritan lepers as Jesus passes between Samaria and Galilee (Luke 17:11–19)
9. Levi/Matthew near Capernaum in Galilee (Mark 2:13–14; Matt 9:9; Luke 5:27–28)
10. A demon-possessed man in Gerasa or Gadara in the Gaulanitis region, in the eastern Decapolis (Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39; Matt 8:28–34)
11. A mixed crowd from Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and Tyre and Sidon (Mark 3:8)

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<sup>45</sup> Some (e.g., Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 315 n. 289) question whether the centurion was a Gentile. However, Dunn cannot decide (216 nn. 200, 201). There is no indication that he would have spoken a local language for communication within the military hierarchy, but he would have spoken Greek. This would even have been true in the ranks of the thoroughly Hellenized Herod Antipas. The context, especially in Luke, indicates a foreigner (see Luke 7:5).

12. A mixed crowd from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (Matt 4:25), and Tyre and Sidon (Luke 6:17)

In each of these episodes, there are participants who may have spoken Greek, and some indication that the background of the participants would have invited Jesus to speak in Greek. The Herodians were supporters or part of the thoroughly Hellenized household of Herod Antipas, and Pharisees, such as Paul, could be from anywhere in the Jewish world; the Roman centurion, no matter his race, would have communicated with Greek, especially as the prestige language, to the subservient Jews; the Roman governor, with no indication of an interpreter, would have spoken Greek, not the local indigenous language, with Jesus and the Jewish leaders; the Syrophenician woman from Tyre or Sidon came from a Hellenized area that had eradicated indigenous languages; Samaria had been a multilingual area, with increasing Greek dominance, since the third century BCE; the Greek speakers were probably Gentiles who spoke Greek; the disciples, a mixed group with many from Galilee, were speaking near an ancient and thoroughly Hellenized city of the north; a tax collector for the Herods or Romans would have needed to know Greek for administrative purposes; Gerasa and Gadara were both thoroughly Hellenized cities in the Decapolis; and each of the mixed audiences (possibly reflecting the same crowd) includes thoroughly and long-standing Hellenized areas where indigenous languages would have been unknown, thus requiring the lingua franca Greek. However, the varying levels of specificity do not yet show the probability that Jesus would have spoken Greek on a particular occasion. This requires further refinement.

### 3.1.2. *The Linguistic Context and Theme of the Discussion*

More than simply the participants and their background must be considered in establishing whether Jesus spoke Greek on a given occasion. There must be a consideration of the linguistic context, including the theme of their discussion, to determine whether Greek constituted the linguistic medium. The linguistic context and the theme of discussion include a number of further factors for consideration, covering a broad range of items, such as theology, politics, social dynamics, and the like. This sub-criterion in most instances refines the broad list that was first established on the basis of the participants and their context. However, one must still be open to the fact that the linguistic context and theme of discussion may suggest the use of Greek, even if one does not get

such an indication from the participants involved with Jesus. As a result, the following situations, in which the participants in conversation with Jesus suggest a linguistic context and theme of discussion, may have involved Greek. The theme of discussion involved:

1. A Roman coin and Roman taxes with Herodians and Pharisees (Mark 12:13–17; Matt 22:16–22; Luke 20:20–26)
2. Personal affairs with a centurion in Capernaum in Galilee (Matt 8:5–13)
3. Political questions with Pilate as the Roman representative (Mark 15:2–5; Matt 27:11–14; Luke 23:2–4; John 18:29–38)
4. Mundane issues of daily life with the Syrophoenician or Canaanite Gentile woman of Tyre/Sidon (Mark 7:25–30; Matt 15:21–28)
5. The approach of “certain Greeks” (John 12:20–28)
6. Water (including Greek plays on words related to water) with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4–26)
7. Theological matters with his disciples in Caesarea Philippi, the use of Greek being consistent with Jesus’ widespread use of Greek as reported in the gospels (Mark 8:27–30; Matt 16:13–20; Luke 9:18–21)
8. The situational factors in which the single Samaritan leper who is healed returns (Luke 17:11–19)
9. Words of command addressed to a tax collector named Levi/Matthew (Mark 2:13–14; Matt 9:9; Luke 5:27–28)

Out of an original group of twelve passages, there is supporting linguistic context and thematic indicators that Greek may have been spoken in nine passages. The Roman coin and Roman taxes are clearly Roman topics; the personal issue of a sick son being talked of in Greek is consistent with reversion to one’s first language in a time of crisis;<sup>46</sup> Pilate would only have been prepared to discuss such issues in Greek; mundane issues demand Greek when there is no obvious alternative; the “certain Greeks” are designated by this description as being from a Greek region and bring that foreignness to the situation; the wordplay of the topic demands Greek, consistent with the linguistic orientation of the region; the theological matters are spoken of in a context influenced by the Septuagint; the Samaritan leper discusses religion, but from a viewpoint that reflects his

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<sup>46</sup> This seems to be the case with the Beth She’arim inscriptions. See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 173 n. 138.

cultural background; and the conversation with the tax collector occurs within a linguistic context of tax collection within Galilee.

### 3.1.3. *Determination of the Words of Jesus*

A complete determination would analyze whether the participants besides Jesus spoke in Greek. This criterion, however, is designed simply to determine within contexts in which Jesus speaks whether it is reasonable to posit that Greek was spoken by Jesus and the degree of probability that this took place. In conjunction with this criterion, traditional criteria for authenticity can be invoked, not as a substitute for the criterion, but in further support of it. On the basis of this criterion, as well as other supporting criteria, one can classify these instances in terms of a reasonably high probability that Jesus used Greek on the occasion, a reasonable probability, and some probability. Of the nine episodes noted above, there are eight in which Jesus speaks with the participants, classified below according to the scheme just mentioned.

#### Reasonably High Probability:

1. Jesus and his disciples converse in Caesarea Philippi over theological matters (Mark 8:27–30; Matt 16:13–20; Luke 9:18–21)
2. Jesus responds to Pilate at his interrogation (Mark 15:2–3; Matt 27:11–14; Luke 23:2–4; John 18:29–38)
3. Jesus converses with the Roman centurion (Matt 8:5–13; John 4:46–54)
4. Jesus converses with the Syrophenician or Canaanite Gentile woman (Mark 7:25–30; Matt 15:21–28)

#### Reasonable Probability:

1. Jesus converses with the Pharisees and Herodians over the Roman coin and taxes (Mark 12:13–17; Matt 22:1–22; Luke 20:20–26)
2. Jesus calls Levi/Matthew (Mark 2:13–14; Matt 9:9; Luke 5:27–28)

#### Some Probability:

1. Jesus converses with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4–26)
2. Jesus converses with the Samaritan lepers, especially the one who returns healed (Luke 17:11–19)

The episodes that indicate a reasonably high probability of Jesus speaking Greek have a number of features that support such an estimation. (1) The episode in Caesarea Philippi involves Jesus and his disciples, a number of whom came from Galilee and who had Greek names. They speak about a number of theological issues, including the nature of the “son of man,” a phrase that reflects Greek wording. There are strong reasons for seeing the Matthean account as having priority at least in Matt 16:17–19, a section that includes a number of distinctly Greek formulations (e.g. “flesh and blood,” the naming of Peter with Πέτρος, the play on Peter’s name with πέτρα, the use of “church,” and the syntax of binding and loosing).<sup>47</sup> In support of this formulation are the traditional criteria of multiple attestation with the synoptic parallels, embarrassment or moving against the redactional tendency, including telling no one that Jesus is the Christ and the use of a number of non-Matthean linguistic items. A third criterion is that of historical plausibility in terms of Jesus discussing his identity with his disciples. (2) Jesus’ appearance before Pilate recounts how Pilate—without the use of a translator, which would have been the usual case for a Roman governor<sup>48</sup>—interrogates Jesus regarding his identity. Jesus speaks only two words in the synoptic accounts (though more in John). The criteria of multiple attestation, movement against the redactional tendency in which Jesus uses language not used elsewhere by him, historical plausibility in which the appearance before Pilate is reasonably expected, and execution or historical consequence in which Jesus’ execution follows on from his positive answer to Pilate’s question, are all in further support of this episode. (3) Jesus’ conversation with the Roman centurion regarding his ill servant (or son of a commander in John) reflects the kind of social dynamics of the time, in which the centurion recognizes his power and authority, but has approached Jesus nevertheless. This episode is supported by the criteria of multiple attestation, embarrassment or movement against the redactional tendency in which Jesus commends a non-Jew for a faith not seen elsewhere in Israel and there is even a possible complicity on Jesus’ part with the Romans, and historical plausibility in which Jesus notes the fact that those outside of Israel are more faithful than those within. (4) The final episode to note here is Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophenician or Canaanite Gentile

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<sup>47</sup> See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 159–161.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, 178, citing H. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb (London: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 256.

woman. Though the topic is mundane, the witty interplay is reflective of operative social relations. Supporting criteria include multiple attestation, embarrassment or movement against the redactional tendency in which Jesus is engaged and then challenged by a person in need,<sup>49</sup> and historical plausibility in which a plausible account of Jesus' interaction with Gentiles is recorded.

Those passages that have a reasonable probability of recording authentic words of Jesus in Greek are two. (1) Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees and Herodians over the coin with Caesar's image is not as highly probable as the above, because there is less certainty that the participants involved were distinctly Greek speakers, and the language itself does not clearly confirm this through various linguistic features. Nevertheless, the reasonable probability that Greek was spoken is supported by possible multiple attestation (see the next section), embarrassment or movement against the redactional tendency in which Jesus is seen as being in possible collusion with the Romans, execution or historical consequence in which Jesus' failure to side with Israel leads him into opposition with the Jewish religious leaders, and historical plausibility in which the animosity to Jesus is built up over such episodes. (2) Jesus' two words with Levi/Matthew are the second episode. These words delivered in their Galilean context to a tax collector were probably given in Greek, but the number of words is small, and not distinct as Greek words. They are supported in their authenticity by the criteria of embarrassment in which Jesus willingly associates with—and even welcomes into his closest followers—those who have alienated themselves from their own people and become employed in a disreputable profession, and historical plausibility in which Levi/Matthew's being one of Jesus' closest followers is accounted for.

The final category includes two passages where there is some probability that the authentic Greek words of Jesus are recorded. (1) Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman is dependent upon wordplay in Greek over what constitutes "living water." The supporting criteria include embarrassment or movement against the redactional tendency in which Jesus is seen to be exhausted and in need of physical revitalization

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<sup>49</sup> It is usually taken that Jesus is bested in his conversation with the Syrophenician woman, as in M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 182. I am skeptical that this is the case, as Jesus instigates the challenge by characterizing the non-Jewish woman as a "dog." This invites her response in terms of placing herself as a "dog" in a lower position than the Jews, but yet still making a claim on help. Jesus seems to recognize that she has understood accurately his perspective on his ministry as coming first to his own people.

and he contacts a woman to help him in this, and historical plausibility in which the religious tensions of the times, Jesus' contact with non-Israelites and the antagonism of the Jewish leaders towards him are all established. (2) Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan lepers and in particular the healed leper who returns involves discussion of religious themes, but in the context of one who comes from a culture in which Greek had grown in increasing importance. The supporting criteria include double dissimilarity in which Jesus' contact with Samaritans is not a developed theme in early church preaching or a supported motif in Jewish thought, the criterion of embarrassment or movement against the redactional tendency in which Jesus' healing, though successful, only warrants the return of one grateful recipient and Jesus' resulting surprise, and historical plausibility in which this episode reflects the religious tensions of the time and Jesus' mission to those other than Israel.

### 3.2. *Greek Textual Variance*<sup>50</sup>

The second criterion is that of Greek textual variance. This criterion recognizes that Greek-language based textual criticism of the words of Jesus has not played a significant role in historical Jesus research. There are instances where scholars note that there are textual variants in the Jesus tradition, but there have been very few attempts to analyze these variants as they reflect upon the authenticity of that Jesus tradition. Because the vast majority of historical Jesus scholars begin with the assumption that Jesus taught (virtually exclusively) in Aramaic, there is therefore not a significant need to analyze these textual variants to any extent with an eye on their influence on establishing the *ipsissima verba* Jesus, as they would at best simply reflect variation in the later tradition once it had already been translated into Greek. This formulation is clearly in conformity with the Aramaic or Semitic language hypothesis. However, the Aramaic hypothesis has recently been called into question for a number of reasons. One is that the criterion itself does not actually address the issue of whether the words are authentic to Jesus, as presumably this criterion is reliant upon the entire early church speaking Aramaic.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, all it can attempt to prove is that someone in the early church may have used Aramaic, but not necessarily Jesus. A second criticism is in terms of retroversion itself (as already noted above). Typically the Aramaic hypothesis has utilized the ease of retroversion as an indication of authenticity in

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<sup>50</sup> See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 182–207.

<sup>51</sup> See Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 179.

Aramaic. The complexity of the translation process indicates that ease of retroversion, or the fact that retroversion can take place at all, has little to no bearing on the language of the original statement.<sup>52</sup> A third criticism relates to the lack of evidence for Jesus' or the early church's direct use of Aramaic. If Aramaic was the language of Jesus and his first followers, the transition to Greek occurred almost immediately, so that all of the early written evidence is in and supportive of Greek.<sup>53</sup> The Aramaic language hypothesis is called into further question by any evidence that Jesus may have used Greek.<sup>54</sup> Recent research has further supported the evidence for Jesus' use of Greek.

In the light of this the criterion of Greek textual variance and the Greek words of Jesus is appropriate to discuss. This criterion moves beyond the question of whether Jesus may on occasion have used Greek to try to establish what the words were that Jesus did use on such an occasion. This criterion uses the stability of the transmitted Greek textual tradition in a context in which Jesus plausibly used Greek to try to establish the words that Jesus not only may have used, but probably did use on the occasion. This criterion utilizes the traditional criterion of multiple traditions or attestation as a basis for proceeding. This criterion utilizes the evidence from two or more independent traditions, and the degree of variation within that tradition, as a means of establishing the stable core within that tradition. Thus the greater the variation in the tradition the further removed the current wording is from the original utterance, and the less the variation and the greater the stability the more likely that the tradition preserves tradition closer to the original source. It is axiomatic that the common source of two similar independent traditions is earlier than either of them, and has a reasonable and probable claim to authenticity. This criterion also assumes the standard criteria of textual criticism, although it often utilizes them in ways that differ from the ways that traditional criteria in Jesus research are used.<sup>55</sup> One of the major tendencies is to use the criteria in ways that move opposite of expectation. Several traditional criteria for authenticity tend to rely upon the notion of similarity (e.g. coherence, plausibility, multiple attestation). Textual criticism tends to rely upon the notion of variance. This difference in perspective must be taken into consideration when examining the textual evidence.

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<sup>52</sup> See L. D. Hurst, "The Neglected Role of Semantics in the Search for the Aramaic Words of Jesus," *JSNT* 28 (1986): 63–80.

<sup>53</sup> Betz, "Wellhausen's Dictum," 1–31.

<sup>54</sup> Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, 6, who recognizes such instances.

<sup>55</sup> See Shin, *Textual Criticism*, 135–220.



There are a number of advantages of utilization of this criterion. One of these is that it utilizes the text as we have received it in the tradition, that is, in Greek, rather than having to go back behind the Greek text to some posited (hypothetical) earlier Aramaic source. Another is that this criterion recognizes that, even if one asserts that the Aramaic tradition is predominant (though not exclusive), we have a critical mechanism by which we can attempt to establish the stable original tradition. A third advantage is that this criterion goes a long way toward minimizing the limitations of the criterion of multiple attestation or multiple traditions. Rather than simply attempting to analyze the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, this criterion provides a means by which one can attempt to establish and analyze the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Historical Jesus research has long despaired of establishing the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, and been content to speak in terms of the *ipsissima vox*. In many, perhaps most, cases, such priorities may continue. However, if a method can be devised by which the original words of Jesus may be captured—since in the recorded words of the New Testament Jesus is depicted as speaking—then it behooves scholars to undertake such an endeavor. This criterion is designed to aid in such a task by transforming the criterion of multiple attestation into a criterion of singular establishment, that is, the multiple sources are seen to indicate the established singular tradition that goes back to Jesus.

We begin with the passages from criterion one, Greek language and its context, in which it can be plausibly established that Jesus spoke Greek. This criterion must be established first before we can proceed to analyze the texts in question to see if any of them lead back to an earlier stage in the Greek tradition that might plausibly reflect the original words of Jesus. We noted above that there are eight such passages that have been established with varying degrees of reasonable probability. Furthermore, this criterion is dependent upon the criterion of multiple attestation, in which we rely upon two or more versions of the same wording to indicate through their similarity and variance the stable core of the tradition. This reduces the number of passages to four. I will treat them in order of rising certainty and significance.

### 3.2.1. *Jesus' Conversation with the Syrophoenician or Canaanite Gentile Woman (Mark 7:25–30; Matt 15:21–28)*

These two accounts only have two places where there is significant verbal parallelism. These two places include Jesus' parabolic words to the Syrophoenician woman, and her reply to him (Mark 7:27–28; Matt 15:26–27). Many scholars have recognized the independence of these two accounts on the basis of a number of variant features in the two

pericopes (the location, Jesus' entering into the house of the woman, Jesus' incognito traveling, the disciples' role in Matthew's account, the Jewish features of Matthew's account), indicating to most scholars a Markan and Q account.<sup>56</sup> Within the parallel portions, there is one portion of Jesus' words that overlaps (Mark 7:27; Matt 15:26). Within this section of words, there are several slight variants regarding word order (e.g. ἔστιν καλὸν, βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις). As a result, I believe that it can be established that the following words were used by Jesus: οὐκ<sup>57</sup> ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἄρτον τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῖς κυναρίοις βαλεῖν (or βαλεῖν τοῖς κυναρίοις). Though parabolic, these words suit the context, and their invariable status within the tradition indicates authenticity.

3.2.2. *Jesus' Conversation with the Pharisees and Herodians over the Roman Coin with Caesar's Head (Mark 12:13–17; Matt 22:16–22; Luke 20:20–26)*

There is debate over whether there is multiple attestation of this episode, or whether Matthew and Luke have simply taken over the Markan account.<sup>58</sup> There are some variances in wording that may indicate that there are two independent traditions here (e.g. Matt 22:19a and Luke 20:24 agree against Mark 12:15). If so, there are three blocks of wording that overlap, although usually with only two of the sources agreeing at any given point: (1) Jesus' question of the Pharisees and Herodians, with Matt 22:18 and Mark 12:15 agreeing in Jesus' question, against Luke; (2) wording concerning the coin and inscription, with Mark 12:15 and Luke 20:24 referring to the coin as a Denarius, and Matt 22:19 using the general term νόμισμα; there being several terms for "take"; and Matt 22:20 and Mark 12:16 agreeing that Jesus asked a different question than does Luke 20:24; and (3) Jesus' pronouncement. It is only in this third block that all three gospels generally agree regarding what Jesus says, with only a few variations (connecting words, the article before Caesar, and word order). Taking these variants into account, the following is what Jesus probably pronounced on the occasion: ἀπόδοτε τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ (with Mark reading: τὰ Καίσαρος ἀπόδοτε Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ θεῷ).

<sup>56</sup> See W. E. Bundy, *Jesus and the First Three Gospels: An Introduction to the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955), 280–281.

<sup>57</sup> Mark 7:27 has γάρ.

<sup>58</sup> See Bundy, *Jesus and the First Three Gospels*, 440; F. W. Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 212.

### 3.2.3. *Jesus' Conversation with his Disciples at Caesarea Philippi* (Mark 8:27–30; Matt 16:13–20; Luke 9:18–21)

Even if one accepts Matthean priority for this passage, there are only two blocks of material where there is multiple attestation of two or more gospels (and none of it in the statement in Matt 16:17–19). The first block of material (Mark 8:27; Matt 16:13; Luke 9:18) has several textual variants, but the stable core tradition is clear: τίνα με λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὄχλοι εἶναι; (Matthew has: τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). The second block of material (Mark 8:29; Matt 16:15; Luke 9:20) agrees in wording: ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι;.

### 3.2.4. *Jesus' Interrogation by Pilate* (Mark 15:2–5; Matt 27:11–14; Luke 23:2–4; John 18:29–38)

Jesus' interrogation by Pilate contains two blocks of spoken material that have multiple attestation in all four traditions. A major question is whether this represents one, two or three independent traditions. There are indications that it represents at least two, if not three, separate traditions, including Mark and Matthew, John, and probably Luke.<sup>59</sup> The first block of material has no textual variants or variation in wording, and attests to the words of Pilate: σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων;. The second block of material contains Jesus' answer, and it too has no textual variants or variations in the tradition: σὺ λέγεις. The significance of the words of Jesus is enhanced, when it is realized that these words are only found at these three places in the synoptic gospels, and do not represent a redactional tendency of any of the synoptic authors. In John's Gospel, the two words are found elsewhere, but only in questions, not in a statement as here.

In these four passages, I believe that we have found the words of Jesus in Greek (as well as the words of Pilate). They not only fulfill traditional criteria for authenticity, but they can be analyzed on text-critical grounds to establish a stable core tradition that indicates the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.

### 3.3. *Criterion of Greek Discourse Features*<sup>60</sup>

The third and final criterion concerns Greek discourse features. This criterion perhaps departs the furthest from traditional criteria in that it introduces into exegetical analysis a method of Greek-language based

<sup>59</sup> See Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 204.

<sup>60</sup> See *ibid.*, 210–237.

discourse analysis (or textlinguistics). Discourse analysis is predicated upon the analysis of units larger than the clause. These units include not only clauses and groups of clauses (or clause complexes), but paragraphs and larger units, all the way up to the discourse itself.

There are a number of possible ways to proceed in developing a discourse model for analyzing not only the Greek of the New Testament, but issues related to study of the historical Jesus, and more particularly the words of Jesus. In an ideal context, one will be able to provide a macro- and micro-level analysis of a given gospel, and then linguistically to compare, for example, the words of Jesus against the surrounding narrative, or the parables of Jesus against the other sayings of Jesus, from one gospel to another. The OpenText.org project ([www.opentext.org](http://www.opentext.org)) is attempting to make it possible to gather such data, but so far we simply do not have the resources available to do so. We are limited in the gathering and ability to analyze the data. We are only now developing the kinds of models that can function within the appropriate linguistic restraints on such data, such as the lack of native informants, and even sample sizes.

In the light of these limitations, I have developed the criterion of Greek discourse features in terms of what at first appears to be a much more modest project, but that is more rich with data than one can imagine. I have taken a model of systemic-functional grammar and extended it in terms of register analysis to create a linguistically sensitive and flexible discourse model, and then have applied it in the first instance to Mark 13:5–37, the single largest discourse within the gospel. I will summarize the results of my study in terms of the three register metafunctions.

### 3.3.1. *Mode of Discourse and Textual Metafunction*

The mode of discourse includes all of the features that go to making a discourse a discourse, including the medium and means by which the text is constituted as text. One of the major features of the textual metafunction is cohesion.

Cohesion is studied by means of a number of different linguistic features, including especially the use of conjunctions. In Mark's gospel, of the 88 sections in the Westcott-Hort edition, eighty of those units begin with the conjunction *καί* and six with *δέ*. According to Westcott-Hort, Mark 13:1 begins with *καί*, and Mark 14:1 begins with *δέ*. Mark apparently uses *καί* as a means of creating textual cohesion by linking and instigating successive units. These figures can be refined further. According to the Nestle-Aland text, *καί* begins a new section in 114 of 143 sub-sections of Mark's gospel (including Mark 13:1, 3). This is roughly 80% of all sub-sections in Mark's gospel. *καί* is used in only one of nine sub-sections, or

11%, in Mark 13:5–37. By contrast,  $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$  is used in five of the nine instances (56%), with *asyndeton* and  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$  used in the others.

Information flow is another feature of the mode of discourse. Information flow, though usually treated in terms of the ideational component of discourse, indicates some patterns of usage that exemplify how the author coheses a discourse. Mark's characteristic vocabulary, according to Hawkins, consists of 41 words (used a total of 357 times throughout the gospel), of which only four instances occur in Mark 13:5–37.<sup>61</sup> Mark's rate of use of his characteristic vocabulary is roughly 1:31 words used, whereas these characteristic words only occur in a ratio of 1:132 words used in Mark 13:5–37. Mark 13 apparently is not typical of Markan vocabulary.

### 3.3.2. *Tenor of Discourse and Interpersonal Metafunction*

The tenor of discourse addresses the interpersonal metafunction, that is, how the participants in the discourse are instantiated and linguistically related to each other. Participants can be introduced in terms of grammaticalized, reduced and implied forms, and related to each other and reality in terms of causality and attitude.

The directive force of the frame narrative in Mark's gospel just before the discourse of Mark 13 is from the disciples to Jesus (see Mark 13:1–4). Within the discourse, however, Jesus becomes the instigating and directive force, especially by means of use of the imperative form for commanding. The use of the imperative form illustrates the directional shift from the disciples to Jesus. In Mark 13:1–4, the disciples address Jesus with two commands, to which he replies merely with a question and a statement. Within the discourse itself, there is a larger number of imperatives than in any other chapter of Mark's gospel (19 in Mark 13:5–37). The ratio is 1:1.7 verses, with other chapters having ratios at least double that. The commanding language that is not typical of the rest of Mark's gospel results in Jesus being depicted as the one who instigates directive statements with regard to his followers.

### 3.3.3. *Field of Discourse and Ideational Metafunction*

The field of discourse focuses upon the ideational metafunction, or what a discourse is about in terms of the information that it conveys. There are a number of means of analysis of the ideational component,

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<sup>61</sup> J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae: Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 10–15.

including the subject matter and transitivity, or how the grammatical structure configures the ideational component.

There are two linguistic features to discuss here. The first is transitivity, akin to Markan syntax. The transitivity patterns in Mark 13 are significantly different from those found in the rest of the Gospel. An analysis of Markan syntax identifies fourteen syntactical features that distinguish Markan syntax. Mark 13:5–37 only has three of these features used in five instances. These include the use of parenthetical clauses (Mark 13:10, 14b), use of “I say that...” in two instances (Mark 13:6, 30), and explanatory “for” (Mark 13:11b).

In terms of subject matter, it has been noted previously that the vocabulary of Mark 13 has a number of identifiable patterns of usage that distinguish it from the vocabulary of the rest of the gospel. For example, Perrin has noted that there are 165 words in the Nestle text of Mark 13:5–37, but that 35 (21.2%) do not appear elsewhere in the gospel; fifteen of these words do appear in the book of Revelation.<sup>62</sup> This and other studies tend to show that the discourse of Mark 13 has a unique, apocalyptic vocabulary that is distinct from the rest of the gospel. Some of Perrin’s findings have been called into question by drawing parallels to Mark 4,<sup>63</sup> but the result is that these findings show that Mark 13 and Mark 4, the second longest discourse in the gospel, have lexical items and hence subject matter in common.

A fuller treatment of these features could go into more detail regarding various features of register found in Mark 13 in relation to the rest of Mark’s gospel. This summary suffices, however, to show how various linguistic features can be used to establish the discourse integrity of a block of language. All of the major factors indicate that Mark 13:5–27 has distinguishing features of textual coherence and information flow, directive language used in higher proportion, and distinctly apocalyptic language that unites the discourse together. This does not necessarily establish that the discourse is authentic to Jesus. However, in a context in which Jesus could have used Greek to deliver a discourse, the concatenation of distinct linguistic features at the least indicates a unified discourse distinct from the surrounding gospel context, and possibly originating with Jesus.

<sup>62</sup> N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1963), 131.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., K. D. Dyer, *The Prophecy on the Mount: Mark 13 and the Gathering of the New Community* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998), 75–77.

#### 4. *Application of the Greek Language Criteria*

In this final major section, I wish to turn to a section of text that has not been studied in great detail using the Greek language criteria: the so-called Sermon on the Mount. The sermon must be considered both in terms of its content itself (Matt 5:3–7:27) and the introductory words of Matt 4:25 (cf. also Luke 6:17), which set the stage for the discourse.

##### 4.1. *Criterion of Greek Language and its Context*

I begin with application of the first criterion, to establish if there are participants, a linguistic context and thematic material that would suggest the use of Greek by Jesus.

##### 4.1.1. *Participants and Context*

In Matt 4:25, Matthew states that large crowds followed Jesus from a number of different places. These include: Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan. Luke 6:17 adds the region of Tyre and Sidon to this list. There appears to be a Markan parallel in 3:7–13, in which a crowd from similar places (Mark includes Idumea) gathers around Jesus. In Matthew and Luke, with the crowd gathered, Jesus then proceeds to speak, in Matthew the entire sermon, and in Luke the beatitudes. Mark has Jesus go to a mountain where he appoints his disciples. This may be a parallel, but it may also indicate that there were other occasions when a mixed crowd gathered around Jesus. As there are no further words of Jesus that follow from the Markan passage, I will concentrate upon Matthew with reference to Luke.

In Matthew, when Jesus saw the crowd that was composed of these people, he sat down and began to teach. It is ambiguous whether he was teaching his disciples or the crowd, but the proximity of the huge crowd seems to indicate that he was teaching both. The nature of this context demands that we examine this passage in terms of the possible languages of the participants.

The first factor to note is that those who gathered were from a number of different places, with different linguistic backgrounds. (1) Jerusalem, though traditionally the principal city and the heart of Judaism, was a metropolis with a population of 10–15 or 20% Jews, according to Hengel's estimate (see above), whose primary or first language was Greek. We know from a range of inscriptional and documentary evidence—such as the Theodotus inscription, the temple inscription,

etc.<sup>64</sup>—literary evidence—such as that of Josephus from his account of the first Jewish War—and New Testament evidence—Acts 6:1 refers to Hellenistic Jews, probably distinguishing them on the basis of language<sup>65</sup>—that there was significant usage of Greek even in Jerusalem.<sup>66</sup> Although Aramaic would have been used, perhaps as the Semitic or Jewish language (see Acts 21:40, where, though recognizably knowing Greek, Paul chooses to use Aramaic), there were many other languages used. Pentecost, for example, drew people together in Jerusalem from Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean, including natives from Parthia, Medea, Elam, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya including Cyrene, Rome, Crete and Arabia, perhaps among others (Acts 2:9–11). The only language that could have unified such a crowd gathered in Jerusalem at that time was Greek.<sup>67</sup> (2) Judea was clearly multilingual, especially if Judea was defined as it was in Roman times as a province including Samaria. There is widespread and extended evidence of the influence of Greek upon Judea, even though Aramaic would have been widespread as well. There is epigraphic and documentary evidence, literary evidence, and biblical evidence (including it being the place of writing of apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works) of the widespread use of Greek in Judea.<sup>68</sup> (3) The Decapolis was a loose confederation of ten cities founded on Greek principles and maintaining Greek traditions and practices, including the use of Greek.<sup>69</sup> (4) Galilee has come under recent scrutiny in terms of how much Jewish culture permeated Galilee or was displaced by Hellenism.<sup>70</sup> To some extent these determinations do not affect the

<sup>64</sup> Roughly 40% of all inscriptions found in Jerusalem are in Greek, and half of all epitaphs. See Porter, *Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 158; *Criteria for Authenticity*, 172, esp. citing P. W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE–700 CE)* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), 22–24.

<sup>65</sup> See Porter, *Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 149 n. 34.

<sup>66</sup> See Taylor, *Groundwork of the Gospels*, 98–99; Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 169–171, 176–178; idem, “Reading the Gospels,” 47 n. 59.

<sup>67</sup> So Taylor and Smith, *Groundwork of the Gospels*, 94; V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (1959; repr., New York: Atheneum, 1975), 347; Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 138 n. 28.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, *Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 148–160; “Jesus and the Use,” 134–147; “Luke 17.11–19,” 213–218; summarized in Idem, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 140–141, 169–174.

<sup>69</sup> See Idem, *Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 149–150.

<sup>70</sup> See M. A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, SNTSMS 134 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 122–165. However, Chancey raises more questions than he provides answers or evidence. He does show a trajectory of development of Greek, but very little evidence for Aramaic in comparison, and rejects use of sociolinguistics. His discussion tends to be disjunctive, rather than recognizing levels of multilingual competence.



issue of the use of Greek in Galilee, because the use of Greek is not directly or only dependent upon high levels of Hellenization. The use of Greek was a linguistic phenomenon of Jewish life—e.g. the one language that could unite those at Pentecost was Greek, Greek was widespread in Egypt and resulted in production of the Septuagint—including Galilee, as is evidenced through a range of epigraphic and documentary, literary and biblical evidence. (5) The region beyond the Jordan perhaps refers to what was then known as Arabia or even Nabatea. Though Nabatean was used by the native inhabitants of Nabatea, there was also widespread use of Greek since the early first century when the area came under the domination of Rome.<sup>71</sup> The Babatha archive illustrates that a woman had to do her business in Greek through the Roman legal process in the late first century (before Nabatea became a Roman province in 106 CE) to guarantee that her property was protected.<sup>72</sup> (6) Tyre and Sidon had been Hellenized since the third century BCE, so that there was no more use of indigenous languages in the region, and Greek had become the language of administration and commercial communication.<sup>73</sup>

This quick overview of these various places indicates that Greek would have been the only language that could have linked people from these areas together. If we assume that they were able to understand what Jesus spoke, the only language that he could have spoken to be understood by all of them would have been Greek. Aramaic would have excluded people from Tyre and Sidon, probably those from the Decapolis and the other side of the Jordan, quite possibly those from Galilee and Judea, and even some perhaps from Jerusalem.

In terms of the participants involved, there is some reason to think that the mixed crowd that gathered around Jesus and heard the Sermon on the Mount heard the sermon in Greek.

#### 4.1.2. *Linguistic Context and the Theme of the Discussion*

There is the further consideration of the linguistic context and theme of the sermon. This is not the place to undertake a thorough examination of all of the dimensions of the sermon to establish those portions that

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<sup>71</sup> See G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 28–58.

<sup>72</sup> See S. E. Porter, “The Greek Papyri of the Judaean Desert and the World of the Roman East,” in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. S. E. Porter and C. A. Evans, JSPSup 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 293–316, esp. 313.

<sup>73</sup> See A. H. M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 227–295.

reflect a Greek linguistic context, and possibly Greek themes. However, there are several features to note that merit further attention.

1. Use of the Old Testament. Jesus is recorded as using the Old Testament in a number of places in the Sermon on the Mount, including Matt 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38 and 43. According to Gundry, all of these reflect the Septuagint, except the quotation in Matt 5:31, which is a mix of Septuagintal and non-Septuagintal features.<sup>74</sup> The logic is usually that the author of Matthew's gospel placed the Septuagint citations into Jesus' mouth. There are two considerations that argue for further consideration of this assertion. The first is that what is being indicated by Gundry's analysis is that there is a determinable difference between the Septuagint and other versions of the text used (in particular the Masoretic text). Rather than Jesus simply being seen to cite the Septuagint on occasion, he does so consistently and throughout the sermon. This indicates that the use of the Septuagint is integral to the larger context of the sermon, and that a redactor could not simply hope to place the Septuagintal version into the sermon at all of these points without affecting the meaning of the sermon. The second consideration is that it is not beyond belief, and in fact is the simpler and more elegant explanation, to posit that Jesus—like other Jews of the time, who knew Greek and used the Septuagint, such as Paul—used the Septuagint version and quoted the Greek version when he gave his sermon in Greek.

2. Macarisms. The macarisms at the beginning of the sermon (Matt 5:3–11) work much better in Greek than they do in Aramaic. These appear to have been originally constructed and delivered, and then written, in Greek on the basis of a number of linguistic features. These features include the choice of lexis, the parallelism with the articular participles, alliterative use of initial /p/ for the subject of the macarism,<sup>75</sup> and the parallel causal clauses. There is also a Greek and Roman literary tradition of this type of macarism.

3. Lord's Prayer. The Lord's prayer (Matt 6:9–13) has a number of features that indicate that it was formulated and delivered, and then written, in Greek. These features include the syntax, in which there

<sup>74</sup> R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope*, NovTSup 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 149; cf. also D. S. New, *Old Testament Quotations in the Synoptic Gospels, and the Two-Document Hypothesis*, SCS 37 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 94–98.

<sup>75</sup> See J. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 106. Kloppenborg notes an attempt to defend the alliterative features of the supposed earlier Aramaic, but these attempts are forced (106 n. 106 by Michaelis).

is a shift from Predicator–Subject structure in the first three primary clauses, to Complement–Predicator–Adjunct structure in v. 11 before returning to Predicator–Complement/Adjunct structure in the final two primary clauses. This places v. 11 as the turning point of the prayer, from focus in the first half upon adulation of God to imploring God for provision. A second feature is some of the alliteration, including the play on the sounds of words for “debt” and “forgive” in v. 12.

4. Use of the Word Gehenna. Roberts makes the point that the fact that Gehenna remains in the Greek form of the sermon indicates that it was originally delivered in Greek. Following the line of thought of Lytton, Roberts notes that Gehenna indicated a terminal punishment for the wicked, rather than an interminable punishment as indicated by the word “hell.” Lytton, according to Roberts, argues strongly for not confusing the two, and appeals to the fact that Jesus himself provided the example as to how to use these words. Roberts believes that this indicates that the original Sermon on the Mount was delivered in Greek, as indicated by the fact that Gehenna is retained in Matt 5:22, 29, 30, rather than translated into a Greek equivalent (for which there was none), as it would have been along with all of the other Aramaic phrasing if originally delivered in Aramaic.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4.1.3. *Determination of the Words of Jesus*

One of the major objections to the proposal above—besides the fact that there is an inherent presumption against wanting to consider whether Jesus delivered the sermon in Greek—is the widespread belief that the sermon was not delivered on a single occasion but that it is a composite of a number of statements redacted by the author of the gospel, perhaps compiled from Q or perhaps found in another form.<sup>77</sup> Not all have accepted this theory,<sup>78</sup> however, and perhaps some of the linguistic considerations will enable scholars to take another look at such a discourse with another linguistic framework governing analysis. On

<sup>76</sup> Roberts, *Greek*, 104–111.

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 90; C. M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 36–37.

<sup>78</sup> There is a long tradition of seeing the Sermon on the Mount as a unified and singular document, perhaps delivered by Jesus. See, e.g., C. W. Votaw, “Sermon on the Mount,” in *Dictionary of the Bible: Extra Volume*, ed. J. Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 1–45, esp. 1–9; among recent interpreters, J. Lambrecht, *The Sermon on the Mount: Proclamation and Exhortation* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1985), 39–40; cf. H. D. Betz, *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 1, 18, who argues for a pre-Matthean composition.

the basis of the criteria above, I would say that it is probable that Jesus spoke at least part of the Sermon on the Mount in Greek (see below).

#### 4.2. *Criterion of Greek Textual Variance*

This criterion is dependent upon multiple attestation. There is sufficient recognition by scholars that there are two bodies of material at play in the Sermon on the Mount and the parallel Lukan material—whether one believes that the Matthean version is composite or not—to perform an elementary analysis of Greek textual variance.

I do not present all of the textual variants, but produce what I think appears to be the stable core of the sermonic material, as found in relation to Matthew's Gospel, with some appropriate textual notes.

Matthew 5:3 μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ ὅτι αὐτῶν [ὑμετέρα] ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>79</sup>

6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες ὅτι χορτασθήσονται.

11 μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς.<sup>80</sup>

12 χαίrete, ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολλὸς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.<sup>81</sup> followed by a word about prophets.

13 A statement about salt

14–16 A statement about light

17–20 A statement about the law and the prophets

21–26 A statement on judging

27–32 A statement on adultery and divorce

32 πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ . . . ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, followed by a statement regarding remarriage and adultery

38–42 A statement on retaliation

44 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν,<sup>82</sup> ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε for those who are opposed,

46 ἐὰν γὰρ ἀγαπήσητε<sup>83</sup> τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας ὑμᾶς, τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε;<sup>84</sup> followed by a statement on greeting/loving.

6:9 προσεύχεσθε· πάτερ, ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου, 10 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου. 11 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δός<sup>85</sup> ἡμῖν σήμερον· 12 καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα<sup>86</sup> ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν.<sup>87</sup> 13 καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,

19–21 A statement on treasures

<sup>79</sup> There is a variant over whether the kingdom is “of heaven” or “of God.” Matthew uses “heaven,” but God is probably original.

<sup>80</sup> There is a variant regarding word order with the pronoun.

<sup>81</sup> There is a variant concerning the use of the singular or plural for “heaven/s.”

<sup>82</sup> There are variants regarding the conjunction and the word order of the object.

<sup>83</sup> Here an aorist subjunctive, but in Luke 6:27 a present imperative.

<sup>84</sup> Luke uses different wording for the same notion.

<sup>85</sup> Luke uses the present imperative. See Porter, *Verbal Aspect*, 347–350.

<sup>86</sup> Luke uses the word for “sins.”

<sup>87</sup> Luke uses the word for “sins,” as well as changed word order.

22 ὁ λύχνος τοῦ σώματος ἐστὶν ὁ ὀφθαλμός. ἐὰν (οἱ ὅταν) οὖν ᾗ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου ἀπλοῦς,<sup>88</sup> ὅλον τὸ σῶμά σου φωτεινὸν ἔσται· 23 ἐὰν (οἱ ἐπὶ) δὲ πονηρὸς ᾗ, τὸ σῶμά σου σκοτεινὸν. τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκότος ἐστίν...

24 οὐδεὶς δυσὶ κυρίοις δουλεύει· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει· οὐ δύνασθε θεῷ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾷ.

25 διὰ τοῦτο λέγω ὑμῖν, μὴ μεριμνᾶτε τῇ ψυχῇ τί φάγητε, μηδὲ τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν τί ἐνδύσησθε· ἡ<sup>89</sup> ψυχὴ πλεῖον ἐστὶν τῆς τροφῆς καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἐνδύματος; 26 Statement about birds ὅτι οὐ σπεύρουσιν οὐδὲ θερίζουσιν... καὶ θεὸς<sup>90</sup> τρέφει αὐτά/αὐτούς· οὐχ<sup>91</sup> ὑμεῖς μᾶλλον διαφέρετε αὐτῶν/τῶν πετεινῶν; 27 τίς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύναται προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ πῆχυν;<sup>92</sup> 28 περὶ ἐνδύματος/τῶν λοιπῶν τί μεριμνᾶτε;<sup>93</sup> Statement on lilies. 29 λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν οὐδὲ Σολομῶν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ περιεβάλετο ὡς ἐν τούτων. 30 εἰ δὲ τὸν χόρτον τοῦ ἀγροῦ σήμερον ὄντα<sup>94</sup> καὶ αὐριον εἰς κλίβανον βαλλόμενον ὁ θεὸς οὕτως ἀμφιέννυσιν, πολλῶ/πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὑμᾶς, ὀλιγόπιστοι; 31 Statements on not troubling over eating, drinking or clothing. 32 πάντα γὰρ ταῦτα<sup>95</sup> τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιζητοῦσιν· οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν<sup>96</sup> ὅτι ζητεῖτε τούτων. 33 ζητεῖτε τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ ταῦτα προστεθήσεται ὑμῖν.

7:1 μὴ κρίνετε, ἴνα (οἱ οὐ) μὴ κριθῆτε· 2... ἐν ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε (ἀντι)μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν. 3 τί δὲ βλέπετε τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου, τὴν δὲ ἐν τῷ... ὀφθαλμῷ δοκόν<sup>97</sup> οὐ κατανοεῖς; 4 πῶς ἐρεῖς/δύνασαι λέγειν τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, ἄφες ἐκβάλλω τὸ κάρφος σου...; 5 ὑποκριτά, ἔκβαλε πρῶτον τὴν δοκὸν ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου, καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις ἐκβαλεῖν τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου.<sup>98</sup>

7 αἰτεῖτε, καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν· ζητεῖτε, καὶ εὕρησεται· κρούετε, καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν. 8 πᾶς γὰρ ὁ αἰτῶν λαμβάνει καὶ ὁ ζητῶν εὕρισκει καὶ τῷ κρούοντι ἀνοιγήσεται. 9–10 Asking and receiving. 11 εἰ οὖν ὑμεῖς πονηροὶ ὄντες οἴδατε δόματα ἀγαθὰ διδόναι τοῖς τέκνοις ὑμῶν, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς<sup>99</sup> δώσει ἀγαθὰ<sup>100</sup> τοῖς αἰτουῦσιν αὐτόν.

<sup>88</sup> There is a difference in word order in Luke.

<sup>89</sup> Luke has the conjunction γὰρ, while Matthew has the negative particle (with a question) οὐχί.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew has ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος.

<sup>91</sup> Luke has πόσῳ and a slight change of word order.

<sup>92</sup> Luke has a slight change of word order.

<sup>93</sup> Luke has a slight change of word order.

<sup>94</sup> There is variation in word order in this phrase, but the same lexical elements, with slight adjustments.

<sup>95</sup> Luke has a change of word order.

<sup>96</sup> Luke has a slight change of word order.

<sup>97</sup> Luke has a slight change of word order.

<sup>98</sup> Luke has several changes of word order in these clauses.

<sup>99</sup> Luke has the singular “from heaven.”

<sup>100</sup> Luke has “holy spirit.”

- 12... θέλητε ἵνα ποιῶσιν ὑμῖν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ποιεῖτε αὐτοῖς·  
 13 Entering through the narrow gate.  
 24–27 Hearing and doing

This brief analysis of the Sermon on the Mount illustrates that there are at least two levels of core tradition related to the sermon. There are those passages where Matthew and Luke have substantially the same wording, with only minor lexical or syntactical variation, that indicates a core stable tradition. There are also a number of places where the wording might be substantially different (although in many of these instances there are a few similar lexical key items) but the topics are the same, and developed in similar ways.

#### 4.3. *Criterion of Greek Discourse Features*

As a final deliberative and demonstrable exercise, I wish to present a brief analysis of some key discourse features of Matt 5:3–27.<sup>101</sup>

##### 4.3.1. *Mode of Discourse or Textual Metafunction*

There are two dimensions to consider in examining the mode of discourse in Matthew's gospel in relation to Matt 5:3–27.

1. Cohesion. Textual cohesion is established through a number of means, one of the primary ones being the use of clausal-level conjunctions. Matthew's Gospel uses a range of means to create cohesion. In the Nestle-Aland text, the conjunctions include these six as the most widely used: δέ (69x), καί (51x), asyndeton (38x), τότε (31x), οὖν (6x), and γάρ (4x). By contrast (and not included in the numbers above), the most frequent conjunctions for Matt 5:3–27 are: asyndeton (19x), δέ (4x), γάρ and οὖν (2x each), and καί (1x). Thus cohesion within the sermon is created primarily on the basis of the use of asyndeton, which accounts for two-thirds of the conjunctive relations. This stands out in comparison to the rest of the Gospel, where asyndeton is less than one in five of the instances.<sup>102</sup>

2. Information flow. Hawkins has isolated the distinctive words and phrases that are characteristic of Matthew's gospel.<sup>103</sup> Of those, he

<sup>101</sup> On the register metafunctions, see Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity*, 215–218, with bibliography.

<sup>102</sup> On conjunctions in Matthew, see S. L. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew*, JSNTSup 216 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>103</sup> Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 4–8.

notes fourteen that merit special attention as the most distinctive and important. These words are underrepresented in the sermon. However, these words are often more highly represented in Matthew 1–2, material that is typically thought to originate with the author of the gospel. The statistics for the fourteen words are as follows:

ἀναχωρέω—this word appears ten times, four times in Matthew 1–2, but only one time in the Sermon on the Mount at Matt 7:23.

βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν—this phrase appears thirty-two times in Matthew's gospel, no times in Matthew 1–2, but five times in the Sermon on the Mount at Matt 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 7:21.

ἰδοῦ after a genitive absolute—this construction occurs eleven times in the gospel, and four times in Matthew 1–2, but no times in the sermon.

λεγόμενος with names—this construction occurs thirteen times in the gospel, and twice in Matthew 1–2, but no times in the sermon.

πατήρ with a following genitive pronoun—this construction occurs twenty times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), and sixteen of those are in the sermon at Matt 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6 (twice), 8, 9, 14, 15, 18 (twice), 26, 32; 7:11.

πατήρ ὁ ἐν (τοῖς) οὐρανοῖς—this construction appears thirteen times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), and six times in the sermon at Matt 5:16, 45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21.

πατήρ ὁ οὐράνιος—this construction appears seven times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), and four times in the sermon at Matt 5:48; 6:14, 26, 32.

πληρώω used of Scripture—this verbal construction occurs twelve times in the gospel, and four times in Matthew 1–2, but only one time in the sermon at Matt 5:17.

προσέρχομαι—this verb occurs fifty-two times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), and no times in the sermon.

ῥηθέν—this verbal form occurs thirteen times in the gospel and four times in Matthew 1–2, but no times in the sermon.

τί σοι/ὑμῖν δοκεῖ—this phrase occurs six times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), but no times in the sermon.

τότε—this word is used ninety times in the gospel, and three times in Matthew 1–2, but only three times in the sermon at Matt 5:24; 7:5, 23.

ὑποκριτής—this word is used thirteen times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), but no times in the sermon.

ὡσπερ—this word is used ten times in the gospel (no times in Matthew 1–2), but no times in the sermon.

The pattern that we see here is that information flow of the gospel is carried forward by particular vocabulary. This vocabulary is noticeably absent in the Sermon on the Mount, except for terms regarding God as father. In fact, the usage of God as father in the sermon is what constitutes this language in Hawkins' calculation as distinctively Matthean

vocabulary. If these terms were not counted in the sermon, they would not qualify as distinctive vocabulary.

#### 4.3.2. *Tenor of Discourse or Interpersonal Metafunction*

The tenor of the discourse is structured around the shift in person. Lambrecht has provided an outline of the sermon.<sup>104</sup> He notes that the introduction or prologue consists of Matt 5:3–16, the middle part (or body, although he does not use this term) of Matt 5:17–7:12, and the conclusion or epilogue of Matt 7:13–27. The sermon maintains a consistent use of person in each of these sections. The introduction is in the third person plural from 5:3–10, with the macarisms, until the final one is addressed to “you” plural. The introduction of the second person plural at the end of the list of macarisms is an implied reference. However, in Matt 5:13 the you is grammaticalized in a reduced (pronominal) form. The “you” is never explicated further within the sermon, ostensibly because it relies upon the audience established in Matt 4:25 (cf. Luke 16:7). The entire body of the sermon is in the second person (usually) plural, in so far as Jesus as speaker addresses his words to a “you” audience (e.g. Matt 5:20; 6:25), the main verb of a new paragraph is in the second person plural (passim), or an Old Testament quotation is introduced with ἐπέθη. The only exceptions are at Matt 6:22, 24. In the first, the gnomic statement is made first, but then it is applied in the second clause to “you” singular. In the second instance, a series of general statements is made, before the concluding statement in the second person plural (“you are not able...”). The conclusion begins in the second person plural (Matt 7:13, 15), but then shifts to the third person singular (Matt 7:21, 24).

#### 4.3.3. *Field of Discourse or Ideational Metafunction*

The ideational component is often related to choice of vocabulary and transitivity. I wish here to include several other factors for consideration.

1. Quotations from the Old Testament. Quotations from the Old Testament are an important part of the ideational content of Matthew’s gospel, as they are seen to be providing support from scripture for the events unfolding in the gospel account.<sup>105</sup> However, there are also ways that the quotations are presented, and the nature of the quotations themselves, that indicate that the function of the Old Testament quotations may vary, and that may point to unique use within the

<sup>104</sup> Lambrecht, *Sermon on the Mount*, 28.

<sup>105</sup> See Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 193–204.



Sermon on the Mount. Hawkins notes that there are a number of quotations of the Old Testament that are ostensibly introduced by the gospel's author or editor (see Matt 1:23; 2:15, 18, 23; 4:15, 16; 8:17; 12:18–21; 13:35; 21:5; 27:9–10). Hawkins notes that these quotations do not agree as closely with the text of the Septuagint as do other quotations introduced elsewhere in the Matthean narrative.<sup>106</sup> However, the quotations within the Sermon on the Mount have two peculiarities. The first is that all of the quotations in the Sermon on the Mount are introduced by the word ἐπέθη (Matt 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43).<sup>107</sup> The second is (as noted above) that these quotations do conform closely to the Septuagint for the most part.

2. Matthean forms of expression (syntax). Transitivity is part of the ideational metafunction. Hawkins notes that there are a number of distinctly Matthean phrases that are used by the author. He notes fourteen that are peculiar to Matthew's gospel, and not found in the other synoptics. Of the fourteen examples that he cites (totaling thirty-one instances), only one of them is found one time (so one instance) in the Sermon on the Mount. At Matt 5:17, the phrase μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι is found (cf. Matt 10:34, its only other occurrence in Matthew's gospel).<sup>108</sup> On the basis of this, one can see a unique syntax in the Sermon on the Mount that does not rely upon peculiarly Matthean formulaic phrasing. However, Hawkins goes on to note a number of other features as well. Besides these unique or peculiar formulas, he notes instances where a form of expression is found in both Matthew and one of the other synoptic gospels, but also in Matthew in another context. These forms of expression apparently illustrate both that the author of Matthew's gospel was cognizant of the synoptic tradition, but also that he was able to use it elsewhere within his gospel, thereby enhancing its synoptic content by means of uses of these forms of expression. Hawkins notes nineteen such forms of expression in Matthew's gospel, with a total of fifty-two instances in all.<sup>109</sup> None of the examples that he cites is found in the Sermon on the Mount. Lastly, Hawkins notes forms of expression that he claims are placed in different places by Matthew and the other gospel writers. In relation to Matthew and Mark's gospels, Hawkins cites four examples, none of which occur in the Sermon on the Mount. In relation

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<sup>106</sup> Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 154.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 168–169.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 170–171.

to Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospels, Hawkins cites two examples, neither of which occurs in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>110</sup>

These several studies provide preliminary results regarding the textual, interpersonal and ideational metafunctions of the Sermon on the Mount in relation to Matthew's gospel. There are a number of indications of textual unity of the Sermon, and identifiable features that distinguish it from the rest of the narrative of Matthew's gospel. One plausible explanation of this distinct unity within the diversity of the gospel is that the Sermon originated earlier, possibly as an entire discourse, and, within a context of Greek language usage, given by Jesus.

### 5. Conclusion

This paper attempts to outline criteria for Greek language research into the authenticity of sayings of the historical Jesus. The history of discussion of the language of Jesus goes back to the earliest times of discussion of the historical Jesus, in so far as modern critical thought is concerned. During that time, there have been changing fortunes for thought regarding the language of Jesus. In recent times, Greek language criteria have been widely neglected. In recent work I have attempted to rejuvenate such criteria by introducing three criteria that hold out promise. These criteria attempt to establish a linguistic environment in which Jesus may have been presumed to use Greek in his communication. Once this assumption is reached, then further examination of key passages can be made to establish the words that may have been spoken on such an occasion. Furthermore, it is possible to use various discourse-based criteria to attempt to establish the coherent nature of a given discourse. For the most part this paper has reviewed and further refined previous research. However, further use of these criteria suggests that there are other New Testament passages that merit examination by means of these Greek language criteria. Such a preliminary attempt has been made here regarding the Sermon on the Mount. In any case, this paper constitutes an effort to re-introduce Greek language criteria into historical Jesus research by demonstrating both method and results.

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<sup>110</sup> Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 172–173.

# FROM THE MESSIANIC TEACHER TO THE GOSPELS OF JESUS CHRIST

RAINER RIESNER

*“Jesus habebat scholam ambulantiem”*  
(J.A. Bengel, Gnomon to Matt 8:23)

## 1. *The Present: The “Third Quest” for the Historical Jesus*

Since the 1980's scholars started speaking of the “Third Quest” for the Historical Jesus.<sup>1</sup> This quest was to be distinct from the liberal *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* and also from the form-critical approaches, particularly those connected with the names of R. Bultmann<sup>2</sup> and M. Dibelius.<sup>3</sup> The characteristics of the new approach would be fourfold: to take into serious consideration (1) the Jewish context, (2) the social history, (3) the extra-canonical traditions, and (4) a downplaying of christological preconceptions.<sup>4</sup> The following approach to the synoptic tradition was first published as a doctoral thesis at the University of Tübingen in 1981 with the title *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*.<sup>5</sup> The reactions were extremely mixed, but

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<sup>1</sup> The term was coined by T. Wright in S. Neill and T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379. Cf. also B. Witherington, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); M. A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998); D. L. Bock, *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 141–152; J. Schröter and R. Brucker, eds., *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, BZfW 114 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT NF 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921; 2nd ed., 1931).

<sup>3</sup> *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919; 2nd ed., 1933).

<sup>4</sup> G. Theissen and D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 145–157.

<sup>5</sup> WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981; rev. ed. 1983 and 1988). A completely revised 4th edition with a new subtitle “Jüdische Volksbildung und Evangelien-Überlieferung” will be published in 2011.

even those critical of my general approach, such as W. H. Kelber<sup>6</sup> and G. Theissen,<sup>7</sup> could recognize the value of this alternative to classical form criticism. Following the publication of the thesis, I wrote various summaries and produced more detailed analyses of various aspects of the early Jesus tradition.<sup>8</sup> My approach recognizes both the successes and problems inherent in the representation of the Historical Jesus and his teachings in the “Third Quest.”

### 1.1. *Jewish Context*

Even in 1982 one reviewer was to strongly criticize what he saw as an overemphasized use of the Jewish context of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> But those who want to trace the development from the Historical Jesus to the gospels must first ask how, in contemporary Judaism, traditions were formulated and transmitted. When my thesis appeared, it could claim to be the most comprehensive examination of Jewish education in the Second Temple period (JaL §6–9).<sup>10</sup> In the meantime there have been many publications on this subject—some making matters clearer and others raising further problems. The synagogue and the connected elementary schools were a revolution in the religious history of antiquity. Even in pre-rabbinic Judaism teaching and learning was not a question of class “superiority” but of piety (1 *En.* 83.1; *Jub.* 7.38–39; 4 *Macc.* 18.10–19). With all this in mind, it is important to stress that Jesus started his career as a preacher in synagogues and Paul also based his missions strategy around

<sup>6</sup> “Die Anfangsprozesse der Verschriftlichung im Frühchristentum,” in *ANRW* II 26.1, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1992), 3–62, at 36.

<sup>7</sup> “Nachwort” to R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 10th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 409–452, here 416–417. The thesis is seldom so misrepresented as by H. W. Hollander, “The Words of Jesus: From Oral Traditions to Written Record in Paul and Q,” *NovT* 42 (2000): 340–357, here 342–343.

<sup>8</sup> R. Riesner, “Der Ursprung der Jesus-Überlieferung,” *TZ* 38 (1982): 493–513; “Jesus as Preacher and Teacher,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. H. Wansbrough, *JSNTSup* 64 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 185–210; “Teacher,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 807–811; “Rückfrage nach Jesus,” *TBei* 30 (1999): 328–341; 31 (2000): 152–162; 37 (2006): 42–49, 326–333; *Der Ursprung der Jesus-Überlieferung*, 3rd ed. (Bad Liebenzell: Liebenzeller Mission, 2003). My apologies to the readers that due to the limitations of space I refer so often to my own publications. The references to paragraphs in the text refer to the paragraphs in *Jesus als Lehrer* (abbreviated as JaL). The paragraph numbering remains valid for all revised editions.

<sup>9</sup> W. Schmithals, *RefKZ* 124 (1983): 136–137.

<sup>10</sup> *Jesus als Lehrer* (1981), 197–205. Because there was no English translation of the book this fact was not widely recognized.

them (Acts 9:20; 13:5 etc.). It is also significant that Jewish (Jas 2:2; cf. Heb 10:25) and even Gentile Christians (Ignatius, *Pol.* 4.2; *Herm.* 43.9) called their places of assembly “synagogues” (συναγωγαί).

### 1.2. *Social History*

Classical form-criticism claimed to be a sociologically orientated method, but this claim was unjustified. The circle of Jesus’ disciples was not really recognized as a sociological entity and consequently as a possible *Sitz im Leben* for the pre-Easter Jesus tradition. The form-critical pioneers postulated that the first Christian transmitters of tradition suffered from a complete lack of education, but this incorrect assumption was uncritically inherited from Romanticism (JaL §2.2). Today the majority of scholars believe that there were some educated people, at least in the communities founded in the Pauline missions (cf. 1 Cor 1:26; Rom 16:23 etc.).<sup>11</sup> But as will be shown, even for the primitive community in Jerusalem we find a state of affairs different from what the early form-critics assumed. Regarding the importance of teaching and learning in early Christianity, the ancient historian E. A. Judge can speak of a “scholastic community.”<sup>12</sup> At a time when the socio-historical criticism of the New Testament was not generally accepted, I, on the other hand, openly applauded the method.<sup>13</sup> One reviewer valued “*Jesus als Lehrer*” as the most thorough socio-historical study of the framework of Jesus’ teaching.<sup>14</sup> Another reviewer even found in the book a new “milieuvergleichende Methode,”<sup>15</sup> i.e. a new method of comparing Jesus and his Jewish context.

### 1.3. *Extra-Canonical Traditions*

The references to Jesus in non-Christian historians, like the Jew Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 17.63–64; 20.200) and the Roman Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.44.5), bear witness to his basic historicity.<sup>16</sup> The other extra-canonical sources

<sup>11</sup> Cf. W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 51–73; R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 29–38.

<sup>12</sup> “The Early Christians as a Scholastic Community,” *JRH* 1 (1960/1961): 4–15, 125–137.

<sup>13</sup> “Neues Testament und Soziologie,” *TBei* 17 (1986): 213–222.

<sup>14</sup> E. Baasland, *TTK* 54 (1983): 203.

<sup>15</sup> F. Mussner, *Theologische Berichte* 13 (1985): 173–174.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM, 1998), §3:1, 4.

are, on the other hand, either unhelpful or even misleading.<sup>17</sup> This is true for the apocryphal gospels including the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>18</sup> The strong belief of some scholars that they can find the oldest layers of Jesus tradition in these extra-canonical sources is not an advancement of historical-critical study of the gospels. An analysis of the apocryphal material using the same strict criteria as with the canonical gospels will hardly produce more fragments of reliable Jesus traditions than has already been detected by J. Jeremias (e.g. *Gos. Thom.* 82; Origen, *In Jerem. Hom.* 3.3 [GCS 33.312]).<sup>19</sup> Not even the most recent attempts to understand Jesus against the background of Cynic wandering preachers, something already tried by some German scholars in the past,<sup>20</sup> succeed in making the case more convincing by use of a hypothetical reconstruction of the redaction history of the hypothetical source Q.<sup>21</sup> In relation to the shared themes in Q and Mark, the truly existing “Q” materials do not differ substantially from the traditions behind Mark’s Gospel.<sup>22</sup>

#### 1.4. *Christology*

The counsel to avoid reading one’s christological agenda into historical Jesus research must be heeded. But the demand of some adherents of the “Third Quest” to refrain from every christological interpretation of Jesus is in itself not a historically viable position. Even a cursory look at Josephus (*War* 2.56; *Ant.* 17.273–276 etc.) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.9) shows

<sup>17</sup> Cf. C. A. Evans, “Jesus in Non-Christian Sources,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 443–478.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. N. Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron*, AcadBib5 (Atlanta: SBL; Leiden: Brill, 2002); H. J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien: Eine Einführung*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005); and also J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus I* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 112–166.

<sup>19</sup> *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1964). Cf. also O. Hofius, “Unknown Sayings of Jesus,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 336–360.

<sup>20</sup> So already E. Wechssler, *Hellas im Evangelium* (Berlin: Metzger, 1936; 2nd ed., Hamburg: Schroeder, 1947), 242–266; C. Schneider, *Geistesgeschichte des Christentums I* (Munich: Beck, 1954), 31–45.

<sup>21</sup> For J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991); R. W. Funk, R. H. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), cf. R. Riesner, *TBei* 31 (2000): 155–157; and also N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 44–74; C. A. Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 100–222.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. E. P. Meadors, *Jesus the Messianic Herald of Salvation*, WUNT 2.72 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995).

that messianic hopes played a more important role in Second Temple Judaism than is today often accepted.<sup>23</sup> In his public activity, Jesus was frequently confronted with such expectations (Mark 12:35–37; Luke 3:15).<sup>24</sup> The development of a “high” christology, even in earliest Jewish Christianity, cannot be explained solely by their faith in the resurrection of Jesus but only if aspects of his own proclamation pointed in this direction.<sup>25</sup> Concerning the gospels, the questions of christology and the transmission of the traditions are inseparably intertwined: The claim of Jesus to be, to use the expression of M. Hengel, “the Messianic Teacher of Wisdom,”<sup>26</sup> is something asserted even before Easter—and all the more so after. This provided crucial motivation for the transmission of his traditions (JaL §3.3).

## 2. Background: Jewish Elementary Education

The question of an oral tradition behind the gospels was not a new discovery of the so-called “Form-critical school.” Before literary criticism blossomed in the second half of the nineteenth century, scholars studied this phenomenon (JaL §3.4). People like J. C. L. Gieseler,<sup>27</sup> A. Schlatter,<sup>28</sup> J. Weiß,<sup>29</sup> J. Ranft<sup>30</sup> and B.S. Easton<sup>31</sup> pointed to the rabbinic

<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992); W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 53–212.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003); idem, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005); and also R. Riesner, “Christologie in der Jerusalemer Urgemeinde,” *TBei* 28 (1997): 229–243.

<sup>26</sup> “Jesus as Messianic Teacher of Wisdom and the Beginnings of Christology,” in *Studies in Early Christology*, ed. M. Hengel (Edinburgh: Clark, 1995), 73–118. According to M. Ebner, *Jesus—ein Weisheitslehrer? Synoptische Weisheitslogien im Traditionsprozeß*, HBS 15 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), Jesus, as a simple carpenter, was outside of any Jewish teaching tradition. Cf. the critical comments by R. Riesner, *TBei* 30 (1999): 334–335. Writing from an interesting, but rather narrow, pedagogical point of view is J. T. Dillon, *Jesus as a Teacher: A Multidisciplinary Case Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> *Historisch-kritischer Versuch über die Entstehung und die frühesten Schicksale der schriftlichen Evangelien* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1818), 104–105.

<sup>28</sup> *Jochanan Ben Zakkai: Der Zeitgenosse der Apostel*, BFChTh 3.4 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1899), 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Die drei älteren Evangelien*, SNT 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907), 54.

<sup>30</sup> *Der Ursprung des katholischen Traditionsprinzips* (Würzburg: Triltsch, 1931), 113–178.

<sup>31</sup> “The First Evangelical Tradition,” *JBL* 50 (1931): 148–155.

tradition system as an analogy for the transmission of the Jesus tradition. This approach was later developed by B. Gerhardsson,<sup>32</sup> and his thesis was made known by his teacher H. Riesenfeld through a lecture at the SNTS congress at Oxford in 1957.<sup>33</sup> Gerhardsson was criticized for anachronistically projecting the developed rabbinical tradition techniques of the second to fifth centuries AD into New Testament times.<sup>34</sup> In the meantime his work was received positively by the well-known expert in Jewish studies J. Neusner.<sup>35</sup> Gerhardsson had himself begun to stress the importance of the Jewish school system starting in the second century BCE (1 Macc 1:13–14; 2 Macc 4:9–12).<sup>36</sup> *Jesus als Lehrer* employed the approach of the Scandinavian scholars and attempted to further develop it in the areas of Jewish popular education (JaL §6–9) and Jesus' authority (JaL §10–12) and methods (JaL §13–19) as the Messianic Teacher.

### 2.1. *The Synagogue*

In spite of some opposing voices the majority of scholars accept the existence of synagogues in the Diaspora and in Erez Israel in the Second Temple period (JaL §7).<sup>37</sup> Importantly, the only Palestinian inscription we have from a synagogue of Herodian times, renovated by a certain Theodotos in Jerusalem,<sup>38</sup> determined the main purpose of the building as “the teaching of the laws” (ΕΙΣ ΔΙΔΑΧΗΝ ΕΝΤΟΛΩΝ) (CIJ no. 1404 [332]). In a similar vein, Philo of Alexandria described

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<sup>32</sup> *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, ASNU 22 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup; Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1961; 2nd ed., 1964).

<sup>33</sup> “The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings,” in *Studia Evangelica: Papers Presented to the International Congress Held at Christ Church, Oxford*, ed. K. Aland and F. L. Cross, TU 73 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1959), 43–65 (repr. in *The Gospel Tradition* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1970], 1–29).

<sup>34</sup> M. Smith, “A Comparison of Early Christian and Early Rabbinic Tradition,” *JBL* 82 (1963): 169–176.

<sup>35</sup> “Foreword” to B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript with Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), xxv–xlvi.

<sup>36</sup> *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, CN 20 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1964), 16. A summary of his present position is given by B. Gerhardsson, *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition*, ed. D. A. Hagner (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. only L. I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Synagogues in Jerusalem,” in *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. Bauckham, A1CS 4 (Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 179–211.



the function of the Diaspora synagogues as “coming together for the expositions of the laws (συνάγεσθαι πρὸς τὰς τῶν νόμων ὑφηγήσεις)” (*Leg. Gai.* 157). The focus of the synagogue service on the reading and expounding of holy scriptures distinguished Judaism from all the other religions of antiquity and this fact made it attractive for non-Jews.<sup>39</sup> Philo could call the synagogues “teaching houses” (διδασκαλεῖα) and the Sabbath service a kind of “philosophizing (φιλοσοφεῖν)” (*Opif.* 128; *Decal.* 98.100; *Spec.* 2.61–62; *Mos.* 2.215–216). In the synagogues, Torah and prophets were not only read and expounded on the Sabbath, but those interested could also study the scrolls in the building during the week (cf. Acts 17:10–11; *b. Qidd.* 66a). When the Essene community of Qumran organized a daily study of the holy scriptures (1QS VI, 6–8) they realized an Old Testament ideal (Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2) that other pious people were also striving for. In the region where Jesus was mainly active we know of synagogues in Tiberias (Josephus, *Life* 280) and Nazareth (Mark 6:1–2; Luke 4:16) from literary sources. There is archaeological evidence for one also in Gamla and Magdala (known since 2009) and probably Capernaum (Mark 1:21).

## 2.2. Elementary Schools

Even as early as the pre-Maccabean *hasidim* can one find a program designed for “popular education” (11QPs<sup>a</sup> 154 XVIII, 5–8). Their desire was that all should hear and understand the Torah so that they could live it out in daily life. In the Essene communities not only the adults but also the young people were required to learn (1QSa I, 4–5). Outside Essene circles every Jew that had reached the age of religious maturity could take an active part in the synagogue service. This “democratization of religion” resulted in the development of a system of elementary education (JaL §8).<sup>40</sup> Under the scribe Shimon Ben Shatah and Queen Alexandra Salome (76–67 BCE), the latter being very sympathetic towards the Pharisees, there was even an attempt to make education in synagogue schools compulsory for boys (*y. Ket.* 8:11 [32c]). When the reform failed, because the Pharisees lost political influence, they, and other pious

<sup>39</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?” in *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles*, ed. J. Ådna and H. Kvalbein, WUNT 127 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 211–250.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* I (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 78–83.

groups, had to take the initiative themselves.<sup>41</sup> In Tannaitic sources the close relationship of synagogue and elementary school is completely self-evident (*b. Hag.* 15a–b; *b. Taan.* 23b etc.). However, archaeological evidence can probably show a connection to have existed before AD 70. A small room adjoining the synagogue of Gamla was equipped with stone benches along the walls and this suggests that it was used as a classroom.<sup>42</sup>

Recently C. Hezser put forward the argument that the ability to read and write in Judaism before 70 BCE was as uncommon as or even less common than in the rest of Hellenistic-Roman society.<sup>43</sup> To the contrary, A.R. Millard points to literary sources and above all to archaeological findings that imply a higher degree of literacy in Palestine in the Second Temple period.<sup>44</sup> A. I. Baumgarten rightly stresses the fact that in Jewish parties like the Essenes and Pharisees there existed strong religious motivation for education.<sup>45</sup> This point is illustrated by Josephus when he writes (although with some exaggeration):

But, should anyone of our nation be questioned about the laws, he would repeat them all more readily than his own name. The result of our learning by heart (ἐκμανθάνοντες) of the laws from the first dawn of intelligence is that we have them, as it were, engraven (ὥσπερ ἐγκεχαραγμένους) on our souls.<sup>46</sup>

Even a Roman anti-Semite like Seneca was forced to admit that the general Jewish population had a good religious education (*De superstitione* [Augustine, *De Civ.* 6.10]). Furthermore, facing the catastrophe of military defeat (and certain death) at the hands of the Romans, the

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. R. Deines, *Die Pharisäer: Ihr Verständnis im Spiegel der christlichen und jüdischen Forschung seit Wellhausen und Graetz*, WUNT ser. 2.101 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 520–526.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. D. D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogue in the Second Temple Period*, SBLDS 169 (Atlanta: SBL, 1999), 434.

<sup>43</sup> *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). C. Hezser is heavily reliant on W. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Cf. the discussion in M. Beard and others, *Literacy in the Roman World*, JRAS 3 (Ann Arbor, MI: Roman Archaeology Society, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, BS 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*, SPB 55 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 114–136.

<sup>46</sup> *Apion*, 2.178; cf. *Ant.* 4.210. For ἐκμανθάνειν *ediscere* as “learning by heart” cf. J. P. Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997), 133–134.

Zealot defenders of Masada renovated the synagogue and apparently built a class room in one of the palatial buildings.<sup>47</sup>

### 2.3. Family and Religious Groups

The measure of religious elementary education a Jewish son received was dependent on the piety of his family (Jal §6). There is some suggestion that the small village of Nazareth was founded by a clan of the Davidic family when, in the first century BCE, Galilee was resettled by Jews.<sup>48</sup> The name of Nazareth, which means “(village of the) branch”, was intentionally given by the settlers to recall the prophecy of the messianic “branch” (נֶצֶר) in Isa 11:1 (cf. Matt 2:23; Julius Africanus [Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.7.14]).<sup>49</sup> In the wider family of Jesus lived Enochic traditions (cf. Jude 14) and an exposition of scripture that reminds one of the style of exegesis found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>50</sup> The religious outlook of Jesus’ family seems to be a Hasidic Judaism<sup>51</sup> which came to the forefront during the Maccabean crisis (1 Macc 7:12–17) but which, nevertheless, had its roots deep in the Persian era (cf. Ps 149:1).<sup>52</sup> Not every Hasidic group chose the separatist way of the Essenes of Qumran. Such groups produced literature like the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the *Similitudes of Enoch*. In this context G. Boccaccini speaks of an “Enochic Judaism” as part of a pluralistic “Middle Judaism.”<sup>53</sup>

An ancient Jewish proverb (*y. Rosh. HaSh.* 1 [57b]) speaks about the deep scriptural knowledge of carpenters (סִיָּרְיָיִם), the profession of both Joseph and Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3 [τέκτων]). Behind the saying found in Matt 11:27 and Luke 10:22 stands a picture of the father as teacher (cf. 3 *En.* 45.2; 48[E].7) suggesting that Joseph gave

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Y. Yadin in M. Avi-Yonah, *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* III (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977), 809–810.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. B. Pixner, *Paths of the Messiah*, ed. R. Riesner (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 169–176, 380–393; and also É. Nodet and J. Taylor, *The Origins of Christianity: An Exploration* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1998), 154–155.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Nazaret/Nazoräer,” in *Neues Bibel-Lexikon* II, ed. M. Görg and B. Lang (Zürich: Benziger, 1995), 908–112.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1990).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. O. Betz and R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran, and the Vatican: Clarifications* (London: SCM, 1994), 141–147; and also P. Sacchi, “Recovering Jesus’ Formative Background,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 123–139.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. O. Plöger, *Theokratie und Eschatologie*, WMANT 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1959), 19–36.

<sup>53</sup> *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

elementary instruction in the Torah to Jesus. In Nazareth there existed not only a synagogue but also a synagogue attendant (ὕπηρέτης [Luke 4:20]). According to the Mishnah this *hazzan* (חָזָן) could also function as an elementary teacher (*m. Shab.* 1:3–4). There is no real argument to cause doubt that Jesus attended the local synagogue regularly (JaL §9.3) and read publicly from the scriptures (Luke 4:16–20). The regular preaching and teaching of Jesus in the synagogues (Mark 1:22–23, 39; 3:1 etc.) was, even for R. Bultmann, one of the most historically trustworthy elements of the gospels.<sup>54</sup> The Sabbath readings from the Hebrew Old Testament normally had to be learnt by heart in order that they could be recited without errors and pauses (*Tanh. Jithro* 90a [Str-B 4.1, 158]). The regular reading of the texts served also to impress them into the memory of the listeners (Josephus, *Apion* 2.175; *Ant.* 4.210–211). From an analysis of the sayings of Jesus it is possible to conclude that he must have memorized important parts of the Old Testament.<sup>55</sup>

### 3. Origin: Jesus as Teacher

#### 3.1. Teaching Authority

Josephus reports the likely widespread impression of his contemporaries when he called Jesus a “wise man (σοφὸς ἀνὴρ)” and “teacher (διδάσκαλος)” (*Ant.* 18:63).<sup>56</sup> In all the four gospels Jesus is addressed as “teacher (διδάσκαλε)” even when such a christological characterization was not necessarily sufficient for the evangelists—shown by the fact that the address was often substituted with “Lord (κύριε)” (Matt 8:25 compared with Mark 4:38 etc.)<sup>57</sup> or “Master (ἐπιστάτα)” (Luke 8:24 compared with Mark 4:38 etc.). It has been kept in the historical records that Jesus was addressed as “Rabbi” (רַבִּי, ῥαββί) by his followers and those not so closely associated with him (Mark 9:5; Matt 26:25,

<sup>54</sup> *Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr 1929), 43–44 (ET: *Jesus and the Word* [London: Nicholson & Watson, 1935]).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (London: Tyndale, 1971); and also B. F. Meyer, “Appointed Deed, Appointed Doer: Jesus and the Scriptures,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 155–176.

<sup>56</sup> For the originality of these phrases in the *Testimonium Flavianum* cf. G. Vermes, “The Jesus Notice of Josephus Re-examined,” *JJS* 38 (1987): 2–10.

<sup>57</sup> In a Semitic language milieu this change was very easy. Cf. B. T. Viviano, “Rabbouni and Mk 9,5,” *RB* 97 (1990): 207–218.

49; John 1:38 etc.). In Palestine in the first century CE the address was used mainly, although not exclusively, for teachers.<sup>58</sup> Behind some of the other references to Jesus as “Teacher” (Mark 12:14; Matt 23:10; cf. CD XX, 1) might stand the Hebrew term *moreh* (מוֹרֶה), which we know as the name of honour for the Essene “Teacher of Righteousness” (CD I, 9–11; 1QpHab II, 3, 8 etc.).<sup>59</sup> Jesus himself did not shy from the self-identification as “prophet” (Mark 6:4; Luke 13:33), and was also received as such by his listeners (Mark 8:28). Such a claim in no way contradicts the description of Jesus as a teacher (JaL §11), as the prophets of Israel functioned for the people (Isa 28:9), and even more so in the circle of their disciples, as teachers (Isa 8:16–18).<sup>60</sup>

The messianic claim of Jesus was known to the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples (JaL §12) at least since Peter’s “confession” at Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27–30).<sup>61</sup> The expectation that the Messiah would teach with divine wisdom is found in very different Jewish traditions from this period.<sup>62</sup> This theme exists in the writings of the Qumran Essenes (CD VI, 11; VII, 18; 4QFlor I, 11; 4Q541 etc.),<sup>63</sup> also in the probably Pharisaic *Psalms of Solomon* (*Pss. Sol.* 17.42–43; 18.4–9), in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (*T. Judah* [A]21.1–4; *T. Levi* 18.2–6), in Samaritan literature (*Memar Marqa* 4:12; cf. John 4:25), in the relatively old Isaiah Targum (to Isa 53:5, 11) and also in rabbinic material (*Midr. Ps. 21* [90a] etc.). Jesus himself affirmed in various ways that his teachings did not stand on the same level as those of other Jewish teachers (JaL §12.3–4): His words are a revelation of the heavenly Father (Matt 11:25–26 / Luke 10:21) and divine wisdom (Matt 12:42 / Luke 11:31; Matt 23:37–39 /

<sup>58</sup> Cf. A. F. Zimmermann, *Die urchristlichen Lehrer: Studien zum Tradentenkreis der didaskaloi im frühen Urchristentum*, WUNT 2.12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2nd ed., 1988), 69–91.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. C. Spicq, “Une allusion au Docteur de Justice dans Matthieu, XXIII.10?” *RB* 66 (1959): 387–396; J. Morgenstern, “Jesus the Teacher,” in *Some Significant Antecedents of Christianity*, SPB 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 1–7.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. S. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*, CBNTS 24 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994).

<sup>61</sup> Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments I: Grundlegung: Von Jesus zu Paulus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 110–124; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 326–331.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. also J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 102–122.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. J. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*, WUNT 2.104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 268–277.

Luke 13:34–35; Matt 11:28–30). They will remain after heaven and earth pass away (Matt 24:35 / Mark 13:31 / Luke 21:33) and will serve as a criterion for the final judgment (Mark 8:38 / Luke 9:26). Some of these aspects are combined in a carefully structured parable (Matt 7:26–29 / Luke 6:47–49):

Everyone who hears these words of mine  
and acts on them  
will be like a wise man  
who built his house on rock.  
The rain fell, the floods came.  
And the winds blew and beat on that house,  
but it did not fall,  
because it had been founded on rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine  
and does not act on them  
will be like a foolish man  
who built his house on sand.  
The rain fell, and the floods came,  
and the winds blew and beat against that house,  
and it fell—  
and great was its fall.

Even in pre-Easter times there were not only practical reasons to conserve Jesus' words, but all the more so due to the messianic authority *motif*.

### 3.2. Languages

The insight of G. Dalman,<sup>64</sup> that to best understand the words of Jesus one needs to take into account the three languages, Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek, remains valid (JaL §14). However, due to our increasing knowledge of the matter, the relative prominence of each must be changed a little.<sup>65</sup> After Dalman and the extensive research of M. Black,<sup>66</sup> New Testament studies tended toward a "Pan-Aramaism," an overemphasis on the Aramaic element. Since the Qumran findings, however, we know that Hebrew was not only the holy language of the scholars and the Old Testament, but also was spoken in Judea and Jerusalem as a

<sup>64</sup> *Jesus—Jeschua: Die drei Sprachen Jesu* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1922; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967).

<sup>65</sup> Cf. J. A. Lund, "The Language of Jesus," *Mishkan* 17/18 (1992/1993): 139–155.

<sup>66</sup> *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

middle-Hebrew, primarily but not only by the tradition-faithful Jews.<sup>67</sup> A fair assumption is that Jesus, while in Galilee, taught in the everyday language of Aramaic, but, in Judean and/or scribal contexts, a Hebrew original version should be seriously considered. For example, some of the parables were not directed to the people in general, but originated from scribal debates (e.g. Mark 12:1–12).<sup>68</sup> In this respect one can find many valuable observations from the great Israeli scholar D. Flusser, even if his argument for a predominantly Hebrew original version goes too far.<sup>69</sup> The role of Greek in Palestine (cf. John 19:20) is also stronger than Dalman considered;<sup>70</sup> but at the same time its importance for the teaching of Jesus should not be overestimated either.<sup>71</sup> However, the first translation of Jesus' words into Greek could have already begun in pre-Easter times, for example in Jerusalem where there were Greek-speaking synagogues (Acts 6:9). In any case, that such translation appeared shortly after Easter is evidenced by the fact that Jerusalem's earliest Christian community was bilingual from the start (Acts 6:1). With this in mind, it is important to note that, for the first post-Easter Jesus tradition, there were plenty able to use more than one language without difficulty.

### 3.3. *Teaching Forms*

Within the synoptic word-tradition it is possible to distinguish about 246 independent units, and these in turn, from a formal point of view, divide into a further two groups (JaL §15). About 80% of the independent units are short (an average of four stanzas) and are arranged in any form of *parallelismus membrorum*. The longer units which make up approximately 56% of the extent of the synoptic tradition are almost entirely parabolic. This dichotomy corresponds to the different uses in

<sup>67</sup> E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, HSS 29 (Atlanta: SBL, 1986), 117–118.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. H. P. Rüger, "Das Problem der Sprache Jesu," ZNW 59 (1968): 111–122.

<sup>69</sup> *Jesus* (with R. S. Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997), 22. Cf. D. Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988); idem, *Entdeckungen im Neuen Testament I/II* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1987; 1999). Cf. also M. Lowe and D. Flusser, "Evidence Corroborating a Modified Proto-Matthean Synoptic Theory," NTS 29 (1983): 25–47; B. H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. M. Hengel (with C. Marksches), *The "Hellenization" of Judaea in the First Century after Christ* (London: SCM, 1989).

<sup>71</sup> For a rather widespread use see S. E. Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 123–154.

the preaching of Jesus. The short units are, as regards content, very dense teaching summaries. In these summaries Jesus combined what he considered fundamental propositions that he wanted to impress into the memory of his listeners.<sup>72</sup> G. A. Kennedy, an expert in ancient rhetoric, reckons that Jesus set these summaries either at the beginning or at the end of longer speeches and presumably repeated the elements throughout (cf. Mark 7:1–15).<sup>73</sup> He could also have drawn attention to these summaries by raising his voice (Luke 8:8; 10:21), or by using special introductory formulae. Indeed, one often reads the request to “listen (ἀκούειν)” (Mark 4:3; 7:14 etc.). The corresponding Hebrew word (שמע), in certain contexts, would serve to impress what will be said into the memory or even to mark the words as something to be memorized (Deut 6:4; Prov 1:8; Sir 16:24 etc.). Jesus’ non-responsorial use of the word “Amen” is, stylistically speaking, without analogy. The “Amen” introduction stood, for Jesus, in place of the prophetic speech formula “Thus says the Lord” and indicates the revelatory nature of what he was to say.<sup>74</sup>

The teaching summaries are not only formed by parallelism, but also often by rhythm, rhyme, alliterations, assonances, paronomasia and word-plays.<sup>75</sup> The representatives of the form-critical school have labelled these elements as merely “decorative,”<sup>76</sup> and hence they have remained largely undervalued. However, M. Black has summarized the sense of these forms, as follows:

Jesus did not commit anything to writing, but by His use of poetic form and language He ensured that His sayings would not be forgotten. The impression they make in Aramaic is of carefully premeditated and stud-

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<sup>72</sup> So already, e.g., E. Haupt, “Das Leben Jesu von B. Weiß kritisch beleuchtet,” *TSK* 57 (1884): 7–79, here 26; T. Soiron, *Die Logia Jesu: Eine literarkritische und literarhistorische Untersuchung zum synoptischen Problem*, *NtA* 6.4 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1916), 139; K. Bornhäuser, *Die Bergpredigt: Versuch einer zeitgenössischen Auslegung*, *BFChTh* 2.7 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1923), 11.

<sup>73</sup> *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 68.

<sup>74</sup> W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, *THK* 2 (Berlin: EVA, 7th ed., 1977), 114.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. especially Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 143–185; J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1971), §2; R. H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus’ Teachings*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster & John Knox, 1994); and also G. Mussies, “Jesus’ Idiolect,” *TD* 26 (1978): 254–258.

<sup>76</sup> Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed. (1931), 73: “ornamentale Motive.”



ied deliverances; we have to do with prophetic utterance of the style and grandeur of Isaiah, cast in a medium which can express in appropriate and modulated sound the underlying beauty of the sentiment or the passion out of which the thought arose...<sup>77</sup>

As also for the prophets, the “aesthetic” element of Jesus’ words acted in the service of forcefulness and memorability.

The longer parabolic units also were not, as a rule, spontaneous creations, but were consciously formed small “works of art.” A more exact analysis of these traditions points to the fact that they often have a strophic structure. Also not totally lacking are elements of parallelism. But the memorable nature of these units consists mainly in their pictorial and narrative elements.<sup>78</sup> Some parables have, like the teaching summaries, a straightforward didactic purpose. However, the perception that Jesus’ parables were only illustrations of his teaching in an easy to understand form, an argument stressed by A. Jülicher, was too one-sided. Exaggerated and unreal elements in these parables cannot simply be explained as creations of the early churches’ allegorical interpreting, but rather most can be seen as originating from Jesus himself—used in order to illustrate the different quality and subversive nature of the “kingdom of God” (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ).<sup>79</sup> Mark didn’t get it completely wrong in claiming that many of the parables were part of the messianic “secret” (Mark 4:10–12 [μυστήριον τῆς βασιλείας]). The element of “riddle” that is often found in the parables could suggest to those “who have an ear to hear” that such words should be understood as apocalyptic revelation.<sup>80</sup> When Matthew writes that Jesus “presented a parable to them (παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς)” (Matt 13:24, 31), he used terminology that was already employed in the Old Testament (אֲפֹרֹתַי [Exod 19:7; 21:1; Deut 4:8]) and later in the New Testament (παρατιθέναι [1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 2:2]) in connection with the transmission of tradition. The memorable forms of the parables made it possible for the listeners to later meditate over what was said and not simply to hear it once... and

<sup>77</sup> Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (1967), 185.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. A. D. Baum, “Bildhaftigkeit als Gedächtnishilfe in der synoptischen Tradition,” *TBei* 35 (2004): 4–16.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. C. L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 29–70; and also H. J. Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten*, 2nd ed., *NtA* 13 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1986).

<sup>80</sup> Cf. E. Lohmeyer, “Vom Sinn der Gleichnisse Jesu [1938],” in *Gleichnisse Jesu: Positionen der Auslegung von Adolf Jülicher bis zur Formgeschichte*, ed. W. Harnisch, *WdF* 366 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 154–179.

forget it. Nevertheless, the greater number of variations in the synoptic parables points to the fact that the longer and less strictly formed units, while existing only as oral traditions, were treated more flexibly than the shorter teaching summaries.

### 3.4. *Locally Settled Sympathizers*

Only a small number of Jesus' followers actually accompanied him on his wanderings. Most of the people who believed in his message of the in-breaking kingdom of God remained at home, with the rest of their family members, either in Galilee (Mark 1:30–31; 5:35–43) or Judea (Mark 14:3).<sup>81</sup> For these local circles of sympathizers the separation from the authoritative teacher himself was not only a post-Easter problem (JaL §20). The memorizing of the Jesus traditions could help to deal with this deficiency. The story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42), a tradition which stems from older Jewish Christianity,<sup>82</sup> could be a reflection of the memory of the special instruction that such locally settled sympathizers received: When Jesus was present it was considered the most important thing (Luke 10:42), taking the typical posture of a student (Acts 22:3; *m. Abot.* 1:4), “to sit at his feet” and “to listen to his word (ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ)” (Luke 10:39). As some members of the upper class were on sympathetic terms with Jesus (Mark 15:43; Luke 19:1–9 etc.), it is not completely out of place if some researchers consider it possible that, even before Easter, some written notes were made of the words of Jesus.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.5. *The Circle of Disciples*

The tradition that Jesus gathered a circle of men around himself who permanently accompanied him (JaL §17) belongs to the most historically authentic material found in the gospels (Mark 1:16–20; 3:13–15). Their “discipleship” (ἀκολουθεῖν, ἔρχεσθαι ὀπίσω from the Hebrew אַחֲרָיָהוּ) was more than the usual Jewish teacher–student relation-

<sup>81</sup> Cf. now also R. W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 28–61.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. D. L. Bock, *Luke 9:51–24:53*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 1037–1039.

<sup>83</sup> E. E. Ellis, “New Directions in Form Criticism,” in *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*, WUNT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1978), 237–253, here 242–247; Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, 221–229.

ship.<sup>84</sup> The disciples of Jesus did not choose their teacher but were rather selected by him (Matt 8:19–22 / Luke 9:57–62). It was not possible for the disciples to change this teacher either, for Jesus was their “only teacher” (Matt 23:8–10). Moreover, the disciples had to be ready to share the fate of their teacher—even if this meant martyrdom (Mark 8:34–37; Matt 10:24–25 / Luke 6:40). This level of faithfulness was something usually only expected for commitment to the Torah (Mark 8:35 diff. *b. Ber.* 63b). All of these unusual features point back to the messianic claim of Jesus. However, the pre-Easter circle of disciples was not only a theological but also a sociological entity. H. Schürmann has therefore correctly pointed out that this group was both receiver and carrier of the pre-Easter traditions of Jesus.<sup>85</sup>

The circle of disciples distinguished itself in some characteristics from other Jewish forms of schooling, but this did not make it a completely unique phenomenon. Contemporaries could compare the disciples of Jesus with those of John the Baptist or disciples of pharisaic teachers (Mark 2:18). In the gospels, the chosen disciples of Jesus are labelled with the Greek expression μαθηταί. This is a term that points back to the Hebrew or Aramaic word for “student” (תַּלְמִיד / תַּלְמִידָא). This name Jesus himself had given them (Matt 10:24 / Luke 6:40; Luke 14:26) in order to make clear the important task they now had, namely to “learn” (μανθάνειν, לַמַּד) from his word and behaviour (Matt 11:28–30). This learning happened spontaneously by the fact that the disciples, as constant companions of Jesus, heard his teaching summaries and parables over and over again before different audiences. The disciples, however, received their own instruction, in which Jesus impressed upon them his sayings to matters relating to their behaviour towards each other (Mark 10:41–45 etc.) and towards outsiders (Luke 6:32–35 / Matt 5:45–47 etc.). Jesus had them memorize the prayer (Luke 11:1–4)<sup>86</sup> that distinguished the circle of his disciples from the followers of the Baptist (Jal §17.7).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Teacher and His Followers* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1981); and also M. J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>85</sup> “Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition: Versuch eines formgeschichtlichen Vorgangs zum Leben Jesu,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: EVA, 1960), 342–370 (enlarged in H. Schürmann, *Jesus—Gestalt und Geheimnis: Gesammelte Beiträge*, ed. K. Scholtissek [Paderborn: Bonifacius, 1994], 85–104, 380–397).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. also J. J. Vincent, “Did Jesus Teach His Disciples to Learn by Heart?” *TU 88* (1964): 105–118.

### 3.6. *The Pre-Easter Mission*

Jesus sent out his disciples in Galilee, at least once but possibly more times (JaL §18), in order to preach about the in-breaking of the kingdom of God (Matt 10:1 / Mark 6:7 / Luke 9:1; Luke 10:1; cf. 1 Cor 9, 16).<sup>87</sup> In the process the disciples themselves were to teach (cf. Matt 5:19). However, they acted and spoke not in their own authority, but “in the name of Jesus” (cf. Mark 9:38; Luke 10:17), in the name of the one who had “commissioned” (ἀποστέλλειν, ἄψ) them (Matt 10:16 / Luke 10:3). Whether Jesus used the word *shelihim* (שְׁלִיחִים) or not (cf. Mark 3:16; Luke 6:13 [ἀπόστολοι]) is not important, because for all practical purposes the disciples were his “sent ones,” who, when they were asked, had to be able to answer with the words of their Sender. This is the reason why Jesus said (Luke 10:16):

Whoever listens to you  
listens to me,  
and whoever rejects you  
rejects me,  
and whoever rejects me  
rejects the one who sent me  
(τὸν ἀποστειλάντά με).<sup>88</sup>

Jesus built, as it were, a chain of tradition that reached from God, through himself to the disciples and then onto their listeners. This commissioning of the disciples happened in a way analogous to the sending of the prophets of Israel (Matt 10:16 / Luke 10:3; cf. Luke 11:49–51). One of the most important speech-forms of the prophets was the so-called messenger formula “Go and say to X, thus says Y...” with the words of the sender following.<sup>89</sup> Even as early as the 1930’s, B. S. Easton correctly writes:

[Jesus] trained his disciples... for a popular preaching that was to echo his own as closely as possible; the various ‘mission charges’ in our gospels take the content of the disciples message so completely for granted that only its manner of delivery is described.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Cf. E. J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission I: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, Press; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 263–315.

<sup>88</sup> For the originality of the Lukan form, cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 28A (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 856–857.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. C. Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

<sup>90</sup> *Christ in the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner’s, 1930), 41.

Indeed, the only example found in the gospels of guidance that Jesus gave with regard to the content of the disciples' message (Matt 10:7 / Luke 10:9) is a self-citation (Mark 1:15 / Matt 4:17; Matt 12:28 / Luke 11:20). Special instructions for the disciples before their commission are not only mentioned in the context of the commissioning traditions, but also presupposed in a saying like Luke 12:3 (cf. Matt 10:27). In these instructions Jesus did not only regulate the manner in which the messengers were to present themselves, but he could also remind them of his parables and teaching summaries so that they could repeat them to their listeners.

### 3.7. Esoteric Instructions

The "woes" pronounced over the villages of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Matt 11:21–24 / Luke 10:13–15) show that the so-called "Galilean crisis" was not merely a construction of Mark, but a reality of Jesus' time.<sup>91</sup> Obviously, one reaction to this was the founding of the circle of the twelve (cf. John 6:66–70) by means of which Jesus wanted to uphold his right to God's people of Israel throughout the crisis (Matt 19:28 / Luke 22:30). The prophet Isaiah, who, after his preaching was rejected, "bound (צֹרֵר תְּעוּדָה) up the testimony and sealed the teaching among his disciples (הַתּוֹמִים תּוֹרָה כְּלִמְדֵי)" (cf. Isa 8:16). In the same way Jesus withdrew into his closest circle of followers to give esoteric instructions (JaL §19) to them (Mark 9:28 etc.; cf. 4:11–12). These instructions included, most notably, themes such as his claim to be the messianic Son of Man (Mark 8:27–33), the judgment over Israel and the world (Mark 13) and also the announcement and meaning of his forthcoming suffering and expiatory death (Mark 14:17–25). T. W. Manson has shown that the key concepts "kingdom of God" and "Son of Man" are expressed in very different terms.<sup>92</sup> If one does not want to dispute Jesus' authorship of one of the two themes,<sup>93</sup> two different situations or phases of his activity have to be assumed. And this is

<sup>91</sup> Cf. B. F. Meyer, *Christus Faber: The Master Builder and the House of God* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992), 25–40; F. Mussner, "Gab es eine galiläische Krise?" in *Jesus von Nazareth im Umfeld Israels und der Urkirche*, ed. M. Theobald, WUNT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 74–85.

<sup>92</sup> *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies in Its Form and Content*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 320–329.

<sup>93</sup> Against this speaks already the combination of both in Dan 7:13–14. Cf. C. C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, WUNT 2.38 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986); B. Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 179–278.

exactly what the gospels describe, although in different ways. According to R. A. Culpepper, some of the main features of ancient “schools” are admiration for the founding figure, community life, teaching and learning activities, esoteric instruction and a sense for tradition.<sup>94</sup> Therefore it is possible, in light of the above, to speak of the pre-Easter circle of Jesus’ disciples as a “school.”

#### 4. *Transmission: Pre-Synoptic Traditions*

##### 4.1. *Personal Continuity*

R. Bultmann didn’t really discuss the question of whether memories of eyewitnesses were preserved in the synoptic tradition (JaL §3.1). This prompted the ironic remark of V. Taylor: “If the Form-Critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the resurrection.”<sup>95</sup> However, M. Dibelius considered more seriously the likelihood of such memories, and hence his respect for the trustworthiness of the tradition was greater.<sup>96</sup> M. Albertz, the third but forgotten pioneer of classical form criticism, was even more positive about the consistent continuity between the pre- and post-Easter tradition.<sup>97</sup> As a result of the seminal article by H. Schürmann about the pre-Easter beginnings of the sayings tradition (note 85), one is nowadays generally more inclined to see some sort of continuity. G. Theißen postulates, as the most important bearers of tradition, a very hypothetical circle of “itinerant charismatics.”<sup>98</sup> K. E. Bailey,<sup>99</sup> and following him J. Dunn,<sup>100</sup> find in the rural Galilean

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<sup>94</sup> *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on an Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools*, SBLDS 26 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 258–259. T. Schmeller, *Schulen im Neuen Testament? Zur Stellung des Urchristentums in der Bildungswelt seiner Zeit*, HBS 30 (Freiburg: Herder, 2001), does not treat the pre-Easter circle of disciples.

<sup>95</sup> *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1935), 41.

<sup>96</sup> *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 295.

<sup>97</sup> *Die Botschaft des Neuen Testaments I/1: Die Entstehung des Evangeliums* (Zollikon: Zwingli, 1947); and already M. Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1921), VI.

<sup>98</sup> *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

<sup>99</sup> “Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 34–54; “Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *ExpTim* 106 (1995): 563–567.

<sup>100</sup> “Altering the Default Setting: Re-envisaging the Early Transmission of the Jesus Tradition,” *NTS* 49 (2003): 139–175; *Christianity in the Making 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 239–245, 881–884.

communities the *Sitz im Leben* of an “informal controlled tradition.” However, both conceptions still maintain the notion of anonymous collectives, an assumption so prominent in classical form-criticism. Contrary to this, S. Byrskog, following modern research on Oral History, stresses the important role of individual witnesses and points to the examples of Peter and James, the brother of the Lord.<sup>101</sup> To this R. Bauckham adds the circle of the Twelve, Cleopas (Luke 24:18; cf. John 19:25) and specifically named women like Mary Magdalene and others (Mark 15:40–41; Luke 8:1–3). Bauckham sums up his comprehensive study of the subject in the following conclusion:

This stress in the Gospels on the eyewitness qualifications of those who were with Jesus from beginning to end, whether the Twelve as a group or particular disciples highlighted in particular Gospels, is an interesting point of correspondence with the best principles of Greek and Roman historiography, for which the best informant or (better) author was one who had extensive personal experience on the subject.<sup>102</sup>

Like Polybius (17.27.3) and Lucian (*Hist. Conscr.* 47), Luke (Luke 1:1–4) and Papias of Hierapolis (in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.3–4) emphasized the importance of eyewitnesses.

In 1 Cor 15:3–5 Paul cites a tradition (εὐαγγέλιον) that combines both the passion and resurrection stories of Jesus, and which, in its basic form, reaches back into the first couple of decades of the early church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor 15:11).<sup>103</sup> This makes it clear that since the earliest period of church history the content of tradition was bound up with particular names and groups of “tradition-transmitters” like Peter and the Twelve (1 Cor 15:5), or James as representative of the family of Jesus (1 Cor 15:7). In the extended form of the tradition, as Paul passes this on to the Corinthians, it is hinted that there were, besides Jerusalem, two other areas in which Jesus tradition was fostered: Galilee, where

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<sup>101</sup> *Story as History—History as Story*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). An updated summary in S. Byrskog, “Das Lernen der Jesusgeschichte nach den synoptischen Evangelien” in *Religiöses Lernen in der biblischen, frühjüdischen und frühchristlichen Überlieferung*, ed. B. Ego and H. Merkel, WUNT 180 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 191–210.

<sup>102</sup> “The Eyewitnesses and the Gospel Traditions,” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 28–60, here 59. This article is a summary of *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>103</sup> Cf. C. Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, THK 7 (Berlin: EVA, 1996), 355–361; and also R. Riesner, “Chronologie und Theologie bei Paulus,” *JET* 10 (1996): 110–122.

one is to obviously situate (cf. Matt 28:16–17) the appearance to the five hundred (1 Cor 15:6),<sup>104</sup> and the churches founded in the Pauline missions, in which stories were circulated about the Christophany experience of Paul (1 Cor 15:8; cf. Acts 9:1–9). With this in mind, one ought not to neglect the geographical factor in relation to the question of the early passing on of tradition.

In a groundbreaking work about oral tradition, J. Vansina specifies two different conditions necessary for the possibility of reliable tradition: (1) the existence of fixed and possibly even “esoteric” transmitters and (2) the use of mnemonic techniques as aids to the securing of the tradition.<sup>105</sup> As regards the pre- and post-Easter nature and treatment of the words of Jesus, both of these conditions were met, thus qualifying them as fostered tradition (JaL §3.6). The highly memorable sayings of Jesus, but also many of the deliberately formed narratives, cannot be classified as fluid folklore, but rather as teaching tradition. The influence of Christian prophets on the shaping of the Jesus tradition has been completely overestimated.<sup>106</sup> In the Gospel of Mark it is particularly the “Twelve” around Peter that are depicted as prototypes of transmitters.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, they built a living bridge of tradition between pre- and post-Easter times. Nevertheless, conservative scholars have often not paid enough attention to the fact that the existence of eye and ear witnesses is, although a necessary condition, not a sufficient one to secure a reliable transmission of a word tradition. Even memorable tradition suffers from the natural limitations of human memory.<sup>108</sup> Such deficiencies can mainly be overcome by means of repetition and the use of written notes.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. E. F. F. Bishop, “The Risen Christ and the Five Hundred Brethren,” *CBQ* 18 (1956): 341–344; H. J. Klauck, *1. Korintherbrief*, NEB 7 (Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 110; D. Häusser, *Christusbekenntnis und Jesusüberlieferung bei Paulus*, WUNT 2.210 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 131–135.

<sup>105</sup> *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (London: Kegan & Paul, 1965), 31. Cf. also R. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 52–87; W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), 62–63; D. C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75–88.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 233–246; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 186–192.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. K. Stock, *Boten aus dem Mit-Ihm-Sein: Das Verhältnis zwischen Jesus und den Zwölf nach Markus*, AnBib 70 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. R. McIver and M. Carroll, “Experiments to Determine Distinguishing Characteristics of Orally Transmitted Material by Literary Means, and Their Potential Implications for the Synoptic Problem,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 667–687.



#### 4.2. *Cultivated Tradition*

Philo took it for granted that the training of the memory (μνήμη) was a necessary part of *egkyklios paideia* (*Somn.* 1.205). M. Carruthers provides the following picture of an educated man in Hellenistic-Roman antiquity:

The choice to train one's memory or not for the ancients and medievals was not a choice dictated by convenience: it was a matter of ethics. A person without a memory, if such a thing could be, would be a person without moral character and, in a basic sense, without humanity.<sup>109</sup>

Although, on the one hand, to memorize something often meant no more than to have the gist of that something memorized, this is not the whole picture. On the other hand, not only in the instruction of educated families (Xenophon, *Symp.* 3.5), but in all levels of Hellenistic schooling, learning by heart played an important role (Plato, *Euthydemus* 276D; Horace, *Ep.* 1.18.12–14).<sup>110</sup> The pedagogue Quintilian makes it clear that schoolboys memorized large parts of classical literature in order to have examples at hand for imitation (*Inst. Orat.* 2.7.2–4). We know of many gnomic school texts from antiquity.<sup>111</sup> In rhetoric schools the memory was also trained (Cicero, *De Inv.* 1.9), and exemplary texts were learnt by heart (Isocrates, *Soph.* 12–13). R. Finnegan, the acclaimed expert on oral tradition, wrote:

The demonstration that rote-memory need not be important in oral poetry has sometimes misled students of the subject (myself included) to assume that it is *never* important. Parry and Lord did not go so far as this, but their works can be read as implying it.<sup>112</sup>

Importantly, she stresses that verbatim transmission was not unusual with ritualized, religious oral “texts.” The practice of memorizing something verbatim was far more common in the societies of antiquity that had developed systems of scribes and schools,<sup>113</sup> as in Second Temple

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<sup>109</sup> *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. K. Berger, “Hellenistische Gattungen im Neuen Testament,” in *ANRW* II 25.2, ed. W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 1031–1432, at 1296–1299.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 120–151.

<sup>112</sup> *Oral Poetry*, 73.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. J. Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 167–190; L. Schwienhorst-Schönberger, “Den Ruf der

Judaism. Josephus took pride in his exceptional ability to memorize (*Life* 8). According to Philo the Jews “trained from their earliest years” to have “the commandments enshrined in their souls (ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀγαλματοφοροῦσι)” (*Legat.* 210; cf. Josephus, *Apion* 2.178). Even the Roman satirist Juvenal confirmed that the Jews “learnt the Law of Moses by heart (*Iudaicum ediscunt... ius Moyses*)” (*Sat.* 14.101–102 [ed. Stern 2.102]).

Scholars rarely consider it possible that there were some educated believers before the foundation of the Pauline communities. Contrary to this, however, one should take note of two special groups, apparently connected with each other, in the primitive community of Jerusalem. (1) Joseph Barnabas and also his nephew (or cousin) John Mark were of Levitical descent (Acts 4:36–37; 12:12). Levites not only had teaching tasks in Old Testament times (Deut 31:9–13; Neh 8:9 etc.), but they also played an important role in the Essene communities (1QS 1–2 etc.).<sup>114</sup> (2) R. Schnackenburg<sup>115</sup> and A. T. Lincoln<sup>116</sup> discovered, with a degree of surprise, that, possibly at a rather early stage, some Essene Christian converts exercised a certain degree of influence on the baptismal catechesis. The Book of Acts provides some clues that members of the Essene quarter of Jerusalem (Josephus, *War* 5.145)<sup>117</sup> joined the primitive community in its formative years (Acts 2:4; 6:7).<sup>118</sup> In early monasticism, the memorizing of the Holy Scriptures was highly valued (Pachomius, *Praecepta* 139–140).<sup>119</sup> The roots of this life-style go back to the circle of Jesus’ disciples and to Christian ascetics influenced by

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Weisheit hören: Lernkonzepte in der alttestamentlichen Weisheitsliteratur,” in *Religiöses Lernen*, ed. Ego and Merkel, 69–82, here 76–78.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. G. J. Brooke, “Levi and the Levites in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 115–139; R. Riesner, “Der ‚neue Bund‘ und die Überlieferungsströme im Urchristentum,” in *Jesus als Bote des Heils*, ed. L. Hauser, F. R. Prostmeier, and C. Georg-Zöllner, SBB 60 (Stuttgart: Katholischen Bibelwerk, 2008), 277–293.

<sup>115</sup> *Der Brief an die Epheser*, EKK 10 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1982), 227.

<sup>116</sup> *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 327.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* II, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black (Edinburgh: Clark: 1979), 563 n. 5; B. Pixner, “Mount Zion, Jesus, and Archaeology,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 309–322.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Jesus, the Primitive Community, and the Essene Quarter of Jerusalem,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Charlesworth, 198–234; idem, *Essener und Urgemeinde in Jerusalem: Neue Funde und Quellen*, BAZ 6 (Gießen: Brunnen, 1998); idem, “Essener und Urkirche auf dem Südwesthügel Jerusalems (Zion III),” in *Laetare Jerusalem*, ed. N. C. Schnabel, JThF 10 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2006), 200–234.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. W. A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 126–140.

Essenism.<sup>120</sup> The liberal scholar P. Wernle pointedly declared: “Upon joining the community every Christian learnt the most important words of the Lord by heart.”<sup>121</sup>

The tradition-terminology in 1 Cor 15:3a (παραδόναί, παραλαμβάνειν) has a direct parallel (לְקַבֵּל, רָסַמ) in the rabbinic literature (*m. Ab.* 1:1) and this suggests a deliberate passing on with the effort to remain true to the original, even in wording (τινὶ λόγῳ [1 Cor 15:1–2]). For an educated Christian like Papias, the Gospel of Mark indicated that Peter had taught the Jesus tradition in memorable units (πρὸς τὰς χρεῖαις ἐποίετο τὰς διδασκαλίας [*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15]).<sup>122</sup> The memorization of *chreiai* (χρεῖαι) by repetition was not only practiced by schoolboys but also by adults (Dio Chrysostomus, *Or.* 72.11; cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 33.7). According to the *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* (2.1 [MPG 1:1249]), Peter was “recalling and repeating (*recolens ac retexens*) the words of the Lord” in order “to keep them in memory (*memoriter tenere*).” Concerning the words of his teacher Polycarp, Irenaeus wrote: “I repeat them constantly in genuine form (γνησίως ἀντὰ ἀναμαρτωμῶμαι)” (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.20.7 [ed. Schwartz 208]). It is probable that these two passages from the second century AD only make explicit what was commonly practiced in the first century AD. The letters of Paul and James are important witnesses of the state of affairs between Jesus and the synoptic gospels.

#### 4.3. Paul

The different components of the formula in 1 Cor 15:3–5 are best understood as (types of) headlines indicating the use of certain Jesus traditions.<sup>123</sup> Paul, the pupil of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3),<sup>124</sup> was accustomed

<sup>120</sup> Cf. F. C. Joest, “Vom Ursprung des Mönchtums,” *Edith Stein Jahrbuch* 8 (2002): 21–33.

<sup>121</sup> *Die synoptische Frage* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1899), 221: “Die wichtigsten Herrenworte hat damals jeder Christ beim Eintritt in die Gemeinde auswendiggelernt.” Cf. also R. Riesner, “Taufkatechese und Jesus-Überlieferung,” in *Logos—Logik—Lyrik*, ed. V. A. Lehnert and U. Rösen-Weinhold, ABG 27 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2007), 305–339.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. J. Kürzinger, *Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments*, EichM 4 (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1983), 43–68; Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 205–217; and already R. O. P. Taylor, *The Groundwork of the Gospels* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 26–30.

<sup>123</sup> J. Roloff, *Apostolat—Verkündigung—Kirche: Ursprung, Inhalt und Funktion des kirchlichen Apostelamts nach Paulus, Lukas und den Pastoralbriefen* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1965), 48.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (with R. Deines; London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 40–53.

to using such *simanim* (סִמָּנִים) in summarizing traditions.<sup>125</sup> As is shown by 1 Cor 11:23–24, this is not a mere hypothesis. Paul started with the same transmission terminology and, after a kind of headline “On the night he was betrayed,” cited the Eucharistic words of Jesus (cf. Luke 22:19–20). It is a matter of debate how much knowledge of the Jesus tradition is presupposed in the letters of Paul.<sup>126</sup> One should not be too perplexed that the apostle explicitly refers to the words of Jesus only on rare occasions (certainly in 1 Cor 7:10; 9:16; 11:23; 1 Thess 4:15, but also very likely in 1 Cor 10:33–11:1; Rom 14:14). Even the First Epistle of John did not explicitly cite or refer to the words of Jesus, a fact made all the more remarkable because the Gospel of John was written in the same circle. If there existed a controlled Jesus tradition, as is witnessed by Paul (1 Cor 11:23; 15:1–3), then it would have been possible to allude to it in letters etc. The use of the Old Testament in the New Testament is a comparable phenomenon. We have many more allusions, whether loose or clear, than direct citations. Without a clear picture of the person and activity of Jesus (cf. Gal 3:1), Paul’s preaching would not have been understood. A thorough analysis of his letters shows that they presuppose a remarkable number of Jesus traditions.<sup>127</sup> For example, he knew the ransom logion (1 Cor 9:19–21; 10:33–11:1; cf. 1 Cor 7:22–23; Rom 5:15), something of central importance for the claims and aims of Jesus (Mark 10:45 / Matt 20:28; cf. Acts 20:28, 35).<sup>128</sup> The argumentation of a whole passage like 1 Corinthians 8–10 is guided by the words (cf. 1 Cor 9:14) and the example of Jesus (1 Cor 11:1).<sup>129</sup> This is all the more remarkable as the problem of food sacrificed to idols was not something directly touched upon by Jesus. In cases like this Paul applied Jesus traditions in a similar way, by means of analogy, since the “command of the Lord (ἐπιταγή τοῦ κυρίου)” had more authority than his own opinion (1 Cor 7:10–12, 25).

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 299–300.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung,” in *Evangelium—Schriftauslegung—Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher*, ed. J. Ådna, S. Hafemann, and O. Hofius (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 346–365.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. especially M. B. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13*, JSNTSup 59 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991); D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); S. Kim, “The Jesus Tradition in Paul,” in *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origins of Paul’s Gospel*, WUNT 140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 259–292.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Back to the Historical Jesus Through Paul and His School (The Ransom Logion—Mark 10.45; Matthew 20.28),” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 171–199.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. S. Kim, “Imitatio Christi (1 Corinthians 11:1): How Paul Imitates Jesus Christ in Dealing with Idol Food (1 Corinthians 8–10),” *BBR* 13 (2003): 193–226.

Most of the allusions and citations are nearer to the Lukan form of the tradition. Second in frequency are allusions which approximate to a Matthean form. However, occasionally one even finds agreements with Mark (Rom 14:14 / Mark 7:15 etc.) and John (1 Cor 15:36–37 / John 12:24 etc.). For a long time it was believed that Paul received his traditions mainly from the community in Antioch. Today, however, there exists a critique of this “Pan-Antiochenism,”<sup>130</sup> and more attention is given to the Damascus community whose importance for Paul had already been stressed by O. Cullmann.<sup>131</sup> That Paul in his letters was so near to the Lukan special tradition is best explained by the fact that this was the form of tradition he received in the first messianic community he belonged to (cf. Acts 9:17–18). The apostle, of course, had other opportunities to learn Jesus tradition. One such possibility is when he met with Peter and James, the Brother of the Lord, around AD 33/34 in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18).<sup>132</sup> At a later meeting with these two figures Paul also mentions John, the Son of Zebedee, as one of the “pillars” (στυλοὶ) in the temple of the eschatological people of God (Gal 2:9). It is probably not going too much out on a limb to suggest that around this important Christian leader and witness to the Historical Jesus was a group fostering its special form of tradition. In respect to Paul’s acquaintance with Jesus tradition, one should not forget the role of Barnabas of Jerusalem as his companion on the first missionary journey (Acts 13–14; cf. Gal 2:1–13). That in 1 Thessalonians Paul is rather near to a Matthean form of tradition could be due to the influence of Silas, the Jerusalem Hellenist and co-author of this letter (1 Thess 1:1).<sup>133</sup>

#### 4.4. James

The numerous allusions in the Letter of James to the Jesus tradition are widely recognized. Today there are new adherents to the thesis that

<sup>130</sup> M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM, 1997), 286. Cf. even G. Strecker, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, ed. F. W. Horn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 70.

<sup>131</sup> *Die Tradition als exegetisches, historisches und theologisches Problem* (Zürich: Zwingli, 1954), 15–16. Cf. also R. Riesner, “L’héritage juif de Paul et les débuts de sa mission,” in *Paul, une théologie en construction*, ed. A. Detwiler, J. D. Kaestli, and D. Marguerat (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2004), 135–155, here 148–152.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 319–323.

<sup>133</sup> Cf., E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1947), 369–375; and also H. Binder, “Paulus und die Thessalonicherbriefe,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. R. F. Collins, BETL 87 (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 87–93.

the letter was composed either by James himself or by those in a circle closely associated with him.<sup>134</sup> The form of the Jesus tradition in the letter shows a certain relationship to the Lukan special tradition (Jas 5:1 / Luke 6:24–25 etc.).<sup>135</sup> It appears that this was the form of tradition that was particularly fostered in the wider family of Jesus. This is confirmed by an analysis of the language and content of the Lukan special tradition, and especially by geographical and personal clues found in the text.<sup>136</sup> The tradition is characterized by a Hebraized language and by aspects that betray a certain contact with Judea and Jerusalem. Particularly stressed are themes such as poverty, Holy Spirit and Israel as the people of God. Some sources of this tradition are hinted at in the text, namely: Mary, the Mother of Jesus (Luke 2:19, 51), his uncle Cleopas (Luke 24:18; cf. John 19:25; Hegesippus [Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.11]), and also some women followers (Luke 8:1–3; cf. Acts 1:14).<sup>137</sup> It is possible to explain why Paul, in Damascus, learnt this form of tradition. The community was founded by Jewish Christians, with Hasidic or Essene background (εὐλαβῆς from יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן יוֹסֵפִי), who had contacts with the relatives of Jesus (Acts 22:12; cf. Luke 2:25).<sup>138</sup> K. Berger suggests that similarities between the letters of Paul and the Johannine writings go back to a common Damascene tradition.<sup>139</sup> As it is generally recognized, there exist some striking agreements between the Gospel of John and the Lukan special tradition. Where Paul and John are, thematically and in

<sup>134</sup> Cf. especially L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James*, AB 37A (New York: Doubleday, 1995); R. Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (London: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>135</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, "James," in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. J. Barton and J. Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1255–1263.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, "Luke's Special Tradition and the Question of a Hebrew Gospel Source," *Mishkan* 20 (1994): 44–52; idem, "James's Speech (Acts 15:13–21), Simeon's Hymn (Luke 2:29–32), and Luke's Sources," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology: Festschrift Howard Marshall*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), 263–278; idem, "Das Lokalkolorit des Lukas-Sonderguts: Italisches oder palästinisch-judenchristlich?" *SBFLA* 49 (1999): 51–64.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, "Die Emmaus-Erzählung (Lukas 24,13–35): Lukanische Theologie, judenchristliche Tradition und palästinische Topographie," in *Emmaus in Judäa: Geschichte—Exegese—Archäologie*, ed. K. H. Fleckenstein, M. Louhivuori, and R. Riesner, BAZ 11 (Gießen: Brunnen, 2003), 150–207; and also R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (London: Routledge, 2002), 257–310.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *Bethanien jenseits des Jordan: Topographie und Theologie im Johannes-Evangelium*, BAZ 12 (Gießen: Brunnen, 2002), 113–117.

<sup>139</sup> *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Francke, 1995), 233–236.

terms of language, rather close, one mostly finds a pre-Lukan tradition as a common denominator.<sup>140</sup>

#### 4.5. *Early Written Notes*

Books in antiquity served as aids to commit the subject matter to memory (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.118). For this reason they were normally read aloud (cf. Acts 8:30). However legendary his story might be, Clement of Alexandria provides a realistic picture of the practises of antiquity when, according to him, some Roman knights requested from Mark a written gospel in order that they “could commit to memory what was said (*ut possent quae dicebantur memoriae commendare*)” (*Adumbrationes ad 1 Pet* 5:13 [GCS 17.206]). Later, in the fourth century AD, Augustine took for granted that he himself and some Christian catechists had memorized all of the four gospels by heart: “*totumque evangelium... ad verbum edidicimus*” (*De catechizandis rudibus* 5). Paul did not have anything to stop him writing down, around 54 CE, a Jesus tradition like the Eucharistic words (1 Cor 11:23–24). It is generally believed that the sayings source Q was written down in about the year 50 CE.<sup>141</sup> But the obvious question arises: Why so late?

G. Theißen suggests that due to the severe crisis under Caligula in the years 40/41 CE, the substance of the synoptic apocalypse (Mark 13) and passion narrative were fixed in written form.<sup>142</sup> According to R. Pesch, even before the high priest Caiaphas was forced to leave his post in 37 CE, there was, he postulates, a pre-Markan passion narrative written down in Jerusalem, starting with the confession of Peter (Mark 8:27–30).<sup>143</sup> It was very common in educated circles of the Hellenistic-Roman times to take notes (*ὑπομνήματα*, *commentarii*).<sup>144</sup> For C. H. Roberts it was self-evident: “No doubt the oral [gospel] tradition was

<sup>140</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Genesis 3,15 in vorlukanischer und johanneischer Tradition,” *SNTU A* 29 (2004): 119–178.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 226–227.

<sup>142</sup> *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, NTOA 8 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 133–211.

<sup>143</sup> *Das Evangelium der Urgemeinde* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979); *Das Markusevangelium II*, 4th ed., HTK 2.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 1–27.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. G. A. Kennedy, “Classical and Christian Source Criticism,” in *The Relationships among the Gospels: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. W. O. Walker (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1978), 125–155, here 130–137.

reinforced, as it was in Judaism, with notes.”<sup>145</sup> Even a critic of F. C. Baur like H. W. J. Thiersch defended such a hypothesis.<sup>146</sup> Also F. D. E. Schleiermacher, while developing his “Diegesen-Hypothese” from Luke 1: 1–4 (πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν), pointed in the same direction.<sup>147</sup> We know of the gospels only in the form of the papyrus-codex. Since this was one of the typical forms of the notebook (cf. 2 Tim 4:13), one could suggest that the gospels were edited with the help of informal notes.<sup>148</sup> In the light of that contemporary background one can say that, probable as such notes are, it is equally improbable that any will be discovered. Since they were only meant for private use and not published works (ἐκδόσεις) for distribution, they have not been preserved.<sup>149</sup> One can only try to conceive of the existence of some pre-synoptic sources by combining literary analysis and historical reconstruction.

### 5. Publication: The Synoptic Gospels

#### 5.1. Literary Analysis

In the 1960’s, for most scholars, the two-document hypothesis seemed to be an assured result. Today it is still the most popular solution,<sup>150</sup> but there is now serious competition (JaL §1).<sup>151</sup> The new Griesbach

<sup>145</sup> “Books in the Graeco-Roman World and the New Testament,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible I: From the Beginnings to Jerome*, ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 48–66, here 55. For the use of written notes in the redaction of the Mishnah cf. M. S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 100–125.

<sup>146</sup> *Versuch einer Herstellung des historischen Standpuncts für die Kritik der neutestamentlichen Schriften* (Erlangen: C. Heyder, 1845), 84.

<sup>147</sup> “Über die Schriften des Lukas, ein kritischer Versuch [1817],” in *Exegetische Schriften*, ed. H. Patsch and D. Schmid (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 1–180.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. the discussion in S. Enste, *Kein Markustext in Qumran: Eine Untersuchung der These: Qumran-Fragment 7Q5 = Mk 6,52–53, NTOA 45* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 86–94; G. N. Stanton, “Why Were Early Christians Addicted to the Codex?” in *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 165–191; and also M. McCormick, “The Birth of the Codex and the Apostolic Life-Style,” *Scriptorium* 39 (1985): 150–158.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. also L. Alexander, “Ancient Book Production and the Circulation of the Gospels,” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. R. Bauckham (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 71–112.

<sup>150</sup> Especially influential is F. Neirynck, *Evangelica: Gospel Studies—Études d’Évangile I/II*, BETL 82 and 94 (Leuven: Peeters 1982; 1991), etc.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. E. P. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 51–119; R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 111–125; D. L. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic*



hypothesis,<sup>152</sup> the Farrer hypothesis<sup>153</sup> and the multiple-source hypothesis<sup>154</sup> have now been applied to the entire synoptic tradition. One is certainly correct to also stress the importance of the oral factor in the formation of the synoptic tradition,<sup>155</sup> even if the tradition hypothesis cannot explain the entire synoptic phenomenon (cf. Matt 24:15 / Mark 13:14 [ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω]). Indeed, the camp of the Two-Document-Hypothesis supporters is not united. Some doubt that Q was a unified document.<sup>156</sup> Others propose that Q was a proto-gospel, including narratives with minor agreements (strong Mark-Q overlaps) and perhaps even a passion narrative.<sup>157</sup> There are now some strong voices among younger scholars that dispense with Q altogether.<sup>158</sup> Given

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*Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition, and the Interpretation of the Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 345–394; D. A. Black and D. R. Beck, eds., *Rethinking the Synoptic Problem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001); M. Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze*, The Biblical Seminar 80 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); D. A. Carson and D. J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 88–103.

<sup>152</sup> H. Riley, *The Making of Mark* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1989); A. J. McNicol (with L. O. Cope, D. L. Dungan, W. R. Farmer, D. Peabody, and P. L. Shuler), *Beyond the Q Impasse: Luke's Use of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1996); D. B. Peabody, L. O. Cope, and A. J. McNicol, eds., *One Gospel from Two: Mark's Use of Matthew and Luke* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002).

<sup>153</sup> E. Franklin, *Luke, Interpreter of Paul, Critic of Matthew*, JSNTSup 92 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994); M. Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002).

<sup>154</sup> P. Benoit and M. É. Boismard, *Synopse des quatre évangiles I–II*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1973).

<sup>155</sup> Cf. A. D. Baum, “Oral Poetry und synoptische Frage: Analogien zu Umfang, Variation und Art der synoptischen Wortlautidentität,” *TZ* 59 (2003): 17–34; idem, *Der mündliche Faktor und seine Bedeutung für die synoptische Frage: Analogien aus der Antiken Literatur, der Experimentalpsychologie, der Oral Poetry-Forschung und dem rabbinischen Traditionswesen*, TANZ 49 (Tübingen: Francke, 2008); T. C. Mournet, *Oral Tradition and Literary Dependency: Variability and Stability in the Synoptic Tradition and Q*, WUNT 2.195 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

<sup>156</sup> Cf. T. Bergemann, *Q auf dem Prüfstand: Die Zuordnung des Mt/Lk-Stoffes zu Q am Beispiel der Bergpredigt*, FRLANT 158 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

<sup>157</sup> Cf. H. Fledderman, *Mark and Q: A Study of Overlap Texts*, BETL 122 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995); E. Franklin, “A Passion Narrative for Q?” in *Understanding Studying, and Reading: New Testament Essays in Honour of John Ashton*, ed. C. Rowland and C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, JSNTSup 153 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1998), 30–47; S. Hultgren, *Narrative Elements in the Double Tradition: A Study of Their Place within the Framework of the Gospel Narrative*, BZNW 113 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002); H. M. Humphrey, *From Q to “Secret” Mark: A Composition History of the Earliest Narrative Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006); and also J. Schröter, “Anfänge der Jesusüberlieferung: Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu einem Bereich urchristlicher Theologiegeschichte,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 53–76.

<sup>158</sup> M. Goodacre and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Questioning Q: A Multidimensional Critique* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), with a foreword by N. T. Wright (IX–XI).

the far-reaching implications of certain forms of the Q hypothesis for the understanding of Jesus and early Christianity<sup>159</sup> this seems to be a rather dramatic development. Absolute Markan priority is doubted by proponents of a Proto-Mark<sup>160</sup> or a Deutero-Mark.<sup>161</sup> Some believe that Matthew used Luke and others, quite the opposite. In order to create a plausible synoptic model, one should integrate as many literary phenomena as possible, and should ensure that it is compatible with the known history of early Christianity (JaL §3). There are so many hypotheses suggested because everyone can explain *parts* of the related problems plausibly. If one is to suggest a hypothesis that could even approach a complete solution it should combine elements of different proposed models. This reasoning would require a somewhat complex model, something like a combination of the tradition hypothesis and a multiple-source hypothesis.

In the following a combined model is proposed, individual elements of which proponents of other models might accept.<sup>162</sup> (1) Double expressions in Mark speak strongly for the possibility that it was created from two parallel sources (cf. Mark 1:32 etc.).<sup>163</sup> Both sources go back to an older source that comprises the material common to Matthew, Mark and Luke (*traditio triplex*). One edition of this “proto-Mark” was enlarged by material common to Matthew and Mark, which concentrated on Galilee and was of interest to Jewish Christians (Mark 6:45–8:21 / Matt 14:22–16:12). The other edition of “Proto-Mark” was characterized by

<sup>159</sup> Cf. only J. S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000).

<sup>160</sup> W. Schmithals, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), 404–431; H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 273–285.

<sup>161</sup> A. Fuchs, *Spuren von Deuteromarkus I–IV*, SNTU B4 (Münster: LIT, 2004); Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 190–198.

<sup>162</sup> A more thorough argument will be given in another publication. As has only recently been drawn to my attention, the model I propose is close to that of R. Devreese, *Les Évangiles et l'Évangile* (Paris: Fleurus, 1963). There are noteworthy similarities to, e.g., D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Leicester: Apollos; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 1029–1045; R. Minnerath, *De Jérusalem à Rome: Pierre et l'unité de l'église apostolique*, ThH 101 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994); P. Rolland, *L'origine et la date des évangiles: Les témoins oculaires de Jésus* (Paris: Saint Paul, 1994); H. J. Schulz, *Die apostolische Herkunft der Evangelien: Zum Ursprung der Evangelienform in der urgemeindlichen Paschafeier*, QD 145 (Freiburg: Herder, 3rd ed., 1997).

<sup>163</sup> Cf. P. Rolland, *Les premiers évangiles: Un nouveau regard sur le problème synoptique*, LD 116 (Paris: Cerf, 1984), 59–157; D. Burkett, *Rethinking the Gospel Sources: From Proto-Mark to Mark* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004).

small textual alterations common to Mark and Luke. These modifications are mainly stylistic improvements, some of which would have been helpful for Gentile Christians to better understand the text (Mark 2:7 / Luke 5:21; Mark 12:12 / Luke 20:19 etc.). (2) Q by definition is a sayings source, but the story of the centurion of Capernaum (Matt 8:5–13 / Luke 7:1–10) shows it contained at least one miracle story. Of course, this was a text of special interest for Gentile Christians. Other narrative texts with strong minor agreements cannot be excluded *a priori* from the hypothetical source. This means that Q develops into a full gospel. Since this source follows the structure of Mark it is fair to assume that it is an edition of “Proto-Mark” that has been enlarged by sayings material. (3) The special tradition of Luke consisted not only in material unique to him. Material found in the triple tradition and in “Q” that is characterized by a Hebraizing, Judean-Jewish-Christian tendency, should also be included.<sup>164</sup> Luke has combined this special source with the Gentile Christian edition of “Proto-Mark.” The minor and major agreements (“Q”) of Luke with Matthew point to a common dependency on that Greek source, which combined “Proto-Mark” with the sayings tradition. It is a more complicated matter to define the relationship between the Lukan special tradition on the one hand, and this combined source and the Greek “Proto-Mark” on the other hand. The similarities in material and structure could even be explained by a common source, i.e. a Semitic “Proto-Mark.” (4) Before and after these gospel-like sources, there also existed smaller written collections of sayings (Mark 13), parables (Mark 4), conflict stories (Mark 2:1–3:6) and even passion narratives.<sup>165</sup>

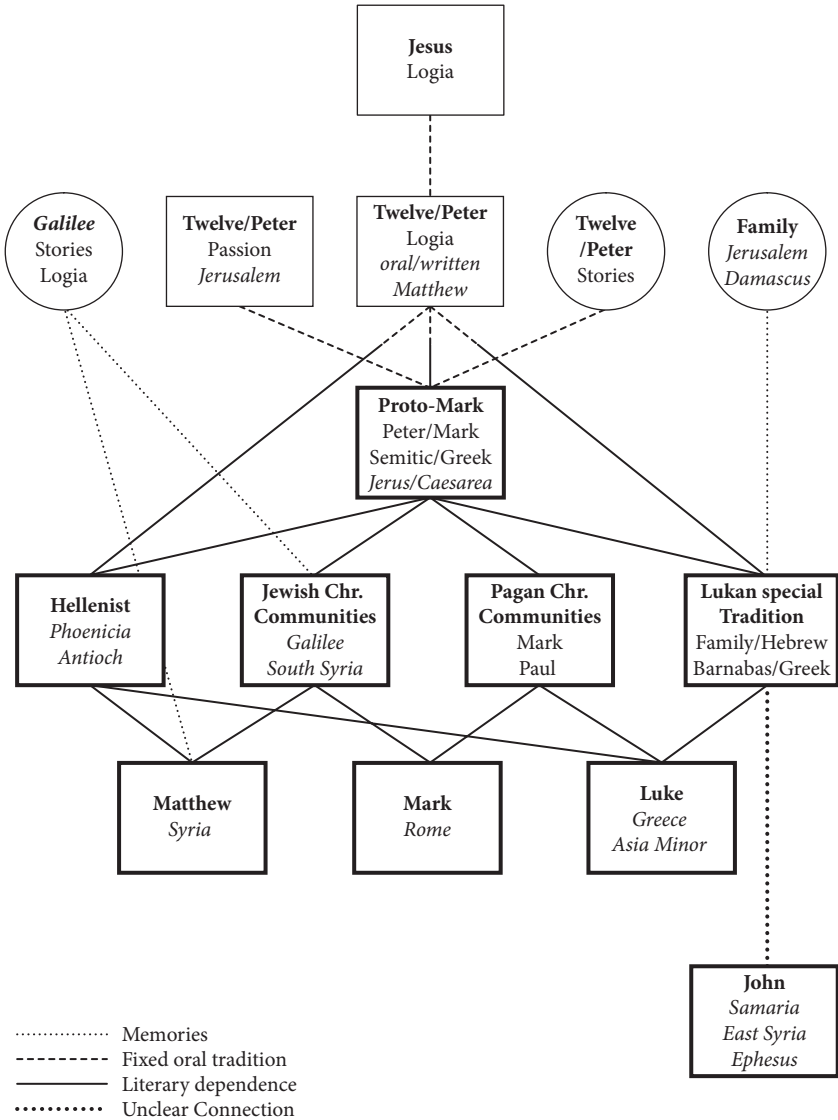
## 5.2. *Historical Reconstruction*

An explanatory model should be as complex as is necessary and, at the same time, as simple as possible. The following diagram illustrates the most important stages of the tradition as it develops from its origin with Jesus right up till the publication in the canonical gospels. This

<sup>164</sup> Cf. T. Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas: Eine literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, SNTSMS 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); R. Riesner, “Prägung und Herkunft der lukanischen Sonderüberlieferung,” *TBei* 24 (1993): 228–248.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. H. A. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 21–30; U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 251–252.

combined hypothesis simplifies, without a doubt, a far more complex reality marked by relatively good mobility between the early Christian communities.<sup>166</sup>



<sup>166</sup> Cf. M. B. Thompson, “The Holy Internet: Communication between Churches in the First Christian Generation,” in *The Gospels for All Christians*, ed. Bauckham, 49–70.

(1) At the origin of tradition stood Jesus himself who condensed his preaching in teaching summaries and parables. His disciples were thus able to memorize this material. (2) The “Twelve” around Peter were appointed by Jesus as judges of the people of Israel. After his resurrection they gathered, in Jerusalem, the eschatological community. The Holy City became the hub of the messianic movement partly because it was from Jerusalem that the eschatological Torah for Israel and the nations (Isa 2:1–5 / Mic 4:1–3) should proceed (cf. Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 14:36; Melito, *Paschal Homily* 7). The “teaching of the apostles (διδασκαλίαν τῶν ἀποστόλων)” (Acts 2:42) included a witness to the activity of Jesus “from his baptism by John until his resurrection” (Acts 1:21–22). The “Twelve” were “servants of the word” (ὑπηρέται τοῦ λόγου) in a unique way (Luke 1:2; cf. Acts 6:4). They were “eyewitnesses (ἀυτόπται)” and, as a consequence, better equipped to “transmit” (παραδιδόναι) the “story” (διήγησις) of Jesus (Luke 1:1–2). Matthew, the former tax collector (Matt 9:9), may have played a role in the production of the first written record of the sayings and deeds of Jesus (Papias [*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.16]).<sup>167</sup> Probably Peter was involved when, in the earliest Christian community in Jerusalem, a primary passion narrative was formed under the influence of Isaiah 53 (cf. 1 Cor 15:3–4).<sup>168</sup> (3) The short Gospel of Mark was preserved primarily because of its connection with the Petrine tradition (Papias [*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15]).<sup>169</sup> The Book of Acts shows John Mark in contact with Peter already before 44 CE in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12). It is possible that, as early as the first couple of decades of the primitive community, John Mark was active as a scribe creating a Greek translation of an enlarged passion narrative. A presentation of the story of Jesus, divided geographically into his Galilean and Jerusalem ministries, was possibly even part of the early Christian catechesis (cf. Acts 10:36–43; 13:23–31).

(4) Since the Primitive community in Jerusalem was composed of, at least, Aramaic/Hebrew and Greek speakers it was necessary to translate the Jesus traditions into Greek. The bilingual John Mark would have been able to produce a Greek “Proto-Mark.” When the Hellenists (Ἑλληνισταί) were driven out of the Holy City around 31/32 CE

<sup>167</sup> Cf. R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 609–622.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (London: SCM, 2000), 153–157.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, “Literary, Theological, and Historical Problems in the Gospel of Mark,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Stuhlmacher, 209–251.

(Acts 11:19),<sup>170</sup> they took with them Greek Jesus traditions.<sup>171</sup> In Antioch, where, soon after this, a big community developed consisting of both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:20–26), there existed a special need for such translated traditions. A source like the Greek “Proto-Mark” combined with sayings of Jesus would have been a great help in instructing the community members. (5) We do not know much about the communities in Galilee (Acts 9:31), but their need for the Jesus tradition goes without saying. Their need could be met by a “Proto-Mark” that was enlarged with material that would have been of special interest for Jewish Christians in Galilee. Since Galilee bordered Greek-speaking territories like Phoenicia, Gaulanitis, Decapolis and Caesarea, this makes all the more plausible the early transition from Aramaic to Greek. (6) Paul could learn further Jesus tradition while on his mission to Cyprus as he was accompanied by John Mark (Acts 13:4–13). Later on John Mark played a certain role in the Pauline communities of Asia Minor (Phlm 24; Col 4:10). In the context of the synagogue preaching of Barnabas and Paul in Cyprus, Mark is given the title of ὑπηρέτης (Acts 13:5; cf. 4:16; Luke 1:1–4). This term recalls the concept of “servant of the word” (Luke 1:2) and serves to distinguish Mark as a carrier of Jesus tradition.<sup>172</sup> A Greek “Proto-Mark,” revised for Gentile Christians, could have functioned as a memory aid for those teaching in the Pauline communities.

(7) Luke suggests that, even in the earliest period of the Jerusalem community, not only those gathered around the Twelve but also the family of Jesus played an important role (Acts 1:12–14). This is a picture confirmed by Paul (Gal 1:19; 2:9, 11; cf. 1 Cor 15:6). The members of this group assembled in a location different from the Greek-speaking believers (cf. Acts 12:12, 17). The Lukan special tradition matches, as regards the philological questions, particularly the tradition of the “Hebrews” (Ἑβραῖοι) and, as regards content, the interests of the family of Jesus. According to the oldest church tradition relating to the Epistle “to the Hebrews (πρὸς Ἑβραίους),” Barnabas was the author of the letter (Tertullian, *De pudicitia* 20).<sup>173</sup> It is striking that the Jesus tradition in this letter has some points of contact with the Lukan special

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 59–74.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, “Between Jesus and Paul,” in *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1983), 1–29, here 26–29.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. B. T. Holmes, “Luke’s Description of John Mark,” *JBL* 54 (1935): 63–72.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Der Hebräer-Brief nach altkirchlichen Zeugnissen,” *European Journal of Theology* 11 (2002): 15–29.

tradition.<sup>174</sup> Barnabas acted as a go-between connecting Jerusalem and the Hebraic community in Damascus (Acts 9:26–27) and the Hellenistic community of Antioch (Acts 11:22–26). (8) The oldest church tradition about Luke connects him with Antioch (*Antimarcionite Prologue* [ed. Harnack 324–325]) and denotes the evangelist as a sometime companion of Paul (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1). Both aspects of this tradition are confirmed by the Book of Acts.<sup>175</sup> As a member of the community in Antioch, Luke could have become acquainted with the Greek “Proto-Mark” enlarged by sayings of Jesus. He could also have become familiar with the edition of “Proto-Mark” revised for Pauline and other Gentile Christian communities through direct contact with John Mark (Phlm 24; Col 4:10, 14).<sup>176</sup> A Greek translation of his special source, going back to the circles around James and other members of the family of Jesus, could have been obtained from Barnabas. Presumably, at a rather early stage, there must have existed a connection between this special tradition and the pre-Johannine tradition.<sup>177</sup>

### 5.3. *Mark, Luke, and Matthew*

The three synoptic gospels, unlike their predecessors, were preserved because they were edited books. This is made particularly clear by the dedication in Luke’s gospel that obliged Theophilus to make copies (cf. Luke 1:1–4). The genre of the gospels is more comparable with ancient biography than could have been allowed by classical form criticism.<sup>178</sup> (1) As indicated by an old church tradition, the Gospel of Mark was

<sup>174</sup> Cf. F. Dibelius, *Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes: Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des Urchristentums* (Strasbourg: Heitz & Mündel, 1910), 14–30.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. C. J. Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen: Lukas als Historiker der Paulus-Reisen*, WUNT 56 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); R. Riesner, “Lukas,” in *Hauptwerke der Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. V. Reinhardt (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1997), 391–394; J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 79–86. Even the question of a medical training of Luke (Col 4:14) must be discussed anew. Cf. A. Weissenrieder, *Images of Illness in the Gospel of Luke: Insights of Ancient Medical Texts*, WUNT 2.164 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>176</sup> For a life-setting of the letters to Philemon and to the Colossians in an Ephesian imprisonment of Paul cf. E. Schweizer, *Der Brief an die Kolosser*, 3rd ed., EKK 12 (Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1989), 20–28; N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, TNTC (Leicester: InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 21–39.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Versuchung und Verklärung (Lukas 4:1–13 und Johannes 12:20–36),” *TBei* 33 (2002): 197–207.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. D. Dormeyer, *Evangelium als literarische und theologische Gattung*, EdF 263 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989); R. A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, SNTSMS 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge

written in Rome (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1; Clement, *Hypotyposesis* VI [Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.6–7]). This is confirmed by evidence within the Gospel: Mark was written after the death of Peter, for which the earliest possible date is 64 CE, and, as good as certain, before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.<sup>179</sup> In the sixties of the first century CE it seems that there were, in Rome, tensions between Jewish and Gentile Christians (cf. Rom 9–14; 1 Clement 5:2–5). In such a situation it would have been helpful to publish a gospel uniting the Jewish and the Gentile Christian version of “Proto-Mark.”<sup>180</sup> In such a light, our canonical Mark would then have functioned like a first gospel harmony. (2) The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were designed for the Pauline communities around the Aegean (*Antimarcionite Prologue* [ed. Harnack 324–325]), giving Ephesus a prominent place (cf. Acts 19–20). Indeed, the position of A. von Harnack,<sup>181</sup> that Luke-Acts was written before the end of the Jewish War (in spite of Luke 21:20–24), should not be lightly discarded.<sup>182</sup> (3) The Gospel of Matthew was written in Syria (cf. Matt 4:13–17, 24) for Jewish Christian communities open to the idea of mission to the Gentiles (Matt 28:16–20). A composition before 70 CE is not completely out of the question.<sup>183</sup> For the early Christians, the sixties of the first century CE were a time of upheaval and transition. The three leading apostles, James the Brother of the Lord, Paul, and Peter, were killed as martyrs, and Jerusalem could no longer function as a centre of tradition. The Papias reference makes clear that the Gospel of Mark was to preserve the apostolic Jesus tradition associated with Peter (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15). The Gospels of Luke and Matthew were able to do the

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University Press, 1993); D. Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst*, TANZ 22 (Tübingen: Francke, 1997); and also R. Riesner, “Das lukanische Doppelwerk und die antike Biographie,” in *Lebensgeschichte und Religion*, ed. D. Dormeyer, H. Mölle, and T. Ruster (Münster: LIT, 2000), 131–144; B. Orth, *Lehrkunst im frühen Christentum: Die Bildungsdimension didaktischer Prinzipien in der hellenistisch-römischen Literatur und im lukanischen Doppelwerk*, Beiträge zur Erziehungswissenschaft und biblischen Bildung 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>179</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SCM, 1985), 1–30.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. the scenario in D. L. Dungan, “The Purpose and Provenance of the Gospel of Mark According to the ‘Two-Gospel’ (Owen-Griesbach) Hypothesis,” in *New Synoptic Studies*, ed. W. R. Farmer (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983), 411–440.

<sup>181</sup> *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synoptischen Evangelien* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1911).

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 207–210, 296–300; A. Mittelstaedt, *Lukas als Historiker: Zur Datierung des lukanischen Doppelwerks*, TANZ 43 (Tübingen: Francke, 2006).

<sup>183</sup> Cf. D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), LXXIII–LXXV.



same for Christian communities in distant areas like the Aegean and Syria. These historical and geographical circumstances may explain why the synoptics are not directly dependent on each other.

### 6. *Assessment: Criteria of Authenticity*

Even a tradition deserving general trust with respect to its origin and transmission must be assessed in detail. Among the criteria presently discussed in gospel exegesis,<sup>184</sup> the following should be particularly emphasized (JaL §5): (1) Attestation in multiple sources and/or traditions: According to our reconstruction there existed at least four important streams of tradition, namely, “Proto-Mark,” that common to Luke and Matthew (Q-material and pericopae with strong minor agreements), Lukan special tradition and a Galilean tradition behind parts of Mark and Matthew. My reconstruction shows a certain similarity with the four-document hypothesis of B. H. Streeter,<sup>185</sup> once so influential in English exegesis. (2) Different genres: It is a sign of authenticity if themes and statements are found both in the sayings of Jesus and in narratives about him, and also in teaching summaries and parables. (3) Language: A Semitic colouring is an indication of old tradition and Hebraisms, in particular, suggest a Palestinian origin. (4) Mnemonics: If a tradition was formed with the use of mnemonic techniques it had a greater chance of remaining consistent in form and content. (5) Environmental and period sensitive influences: A tradition is of reliable quality if it coheres well with our knowledge of the political, religious and cultural realities of the time. (6) Unique and characteristic features: Some phrases, like addressing God as *abba* or using *amen* in a non-responsorial way, and conceptualizations such as the original combining of the Servant of the Lord and the Son of Man—are all unique to the Historical Jesus. On the other hand, stylistic features, like the use of antithetical parallelism, and concepts, like the Kingdom of God, were also characteristic of him. (7) Historical coherence: A tradition gains credibility in so far as it can be integrated with the known history of Jesus. (8) Consistency of content:

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<sup>184</sup> Cf. S. E. Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 2000); T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80.

<sup>185</sup> *The Four Gospels: A Study in Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924; 2nd ed., 1930).

A tradition is trustworthy if it agrees with other authentic tradition. All of these criteria can be used for authenticating traditions but only some of them (No. 3, 5, 7, 8) for falsifying.

## 7. Collection: *The Four-Gospel Canon*

### 7.1. *Tradition and Theology in John*

Although the Fourth Gospel has points of connection with the synoptic tradition, especially in its Lukan form, it is rooted in a largely independent tradition.<sup>186</sup> In the Gospel of John, history and theology are more strongly intertwined than in the synoptics. Nevertheless, it is possible, using appropriate criteria, to detect very old layers of tradition.<sup>187</sup> We may trace some of the stations on the long journey of the Johannine tradition from its origin until its final fixed form in the Fourth Gospel:<sup>188</sup> (1) Fairly precise local knowledge<sup>189</sup> and partly Hebraizing Greek<sup>190</sup> suggest an origin for this tradition in Jerusalem and Judea.<sup>191</sup> (2) Good local knowledge and a remarkable interest in the mission to the Samaritans suggest that Samaria was an important area for the Johannine tradition (John 4).<sup>192</sup> (3) The Fourth Gospel struggles with followers of John the Baptist who lived east and west of the Jordan (John 1–3). We find, particularly in the region of Batanaea (John 1:28), a peculiar mix of Baptist circles, Essene groups, and Johannine communities.<sup>193</sup> (4) The old church traditions unanimously testify to the publication of the Fourth Gospel in Ephesus (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1). There we meet not only disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1–9) and Essenizing Jewish priests (Acts 19:13–16), but also, at the end of the first century CE, a certain

<sup>186</sup> Cf. M. Theobald, *Herrenworte in Johannes-Evangelicum*, HBS 34 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002).

<sup>187</sup> Cf. P. W. Ensor, *Jesus and His "Works": The Johannine Sayings in Historical Perspective*, WUNT 2.85 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); E. E. Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament Documents*, BIS 39 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 143–182; C. L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Riesner, *Bethanien jenseits des Jordan*, 132–167.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. B. Schwank, *Evangelium nach Johannes* (St. Ottilien: Eos, 1996).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament I: Satzlehre*, 2nd ed., SUNT 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 17–18.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), 109–113.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1976).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, "Bethany beyond the Jordan (John 1:28)," *TynBul* 38 (1987): 29–63.

Jewish Christian by the name of Cerinthus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.3.4), whose docetism the Fourth Gospel combated.<sup>194</sup>

## 7.2. *The Four-Gospel Collection*

The Gospel of John makes a bold claim to embody a tradition of the highest authority (John 19:35; 20:30–31). Thus it may have come to supplant the three older synoptic gospels. The papyri P<sup>4</sup>, P<sup>64</sup> and P<sup>67</sup> possibly are fragments of a Four-Gospel-Codex from the end of the second century CE.<sup>195</sup> One may even trace back such a collection as early as the school of Justin Martyr situated in Rome around 150 CE (*Dial.* 103:8).<sup>196</sup> T. Zahn argued that the collection of the four canonical gospels was arranged in the circle of John's disciples in Ephesus at the beginning of the second century CE.<sup>197</sup> By being part of this collection it was made clear that the Fourth Gospel was supplementing and even surpassing the synoptics, but was never meant to replace them. Recently, T. Heckel took up Zahn's hypothesis and further developed it.<sup>198</sup> The later added chapter, John 21, betrays an intention to connect, through the references to the Beloved disciple and Peter, the Johannine and synoptic traditions. Irenaeus, through his teacher Polycarp of Smyrna, had access to information from the Johannine circle (*Adv. Haer.* 3.3.4), a fact that could explain why the Four-Gospel-Canon was never, for him, a matter of doubt (*Adv. Haer.* 3.11.7–9).

## 8. *Conclusion: Trustworthy Tradition*

In order to have a historically trustworthy record, whether written or oral, it is a basic requirement to lay bare the process from eyewitnesses to the final form.<sup>199</sup> If the arguments given here are by and large correct, then

<sup>194</sup> Cf. F. Neugebauer, *Die Entstehung des Johannesevangeliums: Altes und Neues zur Frage seines historischen Ursprungs*, ATh 1.36 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1968); H. Cazelles, "Johannes: Ein Sohn des Zebedäus, 'Priester' und Apostel," *IKZ* 31 (2002): 479–484.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. T. C. Skeat, "The Oldest Manuscript of the Four Gospels?" *NTS* 43 (1997): 1–34.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. G. N. Stanton, "The Fourfold Gospel," in *Jesus and Gospel*, 63–91.

<sup>197</sup> *Grundriß der Geschichte des Neutestamentlichen Kanons*, ed. U. Swarat (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1985; 2nd ed., Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1904).

<sup>198</sup> *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium*, WUNT 2.120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

<sup>199</sup> K. Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte? Methoden der Biblexegese*, 5th ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1989), 145.

we have good reason to maintain the continuity of the Jesus tradition between his own proclamation right up to the publication of the synoptic gospels. The origin of the tradition and its authoritative preservation in writing are separated by less than a single generation, thus ensuring that the tradition was developed and transmitted in close contact with ear and eye witnesses. We know through the apologist Quadratus that, even as late as 100 CE, eyewitnesses of the ministry of Jesus were still living (*Apology* [Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.3.1–2]). Through the use of mnemonic devices by Jesus, his disciples and the early church catechesis there resulted a considerable consistency throughout transmission, especially in the sayings tradition. The early use of written notes could reinforce this consistency. Yet even the present approach does not exclude a reformulation of traditions. Indeed one cannot deny the existence of variants. Yet one ought to ask whether, without the cultivated tradition assumed here, we should find far more divergent traditions than actually exist. If the historian had to reconstruct the activity and teaching of Jesus solely from the Gospels of Thomas, Philip and Peter, he would be in a state of despair. On the contrary, to attempt a reconstruction by comparing the synoptics and even the Gospel of John remains a promising enterprise. In many cases we can expect to know more than the mere gist of what Jesus actually said. The third section of this paper (pp. 414–424) includes a reconstruction of the ministry and the message of Jesus *in nuce*.<sup>200</sup> Apart from the many variations in the tradition and the many unresolved questions over this and that detail, the canonical gospels impress upon their readers a clear picture of Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. also R. Riesner, “Jesus von Nazaret,” in *Die Stifter der großen Weltreligionen*, ed. E. Brunner-Traut, 3rd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 62–93. Closely associated representations are B. F. Meyer, *Christus Faber: The Master-BUILDER and the House of God* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992); M. Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994); R. H. Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996); O. Betz, *Was wissen wir von Jesus? Der Messias im Licht von Qumran*, 4th ed. (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2000); U. Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments I/1: Geschichte des Wirkens Jesu in Galiläa, I/2: Jesu Tod und Auferstehung* . . . (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 2002; 2003). My gratitude goes to Chris Tilling (St. Mellitus College, London) for his help in preparing the English translation.

# THE GOSPEL OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

JAMES M. ROBINSON

Each generation of scholarship has introduced one or more methods that have proven valid enough to achieve some lasting results.<sup>1</sup> Succeeding scholarship has built on them, even though introducing new methods to provide correctives, fill in blind spots, undo excesses, etc. But new methods that simply reject or ignore the history of scholarship have by and large turned out to be themselves invalid. My own preferred method, with its center in the Sayings Gospel Q, builds on and dialogues with the history of the discipline. In part this is a dialogue with my own involvement in the quest of the historical Jesus over the past half-century.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. *The Two-Document Hypothesis*

The first problem solved by modern scholarship was to explain why Matthew, Mark, and Luke stand over against John. For they present the public ministry of Jesus with much the same material in much the same order, and hence are called the synoptic gospels, whereas John goes its own way. The solution was that the synoptic gospels are similar because Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source, whereas John did not.

But this solution left one problem dangling: There are many sayings in Matthew and Luke that occur in much the same sequence with much the same wording, but nonetheless cannot be derived from Mark, since they are not present in Mark at all. This problem led to the postulate of a second source shared by Matthew and Luke, what we today call the Sayings Gospel Q. This basic solution to the synoptic problem has stood the test of time, in spite of a minority of scholars who have proposed various mutually-exclusive and unconvincing alternatives.

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<sup>1</sup> See my essay, "Nineteenth Century Theology as Heritage and Fate," *The Drew Gateway* 44 (1974): 54–71.

<sup>2</sup> Most of my essays cited in the notes of the present essay have been republished in my collected essays: *The Sayings Gospel Q: Collected Essays*, ed. Christoph Heil and Joseph Verheyden (Leuven: University Press; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005).

Perhaps the most grandiose illustration of failing to build on the solid foundation of the two-document hypothesis, as it came to be known, has been Albert Schweitzer's presentation of the public ministry of Jesus as an apocalypticist.<sup>3</sup> For he questioned the priority of Mark and the existence of Q, and instead took Matthew's Mission Instructions (Matt 10) as a verbatim record, "historical as a whole and down to the smallest detail," in which Jesus hastily sent out his apostles to evangelize as many Jewish villages as possible before the apocalyptic cataclysm he expected to take place at the next harvest season. Jesus never expected to see the apostles again in this age. Hence their return to report on their "successful" mission was his first experience of reality: "The actual history disavowed the dogmatic history." Since the mission failed to trigger the apocalypse, Jesus marched on Jerusalem to force God's hand and thus to effect his apocalyptic goal.

But, far from being a verbatim record of Jesus' instructions to his apostles, Matthew 10 is a pastiche of excerpts from the Mission Instructions of Mark 6:7–11 and the Mission Instructions of Q 10:3–12, 16, into which have been interpolated excerpts from the Markan apocalypse (Mark 13:9, 11–13) and other Markan material (Mark 3:16–19; 9:41), as well as other Q sayings (Q 6:40; 12:2–9, 11–12, 51, 53; 14:26–27; 17:33) and special Matthean traditions about confining the mission to Jews

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<sup>3</sup> For detailed documentation of this criticism of Schweitzer see my "History of Q Research," in *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, ed. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg (Leuven: Peeters; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), xix–lxxxi, especially "Matthew without Q: Schweitzer's Jesus the Apocalypticist," xxxiii–xxxviii. The same presentation, slightly abbreviated, and without the foreign language quotations, is presented in my "Introduction" to *The Sayings Gospel Q in Greek and English with Parallels from the Gospels of Mark and Thomas*, ed. James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg (Leuven: Peeters; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 11–72, especially "5. Matthew Without Q: Jesus the Apocalypticist," 30–35. Similarly in slightly abbreviated form in my essay, "The Image of Jesus in Q," in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 7–25, especially "Jesus the Apocalypticist," 9–12, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 645–662, especially 648–655. See also my earlier dismantling of Schweitzer's position based on his history of the quest, both in German ("Einführung," *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, Taschenbuch-Ausgabe [München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch, 1966], 7–24, with reprints) and English ("Introduction," *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* [New York: Macmillan, 1968], xi–xxxiii, with reprints), and with the title, "Albert Schweitzer's Quest of the Historical Jesus Today," in my slightly revised reprint, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 172–195. Most recently see my "Methodological Prolegomena to the Jesus Project," ed. R. Joseph Hoffmann, *CSER Review* 1.2 (Winter/Spring 2006/2007): 28–31.

(Matt 10:5–6, 23). So what Schweitzer interpreted as the most important turning-point in Jesus' public ministry simply never happened.

Schweitzer thought his brilliant presentation of Jesus' apocalyptic actions could wipe out a century of pedantic source criticism. But now, a century later, no scholar accepts Schweitzer's presentation of Jesus' apocalyptic conduct. Instead, the two-document hypothesis for the solution of the synoptic problem has become the standard position used in textbooks and the ongoing scholarly discussion.

## 2. *Jesus the Jew*

Adolf Harnack elevated the teachings of Jesus in Q into the "essence of Christianity," "religion itself." But Julius Wellhausen and Rudolf Bultmann made the point that Jesus was a Jew and so has to be understood as a Jew, not as a Christian.<sup>4</sup> Hence Bultmann's book *Jesus and the Word* presented Jesus as exemplifying authentic existence, but not Christian faith; his book *Primitive Christianity* described Jesus' preaching not in the chapter on "primitive Christianity," but rather in the chapter on "Judaism"; his *Theology of the New Testament* presented Jesus as a presupposition of New Testament theology, but his teachings were not part of that Christian theology; and his debate with the new quest presented at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences in 1960 insisted that Jesus "ought not to be described as the subject of Christian faith, though he is nevertheless its object." Karl Barth, in his 1923 debate with Harnack, had already argued that what Harnack called "the heart of the gospel" (love for God and one's neighbor) was the heart "not of the gospel, but of the law."

Barth and Bultmann were able to avoid the theological problem inherent in the historical Jesus being a Jew by the fact that their theology was not based on the historical Jesus, but rather, for Barth, on Paul (cf. Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*), leading to Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, and for Bultmann, on the kerygma, leading to Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*. Their circumvention of the historical Jesus was supported methodologically by form criticism, which argued that the traditions

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<sup>4</sup> For detailed documentation of this debate with Harnack, see my "History of Q Research," especially the section "Q as the Essence of Christianity or the Kerygma: Harnack vs. Wellhausen, Barth, and Bultmann," xxxviii–xlvi; my "Introduction," especially section "6. The Essence of Christianity as Q or the Kerygma," 35–39; and my essay, "The Image of Jesus in Q," especially "Q or the Kerygma," 13–14.

about Jesus were first and foremost documentation for the role they played in the life of the primitive church, and only secondarily, if at all, documentation for the historical Jesus. For all practical purposes, the historical Jesus is beyond the historian's reach. Between the two World Wars, the quest of the historical Jesus was suspended.

### 3. *The New Quest of the Historical Jesus*

When it became obvious to Bultmann's pupils that this solution was equivalent to a modern version of the heresy of docetism, they opened a new quest of the historical Jesus, led by Ernst Käsemann, and epitomized in Günther Bornkamm's *Jesus of Nazareth*.<sup>5</sup> Its main concern was to build a bridge between Jesus and the kerygma, by finding in Jesus an implicit christology that became explicit after Easter, or an indirect christology that became direct. Hans Conzelmann posed it as "the problem of the *continuity* between Jesus and the community, i.e. the basic problem of New Testament theology as a whole."<sup>6</sup> In this way the overall orientation of scholarship to the Bultmannian kerygma or even to Barthian neo-orthodoxy remained in place. But this opening of a new quest of the historical Jesus, having achieved its theological purposes of vindicating the full humanity of Jesus in the age of historicism and building a bridge from Jesus to the church, was itself short-lived.

### 4. *The Third Quest of the Historical Jesus*

The "third quest" of the historical Jesus has had its center in the English-language world:<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See my review of the German edition of Bornkamm's book, *Jesus von Nazareth*, in *JBL* 76 (1957): 310–313. For more detailed documentation of the whole post-Bultmannian development see my small book, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, SBT 25 (London: SCM; Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1959, and numerous re-impressions). The German translation is an enlargement: *Kerygma und historischer Jesus*, trans. Heinz-Dieter Knigge (Zürich: Zwingli, 1960). The second German edition is revised and again enlarged, 1967.

<sup>6</sup> Hans Conzelmann, "Gegenwart und Zukunft in der synoptischen Tradition," *ZThK* 54 (1957): 279.

<sup>7</sup> Of course there have been important German works, such as Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), ET: *Jesus of Nazareth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998); and Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), ET: *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), for which one may see my review, *RBL* 2 (2000): 361–363.



Robert W. Funk's the "Jesus Seminar" finally published the outcome of its voting on each saying ascribed to Jesus.<sup>8</sup> The voting method has been misleading, though not because of its notorious black-balling use of colored balls (a voting procedure which soon became too slow and cumbersome, and so was discontinued, except when TV cameras were present). Rather, it was other factors that have led to non-objective conclusions. For those who are members of the Jesus Seminar are not a cross-section of the discipline, as they would more nearly have been if the Jesus Seminar had become part of the Society of Biblical Literature, which was originally envisaged. But this option was closed out when the Executive Secretary of SBL fired Funk from his position as head of Scholars Press, whereupon Funk withdrew from SBL and set up his own private Polebridge Press and Westar Institute to host the Jesus Seminar. Thus the Jesus Seminar, rather literally, moved out of the mainstream of American New Testament scholarship, to become, instead, more of a group of dissidents.

Also the procedure of the Jesus Seminar often tended not to produce a conclusion representing the present status of the discipline: One member prepared an essay on the saying in question, which was circulated to the others, and then voted on at the next meeting. But rather than all members doing their own research on the saying in question, and reaching their own conclusions, they at best came to the meeting having read the assigned essay. Then, depending on how persuasive, not to say domineering, the author of that essay was in oral discussion, one usually voted with him or her.<sup>9</sup>

Its co-chair, John Dominic Crossan, whose work pre-dated considerably the Jesus Seminar itself,<sup>10</sup> has continued to publish, on his own, very high-quality and popular books on Jesus.<sup>11</sup> He has built largely on

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<sup>8</sup> Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993). For the outcome, as seen by various members, see *Profiles of Jesus*, ed. Roy W. Hoover (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2002). For my brief report, "What Jesus Had to Say," which triggered the volume, see 15–17.

<sup>9</sup> For devastating critiques from the evangelical viewpoint, see Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), and N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994); *The Essential Jesus: Original Sayings and Earliest Images* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

the basis of the multiple-attestation method, giving priority to sayings attested in more than one of the oldest sources. For him, this boils down to the Sayings Gospel Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*, both of which he pushes back toward the middle of the first century, clearly prior to the synoptic gospels and John. But the final form of Q, as used by Matthew and Luke and hence available to us, presupposes the siege or fall of Jerusalem (Q 13:34–35). And the *Gospel of Thomas*, at least as we know it in Coptic translation from a mid-fourth-century codex, not only has archaic materials (see below), but also in some cases betrays influence from the synoptic gospels, which may or may not be due to secondary scribal corruption.<sup>12</sup> Hence it is more difficult, and more controversial, to follow Crossan's basic methodological presupposition than would seem to be the case at first glance.

Over the past generation evangelical churches have flourished, and main-line denominations, whose theological seminaries were the *Sitz im Leben* of the historical-critical method of biblical scholarship, have declined accordingly. As a result, a reekerygmaticized "historical" Jesus has flourished, since it presents a Jesus who is reassuringly close to what the church has always preached and believed about him. This program is laid on the line in the title of one such work, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*.<sup>13</sup> Massive, multivolume works by John P. Meier<sup>14</sup> and N. T. Wright<sup>15</sup> have carried this method to its ultimate outcome, in rendering the literal, physical resurrection a fact proven by this reekerygmaticizing "historical" method. This should surely satisfy any doubting Thomas (John 20:25):

<sup>12</sup> E.g., for the dependence of Saying 16 on the Gospel of Luke, see my argument in Q 12:49–59: *Children against Parents—Judging the Time—Settling out of Court*, ed. Shawn Carruth, *Documenta Q: Reconstructions of Q through Two Centuries of Gospel Research Excerpted, Sorted, and Evaluated* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 119–121.

<sup>13</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996). See my alternative, "The Real Jesus of the Sayings Gospel Q," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, NS 18.2 (1997): 135–151, reprinted in German, "Der wahre Jesus? Der historische Jesus im Spruchevangelium Q," *Protokolle zur Bibel* (Salzburg) 6.1 (1997): 1–14, and, with footnotes, *ZNT* 1 (1998): 17–26. The German edition is republished in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 519–534.

<sup>14</sup> John P. Meier, a three-volume series: *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991; 1994; 2001); *The Roots of the Problem and the Person; Mentor, Message, and Miracles; Companions and Competitors*.

<sup>15</sup> N. T. Wright, a three-volume series: *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992; 1996; 2003): *The New Testament and the People of God; Jesus and the Victory of God; The Resurrection of the Son of God*. In abbreviated form: *The Contemporary Quest for Jesus* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002).

“Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.” But this then raises the problem of true faith posed by the Fourth Evangelist, or, as these authors would have to say, by the resurrected Jesus himself (John 20:28): “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” For the Johannine Jesus had already reproached the centurion whose boy was ill (John 4:48): “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.”

Over against this rekerygmaticizing method of changing the historical Jesus back into the kerygmatic Christ, it is refreshing to find a distinguished Jewish authority on the historical Jesus who brings us back to Jesus the Jew.<sup>16</sup> He has unsurpassed knowledge of Jewish Aramaic (e.g. on the idiom “son of man”), complete mastery of the Jewish sources (e.g. his translation of all the Dead Sea Scrolls) and of the methods accredited in the quest of the historical Jesus; freedom from the apologetic necessity to change Jesus from a Jew into a Christian; and forty years of research on the historical Jesus behind him. His most recent book summarizes in its twenty-page epilogue what can be known objectively about Jesus, a presentation far more valid and reliable than the endless tomes of those who have to do something with Jesus the Jew other than let him be what he was.

##### 5. *Non-Canonical Manuscript Discoveries*

During my lifetime, the Ugaritic clay tablets discovered in the royal palace at Ras Shamra on the coast of Syria revealed the Semitic language and culture behind the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>17</sup> The Qumran scrolls discovered near the Dead Sea revealed the Judean apocalypticism of the time of Jesus. And the Nag Hammadi codices discovered near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt revealed Christian Gnosticism as presented in its own texts, whereas it had previously been known almost exclusively through

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<sup>16</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2003). This is the quintessence of his previous four books on Jesus: *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973); *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Pittsburgh, PA: Trinity Press International, 1983); *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (New York: Viking, 2001); *Jesus in His Jewish Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> See my eulogy, “Claude Frédéric-Armand Schaeffer-Forrer (1898–1982): An Appreciation,” *BAR* 9.5 (1983): 56–61.

the myopic, tendentious, and invidious excerpts of heresiologists bent on portraying it in its worst light.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have contributed surprisingly little to our understanding of Jesus,<sup>18</sup> although much has been made of the occasional parallels that have occurred. Perhaps what is most significant, even if usually overlooked, is the absence of the two idioms most distinctive of Jesus: “kingdom of God” and “son of man.” Since both idioms had usually been ascribed to Jewish apocalypticism at the time the scrolls were discovered, their absence should tell us something about Jesus’ use of these terms. In fact their use by Jesus is no longer considered apocalyptic (see below).

The monopolizing of the Dead Sea Scrolls<sup>19</sup> led to the bizarre thesis of Robert Eisenman that the founder of the sect, the “teacher of righteousness,” a circumlocution for “just teacher,” was none other than Jesus’ brother, James “the just” (as he is called in the *Gospel of Thomas*, Saying 12). Eisenman postulated that the unpublished fragments contained the missing documentation for his hypothesis. He claimed that the fragments in question had been suppressed by the Roman Catholic Church, fearing that such evidence, by proving that Jesus’ own brother insisted on conforming to Jewish law, would pull the rug out from under Gentile Christianity. So Eisenman somehow obtained in Israel a copy of the photographs of the unpublished fragments that were supposed to contain the damaging evidence. I helped him publish them, he to prove his thesis, I to disprove it.<sup>20</sup> Of course the unpublished fragments, once they became available, have not provided any support for Eisenman’s speculation. In any case, his thesis would have required a redating of Hebrew script and of Palestinian pottery, so as to move the teacher of righteousness and the founding of the Qumran community down a

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<sup>18</sup> But see my essay, “Die Hodajot-Formel in Gebet und Hymnus des Frühchristentums,” in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen*, trans. Gustav-Alfred Picard, BZNW 30 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 194–235. My English retroversion, “The *Hodayot* Formula in Prayers and Hymns of Early Christianity,” is published for the first time in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 75–118.

<sup>19</sup> See my essay, “Ethics in Publishing Manuscript Discoveries: Panel Discussion,” in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site: Present Realities and Future Prospects*, ed. M. O. Wise et al., Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences 722 (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994), 468–471. Also my essay co-authored with George J. Brooke, “A Further Fragment of 1QSb: The Schøyen Collection MS 1909,” *JJS* 46 (1995): 120–133.

<sup>20</sup> Robert H. Eisenman and James M. Robinson, *A Facsimile Edition of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1991; 2nd rev. impression 1992).

couple of centuries into the first century AD. Qumran is simply not a Jewish-Christian monastery.

### 6. *The Gospel of Thomas*

Among the Nag Hammadi texts, it is especially the *Gospel of Thomas*, Tractate 2 in Codex II, that has proven to be most relevant for the quest of the historical Jesus.<sup>21</sup> This is true in several regards:

There are three ways in which *Thomas* has begun to make an impact on the quest for the historical Jesus: by providing new sayings to be considered as sayings of Jesus; by offering independent versions of sayings already known from the tradition, so that their history and development can now be understood better; and by adding another perspective from which to view the overall development of the Jesus tradition, and so better to understand its origins.<sup>22</sup>

With regard to the first way listed by Patterson, “providing new sayings to be considered as sayings of Jesus,” the results have been disappointingly meager:

Joachim Jeremias thought that *Thom.* 82 and 98 might be authentic sayings of Jesus. Johannes Bauer added *Thom.* 81, 58, 51, and 52 to this list. R. McL. Wilson considered *Thom.* 39, 102, and 47 as possible candidates. The Jesus Seminar voted no new sayings in *Thomas* into the “red” category (= authentic), but did consider *Thom.* 97, the parable of the broken jar, “pink” (= probably authentic).<sup>23</sup>

With regard to the second way listed by Patterson, sayings “offering independent versions of sayings already known from the tradition,” a striking instance is Saying 65, the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen familiar from Mark 12:1–12. For the Markan parable is obviously an allegory of *Heilsgeschichte*, with the owner of the vineyard clearly identified as God, who plants the vineyard with allusions to Isa 5:1–7. Thus the

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<sup>21</sup> See my address, “Nag Hammadi: The First Fifty Years,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3–33. Abridged reprint in Stephen J. Patterson, James M. Robinson, and Hans-Gebhard Bethge, *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 77–110. The most thorough monograph is by Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> Patterson, “Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today,” in *The Fifth Gospel*, 33–75, at 71.

<sup>23</sup> Patterson, “Understanding the Gospel of Thomas Today,” 71–72.

husbandmen, representing Israel, are the wrongdoers, from whom God finally takes the vineyard, so as to turn it over to Gentile Christianity. But Saying 65 lacks all these allegorical allusions to *Heilsgeschichte*, and instead tells a real parable. Since Jesus did not tell allegories, but did tell parables, the *Gospel of Thomas* may well present an independent, older tradition of this parable than does the Gospel of Mark.

There is a lacuna in the opening of the parable, which has usually been restored to read “A [good person] owned a vineyard.” But this restoration, clearly reflecting the allegorical identification of the owner with God, has come to be challenged, since another restoration reads “A [userer] owned a vineyard.” The merciless exploitation of the peasantry by wealthy landowners could well have been criticized by Jesus in the parable. Of course, the murderous response of the husbandmen would not have met with Jesus’ approval, but a number of the parables of Jesus narrate wrong conduct as part of the story line, without the assumption that Jesus approved of such wrongdoing. John S. Kloppenborg has done papyrological research on the actual conditions to which such peasants were subjected, in support of the view that the parable may have been intended by Jesus as a criticism of the owner of the vineyard, in support of the poor.<sup>24</sup> In any case, it would seem to be clear that the parable as found in the *Gospel of Thomas* is presupposed in, rather than being dependent on, Mark 12:1–12. Thus we find here an instance of the *Gospel of Thomas* having an older tradition than that in the New Testament.

An even more striking instance of a reading in the *Gospel of Thomas* that is older than the corresponding saying in the New Testament is the presence in Saying 36 of the *Gospel of Thomas* of an original reading that has been corrupted by a scribal error already in the Sayings Gospel Q (and hence in Matthew and Luke), at Q 12:27: “Observe the lilies, how they grow: They do not work nor do they spin.” Whereas in the Coptic translation in Nag Hammadi Codex II this saying has been abbreviated, and so the place in question is not even present for discussion, Saying 36 is by good fortune extant in the Greek original of the *Gospel of Thomas* in P. Oxy. 655. Here it reads: “[You are] far better than the lilies, which do not card nor spin.” This reading is also attested in Matt 6:28 in the Codex Sinaiticus, though the first corrector erased it and replaced it with the standard text. “Do not card” is in Greek

<sup>24</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*, WUNT 195 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2006).

[οὐ ξάινει], whereas “grow” in Greek is spelled very similarly, [αὐξάνει]. Apparently at some juncture in the scribal copying of Q (or a precursor of Q) a scribe misread and hence miscopied. For the reading in P. Oxy. 655 and Codex Sinaiticus, negating the first chore in the making of clothing by hand, “do not card,” fits much better the listing of things that (ravens and) lilies do not do, thereby illustrating the carefree lifestyle to be emulated by the Q movement.<sup>25</sup> The scribal error reading “they do not card” as “they grow” at a very early stage in the transmission of the saying is easy to understand as a slip of the eye.

With regard to the third way listed by Patterson, “adding another perspective from which to view the overall development of the Jesus tradition, and so better to understand its origins,” the very fact that the *Gospel of Thomas* is a sayings gospel has of course drawn attention to

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<sup>25</sup> This solution was first proposed by T. C. Skeat, “The Lilies of the Field,” *ZNW* 37 (1938): 211–214. It has been revived by myself and Christoph Heil, “Zeugnisse eines griechischen, schriftlichen vorkanonischen Textes: Mt 6,28b ✠\*, P. Oxy. 655 I, 1–17 (Ev Th 36) und Q 12,27,” *ZNW* 89 (1998): 30–44. This essay was promptly followed by two further articles I wrote, “A Written Greek Sayings Cluster Older Than Q: A Vestige,” *HTR* 92 (1999): 61–77; “The Pre-Q Text of the (Ravens and) Lilies: Q 12:22–31 and P. Oxy. 655 (Gos. Thom. 36),” in *Text und Geschichte: Facetten historisch-theologischer Arbeitens aus dem Freundes- und Schülerkreis. Dieter Lührmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Stefan Maser and Egbert Schlarb, Marburger Theologische Studien 50 (Marburg: Elwert, 1999), 143–180. The result of these investigations was published in an “Excursus on the Scribal Error in Q 12:27,” in *The Critical Edition of Q*, xcix–ci. See also the photographic reproductions of the relevant sections of P. Oxy. 655 and Codex Sinaiticus on the endpapers. This position was criticized by Jens Schröter, “Vorsynoptische Überlieferung auf P. Oxy. 655? Kritische Bemerkungen zu einer erneuten These,” *ZNW* 90 (1999): 265–272, to which Heil and I responded in two essays, “Noch einmal: Der Schreibfehler in Q 12:27,” *ZNW* 92 (2001): 113–122; and “The Lilies of the Field: Saying 36 of the *Gospel of Thomas* and Secondary Accretions in Q 12:22b–31,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 1–26. Schröter responded in two essays, “Verschrieben? Klärende Bemerkungen zu einem vermeintlichen Schreibfehler in Q und tatsächlichen Irrtümern,” *ZNW* 92 (2001): 283–289; and “Rezeptionsprozesse in der Jesusüberlieferung: Überlegungen zum historischen Charakter der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft am Beispiel der Sorgensprüche,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 442–468. Stanley E. Porter has entered the discussion, “P.Oxy. 655 and James Robinson’s Proposals for Q: Brief Points of Clarification,” *JTS* NS 52 (2000): 84–92, to which Heil and I responded, “P.Oxy. 655 und Q: Zum Diskussionsbeitrag von Stanley E. Porter,” in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften’s Thirtieth Year*, ed. Hans-Gebhard Bethge et al., Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 411–423. Then Robert H. Gundry joined the discussion, “Spinning the Lilies and Unravelling the Ravens: An Alternative Reading of Q 12:22b–31 and P.Oxy. 655,” *NTS* 48 (2002): 159–180. I published a final response in the essay presented at the Conference on the *Gospel of Thomas* (University of Laval, 2003), “A Pre-canonical Greek Reading in Saying 36 of the Gospel of Thomas,” in *Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi*, section *Études* 8 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 517–559. All seven of these articles by myself (and Heil) are republished in a section to themselves, “Essays on the Original Reading behind Q 12:27 in Codex Sinaiticus and P.Oxy. 655,” in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 711–883.

sayings collections, in addition to narrative gospels, as a way in which Jesus traditions were transmitted. This has led to the designation of Q as the “Sayings Gospel Q” in distinction from the “narrative gospels” Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.<sup>26</sup> And older sayings collections embedded in Q have been a topic of lively discussion.<sup>27</sup>

Part of the methodological issue has to do with the use of non-canonical texts in New Testament scholarship. An anecdote from the meeting of the Society for New Testament Studies in Basel on Aug. 21, 1984 can serve to illustrate the problem:<sup>28</sup> Nikolaus Walter presented a paper on “Paul and the Primitive Christian Jesus Tradition,” to which I was the assigned respondent. He presented a thorough tabulation and analysis of all parallels from the canonical gospels found in the letters of Paul, to which one could hardly take exception. Hence my first criticism was: “It is arbitrary to consult only the canonical texts. Jesus traditions known to Paul could be attested in non-canonical sources such as the *Gospel of Thomas*.” Walter responded by asking whether I could give an example. What occurred to me on the spot was 1 Cor 2:9: “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.’”

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<sup>26</sup> See my programmatic essay on the sayings gospel genre, “ΛΟΓΟΙ ΣΟΦΩΝ: Zur Gattung der Spruchquelle Q,” in *Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Erich Dinkler (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964), 77–96, revised and enlarged in *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 216–250, ET: “ΛΟΓΟΙ ΣΟΦΩΝ: On the Gattung of Q,” in *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971; paperback, 1979), 20–70, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 37–74. On the discussion it engendered, see my essay “On Bridging the Gulf from Q to The Gospel of Thomas (or Vice Versa),” in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1986), 127–175, especially section “IV. The Genre of Q and the Gospel of Thomas,” 164–175, with 166–167 addressing the criticism of B. Dehandschutter and Werner Georg Kümmel, republished in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 203–258, especially 245–258, here 247–248. See also my essay “The Sayings Gospel Q” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, BETL 100 (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 1992), 1:361–388, especially 371 n. 12, in response to the criticism of Heinz Schürmann, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 319–348, especially 329–340 n. 12. Further, my essay “Die Bedeutung der gnostischen Nag-Hammadi Texte für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays Honoring Dieter Georgi*, ed. Lukas Bormann, Kelly Del Tredici, and Angela Standhartinger, NovTSup 74 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 23–41.

<sup>27</sup> See my essay, “The Q Trajectory: Between John and Matthew via Jesus,” in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester*, ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 173–194, especially the section “Helmut Koester’s Early Sapiaential Layer in Q,” 184–189, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 285–307, especially 296–302.

<sup>28</sup> See James M. Robinson, “The Study of the Historical Jesus after Nag Hammadi,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Rejected Gospels*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Semeia 44 (Atlanta: SBL, 1988), 45–55, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 275–284.



Walter had mentioned this text only as an instance of Paul citing vaguely the Old Testament (to which the quotation formula “as it is written” is often assumed to refer, though the precise text is missing from the Old Testament—the margin of Nestle-Aland lists Origen’s reference to the *Apocalypse of Elijah*). But Walter did not even mention the fact that this unidentified “Old Testament” quotation is cited as a saying of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas* (Saying 17): “Jesus said, ‘I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind.’”<sup>29</sup> Thus this saying is part of the Jesus tradition that Walter purported to be treating exhaustively in relation to Pauline parallels. For by “Jesus tradition” he does not mean just “authentic” sayings of Jesus, but rather all sayings ascribed to Jesus.

When I drew to his attention this saying ascribed to Jesus by the *Gospel of Thomas*, he pointed out that in 1 Cor 2:9 the saying is not introduced as a saying of Jesus, and hence need not be included in his presentation. But I then pointed out that he included a whole section devoted to “contacts with *logia* from the Jesus tradition that are not directly identified [as such] by Paul himself,” such as occur in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 4, where Walter listed several parallels to the Sermon on the Mount/Plain. According to Walter’s paper, a complete tabulation of Pauline parallels to Jesus traditions, such as he was providing, should include non-canonical parallels comparable to these, even though Paul in no way identified them as parallel to sayings in the Jesus tradition, so that one cannot even know whether Paul recognized the parallels. So I made the point that to limit such a complete tabulation of parallels to the canon, which is what Walter in fact had done, seemed arbitrary, from a purely historical point of view. Obviously Paul did not limit himself to the canonical gospels, since they did not exist when he wrote.

Walter responded to my appeal to his own policy of including parallels not identified by Paul as sayings of Jesus by conceding that the parallel between 1 Cor 2:9 and Saying 17 of the *Gospel of Thomas* should indeed have been included in his survey. But the subsequently published text of his presentation (in *NTS* 1985) left the typescript used at the meeting unaltered at this point, though in other regards the text had been updated prior to publication. He did not even go to the pains of arguing, e.g., that the text was known to Paul not as a saying

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<sup>29</sup> It is also ascribed to Jesus in the *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III, 5; 140).

of Jesus but as derived from some “Old Testament” text unrelated to the Jesus tradition.

This anecdote illustrates the problem in our discipline today: Many are wearing blinds that limit their survey to the canonical gospels, a limitation of course facilitated by the limitations of the concordances and standard reference works such as commentaries, where the pre-Nag-Hammadi data is already conveniently collected, thus perpetuating in our day the limitations of previous generations. But these traditional confines of the discipline are immediately transcended by anyone who knows how to surf the web. Yet this outdated method is no doubt fostered by some vague awareness that once one moves beyond the familiar canonical confines, a vast and undefined terrain is opened up, in which one is perhaps not trained, and for which one has no empathy or inclination.

Perhaps the problem lies in large part in the fact that the *Gospel of Thomas* was discovered in the gnostic library of Nag Hammadi, and, apart from the Bultmannian tradition, Gnosticism has usually been excluded from New Testament scholarship. But it has become clear that not all the Nag Hammadi texts are in fact gnostic. The *Teachings of Silvanus* (VII, 4) is simply wisdom literature, with what could be considered an anti-gnostic polemic! A section of Plato’s *Republic* (VI, 5) is of course not gnostic, nor are the *Sentences of Sextus* (XII, 1), both of which are already known apart from the Nag Hammadi discovery, and so are free of any “guilt by association.” But so is the *Gospel of Thomas*! For P. Oxy. 1, 654, and 655 are three (very fragmentary) copies of the Greek original of the *Gospel of Thomas* that are a century older than the Coptic copy, without any gnostic context at all. Whether the *Gospel of Thomas* is to be considered gnostic is highly contested in scholarly literature. This is in part a matter of definition. The standard gnostic myth is not present. The nearest one might come to assuming that Gnosticism is presupposed would be Saying 50:

Jesus says: “If they say to you: ‘Where do you come from?’ (then) say to them: ‘We have come from the light, the place where the light has come into being by itself, has established [itself] and has appeared in their image.’ If they say to you: ‘Is it you?’ (then) say: ‘We are his children, and we are the elect of the living Father.’ If they ask you: ‘What is the sign of your Father among you?’ (then) say to them: ‘It is movement and repose.’”

But most of the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* that are not found in the New Testament (about half of the sayings) cannot be explained as

secondary “gnostic” creations, but are more like the sayings found in the New Testament.

The debate about the dating of the original composition of the *Gospel of Thomas* also has a hidden agenda. The older it is thought to be, the higher its status is among sources for the historical Jesus (exemplified e.g. by Crossan). The later it is thought to be, the less it needs to be considered a standard part of the discipline (exemplified e.g. by Ménard and many others, especially if one may appeal to the argument from silence).

Of course another problem is the Coptic language in which the only rather complete copy of the *Gospel of Thomas* has survived. There is only one chair of Coptic Studies in the world, held first by Martin Krause, then by his successor Stephen Emmel, at the University of Münster. So when Coptic is taught, it is usually by a person whose main occupation lies elsewhere, and when it is learned, it is usually as an elective. Coptic has not been a standard language of New Testament scholarship, with the possible exception of an occasional textual critic. Since it is a ground rule of the discipline, that one master the foreign languages of the discipline, the *Gospel of Thomas* is by this (il-)logic not to be included in the discipline.

If it were the Greek Oxyrhynchus papyri that were complete, and the Coptic Nag Hammadi copy that consisted only in a few fragments, or if a second-century copy of the Greek text had been discovered not near the Nile but near the Jordan, the discipline would have been unanimous in including it, as in the case of the *Didache*, among the most important non-canonical Christian texts relevant to New Testament studies. That is to say, its *de facto* exclusion from the discipline is arbitrary.

### 7. *Biblical Archaeology*

Ever since Constantine’s mother Helena went to the promised land and located the site of Jesus’ crucifixion and burial, in order to build there the church of the Holy Sepulcre, many pilgrimage sites have given rise to constructions commemorating what is supposed to have happened there. But though the pilgrimage sites themselves may be older than the ruins of the constructions built over them, it is naïve to assume that they are therefore the actual locations where the event took place, and, even if they were, that they would be relevant to the study of Jesus. The shrines built over the original sites would in any case have destroyed any relevant evidence.

Pilgrim buses usually stop for lunch in the Franciscan hostel at the “Mount of the Beatitudes,” so that the pilgrims can see where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount (which, time permitting, is read aloud at the site). The problem is that the location on a “mount” is derived not from the memory of the disciples, but from Matthew borrowing the hillside location of the calling of the twelve from Mark 3:13. Furthermore, the “Sermon” was never presented by Jesus as a speech, but is a collection of his sayings made by his followers. In this case, a pilgrimage site cannot provide the basis for the conjecture that this is the original location for what happened in Jesus’ lifetime, since his preaching of the Sermon on the Mount did not happen at all.

Somewhat more possible, but still quite conjectural, is the Franciscan “house of Peter” that is the main pilgrim attraction next to the synagogue in Capernaum. For Peter’s mother-in-law was healed in her home after the healing of the demon-possessed person in the synagogue of Capernaum (Mark 1:23–31). Indeed, this is where Jesus’ public ministry began. Capernaum would seem to have been his headquarters, where he is reported to have been “at home” (Mark 2:1). If Peter’s home became Jesus’ home, that would account for Peter’s prominence.

But such pilgrimage sites do not bring one any nearer to Jesus, unless one has the good fortune to find there a true piece of the cross (since most pieces are already in European cathedrals). When Ernst Renan called Palestine “the fifth gospel,” what he had in mind was not such pilgrimage sites, but rather the village life of the native Arab population, which he thought had changed but little since the time of Jesus. In comparison with the Paris life of a century ago, no doubt this was to a large extent true.

When archaeology began in modern times, it was apologetic in nature, to prove that the Bible was right after all. So the walls of Jericho were located, fallen down as they were supposed to be: “So they blew the trumpets, and when the army heard the trumpet sound, they raised a great shout, and down fell the walls” (Josh 6:20). But this dramatic proof of Joshua’s conquest later turned out to be walls that came tumbling down centuries before Joshua’s time. His next victory was at Ai: “Joshua burnt Ai to the ground, and left it the desolate ruined mount it remains to this day” (Josh 8:28). Its Hebrew name, like its Arab name, *el-tell*, means simply “the ruins.” But modern dating has now shown that it was already in ruins long before Joshua. Apparently local ruins were simply used to create (very successfully) the story of the

conquest. Today the “conquest” is conceived of as a much more peaceful immigration and assimilation.

Archaeology by its very nature is destructive, literally removing most of the evidence on which its conclusions are based. Archaeologists have had a very bad track record of publishing only “preliminary reports,” but dying before publishing their “final report.” The American Schools of Oriental Research have tried to correct this situation by requiring that more-nearly-final reports be published after a few seasons, before further field work is approved.

Archaeological method has undergone major improvements over recent generations. Rather than a whole tell being excavated (and thus destroyed), a trial trench is first dug, both so as to limit the damage, if any, to something that should not be cut through, and also so that one can get a profile of the layering and dating of the tell itself. For a straight and clean balk reveals the layers of each successive destruction and rebuilding of the site, so that the archaeologists can determine if it is a promising site to continue excavating. Furthermore, the site is not completely excavated, but some areas are left for future archaeology, so that the results of the excavation can later be verified, when the more advanced methods of future generations of archaeologists can be employed.

The dating of the sites is decisive with regard to their relevance to Jesus. Potsherds are the basis of chronology, since they are found everywhere, whereas other datable artifacts, such as coins or cartouches, are rare. The dating of pottery has become a science, for “indicator sherds” of the lip, handle, or base of a pot can be dated to within a half-century. Of course, Christian construction did not take place in Jesus’ time, and so most Christian sites date from the Byzantine period and are hence irrelevant for the study of the historical Jesus.

Galilee is littered with synagogues, and Jesus is reported to have preached and healed in synagogues. But no synagogues contemporary with Jesus have been located in Galilee. (Gamla, where there seem to be ruins of an early synagogue destroyed in the war with Rome and not rebuilt, is on the eastern side of the Jordan.) One has to postulate either that the synagogues have not yet been located or excavated (perhaps inaccessible under later synagogues, as in Capernaum), or that the “synagogues” (literally: assemblies) that Jesus visited were not in buildings constructed as synagogues (to which Luke 7:5 refers), but in homes used for the assemblies. Q never reports Jesus going to a synagogue at all, but the Mission Instructions say one is to go to houses (Q 10:5–7).

The most impressive Galilean constructions from Jesus' time that are still visible are the Roman amphitheaters and gymnasia for the entertainment of troops stationed e.g. in Sepphoris and Capernaum. But they do no more than provide a setting for the pejorative appellation "hypocrite" (Q 6:42), literally "actor," or illustrate the off-duty lifestyle of the centurion whose boy Jesus healed (Q 7:1–10). Stone inscriptions found in Galilee are usually in Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic.

A fishing boat of approximately Jesus' time has been found relatively intact in the Sea of Galilee and preserved on dry land for pilgrims to see. Its little museum is of course an attraction for pilgrims, but adds little to our actual knowledge about Jesus. The existence of fishing vessels in which Jesus could hitch a ride across the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:35–41; 6:45–52) has never been doubted.

Perhaps the most relevant archaeological discoveries for understanding Jesus have to do with the Jewishness of Galilee. For it has been common, and of course to an extent valid, to distinguish Galilean Judaism from the Judaism of Judea and Jerusalem. After the death of Solomon, the north, the state of Israel, separated itself off from the south, the state of Judea. The north was conquered earlier, and its captives never returned, whereas the captives from the south were permitted to return and rebuild. Samaria separated the two. The Maccabees who liberated the south from the Romans and ruled there from 166 to 37 BCE orchestrated forced circumcisions in the north to Judaize the region, but the conversion may have been only skin-deep. In any case, such considerations have been brought into play to minimize Jesus' Jewishness. After all, Nazareth was a hamlet near the city of Sepphoris, which the Romans had destroyed for insurrection and then rebuilt in Jesus' time, as a Hellenistic city (see the beautiful floor mosaic of the "Mona Lisa" excavated and preserved as a small museum there).

Recent archaeology has, however, tended to point in the other direction, by pointing out distinctively Jewish traits in Galilee:<sup>30</sup> At the doorways to homes in Sepphoris one has often found the small Jewish

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<sup>30</sup> See such works as those by the archaeologists who have excavated Bethsaida, Jean J. Rousseau, and Rami Arav, *Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), to which I provided a "Foreword: A Down-to-Earth Jesus," xiii–xviii. See also more recently Jonathan L. Reed (who has excavated at Sepphoris), *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Pittsburgh, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); and John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

cisterns for washing before entering the house. Bones of pigs, forbidden for Jews to eat, are conspicuous by their absence. Large stone pots, preferred by Jews for purity reasons (see John 2:6), are common in Capernaum. So archaeology has tended to confirm the Jewishness of Jesus' world. The gospels never mention him going to the cosmopolitan, more Greek-speaking, more Gentile, Galilean cities of Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Scythopolis.

### 8. *Feministic Studies*

The text of Q, and therefore presumably Jesus, do not do justice to the modern feminist sensitivity as to the full equality of women.<sup>31</sup> The most that is usually said is that male-female pairs are present in Q, with which both men and women can hence identify. The male Ninevites are paired with the Queen of the South standing in judgment against Israel (Q 11:31–32); a man sowing a field with mustard seed (Q 13:18–19) is paired with a woman making bread out of yeast (Q 13:20–21); the shepherd seeking a lost sheep (Q 15:4–5, 7) is paired with a woman seeking a lost coin (Q 15:8–10); two males on a couch (Q 17:34) are paired with two females grinding at a mill (Q 17:35). Pairings may be implicit, even if less visible, in such formulations as bread (baked by a woman) and fish (caught by fishermen) in Q 11:11–12, and ravens (in contrast to men working in the fields) and lilies (in contrast to women making clothing) in Q 12:24, 27–28. The Q movement's disruption of family ties between generations involves the women as well as the men (Q 12:53; 14:26). Though such pairings thus recognize women as well as men, no inclusive point is explicitly scored. The patriarchal culture is tacitly presupposed, in such formulations as "marrying and giving in marriage" (Q 17:27), and in addressing God as "Father" (Q 10:21 *bis*; 11:2; cf. 6:36; 10:22 *bis*; 11:13; 12:30).<sup>32</sup> But Q does have the most

<sup>31</sup> James M. Robinson, "The Image of Jesus in Q," in *Jesus Then and Now*, ed. Meyer and Hughes, 7–25, here 8–9, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 645–662, at 647–648.

<sup>32</sup> Luise Schottroff, *Itinerant Prophetesses: A Feminist Analysis of the Sayings Source Q*, Occasional Papers 21 (Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1991); Schottroff, "Wanderprophetinnen: Eine feministische Analyse der Logienquelle," *EvT* 51 (1991): 332–344. Decidedly critical is Helga Melzer-Keller, *Jesus und die Frauen: Eine Verhältnisbestimmung nach den synoptischen Überlieferungen*, HBS 14 (Freiburg: Herder, 1997), "Teil IV: Jesus und die Frauen in der Logienquelle," 330–353; Melzer-Keller, "Frauen in der Logienquelle und ihrem Trägerkreis: Ist Q das Zeugnis

nearly explicit beginnings of a truncated female Sophia christology (Q 7:35; 11:31, 49).<sup>33</sup>

Mary Magdalene is unfortunately not mentioned in Q; but also none of the male disciples are mentioned by name in Q. She is of course the center of attention today, especially since the publication of the best-seller *The Da Vinci Code*,<sup>34</sup> where there are enough references to scholarship to obscure where fact leaves off and fiction takes over: She is not only Jesus' wife and mother of his child, but even the ancestress of the French royal family (which thus also has a famous ancestor)! We limit ourselves to what has some affinity to the facts:

Mary was from the village of Magdala on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. She was one of the "women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," the one "from whom seven demons had gone out" (Luke 8:3). But Luke reports this bit of information immediately following his story of an anonymous "woman of the city, who was a sinner": When Jesus was having dinner at a Pharisee's house in Galilee, she came to Jesus with "an alabaster flask of ointment" (Luke 7:36–50, especially v. 38):

Standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

This is Luke's version of the story that Mark (14:3–9) located in the home of Simon the leper in Bethany, where there are no negative comments about the woman, whom Jesus commends. This woman immediately disappears completely from the story, and yet this kind of body language has been too much for some to let pass. The result has been that, down through the ages, Mary Magdalene has been falsely identified as a repentant prostitute.

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einer patriarchatskritischen, egalitären Bewegung?" in *Wenn Drei das Gleich sagen... Studien zu den ersten drei Evangelien*, ed. Stefan H. Brandenburger and Thomas Hieke, *Theologie 14* (Münster: Lit, 1998), 37–62; Melzer-Keller, "Wie frauenfreundlich ist die Logienquelle?" *BK 54* (1999): 89–92.

<sup>33</sup> See my essay "Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Traditions and the Gospels," in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Wilken, University of Notre Dame Center for the Study of Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 1 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 1–16, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 119–130; and my presentation "Very Goddess and Very Man: Jesus's Better Self," at the feminist conference I initiated in the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity I directed, published in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. Karen King, *Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 113–127, reprinted in *The Sayings Gospel Q*, 259–273.

<sup>34</sup> Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code: A Novel* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).



This view received (all-too-faint) support from the fact that a similar story is told in the Gospel of John about a completely different Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, during a meal at their home in Bethany of Judea (John 11:2; 12:3). The identification of Mary Magdalene with the prostitute has finally been repudiated officially by the Roman Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council.

What do we know about the real Mary Magdalene? She was named after her home town: The town's name, Magdala, produced the term Magdalene, just as Gadara produced Gadarene (Matt 8:28) and Nazara (Matt 4:13 = Luke 4:16 = Q 4:16) produced Nazarene (Mark 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Luke 24:19). Women in that day were usually named after the dominant male in their life, such as the father or husband: "Joanna wife of Chusa, Herod's steward" (Luke 8:3), "Mary (mother) of James the younger and of Joses" (Mark 15:40), Mary the (wife) of Clopas" (John 19:25), "Mary the mother of John called Mark" (Acts 12:12). But among Jesus' female supporters, Suzanna (Luke 8:3) and Salome (Luke 8:3; Mark 15:40; 16:1) also lack any such identification, though in one text (Matt 27:56 parallel to Mark 15:40) "Salome" is replaced by "the mother of the sons of Zebedee." Perhaps Mary Magdalene did not have any such dominant male relative(s) after whom she was named, as the use of the name of her village to identify her might suggest. Or she may have lost her family identity on being abandoned due to her severe emotional condition,<sup>35</sup> or when she became a follower of Jesus (though others retained such designations).

Luke lists Mary Magdalene as first in a list that included "Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means" (Luke 8:3). Thus Mary Magdalene is part of the larger female entourage accompanying Jesus, who supported his itinerant ministry as best as they could. Hence she is among the women who witnessed the crucifixion (Mark 15:40–41; John 19:25). The women continued to be present even after the crucifixion (Mark 15:47): "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid."

They take the lead in the empty tomb stories: After the Sabbath they went to the tomb to perform the burial rites usually performed by women (Mark 16:1). Much to their amazement, they found the tomb

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<sup>35</sup> As in the case of the Gerasene demoniac, Mark 5:1–20, who "lived among the tombs" (v. 3) until cured, whereupon he wanted to follow Jesus (v. 18), but Jesus told him to "go home to your own" (v. 19).

empty. But they saw a young man dressed in a white robe (Mark 16:5), or an angel (Matt 28:2), or two men in dazzling apparel (Luke 24:4), who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. They were commissioned, in a formula familiar from the Old Testament (Mark 16:7): “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.” Mark reported they were scared to tell the disciples (Mark 16:8), but Luke elaborated (Luke 24:10–11):

Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

It was the Gospel of John (20:1–18) which at this point becomes the most important regarding Mary Magdalene. For John lists her coming alone to the tomb before dawn, and on finding it empty, running to tell Peter and the beloved disciple, who run and see it to be empty, and then return to their lodgings (v. 10). But Mary Magdalene stays at the tomb. Jesus appears to her. She mistakes him for the gardener, until he calls her by name, whereupon she recognizes him. He tells her, “Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father” (v. 17). He sends her to the disciples, to whom she announces: “I have seen the Lord” (v. 18). All this attests to the importance of Mary Magdalene in Easter traditions, irrespective of what does or does not lie behind such stories as historical fact.

From all these references to Mary Magdalene, it is clear that she was pre-eminent among the women accompanying Jesus, down to the very end. But any romantic overtones one wishes to find in these references to her have to be read into the text, and probably say more about the one who hears such overtones than about Mary Magdalene herself. Jesus functioned in his society as a “holy man,” and no doubt was treated as such. He called upon his disciples to renounce family ties (Q 9:59–60; 12:51–52; 14:26), as he himself had done (Mark 3:19–21, 31–35; 6:4; Matt 4:13).

### *9. The Lost Gospel of Jesus*

The focus of my engrossment with the historical Jesus has over the years shifted from finding a viable transition from Jesus to the kerygma to rediscovering the gospel he brought to Galilee... and perhaps even to us.

Our basic problem with Jesus is that the church has envisaged for him a different gospel from what he envisaged for himself. The Apostles' Creed, shared among almost all branches of Christianity, poses the problem clearly, even if unintentionally: It presents Jesus as the central figure in the trinity in heaven, rather than as the individual he was in Galilee. It simply skips over the historical Jesus, by moving from what was done *for* him: "...conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary," directly to what was done *against* him: "suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead and buried..." But between birth and death, Bethlehem and Golgatha, the Creed is completely silent: Missing is what was done *by* Jesus, whatever Jesus himself actually did or said by way of gospel. One would not even know that he was a Galilean, or a Jew.

The quest of the historical Jesus has sought to bring to the surface the missing Galilean Jew Jesus. Especially over the past generation that quest has been renewed with valuable new or improved tools at its disposal. The actual circumstances of Galilee under Roman control have been brought increasingly into view (see above). If thus the context into which Jesus is to be placed has become much more nuanced and reliable, the Jesus placed in that context tends to be increasingly lost in the mass of circumstantial evidence. Of course, we know we cannot take him out of his world and transplant him into our world, lest we make him into what he was not. We have been warned some time ago to avoid "the peril of modernizing Jesus."

Yet Jesus seems to have been a profound person, grappling with the human dilemma as he experienced it in his cultural context. He found a solution to it, which he implemented in his own life and urged anyone who would listen to implement in their life. This was of course couched in the language and options of his cultural situation, which is not ours. But the dilemma he confronted is still our dilemma, even though now recast in new language and modern alternatives.

His cause in life was not improving fishing conditions on the Sea of Galilee, or evading Roman taxation, or avoiding Gentile pollution, or many other issues he knew about as a Galilean Jew, but all of which are issues that are not our issues today. His basic issue was that most people have solved the human dilemma for themselves at the expense of everyone else, putting them down so as to stay afloat oneself. This vicious, anti-social way of coping with the necessities of life only escalates the dilemma for the rest of society.

All of us know the result all too well, for we have experienced it ourselves in one form or the other: In the break-down of mutually-supportive human relations into haves and have-nots; the ruling class subjugating the serfs, share-croppers, blue-collar workers; the battle of the sexes; dictatorships of one kind or the other; exploitation at the work place; colonialism; and on and on.

The problem of understanding the gospel of Jesus is to interface between his cultural situation and ours, his specifics and ours, his language and ours, so as to be able really to listen to him and think through for ourselves what he had to say. This applies both to the forms that the human dilemma took in his situation and ours, and to the solution he offered in his, and our translation of that into ours.

Jesus deserves more than being shelved as just a lofty curiosity in our cultural heritage. He needs to be taken seriously, really to be heard.

#### 10. *The Sayings Gospel Q*

The primary source for knowing Jesus is to be found in the pithy and memorable sayings he used to move his listeners into action. They are what lived on after him, in that his disciples continued to proclaim them, in spite of their having experienced his utterly appalling execution, which one might think would have crushed their faith in all that Jesus had said, and silenced even their best intentions. It was these sayings that kept alive stories about what he had done, indeed engendered more and more stories ascribed to him.

But the sayings—of course not all of them, but the oldest layer—do go back to those who remembered what Jesus said and why he said it. Indeed, they were preserved not just as nostalgic memories of a past leader, but rather as the true message that his followers continued to announce in Jesus' name. The sayings scored their point when Jesus said them, and when his disciples repeated them. And they can score that same point when we hear them today. The Sayings Gospel Q is thus the primary source for the gospel of Jesus.

Of course the reader is interested to know about what Jesus did, not just what he said. But the Sayings Gospel Q presents him as a person who did precisely the kind of things the narrative gospels report: His role as faith healer is made clear in Q by the narration of the healing of the centurion's boy (Q 7:1–10). His role as exorcist is made clear in the exorcism initiating the Beelzebul controversy (Q 11:14–15).

Q launched the proof that Jesus is the “One to Come” that John had predicted, by calling on John’s disciples to see and hear what Jesus was doing. Q even provided the list of things Jesus had done that prove it (Q 7:22). It is indeed odd that a sayings gospel would list, as its evidence as to who Jesus is, first his healings, before mentioning what he said. Furthermore, Q reports that “mighty works” were performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida (Q 10:13). And the Mission Instructions in Q call on the disciples to heal the sick (Q 10:9), making clear that Jesus’ healing power was carried over to them. Thus Jesus’ role as faith healer and exorcist is as clear in the Sayings Gospel Q as it is in the narrative gospels. More important still, it is the Jesus of Q who also gives his explanation for the faith healings and exorcisms: It is God reigning.

Of course there is no final proof that even the oldest layer of sayings attributed to Jesus do in fact go back to him. His disciples, in continuing his message after his death, inevitably repeated them in such a way as to avoid misunderstandings that may have arisen, and to make clear what they were sure was Jesus’ intent. But it has become possible to a very large extent to detect such “improvements,” and hence to get behind them to the earlier formulation.

The reader of the canonical gospels, and even of Q, must avoid both extremes in assessing the reliability of the sayings ascribed to Jesus: Later reformulations, or even new sayings put on Jesus’ tongue, should not be ascribed to him, even though they may well be our favorite sayings. Furthermore, Jesus spoke Aramaic, and the gospels are all in Greek, so one is not talking about verbatim quotations, what Joachim Jeremias advocated as the “*ipsissima verba Jesu*.” But the oldest layer of sayings ascribed to him should not be considered unreliable, but should in fact be what we use to talk about Jesus, as even Rudolf Bultmann insisted. Otherwise Jesus quite unnecessarily disappears from the pages of history, or “Jesus” becomes an empty category into which wild fantasies can be poured.

### 11. *What Jesus Has to Say: God is Reigning*

To begin with the best-known text in Q, the Lord’s Prayer: Matthew has glossed the prayer several times, to embellish it according to the more liturgical usage of his own congregation. One of these Matthean additions is the petition (Matt 6:10): “Thy will be done on earth

as it is in heaven.” Apparently the petitions originally ran as follows (Q 11:2–4):<sup>36</sup>

Let your reign come;  
 Our day’s bread give us today;  
 and cancel our debts for us,  
     as we too have cancelled for those in debt to us;  
 and do not put us to the test!

The Lord’s Prayer is clearly not a prayer about the afterlife or another world, but about the here and now. Indeed, the interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer, which follows directly in Q, makes this abundantly clear (Q 11:9–13). Jesus hardly meant that as surely as a human parent gives bread and fish in the here and now, the heavenly Father will give pie in the sky by-and-by. The clear meaning is that God will answer the petition “our day’s bread give us daily” in the here and now, daily.

Perhaps this present reality of God reigning is made most clear in the case of exorcism (Q 11:20): “But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then there has come upon you God’s reign.” The abnormal symptoms of a disease that led it to be called possession by a demon or an evil spirit are in the here and now (Mark 9:17–18, 20, 22). Of necessity the exorcism, as the coming of God’s reign, is also in the here and now.

The extent to which a day’s bread and exorcisms are already God reigning is made clear in the Mission Instructions (Q 10:8–9): “And whatever town you enter and they take you in, eat what is set before you, and cure the sick there, and say to them: ‘The kingdom of God has reached unto you.’”

Actually, the Q people thought they were already “in” the kingdom (Q 7:28): “There has not arisen among women’s offspring anyone who surpasses John. Yet the least significant in God’s kingdom is more than he.” Similarly, the woe pronounced against exegetes of the Law, who shut people out of the kingdom, does not just refer to closing access to the kingdom in the afterlife, when one might otherwise have hoped to enter it, but refers to these exegetes of the Law as themselves not having entered the kingdom already now (Q 11:52): “...for you shut the kingdom of God from people; you did not go in, nor let in those trying to get in.”

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<sup>36</sup> Q 11:2b–4, ed. Shawn Carruth (Leuven: Peeters, 1996). This is the first in the series Documenta Q: Reconstructions of Q Through Two Centuries of Gospel Research Excerpted, Sorted, and Evaluated.

Another saying in Q indicates rather precisely the point in time when the kingdom has entered into history, namely just after the law and the prophets and John, for since then, perhaps beginning with John's death, the kingdom is violated and plundered (Q 16:16): "The law and the prophets were until John. From then on the kingdom of God is violated and the violent plunder it." Similarly, the parables of the kingdom present God's reigning as beginning already now. To be sure, this is not intended as a given status, like the "established church," as if God reigning had been turned over to a sometimes all-too-human hierarchy to run. Rather God reigning is something that actually happens from time to time, as God participates in the living experience of people. For God inspires his children to act as he does, and thus through them does his reigning (Q 6:27–28, 35):

Love your enemies and pray for those persecuting you, so that you may become sons of your Father, for he raises his sun on bad and good and rains on the just and unjust.

Jesus rejected the idea of locating any given place where the kingdom can be expected to come, since in fact it is already present in the here and now (Q 17:20–21):

But on being asked when the kingdom of God is coming, he answered them and said: 'The kingdom of God is not coming visibly. Nor will one say: Look, here! Or: There! For look, the kingdom of God is within you!'

Again, this saying should not be misunderstood, as if it had in view just a mystic inwardness. Though the rare preposition translated here "within" does seem to mean inside in contrast to outside,<sup>37</sup> the meaning would not seem to be far from the alternate translation, "among you" or "in your midst," since it does mean "inside" society, standing over against some never-never land "out there." The point of the saying is that the kingdom is not something that will take place somewhere sometime, but is a reality in the present experience of people in the world of today.

Jesus called on people to "seek" the kingdom (Q 12:31): "But seek his kingdom, and all these shall be granted to you." This is anything but hunting for some future cosmic event, which Jesus had explicitly

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<sup>37</sup> T. Holmén, "The Alternatives of the Kingdom: Encountering the Semantic Restrictions of Luke 17:20–21 (ἐντὸς ὑμῶν)," *ZNW* 87 (1996): 214–229.

rejected. Rather, this seeking is set over against the other kind of seeking, which anxiety-laden Gentiles do, when they ask (Q 12:30): “‘What are we to eat?’ Or: ‘What are we to drink?’ Or: ‘What are we to wear?’”

Hence “seeking” for the kingdom returns full circle to the petition, “let your reign come,” in the Lord’s Prayer: One does not need to be anxiety-laden about scrounging for such physical necessities as food to eat, because one can trust in God reigning, that is to say, answering the petition for God’s reign to come, in the concrete form of someone providing our day’s bread.

Thus the kingdom of God, the one clearly recognizable “technical term” in Jesus’ vocabulary, in a sense elevates to religious relevance much of everyday living, such as sickness, the need for food and clothing, the evil with which people are always struggling. It is in the very real everyday world that God reigning is very good news (Q 7:22), Jesus’ gospel.



## SCHOLARLY RIGOR AND INTUITION IN HISTORICAL RESEARCH INTO JESUS

JACQUES SCHLOSSER

When Justin of Rome speaks of “our Jesus,”<sup>1</sup> he shows that the crucified Lord fully belongs to history (*Dial.* 46.1); but he perceives him from one particular perspective (“our Jesus”) which cannot be detached from the faith which recognizes in him “the Christ” (116.1), “the Son of God” (116.2), “our savior Jesus Christ” (*1 Apol.* 33.5) according to the teaching imparted by those who have cultivated the remembrance of Jesus (*1 Apol.* 33.5). The same is true of Origen in his refutation of Celsus.<sup>2</sup>

The historian who studies Jesus of Nazareth inevitably encounters this perspective inspired by faith, but he will not allow himself to be inspired by it when he attempts to specify *as an historian* who this man was, what he did, and what he said. He is aware that “the hypothesis of an action of providence eludes science,”<sup>3</sup> and he will keep to those instruments which the customary praxis of history offers him. If necessary, he will make it clear that the Jesus of history is in fact only the Jesus reconstructed by the academic discipline known as history—not what we might call the “real” Jesus. And this means that despite the reservations which one sees on this point among theologians (including some exegetes),<sup>4</sup> a secular approach, i.e. one carried out in a purely historical perspective, seems to me legitimate and possible.

### 1. *An Undertaking which Is Both Legitimate and Possible*

According to E. M. Laperrousaz, “There was a time, not so very long ago, when it was the done thing—for the sake of prudence—to cast

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<sup>1</sup> *Dial.* 33.1; 116.1. Cf. also “our Christ,” 111.2 and 113.1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Contra Celsum* 1.25, 29, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Marc Bloch, *Apologie pour l'histoire ou métier d'historien* (critical edition prepared by Étienne Bloch; Paris: Armand Colin, 1993), 88.

<sup>4</sup> Cf., e.g., Pierre Grelot, *Jésus de Nazareth, Christ et Seigneur* 1, LD 167 (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 12–13.

doubt on the real existence of the founders of religious and other movements in classical antiquity. Today, with the development, the deeper knowledge, and the greater sophistication of our knowledge of the ancient history of the eastern Mediterranean Basin, who would dare to call into question the real existence of persons such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Jesus, and... the Teacher of Righteousness who founded the Essene community of Qumran...?"<sup>5</sup> If Jesus is an undisputed historical personage, it seems normal that one should study him in a rational manner which has recourse exclusively to the methods and approaches which are employed in the customary praxis of history. In this case, we are moving above all in the realm of ancient history, where we have a variety of sources on which to draw: historical, literary, or epigraphic texts, archaeological discoveries such as figurative artistic objects, and the contribution made by numismatics (to mention only a few of the available resources).<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, the researcher who studies Jesus as an historian is also a believer, but this situation is not without its parallels: other historians too have an existential relationship to the object of their researches. Just as some of his colleagues must take care to keep their political or ideological commitment in check, so too the Christian historian will endeavor to prescind from his personal faith and to concentrate on those things which can be observed and verified and thus form the object of a common undertaking which is independent of the personal convictions of the individual scholar. In addition to intellectual honesty, respect for methodology constitutes a useful and indeed indispensable safeguard here. For no matter what differences may exist among the various schools of historians, they all have the critical method in common, and the historical enterprise implies that all who are involved in this rational procedure "take care to verify facts, cultivate precision, and seek complete information," without forgetting the fundamental ingredients, viz. the criticism of one's sources and the establishing of the facts.<sup>7</sup> When the academic study of the Bible concentrates on the historical aspect, it must be conducted according to the same rules. This means that "it is not obvious why faith should be

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<sup>5</sup> "Quelques questions primordiales concernant Jésus," *Historiens et Géographes* 374 (May 2001): 121.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jean-Nicolas Corvisier, *Sources et méthodes en histoire ancienne* (Paris: PUF, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Antoine Prost, *Douze leçons sur l'histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 285, 287; cf. also 290–293.

a necessary component of the historical criticism of the Bible.”<sup>8</sup> It follows that “Jesus and his companions are historical personages and can therefore be studied historically by anyone who has the competence to do so.”<sup>9</sup> This means that the legitimacy of an historical study of Jesus is indubitable—but is it possible?

The severity with which Schweitzer concluded his famous dossier of the nineteenth-century quest of the historical Jesus<sup>10</sup> has sometimes been interpreted as ruling out in principle any research into Jesus, but this is not correct. Schweitzer himself proposes a synthesis which we could describe as a falsification of the liberal portrait of Jesus and the proposition of a substitute hypothesis.<sup>11</sup> It is above all Rudolf Bultmann who is supposed to be the chief representative of radical skepticism. Some of his affirmations certainly seem to go in this direction, such as the famous sentence in his book about Jesus: “I believe that we can know virtually nothing about the life and the personality of Jesus, because the Christian sources which we possess are very fragmentary and invaded by legends, and they displayed no interest on this point—and there is no other source for Jesus.”<sup>12</sup> Subsequently,<sup>13</sup> Bultmann himself corrected the misunderstanding which had arisen because readers of his book confused “person” with “personality.” He specified that the evangelists are indeed interested in the “person” of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> From time to time, voices are raised in ironic congratulation of the scholars’ courage. Such critics believe in reality that it is somewhat naïve and irresponsible to engage in historical research into Jesus, and they suggest that this rash enterprise should be abandoned altogether. It seems to them doomed to failure a

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<sup>8</sup> Jean-Noël Aletti, “Exégète et théologien face aux recherches historiques sur Jésus,” *RSR* 87 (1999): 423–444, at 439.

<sup>9</sup> Gérard Rochais, “Jésus: entre événement et fiction,” *Lumière et Vie* 248 (2000): 7–18, at 16.

<sup>10</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1933).

<sup>11</sup> On the role of falsification in historical research, cf. Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1997), 207–209.

<sup>12</sup> From the French translation: Rudolf Bultmann, *Jésus: Mythologie et Démythologisation* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), 35.

<sup>13</sup> For more details, cf. Jacques Schlosser, “Le débat de Käsemann et Bultmann à propos du Jésus de l’histoire,” *RSR* 87 (1999): 373–395, esp. 376–377.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the response of Bultmann to E. Foerster, published by Walter Schmithals, in *Rudolf Bultmanns Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Bernd Jaspers (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 70–80.

*priori*, thanks to the special character of the gospels which undoubtedly remain the principal sources for every investigation of Jesus.

It is obvious that a remote past is accessible only through the sources. The question is therefore whether the available documentation is sufficient to reconstruct the historical figure of Jesus. But the first step to be taken by the scholar, especially when he realizes that he is in fact an amateur (since he does not himself belong to the body of professional historians), is to ask the specialists about the methods and practices of history. I believe that the most fruitful results will be gained from examining those historians who are themselves familiar with the problems of biblical exegesis.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. *Some Notes on Historical Praxis*<sup>16</sup>

I do not propose here to present the conceptions and the praxis which were current in the historians of antiquity, although it is certainly useful to know about these.<sup>17</sup> All I wish to do is to give some information about how historians work today, so that we will be aware of the problems that those who begin an historical enquiry may face.

It was in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries that history acquired the status of a university discipline,<sup>18</sup> first in Germany (more precisely, in Prussia), then in France; its outstanding representatives were Leopold von Ranke in Germany and Charles Seignobos in France. The slogan with which a later age summed up the historical studies practiced at that period is borrowed from Ranke: *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*, “how things actually were.” This gives the impression that those historians were primarily interested in facts and indeed obsessed with the objectivity of those facts. As always,<sup>19</sup> this slogan expresses the truth by means of a caricature. If we read Ranke’s words in their

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Henri-Irénée Marrou, *De la connaissance historique*, 6th ed. (Paris: Seuil, 1975); or Marie-Françoise Baslez, *Bible et histoire : Judaïsme, hellénisme, christianisme* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> I develop here the sketch presented in my *Jésus de Nazareth*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Agnès Viénot Éditions, 2002), 13–18.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *L’histoire d’Homère à Augustin: Préfaces des historiens et textes sur l’histoire réunis et commentés par François Hartog, traduits par Michel Casevitz* (Paris: Seuil, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> There were of course precedents: on this, cf. Jacques Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 305–325; and Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l’histoire, l’oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 217–218, who emphasizes the important role of Lorenzo Valla.

<sup>19</sup> We should recall that classical antiquity knew similar formulations: e.g., Flavius Josephus, *Apion* 1.37; and Lucian (quoted in *L’histoire*, n. 17 above, 236).

immediate context,<sup>20</sup> we see that the objectivism commonly associated with these words is much attenuated. It is in fact the expression of a genuine modesty vis-à-vis the lofty mission which some scholars of that time attributed to history, which was supposed to judge the past, teach our contemporaries, and prepare the future. The adherents of positivist history do indeed emphasize facts, public affairs, individuals, and events, thus exposing themselves to the risk of illusions and short-sightedness: this school “immobilized history in events and eliminated duration.”<sup>21</sup> When taken to excess, it tended to promote “an erudite ‘positivist’ ideal which fled from ideas and banished from the historical enterprise the task of investigating causes.”<sup>22</sup> It has been said that Seignobos wanted “to reconstruct the knowledge of reality. But this always eludes him, because he only substitutes fragmentary, uncertain, and misleading traces for reality instead of interpreting this.”<sup>23</sup> But the “methodical school” (to use an expression dear to A. Prost, which P. Ricoeur has reprinted)<sup>24</sup> does not deserve all the criticisms to which it has been subjected.<sup>25</sup> The adherents of this school were perfectly well aware that facts and data do not fall ready cooked onto their plates (so to speak) and that the historian too is personally implicated in what he does.<sup>26</sup> There can be no doubt that their honesty, their erudition, and their concern about facts are permanent values.

Nevertheless, the historians of the first part of the twentieth century distanced themselves from their predecessors, who in some cases had been their own teachers. More work was devoted to the long-term perspective, to economic and social realities, and to “mentalities.” I would emphasize here the following characteristics, which are interlinked: the insistence on the indissoluble bond between the historian and the history which he produces, the treatment of facts, and the role of questions, of hypotheses, and of the imagination.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. the complete sentence in Prost, *Leçons*, 289, or in Le Goff, *Histoire*, 270.

<sup>21</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire*, 54.

<sup>22</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire*, 234.

<sup>23</sup> Bertrand Müller, *Lucien Febvre, lecteur et critique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2003), 226 n. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Mémoire*, 217–218 n. 42.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the clarifications by Gérard Noiriel, *Sur la “crise” de l’histoire* (Paris: Belin, 1996), 111–121 and 127; and by J. Glénisson in *Dictionnaire des Sciences Historiques*, ed. André Burguière (Paris: PUF, 1986), 630–631.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the texts by Seignobos quoted by Prost, *Leçons*, 65–66 and 266 n. 3; and the remarks by Le Goff, *Histoire*, 276.

“History is inseparable from the historian.” This is the title of one chapter in a masterly book which continues to be used as a work of reference;<sup>27</sup> it also represents a shared conviction. Marrou’s reaction against positivism is particularly noticeable, and this accounts for the excessive vigor with which he makes some of his points.<sup>28</sup> The scholar is not in a vacuum; to a large extent, he is what he is because of his education and his social environment; he has his own personality, his preferences, and his passions. Nor is it so certain that the historian gains anything by adopting an attitude of coldness and suspicion with regard to the object of his researches. Marrou (rather overplaying his hand) advises him to trust his interlocutor from the past (pp. 92–94), since sympathy is “the source and precondition of comprehension,” and friendship allows one to see clearly. Marrou sums up his position by saying that good history demands an existential commitment: “Against the strict objectivism of the old positivism, which would have liked to be able to reduce the attitude of the historian to a frozen and basically indifferent look at a dead past, history has seemed to us to be the fruit of an action, of an endeavor, and of a creative sense which brings into play the living powers of the human spirit, as these are defined by the historian’s abilities, his mentality, his technical equipment, and his cultural level. History is an adventure of the spirit, in which the total personality of the historian is involved...” (p. 197). This position has its limits, and Marrou himself nuances it when he specifies that the historian must “silence his own passions, beginning by calming those passions which his existential commitment kindles in him.” He must be aware of his subjectivity, but this is “in order that he may learn to keep watch over it, so that he may never be tricked by his own self. He must put himself in the best possible condition to see and hear, to comprehend” (p. 212). Since the “foaming of the feelings” risks suffocating the scholar’s lucidity, it is essential to balance this attitude of sympathy “by elements which are less intuitive, and more rational and certain.”<sup>29</sup> In order to avoid all ambiguity, Marrou states his belief

<sup>27</sup> Marrou, *Connaissance*. For a synthesis of the historical work of Marrou, cf. Pierre Riché, *Marrou: Historien engagé* (Paris: Cerf, 2003), esp. 167–198.

<sup>28</sup> According to Ricoeur (*Mémoire*, 440), Marrou certainly ought to have followed up his denunciation of an objectivity which was too naïvely conceived, by “a parallel critique of subjectivity.” We must distinguish between a “good subjectivity” and a “bad subjectivity,” and the *moi de recherche*, the “I who studies,” must not be a *moi pathétique*, an “I moved by feelings.”

<sup>29</sup> Prost, *Leçons*, 95 and 108.

that the academic undertakings of the nineteenth century—philology, the criticism of texts and of testimonies, and the recourse to auxiliary sciences—retain all their value.<sup>30</sup>

The historians of the first part of the twentieth century, especially those who belonged to the school of the *Annales*, agreed about the necessity to “construct” the facts, and this point of view now seems generally accepted. Summing up the thought of Marc Bloch, one of the founders of the *Annales*, Jacques Le Goff writes: “The facts are not objective phenomena which exist outside the historian, but are the result of the work and the construction of the historian, who is the creator of the historical facts.” He adds: “the historical fact is not a ‘positive’ datum, but an active construction by” the historian.<sup>31</sup> We no longer have direct access to the reality of the past. We discover its traces, “i.e., the mark, perceptible to the senses, which has been left by a phenomenon that cannot be grasped in itself,”<sup>32</sup> and we attempt to reconstruct the facts by means of the traces which they have left, since “historical research understands every document as the symptom of that which produced it.”<sup>33</sup> But realistically, we are obliged to recognize that in his concrete work, the scholar must work on facts which have already been constructed by the research of his predecessors, since “no historian hesitates to take over ready-made facts from other historians, provided that they are well made and that he can reuse them in his own construction.”<sup>34</sup>

At first sight, a common sense view<sup>35</sup> will be that historical work consists of two stages. First of all, one collects the documentation, and then one makes use of it. My remarks above about “facts” show that

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<sup>30</sup> “We only *seem* to criticize the axioms of the positivist method. In reality, our theory integrates these...” (Marrou, *Connaissance*, 229). Marrou clearly wished to distance himself from the excesses of historicism, where in extreme cases the historian renounced “science in order to abandon himself to intuition... or to art for art’s sake”: O. Dumoulin in Burguière, ed. *Dictionnaire*, 330.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the preface by Jacques Le Goff in Bloch, *Apologie*, 7–32, at 10 and 15. Le Goff returns to this point several times in his own work: *Histoire*, 20, 183, 197.

<sup>32</sup> Bloch, *Apologie*, 103.

<sup>33</sup> Michel de Certeau, *L’écriture de l’histoire* (2nd ed., 1975; repr., Paris: Gallimard, 2002) 27.

<sup>34</sup> Prost, *Leçons*, 73.

<sup>35</sup> In history—perhaps even more than in other disciplines—the recourse to “plain common sense” is a temptation against which one must be on one’s guard. This is affirmed by Bloch, *Apologie*, 100: common sense is often “nothing more than a conglomerate of irrational postulates and of hastily generalized experiences”; and Prost, *Leçons*, 64.

this view is extremely naïve,<sup>36</sup> since “history is not a fish in a net; the historian does not cast out his net in a random manner to see if he will catch any fish—and only then look to see what kind of fish he has caught!”<sup>37</sup> From the outset, the historian selects and examines the data, and from the outset he is guided by an antecedent understanding, a provisional image of the past, a particular point of view, and questions “which predetermine all the enquiry and provide its orientation.”<sup>38</sup> Experience not infrequently shows that new questions are generated by new perspectives which are dominated by present-day concerns and which entail *inter alia* a new reading and a different evaluation of sources which have been known for a long time. This means that the questions, and even the explanatory hypotheses, are active at the very moment when the work begins, and there is a permanent dialogue between the questions and the hypotheses on the one hand and the way in which the documentation is treated on the other. This applies to the Bible too: “in order to carry out research into the persons of the Bible, one must discover the right questions,” and “in order to define the right questions, one must have access to the right tools.”<sup>39</sup>

In somewhat exaggerated terms,<sup>40</sup> Lucien Febvre posited an antithesis between the traditional historians “who lived in a respect for the ‘fact’ which was as puerile as it was devout” and the innovators for whom the basis of academic work consisted in “asking questions and formulating hypotheses.” The first group saw this new option as a betrayal which amounted to “allowing the Trojan horse of subjectivity to penetrate the city of objectivity...” Today, there is a general consensus that questions and initial explanatory hypotheses play an indispensable role,<sup>41</sup> but the

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Bloch, *Apologie*, 109.

<sup>37</sup> Prost, *Leçons*, 75.

<sup>38</sup> Marrou, *Connaissance*, 201.

<sup>39</sup> Baslez, *Bible et histoire*, 13.

<sup>40</sup> This is probably due to the context in which he made these remarks—in this case, a public lecture. The text is printed in Charles-Olivier Carbonell and Jean Walch, eds. *Les sciences historiques de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Larousse, 1994), 216–226, at 219.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. especially the “lesson” about “The historian’s questions” in Prost, *Leçons*, 81–100; Ricoeur, *Mémoire*, 225–226. On the “classics,” cf. Bloch, *Apologie*, 109–111; François Simiand and Lucien Febvre, quoted by Müller, *Febvre*, 235 and 408: “The work of research and of elaboration, of analysis and construction, of positive information and of an inductive and systematic utilization, is one single and indivisible task” (F. Simiand); “there is no scholar in any science who begins his work without a hypothesis, who sets about gathering facts without a hypothesis, or who structures and clarifies the facts which he has assembled without a hypothesis” (L. Febvre); Marrou, *Connaissance*, 201–202 and *passim*.



method works only if one takes one's precautions. It goes without saying that a hypothesis can always be revised as one's work progresses, and one must guard against gradually transforming a hypothetical given into a probable truth, and then into a certainty, unless a synthesis of the arguments justifies this. We are rather more reluctant to attribute a positive role to the imagination because of the connotations of pure fantasy, delirium, or dreaming which are sometimes attached to this word (a French expression calls the imagination *la folle du logis*, which we might translate as "the madwoman in the attic"). Nevertheless, we must have recourse to the imagination, once we acknowledge that we cannot carry out research without antecedent questions, and when we attempt to formulate our working hypotheses. When the imagination is kept under control, it can help provide a concrete perception of the past; above all, the imagination—the "scientific imagination" which is active through our ability to form abstract pictures—is needed in every academic enterprise.<sup>42</sup> Where we cannot carry out laboratory experiments, we employ a kind of mental experiment, although I am convinced that we ought not to go in for too many lines of argument based exclusively on "one may well imagine that..." or "it is not impossible that..." in order to explain the inexplicable. And we must be aware of the surreptitious transformations which occur only too often: "a possibility that cannot be excluded automatically acquires the status of a demonstrated possibility," and "the base metal of mere possibility is regularly and miraculously transmuted into the gold of real probability."<sup>43</sup> I agree with those who hold that one should not stick one's neck out too far when one is working without a safety-net, and I would be happy to put my own signature to the principle which Louis Duchesne deduced from Rom 12:3, "I prefer to go less far and to walk in safety."<sup>44</sup> No doubt, "one always dislikes saying: 'I do not know, I cannot say.' One should say this only after having searched energetically, indeed desperately. But there are moments when the most urgent duty of the scholar, after he has tried every avenue, is to accept his ignorance and to admit it honestly."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Here, I follow closely Le Goff, *Histoire*, 208–209. Cf. also the nuances in Prost, *Leçons*, 185.

<sup>43</sup> Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *RB* 108 (2001): 297 and 298.

<sup>44</sup> According to Marrou, *Connaissance*, 139.

<sup>45</sup> Bloch, *Apologie*, 106.

The great masters, especially M. Bloch, recommend that the historian subject the traces of the past to a subtle and indirect reading. The concrete examples exist in order to illustrate that reading. When we pay attention to that which someone “gave, to understand without wishing to tell it” directly, we learn much more about the past than it itself “judged it right to let us know.”<sup>46</sup> This point of view goes further than the classic distinction between voluntary and involuntary testimonies, because the historian is now seeking precisely “to treat voluntary testimonies as involuntary testimonies and to interrogate them about something other than they themselves wished to say.”<sup>47</sup> It is in this manner that the parables in the Gospel offer us information which the social sciences employ to reconstruct their socio-economic environment.

In their work on the basis of documents,<sup>48</sup> which they exploit with rigor and subtlety with the help of the techniques summarized in the terms “methodical school,” “critical method,” or “historical-critical” method, historians agree that they are not simply looking for factual data, but also for connections and for the interplay of cause and effect. Even those who are most sensitive to the subjective implication recognize that history is not the tower of Babel: “two historians who ask a question in the same way, and possess the same documentary data and the same technical and cultural equipment which permits them to get to work on these data, are not going to arrive at different answers: they are not going to construct two separate histories. The historian is not imprisoned within his subjectivity...”<sup>49</sup> The insistence on the personal involvement of the historian in his work has not rendered the words “objective” and “objectivity” taboo. The subjectivity which is acknowledged to exist on the part of the historian “must not lead to a fundamental skepticism with regard to historical objectivity, nor to the abandonment of the notion of *truth* in history.”<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the vocabulary of “objectivity” is perhaps not the best suited today, since it seems to retreat from the close links between the historian and the history which he produces, and to revive the old vulgar positivism.

<sup>46</sup> Bloch, *Apologie*, 108–109. Cf. also 125.

<sup>47</sup> Prost, *Leçons*, 63. According to Michel Foucault (quoted by Le Goff, *Histoire*, 294), the traces “say in silence something other than they say.”

<sup>48</sup> I use this term in its common meaning, without entering here into the very complex discussion of the differences between “monuments” and “documents,” or between “facts” and “events.” Cf. Ricoeur, *Mémoire*, 226–229.

<sup>49</sup> Marrou, *Connaissance*, 218.

<sup>50</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire*, 22 (his italics), cf. also 10 and 194–200.

One may prefer to speak of “distancing oneself,” of “impartiality,” or perhaps simply of “truth,” provided we accept that “in history, truth is that which is proved.”<sup>51</sup> Although it may seem somewhat pedantic, my own preference is for a vocabulary which evokes the consensus which scholars reach on the basis of observations or arguments which all agree to be relevant: “intersubjectivity” and “intersubjective.”<sup>52</sup> We must also take into account the varying “levels of the scientific character of history.” It is fairly easy to reach such a consensus on the basic data, the collection and interpretation of each individual document, but less easy when we engage in “explanatory history” (dealing with social, economic, and political forces); and it becomes truly difficult on the level of the “poetic” history which deals with the vast ensembles which serve “to help a nation understand itself by means of its foundational narratives.”<sup>53</sup>

This means that the emphasis of contemporary historiography on subjectivity and on the personal involvement of the historian inevitably warns the scholar to be extremely prudent—and prudence is all the more necessary when we bear in mind that the available sources themselves to a very large extent have a Christian origin. But is there really a contradiction between an approach which seeks to be rigorously scientific and the work undertaken by an historian who finds himself “addressed personally”<sup>54</sup> because of his faith? This specific issue is one element in a wider debate which took place in France after the First World War,<sup>55</sup> but is not limited to any one place or time. It concerns the impartiality which is necessary, the distance which must be kept, and the tension between personal involvement and the freedom to look afresh at the questions. The difficulty is due to the fact that this commitment can help the scholar to see more clearly in a matter which he knows from the inside with a “knowledge born of friendship” (to use Marrou’s phrase); at the same time, however, this commitment can equally well lend itself to nationalistic and political excesses.

<sup>51</sup> Prost, *Leçons*, 266–268 and 288–293, at 289.

<sup>52</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire*, 196, points out the advantages of this vocabulary.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *La critique et la conviction* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1995), 131–132.

<sup>54</sup> On this question, cf. the nuanced reflections by Jean-Paul Michaud, “Jésus de l’histoire et Jésus des évangiles : À l’occasion du *Jésus de Nazareth* de Jacques Schlosser,” *Theoforum* 32 (2001): 223–233, at 232–233.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Müller, *Febvre*, 325–330.

### 3. *The Sources*

“Without documents, there is no history.” It is difficult to disagree with this principle of the two masters of the methodical school, Langlois and Seignobos.<sup>56</sup> The value of the historian’s work depends on the wealth and quality of his sources—but also on their diversity, since often the light can come only “from the converging rays of testimonies of a very diverse nature.”<sup>57</sup> Traditionally, the historian’s tool *par excellence* has been the cross-checking of his sources.<sup>58</sup> In this respect, the historian who studies Jesus finds himself at a disadvantage, since the object of his researches belongs to local history, which seldom offers many documents (especially epigraphic sources), and where archaeology, though not silent, does not have the important role which it plays in other sectors.<sup>59</sup>

By rediscovering to some extent “Jesus the Jew,” recent research has naturally enough emphasized the study of his environment. Many investigations into Galilee have been carried out from the general perspective of the social sciences, and the exploitation of the countless pieces of information which we find in the works of Flavius Josephus is a significant documentary enrichment of our knowledge of the environment in which Jesus lived.<sup>60</sup> More directly, in addition to what Josephus tells us about James and John the Baptist, the passage about Jesus himself (*Ant.* 18.63–64) has taken on a new value, since recent analyses have shown convincingly that we may now consider this, not as a completely secondary addition, but as a text of Josephus with some

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<sup>56</sup> It is quoted by Le Goff, *Histoire*, 297.

<sup>57</sup> Bloch, *Apologie*, 111; Marie-Françoise Baslez, in the introduction to a collection she has edited: *Les premiers temps de l’Eglise de saint Paul à saint Augustin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 8. Cf. also the personal testimony by Le Goff, *Histoire*, 217.

<sup>58</sup> Marie-Françoise Baslez, *Les sources littéraires de l’histoire grecque* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003), recalls this repeatedly. Her book is also a fine illustration of the information which the historian can find in a great variety of texts if he knows how to practice the indirect reading mentioned above.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), especially his summary on 212–220. Not even important centers such as Sepphoris and Capernaum furnish many epigraphic texts (121 and 156).

<sup>60</sup> This benefit can be seen with particular clarity in Martin Ebner, *Jesus von Nazareth in seiner Zeit: Sozialgeschichtliche Zugänge*, SBS 196 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2003).

Christian interpolations.<sup>61</sup> The progress of Palestinian archaeology has supplied numerous indirect data.<sup>62</sup>

In another field, the “neo-liberal” wing of the Third Quest<sup>63</sup> has paid remarkable attention to the non-canonical Christian documentation, with a general tendency to attribute an earlier date to these writings than is customary, and to insist on their independence vis-à-vis the canonical sources. These texts must certainly be taken into consideration, but their contribution remains limited by their fragmentary state of conservation. The promotion of the Secret Gospel of Mark and the “Cross Gospel” as independent and very ancient texts is based on indications that are very fragile; at any rate, prudence warns against locating these works (if they actually ever existed *as such*) at the origins of the trajectory of the gospels.<sup>64</sup> The *Gospel of Thomas*, on the other hand, deserves a serious consideration, but no global judgment about its value and its relevance is genuinely convincing: one cannot claim that it is a gnostic text, nor that it is wholly free of gnostic passages, and it is impossible to prove either that it is completely dependent on the synoptics or that it is always independent of them. If the *Gospel of Thomas* is to be given its appropriate place in the historical study of Jesus, the best path seems to be to concentrate on the individual logia and to analyze them separately.<sup>65</sup> In this way, the historian can base his

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<sup>61</sup> For the essential elements of the debate, cf. Craig A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*, rev. ed., NTTTS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 280–284. For detailed argumentation, cf. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus 1: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 59–69 with footnotes; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 75–82; Ebner, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 26–27. However, the optimistic judgment of Étienne Nodet (cf. most recently his *Histoire de Jésus? Nécessité et limites d'une enquête* [Paris: Cerf, 2003], 225–228) about the historical value of the Slavonic version of this text is not likely to meet with a scholarly consensus any time soon.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Reed, *Archaeology*; and K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>63</sup> This term is repeatedly used by James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. especially the presentation and criticisms by Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 114–116; and Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 167–172.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. the arguments of Jean-Daniel Kaestli, “L'utilisation de l'Évangile de Thomas dans la recherche actuelle sur les paroles de Jésus,” in *Jésus de Nazareth: Nouvelles approches d'une énigme*, ed. Daniel Marguerat, Enrico Norelli, and Jean-Michel Poffet, 2nd ed., *Le Monde de la Bible* 38 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2003), 373–395; David E. Aune, “Assessing the Historical Value of the Apocryphal Jesus Traditions: A Critique of Conflicting Methodologies,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der*

arguments on a supplementary element in individual instances, when he seeks to define the genesis and growth of a tradition of the synoptic type; both for that part of the tradition behind *Thomas* which does not confirm the synoptics and for that part where independence is probable (despite a relationship of *some* kind to the synoptics), there will thus be an extra attestation to evaluate when he applies the criterion of multiple attestation. This would be particularly useful in the study of the parables.<sup>66</sup>

No sound historical methodology can contest the fact that the major sources remain the canonical gospels. There is no need to spell out in detail the few resemblances and the numerous differences which come to light when one compares the synoptics with John.<sup>67</sup> The differences are so weighty that the principle so vigorously formulated by Albert Schweitzer remains basically valid with regard to the reconstruction of Jesus' preaching: John is a world of its own, and the differences vis-à-vis the synoptics are irreconcilable. This means that the scholar is forced "to decide from the outset in favor of one source or the other. Here, 'no one can serve two masters!'"<sup>68</sup> Naturally, this verdict must be nuanced, not only because John contains some elements of teaching of a synoptic type,<sup>69</sup> but above all because he supplies original and precious data of a geographical and historical nature. But the classic position is fundamentally correct to say that the reconstruction of the teaching of Jesus, its vocabulary, its categories, and its dominant themes must rely on the synoptics as the primary sources.

Form criticism emphasized the apologetic, polemic, missionary, and disciplinary tendencies of the tradition, and redaction criticism, taking up the intuitions of William Wrede, drew attention above all to the creative theological work carried out by the authors of the gospels; but this has surely led to an excessive neglect of the historical intention of

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*gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 243–272.

<sup>66</sup> We may recall that many parables are attested only in the special tradition of Matthew or of Luke, and that Q contains very few parables. This frequently means that the criterion of multiple attestation cannot be used.

<sup>67</sup> Obviously, the difference did not escape the scholars of the nineteenth century. Cf., e.g., the remarks by David Friedrich Strauss which are recalled by Werner Georg Kümmel, *Das Neue Testament: Geschichte der Erforschung seiner Probleme*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1970), 152–154.

<sup>68</sup> Schweitzer, *Geschichte*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> On the logia, cf., e.g., Jacques Schlosser, "Les logia johanniques relatifs au Père," *RevSR* 69 (1995): 87–104.

these texts, forgetting that each gospel purports to be a narrative about a person belonging to the past, and that they certainly intend to locate Jesus within history (Ernst Käsemann). It remains true that they are written in such a way that the paschal triumph of the protagonist is made manifest by means of his portrait: in other words, what they offer us is certainly a testimony of faith. Their authors were not eyewitnesses of events that had taken place fifty or sixty years earlier, nor do they make such a claim. Besides this, they transpose into the past situations and preoccupations which could only have arisen *after* Easter, e.g. how to handle conflicts in a community which has grown in size and is obliged to organize its life (Matt 18:15–18). This is only one elementary example of the numerous traits which pose problems for anyone who wishes to use the gospels directly as sources for the reconstruction of the historical figure of Jesus. At the very least, one must inquire into their genesis, taking into account the various degrees of probability.

Although it has never achieved a consensus on every point of detail, the classic “two-source theory” provides the best starting point. Here, the literary relationships between the texts are certain, and their analysis permits us to regard the priority of Mark as established. On a less certain level—for the simple reason that this is a scholarly hypothesis—the existence of the document “Q,” a collection of logia utilized by Matthew and Luke, is highly probable. Despite the enormous amount of work dedicated to this project from the early 1970’s onwards, the restoration of its contents resembles a road full of pitfalls. This reached a plausible but provisional conclusion with the publication of the “critical edition.”<sup>70</sup> The reconstruction of the genesis of the document Q in two or three stages which can be identified in its text is a much more hypothetical matter. Equally (or even more) uncertain is the reconstruction of a hypothetical “signs source” of a more or less synoptic character which is allegedly reused in the Gospel of John; the same applies to the reconstruction of hypothetical pre-Markan collections. This uncertainty has only one genuine irritating consequence: it weakens the criterion of multiple attestation; otherwise, the elements themselves do not disappear when questions are posed about the existence of one particular literary composition. We are simply left with isolated traditions, and I believe that form criticism, despite the more or less justified criticisms leveled

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<sup>70</sup> James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

in recent years,<sup>71</sup> has supplied (at least implicitly) a methodology for dealing with such texts which remains valid in its essential points.

The synoptic gospels—the fundamental texts which are the necessary starting point for the historian’s work—are not neutral, since they come from groups which already regarded Jesus as the “Lord Jesus,” the Son of God. The commitment here is strongly accented, but it is not unique: it can be observed everywhere in the historiography of classical antiquity, and scholars have drawn attention to particular instances which well exemplify this trait.<sup>72</sup> For example, when Xenophon writes his *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, he produces “a militant literature which cannot be read as a direct contribution to the history of Sparta.” In his parallel *Lives*, Plutarch presents “models of virtue and of an irrational lack of proportion,” and this “is impossible without an edifying prejudice from which one must free oneself, if one wishes to employ these texts as documentary sources.” Diogenes Laertius’s *Lives of the Philosophers* include “developments of a hagiographical character.” Since the gospels are documents which profess their authors’ belief, and take into account the needs of the believing community in an anachronistic and unstated manner, they too must be submitted to a critical analysis. This task is not without its difficulties.

#### 4. A Complex Task

According to the traditional vocabulary of classical times, the work of the historian consists in collecting the *actions* and putting into a proper form the *words* of the heroes.<sup>73</sup> This duality characterizes the canonical gospels, but not the extra-canonical gospels; it applies only to a small extent to Q,

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<sup>71</sup> Cf., e.g., Walter Schmithals, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 298–318; David du Toit, “Erneut auf der Suche nach Jesus: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme der Jesusforschung am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts,” in *Jesus im 21. Jahrhundert: Bultmanns Jesusbuch und die heutige Jesusforschung*, ed. Ulrich H. J. Körtner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002), 91–134, at 132–133, with bibliography in n. 164; idem, “Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and Its Earliest Records*, ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmitt, JSNTSup 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 82–124, at 122–123, with bibliography in n. 160.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Baslez, *Sources*, 66 and 194–195 (the quotations in the text are taken from these pages).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War* 1.22; Flavius Josephus, *Apion* 1.9, claims to know everything about the events he describes, since he was an eyewitness; Acts 1:1 belongs to the same tradition.



where the words predominate. There is no reason *a priori* to prefer one of these two series of materials rather than the other, but until recently, the logia (or, to put it briefly, the preaching of Jesus) have enjoyed a privileged position, for the following reasons. In the rather rare instances where the New Testament writings other than the gospels refer explicitly or implicitly to Jesus, it is primarily his words that are evoked.<sup>74</sup> But above all, if we look at the texts of the gospels themselves, we can see that the words which Jesus spoke (or is supposed to have spoken) are transmitted with greater care and precision than the narratives about him. For this reason, I continue to believe that the logia as a whole are historically more reliable than the narratives about Jesus.<sup>75</sup> In order to verify this reliability, two approaches have been traditionally employed, and these are more closely linked than my presentation suggests, viz. the reconstruction of the primitive form of a logion by means of literary analysis, and the application of the criteria of authenticity in order to test historical reliability.

The first approach has become more precarious today. Whereas an earlier generation could practice it on a large scale without being troubled by methodological considerations, the idea that literary analysis can be employed to reconstruct the primitive form seems to have lost its credibility today, thanks to the considerable variations which we observe in the scholars' affirmations. Let me illustrate this by means of a few examples where the divergences in the analyses are extraordinarily persistent. Did the logion about the exorcisms of Jesus in Luke 11:20 par. Matt 12:28 refer to the "finger" of God or to the "Spirit" of God? In the eschatological judgment to which Luke 12:8 par. Matt 10:32 alludes, is the one who vouches for the believer (the defense witness) the "I" of Jesus (Matthew) or the Son of Man (Luke)? And what is the "correct version" of the logion about divorce, or of the words spoken at the Last Supper? E. P. Sanders believes that the consensus of the exegetes covers too few texts to permit "a full depiction of Jesus" and that the analysis of the discourse material does not succeed in giving us a convincing picture of Jesus which answers important historical questions.<sup>76</sup> He is probably not

<sup>74</sup> Here I have in mind especially the Corpus Paulinum, James, and 1 Peter.

<sup>75</sup> Here I agree with Dieter Lührmann, "Die Logienquelle und die Leben-Jesu-Forschung," in *The Sayings Source and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press and Peeters, 2001), 191–206, despite the reservations by Jens Schröter, "Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus," in the same volume, 207–254, at 245–246.

<sup>76</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), esp. 3–18 (quotation from 4) and 133.

the only scholar to think that “the material was subject to change and may have changed, but... we do not know just how it changed” (p. 15). But perhaps we should go one step further, and ask about the appropriateness of a model which supposes that the path of tradition always runs via the contacts between various written texts<sup>77</sup> and that in any case, if an oral tradition did exist, it was very soon replaced completely by the written tradition. It is doubtless nearer the truth to assume that the oral tradition persisted for a long time alongside the written transmission—and this is no new discovery.<sup>78</sup> The words of Papias quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.4) are often cited in this context: “If anyone chanced to come who had actually been a follower of the elders, I would enquire as to the discourses of the elders, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the Lord’s disciples; and the things which Aristion and John the elder, disciples of the Lord, say. For I supposed that things out of books did not profit me so much as the utterances of a voice which lives and abides.”<sup>79</sup> On the basis of some practices which had become institutionalized in traditional societies,<sup>80</sup> it has often been thought that oral tradition is characterized by an extreme fixity, but this is not correct. “The memory which is transmitted by apprenticeship in societies without writing is not a memory ‘word for word,’” and it seems rather that “the specialists of the tradition can innovate, whereas a written text on the contrary can have a ‘magical’ character which makes it more or less untouchable. This means that we should not posit an antithesis between an oral history which would be a history of fidelity and immobility on the one hand, and a written history on the other which would be a history of malleability and perfectibility.”<sup>81</sup> Recent exegesis benefits from

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<sup>77</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, has recently insisted very strongly on this point in his ample chapter on tradition (173–254).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. O. Cullmann’s article (1925) reprinted in his *Vorträge und Aufsätze 1925–1962* (Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck; Zurich: Zwingli, 1966), 41–89 (at 55–59).

<sup>79</sup> ET: Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine* 1 (London: SPCK, 1927), 99. Cf., e.g., Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck, 2000), 244–245.

<sup>80</sup> In our context, the rabbinic tradition has often been proposed as a relevant example, especially by the Scandinavian school represented by names such as H. Riesenfeld, B. Gerhardsson, and S. Byrskog. For information, cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 197–198.

<sup>81</sup> Le Goff, *Histoire*, 113–114 and 225–226. He refers to Jack R. Goody, *La raison graphique : La domestication de la pensée sauvage* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), but it should be borne in mind that this book is a study of a society without writing.

these perspectives, even though our sources were not born in a society without writing.<sup>82</sup>

One other point of view should be taken into consideration, when we recall the specific manner in which Jesus himself said what he had to say. He did not sit in an academy, imparting his teaching to a group of disciples who had chosen to enroll in his school. Whatever one may think of the idea of “itinerant radicalism,” it is certain that Jesus moved from place to place and that he offered his message to a variety of persons in particular circumstances. Everything suggests that he possessed a real pedagogical talent and that he formulated his teaching for the specific persons who were listening to him. We often see him reacting to an event, and although the *mise-en-scène* may be due to the work of composition carried out by the agents of the tradition on the basis of the literary genre of the ethical maxim (*chreia*), there must also be cases which reflect historical reality, such as Luke 13:1–5. As Heinz Schürmann has demonstrated so brilliantly in a remarkable article which unfortunately is largely forgotten, there must have been typical situations before Easter, linked for example to the life of the group of disciples, situations which led Jesus to intervene several times on one and the same topic in order to appeal for constancy or to recommend mutual service.<sup>83</sup> Finally, we must not forget an obvious point to which O. Cullmann explicitly drew attention in 1925<sup>84</sup> and which J. D. G. Dunn has forcefully recalled in the very title of his book *Jesus Remembered*, viz. that the sources give us access only to the impact which the words of Jesus made on his disciples and to the impression which these words made on them.<sup>85</sup> All these observations suggest reservations vis-à-vis the model supplied by textual criticism: in this perspective, there is not one single *authentic* reading with *secondary* variants.

Under these conditions—and without even mentioning the discrepancies which are unavoidable when one passes from the original

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 192–210.

<sup>83</sup> Heinz Schürmann, “Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus: Beiträge zum Christusverständnis in Forschung und Verkündigung*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1962), 342–370, reprinted in H. Schürmann, *Jesus: Gestalt und Geschichte: Gesammelte Beiträge*, ed. Klaus Scholtissek (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1994), 380–397 (first part) and 85–103 (second part).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Cullmann, *Vorträge und Aufsätze 1925–1962*, 75.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. also James D. G. Dunn, “‘All That glistens is not Gold’: In Quest of the Right Key to unlock the Way of the historical Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 131–161.

Aramaic to the Greek translation—it is sensible to abandon the idea of reconstructing every last verbal detail of the words of Jesus (except in those few privileged cases where the documentation permits this) and to concentrate instead on the subject matter, or quite simply the contents, the meaning of his words.<sup>86</sup> There are however special instances where we can hear the *ipsissima vox Iesu*—Theissen and Winter speak of “clues to particularity.”<sup>87</sup> These are akin to what Marc Bloch calls the “truly exceptional expressions” which alone “can reveal the identity of an author.”<sup>88</sup> I believe however that as a general rule, we should press the analysis of the exact verbal forms as far as possible, in order to avoid the risk of accepting too easily a thematic equivalence. It is not especially important to know whether the demons were expelled “by the finger of God” or “by the Spirit of God”—in each case, the language refers to the power of the intervention. But it is not irrelevant to know precisely who or what was expected to come: the Son of Man in or with his kingdom (Matt 16:28), or the kingdom of God himself (Mark 9:1).

In order to be able to attribute to Jesus himself the words which are reconstructed in this way, sometimes in their exact verbal form or at least in their characteristic tone,<sup>89</sup> but more frequently in their contents, we must take the second step, which aims at establishing the authenticity of the logia (it applies equally to the facts related in the gospels) at least in the minimal perspective evoked, not without humor and with a measure of skepticism, by Sanders:<sup>90</sup> “An ‘authentic’ saying is one which we have good reason to believe is as close to something that Jesus said as we can hope for.” “Good reasons” can be discovered by means of the various approaches which constitute the historical method in general: above all, the cross-checking and comparison of one’s sources, but also the investigation and confirmation of a possible connection between the events/cause and the events/result. The criteria which were gradually assembled by historical research into Jesus, and have been subject

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<sup>86</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 194–206.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 190–191.

<sup>88</sup> *Apologie*, 149.

<sup>89</sup> The French word *ton* suggests something that is difficult to define precisely. From a more general point of view, Gérard Rochais sensitively paints an evocative picture of what *ton* means: “Du bricolage exégétique,” *Religiologiques* 9 (Spring 1994): 139–155, at 146: “The tone is not the voice of the writer, nor his style, nor the interest and the quality of his language, but his particular way of expressing himself, which imposes silence on the common language by rising up above this.”

<sup>90</sup> *Jesus and Judaism*, 357 n. 30.

to reconsideration in recent years,<sup>91</sup> are basically an adaptation of the rules governing all historical work to the particular case of research into Jesus and the birth of Christianity.

Examples are the criterion of multiple attestation, and what V. Fusco calls the criterion of “sufficient explanation” because its starting point is the observed effects, from which it argues back to the necessary causes: basically, one must understand and explain “how and why things happen.”<sup>92</sup> This criterion overlaps with what J. P. Meier calls the criterion of rejection.<sup>93</sup> According to Fusco,<sup>94</sup> we must see the “sufficient explanation” as “the criterion *par excellence*. If the criteria of ‘multiple attestation,’ of ‘coherence,’ and . . . of ‘discontinuity’ are to become genuinely effective, they must come down to this criterion. The criterion of ‘discontinuity’ is merely one particular application of the criterion of ‘sufficient explanation’: for the reason why we must attribute to Jesus something that contrasts with the tendencies of Judaism and of earliest Christianity is precisely because we would lack a sufficient explanation of such a phenomenon.”

It is the criterion of double difference that has generated the most extensive debate. We sometimes hear that this criterion has almost completely vanished in the most recent research—for example, G. Theissen and D. Winter assert that the Third Quest has abandoned in principle that part of the criterion which refers to the difference vis-à-vis Judaism, and has applied in a more controlled manner that part which refers to the difference vis-à-vis Christianity.<sup>95</sup> This affirmation seems somewhat exaggerated.<sup>96</sup> There has nevertheless been a clear tendency in the Third

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<sup>91</sup> Here I mention only a few major works: Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*; Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds. *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, NTTS 28.2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999); idem, eds. *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, NTTS Vol. 28, no. 1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999); Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical- Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>92</sup> Prost, *Leçons*, 306.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *A Marginal Jew I*, 177.

<sup>94</sup> Vittorio Fusco, “La quête du Jésus historique. Bilan et perspectives,” in *Jésus*, ed. Marguerat et al., 25–57, esp. 55–56.

<sup>95</sup> *Kriterienfrage*, 173. David du Toit, “Erneut auf der Suche nach Jesus,” 115, takes the same position; cf., however, idem, “Der unähnliche Jesus: Eine kritische Evaluierung der Entstehung des Differenzkriteriums und seiner geschichts- und erkenntnistheoretischen Voraussetzungen,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 89–139, at 90–91.

<sup>96</sup> Here I mention only the fact that this criterion is still employed, in a controlled manner, by Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazareth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 17–18; and by Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 171–174; cf. also the remarks by Porter, *Criteria*, 122. As Ingo

Quest, at least on the part of some scholars, to take the opposite path to the Second Quest, which was concerned to underline the relationship between the preaching of Jesus and the kerygma of the church and therefore liked to emphasize the relationship between Jesus and Christianity, heightening his originality vis-à-vis Judaism. Today, the tendency is to underline heavily the integration of Jesus into Judaism and, correlatively, to insist on the discontinuity which exists between Jesus and earliest Christianity.<sup>97</sup> In its extreme form, found in some publications intended for a mass readership, this tendency states that the gospels have nothing to do with the history of Jesus and that they are merely an ideological construction, a discourse.<sup>98</sup>

Enough has been said about the absurdities to which the strict application of the isolated criterion of radical originality can lead; it is certainly correct to say that “we cannot imagine a Jesus who was always in disagreement with Judaism and a church which was always in disagreement with Jesus.”<sup>99</sup> Käsemann himself was perfectly aware of this, when he presented his classic definition of this criterion and immediately added that it was of course powerless to show us what *united* Jesus to Judaism and to earliest Christianity.<sup>100</sup> There was also a general agreement to restrict the validity of this criterion: “the criterion is valid in a *positive* not *negative* application.”<sup>101</sup> It serves to maintain, not to exclude, and it can be applied only in privileged instances. Many scholars however find these precautions insufficient.

The strongest criticism, supported by a rigorous logic, has been made by T. Holmén, who argues that we must deconstruct this criterion and reject its first half, since “dissimilarity to Judaism furnishes no indication

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Broer has shown with his customary precision on points of detail, the criticism which has been leveled at this criterion is far from wholly convincing: “Die Bedeutung der historischen Rückfrage nach Jesus und die Frage nach deren Methodik,” in *Jesus von Nazaret—Spuren und Konturen*, ed. Ludger Schenke et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 19–41, at 32–36.

<sup>97</sup> du Toit, “Erneut auf der Suche,” 116 n. 106.

<sup>98</sup> We find the same tendency in a more general manner wherever the slogan resounds that there are no basic differences between writing history and writing a novel. For illustrations, cf. Prost, *Leçons*, 283–284.

<sup>99</sup> Vittorio Fusco, “Introduzione generale ai Sinottici,” in *Vangeli sinottici ed Atti degli apostoli*, ed. Mauro Lâconi et al., Logos, Corso di studi biblici 5 (Turin: Elle Di Ci, 1994), 33–132, at 124.

<sup>100</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “Das Problem des historischen Jesus,” in *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen 1*, ed. Ernst Käsemann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 187–214, at 205.

<sup>101</sup> Craig A. Evans, “Recent Developments in Jesus Research: Presuppositions, Criteria, and Sources,” in *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–49, at 21.

of authenticity and has, as a principle, nothing to do with the question of authenticity.”<sup>102</sup> It is in fact a logical error to overlook the possibility that the community may of its own accord have accentuated the originality of Jesus in order to justify its own positions. The second half of the criterion, regarding the difference vis-à-vis nascent Christianity, remains entirely valid and can be used effectively. When the criterion is reduced in this way, Holmén sees it as a somewhat toned-down variant of the criterion of ecclesiastical embarrassment.<sup>103</sup> I find the disqualification of the difference vis-à-vis Judaism excessive. It is of course perfectly possible that the community enhances the status of its own novelty vis-à-vis Judaism by attributing this to Jesus—all the more so, since earliest Christianity displays a number of different tendencies. For example, it is possible that the logion Q 16:17 was introduced into the tradition by a group which wished to oppose all laxity with regard to the law; in this case, given that Jesus does not appear to be overly concerned about individual details of the law, we might indeed have to refuse the attribution of this logion to Jesus, and ascribe it to another Jew.<sup>104</sup> It would however still be necessary to base this assertion on evidence of the positive interest of the community in some particular situation. Let us simply note that it regulated the problem of circumcision without attributing to Jesus one single word on the subject (with the exception of *Gos. Thom.* 3); and that the controversies and logia about the Sabbath are presented in the gospels, but the epistolary literature does not provide even slight indications—Gal 4:10 and Col 2:16 are not exceptions—about the problem which the Sabbath may have posed to the Christian community. In other words, the dissimilarity vis-à-vis Judaism ought to be invoked as a criterion of authenticity in cases where Christianity does not reveal any particular interest in one or other topic.

The demolition and reorganization of the criterion of double dissimilarity lead to a new and rather complex construction by G. Theissen and his collaborators.<sup>105</sup> They argue that we must salvage a few solid elements from this criterion and then abandon it. It must be transformed

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<sup>102</sup> Tom Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 47–80, at 75.

<sup>103</sup> For the various names given to this criterion, cf. Porter, *Criteria*, 106–107.

<sup>104</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 21.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, esp. 175–217; Theissen and Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 117–120.

by the integration of coherence or multiple attestation, thus becoming a criterion of historical plausibility which can be defined as follows: “an historical reconstruction of Jesus is historically credible only if it is plausible against the background of the Judaism of his time and if it makes plausible the evolution which leads from Jesus to earliest Christianity.”<sup>106</sup> Data in the sources merit our confidence when they are both plausible in the Jewish context and comprehensible as an effect generated by Jesus. A high value is thus attached to the harmony revealed by a comparison of the gospel sources with Jewish data. The expectation underlying the criterion of dissimilarity was that it would be possible to bring to light the ruptures and hence the originality of Jesus; the position now is that Jesus could have said and done only what a charismatic Jew of the first century CE could have said and done.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, while aware that the community probably altered the pre-Easter traditions in order to adapt them to its new situation, the scholar will be attentive to the continuity between Jesus and the community. In particular, he or she will emphasize the value of those elements which the community preserved despite the fact that they no longer had any interest in them, or even found them embarrassing. Here, the argument about difference is taken up anew under the form of the criterion of embarrassment. It can be seen that the sources have taken over data which were in accord with the interests of the community, as well as other data which ran contrary to these interests. It can be useful here to bear in mind the complementary points of view which are relevant to the question of plausibility in relationship to a specific context (in the sense of a social environment).

The insertion into a context can consist both of conformity and of originality. There is no antithesis between conformity to an environment and the originality of an historical personage. Individuality should be understood, not as *opposition* to a shared context (i.e., in keeping with the criterion of dissimilarity), but as *difference within* a shared context.

In this construction, everything seems well thought out and logically put together.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, I have serious doubts about its practical

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<sup>106</sup> I borrow this happy formulation from Daniel Marguerat, “La troisième quête du Jésus de l’histoire,” *RSR* 87 (1999): 327–421, at 417.

<sup>107</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 119.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. however the acute criticism by Holmén, “Doubts,” 73–74 n. 106; and the reservations of Porter, *Criteria*, 121–122.



usefulness: is it really possible to employ this criterion? We should no doubt bear in mind that the criterion of historical plausibility, when constructed in this elaborate manner, does not offer us a test that we must apply to individual texts; rather, it is an invitation to take account of the complexity of reality. In general, it must be said that the term “criterion” is inappropriate, since it suggests a rigorously academic test following a procedure that must be applied in order that precise facts may be established beyond any doubt. Would it not be better to speak of simple safeguards which stake out the path for the investigation, and help the scholar—not without making use of his intuition<sup>109</sup>—to organize some of his “odd jobs around the house”? We touch at this point on a debate that is probably inexhaustible, viz. the question of the very nature of history: is it an art or a science? Doubtless it is both, as Bloch so elegantly puts it: “The critique of testimony has as its object realities of the psyche, and will therefore always remain an *art involving subtle sensitivity*. There is no book of recipes for it to consult. But it is also an *art involving the reason*, based on the methodical practice of some great operations of the human spirit.”<sup>110</sup> In part, at any rate, the historian functions like a professional worker with his own specific know-how, and the word “household tasks” (*bricolage*) is perfectly appropriate here, provided we strip it of its negative connotations and see in this “odd-job man” (*bricoleur*) one who is “skilful, ingenious, an all-rounder, imaginative, and an artist.”<sup>111</sup> This term helps evoke one particular dimension of the historian’s work and does justice to “the feeling that there is no rule that can be applied automatically and systematically, that everything is a question of the correct dosage, of feeling one’s way, of learning to understand.”<sup>112</sup>

### 5. Constraints and Freedom

One of the main difficulties encountered by historical research into Jesus is achieving the correct balance between an emphasis on particular texts or traits and the appreciation of the indirect information which may be

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<sup>109</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 191, suggest this (“often very intuitive”) with reference to the total figure of an historical person, which must be discerned by combining different elements.

<sup>110</sup> Bloch, *Apologie*, 139 (my italics).

<sup>111</sup> Rochais, “Bricolage,” 142.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Prost, *Leçons*, 146–151, at 147.

furnished by “global paradigms,”<sup>113</sup> holistic patterns which are available in the biblical or Jewish tradition, where these are regarded not merely as a background but as sources in the strict sense of the term, and where one therefore draws largely on them—as is legitimate in historical research. Examples of such globalizing pictures are the Deuteronomistic motif of the persecuted prophets,<sup>114</sup> the heroic exploit of the exodus which culminates in the entry into the promised land,<sup>115</sup> the apocalyptic paradigm reconstructed by Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, and the image of the exile from which the people hope to be delivered.<sup>116</sup>

This is why the model of the “restoration of Israel,”<sup>117</sup> alone or in combination with the motif of the exile, has often been used in recent years<sup>118</sup> to explain the future dimension of the kingdom of God and the nature of the salvation to be expected when God’s reign is fully accomplished.<sup>119</sup> According to N. T. Wright, the Israel of the Second Temple was in a state of exile and hoped for the restoration of the symbols of a life in accordance with the covenant: the temple would be rebuilt, the country cleansed, and Torah would be observed perfectly (p. 280). All this is envisaged as taking place in this world, and Israel is interested in tangible realities: the temple, the country, the law, the race, the economy, and justice (p. 285). The expected resurrection would lead to a bodily life here below, with bodies capable of enjoying the very tangible benefits linked to peace and prosperity (p. 286). In short, the fundamental

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<sup>113</sup> This expression is coined by Prost, *Leçons*, 234, à propos Marxism and structuralism.

<sup>114</sup> Odil Hannes Steck, *Jesus und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum*, WMANT 23 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).

<sup>115</sup> This depiction seems important, if we are to understand the prophets of action in the first century CE about whom we read in Josephus. Cf., e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 286.

<sup>116</sup> For a synthesis and critique of this model, which has been employed above all by N. T. Wright, cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 472–477.

<sup>117</sup> On this subject, cf. James M. Scott, ed. *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, JSJSup 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>118</sup> It is not however new, as we see from the plea by Helmut Flender, *Die Botschaft Jesu von der Herrschaft Gottes* (München: Kaiser, 1968), 30–51, in favor of a “realization of salvation here on earth.”

<sup>119</sup> Cf. above all Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, esp. 123–211 and 319–340; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus 3: Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 125–197; Scot McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teaching of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); idem, “Jesus and the Twelve,” *BBR* 11 (2001): 203–231; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992).

hope of Israel concerns freedom from oppression, the restoration of the country, and the rebuilding of the temple (p. 299): for the age to come, Israel awaited liberation from the Roman yoke, the restoration of the temple, and delight in its own land (p. 300). E. P. Sanders has noted similar elements, which he incorporates into a larger synthesis.<sup>120</sup> He describes the following distinctive traits of an eschatology of restoration: (1) the gathering of all Israel, i.e. of the twelve tribes, which implies the theme of the land; (2) the conversion of the Gentiles or their extermination; (3) the reconstruction of Jerusalem and of the temple in a new glory; (4) the purity of the eschatological cult and the uprightness of the people's life, which involves or implies faithfulness to the law. D. E. Aune and E. Stewart see the following elements as constitutive here: the restoration of the country and of the kingship, the gathering of the people, the restoration of the temple and of Jerusalem, paradise lost and regained, and the restoration of creation.<sup>121</sup>

A number of scholars have applied this model with varying degrees of intensity to the eschatology of Jesus. The variety is not surprising, given the semantic breadth of the word "restoration," which covers both the re-establishing of a situation which no longer exists and a renewal which may perhaps be purely spiritual. Let me illustrate this variety by briefly presenting two positions. According to E. P. Sanders,<sup>122</sup> the lack of homogeneity between the deeds which Jesus is recorded to have performed and the words which he is recorded to have said means that we cannot affirm without further ado—i.e., as if it were an obvious fact!—that his eschatology is in continuity with the Jewish expectation of the restoration of Israel. Nevertheless, the priority given to the facts—i.e., the baptism by John, the group of the twelve, the action of cleansing the temple accompanied by the threat of its destruction, and finally the persistence even after Easter of the idea of the restoration of Israel (cf. Acts 1:6)—permits us to consider this hypothesis as probable. We must however note the absence of the political and nationalist dimension; nor does Jesus issue a general appeal to the Jewish nation to repent.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>120</sup> *Jesus and Judaism*, 77–116; *Practice and Belief*, 289–295.

<sup>121</sup> D. E. Aune with Eric Stewart, "From the Idealized Past to the Imaginative Future: Eschatological Restoration in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Restoration*, ed. Scott, 147–177.

<sup>122</sup> *Jesus and Judaism*, esp. 106–119.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. also the prudent presentation of this question in E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Viking, 1994).

According to Scot McKnight, a resolute follower of the position taken by Wright,<sup>124</sup> the Jesus tradition as a whole is profoundly shaped by the model of the restoration of Israel. This applies to Jesus' vision of God, his eschatology, and his ethics. McKnight frequently recalls the distinctive traits of the underlying picture: the nation of Israel, its land, the twelve tribes, liberation from foreign dominion, the restoration of the temple, and purification.<sup>125</sup> Globalizing concepts such as covenant, salvation, liberation, deliverance from exile, and theophany are proposed as hermeneutical keys.<sup>126</sup>

Obviously, we cannot begin a detailed exegetical discussion of such a complex question here. Let me simply mention some facts which suggest prudence. The Jewish tradition itself contains evocations of the future which are not centered on the restoration of Israel in any very realistic sense. In order to express their hope, these employ Greek motifs which speak of a more transcendent dimension<sup>127</sup> or else, as in some apocalyptic texts, have recourse to astral motifs in a completely utopian perspective.<sup>128</sup> In the specific case of the Jesus tradition—considered as an identifiable complex within Judaism—the evidence adduced in favor of an interpretation of Jesus' eschatology in terms of the restoration of Israel is of unequal value.

The most important piece of evidence is certainly the choice of the twelve. It is scarcely possible to doubt the historicity of this action by Jesus, and it makes sense only on the basis of the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>129</sup> The existence of the twelve and their participation in the mission of

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<sup>124</sup> I find the following remarks typical: the absence of the vocabulary of exile in the Jesus tradition is irrelevant because "kingdom language is 'end of exile' language; 'end of exile' is negative to the positive 'kingdom'": *New Vision*, 83 n. 51.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. esp. McKnight, *New Vision*, 9–14, and the theses proposed on 120, 129, and 155.

<sup>126</sup> McKnight, *New Vision*, 80. For an analogy, cf. Nodet, *Histoire de Jésus*, 206: "The totality of the public life of Jesus is integrated into a symbolic geography linked to his homonym Joshua."

<sup>127</sup> Cf. the texts from Philo (*Life of Moses* 2.288) and Josephus (*Ant.* 18.14, 16, 18; *War* 1.650; 2.154–155, 164–165; 3.374–375; 7.343–346; *Apion* 2.218) cited by Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 298–301.

<sup>128</sup> Cf., e.g., Dan 12:3; *1 Enoch* 104.2; Ps.-Philo, *L.A.B.* 19.12–13. Émile Puech, *La croyance des esséniens en la vie future: immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien*, EB 21 and 22 (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), has underlined the tremendous variety of beliefs about the modalities of the future life, with particular emphasis on the evidence of a spiritual and transcendent conception.

<sup>129</sup> The essay by John P. Meier, "Jesus, the Twelve, and the Restoration of Israel," in *Restoration*, ed. Scott, 365–404, concentrates on this point. Most of this text takes up the arguments in his *A Marginal Jew III*, 125–197.

Jesus mean that he centered his activity on Israel.<sup>130</sup> But what about their function in the kingdom, once this is set up? At first sight, the traditions in Q 22:28–30 par. and Mark 10:35–40 give a clear answer: they will sit beside Jesus and are called to exercise an official function. The difficulties begin when we try to define this more precisely. In the logion about the thrones, are we to read “thrones” or “twelve thrones,” and are we to understand *krinein* as “governing” or (in the more obvious sense of the verb) “judging,” or even “condemning”? And is the authenticity really as certain as scholars assure us?<sup>131</sup> One piece of evidence which suggests caution, or even a negative judgment,<sup>132</sup> is the clear presence of the *messianic* kingdom (in the broad sense of this term) in Mark 10:37, 40, as well as elements of redactional interpretation which frame the brief fragment of Q which is reconstructed on the basis of Matt 19:28 par. Luke 22:28–30. We must beware of confusing the messianic kingdom with the kingdom of God. The two are nowhere else attested together in the gospel texts, and the messianic kingdom plays scarcely any role in the preaching of Jesus—unless one wishes to employ the language of the commentators (which is not the language of the texts themselves) to express the place and the role of Jesus in the kingdom of God by means of the phrase “messianic kingdom” (e.g. Q 11:20). Aristotle observed that “one swallow does not make a summer,” especially if it flaps its wings; and perhaps not even two swallows are enough. I am not convinced by the evidence which is often adduced in confirmation of the implications of Mark 10:35–40 and Q 22:28–30.

Did Jesus associate the coming kingdom with a concrete temple which would function as such? This seems to me far from certain, since not all the versions of the logion about the temple contain the positive clause announcing a new construction (this is lacking in Acts 6:14 and *Gos. Thom.* 71), and also because the double symbolism of the temple in earliest Christianity—both christological (exploited in John 2:21–22) and ecclesiological—would account very well for the insertion of the reconstruction into the other versions (Mark 14:58 par.; 15:29; John 2:19).<sup>133</sup> Some

<sup>130</sup> Sanders rightly emphasizes this trait: *Jesus and Judaism*, esp. 98–106; cf. also McKnight, *New Vision*, passim; and idem, “Jesus and the Twelve.”

<sup>131</sup> Cf. especially the very positive judgment by Meier, *A Marginal Jew III*, 137–138.

<sup>132</sup> For information, cf. Dieter Zeller, “Jesus, Q und die Zukunft Israels,” in *Sayings Source*, ed. Lindemann, 362–365.

<sup>133</sup> For an analysis, cf. Jacques Schlosser, “La parole de Jésus sur la fin du Temple,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 398–414.

of the elements in the Jewish picture of the restoration of Israel and of its background play only a very minor role in the Jesus tradition,<sup>134</sup> and although it is always difficult to interpret a silence, this fact invites us not to gloss over the differences between the traditional Jewish expectation and that of Jesus.<sup>135</sup> Let me mention only the almost complete absence of the theme of the land—all the more striking, in that the Christian tradition employs the “logia of entering” into the *basileia*,<sup>136</sup> as Jesus himself had sometimes done. The expression “to enter the *basileia*,” which almost amounts to a formula, was entirely appropriate as an evocation of the fulfillment of Israel’s national hope. But the logia in question (cf. in particular Mark 9:47 and 10:25) cannot be understood in this light, nor can another very characteristic series in which the *basileia* is portrayed as a gift of God to certain categories of persons, e.g. the “poor” in the first beatitude (Q 6:20b) or the children (Mark 10:14 par.; 10:15 par.). The criterion of coherence thus leads me to be cautious about accepting the above-mentioned interpretation of Mark 10:35–40 and Q 22:28–30. Besides this, although there is no reason to doubt Jesus’ openness vis-à-vis Israel, we must not forget the fact that the addressee of his words, his demands, or his promises, is often the individual.

More precisely still, the logion at Mark 9:47, one of the best examples of the individual appeal by Jesus, points in a different direction than the realistic idea of the restoration of Israel, since it envisages a place beyond death.<sup>137</sup> This can be seen even more clearly in the way in which Mark 12:25 (part of a text which is probably authentic)<sup>138</sup> evokes the

<sup>134</sup> There is a brief survey of this question in Jacques Schlosser, “Der Gott Jesu und die Aufhebung der Grenzen,” in *Der Gott Israels im Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments*, ed. U. Busse, QD 201 (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 58–79, at 60–63.

<sup>135</sup> As an illustration, cf. the clear-cut verdict by Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, ed. Otto Merk, UTB 630 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980), 3.

<sup>136</sup> The epistolary literature of the New Testament and the apostolic fathers bear witness to a spiritualization of the idea of the kingdom, which is in effect identified with heaven. In this context, they like to use the images which express in the Jewish tradition the idea of entering or inheriting the land.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*; McKnight, *New Vision*, 112. Cf. also the older study by Johannes Theissing, *Die Lehre Jesu von der ewigen Seligkeit: Ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Breslau: Müller & Seiffert, 1940), 49.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. above all Otto Schwankl, *Die Sadduzäerfrage (Mk 12,18–27 parr): Eine exegetisch-theologische Studie zur Auferstehungserwartung*, BBB 66 (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1987), 466–587; and John P. Meier, “The Debate on the Resurrection of the Dead: An Incident from the Ministry of the Historical Jesus?” *JSNT* 77 (2000): 3–24; idem, *A Marginal Jew III*, 431–444 and 479–487. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 237, leaves this question open.

condition of “those who rise from the dead” in terms which exclude a terrestrial conception of salvation.<sup>139</sup> The resurrection from the dead gives access to a “new type of life similar to that of the angels,” which implies “a transcendence of this present world, not simply an improvement of it.”<sup>140</sup> Nor should we forget that the apocalypse—from which we probably cannot dissociate Jesus completely—had reshuffled the cards by relativizing the election of Israel and opening up a universal perspective.

These remarks do not pose a radical question mark against the model of restoration; at the very least, however, they show that it has not supplied the universal key and that it does not function in the most pointed definition that has been given, viz. the revolutionary and political dimension in which the liquidation of the enemy is the condition *sine qua non* of the restoration of Israel. If this model is not to turn into a bulldozer, one must analyze the individual texts, and I myself am inclined to give a wider application to the principle which John P. Meier has formulated with regard to the social sciences: “abstract models... will not supply concrete data that are otherwise lacking.”<sup>141</sup> I entirely agree that the meaning of a symbol such as the “kingdom of God” must be discerned on the basis of its current usage and of its employment by Jesus himself.<sup>142</sup> I am however inclined to attach more weight to the second factor than to the first.

We encounter here one of the classic problems in history, viz. the creativity of an individual who is caught in the constraints of his environment. Since I lack the sufficient philosophical equipment, all I can do here is to offer a few modest remarks by way of a conclusion. The historians of the nineteenth century, influenced both by Idealism and by Romanticism, accorded a disproportionate importance to the individual, especially to the “hero.”<sup>143</sup> With the development of sociology, the social sciences, the history of “mentalities,” and cultural anthropology, the opposite tendency gained ground, and historians insisted much more strongly on the constraints of the environment and on the conditioning

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<sup>139</sup> Sanders, *Historical Figure of Jesus*; McKnight, *New Vision*, 186, makes the same point more clearly.

<sup>140</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew III*, 443.

<sup>141</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew* 27.

<sup>142</sup> Marius Reiser, “Eschatology in the Proclamation of Jesus,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 216–238, esp. 226–227.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. du Toit, “Der unähnliche Jesus,” 107–110.

linked to a lengthy passage of time. For example, F. Simiand demanded that the study of human facts should not concentrate on singular facts, but on those that are repeated. This means “removing the accidental in order to cling to that which is regular, eliminating the individual in order to study the social.”<sup>144</sup> L. Febvre reproached his friend Marc Bloch, the author of *La société féodale*, for “a kind of return to a schematic way of thinking—to something that can only be called sociologism” that was perceptible in his book, from which “the individual is almost completely absent.”<sup>145</sup> As a reaction to a history which “left little space for the freedom of the agents” and reduced their possibilities of intervention, we have more recently seen a “rehabilitation of the agents.”<sup>146</sup> The historian must show “that in reality, nothing is ever completely laid down in advance, and that the human person can modify the conditions which are laid down for him” (W. Kula).<sup>147</sup> Bearing this mind, I fail to be convinced by a number of trenchant affirmations in studies of Jesus—for example, (1) since Jesus was a Jew, he must have been married, because the rabbis were married;<sup>148</sup> (2) Jesus could not have spoken a logion such as Mark 7:15, for the simple reason that this was too revolutionary for Judaism;<sup>149</sup> and (3) according to Theissen (quoted above), Jesus could not have gone beyond the limits laid down for charismatic persons in his own age.

Given the necessarily limited character of our information, one can never affirm with certainty that something is without analogy in a given epoch.<sup>150</sup> This means that we cannot exclude the possibility that

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<sup>144</sup> Text quoted by Prost, *Leçons*, 191.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. André Burguière, “Marc Bloch, historien des mentalités,” in *Marc Bloch: L'historien dans la cité*, ed. Pierre Deyon, Jean-Claude Richez, and Léon Strauss (Strasbourg: Presses Universitaires de Strasbourg, 1997), 43–55, at 44.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Prost, *Leçons*, 229–231.

<sup>147</sup> This text is quoted with approval by Le Goff, *Histoire*, 351.

<sup>148</sup> Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Bruder Jesus: Der Nazarener in jüdischer Sicht*, 11th ed. (München: DTV/List, 1988), 103–106.

<sup>149</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 228. On this subject, I agree with Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 173.

<sup>150</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 188. Taking the position of an historian, i.e., eschewing all dogmatic orientations, they emphasize the impossibility of affirming that something is without analogy in a given epoch. I believe that the same criticism should be made of the affirmation that it was impossible in principle for Jesus to distance himself from Judaism. This question should be discussed primarily on the basis of the *texts*.



Jesus took a particular and original position.<sup>151</sup> We have been told often enough that the Judaism of the first century was polymorphous, and that it is very difficult to give a positive definition of this Judaism; at any rate, it should not be unconsciously identified with rabbinic Judaism. We should not close this dossier too quickly.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Broer, "Bedeutung" 37, is right to insist on this point.

<sup>152</sup> English translation: Brian McNeil.



# CRITICAL FEMINIST HISTORICAL-JESUS RESEARCH<sup>1</sup>

ELISABETH SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA

Since the focus of this volume is on method, I want to state from the outset that I see the problem of Historical-Jesus<sup>2</sup> research not only as one of methods of investigation, i.e. “how scholars ferret out information about Jesus,” but also as one of epistemology, i.e. the theory of “how we know what we know,” and methodology, i.e. how scholars make meaning out of the “data” which we in turn construct with the help of technical research methods.<sup>3</sup> A critical feminist approach requires us to foreground the epistemological assumptions that guide scholarly choices of methodologies, how we proceed to implement particular methods, and how we get in touch with the historical imagination and legitimizing ideologies that determine our choices of reconstructive models and metaphors. In order to address these questions I will discuss two different methodological areas which seem to be crucial for the transformation of scientific positivist malestream<sup>4</sup> into critical scientific feminist Historical-Jesus research.

## 1. *Historical-Jesus Research as a Scientific Discourse*

If it is correct that historiography does not just produce information but serves to generate and form national, religious, communal, and personal identities<sup>5</sup> then the discussion of and the controversy around the

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<sup>1</sup> This article was completed in August 2004. I am grateful to Professor Melanie Johnson-Debaufre for the careful reading of the manuscript and constructive suggestions for its improvement. I also want to thank my research assistant Ms. Katrina Garcia Eveloff for checking my text and notes for possible mistakes and Germanisms.

<sup>2</sup> I write Historical-Jesus research in this way in order to indicate that the Historical-Jesus is a scholarly construct.

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Harding, “Is There a Feminist Method?” in *Feminists and Methodology*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1–14.

<sup>4</sup> I use this term in a descriptive way to indicate that Scripture, tradition, church, and society have been and still are determined and dominated by elite educated white men.

<sup>5</sup> As long as Historical-Jesus research continues this search for identity a critical

Historical-Jesus must be conducted much more self-critically on the level of theory formation and methodology than has been the case until now.

### 1.1. *Critical Methodology and Perspective*

Methodology (Grk. *meta* = after; *hodos* = way; *logos* = word/teaching) usually refers to the critical scientific level of reflection at which basic decisions are made. It not only invites us to ask how Historical-Jesus research deals with the fact that it is a societal, religious, and institutional discourse whose contextuality always already determines its studies about Jesus.<sup>6</sup> It also invites us to ask why Historical-Jesus research is not able to acknowledge that it has promoted and continues to reinscribe Christian Eurocentrism, anti-Judaism, and the marginalization of wo/men.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it is important that scholars reflect on the preconstructed<sup>8</sup> ideological frameworks which are tacitly mediated through scientific methods.

Although the history of Jesus research has amply documented that scholars always reconstruct Jesus in their own image,<sup>9</sup> many still claim

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feminist interpretation must critically assess it and articulate alternative reconstructions. The power of historical narrative is overlooked, for example, by scholars who argue against a feminist egalitarian reconstruction of the Jesus movement. See for instance the dissertation of Helga Melzer-Keller, *Jesus und die Frauen: Eine Verhältnisbestimmung nach den synoptischen Evangelien* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997), 440–441; Manuela Kalsky, *Christophanien: Die Re-Vision der Christologie aus der Sicht von Frauen in unterschiedlichen Kulturen* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000); Kathleen E. Corley, *Women and the Historical Jesus: Feminist Myths of Christian Origins* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2002), 146.

<sup>6</sup> Anette Noller, *Feministische Hermeneutik: Wege einer neuen Schriftauslegung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1995), 70–75.

<sup>7</sup> I write wo/men in this way not only to indicate the instability of the meaning of the term but also to signal that when I say wo/men I mean to include subordinated men. For the problematic meaning of the term woman/women see Denise Riley, "Am I That Name?": *Feminism and the Category of Women in History* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>8</sup> For this expression see Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> To mention just a few references: James H. Charlesworth, "Annotated Bibliography," in *Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism*, ed. Martin J. Borg (New York: Crossroad/The American Interfaith Institute, 1991); James H. Charlesworth, "From Barren Mazes to Gentle Rappings: The Emergence of Jesus Research," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 7.3 (1986): 221–230; John F. O'Grady, "The Present State of Christology," *Chicago Studies* 32.1 (April 1993): 77–91; Werner G. Kümmel, "Jesusforschung seit 1981," *Theologische Rundschau N.F.* 53 (1988): 229–249 and 54 (1989): 1–53; Daniel Korsch,

that they can produce the true correct meaning of the Historical-Jesus as a “fact of history” with scientifically controlled methods.<sup>10</sup> However, such a claim overlooks the epistemological difficulty presented by the rhetoric<sup>11</sup> of our sources. No universal, objectively given and detectable Historical-Jesus can be distilled once and for all from our sources and texts since texts are multivalent and allow for a multiplicity of valid readings. Hence, a critical feminist methodology does not so much ask whether and how one can establish scientific proofs that Jesus actually said this or did something but rather inquires as to how scientific Historical-Jesus discourses know what they claim to know and how they authorize their historical reconstructions as “true,” “scientific,” and “reliable.”

In other words the rich array of Historical-Jesus reconstructions calls for a critical inquiry into the rhetoricity<sup>12</sup> of scientific Historical-Jesus discourses, probing how they can say what they say and for whom and

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“Neue Jesusliteratur,” *Bibel und Kirche* 48 (1993): 40–44; Ferdinand Hahn, “Umstrittenes Jesusbild?” *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 44 (1993): 95–107; *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation on the Work of John Dominic Crossan, Author of The Historical Jesus*, ed. Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1994); Luke T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1966); Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996); cf. Werner Kelber, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus: From the Perspectives of Medieval, Modern, and Post-Enlightenment Readings, and in View of Ancient Oral Esthetics,” in *The Jesus Controversy*, ed. Werner Kelber (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); and Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994). See also my book *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> For such a positivist rhetoric see for example Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 34–35: “To be a critical scholar means to make empirical, factual evidence—evidence open to confirmation by independent, neutral observers—the controlling factor in historical judgments.... Critical scholars adopt the principle of methodological skepticism: accept only what passes the rigorous tests of the rules of evidence....”

<sup>11</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> For the theoretical underpinnings of this approach see, e.g., Jane Sutton, “The Death of Rhetoric and Its Rebirth in Philosophy,” *Rhetorica* 4 (1986): 203–226; Richard Harvey Brown, *Society as Text: Essays on Rhetoric, Reason, and Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald McCloskey, eds., *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Robert L. Scott, “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later,” in *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth Century Perspective*, ed. B. L. Brock, R. L. Scott, and J. W. Chesebro, 3rd rev. ed. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 140–141; Susan C. Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 63; Michèle Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault* (Stanford:

to what ends scholars produce Historical-Jesus research. The nexus between reconstructions of Jesus and those theoretical, historical, cultural, and political conceptual frameworks that shape academic Historical-Jesus discourses needs to become conscious.

The theoretical discourse from within which I approach the task of Historical-Jesus research is that of a critical feminist theory and theology of liberation. Since, however, malestream academic discourses do not explicitly state their research perspective and interests, they pass themselves off as “unmarked” scientific discourses in contrast to those marked as feminist, post-colonial, or Christian. By claiming to have produced a scientific history of the “historical” Jesus<sup>13</sup> which, unlike theological-religious or feminist, post-colonial, and liberationist reconstructions, is allegedly a truly scientific account of Jesus, malestream scholars obfuscate the fact that contextuality and ideological interests also shape their own research. As William Arnal has observed:

Identity- and minority based criticisms and readings of the biblical texts are normally assigned to the abyss of tendentious hypotheses, in part because we can read their ideological subtext with all too much ease. . . . But the ideological subtext of the dominant culture or of the broader social totality, which encompasses even marginal groups, is normally much harder for us to read, simply by virtue of its proximity, of our own embeddedness in it. We have memorized the texture and foliage of the individual trees, without even an inkling that we could also map out the parameters of the forest in which they stand.<sup>14</sup>

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Stanford University Press, 1991); Raymond A. Morrow with David D. Baron, *Critical Theory and Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994); Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, *Athens On Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Lorraine Code, *Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Cheryl Glenn, *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997); John Louis Lucaites, Celeste Michelle Condit, and Sally Caudill, eds., *Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999); Jane Sutton, “The Taming of Polos/Polis: Rhetoric as an Achievement without Women,” in *Introduction to Contemporary Rhetorical Theory: A Reader*, ed. John Louis Lucaites, et al. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 101–127.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. John Meier, “The Bible as a Source for Theology,” in *Catholic Theological Society of America: Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Convention*, ed. George Kilcourse (Toronto, 1988), 1–12. See also his book *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 4, where he distinguishes between the “real” Jesus and the Historical-Jesus: “in contrast to the ‘real Jesus,’ the ‘historical Jesus’ is that Jesus whom we can recover or reconstruct by using the scientific tools of modern historical research.”

<sup>14</sup> William E. Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 64–65.

In order to map out the parameters of the forest, in which Historical-Jesus research stands I propose that one adopts a critical feminist analytic which, however, is not the same as studying the so-called “wo/man and Jesus” question. It is generally assumed that “woman” or “gender”<sup>15</sup> is the only research object and analytic category of feminist studies. However, this is only partially correct. Critical feminist studies—in contrast to women’s studies or gender studies—do not simply take “woman” or “gender” either as their only object of inquiry or as their sole analytic category. Rather critical feminist studies utilize a critical social theory and critical methods of analysis, which are able to comprehend the socio-political structures of domination and oppression that have determined wo/men’s lives in antiquity and continue to do so today.

In short, critical feminist, ideology critical or post-colonial studies insist that when one wishes to find out about the Historical-Jesus, one needs to investigate whether Historical-Jesus research is conscious of its permeation with hegemonic knowledge and interests of domination and critically analyze the discursive frameworks and heuristic models used to explain the world and reality. One must look at the competing ideological and economic interests and theological frameworks which determine the development and the results of Historical-Jesus research. One must become conscious of how Historical-Jesus discourses overlook, marginalize, or caricaturize wo/men and re-inscribe the hegemonic structures of domination such as gender, race, class, and imperialism.

As a critical methodology<sup>16</sup> feminist analysis focuses especially on those factors in Historical-Jesus research which govern and determine the use of its scientific methods. Not only are the subjects, basic concepts, re-constructive models, presuppositions, and audiences of critical feminist studies different from malestream social-scientific Historical-Jesus studies, but also their goals. Critical feminist studies insist with Jürgen Habermas that questions of power are central not only for the understanding of language, tradition, and canon, but also for Historical-Jesus

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<sup>15</sup> Cf., e.g., the contributions in Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, eds., *New Testament Masculinities*, Semeia Studies 45 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> For a perceptive discussion of my critical approach see Marsha Aileen Hewitt, “The Feminist Liberation Theology of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza as a Critical Theory,” in *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 443–458.

research itself. Habermas distinguishes three basic forms of knowledge: the empirical-analytical, the hermeneutic-historical, and the critical-emancipatory. We search for knowledge in order to control social situations and the facts of nature (empirical-analytic), to understand and appreciate historical realities (hermeneutic-historical), and to change our individual and collective knowledge of reality (the critical-emancipatory form) so that human potential and possibilities for freedom and equality can be maximized.<sup>17</sup>

Whereas mainstream Historical-Jesus research claims to be interested primarily in the first and maybe in the second form of knowledge production, critical feminist research is concerned especially with the third form of knowledge about the world. It seeks not just to understand but also to change relations of inequality. In and through the process of a hermeneutics of suspicion it problematizes and questions the functions and claims of scientific Historical-Jesus studies. In a feminist perspective, one must ask, does social-scientific Jesus research contribute to change and transformation or does it seek to maintain the status quo? In short, inquiring into the rhetoricity of Historical-Jesus research one must ask by whom, why, and in whose interests social-scientific Historical-Jesus knowledge is produced.

Patricia Hill Collins has outlined three epistemological criteria for developing a critical self-reflexivity that could sustain emancipatory oppositional practices.<sup>18</sup> Adapting these criteria to Historical-Jesus study one would need to ask:

1. Does a reconstruction of the Historical-Jesus “speak truth to people about the reality of their lives” and the lives of wo/men in the first century? Who are the experts, what are the standards they use and what counts as knowledge? Who decides and why do we accept or reject what the Jesus experts say?
2. What is the “stance toward freedom” in a particular source text as well as in a particular rendition of the Historical-Jesus? What are its visions of emancipation and the strategies of change it suggests? Does it encourage people to resist relations of domination and can it engender social and religious change?

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. the discussion of critical theory by Raymond A. Morrow with David D. Baron, *Critical Theory and Methodology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 398–99.



3. Does a particular Historical-Jesus reconstruction move people to struggle or does it advocate the status quo? Does it provide an ethical foundation and framework grounded in notions of justice and authority for struggle? How effectively does it provide moral authority to the struggles for self-determination?

In short, one needs to critically inquire into the politics of meaning-making that determine Historical-Jesus research and pay special attention to how much historical reconstructions of Jesus function either to undo or to continue the marginalization and erasure of wo/men and other non-persons from historical records and consciousness. Since Historical-Jesus research has served the interests of western colonization and hegemony, one must problematize the theories, theologies, or ideologies that have fostered colonization and domination and which are re-inscribed through biblical texts and interpretive discourses on Jesus. In a situation of ever-increasing globalization of communication and concomitant impoverishment of peoples, critical feminist Historical-Jesus research scrutinizes all scientific Historical-Jesus discourses as to how much they promote or undermine the politics of exclusivity, inferiority, prejudice, and dehumanization that determine cultural or religious identity formations. Consequently it is important to investigate Historical-Jesus research as a discursive formation.

### 1.2. *Historical-Jesus Research as a Discursive Formation*

The dictionary definition of the term “discourse” stresses that the general sense of this term is “to speak, talk, converse, discuss.” It also can mean “speech” and “treatise.” However, such a generalized definition suppresses that at least since Foucault<sup>19</sup> discourse and discursivity must be understood as related to context and power. Discourses do more than just designate things; they are practices “that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”<sup>20</sup> The notion of discourse allows one to attend to the processes that govern its construction. The task is to understand how power is at work in research practices and operates in specific

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<sup>19</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (Brighton: Harvester, 1980); idem, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1972).

<sup>20</sup> Michèle Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 130.

methods and categories. Power is something that is exercised and dispersed in language rather than something that is simply possessed.<sup>21</sup>

Historical-Jesus research can be studied as a discursive formation that systematically shapes the object, the Historical-Jesus, of which it speaks. Hence, one can investigate how its discourses manufacture the Historical-Jesus as a symbolic scholarly construct and as an ideologically produced subject position that elite men are able to inhabit and in relation to which wo/men always are positioned in and through practices of subordination and/or romance. As a scientific discursive formation Historical-Jesus research re-arranges the information and “data” derived from its sources and places them in a reconstructive historical framework or model that, consciously or not, is determined by the experience and interests of the scholar at work. “To the extent that discourse configures what it indicates, it is a fiction as much as a representation.”<sup>22</sup>

As a scientific discursive practice, Historical-Jesus research can be investigated as “the study of the construction of the subject, the extent to which and the mechanisms through which individuals are attached to identities,” as well as an investigation of the role that the process of identity construction “plays in the disruption or stabilization of political formations and the relation of all these processes to distinctions of gender, ethnicity, and class.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, one is able to investigate Historical-Jesus research as a discursive practice that, like historiography on the whole, seeks to constitute the identity of the Historical-Jesus and thereby Christian religious and western cultural identity in terms of scientific positivism<sup>24</sup> as well as cultural androcentrism or, better, kyriocentrism.

Historical-Jesus discourse is characterized by a paradoxical rhetoric that stresses the capability of its scientific methods to produce a reliable account of the “real” Historical-Jesus. Yet, this claim has been unjustified in its results since Historical-Jesus research has produced a host of different and often competing images of Jesus. Since the multiplicity and variety of Historical-Jesus images and approaches is not a controverted but a scientifically verifiable “fact,” it is necessary, I argue here, to look

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<sup>21</sup> Barrett, *Politics*, 135.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Poster, *Cultural History + Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Poster, *Cultural*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> See Collins, *Fighting Words*, 92.

more closely at how Historical-Jesus research and its social-scientific rhetoric<sup>25</sup> is produced and to study Historical-Jesus research as a discursive formation. Hence, one must always engage not only in historical re-construction but also in ideological criticism. By ideology I do not mean simply “false consciousness” or misrepresentation and mystification of reality. Rather, I understand ideology first in the broader sense of a practice and politics of meaning-making.

Feminist ideology critique is a mode of investigation that recognizes the contesting interests at stake in the scientific construction of the Historical-Jesus. It conducts its investigation from a committed position within a social analytic whose legitimacy is argued for not on the grounds of its scientific Truth but on the basis of its explanatory power and its commitment to emancipatory social change.<sup>26</sup> Conceptualizing Historical-Jesus discourses as ideology, i.e. as meaning-making under certain socio-political and religious conditions, allows one to investigate Historical-Jesus discourse or “history making” as an intellectual critical practice. In short, I argue that Historical-Jesus research has to enter a *fourth ideology-critical quest* for the Historical-Jesus, it must become Post-Quest Historical-Jesus research.

It is well known that Historical-Jesus research is a child of the European Enlightenment. According to Albert Schweitzer Historical-Jesus research in the nineteenth century had as its goal the liberation of the Jesus of History from the tyranny of church dogma and ecclesiastical institutions with the help of rationalist science.<sup>27</sup> However it is less recognized that because of these beginnings Historical-Jesus research also shares in the ideological assumptions of Eurocentric colonialist, racist, and antifeminist scientific discourses.

Scholarship generally has come to distinguish four periods of Historical-Jesus research and three quests for the historical Jesus. Whereas three of the four Quests have doggedly pursued the Historical-Jesus in various ways and with differing methods in positivist scientific terms, the interlude

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<sup>25</sup> For the historical context of this rhetoric see Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Theology and Historical-Critical Method from Spinoza to Käsemann* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> Rosemary Hennessy, *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 3–4, stresses that the critical investigation of the life of Jesus is the “greatest achievement of German theology.”

of the *No-Quest* period lasted roughly sixty years during which the search for the Historical-Jesus was virtually abandoned and the kerygmatic Christ took center stage. The No-Quest period was the period between the First and the Second Quests beginning with the work of Martin Kähler in 1896<sup>28</sup> and ending with Ernst Käsemann's revival of Historical-Jesus research in 1953.<sup>29</sup> It was actually a declaration against liberal "life of Jesus scholarship"<sup>30</sup> that claimed to represent the "real" Historical-Jesus free from all dogmatic overlay.

The Third Quest<sup>31</sup> has emerged primarily among North American scholars in the past twenty-five years.<sup>32</sup> The Third Quest is not kerygmatic but historical and social scientific in intent. It is characterized by interest in social history, integration of Jesus into Judaism, and attention to non-canonical sources.<sup>33</sup> However, it is split into two directions, those who advocate a non-eschatological understanding of Jesus (Mack, Crossan, Vaage *et al.* in the Jesus Seminar) and those who defend the eschatological Millenarian Jesus who hoped for the restoration of Judaism (Sanders, Theissen/Merz, Allison, Meier, Horsley *et al.*).

The Third Quest was facilitated through new studies of early Jewish writings, research of the Qumran scrolls, the Nag Hammadi discovery and archeological finds. Whereas these studies have amply documented that Judaism in the first century CE was variegated and pluralistic, the arguments on Jesus' Jewishness often seem to presuppose a unitary patriarchal form of Judaism. If scholars use not a sociological conflict but an integrationist model for their reconstruction of Jesus, they are not able to imagine Jesus as a member of a variegated Jewish *basileia*

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<sup>28</sup> Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, ed. and trans. Carl Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

<sup>29</sup> This paper was published by Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in his *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964).

<sup>30</sup> See Barry W. Henaut, "Is the 'Historical Jesus' a Christological Construct?" in *Whose Historical Jesus?*, Studies in Christianity and Judaism = Études Sur Le Christianisme et le Judaïsme; No. 7, ed. William E. Arnal, Michel R. Desjardins, and Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion (Waterloo, ON: Published for the Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 241–268.

<sup>31</sup> The coinage of the term Third Quest is attributed to S. Neill and T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379–381.

<sup>32</sup> David S. du Toit, "Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research," in *Jesus, Mark, and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and Its Earliest Records*, ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 83–124.

<sup>33</sup> See the very helpful chart in Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1988), 12.

movement that was inclusive of wo/men and stood in conflict with the hegemonic kyriarchal structures of the Roman Empire of which hegemonic Judaism also was a part. In short, they are not able to articulate a reconstructive frame of reference that can fully conceptualize the emergent Jesus movement and its diverse articulations as participating in popular Jewish and Greco-Roman movements of cultural, political, and religious survival, resistance, and change.

Finally, the Third Quest for the Historical-Jesus seeks to establish its scientific character in terms of the quantitative method of stratigraphy with its segmentation of the text and its reassembly in vast databases. It also adopts social-scientific models derived from cultural anthropology or quantitative sociology for authorizing its scientificity. By taking over such quantitative methods, Historical-Jesus research also appropriates the theoretical assumptions that shape and govern scientific discourse on the whole.

### 1.3. *The Socio-Political Location of Historical-Jesus Research*

It is well known that biblical studies in general and Historical-Jesus discourses in particular emerged on the scene together with other disciplines in the humanities that sought to articulate their discourses as scientific practices in analogy to the natural sciences. Sandra Harding has pointed to a three-stage process in the emergence of science shaping and determining scholarly discourses, their presuppositions and their intellectual frameworks.

The *first* stage consisted in the breakdown of feudal labor divisions and slave relations. This breakdown made the scientific method of experimental observation possible. According to Harding, "Science's new way of seeing the world developed from the perspective of the new kind of social labor of artisans and the inventors of modern technology."<sup>34</sup>

The *second* stage is exemplified in the New Science Movement of the seventeenth century that flourished in Puritan England and brought forth a new political self-consciousness with radical social goals. "Science's progressiveness was perceived to lie not in method alone but in its mutually supportive relationship to progressive tendencies in the

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<sup>34</sup> Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 218, with reference to Edgar Zilsel, "The Sociological Roots of Science," *American Journal of Sociology* 47 (1942).

larger society.”<sup>35</sup> Scientific knowledge was to serve the people and to be used for redistributing knowledge and wealth.

The *third* stage produced the notion of purely technical and value-neutral science. The progress which science represents is based entirely on scientific method. The emergence of this third stage in the development of science also spelled the end of the collaboration between science and social, political, or educational reform—a price paid for institutionalization and political protection. The institutionalization of science meant the separation of science’s cognitive and political aims and the restriction of “true” science and scientists to the former.

This understanding of science goes hand in hand with value-neutrality, which captures what is real through impersonal, quantitative language; and *method*, understood as norms, rules, procedures, and scientific technologies. Scientific values are trans-historical human values; they are not particularistic, local, partial, or political. Historically and culturally specific values, emotions, and interests must be kept separated from de-politicized transcendental scientific practices. Abstract thinking, mathematical intelligibility, and mechanistic metaphors become the hallmarks of true science.

It is also at this third stage of development that academic scientific disciplines emerged, producing the discourses of domination—racism, heterosexism, colonialism, class privilege, ageism—as “scientific” discourses.<sup>36</sup> While previously discourses of colonization were developed on the grounds of Christian religion, now science takes the place of religion and continues its work of hegemonic legitimization. These scientific discourses of domination are formed as elite discourses that justify relations of ruling. Hence, “soft” academic disciplines such as history, sociology, and anthropology, in their formative stage, developed discourses of domination in order to prove that they also belonged to the “hard” sciences. Thus academic social-science disciplines supported European colonialism and capitalist industrial development.

It has long been recognized that the discipline of cultural anthropology and ethnology has been developed in the interest of western colo-

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<sup>35</sup> Harding, *Science Question*, 219.

<sup>36</sup> See Ronald T. Takaki, “Aesclepius Was a White Man: Race and the Cult of True Womanhood,” in *The Racial Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, ed. Sandra Harding (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 201–209; Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander L. Gilman, “Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism,” *ibid.*, 170–193; and Nancy Leys Stepan, “Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science,” *ibid.*, 369–376.

nialism. For instance Radcliffe-Brown, one of the founding fathers of functionalist social anthropology which stresses stability, unity, integration, and equilibrium as most important for the functioning of a society, states this link between anthropology and colonialism quite openly:

Now I think this is where social anthropology can be of immense and almost immediate service. The study of the beliefs and customs of the native peoples, with the aim not of merely reconstructing their history but of discovering their meaning, their function, that is, the place they occupy in the mental, moral and social life, can afford great help to the missionary or the public servant who is engaged in dealing with practical problems of the adjustment of the native civilization to the new conditions that have resulted from our occupation of the country....<sup>37</sup>

However, what is often less recognized is the function of social anthropology not only in the service of colonial administrations in the last century but also in the service of US economic and political hegemony today. As the world's only remaining "Super Power" US military institutions and governmental agencies use social scientists in the interest of American imperialism for controlling so-called third world developing nations.

Cultural anthropology still provides the theories and materials for managing the world today. Insofar as western social scientists study those peoples who are either poor or living under neo-colonialism but not the elites of their own society and culture, they always produce knowledge that can be used against the oppressed and exploited who are studied. Imperialism, "to survive, must counterattack with ever more sophisticated weapons, hard and 'soft.' It must understand the people it domineers, so as to understand how to prevent them from overthrowing that domination."<sup>38</sup> Recognizing the permeation of anthropological theories and frameworks with imperialist interests, social-scientific Historical-Jesus research must investigate the world view and normalizing function of the models and theories adopted from the social sciences rather than simply take over anthropological theories in order to prove Historical-Jesus studies to be scientific.

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<sup>37</sup> A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, "The Methods of Ethnology and Social Anthropology," *South African Journal of Science* 20 (1923): 124–147, 142–143.

<sup>38</sup> Jack Stauder, "The 'Relevance' of Anthropology to Colonialism and Imperialism," in *The Racial Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 425–426.

Moreover, not only cultural anthropology but also philology and history as scientific disciplines worked in the nineteenth century in the interest of colonial domination. Comparative philology, for example, contrasted Hebrew/Semitic and Aryan/Indo-European languages, since it considered languages to be the “best mirror of the human mind” and the “most ancient monument of peoples.”<sup>39</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant has pointed out that the function of the Hebrew-Aryan language myth was the justification of racism, anti-Semitism, and colonial domination:

As scholars established the disciplines of Semitic and Indo-European studies, they also invented the mythical figures of the Hebrew and the Aryan, a providential pair which, by revealing to the people of the Christianized West the secret of their identity, also bestowed upon them the patent of nobility that justified their spiritual, religious, and political domination of the world.<sup>40</sup>

The nineteenth-century professionalization of history also fostered scientific practices advocating commitment to an objectivity above the critical scrutiny of such categories as class and gender, along with strict use of evidence, less rhetorical style, the development of archives, libraries, peer reviews, and professional education. Scientific historical discourses created an intellectual space inhabited by an “invisible and neutered I” which was considered a “gender- and race-free” community of scholars. At the same time science was producing discourses of exclusion such as racism, heterosexism, and colonialism, thus barring women from the professions and turning them into objects of research.

American sociology in its formative years exhibits the same symptoms as scientific philology and historiography.<sup>41</sup> It was influenced by European anthropological discourses that emerged with imperialism and understood colonized peoples as “primitives” who were considered to be more natural, sexual, untouched by civilization, and inferior because of their innate biological differences—for instance, their allegedly smaller brains. In the US, Indigenous Americans and African Americans were those who represented the “primitive” in sociological

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<sup>39</sup> Leibniz as quoted by Maurice Olender, *The Languages of Paradise: Race, Religion and Philology in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Pierre Vernant, “Foreword,” in Olender, *The Languages of Paradise*, x. He also points to the anti-Judaism engendered by this debate which foreshadows the death camps of the Holocaust.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Randall Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3–46.



and anthropological scientific discourses. They were construed on biological and cultural grounds to be either violent or childlike or both. People who were Not-white and Not-male were praised as “noble savages” or feared as “bloodthirsty cannibals.” Blacks and White women were viewed as childlike, a factor used to explain their supposedly inferior intelligence.

White women and Blacks were also seen as more embodied, “natural,” and controlled by their physical, biological essences. Both were viewed as having an inherent “nature” of some sort—for blacks violence, for White women passivity. Collectively, these comparisons generated a situation in which race and gender gained meaning from one another, situated within economic class hierarchies that drew upon these ideas.<sup>42</sup>

This third stage in the development of science constructs a sharp dualism between science and theology, or scientific discourse and ideology, in order to prove its objective character. A series of structuring dualisms<sup>43</sup> and dichotomies between science and politics, history and theology, knowledge and fiction, past and present, rationality and faith, male and female, white and black, Caucasian and Asian, and so on, determine the western scientific world view.

Scientific Historical-Jesus discourses re-inscribe such structuring dualisms as a series of oppositions between Historical-Jesus and kerygmatic Christ, Mediterranean culture and US society, itinerant prophets and sedentary householders, Jesus and Judaism, or Jesus and wo/men. As a scientific discourse Historical-Jesus research thus participates in the discourses of domination which were produced by science.

#### 1.4. *Historical-Jesus Research and its Rhetorical Context of Domination*

The rhetoric of Historical-Jesus discourses belongs to the third stage of the history of science. As Dieter Georgi,<sup>44</sup> Shawn Kelly,<sup>45</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Collins, *Fighting Words*, 100–101.

<sup>43</sup> For a comprehensive interpretation of Q scholarship see, e.g., Richard Horsley, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); and Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> Dieter Georgi, “The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism,” *HTR* 85 (1992): 51–83.

<sup>45</sup> Shawn Kelly, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan, “Jesus/the Native: Biblical Studies from a Postcolonial Perspective,” in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, ed. Fernando

and others have shown convincingly, Historical-Jesus research has participated in fashioning and legitimating the cultural-scientific discourses of domination that were conditioned on the absence of wo/men who were non-elite, non-white, and non-male. The image of Jesus, the extraordinary (white) man or “noble savage” who as an especially gifted and powerful individual transcends all normal boundaries, corresponds to the liberal ethos of elite western men. Hence, malestream historical and social-scientific Jesus discourses must be critically analyzed as European-American discourses that have functioned in the service of western domination and Christian mission. They continue to reproduce not only the kyriocentric self-understanding and religious horizon of Christians but also that of western culture if they do not critically question the ideological functions of their own methods and theoretical lenses.

In addition, the political context and rhetorical situation in which feminist as well as malestream Historical-Jesus research takes place today is constituted by the resurgence of the religious Right claiming the power to name and to define the true nature of religion.<sup>47</sup> Right wing, well-financed think tanks are supported by reactionary political and financial institutions that seek to defend kyriarchal capitalism.<sup>48</sup> Right-wing movements around the globe have insisted on the figuration of emancipated wo/men as signifiers of western decadence or of modern atheistic secularism and have presented masculine power as the expression of divine power.<sup>49</sup>

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Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); see also her “Engendering Christ,” in *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth*, ed. Segovia, 300–313.

<sup>47</sup> See the variegated contributions in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, eds., *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge* (Concilium; London: SCM Press, 1992).

<sup>48</sup> For an excellent critical analysis of the involvement of religion in this global struggle see especially the work of the late Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People* (New York: Penguin, 1982); eadem, *In Banks We Trust* (New York: Penguin, 1986); Sara Diamond, *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right* (Boston: Southend Press, 1989); Jerome Himmelstein, *To the Right: The Transformation of American Conservatism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Fundamentalism and Gender, 1875 to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Betty DeBerg, *Ungodly Wo/men: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990); Walter H. Capps, *The New Religious Right: Piety, Patriotism and Politics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990); Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Fundamentalism Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>49</sup> See especially the declaration of the Division for the Advancement of Women on

The proliferation of “new” scientific Historical-Jesus books does not undermine but sustains the literalist desire of biblical fundamentalism for an “accurate,” reliable biography of Jesus as a firm foundation of western culture and Christian religion. Hence, scientific Historical-Jesus scholarship does not threaten religious positivism but functions politically as the reverse side of the fundamentalist literalist coin. Like Historical-Jesus research, fundamentalist interpretations seek to “fix” the pluriform expressions of Christian scriptures and traditions, to unify the variegated texts and ambiguous metaphors of Jesus the Christ, and to filter them into a “common sense” realistic narrative about the man Jesus.

As long as the Third Quest tacitly and often unknowingly assumes that Christian (male) identity remains bound up with a positivist “scientific” reconstruction of the Historical-Jesus, the heroic patriarchal Man, it cannot but produce the historical “fact” of Jesus’ maleness as an objectified historical given that is constitutive for hegemonic Christian western (male) identity. Therefore, it is necessary to interrogate not only the gender constructions of social-scientific Historical-Jesus research but especially also its theoretical horizon of positivism. Both strategies, the analysis of the ideological undergirding of positivist biblical scholarship, and the problematization and deconstruction of Jesus’ masculinity as an objectively given fact of history, are necessary in order to recognize the functions in the service of domination which historical-social-scientific Jesus research often unwittingly performs.

Consequently, critical feminist Historical-Jesus research insists that judicious reflection on the social contextualization, theoretical perspective, and rhetorical situation of scholars must become an integral part of research. Considering the race, gender, and national-social location of most biblical scholars, it is not surprising that the historical *man* Jesus is in the center of scholarly interest. Consequently, the social and religious

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“International Standards of Equality and Religious Freedom: Implications for the Status of Women,” in *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, ed. Valentine M. Moghadam (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 425–438; Rebecca E. Klatch, “Women of the New Right in the United States: Family, Feminism, and Politics,” in *Identity Politics and Women*, ed. Moghadam, 367–388. Most of the contributions in *Identity Politics and Women* are on women and Islam in different parts of the world. However, see Sucheta Mazumdar, “Moving Away from a Secular Vision? Women, Nation, and the Cultural Construction of Hindu India,” *ibid.*, 243–273; and Radha Kumar, “Identity Politics and the Contemporary Indian Feminist Movement,” *ibid.*, 274–292; see also the three-part award-winning PBS series *God and Politics* in which Bill Moyers explores the connections between state and church and its impact on US foreign policy.

location of Historical-Jesus researchers must become an area of critical investigation since it always already determines research itself. From a scientific-epistemological point of view, a clear-cut reconstitution of the world of Jesus and his historical influence that is not affected by the person of the interpreter and her/his social-political situation is intellectually impossible and theoretically outdated.

Students of culture and sociology, as for instance Pierre Bourdieu, have demanded that the subjects of research, the intellectuals, must become first ethnologists of their own discipline and analysts of their own status in society if they want to work scientifically. Those who intend to work sociologically must always first engage in a “sociology of sociology” in order to become conscious of their own social location, of the notions and pre-constructions which they use, and of their interests or dependencies as well as to arrive at a theory of scientific praxis.

When reading many sociological works, I find it regretful that people whose profession it is to objectify the social world are so little able to objectify themselves and that they do not see, that what comes to the fore in their allegedly scientific discourses is precisely not the object but much more their relation to the object, resentment, envy, social desire, unconscious strivings, a whole lot of unanalyzed things.<sup>50</sup>

In sum, the refusal of the Third Quest to problematize its own methodological assumptions and ideological interests as well as its sophisticated advocacy of historical positivism corresponds to political conservatism. Its emphasis on the “realia” and “facts” of history and the reliability of its methods serves to promote scientific fundamentalism. Its universalizing discourses obfuscate that historians select and interpret archeological artifacts and textual evidence as well as incorporate them into a scientific model and narrative framework of meaning.

For that reason, the numerous reviews of the genealogy of Historical-Jesus research usually do not mention the works on the Jesus of history that have emerged around the globe parallel to the Third Quest but were inspired by different interests and methodologies. Among others, Grant LeMarquand<sup>51</sup> has pointed to the ignorance of the western academy about African, Asian, Oceanian, Indigenous, Latin American, and North American minority Historical-Jesus scholarship.<sup>52</sup> Although African,

<sup>50</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 12.

<sup>51</sup> Grant LeMarquand, “The Historical Jesus and African New Testament Scholarship,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. Arnal et al., 161–180.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984);

Asian, Latin American, and post-colonial biblical scholars are well aware of the issues raised by western Historical-Jesus scholarship, they frame and shape their own discourses on Jesus differently. Their major concern is not Historical-Jesus research but to deconstruct colonialist interpretations of Jesus and to establish the common ground between their own cultures and the Jesus of history. They focus on the Jesus of history not only because his culture comes in many respects very close to their own but also because their own cultures were constructed as inferior and even “satanic” by western missionaries in the name of Jesus.

Thus, the western scientific historiography of Historical-Jesus research is constituted in and through the exclusion of the discourses of the “others” and characterized by Euro-American-centrism. The “scientific” self-understanding of Historical-Jesus research justifies such exclusions of the discourses of the “others.” One wonders whether it is an historical accident that the Third Quest for the Historical-Jesus exploded not only during the resurgence of the political right and the revival of religious fundamentalism but also in a time when the wo/men’s and Third-World liberation movements gained ground and developed rhetorical power in the churches and the academy.

Since my book *In Memory of Her* appeared in the early eighties it belongs to both the beginning stage of the Third Quest of Historical-Jesus research and to global liberationist Jesus research which emerged at the same time. It does not subscribe to the methodological positivism of the Third Quest but adopts a critical feminist and liberationist perspective. In opposition to the Second Quest and in line with the ethos of the Third Quest I stressed not only the sayings but also the narrative traditions and was concerned to reconstruct the Jesus movement as an egalitarian Jewish movement of wo/men. However, I argued against topical studies on “women and Jesus” which frame their research in terms of the cultural model of patriarchal romance<sup>53</sup> between the great

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Robert Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991); Priscilla A. Pope-Levison and John R. Levison, *Jesus in Global Contexts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); R. J. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Jon Sobrino, *Christ the Liberator: A View from the Victims* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001); Doris Strahm, *Vom Rand in die Mitte: Christologie aus der Sicht von Frauen in Asien, Afrika und Lateinamerika* (Luzern: Exodus Verlag, 1997); Robert Lasalle-Klein, “A Postcolonial Christ,” in *Thinking of Christ: Proclamation, Explanation, Meaning*, ed. Tatha Wiley (New York: Continuum, 2003), 135–153.

<sup>53</sup> For the impact of such reading see Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Man Jesus and his women followers. Consequently, I sought to replace the Historical-Jesus research framework that takes the study of “Jesus and women” as its object with a feminist framework that focuses on wo/men as historical agents. Looking as a wo/man (i.e., from a wo/man scholar’s social location) and from a feminist perspective (i.e. with a hermeneutics of suspicion rooted in a feminist social analytic) at the Historical-Jesus is quite different from concentrating on wo/men as objectified research objects.

*In Memory of Her* begins with a theoretical exploration of three methodological issues: theological hermeneutics, androcentric language and texts, and the writing of feminist history. In discussion with social world studies and feminist historiography, the book sought to articulate a critical feminist theoretical model for the reconstruction of the Jesus movement and early Christian history that is conscious of its discursive character. However, with the exception of a short discussion by Marcus Borg,<sup>54</sup> Raymond Martin,<sup>55</sup> David du Toit<sup>56</sup> and a selective reception by Richard Horsley,<sup>57</sup> my methodological proposals and critical historiographical explorations<sup>58</sup> seem to have been virtually overlooked, although key elements of my Historical-Jesus reconstruction<sup>59</sup> such as equality, commensality, execution, and the Roman imperial context, have been confirmed by the research of leading Historical-Jesus scholars such as Borg, Crossan, or Horsley. One wonders whether this is because my work makes its feminist interests explicit and thereby challenges the positivist and empiricist ethos of the discipline or because the non-discussion of feminist work allows for its appropriation without citation.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Marcus Borg, “Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship,” *HTR* 84 (1991): 1–22.

<sup>55</sup> Raymond Martin, *The Elusive Messiah: A Philosophical Overview of the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 71–95.

<sup>56</sup> David S. du Toit, “Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research,” 83–124.

<sup>57</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Sociology and the Jesus Movement* (New York: Crossroad, 1989).

<sup>58</sup> See especially chs. 2 and 3 of *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

<sup>59</sup> See my article “The Rhetorics and Politics of Jesus Research: A Feminist Perspective,” in *Jesus, Mark, and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and Its Earliest Records*, 259–282. However, whereas I sought to depict the movement to which Jesus belonged and its expansion and modification in the cities of the Roman Empire, Historical-Jesus books generally seek to reconstruct Jesus as an unequaled individual.

<sup>60</sup> Jane Schaberg, “A Feminist Experience of Historical-Jesus Scholarship,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* ed. Arnal et al., 146, has pointed to the “ignoring, censoring, dismissing, silencing and trivializing of feminist scholarship, as well as its appropriation without attribution” as a form of silencing.

To understand Jesus research as a critical practice of *remembering the struggles* for equality and justice<sup>61</sup> rather than as a quest for scientific data engenders a shift from a rhetoric of scientific or theological positivism that seeks to produce scientific certainty and theological normativity to one that aims at critical retrieval and articulation of memory. *Memory* as a reconstructive frame of meaning does not require one to construe a dualistic opposition between history and theology, objectivity and interestedness, Jesus and Judaism, Jesus the exceptional individual and Jesus shaped by his community, between the pre-Easter and the post-Easter Jesus, or the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ. If the memory of Jesus' execution, understood as an instance of unjust human suffering, is at the heart and center of this memory, then the critical ethical line must be drawn between injustice and justice, between the world of domination and a world of freedom and well-being.

One might object that historical and theological re-constructions of the Historical-Jesus that are conceptualized as rhetorical practices of memory function as "myth," that is, as stories of "pristine" beginnings because they again place Jesus the great individual at the center of attention. However, such an objection overlooks the different power relations that determine hegemonic and critical feminist interests in Historical-Jesus research. It also neglects that the interest of historical re-construction understood in terms of memory is not the same as that of neo-orthodox canonical apologetic interpretation or the liberal quest for the historical Jesus, the "great heroic individual." It is not the same because its rhetoric is neither that of scientific positivism nor that of normative identity construction. Rather, it seeks to understand the Historical-Jesus in terms of Sandra Harding's second stage of scientific research where reflection upon the effects of science is part of the condition of science itself.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See *In Memory of Her*, 92: "The sociological-theological model for the reconstruction of the early Christian movement suggested here should, therefore, not be misread as that of a search for true, pristine, orthodox beginnings which have been corrupted either by early Catholicism or by 'heresy,' nor should it be seen as an argument for an institutional patriarchalization absolutely necessary for the historical survival of Christianity. The model used here is that of social interaction and religious transformation, of Christian 'vision' and historical realization, of struggle for equality and against patriarchal domination." See also my retrospect "Re-visioning Christian Origins: *In Memory of Her Revisited*," in *Christian Beginnings: Worship, Belief and Society*, ed. Kieran O'Mahony (London: Continuum International, 2003), 225–250.

<sup>62</sup> Wolfgang van den Daele, "The Social Construction of Science," in *The Social*

## 2. *Transforming Historical-Jesus Research*

The following four methodological issues are controverted but crucial for the transformation of Historical-Jesus research from a purely technical and value-neutral science to one that is socially progressive and feminist which I will discuss with respect to others' and my own approach: the understanding of language and text as rhetorical, the question of "criteria of authenticity," the chosen systemic analytic, and the critical reflection on reconstructive models.

### 2.1. *The Rhetoricity of Language and Texts*

A foundational methodological contribution of critical feminist studies to social theory and scientific understanding consists of the recognition of the rhetoricity and kyriocentric function of grammatically masculine, so-called generic language. As postmodern literary theory, so also critical feminist theory questions and renders problematic the understanding of language presupposed by Historical-Jesus research which tends to understand androcentric, or, better, kyriocentric, language as a window to the world of the Historical-Jesus and to presuppose that texts reflect and represent reality objectively. However, kyriocentric language does not simply reflect reality but constructs and prescribes it. It creates the symbolic worlds that it pretends to depict. Language is not just descriptive-reflective-pragmatic but also prescriptive-performative-political. Kyriocentric language serves kyriarchal interests; conversely, kyriarchal interests determine the meanings of kyriocentric language.

Grammatically masculine languages such as Hebrew, Greek or Latin function as generic languages that supposedly include wo/men under terms such as *men*, *disciples*, or *Jews*. They mention wo/men explicitly only if they are exceptions, pose a problem, or if individuals need to be marked by gender identification. Thus kyriocentric languages not only inscribe and prescribe gender but also other hierarchies of domination. Since, for instance, slave wo/men are subsumed under slaves and Jewish wo/men under Jews, they are effectively made invisible in our historical source "data." How grammatically masculine generic languages are to be understood can only be decided with reference to the social reality which in turn is linguistically produced. The texts about wo/men are like

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*Production of Scientific Knowledge*, ed. Everett Mendelsohn, Peter Weingart, and Richard Whitley (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1977), 38.



the tip of an iceberg indicating what we have lost but they are not comprehensive reflections of reality.

Hence, on feminist methodological grounds the topical approach that focuses on “Jesus and women” has been problematized. Nevertheless, books on “Jesus and Women” seem to proliferate and works of the Third Quest still “segregate” *wo/men* and read only the *women* passages as referring to them as though *wo/men* did not belong to the disciples of Jesus or to the members of other Jewish movements. For instance, after discussing the Jesus movement in general Theissen and Merz have a special section on *women*.<sup>63</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann<sup>64</sup> in turn headline their two special sections on *women* with “women among the followers of Jesus” assuming the generic masculine for followers of Jesus. Such an “add and stir” approach is well intended but continues to marginalize *wo/men* by reinscribing the ideological tendencies of kyriocentric language.

Social-scientific Jesus research continues to neglect the methodological problem posed by the recognition of kyriocentric language because it does not recognize and adapt a feminist social analysis that can lay open the structures of domination in antiquity and today. Following Max Weber, scientific Historical-Jesus accounts understand language as transparent and do not recognize the possible gap between subjective meanings and objective social practices. The andro-kyriocentric text becomes script in a positivistic posture of Historical-Jesus research that pretends to describe the “real” Jesus or “what actually happened.” The gaps, omissions, breaks, and partial truths of the andro-kyriocentric text are filled in with reference to the conventions, knowledges, and practices of a kyriarchal society which are not interrogated but understood as common sense. The literary critic Catherine Belsey has identified such a scientific-positivist understanding of language as “expressive realism”:

The strategies of the classic realist text divert the reader from what is contradictory within it to the renewed recognition (misrecognition) of what he or she already ‘knows’, knows because the myth and signifying systems of the classic realist text re-present experience in the ways in which it is conventionally articulated in our society.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Gerd Theissen and Anette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>64</sup> Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of the First Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1999).

<sup>65</sup> Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (New York: Methuen, 1980), 128.

According to Belsey such “expressive realism” is at home in the period of industrial capitalism. Itumeleng Mosala in turn has pointed out that such “expressive realism” is also operative in social-scientific biblical research and works hand in glove with neo-capitalist tendencies of reification.<sup>66</sup>

In short, I argue, scientific Jesus research still needs to recognize that androcentric language and kyriocentric knowledge are rhetorical and perspectival, that is, they are articulated by certain people for a certain audience and readership and they operate grammatically with certain articulated or unacknowledged kyriarchal interests. Hence an intra- and intertextual analysis of language and text does not suffice. It must be bolstered by a critical-systemic analysis of religious-political structures of domination.

In light of the ideology-critical feminist analysis of language and symbolic worlds that normalize and legitimate socio-political and religious systems of domination as “common sense,” scientific Historical-Jesus research can no longer claim to tell us “what really happened” as the subtitle “Discovering What Happened...” of Crossan’s *The Birth of Christianity*<sup>67</sup> promises. It can no longer assert that it describes the reality of the Historical-Jesus as objectively and scientifically as possible. Instead, scientific Historical-Jesus studies must critically reflect on the social theories that shape their work in order to make good on their claim to scientific objectivity.

## 2.2. Sources and Criteria of “Authenticity”

The generative discursive problem that Historical-Jesus research seeks to overcome or fruitfully transform is the simple fact that the Christian canon has not one but four gospels—that is, four quite different narratives about Jesus. Moreover, there are many other gospel writings that did not make it into the canon but must be used as historical sources.<sup>68</sup> It is the hermeneutical problem posed by the multiplicity of the gospels

<sup>66</sup> Itumeleng Mosala, “Social Scientific Approaches to the Bible: One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 55 (1986): 15–30.

<sup>67</sup> Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

<sup>68</sup> Whereas Historical Jesus scholars generally agree on using the reconstructed source Q, they are divided in their evaluation and use of extra-canonical sources. However, the exclusion or inclusion of, for instance, the *Gospel of Thomas* in one’s source base leads to quite different reconstructions of the Historical Jesus.

and source-traditions that has spawned attempts to reduce the pluriform gospels to one uniform gospel message or to reconstruct a unified picture of Jesus. In addition, the linguistic turn in biblical studies has driven home that texts do not have a single, definite meaning and a “final solution.”<sup>69</sup> The rhetoricity of discourse understands the textuality of texts as a construct rather than as a mirror reflecting pre-existing reality. Language is not a mere vehicle for the transmission of social and historical facts but the producer of meaning.

Archival and other sources, therefore, are not just quarries for factual information but transmit historical meaning produced by scholars. In short, the rhetoricity of our sources poses the rhetorical problem that Historical-Jesus research seeks to overcome. Such an understanding of text and language as rhetorical and constructive challenges the epistemological dichotomy between scientific and creative writing, between fact and fiction. In light of the linguistic turn to rhetoric, the Third Quest for the Historical-Jesus therefore seems to be a step backwards from the methodological achievement of redaction and narrative criticism, since it appears to be less apt to do justice to the textuality and rhetoricity of our canonical and extra-canonical sources.

Historical-Jesus research has developed criteria of authenticity<sup>70</sup> for adjudicating the multivoiced information of our sources. The Second Quest, dubbed the New Quest by James Robinson, has insisted that it is possible to extract or distill the Historical-Jesus from early Christian sources like a kernel from a husk. In order to be regarded as authentic, words and deeds of Jesus must *firstly*, be documented in more than one source (the criterion of multiple attestation). *Secondly* they must not be found in the Jewish culture of the time or be explainable as stemming from the interests of the early church (the double dissimilarity or difference—criterion which would be better called the exclusivity—criterion). And *thirdly* they must cohere with the material previously judged as authentic (the coherence criterion).<sup>71</sup> In other words, the Second Quest adopts a reductionist historical method which does not

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<sup>69</sup> See, e.g., Alicia Suskin Ostriker, *Feminist Revision and the Bible* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993).

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Tom Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80.

<sup>71</sup> Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 39–40, who has labeled the criterion of exclusivity as criterion of dissimilarity.

take into account the fact that historiography must evaluate and place texts and artifacts into a coherent frame of meaning or reconstructive model in order to tell a story about Jesus that makes sense. All history is a reconstruction.

Moreover, this reductionist method assumes that Jesus is totally different from both Judaism and from his followers, the early churches. He is the totally Other. In order to establish the historical uniqueness of Jesus and his ethics, the Second Quest, like the First, needed a negative depiction of Judaism as its foil. Jesus supposedly knew that his teaching undermined the fundamentals of Jewish belief. The Roman imperial authority allegedly executed him because of his conflict with a ritualistic and legalistic Judaism. This anti-Jewish framework has also determined many studies on "Jesus and Women" and is still operative in many popular works.<sup>72</sup>

Since the Third Quest justifiably has rejected the Second Quest's reductionistic criteria of authenticity and has placed Jesus firmly in his Jewish context, it needed to develop new methods and criteria of evaluation. To that end the Jesus Seminar, whose members are mostly white male and Christian,<sup>73</sup> has adopted forms of opinion research and voting practices in order to stratify the traditions about Jesus. Other scholars have developed the *plausibility* criterion, which judges materials as authentic on the grounds of whether their content can be made plausible historically and be understood as fitting into the time and culture of Jesus.<sup>74</sup>

However, this criterion overlooks that what is regarded as "common sense" or plausible in a culture depends on the hegemonic ideological understandings of "how the world is." For instance, the assumption that wo/men were marginal or second class citizens in all forms of first-century Judaism makes it impossible to assert plausibly that they were

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<sup>72</sup> See my discussion in *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 67–96.

<sup>73</sup> For the intent of the Jesus Seminar and the controversy surrounding it see Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 65–82.

<sup>74</sup> This hermeneutical circle between a preconstructed image of Jesus and evaluations of individual texts is recognized by Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 206: "Ein zutreffendes historisches Gesamtbild ist eine Idealvorstellung, ein Grenzwert, dem wir uns immer nur in Form von Plausibilität annähern können." However, they do not critically question the plausibility criterion on the basis of this insight.

equal members in the Jesus movement if one understands it as a Jewish movement. The inability of such discourses to plausibly discuss the possibility of understanding the Jesus movement as a Jewish movement that sought to abolish kyriarchal domination and believed in the basic equality of all the children of G\*d not only bespeaks antifeminist but also anti-Jewish tendencies since it can not imagine egalitarian tendencies within Judaism.

Hence, I have suggested that the reductionist double criterion of dissimilarity or exclusivity of the Second Quest and the conservative criterion of plausibility of the Third Quest should be replaced with the criterion of “historical possibility.” What is “thinkable” or “possible” historically must be adjudicated in terms of an emancipatory reconstructive model of early Christian beginnings and how it utilizes its source-information and materials. Instead of asking whether it is likely or plausible that wo/men shaped the Jesus-traditions, one must ask if it is historically possible and thinkable that they did so. This shift requires scholars to prove that such a possibility did not exist at the time. To make such an argument would presuppose that scholars have studied not only hegemonic historical formations but also the emancipatory elements in Greco-Roman and Jewish societies. In using the criterion of historical possibility one must, however, be careful not to answer it with reference to what is deemed “plausible” and “common sense” truism.<sup>75</sup>

Such a change of theoretical framework from one that uncritically reinscribes “what has happened” to one that imagines “what was historically possible” makes it conceivable that the agency and leadership of Jewish and Roman, free and enslaved, rich and poor, elite and marginal wo/men could have shaped the Jesus traditions and early Christian beginnings. Those who hold the opposite view, for instance that slave wo/men or Jewish wo/men were not active shapers of early Christian life, would have to argue their point. A feminist reconstructive historical model of egalitarian possibility, I suggested with *In Memory of Her*, is able to place the beginnings of the Galilean prophetic-wisdom-*basileia* movement around Jesus within a broader cultural-religious historical frame of reference. It allows us to trace the tensions and struggles between emancipatory understandings and movements inspired by the

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<sup>75</sup> This is the primary mode of arguing by Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 361–409, when discussing wo/men’s leadership in the Jesus movement.

radical democratic logic of equality on the one hand and the dominant kyriarchal structures of society and religion in antiquity on the other.

A *possible* emancipatory reconstruction of early Christian beginnings as egalitarian does not mean that the extant early Christian sources do not also allow for a hegemonic kyriarchal reconstruction of the Jesus movements. The opposite is the case because all of our sources are written in andro-kyriocentric language and by the historical winners. It only means that one needs to show methodologically that a feminist egalitarian reconstruction is “possible,” if one reads the extant sources with a hermeneutics of suspicion, and that it is preferable with respect to the Christian identity construction which Historical-Jesus research engenders. In other words, scholars no longer can justify their reconstructive readings in a positivist scientific fashion but need to stand accountable for them and their political functions in light of the values and visions they have promoted in the past and continue to promote today.

### 2.3. *Systemic Analysis*

From its beginnings social-scientific research has worked with the analytic category of patriarchy, particularly Ernst Troeltsch’s notion of love-patriarchalism,<sup>76</sup> but it has never developed this category theoretically. For instance, the macrosociological societal model of Gerhard Lenski is widely used in Historical-Jesus studies but this model does not consider patriarchal relations of domination. Rather, it seeks to model how to

balance the twin warring emphases of functional and conflictual analysis within the social sciences. Functionalists emphasize common interests, common advantages, consensus and cooperation; conflictualists emphasize dividing interests, domination, exploitation, and coercion.<sup>77</sup>

Whereas Stegemann and Stegemann, for example, acknowledge Mayer-Schärtel’s contention that the introduction of gender analysis would change Lenski’s model,<sup>78</sup> they themselves do not make such changes.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 1–19.

<sup>77</sup> Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity*, 153.

<sup>78</sup> They refer to her dissertation (cf. Barbara Mayer-Schärtel, “*Die Frau ist in jeder Hinsicht schwächer als der Mann*”: Eine sozialgeschichtliche und kulturanthropologische Untersuchung zum Frauenbild des Josephus [Neuendettelsau, 1994]) but not to her published work.

<sup>79</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 65–67.

Crossan also recognizes that Lenski's model does not structure gender into its typology but argues that it does not do so because it is a model of social class.<sup>80</sup> He seeks to remedy this by integrating Lenski's model with an anthropological model of gender roles that was developed in the late 1970's. This model is therefore not able to take into account the extensive feminist discussions on the sex/gender system which have taken place in the last decade.

While in the 1970's feminist theorists used as key analytic categories androcentrism/gender (= male-female dualism) and patriarchy (= the domination of the father/male over women) and distinguished between sex and gender roles, such a dualistic gender analysis has been seriously questioned by feminist theorists in the 1980's and 1990's who have pointed to the multiplicative, intersecting structures of domination determining wo/men's lives. In order to theorize structures of domination in antiquity and the multiplicative intersection of gender, race, class, and ethnicity in modernity, I have sought to articulate a heuristic model that replaces the notion of patriarchy/patriarchalism with that of kyriarchy as a key analytic category. While at first glance this model seems to be similar to Lenski's it is not a simple class or "dual systems" model. This can be seen if one looks at Lenski's class stratification model as developed by Stegemann and Stegemann in light of a kyriarchal stratification model.

Kyriarchy means the domination of the lord, slave master, husband, elite freeborn educated and propertied man over all wo/men and subaltern men. It is to be distinguished from kyriocentrism which has the ideological function of naturalizing and legitimating not just gender but all forms of domination. Kyriarchal relations of domination are built on elite male property rights over wo/men and other subordinates as well as wo/men's dependency, subordination, obedience, and second class citizenship.

Hence, it is important to see gender as one among several systems of domination and to conceptualize the formation of gender in terms of power relations. Gender is structured and constructed as it is because it serves to sustain the hegemonic sexual/economic/racial/cultural/national/religious unequal distribution of power and wealth. If Historical-Jesus research would recognize and work with the analytic concept of kyriarchy, it would be able not only to analyze its own imbrication with

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<sup>80</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 151.

colonialist and Christian western elite male interests but also construct its key analytic model of Mediterranean society and culture differently.

Kyriocentric ideology and systemic kyriarchy is not characteristic of only modern western societies. Already Aristotle had argued that the freeborn, propertied, educated Greek man is the highest of moral beings and that all other members of the human race are defined by their functions in his service. Kyriarchal relations of domination and subordination are explicitly articulated in western political philosophy in the context of Greek democracy and Roman imperialism. They have been mediated by Christian scriptural-theological traditions and have decisively determined modern kyriarchal forms and ideologies of democracy.

It is often maintained that the re-constructive model of Mediterranean society that works with the dualism of “honor-shame” adequately describes the reality of the ancient world. In using it, researchers are supposedly protected from projecting their own modern ideas and presuppositions unto the past. However, this maneuver obscures that Mediterranean society in antiquity would be more adequately comprehended with the social analytic of kyriarchy since the dualism “honor-shame” is only one, though an important, feature of the kyriarchal ethos of antiquity.

Mediterranean area studies that stress “honor-shame” culture not only fail to adequately describe the ancient world, they also prevent contemporary interpreters from engaging in “cross-cultural” dialogue because they project the “honor-shame” system onto “other” cultures but do not explore it for their own cultural context. Such studies identify Mediterranean culture as a totally alien culture. This culture allegedly favors being over doing, cultural dyadic relations over individualism, the present or past over the future, subordination over mastery, a view of human nature as a mixture of good and bad elements over a view of human nature as exclusively good or bad.<sup>81</sup> For instance, Pilch and Malina argue:

Thus in the United States, males generally are *expected* [emphasis added] to achieve (doing) and only secondarily permit themselves to be spontaneous (being), women in general are primarily expected to be spontaneous, and only secondarily to be dedicated to achieving. In Mediterranean society relative to this same area of concern, men are primarily socialized to spontaneity, while women are primarily socialized to achievement, doing, “work.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), xxii.

<sup>82</sup> Pilch and Malina, eds., *Biblical Social Values*, xxiii–xxiv.



By constructing this dualistic oppositions the authors effectively re-inscribe gender dualism as a social reality and as a fact rather than problematizing it as an ideological structure.

Halvor Moxnes concedes that those cultural anthropologists who have initiated Mediterranean studies have more recently distanced themselves from the understanding of the Mediterranean as a “fixed cultural area.” Yet, despite recognizing the constructedness of the “Mediterranean,” he nevertheless insists on gender dualism as its main characteristic:

But it is the specific relationship between the honor-and-shame code and male and female roles, that has been put forward as distinctive for the Mediterranean region. It is this theory that is at the center of the current discussion. Both linguistically and conceptually languages in the Mediterranean divide the world into masculine and feminine domains, and “male” and “female” thus become metaphors for other types of divisions.<sup>83</sup>

It is curious that Moxnes does not reflect on the fact that not just Mediterranean languages but all western languages are gendered and as such “divide the world up into masculine and feminine.” Hence, such a relationship is not distinct to Mediterranean cultures but is a characteristic of kyriarchal western cultures. Rather than problematize this reconstructive model of the Mediterranean, the Social-Scientific Context Group insists that one can engage in intercultural dialogue and avoid ethnocentrism only if one constructs the Mediterranean biblical world as totally different from our own. Thus they juxtapose biblical and US culture as exclusive opposites, without recognizing that much of US culture operates by honor-shame as do Native, European, African, or Asian cultures.

If one were to use not a contrast but an equivalence analogical model of re-construction one could see that “honor-shame” as well as its concomitant gender dualism are not particular to Mediterranean biblical culture. Most of the characteristics listed by Pilch and Malina as pertaining to Mediterranean culture could also be found in US culture if one looked at both cultures in terms of kyriarchal relations of domination. Moreover, one cannot simply compare cultures without taking the intersection of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and social locations into account.

Rather than construct the dualistic binaries Mediterranean-US culture, past and present culture, one needs to look at kyriarchal domination and democratic equality in both the Mediterranean biblical and our

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<sup>83</sup> Halvor Moxnes, “Honor and Shame,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 33.

own contemporary cultures. If one were to pay attention to changing relations of kyriarchal domination one could trace their change throughout western history, albeit in ever varying forms. Gender dualism is not something peculiar to Mediterranean culture but is produced by all socio-cultural systems of domination.

In addition, both historical-critical and social-scientific studies presuppose almost as a dogma that a deep chasm exists between people of the past and people of today.<sup>84</sup> The interpretive model used by critical-historical and social-scientific studies is not that of the *neighbor* or the *ancestor* but that of the *alien*. According to this hermeneutical model the people of the first century are not just foreigners but “aliens” who come from a different world. This distancing move, however, obscures on the one hand that we can comprehend historical worlds and societies only through the means of contemporary languages, perceptions, theories, or analogies, and on the other hand that history is written by and for people today about people of the past.

To think of the past in terms of neighbor would prevent us from turning the other into the same and at the same time allow us to appreciate and respect the other as different. To replace the model of the “other” with that of the “neighbor” would enable scholars to highlight both the differences and the similarities of past and present cultures and peoples. Insisting on the total otherness of people in antiquity and their cultures obscures the fact that we cannot understand the past if we do not stand in relationship and continuity with it. Heuristic models of the past are always articulated in the present. Whether they are acknowledged as scientific depends not only on their power of persuasion but also on the communicative relations of power in which they are embedded. Hence, social-scientific historiography like any other historiography serves ideological interests and must be accounted for in terms of an ethics of interpretation.

#### 2.4. *Reconstructive Models*

Scientific Historical-Jesus research often obfuscates the linguistically constructed and prescriptive character of both its kyriocentric language and source materials and its reconstructive models. The reality of the first century looks different, for instance, if one uses a sociological model

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<sup>84</sup> Pieter F. Craffert, “Relationships between Social-Scientific, Literary, and Rhetorical Interpretation of Texts,” *BTB* 26 (1996): 45–55.

of integration or if one employs a crisis model with respect to Roman imperialism and hegemonic Greco-Roman culture. It looks different if one describes the relationship of the Jesus movement to its mother culture, Judaism, in terms of an integrative re-constructive model or in terms of a conflictive crisis model. Both assumptions are possible, but result in quite different re-constructions of the Historical-Jesus and in quite different historical scenarios. Equally, the groups affiliated with Jesus look different if they are understood as social movements that are in conflict with the dominant society they seek to transform or if they are understood as sectarian splinter groups in conflict with Judaism.

#### 2.4.1. *Methodology*

According to Malina<sup>85</sup> the method and examination process of social-scientific inquiry recognizes three steps: postulating, testing, and changing the explanatory model. The *first* step consists of postulating a model (theory, or paradigm). At this point a critical scrutiny of the construction and selection of models becomes necessary. The *second* step requires testing the model with respect to actual experience in the “real” world, to which the model refers. But, how can a model be tested if it cannot be measured against the experience of the first century, since such actual experience is no longer available to us?

The *third* step in the process of critical examination consists of changing the model according to one’s test results in order to correct its deficiencies. Here scholars use three types of methodology: social-scientific criticism, polling and stratigraphy. Since social-scientific Jesus research cannot prove its hypotheses with reference to the experience of the Historical-Jesus and his compatriots in the first century CE, the criterion of plausibility or probability is introduced which argues with reference to our knowledge and “common sense” understanding of the world today. However, such a methodological move does not sufficiently take into account that what seems plausible depends on one’s overall understanding of the world. Our “common sense” understandings have ideological and naturalizing functions. Hence, the plausibility or probability criterion is always already implicated in discourses of domination that have become “common sense.”

Moreover, since Jesus scholars are not able to test their theoretical re-constructive models with reference to the Historical-Jesus and his experience, they have developed criteria that would enable them to

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<sup>85</sup> Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

retrieve as much as possible from the “authentic” historical figure of Jesus. While the Jesus Seminar has resorted to the consumer evaluation model of polling in order to sort out the “authentic” materials about Jesus, Dominic Crossan, one of its leaders, has perfected the archaeological method of stratigraphy as a scientifically controlled means to reconstruct Jesus as a peasant leader who announced the brokerless kingdom.<sup>86</sup>

The scientific method of stratigraphy advocated by Crossan proceeds in a threefold manner: it insists that Historical-Jesus re-constructions must be placed into context by way of Greco-Roman history and cross-cultural anthropology. Crossan, for instance, discusses the Millennialism paradigm as such a cross-cultural model. Then, he argues, one must make a scientific inventory of the Jesus materials and he does so first by dating the sources, secondly by stratifying them into time periods (the first stratum from 30 to 60 CE; the second from 60 to 80 CE, the third from 80 to 120 CE, and the fourth from 120 to 150 CE). Finally, Crossan sorts out and groups the extant materials into one of four categories: those attested only once, those that are independently attested twice or three times and those independently attested more than three times.

In so doing Crossan hopes to determine what materials precisely go back to the Historical-Jesus. It is appropriate, he argues, to begin with the first stratum but to bracket materials that are attested only once in one source. Moreover, in the first stratum “everything is original” until it is argued otherwise.<sup>87</sup> Those materials that go back to Jesus and are deemed to be “authentic” are marked with a plus (+) sign, those that do not are marked with a minus (–) sign and those that do not lend themselves to such “positivistic simplifications”<sup>88</sup> are marked with both signs.

Dale Allison discusses Crossan’s scientific method extensively and deconstructs its procedures point by point. He not only questions the very unstable and inconclusive method of dating but also the chronological delineation of the four stratigraphic layers. For instance, if one were to extend the period of the first stratum to 70 rather than 60 CE and the second to 100 rather than 80 CE the extant sources would need to be evaluated quite differently and hence a different “authentic” Historical-Jesus would emerge. Allison concludes “that we can never

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<sup>86</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), xxvii–xxviii.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiv.

demonstrate that our sources do in fact contain enough authentic material—however much that might be—to make questing a promising activity.”<sup>89</sup>

#### 2.4.2. *The Millenarian Model*

Nevertheless Allison does not want to give up the quest for the Historical-Jesus although he is less sure of its scientific character. He goes on to propose the Millenarian movement model for his own re-construction of Jesus as a thoroughly eschatological figure who is best understood in social-scientific terms as a Millenarian prophet. Over and against those who reconstruct a non-eschatological Jesus as, for instance, Burton Mack, Marcus Borg, and Dominic Crossan do, Allison, following the lead of Wrede, Schweizer, and Sanders, paints a picture of a thoroughgoing eschatological Jesus.

This Millenarian or Millennial cross-cultural model is widely utilized in Jesus research.<sup>90</sup> Dennis Duling defines Millennialism as:

A social movement of people whose central belief is that the present oppressive world is in crisis and will soon end, usually by some cataclysmic event, and that this world will be replaced by a new, perfect, blissful and trouble free world, often believed to be a restoration of some perfect time and place of old.<sup>91</sup>

Cultural anthropologists have synthesized this cross-cultural model of Millennialism by isolating “common themes” emerging from different times and places and in diverse social environments. Their social-scientific explanation of Millenarianism is either political, military, economic, heroic (the great man theory), cultural, psychological, or all of these.

Although I agree with Allison’s rigorous critique of the stratigraphic method and his assertion that interpretation and re-construction of the Historical-Jesus must adopt an organizing theoretical framework, I do not think it is methodologically correct to use the social-scientific re-constructive model of Millenarian movements to prove one’s own

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<sup>89</sup> Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 35.

<sup>90</sup> Dennis C. Duling, “Millennialism,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Rohrbaugh, 198–201 mentions among others the work of Isenberg, Gager, Horsley, Meeks, Jewett, Theissen, and Kloppenborg for the final version of Q. Cf. also Paul W. Hollenbach, “Recent Historical Jesus Studies and the Social Sciences,” *SBLSP* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983), 61–78; and Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990).

<sup>91</sup> Duling, “Millennialism,” 183.

re-construction of an eschatological Jesus as he does. In order to corroborate his Millenarian re-construction Allison points to the social-scientific parallel of Millenarian movements. In so doing he stands social-scientific method on its head. Since he cannot test out the social-scientific Millenarian model in light of the “authentic” materials about Jesus which we can never find with historical certainty, he seeks to prove his re-construction of a thoroughgoing eschatological Jesus by parallelizing and “proof-texting” it with reference to the cross-cultural model of Millennialism.<sup>92</sup>

Moreover, all Jesus scholars do not share his stress on imminent eschatology. Marcus Borg,<sup>93</sup> for instance, has argued that the scholarly consensus around the eschatological Jesus is in the process of breaking down. Allison in turn seeks to utilize the model of Millenarian movements in order to halt this breakdown and to reassert the Wrede-Schweitzer-Sanders imminent eschatology tradition.

To adjudicate this debate on the eschatological or non-eschatological Jesus,<sup>94</sup> I suggest, one cannot simply marshal textual evidence in one or the other direction. Instead one must question the theoretical model of Millenarianism. Although the Millenarian research model has been formulated by anthropologists and ethnologists and not primarily by biblical scholars, it still has been formulated by western scholars thinking within a Jewish and Christian symbolic universe though they may have long rejected Christianity or Judaism. It is noteworthy that Christopher Columbus and other discoverers of the “New World” were influenced by Millenarian ideas. As Massynbaerde Ford points out, “Adherents of this eschatological tradition anticipated a new age which would be ushered in by spiritual persons, thus supplying a powerful incentive to colonize the ‘New World.’”<sup>95</sup>

#### 2.4.3. *Social Change Movement Model*

In light of the discussion on the political function of social anthropology as an academic discipline serving colonialist ends, it is necessary

<sup>92</sup> Allison, *Jesus*, 81–94.

<sup>93</sup> Marcus Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 18–43.

<sup>94</sup> For an excellent contextualization of the eschatology debate cf. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, *Jesus Among Her Children: Q, Eschatology, and the Construction of Christian Origins*, HTS 55 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

<sup>95</sup> Josephine Massynbaerde Ford, “Millenium,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary IV* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 834.

to question the Millenarian reconstructive model and to replace it with that of actual “social movements” for change such as the workers’ movement, the Civil Rights movement, the feminist movement, or the ecological movement, among others. While apocalyptic hopes, dreams, and expectations of justice and restoration are central to social movements for change, I have suggested<sup>96</sup> that they have a rhetorical rather than a predictive function. They envision a different world in the interest of mobilizing resistance and revolt against unjust situations and oppressive structures here in the present. To understand social movements and their hopes and dreams the way Millennialism does is to misunderstand their pathos for bringing about justice. Hence, I suggest that in order to serve as an appropriate paradigm for Historical-Jesus research the re-constructive social-scientific model of Millennialism is best replaced with a social-scientific model that focuses on social political movements for change.

In contrast to the scientific construct of Millenarian movement social movements for change are not always inaugurated by a charismatic leader nor do they expect that change will benefit only their own group, the “elect.” For instance, Dr. Martin Luther King did not initiate the Civil Rights movement, nor was it considered to be “his” movement. Rather, he was a part of the Civil Rights movement and provided the rhetorical leadership that galvanized the movement. In a similar fashion, grassroots wo/men’s movements are generally not organized around a single charismatic leader but around a vision for changing situations of injustice and dehumanization. Hence, they provide an historical model for Historical-Jesus research that does not center on Jesus the “great Man” and hero.

How the Millenarian model with its stress on imminent eschatology depoliticizes interpretation can be seen from the ways scholars understand the key notion in Jesus’ preaching, the *basileia tou theou*. If one looks at the debate on the eschatological or non-eschatological Jesus one is struck by the fact that the leading antagonists E. P. Sanders<sup>97</sup> and Burton Mack<sup>98</sup> agree on one point: Jesus was apolitical and not concerned with changing his social-religious worlds.<sup>99</sup> In such an apolitical reading the *basileia tou theou* becomes a purely religious eschatological or a

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<sup>96</sup> See my book *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991).

<sup>97</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>98</sup> Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

<sup>99</sup> Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 21.

non-eschatological ethical notion. For instance, Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz argue that

God's kingdom is the establishment of his ethical will, the kingdom is to be understood dynamically as rule. . . . If the "kingdom of God" is an image for the establishment of God's ethical will, there is even more of a demand on the human ethical will.<sup>100</sup>

Since the "kingdom" extends into the realm of death because the dead ancestors are envisioned as sharing its eschatological table community, Theissen and Merz conclude that it is certainly not a "political kingdom" but "a religious expectation with political relevance."<sup>101</sup> Hence, over and against Perrin,<sup>102</sup> they argue that the *basileia* of G\*d is not a symbol and does not refer to any well-defined myth. Instead, it is a "living metaphor." While an apolitical reading of the *basileia* of G\*d as metaphor or religious symbol is possible if the issue is articulated as the problem of whether Jesus' preaching was eschatological or non-eschatological, it is not possible if one foregrounds the aspect of social movement, since social movements only emerge if there is an actual or perceived crisis and a need for socio-political change. However, one must be careful not to apply such a crisis model primarily to Judaism but rather to its domination by Roman imperialism. Depoliticizing the Millenarian model unavoidably leads to Christian anti-Jewish re-constructions of the Jesus movements.

While most scholars agree that *basileia tou theou* is central to the message of Jesus and hence represents the "authentic" Jesus, they disagree on the translation of the term and its meaning context. With Theissen and Merz the majority of scholars understand *basileia* to mean "kingly rule and reign," although we have clear instances where Jesus speaks of it in a spatial sense as "entering the *basileia*." In this interpretation G\*d becomes the king and sovereign whose will is law and must be obeyed. Such a stress on G\*d's kingly ruling is often explicated in terms of domination.

In contrast, a translation of *basileia* in a spatial sense as "royal realm," or in a collective sense as "kingdom," focuses on the people who consti-

<sup>100</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1998; German, 1996), 275.

<sup>101</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 276.

<sup>102</sup> I surmise this inference since their text does not refer to Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), who adopted the symbol theory of Wheelwright and argued that the "kingdom of G\*d" was a tensive symbol of ancestral range.



tute the *basileia* because according to ancestral tradition Israel was a covenant partner, a “kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:6; Isa 61:6).<sup>103</sup> That is, this tradition speaks in monarchical symbols about a radical egalitarian democratic polity. Still, such a political translation of *basileia* further depends on its meaning context. If *basileia* is contextualized in terms of Millennialism’s imminent or thorough-going eschatology it becomes a vision of the “other world,” a vision of “pie in the sky” that perpetually is disappointed by historical developments.

However, it has been convincingly argued that none of the early *basileia* sayings attributed to Jesus bespeaks such an otherworldly expectation.<sup>104</sup> Hence the meaning of *basileia* must be contextualized differently. If contextualized in the socio-political paradigm of social and religious movements for justice, *basileia* becomes a critical political term. Its meaning context is the Roman imperial system, which also was termed *basileia*, and Israelite liberation movements. *Basileia* becomes the hallmark of the movement around Jesus as an anti-imperialist egalitarian movement that seeks change for all those living at the bottom of the kyriarchal pyramid of domination—the poor, the dehumanized, the powerless, the outsiders and wo/men.

The crucial question in this contextual model of social movement is not whether Jesus and the movements gathered in his name did or did not expect the imminent end of the world. Rather, the crucial research question is whether they were compelled by a vision of a *basileia* different from that of the Roman Empire, a *basileia* that would radically change the oppressive situations in which they found themselves and that demanded the abolishment of all status privileges among them.

#### 2.4.2. *In Conclusion*

I have suggested a social-movements-for-change model as an alternative to Millennialism that allows one to reconstruct the movements gathered in Jesus’ name that inspire political-religious change rather than spiritualizing and de-politicizing them. Social-scientific Historical-Jesus study

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<sup>103</sup> See my dissertation *Priester für Gott: Zum Herrschafts- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972); as well as Sheldon R. Isenberg, “Millenarianism in Greco-Roman Palestine,” *Religion* 4 (1974): 26–46; idem, “Power through Temple and Torah in Greco-Roman Palestine,” in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 24–52; and Jacob Neusner’s extensive work, especially his *First Century Judaism in Crisis* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975).

<sup>104</sup> Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*, 69–97.

would become more rather than less scientific and objective if it would engage critical feminist questions and methodologies. Critical feminist Jesus studies bring to the conversation their insistence on a hermeneutics of suspicion that scrutinizes the ideological frameworks and political functions of research in the discourses of domination as well as their engagement of a hermeneutics of re-construction that places wo/men in the center of attention. I have offered here methodological reflections that would facilitate such a collaboration of critical feminist and socio-cultural-religious Historical-Jesus research in the interest of emancipation and liberation.

# HISTORICAL SKEPTICISM AND THE CRITERIA OF JESUS RESEARCH: MY ATTEMPT TO LEAP OVER LESSING'S UGLY WIDE DITCH<sup>1</sup>

GERD THEISSEN

The subtitle of this essay may perhaps suggest that there exists a kind of theological sport: “competitive jumping across Lessing’s ditch”—i.e., over the deep ditch of historical criticism. But this is a sport with no winners. No one has yet succeeded in leaping over this ditch; despite various approach runs, everyone up to now has landed in it. But then one discovers something unexpected: the ditch may be full of water, but it is fun to swim in it. This is why I would like to invite the reader to spring into the ditch. We will reach the far bank, not in a competitive leap, but by swimming. We may perhaps need a helping hand to draw us up onto the shore, but we must not refuse to take hold of that hand. This metaphor makes my most important point; let us therefore take a little time to interpret the image and comment on it.

What ditch is this, and what are its dimensions? It is the ditch between historical knowledge and faith. Faith is absolute certainty, a courage for life and for death, which is based on the person of Jesus and bears the imprint of this person. However, all that we know about Jesus is mediated by historical sources, and their interpretation will always remain a matter of dispute. Our knowledge of Jesus is more or less hypothetical, for one can always say: things may have been different. Faith, however, affirms apodictically: this is how things are. The problem is: how can conditional historical knowledge become the basis of unconditional certainty?

This was the problem Lessing tackled when he published his little treatise *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft* in 1777. He was not a

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<sup>1</sup> This essay first appeared in English under the title “Historical Scepticism and the Criteria of Jesus Research,” *SJT* 49 (1996): 147–176. A revised German version was published in G. Theissen and D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 233–269. The present essay was translated by Brian McNeil from a subsequent revised and expanded version: “Historische Skepsis und Jesusforschung. Oder: Meine Versuche über Lessings garstigen breiten Graben zu springen,” in Gerd Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, ed. Annette Merz, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 327–363.

radical skeptic in his evaluation of the traditions about Jesus, but he was aware that there are no necessary judgments in the sphere of historical science. There are only “accidental truths of history,” which always entail the reservation that things may in fact have been different. Lessing’s age knew unconditional certainty only in the form of “necessary truths of reason,” and he saw a deep gulf separating the two: “Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason.” In the face of this gulf, he cried out: “This, this is the nasty wide ditch that I cannot cross, no matter how often and seriously I have attempted to leap. If anyone can help me get across to the other side, then let him do so; I ask him, indeed I beseech him. He will earn his reward from God for what he does for me.”<sup>2</sup>

After more than two centuries of historical-critical research, the ditch has grown deeper, longer, and broader.

*First*, the ditch has grown deeper. The historical criticism of sources has become more radical. Anyone who has read historical-critical scholarship knows that all the sources about Jesus are the work of human beings; they are one-sided, tendentious, and may perhaps be unhistorical in many ways. We will never have the opportunity to check these sources against the events themselves; all we can do is to compare them with other sources, but these in turn are one-sided and tendentious. Historical knowledge is a fallible reconstruction based on fallible sources.

*Secondly*, the ditch has become more complicated. Even if we possessed an historically accurate picture of Jesus and knew that this is how things were—and not otherwise—we would still be faced with a second problem, viz. that everything we know about Jesus is derivable

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. E. Lessing, *Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft*, in *Lessings Werke* III, *Schriften* II, ed. K. Wölfel (Frankfurt: Insel, 1967), 307–312, with the commentary by K. Beyschlag, *ibid.*, 638–640; the metaphor of the “ditch” is found on p. 311 (ET: B.McN.). Lessing makes two linked distinctions. First, there is the rationalistic distinction between necessary truths of reason and accidental truths of history, which goes back to Leibniz’s distinction between *vérités de fait* and *vérités de raison*. Secondly, within the *vérités de fait*, there is a distinction between those facts which we can directly experience, and those facts which we know only through the mediation of witnesses and sources. This distinction comes from an empiricist tradition. Lessing would be happy if facts which are indirectly attested were confirmed by substantial analogies that many could directly experience today—for example, if miracles were performed not only in the days of Jesus, but at the present day too. The tension between the rationalistic and the empiricist ways of thinking is emphasized by L. P. Wessel, *G. E. Lessing’s Theology: A Reinterpretation: A Study in the Problematic Nature of the Enlightenment* (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 106–108, 119–121. A. Schilson offers a short sketch of Lessing’s theology in *Lessings Christentum*, KVR 1463 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980).

knowledge, in the sense that it has analogies and genealogies. Everything is embedded in an historical context; nothing is absolute. The problem of historical relativism threatens to dissolve the uniqueness of Jesus. The ditch which leads to him, leads us in fact into a labyrinth of ditches in which everything is connected with everything else, and we cannot find the path to the exit.

*Thirdly*, the ditch has grown broader, as an experiment will show: let us suppose for a moment that we could solve the problem of historical relativism, i.e. that we could identify something completely distinctive, underivable, and unique in the traditions about Jesus. We would still have the problem of historical distance: the Jesus who drove out demons and prophesied the end of the world belongs to a vanished ancient world, and every day that passes puts a greater distance between his world and ours. The academic ethos of every historian entails the acknowledgment that Jesus' world is alien to us. The historian fears nothing so much as the accusation that he is modernizing Jesus<sup>3</sup> and interpreting him on the principle that, "if one understands Jesus correctly, he was basically saying all along what I myself think to be true." We must take seriously the foreignness and the otherness of Jesus.

These three problems which I have sketched briefly—the problems of the historical criticism of sources, of historical relativism, and of historical distance—explain why no one can leap over Lessing's ditch. No one can win the gold medal in the theological discipline which might be defined as "competitive jumping across Lessing's ditch." But what are we in fact looking for, when we attempt to leap over the ditch? What would be the first prize in such a competition? We are looking for certainty about an historical person, in order responsibly to base a religious interpretation of life and an existential praxis on this person. This means that we are in fact asking two questions: the historical question of how we can come into contact with history, and the religious question of how we can come into contact with God. Lessing made a distinction between the two questions, but they go together in the Christian faith. The question is whether historical certainty is the necessary but insufficient condition for establishing religious faith. Does this faith find its starting point in historical certainties, and then go beyond these—while remaining vulnerable, if the historical events should in fact turn out to have been otherwise than they have been presented to us up to now?

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<sup>3</sup> H. J. Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1937; London: SPCK, 1962).

Would one then be compelled to understand the faith in a new and different manner? Or can the two questions be combined differently? Is it a necessary condition for the Christian faith that one comes into contact with God—and a sufficient condition, that one links this religious certainty to an historical character? In this case, is it irrelevant to what extent this character is genuinely historical? Could it be enough for this character to touch our history in some way or other—even if this point of contact is shrouded in myth and legend? Since two questions are involved in the search for historical and religious certainty, we will discuss these in turn. We ask first: is there an historical certainty in Jesus research that can become the basis of religious certainty? Then we reverse the question, and ask: is there a religious certainty in the relationship to the biblical Jesus that can be convincingly linked to historical knowledge?

### 1. *The Possibility of Historical Certainty in Jesus Research*

How did Lessing solve the problem? He held that the personal certainty which he sought could be generated only by the agreement of accidental historical facts with the “necessary truths of reason,” i.e. by truths which the reader of the historical sources possesses *a priori*. He saw the commandment to love as one such obvious truth of reason. This convinced him even in the form of the unhistorical legend of the testament of John, which is said to have consisted of only a few words: “My little children, love one another!”<sup>4</sup> Lessing’s solution cannot be ours, for the simple reason that we doubt the very existence of necessary truths of reason (with the exception of formal and tautological sentences). Nevertheless, our solution can begin with his. We can summarize the theoretical presuppositions of this solution in three points.

*First*, certainty never arises exclusively through external data (whether these be empirical material or historical sources), but only through the agreement of axiomatic convictions in ourselves with accidental external data. Axiomatic convictions (or ideas) are all those propositions which we find it unnecessary to justify. Since we believe that these are never untrue, we use them to justify other propositions. The experience of

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<sup>4</sup> G. E. Lessing, *Das Testament Johannis* (1777), in *Lessings Werke* III, *Schriften* II, ed. K. Wölfel (Frankfurt: Insel, 1967), 313–318.

certainty is generated when already existing certainties are “confirmed” by external data.<sup>5</sup>

*Secondly*, axiomatic convictions which make certainty possible are not innate in history, but are acquired in an historical process. Convictions which constitute modern historical consciousness in the aftermath of the Enlightenment make the historical “ditch” seem so impassable; these are above all the three convictions sketched above, viz. that all sources are the work of fallible human beings, that all events are embedded in analogies and genealogies, and that no anachronistic projections back into the past can ever grasp the reality of an historical person. We do not acquire these convictions only as a result of our work with concrete sources. Rather, we possess them *a priori* and bring them to bear on our analysis of the sources. And they prove their value over and over again: these are tried and proven convictions, ideas that have been tested empirically.

*Thirdly*, we cannot arbitrarily suspend the axioms of the historical consciousness and make faith possible by postulating infallible (inspired) sources, events to which there are no analogies, or eternal truths. We must find certainty in our approach to the historical Jesus, not against our axiomatic convictions, but with them! In what follows, I shall seek to demonstrate how these three axioms contain an inherent dialectic. If one reflects on their own logic, one will see that they also embrace their own antitheses, thereby making possible a self-limitation on historical skepticism, historical relativism, and historical foreignness. This does not of itself make them the basis of a religious certainty, but they no longer form a barrier to such a certainty. We attain those certainties which are in fact accessible to us, not by leaping over the axioms, but by jumping into them, as one jumps into cold water.

The hypothesis which I shall elaborate is that the three axioms of modern historical research are connected to the criteria of Jesus research. These criteria do not indeed form a bridge that would allow us to cross Lessing’s nasty ditch dry-shod, but they are a life belt (so to speak) that will prevent us from drowning as we swim through the waters of the ditch.

Let us recall the criteria which have guided research until now. The *criterion of dissimilarity* established a minimum of historical and

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<sup>5</sup> On axiomatic convictions, cf. D. Ritschl, “Die Erfahrung der Wahrheit: Die Steuerung von Denken und Handeln durch implizite Axiome,” in *Konzepte: Ökumene, Medizin, Ethik. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. D. Ritschl (München: Kaiser, 1986), 147–166.

authentic material through a comparison with Judaism and earliest Christianity. This was complemented by the *criterion of coherence*, which declared as authentic all the traditions whose contents agree with this minimum. The third criterion was the *multiple attestation* of traditions, which argued for the authenticity of still other traditions, or at any rate made their historicity more probable. I believe that this catalogue of criteria should be replaced by a criterion of historical plausibility. What is to be considered genuine? Not that which is different from the Jewish environment and from earliest Christianity, but that which can be given a plausible *Sitz im Leben* as an individual phenomenon in its *Jewish context*, and can plausibly explain the *historical impact of Jesus on earliest Christianity*.<sup>6</sup> The intention of this new formulation of the criteria is not to replace the old criteria by a completely new set; rather, the elements of the old catalogue are rearranged and supplemented by a greater attention to the historical context and the historical impact. I shall now attempt to show that my new formulation of the criterion of Jesus research corresponds to the basic axiomatic convictions of modern (secular) historical research.

The idea of human imperfection and fallibility finds its appropriate expression in the criterion of "plausible impact." The task of historical research is to interpret sources in such a way that they can be perceived as the consequence of the story to which they bear witness (or of the impact of the authors of these sources). In other words, the task of historical research is not only to relate reconstructed events, but to relate them in such a way that it is possible to comprehend the sources which bear witness to them as the consequence of these events. In Jesus research, therefore, we must explain and interpret the historical impact made by Jesus, as we find this in the form of the sources which bear witness to him. Human imperfection and fallibility mean that these sources never give us a completely coherent picture of events; but it is also rare for the picture to be completely incoherent. We find both elements, and incoherencies are a valuable indicator for us. Where they go back to something that contradicts dominant tendencies in the Christian sources, they are an indicator of historical memory. For example, anything that has survived *against* the tendency to see in Jesus a divine being, probably goes back to the historical Jesus. This is the old criterion of dissimilarity vis-à-vis earliest Christianity, now made concrete (as a sub-criterion of the plausibility of historical impact) as the criterion of "running contrary to

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Theissen and Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage*.



tendencies.” The other sub-criterion is the evaluation of the agreement in the picture of Jesus which we find in various sources, provided that these are mutually independent. This is the old criterion of coherence. History itself can continue to make an impact through an element that survives in a cross-section of different sources.

The second fundamental axiomatic conviction of modern historical research, the idea of the relativity of all events, finds its expression in the criterion of contextual plausibility. We must relativize all the traditions about Jesus in an historical sense, i.e. locate them within their Jewish context, and then investigate both agreements with this context and divergences from it. Here, we take up the traditional criterion of dissimilarity vis-à-vis Judaism and reformulate it as a criterion of contextual historical individuality. This is the first sub-criterion of contextual plausibility, and it is supplemented by a second sub-criterion, viz. the search for what explicitly agrees or generally accords with the Jewish context. Only that which is conceivable in the concrete Jewish context of the first century of the Common Era can be ascribed to the historical Jesus, who does not stand in history in some “absolute” detachment, but is woven into the history of the Judaism of his period. Precisely this is his “relativity.” And this is precisely what the basic idea of historical relativism postulates for every historical fact in relation to its own specific context.

The third fundamental modern conviction of historical research is that all events have a foreign character *a priori*, and that we must evaluate events on their own terms, even where they seem to run contrary to our own convictions. This principle does not lead to the formulation of particular criteria. One cannot in the least maintain that, the more foreign an event is, the better its claim to historical authenticity. The autonomy and integrity of history mean that we cannot reconstruct it either as a positive correspondence or as a negative counterfoil to our own historical world, for neither of these would be an evaluation of the past on its own terms. The autonomy of history is appropriately taken into account only when we consciously choose a methodology that can free us from our own preconceptions. In short, this third fundamental conviction of the historical consciousness means that we must keep on looking for new criteria of what is “historical,” and improve and refine these.

This then is how we propose to attempt to get across Lessing’s nasty ditch. We will leap into it, but we will not drown if we follow methodological criteria.

### 1.1. *The Problem of the Criticism of Historical Sources*

All source criticism is based on an implicit anthropological axiom, viz. that human beings are fallible. They never transmit the historical truth *per se* (to the extent that this exists), but present stories in the light of their own interests, tendencies, and intentions. This is why the sources contradict each other so much. And this is why it is necessary to read sources critically and to interpret them first of all as the expression of the circumstances in which they came into being, before we evaluate them as documents of the events which they relate. This means that we must approach all our sources, even the best and most reliable, with a methodologically disciplined distrust. Nevertheless, there undoubtedly exist historical certainties. No one doubts that Caesar or Luther lived and worked. No one doubts the existence of a man called Pontius Pilate. But whence comes this certainty, if all historical knowledge is said to be relative and hypothetical?

In the attempts to leap over Lessing's ditch, we encounter an interesting dialectic at this point. All historical criticism is based on the axiomatic conviction of universal human fallibility—yet precisely this conviction preserves us from a total skepticism. If people are too imperfect to be able to transmit the truth *per se*, then they are also too imperfect to be able to orchestrate (consciously or unconsciously) a complete deception about historical facts.<sup>7</sup>

Let us suppose that there had existed in the first century CE a committee for the leading astray of future historians, and a conspiracy aimed at leaving us a fictitious picture of Palestine at that period and of the events which took place there. Not even the most powerful committee would be mighty enough to exercise a genuine control over all the sources and relics and impose on these a particular view of things. Did they really make an agreement to hide various coins of Pontius Pilate in the soil of Palestine, or to chisel out an inscription by Pilate which was preserved for later generations because it was used as a stair in the theater at Caesarea and thus escaped notice? Did the committee persuade Philo, Josephus, and Tacitus (or the copyists of their texts) to insert various pieces of information about Pilate scattered throughout their works? Did it prompt the evangelists to write about Pilate in a way which does not actually contradict those scattered pieces of information,

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<sup>7</sup> Some of the following ideas are inspired by M. Bloch, *Apologie der Geschichte oder Der Beruf des Historikers*, Anmerkungen und Argumente 9 (Stuttgart: Klett, 1974).

but on the other hand can scarcely be derived from Philo, Josephus, or Tacitus? This is quite impossible! Any historian who studies the very accidental sources about Pilate will become intuitively certain that he was an historical person. No one doubts the historicity of Pilate. The imperfect ability of human beings to hand on the truth pure and unvarnished also means that they are unable to rewrite everything completely. We are axiomatically convinced today of human fallibility before we have studied even one single concrete source; and the same axiom protects us *a priori* from the suspicion that everything these sources relate is a product of the imagination, provided of course that we have a sufficiently complex body of sources available.

This brings us to a re-evaluation of Lessing's problem. He identified the historical contingency of the tradition as the reason for the shattering of the certainty of faith. Every tradition implicitly tells the critical reader: things could have been otherwise. We have however noted that if historical certainty exists at all, it is based on the contingent character of the tradition. The more convincingly this contingency emerges in the tradition, the stronger will be our intuitive certainty that we are encountering genuine history. It is indeed true that the accidental truths of history cannot be the basis of the necessary truths of reason (the existence of which is in any case disputed, with the exception of logical and mathematical truths). But accidental truths of history are the only possible basis of historical certainty, and we cannot achieve more than such an historical certainty about historical objects. This is what we mean when we say that we must leap right into the ditch of historical contingency, and that we should have no qualms about doing so. For it is only in the midst of historical contingency that we can arrive at historical certainty.

Leaping into the water of historical contingency means studying the sources which have accidentally survived. It is only where these are sufficiently complex that we can activate in both directions the axiom of the human person's limited capacity vis-à-vis both total truth and total falsification. Our thesis is that the human person's incapacity to tell the historical truth *per se* can be seen in the many contradictions and disagreements of the historical sources; and the incapacity to falsify the historical truth totally can be seen in the fact that, in many cases, such incoherencies can be given a coherent interpretation. Incoherencies which can be coherently interpreted are the best indicator that we are drawing close to the historical truth. Let us now look at both of these: the contradictions and their coherent interpretation.

We cannot compare the sources with the historical reality they portray, but we can compare the various sources themselves. When we do so, we almost always find contradictions. These are fruitful when they can be interpreted as an indication that source A is independent of source B, for we then have a twofold access to the historical reality, two windows through which we can get a glimpse of it. In this sense, Jesus research is well supplied with sources. Even if we leave aside the gospels of John and *Thomas*,<sup>8</sup> literary criticism today agrees that we possess two mutually independent ancient sources, the Gospel of Mark and the logia source Q, in addition to two mutually independent bodies of tradition, viz. the specifically Matthean and Lukan materials. The classical *Formgeschichte* increased the number of sources by considering each small unit as a tradition that could be potentially isolated, and attributed a specific perspective to each genre. This means that we possess a large amount of data with observable small tensions. If it is possible, on the basis of the final form of these traditions, to take this network of incoherent data and sketch a coherent picture of Jesus—something every book about Jesus does!—then the situation with regard to our sources cannot be wholly unfavorable.

These considerations confirm the necessity of reformulating the traditional criterion of coherence. The very concept of “coherence” is misleading, for as we have seen, the criterion functions because the sources contain a mixture of coherent *and* incoherent elements. We can examine the coherent traits against the background of incoherent elements and interpret the former as indicators of the historical reality; or else we can isolate the incoherent elements against the background of relatively coherent tendencies in the sources, and identify precisely in these awkward elements relics of a history which lies behind the sources. In other words, we can attach importance either to the coherence of our sources or to those elements which run contrary to identifiable tendencies. The two sub-criteria are mutually independent.

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<sup>8</sup> We should make a distinction here between “autonomy” and “independence.” *Thomas* certainly represents an autonomous tradition, the specific character of which can be explained without recourse to the canonical gospels. This does not exclude the possibility that the canonical gospels have exercised a secondary influence on some traditions or on the textual history of *Thomas*. Cf. the discussion of this problem by S. J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993).

1.1.1. *The Criterion of Coherence of the Sources*

The agreement of our sources<sup>9</sup> can be an indicator of historical reality above all when the sources are mutually independent, and their mutually divergent tendencies can be interpreted as peculiarities of the source in question (e.g. as typically Johannine traits).<sup>10</sup>

1. This applies to the so-called *cross-section proof*, which looks for recurrent *topoi*, forms, and contents in various streams of tradition. If constant traits of Jesus recur again and again despite all distortions, these are relics of the historical man. If we find something in the specific Matthean and Lukan materials, Q, Mark, John, and *Thomas*, this is most likely based on history itself. For example, we find everywhere the concept of the kingdom of God (the Matthean variant speaks of the “kingdom of heaven”). This is a central concept in Jesus’ preaching. With the exception of the gospels of John and *Thomas*, all the sources speak of God’s reign in apocalyptic colors. This is a marvelous new state of affairs in which the whole world will be transformed; it lies beyond the immanent history of the world, for even the deceased patriarchs will be present in the kingdom of God (Matt 8:11–12). When John and *Thomas* speak of the kingdom of God as a present reality, or when it becomes in *Thomas* a cipher for the true, heavenly self of the human person, this is partly a development of those aspects in Jesus’ proclamation of the *basileia* which refer to the present time, and partly the effect of tendencies related to gnosis which have reshaped the image of the historical Jesus. But we can be fairly certain that Jesus proclaimed the *basileia* in a conceptual framework with apocalyptic colors, although of course he transcended this framework when he announced that the future reign of God was already a present reality.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “Agreement” and “coherence” are not timeless criteria. What we regard as coherent can be incoherent in the eyes of others, and vice versa. The letters of Paul are full of contradictions, although a glance at the Letter to the Romans will remind us that he is one of the “systematic” New Testament authors. There may well be an even greater number of contradictions in the utterances of persons (including Jesus himself) who thought less systematically. We must develop a sensitivity to what was felt to be “coherent” and contradictory at the various periods of history. A comparison between the two historical works of Josephus (the *Jewish War* and the *Antiquities*) shows the extraordinary divergences that are possible in one and the same author when he writes about the same events, sources, and traditions!

<sup>10</sup> We take up here the traditional criterion of coherence, but there is one important difference: this was dependent on the criterion of dissimilarity, whereas our criterion can be applied to sources without first employing the criterion of dissimilarity to distinguish authentic from inauthentic elements.

<sup>11</sup> I am aware of the tendency in contemporary American exegesis to deny the apocalyptic and cosmic elements in Jesus’ eschatology. Cf. M. J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary*

2. In the case of *elements which do not depend on one single genre*, we likewise reckon with historical material. When various genres and forms contain comparable and mutually coherent elements, these may be historical. For example, we hear about Jesus' miracles both in the form of miracle stories (i.e., in a narrative genre) and in the form of logia by Jesus (i.e., in the verbal tradition). The miracle stories lack traits which are characteristic of the verbal tradition, viz. the proclamation of God's reign, the summons to repentance, the idea of following Jesus. This incoherence can be explained:<sup>12</sup> even during Jesus' lifetime, people talked about his miracles—independently of whether they actually followed his call to repentance in view of the imminence of the *basileia*. This is why we find Jesus portrayed in some popular tales as a wonder-worker in the light of the general belief in miracles in the classical period, without any specifically *Christian* traits. The verbal tradition, on the other hand, was transmitted by those who followed Jesus, i.e., by disciples who shared his lifestyle. Like Jesus, they were homeless, they had often abandoned their families, and they were poor. They handed on the logia which suited their lifestyle: words about the imminent transformation of the whole world, about the universal summons to repentance, and the call to a few persons to follow Jesus. Miracles too formed a part of their message: in their tradition of logia, the miracles are linked to the preaching of the *basileia* (Matt 12:28 par.), to the summons to repentance (Matt 11:20–24), and to the decision taken for or against Jesus (Matt 11:2–6 par.). Since their own way of life accorded with that of Jesus, these followers, the “wandering charismatics,” saw no need to adapt his words to another mentality, and this is why there is a good chance that they did in fact hand on the words of Jesus in the spirit in which he had originally spoken them. The verbal tradition also confirms that the miracles of Jesus were accessible even to people who had not become his adherents (Matt 11:20–24; 12:22–24). His enemies too knew about them, and this allows us to suppose that it was not only his followers who spoke about his miracles. These indicators make plausible the emergence of a miracle tradition in narrative form which was not specifically Christian. We may therefore conclude that a

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*Scholarship* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 47–68, 69–96. I believe that D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), is correct to protest against this denial of Jesus' eschatology.

<sup>12</sup> On what follows, cf. G. Theissen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, NTOA 8 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989), 119–121.

historical-critical reconstruction of the activity of Jesus can explain the genesis of two distinct blocks of sources, the miracle *narratives* which reached the people, and the tradition of Jesus' *words* which remained restricted to his disciples. Jesus was experienced differently by the people and by his disciples. It is thus possible to offer a coherent interpretation of the incoherencies of the Jesus tradition in the miracle tradition. In this case, the two genres are not equidistant from history; the miracle stories, which spread to a wide public, distanced themselves from the historical reality more quickly than the tradition of Jesus' words.

3. The principle that incoherencies in the sources can be interpreted as pointers to a coherent history is also the basis of the traditional criterion of *multiple attestation*. This criterion leads to one-sided positions. When a scholar constructs a picture of Jesus exclusively on multiply attested traditions in both canonical and non-canonical texts,<sup>13</sup> he makes himself dependent on two factors: (a) on the chance survival of some logia and deeds of Jesus on papyrus fragments, and (b) on the tendentious selection of logia of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Since *Thomas* contains the picture of a "non-eschatological Jesus," one will end up with a picture of the historical Jesus that is not eschatological (in the apocalyptic sense). Besides this, multiple attestation is in principle a weaker criterion than cross-section proof and the presence of an element in various genres, since multiple attestation permits us to draw conclusions about the historical reality only when we can evaluate various attestations of one and the same tradition as two mutually independent points of access to the historical reality—in other words, only where we have two separate eyewitnesses.<sup>14</sup> This is never completely impossible, but it is difficult to prove. Where we find related material in various streams of tradition and genres (i.e., in the cross-section proof and the elements which are not restricted to one single genre), it is *a priori* more probable that this goes back to several independent "contacts" with the historical reality.

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<sup>13</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), is based almost exclusively on the criterion of multiple attestation.

<sup>14</sup> The same reservation is made by N. Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1975). The criterion of multiple attestation was applied above all by T. W. Manson, who presupposed two sources which he believed were the work of eyewitnesses: he saw the authority of Peter behind the Gospel of Mark, and the authority of the apostle Matthew behind Q. Naturally, if this is presupposed, the criterion of multiple attestation becomes an outstanding criterion of authenticity; but scarcely anyone accepts these presuppositions today.

### 1.1.2. *The Criterion of Material Running Contrary to a Tendency*

This criterion<sup>15</sup> illustrates well the reason why the historical search for the truth profits from the human imperfection vis-à-vis the truth: although we are conditioned by our own tendencies in all the narratives and stories we tell, we cannot prevent the survival of elements which run contrary to these tendencies. Accordingly, anything in the earliest Christian sources which contradicts their general tendencies may be historical. Let us look at some examples.

The baptism of Jesus contradicts the tendency of early Christianity to venerate Jesus as a divine being. It presupposes a confession of sin, which Jesus too probably pronounced. The early Christian tradition seeks to limit the damage here. The Gospel of John admits that Jesus bore sins when he came for baptism, but only in order to underline that he was bearing the sins of the world, not his own (John 1:29). It transforms the story of the baptism into the story of a meeting of the Baptist with Jesus.

Some of the criticism of Jesus runs contrary to tendencies, both his enemies' criticism that he is in league with Satan (Matt 12:24) and the criticism of the people, who see in him a glutton and a drunkard (Matt 11:19). The fear of Herod Antipas that Jesus may be the Baptist, risen from the dead (Mark 6:14), also runs contrary to tendencies, since both the high esteem for the Baptist which this presupposes and the idea of resurrection as a return to earthly life are improbable after Easter.

Above all, Jesus' death on the cross runs contrary to all the tendencies to venerate him in a religious sense: it was not easy to interpret the execution of a criminal as the death of a redeemer. The early Christians were well aware that the cross was a *skandalon* (1 Cor 1:18–26).

A particularly favorable instance is statements which run in contrary directions: where both friend and foe assume the same facts, these are likely to be historical. For example, Jesus' exorcisms were interpreted by his adherents as signs of the emergence of God's reign (Matt 12:28), but by his enemies as the working of a demonic power (Matt 12:24). Both sides

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. P. W. Schmiedel, "Gospels," *EB(C)* II (1901), cols. 1761–1898; idem, *Das vierte Evangelium gegenüber den drei ersten*, RV I.8 and I.10 (Halle: Gebauer-Schwetschke et al., 1906). The "columns" on which Schmiedel wanted to base historical research into Jesus are passages which run contrary to a tendency. In E. P. Sanders and M. Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1989), 304–306, we find the same criterion under the heading: "Strongly against the grain; too much with the grain."



presuppose the existence and the religious relevance of the exorcisms, and this makes their concordant testimony all the more weighty.

This last example shows how the search for elements which run against tendencies often coincides with the search for agreements. The baptism of Jesus corresponds to the criterion of “source coherence.” We have several pieces of independent testimony (Mark 1:9–11 pars; *Gospel of the Hebrews* 2; John 1:32–34), and it is attested in several genres, both in the synoptic baptismal narrative and in a summary (Acts 10:37; cf. 1:22). This means that we have a certain “coherence of the tradition.” At the same time, however, some aspects of the baptismal narrative clearly run contrary to tendencies, e.g. the dependence of Jesus on the Baptist (which is toned down in Matt 3:14) or the confession of sins on the occasion of baptism (which is consciously denied in frag. 2 of the *Gospel of the Nazareans*). In concrete historical work, we apply both criteria simultaneously, and understand both the agreements and the elements which run against tendencies as an expression of the historical impact made by Jesus.

The criterion of plausible effect is however insufficient, since the question remains: how can we be sure that the early Christian religious imagination did not create a picture of Jesus after Easter, and that this picture has survived in various strands of the tradition and sources? What guarantees that we encounter the historical Jesus, rather than an early picture of him? Are not in principle all the sources colored by the religious convictions of earliest Christianity, which profoundly restructured its recollection of the historical Jesus in the light of the Easter experience? A second criterion is necessary, that of contextual plausibility.<sup>16</sup> The more convincingly we can uncover Jesus’ ties to his Jewish context, the more will we be certain that we can get behind the post-Easter Christian pictures of Jesus to discern the pre-Easter historical reality; and the more will we be certain that Jesus is a product, not of the early Christian imagination, but of the history of Judaism. This presupposes that everything in Jesus is “relative”—i.e., related to his specific Jewish context. This is why we must discuss the criterion of Jesus’ contextual ties in the framework of the problems connected with historical relativism.

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<sup>16</sup> The criterion of “contextual plausibility” is found in various forms in almost all the catalogues of criteria, e.g., as “environmental criterion.”

### 1.2. *The Problem of Historical Relativism*

Historical relativism says that all historical phenomena are linked: they are “in relation” or “relative” to one another. All must be derived from their pre-history, explained on the basis of their own situation, and illuminated by means of analogies. Nothing is “underivable,” since everything is the result of development. Nothing is incomparable, since there are analogies to everything. Nothing is absolute. However, the Christian faith is based on Jesus as the mediator of an absolute certainty, viz. that through him we are confronted with God. Lessing’s nasty wide ditch opens up anew between this certainty of faith and the historical relativity of Jesus. In Lessing’s own period, the real extent of this ditch could not yet be seen. It was only the nineteenth-century research into the history of religions that made us aware how much Jesus is embedded in his own period and in religious history.

Nevertheless, the historical research into Jesus has based the criterion of dissimilarity on the supposition that Jesus is a unique figure. Does not the certainty of his distinctiveness and underivability contradict the basic conviction of historical relativism that everything is linked to everything else, and that nothing is completely singular? Doubts about the criterion of dissimilarity are only strengthened when we discover that it is impracticable and misleading. It is impracticable, because it contains a universal negative judgment which we cannot verify;<sup>17</sup> and it is misleading, because it leaves out of account everything that Jesus had in common with Judaism and early Christianity. Accordingly, we cannot escape from historical relativism by simply appealing to the criterion of dissimilarity which is practiced in Jesus research, since this is too problematic. And yet, behind this criterion lies a justified idea, viz. the conviction of the individuality of historical persons and events.

It is precisely historical relativism that helps us to justify and assert this conviction of the individuality of historical phenomena, in two ways. The principle that everything is connected with everything else means that one may never interpret particular elements in an historical phenom-

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<sup>17</sup> In order to demonstrate the underivability of a tradition about Jesus from the environment in which he lived, we would need to possess a complete picture of this environment. This was pointed out nearly four decades ago: cf. M. D. Hooker, “Christology and Methodology,” *NTS* 17 (1970): 480–487: “Use of this criterion seems to assume that we are dealing with two known factors (Judaism and Early Christianity) and one unknown—Jesus; it would perhaps be a fairer statement of the situation to say that we are dealing with three unknowns, and that our knowledge of the other two is quite as tenuous and indirect as our knowledge of Jesus himself” (482).

enon in isolation, but only in connection with all the other co-existing elements—irrespective of whether this phenomenon is a text, a human being, or a social movement. Once again, we encounter here an internal dialectic: although some individual elements may be “derivable,” this does not entitle us to say that the combination of these elements is “derivable.” It could be singular. The more elements we find combined, the less probable is it that we will find a substantially comparable phenomenon at some other point in world history. In the case of human beings, this seems excluded *a priori*, since each one is such a complex phenomenon that a “repetition” is excluded. This is why we always approach historical reality on the basis of an axiomatic faith in its individuality.

Historical relativism contains however a second idea, which likewise functions as an axiomatic conviction, viz. the idea of development. The principle that everything is linked to everything else holds not only of synchronic relationships between elements in one and the same historical phenomenon, but also for the diachronic sequence of elements (of traditions, ideas, or motifs). Historical relativism affirms that everything can be derived from earlier units, and this is why we can sort all historical material into a sequence of earlier and later elements. If all the elements were equal in every respect, it would be impossible to arrange them in a temporal sequence, and we would be unable to distinguish various stages within this sequence. The idea of development implies the idea of the singularity of every individual moment in this development, for we can conceive of development only if we can distinguish earlier and later stages, preceding and subsequent elements. In this sense too, historical relativism necessarily implies the axiomatic faith in historical individuality; and both these ideas were in fact elaborated in the history of ideas at the same period, in the age of historicism in the nineteenth century. They belong together.<sup>18</sup>

Let us sum up the argumentation hitherto. Behind historical relativism lies a very elementary axiom: everything must be interpreted in context. This leads (*a*) to a relativization of all historical phenomena, since these are embedded in diachronic and synchronic contexts; and (*b*) to an individualization of each historical phenomenon, thanks to its singular place in diachronic developments and to its complexity as a synchronic structure. If everything is linked to everything else, then everything is both relative and individual.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. F. Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, Werke III (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1959).

If we apply this general historical conviction to the concrete figure of Jesus, we come to the conclusion that his singularity consists in a singular combination of Jewish traditions as well as in the fact that his words and deeds represent a distinctive stage in the development that leads from Judaism to early Christianity.

The traditional criterion of dissimilarity does not do justice to this affirmation, since its methodology pays attention only to the differences, not to the agreements between traditions about Jesus and the Jewish context. The criterion of "contextual plausibility" embraces both aspects, and it is only in this way that we can avoid the dilemma of being compelled to formulate negative universal statements which in principle are unverifiable. We can never prove that some element in the tradition about Jesus is never attested anywhere in Judaism, is not derived from anything in Judaism, or is inconceivable anywhere in Judaism. We can however make positive judgments about connections between a limited quantity of Jewish sources and the tradition about Jesus. By comparing this tradition with a limited amount of source material, we can identify singular traits in the tradition, or else locate their distinctive place within a concrete trajectory of development. In other words, we can investigate how they are embedded in concrete synchronic or diachronic contexts, and demonstrate their contextually bound individuality within these contexts.

This idea of an internal dialectic of historical relativism also contradicts the conviction (born of the criticism of theology) that Jesus cannot in any sense be "singular" and "lacking analogies." If one takes the logic of this axiom of relativism to its own conclusion, it becomes self-limiting, as we see in the development of the "history of religions" research into early Christianity.

For a long time, it was considered a sign of "unenlightened" ties to church dogma, when the singularity of the phenomenon of Jesus was defended against all attempts to derive it from the history of religions, and theologians refused to employ consistently the analogies from the history of religions as the key to understand both Jesus and early Christianity, or to classify these phenomena unreservedly in terms of developments in the history of religions. Today, the perspective has changed: the exaggerated evaluation of analogies and trajectories of development in the history of religions is perceived as an (often unconscious) dogmatic insistence on the singularity of Jesus and on the centrality of his position in the history of religion and of the world. This is because the old "history of religions" research unconsciously began

by subjecting many of the analogies it examined to an *interpretatio christiana*, before going on to apply these successfully (on the basis of such a reinterpretation) to the explanation of early Christian phenomena. For example, scholars were convinced that dying and rising deities were worshiped in the mystery cults; today, we see that although the yearning for a new life (before or after death) is indeed expressed in the mystery cults, one can speak only at a much later date of a “resurrection” of the deities whom they worshiped. Originally, all that we find are compromises between death and life.<sup>19</sup> Persephone (or Kore) must remain in the underworld for a third of the year; she is permitted to return to the world of the divine life only in the remaining two-thirds. The corpse of Attis remains dead, but it does not decompose; only his little finger moves. Osiris rules in the underworld, and this means that he himself is one of the dead; but corn grows out of his corpse. Mithras, since he is not a dying god, provides no analogy. Rather, his figure is an “alternative scenario” to the way in which the experience of death and the hope of life were “staged” in other mystery cults. As far as we know at present, only early Christianity had a deity who died and rose again. The preaching of this deity doubtless found an echo in people who expressed their longing for new life in their myths of dying deities; but it is only in early Christianity that this longing is expressed in the form of a resurrection from death. In other words, the older “history of religions” research unconsciously took the figure of Christ as its model when it interpreted the deities in the mystery cults: these scholars saw Christ as the key to the history of religions. And this is an unconscious survival of Christian dogmatics which makes it more difficult to perceive and evaluate each individual phenomenon on its own terms.

The same is true of the classification of phenomena in terms of developments in the history of religions. It is not by chance that a rather conservative “biblical theology” has attached importance to demonstrating such developmental sequences from the Old Testament to the New. Here too, we must ask whether it is not being suggested *a priori*

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. D. Zeller, “Die Mysterienkulte und die paulinische Soteriologie (Röm 6,1–11): Eine Fallstudie zum Synkretismus in Neuen Testament,” in *Suchbewegungen: Synkretismus—kulturelle Identität und kirchliches Bekenntnis*, ed. H. P. Siller (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), 42–61; idem, “Hellenistische Vorgaben für den Glauben an die Auferstehung Jesu?” in *Von Jesus zu Christus, Festschrift: P. Hoffmann* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 71–91. Against this position, G. Baudy reconstructs a close connection between the cult of Tammuz and the early Christian message: “Das Evangelium des Thamus und der Tod des ‘großen Pan’: Ein Zeugnis romfeindlicher Apokalyptik aus der Zeit des Kaisers Tiberius?” *ZAC* 4 (2000): 13–48.

that all the trajectories in the Old Testament and early Judaism were leading up to the one unique figure of Jesus of Nazareth. For example, the few texts about the Son of Man in Dan 7, Ethiopian *Enoch* 37–71, and 2 *Esdras* 13 are read as “preliminary stages” leading to the early Christian statements about the Son of Man; or Leviticus 16 and Isaiah 53 are read as pointing to faith in the expiatory death of Jesus, although it was perhaps only an *interpretatio christiana* (though doubtless an impressive piece of exegesis) that discovered in the scapegoat ritual of Leviticus 16 an existential representation of the sinful human being in the goat which is killed and driven out of the camp; or messianic affirmations are discovered everywhere in the Old Testament and in the intertestamental Jewish literature, and interpreted to suggest that the expectation of the Messiah was central to the Jewish religion. In reality, this was only one variant of eschatological hopes. It is only from a Christian perspective that one can read the so-called “messianic” testimonies in such a way that they increase in intensity and rise up to an ever more sublime expectation of the Messiah. Biblical messianism is one trajectory among others, not the only one; it was only for the first Christians that it became the central perspective.

The awareness of relativity in the field of the history of religions leads scholars today to “relativize” analogies which were adduced without sufficient pause for reflection and trajectories of development which were constructed with a breathtaking boldness. Today, it is precisely the investigation of the individuality of all phenomena that counts as the expression of an enlightened critical historical awareness. For the theological assertion that no analogies exist to the singularity of Jesus is in fact no more “dogmatic” than the attempts (born of a critique of theology) to posit so many analogies and developmental sequences that one of the most outstanding characters in history ultimately becomes indistinct.

### 1.2.1. *The Criterion of Contextual Correspondence*

The more a tradition about Jesus fits the context of contemporary events and local circumstances, Jewish tradition and Jewish mentality, the less can Jesus be a figment of the early Christian imagination. For the main difference between a fictional character and an historical person is that we can date and localize the latter and establish links to other historical figures and persons.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946; Oxford University Press, 1956), 246–247.

We have mentioned above some examples of traditions about Jesus which run contrary to tendencies, and these can also illustrate the criterion of contextual correspondence: the baptism of Jesus at the beginning of his public activity, the criticism of his enemies during this activity, and his crucifixion at the end of his ministry. The baptism, criticism, and execution of Jesus are linked to John the Baptist, Herod Antipas, and Pontius Pilate. We meet all three figures in non-Christian sources too,<sup>21</sup> so that we can use these as a check on the Christian sources. Such a comparison shows that we undoubtedly possess historically reliable information in the Christian sources about these three persons, even if it comes from a particular perspective. By analogy, we may conclude that if the tradition possesses an historical background with respect to these three contemporary figures, it will possess an historical background of roughly the same extent with regard to Jesus himself.

Another aspect of contextual correspondence is traditions about Jesus which are embedded in a specific local context.<sup>22</sup> We find local color when we hear about a baptism in the wilderness (cf. Mark 1:4)! This is a paradoxical statement: where is one to find water in the wilderness? But some stretches of the Jordan are surrounded by the desert, with only a narrow water-meadow separating them.

Above all, however, we can connect traditions about Jesus to Jewish traditions and Jewish mentality. The *Assumption of Moses* was edited anew shortly before the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It expresses an expectation of the kingdom of God in a non-violent form: the pious wait for God to prevail over Satan. Jesus' preaching is similar: he too sees God's reign becoming a reality in his own exorcisms (Matt 12:28), and here too this takes place without human violence. The *Assumption of Moses* offers us a glimpse of the environment in which Jesus preached. At the same time, however, we find differences. In the *Assumption of*

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<sup>21</sup> The sources are: (1) for John the Baptist, Josephus, *Ant.* 18.116–119; Matt 3:1–17 pars. (2) For Herod Antipas: Josephus, *Ant.* 18.36–38, 101–105, etc.; Matt 14:1–12 pars.; Luke 13:31–32; Luke 23:6–12; Antipas is also mentioned, without being named, by Dio Cassius, 55.27.6. Two of his inscriptions survive (cf. OGIS 416 and 417); for his coins, see Y. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins and the Second Temple Period* (Tel Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1967), 72–75, 133–135. (3) Pilate is attested by Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35, 55–59, 62, 64, 87–89; *War* 2.169–177; an inscription has been found in Caesarea (cf. J. Lemonon, *Pilate et le gouvernement de la Judée*, Textes et documents, EtB [Paris: Gabalda, 1981], 23–32). For his coins, cf. Meshorer, *Jewish Coins*, 102–106.

<sup>22</sup> On the basis of his earlier studies, S. Freyne offers an overview of the Galilean environment in “The Geography, Politics, and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 75–121.

*Moses*, God's kingly rule is opposed to the Gentiles, but this antithesis disappears in the tradition about Jesus. On the contrary, he says that people from all the four corners of the world will stream into the kingdom of God. He is probably thinking of the Jewish Diaspora, but the Gentiles too are included (Matt 8:11–12). The second half of our criterion of contextual plausibility draws our attention to such individual traits within one and the same context.

### 1.2.2. *The Criterion of Contextual Individuality*

Every comparison between Jesus and his environment includes both similarity and dissimilarity. Here, as is always the case, we recognize a person by means of his individual traits, or more precisely by a combination of traits which we often grasp only on the intuitive level. In daily life, we require only small sections of someone's physical appearance, a few movements, the voice, etc., in order to identify him or her; we need not engage in an intellectual reflection on whether our identification is justified. Similarly, we encounter "indicators of specificity" of this kind in the historical tradition about Jesus, recurrent traits which we find nowhere else. Here too, the indicators are often complex, as we see in the following two examples. The first is based on synchronic relationships between a number of elements, the second on the special position of one element within a diachronic development.

The first example concerns *Jesus' vocabulary of forms*. Even if we are uncertain whether particular logia genuinely go back to Jesus or not, we are astonishingly certain that we know the linguistic forms he employed in his preaching, viz. that unique combination of literary (oral) forms, *topoi*, and structures which is linked to Jesus. If we demonstrate the authenticity of one single example of each form of the tradition about Jesus, we have demonstrated that Jesus employed this genre as a whole. Usually, several examples of a genre could be authentic, and this means that even if we are uncertain whether we are correct in one particular instance to pronounce a logion authentic, our judgment may be correct in another instance. It is usually improbable that *none* of the numerous examples of one particular genre is authentic. We may make this point as follows: although we are uncertain whether we can identify the *paroles* of Jesus in each individual case, we know his *langue* very well. We know that Jesus employed parables and metaphors, cries of woe and macarisms, aphorisms and warnings. We find parallels to all these forms elsewhere in Judaism, but their combination is unique. We know of no other contemporary Jewish teacher who fashioned this combination of



structures and literary forms—and who also exercised a charismatic activity as worker of miracles and leader of a group of disciples.

Secondly, let us mention once again Jesus' *eschatology*, which retains its distinctive position in a diachronic line of development. God's reign is often established in the course of a war against the Gentiles or other foes; one may recall here the *War Scroll* from Qumran. The *Assumption of Moses* adapts this concept to a more peaceful age, at the beginning of the first century CE. Here, the pious in Israel are completely non-violent. They react to a great religious persecution by withdrawing to a cave to await death and the beginning of the kingdom of God. Jesus continues this line of thinking: he holds that the kingdom of God can coexist with the *imperium romanum* in the present day, since it is beginning now, i.e. at a time when Roman rule is unchallenged.

Jesus too sees the people who belong to God's kingdom as non-violent, indeed as committed to non-violence, since it is the kingdom itself that suffers violence—whether from its adversaries or its adherents (Matt 11:12–13). According to Jesus, the kingdom begins with John the Baptist. After Easter, the Christians went one step further, and identified the beginning of the eschatological events with the raising of Jesus from the dead. Along this trajectory from a kingdom of God in the future tense to an eschatology in the present and aorist tenses, the logion about those who seize the kingdom by violence occupies a unique position. It adopts tendencies which already existed in Judaism, takes these further, and then in turn is developed by the faith of the early Christians.

The more deeply we study the tradition about Jesus in this way, the more unshakable is our certainty that the trajectories which come to light here, and their specific vocabulary of forms, are not found anywhere else. This certainty is justified, even if it contains a somewhat *a priori* element, viz. the ideas of historical development and individuality.

Let us return to our criterion of plausibility. We have seen that the traditional criterion of dissimilarity contains a correct kernel when it pays due heed to individuality. This is a well tested and proven "idea," and it should not be surreptitiously weighed down with a much more far-reaching religious (or theological) idea, viz. that in Jesus, a transcendental reality irrupts into our world. It is not of course correct to make an antithesis here between pure "empiricism" on the one hand and pure "faith" on the other; rather, in both cases *a priori* ideas are at work, and both forms of approach to Jesus are legitimate. Historical "ideas" (which guide the search for knowledge in every historical methodology)

give us access to historical reality, while religious ideas seek to give us access to a transcendental reality. The knowledge which we attain along the historical path is asked to bear too much weight when the idea of “revelation” (i.e., of an irruption of transcendence) is introduced into the historical idea of individuality—and this is implicit in the criterion of dissimilarity, where “dissimilarity” means underderivability from either Judaism or Christianity, i.e. an underderivability from *history*. This is why we replace the criterion of dissimilarity with a criterion of plausibility which says that traditions about Jesus are authentic when they can be recognized as something individual in the Jewish context of the first century CE and can be plausibly interpreted as the origin of an historical impact which we find in the early Christian sources.

In our present context, the decisive point is that we arrive at knowledge of the individuality of Jesus only by affirming historical relativism. Here, this individuality is relativized in the framework of Judaism, but this is no disadvantage, theologically speaking, since the relationship of Christianity to Judaism belongs to the essence of Christianity. Historical relativism is initially a deep ditch, but the leap into this ditch is profitable. We must plunge into the cold water of historical relativism. This water links Christianity and Judaism—and in fact all religions.

### 1.3. *The Problem of Historical Strangeness*

This does not yet solve all our problems. Let us suppose that we had an historically reliable picture of the historical Jesus which did justice to his individuality in the framework of Judaism; we should still have the problem of his historical strangeness. The tradition about Jesus takes us into another world. There is nothing exceptional about this: with every day that passes, every historical tradition moves twenty-four hours further away from us. The strangeness of past history is not some special problem of the tradition about Jesus. Modern historical consciousness is fundamentally convinced that every tradition is historically strange. In the case of traditions with which we think we are familiar, this consciousness is skeptical about whether they are truly as close to us as it seems; is it not possible that chance agreements with the world in which we live have seduced us into discovering something of ourselves in those traditions? Accordingly, the postulate of historical strangeness is applied to every tradition, even to those we think we know well. This is an axiomatic conviction of historical knowledge, which has repeatedly proved its worth in the study of history.

This is why there is no greater sacrilege in historical science than the “modernization” of foreign environments and phenomena, instead of understanding them in their own context and on their own terms.<sup>23</sup> This is all the more true when people today are interested in deriving orientations from the past for the present—and in interpreting the past in the context of the present.

This is precisely what happens with Jesus. The Christian faith makes the figure of Jesus the center of its existential orientation, and a strict scientific ethos must regard this as guaranteeing from the outset that all genuinely neutral work will be sabotaged here. One may claim that the past is being actualized, but it looks like a rape of history. Once again, Lessing’s wide ditch opens up before us—and this time in a particularly intimidating form, since the fact that this historical distance increases every day makes every attempt to overcome it seem hopeless.

We should note that the conviction of the foreignness of past history is an axiomatic idea which we always bring to bear on the study of the sources. And here we find the same situation as with other axiomatic ideas of the historical consciousness: if we pursue them to their logical conclusions, they develop a dialectic which reveals that they necessarily include their opposites. It is only if we insist upon the foreignness of the historical tradition that we can discover in it a closeness that allows us to understand it as an expression of the same cultural activity in which people today are also engaged. But how is this possible?

Let us try the following experiment. Let us suppose that all we found in historical texts was our own familiar environment, or that their environment was still identical with our own. The consequence would be that we no longer experienced this existential environment as an “historical” world (i.e., as an environment which changes, and which we ourselves can change), but as a natural world which remains the same in its fundamental structures, and necessarily is the way it is. It is only the foreignness of history that makes us aware that historical “existential environments” are worlds of meaning constructed by the human person, like our own modern world. Paradoxically, it is only a foreign element in history that makes us aware of *how* we are contemporaneous with all human persons in the past and in the future, viz. by means of the cultural human activity of bestowing meaning. The human person never lives in a natural environment, but always in a constructed existential

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus*.

environment which he himself constructs by means of interpretations and convictions, institutions and technologies, and which displays an immense variety.

Once again, we must not attempt to counter the modern axiom of the foreignness of history by looking for some access to the past which would appeal (for example) to timeless truths which are found only in historically mutable forms. Rather, we must unreservedly accept this foreignness, even if it seems to push Jesus out to the uttermost edges of our own culture. For the more foreign an historical figure initially is, the greater is the possibility that the serious encounter with his or her foreignness will disclose new dimensions of our own cultural activity of bestowing meaning. This will not merely confirm our own understanding of human culture, but also expand it and deepen it.

Can this dialectic of distance and closeness, foreignness and familiarity be demonstrated in the concrete example of the figure of Jesus? Our thesis is that the foreignness of Jesus, which we see in his exorcisms, his radicalism, and his apocalyptic expectations, does indeed remove him to the margins of our culture. But it is precisely these bizarre traits that can be interpreted as the expression of a protest that lays bare the heart of our own culture, its hidden center and its secret program.

### 1.3.1. *The Foreignness of the Historical Jesus*

The *foreignness* of the historical Jesus can be seen in his expectation of a comprehensive cosmic revolution. He believed that the kingdom of God was already present in a hidden manner, and that it would transform everything in the near future. After that, nothing would be as it was before. This comprehensive revolution could be spoken of in parables and images, as well as in general apophthegms. It appeared as a *mysterium fascinosum* with unclear outlines; the only clear point is that the kingdom of God would be preceded by a definitive judgment, since not everyone would attain this kingdom. The judgment threatened everyone, but one could be saved by repentance. Among Jesus' closest followers, this repentance entailed a bizarre ethical radicalism: willingness to renounce all resistance and to love one's enemies, a carefree attitude to earning one's own living, the renunciation of possessions, poverty, a break with one's family and with familial *pietas*—even one's own father should be left unburied, if the kingdom of God demanded this. Compared with the kingdom, everything else (normal life with work and a profession, a house and a family) was unimportant. This kingdom of God brought salvation for those who now were outsiders:

those possessed by unclean spirits were healed, the devil seemed to have been conquered, demons fled away. Sick people were healed in strange miracles, those inflicted with a moral stigma were accepted, the poor and children were to come to power in the kingdom of God. But this central element in Jesus' preaching, the rule of God, was not "fulfilled" by history: it did not come. Jesus went up to Jerusalem, perhaps in expectation of the kingdom of God; he may have consciously accepted the risk that he would suffer a violent death. The Jewish aristocracy handed him over to the Roman authorities, who executed him. After his death, the disciples had apparitions which convinced them that he had risen from the dead. Who was this Jesus? Partly a sensitive poet, partly an apocalyptic prophet, partly a miracle-worker and exorcist, as well as a charismatic leader and the proponent of an extreme ethic! If the tradition about him were not already so familiar to us, we would experience his strangeness even more strongly.

### 1.3.2. *The Closeness of the Historical Jesus*

And yet it is precisely this Jesus, who remains foreign to our modern world, who can draw close to us in a surprising way. All we need to do is to relate the meaning which is given to the world and to life in the traditions about Jesus to the task which is incumbent on all human culture, viz. to reduce the pressure for selection. Culture begins with the fact that human life is made possible where it would be impossible under natural conditions. It is made possible by technology which is brought to bear on the environment, by social institutions which create a balance, and by ethically motivated convictions. Culture begins where the weak person, who *per se* has no (or only slight) possibilities for life, receives a new (or better) possibility for life through conscious human behavior. As soon as this happens, the human person has left the realm of nature and entered the realm of culture. He crosses a threshold, although it is always possible for him to fall back.<sup>24</sup>

In the Bible, this cultural obligation to reduce the pressure for selection takes the form of a harsh protest against the very principle of selection. This protest begins in the Old Testament and finds its clearest expression in Jesus of Nazareth. As Friedrich Nietzsche acutely saw, the principle underlying the Christianity which Jesus founded is the very

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<sup>24</sup> For a further elaboration of these ideas, cf. G. Theissen, *Biblischer Glaube in evolutionärer Sicht* (München: Kaiser, 1984).

antithesis of selection,<sup>25</sup> for here the weak are not only protected, but are accorded priority: in the kingdom of God, the poor, the sick, the starving, and the children are to occupy prominent places. We may perhaps find the miracle stories bizarre, but they make an unconditional protest against the natural distribution of the chances for life, by giving a chance even to those lives which are guttering out or are permanently reduced. Jesus' ethic may appear radical to us, but all it does is to break with biological evolution up to that time. He poses a question mark against the family solidarity which is based on biology, i.e. love for those to whom one is genetically related. Instead, he demands something that runs counter to biological behavioral tendencies, viz. love of one's enemies, love for those to whom one is not genetically (or culturally) related. The apocalyptic expectation of an incipient cosmic revolution which is already beginning in a hidden manner may seem bizarre and illusory, but it corresponds precisely to the situation of the human person on the threshold between biological and cultural evolution, between the realm of nature and freedom. Wherever a person rises up against the power of the principle of selection, he has already crossed this threshold—in many individual actions, hidden in the midst of a world which as a whole runs according to very different laws. Many dimensions of the new sphere which such a person enters remain alien to him: the expectation of the judgment, with its separation of the good and the evil, seems archaic and cruel. One might of course say that all this does is to portray the pressure of selection which rules over all human life, and makes its impact on morality too: the evil person is to have less chance of life than the good person. But in fact, the tradition about Jesus puts a question mark against this simple distribution of good and evil: only those who repent will survive the judgment, only those who admit their sins—i.e., admit that they do not in fact have any chance—will be saved. The irritating element of the early Christian paschal message fits this picture, and indeed gives it a new center, because this message makes a failure, a powerless man, the origin of life. That which is *eliminated* from life becomes the embodiment of a new life. Selection means death and life, i.e. diminished chances of life and survival. But the overcoming of death is the overcoming of selection.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist*, §7, in F. Nietzsche, *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* VI.3, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969). He defines Christianity as a religion of compassion, and writes: "Taken as a whole, compassion runs contrary to the law of development, which is the law of selection. It keeps alive what is ripe for death" (trans.: B.McN.).

If we see in the figure of Jesus—and precisely in those elements which we find bizarre and foreign—an expression of the protest against selection, then this figure moves from the outer margin of our culture into its center, at any rate for those who are committed to the program of reducing selection for weaker or less well “assimilated” persons. Nothing guarantees that this “program” will be followed, and nothing guarantees that the obligation to do so will be accepted. National Socialism was a public betrayal of this program, which however was not only betrayed by one particular ideology, but often enough by Christian churches too. Such betrayal has always led to immense suffering. Human culture is not simply the overcoming of the pressure for selection, but rather the potential for its overcoming; and at the same time, human culture is exposed to the risk of collective cruelties which artificially intensify selection.

Let us sum up: personal certainty in relation to the historical Jesus arises through the encounter between axiomatic convictions and those sources which happen to have survived. Initially, the axiomatic convictions of the modern historical consciousness deepen the ditch between ourselves and the historical Jesus. The three premises—the fallibility of all historical sources, the historical relativity of all phenomena, and the foreignness of all past history—lead to historical skepticism, relativization, and distance. The historical Jesus seems to vanish from sight in an inaccessible past. However, these same premises contain an inherent dialectic which necessarily includes their opposites. The logical consequence of the fallibility of all human sources sets a limit to our historical skepticism; the fact that the phenomenon of Jesus belongs in specific historical contexts opens our eyes to his individuality; and if we examine his provocative foreignness, we discover that he is surprisingly close to us today. The ditch which separates us from the historical Jesus remains wide, long, and deep: and we cannot leap over it. But if we fall into it, that is no catastrophe, since we can swim in it and thus draw nearer to Jesus. All our knowledge, even the greatest certainty accessible to us, is hypothetical, and at every point there is a reservation: things could also have been otherwise. We have however shown that personal certainty is nevertheless possible, thanks to axiomatic convictions. These axiomatic convictions have themselves become historical; they do not possess a timelessly necessary character, even if we cannot imagine employing any other premises in our approach to historical objects. For us, what we learn in the light of these convictions is “certain”—as certain as human certainty can be. But not even this certainty is unconditional. There remains an element of the hypothetical; Lessing’s ditch is not filled in. How can we come to accept this ditch?

Or, to put the same question differently, how can we come to accept the hypothetical character of all knowing and believing? Or is there perhaps something that points beyond the hypothetical?

## 2. *The Possibility of Religious Certainty in the Christian Faith*

Our first question must be: what are the paths on which theology up to now has attempted to come to terms with the relativity of historical knowledge, and to overcome Lessing's ditch by means of arguments? We can sketch four paths briefly.

### 2.1. *The Orientation to the Biblical Picture of Jesus*

All historical reconstructions of Jesus have an aura of the hypothetical. Why should one not prefer the biblical picture of Jesus to these constructs of the scholarly imagination—trusting that this biblical picture reflects the impact made by the historical Jesus? Do we not possess the “real Jesus” in the “image” which he “brought about”? In his classic book *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus* (1892), Martin Kähler pleaded for this “biblicist” solution. Even here, however, the question remains: Why do we recognize an absolutely compelling truth precisely in this biblical Christ—an enigmatic figure who descended from heaven and returned thither, who became a human person and then triumphed over all the powers in heaven and earth as a divine being, who suffered a violent death in order to make possible life and love? Only a convincing answer to this question would show that we had really overcome Lessing's ditch! But is not the biblical image of Christ, like other images of redeemers and deities, every bit as disputed, every bit as relative, and every bit as foreign as the historical Jesus?

### 2.2. *The Attempt to Guarantee the Authenticity of the Picture of Jesus*

This need has often been felt, and this endeavor became a program with the “positive-critical” researchers into the history of Jesus, Joachim Jeremias, Leonhard Goppelt, and Werner Georg Kümmel. In the midst of a welter of hypotheses and uncertainties, it was expected that historical research would provide guaranteed results: “Only the Son of Man himself and his word can give authority to our preaching.”<sup>26</sup> The positive-critical solution fails to

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<sup>26</sup> J. Jeremias, “Der gegenwärtige Stand der Debatte um das Problem des historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus: Beiträge zum*



convince, however, because it must continually leap over the hurdle of the relativizing power of the hypothetical: it makes faith dependent on shifting historical hypotheses. And even if one were to leave this problem aside, we should still have the question: Why do we recognize in one particular selection of the logia of Jesus a voice that addresses us in an absolutely binding manner? Is not the interpretation of *all* the potentially authentic logia a matter of dispute? And even if they were indisputably authentic, are they not *all* historically conditioned and potentially foreign?

### 2.3. *The Reduction of the Picture of Jesus in Kerygmatic Theology*

Those who have little confidence in the agreed results of historical research, and do not want to make the Christian faith dependent on the shifting hypotheses of scholarship, can follow Rudolf Bultmann's kerygmatic theology and reduce the relationship of the Christian faith to history to the formal "fact" that Jesus has come. In preaching and in living the Christian faith, one refers to the biblical picture of Jesus, but theological argumentation and reflection refer to an invisible point of reference. But the reduction carried out by kerygmatic theology is untenable, because the reduction of the historicity of Jesus to the mere "fact" that he has come presupposes a prior consensus that the one who has come (whoever he may be) possesses absolute significance. If his significance remains invisible within history, it can be expressed only in a myth which transcends history.

We can illustrate this by means of an image: kerygmatic theology sees the human person in the situation of one who is buried alive. For such a person, salvation consists in the simple fact *that* other people get through to him. It does not matter what they look like, where they come from, or what their motivation may be; the only thing that matters is that they re-establish the link to the world of light and of life. This does however presuppose a certain knowledge of this world of light and of life; it also presupposes that the rescue squad arrive on the scene with the genuine intention of rescuing the one who is buried alive. Similar presuppositions lie behind the reduction in kerygmatic theology. It presupposes the conviction of a "world" of God which lies beyond this world, and the certainty that salvation can be brought about through contact with this "world of God." For only after this is clear, is it possible for the utterly decisive event to occur, viz. that someone from God's world enters into history. Accordingly, it is only within the course of

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*Christusverständnis in Forschung und Verkündigung*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 12–25, at 25.

history that the “mere fact” is a “*mere* fact”: in the framework of the comprehensive myth which transcends history, this “fact” is filled with content from the outset. It is the “fact” that a redeemer has come.

#### 2.4. *The Symbolic Understanding of the Picture of Jesus*

A symbolic understanding detaches itself even more consistently from history. Poetic and metaphorical texts possess their truth in themselves, irrespective of their historicity and authenticity. Why may one not interpret the New Testament witness to Jesus as an image and likeness of timeless truths? May one not discover in these texts the insight that the human person in his existence and freedom lives on the basis of a grace that he does not himself control? This internal truth requires no external confirmation. This means that the picture of Jesus is not only “demythologized,” but also “dekerygmaticized”: it is transformed from a message rooted in one particular historical situation into a timeless cipher. On the basis of Karl Jaspers’ philosophy, F. Buri has pleaded for this solution.<sup>27</sup> The symbolic solution may seem the antithesis of the biblicist solution, but it shares the same inadequacy. Both protest against a critical attitude of the modern mentality vis-à-vis historical sources, viz. the methodology which wishes to make a distinction between historical reality and the witnesses to this reality. But we cannot be content (on the basis of an expanded concept of reality) with the affirmation that all the biblical testimony bears witnesses to something “real” in the sense of historical reality. Nor can we be content with an expanding concept of symbol which tells us that all the statements in the Bible—even where they clearly refer to unique historical events—have exclusively a timeless, symbolic meaning. Both approaches are right to affirm that we can prize the traditional texts on their own terms, and that they contain real experiences as well as the experience of something “real”—independently of the historical reality they may contain. But what impels us, when we make affirmations about historically unique events, to see an extra symbolic meaning that points beyond every relative, transitory, and contextually determined meaning? Must we not already have had contact with the eternal, if we perceive something as a symbol of the eternal?

At the close of this essay, all I can attempt is a personal answer, or more precisely, two answers. There is a tension between them. The first answer says: the inextricably hypothetical character of all our knowledge

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<sup>27</sup> F. Buri, “Entmythologisierung oder Entkerygmatisierung der Theologie,” in *Kerygma und Mythos II*, ed. H. W. Bartsch, ThF 2 (Hamburg: Reich, 1952), 85–101.

compels us to come to terms with this hypothetical character. This first answer leads to an acceptance of our fragmentary and limited human existence. But the second answer says that the unconditional character of religious faith allows us to put a question which goes beyond all that is hypothetical, since we have in us a “sense” for that which is unconditional, for the eternal, for freedom. This answer leads to the affirmation that we have a “sense” in us which points beyond our fragmentary human existence.

### 2.5. *The First Answer: The Hypothetical Character of All Knowledge and Faith*

One can come to terms with the hypothetical character of our knowledge and faith. Let me mention four reasons for doing so: a hermeneutical, a philosophical, an aesthetic, and a religious reason.

First, there is a *hermeneutical* reason, understanding this adjective comprehensively, to mean reflection on all the procedures of intellectual and historical science. In research into the person of Jesus, everything is more or less hypothetical. But in the course of every construction of a hypothesis there necessarily emerges *one* certainty, viz. that it is meaningful to develop historical hypotheses about Jesus, weighing up the various possibilities and giving preference to those that are more probable. It is precisely the hypothetical relativization—“Things could have been *different!*”—that gives us the certainty that “There is *something* that could have been different,” for otherwise it would be meaningless to continue to elaborate hypotheses about this particular object. Even the conviction of his historicity, i.e. of his “mere fact,” is formed by the hypothetical weighing up of the possibilities about *what* Jesus could have been. Paradoxically, therefore, the consistently hypothetical element in research into Jesus can become the basis of a certainty.

The second reason is *philosophical*, or more precisely, metaphysical, since it presupposes a picture of the whole of reality. We are well aware that such pictures are bold anticipations of something that we cannot know definitively; the decisive point in our present context is that not only our knowledge, but the whole of our life has a hypothetical character. The stream of life is a process of trial and error which attempts to correspond to the God-given basic conditions of reality. Thus, the world and all of life is a hypothesis which seeks to correspond to the will of God—and this includes our knowledge, just as it includes the New Testament and the Christian religion. Everything is hypothetical, everything can be superseded and rendered obsolete. And precisely for

this reason, we can accept the hypothetical character of our knowledge and our faith.

A third answer is based on *aesthetic* experience. All knowledge has a preliminary character, including our knowledge of Jesus, but we can give this knowledge an aesthetic form which rounds it off in a manner which remains valuable, even if our knowledge is transitory. This is why our pictures of Jesus ought to have an aesthetic character. Poetry reconciles us to the fact that our knowledge will one day be superseded.

The fourth and decisive answer is based on *religious* faith. All knowledge is a hypothesis—and all life is a hypothetical attempt to respond to God. Every hypothesis is exposed to the risk of failure. But the Christian faith is convinced that God accepts even those variants of life that fail. All life seeks to respond to him—and this response is in fact God's own gift. In his Word, he offers us that which is in accordance with his own self—without prior conditions and in a manner which is absolute and valid for all eternity.

#### 2.6. *The Second Answer: A Sense for the Unconditional Element in Knowledge and Faith*

Our second answer is generated almost dialectically by the first answer. We must come to terms with the hypothetical character of our thinking and indeed of everything. But this “reconciliation” would be superfluous, if there were not in us something that rebelled against the transitory, relative, and limited character of human existence: a sense for the unconditional and eternal, a sense that protests when it is confronted with reality. Might it not be this sense in us that is activated by some of the traits in the picture of the historical and biblical Jesus, and that makes the historically relative significance of this picture transparent to something that concerns us in an unconditional way? Is this why Christians hear the Word of God in an historically contingent event—i.e., because this sense has been activated in them? The Word of God is a contingent event, and it is as “underivable” as the existence of the world itself. But does it perhaps awaken in us in a subjective manner possibilities of understanding which allow us to ask questions that go beyond the realm of the hypothetical? Objectively speaking, the Word of God encounters us in the New Testament in the form of the person of Jesus Christ, a divine being who lived under the conditions of finitude. May not this christology correspond in a surprising way to these possibilities of understanding in the human person? We will take up these questions at the end of my

essay: first, the subjective presuppositions for understanding, and then the objective traits of early Christian christology.<sup>28</sup>

The Word of God creates for itself an internal evidential character in the human person because it corresponds to internal conditions of the human person. What are these *a priori* conditions? I believe that every claim to validity presupposes three convictions of which one may not necessarily be conscious *de facto*, but of which one can become conscious. These are the transcendental presuppositions of religious certainty.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.6.1. *The First Insight*

A statement that something is true or false claims that it will be true or false even in  $x + n$  years from now. Every claim to validity includes a “claim to eternity.” Even if one relativizes this claim to validity and says that it is limited to particular places and times, one demands for this relativizing assertion itself an unlimited claim to validity for  $x + n$  years. Thus, in all claims to validity we implicitly attest a sense for that which is “eternal,”<sup>30</sup> even if we explicitly deny the existence of such a sense—and will continually and necessarily tend to deny it in view of the overwhelming experience of transitoriness. But even the defiant affirmation that everything is relative would be an empty insight if it did not correspond to an unquenchable search of the human person for that which is not relative.

### 2.6.2. *The Second Insight*

All claims to validity include an element of absoluteness. When we measure something against a norm, we give preference to that which corresponds to the norm, not to that which contradicts it.<sup>31</sup> We *must*

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<sup>28</sup> In what follows, I present ideas that I have developed in G. Theissen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen: Eine Theorie des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Kaiser, 2000; 3rd ed., 2002), 400–405.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. R. Schaeffler, *Fähigkeit zur Erfahrung: Zur transzendentalen Hermeneutik des Sprechens von Gott*, QD 94 (Freiburg: Herder, 1982). This book does not simply argue for the existence of God on the basis of transcendental presuppositions in human consciousness. Rather, in historically contingent situations, these presuppositions can be severely shaken, and the collapse of the experiential world which they had constructed allows one to experience that which makes all experience possible.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. A. Nygren, *Die Gültigkeit der religiösen Erfahrung* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1922), on the “eternal” as the transcendental basic category of the “religious.”

<sup>31</sup> W. Windelband, “Das Heilige” (extracts in C. Colpe, ed., *Die Diskussion um das “Heilige”*, WdF 305 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977], 29–56), defines the place of religion not as a sphere alongside logic, ethics, and aesthetics, but as a consciousness of the norms which operate in these spheres in contradiction of that which *de facto* exists. The “antinomistic coexistence of the norm and of that which

give preference to that which we have subjectively recognized as the truth, not to that which we have recognized as an error. One who nevertheless prefers illusion to the truth can do so only because he accords preference to other values, rather than to the cognitive criteria of truth and falsehood: that which serves life or other values is more valuable in his eyes than that which serves the truth. And this means that he too acknowledges the unconditional precedence of the higher norm. Accordingly, wherever we make normative judgments, we are activating an unconditional element in our thinking—even when we explicitly deny that such an element exists.

### 2.6.3. *The Third Insight*

When we claim that a statement is valid, we claim that we ourselves take responsibility for it. If our statement was exclusively determined by factors lying in the past, we could do no more than record the fact that we have made a statement: we could never claim validity for it, and a discussion of claims to validity would consist of waiting to see whether we might be “determined” in the future differently than in the present. Even the thesis that everything is determined does not claim to be completely determined by causal factors in the past. It claims to have been formulated in freedom and “responsibility.”

This sense for the eternal, the unconditional, and responsibility becomes productive in religion. With the help of images drawn from the world in which we live, it constructs spaces which go far beyond that environment. In a long historical process of trial and error, religious history has generated symbols and images which correspond exactly to the *a priori* conditions of religious experience. Above all, we find the traces of such a transcendental poetic work, going beyond everything that belongs to the empirical sphere, in the early Christian belief in Christ.

The human person possesses *a priori* a sense for the eternal, the unconditional, and responsibility, but experiences himself empirically as transitory, conditioned, and determined. He lives in a split with himself. From the very outset, this sense for the eternal, the uncondi-

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contradicts the norm in one and the same consciousness” (31) leads to the experience of the holy. “The holy, as the consciousness of the normality of the true, the good, and the beautiful, is *experienced as transcendental reality*” (35; italics original). I would take a more cautious position: the normative consciousness is not religious *per se*, but it is a necessary presupposition of religious experience. In order for such a normative sensitivity to become religion, further “sufficient” conditions are required.

tional, and responsibility helped to shape early Christian christology, and perhaps this helps us understand why the historical Jesus is exalted to the status of a deity. On the basis of a religious *a priori*, a transitory phenomenon, i.e. a man who lived under limiting conditions and in whose life determinative societal and political factors are recognizable, was acknowledged as a manifestation of something eternal and unconditional that challenges us to take responsibility, and this man was clothed in the mythical aura that is appropriate to a divine being.<sup>32</sup> But the phenomenon of Jesus was not totally absorbed into this mythical aura. People remembered that Jesus was also mortal, conditioned, and not free, i.e. that he was a concrete figure of earthly history. When we ask why his picture was so plausible in the eyes of the first Christians, may not the answer be that this christology corresponds to the structure of the human self—a human self which has a sense for the eternal, the unconditional, and responsibility, but at the same time is exposed to transitoriness, conditions, and coercions? When the gnostic groups interpreted Christ as a symbol of the human self, their insight was correct; the problem was that they denied the unity of the eternal and the transitory, of unconditional and conditioned, of freedom and coercion in this symbol, and maintained a somewhat narcissistic view of the self, which ought in principle to know that it had been set free from this world of the transitory, the conditioned, and the determined.

I believe that it is only the activity of a wholly formal *a priori* of the eternal, the unconditional, and freedom that explains why human beings in their religious constructions continually transcend the finite empirical world and perceive something eternal in the transitory, something unconditional in the conditioned, and the appeal to assume responsibility in an inexorable fate—a perception with a strong evidential character. It is only when we presuppose such a religious sense in the human person that the nasty wide ditch of G. E. Lessing opens up between the realm of the unconditional (which is the objective of this religious sense) and the realm of the historical.

Let me explicitly emphasize that a transcendental category denotes only that we necessarily develop the idea of something “eternal.” But since we automatically and necessarily develop this idea, we are always

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<sup>32</sup> We find a formally comparable interpretation of the early Christian christology as the outcome of the elaboration of indisputably historical facts by a religious *a priori* in R. Otto, *Das Heilige* (München: Beck, 1917), 183–184: Jesus is “the holy in its manifestation,” which can be affirmed with an inner evidential character thanks to a religious *a priori* in the human person.

uncertain whether any objective reality corresponds to it: a sense for the “eternal” is not in itself proof of the evidence of the “eternal.” It is however clear that without a formal sense for the “eternal,” it would be impossible for substantial ideas about the “eternal” to be generated in the religious imagination, or to find belief. More specifically, the insight into the “eternity” of logical structures is no basis for religious experience; but without the sense for the “eternal” which is articulated in those structures, there would be no wider-reaching religious experience of the eternal.

The early Christian religion offered more than a plausibility based on its correspondence to transcendental categories of the human consciousness. It had such a strong evidential character because it was able at the same time to cope with the shattering of such categories. We can consciously deny something that is presupposed *a priori* in our consciousness as a transcendental category, because overwhelmingly powerful experiences argue against it. The sense for the eternal contradicts the experience of transitoriness, the sense for responsibility contradicts the experience of coercion and dependence, the sense for the unconditional contradicts the experience that everything is relative. The transcendental categories of our consciousness do not automatically win acceptance in our experience. They can be shaken to their foundations, and a whole world can collapse along with them. In borderline experiences, that which “automatically” determines our consciousness can be “de-automatized.”<sup>33</sup> That which seems utterly obvious is called into question. In the early Christian religion, this shattering of the “self” is portrayed in impressive images, perhaps most impressively in the gnostic metaphors and myths. Here, the “self” of the human person is a spark that has been thrown into a hostile world and subjugated to transitoriness and bodiliness, although it bears in itself a spark (often buried) of the “eternal,” the “unconditional,” and “freedom.” The Christianity in the mainstream communities adopted ideas which lay close to gnosis. In the affirmations of the Gospel of John, Christ is the only gnostic who knows whence he comes and whither he goes (John 8:14), and all Christians can understand their own “self” if they take him as their model. Through

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<sup>33</sup> The intuitive gnostic experience of the self as a phenomenon related to a divine being is one variant of mystical experiences. In the case of mystical experiences, scholars have rightly drawn attention to the great importance of the de-automatization of the perception and the processing of impressions. Cf. N. G. Holm, *Einführung in die Religionspsychologie*, UTB 1592 (München: Reinhardt, 1990), 72–75.



Jesus, a little light of eternity has been rekindled in them; through him, an unconditional value has entered the world; through him, freedom has been bestowed. And in his figure—in his failure, his suffering and dying—people found the strength to endure the shattering to which the transcendental depths of our self are exposed.

We began by speaking of Lessing's wide ditch. This is the ditch between hypothetical knowledge and unconditional faith. At the end of our reflections, we can say that this is a double ditch. The first ditch prevents us from finding a certain approach to history; the second prevents us from finding a confident approach to God. And yet, we have seen that certainty can arise at the meeting point between axiomatic certainty and contingent external factors. In historical science and in faith, however, this axiomatic certainty has a different nature. In history, the basic axioms are a product of history: they are based on the experience of studying history, and are in principle discovered *a posteriori*, although they function as an indisputable *a priori* in historical reconstruction. In religion, on the other hand, these axiomatic certainties are based on formal *a priori* categories which we bring with us (so to speak). In both cases, we must activate subjective presuppositions in ourselves, if we are to be successful. But nothing can spare us from leaping into the ditch and swimming to the other shore. There, a helping hand may perhaps reach out to us. Generations of Christians have experienced this hand, as the grace of God which accepts even our hypothetical attempts; and sometimes also as an inner light which continues to shine even in our failures. The philosophy of religion can show that the encounter with the contingent Word of God activates a religious sense in us, a sense for the eternal, the unconditional, and freedom. This makes us sensitive to the encounter with the Word. For many people, this sensitivity makes the Bible a potential place of dialogue with the living God, and thus the medium of a certainty which goes far beyond historical plausibility and transcendental reflection.



# A METALANGUAGE FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS METHODS: AN EXPERIMENT

TOM HOLMÉN

## 1. *Introduction*

The reader who has scrupulously worked through the different methodological approaches incorporated into this volume can scarcely have avoided noticing their great diversity. Indeed, the diversity is highlighted to such an extent that in this respect at least, the volume can safely be regarded as having reached its goal. One of the ideas underlying this volume has been to manifest the methodological heterogeneity of current historical Jesus research.<sup>1</sup> Such a display should put us in a better position to analyze the multiple viewpoints, to create ways of handling their diversity, and perhaps even to dismiss unnecessary multiformity and variegation, thus promoting more enlightened learning.

The analysis of the diversity can take several forms. While it would be an interesting and important undertaking to evaluate the presented approaches as functional methods, assess their pros and cons etc., the target of this essay lies elsewhere. The approaches teem with various terms, concepts and expressions which aim to illuminate the viewpoints to the problem of the historical Jesus suggested in each given approach. The fact, however, that the approaches almost always introduce new terminology and, on the other hand, often use common terms and concepts with diverging purposes, poses a serious threat to the pursuit of illumination.<sup>2</sup> Even trained scholars often find it difficult to grasp fully the niceties of a given approach that its terminology indicates—and, in particular, to understand them in relation to the fine points of the other

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction to this volume.

<sup>2</sup> To put it pointedly, in order to gain a full command of all the methods one needs to learn previously unknown words with previously unknown meanings, previously known words with previously unknown meanings, previously unknown words with previously known meanings, and previously known words with previously known but different meanings. And this varies from one approach to another. A situation like this is typical of an evolving methodology, but can also reflect scholarship which after a pause heads for new directions.

approaches. This essay seeks to improve this situation by suggesting a tool that would, in the first place, promote easier and more exact analysis and comparison of the various historical Jesus methods. To this end, the essay devises a second-order vocabulary in relation to which the different technical terms, concepts and expressions employed in the approaches (i.e., the first-order vocabulary) are arranged.<sup>3</sup> However, the tool cannot remain a simple glossary. It must be fashioned in such a way that it can also accommodate the structures that bind together the first-order words. Hence, I propose a metalanguage. As a second-order analytical method, it should enable a more accurate discussion of the different historical Jesus methods.

In the absence of previous treatments along these lines (as far as I know), this presentation takes the character of an experiment.

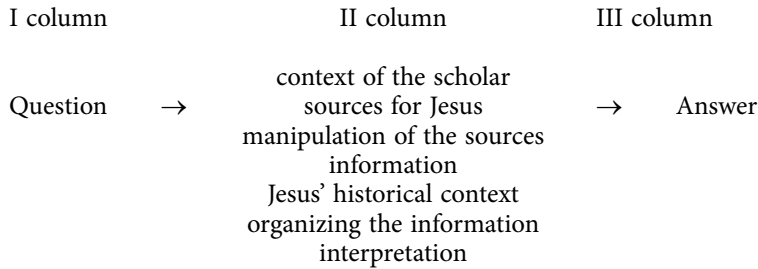
## 2. *The Basic Scheme*<sup>4</sup>

Fundamentally, the metalanguage can be divided into (a) vocabulary, also called “lexemes”, and (b) structure. The structure, in turn, comprises (b1) relationships between the various lexemes and (b2) orders of observance of the lexemes and their relationships. I will approach the metalanguage from the point of view of the lexemes. It is these that mostly require elaboration on the theoretical level. The structure, i.e., relationships and orders of observance, will mainly be reflected in the example analyses. For the sake of terminological transparency I will assemble the metalanguage out of lexemes that more or less closely resemble the vocabulary of the object language. The structure of the metalanguage, again, should flexibly emulate the structures of the historical Jesus methods. All in all, I propose to work with this basic scheme:

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<sup>3</sup> In the present article, accordingly, the technical words used in the approaches are not in fact compared with each other or organized in relation to each other. Rather, they are compared within and organized in relation to the second-order vocabulary.

<sup>4</sup> The knowledge base on which I draw in this presentation covers all kinds of literature. However, the foremost context of the metalanguage is formed by the approaches of the present volume, and my references to the object language largely relate to them.



Naturally, what the scholars ask ('Question') and how they regard the results ('Answer') are highly relevant to the pursuit of historical Jesus research. Hence, I emphasize their significance by including columns I and III in this scheme. However, it is column II that most centrally comes into view in methodological discussions. Although I will also consider the impacts of the 'Question' and the 'Answer' on the work of a historical Jesus scholar, the investigation he or she pursues, the clear focus of this essay will be on the column II issues.<sup>5</sup>

I will now zoom, phase by phase, more and more deeply into the texture of the metalanguage. On the level of what I call the *basic lexemes* (i.e., when "zoomed out") I suggest the following second-order terms and concepts (cf. a): the 'context of the scholar,' the 'sources for Jesus,' the 'manipulation of the sources,' 'information,' 'Jesus' historical context,' 'organizing the information,' and 'interpretation.' The relative transparency of this vocabulary immediately allows us to study the most elementary mutual relationships of these terms (cf. b1).<sup>6</sup> 'Sources for Jesus' are indispensable to every investigation into the historical Jesus, because they contain the 'information' about Jesus. In order to find the 'information' in the 'sources for Jesus,' modern critical scholarship has required 'manipulation of the sources.' An 'interpretation' is sought by viewing the 'information' within 'Jesus' historical context' and by 'organizing the information' into a coherent picture of Jesus. (One should note that a categorical distinction between information and interpretation is possible only within the confines of the metalanguage. Thus, no positivistic understanding of historiography is implied

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<sup>5</sup> Thus, it remains an open possibility that 'Question' and 'Answer' could in turn be divided into further lexemes.

<sup>6</sup> Please note that the following explication does not yet aim to put observation of the relationships in any deliberate order.

here.) All this is given perspective by a reflective consideration of the 'context of the scholar' himself or herself.

Nevertheless, this explication of relationships is only one alternative among many, although on this level we are looking only at the basic lexemes. For some scholars, observing 'Jesus' historical context' belongs—either additionally or exclusively—to the 'manipulation of the sources.' Further, while some scholars do not place much emphasis on the 'context of the scholar,' others pay considerable attention to this. Again, while 'organizing the information' plays no visible role at all in some methods, it is included in others. There are also differences with regard to what scholars think should be included in 'interpretation.'

A basic order for observing the lexemes and their relationships (cf. b2) is also unproblematical. Often, scholars begin with the 'sources for Jesus,' proceed to the 'manipulation of the sources,' and then to 'information.' This, indeed, is the vocabulary and structure of the historical Jesus method in its very rudiments, and it serves as the applied scheme in the approaches of many scholars. The need to make the metalanguage all-inclusive with respect to the object language has led me to include as many as seven items in column II. Next, the most usual addition to the structure and observation order is 'Jesus' historical context.' As I have pointed out, this sometimes forms part of the 'manipulation of the sources'; sometimes it is presupposed by 'interpretation,' and sometimes both usages coexist. Hence, 'Jesus' historical context' may be second (and is then included in the 'manipulation of the sources') and/or come after 'information' (which is third). In the latter case, it can appear alone or in conjunction with 'organizing the information.' Consequently, these two take either the fourth or fifth place. 'Interpretation' can take either the fourth place (i.e. in the rudimentary structure) or fifth or sixth (i.e. if some combination of 'Jesus' historical context,' the 'manipulation of the sources,' and/or 'organizing the information' is included). Finally, the methods which on the whole take 'the context of the scholar' into account most often consider it first: i.e. this is their starting point, rather than the 'sources for Jesus.' This pushes the other lexemes back on the list: e.g., 'interpretation' can come seventh at most.

In this way, even a brief explication of the observation orders in the various methodological approaches produces a considerable complex of alternatives. And even more alternatives exist; the more we go into detail, the more alternatives will we see. We need not elaborate them theoretically; see the appendix, where I have set out in full the discussed

orders of observation.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise the relationships and orders of observation will again come into view in the examples of concrete analysis to follow later on below.

### 3. *An Elaborate Vocabulary*

At this point, the next step forward (or “zooming in”) is the further explication of the vocabulary we have used so far, viz. the basic lexemes. From this point on, however, the elaboration of the second-order vocabulary becomes too abstract to be pursued without references to the first-order terms and concepts. We thus need to ask: What are the concrete representations of the metalanguage lexemes in the object language and what further lexemes are required?

#### 3.1. *Sources for Jesus*

‘Sources for Jesus’ is naturally understood to denote the ‘documents,’ such as the synoptic gospels, their sources, the Gospels of John and *Thomas* as well as some other writings that scholars have suggested. However, there are even other types of materials that are employed as ‘sources for Jesus.’ For example, sociology sometimes takes on such a role, with statements about Jesus being extrapolated from the sociological *data* of Jesus’ time and place. Further along this line of methodological thinking, we find various sociological *models* used to explain and describe Jesus. Partly related to these are various role categories, such as prophet, sage, teacher, Cynic itinerant, charismatic, miracle worker, or messianic claimant, which sometimes help complement the picture of Jesus which is based on information acquired elsewhere and justifies identifying him with some specific role category. Finally, archaeology, topography etc. can in principle be employed as independent ‘sources for Jesus,’ although they are most often integrated into the sociological approaches. The ‘sources for Jesus’ can thus be divided into ‘documents’ and other materials which I call ‘extrapolative sources.’ With this latter type of ‘sources for Jesus,’ one must always examine carefully whether they are genuinely used to increase the ‘information’ about Jesus, i.e. whether they genuinely serve as ‘sources for Jesus,’ or merely guide the ‘interpretation’ of the ‘information,’ i.e. whether they offer data for

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1.

‘Jesus’ historical context.’ Sometimes, however, these alternatives are merely semantic.

### 3.2. *Information*

‘Information’ means that material of the ‘sources for Jesus’ which is deemed useable in a scholarly reconstruction of the historical Jesus. This pragmatic formulation is chosen in order to avoid getting involved in the discussion about the concepts of authenticity or historicity and the tricky questions of certainty, objectivity, a positivistic understanding of historiography, etc., which are often attached to these concepts. Ultimately, the important point is that a scholar uses some particular material in drawing a picture of Jesus. ‘Information’ is the material a given scholar believes it possible to utilize in this task.

We must observe a distinction within ‘information,’ viz. ‘specific’ vs. ‘general information.’ For instance, the Q-pericope Matt 12:28 / Luke 11:20 tells about the relation between Jesus’ exorcisms and the kingdom of God. This I would categorize as ‘specific information.’ On the other hand, there is the overall motif of the kingdom of God which, irrespective of the details of any particular pericope or individual tradition, finds expression across the length and breadth of the sources. This overall motif is clearly ‘general information.’ Hence, we can look at Matt 12:28 / Luke 11:20 in two ways, seeking either ‘specific’ or ‘general information.’ Another example is the texts Luke 17:20–21 and Matt 12:28 / Luke 11:20. They share the particular motif of Jesus’ speaking of the kingdom as present (best classified as ‘specific information’). Naturally, they also share the overall motif of the kingdom (‘general information’).

I shall refer to this distinction, which is evaluated variously in the different methods, as the ‘type of information.’ The distinction is especially important with respect to the ‘manipulation of the sources.’

### 3.3. *Manipulation of the Sources*

‘Manipulation of the sources’ is performed in order to identify the ‘information’ in the ‘sources for Jesus.’ This denotes the procedures by means of which the various methods decide on what material offered by the ‘sources for Jesus’ can be used in reconstructing a scholarly portrait of the historical Jesus. Obviously, ‘manipulation of the sources’ can take very various forms. This is also dependent on various issues:



First (*i*), ‘manipulation of the sources’ will take different forms, depending on what kind of ‘sources for Jesus’ one proposes to utilize. Many of the more commonly known procedures involved in ‘manipulation of the sources,’ such as the so-called criteria of authenticity or tradition criticism, are designed to be applicable to ‘documents,’ but not to ‘extrapolative sources.’ Still, clearly, if one intends to employ the ‘extrapolative sources,’ one should also determine a methodological approach to them which is appropriate to critical research. We do not use ‘documents’ without discrimination, nor should we use ‘extrapolative sources’ without reflecting on how we critically and methodologically ‘manipulate’ them in order to obtain ‘information.’ The ‘extrapolative sources’ indeed require a specific methodological approach of their own type.<sup>8</sup> In this field, however, work has still to begin.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly (*ii*), ‘manipulation of the sources’ depends on the ‘type of information’ one primarily searches for in each given situation. While some forms of ‘manipulation of the sources’ are suitable for the detection of general level ‘information,’ others are required for ferreting out specific ‘information.’ For instance, ‘manipulation’ that can establish as ‘information’ that Jesus was known as a miracle-worker and exorcist will not necessarily work with one particular miracle or exorcism story (and *vice versa*).

Thirdly (*iii*), in the specific case of ‘documents,’ one can concentrate on ‘manipulating’ either fragments or larger quantities of the source material. The first alternative can be illustrated by an analysis (cf. ‘manipulation’) of Mark 2:18–20 which tries to determine its

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<sup>8</sup> As far as I know, this observation, prompted by the metalanguage, has not been made so clearly before now. Judged on the basis of scholarly discussion, many scholars are skeptical about the use of sociological and similar methods because of the lack of criteria for determination of how the available sociological and comparable (*sc.* what I call “extrapolative”) knowledge about Jesus’ time and place can also be seen to pertain to Jesus specifically. On the other hand, frustration over the criteria of authenticity has sometimes turned scholars’ attention from ‘documents’ to ‘extrapolative sources.’ The solution of the metalanguage is to treat the knowledge acquired by sociology, archaeology etc. as ‘sources for Jesus,’ not as ‘information.’ This inevitably subjects the output of those methods to ‘manipulation’ of some kind.

<sup>9</sup> Although a lively debate continues about the authenticity criteria and the other tools needed to gauge ‘documents’—in other words, no consensus is in sight—there is a prior tradition of discussion in which scholars can participate. As to the ‘extrapolative sources,’ however, no such comparable tradition is available; the methodological apparatus, *i.e.*, the ‘manipulation of the sources’ suited to gauging sociological data or models etc. as ‘sources for Jesus’ which yield ‘information,’ needs to be determined almost from scratch.

authenticity (cf. ‘information’). An example of the ‘manipulation’ of larger quantities of source material is the analysis of the entire parable tradition.<sup>10</sup>

One central difference between *ii* and *iii* is thus that *ii* deals with the purpose of ‘manipulation,’ i.e., ‘manipulation’ *in order to* (*sc.* identify particular ‘type of information,’ namely general or specific), while *iii* is concerned with what is being ‘manipulated,’ i.e., ‘manipulation’ *of* (*sc.* a certain proportion of source material, namely fragments or larger quantities).<sup>11</sup> In principle, one can ‘manipulate larger quantities’ in order to find ‘specific information’ or ‘manipulate fragments’ in order to find ‘general information.’ Usually, however, ‘manipulation of larger quantities’ is more apt to yield ‘general information’ and, correspondingly, ‘manipulation of fragments’ to yield ‘specific information.’

The result is a somewhat idiosyncratic vocabulary, but I believe that the distinctions made are justified and necessary with respect to the functionality of the metalanguage since, as a matter of fact, ‘manipulation of the sources’ is the lexeme mostly in view in the object language discussions.

‘Manipulation of the sources’

- ‘manipulation of extrapolative sources’ and
- ‘manipulation of documents’ → (*i*)
- ‘manipulation of fragments’ and
- ‘manipulation of larger quantities’ → (*iii*)
- ‘manipulation for general information’ and
- ‘manipulation for specific information’ → (*ii*)

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<sup>10</sup> One could also point out the resistance of some scholars to deal with short units and individual pericopes on their own. Most notably in this volume, see the remarks by Horsley: “Focusing on individual Jesus-sayings as abstracted artifacts is thus a dead-end street that will not lead to the historical figure... We are thus led to focus in almost the diametrically opposite way to standard study of the synoptic tradition. That is, we must focus on the overall series of speeches in Q and the overall story in Mark, in order to understand not only ‘the whole picture’ but also the way each component of the overall series or story functioned in and constituted the whole picture.” Cf. also many remarks by Kirk.

<sup>11</sup> In theory, one could suppose that a different kind of ‘manipulation’ is required in every combination of *ii* and *iii*: ‘manipulation’ of fragments in order to identify general information, ‘manipulation’ of larger quantities in order to identify general information, ‘manipulation’ of fragments in order to identify specific information, and ‘manipulation’ of larger quantities in order to identify specific information.

### 3.4. *Jesus' Historical Context*

This lexeme comes very near to the object language. Of course, many things are examined in the concrete study of the historical context, and this makes several second-order distinctions evident. There are, on the one hand, sources for Jesus' context, i.e. the material that provides information about the context. On the other hand, there are also particular ways of looking at this material, i.e. different centers of attention depending on the perspective from which the information provided by the sources is sifted and sorted out. Among the sources I count, first, the literature of the period of the given context, second, archaeology and comparable sciences (e.g., paleography), and third, social-scientific and cognate methods. I call these 'context materials.' There are four centers of attention: topics (e.g., cultural, economical, political, psychological and religious contexts), locations (e.g., Jerusalem, Nazareth, Galilee, Judea and Palestine), influences (e.g., Jewish, Roman and Hellenistic), and perspectives (e.g., individual, group, inside, outside, the marginal, the essential, the oppressed, the oppressors). I shall name these 'context vantage points.'

### 3.5. *Organizing the Information*

This mainly deals with the problem of relating the part to the whole and vice versa. One should observe that what is being addressed here is the 'information,' i.e. that material of the 'sources for Jesus' which, thanks to 'manipulation of the sources,' has been deemed useable in a scholarly reconstruction of the historical Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Surprisingly few scholars have put any greater effort into finding out how to properly and orderly collect and appraise the pieces of information that have been obtained about the historical Jesus. Nonetheless, this can be highly relevant, especially when painting a full-length portrait of Jesus. There are always several alternative choices with regard to emphasizing the parts in the whole and identifying the relationships between the parts, and all this adds up to a particular interpretation of the parts and the whole alike. Naturally, when a scholar focuses only on one more specific motif or aspect of Jesus life, 'organizing the information' must be done in a somewhat different way. It is usual to try to enhance understanding of the motif or aspect under scrutiny by viewing it against the background of selected

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<sup>12</sup> Thus, not all kinds of data about Jesus are included here. In common parlance, one would speak of material that has been deemed authentic. The concept of authenticity is, however, usually related to 'documents' only.

wider themes of Jesus' proclamation, especially such themes that the motif or aspect in question can be regarded as forming part of or being essentially related to.<sup>13</sup> There are thus two basic modes of 'organizing the information': 'full-scale' and 'selective.'

### 3.6. *Interpretation*

This is how scholars believe they should understand the 'information' contained by the 'sources for Jesus.'<sup>14</sup> In concrete research work, presuppositions always attach to information, thus generating an interpretation. In other words, in reality there never exists completely uninterpreted, "pure" or "raw" data. The proposed second-order language seeks to accommodate this reality through the lexemes 'Jesus' historical context,' 'organizing the information' and the 'context of the scholar.' The last of these lexemes should be seen to regulate all the others, so it is properly given an independent position. Formally, thus, 'information' is turned into 'interpretation' through illumination by an assessment of 'Jesus' historical context' and/or 'organizing the information.'

There are, in principle, two types of 'interpretation': 'descriptive' and 'imperative.' These categories seek to name the possible uses of the research results. What should we think about the function of the results? Is it only to supply a historical description of Jesus, or also to draw further conclusions from this?<sup>15</sup> One should be careful neither to equate nor to confuse these categories with the motives which prompt research into the historical Jesus. One ongoing discussion has addressed the problematic of theological motives vs. historical interest. In principle, 'descriptive' and 'imperative interpretations' can both be inspired by both of these motives. However, the discussion of motives is not properly a concern of 'interpretation.' Instead, the metalanguage locates this discussion in the 'context of the scholar.'

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<sup>13</sup> For example, an investigation into Jesus' conception of the Sabbath is viewed against the wider theme of Jesus and the law.

<sup>14</sup> 'Information' comes close to 'Question,' but I prefer to deal with them as basically separate lexemes.

<sup>15</sup> For examples of such further conclusions, see "Some Elementary Translation" below. 'Imperative interpretation' does not mean, for instance, using the scholarly picture of the historical Jesus to explain the emergence of early Christianity.

### 3.7. *Context of the Scholar*

Since the scholar is the one who applies the method, the ‘context of the scholar’ should be seen to affect every other lexeme in the metalanguage vocabulary. By the same token, since it is the scholar who applies the method, the lexeme could also simply be entitled ‘scholar,’ for it is through the scholar that his or her context likewise becomes operational. However, I prefer to employ the concept of “context” for the reference to the outside influence on the scholar which it offers.

In real life, there are almost innumerable things that can count as constituents of the ‘context of the scholar,’ i.e., factors that can potentially influence the scholarly work via the scholar himself or herself. While it is essential to realize their variety and actuality, it is also possible to outline some categories among them, e.g. permanent and transient factors, as well as innate capacities (basically permanent) and acquired capacities (permanent and transient). A list grouped according to these divisions could look like this:

#### permanent factors

- innate capacities (gender, color, talents, nationality, personality, penchants)
- acquired capacities (personality, penchants, skills, learned knowledge, convictions, profession, religiosity, ideology, experiences, habits)

#### transient factors

- place of employment, life situation, social relationships, health, mood, environment

One should naturally assume that the boundaries between the categories are more or less shifting.<sup>16</sup> For example, the permanency of acquired capacities is relative. The same is true even of some innate capacities.<sup>17</sup>

This brings us to the end of the elaboration of the second-order vocabulary. For the purpose of clarification, Appendix 2 displays all the lexemes with the references to the object language. Following the work

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<sup>16</sup> Wealth and class are difficult to categorize at all, and they are not included in the above list.

<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, whether some of the innate capabilities mentioned here can also be regarded as transient depends on the anthropology one prefers.

of “zooming in,” I will now seek to “translate” some of the methodological approaches included in the present volume into the metalanguage.

#### 4. *Some Elementary “Translations”*

One should observe that the renderings given below are intentionally rudimentary. No complete unraveling of the methods is attempted, for this would require considerably longer treatments than are possible here. Also, one should not produce a finished assessment of a scholar’s historical Jesus method on the basis of only one piece of writing, at least when this was not composed with a view to producing an account of the historical Jesus method with a comprehensiveness approximating to that of the metalanguage. In particular, I will not offer a critique of the methodological approaches, although this is one potential use of the metalanguage. Instead, the goal of the following discussion is merely to exemplify the analysis of historical Jesus methods by means of the metalanguage, to help us evaluate how, in more specific terms, the metalanguage can facilitate analysis and comparison of methods, and what other uses it could have.

In reading the following discussion, it is advisable to consult Appendix 2. Please observe that I occasionally use abbreviated forms of the metavocabulary (as throughout in this article, the words belonging to the second-order vocabulary are signaled by single quotation marks). My procedure is simple: I first list the lexemes of main relevance to the given methodological approach, then describe the relationships and orders of observation.

##### 4.1. *Dale C. Allison*

The central vocabulary employed by D. Allison consists of the ‘documents,’ the ‘extrapolative source’ of role categories, ‘general information,’ ‘manipulation for general information,’ ‘manipulation of larger quantities,’ ‘Jesus’ historical context,’ ‘selective organizing of the information,’ and ‘acquired capacities’ of the scholar.<sup>18</sup> Allison emphasizes that it is mainly ‘general information’ the ‘documents’ really can yield. He argues for this on the basis of ‘acquired experiences of the scholar.’<sup>19</sup> He seeks

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<sup>18</sup> Hence, whenever listing the main lexemes, I am not yet seeking to imply any order of observation.

<sup>19</sup> The followers were likely to remember the big picture and to have got the general impression right. This is in general how the human memory works.

to shape the 'manipulation of the sources' accordingly, underlining the importance of 'manipulation for general information' as well as 'manipulation of larger quantities'<sup>20</sup> and lending further support to this decision by an appeal to 'acquired convictions of the scholar' which he claims frustrate the 'manipulation of fragments.'<sup>21</sup> He also sees considerable problems in the inherent methodology of the 'manipulation of fragments.'<sup>22</sup> To 'manipulation for general information' and 'manipulation of larger quantities' he adds 'manipulation of extrapolative sources' of role categories,<sup>23</sup> 'Jesus' historical context' and 'selective organizing of the information.'<sup>24</sup> Allison's current approach addresses 'interpretation' in his attempt at minimizing the role of the 'context of the scholar,' that is, at excluding as much as possible the influence from 'acquired convictions of the scholar.'<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.2. *Jürgen Becker*

Becker's main lexemes are 'Question,' 'manipulation of documents,' 'context of the scholar,' 'organizing the information,' 'manipulation of extrapolative sources,' 'Jesus' historical context,' and 'sources for Jesus.' For Becker, the 'sources for Jesus' are 'documents,' and the discussion of how to deal with them in an appropriate way takes a central place in his approach. Becker allows for both 'manipulation for general information' and 'manipulation for specific information,' and he accepts 'manipulation of fragments' as being in line with the nature of the 'sources.' At the same time, he shows a somewhat critical attitude to 'manipulation of larger quantities.' He is also cautious about including 'Jesus' historical context' in 'manipulation of the sources.' Becker sees an integral link

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<sup>20</sup> If anything can be trusted in the 'documents,' it is the general motifs and themes that are recurrently attested in the tradition. Allison also mentions giving preference to a narrative that is able to clarify more data in a more satisfactory fashion than its rivals.

<sup>21</sup> The criteria of authenticity (included by Allison in the 'manipulation of fragments' and therefore not well suited to general motifs and themes recurring in the tradition) cannot reverse a scholar's previous convictions ("prior inclinations") about Jesus. These criteria tend only to be utilized as means of justifying them *ex post facto*.

<sup>22</sup> The criteria are also contradictory and contain many inherent weaknesses.

<sup>23</sup> "The paradigm of Jesus as apocalyptic prophet."

<sup>24</sup> Correlating the major, recurring themes and motifs with certain circumstances about Jesus' life that can be recovered with confidence: rough dates, baptism by John the Baptist, the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, arrest and condemnation, and crucifixion.

<sup>25</sup> This attempt results in discarding the 'manipulation of fragments' and opting for other forms of 'manipulation of the sources.'

between the ‘Question’ and the need to elaborate a proper ‘manipulation of the sources.’ Furthermore, a proper ‘manipulation of the sources’ can enable the scholar to gain some control of the influence of the ‘context of the scholar.’ The ‘manipulation’ also makes the scholar aware of this influence. Despite focusing on ‘documents,’ Becker briefly considers ‘manipulation of extrapolative sources.’ Here he also pays some attention to ‘organizing the information.’

#### 4.3. *John D. Crossan*

Crossan’s methodological approach displays lexemes such as ‘cultural vantage point,’ ‘political vantage point,’ ‘locations,’ ‘context materials,’ ‘documents,’ ‘manipulation of documents’ and ‘Jesus’ historical context.’ Crossan deals with ‘documents’ and sees the ‘manipulation of documents’ as including both ‘manipulation of larger quantities’ and ‘manipulation of fragments.’<sup>26</sup> In particular, however, ‘Jesus’ historical context’ is a constituent of Crossan’s ‘manipulation of sources.’<sup>27</sup> With this in mind, Crossan articulates ‘Jesus’ historical context’ carefully and systematically, using mainly the lexemes of ‘cultural vantage point,’ ‘political vantage point,’ and ‘locations.’ He is also selective in his choice of the ‘context materials,’ including mainly certain ‘context literature.’<sup>28</sup> ‘Context archaeology’ is mentioned. Further, Crossan pays attention both to the ‘context of the scholar’ and to the ‘Question.’<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.4. *Richard A. Horsley*

The two all-important lexemes of Horsley’s vocabulary are ‘Jesus’ historical context’ and ‘manipulation of larger quantities.’ Horsley emphasizes the importance of a minute and comprehensive study of ‘Jesus’ historical context’ involving virtually all conceivable ‘context materials’ and ‘context vantage points.’<sup>30</sup> For Horsley, the ‘sources for Jesus’ are mainly ‘documents’ (some weight is also given to the ‘extrapolative source’ of role categories), which must be considered along the lines

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<sup>26</sup> The starting point is Q. The earliest material (which alone will be used) is to be found both in Q and in one or more independent sources. The examples give traditions with only a few attestations and with attestations in a larger amount of material.

<sup>27</sup> The earliest material (to be found both in Q and in one or more independent sources) is tested against ‘Jesus’ historical context.’

<sup>28</sup> The gospels must not be used as the ‘context materials.’

<sup>29</sup> He opts for interactivism and for not distinguishing between the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith” at least as the presumption of historical research.

<sup>30</sup> See the discussion in his chs. 1 and 2.



of the ‘manipulation of larger quantities.’<sup>31</sup> An essential element in this manipulation is the careful and variegated assessment of ‘Jesus’ historical context,’<sup>32</sup> which also helps counteract the ‘context of the scholar.’<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.5. *John P. Meier*

The prime lexemes of Meier’s approach are ‘Question,’ ‘documents,’ and ‘manipulation of fragments.’ Meier discusses carefully what exactly is the ‘Question’<sup>34</sup> and sees the ‘manipulation of the sources’ as a logical outcome of this discussion.<sup>35</sup> Here he concentrates on ‘documents’ and pursues mainly the ‘manipulation of fragments.’ However, ‘manipulation of larger quantities’ is also within the range of Meier’s methodological thinking, with the differentiation of ‘manipulation for general information’ and ‘manipulation for specific information.’<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.6. *Jacques Schlosser*

Schlosser’s key vocabulary consists of the ‘context of the scholar,’ ‘documents,’ the ‘explorative source’ of religious tradition, ‘manipulation of fragments’ and ‘Question.’ According to Schlosser, the ‘context of the scholar’ is not simply a factor whose influence should be minimized; it can also make a positive contribution to scholarly work and aid in the ‘manipulation of the sources.’<sup>37</sup> Schlosser’s ‘sources for Jesus’ are mainly ‘documents.’ He does consider the ‘explorative sources’ (explicitly that of religious tradition) but remains still largely skeptical of them, *inter*

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<sup>31</sup> Horsley strongly criticizes the basis of form criticism’s work on short units, sayings and pericopes.

<sup>32</sup> “Those representations can then be evaluated in their own historical context, then compared and contrasted against the background of what we know of the historical context of Jesus-in-mission in Galilee and Judea.”

<sup>33</sup> Apprehension of ‘Jesus’ historical context’ reduces the domestication of the gospel sources and Jesus “as if they belonged to us.” Much of Horsley’s approach here is obstructed by the fact that the article only seeks to present its rough outlines: “It will take many years and sensitive analyses and studies even to begin to formulate an adequate approach to Jesus-in-movement-in-context that is both contextual and relational.”

<sup>34</sup> Real, earthly, historical and historic Jesuses?

<sup>35</sup> Picturing the *historical* Jesus requires critical and methodical use of the ‘sources for Jesus.’

<sup>36</sup> Cf. the examples of the general motif of the kingdom of God attested by a “wide sweep of witnesses in different sources and genres” and the precise words and actions of the Last Supper.

<sup>37</sup> Among other things, he advocates the scholar’s sympathy towards the sources, since this is a precondition of comprehension.

*alia* because of the way in which he sees the ‘Question.’<sup>38</sup> Further, he concentrates on the ‘manipulation of fragments.’<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.7. *Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*

Schüssler Fiorenza’s vocabulary centers on lexemes such as ‘context of the scholar,’ ‘extrapolative sources,’ ‘interpretation,’ ‘Question,’ and ‘Answer.’ Central to Schüssler Fiorenza’s methodological thinking is the ‘context of the scholar,’ which she elaborates in various ways. The central constituents of the ‘context’ seem to be ‘innate capacities’ such as gender, color and nationality, although other aspects too figure prominently. Unlike many authors, Schüssler Fiorenza sees the ‘context of the scholar,’ not as a factor whose influence one should seek to rule out (as far as possible), but as something one should articulate and allow to participate in the work of the scholar in a controlled manner. The exact purport of “controlled” is derived from those contemporary values that one regards as correct.<sup>40</sup> So strong is the control of the ‘context of the scholar’ that it partially takes on the role of the ‘manipulation of the sources.’<sup>41</sup> It also largely dictates how one views ‘Jesus’ historical context.’<sup>42</sup> Further, it participates in defining the sociological model that is utilized as an ‘extrapolative source.’<sup>43</sup> Here some attention is given to ‘manipulation of extrapolative sources’ as well. Because of the particular understanding of the ‘context of the scholar,’ ‘interpretation’ emerges as crucial. Obviously, ‘interpretation’ must be ‘imperative.’ While the ‘context of the scholar’ almost becomes one with the ‘Question,’ ‘interpretation’ closely identifies with the

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<sup>38</sup> The individual has made a comeback as the object of historical research. Accordingly, Jesus should be granted a certain degree of autonomy, which renders extrapolations from general circumstances and constraints of Jesus dubious.

<sup>39</sup> This is required by the nature of the ‘documents.’

<sup>40</sup> For otherwise, some other modern interpretative framework takes over. Thus, the central question is the ethics of interpretation.

<sup>41</sup> A criterion of historical possibility instead of the criterion of plausibility: a feminist egalitarian reconstruction is to be preferred unless one can prove that it is impossible. Usually the procedure is an opposite one, i.e., scholars turn to ‘manipulation of the sources’ in order to exclude the influence of the ‘context of the scholar.’

<sup>42</sup> What is thinkable or possible within Jesus’ historical context must be adjudicated in terms of an emancipatory reconstructive model of early Christian beginnings.

<sup>43</sup> It is necessary to replace the millenarian reconstructive model (suggested for instance by Allison) with that of actual “social movements” for change such as the workers’ movement, the Civil Rights movement, the feminist movement, or the ecological movement. As an appropriate paradigm for Historical-Jesus research, a social-scientific model that focuses on social political movements for change does not center on Jesus the “great Man” and hero.

‘Answer.’ But because of its dominant role, the ‘context of the scholar’ can to some extent be associated with the ‘Answer’ too.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4.8. *Gerd Theissen*

Theissen’s central vocabulary includes ‘manipulation of the sources,’ ‘Question,’ ‘interpretation,’ and the ‘context of the scholar.’ A dialogue between the ‘Question’ and the ‘sources for Jesus,’ which for Theissen are ‘documents,’ generates a view of the ‘manipulation of the sources.’<sup>45</sup> Always in reference to this dialogue, Theissen observes manipulation of both ‘larger quantities’ and ‘fragments,’ as well as manipulation for both ‘general’ and ‘specific information.’<sup>46</sup> For Theissen, ‘Jesus’ historical context’ belongs essentially to the ‘manipulation of the sources,’<sup>47</sup> although it also plays a natural part in ‘interpretation.’<sup>48</sup> Theissen attaches some clear ‘imperative’ features to ‘interpretation,’ partly because of how he views the ‘Question.’ Likewise, there is a close link between the ‘Question,’ the ‘sources for Jesus,’ and the ‘Answer.’<sup>49</sup> He sees the ‘context of the scholar’—in the form of religiosity—as actually formative with regard to the ‘Question’ (and the ‘Answer’).<sup>50</sup> However, on the whole it is to be kept from interfering with the scholar’s work, and this is the precise aim of the dialogue between the ‘Question’ and the ‘sources for Jesus’ (resulting in the ‘manipulation of the sources’).

I recall once more the limitations of this survey: None of the methodological approaches included in the present volume, and thus none of those analyzed above, can be taken as a comprehensive presentation of the methodological thinking of the writer. It is probable that the

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<sup>44</sup> The social-movements-for-change model allows one to reconstruct the movements gathered in Jesus’ name that inspire political-religious change.

<sup>45</sup> The axioms of modern historical research are connected to the criteria of Jesus research.

<sup>46</sup> This comprehensiveness is warranted by the view that the sources are of a rather complex character (including a large number of data with observable small tensions). On the other hand, this is the very fact that makes them suited to answering historiographical questions.

<sup>47</sup> Jesus’ ties to his Jewish context display him as a product of the history of Judaism, not of early Christian imagination. Cf., in particular, the criterion of contextual plausibility.

<sup>48</sup> The historical strangeness of Jesus is attained through understanding him in his own context.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Theissen’s ch. 2, “The Possibility of Religious Certainty in the Christian Faith.”

<sup>50</sup> Leaping over Lessing’s ditch means looking for certainty about a historical person in order responsibly to base a religious interpretation of life and an existential praxis on this person.

scholars in question would allow for further lexemes, basic-level or “zoomed in,” if they were challenged to respond to the metalanguage that has been proposed here.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, the analyses of the eight selected approaches do not intend to be exhaustive or normative. They could no doubt be adjusted and be more detailed. What these analyses should do is to exemplify how the metalanguage could promote the methodological discussion, if it were put into general usage. Here, I can see two different basic applications.

### 5. *Two Main Applications of the Metalanguage*

The first is the way in which the metalanguage, in an elementary guise, has been employed in the above examples, namely as *an analytical tool*. As such, the metalanguage serves the analysis of the various methodological approaches and their comparison with each other, and can yield the following vantage points:

1. We get a clear picture of the main methodological elements (represented in the metalanguage by the basic lexemes) that are in play. Since the repertoire of the main elements included varies from one approach to another, the scholarly discussion is guided to inquire about the necessity (or not) of particular elements, viz. those which appear in some approaches but not in all: Should these elements be ignored or, rather, always be taken into account? In other words, what main methodological elements must an approach include, if it is to be considered valid and cogent? What are the optional elements, and under what circumstances should they be excluded/included? For example—I refer here to the analyses above—is there a case for methodological solutions that practice ‘manipulation for general information’? Some approaches pay attention to this lexeme, while some others do not.<sup>52</sup> Should we interpret its absence as a deficiency or its presence as a redundancy? Or are there methodological circumstances that vary and can render ‘manipulation for general information’ necessary or unnecessary? Similar requests for

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<sup>51</sup> And we know from their other writings that further lexemes are relevant to them. However, these writings have not been utilized as data bases here. Thus, the readers are supposed to have acquainted themselves with the presentations included in this volume alone. In other words, the treatments in this chapter have sought to be illustrative rather than comprehensive.

<sup>52</sup> Observed by Allison, Becker, Meier, and Theissen. Not observed by Crossan, Horsley, Schlosser, and Schüssler Fiorenza.

clarification can be presented vis-à-vis the 'manipulation of fragments',<sup>53</sup> 'extrapolative sources',<sup>54</sup> 'organizing the information',<sup>55</sup> and so on. Up to now, methodological discussion has been rather unreceptive to these kinds of explanations.

2. We get a clear picture of the relative functions with which scholars invest the different methodological elements, i.e. of how they see the function of a given methodological element in its relation to others. (In the metalanguage, these functions are represented by the relationships and orders of observation of the lexemes.) For example, in many approaches the influence of the 'context of the scholar' should always be barred.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, it is to be counteracted, and the usual tool for this purpose is 'manipulation of the sources',<sup>57</sup> although other means can also come into question.<sup>58</sup> In other approaches, the 'context of the scholar' can sometimes make a constructive contribution and aid 'manipulation of the sources',<sup>59</sup> or even form an essential part of this lexeme.<sup>60</sup> How can this be so, and what other lexemes and their relationships are involved in producing such diverse outlooks? Indeed, such questions have not yet been explicitly discussed; but they have a key role in elucidating the roots of the methodological diversity of historical research. Consequently, the questions play a key role even in the attempt to understand the diversity of the results of research.

Obviously, the views offered by these two vantage points often coalesce. For example, sometimes the necessity of a methodological element is justified by its relational function,<sup>61</sup> and the same can be said of the question about the optional elements of methodology.

When we move from the level of the main methodological elements or basic lexemes to a more specific level, we enter upon an analysis and comparison which would simply be too intricate to handle without the conceptual language proposed here. The following reflections accompany and deepen the first two points:

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<sup>53</sup> For example: not accepted by Allison and Horsley; used by Crossan and Meier.

<sup>54</sup> For example: not quite accepted by Schlosser nor used by Theissen; used in a very limited way by Becker and without constraints by Schüssler Fiorenza.

<sup>55</sup> Used by Allison and Becker; ignored by others.

<sup>56</sup> See Allison.

<sup>57</sup> See Becker and Theissen.

<sup>58</sup> Horsley: 'Jesus' historical context.'

<sup>59</sup> Schlosser.

<sup>60</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, how Allison's 'acquired experiences of the scholar' becomes a necessary lexeme because it leads to the important conclusion that one should mainly seek 'general information.'

3. The more elaborate second-order vocabulary allows us to make a comprehensive list of the methodological elements and sub-elements (and even sub-sub-elements) that are used in the scholarly methodological discussion. The questions asked on the basis of this inventory are basically the same as in point 1 above, viz. the necessity (or not) of the elements that appear in some methodological approaches but not in some others, etc. However, it is important to observe that this question can properly be posed here only after an understanding of the issues raised in the two previous points, since otherwise the field of vision remains much too narrow. A typical example is the intense debate about the so-called criteria of authenticity. While in itself quite justified and important, this debate concerns only one small sector of the methodological problematic as we now see it through the wide-angle lens of the metalanguage.<sup>62</sup> The debate lacks its methodological context, i.e. the other lexemes. At the same time, it fails to do justice to the many intricate connections and relative functions between the various lexemes, leading from the basic vocabulary level to the elaborate and *vice versa*, that are seen only when we “zoom in” through the metalanguage. This takes us to vantage point

4., which concerns precisely the many-sided relations between the more specific methodological elements represented by the more elaborate second order vocabulary.

Hence, in all these issues the metalanguage can be made into a common, shared system that enables us to formulate our questions and comments precisely. The metalanguage ensures that we know what we are talking about. Naturally, this will be helpful even if we are not aiming at a comprehensive analysis of methods, but wish to concentrate on some particular element, assessing, for instance, different views on that element among several scholars. Take again the example of the authenticity criteria which are an expression of ‘manipulation of sources.’ We see that scholars (a) employ different criteria, (b) evaluate the individual criteria differently, and (c) appreciate the use of criteria in general differently. We might then be able to point out that as far as ‘documents’ are concerned, viz. as ‘sources for Jesus,’ the criteria of authenticity have usually proven worthwhile, for they have so far been developed particularly with ‘documents’ in view. But where a scholar tends to distrust ‘documents’ and prefers ‘extrapolative sources’ as ‘sources for Jesus,’ the criteria are bound to appear less important.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> ‘Manipulation of documents’ within ‘manipulation of sources.’

<sup>63</sup> Cf. here (c).

Further, scholars' varying repertoires of criteria and their perception of some particular criterion or criteria as more important than others might be explicable on the basis of the 'type of information' they are looking for, and whether they aim at the manipulation of 'fragments' or of 'larger quantities.'<sup>64</sup> Differences may also be occasioned by the influence of other basic lexemes. Many scholars see 'Jesus' historical context' as a significant factor in the 'manipulation of the sources.'<sup>65</sup>

Even where we cannot account for all the differences between scholars' methodological approaches by showing how different lexemes are actualized in the approaches, the metalanguage lets us carry out the analysis and comparison on a deeper level and in a more controlled way than could ever be the case if we stayed on the level of the object language. Actually, having reached the limits of the metalanguage, we are in a situation analogous to that where the analysis usually begins, and we are therefore still capable of putting further analytical questions.

All in all, a substantially greater analytical perceptiveness emerges from the utilization of the metalanguage. Naturally enough, the metalanguage gives us a far more comprehensive view of the methodological discussion than could be achieved on the basis of any existing methodological approach. When these observations are put together we arrive at the second basic use of the metalanguage, viz. as a *conceptual matrix* for molding a new historical Jesus method!

Indeed, why not start from the metalevel, with the aim of achieving a new concrete approach, an applied instance of the metalanguage? The construction of a method in this way would certainly benefit from the perceptiveness and comprehensiveness of the metalanguage, and it could build upon the experiences learned from the analyses of the existing methodological approaches, i.e. from the first usage of the metalanguage. Without going into further details, the main concern here should be to bring the new method into a responsible relationship with all the lexemes (methodological elements) and their relationships (relative functions) involved in the metalanguage. As a suggestion, one could begin with the basic lexemes and their relationships and orders of observation, then proceed to the more specific level of the second-order vocabulary and, finally, engage a dialectic between these two levels as in the hermeneutic circle. One should also reflect continuously on the metalevel meaning of the solutions made regarding the concrete method-to-be.

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. (a) and (b).

<sup>65</sup> It is, for example, an integral element of Theissen's authenticity criteria.

To be sure, despite taking greater care in the genesis of a method constructed in a new way, there will never be a time when there is one Method with which everyone would agree. There will always be reasons for divergences of opinion. But if such reasons could be reduced by employing a metalevel model, why not give it a try? The different methods arrived at would have an improved quality, thanks to their illumination by the metalanguage. They would probably also be found to be mutually applicable to a greater degree than hitherto.

Naturally, as an analytical tool the metalanguage also provides better means for the evaluation and criticism of existing historical Jesus methods, and a brief example of such a use would seem to be in order. I will not pass judgments on the methodological approaches included in this volume from the point of view of the metalanguage.<sup>66</sup> Instead, I wish to criticize my own methodological thinking. In the light of the metalanguage, what can I say of my own methodological solutions to the problem of the historical Jesus? I have presented these mainly in *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking* and in the encyclopedia article “Authenticity criteria.”<sup>67</sup> Typically, my emphasis has very much been on the criteria of authenticity. There are obvious reasons why the encyclopedia article stresses this aspect, but even in the monograph most space is given to the elaboration of the various criteria. On the whole, however, lexemes to which I pay at least some attention are ‘documents,’ ‘general and specific information,’ ‘manipulation of documents,’ ‘manipulation for general information,’ ‘manipulation for specific information,’ ‘manipulation of larger quantities,’ ‘manipulation of fragments,’ ‘Jesus’ historical context,’ and ‘Answer.’ The basic lexemes I completely ignore are ‘organizing the information,’ ‘interpretation,’ and the ‘context of the scholar.’ As to more specific vocabulary, I lack ‘extrapolative sources’ and their ‘manipulation.’ In addition, I am rather unspecific about the ‘context vantage points’ of ‘Jesus’ historical context,’ although I seem to

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<sup>66</sup> As I have stated above, they come unprepared for such a questioning.

<sup>67</sup> *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 24–36; “Authenticity Criteria”, in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. C. A. Evans (New York: Routledge, 2008), 43–54. See further, for example, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity”, in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80; “Knowing about Q and Knowing about Jesus: Mutually Exclusive Undertakings?” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 497–514.



observe many of them in the concrete analysis: 'Jesus' historical context'<sup>68</sup> is not properly dealt with where I discuss the method in the monograph, although it does play an important role in the study.<sup>69</sup>

This rudimentary inventory of the methodological elements and sub-elements (cf. points 1 and 3 above) included in my historical Jesus method as I have presented it earlier, is not a detailed critique; but I think that if I were to embark on a new, more extensive study of Jesus, I would need to look at things more comprehensively and also articulate the method more precisely. I also think that the metalanguage would enable me to do precisely that. At any rate, I am obliged to explain (to myself at least) why I have not included in the method any of the methodological elements that now appear to be missing. Observing the above points (2) and (4), and performing the critical analysis more properly, would probably lead to further "revelations" like this.

## 6. *Concluding Words*

Scholarship is always in need of strategies that can increase clarity and exactness. This is particularly true of the methodological discussion of historical Jesus research, where no such opportunity should be bypassed unexamined. Therefore I am so bold as to wish that the contours of a metalanguage proposed here could be accepted for consideration. In my view, all uses of the metalanguage present new, promising centers of attention for future methodological dialogue. The study of the metalanguage could suggest ways of improving those methods that are already in use. Scholars who engage in historical Jesus research for the first time could learn a better understanding of the existing methods by using the metalanguage as an analytical tool, and pursue the definition of their own method with the metalanguage as a conceptual matrix. In this way, gradually, the diverse traits of methodological thinking in historical Jesus research could be brought closer to each other. This would facilitate the discussion and increase the common applicability of both the methods and the results to which they lead.

No doubt, the metalanguage itself still requires further development and adjustment. Hopefully, work in this area is now beginning.

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<sup>68</sup> Note that this is a lexeme which stands for a methodological element. It does not denote the contents of the context, viz. what the context actually was like.

<sup>69</sup> Hence, this applies to *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*.

## APPENDIX 1

SOME OBSERVATION ORDERS OF LEXEMES AND THEIR  
RELATIONSHIPS*The rudimentary structure:*

1.a.

sources for Jesus (*first*)→ manipulation of the sources (*second*)→ information (*third*)

1.b.

sources for Jesus (*first*)→ manipulation of the sources (*second*)→ information (*third*)→ interpretation (*fourth*)*More comprehensive structures:*

2.a.i

sources for Jesus (*first*)→ manipulation of the sources (*second*)→ information (*third*)→ Jesus' historical context (*fourth*)→ interpretation (*fifth*)

2.a.ii

sources for Jesus (*first*)→ manipulation of the sources (*second*)→ information (*third*)→ organizing the information (*fourth*)→ interpretation (*fifth*)

2.b.i

sources for Jesus (*first*)→ manipulation of the sources (*second*)→ information (*third*)→ Jesus' historical context (*fourth*)→ organizing the information (*fifth*)→ interpretation (*sixth*)

## 2.b.ii

sources for Jesus (*first*)

- manipulation of the sources (*second*)
  - information (*third*)
    - organizing the information (*fourth*)
      - Jesus' historical context (*fifth*)
        - interpretation (*sixth*)

## 3.a

sources for Jesus (*first*)

- manipulation of the sources (*including* Jesus' historical context) (*second*)
  - information (*third*)
    - interpretation (*fourth*)

## 3.b.i

sources for Jesus (*first*)

- manipulation of the sources (*including* Jesus' historical context) (*second*)
  - information (*third*)
    - Jesus' historical context (*fourth*)
      - interpretation (*fifth*)

## 3.b.ii

sources for Jesus (*first*)

- manipulation of the sources (*including* Jesus' historical context) (*second*)
  - information (*third*)
    - organizing the information (*fourth*)
      - interpretation (*fifth*)

## 3.c.i

sources for Jesus (*first*)

- manipulation of the sources (*including* Jesus' historical context) (*second*)
  - information (*third*)
    - Jesus' historical context (*fourth*)
      - organizing the information (*fifth*)
        - interpretation (*sixth*)

## 3.c.ii

sources for Jesus (*first*)

- manipulation of the sources (*including* Jesus' historical context) (*second*)
- information (*third*)
  - organizing the information (*fourth*)
  - Jesus' historical context (*fifth*)
  - interpretation (*sixth*)

A *full structure* (alternatives as in 1.–3.):

## 4.

context of the scholar (*first*)

- sources for Jesus (*second*)
- manipulation of the sources (*third*)
- information (*fourth*)
  - Jesus' historical context (*fifth*)
  - organizing the information (*sixth*)
  - interpretation (*seventh*)

## APPENDIX 2

THE SECOND-ORDER VOCABULARY  
(BASIC PLUS ELABORATE LEXEMES)

## 'Sources for Jesus'

- 'documents' (e.g., Mark, Q, Matthew<sup>s</sup>, Luke<sup>s</sup>, the Gospel of John, the *Gospel of Thomas*)
- 'extrapolative sources' (e.g., sociological data, sociological models, role categories, archaeology, topography, religious tradition)

## 'Information'

- 'type of information'
  - 'general information' (overall motif of the kingdom of God)
  - 'specific information' (e.g., the relation between Jesus' exorcisms and the kingdom; cf. Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20)

## 'Manipulation of the sources'

- 'manipulation of extrapolative sources'
- 'manipulation of documents'
  - 'manipulation of fragments' (e.g., analysis of Mark 2:18–20)
  - 'manipulation of larger quantities' (e.g., analysis of the parable tradition)
  - 'manipulation for general information' (resulting 'information,' e.g.: the historicity of Jesus as miracle-worker)
  - 'manipulation for specific information' (resulting 'information,' e.g.: the historicity of a particular miracle story)

## 'Jesus' historical context'

- 'context materials' (e.g. literature, archaeology, social-scientific methods)
- 'context vantage points'
  - 'topics' (e.g., cultural, economical, political, psychological and religious contexts)
  - 'locations' (e.g., Jerusalem, Nazareth, Galilee, Judea and Palestine)
  - 'influences' (e.g., Jewish, Roman and Hellenistic)
  - 'perspectives' (e.g., individual, group, inside, outside, the marginal, the essential, the oppressed, the oppressors)

‘Organizing the information’

- ‘full-scale organizing of the information’
- ‘selective organizing of the information’

‘Interpretation’

- ‘descriptive’
- ‘imperative’

‘Context of the scholar’

- ‘permanent factors’
  - ‘innate capacities’ (e.g., gender, color, talents, nationality, personality, penchants)
  - ‘acquired capacities’ (e.g., personality, penchants, skills, learned knowledge, convictions, profession, religiosity, ideology, experiences, habits)
- ‘transient factors’ (e.g., place of employment, life situation, social relationships, health, mood, environment)

PART TWO

VARIOUS ASPECTS OF HISTORICAL JESUS METHODOLOGY





WITH THE GRAIN AND AGAINST THE GRAIN:  
A STRATEGY FOR READING THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

COLIN BROWN

John P. Meier concludes his account of “The Criterion of Rejection and Execution” with the comment: “A Jesus whose words and deeds did not threaten or alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus.”<sup>1</sup> Traces of rejection and affirmation can be found in the scant references to Jesus in Josephus, Pliny, Tacitus, and Lucian of Samosata.<sup>2</sup> They abound in the gospels. Why did Jesus inspire veneration in some and bitter antagonism in others?

My answer takes the form of an exercise in hermeneutics and intertextuality. The reason is the need to penetrate a world different from ours. Concepts of purity and holiness, and authority, patronage, and life under “exile” conditions are like rules of a game that are followed but not seen. Those who lived in the world of Second Temple Judaism followed them instinctively. But we have to discover them.

The question of the historical Jesus is not just one of material evidence. It is a hermeneutical question insofar as it turns on how *the same evidence* is interpreted from opposing standpoints. Instead of reading the text as a linear narrative, I shall try to identify currents and cross-currents in light of the perspectives of the evangelists and those of Jesus’ adversaries. Both viewed Jesus intertextually—the perspectives of both sides were conditioned and shaped by the Hebrew Scriptures. It was not simply a matter of searching for proof texts. It was a question of *halakhah*—the fulfillment of the Torah as the way in which Israel should “walk” (Exod 18:20) in a culture which held that, because God was holy, his people and land should also be holy. It raised the question of which profiles found in the Law and the Prophets fitted Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>1</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus 1, The Roots of the Problem of the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 177.

<sup>2</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63–64; Pliny, *Letter* 10.96; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; Lucian, *The Passing of Peregrinus* 11; cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 56–111; Robert E. van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

Because of their distinctive perspectives, it is necessary to examine each gospel separately. I shall consider Mark first since Mark is generally held to be a source for Matthew and Luke. Because of limitations of space I shall not examine their extensive debt to Mark, but shall focus on distinctive emphases.

### 1. *Reading with the Grain and against the Grain*

To read with the grain is to go along with the claims of a narrative. To read against the grain is to question those claims in light of embarrassing material and counter claims. The gospels highlight three spheres of conflict where Jesus appears to cross boundaries: religion, family, and society.<sup>3</sup> Traditional piety copes with charges against Jesus by insisting that they were unfounded. Critical scholarship builds them into its “criterion of embarrassment” on the assumption that the *unintentional* presence of embarrassing material indicates historicity.<sup>4</sup> A third way—which is what I propose here—is to suggest that one of the reasons why the gospels were written was to confute the charges, smears, and embarrassing features.

For some years I have been experimenting with a heuristic device in order to identify and account for the currents and cross currents in the gospels. It uses two theses. Thesis A represents the standpoint of the evangelists, and Thesis B that of Jesus’ adversaries. Both interpret *the same sayings and actions of Jesus*, but from opposing standpoints.<sup>5</sup> I shall deal first with Thesis B for two reasons. Chronologically the first “confessions” in the gospels were *hostile*—“He has gone out of his mind” and “He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons” (Mark 3:21–22). “Christian” confession came later amid a background of conjecture. My second reason is that Thesis A not only affirms Jesus but seeks to confute Thesis B. Just as there was an oral tra-

<sup>3</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity in Mark’s Gospel,” *Semeia* 35 (1986): 91–128; Bruce J. Malina and Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988); David Rhoads, “Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries,” in *Mark and Method*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 135–161.

<sup>4</sup> Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 174.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Brown, “Synoptic Miracle Stories: A Jewish Religious and Social Setting,” *Forum* 2.4 (1986): 55–76; Colin Brown, “The Jesus of Mark’s Gospel,” in *Jesus Then and Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 26–53.

dition about Jesus in early Christianity,<sup>6</sup> ongoing polemic against Jesus indicates written and oral traditions in Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

Thesis B has two forms. Thesis B1 is based on the directives of the Torah regarding prophets who lead astray by signs and wonders. Deut 13:1–5 states that if a prophet arises and offers a sign or wonder and says, “Let us go after other gods,” the people are not to go. They are to know that the Lord their God is testing them to see if they love the Lord with all their heart and soul. Only the Lord’s voice is to be obeyed. The prophet should be put to death that the evil may be purged from their midst, so that “all Israel shall hear and be afraid and never again do any such wickedness” (Deut 13:11). The same fate awaited the medium and wizard.<sup>8</sup> A trajectory reaffirming the directive concerning deceiving prophets may be traced through Philo, the Temple Scroll, the Damascus Document, the Mishnah tractate Sanhedrin, the Talmud, and Jewish attitudes reflected in Christian writings.<sup>9</sup>

*Thesis B1 proposes that, when Jewish authorities saw Jesus attracting large crowds by his healings and exorcisms while propounding deviant teaching and crossing the boundaries of purity, they sought guidance from the Torah,*

<sup>6</sup> Henry Wansbrough, ed., *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69, 102, 106–107; *First Apology* 30; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.38, 68; Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 3; *Acts of Thomas* 96; *b. Sanh.* 43a; cf. Graham N. Stanton, “Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God’s People?” in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 164–180; Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*, SBLDS 64 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983); Frederick W. Norris, “Eusebius on Jesus as Deceiver and Sorcerer,” in *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 523–540.

<sup>8</sup> Deut 13:6–18; 17:2–7, 12; 18:20–22; Lev 20:27.

<sup>9</sup> Philo, *Special Laws* 1.65, 315–317; *m. Sanh.* 7:4, 10; 11Q Temple Scroll LIV; CD XII, 2–3; *b. Sanh.* 43a; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69, 108; *T. Levi* 16.3; *Acts of Thomas* 20, 48, 96, 104, 106, 107; *Acts of Pilate*, Prologue 1; cf. David E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW II*, 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557; Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978); Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum in der Antike* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982); Günter Schlichting, *Ein jüdisches Leben Jesu: Die verschollene Toledot Jeschu-Fassung Tam u-mu’ad*, WUNT 24 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1982); William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

and found that Jesus fitted the profile of the prophet who performs signs and wonders in order to lead astray, and the wizard empowered by an alien spirit. They saw no alternative but to “purge the evil” from their midst.<sup>10</sup>

Thesis B2 focuses on disobedience. Deut 21:18–21 lays down the procedure:

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they chastise him, will not give heed to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, and they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel shall hear, and fear (RSV).

Jacob Milgrom observes:

In the biblical view the Decalogue would fail were it not rooted in a regularly observed ritual, central to home and table, and impinging on both senses and the intellect, thus conditioning reflexes into patterns of ethical behavior.<sup>11</sup>

David Noel Freedman sees Deut 21:18–21 as the embodiment of the fifth commandment (Deut 5:16) in the form of case law. In the formation of the canon of the Hebrew Bible Freedman argues that violation of the ten commandments played a significant part in the ordering of

<sup>10</sup> Calvin appealed to Deut 13 in rejecting truth claims of the Catholic Church based on contemporary miracles (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Prefatory Address [1536]). Hobbes (*Leviathan*, ch. 37 [1651]) and Spinoza (*Tractatus Theologico Politicus*, ch. 6 [1670]) cited the passage in rejecting miracles in general as a basis for truth claims (Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984], 15, 32–33, 46). Perhaps the first modern theologian to contemplate that Deut 13 might be applied to Jesus was Hugo Grotius (*The Truth of the Christian Religion* [1627], book 5, §6). Grotius rejected the application on the grounds that Jesus forbade worship of false gods.

Modern scholars who see the relevance of Deut 13 include Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jerusalem und Rom im Zeitalter Jesu* (Bern: Franke Verlag, 1957); Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Knopf, 1960); August Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit: Untersuchungen zum Strafverfahren gegen Jesus*, WUNT 21 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980); Otto Betz, “Probleme des Prozesses Jesu,” ANRW II 25.1 (1982): 565–647; D. Neale, “Was Jesus a *Mesith*? Public Response to Jesus and His Ministry,” *TynBul* 44.1 (1993): 89–101. Joseph Klausner argued that Judas betrayed Jesus, when he came to see Jesus as the false prophet who had come to the Holy City to demonstrate his claims by mighty works. Judas saw it as his religious duty to deliver the deceiver to the authorities so that the evil could be exterminated (*Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching*, trans. Herbert Danby [London: Allen & Unwin, 1925], 325).

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 736.

the books. Rebellion is a central theme of Deuteronomy. An account of the violation of the fifth commandment in the fifth book of the canon has a special significance.<sup>12</sup>

*Thesis B2 proposes that in the eyes of some contemporaries—including those of his mother, brothers, and sisters—Jesus fitted (or was dangerously close to fitting) the profile of the “stubborn and rebellious son.” In the event, Jesus’ relationship with his family became dysfunctional.*

Thesis A seeks to rebut Theses B1 and B2 by means of the Spirit christology outlined by Peter at Pentecost and Caesarea.

“You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know” (Acts 2:22). “You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10:36–38).

*Thesis A proposes that Jesus’ activity is to be attributed to the anointing of the Spirit, in virtue of which he was the “Christ.”*

Each gospel has its own perspective in developing this thesis. All three have what may be called an “upfront” Spirit christology, accompanied by a developing word christology, and in the case of Matthew and Luke a word and wisdom christology.

The gospels focus on Jesus’ activity in Galilee and Judea. Gentiles hardly come into the picture.<sup>13</sup> The power of Rome remains in the background, but it is pervasive. It surfaced with the question of giving tribute to Caesar. Jewish rulers existed at the pleasure of the Roman prefect. Would Jesus prove to be the Son of David who would drive out the Romans and restore the Davidic kingdom? Words like “gospel,” “Son of God,” and “savior,” which we today assume to be characteristically Christian, turn out to be derived from inscriptions memorializing deified Caesars.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore necessary to add Thesis C.

<sup>12</sup> David Noel Freedman, *The Unity of the Hebrew Bible* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 24–25.

<sup>13</sup> Leander E. Keck, *Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001); Sean Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 74–91.

<sup>14</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), lxxx–xciii; Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*,

*Thesis C proposes that in their choice of terms and incidents the canonical gospels present Jesus as the true Son of God, and the Kingdom of God as the reign of God in conscious opposition to Roman rule.*

## 2. Rereading the Gospels

### 2.1. Mark

Mark is seen increasingly as ancient biography.<sup>15</sup> In my judgment it has the form of a tragic-epic in five acts with a prologue and epilogue, intended to be declaimed.<sup>16</sup> The Prologue (1:1–13) contains the elements of what is to come. The opening sentence introduces the themes of Thesis A and Thesis C: “The beginning [ἀρχὴ]<sup>17</sup> of the good news [τοῦ εὐαγγελίου] of Jesus Christ, the Son of God [Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ]”<sup>18</sup> (1:1; cf. 1:14–15). The term gospel/good news is found in numerous inscriptions including the Priene inscription (9 BCE): “the birthday of the god [Augustus] meant for the world the beginning of the message of peace [εὐαγγελίον] which has him as its author.”<sup>19</sup> Mark’s opening sentence not only introduces hearers to Jesus Christ, but also advances his claims over Caesar’s. Use of the Latin name *Jesus* became conventional in the early church. It has the advantage of contextualizing him for the Roman world. But in so doing it obscures the allusions contained in the Semitic forms *Yeshu* or *Yehoshua*, which connected him with the Joshua of the Hebrew Bible.

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trans. Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 288–313. The term *euangelion* “gospel” is found once in the Old Testament (2 Sam 4:10), but frequently in inscriptions, papyri, and Josephus.

<sup>15</sup> Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst* (Tübingen: Francke, 1997); Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Colin Brown, “The Jesus of Mark’s Gospel,” in *Jesus Then and Now*, 26–53; cf. David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982); Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> In Aristotle *arche* means a prologue (*Poetics* 1450b 27–28). Ancient biography had a beginning (*arche*) dealing with the subject’s origins, a middle (*akme*) concentrating on highlights, and end (*telos*) dealing with the subject’s demise and possible vindication (Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie*, 192–209).

<sup>18</sup> υἱοῦ θεοῦ is omitted from some manuscripts. If it is an early insertion, its inclusion may be due to a scribe’s noticing its political significance. The identification of Jesus as God’s Son (1:11; 15:39) has a political dimension.

<sup>19</sup> Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 298.

In the Prologue *Christ* appears as a virtual surname. But it is actually a title that lies at the heart of the controversy. *Christos*, like the Heb. *mashiach* (Messiah), means “anointed.” It raises the question: “Anointed by whom?” Mark’s answer is given in his account of the descent of the Spirit on Jesus after his baptism, when Jesus is identified as God’s son by the “voice from heaven” (1:10–11). I share the view that *Christ* probably meant “the anointed one” without further connotations.<sup>20</sup> It has a double reference: to Jesus as “the anointed one,” and to the Spirit as the agent of the anointing and empowerment.

The Prologue contains three sets of prophecy. The first two identify the Baptizer as the messenger preparing the way for Yahweh’s return (1:2–3; cf. Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3), signifying the end of the exile which, despite the return from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple, many Jews felt to be ongoing.<sup>21</sup> The third is John’s prophecy: “I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit [ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ]” (1:8). Traditionally this prophecy has been taken to refer to Pentecost. But the prophecy is not addressed to the disciples (Acts 1:5; 11:16), but to the Jews who have come to John for baptism. Tradition has turned Jesus’ activity into an interlude prior to the prophecy’s posthumous fulfillment. As such it has no relevance to Mark’s narrative. My counterproposal argues that Mark wants us to see Jesus’ activity as fulfillment of John’s prophecy.

Baptism is a rite of purification and consecration. The activities of Mark’s Jesus were directed at the purification and consecration of Israel through “baptism” with the Holy Spirit with a view to preparing Israel for Yahweh’s return and the establishment of God’s reign. Before this can happen Jesus must be consecrated by John’s baptism and the descent of the Spirit (1:9–11). Jesus’ preparation is completed by the Spirit driving him into the wilderness, where he overcomes Satan’s temptations (1:12–13). It may be noted that the term “Holy Spirit” occurs only three times in the Hebrew Scriptures (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10–11). Its common use in the New Testament may be to counter Thesis B1 by

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, Bampton Lectures 1980 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 80–82, 139–143, 149–143.

<sup>21</sup> Craig A. Evans, “Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel,” in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. Carey C. Newman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 77–100; James M. Scott, ed., *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Conceptions*, JSJSup 36 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997); Scott, ed., *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, JSJSup 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

emphasizing that the Spirit that empowered Jesus was not Satan but the Holy Spirit of God.

The stage is set for Jesus' proclamation of "the good news [εὐαγγέλιον] of God... 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news [ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ]" (1:14–15). "Act 1" may be called "The Beginnings of Conflict" (1:14–4:34). Following the call of the disciples, they went to Capernaum, where Jesus taught on the Sabbath and was accosted by a man "with an unclean spirit [ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ]" (1:23).<sup>22</sup> The expression mirrors that in John's prophecy (1:8). In exorcising the unclean spirit Jesus performs his first act of baptizing with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1 narrates sundry exorcisms and healings. The climax is reached with the healing of the leper, where the motif of cleansing is stressed (1:40–45). Jesus' act of touching the leper would be expected to make Jesus unclean. But his action is an instance of what Klaus Berger terms "offensive holiness" which conveys purity in virtue of Jesus' anointing by the Spirit.<sup>23</sup> Jesus' command to the leper to show himself to the priest follows the instructions of the Torah, but the failure to heed the injunctions sows the seeds of estrangement.

The healing of the paralytic (2:1–12) introduces another facet of cleansing: forgiveness of sin. It brings into the open the opposition I have sought to identify under Thesis B. Jesus' pronouncement, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (2:5), prompts the thought, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7). The blasphemy consists in Jesus' presumption to act as God's agent. It anticipates the charge on which Jesus was eventually condemned (14:64). Tension mounts over Jesus' eating with sinners and tax collectors (2:15–17) and the disciples' plucking corn on the Sabbath (2:23–28). The healing of the man with the withered hand in the synagogue on the Sabbath prompts the Pharisees to conspire with the Herodians on how to destroy Jesus (3:1–6).

<sup>22</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 54 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993), 57–71. Peter G. Bolt sees the demons as the spirits of the departed ("Jesus, the Daimons and the Dead," in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996], 75–102). Such incidents are part of Jesus' epic struggle with death (Bolt, *Jesus' Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark's Early Readers*, SNTSMS 125 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003]). Paul W. Holtenbach sees the phenomenon as the outcome of colonial oppression ("Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study," *JAAAR* 49 [1981]: 567–588).

<sup>23</sup> "Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer," *NovT* 30 (1988): 231–262.



The outcome is a delegation of Torah experts from Jerusalem deputed to investigate Jesus' activities. Their verdict—"He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons" (3:22)—coincides with Thesis B1. Jesus' parables about the strong man are capped by the saying, "whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (3:29). Mark's comment—"for they had said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (3:30)—makes it clear that it is the accusers who are the blasphemers by attributing to Satan the manifest work of God's Spirit (Thesis A).

The action of Jesus' mother and brothers calling to Jesus (3:31–32) points to Thesis B2. Although the charge expressed in Thesis B1 has failed—for the time being—Jesus remained vulnerable to the charge that he was a "stubborn and rebellious son" who would not listen to the voice of his mother. Jesus' family had tried to restrain him when people began to say that he was out of his mind (3:21). Their call to him outside the house (3:31–32) was either a renewed attempt to get him to abandon his activity or a public dissociation. It met with the rebuke: "Who are my mother and my brothers?... Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (3:33–35). The parables of 4:1–33 serve as comment on responses to Jesus. The implication that Jesus is the sower of the word (4:14) points to Jesus as God's agent and spokesman (1:27, 38–39; 2:2, 5, 10, 19–22, 27; 3:4–5, 23–30, 33–35).

"Act 2" "The Conflict Spreads (4:25–7:23)" begins and ends with sea crossings, marking Jesus' tactical retreat from the territory ruled by Herod Antipas, and his return as a second Joshua about to engage in a new conquest. Mark's account of the stilling of the storm (4:35–5:1) echoes the story of Jonah. Like Jonah, Jesus was asleep, and the disciples like the sailors feared for their lives. Like Jonah, he was a prophet under judgment. Matthew and Luke detach the story from the Beelzebul charge. But in Mark it is a reprise of Thesis B1. If the boat had sunk, it would have been seen as a judgment on Jesus and vindication of his accusers. Jesus' rebuke takes the same form as that he used earlier with the unclean spirit (4:39; cf. 1:25).

Three stories develop the theme of purity. That of "Legion" (5:2–20) is located in the Decapolis, a Roman foundation. Political and religious motifs are intertwined (Thesis C). The tenth legion, stationed in Syria since 6 CE, had an image of a boar on its standards.<sup>24</sup> From the standpoint

<sup>24</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 110.

of the Torah, anything idolatrous should be devoted to destruction (Deut 13:17–18). The destruction of the pigs might be seen as symbolic of national aspirations to drive the Romans into the sea. The story combines aspects of demon possession noted earlier: demons as the spirits of the departed and political servitude.<sup>25</sup> The description of Legion as a man “with an unclean spirit [ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ]” (5:2) echoes that in 1:23. The fact that no shackles could subdue him suggests that the only power strong enough to overcome him is the Holy Spirit.

Jairus’s daughter (5:21–24, 35–43) and the woman with the flow of blood (5:25–34) raise the question of ritual impurity.<sup>26</sup> Like the story of Legion, they show Jesus crossing the boundaries. All three are linked with death, and physical contact would have brought defilement. Instead of being defiled, Jesus bestows purity and life. On returning to his hometown Jesus taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath, prompting the question: “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands!” (6:2). But Jesus could do no such deed there because of unbelief. He then sent out his disciples to preach repentance with authority over unclean spirits (6:7–13).

A retrospective interlude assesses the impact of Jesus and John and their threat to Herod Antipas (Thesis C). Whereas some saw Jesus as Elijah or one of the prophets, Herod saw him as the beheaded John raised to life (6:16). A detail in the story of the feeding of the five thousand (6:30–44) throws light on its political significance. Mark notes that Jesus had compassion on the crowd “because they were like sheep without a shepherd” (6:34). When Moses was dying, he feared for the future of Israel and asked, “who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord may not be like sheep without a shepherd” (Num 27:17). Whereupon, the Lord told him, “Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hands upon him” (Num 27:18). Herod Antipas had proved himself to be unfit to be the shepherd of Israel. John the Baptizer had been a righteous leader, but Herod had beheaded him. It fell to Jesus to be the *new Joshua*, the shepherd of Israel.

<sup>25</sup> Gerd Theissen conjectures that the demons were the spirits of fallen fighters (*The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, ed. John Riches, trans. Francis McDDonagh [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 255).

<sup>26</sup> Craig A. Evans, “‘Who Touched Me?’ Jesus and the Ritually Impure,” in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration*, by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, AGJU 39 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 353–376.

Following the feeding, Jesus embarked on a journey that would eventually lead to the cross. It was a *second conquest*, led by a pacific “Joshua” who sought to purify the people of Israel in preparation for God’s reign. The journey began with Jesus “walking on the sea” (6:45–52). The idea of walking on water has prompted suggestions of a displaced resurrection narrative or an epiphany.<sup>27</sup> J. D. M. Derrett’s provocative article “Why and How Jesus Walked on the Sea”<sup>28</sup> gives a more down-to-earth explanation. Derrett suggests that Jesus was reenacting Joshua’s crossing of the Jordan at the original conquest. As Joshua sanctified himself and communed with Yahweh before crossing the Jordan (Josh 3:8), Jesus went up the mountain to pray alone (6:46–47). Jesus then made his way along the edge of a shelf across the lake<sup>29</sup> in order to stand like Joshua with his feet in the Jordan (6:48; cf. Josh 3:8), before joining his disciples in the boat and crossing to Gennesaret on the west bank (6:53).

The ensuing debate with the Pharisees centers on purity (7:1–23).<sup>30</sup> From the perspective of Thesis B, Jesus is a subverter of the law in his disregard of ritual purity. Mark’s explanation for Gentile hearers takes up the language of baptism: “they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash [βαπτίσωνται] it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing [βαπτισμοῦς] of cups, pots, and bronze kettles” (7:4). Mark’s Jesus insists that it is not what passes through the stomach that defiles, but what comes out of the heart (7:21–23). “Thus he declared all foods clean” (7:19).

“Act 3” “The Climax (7:24–10:45)” begins with Jesus seeking refuge in the region of Tyre, and performing an exorcism on the daughter of the Syrophenician woman (7:24–30). The healing of the deaf mute (7:31–37) is followed by the feeding of the four thousand (8:1–10), which is widely regarded as a doublet of the earlier feeding. It appears to be set in predominantly Gentile Decapolis. If the boy were a local

<sup>27</sup> “He meant to pass them by” (6:48) is the language of epiphanies (Exod 33:19, 22; 34:6; 1 Kgs 19:11); cf. J. P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Functions of Matt. 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–52 and John 6:15–21*, AnBib 87 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), 67–75; Theissen, *The Miracle Stories*, 186–187.

<sup>28</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, *Studies in the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 4:92–111.

<sup>29</sup> Derrett’s account of the geological formation is confirmed by *The Holy Land Satellite Atlas*, ed. Richard Cleave (Nicosia: Rohr, 1994), 24–25, 34–45, which gives images taken by NASA Landsat 5 on January 18, 1987.

<sup>30</sup> Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark*, JSNTSup 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986); James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus and Ritual Purity: A Study of the Tradition-History of Mark 7:15,” in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990), 37–60.

Gentile, Jesus' action would be another example of crossing boundaries and imparting purity.<sup>31</sup>

The Pharisees' request for "a sign from heaven" (8:11) is frequently taken at face value as a plea for conclusive evidence. But in light of the Beelzebul charge, it is difficult to envisage how any further empirical evidence would be acceptable. In light of Thesis B1, all signs were to be seen as tests of fidelity to Yahweh. If Jesus were to perform a sign—especially one like the feeding just reported—the Pharisees would have hard evidence before impeccable witnesses (themselves) that Jesus fitted the profile of the sign-working apostate prophet of Deuteronomy 13.

It would be anachronistic to read into Peter's confession the christologies of the ecumenical councils. "You are the Christ" (8:29) means the one anointed by the Spirit (Thesis A). The confession is the climax and the turning point of the narrative. Elements of Thesis C begin to appear. The choice of Caesarea Philippi (given by Augustus to Herod the Great and dedicated to Caesar) with its famous grotto dedicated to Pan carries an implicit political and religious challenge. The region was close to ancient Dan, which was reputed to be the source of the Jordan. As such it proved to be the starting point for a new conquest from north to south, as in the traditional phrase "from Dan to Beersheba." Instead of publicizing Jesus, the disciples are ordered to secrecy (8:30). More ominous are the passion predictions (8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:31–34). The question, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (10:38) sounds puzzling as Jesus had already been baptized. The cup that Jesus was about to drink was the cup of wrath and judgment.<sup>32</sup> From the standpoint of Thesis B, Jesus' death would be an act of judgment and cleansing. As such it would be a "baptism." From the standpoint of Thesis A, it would be "a ransom for many" (10:45).

"Act 4" "The Dénouement (10:46–13:37)" begins with Jesus' final act of healing. The story of blind Bartimaeus (10:46–52) contrasts with the hostility of the Jerusalem authorities. Blindness was an impurity that

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<sup>31</sup> J. D. M. Derrett sees further parallels with Joshua ("Crumbs in Mark," in *Studies in the New Testament*, 4:82–91). The incident of the blind man from Bethsaida seeing men "like trees walking" (8:24) may be an ominous vision of soldiers carrying lumber to make a palisade (Derrett, "Trees Walking, Prophecy, and Christology," in *Studies in the New Testament*, 3:107–29).

<sup>32</sup> Isa 51:17–22; Jer 25:15; Ezek 23:31–33; Hab 1:16.

many regarded as a disqualification from entering the Temple.<sup>33</sup> Jesus' action would qualify him to enter the Temple. The cry "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" has messianic kingly implications (Thesis C) but also connotations of healing (Thesis A) in light of traditions concerning David and Solomon.<sup>34</sup> The turning point comes with the "cleansing" of the Temple (11:15–19). Jesus' action fits both Thesis A and Thesis B. When asked about his authority, Jesus gave an apparently evasive answer: "Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me" (11:30). Jesus' interrogators rightly perceive that, if they were to acknowledge that John's baptism was from God, the next question would be, "Why then did you not believe him?" John had preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, but this was in preparation for the baptism of one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (1:8). In this light Jesus' action could be described as *the baptism of the Temple*. But to the authorities Jesus' actions were those described under Thesis B1 (11:18; 12:12).

The encounters that follow—questions about tribute to Caesar, resurrection, the first commandment, warnings about scribes, and the widow casting all she had—all have to do with pure religion. In light of Thesis B1 the question about the first commandment (12:28; cf. Deut 6:4–5; 13:3) was a test of Jesus' orthodoxy. Jesus' addition of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (12:31; cf. Lev 19:18) elicits the scribe's comment that the two commandments are "much more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices" (11:33; cf. 1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6–8). It has the effect of relativizing the Temple, just as 7:19 relativized the dietary laws. From the standpoint of Thesis B1 the scribe was putting himself in danger of being accused of being led astray by Jesus.

The cosmic language of the so-called "apocalyptic discourse" (13:1–37) is not about the end of the world but about the impending judgment that will occur within the lifespan of "this generation" (13:30).<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>33</sup> Lev 21:17–24; 2 Sam 5:6–8; John 9:1; Acts 3:1–5; 1Qsa II, 3–10; 4QMMT LII–LVII; 11Q Temple Scroll XLV, 12–14.

<sup>34</sup> 1 Sam 16:13–23; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.166–169; 8.42–49; Dennis Duling, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *HTR* 68 (1975): 235–252; Duling, "The Promises to David and Their Entrance into Christianity—Nailing Down a Likely Hypothesis," *NTS* 20 (1974–1975): 55–77; L. R. Fisher, "Can This Be the Son of David?" in *Jesus and the Historian*, ed. F. T. Trotter (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 82–97; David E Aune, *ANRW* II 23.1 (1980): 1586; Bruce Chilton, "Jesus *ben David*: Reflections on the *Davidssonfrage*," *JSNT* 14 (1982): 88–112.

<sup>35</sup> Colin Brown, *Jesus Then and Now*, 39–40.

warnings about false messiahs and false prophets performing signs and omens echo the language of Deuteronomy 13 and Thesis B1. They found fulfillment in the sign-prophets in the period leading up to the war with Rome.<sup>36</sup>

“Act 5” “The Catastrophe (14:1–15:3)” begins with the decision to arrest and kill Jesus, though the impending Passover poses a problem. Events move rapidly from the anointing (14:3–9), Judas’ deal with the chief priests (14:10–11), the Passover meal with the Twelve (14:12–21), and Jesus’ arrest in Gethsemane (14:26–52). With regard to the night interrogation (14:53–65) Otto Betz observes: “The Sadducees who were charged with political responsibility for law and order were more sensitive towards a prophetic criticism of the political and moral state of Israel, delivered in the spirit of holy Scripture.... They too applied the criteria of Deut. 13 and in addition 21:22–23 to the actions and claims of Jesus, according to which false messianic claims which endangered the people, the city, and the temple constituted a blasphemy against God.”<sup>37</sup> August Strobel sees the charge of being a false prophet linked with the more serious one of leading the people astray as the important issue.<sup>38</sup>

Running throughout the passion narrative are the related themes of prophecy and signs. False witnesses testify, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands’” (14:58). However, the witnesses could not agree. Jesus himself provides the grounds for his condemnation with his prophecy of a sign that the high priest himself would see. “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus said, ‘I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven’” (14:61–62). In a symbolic gesture on hearing the blasphemy the high priest tore his clothes (*m. Sanh.* 7:5), and the assembly concurred with the capital charge (14:63–64). The blasphemy appears to have several facets, but the central factor is Jesus’ claim to be the Lord’s Anointed and that the high priest would see Jesus seated alongside God, as they rode on the clouds in judgment.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.258–264; *Ant.* 20.97–98, 168–172; cf. Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Betz, “Probleme,” *ANRW* II 25.1, 595 (author’s translation).

<sup>38</sup> Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit*, 81–86.

<sup>39</sup> Brown, *Jesus Then and Now*, 41. The answer appropriates the imagery of Psalm 110 and Dan 7:13, embellished by that of Exod 14:20; Num 10:34; Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1.

The motif of Thesis B1 is maintained in the incidents of the blindfold and taunts to prophesy (14:65; cf. Isa 11:3–4),<sup>40</sup> the challenge to come down from the cross (15:29), and the presumed call to Elijah (15:35–36). Thesis C comes back into play in handing Jesus over to Pilate who asks him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (15:2). The theme of kingship is played out in Pilate’s appeal to the crowd who prefer Barabbas who had committed murder during the insurrection (15:7) to “the man you call the King of the Jews” (15:6–15); the clothing and crowning of the scourged Jesus with a purple robe as King of the Jews (15:16–20); the triumphal procession to the cross (15:21–24);<sup>41</sup> and the *titulus* inscription “King of the Jews” (15:26).

The rending of the Temple veil was a sign indicating that the sanctuary was now vulnerable to the invasion of the profane and that God was no longer present.<sup>42</sup> It has been interpreted as a fulfillment of John the Baptist’s prophecy (1:8).<sup>43</sup> In death, the Spirit that had come upon Jesus after his baptism left him [ἐξέπνευσεν] to become the breath of divine judgment (15:37; cf. Isa 11:4; 27:8; Job 4:9; Wis 11:20).<sup>44</sup> To the Roman centurion it was an omen indicating divinity, “Truly this man was God’s Son!” (15:39). The comment is a counterpart to 1:11, bringing Mark’s narrative full circle. The words are not a confession of faith but of defeat.<sup>45</sup>

The narrative proper ends in tragedy, but Mark’s epilogue (15:40–16:8) transforms tragedy into triumph. The best manuscript tradition

<sup>40</sup> W. C. van Unnik, “Jesu Verhöhnung vor dem Synedrium (Mc xiv 65 par),” in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Works of W. C. van Unnik*, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1973) 1:3–5; Betz, “Probleme,” ANRW II 25.1, 638.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Schmidt, “Mark 15:16–31: The Crucifixion Narrative and the Roman Triumphal Procession,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 1–18; Schmidt, “Jesus’ Triumphal Procession March: The Sacred Way as Roman Procession,” *BRev* 13.1 (1997): 30–37.

<sup>42</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave, A Commentary on the Passion Narratives of the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1101, noting similarities with the departure of the glory of God from the Temple (Ezek 10) just before the invading Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem.

<sup>43</sup> B. M. F. van Iersel, “He Will Baptize You with the Holy Spirit: The Time Perspective of Baptisei,” in *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn*, ed. T. Baarda, A. Hilhorst, G. P. Luttikhuisen, and A. S. van der Woude (Kampen: Kok, 1988), 132–141.

<sup>44</sup> ἐκπνέω is a common word for expire (BDAG, 38). It is related to πνεῦμα, spirit. Since Jesus had a unique relationship with the Holy Spirit, 15:37 may refer to breathing out the Holy Spirit.

<sup>45</sup> John Pobee, “The Cry of the Centurion—A Cry of Defeat,” in *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge Studies in Honour of C. F. D. Moule*, ed. Ernst Bammel, SBT 2.13 (London: SCM, 1970), 91–102.

ends with 16:8:<sup>46</sup> “So they [the three women who had brought spices to anoint the corpse] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid [ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ].” Three main reasons have been proposed for the alleged unsatisfactory state of affairs. It seems grammatically odd to end a work with a conjunction. To end on a note of fear seems to be psychologically unfulfilling. The desire to know more is attested by the various shorter and longer endings attached to Mark, and the fact that other gospels (canonical and uncanonical) give us more.

Yet these reasons miss the point. Examples of sentences ending with conjunctions are well attested.<sup>47</sup> The motif of fear is a recurrent theme (4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:20, 50; 9:32; 10:32; 11:18, 32; 12:12; 16:8). It played an important role in Aristotle’s contention that tragedy and epic should arouse pity and fear in order to produce catharsis in spectators and hearers.<sup>48</sup> In biblical religion fear is a most appropriate response to divine acts (Deut 5:29; 13:4; 31:12–13; Ps 2:11; Prov 1:7). It may be that Mark deliberately left his gospel open ended, for the reason that the life and activity of Jesus is unending. As elsewhere in Mark, what is important lies in what is not said. A tacit element throughout Mark is the question of purity and impurity. It plays a major role in Mark’s epilogue. A young man/angel is in the tomb clothed in a white robe (16:5), reminiscent of Jesus’ transfiguration (9:3). Evidently, he is not defiled. Nor are the women. But in Jewish tradition corpses and graves defile.<sup>49</sup> The implication is that Jesus has cleansed the grave from its defiling power and strength. Far from being an anticlimax, Mark’s story of the women is the climax of the gospel. What has taken place is the ultimate act of cleansing. Mark’s narrative has moved from the conquest of individual spirits to the conquest of death itself.

## 2.2. *Matthew*

The character and composition of Matthew has received much attention in recent years.<sup>50</sup> Many agree with Benjamin W. Bacon in seeing Matt 13:51–52 as a self-portrait of the author—a “scribe who has been

<sup>46</sup> Patrick D. Miller and Beverly Roberts Gaventa, eds., *The Ending of Mark and the Ends of God: Essays in Memory of Donald Harrisville Juel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005); cf. Colin Brown, *Jesus Then and Now*, 52 n. 106.

<sup>47</sup> BDAG 190, 1060. LXX examples include Gen 18:15; 45:3.

<sup>48</sup> *Poetics* 1449b 25–28.

<sup>49</sup> Num 6:6; 19:14–22; Lev 21:1–2; *Mishnah Ohalot*. Graves were marked to avoid causing defilement (Matt 23:29; Luke 11:44; *m. Sheq.* 1:1).

<sup>50</sup> Graham N. Stanton, “The Origin and Purpose of Matthew’s Gospel: Matthean



made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven... like unto a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."<sup>51</sup> Bacon comments: Matthew is "‘a converted rabbi.’ His ideal, his methods, his stereotyped phraseology, his delight in numerical groupings, his proverbial sayings, all show the characteristics of a trained teacher of the synagogue. He has become a church catechist; but he has not discarded the methods of his training nor greatly altered its ideals."<sup>52</sup> In his "unbounded reverence for the Law" Matthew arranged his gospel in five books like the Pentateuch.<sup>53</sup> Matthew's development of Mark and Q was retrograde, since it reduced Jesus to a second Moses, laid down commandments for higher righteousness while missing Jesus' vital sympathy with the prophets, and substituted book religion for the living God of goodness and truth.<sup>54</sup>

A more sanguine view is taken by Dale C. Allison, Jr., who argues that Matthew was written "by a man with an almost Jeremian sense of foreboding, a man who solemnly undertook to write a powerful and persuasive book which would endorse the pre-Christian past and prohibit the dissociation of Christianity from Judaism, a book which would demonstrate that the Messiah himself followed in the footsteps of the lawgiver, and therefore to abandon Moses is to abandon Jesus."<sup>55</sup>

A significant body of scholars takes the opposite view: Matthew and his community have already parted ways with formative Judaism.<sup>56</sup> Graham N. Stanton compares Matthew with the *Damascus Document*:

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Scholarship from 1945 to 1980," *ANRW* II 25.3 (1985): 1889–1951; Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 23–210; Stanton, ed., *The Interpretation of Matthew*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995); Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, eds., *Treasures Old and New: Contributions to Matthean Studies*, SBLSS 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 27–68.

<sup>51</sup> Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), 131.

<sup>52</sup> Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, 132; cf. Ernst von Dobschütz, "Matthew as Rabbi and Catechist" (1928), in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Stanton, 27–38.

<sup>53</sup> Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, xxx–xxiv.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin W. Bacon, "Jesus and the Law: A Study of the First 'Book' of Matthew," *JBL* 47 (1928): 203–231.

<sup>55</sup> Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: The Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 290; cf. J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990); Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> C. F. D. Moule, "St. Matthew's Gospel: Some Neglected Features," in *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 67–74; Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Lund: Gleerup, 1968); Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner, eds., *Anti-Semitism and*

kinship with the parent body is acknowledged, but the offspring is estranged from the parent. Matthew is the only evangelist to speak of Jesus' ἐκκλησία (16:18; 18:17), which is separate from "their synagogues" (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9). Disciples are not to be called "rabbi" (23:7–8). In denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, Matthew's Jesus declares: "Therefore I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town" (23:34). The temple will be left desolate (23:38), but with the coming of Jesus "something greater than the temple is here" (12:6).<sup>57</sup>

While Bacon's theory of a fivefold structure has attractions, Matthew does not correspond to the Pentateuch. More attractive is Jack Dean Kingsbury's identification of a three-book structure.<sup>58</sup> Matthew arranged his materials in three books identified by "superscriptions." The first—"The book of the genesis of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham" (1:1)—tells of the origin and significance of Jesus (1:1–4:16). The other two begin with "from that time," and indicate new phases in Jesus' activity. The second phase (4:17–16:20) begins with "From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" It denotes the nature and effect of his proclamation to Israel. The third phase (16:21–28:20) is introduced by "From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised." This last phase deals with the consequences of the rejection of Jesus' proclamation. "The events surrounding Jesus are, in the eyes of Matthew, of ultimate meaning for Israel and all humankind."<sup>59</sup>

Corresponding to this threefold division on a macro-level, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., have identified forty-four triads in Matthew on the micro-level of Jesus' teaching.<sup>60</sup> Glenn H. Stassen observes that the internal triadic structure of the triads has largely been missed because scholars have been thinking in terms of dyadic antitheses. Stassen characterizes the triadic structure of Jesus' teaching as consisting in (1) a description of traditional piety which is unable to deal adequately

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*Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 55–79; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13* (Dallas: Word, 1993), lxxv–lxxiii; Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 17–21, 129–141.

<sup>57</sup> Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 96–98.

<sup>58</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 1–39.

<sup>59</sup> Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 36–37.

<sup>60</sup> *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:86–87.

with (2) the vicious circle of destructive behavior, but which can be broken by (3) the “transforming initiative” of Jesus’ radical teaching.<sup>61</sup> This point brings us to the fundamental issue of hermeneutics, which comes to the fore in Matthew. According to Theses B1 and B2, Jesus’ adversaries viewed him in terms of the profiles found in the Torah of the wonder-working prophet who leads astray and the stubborn and rebellious son. Matthew rebuts these charges by presenting Jesus as fulfiller of the *law and the prophets*: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill” (Matt 5:17).<sup>62</sup>

Thesis C and Thesis A come to the fore in Matt 1:1–4:16, which is “The book of the genesis of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham.” The genealogy (1:2–16) contains allusions to Davidic descent and kingship.<sup>63</sup> But there are also allusions to the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source of Jesus’ identity (1:18, 20). When Mary was found with child, Joseph “being a righteous man” planned to dismiss her quietly, but the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child that is born in her is from the Holy Spirit [ἐκ πνεύματός... ἁγίου]. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (1:20–21).

Four observations may be made. First, whatever kingly descent Jesus may have, his mission is to save his people from their sins. Second, there is a play on words linking the Hebrew form of Jesus’ name (*Yeshua*, a shortened form of *Yehoshua*, i.e. Joshua) with the promise that he will save his people from their sins.<sup>64</sup> Although many scholars

<sup>61</sup> Glenn H. Stassen, “The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21–7:12),” *JBL* 122 (2003): 267–308.

<sup>62</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 328.

<sup>63</sup> Matt 1:1 “functions to dispute the truthfulness of the imperial claims, suggesting Rome’s demise, offering some present relief and proclaiming an alternative and just social vision under way now but yet to be fully realized in the future new creation through Jesus Christ son of David, son of Abraham” (Warren Carter, “Matthaeian Christology in Roman Imperial Key: Matthew 1:1,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John Riches and David C. Sim, JSNTSup 276 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2005], 165); cf. M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*, SNTSMS 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 139–229; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 57–95.

<sup>64</sup> *Yehoshua* means “Yahweh saves” or “May Yahweh save” (Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 205–208).

see in Matthew a Moses typology, Jesus' name points to a *Joshua typology*. Dale C. Allison, Jr., comes close to making the point in his observation: "Surely it would be a dull and uninformed reader who does not recognize that the life of Joshua is to a significant degree a replay of the life of Moses. Joshua completed the work left undone by his predecessor, with the result that the conquest of Canaan fulfilled the promise of the exodus from Egypt. We may say that the conqueror of the land is 'almost a second Moses.'"<sup>65</sup> As Matthew's narrative unfolds, Jesus the new Joshua is not only the teacher of Israel but her anointed leader engaged in a new conquest—not bloody like Joshua's—but one of peace to purify and heal Israel in preparation for the kingdom of God.

My third observation brings us back to the genealogy, which is arranged according to three groups of fourteen generations: from Abraham to David, from David to the deportation to Babylon, and "from the deportation to the Messiah" (1:17). The fact that no mention is made of a return from exile accords with the view that the exile was still going on, and the hope that the Messiah would bring it to an end. My fourth observation is that the assumption that the Spirit played a male role in Jesus' conception is not supported by Matthew. The formula denoting the male role in the genealogy is "Abraham begat, Isaac begat Jacob," etc. Five women are mentioned—all victims of sexual abuse or degraded circumstances—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and Mary "of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah" (1:16). In each case the preposition ἐκ/ἐξ ("of") is used—the same preposition which is used in the two descriptions of the conception of Jesus "of the Holy Spirit" (1:18, 20). The implication is that the Holy Spirit played a *female role* in the conception of Jesus.<sup>66</sup>

The angel's word is followed by the explanation: "All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Look, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us'" (1:22–23). Christian tradition has taken this as a proof-text predicting the virgin birth. But in context Isa 7:14 promises a sign that before the child is weaned the danger posed by two invading kings will be past. Like other instances of fulfillment in Matthew (e.g. 2:18; 12:17), it is a case of history being

<sup>65</sup> Allison, *The New Moses*, 26. Allison notes 8 parallel accounts from what might be called *The Parallel Lives of Moses and Joshua*.

<sup>66</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 221. The Greek word for Spirit (πνεῦμα) is neuter, but in biblical Hebrew טְהָרָה is feminine.

repeated in an ultimately significant way. R. E. Watts contends: “(a) Matthew’s citation of Isa 7:14 not so much serves as a proof text supporting Jesus’ miraculous birth as constitutes a warning of the dire consequences should Israel respond faithlessly to the salvation he inaugurates and (b) the twofold naming—Jesus (salvation) and Immanuel (potential disaster if Yahweh’s intervention is met with unbelief)—is programmatic for the gospel’s larger literary and theological schema.”<sup>67</sup>

I argued that Mark understood John’s prophecy that “he will baptize with the Holy Spirit” (1:8) as programmatic for Jesus’ ministry of purification. The Q form of the prophecy adds the words “and with fire” (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). James D.G. Dunn concludes that the words “must have been a metaphor of judgment.”<sup>68</sup> However, the following verse indicates a two-stage process of gathering the wheat and burning the chaff (3:12). But first Jesus must “fulfill all righteousness” and receive baptism from John, after which “suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove.”<sup>69</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “This is my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (3:15–17). The words of the Bat Qol allude to the kingship ritual in which the king is addressed as “my son” (Ps 2:7, Thesis C) and to the role of the anointed one (Isa 42:1, Thesis A).

As in Mark, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness where he undergoes testing reduplicating the testing of Israel during the wilderness wanderings.<sup>70</sup> Where Israel failed, Jesus overcame. The threefold testing—to turn stones into bread, to throw himself from the Temple pinnacle, and to worship Satan in return for the kingdoms of the world—are tests of Jesus’ new status as Son of God. Each is met with a citation from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13). The narrative is a preemptive rebuttal of the Beelzebul charge (Thesis B1).

Matthew’s second “book” (4:16–16:20) deals with Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom to Israel and its reception. Jesus is not only the

<sup>67</sup> R. E. Watts, “Immanuel: Virgin Birth Proof Text or Programmatic Warning of Things to Come (Isa. 7:14 in Matt. 1:23),” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 92–113. Isa 7:17 is cited in CD A 7.11.

<sup>68</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, “The Birth of a Metaphor—Baptized in Spirit,” in *The Christ and the Spirit*, 2, *Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 103–117, here 105; Dunn, “Spirit-and-Fire Baptism,” in *Pneumatology*, 93–102.

<sup>69</sup> Leander E. Keck, “The Spirit and the Dove,” *NTS* 17 (1970–1971): 41–67.

<sup>70</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God’s Son (Matt. 4:1–11 and Par): An Analysis of an Early Christian Midrash* (Lund: Gleerup, 1966).

teacher of Israel in delivering the Sermon on the Mount; he is also her healer and purifier through his “mighty acts.”<sup>71</sup> Jesus’ healing activity begins after the Sermon on the Mount<sup>72</sup> with the story of Jesus touching the leper and saying, “Be made clean!” (8:3). Repeated references to cleansing maintain the theme of purity. The instruction, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (8:4), shows how Jesus “fulfilled” the law, despite breaking it by touching the leper.

The story of the centurion’s servant (Matt 8:5–13 and Luke 7:1–10, but not in Mark) contrasts the faith of the centurion with the unbelief of Israel. As a man “under authority” the centurion sees Jesus as a man under authority, empowered to speak the healing word. From the standpoint of Thesis C, Jesus serves an authority with power that Rome cannot match. Matthew notes that Jesus was “amazed” at his faith. The story concludes with Jesus saying that he has not found such faith in Israel, and predicting that many will come from the east and west to eat with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom, while its heirs will be thrown into outer darkness. The centurion is told, “Go; let it be done for you according to your faith.” The servant was healed the same hour (8:10–13).<sup>73</sup>

The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, the casting out the spirits with a word curing all the sick “that evening” (8:14–16) are interpreted as the fulfillment of “what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, ‘He took our infirmities and bore our diseases’” (8:17; cf. Isa 53:4). The stilling of the storm is detached from its Markan context, and becomes a rescue miracle with wider implications of dangers facing disciples.<sup>74</sup>

Mark’s story of Legion becomes a condensed story of two unnamed men (8:28–34). It is followed by the healing of the paralytic (9:1–8), the objection of the Pharisees to Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners (9:9–13) and Jesus’ response (9:14–17), Jairus’s daughter and the

<sup>71</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus According to Matthew* (Lund: Gleerup, 1979); Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in Matthew*, WUNT 170 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>72</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995).

<sup>73</sup> Ralph P. Martin, “The Pericope of the Healing of the ‘Centurion’s’ Servant/Son (Matt. 8:5–13 par. Luke 7:1–10): Some Exegetical Notes,” in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*, ed. Robert A. Guelich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 14–22.

<sup>74</sup> Günther Bornkamm, “The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, by Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, trans. Percy Scott (London: SCM, 1963), 52–57.

woman with a hemorrhage (9:18–26), two blind men (9:27–31), and a demoniac (9:32). The amazed crowds say, “Never has anything like this been seen in Israel” (9:33). But the Pharisees respond with the first intimation of Thesis B1: “By the ruler of demons he casts out demons” (9:34). A warning is given in Jesus’ mission charge to the Twelve: “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!” (10:25). A hint of Thesis B2 is given in Jesus’ sayings about his role in family estrangement (10:34–39). All this is countered by the disclosure of Jesus’ identity as the father’s agent in the saying, “Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes him who sent me” (10:40; cf. 11:27–30).<sup>75</sup>

The question sent by John from prison—“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” (11:3)—presupposes the expectations raised by the Servant Song about the one on whom God had put his Spirit (Isa 42:1–4; cf. Matt 3:17; 12:8–21). He was expected to “bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those that sit in darkness” (Isa 42:7). But Jesus was not a militant. His answer drew on a variety of Isaianic passages: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me” (11:4–6; cf. Isa 29:18–19; 35:5–6; 61:1).

In his appraisal of John Jesus observed: “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (11:18–19; cf. Deut 21:20). The expression “a glutton and a drunkard” is part of the formula identified under Thesis B2 for denouncing a “stubborn and rebellious son.” This leads to Jesus denouncing the cities in which most of his “deeds of power” had been done for their lack of repentance (11:20–24).

As in Mark, the conspiracy of the Pharisees to destroy Jesus (11:14) is preceded by the incident in the cornfields (12:1–8), and the healing on the Sabbath of the man with a withered hand (12:9–13). But Matthew inserts a passage which attributes the healings of Jesus to the

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<sup>75</sup> Anthony Harvey, “Christ as Agent,” in *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament: Studies in Christology in Memory of George Bradford Caird*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 239–250; cf. the rabbinic saying “A man’s agent is as himself” (*b. Ber.* 5:5).

Spirit in line with Thesis A: “This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “Here is my servant, whom I have chosen, my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets. He will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick until he brings justice to victory. And in his name the Gentiles will hope” (12:18–21; cf. Isa 42:1–4).<sup>76</sup>

After healing a demoniac who was blind and mute, the crowd asks, “Can this be the Son of David?” to which the Pharisees respond: “It is only by Beelzebul [ἐν τῷ Βεελζεβοῦλ], the ruler of the demons, that this fellow casts out the demons” (12:24). Thesis A and Thesis B1 are brought into sharp juxtaposition. Matthew reproduces the essential elements of Mark’s account, including warning against blasphemy against the Spirit (12:31–32), but inserts two new comments, apparently drawn from Q like the ensuing wisdom teaching. “If I cast out demons by Beelzebul [ἐν Βεελζεβοῦλ], by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges” (12:27). “But if it is by the Spirit of God [ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ] that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (12:28). The juxtaposition ἐν Βεελζεβοῦλ and ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ leaves no doubt that Jesus’ accusers are guilty of blasphemy by attributing to Beelzebul the manifest work of God’s Spirit.<sup>77</sup> The work of the Spirit through Jesus manifests the kingdom, God’s presence in power. The episode closes with the incident involving Jesus and his mother and brothers (12:46–60, Thesis B2).

Matthew’s wisdom christology, hinted at in 11:19, now comes into the open.<sup>78</sup> Jesus has already replaced the yoke of Torah-based wisdom by inviting the weary and heavy laden to take his yoke and learn from him (11:28–30; cf. Sir 51:23–26)—an act which could be construed as leading astray. Matthew’s Jesus responds to the Pharisees’ request for a sign by saying that no sign will be given “an evil and adulterous generation” except the sign of Jonah, but something greater than Jonah is here

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Richard Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, SNTSMS 123 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>77</sup> Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, 177–178.

<sup>78</sup> M. Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); James M. Robinson, “Jesus as Sophos and Sophia: Wisdom Tradition and the Gospels,” in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Robert L. Wilken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 1–16; Celia M. Deutsch, *Lady Wisdom, Jesus, and the Sages: Metaphor and Social Context in Matthew’s Gospel* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996).



(12:38–41; cf. 16:4). “The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!” (12:42).

Matthew’s third “book” (16:21–28:20) follows Peter’s confession. “From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised” (16:21).<sup>79</sup> The course of events leading up to Jesus’ execution broadly follows Mark. Two issues call for comment. Both have bearing on Thesis B1. In Mark the Greek of Peter’s confession (8:29) and the high priest’s question (14:61) contain identical words: σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς.<sup>80</sup> Matthew’s account is more complex—both Peter and Caiaphas used the phrase “the living God” but in different ways. Peter confesses, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God [σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος]” (16:16). The high priest says to Jesus, “I put you under oath before the living God [ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος], tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God [σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ]” (26:63). While ἐξορκίζω was used in the general sense of putting under an oath, it was also used in exorcism.<sup>81</sup> If so the high priest was thinking that he was dealing with the demonic, invoking the living God.

Also in line with Thesis B1 is the request to Pilate by the chief priests and Pharisees: “Sir, we remember what that impostor [πλάνος] said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ Therefore command the tomb to be made secure until the third day; otherwise his disciples may go and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He has been raised from the dead,’ and the last deception [πλάνη] would be worse than the first” (27:63–64).

<sup>79</sup> This verse appears to be an expansion of the cryptic oracle “the gates of Hades will not prevail against [the church]” (Colin Brown, “The Gates of Hell and the Church,” in *Church, Word, and Spirit: Historical and Theological Essays in Honor of Geoffrey W. Bromiley*, ed. James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987], 15–44; Brown, “The Gates of Hell: An Alternative Approach,” in *SBL 1987 Seminar Papers* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 357–367).

<sup>80</sup> Colin Brown, “The Hermeneutics on Confession and Accusation,” *CTJ* 30 (1995): 460–471.

<sup>81</sup> BDAG, 351; cf. PGM IV 1227–1264 (*The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, ed. Hans Dieter Betz, 2nd ed. [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], 62).

### 2.3. Luke

It is widely recognized that Luke is the first of a two-volume work,<sup>82</sup> which either drew on Q or directly on Matthew,<sup>83</sup> in addition to Mark. Robert C. Tannehill observes: “One of the richest ways of reading Luke and Acts is as the story of God’s promise to Israel—a promise given to Abraham and made more specific to David—concerning the salvation of Israel through a Messiah who will also be the savior of all nations.”<sup>84</sup>

Luke’s Spirit christology begins with his pre-history. It includes the annunciation, which resonates both with Thesis C in the promise of Davidic kingship, and with Thesis A in the angel’s assurance to Mary: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow [ἐπισκιάσει] you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God” (1:30–35).<sup>85</sup> As with the songs of Mary (1:46–55) and Zechariah (1:67–79), the annunciation might have raised hopes of a warrior king like David. Such expectations are dashed by Jesus’ pronouncements in the synagogue in Nazareth.

The census decreed by Augustus when Quirinius was governor of Syria provoked the uprising led by Judas the Galilean,<sup>86</sup> but Luke is more interested in locating Jesus in the time-frame of world history (2:1–2; cf. 3:1). He wants to show how the politics of Rome worked “hand in hand with God’s divine purpose for salvation.”<sup>87</sup> Those who wondered whether John was the Messiah were told, “I baptize you with

<sup>82</sup> H. J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (repr., London: SPCK, 1958); Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); David P. Moessner, ed., *Luke the Interpreter of Israel 1: Jesus and the Heritage of Israel* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

<sup>83</sup> Allan J. McNicol, David L. Dungan, and David B. Peabody, eds., *Beyond the Q Impasse—Luke’s Use of Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002). For reconstruction of the Lukan material see Kim Pfaffenroth, *The Story of Jesus According to L*, JSNTSup 147 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>84</sup> R. C. Tannehill, “The Story of Israel with the Lukan Narrative,” in *Luke the Interpreter of Israel*, ed. Moessner, 325–339, here 325.

<sup>85</sup> ἐπισκιάζω means to overshadow (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:34; Luke 9:34) and is used figuratively of providential care (Ps 91:4; 140:7); cf. Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 114–117; BDAG, 378–379; Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel’s Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

<sup>86</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.117–118, *Ant.* 18.1–3.

<sup>87</sup> Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and in Interpretation*, SNTSMS 100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 140.

water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (3:16–17).

The equation of John’s prophecy with Acts 1:5 and 11:16 led to the assumption that it was fulfilled at Pentecost, resulting in failure to see its relevance to the earthly Jesus. Baptism in the Holy Spirit in Acts is a continuation of Jesus’ baptism in the Spirit in Luke. To make this possible, Jesus must be baptized by John, be anointed by the Spirit, and hear the assurance, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (3:21–22).

Sandwiched between the baptism and the temptations is the genealogy which traces Jesus’ lineage back to “Adam, son of God” (3:38). As in the other gospels, Son of God is a messianic title, bestowed in virtue of his anointing. Satan’s temptations<sup>88</sup> turn on the reality of that anointing. The point is strengthened by Luke’s observation that Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” when he “was led by the Spirit in the wilderness” (4:1), and that he returned to Galilee “filled with the power of the Spirit” (4:14).

Thesis A receives further confirmation by Jesus reading from the Isaiah scroll on the Sabbath in the synagogue at Nazareth. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (4:18–19; cf. Isa 61:1–2). Jesus added: “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (4:21). What prevented a violent uprising is the omission of the words “and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa 61:2).

John Howard Yoder and others have read into the episode a program for implementing the jubilee year (Lev 25), in which property lost through debt was returned, the land was to lie fallow, and Israelite slaves but not others were released.<sup>89</sup> Several considerations militate against the idea. Jubilee year terminology does not appear in Luke. Proclaiming release is not confined to the jubilee (Lev 25:10; cf. Jer 34:8,

<sup>88</sup> Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989).

<sup>89</sup> J. H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); Sharon Ringe, *Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

15, 17). Jesus refused to participate in redistribution of family wealth (12:13). Yoder's description of the Lord's Prayer as "jubiliary"<sup>90</sup> works better for Matthew than for Luke! Matt 6:12 has "forgive us our debts [ὀφειλήματα]," whereas Luke 11:4 has "sins [ἁμαρτίας]." In the one case of release—rescuing John from prison (7:18–23)—Jesus did nothing! Zacchaeus's restoration of money had to do with defrauding—not release from debt (19:8). Jesus' response focuses on salvation, "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost" (19:9–10). Jesus' identification of himself in terms of Isa 61:1–2 fits better the theme of ending exile—which was the original context of the prophecy.

Initial amazement at Jesus' gracious words (4:22) rapidly turned to rage, when Jesus reminded his hearers that there were many widows in Israel, but Elijah was sent only to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon, and there were many lepers in the time of Elisha, but only Naaman the Syrian was cleansed (4:26–27). When the implications sank in, the hearers tried to hurl Jesus over a cliff (4:28–30).

D. Neale sees the action as implementation of Deut 13:1–11 (Thesis B1).

Their intent was evidently to stone Jesus, for which throwing the offender from a cliff 'twice the height of a man' (M. San. 6.4) was the first step. The attempted stoning is in complete accord with rabbinic prescriptions for the treatment of the *mesith* [one who entices away from Yahweh to idolatry]. To the inhabitants of Nazareth the rejection of Jesus was probably viewed as an act of religious and civic responsibility, an act of obedience to Torah and community. . . . Following this episode Jesus could not return home and the saying in Luke 9:58 that the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head may have been quite literally true.<sup>91</sup>

In this light the move to Capernaum (4:31) and from there to other cities where Jesus "must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God" (4:43) was strategic. In what follows Luke gives his version of stories found in Mark and Matthew. An exception is the raising of the widow of Nain's son [7:11–17]. S. John Roth sums up: "In Luke's Gospel. . . Jesus is found associating with and expressing God's favor toward the lame, the blind, and the others, *and* toward sinners. . . . It is the task of Luke's narrative to undermine the LXX-nourished, traditional rejection of sinners."<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 62.

<sup>91</sup> D. Neale, "Was Jesus a *mesith*? Public Response to Jesus and His ministry," *TynBul* 44.1 (1993): 99–100. The verbal form of *mesith* is found in Deut 13:6 (MT 13:7).

<sup>92</sup> S. J. Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 144 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 218–219.

The first intimation of Thesis B2 (8:19–21) comes before the Beelzebub charge. A hint is given by Jesus' reputation as "a glutton and a drunkard," which is met by an intimation of wisdom christology—"Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children" (7:34–35; cf. 11:24–33; Matt 11:18–19; Deut 21:20). Thesis B1 comes to the fore in 11:14–23 where the Beelzebub charge is linked with a request for a sign from heaven (11:16). It is met by a *reductio ad absurdum*. "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? —for you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebub [ἐν Βεελζεβοὺλ]" (11:23; cf. Matt 12:25; Mark 3:18). The threefold repetition of ἐν Βεελζεβοὺλ (11:15, 18, 19) as the presumed source of Jesus' power is grammatically similar to, but theologically diametrically opposite of "by the finger of God [ἐν δακτύλῳ θεοῦ]." The implied blasphemy is stated later (12:20). Jesus' activity is the intimation of God's kingdom. "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (11:20).<sup>93</sup>

Thesis B2 lies at the heart of Jesus' tensions with the Pharisees who grumbled at the way Jesus welcomed and ate with sinners (15:1). In response Jesus told the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. The latter (15:11–32), commonly called the Parable of the Prodigal Son, is based on the stubborn and rebellious son.<sup>94</sup> Initially the younger son behaves like the glutton and drunkard described (Deut 21:18–21) and his wisdom counterpart (Prov 23:19–25; 28:7; 29:1–3). The language (15:29–30) echoes that of Deut 21:20. In extremity the younger son returns from the dead (15:23–24, 32), and is welcomed by his rejoicing father. But the elder son who never broke his father's command rebukes his father, and refuses to join the festivities (15:25–30). The parable poses the question, "Which son was the stubborn and rebellious son?"

The Parable of the Unjust Steward (16:1–9) extends the theme.<sup>95</sup> At first the steward looks like a junk-bond artist. The parable is

<sup>93</sup> Edward J. Woods, *The "Finger" of God in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 204 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001). Woods traces "finger of God" to Exod 8:19; 31:18; Deut 9:10 (90–98). It is similar to "hand of God," and has the sense of divine power in action, creative omnipotence, which in other contexts are identified with God's Spirit (cf. Matt 12:28).

<sup>94</sup> Colin Brown, "The Parable of the Rebellious Son(s)," *SJT* 51.4 (1998): 391–405.

<sup>95</sup> Colin Brown, "The Unjust Steward: A New Twist?" in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige, JSNTSup 87 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 121–145.

transformed if we remember two points. First, the debts that the steward drastically reduces represent usurious interest attached to loans.<sup>96</sup> By removing the unlawful interest the steward was enacting the Torah's teaching that loans to fellow Jews should not require interest (Deut 15:7–8; 23:20–21; Exod 22:25; Lev 25:36–37). Second, the steward was Jesus himself whose mandate included proclaiming release (4:18–19; 5:20; 7:47–49), which the Pharisees protested. The parable is a defense of Jesus, who wins his master's commendation (16:8) in the face of those who would remove him.

Perhaps because he was writing for a Gentile audience, Luke omits mention of blasphemy at the Jewish preliminary hearing (22:66–71). The real trial is before Pilate who pronounces Jesus innocent three times (23:4, 14, 22), but finally gives way to demands (23:24) to release the guilty Barrabas and crucify the innocent Jesus.<sup>97</sup> Luke's stance (Thesis C) is neither anti-Semitic nor pro-Roman. It reveals how Roman might and Jewish hostility are used by God in his saving purpose for the salvation of Israel and the nations (24:25–27, 44–49).

### 3. *Postscript*

Thesis C is about Christian and Gentile relations, but Theses A, B1 and B2 are about *internal Jewish* relations. Needless to say, canonical reading of the texts is not the same as recovering the historical Jesus. But it is an important preliminary step. The next is to figure out the history behind the Theses.

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<sup>96</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, "The Parable of the Unjust Steward," in *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970), 48–72.

<sup>97</sup> Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 141–149.

## FORM CRITICISM AND JESUS RESEARCH

ARLAND J. HULTGREN

Readers of the synoptic gospels often become aware that there are small units within the gospels that have striking similarities in the ways that they tell things. The similarities are strong enough to prompt the reader to give names to the units. Some of the most easily recognizable units having similarities are miracle stories, debates between Jesus and opponents, and parables.

As soon as a person begins to classify and name materials in this way, that person has entered into the field of gospel research known as form criticism. Form criticism, as applied to the gospels and to Jesus research specifically, is a discipline that, at a minimum, classifies gospel materials according to forms that can be discerned as the vehicles by which the traditions about Jesus were conveyed from the oral stages of transmission into the written gospels, such as miracle stories, parables, and more. In practice, however, form-critical work of New Testament scholars has not limited itself to classification. It has gone beyond that to have major significance for Jesus research. In fact, form criticism has had a truly revolutionary impact on Jesus research since early in the twentieth century. With the rise of form criticism, the study of the historical Jesus took on a new vigor. Its practitioners sought new criteria for determining what can be traced back to Jesus as “authentic” material (meaning traditions from or about Jesus that can be considered as historically accurate as can be expected) and what cannot. Its results have provided a veritable data base concerning Jesus that some have considered the building blocks to use in constructing a picture of the historical Jesus. To be sure, some scholars have regarded form criticism as misguided or to have run its course as a method for historical research. Nevertheless, the methods and results of form criticism are constantly being employed as a matter of course in studies about the words and deeds of Jesus. In spite of some challenges to it, there has been no “turning back the clock” to pre-form-critical work in assessing the historicity of traditions from and about Jesus.

The English term “form criticism” is adapted—not actually translated—from the term coined by the German-language pioneers of the method,

namely, *Formgeschichte*. A literal translation of the word would be “form history” or “history of form.” Yet those terms provide only partial insight into actual form-critical work in modern times. When applied to the study of the gospels, it is more helpful to think of form criticism as a discipline that seeks to discern the *history of the formation* of traditions about Jesus in the pre-literary stages of gospel transmission.

The basic viewpoint of form criticism is that the traditions about Jesus, both narratives and teachings, circulated in oral form for decades prior to being written down. They were composed, preserved, and formed (shaped, given form) for practical needs in the life and mission of the early church. Those processes have left their marks on the traditions, affecting the ways that the traditions were told, and those ways can still be discerned in our reading of the gospels today. An awareness of those ways, in turn, has implications for the reconstruction of the actual (or “authentic”) sayings and deeds of Jesus.

### 1. *The Origins of Form Criticism*

Prior to its use in biblical studies, form criticism originated in—and was practiced first—in the study of folklore. In the field of biblical studies it was taken up and applied first in the study of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> It made its appearance most notably in the work of the German Old Testament scholar Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) in his studies of Genesis and the Psalms. In the case of Genesis, he sought to inquire about the origins of its various stories in their pre-literary, oral settings. He classified the materials according to their forms (aetiological legends, ethnological legends, etymological legends, ceremonial legends, geographical legends, and mixed legends) and suggested that the various units were shaped, or given form, through their telling within various settings in the historical and social life of Israel.<sup>2</sup> In regard to the Psalms, he classified them into several types (hymns, community laments, songs of the individual, thank offering songs, laments of the individual, entrance liturgies, Torah songs, blessings, and royal psalms) and proposed that they arose in various liturgical and other contexts.<sup>3</sup> The work of Gunkel

<sup>1</sup> For a brief survey and bibliography, cf. John Barton, “Form Criticism (OT),” *ABD* 2:838–841.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 25–36. The German edition was *Die Sagen der Genesis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

<sup>3</sup> Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).



has been furthered by a good number of other Old Testament scholars, and its vitality and impact continue in the present.<sup>4</sup>

Form criticism soon became applied to the study of the synoptic gospels, beginning in the early part of the twentieth century. Once again the earliest form-critical works were produced by German scholars. The earliest influential volume was written by Martin Dibelius (1883–1947), published in 1919, and the second by Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), published in 1921.<sup>5</sup> The major pioneer outside of Germany was the British scholar Vincent Taylor (1887–1968), whose influential book appeared in 1933.<sup>6</sup> Burton Scott Easton was an early interpreter of form criticism in the United States, whose work was published in 1928, and E. Basil Redlich was an interpreter in England by means of his book on form criticism in 1939.<sup>7</sup> Easton reviewed the works of Dibelius and Bultmann (Taylor's book had not yet been published), offered a critique of them, and presented some observations of his own. Redlich did the same but incorporated some of Taylor's work—then in published form for only a few years—into his survey.

## 2. *Assumptions and Assertions of Form Criticism*

By the time that form-critical investigations of the synoptic gospels arose in the first part of the twentieth century there were some commonly held views among New Testament scholars that formed the foundation upon which the form critics built (their assumptions). In carrying out their own work they held to and developed some additional views that they had to promote (their assertions).

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This brief book was based on an article published in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., ed. Hermann Gunkel, 6 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927–1932), 4:1609–1630.

<sup>4</sup> For an assessment and bibliography, see Rolf Knierim, "Criticism of Literary Features, Form, Tradition, and Redaction," in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 123–165.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1919), ET: *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934); Rudolf Bultmann, *Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921), ET: *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963; 2nd ed., 1968). Hereafter these will be designated, respectively, as *Tradition to Gospel* and *Synoptic Tradition* (2nd ed. of the latter).

<sup>6</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933; 2nd ed., 1935).

<sup>7</sup> Burton Scott Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928); E. Basil Redlich, *Form Criticism: Its Value and Limitations* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1939).

The assumptions commonly held by the form critics during the first decades of the twentieth century included the acceptance of (1) the two-source theory concerning the synoptic gospels as the best way to account for their similarities and differences; (2) the priority of the Gospel of Mark among the three; and (3) the view that all three gospels were written well into the last half of the first century AD, preceded by decades of oral transmission of the gospel tradition. In addition to these common assumptions, other points were assumed or had to be asserted, including the following.

1. The work of Karl L. Schmidt, a contemporary of Dibelius and Bultmann, confirmed what had been considered for some time already.<sup>8</sup> That is that the synoptic gospels contain traditions that have been put into a framework (made up of geographical settings and chronological links) designed by the first evangelist (Mark). The framework of Mark's gospel is due, in other words, to the redaction (editing work) of the first evangelist. It was he who ordered the material into its present sequence in his own gospel, and Matthew and Luke generally adopted that framework, supplementing it with additional materials and editorial work of their own. Two main points can be derived from this that have vital importance for form criticism. First, the gospel narrative of Mark is not necessarily based on "historical reporting" of when and where Jesus of Nazareth went in the conduct of his ministry; rather, the narrative was designed primarily by the evangelist. Second, a distinction can be made between "tradition" and "redaction" in the gospels.

2. The gospel tradition is made up of independent units. Each "pericope" (a small unit, such as a miracle story or parable) circulated independently in the oral period of transmission prior to the writing of the gospels.<sup>9</sup> These units were brief narratives about Jesus or compact teachings from him (or attributed to him at least). Although some pericopes may well have been gathered together in sequential arrangements, such as a primitive version of the passion narrative (reflected in Mark 14:1–15:47 and parallels), and perhaps a few other blocks of materials sharing similarities in form or content (such as the five conflict stories

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<sup>8</sup> Karl L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964). The book has not been published in English translation.

<sup>9</sup> M. Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 178; Rudolf Bultmann, "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," in *Form Criticism: Two Essays on New Testament Research*, by Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Kundsinn (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 25, 64; Taylor, *Formation*, 174–175.

in Mark 2:1–3:6), most were not gathered together prior to the writing of the gospels. In general it can be said, from the form-critical point of view, that the evangelists were “only to the smallest extent authors,” for they were primarily “collectors” of traditions.<sup>10</sup>

3. The units of tradition were composed, shaped, and transmitted by teachers and preachers in the early church, not by historians or biographers of Jesus. Those who composed them did not do historical work as modern historians or biographers would do to verify the words and deeds of Jesus. A modern biographer would be interested in many questions that a reading of the gospels does not answer, such as how much schooling Jesus had, what religious training he had, how many languages he could speak or understand (Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, etc.), and details of his relationship to his parents, siblings, and teachers. These and other equally simple questions intrigue the historian and biographer of modern times. But the persons who transmitted the words and deeds of Jesus, including the gospel writers, seem to have had no interest in them.

4. Every unit of tradition contained in the gospels came into being and continued to exist because of its usefulness in the early church’s life and teaching. They bear witness to the significance of Jesus in his own time and place, to be sure, but they also bear witness to his significance as the Christ for the early Christian communities of faith. The units of tradition were employed for teaching (catechesis), apologetics (defense of Christian belief and behavior), worship, and preaching.

5. Since one can observe the development of traditions about Jesus at a *literary* level, one can expect the same to have happened during the *pre-literary* stages of their transmission. For example, at Mark 8:27 Jesus is with his disciples at Caesarea Philippi, and he asks them, “Who do people say that I am?” But at Matt 16:13—presumably based on Mark’s account, but at a later time—the question of Jesus to his disciples is, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” The simple first person of Mark’s Gospel (“I”) has been altered by the use of a christological title (“Son of Man”) in the Gospel of Matthew. Another example is within the account of the Stilling of the Storm (Mark 4:35–41//Matt 8:23–27). Jesus is asleep, and the disciples come to wake him. In Mark’s Gospel they say to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (4:38). But apparently for the evangelist Matthew, one does not address Jesus with such a pedestrian title (“teacher”). The disciples awaken Jesus with

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<sup>10</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 3.

the words, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" (Matt 8:25). Jesus is the Lord, and he can save. And so a reverential approach is made, and a christological title ("Lord") is used. Many other examples of the growth of traditions can be shown at a *literary* level. One should expect the same at the *pre-literary* level where, presumably, there would have been fewer "controls" on what was being transmitted.

6. Each pericope, as a unit composed for the life and mission of the church, portrays Jesus then not simply as the Jesus of history, but also as the Christ of faith. The event of Easter colors everything. The terms "Jesus of history" and "Christ of faith" are modern and would have had little or no meaning to first-century Christians. But that is precisely the point. Christians of the first century melded the two together. To be sure, the gospel traditions contain historical information—a lot of information—about Jesus, but the interests and efforts of the composers and transmitters are not given to retrieval for its own sake. The gospel traditions are already at the pre-literary level "kerygmatic," and they remain so in the written gospels as well. Calling the traditions "kerygmatic" (derived from the Greek word *kerygma*, "proclamation") means that they are proclamatory; they proclaim the Christ of faith. Without being pejorative, form critics have therefore spoken of the aim of the traditions within the gospels as "propaganda."<sup>11</sup>

7. The gospel tradition is made up of both "authentic" material which can be recovered and material that can be designated "secondary." The latter is due to "church composition," "community formulation," or "redaction." By "authentic" tradition is meant that which can most likely be attributed to Jesus himself (as in a teaching) or to those who observed him (as in reports of his deeds). Various criteria have been worked out to test whether a given unit is authentic or not.

### 3. *The Work of Form Criticism of the Gospels*

There are three operations typically taken in form-critical work: (1) classification of a unit of tradition according to form; (2) assignment of that unit to a *Sitz im Leben* (literally, "setting in life," but expressed better in English as "life situation," the creative milieu in which it came to be; the plural form of the German term is *Sitze im Leben*); and

<sup>11</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 15, 37–38, 288; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 368.

(3) assessment of its historical value. In a precise sense, form criticism can (and some say should) be carried on without the third operation listed. The assessing of the historical value of a unit can more properly be called “tradition criticism” (German: *Traditionsgeschichte*). In spite of that, however, form-critical work has included historical assessment from its very beginning.

### 3.1. *The Forms of the Gospel Tradition and Their Pre-Literary Settings*

Two points need to be made at the outset of the following discussion. First, for the sake of efficiency in presentation, and to avoid repetition, it is helpful to combine the first two operations (classification and assignment to *Sitz im Leben*) into a single discussion. They are actually interdependent in form-critical work, since it is assumed that the specific use to which a unit was put (the *Sitz im Leben*, such as preaching, apologetics, etc.) determined its form.

Second, a discussion of the forms and their various *Sitze im Leben* can become complicated, since the major form critics in the beginning of the twentieth century organized their materials differently and used different terminology. What follows is an attempt to make a general, comprehensive presentation with only a minimum amount of differentiation. Since the work of Bultmann is the most comprehensive and systematic, his outline will be followed, and his terms will be used as headings, and those of Dibelius and Taylor will be incorporated. For more detailed discussion, one has to examine the works themselves.

The materials in the gospels can be divided into two broad categories: sayings and narratives. The “forms” exist within each of those larger categories. Within the larger category of *sayings* are the following forms:

1. Apophthegms (German: *Apophthegmen*). The term “apophthegm,” used by Bultmann, is obscure, but it is used rather broadly in literary criticism to refer to a terse, pointed saying. Regarding material under this form, Dibelius used the term “paradigms” (German: *Paradigmen*), and Taylor used the term “pronouncement stories.” Bultmann divided the “apophthegms” into three smaller categories: controversy dialogues, scholastic dialogues, and biographical apophthegms. The most formal of these are the “controversy dialogues,” sometimes called “conflict stories” (for they are stories, not simply dialogues). Typically these stories have a three-part structure: (1) a narrative, in which it is obvious that a clash (a controversy or conflict) is coming; (2) a question or verbal attack by an opponent (or opponents) of Jesus; and (3) a dominical (= from the

Lord) saying. There are five conflict stories gathered in Mark 2:1–3:6. Using one of the shortest as an illustration, the three parts can be seen in Mark 2:18–20: “[*Introductory Narrative:*] Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, [*Opponents’ Question:*] ‘Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?’ [*Dominical Saying:*] Jesus said to them, ‘The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.’”

According to Bultmann, these units had their formal origins (*Sitz im Leben*) “in the discussions the Church had with its opponents, and as certainly within itself, on questions of law.”<sup>12</sup> Scholastic dialogues are those in which questions are asked of Jesus by his disciples or others (e.g., the Question from John concerning Jesus, Matt 11:2–6//Luke 7:18–23), and their origins would have been primarily in teaching, dealing with some question of interest.<sup>13</sup> The biographical apophthegms (e.g., Jesus Blessing the Children, Mark 10:13–16//Matt 19:13–15//Luke 18:15–17) arose primarily in preaching for the sake of edification, presenting Jesus as a living contemporary and thereby comforting and admonishing the church.<sup>14</sup> Dibelius, writing earlier than Bultmann, did not make a three-fold distinction among the paradigms. According to him, the gospel tradition as a whole was composed and conveyed in early Christian preaching,<sup>15</sup> and that was certainly true in the case of paradigms, which served as illustrative material for sermons.<sup>16</sup> Taylor used the term pronouncement story because in the units under discussion “everything leads up to the final word of Jesus, which for the early Christians must have had the force of a pronouncement” that had a “bearing on some aspect of life, belief, or conduct.”<sup>17</sup> Concerning their life setting in the early church prior to being written down, Taylor’s verdict was that those would have been apologetics and preaching.<sup>18</sup>

2. Parables. In the manner of others before him in German scholarship, Bultmann subdivided the parables of Jesus into three subgroups.

<sup>12</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 41.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 14, 61.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 43, 61–62, 69, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *Formation*, 65, 30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 62, 170.

Those three are “similitudes” (German: *Gleichnisse*), which consist of a brief comparison introduced by “is like” (or something similar) and lacking narrative (e.g., The Leaven [Matt 13:33//Luke 13:20–21]); “parables” (German: *Parabeln*), which include a narrative (e.g., The Two Sons [Matt 21:28–32] and The Unjust Judge [Luke 18:2–8]); and “exemplary stories” (German: *Beispiel Erzählungen*), which provide examples for human conduct (The Good Samaritan [Luke 10:29–37], The Rich Fool [12:16–21], The Rich Man and Lazarus [16:19–31], and The Pharisee and the Tax Collector [18:9–14]). For Bultmann, many of the parables can be attributed to Jesus, but most have been reworked by preachers and teachers interested in interpreting (including allegorical interpretation) and applying them to live issues in the early church.<sup>19</sup> Dibelius treats the parables under the larger category of “exhortations” within the New Testament, asserting that they were used in hortatory preaching (broadly conceived to include comfort as well as demand).<sup>20</sup> Taylor treats the parables along with other sayings of Jesus, and contends that they were used (as with Jesus himself) to provoke “deeper thought on the problems of life and of faith” in preaching and teaching.<sup>21</sup>

3. Sayings of Jesus. In addition to the parables, there are sayings of various kinds that are more difficult to classify. The most precise system of classification is that, once again, of Bultmann. He classifies the remaining sayings of Jesus into four groups. These are (1) wisdom sayings, which are much like proverbs (e.g., Matt 6:27: “And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?”), (2) prophetic and apocalyptic sayings (e.g., the Beatitudes, Matt 5:3–11//Luke 6:20–23), (3) legal sayings (e.g., Mark 11:25: “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses”), and (4) “I” sayings, in which Jesus speaks of his own ministry (e.g., Matt 5:17: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them”). The uses to which the early church put such sayings varied a great deal, but in general they were put to use in instruction, and in the case of the legal sayings to establish guidance (even rules) in the early church.<sup>22</sup> Dibelius concludes that the sayings of Jesus were “originally gathered together for a hortatory end, to give

<sup>19</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 48.

<sup>20</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 249–259.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, *Formation*, 102.

<sup>22</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 145, 149.

the Churches advice, help, and commandment by means of the Master's words."<sup>23</sup> Taylor holds that the sayings, for the most part, are based on reminiscences of the teachings of Jesus in communities "ready to be taught" (presumably a catechetical interest).<sup>24</sup>

In addition to *sayings* material in the gospels, there is an abundance of *narrative* material. Within that larger category are the following "forms."

1. Miracle Stories. The term "miracle stories" is used by Bultmann (German: *Wundergeschichten*) and Taylor. Dibelius uses another, and that is "tales" (German: *Novellen*). Typically the miracle stories have a three part structure: (1) a setting, in which there is a description of an illness or other kind of problem; (2) a cure or resolution of the problem at hand by a saying, gesture, or both by Jesus; and (3) a demonstration that the miracle has taken place.<sup>25</sup> A very brief example of a three-part miracle story is provided in Mark 1:30–31: "[*Setting:*] Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. [*Cure:*] He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. [*Demonstration of the Cure:*] Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them." Other brief examples can be observed at Mark 7:32–35 and 8:22–25. Bultmann classified miracles into four smaller categories: exorcisms, healings, raisings from the dead, and nature miracles. According to him, the miracle stories were employed to make claims concerning the messianic authority and divine power of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> For Dibelius they arose in story-telling, were told for "pleasure in narration," "to give early Christian miracle-workers examples and leading" for their own activities, and to demonstrate the preeminence of Jesus over all rival gods.<sup>27</sup> For Taylor they are more decidedly christological; they were told to illustrate the power and compassion of Jesus.<sup>28</sup>

2. Legends. Both Dibelius and Bultmann used this term (German: *Legende*), but Taylor chose to call the material simply "stories about Jesus" since, he says, the term "legend" tends to place a negative judgment on the materials in regard to their historicity.<sup>29</sup> Among the legends

<sup>23</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 246.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, *Formation*, 93.

<sup>25</sup> Bultmann, "Study of the Synoptic Gospels," 37–39.

<sup>26</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 219, 226.

<sup>27</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 102, 196.

<sup>28</sup> Taylor, *Formation*, 133.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.



or stories about Jesus are the Infancy Narratives (Matt 1–2; Luke 1:5–2:52), the Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9–11//Matt 3:13–17//Luke 3:21–22), the Boy Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:41–49), the Temptation (Mark 1:12–13//Matt 4:1–11//Luke 4:11–13), Peter’s Confession (Mark 8:27–30//Matt 16:13–20//Luke 9:18–21), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8//Matt 17:1–8//Luke 9:28–36), the Triumphal Entry (Mark 11:1–10//Matt 21:1–9//Luke 19:28–38), the Last Supper (Mark 14:22–25//Matt 26:26–29//Luke 22:19–20), and the Resurrection Narratives (Mark 16:1–8//Matt 28:1–20//Luke 24:1–53). Bultmann speaks of their purpose in the early church as primarily “religious and edifying”<sup>30</sup> within the context of worship.<sup>31</sup> Dibelius and Taylor also concluded that worship was the setting in which the legends or stories flourished.<sup>32</sup>

Dibelius sets aside three of these narratives and gives them a name of their own, viz. “mythological narratives.” These are the Baptism of Jesus, the Temptation of Jesus, and the Transfiguration. His reason for doing so is that those stories include some action of God on the scene.<sup>33</sup> By using the term, however, he does not mean to undercut a historical basis for them.

3. Passion Narratives. Each of the four gospels has a passion narrative (Mark 14:1–15:47 //Matt 26:1–27:66 //Luke 22:1–23:56 //John 18:1–19:42), recalling the last days of Jesus’ ministry, suffering, and death. The form-critical judgment of Dibelius, Bultmann, and Taylor was that a primitive passion narrative existed prior to the writing of the gospels,<sup>34</sup> a view which has been supported by some scholars subsequently,<sup>35</sup> but challenged by others.<sup>36</sup> The *Sitz im Leben* of the passion narratives has been discussed widely. The pioneers of form criticism

<sup>30</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 244.

<sup>31</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 66–69.

<sup>32</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 132; Taylor, *Formation*, 145.

<sup>33</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 266, 271.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 23, 218; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 279–280; Taylor, *Formation*, 44–45, 170 (but soon there were three versions, pp. 54–55).

<sup>35</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:53–57, maintains that there was at least a “passion sequence” that could be preached prior to the writing of the gospels. For a survey, ending with support for a pre-Markan passion narrative (2:1523), cf. Appendix IX to Brown’s two-volume work by Marion L. Soards, “The Question of a Pre-Markan Passion Narrative,” 2:1492–1524.

<sup>36</sup> John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS 10 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973); Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Baltimore: Michael Glazier, 1984); Frank J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies* (New York: Paulist, 1986); cf. also the essays in Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

have suggested preaching,<sup>37</sup> apologetics,<sup>38</sup> and worship<sup>39</sup>—with some overlap between these.

### 3.2. *The Historical Value of the Traditions about Jesus*

As indicated already, the question of the historicity (often called “authenticity” or “genuineness”) of the units of gospel tradition falls, strictly speaking, to “tradition history.” Nevertheless, it was the pioneers of form criticism who articulated some basic criteria that have been commonly used in research on Jesus ever since, and the early form critics also made historical judgments in their various works.

To begin with, Dibelius articulated only one criterion. He was confident that early Christian preaching preserved the traditions about Jesus, and he said that that yields “a criterion of historicity; the nearer a narrative stands to the sermon the less is it questionable, or likely to have been changed by romantic, legendary, or literary influences.”<sup>40</sup> The confidence that Dibelius had in early Christian preaching as a medium by which the traditions were well preserved is reflected in the often-made remark about his view: “Am Anfang war die Predigt” (“In the beginning was the sermon”).<sup>41</sup> The way he expresses it, his criterion had to do with “narrative” material, but in fact he generalized from that to consider much of the “sayings” materials—since they were gathered for “hortatory” purposes—to have a high degree of authenticity as well.<sup>42</sup>

Bultmann produced a more rigorous criterion that has been used widely for the study of the sayings tradition of Jesus ever since. It has been known most often as “the criterion of dissimilarity” but also by a variety of other names (e.g., the criterion of “distinctiveness,” “discontinuity,” “double dissimilarity,” and “dual irreducibility”): “We can only count on possessing a genuine similitude of Jesus where, on the one hand, expression is given to the contrast between Jewish morality and piety and the distinctive eschatological temper which characterized the preaching of Jesus; and where on the other hand we find no specifically

<sup>37</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 178–179; Taylor, *Formation*, 170.

<sup>38</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 66; Taylor, *Formation*, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Georg Bertram, *Die Leidensgeschichte Jesu und der Christuskult*, FRLANT 32 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922); Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 65–66.

<sup>40</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 61.

<sup>41</sup> Erich Fascher, *Die formgeschichtliche Methode: Eine Darstellung und Kritik*, BZNW 2 (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1924), 54.

<sup>42</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 246.

Christian features.”<sup>43</sup> Put more simply, the criterion can be expressed this way: if a saying is dissimilar to conventional Jewish teaching and dissimilar to typical Christian teaching, it can be considered authentic. In actual practice the criterion has often been used in a negative way to rule out materials, so that if anything does *not* pass the criterion, it *must not be* considered authentic. But that does not necessarily follow. Much that does not pass the criterion *could* be authentic. For example, the command to love one’s neighbor as oneself is attributed to Jesus (Mark 12:31//Matt 22:39; Luke 10:27), but since it is based on an Old Testament text (Lev 19:18), it is a traditional Jewish teaching; furthermore, it is a common early Christian teaching as well (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8). But that does not mean that Jesus would never have uttered the command. The point of the criterion, as articulated by Bultmann and others who use it as a positive criterion, is that those sayings attributed to Jesus that stand out as distinctive can be considered authentic with a high degree of confidence, offering a collection by which to measure other things. But other sayings may well be authentic on other grounds.

Since the work of the pioneers in form criticism, other criteria for authenticity have been proposed and employed, of which the most well-known are the criteria of (1) linguistic and environmental tests, (2) coherence (or consistency), and (3) multiple-attestation (or cross-section method).<sup>44</sup> Discussion of these criteria (and others) need not be entered into here, since it is carried on in another chapter. But it should be said that the criteria spelled out here have been contested, and alternative approaches to evaluate the tradition have been proposed. The most important question to be raised is whether it is possible to analyze the oral tradition behind the written materials of the gospels at all, since there may be a discontinuity in the presentation of a tradition in its oral and written forms.<sup>45</sup>

The historical yield derived from the gospel tradition varies according to the form critics. Within the overall purview of the work of Dibelius, the paradigms and portions of the passion narrative are the most reliable historical materials. He considered many of the paradigms to have

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<sup>43</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 205.

<sup>44</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of these and other criteria, cf. Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Among other things, this is a point made by Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism*, PTMS 26 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979); cf. also Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 8.

been composed by eyewitnesses who could control and correct them as they were told and transmitted,<sup>46</sup> and although some units of the passion narrative have been constructed (some, for example, from Old Testament materials) and are therefore secondary, the basic story has a basis in eyewitness testimony.<sup>47</sup> The tales (miracle stories), he says, have less historical value than the paradigms,<sup>48</sup> and the legends have hardly any.<sup>49</sup>

Bultmann, in a relentless quest to seek whether the units of tradition have a historical basis to them, going item by item, finds a very mixed picture, which makes generalizations about his work nearly impossible. Two different sayings, for example, may have the same form (such as “prophetic saying”), but he might consider one to be authentic but not the other. Within the sayings tradition, Bultmann concludes that many of the controversy dialogues may well contain authentic sayings of Jesus, even if their narrative frameworks have been created artificially.<sup>50</sup> Other forms of sayings material that have a high degree of historical value are the parables, prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, some of the “I” sayings, and sayings concerning the law.<sup>51</sup> The saying that can be considered to have “the highest degree of authenticity which we can make for any saying of Jesus,” he says, is Luke 11:20 (“But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you”), which is an “I” saying, and the reason he gives is that “it is full of that feeling of eschatological power which must have characterized the activity of Jesus.”<sup>52</sup> Sayings that are ruled out include many of the biographical apophthegms, wisdom sayings, and the passion predictions.<sup>53</sup> Concerning the narrative material, Bultmann says that there might be a historical basis for some of the healings,<sup>54</sup> but he regards many miracle stories to have been created in the Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) church,<sup>55</sup> which rules out their origins among the (Aramaic-speaking) witnesses of Jesus’ ministry. The legends, he says,

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<sup>46</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 59–62.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 204–205.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 102–103.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 108–109.

<sup>50</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 41–44.

<sup>51</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 48, 56, 58; *idem*, *Synoptic Tradition*, 150–163.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>53</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 45, 55, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 228.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 240.

“instead of being historical in character are religious and edifying.”<sup>56</sup> The passion narrative in its primitive form “would have told very briefly of the arrest, the condemnation by the Sanhedrin and Pilate, the journey to the cross, the crucifixion and death.”<sup>57</sup> But in terms of the historicity of the narrative, Bultmann has written as follows:

As [Jesus] came up to Jerusalem with his followers his arrival was viewed by the procurator [Pilate] as politically dangerous. Whatever part the Jewish authorities took therein cannot now be made out, since the Passion Narrative is too thickly overgrown with legend.<sup>58</sup>

Taylor concludes that there is a historical basis for most of the materials in the gospels. He does not spell out any formal criteria in his book on form criticism but simply asserts a good deal of confidence in the process of transmission of the traditions from and about Jesus. The pronouncement stories, he says, ought to be esteemed “among the strongest and most stable elements in the Gospel tradition.”<sup>59</sup> Concerning the sayings and parables, he says that “what Jesus said was remembered,”<sup>60</sup> and “I have no hesitation in claiming that the tradition of the words of Jesus is far better preserved than we have any right to expect, and with much greater accuracy than is to be found in the record of the words of any great teacher of the past.”<sup>61</sup> In regard to the stories about Jesus, Taylor considers some to have “historical realism” and in general, he says, one can have “confidence in their historical value.”<sup>62</sup> The passion narrative has a “historical nucleus” consisting of a “primitive sketch” of the arrest, condemnation, crucifixion, and death of Jesus,<sup>63</sup> and it was shaped “by eyewitnesses and others who had knowledge of the original facts,” and repetition at worship “gave relative fixity to the Story, and yet not such a fixity as to leave no room for additions.”<sup>64</sup> Many of the healing miracles should be accepted as having a historical basis to them, but regarding the nature miracles, Taylor says, “we should at once explain them as legends, and look for natural events which have been given a miraculous interpretation.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 244.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

<sup>58</sup> Bultmann, “Study of the Synoptic Gospels,” 72.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, *Formation*, 87.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 148, 166.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 58–59.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

#### 4. *Specialized Form-Critical Works*

Form-critical work has been carried on by a number of scholars in addition to the major scholars of the early period, whose works had covered both sayings and narrative traditions. The other studies have tended to be more specialized. Already at the time of Dibelius and Bultmann, Martin Albertz wrote an important book on the conflict stories (German: *Streitgespräche*) in the synoptic gospels, published in 1921,<sup>66</sup> which was a form not dealt with subsequently in a comprehensive way until the work of Arland J. Hultgren published fifty years later.<sup>67</sup> The passion narrative was analyzed form-critically by Georg Bertram, whose book was published in 1922.<sup>68</sup> The same block of material has been the subject of study by others, particularly by Raymond E. Brown, whose study published in 1994 deals with form-critical and other questions (such as questions of historicity and redaction by the evangelists).<sup>69</sup> The miracle stories have received form-critical analysis and attention by Reginald H. Fuller in his book of 1963.<sup>70</sup> The well-known and widely used book on the parables of Jesus by Joachim Jeremias, published in Germany in 1947 and in English translation for the first time in 1954,<sup>71</sup> presupposed the form-critical view of the gospel tradition, requiring an extensive discussion of criteria for judging the authenticity of the parables, or parts of them.<sup>72</sup> Form-critical work continues in the work of the Jesus Seminar, which has produced volumes on the sayings traditions and the narrative traditions of Jesus, published in 1993 and 1998, respectively.<sup>73</sup>

As these and other works have been published through the years, the form-critical categories of the early period have been considered

<sup>66</sup> Martin Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichte des Urchristentums* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1921).

<sup>67</sup> Arland J. Hultgren, *Jesus and His Adversaries: The Form and Function of the Conflict Stories in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1979).

<sup>68</sup> Bertram, *Der Leidensgeschichte Jesu und der Christuskult*.

<sup>69</sup> Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*.

<sup>70</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

<sup>71</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, ATANT 11 (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1947); but published in subsequent, revised editions; ET: *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1954); but also published in subsequent, revised editions.

<sup>72</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 23–114.

<sup>73</sup> Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, eds., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Robert W. Funk, ed., *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

insufficient. The range of forms has been enlarged to include aphorisms,<sup>74</sup> call and commissioning stories,<sup>75</sup> sentences of holy law,<sup>76</sup> and more.<sup>77</sup>

### 5. *Form Criticism and Jesus Research*

The form-critical movement has had a profound effect upon Jesus research ever since its rise early in the twentieth century. How that is so can be discussed here under two parts: first, a listing of some implications to be drawn from form-critical work that are now commonly accepted; and, second, a brief review of how these appear in some major works concerning the historical Jesus.

#### 5.1. *Some Implications for Research*

1. The End of the “Old Quest.” The original “Quest of the Historical Jesus,” which had its beginnings with Hermann S. Reimarus (1694–1768), had actually come to an end by the time that Dibelius and Bultmann wrote their form-critical works. The book by Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, published in German in 1906 (subsequently in English translation in 1910 under the title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*), marked the end of that quest.<sup>78</sup> One can hardly say therefore that form criticism caused the end of the old quest. Nevertheless, it greatly aided the view that no one can write an orderly and connected account of Jesus’ career and development as a personality as the “old questers” sought to do. Additional “quests” have come on the scene since the demise of the “old quest,” but none has been carried on with the assumptions of the old one concerning the gospels and their sources.

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<sup>74</sup> Howard C. Kee, *Jesus in History: An Approach to the Study of the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 302; John D. Crossan, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983).

<sup>75</sup> Funk, *The Acts of Jesus*, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “Sentences of Holy Law in the New Testament,” in his *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 66–81. Although most of these are in books other than the gospels, examples within the gospels cited by Käsemann include Mark 4:24; 8:38; Matt 5:19; 10:32–33.

<sup>77</sup> A comprehensive listing of forms throughout the New Testament is provided by Klaus Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1984).

<sup>78</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A. & C. Black, 1910; repr., Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001).

2. The Gospel Tradition behind the Sources. Until the rise of form criticism, scholarly work on the question of what lay behind the gospels was devoted largely to "source criticism." It was assumed that the "sources" behind the gospels were the earliest and most reliable records that can be obtained. But after the rise of form criticism, there was a realization that investigations concerning the historical Jesus must penetrate further, going back even beyond the written sources. One could no longer, for example, take the Gospel of Mark as a source for producing an outline of Jesus' ministry, since that gospel was itself a collection of traditions that had circulated independently prior to Mark's composition of his gospel.

3. The Gospels as Kerygmatic Witnesses. The form-critical approach to the gospels emphasized that the gospels, and the traditions they convey, are kerygmatic. That is, they do not simply convey history concerning a person of the first century, but speak of him in light of the Easter gospel. While there is, to be sure, historical information within the traditions, the traditions have been so colored by those who transmitted them that Jesus is portrayed even in his earthly ministry as the Christ of Christian faith, which knows the outcome of his passion, death, and resurrection and affirms his present reign. This means that any research into the historical Jesus must be conscious of the kerygmatic nature of the gospels.

4. Words and Deeds. In light of the form-critical approach, in which it is assumed and asserted that the traditions of Jesus circulated independently of one another prior to being written down, one can no longer compose a biography of Jesus or even sketch out an account of "the life and teachings of Jesus." To do so presupposes the ability to figure out a chronology and to fit the teachings of Jesus within it. That is now seen to be impossible. The most one can do is compose accounts of "the words and deeds of Jesus" within some broad framework that begins with his baptism by John and ends with his crucifixion.

5. The Burden of Proof. The traditional view through most centuries has been that the gospels convey reliable information about the teachings, miracles, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. If one is to contest any part of the gospels, reasons would have to be given for doing so. But with the rise of form criticism all that has changed. In principle, the burden of proof now rests on anyone who claims historicity for any part of the gospel tradition.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. the comment of Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York:



6. The Need for Criteria of Authenticity. Both Dibelius and Bultmann articulated criteria by which to test whether a unit of gospel tradition can be considered authentic. Although form criticism can be carried on without that, it has nevertheless posed the question of criteria to anyone who does research on Jesus. Since the tradition was in oral form prior to its being written down, and since it was shaped and supplemented by preachers and teachers in the oral period of its development, the person who seeks to give an account of the words and deeds of Jesus must make some decisions concerning authenticity. Form criticism has thus not only proposed criteria for authenticity, such as the criterion of dissimilarity; it has made it necessary for the researcher to discuss the criteria being used in the historical project being carried out.

### 5.2. *Form Criticism and Some Major Works*

Many books have been written that presuppose and employ form-critical work, often adding additional criteria for historicity to those already mentioned. What follows is not an exhaustive survey, but a brief review of some of the more important books that have been produced that employ form criticism in an explicit way, following the chronological order in which they were published.

Among the first to write books on Jesus after the rise of form criticism were Bultmann and Dibelius themselves. Bultmann produced a book entitled *Jesus* that was published in German in 1926 (English version: *Jesus and the Word*, 1934), and says in his introductory discussion of “view-point and method” that what he has to say on critical matters can be found in his *History of the Synoptic Tradition*.<sup>80</sup> Basically, he says, the subject of his book is “not the life or the personality of Jesus, but only his teaching, his message.”<sup>81</sup> Consequently Bultmann gives no attention to the narrative material. Dibelius wrote a book called *Jesus* in both its German (1939) and English (1940) versions.<sup>82</sup> He devotes a chapter to “Sources” and within that larger discussion summarizes

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Harper & Row, 1967), 39: “The nature of the synoptic tradition is such that the burden of proof will be upon the claim to authenticity.” For a similar viewpoint, cf. also E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 13.

<sup>80</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934), 14. The German edition was *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926).

<sup>81</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949), 23–35. The German version was *Jesus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1939). Subsequent references are to the English version.

his earlier form-critical work, but he adds that a “biography” of Jesus is impossible, for “all we know is individual incidents.”<sup>83</sup> Of particular interest, however, is his statement: “It is proper to speak of non-genuine sayings only where the later circumstances, conditions, or problems of the already existing Church are clearly presupposed.”<sup>84</sup> That is to make a negative use of one part (the second part) of the “criterion of dissimilarity” (or “double dissimilarity”) mentioned above. Dibelius continues to assert the essential trustworthiness of the passion narrative and, unlike Bultmann, deals with narrative—the narrative of the passion in particular<sup>85</sup>—in addition to sayings traditions.

After the end of the “old quest” of the historical Jesus, and due in large part to the impact of form criticism, there was a time in which there was an eclipse in Jesus research. To be sure, there were several studies of Jesus by scholars whose works did not deal with the implications of form criticism,<sup>86</sup> although that was not true of all.<sup>87</sup> In any case, a new impulse came in 1953 with a challenging lecture, subsequently published, by Ernst Käsemann that is generally credited with initiating a “new quest” for the historical Jesus. Käsemann maintained that, even though a “life of Jesus” cannot be produced, Christian faith requires continuity between itself and the historical Jesus; the alternative is docetism.<sup>88</sup> The first major book of note in the new era was that of Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth* (1956; English version: *Jesus of Nazareth*, 1960). In many ways this was the most important book on Jesus produced in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Bornkamm, form criticism has taught the modern investigator “to look for the connection between the entire Jesus tradition and the faith and life of the Church, out of which that tradition arose and for which it was meant.”<sup>89</sup> The investigation would, of course, separate that which is authentic from that which is not; but that is possible, since

<sup>83</sup> Dibelius, *Jesus*, 29.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34, 131–138.

<sup>86</sup> Among those that can be cited are Shirley Jackson Case, *Jesus: A New Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); and Edgar J. Goodspeed, *A Life of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1979).

<sup>87</sup> Especially important are the works of William Manson, *Jesus the Messiah* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946); and Maurice Goguel, *The Life of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1949); the French version was much earlier, *La vie de Jésus* (Paris: Payot, 1932).

<sup>88</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in his *Essays on New Testament Themes*, SBT 41 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1964), 15–47.

<sup>89</sup> Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 20. The German version was *Jesus von Nazareth* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956).

the tradition “is itself very considerably concerned with the pre-Easter history of Jesus.”<sup>90</sup> Bornkamm discusses the teachings of Jesus in detail, particularly the kingdom of God and themes related to it. He gives scant attention to the miracles of Jesus, except to grant that Jesus performed healings.<sup>91</sup> He rules out a “messianic consciousness” and the possibility that Jesus made use of or accepted any messianic titles, since these are regarded by him as post-Easter.<sup>92</sup> He devotes an entire chapter to the passion narrative, analyzing it section by section concerning its history and theology, and has a section on the resurrection narratives. The resurrection narratives, he says, seek to give “empirical expression” to the Easter event.<sup>93</sup> The Easter message was prior to the stories, so one can hardly gain knowledge of what actually happened on the basis of the stories themselves.

Shortly after the publication of Bornkamm’s book on Jesus, two shorter compositions appeared which have also been widely influential and which make use of the methods and results of form criticism. One was an encyclopedia article written by Hans Conzelmann, published in 1959, which appeared in English translation in 1973 as a slim volume called *Jesus*. Conzelmann deals briefly with the matter of authenticity. According to him, the “core” of the passion narrative and the “core” of the parables can be considered reliable, and he places confidence in the “criterion of dissimilarity.”<sup>94</sup> The other study was by Reginald H. Fuller in a section of his introduction to the New Testament that was published in 1966. After discussing form criticism—including its “assured results,” its limitations, and the criteria for making judgments about authenticity—Fuller provides a succinct itemization (in less than four pages) of materials (both sayings and narrative) that he considers authentic.<sup>95</sup>

A major work on the sayings of Jesus, ignoring the narratives in the gospel tradition, was published in 1967, authored by Norman Perrin. Perrin says early on in his book that the views presented concerning the nature of the gospel tradition “are the results of what may loosely be called ‘form criticism,’” as well as tradition criticism and other things, all

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<sup>90</sup> Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 22.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 172–174.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>94</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 16, which is a translation of “Jesus Christus,” in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Kurt Galling, 7 vols., 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1957–1965), 3:619–653.

<sup>95</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1966), 99–102.

of which, he says, can be placed under “‘form-critical’ views.”<sup>96</sup> Moreover, he discusses the various criteria typically used in “form-critical” work and employs them throughout his book.<sup>97</sup> Other major books, such as *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* by Edward Schillebeeckx (Dutch version, 1975; English version, 1981), *Jesus and Judaism* by E. P. Sanders (1985), and the massive four-volume *A Marginal Jew* by John P. Meier (1991–2009) discuss form criticism as a presupposition to their works and, in particular, the place of the criterion of dissimilarity within their own respective methodologies.<sup>98</sup> The same can be said for a good number of other books and essays, including the comprehensive, but at the same time compact, essay on “Jesus Christ” by Ben Meyer in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.<sup>99</sup>

Finally, with the work of the so-called Jesus Seminar, form criticism has been given a renewed interest and greater prominence. The two major volumes that have been produced on the traditions of Jesus—both the sayings in *The Five Gospels*, published in 1993, and the narratives in *The Acts of Jesus*, published in 1998—make use of form criticism on a grand scale, including the most wide array of criteria concerning historicity ever employed, and with controversial results.<sup>100</sup>

## 6. Concluding Comments

The major works cited are only a few out of the vast number of books written on the historical Jesus that show the impact of form criticism directly. Attention has not been given here to the challenges that have been put to form criticism over the years. Four things can only be mentioned. (1) There have been attempts to reimagine the gospel tradition, its transmission, and its reliability. Most notable is a proposal appearing in the works of Harald Riesenfeld and Birger Gerhardsson.<sup>101</sup> They have

<sup>96</sup> Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 25.

<sup>97</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 39–49.

<sup>98</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 92–95; he calls the criterion “the principle of irreducibility” and says it is basic to evaluating the tradition (95); Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 13–22; he uses and discusses it as “the test of double ‘dissimilarity’” (16–17); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 1:166–195; he calls the criterion the “criterion of discontinuity.”

<sup>99</sup> Ben F. Meyer, “Jesus Christ,” *ABD* 3:773–796. An extensive bibliography is included.

<sup>100</sup> Funk, *The Five Gospels*, 25–34; idem, *The Acts of Jesus*, 9–16.

<sup>101</sup> Harald Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings: A Study in the Limits of “Formgeschichte”* (London: Mowbray, 1957); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and*

proposed that Jesus taught his disciples to memorize a tradition that was later guarded by them, assuring accurate transmission. Their viewpoint, however, has not been accepted beyond a small circle of scholars. (2) The forms proposed by the form critics have sometimes been found wanting. On formal grounds, for example, can a clear distinction be made between miracle stories and legends? Could not the former be classified more broadly among the latter—along with other materials that edify? And what does one make of the Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1–12//Matt 9:1–8//Luke 5:17–26)? It is customarily classified as a conflict story (or pronouncement story), but it can also be classified as a miracle story; it even contains a prime example of a “choral ending” in which the crowds affirm that a miracle has happened (Mark 2:12//Matt 9:8// Luke 5:26). It becomes necessary, then, to recognize that not all materials in the gospels can be classified unambiguously into clear-cut forms, a fact which both Dibelius and Bultmann recognized.<sup>102</sup> As various critics have said, sometimes it appears that classifications are made more on the basis of content than form.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, one cannot totally separate form and content. For example, while an “I” saying (as in Matt 5:17, “I have come . . . to fulfill [the law and the prophets]”) and a legal saying (as in 16:18, “I will build my church [on this rock]”) may share much in common syntactically, formal differences do exist (even if not “differences in form,” if “form” means structure alone) because of their contents and signification. (3) There is disagreement concerning the proposed *Sitze im Leben* of the traditions. One sees that already in the differences between those proposed by Dibelius and Bultmann. Consequently the charge can be made that there is considerable speculation in the proposals made. (4) The criteria used by the major form critics (and others following them) to discern what is historical and what is not have been weighed, modified, and criticized.

Nevertheless, in spite of such reactions and criticisms, it must be concluded that the basic insights of form criticism concerning the shaping and transmission of the traditions from and about Jesus have endured, and they continue to have an impact on Jesus research.

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*Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, ASNU 22 (Lund: Gleerup, 1961); idem, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, ConBNT 20 (Lund: Gleerup, 1964).

<sup>102</sup> Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 43; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospel*, 74; Stephen Travis, “Form Criticism,” in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 158; Christopher Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 100.



## TRADITION CRITICISM AND JESUS RESEARCH

GRANT R. OSBORNE

Tradition criticism is the step-child of form and redaction criticism, developed as a method for determining authentic Jesus material in the gospels and studying the history behind a text or idea in that material. "Tradition criticism" stems from the technical German term *Traditionsgeschichte*, which might better be translated "tradition history"<sup>1</sup> or "the history of the transmission of the traditions."<sup>2</sup> Form criticism deals with the identification and development of an individual gospel tradition; tradition criticism studies the use of that tradition in the *Tendenz* of the gospel itself; and redaction criticism studies how each evangelist modified the tradition sources in producing their own compositions.

The precursors to the discipline were D. F. Strauss, who stated that the stories about Jesus were created by the community along the lines of Greco-Roman myths; and W. Wrede, who argued that it was the needs of the community that were read into the developing traditions. The basic theory, however, was developed by the form critics, in particular K. L. Schmidt, M. Dibelius, and R. Bultmann in Germany in the 1920's and by V. Taylor and R. H. Lightfoot in Britain in the 1930's and 40's. By utilizing models developed via the study of ancient folk literature, they posited an oral period of thirty to forty years after the death of Jesus and creation of the community, during which the stories and sayings of Jesus floated as independent units through the preaching and teaching of the church. As oral traditions<sup>3</sup> they followed certain laws of

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<sup>1</sup> David R. Catchpole, "Tradition History," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. H. Marshall (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 165, who speaks of "an ongoing process of development in the form and/or meaning of concepts or words or sayings or blocks of material."

<sup>2</sup> William G. Doty, *Contemporary New Testament Interpretation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 75, drawing upon James M. Robinson, *Theology as History* (New York: Harper, 1967), ix-x.

<sup>3</sup> A good study is Øivind Andersen, "Oral Tradition," in *Jesus and the Oral Tradition*, ed. Henry Wansbrough, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 17-54. He traces topics like oral communication, oral culture, oral format, stability and reliability, and the movement from oral tradition to writing.

transmission derived from ancient folk literature (see next section) so that the details of the stories and sayings were continually altered, with new details or whole units added on the basis of the kerygmatic needs of the church. In studying the forms of these traditions, critics developed four tasks: analyzing the forms of the stories and sayings, reconstructing the original *Sitz im Leben* (situation in the life of the church) that accounted for the various details; working backward from the final form to elucidate the original, authentic nucleus of the tradition; and determining the history of the transmission of the tradition. The latter three constitute the discipline of tradition criticism.

### 1. *The Tasks of Tradition Criticism*

#### 1.1. *Sitz im Leben Analysis*

The “life-setting” of gospel pericopae functions at two levels. First, at the macro-level critics have theorized that miracle stories developed in apologetic settings, primarily in Greco-Roman settings vis-à-vis divine man expectations, while pronouncement stories and parables developed in preaching contexts and sentences of holy law stemmed from church discipline situations. They believe that in many cases the nucleus may have come from the historical Jesus. However, as the stories and sayings floated from house church to house church and were preached in the weekly meeting as well as used in catechetical instruction and proclaimed in the church’s mission to the world, they were expanded to meet the new situations. Moreover, Christian prophets would create new sayings to meet new circumstances, believing them to be inspired by the exalted Christ.

At the micro-level there is also the life-setting of the individual pericope or added details. There the critic asks whether a detail or saying goes back to the historical Jesus or was added by the later church. For form critics this is determined by the form itself, seen in terms of four tendencies or laws of transmission: (1) a tendency for stories/sayings to expand as new material was added (Matt 16:13–23; Mark 8:27–33); (2) a tendency to clarify or qualify the original details (Mark 14:13; Luke 22:8); (3) a tendency to reduce Semitisms from the original (Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26); (4) a tendency to create new sayings to meet new needs in the community (Matt 10:18; Luke 9:62).<sup>4</sup> Critics will take

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<sup>4</sup> The first three are from Scot McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand



a story from the gospels, go backwards to discover the historical nucleus (if any), and then try to re-enact the life situation in the early church where various details were added. There are thus two origins: the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, the situation in the life of Jesus that gave rise to the original nucleus; and the *Sitz im Leben der Kirche*, the life setting in the early church that accounts for the expanded details. Redaction critics would add a third, the situation behind the community of the evangelist as he collected the stories, put them together in his composition, and made final changes to the stories and sayings to address the needs of his own community.

For instance, consider the discourse against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Haenchen wrote a classic article<sup>5</sup> in which he argued that the original situation did not stem from the situation of Jesus but from the hostility between Jews and Christians in Palestine before the final war of 66–70 CE. It was Christian prophets in the light of extreme opposition who developed the woes of vv. 13–32, and then Matthew in the situation of his church added the call to humility in vv. 8–10. David Garland sees all three *Sitze im Leben* present in the chapter. The nucleus goes back to Jesus' rejection by the Jews of his day, then it also somewhat reflects the later historical hostility between Jews and Christians; but Garland finds the primary life situation in Matthew's pastoral warning to Christian leaders in his own day not to be like the Jewish leaders, lest the same judgment fall on them.<sup>6</sup> Finally, Kenneth Newport sees 23:2–31 in a pre-70 CE setting due to the Jewish legal details, while 23:32–39 (general to the nation as a whole) stems from Matthew's hand.<sup>7</sup> Of course, each passage is studied in turn to determine its particular background and origin, but on the whole this exemplifies how tradition critics determine life-settings.

### 1.2. *Determining the Original Historical Nucleus*

The search for "authentic" Jesus material means ascertaining what if anything in a pericope can be traced back to the historical Jesus, and

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Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 73. For a helpful presentation see also C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Ernst Haenchen, "Matthäus 23," *ZTK* 48 (1951): 38–63. See also F. W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), who concludes that none of it stems from Jesus.

<sup>6</sup> David Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, *NovTSup* 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 215.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew 23*, *JSNTSup* 117 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 76–79.

what represents the later biblical Christ.<sup>8</sup> The general assumption in the 1940's to the 1960's was pessimistic (see below), believing the burden of proof to be upon affirming the authenticity of a passage. This has been continued in recent years by the Jesus Seminar that made this burden of proof one of "the seven pillars of academic wisdom."<sup>9</sup> In fact, J. M. Robinson has redefined the meaning of "authentic" in an existential direction when he says a saying Jesus never uttered "may well reflect accurately his historical significance, and in this sense be more 'historical' than many irrelevant things Jesus actually said."<sup>10</sup> He has in effect reversed the whole meaning of "authentic" as normally used.

However, many have not been so negative (e.g. Vincent Taylor, C. H. Dodd), believing each detail should be studied on its own merits. For example, consider the possible evolution of the term "Lord" from the time of Christ (= "Sir") to the early church, where it gained overtones of Messiah (Jewish Christianity) to universal, cosmic Lordship (Gentile Christianity). Moule studies the use of "Lord" within Luke, noting dialogue passages where "Lord" is used simply as a term of respect (from the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus' ministry) and editorial passages where it has a titular sense (from the *Sitz im Leben* of the Lukan community). He uses this to demonstrate the historical veracity of Luke.<sup>11</sup> There is the further question as to whether the exalted sense arose in the post-Easter Palestinian church (so Moule) or the later Hellenistic Jewish church.<sup>12</sup>

Here of course the criteria for authenticity come into play.<sup>13</sup> Since they are covered in a separate article, I will here simply summarize their development and use. The first three, often called "the formal criteria," consist of dissimilarity (a saying is authentic only if it cannot be paralleled in either Judaism or the early church, lest it transfer Jewish ideas into

<sup>8</sup> This distinction was first elucidated by Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, trans. C. E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964; Ger. orig., 1892).

<sup>9</sup> Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>10</sup> James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959), 99.

<sup>11</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1967), 56–60.

<sup>12</sup> So Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner's, 1965), 245–246.

<sup>13</sup> On these see Grant R. Osborne, "The Evangelical and *Traditionsgeschichte*," *JETS* 21.2 (1978): 117–130; Robert H. Stein, "The 'Criteria for Authenticity,'" in *Gospel Perspectives I: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 225–253; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 168–184.

Jesus or read back church dogma onto Jesus' lips); multiple attestation (if a saying carries over into a cross-section of primary sources such as Mark, Q, M, L, or John, it is more likely authentic); and coherence (if a passage is consistent with other material already deemed authentic, the tradition behind it is deemed authentic as well). The dissimilarity criterion has long been criticized for its overly pessimistic demand for an irreducible minimum, as if the historical Jesus could have no ties with Judaism and could supply no teaching for the early church.<sup>14</sup> Multiple attestation is a more positive tool and has value in showing likely authenticity, but does it mean that no passage appearing only once can be authentic? It must be used carefully as part of a larger whole and not made an end in itself. Coherence can often simply magnify previous mistakes, as decisions already made are applied to a passage. For instance, if Jesus' messianic self-consciousness is ruled out on the basis of the first criterion, then all passages related to it (e.g. Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi) are also rendered null and void.

The secondary criteria are more positive in scope and relate to material that can be authenticated and not just rejected. For instance, material that goes counter to the intentions of the evangelists and is in tension with Jesus' teaching (e.g. Schmiedel's "pillar sayings") are likely genuine. For instance, Mark 3:21 (Jesus' family thinks he's lost his mind) or 12:32 (Jesus' ignorance of the Eschaton) seem to denigrate Jesus' supernatural ability and point to authenticity. Also, the presence of Aramaisms points at least to early Palestinian tradition and could well demonstrate Jesus' own teaching. Jesus' principal language was certainly Aramaic, and when Mark 5:41 has Jesus say "*Talitha koum*" ("Little girl, rise"), we may well have *ipsissima verba*. Jeremias emphasized Palestinian customs and background as indicators of early origin in his study of parables,<sup>15</sup> and this too points to early formulation. Further, when the language and style of a passage is not that of the evangelist, it points to a source rather than to a redactional insertion. Of course, it cannot prove the passage goes back to Jesus, but it does highlight traditional material. This has been used to posit a signs source for John.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See Morna Hooker, "On Using the Wrong Tool," *Theology* 75 (1972): 570–581; R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels: Some Comments on Current Methods* (London: SPCK, 1972), 6–8.

<sup>15</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM, 1963), 11–12.

<sup>16</sup> See Robert T. Fortna, *The Gospel of Signs*, SNTSMNS 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1972).

Recently even more positive criteria have been developed. Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter provide a devastating critique of the dissimilarity principle in which they show that its “one-sided delimitation of Jesus over against Judaism... cannot be maintained in its traditional form” because “the historian is interested in determining the material relation of Jesus to his context and to the history of his effects.”<sup>17</sup> They propose a more positive “criterion of plausibility,” examining the “network of continuities” between Jesus and his context in terms of the history of effects in relation to both Judaism (its effect on him) and the early church (his effect on it). The result is “a ‘historical’ comprehensive picture of him that embraces his social context in Judaism as well.”<sup>18</sup>

John P. Meier speaks of the “criterion of embarrassment,” i.e. passages that would not fit the exalted claims of the early church. For instance, the baptism of the superior sinless Jesus by sinful John, especially in Mark’s stark portrayal (1:4–11) with no theological embellishment, could be evidence pointing to veracity.<sup>19</sup> N. T. Wright has developed the criterion of “double similarity and dissimilarity,” meaning that on the one hand Jesus certainly built on his Jewish roots and at the same time differed from them in developing his distinctive method and ministry. He uses the parable of the prodigal son as an example, arguing that it is in one sense similar to the Jewish context and early Christian worldview and at the same time is dissimilar to both, pointing to the unique message of Jesus. This, he believes, establishes an authentic story from the historical Jesus.<sup>20</sup> Finally, we would note J. D. G. Dunn, who speaks of the criterion of oral transmission of tradition, namely a stable core of traditions transmitted by faithful participants in the Jesus story. These multiple witnesses further enhance the viability of the synoptic portrayal.<sup>21</sup> He uses this to support the historical rootedness of the triumphal entry (Mark 11:1–11 par.), arguing that the local details as well as the acclamation evidence “the characteristics of oral transmission,” with the core being consistent in all four gospels.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 172.

<sup>18</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Plausible Jesus*, 188–189.

<sup>19</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 168–171.

<sup>20</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 131–133.

<sup>21</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 192–210.

<sup>22</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 640–642.

### 1.3. *Determining the History of the Transmission of the Tradition*

Bultmann established the basic principle that the oral tradition behind the gospels was transmitted according to certain “formal laws” and began with a pure form that was characterized by simplicity and then progressed in the history of transmission to greater complexity and detail.<sup>23</sup> The task of the tradition critic then is to strip away the layers of tradition and determine the history behind the development of the tradition unit. Bultmann divided the New Testament period into three rigid layers—the Palestinian period, the Hellenistic Jewish period, and the Hellenistic church. He believed he could classify the details historically and get behind the Hellenistic to the Palestinian.

This view of an uncontrolled process of development has been challenged by Birger Gerhardsson and Harald Riesenfeld, proponents of what has become known as the “Scandinavian hypothesis,” saying that the process of transmission was controlled by rabbinic methods of memorization and recital, so that the sayings took on a fixed form that was not so open to change and sought to be faithful to the teacher’s original message.<sup>24</sup> While they overstated their theory in terms of Jesus teaching by repetition (no evidence for this) and the stories having a very fixed form (the differences between the gospels make this difficult), their view has had a renaissance of late in terms of a more faithful transmission of Jesus’ teaching, as exemplified in the Lukan prologue (1:1–4). Sanders builds on two points: outside the gospels there is not a substantial set of Jesus traditions, while in the gospels there are “full texts not just essential points.”<sup>25</sup> Thus the assumption of floating material continually altered to meet the needs of the church becomes problematic. Full texts were transmitted, not just core material, and in many cases we can be certain that the text was preserved, such as the divorce saying (1 Cor 7:10–11; Matt 5:31–32, 19:9; Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18) and the words of institution (1 Cor 11:23–26; Matt 26:26–29 par.).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See Rudolf Bultmann, “The New Approach to the Synoptic Problem,” in *Existence and Faith* (1926; repr., London: Collins, 1964), 39–62, esp. 45–47.

<sup>24</sup> Harald Riesenfeld, “The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginning,” in *The Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 11–29; Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961). For a defense of this position, see Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, WUNT 27 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981); and his “Jüdische Elementarbildung und Evangelien-Überlieferung,” in *Studies of History and Tradition*, ed. France and Wenham, 209–223.

<sup>25</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 14.

<sup>26</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 14–15.

The first to make a strong distinction between written and oral forms was Werner Kelber, who argued for preservation of the core message within an environment of retelling with features like paronomasia, alliteration, proverbs, parallelism, chiasm, and such, all features that can be distinguished in the final form of the gospels, so that Kelber believed that the written gospel took on the form of a fixed or frozen orality.<sup>27</sup> Dunn takes this to the next level by positing three things: a community would exert control over its traditions; the degree of control will depend on form and the importance of the tradition; and the core of the story would be the most firmly fixed element.<sup>28</sup>

The tendency in recent years has been to see the changes as the work of the evangelist more than of various strata in the church. The three stages above—the original setting in the life of Jesus, the setting of the developing church, and the setting in the production of the gospel by the evangelist—must all be taken into account, but the emphasis is shifting to the evangelist who took the traditions inherited and reshaped them by adapting, omitting, and adding details. Of course the great debate concerns the reliability of this redactional material.

This is a good place to discuss the fractious issue of burden of proof. Widely divergent views have been presented, e.g. Perrin's statement that the synoptic problem demands that "the burden of proof will be upon the claim to authenticity"<sup>29</sup> vs. Jeremias's claim that "it is the inauthenticity, not the authenticity, of the sayings of Jesus that must be demonstrated."<sup>30</sup> Sanders is certainly correct when he says, "The question of where the burden of proof falls, which has been so often discussed, is in fact very simple: it falls on the one who argues a case."<sup>31</sup> Both sides are equally responsible to prove their position. Nevertheless, we must agree with Stein that there is good evidence for accepting the basic trustworthiness of the gospel accounts: the presence of eyewitnesses to control the tradition; a center of leadership that would ensure careful transmission;

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<sup>27</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). See also his "Jesus and Tradition: Words in Time, Words in Space," in *Orality and Textuality in Early Christian Literature*, *Semeia* 65 (1994), 139–167.

<sup>28</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 209, building on Kenneth E. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 34–54.

<sup>29</sup> Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 39.

<sup>30</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), 37.

<sup>31</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 13.

the high view toward the *Logia Jesu* in the early church; the faithful way difficult sayings were preserved; the absence of many serious problems (from the later church) reflected in the gospel accounts — all show reluctance to make up material.<sup>32</sup>

The beatitudes of Matt 5:3–12 will provide a fine example. Ulrich Luz reconstructs the history of transmission as follows:<sup>33</sup> The first three beatitudes from Q may go back to Jesus in their Lukan form (due to the absence of explicit christology and of an ecclesiastical limitation); Q added a fourth (vv. 11–12) that stemmed from the community; between Q and Matthew's redaction came the addition of four more beatitudes (vv. 5, 7–9). So for him Matthew added a few redactional details but no beatitudes. Davies and Allison agree on the four Q beatitudes of Luz but believe the others (vv. 5, 7, 8, 9) also stem from Q and accept v. 10 as Matthean.<sup>34</sup> Yet Hagner believes that even though both Matthew's and Luke's versions are artistically constructed, they exhibit the kind of form and content that the early church would have memorized;<sup>35</sup> and Blomberg believes Jesus may well have spoken all eight beatitudes along with eight woes, with Matthew and Luke choosing to employ those that fit their message.<sup>36</sup> In other words, redaction does not have to mean non-historicity.

## 2. *Stages in the Use of Tradition Criticism for Jesus Research*

It is certainly true that tradition criticism has too often failed to open up new vistas of understanding of the historical Jesus or what constituted his ministry. In fact, we have to say that Schweitzer's classic rhetoric still fits:

Formerly it was possible to book through-tickets at the supplementary-psychological knowledge office, which enabled those traveling in the interests of life-of-Jesus constructions to use express trains, thus avoiding the inconvenience of having to stop at every little station, change, and run the risk of missing their connection. This ticket office is now closed. There

<sup>32</sup> Stein, "Criteria," 226–227.

<sup>33</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, trans. W. C. Linss (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 227–228.

<sup>34</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:434–435.

<sup>35</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 144.

is a station at the end of each section of the narrative, and the connections are not guaranteed.<sup>37</sup>

The so-called “scientific” historicism of our day has not produced the results promised, and scholars still tend to recreate the historical Jesus in their own image. We have the existential Jesus of Bultmann and Käse-mann, the itinerant Cynic philosopher of Funk and Crossan, the Spirit-filled teacher of wisdom of Borg, the social activist of Horsley, the Sophia of Schüssler Fiorenza, all erected not so much on historical research as on the times in which we live. Let us trace the progress of the discipline, for that is where the hope lies. More and more, a new positive atmosphere is entering the halls of academia in which the traditions are given credence in developing the historical Jesus. I will trace three stages.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.1. *The Great Gulf between History and Tradition (1900–1970)*

The academic legacy of German scholarship in the nineteenth century saw a turning point in attitudes to the history behind the gospels and the early church. F. C. Baur (1792–1860) sought “objective historical truth,” which meant distinguishing “how it really was” from the biblical portrayal of it. His premise was that the traditions were controlled by the *Tendenz* of the early church and so both distorted the facts and misled later understanding. Thus Baur laid the foundation for tradition criticism.<sup>39</sup> It was Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) who turned this into a science by positing the pre-history behind the traditions and seeing it influenced by the life-situation of the early movement.

To this must be added the historical principles of Ernst Troeltsch and the methodology of William Wrede. Troeltsch developed three principles of historiography: criticism (all historical judgments are uncertain and must be critically examined); analogy (ancient events are analogous to modern events and must be judged on the basis of everyday experience); and correlation (all events are interrelated and must be placed into the comprehensive wholeness of history).<sup>40</sup> This loss of certainty in

<sup>37</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (1906; repr., London: A. & C. Black, 1954), 333.

<sup>38</sup> Building upon my “History and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels,” *TrinJ* NS 24 (2003): 5–22.

<sup>39</sup> See Theissen and Winter, *Plausible Jesus*, 76–78.

<sup>40</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, “Historical and Dogmatic Method in Theology,” in *Religion as History*, trans. J. L. Adams and W. F. Bense (1898; repr., Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 11–32; as found in Scot McKnight, “Jesus of Nazareth,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 154.



historical enquiry led to the radical skepticism of critical scholarship as developed through the next fifty years; and it became an *a priori*. Wrede applied this to life of Jesus research; in his *Das Messiasgeheimnis* (ET *The Messianic Secret*, 1901) he argued that the early community created the messianic tradition rather than the other way around. So it was the church that made Jesus Messiah, not Jesus himself. This axiom controlled tradition criticism for a half century.

Rudolf Bultmann inherited and developed these principles even further. As Neill and Wright state:

...no ghosts are ever laid in Germany. In the writings of Bultmann we encounter the full procession of the ghosts. Here is Strauss telling us that the life of Christ cannot be written because the connecting thread between the individual events has been broken. Here is Baur, insisting on the radical difference between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. Here is Schweitzer (albeit with modifications) teaching us that Jesus of Nazareth supposed that the great act of God in him would mean the end of human history. Here is the radical skepticism of Wrede.<sup>41</sup>

Bultmann made a radical dichotomy between history and faith, and the gospel accounts were the product of the community and had little resemblance to the historical Jesus. As a result of his dialectical theology (in this he radicalized Barth), the historical facts of Jesus can never be the basis for faith, and as a result of his critical presuppositions that historical nucleus cannot be ascertained anyway. It is the historic biblical Christ as created by the early church that must be the basis of understanding. Bultmann was adamantly opposed to attempts at delineating the personality or actions of Jesus and considered him an eschatological prophet within Judaism who can only be known by the effects of his teaching (not the content). For him Jesus was only the presupposition of New Testament theology.<sup>42</sup> Faith is an existential decision and cannot be the product of historical reflection. R. H. Lightfoot summed up this perspective in his famous statement that the gospels “yield little more than a whisper of his voice; we trace in them but the outskirts of his ways.”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament: 1861–1986* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 237–238.

<sup>42</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner's, 1951), 3.

<sup>43</sup> R. H. Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1934), 225.

This was continued in the “new quest” for the historical Jesus. This began with Ernst Käsemann’s famous address in 1953 at the “Old Marburgers” (colloquy of Bultmann’s students) entitled “The Problem of the Historical Jesus.”<sup>44</sup> He accepted Bultmann’s rejection of historical Jesus research but said that the historical question itself was still valid, saying, “The quest of the historical Jesus is legitimately the question of the continuity of the gospel in the discontinuity of the times and in the variation of the kerygma.”<sup>45</sup> But it was a continuity of effect more than form, and what carried over had strong existential overtones, centering almost entirely on Jesus’ sayings rather than his deeds and producing a teacher of wisdom. Bultmann’s negative bias against Jesus research was overturned, but the negative criteria still controlled the process, and great amounts of traditional material were relegated to the dustbin of later theological creation. The continuity between the historical Jesus and the gospel records was still quite insubstantial.

Yet the degree of discontinuity depended upon the individual scholar. This can be seen in the founders of redaction criticism, all students of Bultmann. Conzelmann is the closest to Bultmann’s absolute disjunction, but Marxsen would allow more material, and Bornkamm was the most conservative of the group. Still Bornkamm said the critical task is to recover “those facts that are prior to any pious interpretation and which manifest themselves as undisturbed and primary.”<sup>46</sup> Another post-Bultmannian, Norman Perrin, developed most consistently the criteria for authenticity<sup>47</sup> and argued for three different kinds of knowledge: descriptive historical knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth; historic knowledge of Jesus that is significant for today; and knowledge of him that stems from faith that acknowledges him as Lord and Christ.<sup>48</sup> The question is how much is accessible to the historian, and moving from one level to the next (remembering that we are studying the same texts and asking questions at all three levels) is incredibly complex. Given the critical presuppositions of the Bultmannians, their pessimism was warranted.

The work of the Jesus Seminar must be discussed here. While belonging to a later era, its roots are in the Bultmannian school, as befits the

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<sup>44</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1964), 15–47.

<sup>45</sup> Käsemann, “Problem,” 46.

<sup>46</sup> Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 26.

<sup>47</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 39–47.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 234–235.

fact that Robert Funk was one of Bultmann's last students. It has often been labeled a throwback to this earlier era. Their project resulted in five gospels because they believe that the *Gospel of Thomas* as well as Q predated the material in the four canonical gospels. They vote on the viability of a passage line by line using four colored marbles—red (authentic), pink (probably authentic), grey (doubtful and likely inauthentic), and black (definitely inauthentic), and most of the red material is found in either Q or *Thomas*. The one area where the Seminar differs from Bultmann is their stated desire to rediscover the historical Jesus and to situate him in his original social background (especially Crossan). Yet the older quest is firmly evident in it. As Wright says, the older program is seen in Burton Mack's emphasis on the fictitious nature of Mark and in his dichotomy between primitive Palestinian Christianity and "the Christ-cult of Paul" as well as the reconstruction of Q with its *traditionsgeschichtliche* underpinnings and in Crossan's approach, so like the new quest.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.2. *Bridging the Gulf between History and Tradition (1970–85)*

It must be recognized that pessimistic historical enquiry did not dominate all scholarship from 1830–1970. Baur's dialectical approach was overturned by the writings of Theodor Zahn in Germany and J. B. Lightfoot in England. Scholars like the Cambridge trio (Lightfoot, Westcott, Hort), or Zahn and Schlatter in Germany fought for a more conservative scholarship. Redaction criticism led to composition criticism and a more positive view of the worth of the gospels for history. In the 1970's this took a more positive turn in the world of scholarship. David Catchpole challenged the "assured results" regarding the distinction between Palestinian, Hellenistic-Jewish, and Hellenistic communities in the early church, pointing out three things. (1) Hellenistic influence was strong in Palestine, as seen in non-Semitic loan words, Hellenistic thought-patterns at Qumran, and the presence of a Hellenistic synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9). There was great variety in Judaism. (2) Differences within communities are as important as differences between communities, for widely divergent views were maintained in individual communities, as seen in the debates within Acts. (3) One cannot decide whether Semitic features belong to Jesus or the Aramaic-speaking community,

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<sup>49</sup> Wright, *Victory of God*, 34–35.

so there are no clear criteria for demarcating such differences.<sup>50</sup> In short, the speculative nature of many tradition-critical decisions began to be realized, and a counter-movement away from skepticism and toward a greater openness to historical material started to appear.

This can be exemplified in the evaluation of “thirteen objections by historical skeptics” on the part of Theissen and Merz:<sup>51</sup> (1) The silence of non-Christian sources about Jesus parallels that of others like Hillel or Bar Cochba. (2) The so-called mythical portrait of Jesus in Paul does not mean Paul was unaware of the earthly Jesus, as seen in the same dichotomy between John’s gospel and his epistles. (3) The contradictions between John and the synoptics do not mean the former is ahistorical. (4) The view that Easter faith has reshaped pre-Easter traditions is reductionistic, for the two are interdependent, e.g. John clearly notes a post-Easter understanding (2:22; 12:16). (5) The writing of the synoptic accounts years later does not make the traditions suspect, for the “local color” was quite faithful to the times of Jesus. (6) The belief that the Jesus tradition came from the needs of the later church does not fit the “historicizing elements” that point to the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* rather than that of the later community. (7) The view that the community needs produced the traditions also does not fit the fact that later issues like circumcision or structures of authority are not found in the gospels. (8) The extensive use of proof from scripture goes back to Jesus himself not just to the early church. (9) We know the “form” of the Jesus tradition with a high degree of probability, e.g. his use of admonitions, beatitudes, parables; the old skepticism is unwarranted. (10) The idea of Christian prophets creating sayings is only a critical abstraction and is unprovable. (11) The presence of the miraculous and of supernatural intervention must be based on fact, for they would not have developed in a vacuum, as shown by the criterion of multiple attestation. (12) The “mythical motifs” (virgin birth, transfiguration, resurrection *et al.*) parallel other ancient stories (e.g. Alexander, Augustus), and historians are generally open to historical background behind such stories. (13) The negative criteria are being replaced by positive criteria centering on historical plausibility, with a new openness to the Jesus traditions in their historical context.

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<sup>50</sup> Catchpole, “Tradition History,” 172–174.

<sup>51</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 91–121.

Two major sets of publications led to a reappraisal of the data. In 1970 I. Howard Marshall launched the first of a series arguing that history and theology are interdependent rather than contradictory, stating that Luke “was a faithful historian who wished to give a faithful portrait of the ministry of Jesus and the life of the early church,” as seen in the fact that Luke “was very much controlled by his sources.”<sup>52</sup> So Luke was interested in real events and chose those that fit his message and reconstructed them into a holistic narrative, thus showing that for Luke biblical faith is rooted in the historical and cannot be separated from it.<sup>53</sup> Three other books followed in a similar vein on Mark (Ralph Martin), John (Stephen Smalley), and Matthew (R. T. France), arguing similarly that the theologically interpreted data in the gospels stem from historical facts rather than later creations.<sup>54</sup>

The second set is the six-volume *Gospel Perspective* series, published from 1980–86, summed up in Craig Blomberg’s *Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (1987). The series was written to explore the Jesus traditions in light of the negative conclusions of critical scholarship and addressed especially the question of the evangelists adding stories and sayings to the Jesus tradition. For instance, Richard Bauckham compares the gospel traditions with midrashic expansions and concludes that “the Evangelist’s traditions, however ‘midrashic’ his procedure may be, could be historical in origin.”<sup>55</sup> France finds no evidence of a tendency to “create history out of Scripture,” saying “to observe a process of theological interpretation is not at all the same as to postulate the development of new elements of narrative.”<sup>56</sup>

### 2.3. *The Interdependence of History and Tradition (1985 to the Present)*

The “third quest” for the historical Jesus departed from the skepticism of the first two quests both in utilizing Jewish background alongside

<sup>52</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), 9.

<sup>53</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 21–25, 32–37.

<sup>54</sup> Ralph Martin, *Mark—Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972); Stephen Smalley, *John—Evangelist and Interpreter* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978); R. T. France, *Matthew—Evangelist and Teacher* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989).

<sup>55</sup> Richard Bauckham, “The Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Pseudo-Philo and the Gospels as ‘Midrash,’” in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 67.

<sup>56</sup> R. T. France, “Postscript—Where Have We Got to, and Where Do We Go from Here?” in *Studies in Midrash*, ed., France and Wenham, 298.

Hellenistic<sup>57</sup> and in a new openness to the gospel traditions as historical data in their own right. The final thread of the dissimilarity criterion was broken, as Jewish background became a tool for discovering the historical Jesus. Theissen and Merz see three aspects:<sup>58</sup> (1) an interest in social history, centering on the “social continuity between the pre-Easter circle around Jesus and Christianity after Easter”; (2) the place of Jesus in Judaism, with Jesus preaching a “restoration eschatology” intended to restore the nation to God along with continuity between the historical Jesus and the kerygmatic Christ as “articulated with the help of the Jewish-biblical pattern of interpretation”; (3) attention to non-canonical sources, although with considerable debate as to whether the *Gospel of Thomas* and Q (so Crossan) are superior sources to the canonical gospels.

There were three precursors to the third quest: first the Jewish lives of Jesus were produced by Montefiore, Abrahams, and Klausner in the first half of the twentieth century and by Sandmel, Flusser, and Vermes in the second half. They singlehandedly forced attention back to the centrality of Jewish backgrounds for Jesus research.<sup>59</sup> Second, Ben Meyer’s *The Aims of Jesus* argued forcefully that both the event and its significance/theological relevance are the subject of historical enquiry, which should be conducted along the lines of critical realism as articulated by Bernard Lonergan, i.e. moving from hypothesis to verification and then validation. Meyer reversed the prevailing “methodological skepticism” and preferred the global supposition that the gospel accounts are historical.<sup>60</sup> He sought to study Jesus’ actions to ascertain his aims and purposes as a key to the historical Jesus. Third, A. E. Harvey believed that the Jesus of the gospels acted within his historical times and the forces of his day.<sup>61</sup> There is no narrowing of Jesus to Jewish eschatology or prophetic movements but a full-fledged examination of his life in light of his impact on the times in which he lived.

<sup>57</sup> For an informing portrayal of his odyssey from Hellenistic to Jewish background on the part of one of the pioneers, see W. D. Davies, “My Odyssey in New Testament Interpretation,” *BRev* 5 (1989) 10–18.

<sup>58</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 10–11.

<sup>59</sup> See Donald A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of the Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

<sup>60</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 78.

<sup>61</sup> A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History: The Bampton Lectures 1980* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 6–7.

The scholars who have contributed to the third quest are a veritable who's who in Jesus studies—Sanders, Theissen, Borg, Horsley, Brown, Bockmuehl, Meier, Witherington, Wright, Dunn, McKnight. I will center on perhaps the four most influential, with the goal to understand current attitudes toward historical Jesus research.<sup>62</sup> E. P. Sanders finds the negative criteria inadequate and demands that the Jesus traditions be placed within the context of Second Temple Judaism. In doing so he says, "We should trust this information unless we have good reason not to do so, that is, unless the stories in the gospels contain so many anachronisms and anomalies that we come to regard them as fraudulent."<sup>63</sup> He begins with the reality of Jesus' crucifixion and asks what kind of Jewish Jesus would cause him to be crucified by the Jewish leaders.<sup>64</sup> Then he turns to those events he believes are certain "facts" about Jesus' life—his baptism by John, that he was a Galilean preacher and healer, the calling of the twelve, confinement of his mission to Israel, his controversy over the Temple, his crucifixion, and the continuance of the movement by his disciples and Jewish opposition to them.<sup>65</sup> Next he examines other Jesus traditions to determine their fit with the Jesus phenomenon. For him the major theme is Jesus' "restoration eschatology," namely the renewal of the national hopes of Israel, not in terms of national repentance but in terms of the imminent inbreaking of the kingdom.<sup>66</sup>

John P. Meier creates an imaginary "unpapal enclave" of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and agnostic scholars in the basement of the Harvard Library, not to leave until they "have hammered out a consensus document on who Jesus of Nazareth was and what he intended in his own time and place."<sup>67</sup> He uses the criteria extensively but in a positive way to affirm historical traditions, arguing strongly that the primary sources are the canonical gospels themselves, including John. He accepts the three life-situations (material from Jesus, the early church, and the evangelists themselves), with decisions made via the criteria. He is generally more positive on results. For instance, on miracles he asserts that while

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<sup>62</sup> This does not mean there is a total consensus in a positive direction, as our discussion of the Jesus Seminar above shows. For one who still thinks the historical Jesus is beyond the purview of the historian, see Helmut Koester, "Redirecting the Quest for the Historical Jesus," *HTR* 23 (1993): 9–11.

<sup>63</sup> Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1993): 54.

<sup>64</sup> Idem, *Jesus and Judaism*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 116–119, 150–156.

<sup>67</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 1.

historical enquiry cannot state with certainty that a miracle occurred, it can affirm that Jesus performed extraordinary deeds that those around him called miracles. Still, Meier accepts to some extent the older separation of history from theology, as when he says the resurrection of Jesus is not open to historical enquiry.<sup>68</sup> Here another new quester, Ben Witherington, demurs, saying every aspect of the Jesus traditions must be historically examined, including Jesus' theological assertions (e.g. regarding his resurrection): "the quest for the historical Jesus... may also involve evaluating whether or not he made certain theological claims about his words, deeds, and person. History and theology in such a case cannot be neatly separated."<sup>69</sup>

N. T. Wright has made the most extensive study of the methodology used for historical Jesus research. For him the gospels were ancient biographies describing the life of the historical Jesus and for the most part were reliable. Like Ben Meyer, he proceeds on the basis of critical realism, i.e. the expectation that there is something "real" there that is accessible to the historian but that needs "critical examination" to ascertain the reliability of the individual Jesus tradition. He states there are three stages in the process: a hypothesis that is tested by critical reflection to see if the theory "can survive the challenge and speak truly of reality."<sup>70</sup> For Wright, traditions regarding his universal lordship, deity, and death "for many" are not just later creations but theological beliefs that must be explained historically. He does this by taking seriously the "world-view" of first-century Judaism as a clue to the mindset of Jesus himself.<sup>71</sup> Wright dedicates himself to six questions: Jesus' fit in Judaism, Jesus' aims and their consistency, why he died, the reason for the gospels as they are, and the impact of these questions for the contemporary church.<sup>72</sup> Through these questions he hopes to give an adequate portrait of the historical Jesus as constructed from the Jesus traditions.

Finally, James D. G. Dunn has begun an ambitious project entitled *Christianity in the Making*, with the first volume *Jesus Remembered*. He has a threefold goal: to explain Jesus' impact on his day and why he was

<sup>68</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1:13.

<sup>69</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 203.

<sup>70</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 32–37.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, *New Testament*, 38–44.

<sup>72</sup> Wright, *Victory of God*, 91–121.



crucified, to ascertain why the movement that emerged was unacceptable to the Judaism of his day, and to discover whether the second-century church was the same or different from the first-century version.<sup>73</sup> The methodology that Dunn establishes is similar to that of Wright. After a lengthy discussion of the inadequacies of the developing critical consensus (25–97), he establishes his own method, believing that hermeneutics is the third partner and the mediator between history and faith in Jesus research.<sup>74</sup> For him the task of historiography is to explain not only what happened but why it happened, and in determining both aspects it must remain at the level of probability rather than certainty. In this the principle of analogy must allow for the unusual, the extraordinary, in human experience, and there is room for the wondrous in Jesus. The closed-world nexus of Troeltsch and Bultmann is erroneous, and critical realism must be open to the larger world.<sup>75</sup>

For Dunn, hermeneutics provides the mode, for questions of history by nature involve interpretation. First, he challenges the postmodern view of the autonomy of the text, arguing for the “priority of plain meaning,” that is, language does portray reality, and there is a referential quality to texts. So the “reconstruction” of historical meaning depends on a probability decision regarding the data utilized.<sup>76</sup> To accomplish this Dunn utilizes the hermeneutical circle (though he prefers the metaphor of a conical spiral moving up to a verified decision) as the historian moves back and forth from the familiar contemporary horizon to the alien horizon of the text, sifting the evidence to determine the viability of the Jesus traditions for historical Jesus research.<sup>77</sup> So the historical Jesus “is the Jesus constructed by historical research,” seen through the memories of the eyewitnesses and writers of the Jesus narratives.<sup>78</sup>

### 3. *An Agenda for Tradition Criticism in Jesus Research*

The movement in tradition criticism has been a gradual replacement of the radical skepticism that predominated until the 1950’s with a cautious but studied optimism toward the historiographical study of the

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<sup>73</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 3.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 99–100.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–111.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 111–118.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 118–125.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 125, 130–131.

Jesus traditions. In spite of the diversity of conclusions on the part of the third questers (see above), they all view the gospel records as historical accounts in their own right to be analyzed as to their viability as Jesus traditions. This is an important phenomenon, for it represents a shift from the centrality of the later communities and their life-situation to the centrality of the historical Jesus in the social milieu of Second Temple Judaism. The *Sitz im Leben Jesu* and the *Sitz im Leben der Kirche* are not conflicting settings but part of a unified tradition, and the focus is shifting from creation to selection and coloring of the traditions by the evangelists. As Wright says, the first-century Jews/Christians “understood more about the real nature of history, that is, about the complex interaction of ‘event’ and ‘meaning,’ than has been grasped by the ardent proponents of ‘scientific history’ in comparatively recent times.”<sup>79</sup>

The task of the historian is to work with both event and interpretation in the Jesus traditions, carefully sifting the aptness/plausibility of each detail for the first-century situation. When studying the temptation narrative, one must judge not only the Matthean and Lukan additions to Mark (the three temptations) but also the interpretation in all three of the event as a cosmic battle in which Jesus proved himself “Son of God” by besting Satan in open combat. Thus we have to ascertain the probability of what happened and what it meant for the early church, without prior assumptions as to what may or may not be accepted.

The methodology is complex, beginning with a judicious use of the critical criteria to decide which of the traditions are more probable and fit the atmosphere of the first-century situation. In doing so, the historian must interact with the tradition as a whole, bracketing critical presuppositions and seeking an openness to all the data. Theological interpretation by the later church/evangelist is part of the historical record and must be judged on its own merits. For example, the awe of the crowds at Jesus’ miracles must be taken seriously as pointing to the extraordinary deeds of Jesus. This awe will explain why the leaders did not arrest Jesus sooner; they were afraid of the reaction of the crowds (Mark 12:12; 14:2). In this light as well let us consider the texts that portray Jesus’ self-consciousness of his death as an atonement “for many” (Mark 10:45 par.; 14:24 par.). Scholars regularly consider these to be later additions. Yet due to the possible Semitisms in the texts and the unusual place of these significant statements (if they were a later church logion

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<sup>79</sup> Wright, *People of God*, 122.

read back onto the lips of Jesus, one would expect the sayings to have much greater prominence in the Jesus story), a good case can be made for their authenticity.<sup>80</sup>

Contrary to the opinions of many, redaction and narrative criticisms are the ally of historical verification rather than its enemy, for they help to identify the editorial choices of the evangelist and the overall narrative strategy at the macro-level and thereby aid the historical process. By seeing how the evangelists used the traditions they inherited, the settings are made more evident and the validation process made more viable. For instance, if the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke are the same sermon (which is probable) then Matthew's "blessed are the poor in spirit" and Luke's "blessed are the poor" are redactional interpretations of the same logion spoken by the historical Jesus, stressing the spiritual and the economic sides, respectively. We are living in an exciting era for Jesus research, with a new honesty and openness to the whole panorama of Jesus material, and with a new methodology that takes the best of the past and weds it to the sociological discoveries of the present.

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<sup>80</sup> See Sidney Page, "The Authenticity of the Ransom Logion (Mark 10:45b)," in *Studies of History and Tradition*, ed. France and Wenham, 137-161.



# THE CRITERIA OF AUTHENTICITY

STANLEY E. PORTER

## 1. *Introduction*

The criteria of authenticity have established themselves within New Testament studies as the most widely used means by which material in the gospels—whether concerning the deeds or words of Jesus—are assessed as authentic.<sup>1</sup> By authentic is meant material that is thought to have originated with Jesus, or come as close as one can legitimately determine using the means at our critical disposal.<sup>2</sup> Despite the criteria having become widely accepted as the methodologically most responsible approach to assessing the authenticity of various episodes and sayings, there are still a number of issues that readily emerge when the criteria are subjected to critical scrutiny. This chapter will summarize some of the issues surrounding the criteria, including their development, their use in other historical disciplines, critical periods in treatment of the criteria, and assessments of the major criteria in use today.

## 2. *Development of the Criteria of Authenticity*

Most of the recent treatments of the criteria of authenticity take a synchronic, or even a-historical, view of the criteria, in which they are

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<sup>1</sup> This essay draws upon previous work, including: S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), esp. 63–123; “Luke 17.11–19 and the Criteria for Authenticity Revisited,” *JSHJ* 1.2 (2003): 201–224; “The Criterion of Greek Language and Its Context: A Further Response,” *JSHJ* 4.1 (2006); “Reading the Gospels and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,” in *Reading the Gospels Today*, ed. S. E. Porter (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 27–55, esp. 49–54; “A Dead End or a New Beginning? Examining the Criteria for Authenticity in Light of Albert Schweitzer,” in *Jesus Research: An International Perspective*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and P. Pokorný (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 16–35; “Methodological Reflections on Discerning Criteria for Obtaining Reliable Historical Information about Jesus,” in *Symposium on Jesus Research*, II [provisional title], ed. J. H. Charlesworth and P. Pokorný (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> See Porter, *Criteria*, 144; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 357 n. 30.

presented in synoptic form in order to be compared and contrasted.<sup>3</sup> As handy as such treatments may be in providing useful points of comparison among the criteria, such presentations have had the deleterious effect of bestowing on the criteria a universality and timelessness that simply cannot sustain critical analysis. The synchronic and synoptic presentations offer a variety of criteria that have originated in differing historical, literary and linguistic contexts and present them as all providing comparatively equal evaluative tools for assessment of Jesus tradition.<sup>4</sup> The result is that the important historical, cultural, theological,

<sup>3</sup> Some of the more important treatments include: W. O. Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Discussion of Methodology," *ATR* 51 (1969): 38–56; D. G. A. Calvert, "An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus," *NTS* 18 (1971–1982): 209–219; N. J. McLelene, "Authenticating Criteria and Mark 7:1–23," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 431–460; R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels*, *Studies in Creative Criticism* 4 (London: SPCK, 1972); F. Mussner, "Methodologie der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus," in *Rückfrage nach Jesus: Zur Methodik und Bedeutung der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, ed. K. Kertelge, QD 63 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 118–147, repr. in F. Mussner, *Jesus von Nazareth im Umfeld Israels und der Kirche: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. M. Theobald, WUNT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1999), 13–42; R. T. France, "The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus," in *History, Criticism and Faith: Four Exploratory Studies*, ed. C. Brown, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 101–143; R. H. Stein, "The 'Criteria' for Authenticity," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham, vol. I (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 225–263; R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981; 4th ed., 1994), 87–96; D. Polkow, "Method and Criteria for Historical Jesus Research," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards, SBLSP 26 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 336–356; S. McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels*, *Guides to New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 59–69; idem, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 42–45; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991–2009), 1:167–195, with useful bibliography on pp. 186–187 n. 7; C. A. Evans, *Jesus*, *IBR Bibliographies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992), 52–67; idem, *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*, rev. ed., NTTS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 127–146; idem, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 13–26 (these three reflect his earlier article, "Authenticity Criteria in Life of Jesus Research," 24 *CSR* 19 [1989]: 6–31); idem, "Life of Jesus," in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. S. E. Porter, NTTS 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 427–475, esp. 441–446; J. Gnillka, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann (1993; ET: Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 20–22; D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 4–6; J. Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. J. R. Crouch (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 13–15; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 81–83 and passim; idem, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 65–67; B. Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 26–29. This is far from a complete list.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (1974; ET: New York: Seabury, 1979), 62–100, bibliography 88–90; F. Lentzen-Deis, "Kriterien für die historische Beurteilung der Jesusüberlieferung in den Evangelien," in *Rückfrage nach*

linguistic and related factors involved in their development are often overlooked, or even dismissed. Those treatments of the criteria that place them within their historical context at least provide the opportunity for diachronic analysis that appreciates the contexts in and out of which the criteria developed.

In many ways, the highpoint in the utilization of the criteria for authenticity can be traced to the rise of German form criticism.<sup>5</sup> The result of such a linkage, as well founded as it is, is that two incongruous results are often put forward. One of these is the linkage of the criteria of authenticity to twentieth-century historical Jesus research, and the other is linkage of the rise of development of criteria to a purported low point in historical Jesus research, often referred to as the “no quest” period.

In response to this formulation, I treat the second result first. Recent historical Jesus research has tended to periodize the quest for the historical Jesus into several distinct epochs. These include: the original or first quest for the historical Jesus (the so-called *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*) from around 1778–1906, begun by Hermann Reimarus and terminated by Albert Schweitzer’s history of research; the no-quest period from 1906–1953, from the time of Schweitzer until Ernst Käsemann’s lecture delivered before the Marburgers; the new or second quest from 1953–1988, beginning with Käsemann and continuing until N. T. Wright’s pronouncement of a third quest; and the third quest from 1988 to the present, begun with Wright’s pronouncement and continuing to the present.<sup>6</sup> As more and more scholars are recognizing, this periodization of the quest of the historical Jesus is untenable and belied by all of the

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*Jesus*, ed. Kertelge, 78–117, esp. 81–93; M. E. Boring, “The Historical-Critical Method’s ‘Criteria of Authenticity’: The Beatitudes in Q and Thomas as a Test Case,” *Semeia* 44 (1988): 9–44, esp. 9–12, cf. 12 n. 8; G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. E. Boring (1997; ET: Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), esp. 1–171; Porter, *Criteria*, 63–123.

<sup>5</sup> See Porter, *Criteria*, 56–57. As this essay illustrates, I wish to modify my position somewhat, recognizing that the criteria reached their highpoint in the form-critical period, even though many of them were developed before then.

<sup>6</sup> See Porter, *Criteria*, 28–62, for discussion of this periodization, often represented in the secondary literature. The major publications are: H. S. Reimarus, *Reimarus: Fragments*, ed. C. H. Talbert, trans. R. S. Fraser (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970); A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (1906; ET: London: A. & C. Black, 1910); E. Käsemann, “The Problem of the Historical Jesus,” in his *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague, SBT 41 (London: SCM, 1964), 15–47; S. Neill and T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379.

pertinent facts.<sup>7</sup> These facts most importantly include the observations that, seeking after Jesus began long before Reimarus and has continued in an unbroken fashion today; if there were such a no quest period as is supposed, it only applied to a small group of German scholars; and rather than quests, there has been continuous writing about Jesus of Nazareth, from different and varied but constant perspectives. The rest of the scholarly world, including those in Britain, France, the Netherlands, the United States and elsewhere, continued to write about and explore the life and teachings of Jesus even during the so-called no-quest period. In fact, the no-quest period was not even an unproductive period for German form-critics of the time, as treatments of Jesus by such worthies as Rudolf Bultmann, K. L. Schmidt and Martin Dibelius so clearly illustrate.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the criteria are not necessarily to be linked to a depressed period in historical Jesus research, but continued to be developed during a time of continued study of Jesus.

In regard to the first result, one must recognize that the criteria are in fact not linked to the development of form criticism for their formulation and inception, but perhaps only for the development of some of the criteria. The standard treatments of the criteria, for example, cite the formulation(s) of Norman Perrin regarding the criterion of double dissimilarity.<sup>9</sup> However, it is important to notice that there were earlier proponents of such a criterion of dissimilarity. These include not only Käsemann and before him Bultmann, who are also cited by some

<sup>7</sup> Besides Porter, *Criteria*, see W. P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); D. C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 2–4, 23–25; cf. W. O. Walker, “The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Discussion of Methodology,” *ATR* 51 (1969): 38–56; R. J. Banks, “Setting ‘The Quest for the Historical Jesus’ in a Broader Framework,” in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 61–82, esp. 61; J. Reumann, “Jesus and Christology,” in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae (Philadelphia: Fortress 1989), 501–564, esp. 502, 504–505; S. E. Fowl, “Reconstructing and Deconstructing the Quest of the Historical Jesus,” *SJT* 42 (1989): 319–333; C. Brown, “Historical Jesus, Quest of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. Green, S. McKnight, and I. H. Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 326–341, esp. 334–335; T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), esp. 346–347.

<sup>8</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. L. P. Smith and E. Huntress (1926; ET: New York: Scribners, 1934); K. L. Schmidt, “Jesus Christ,” in *Twentieth Century Theology in the Making*, vol. 1, *Themes of Biblical Theology*, ed. J. Pelikan, trans. R. A. Wilson (London: Collins, 1969), 93–168, ET: of RGG III, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1929), cols. 110–151; M. Dibelius, *Jesus*, trans. C. B. Hedrick and F. C. Grant (1939; ET: Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949).

<sup>9</sup> E.g., Evans, *Life of Jesus Research*, 136; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 81–82; cf. McKnight, *Jesus and his Death*, 42–45, who invokes but does not actually cite Perrin. See N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, NTL (London: SCM, 1967), 39–43, esp. 39.



scholars, but before them Wilhelm Heitmüller (Bultmann's teacher), H.J. Holtzmann, Schweitzer (not mentioned by Theissen and Winter), Paul Schmiedel, David Friedrich Strauss, and Reimarus, as far back as Martin Luther.<sup>10</sup> In other words, rather than being a twentieth-century formulation, the criterion of dissimilarity can be traced back through many of the significant figures in historical Jesus research, and even earlier back to the Reformation itself. Similar observations can be made for other criteria that continue to be used. The criterion of Semitic language phenomena—including the issue of the language that Jesus spoke—goes back to the sixteenth century in studies by Johann Widmanstadt and Joseph Scaliger, and continuing forward to the work of Arnold Meyer, Gustaf Dalman, C. F. Burney, C. C. Torrey, Matthew Black, Joachim Jeremias, and more recently Maurice Casey, Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans, among others.<sup>11</sup> Though the criterion of least distinctiveness is usually traced to the first proponents of form criticism—e.g. Schmidt, Dibelius and Bultmann, followed by Vincent Taylor<sup>12</sup>—its origins go back earlier to those who first differentiated folk literature and attempted to characterize it, such as Hermann Gunkel in Old Testament studies, and before him back to the eighteenth century in Homeric studies.<sup>13</sup> The criterion of multiple attestation or the cross-section method was not first developed by German scholarship and in any case preceded the development of form criticism in the work first of F. C. Burkitt.<sup>14</sup> The

<sup>10</sup> All cited, along with others, in Theissen and Winter, *Quest*, 261–316. See also Schweitzer, *Quest*, 11, discussed in Porter, “Examining Criteria.”

<sup>11</sup> See Schweitzer, *Quest*, 270–277; S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*, SBG 1 (New York: Lang, 1989), 111–112; idem, *Criteria*, 89–99. See my chapter on Greek Language Criteria in this volume.

<sup>12</sup> See K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch, 1919); M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. B. Woolf (1919; ET: London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934); R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh (1921; Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd ed., 1968); and V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1933).

<sup>13</sup> H. Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*, trans. W. H. Carruth (1901; ET: New York: Schocken, 1964). It is interesting to note that around 1900 theories regarding the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* being composed of a number of definable “lays” were prominent, derived from the theories of F. A. Wolf (1795) (see R. C. Jebb, “Literature,” in *A Companion to Greek Studies*, ed. L. Whibley [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905], 89–162, esp. 96–97 [note that one of the other proponents of the “lay” hypothesis was Karl Lachmann]). By 1930, such theories had passed out of fashion, so that the two classic epics were considered the work of a single individual (see R. C. Jebb and A. T. Sinclair, “Literature,” in *A Companion to Greek Studies*, ed. L. Whibley, 4th rev. ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930], 117–189, esp. 124–125), a theory that has held sway to the present.

<sup>14</sup> F. C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), esp. 147–168.

criterion of embarrassment, though usually attributed to Käsemann, was earlier formulated by Schmiedel.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, composite criteria—whether double similarity (Wright) or historical plausibility (Theissen and Winter)<sup>16</sup>—while perhaps new in their particular formulation, can be seen as originating in the individual criteria that compose them.

### 3. *Use of the Criteria in Other Historical Disciplines*

The widespread use of the criteria of authenticity, and their origins throughout the development of biblical studies, including much earlier than the modern study of the historical Jesus, suggests a number of considerations. One is how these criteria relate to the criteria of historical study used in other historical studies of the ancient world. Without pretending to have made a complete study of ancient historiography and its methods, I can say that it appears that one of the major observable facts regarding the criteria of authenticity and their use in historical Jesus research is that they are essentially confined to use within this discipline, rather than finding acceptance outside the field of New Testament studies.<sup>17</sup> In his study of the philosophy of history, William Dray does not introduce the criteria as known in historical Jesus studies, even though they may have been supportive of his anti-positivist stance, and he does mention religious approaches to history.<sup>18</sup> Two treatments of historical method also do not mention the criteria. David Bebbington's analysis of modern historiography, including presentation of five different historical methods, does not invoke the criteria, even though he purports to offer a Christian view of the discipline.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to Bebbington's more British approach to the subject, David Potter offers an American perspective on Roman history, including mention of the gospels.<sup>20</sup> However, he does not mention the criteria of authenticity. In fact, though he does not mention them, several of the criteria seem to

<sup>15</sup> P. W. Schmiedel, "Gospels," in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 4 vols., ed. T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black (London: A. & C. Black, 1899–1907), II (1901), cols. 1761–1898, esp. 1881–1883.

<sup>16</sup> On these, see below.

<sup>17</sup> One of the best articles on this topic remains A. R. Cross, "Historical Methodology and New Testament Study," *Themelios* 22.3 (1997): 28–51.

<sup>18</sup> W. Dray, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1964); cf. idem, *Laws and Explanation in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

<sup>19</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *Patterns in History: A Christian View* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> D. S. Potter, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian* (London: Routledge, 1999), 144–145.

violate the kinds of historians' fallacies that David Fischer has brought to the attention of historians.<sup>21</sup> These include (and some are discussed further below) the criterion of double dissimilarity possibly violating the fallacy of many questions (e.g. by asking two questions at once, begging the question, or framing a complex question that requires a simple answer) or of contradictory questions (e.g. when the two distinctives create an anomaly of a human unsuited to any world);<sup>22</sup> the criterion of least distinctiveness violating the reductive fallacy in demanding a linear approach to the development of literary forms, or generalization;<sup>23</sup> and the Semitic language criterion having potential problems in question framing, including question begging or creating a false dichotomy.<sup>24</sup>

As noted above, however, New Testament scholars have not been the only ones to study Jesus. There have also been secular historians who have undertaken to write about the life of Jesus. What is noteworthy is that their criteria for discussing Jesus often vary significantly from those of the theologians. Three examples I have come across make this point very well. The first treatment is by the well-known classical historian, T. R. Glover. Glover was a trained classical historian whose academic career was spent entirely within this field;<sup>25</sup> nevertheless, he also wrote upon such topics as Paul and Jesus, as well as the development of early Christianity. In his book on Jesus, entitled *The Jesus of History*,<sup>26</sup> he makes some statements about method in historical research: "There are three canons which may be laid down for the study of any human character, whether of the past or of to-day." Glover says that "They are so simple that it may hardly seem worth while to have stated them; yet they are not always very easy to apply." They are well worth stating, if for no other reason than the contrast they make with criteria in historical Jesus studies. "First of all," he states, "give the man's words his own meaning."<sup>27</sup> He applies this to moderns and ancients. "It is not easy to dissociate the language and the terms of others from the meaning one gives to them oneself; it means intellectual effort and

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<sup>21</sup> D. H. Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 34.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 172–175.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–12.

<sup>25</sup> See the biography by H. G. Wood, *Terrot Reaveley Glover: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

<sup>26</sup> T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History* (London: SCM, 1917). My copy is from 1931, by which time 110,000 had been printed.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

intellectual discipline, a training of a strenuous kind in sympathy and tenderness; but if we are to be fair, it must be done.”<sup>28</sup> This statement is predicated upon Glover’s view of how to handle ancient sources. He says that “the distinction between Christian and secular writers is not one that will weigh much with a serious historian. Until we have reason to distinguish between book and book, the evidence must be treated on exactly the same principles. To say abruptly that, because Luke was a Christian and Suetonius a pagan, Luke is not worthy of the credence given to Suetonius, is a line of approach that will most commend itself to those who have read neither author.”<sup>29</sup> We see already a difference in emphasis between Glover and the studies of others. “The second canon is: Make sure of the experience behind the thought.”<sup>30</sup> Concerning Jesus, he says we must ask the question “What is the experience that leads Jesus to speak as he does, to think as he does?” For Glover this is “What has he found in God? what relations has he with God? what does he expect of God? what is God to him?”<sup>31</sup> There is no mention of Judaism, Hellenism, Greek or Roman thought in Glover’s analysis. “The third canon will be: Ask of what type and of what dimensions the nature must be, that is capable of that experience and of that language.”<sup>32</sup> Here Glover pushes the interpreter to look behind the account to the person who motivated it. Glover’s approach points to the fact that much contemporary historical Jesus study is less about Jesus than it is about the environment in which he lived. It is not a study in the life of a person, but in the examination of purported teachings and events interpreted in the light of their internal and external relations with each other, and within a restrictive environment in which they purportedly occurred. There is a clear favoring of one particular kind of environment for comparison, one that is clearly related to theological criteria for exploration, both in terms of distinguishing Jesus from Judaism and the early church, that is, his contemporaries and his followers, without as much regard for Jesus as the historical person who lived, acted and spoke within the ancient world.

A second classical scholar is Robin Lane Fox. In his *The Unauthorized Version*,<sup>33</sup> Lane Fox analyzes the entire Bible, and as a result makes

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<sup>28</sup> Glover, *Jesus*, 19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Robin Lane Fox, *Truth and Fiction in the Bible* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

comments on the New Testament, and in particular the gospels and their accounts of Jesus. Besides the fact that he arrives at what would be seen by New Testament scholars as unorthodox or at least unusual conclusions,<sup>34</sup> Lane Fox utilizes a method for analysis that is untypical for historical Jesus studies but fully at home within classical studies. Lane Fox is less explicit about his criteria for historical discovery than is Glover, instead utilizing a method that is much more positively inclined. When he is discussing details in John's gospel, Lane Fox notes that "until he [i.e. John's gospel] is disproved, I am content to assume that his assumption here [regarding entering Pilate's residence] was correct."<sup>35</sup> Concerning Jesus' trial, Lane Fox establishes a "secure minimum" on the basis of the actions depicted in the gospels on which they all agree. Then he builds upon this minimum: "We can compare the four Gospels' accounts and give particular credit to facts or sayings on which agreement is most significant: one interesting test is also to look for agreements between the Gospels which are otherwise the least closely related, John and Luke, for instance, or even John and Matthew. Another method is to compare the 'secure minimum' with our knowledge of other 'criminals' who confronted Romans in Judaea before the war of 68–70," such as Josephus.<sup>36</sup> Lane Fox's method of proceeding, rather than being minimalistic and attempting to work the material down to an established core works in the other direction. He finds a means of establishing a secure minimum and then builds positively from this to a fuller account. If anything, this resembles the criterion of coherence, but Lane Fox, to my knowledge, does not use this terminology. Instead, he is much more reliant upon placing the New Testament material within its larger cultural and historical context, with the gospel sources being used as one would use other ancient texts.

A third classical scholar to consider is Michael Grant. After writing on a wide range of topics regarding the ancient world, it was inevitable that he would write a book on Jesus.<sup>37</sup> In an appendix on what he calls "Attitudes to the Evidence," he recognizes some of the difficulties in study of Jesus and the gospels—but has important words of advice for New Testament scholars. He states that "The extraction

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<sup>34</sup> E.g., Lane Fox believes that John's gospel was written by the "disciple whom Jesus loved" and "is historically the most valuable" of the gospels. See Lane Fox, *Unauthorized Version*, 205.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>37</sup> M. Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Scribners, 1977).

from the gospels of evidence about the life and career of Jesus is a singularly difficult, delicate process.” He emphasizes the need to develop method apart from direct work on the gospels: “Students of the New Testament, it has been suggested, would be well advised to study other, pagan fields of ancient history first—because they are easier! For the study of the highly idiosyncratic gospels requires that all the normal techniques of the historian should be supplemented by a mass of other disciplines, though this is a counsel of perfection which few students, if any, can even begin to meet.”<sup>38</sup> Grant gives a short synopsis of the kind of method that he envisions for the study of documents such as the gospels: “When, for example, one tries to build up facts from the accounts of pagan historians, judgment often has to be given not in the light of any external confirmation—which is sometimes, but by no means always, available—but on the basis of historical deductions and arguments which attain nothing better than probability. The same applies to the gospels. Their contents need not be assumed fictitious until they are proved authentic. But they have to be subjected to the usual standards of historical persuasiveness.”<sup>39</sup> Grant’s comments are noticeably consistent with those of Glover and Lane Fox, in which there is an acknowledgment of taking the religious and secular sources on the same level, judging the material in terms of its persuasiveness, and assessing words and events in terms of probabilities.

Grant then evaluates some of the traditional criteria usually used in gospel studies. Besides his placing this discussion in an appendix at the end of the book, what is interesting to note is first his beginning with the traditional criteria of authenticity, but then his move to a set of criteria that seek to find continuity and consistency, and that are in fact quite different from those of the traditional criteria. In a way, Grant’s criteria emerge out of, only to depart from, the standard criteria. Multiple attestation he dismisses as “valueless since the evangelists demonstrably shared so much material from common sources.” The related criterion of “multiple forms” he similarly labels as “not very decisive,” since stories can be traced to a single source.<sup>40</sup> He does not mention double dissimilarity, but does accept that the criterion that rejects “all material which seems to be derived from the days of the Christian Church as it existed after his death” qualifies as the “prin-

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<sup>38</sup> Grant, *Jesus*, 197.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

cial valid method of research.”<sup>41</sup> He interprets this criterion in terms of what he calls “surprises,” which sounds more like the criterion of embarrassment. However, what investigation of Jesus really boils down to for Grant, like Glover, is the character of Jesus and how it stands out from his environment: “the personality that emerges is so forceful and individual and satisfying” and it “conflicts” with what one might have expected the church to produce.<sup>42</sup> Grant cites Moule, who states that what comes through the gospel tradition “without exception” is a “remarkably firmly-drawn portrait of an attractive young man moving freely about among women of all sorts, including the decidedly disreputable, without a trace of sentimentality, unnaturalness, or prudery, and yet, at every point, maintaining a simple integrity of character.”<sup>43</sup> For Grant, the study is really about Jesus, and who he is. Grant thus concludes that “The consistency, therefore, of the tradition in their pages suggests that the picture they present is largely authentic.”<sup>44</sup> This is a radically different conclusion than the one often drawn by historical Jesus scholars. Nevertheless, it is one that gives credence to the primary sources and focuses upon the major historical character.

One of the constants that emerges from this discussion is the need for historians to create a coherent narrative about Jesus, one that integrates the various elements of his words and deeds into a communicative portrait. These historians are in effect arguing for what Harris has called an “integrationist perspective” to history, in which “words are neither labels for things nor labels for ideas, but integrated components of creative communicational endeavours.”<sup>45</sup> This would appear to offer the type of linguistic basis for successful historical writing, and a test against which the criteria invoked might be evaluated.

#### 4. *Critical Periods in Treatment of the Criteria*

In a section above, we discussed the development of the criteria, and noted that their development does not follow the pattern typically used to describe them as originating with form criticism. Like the history

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<sup>41</sup> Grant, *Jesus*, 202.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>43</sup> C. F. D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1967), 63–65.

<sup>44</sup> Grant, *Jesus*, 204.

<sup>45</sup> R. Harris, *The Linguistics of History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 170. See my appropriation of Harris in Porter, “Methodological Reflections.”

of development, the history of discussion of the criteria of authenticity has progressed in various ways. One can see that there are at least four significant critical periods in treatment of the criteria by scholars.

The first period includes the time during which most of the criteria were developed. As noted above, a number of criteria were developed independently and individually. Perhaps the oldest in widespread and continuous use was various forms of the criterion of dissimilarity, which goes back at least to the time of Luther, and was used in various forms by many of the major figures in historical Jesus research, such as Reimarus, Strauss, Schweitzer, Bultmann, Käsemann and others, up to the present. Other criteria developed independently as well. These include: the criterion of Semitic language and features, which dates to the sixteenth century, but saw increased development in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, with such figures as Meyer, Dalman, Burney, Black and Jeremias, up to the present; the criterion of least distinctiveness, which dates back to classical and especially Homeric, and then Old Testament, studies before entering New Testament studies with the form critics such as Schmidt, Dibelius, Bultmann, and Taylor; the criterion of embarrassment, which dates back to Schmiedel at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and continues through Käsemann to the present; the criterion of multiple attestation or independent traditions, which was formulated near the beginning of the twentieth century by Burkitt and developed further by Dodd; the criterion of coherence or consistency, which dates to the rise of form criticism with such scholars as Bultmann.

Whereas the development of these criteria seems to have proceeded independently at first, the next stage in their development seems to have been the conscious use of multiple methods by a number of scholars. For example, Schmiedel linked both what we would now call the criteria of dissimilarity and embarrassment through his definition of nine "foundation-pillars for a truly scientific Life of Jesus," pillars which were unlikely to have been created by the post-Easter church (thus both were dissimilar and potentially embarrassing to it).<sup>46</sup> Bultmann included at least three criteria in his treatment of the synoptic tradition: the criterion of least distinctiveness with regard to the literary forms,

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<sup>46</sup> Schmiedel, "Gospels," col. 1881; cf. cols. 1881–1883: about Jesus in general: Mark 10:17–18; Matt 12:31–32; Mark 3:21; Mark 13:32; Mark 15:34 = Matt 27:46; on Jesus' miracles: Mark 8:12 = Matt 12:38 = Luke 11:29; Mark 6:5–6; Mark 8:14–21; Matt 11:5 = Luke 7:22. See also P. W. Schmiedel, *The Johannine Writings*, trans. M. A. Canney (London: A. & C. Black, 1908), 25–30.



the criterion of dissimilarity in terms of the similitudes of Jesus, and the criterion of coherence or consistency with regard to Jesus' logia and his eschatological perspective<sup>47</sup>—though not together in one place. Käsemann directly linked the use of the criterion of dissimilarity and of embarrassment:

In only one case do we have more or less ground under our feet: [1] when there are no grounds either for deriving a tradition from Judaism or for ascribing it to primitive Christianity, and [2] especially when Jewish Christianity has mitigated or modified the received tradition, as having found it too bold for its taste.<sup>48</sup>

Perrin brought together multiple attestation and coherence, and then the criterion of dissimilarity at the end of the process of reconstructing the tradition history of Jesus.<sup>49</sup>

The third stage in developing the criteria was that of amalgamating and sifting. During this time many of the standard synoptic treatments of the criteria were produced, most of them attempts at bringing as many of the criteria together as possible into a definitive, if not necessarily coordinated list. A number of these treatments of the criteria—e.g. Walker, McEleney, Stein, Boring, Meier (five credible and five dubious) and Evans—had essentially ten criteria each.<sup>50</sup> However, there were other numbers as well. Barbour had four, McKnight had six, Evans had six, eight (six credible and two dubious) or nine criteria, depending on the treatment, Schillebeeckx had nine (five credible and four invalid); Calvert had eleven, and Polkow in his treatment began with a grand total of twenty-five criteria, from which he narrowed this list down to three primary and three secondary criteria (besides two preliminary).<sup>51</sup> One can see that there is some agreement among scholars, but still room for debate.

In an attempt to sort through some of this, as a part of the third stage, the process of determining primary and secondary criteria was developed by a number of scholars. Some of those worth noting are as

<sup>47</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 6, 205, 105.

<sup>48</sup> Käsemann, "Problem," 36–37.

<sup>49</sup> Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 15–49.

<sup>50</sup> Walker, "Quest," 38–56; McEleney, "Authenticating Criteria," 431–460; Stein, "Criteria," 225–263; Boring, "Historical-Critical Method's 'Criteria of Authenticity,'" 9–12; Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 167–195; Evans, *Jesus*, 52–67.

<sup>51</sup> Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism*, 3–5; McKnight, *Interpreting the Synoptic Gospels*, 59–69; Evans, "Life of Jesus," 441–446; idem, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 13–26; idem, *Life of Jesus Research*, 127–146; Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 88–100; Calvert, "Examination," 209–219; Polkow, "Method," 336–356.

follows. Schillebeeckx decided for the following five: (1) embarrassment or against the redactional tendency (traditions included “willy-nilly”), (2) double dissimilarity (dual irreducibility); (3) multiple attestation or cross-section; (4) coherence or consistency; and (5) Jesus’ execution.<sup>52</sup> Polkow arrived at three primary—(1) dissimilarity, (2) coherence, and (3) multiple attestation—and three secondary—(4) Palestinian context, (5) style (Semitic features) and (6) scholarly consensus.<sup>53</sup> Meier determines that there are five primary criteria: (1) embarrassment, (2) dissimilarity (discontinuity), (3) multiple attestation, (4) coherence, and (5) rejection and execution.<sup>54</sup> Evans, finally, notes six criteria: (1) historical coherence (Jesus’ rejection and execution), (2) multiple attestation, (3) embarrassment, (4) dissimilarity, (5) Semitisms and Palestinian background, and (6) coherence.<sup>55</sup> The sifting and sorting indicate that there are a number of criteria that are open for discussion. However, it is also significant to note that only three criteria are found in all four of these lists—(1) dissimilarity, (2) multiple attestation, and (3) coherence.<sup>56</sup> It is also significant to note that a number of criteria that are often invoked in historical Jesus research, even by some of the scholars most deeply involved in the discussion, do not make this essential list.<sup>57</sup>

A fourth stage is what in effect amounts to a reconceptualizing of the criteria from the negative orientation of previous study to what is at least an attempt at a more positive formulation. Wright formulates what he calls the criterion of “double similarity”: “when something can be seen to be credible (though perhaps deeply subversive) within first-century Judaism, and credible as the implied starting point (though not the exact replica) of something in later Christianity.”<sup>58</sup> Wright

<sup>52</sup> Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, 88–98. I use language more familiar to recent discussion, but include his language in parentheses. The invalid criteria are: (1) linguistic or cultural context (i.e., Semitic language and environmental features); (2) distinctive character of the parables; (3) formulae, such as “truly, truly,” etc.; and (4) use of *Abba* (98–100).

<sup>53</sup> Polkow, “Method,” 346–355. He also has two preliminary criteria: discounting redaction and discounting tradition (342–346).

<sup>54</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 168–177. He renders as secondary or dubious: (1) traces of Aramaic, (2) Palestinian environment, (3) vividness of narration, (4) developing synoptic tradition (least distinctiveness), and (5) historical presumption (178–183).

<sup>55</sup> Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 13–24. He labels the following as dubious: (1) least distinctive features, and (2) proleptic eschatology (14–25).

<sup>56</sup> These are the three criteria that Theissen and Merz say that historical Jesus research has “orientated itself on” (G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. J. Bowden [London: SCM, 1998], 115).

<sup>57</sup> Perhaps most noteworthy are: Semitic language features (see my chapter on Greek Language Criteria in this volume for further discussion), and least distinctiveness in terms of literary forms.

<sup>58</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 131–133, at 132.

defines this complex criterion in terms of answering five “questions”: (1) “Jesus fits believably into first-century Judaism”; (2) his purpose is one of “regrouping Israel”; (3) he will draw “hostility” for his actions “from the Temple authorities,” but if “the Romans hear of a major renewal movement among the Jews, they too will want to stamp it out”; (4) Jesus’ vindication indicates the arrival of the kingdom; and (5) the story is told in “theologically consistent” terms.<sup>59</sup> Though Wright attempts to recast his double criterion in terms of a positive outcome, it is predicated upon knowing and recognizing dissimilarity—being subversive in relation to first-century Judaism and not being a replica of the early church. Even his five questions imply dissimilarity in at least three of them. Theissen and Winter, similarly, have created what they call the “criterion of historical plausibility.” This criterion consists of what they term “four partial criteria,” one set of factors revolving around coherence/agreement and incoherence/disagreement, and the other around plausibility of influence and context. Thus their four-fold criterion includes: (1) “plausible coherence of influence,” (2) “plausible influence contrary to the tendency,” (3) “correspondence of context,” and (4) “individuality of context.”<sup>60</sup> Theissen and Winter acknowledge drawing upon criteria of multiple attestation and resistance to the tradition (a form of the criterion of coherence) in formulating their criterion of historical plausibility.<sup>61</sup> Thus in these reformulations, Wright’s is simply a toned-down form of the criterion of double dissimilarity, in which he attempts to mediate degrees of difference and similarity. Theissen and Winter are similar in their conception of a set of criteria that mediate the criterion of dissimilarity by introducing multiple attestation and a form of the criterion of coherence. Thus, even in these reformulations the three criteria mentioned above continue to exert their influence.

##### 5. *Assessment of the Criteria Used in Current Historical Jesus Research*

This concluding section assesses the most prominent criteria that are currently in use in historical Jesus research, although it is beyond the scope of this treatment to engage in widespread and detailed comment. Assessment as the concept is used here has at least two senses. One is

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 132.

<sup>60</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Quest*, 172–201, for initial definition. I use the summary found in Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 116–118, esp. 118 for quotations.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, 116–117. See also S. E. Porter, Review of *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, *JETS* 47.3 (2004): 507–510, esp. 509–510.

in terms of assessing the place that a given criterion occupies within historical Jesus research in relation to the other criteria; another is assessing the criterion itself in terms of its being a valid criterion.

Concerning the first, as noted above, there has been a lengthy development and refining process of the criteria of authenticity in historical Jesus research. If there are as many as twenty-five criteria that have been suggested (as Polkow derives on the basis of study of a number of predecessors), then one of the major developments within historical Jesus research is that of narrowing down and refining the criteria that are used. Three criteria have emerged as predominant: (a) dissimilarity, (b) multiple attestation and (c) coherence or consistency. There are several immediate implications of these results. One of the major implications is that the other criteria have not found anything close to universal acceptance. This means that criteria such as embarrassment, Jesus' arrest and execution, and especially Semitic language and context criteria, among potentially many others, have not commanded anything like widespread assent. A second is that even the attempts at reformulation of the criteria have not necessarily fared any better in devising criteria that command widespread acceptance—especially as they are dependent upon the previously developed criteria, including and most especially the three criteria noted above.

The second sense of assessment raises the question of the individual validity of each of the three criteria that have emerged as supposedly the most useful, in the light of what has been discussed above. I offer brief comments that summarize previous scholarly discussion.<sup>62</sup>

### 5.1. *Criterion of Dissimilarity*<sup>63</sup>

The criterion of dissimilarity originated with the attempt to distinguish authentic material because of its difference from either the developing church or early Judaism. It eventually became associated with double dissimilarity, that is, difference from both the early church *and* Judaism. The negative nature of the criterion, however, means that some continue to use it only in a singular form, in particular, dissimilarity to the early

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<sup>62</sup> That scholarly discussion is found in a variety of places, including the works noted above, especially in notes 1, 2, and 3. I refer below to my treatment in *Criteria*. However, my articles, "Examining Criteria" and "Methodological Reflections," contain further developments of my thought on the various criteria.

<sup>63</sup> See Porter, *Criteria*, 70–76.

church, since similarity of Jesus to the Judaism of his day is thought by some as a necessary assumption to have a plausible and understandable Jesus.<sup>64</sup>

This criterion has been criticized on a number of fronts. (1) This is a negative criterion in that it does not suggest authentic material but simply fails to endorse material by comparison to the early church and Judaism. In this sense, if the purpose of history is that of providing a narrative accounting of the past, which is done by creating an integrated scenario of communicative episodes, as Harris endorses, then the criterion of double dissimilarity—and single dissimilarity also—constitutes at best a highly limited method for gathering evidence and providing a sufficient basis for such an account, but is at worst completely misleading in its depiction. Further, this criterion cannot be used negatively, that is, a saying or event is not proven to be inauthentic by failure to be endorsed by this criterion. These are only some of the logical problems suggested for this criterion.<sup>65</sup> (2) This criterion addresses generic words and actions, rather than specific words and actions, because the point of comparison is what is known of the early church and Judaism. Hence this criterion also ends up equivocating over the meaning of the notion of dissimilar, and disputes degrees of difference, rather than differences in kind. (3) This criterion depends upon exhaustive—and some would argue currently inadequate—knowledge of the early church and Judaism. (4) The criterion fails to address how Jesus related to the Greco-Roman world of the time, confining itself to Judaism and the early church. (5) The minimalist Jesus that is delimited by this criterion is not a representative Jesus meaningfully related to either Judaism or the early church, but is one who verges on being incomprehensible and unintelligible in his environment, in part because there is too little of him. (6) This criterion is, ironically, a form of Christian dogmatics in the guise of objectivity, because it posits the uniqueness, originality and difference of Jesus.<sup>66</sup> (7) This criterion adds nothing in its dual form concerning Judaism, and may in fact have little to nothing to do

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<sup>64</sup> E.g., B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 86.

<sup>65</sup> On the logical problems of this criterion, see T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 47–80, esp. 54–56.

<sup>66</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 115.

with the question of authenticity itself.<sup>67</sup> (8) This positivistic criterion commits the fallacies of what Fischer calls “many questions,” or, perhaps even more likely, “contradictory questions,” as noted above.<sup>68</sup>

### 5.2. *Criterion of Multiple Attestation or Cross-Section Method*<sup>69</sup>

This criterion, developed first outside the bounds of German form criticism, takes two forms. One is in terms of multiply attested independent traditions (Burkitt), and the other is in terms of multiple forms (such as aphorisms, parables, dialogues, miracle stories, poetical sayings, and the like; Dodd).<sup>70</sup>

This criterion, though widely used, has also garnered criticism. (1) This criterion has the major problem of defining what constitutes a source or independent form. The usual sources of historical investigation constitute integral sources in their own right, but in historical Jesus research the sources are sub-sources within larger sources. (2) As a result, the criterion may be subject to question begging as one posits independent sources for the purpose of attestation. (3) This criterion is better at indicating general events and the content of sayings than it is in determining what was actually done or said on a given occasion, because there may be discrepancies between episodes within the sources. (4) There is the question of defining the amount of difference between sources in order to determine whether a given episode or saying constitutes the same one as another. (5) This criterion is often linked to a particular theory of gospel origins, usually with Mark as the first gospel and the others in some way related to it. As long as this is accepted as a working assumption, the criterion may be invoked, but if this assumption is not held the criterion is left without a foundational basis. Even with an agreed theory of gospel origins, however, there are disputes over what constitute sources and their relations, and whether these can be used to establish multiple attestation. (6) Multiple attestation can indicate an earlier source, but it cannot necessarily indicate authenticity, by definition, as the common source is simply an earlier source, not the earliest.

<sup>67</sup> Holmén, “Doubts,” esp. 74–78.

<sup>68</sup> Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 8, 34.

<sup>69</sup> Porter, *Criteria*, 82–89.

<sup>70</sup> See C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935), 26–29; idem, *History and the Gospel* (London: Nisbet, 1938), 91–102, although he attributes the method to E. Hoskyns and N. Davey, *The Riddle of the New Testament* (London: Faber & Faber, 1931), 162–207.

Therefore, this criterion is dependent upon other criteria to determine whether an earlier source is authentic.<sup>71</sup>

### 5.3. *Criterion of Coherence or Consistency*<sup>72</sup>

The criterion of coherence or consistency probably refers to two closely related notions, the one being coherence and the other consistency. Nevertheless, they are usually used without differentiation. The criterion appears to go back to the early days of form criticism, and claims that material that coheres with other authentic material is itself authentic.

This criterion continues to be widely used, but is subject to a number of shortcomings. (1) This is not a criterion of authenticity, but is a derivative criterion that depends on other criteria of authenticity, as it cannot establish authenticity independent of a coherent or consistent relationship. (2) This criterion, as a result, functions in relation to the criterion of dissimilarity, and hence is subject to some of the same strictures noted above.<sup>73</sup> (3) The use of this criterion invokes difficulty in defining what constitutes coherence or consistency, and how much legitimate variation is allowed before two episodes or statements no longer cohere. One could well argue that coherence demands that all material in the gospels be accepted, because they were placed in the gospels by an author/redactor who believed that the material, at least on some level, was coherent. (4) This criterion can be applied to non-historical sources as well as historical ones, and thus provides no differentiation between authentic and inauthentic material. Fictional texts may be expected to be at least as coherent or consistent as non-fictional texts.

## 6. *Conclusion*

The criteria of authenticity will probably continue to be widely used in historical Jesus research. In the light of what has been said above, whether this should be the case or not is a highly debatable point. There are a number of factors that indicate that the criteria are not as firm as is sometimes indicated in reading various treatments of the historical Jesus. These factors include the observation that these criteria are

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<sup>71</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 115.

<sup>72</sup> Porter, *Criteria*, 79–82.

<sup>73</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 115.

particular and peculiar to historical Jesus study. This is not a problem in and of itself, except that it puts the discipline at odds with other historical disciplines with common goals and objectives. More attention perhaps ought to be given to developing historical methods that are at least on similar conceptual platforms with other ancient studies disciplines. Another factor is that there is a range of discussion of the criteria, but that only three criteria appear to be at the heart of most treatments. Much interpretive weight is being put on these criteria, and therefore further scrutiny is in order to ensure that they are able to deliver the results that are demanded of them. A third observation is that the three major criteria that have emerged in recent discussion are not necessarily coordinated with each other. They are thus unable to deliver the kinds of results that are consistent with each other and that deliver the necessary results for establishing a firm foundation for historical Jesus research.



## ALTERNATIVES TO FORM AND TRADITION CRITICISM IN JESUS RESEARCH

TOBIAS NICKLAS

The birth of a critical awareness of the problems involved in research into the historical Jesus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries<sup>1</sup> necessarily entailed the discussion of the criteria which make it possible to construct a reliable picture of the “historical Jesus” that is as “objective” and methodologically viable as possible. Much of twentieth-century Jesus research found a central point of reference (viewed either positively or negatively) in the criterion of difference or dissimilarity, the “critical principle of selection” which was formulated on the basis of German form and tradition criticism by Ernst Käsemann in his debate with Rudolf Bultmann. In his lecture on the “Problem of the Historical Jesus,” which has become a “classic” text, Käsemann said:<sup>2</sup>

We have fairly certain ground under our feet only in one single case: when, for whatever reasons, a tradition can neither be derived from Judaism nor ascribed to earliest Christianity, especially when Jewish Christianity found the tradition which it had taken over to be excessively audacious and either toned it down or altered the point.

Scholars believed that the application of this criterion would make it possible to discern a minimal amount of “genuine” tradition about Jesus, around which one could then group other elements of the Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> Important names here are H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768) and D. F. Strauß (1808–1874). On the methodological approaches of these two scholars and for further information, cf., e.g., G. Theissen and A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 22–24. In his historical review, J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 17–24, begins as early as the Renaissance.

<sup>2</sup> This lecture was held in 1953 and published in the following year: E. Käsemann, “Das Problem des historischen Jesus,” *ZThK* 51 (1954): 125–153, here 144; cf. also idem, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen 1* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 187–214. One of the best known formulations of the criterion in English is by N. Perin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 71: “Material may be ascribed to Jesus only if it can be shown to be distinctive to him, which usually will mean dissimilar to known tendencies in Judaism before him or the church after him.”

tradition as historically reliable, with the help of further criteria such as the “criterion of coherence.” At least from the perspective of German-speaking research, it can be affirmed that Käsemann’s ideas prompted a flood of studies of the “historical Jesus.”<sup>3</sup> But I believe that the criterion of dissimilarity has made a wider impact on the investigation of the historical Jesus, and that it profoundly influences the “third phase” too, since a great deal of the new work can be seen, if one so chooses, as a countermovement to the criterion of dissimilarity.<sup>4</sup> Käsemann emphasizes the singularity of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth, which he distinguishes from the traditions about ancient Judaism and earliest Christianity (and above all from Jewish Christianity, which is implicitly disqualified in this context)—this, however, ultimately means that this figure loses all historical relevance.<sup>5</sup> To a large extent, we can understand the driving force behind the “Third Quest” as the recognition that the historical Jesus can be grasped only as a part of his own world, i.e. as a man embedded in the history of Jewish and Christian tradition.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Historians of research tend to call this phase the *New Quest*, after the *No Quest* phase which began with the collapse of *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*. On this, cf., e.g., N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 21–25. For a critical view of the customary division into historical phases, cf. S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 91 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 28–62.

<sup>4</sup> A critical analysis and discussion of the criterion of dissimilarity can be found in a large number of recent publications. Cf., e.g., T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 47–80; D. S. du Toit, “Der unähnliche Jesus: Eine kritische Evaluierung der Entstehung des Differenzkriteriums und seiner geschichts- und erkenntnistheoretischen Voraussetzungen,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 89–129 (with bibliography). The development of this theme by G. Theissen and D. Winter against the background of questions of social history is very important: *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) (with a detailed overview of the history of research).

<sup>5</sup> As long ago as 1974, F. Mußner, “Methodologie der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus,” in *Jesus von Nazareth im Umfeld Israels und der Urkirche*, WUNT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 13–42, wrote: “We must note that a human being acquires his own profile not only by distinguishing himself from the surrounding world, but also by identifying with this world” (27). The same point is made even more clearly by M. Ebner, *Jesus von Nazaret in seiner Zeit: Sozialgeschichtliche Zugänge*, SBS 196 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 17: “When the criterion of dissimilarity is applied, we discern the outlines of an historical Jesus who made by definition no abiding impact on earliest Christianity—and who appears to have no roots in Judaism.”

<sup>6</sup> A good example here is the development of the so-called “criterion of plausibility” by Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*.

Attempts are made on various levels today to “re”-construct this world: the numerous approaches by means of social history, the dialogue with the results of archaeological investigations, the embedding of Jesus in Judaism and in the Hellenism of his time, are all attempts to do this.<sup>7</sup> This means that although the two phases of research tackle the problem in an antithetical manner, they ultimately have one thing in common: they are concerned to evaluate traditions about Jesus of Nazareth which are linked to the Jewish and Christian history of tradition (whether they seek to distinguish him from this tradition, or to integrate him into it). Besides this, irrespective of the particular phases in the history of research, the criteria of “coherence” and of “multiple attestation” continue to play an enormous role in the quest for the historical Jesus. Both are closely connected with questions about the history of tradition:

*First*, the “criterion of coherence” presupposes the existence of a certain amount of Jesus tradition, which is regarded as authentic on the basis of other criteria (especially that of dissimilarity). Other material which can be judged consistent with the authentic material can likewise be accepted as authentic.<sup>8</sup>

*Secondly*, where affirmations about words or deeds of Jesus of Nazareth are made in mutually independent sources in a similar or closely comparable manner, it is highly probable that these sources have recourse to old traditions. The more numerous and older these independent traditions (handed on in as great a variety of forms as possible) are,<sup>9</sup> the more likely it is that the affirmations genuinely contain authentic material about the historical Jesus. We need not discuss in detail the

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<sup>7</sup> G. Theissen and A. Merz offer an impressive sketch of the trajectories linking social-historical questioning and the classic skepticism of form and tradition criticism: “Der umstrittene historische Jesus. Oder: Wie historisch ist der historische Jesus?” in Theissen and Merz, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 3–32, esp. 8–9.

<sup>8</sup> On this, cf. the classic formulation by N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 43: “Material which is consistent with, or coheres with, material established as authentic by other means may also be accepted.” This criterion must not be applied negatively. Its implicit assumption that all the deeds and words of an historical person must display an inner coherence is problematic, since this is contradicted by the possibility of the inner development of a personality and above all by the idea that identity and personality do not necessarily exclude contradictory and incoherent elements.

<sup>9</sup> C. H. Dodd was the first to point out the significance of the transmission in a variety of forms: *History and Gospel* (New York: Scribners, 1937), 91–101. Dodd constructed a specific criterion on this basis, but this is usually applied in connection with the “criterion of multiple attestation.”

methodological problems of this criterion, which has the potential to uncover the salient features which run through the activity of the historical Jesus (e.g. his concern for the societal outsiders) and which can supply arguments for the authenticity of specific logia of Jesus (down to the details of vocabulary) which may be stronger than those supplied by other criteria. Let me only mention that this criterion is obliged to build upon literary hypotheses and reconstructions of sources. The least disputed of these is the synoptic question; but in many fields, there is no general consensus among scholars.<sup>10</sup>

In both phases, therefore, the investigation and evaluation of the history of tradition is a central anchor in the quest for the historical Jesus. It is around this that the historical constructions are made. This, however, becomes a problem once it is recognized that the attempt to go behind an existing form of written texts to inquire about their development within the tradition (and from there, to evaluate stages of tradition which one has established as a working hypothesis) is extremely problematic from a methodological point of view.<sup>11</sup> This naturally prompts the question whether one is fully justified in speaking of alternatives to form and tradition criticism in the quest for the historical Jesus, since at any rate the most important of the criteria which scholars discuss in this quest are more or less closely connected to the questions posed by tradition criticism.<sup>12</sup> However, other dimensions of methodological work should certainly not be neglected.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the question of the literary relationship of the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas* to the canonical gospels remains a matter of intense debate. On the problems which arise in this context, cf., e.g., T. Nicklas, "Fragmente christlicher Apokryphen und die Textgeschichte des Neuen Testaments," *ZNW* 96 (2005): 129–142. Nor is any consensus in sight in the question of the literary relationship between John and the synoptics. For a detailed overview, cf. M. Labahn and M. Lang, "Johannes und die Synoptiker: Positionen und Impulse seit 1990," in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums: Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, ed. J. Frey and U. Schnelle, WUNT 175 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 443–515.

<sup>11</sup> T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 26, writes: "The traditio-critical analysis working backwards from a text's present form to an earlier tradition is often most hazardous. There are no general 'laws' of how a tradition might develop. Traditions can either grow or become shorter, they can gain tensions or be smoothed, details can be added or reduced. Semitic features may appear and disappear."

<sup>12</sup> In this context, cf. the interesting thesis of J. D. G. Dunn, "All that glitters is not gold! In Quest of the Right Key to Unlock the Way to the Historical Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 131–161, esp. 147–156. He sees the key to the path to the historical Jesus in a realistic assessment of the Jesus tradition. For

## 1. *The Language(s) of the Historical Jesus*

### 1.1. *Attempts to Reconstruct Aramaic “Pre-Forms” of Greek Logia of Jesus*

The gospels are written in Greek; and for a long time, it was assumed that the language of the historical Jesus was Palestinian (more precisely, Galilean) Aramaic. The attempts to use alleged or genuine Aramaisms in the texts of the New Testament, above all the gospels, to reconstruct Aramaic or even Hebrew sources which would originally have preserved the original words spoken by Jesus himself have met with very little success.<sup>13</sup> However, many scholars have looked at least in some individual logia for traces which point to original Aramaic forms.<sup>14</sup> Where the texts either contain individual Aramaic words or can be translated back into Aramaic, scholars have concluded with a large measure of certainty that this must be at least very old, if not indeed authentic material going back to the historical Jesus.<sup>15</sup>

One of the best known examples, which illustrates both the hermeneutical presuppositions for the application of the criterion and its link to the criterion of dissimilarity, is the address of God as *Abba*, which

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more detail, cf. his reflections on the history of tradition in idem, *Jesus Remembered*, 139–336.

<sup>13</sup> As far as I know, the most nuanced approaches in recent scholarship to the reconstruction of Aramaic sources behind the synoptic gospels are offered by M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, SNTSMS 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), with an elaborate methodology in seven steps (cf. 73–110), and idem, *An Aramaic Approach to Q: Sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, SNTSMS 122 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), with modifications to the methodological approach used in the first volume (60–63).

<sup>14</sup> M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), has been particularly influential. The German translator, G. Schwarz, who has likewise published several studies related to this question, asks a rhetorical question which is typical of this approach: “If it is true—and there is no need to doubt it—that Jesus primarily spoke Aramaic, Galilean western Aramaic, in his public preaching, in the instruction of his disciples, in the controversies with his enemies, and in his prayer to God, then ought it not to be a matter of course that one goes back to the Aramaic when investigating the Gospels?” M. Casey offers a detailed overview of research in his *Aramaic Sources*, 1–72.

<sup>15</sup> For example, J. Jeremias expected great things of this method. In his influential book *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 21, he wrote: “Jesus spoke Galilean Aramaic. The translation of his words into Greek, which began at an early date, necessarily means that in many cases the meaning... was displaced. This is why the translation of the parables back into Jesus' mother tongue is a fundamentally important, indeed perhaps the most important instrument for the recovery of their original meaning.”

survives in Aramaic at Mark 14:36. An interpretation of this address which remains popular even today was put forward and widely diffused above all by Joachim Jeremias in the second half of the twentieth century: the word *abba* was used by a child when addressing his father intimately.<sup>16</sup> According to Jeremias, in the Judaism of Jesus' days there is no evidence of such an address of God, and it would have been unthinkable. Jeremias thus emphasizes the allegedly fundamental difference between the way in which the historical Jesus addressed God and that of his Jewish contemporaries, thereby also stressing the distinctiveness of Jesus' relationship to God; he also emphasizes the significance of this form of address as "the very heart of Jesus' relationship to God."<sup>17</sup> This uniqueness led Jeremias to infer the authenticity of this address.<sup>18</sup> He writes:<sup>19</sup>

A Jew would have found it irreverent and therefore unthinkable to address God with this intimate family word. It was something new and unheard-of when Jesus dared to take this step. He spoke with God as simply, intimately, and confidently as a child speaks with its father.

The probability that the historical Jesus addressed God as *Abba* can no doubt be demonstrated, but the consequences which Jeremias deduces from this, and the implications of his argumentation, are no longer tenable today, for two reasons.

*First*, Jeremias's theses have been revised, at least in part, on the linguistic level.<sup>20</sup> The form can indeed be explained as a vocative, and the Greek New Testament offers the earliest evidence of the concept in a

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<sup>16</sup> J. Jeremias, *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 63–64, protests against the idea that the text merely reproduces the babbling utterance of a small child.

<sup>17</sup> J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, vol. 1, *Die Verkündigung Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1971), 73. Cf. also on the same page: "It is in the address of God as *Abba* that the ultimate mystery of Jesus' mission finds expression. He was conscious of being authorized to communicate the revelation of God, because God had made himself known to Jesus as Father (Matt 11:27 par.)."

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jeremias, *Abba*, 59: "In the Jewish prayer literature, there is not one single piece of evidence that God was addressed as *Abba*. But Jesus... always addressed God in this way. This is therefore a completely unambiguous characteristic of the *ipsissima vox Jesu*." A similar view is taken by F. Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum*, FRLANT 83 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 320.

<sup>19</sup> Jeremias, *Abba*, 63. Cf. the similar remarks by O. Cullmann, *Das Gebet im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 54–56.

<sup>20</sup> For a critical position, cf., e.g., G. Schelbert, "Sprachgeschichtliches zu 'Abba,'" in *Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy: Études offertes à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire*, ed. P. Casetti et al., OBO 38 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

vocative sense, but this fact does not permit us to say how much earlier this vocative occurred in Palestinian Judaism. It is also important to note that the form *abba* may not simply be equated with the intimate address of a father by his child (“Daddy”).

*Secondly*, the idea that the address of God as “my Father,” which is attributed to Jesus, is not attested in ancient Judaism, or even that this is unthinkable, has since been refuted by examples which prove the opposite.<sup>21</sup>

We may sum up: the argumentation combines elements from the history of language and from the history of tradition, but it is viable only on the basis of an historically untenable negative picture of ancient Judaism—which until a few decades ago was usually called “late Judaism” and was alleged to have moved far away from its origins by the time of Jesus and to have become “rigid.” This picture is employed as the backdrop to the portrayal of Jesus’ relationship to God.<sup>22</sup>

In principle, one further aspect of the criterion of dissimilarity can be discerned in the search for authentically Aramaic words of Jesus: the “genuine” historical Jesus in his language and environment must be separated from the Greek narrative world of the evangelists and from the linguistic world of the earliest Christians to whom we have access. This makes this criterion extremely problematic *per se*; nor are its presuppositions tenable, for the following reasons.

*First*, even if it could be proved that one particular logion was originally transmitted in Palestinian Aramaic, this would not entitle us to

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Ruprecht, 1981), 395–447; J. A. Fitzmyer, “*Abba* and Jesus’ Relation to God,” in *According to Paul: Studies in the Theology of the Apostle* (New York: Orbis, 1993), 47–63.

<sup>21</sup> Fitzmyer, “*Abba*,” 55, writes: “When he [i.e., Jeremias] writes, ‘For Jesus to address God as “my Father” is therefore something new,’ he is no longer right. It would be better formulated, however thus: There is no evidence in the literature of pre-Christian or first-century Palestinian Judaism that *‘abbā*’ was used in any sense as a personal address for God by an individual Jew—and for Jesus to address God as *‘abbā*’ or ‘Father’ is therefore something new.” For a brief overview, cf. also, e.g., M. Philonenko, *Das Vaterunser: Vom Gebet Jesu zum Gebet der Jünger* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 38–42.

<sup>22</sup> This is why it is scarcely surprising that the earliest representatives of this particular exegesis included authors who were closely linked to the National Socialist ideology. One example is G. Kittel, art. ἄββα, *ThWNT* 1 (1933): cols. 4–6, esp. 6: “Jewish linguistic usage shows how the early Christian relationship to God, like that between a father and his child, far surpasses the possibilities of intimacy which were established in Judaism, and replaces these with something new.” Cf. the illuminating essay by W. A. Meeks, “A Nazi New Testament Professor Reads His Bible: The Strange Case of Gerhard Kittel,” in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. H. Najman and J. H. Newman, *JSJSup* 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 513–544.

conclude that it goes back to the historical Jesus—since he was not the only person who spoke that language. And not even the early date of the tradition would be attested, since our evidence for the existence of a Palestinian Christianity in which Aramaic was spoken is not limited only to the earliest and early periods.<sup>23</sup>

*Secondly*, the inference from the mere fact (a) that a logion transmitted in Greek can be translated back into Aramaic to the affirmation (b) that it first existed in an original Aramaic version is logically unacceptable. We may however with some degree of probability assume that a logion has Semitic roots when it is possible to explain the incomprehensibility of a Greek text on the hypothesis that it has been incorrectly translated from Aramaic.<sup>24</sup> A relatively high probability exists also in logia where an Aramaic version reveals plays on words to which nothing in the Greek corresponds.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, even here we must always ask whether a process within the Greek can account for the genesis of the logion.<sup>26</sup>

*Thirdly*, the possible existence of Semitisms in New Testament Greek is answered much more cautiously today than even only a few decades

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<sup>23</sup> On this, cf. Justin's testimony to persecutions of Christians at the period of the Bar Kokhba war (132–135): *1 Apol.* 31.5–6; and the later testimony of Eusebius: *Hist. Eccl.* 4.5–6.

<sup>24</sup> On this, cf., e.g., M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 107, where he discusses the word ἐπιβολών in Mark 14:72.

<sup>25</sup> One such example may be the logion at Matt 23:24 in the context of the discourse against the Pharisees: ὀδηγοὶ τυφλοὶ, οἱ διυλίζοντες τὸν κόνωπα, τὴν δὲ κάμηλον καταπίνοντες. On this, cf. M.-J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, ÉtB (Paris: Gabalda, 1947), 447; he does not infer any further-reaching conclusions about the authenticity of the logion from this possibility. It is just as likely to have its genesis in early Christian polemic as on the lips of the historical Jesus. This indicates a second problem. The meaning of the logion clearly changes, depending on whether it is spoken by the historical Jesus, by a Palestinian Judaeo-Christian, or after the separation from the synagogue! At least in the last case (but not in the first two), we would have to understand it as “anti-Jewish.”

<sup>26</sup> One extreme example: in P. Oxy. V 840, the fragment of an unknown gospel, lines 32–35, Jesus accuses his opponent, the Pharisaic chief or high priest, of having washed in stagnant waters in which “dogs and swine” lie by day and night. Since it is difficult to interpret this accusation, it has been proposed that the text can be explained on the basis of a translation error (in this case from Hebrew). However, it is obvious that the resulting hypothesis—viz. that the original text spoke of “cuttlefish and thorns”—contributes nothing to a clarification of the meaning. Cf. however A. Sulzbach, “Zum Oxyrhynchus-Fragment,” *ZNW* 9 (1908): 175–176, esp. 176. Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 40–55, offers a critical discussion of a large number of examples, most of which certainly deserve to be taken more seriously.



ago.<sup>27</sup> Many linguistic forms which were once explained as Semitisms can be plausibly accounted for without the hypothesis of a translation from Hebrew or Aramaic.<sup>28</sup> We must therefore assume that in many instances the sheer delight in discovery has led scholars all too quickly to trace Greek texts back to their alleged Aramaic roots.

Above all, however, two of the basic assumptions which are implicit in this thesis are false:

*Fourthly*, this criterion is based on the idea that the formation of tradition in earliest Christianity began in a more or less uniform manner in a Palestinian Judaeo-Christian group which spoke Aramaic and was centered on the “earliest community” in Jerusalem, and that it was only from some specific point in time onwards that translations of various units of this tradition were made into Greek. This idea is untenable, not because we must assume that Judaeo-Christian tendencies survived for a lengthy period in Palestine and elsewhere, but primarily because we cannot assume that there was ever a time when the Jesus tradition was transmitted exclusively in Aramaic.<sup>29</sup> It is more likely that both lines of tradition ran alongside one another (and influenced one another) from the very beginning. This is closely connected to the following point:

*Fifthly*, the source material which is at present available indicates that Greek (and doubtless Latin too, though to a lesser extent) played a

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Study of the Aramaic Background of the New Testament,” in *The Semitic Background to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 5: “Semitism can be abused and can turn out to be a weasel-word. . . . It is obviously legitimate to use it in a generic sense to refer to Jewish or Old Testament traditions or to expressions which are clearly different from classical or Hellenistic Greek, but which are common to both Aramaic and Hebrew.”

<sup>28</sup> In principle, this does not contest the *de facto* occurrence of Semitisms. Methodologically, however, the Greek of the New Testament (or more precisely, *koinè* Greek) should not simply be measured against the grammar of classical Greek. This is emphasized by T. J. Kraus, *Sprache, Stil und historischer Ort des zweiten Petrusbriefes*, WUNT 2.136 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 44–50. For further information on the problem of Semitisms in the New Testament, cf. the classic studies by K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament*, vol. 1, *Satzlehre* 1, SUNT 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968); and M. Wilcox, “Semitisms in the New Testament,” *ANRW* II 25.2 (1984): 979–1029. For a critical view, cf. G. H. R. Horsley, “The Fiction of ‘Jewish Greek,’” *NewDocs* 5 (1989): 5–40, esp. 26–37. T. J. Kraus emphasizes the importance of being aware of the problems: “Grammatisches Problembewusstsein als Regulativ für angemessene Sprachbeurteilung—das Beispiel der griechischen Negation und 2Petri,” *FN* 14 (2001): 87–99, esp. 87–89, 94, 98–99.

<sup>29</sup> We prescind here from the further problem of the exact linguistic form of Aramaic which we may suppose Jesus of Nazareth to have spoken. For further details, cf. A. Piñero and J. Peláez, *The Study of the New Testament: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Tools for Biblical Study 3 (Leiden: Deo, 2003), 122–126 (with bibliography).

much greater role in the Palestine of Jesus' period than scholars had long assumed.<sup>30</sup> With some degree of probability, therefore, we can assume not only that the historical Jesus understood Greek, but that—at least in certain situations of his life, e.g. in the trial before Pilate—he also made active use of this linguistic knowledge.

### 1.2. *Lexical and Rhetorical Characteristics of the Language Used by Jesus?*

P. Pokorný has made a suggestion with regard to the language used by the historical Jesus.<sup>31</sup> He begins with the independent transmission of Jesus traditions in sources that are as early as possible.<sup>32</sup> Basically, his strategy is to link this with the criterion of dissimilarity (although the latter is not explicitly mentioned); he speaks of the “innovation of well known traditions and ideas” by Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>33</sup> Within this material, Pokorný now elaborates lexical and rhetorical linguistic characteristics of the logia of Jesus. He does not believe that it is possible “to identify the textual segments which reflect the Greek” of Jesus himself, and he dismisses the idea of “reconstructing the oldest Aramaic stratum of the discourses of Jesus.”<sup>34</sup> Instead, he concentrates on traces of the language

<sup>30</sup> Among older scholarship, this problem is discussed by J. N. Sevenster, *Do You Know Greek? How Much Greek Could the First Jewish Christians Have Known?* NovTSup 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1968); J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD,” *CBQ* 32 (1970): 501–531; and H. B. Rosén, “Die Sprachsituation im römischen Palästina,” in *Die Sprachen im Römischen Reich in der Kaiserzeit*, ed. G. Neumann and J. Untermann, *BoJ* 40 (Cologne: Rheinland-Verlag, 1974), 215–239. For the more recent period, cf. especially the essays by S. E. Porter, “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?” *TynBul* 44.2 (1993): 199–235; “Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 123–154; and “The Functional Distribution of Koine Greek in First-Century Palestine,” in *Diglossia and Other Topics in New Testament Linguistics*, ed. S. E. Porter, JSNTSup 193 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 53–78. Cf. also J. M. Watt, “The Current Landscape of Diglossia Studies: The Diglossic Continuum in First-Century Palestine,” in *Diglossia and Other Topics*, 18–36, esp. 25–34.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. P. Pokorný, “Lexikalische und rhetorische Eigentümlichkeiten der ältesten Jesustradition,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 393–408. An older study argues on the same lines as Pokorný: H. Schürmann, “Die Sprache des Christus: Sprachliche Beobachtungen an den synoptischen Herrenworten,” *BZ* 2 (1958): 54–84. Schürmann attempts to identify characteristics of the idiolect of Jesus on the basis of the synoptic logia.

<sup>32</sup> He counts texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas* or the apocryphal fragments of P. Oxy. 840, P. Oxy. 1224, and P. Egerton 2 among these sources: cf. Pokorný, “Eigentümlichkeiten,” 394.

<sup>33</sup> Pokorný, “Eigentümlichkeit,” 394; other secondary criteria are “frequency and congruence.”

<sup>34</sup> Both quotations: Pokorný, “Eigentümlichkeit,” 395.

of Jesus which are discernible even in translation—surely not the most tangible of criteria. In his essay, Pokorný takes his starting point in Jesus' phrase "the kingdom of God" (which he believes goes back to the historical Jesus himself),<sup>35</sup> and he looks for characteristic turns of phrase and ideas linked to this (e.g. "the drawing near of the kingdom" or "entering into the kingdom").<sup>36</sup> The argumentation on the theme of "faith" shows how Pokorný proceeds here:<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, Jesus... employed derivatives from the root  $\text{יָדַע}$ , and indeed himself formed a new expression from these derivatives: 'of little faith' or 'the condition of having little faith' which stuck out (so to speak) when they were translated into Greek, just like the address 'Abba.' In this case, the first Hellenistic Christians translated the concept by means of a newly formed Greek word:  $\text{ὀλιγόπιστος}$ ,  $\text{ὀλιγοπιστία}$  (Luke 12:28 par. [Q]; Matt 8:26; cf. Mark 4:40 [Mk]; Matt 14:31 [special Matt]; 16:8 [?]).

Here, the linguistic investigation in the context of the quest for the historical Jesus is linked to the use of the criterion of dissimilarity. Accordingly, we cannot speak in this context of an alternative to the questions posed by tradition criticism; at most, perhaps, we could speak of a complement or of a special perspective.

### 1.3. *The "Criterion of Greek Language and its Context"*

Unlike the above-mentioned authors, S. E. Porter turned the old criterion "upside down" and detached it from the criterion of dissimilarity in his monograph *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*, published in 2000. Porter describes Jesus as a person with an active knowledge of the Greek and Aramaic languages, as well as possibly of Hebrew (actively or passively) and Latin (passively).<sup>38</sup> This is the basis on

<sup>35</sup> Basically, he infers this with the help of the criterion of dissimilarity: cf. Pokorný, "Eigentümlichkeit," 396.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Pokorný, "Eigentümlichkeit," 395–398. Other observations refer to the concepts of "belief—'having little faith'" (398–399), the "metaphorical interpretation of the basic metaphor" of "the kingdom of God" (399–401), "intensifications" (401–404), and "proverbs" (404–405).

<sup>37</sup> Pokorný, "Eigentümlichkeit," 398. Unfortunately, no information is provided here to back up Pokorný's linguistic argumentation. Are the concepts of  $\text{ὀλιγόπιστος}$  and  $\text{ὀλιγοπιστία}$  really *hapax legomena* in the linguistic field of the Greek New Testament (as is affirmed by W. Bauer, *Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ad loc.)? Is anything corresponding to these concepts known in the Aramaic of Jesus' period—and if not, why not?

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Porter, *Criteria*, 134.

which he constructs his “criterion of Greek language and its context”<sup>39</sup> in order to investigate whether particular characteristics of episodes in the New Testament texts permit the inference that the participants in the scene or the events related or the subjects discussed are connected to a Greek-speaking context of the scene in question. In other words, given the historicity of a scene, is there a strong likelihood that Greek was spoken in this scene, or not?<sup>40</sup> Porter proposes a step-by-step process involving the following questions:

First, *when the gospels relate a dialogue, which persons take part? How strong is the likelihood that this dialogue was conducted in Greek?* It is not very likely that Jesus spoke Greek in a dialogue with Jews in Jerusalem, but in the case of Jews outside Palestine, it is clearly more probable that dialogues were in fact conducted in Greek. And in the case of Roman officials, we can scarcely assume that they had a (sufficient) knowledge of Aramaic.<sup>41</sup>

Secondly, *in what context are the participants speaking, and what is the topic?* Here, the attempt is made to establish a link between the subject of a conversation and the possibilities of speaking about this topic in Greek.<sup>42</sup>

Third, *is it conceivable that the words of Jesus in this context are authentic?* Here, one can also employ the old criteria such as multiple attestation and the “embarrassing tradition.”<sup>43</sup>

Porter himself identifies seven episodes in the canonical gospels in which a Greek linguistic context is to be expected, or where words of Jesus are transmitted (Matt 8:5–13 par. John 4:46–54; John 4:4–26; Mark 2:13–14 par.; Mark 7:25–30 par.; Mark 12:13–17 par.; Mark 8:27–30 par.; Mark 15:2–5 par.).<sup>44</sup> Naturally, this does not constitute proof of the authenticity of these scenes, but it opens up the possibility that the Greek logia of Jesus transmitted in these scenes may in fact be *ipsissima verba* of the historical Jesus—in their original linguistic form, without the barrier of a translation. Porter writes:<sup>45</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Porter, *Criteria*, 126–140.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 142–143.

<sup>41</sup> For greater detail, cf. *ibid.*, 144–154 (with examples).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 155–157.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 157–158.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 158.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

This criterion of Greek language constitutes an important means of beginning discussion of whether the Greek words of Jesus in a passage are authentic, but it cannot on its own determine whether the words recorded are the exact words of Jesus... This, therefore, is a general criterion that delimits episodes that capture the authentic flavour of the words of Jesus, not a specific criterion that establishes the actual wording. Nevertheless, this criterion can expand the perspective for the discussion of the criteria in an attempt to determine the weight of probability that Jesus spoke Greek on a given occasion, and that the words recorded were in fact something similar to those in the Gospel accounts.

On its own, the criterion which Porter formulates in this way does not suffice to permit a decision whether an authentic logion of Jesus is transmitted in one particular New Testament text; nor does it seek to do so. Rather, this criterion seeks to clarify whether a text satisfies the conditions for the *potential* transmission in the original language of the logion of Jesus which it contains. In Porter's view, it is only other criteria that can decide whether or not an *ipsissimum verbum* is present. One of these criteria is connected with the variations of transmission in the textual history; another lies on the level of language, viz. the "criterion of discourse features" (for both of these, see below).<sup>46</sup>

## 2. *Textual Criticism and the Historical Jesus*

The reconstruction of historical figures of classical antiquity is made more difficult by the problem of the numerous refractions or differences between the flesh-and-blood person himself, the events linked to his life, the sources which speak about him or about these events, and the perspective of the historian. It is true that most of these problems can already be found when one studies historical figures of the modern period; but the greater the distance from the figure himself, the more must we assume a loss of potential sources. Similarly, we must reckon to

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Porter, *Criteria*, 210–237. In this discussion, Porter builds on his earlier work on discourse analysis in Greek biblical texts. On this, cf., e.g., idem, "Discourse Analysis and New Testament Studies," in *Discourse Analysis and Other Topics in Biblical Greek*, ed. S. E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNTSup 113, Studies in New Testament Greek 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 14–35; and the essays in S. E. Porter and J. T. Reed, eds. *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, JSNTSup 170, Studies in New Testament Greek 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). Cf. also J. T. Reed, "Discourse Analysis," in *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, ed. S. E. Porter, NTTS 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 189–217.

a greater degree with the likelihood that the *surviving* sources no longer correspond to the *original* sources, but have been changed in a great variety of refractions in the course of an extremely complex process of transmission. In the specific case of the quest for the historical Jesus, this means that the complex textual history of the New Testament—or more precisely, of the early Christian sources on which we draw for the process of reconstruction—must be taken into account. This important point has often been neglected in research into the historical Jesus, perhaps because scholars had such great trust in the reliability of the standard critical editions of the New Testament. These editions do not however claim to reproduce “the” original texts of the New Testament writings (if such texts in fact ever existed);<sup>47</sup> what is offered is an eclectic text reconstructed from a number of manuscripts, which claims to come as close as possible to an early textual form. One must remember here that the earliest manuscript attestations for some New Testament passages must be dated more than two hundred years later than their hypothetical date of composition and that all we can propose for the intermediary period, in which the textual transmission may have been very free, are well-grounded hypotheses.

Despite these problems, it is only in recent years that the question of the significance of work on textual history for the quest of the historical Jesus has been the object of intensive study. S. E. Porter has led the field here. He points out that the hypothesis that Jesus repeatedly spoke Greek in the course of his life—with the consequent possibility of discovering *ipsissima verba* of Jesus in the gospels—increases the importance of detailed text-critical work for the quest of the historical Jesus.<sup>48</sup> In two articles written jointly with M. Brook O’Donnell and in his monograph on criteria for research into the historical Jesus, Porter has presented a detailed overview of the numerous variants in the tradi-

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<sup>47</sup> On the problems associated with the idea of an “original text” of the New Testament writings, cf., e.g., the programmatic article by E. J. Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HTR* 92 (1999): 245–281; and idem, “Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism: Moving from the Nineteenth Century to the Twenty-First Century,” in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. D. A. Black (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 17–76, esp. 70–75.

<sup>48</sup> On this, cf. S. E. Porter and M. Brook O’Donnell, “The Implications of Textual Variants for Authenticating the Words of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Words*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 97–133, esp. 103–104; same authors, “The Implications of Textual Variants for Authenticating the Activities of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, *NTTS* 28.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 121–151, esp. 121; Porter, *Criteria*, 187–190.

tion of the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, and given examples of dimensions where textual criticism proves to be an important factor in this quest.<sup>49</sup>

*First*, it is very common to find links between the dominant source-critical theory in the synoptic question and text-critical decisions,<sup>50</sup> e.g. the decision in favor of the reading ἀφίενται (against the well attested ἀφέωνται) at Mark 2:5, 9 in the *Greek New Testament*. The *Textual Commentary* justifies this decision in a way that presupposes specific aspects of the two-source theory in the synoptic question.<sup>51</sup>

*Secondly*, the acceptance of different textual variants as original can make it necessary to employ different criteria in order to answer the question of the authenticity of a logion. Porter's example is the logion at Mark 7:9, which is attested in Greek in two strands of tradition. Within the Greek transmission of the New Testament, the predicate in the final subordinate clause is attested in two variants. The reading τηρήσῃτε is attested by  $\aleph$  A B (in fact τηρητε) *f*<sup>13</sup> 33, the majority text, etc.; the reading στήσῃτε which is preferred by NA27 is based *inter alia* on D W  $\Theta$  *f*<sup>1</sup> and a number of minuscules.<sup>52</sup> Depending on how one decides this extremely difficult case,<sup>53</sup> the text must be translated as follows:

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. the previous note. Shortly before this article went to print, I received the monograph by H. W. Shin, *Textual Criticism and the Synoptic Problem in Historical Jesus Research: The Search for Valid Criteria*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology 26 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004). Shin's starting point is the observation that the quest for the oldest form in textual criticism, the quest for the underlying text or source in the context of the "synoptic problem," and the quest for the historical Jesus all look for the earliest units of material, but work with very different and partly incompatible criteria. This leads Shin to formulate anew the criteria for the quest of the historical Jesus.

<sup>50</sup> For details, cf. Porter and O'Donnell, "Implications," 119–121.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 66: "Although strongly supported in the manuscripts, the perfect tense . . . appears to be secondary, having been introduced by copyists from Luke's account (Lk 5.20). Mark's use of the present tense . . . was followed by Matthew (Mt 9.2)." On the problem in general, cf. also J. K. Elliott, "The Relevance of Textual Criticism to the Synoptic Problem," in *Essays and Studies in New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. J. K. Elliott (Córdoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1992), 147–158.

<sup>52</sup> Porter and O'Donnell, "Implications," 121–123, investigate the variants of the text with the aid of the *apparatus criticus* in NA27. For more differentiated and very reliable information, cf. the volumes edited by R. Swanson, *New Testament Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus*. The volume on the Gospel of Mark (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) offers a detailed overview on p. 107.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 81, where the passage is evaluated as {D}.

Reading 1: "You have a fine way of abolishing the commandment of God, in order to *keep to* your tradition."

Reading 2: "You have a fine way of abolishing the commandment of God, in order to *set up* your tradition."

How is the authenticity of this logion to be judged? The argumentation will vary in accordance with the text-critical decision. If we follow NA27 in assuming reading 2 to be original, we could argue that these words are formulated from the perspective of the separation between Christianity and Judaism, and it is not easy to attribute such a logion to the historical Jesus. On the other hand, reading 1 is certainly conceivable on the lips of the Jewish teacher Jesus, who is criticizing a specific Jewish praxis.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, this example shows not only the limits of text-critical reconstruction, but also (indirectly) the dependence of the quest of the historical Jesus on antecedent decisions which, in most cases, are simply taken for granted in the interpretation of the text.<sup>55</sup>

Porter is not content to assemble the variants of the New Testament text which could play a role in the investigation of the words and deeds of the historical Jesus, nor to present the above mentioned examples with their methodological implications. He takes the further step of formulating a criterion for this investigation which is intimately linked to questions of textual history. The criterion of Greek textual variance depends on the presupposition that the criterion of Greek language (see above) can be employed; it is also perceived as a variation on the criterion of multiple attestation.<sup>56</sup> Porter writes:<sup>57</sup>

This criterion posits that, where there are two or more independent traditions with similar wording, the level of variation is greater the further one is removed from the common source. Conversely, the less variation points to stability and probable preservation of the tradition, and hence the possibility that the source is authentic to Jesus. It is, of course, only logical to assume that the common source of two independent traditions is earlier than either of them, and in terms of the Jesus tradition in the Gospels, has a reasonable claim to authenticity.

<sup>54</sup> For a detailed presentation of this example, cf. Porter and O'Donnell, "Implications," (n. 48 above), 121–122.

<sup>55</sup> For example, J. Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mk 1–8,26)*, 3rd ed., EKK II.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), mentions only in a very brief footnote the text-critical problem which is presupposed in his nuanced exposition of 7:9 (283 n. 36).

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Porter, *Criteria*, 191.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.



Methodologically speaking, this means that if a logion fulfills the criterion of the Greek language and is also found in the same wording in independent traditions, it is highly probable that these specific words can be considered authentic words of Jesus. If in addition there is only a slight variation in the transmission of the logion, the degree of certainty is higher than if the opposite were the case.<sup>58</sup>

Although these ideas are closely linked to the criterion of multiple attestation, the novelty of this approach and the boldness of the argumentation are surprising, and this suggests that it is worth developing Porter's ideas critically:

*First*, the reconstruction of isolated *ipsissima verba* of Jesus makes sense only when it is linked to concepts that these words intend to communicate. Even if a logion could be traced back without any doubt to the historical Jesus, one would still have to ask what relevance it has, if it cannot be related to a unifying concept with a validity broader than that of past situations. In other words, even if this methodology increases the chances of isolating individual *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, perhaps also in connection with concrete situations, these logia do not automatically possess either historical or theological relevance.

*Secondly*, there is an element of what we might call "fuzziness around the edges": how far is it in fact possible to give an account of the *de facto* text-historical breadth of variation in a passage? The existing manuscripts are only "chance discoveries"—most of which for a long time were clustered in specific places such as Oxyrhynchus or the Fayyum region.<sup>59</sup> One

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<sup>58</sup> This formulation closely follows Porter, *Criteria*, 192. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 195: "Obviously, the strongest probability of authenticity rests with independent traditions that record the same statement of Jesus word for word, and the longer the passage even the more likely (lessening the chance of accidental similarity for a couple of words)." On pp. 196–207, he applies this principle to a number of examples: Mark 7:25–30 = Matt 15:21–28; Mark 12:13–17 = Matt 22:16–22 = Luke 20:20–26; Mark 8:27–30 = Matt 16:13–20 = Luke 9:18–21; Mark 15:2–5 = Matt 27:11–14 = Luke 23:2–4 = John 18:29–38.

<sup>59</sup> On the context of Oxyrhynchus, cf. the important essays by E. J. Epp, "The New Testament Papyri at Oxyrhynchus in Their Social and Intellectual Context," in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-canonical: Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda*, ed. W. L. Petersen, NovTSup 89 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 47–68; "The Codex and Literacy in Early Christianity and at Oxyrhynchus: Issues raised by Harry Y. Gamble's *Books and Readers in the Early Church*," *Critical Review of Books in Religion* 11 (1997): 15–37; "The Oxyrhynchus New Testament Papyri: 'Not Without Honor Except in their Hometown,'" *JBL* 123 (2004): 5–55; "The Jews and the Jewish Community in Oxyrhynchus: Socio-Religious Context for the New Testament Papyri," in *New Testament Manuscripts and their World*, ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, TENT 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 13–52. On the Fayyum region, cf. G. Schmelz, "Das Christentum in Fayyum bis zum 5. Jahrhundert," in *Patristica et*

must be cautious in drawing inferences from them about the total original picture of the textual transmission, especially on fine points of detail.

*Thirdly*, it is difficult to know whether the tangible variation in the textual transmission from the second and third centuries (and later) permits conclusions about earlier periods. This question can be posed on two distinct levels. On the level of the surviving textual history, a high variation in later periods need not necessarily lead to negative conclusions about the early transmission, since particular readings may have been consciously produced only from one point in time onwards, in response to specific problems<sup>60</sup>—this applies especially to variants which have an effect on the contents of a text. Other variant readings may be due to changes over the centuries in the sense of style.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, I accept the plausibility in Porter's argument that zero variation within the later textual transmission of independent sources to which we have access—always bearing in mind that variants may in fact have been lost *en route*—permits the conclusion that there was zero variation in the earlier textual transmission too. But I believe that we can draw an inference from the written level to the oral level (with all due caution) only when we can genuinely assume the existence of

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*Oecumenica: Festschrift W. Bienert*, ed. P. Gemeinhardt and U. Kühneweg, MThSt 85 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 2004), 147–156.

<sup>60</sup> On this, cf. the programmatic study by B. D. Ehrman, “The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis: Festschrift B. M. Metzger*, ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes, SD 46 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 361–379. A number of examples of changes made because of debates about questions of orthodoxy can be found in the well known book by the same author, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christian Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). On the question of changes due to apologetic interests, cf. (as a complement to Ehrman's book) W. C. Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition: Evidence of the Influence of Apologetic Interests on the Text of the Canonical Gospels*, SBL Text-Critical Studies (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

<sup>61</sup> The investigation of the language and style of New Testament texts plays a decisive role above all in the approach called “radical eclecticism” which is proposed by G. D. Kilpatrick and J. K. Elliott. For basic information and numerous examples, cf. G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism: Collected Essays of G. D. Kilpatrick*, ed. J. K. Elliott, BETL 96 (Leuven: Peeters, 1990); Elliott, *Essays and Studies*. J. K. Elliott has given a clear summary of the principles of this approach in several essays: cf. “Thoroughgoing Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *Text*, ed. Ehrman and Holmes, 321–335; “The Case for Thoroughgoing Eclecticism,” in *Rethinking*, ed. Black, 101–124; “Thoroughgoing Eclecticism,” in *The Bible as Book: The Transmission of the Greek Text*, ed. S. McKendrick and O. A. O'Sullivan (London: British Library, 2003), 139–145.

independent traditions, since this alone draws the sting from the objection that one cannot take the stability of (later) written transmission as proof of a similar stability in the previous oral transmission. And there is a grey area that must not be ignored completely: the surviving variants do not correspond to the variants which occurred *de facto* in the transmission, and our conclusions about the “zero variation” of the written transmission, based on the incomplete material which has survived, can never be more than approximate. But let us for the moment leave this question aside. The absolute stability at a late date, combined with the identity of mutually independent traditions, is almost inexplicable if the same stability and identity were lacking in the earlier periods.<sup>62</sup> If I understand Porter aright, however, this conclusion would lie ultimately on the level of the criterion of multiple attestation by mutually independent sources; in that case, all it proves (in my opinion) is the early date of a tradition which has been handed on in a stable manner. The final question, viz. whether a logion can in fact be attributed authentically to Jesus, remains open.

*Fourthly*, we have the problem of applicability. The criterion becomes stronger and more clearly relevant when sufficiently long and complex utterances of Jesus are transmitted in several mutually independent sources in a stable textual history. But the longer these concordant passages are, the more are we obliged to ask whether it is still possible to assume the independence of the sources: ought we not to apply a criterion of literary dependence here?<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> An example to the contrary—a mutually independent common redactional revision of the comparable traditions—is conceivable only on the level of the history of the written text (and naturally calls into question the presupposition of mutual independence). This would argue against the thesis of textual “zero variation.”

<sup>63</sup> On this, cf. the methodological reflections on literary dependence by J. Frey, “Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelientradition: Zum Problem: Johannes und die Synoptiker,” in *Johannesevangelium—Mitte oder Rand des Kanons? Neue Standortbestimmungen*, ed. T. Söding, QD 203 (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 79–82. This problem can be seen in the discussion of Mark 7:25–30 = Matt 15:21–28. Porter, *Criteria*, 197, must begin here by demonstrating the mutual independence of the two episodes (certainly against the view held by many other scholars), before he can apply his criterion. Cf., e.g., U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 2: Mt 8–17*, EKK I.2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 230, on Matt 15:21ff.: “The source of this passage is Mk 7:24–30. There are no other primary or secondary sources.”

### 3. *Redaction Criticism and the Historical Jesus*

#### 3.1. *The Role of Redaction Criticism in the Application of the “Criterion of Embarrassment”*

One of the most widely used criteria in the quest for the historical Jesus is the so-called “criterion of embarrassment”; German scholars tend to speak of “something running contrary to the general tendency” or of a “disturbing tradition.” E. Schillebeeckx offers the following classic definition of this criterion:<sup>64</sup>

Each of the Gospels has its own theological position, which can be seen both in the structure and through the separation of redaction and tradition. Through their own eschatological, christological, or ecclesiological views they reveal their theological standpoint by means of their selection of the account of Jesus’ words and deeds and by the way in which they arrange and present their material. The consequence is that when they also transmit material which does not fit particularly well into their own theological conception, this can be considered a genuflection before venerable traditional material. This entitles us to assume that they regarded the tradition in question as inviolable and that they held (for historical or theological reasons)... that it went back to Jesus himself.

Schillebeeckx thus emphasizes the importance of redaction-critical work in the application of this criterion, although tradition criticism also plays a role here. J. P. Meier offers a definition which is clearly different:<sup>65</sup>

The criterion of ‘embarrassment’ ... focuses on actions or sayings of Jesus that would have embarrassed or created difficulty for the early Church. The point of the criterion is that the early Church would hardly have gone out of its way to create material that only embarrassed its creator or weakened its position in arguments with opponents. Rather, embarrassing material coming from Jesus would naturally be either suppressed or softened in later stages of Gospel tradition, and often such progressive suppression or softening can be traced through the Four Gospels.

These two formulations show very clearly that the two scholars emphasize different aspects; I myself tend to prefer the version formulated

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<sup>64</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: Die Geschichte von einem Lebenden* (Freiburg: Herder, 1975; repr., 1992), 78–79. As far as I know, the oldest formulation of this criterion is by P. W. Schmiedel, “Die Person Jesu im Streite der Meinungen der Gegenwart,” *Protestantische Monatshefte* 10 (1906): 257–282.

<sup>65</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 168.

by J. P. Meier, although this means that the strong redaction-critical emphasis in Schillebeeckx's formulation moves into the background. The Dutch scholar's definition embraces more material than Meier's description, including elements which fail to correspond only to the specific redactional tendency of an evangelist (but which need not in principle have posed a problem for the transmission of these elements in the church). On the other hand, Schillebeeckx's approach presupposes very far-reaching considerations and hypotheses about the redactional tendencies of an evangelist, and these in turn are linked (at least in part) to hypotheses about relationships of mutual literary dependence which do not always win universal acceptance. Since Meier's definition is more strongly linked than Schillebeeckx's to the tendencies of the tradition, it is tradition-critical rather than redaction-critical; but since it too deals with the question of plausible interventions in the tradition (i.e., "redaction" in the broader sense of the term), this criterion can be classified as redaction-critical in the widest sense even in Meier's formulation. And it is in fact advisable to locate this criterion on the redaction-critical level, as the following examples show:

*First*, there are a few passages in the Gospel of Mark with no parallels in the other two synoptics. Given that Matthew and Luke knew a Gospel of Mark in the form in which we know it, we may assume that the two later synoptics expunged the text in their redactional work independently of each other. One of these texts is Mark 3:21, the statement that Jesus' relatives wanted to fetch him by force (and probably take him back to Nazareth) because they held him to be "out of his senses." The redaction-critical tendency here is clearly to eliminate these words. In an early church in which the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers James and Jude, played an important role, it is difficult to imagine why such a negative picture of the family of Jesus should have been invented. And when we bear in mind that the Gospel of John too, possibly independently of the synoptics, portrays a relationship of distance between Jesus and his family (e.g. John 2:3-4:12; 7:5),<sup>66</sup> then the "criterion of embarrassment" provides one argument in favor of the authenticity of this brief piece of information.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> On John 2:12, cf. my essay "Die johanneische 'Tempelreinigung' (Joh 2,12-22) für Leser der Synoptiker," *ThPh* 80 (2005): 1-16.

<sup>67</sup> A different view is taken by J. D. Crossan, "Mark and the Relatives of Jesus," *NovT* 15 (1973): 91-113, esp. 110-113.

*Secondly*, however, it is also possible for material that apparently puts Jesus in a bad light to have penetrated the Jesus tradition at a later date, as we see in the following verse, Mark 3:22, a dispute between Jesus and scribes from Jerusalem. When they accuse him of being possessed by Beelzebul, Jesus reacts by defending himself in vehement words (3:23–30).<sup>68</sup> It is clear that Matthew and Luke see no reason here to tone down the accusation which is leveled at Jesus: it merely moves from the lips of the scribes from Jerusalem to the “Pharisees” (Matt 12:24) or “some people” (Luke 11:15). This accusation may seem “embarrassing,” but the redactional tendency does not permit us to draw any conclusions about the historicity of the dispute. It is in fact perfectly conceivable that the historical Jesus faced similar accusations.<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, however, it is in principle possible that the story was constructed only at a later date: the accusation that the miracles of Jesus were brought about by demonic powers or magical means could have arisen in the context of the Christian proclamation of such mighty deeds; and the idea that Jesus seduced the people is attested from later Jewish and pagan perspectives (John 7:12b; 8:48; 10:20; Justin, *1 Apol.* 30.1; *Dial.* 69.7; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.69; 2.49).<sup>70</sup>

### 3.2. *The Criterion of Discourse Features*

A third criterion elaborated by S. E. Porter, the “criterion of discourse features” which was mentioned briefly above, is likewise situated on the level of redaction criticism. Porter here takes up a discourse-analytical model which has been developed by M. A. K. Halliday.<sup>71</sup> Porter proposes the following steps:<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 115 and 268–269, take Mark 3:22–24 par. as an argument (in addition to others) for the historicity of Jesus’ activity as exorcist. Cf. also the argumentation (on different grounds) by N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 440.

<sup>69</sup> On this, it is good to read the cautious argumentation by G. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 143–147.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. also J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 2, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 551, on these and comparable charges: “To be sure, many of these accusations... mirror polemics in and against the early church rather than against the historical Jesus.”

<sup>71</sup> In the field of New Testament exegesis, it is above all J. T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philipians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), who has fruitfully employed this model. For an overview of the most important studies by Halliday, cf. Porter, *Criteria*, 214–215 n. 10.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 214–215.

A way to proceed would be, for each of the Gospels, to take the words of Jesus and isolate them from the other words of the Gospel . . . , and identify a number of linguistic features in these bodies of material. On the basis of these findings, one could establish from the narrative and expository material the linguistic tendencies of a given Gospel writer. Against this one could then test the wording of a passage purportedly uttered by Jesus.

If it can be established that words spoken by Jesus are clearly distinct linguistically from their context in the gospel, and at the same time that they prove to be mutually consistent in various segments, one may assume that the final redaction of the gospel in question had received logia of Jesus in an older and possibly authentic form.<sup>73</sup> Naturally, this criterion has a limited aim, viz. to determine whether one particular section is affected by the final redaction of the gospel or not—this criterion *on its own* can only identify material which is linguistically so distinct from its context that its authenticity seems more probable than that of the surrounding text. But as a complement to the classic redaction-critical criterion, it could supply additional arguments which would help scholars reach a decision or formulate a problem with greater precision. Once again, however, we must remember that this criterion too aims at the reconstruction of *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. Is it meaningful to apply it also in narrative contexts, where it cannot be proved (and may indeed be improbable) that Jesus spoke in Greek? Does not the detachment of logia of Jesus from their narrative framework, which this criterion demands, contradict the criterion of the Greek language, which sees the contexts in which logia are transmitted as decisive for the question whether *ipsissima verba* may be present there? In other words, whereas the “criterion of discourse features” must presuppose in principle that logia receive their context only in the framework of a later level of narration, the “criterion of Greek language” depends on the assumption that the contexts presented in the gospels are historically plausible.

On another level, we have the methodological question whether the narrative sections of the gospels display unified characteristics of an author (or final redactor) which can be objectively identified in linguistic and stylistic terms—such as one might perhaps find in a modern novel. Even the Gospel of John, which is marked linguistically by a strongly

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. the formulation by Porter, *Criteria*, 217.

unifying final redaction,<sup>74</sup> repeatedly displays characteristics in short sections which are otherwise scarcely compatible with the linguistic profile of the text.<sup>75</sup> Naturally, these indicate that older traditions have been taken over in these passages without any great revision. In order to apply Porter's third criterion, however, we must know how we are to deal with such passages. Is it always so easy to separate tradition and redaction that the language of the redaction (or of the author) of the gospel can be reconstructed with absolute certainty?

These critical questions do not mean that it is impossible in principle to apply this criterion; but it is at any rate clear that this is no easy task.<sup>76</sup>

#### 4. *A Summary and a Look Ahead—Reflections Prompted by the Theory of History*

Despite some proposals which seek to detach the quest for the historical Jesus from the intellectual strategies which have been followed up to now, I believe that the investigation of the date and the historical plausibility of traditions about the historical Jesus will continue to form a central axis of this quest. Even the most important of the alternatives to form and tradition criticism which I have discussed here<sup>77</sup> have been

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<sup>74</sup> The classic study is by E. Ruckstuhl and P. Dschulnigg, *Stilkritik und Verfasserfrage im Johannesevangelium: Die johanneischen Stilmerkmale auf dem Hintergrund des Neuen Testaments und des zeitgenössischen hellenistischen Schrifttums*, NTOA 17 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).

<sup>75</sup> For example, John 5:2–3a + (textually disputed) 5:3b–4 presents special problems linked with questions of the history of transmission and textual history. On the problem, cf. T. Nicklas and T. J. Kraus, "Joh 5,3b–4. Ein längst erledigtes textkritisches Problem?" *ASE* 17 (2000): 537–556, esp. 552–553. For the linguistic argumentation, cf. A. Duprez, *Jésus et les dieux guérisseurs: À propos de Jean, V*, CRB 12 (Paris: Gabalda, 1970), 134–135; L. Devillers, "Une piscine peut en cacher une autre. À propos de Jean 5,1–9a," *RB* 106 (1999): 175–205, esp. 188; and M.-É. Boismard, "Bethazatha ou Siloé?" *RB* 106 (1999): 206–218, esp. 214.

<sup>76</sup> Porter himself is aware that further work is necessary here in order to achieve greater precision; above all, the attempt should be made to apply this criterion to an extensive body of text, with all the difficulties this would entail. In *Criteria*, 220–234, he points to linguistic divergences between the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 and the rest of the Gospel of Mark, but he emphasizes that his analysis does not yet go far enough to permit a definitive solution to the question (234).

<sup>77</sup> Some exceedingly dubious criteria (e.g., the "criterion of the more vivid narrative") which are repeatedly applied in secondary literature, either openly or in a concealed manner, have already been sharply criticized by Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 180–183. There is thus no need to review them anew in the present essay.



presented more or less openly in association with the questions posed in tradition criticism. The classic questions of literary and source criticism play a role in every discussion of the quest of the historical Jesus, and it is obvious that the way in which they are answered strongly influences the theses concerning a “re-construction”; besides this, we have seen the potential for investigations on the levels of linguistic analysis, textual criticism, and the history of the text and of its redaction. In many instances, the questions posed by tradition and form criticism play at least a part in these investigations. Of all these proposals, S. E. Porter’s suggested criteria for the quest of the historical Jesus, which form a closed system, are the most clearly detached from the questions of tradition criticism, and this is why they merit particular attention and a debate which can take his suggestions further. Porter is more strongly interested than many other exegetes in the possibility of isolating *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, rather than concepts and basic ideas. In each of its steps, the system which he applies can be considered a reformulation of already existing criteriologies in order to achieve a greater precision:

*First*, the classic (and very vague) criterion of the Aramaic language is changed on two levels. Porter avoids the incalculabilities of translation back into Aramaic by looking for *ipsissima verba* only in those contexts where it is in fact possible that Greek was spoken. In the passages on which he concentrates, he does not presuppose a *probable* authenticity, but only registers the *possibility* that *ipsissima verba* of Jesus may have been preserved here.

*Secondly*, the criterion of “variation in the Greek text” can be seen as making more precise the criterion of multiple independent attestation, which is ultimately a criterion of source criticism.

*Thirdly*, the “criterion of discourse features” is suggested as a means of asking more precise redaction-critical questions. This explains the points of contact with “the criterion of embarrassment.”

These refinements are linked to the attempt to lend an objective character to research into the historical Jesus. One implicit presupposition is however problematic, viz. the clearer the logical assumptions of a methodological instrument are, the less it offers possibilities for subjective decisions; and the sharper the methodological shears that are applied, with a greater restrictiveness that accepts no compromises, the more “objective” (and hence intersubjectively comprehensible) will be the results of the historical investigation. As a matter of fact, Porter’s cluster of exact methods allows very few “subjective” decisions on the

part of the exegete, although this level can never be excluded completely. At the same time, when the instruments are sharpened, and above all when the scholar concentrates on *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, the number of results which are intersubjectively comprehensible is reduced. And this brings to us a problem which confronts every investigation of the historical Jesus: a methodology which is extremely precise, and allows scarcely any leeway for subjectivity in its methodological decisions, leaves us with only a few sections in our sources which reflect material that is certainly historical—but these sections *per se* do not yet bring us to the historical Jesus. Indeed, if taken on their own, they are wholly irrelevant. In the case of the *ipsissima verba*, this can be seen on two levels:

*First*, we must bear in mind the multiple differences between (a) a logion on the lips of Jesus which may possibly have been spoken many times in various situations and (b) a logion which was spoken many times in an unknown number of situations in the oral transmission; further, (c) this logion was then written down in sources and gospels, and was (and is still) read and interpreted in very various situations.<sup>78</sup> And this formulation does not even begin to take account of the breaks in transmission through possible changes in the text.

*Secondly*, even more than longer narrative passages of text, isolated *ipsissima verba* require the subjective interpretation of the exegete before they can be used in the “construction” of a consistent and workable picture of a historical figure.<sup>79</sup>

What applies to *ipsissima verba* can in principle be predicated of all the tradition about Jesus which has acquired linguistic form through a

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<sup>78</sup> On this, cf. the reflections by W. H. Kelber, “Der historische Jesus: Bedenken zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion aus der Perspektive mittelalterlicher, moderner und postmoderner Hermeneutik,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 15–66, esp. 54: “In the quest for the historical Jesus, it is widely assumed that the *ipsissimum verbum* is an incontrovertible fact of linguistic existence. Immense amounts of energy have been spent by scholars in the attempt to reconstruct the original words of Jesus. And yet orality is characterized by a plurality of speech-acts, not by the original logion. It is an undeniable fact of the oral mode of communication that words are repeated and stories told anew, in order to address a variety of hearers.” Cf. also 54–55: “When Jesus uttered an aphorism in one place and then decided to utter it anew in another place, neither he nor his hearers understood this renewed utterance as a secondary version of the primary, original logion. Rather, each utterance was an autonomous speech-act.”

<sup>79</sup> On this problem in the context of research into the so-called *agrapha*, cf. my essay “Zur Problematik der so genannten ‘Agrapha’: Eine Thesenreihe,” *RB* 113 (2006): 78–93.

(written) text.<sup>80</sup> “It is only the interpretation of the surviving elements and their integration into a context sketched by the historian... that breathes life into the remnants of past ages.”<sup>81</sup> Without readers and interpreters (and without their interpretation, which is always subjective), they remain “sluggish mechanisms.”<sup>82</sup> In their openness, texts are always exposed (within certain limits of interpretation)<sup>83</sup> to the subjectivity of the interpreter: the attempt to “reconstruct” the historical Jesus can never escape from the dilemma that it must attempt to “construct” a more less plausible or appropriate “picture” of the historical Jesus.<sup>84</sup> We never have more than an indirect access to the past, by rendering it present to ourselves from our contemporary perspective—and many refractions lie along this path. It is impossible to exclude completely the subjectivity of the interpreter, on the level of the choice of sources or on the level of interpretation.<sup>85</sup> And this means that Albert Schweitzer’s discovery that the *Leben Jesu* of the nineteenth century were closely connected

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<sup>80</sup> On the problems of the “historical representation” of events by means of narratives—precisely in connection with the quest of the historical Jesus—cf. M. Moxter, “Erzählung und Ereignis: Über den Spielraum historischer Repräsentation,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 67–88.

<sup>81</sup> J. Schröter, “Von der Historizität der Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker 163–212, esp. 166–167.

<sup>82</sup> On this understanding of text, cf. U. Eco, *Lector in Fabula: Die Mitarbeit der Interpretation in erzählenden Texten*, 3rd ed. (München: Taschenbuch, 1998), 63–64.

<sup>83</sup> The openness of the texts within “limits of interpretation” which must be defined anew in the case of each individual text precludes the possibility of an “objective” reconstruction of history and makes it therefore advisable to distinguish between “appropriate” and “inappropriate” constructions. The classic introduction of this concept into scholarly discussion is by U. Eco, *Die Grenzen der Interpretation* (München: Taschenbuch, 1992). For further details, cf. J. Kocka, “Angemessenheitskriterien historischer Argumente,” in *Objektivität und Parteilichkeit in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. W. J. Mommsen and J. Rüsen (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1977), 469–475.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. also Schröter, “Von der Historizität,” 167: “The goal of historical research is... not the *reconstruction of the past*, but the *construction of history*.” U. Schnelle, “Historische Anschlußfähigkeit: Zum hermeneutischen Horizont von Geschichts- und Traditionsbildung,” in *Kontexte*, ed. Frey and Schnelle, 47–78, takes a similar view. Cf. esp. 50: “History is not reconstructed, but inescapably and necessarily *constructed*.”

<sup>85</sup> Cf. also Schnelle, “Historische Anschlußfähigkeit,” 48–49: “The point in time where the historian or exegete stands is always the present, into which he himself is ineluctably woven. The cultural standards of the present bring a decisive influence to bear upon our understanding of that which (from today’s standpoint) is the past. The socialization of the historian or exegete, his traditions, and the political and religious values to which he subscribes necessarily condition what he says in the present about the past.” On this, cf. the fundamentally important remarks by P. Ricoeur, *Zeit und Erzählung*, vol. 3, *Die erzählte Zeit* (München: W. Fink, 1991), 225: “The first way to think of the ‘past-ness’ of the past consists in removing from it the sting of temporal distance.”

to the biographies and interests of their authors is not only correct, as a sheer matter of fact:<sup>86</sup> from the perspective of theory of history, the mutual relationship between the subject who constructs the “historical Jesus” and the picture which results from his work is inescapable!<sup>87</sup> This is not merely a matter for regret. For only an “historical Jesus” who is mirrored via the subjective perspective of contemporary human persons, or who can be interpreted from their subjective perspective,<sup>88</sup> can be relevant to people today.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2nd ed. 1913; 9th ed., 1984), remains a decisively important work.

<sup>87</sup> This is the conclusion of the essay by G. Theissen, “Jesus und seine historisch-kritischen Erforscher: Über die Möglichkeit der Jesusforschung,” in *Jesus als historische Gestalt*, 295–308.

<sup>88</sup> Naturally, this does not exclude the possibility of erroneous interpretations!

<sup>89</sup> I allude here (though not exclusively) to the question of the “relevance” of the “historical Jesus” (or of the constructions of the “historical Jesus”) to faith in Jesus of Nazareth. This question is once again the center of vigorous controversy. (Trans. Brian McNeil.)

## SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES AND JESUS RESEARCH

BRUCE J. MALINA

### 1. *Introduction*

The meanings people share in their interpersonal communication derive from their social systems. This is a universal human phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> If ancient authors communicated meanings to their audiences, the only way to understand what those audiences understood is to understand their social systems. To understand what the ancient sources dealing with Jesus meant, one must obviously have recourse to the social system(s) of that time. Otherwise readings of the sources will necessarily be anachronistic and ethnocentric. Social-science approaches to Jesus research have been developed to avoid those pitfalls.<sup>2</sup> These approaches employ a collection of appropriate generalizations and models from the social sciences to interpret the sources for the study of Jesus of Nazareth. What makes a social-scientific generalization or model appropriate depends upon social-scientific and historical judgment. The social-scientific judgment of appropriateness relates to whether the behaviors in question conform to the social system of the eastern Mediterranean cultural region, with its traditional values (e.g. gender roles, concern for honor) and social structures (e.g. kinship focus, endogamous marriage).<sup>3</sup> The historical judgment of appropriateness relates

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<sup>1</sup> As basis for such a claim, see David E. Cournoyer and Barris P. Malcolm, "Evaluating Claims for Universals: A Method Analysis Approach," *Cross-Cultural Research* 38 (2004): 319–342.

<sup>2</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, "Interpretation: Reading, Abduction, Metaphor," in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, and Gerald T. Sheppard (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 253–266; "Social Scientific Criticism and Rhetorical Criticism: Why Won't Romanticism Leave Us Alone," in *Rhetoric, Scripture and Theology: Essays from the 1994 Pretoria Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 131 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 71–101; "La antropología cultural del mundo mediterráneo y el Nuevo Testamento," in *El mundo social de Jesús y los evangelios* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2002), 295–328. Note also the excellent introduction in Elisa Estévez López, *El poder de una mujer creyente: Cuerpo, identidad y discipulado en Mc 5,24b–34: Un estudio desde las ciencias sociales*, Asociación bíblica española 40 (Estella: Verbo Divino, 2003), 48–71.

<sup>3</sup> On the Mediterranean as a culture area, see Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). To

to whether the generalizations and models can be shown to trace back to the first-century eastern Mediterranean. To make such a historical judgment, the historian must remove the filters rooted in the historical developments called Technologism and Scientism, Romanticism (or Postmodernism), the Industrial Revolution, Sense of History, the Enlightenment, the Renaissance and Reformation, the Scientific Method, Scholasticism, Islam, Christendom, Jewishness (rabbinic and Talmudic), Augustine, Constantine, Origen and the like. Each of these historical episodes introduced social features that obfuscate an understanding of the first-century eastern Mediterranean.

The requisite historic awareness of social features that have emerged over the past two millennia indicates that social-scientific approaches to Jesus research are always a form of historical study. However unlike most historians, those using social-scientific approaches explicitly state which generalizations and models they use and why. They explicitly define the terms used in their generalizations and models and then describe the models that undergird the generalizations. In other words, those using social-scientific approaches study the available sources with specific historical questions in mind, with a view to locating the information generated by those questions within some historically and cul-

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study comparative culture areas, see the *Human Relations Area File* (begun by George P. Murdock, now on CD) in which every society on the planet is described in terms of its institutions, values and notable behavioral features. The fruit of such a collection has been to understand other people on their own terms through comparative generalizations. The outcome has been the awareness of culture-areas, areas in which various people hold similar cultural values and modes of perception and assessment of life experiences. Murdock, for example, produced a small book called *Theories of Illness: A World Survey* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1980) in which he took 186 societies and compared them in terms of similarities and differences relative to sickening. Thanks to his categorizations, he surfaced the main theories of illness common to various groupings of these various societies. I mention this book because one of Murdock's unexpected conclusions was to discover a theory of illness characteristic of and distinctive to the circum-Mediterranean region, regardless of the particular histories of the distinctive ethnic or national groups: "Trial and error showed, however, that if North Africa were detached from sub-Saharan Africa and the Near East from Asia, and if both were grouped with Europe to form a composite Circum-Mediterranean region, this would yield three regions reasonably comparable not only to one another but also to each American continent and the Insular Pacific. The experimental tabulation of the incidence of the major theories of illness in these ad hoc regions led to a serendipitous discovery: The theories actually showed some tendency toward segregation by region" (42). Illness theories are replications of the interpretive themes of a culture, and common illness theories would point to common interpretive themes. Thus as regards illness perception, the Mediterranean is different, a difference Murdock traces back to antiquity.

turally appropriate theoretical framework of concepts and hypotheses to produce intelligibility and interpretations. Most historically oriented biblical scholars concerned proceed in the same way,

but in practice there are two main differences. The first is that the historian's conceptualization tends to be implicit, arbitrary, and unsystematic, whereas the social scientist's is explicit and systematic. The second is the historian's tendency, because his sources usually provide him with some sort of loose narrative pattern to which the facts can be related, to evade so far as possible the theoretical issues, and also to deal for [sic] preference less with the underlying structure than with events and personalities, which are usually far more sharply delineated in historical records than in the materials anthropologists and sociologists commonly use.<sup>4</sup>

Social-scientific approaches in Jesus research are directly concerned with history, not social science. Yet as sociologist John Coleman has pointed out, they have made some significant contributions to the social sciences.<sup>5</sup> The use of the social sciences in the historical enterprise of New Testament interpretation is evident by the exegetes' use of explicit, testable and systematic conceptualizations in place of the usual historical approaches typical of traditional historical Jesus research rooted largely in the usually unwary adoption of implicit, arbitrary and unsystematic conceptualizations. Furthermore, and most significantly, social-scientific approaches seek to set out the underlying social structures that provided the meanings articulated in the sources used in historical Jesus research.<sup>6</sup>

For the most part, social-scientific research in New Testament studies has been concerned with interpreting the documents of the New Testament, not with the general story-telling of historians. In other words, its concerns have been exegetical, not historiographical. This is perhaps

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<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Barraclough, *Main Trends in History* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), 50.

<sup>5</sup> John A. Coleman "The Bible and Sociology," *Sociology of Religion* 60 (1999): 125–148.

<sup>6</sup> See John H. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); Bruce J. Malina, "The Social Sciences and Biblical Interpretation," *Int* 37 (1982): 229–242; "Why Interpret the Bible with the Social Sciences," *American Baptist Quarterly* 2 (1983):119–133; *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001); David May, "Drawn From Nature or Common Life: Social and Cultural Reading Strategies for the Parables," *RevExp* 94 (1997): 199–214; Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); John J. Pilch, "Illuminating the World of Jesus with Cultural Anthropology," *The Living Light* 31 (1994): 20–31; Richard L. Rohrbaugh, ed., *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996).

why there is no “life” of the historical Jesus based on social-scientific interpretations so far.<sup>7</sup> Yet the social-scientific interpretative enterprise has produced works bearing upon a historical understanding of Jesus’ career in such great quantity and of such superb quality that one can speak of social-scientific approaches to Jesus research.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. *What Are the Social Sciences?*<sup>9</sup>

That all human beings are entirely the same, entirely different and somewhat the same and somewhat different at the same time is a truism of contemporary western culture. Human beings are entirely the same from the viewpoint of nature, as studied in the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, anatomy). This is the area of the “objective.” Human beings are entirely different from the viewpoint of unique personhood, as discovered by introspection and studied in psychiatry. Since the nineteenth century, this is the area of the “subjective.” Finally human beings are somewhat the same and somewhat different from the viewpoint of distinctive human social groupings and their interpretation of nature.

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<sup>7</sup> But see William Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2000); Halvor Moxnes, “The Historical Jesus: From Master Narrative to Cultural Context,” *BTB* 29 (1999): 135–149; *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003); Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of the First Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Consider the work of Rafael Aguirre, Carmen Bernabé, S. Scott Bartchy, Pieter Craffert, Zeba Crook, Richard DeMaris, Adriana Destro, Dennis Duling, John H. Elliott, Philip Esler, Elisa Estevez, Carlos Gil, Santiago Guijarro, Anselm Hagedorn, K. C. Hanson, William Herzog, T. Raymond Hobbs, Stephan Joubert, Stuart Love, Bruce J. Malina, David May, Halvor Moxnes, Dietmar Neufeld, Jerome Neyrey, Douglas Oakman, Mauro Pesce, John Pilch, Ronald Piper, Richard Rohrbaugh, Torrey Seland, Gary Stansell, Wolfgang Stegemann, Christian Strecker, Walter Taylor, Andries van Aarde, Ritva Williams. References to their works can be readily accessed on Ebsco, ATLA, or NTAbstracts CD; a large collection of bibliographical references may be found in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, ed. John J. Pilch, BIS 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina, and Gerd Theissen (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> For broader understanding of this section, see any introductory college textbook, for example, Craig Calhoun, Donald Light, and Suzanne Keller, *Understanding Sociology* (New York: Glencoe McGraw-Hill, 2001). For theory, see Jonathan H. Turner and Peter R. Turner, *The Structure of Sociological Theory*, 6th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1998). For American Society, see Robin M. Williams, *American Society*, 3rd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1970).



This area is the "social" which is the focal interest of the social sciences. These include sociology, anthropology, social psychology, sociolinguistics and specializations such as political science, economics, communication studies and the like. The social dimension of human beings embraces persons in groups ranging from large societies to small support and/or action groups.

Social scientists study human beings in their interactions with others. What they discover is that human beings perceive aspects of their environment (persons and animate and inanimate non-persons) and interact with their environment in rather regular or patterned ways. It is the patterns of perception and behavior, including thinking and feeling, that enable the articulation of certain rules of a given society. Members of the society know these rules, largely implicitly, and behave according to them. When people adhere to the rules the result is predictable human relations. Ignoring the rules leads to confusion, grievance and judgments of deviance. Generalizations based on observations of such usual patterns of behavior provide a description of the norms of a given society. Norms enable members of a society to understand each other and predict what others will do in certain circumstances. A description of the institutions, values and person types of a given society entails a description of predictable behaviors: the means and goals of modes of acting, perceiving, thinking, feeling and the like. Sociologists as a rule describe the societal patterns or norms of social interaction in their own societies, including normative patterns of evasion. Anthropologists, in contrast, seek to describe such patterns and norms in some alien society. Studies of how individuals relate to groups is the scope of social or cross-cultural psychology. Since both the subject and sources for a life of Jesus derive from an alien society located in the eastern Mediterranean, Mediterranean anthropology would be the social science of choice for the social-science approach. To perform such studies, anthropologists must know their own society so as not to confuse their own social experiences with the foreign institutions, values and person types they study. Without explicit comparison, the anthropologist would interpret the foreign people under study as though they actually belonged to the anthropologist's own society. Such confusion leads to ethnocentric conclusions, and when the confusion deals with history, the outcome is anachronism. Ethnocentrism and anachronism are the two major problems that social-science research seeks to eliminate in Jesus research.

### 3. *Social Sciences and History*

Since the subject and sources for a life of Jesus are removed from the modern scholar by some two millennia, the anthropological models and generalizations must be of a historical sort. In other words, to use anthropology to understand the New Testament, the biblical interpreter, like the anthropologist, must be cognizant of his or her own society to avoid ethnocentrism. And to use the social sciences well, a scholar must use a heavy dosage of modern historical research and historical conclusions both when it comes to the history of other times and places and major actors, modes of writing and speaking, narrating etc. This approach might be best called anthropological historiography.<sup>10</sup> Social-science approaches that bypass historical awareness are not appropriate. Examples of inappropriate social sciences include the use of modern sociology of religion and its models of formal religion, modern economics and its models of formal economics, or psychological explanations deriving from the study of individualistic subjects and their conversion experiences.<sup>11</sup>

Since historical study is always rooted in the imagination of the historian, what the social sciences bring as they process the data processed by traditional or modern historians is a greater focus on the scenarios that are conjured up in the minds of investigators. (Such scenarios are also called schemas, frames, scenes, scripts, gestalts, active structural networks, memory organization packets). After filtering out the accretions of social development evidenced both in his or her own society and in the modern Mediterranean, the investigator will find the behaviors and values that have survived in the region through all historical vicissitudes to be quite useful. Among these we might mention, for example, the primacy of kinship and the kin group over all other institutions, primacy of the ingroup, endogamy, patron-client relationship, shame as sanction, concern for honor, agonism, envy and the evil eye, coalitions, physical force in defense of honor, the primacy of honor over wealth,

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<sup>10</sup> After Pieter Craffert, "Jesus and the Shamanic Complex: Social Type and Historical Figure." Paper read at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Orlando, FL, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, "Understanding New Testament Persons: A Reader's Guide," in *Using the Social Sciences in New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 41–61; John J. Pilch, "BTB Readers Guide: Psychological and Psychoanalytical Approaches to Interpreting the Bible in Social-Scientific Context," *BTB* 27 (1997): 112–116.

hospitality toward strangers, almsgiving, no separation between church and state, sexual organs as symbolizing honor, altered states of consciousness as normal and common human experiences, gender division of labor, folk healing, limited good, and collectivistic personality.

The appropriate use of the social sciences in New Testament interpretation involves a set of presuppositions.

#### 4. *Social-scientific Presuppositions*

Outfitted with the sense of history common to post-Enlightenment education, social-scientific approaches are rooted in four presuppositions: (1) meanings derive from social systems; (2) reading is rooted in what readers bring to the documents they read; (3) after puberty, most human beings can think abstractly at various levels of abstraction; and (4) thinking to a scientific conclusion is circular. The first presupposition comes from the social-scientific study of language in use, a study known as sociolinguistics. The second presupposition comes from experimental psychological studies of reading at a level greater than the sentence. The third presupposition comes from experimental psychological studies of human cognitive development. The final presupposition comes from the philosophy of science dealing with the formation of scientific hypotheses.

##### 4.1. *Presupposition One: How Language Works*<sup>12</sup>

Jesus research is rooted exclusively in reading and interpreting ancient documents, both written and monumental. The preponderance of these documents are writings produced in the past in order to communicate with persons in that time period. Given the nature of the evidence, historical Jesus research obviously has to provide some adequate explanation of how language works and how reading works in order to validate what exactly is retrieved through reading and how exactly does language function. After all, ancient languages do not live in scrolls or books. Rather the markings on a page stand for or represent wordings that represent meanings that can come alive only through the agency of the minds of readers. This observation is rooted in sociolinguistics.

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<sup>12</sup> See Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1978) and other studies in sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics is concerned with language in use, language as used, language intended to communicate meaning and feeling. In contrast, general linguistics focuses on lexical items (words) and complete thoughts (sentences). Sociolinguistics envisions communication through language as entailing three levels. Concretely (level one) language is scribblings and/or soundings. These scribblings and/or soundings are set out in wordings (level two), that is patterns of lines and/or sounds forming lexical items, sentences, paragraphs and the like. Finally, the scribblings/soundings in wordings express meanings (level three). The meanings expressed (encoded) in wordings expressed (encoded) through scribblings and/or soundings derive from the social system of the speakers and/or writers and audiences/readers. The three tiers are evident even to non-literates who know how to change *the way* (level two) they say something (wording) and yet say the same thing (meaning). General linguistics and the propositional theory of reading (one gets *ideas* from reading) focus on the sentence level. Sociolinguistics and the scenario theory of reading (one gets *meanings* from reading) focus on the textual level. A text here is a meaningful configuration of language (realized through sentences) intended to communicate.

#### 4.2. *Presupposition Two: How Reading Works*<sup>13</sup>

How does a reader get to understand meanings through the wordings of some writing? While acquaintance with writing systems (orthography) and wording systems (lexico-grammar) affords many interesting data, a social-scientific approach would focus upon the meanings that are imparted in the process of reading. In experimental psychology, the model of reading comprehension that can be validated might be called a scenario model.<sup>14</sup> This model considers the text as a succession of explicit and implicit scenes or schemes in which the mental representation evoked in the mind of the reader consists of a series of settings, episodes, or models deriving directly from the mind of the reader, coupled with appropriate alterations to these settings, episodes, or models as directed

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<sup>13</sup> See A. J. Sanford and S. C. Garrod, *Understanding Written Language: Explorations of Comprehension beyond the Sentence* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981); further references in Bruce J. Malina, "Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 3–23.

<sup>14</sup> See Sanford and Garrod, *Understanding Written Language*.

by the text. Here the reader must perform two tasks: s/he has to use the text to identify an appropriate “domain of reference,” i.e., call to mind an appropriate scene, scheme, or model suggested by the text, and then s/he must use the identified “domain of reference” as the larger frame within which to situate the meanings proposed in the text as far as this is possible. This model of reading comprehension does have some validation from contemporary experimental psychology.

The point is that the meanings derived from reading and from language are rooted in some social system from which the meanings come. Unless one knows the social system of the authors of documents from antiquity, one cannot help but provide scenarios from one’s own society and thus misunderstand the author’s scenarios. Stated another way, a reader cannot understand what is being said by comprehending what an author communicates in terms of one’s own social system. Similarly, if one knows the wordings (lexicography and syntax) of Greek, Latin or Aramaic without knowing the social system of the speakers/writers of those ancient languages, one can only inject meanings from one’s own social system into the Greek, Latin or Aramaic wordings. Hence the fundamental need to learn about and understand the social systems of the authors of the documents that serve as evidence for historical Jesus research. And access to those social systems is provided by anthropological historiography, the workhorse of social-science approaches.

#### 4.3. *Presupposition Three: How Abstraction Works*<sup>15</sup>

In general, human beings after reaching puberty have the ability, often unused, to think abstractly. Abstract thinking, often called generalization or generalized reasoning, is thinking in terms of ideas or conceptual representations of the essence of things rather than in terms of concrete images. The seemingly concrete word “tree” covers a whole range of rather different objects from deciduous to evergreen and all types falling under each category. Abstraction involves gathering a large number of items and discerning the similarity among them while dismissing the differences. Ideas and concepts are abstract representations of the essences of things; they are the result of the ability to extract and “chunk” together common qualities from a large number of concretely

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<sup>15</sup> See Jaan Valsiner and Kevin J. Connolly, eds., *Handbook of Developmental Psychology* (London: Sage, 2003).

different items, and then to express these chunks in terms of non-concrete signs and symbols. For example, instead of imagining (or talking about) an individual Jonathan apple or Bartlett pear or cooking banana or Freestone peach or Italian plum or navel orange or Hawaiian pineapple, humans can form the idea or concept of fruit. Now what the word "fruit" refers to is an idea of what all items in the previous list have in common, their similarities. And this common or similar element of "fruitness" really has no concrete, physical existence at all. It is really not concrete at all. Obviously, what concretely exists are actual, specific and individually unique apples, pears, bananas, and the like. To conceive of them as apples, pears, and bananas, for example, is a sort of first-level abstraction or chunk. Yet people can go further. They can take such abstractions as fruit, meat, vegetables, bread, and the like and produce a still higher abstraction, in this case "food." Every higher abstraction is a sort of bigger picture. Moreover, along with generating such abstractions, persons who think abstractly also have the ability to make relationships among or between abstractions. One can say, for example, food is necessary for human life. And even beyond this, one can take statements of relationships and put them in sequences called syllogistic reasoning. Abstract thinkers can make deductions from general abstract principles to concrete cases, and inductions from concrete cases to general abstract principles, and abductions to hypotheses in circular reasoning. One can analyze by taking abstractions apart into lower-level abstractions all the way to the concrete level. Conversely, one can synthesize by putting chunks together to ever higher levels of abstraction.

This point of higher and lower levels of abstraction eludes not a few critics of social-science approaches. As a matter of procedure, if a data set does not fit some generalization, one can always go to a higher level of abstraction to remove disconfirming qualities. For example, consider the following levels of abstraction, from highest to lowest: society  $\Rightarrow$  social institutions  $\Rightarrow$  institutional rewards and sanctions  $\Rightarrow$  shame or guilt or anxiety  $\Rightarrow$  honor and shame  $\Rightarrow$  in the Mediterranean area  $\Rightarrow$  in eastern Mediterranean  $\Rightarrow$  in Syro Palestine  $\Rightarrow$  in Galilee or in Jerusalem  $\Rightarrow$  in a specific village. Each level of abstraction adds or subtracts some feature of the behavior or value in question, just as the abstract level of "tree" is three times removed from the topmost abstract level, with many subsets below.

Why do human beings think abstractly? Biologists ascribe such thinking to the development of the cortex of the brain. Experimental psychologists, however, tell us that the main reason for abstract thinking

is that human beings are unable to keep any more than seven (plus or minus two) disparate elements in mental focus at one time.<sup>16</sup> What abstraction enables us to do is to represent and make some order among the countless experiences we undergo in the course of our interacting with our multiple environments. In short, our ability to think abstractly enables us to generate some orderly or patterned understanding of our complex experiences in terms of usually implicit generalizations and models.

Patterns of relationships among abstractions are called models (sometimes theories, or paradigms when they are very high-level abstractions). Models are abstract, simplified representations of more complex real world objects and interactions. Like abstract thought, the purpose of models is to enable and facilitate understanding. Of course such understanding can then be applied to predict and to control outcomes, but understanding comes first. Understanding, then, is the result of the process of abstraction in terms of patterns which order, classify, and give shape to human experiences.

Models are generalizations or abstract descriptions of real world experiences. They are approximate, simple representations of more complex forms, processes, and functions of physical and non-physical phenomena.<sup>17</sup> Now because models are simplifications, they are notorious for misfitting the real world experiences they attempt to represent. To reduce the misfit as much as possible, our cultural tradition—both scientific and humanistic—espouses a validation process presently called “the scientific method.” The scientific method consists of the following steps: (1) postulate a model (or theory or paradigm); (2) test the model against the “real world” experience it relates to; (3) modify the model in terms of the outcome of the test to reduce the misfit by detecting errors of omission or commission. This method is a form of circular reasoning, called abduction. The procedure serves as a safeguard against the twin pitfalls of human understanding: superficiality and inaccuracy.

Models really cannot be proved right or wrong. After all they are postulated, a step basic to abduction (see next presuppositions). They derive from a sort of insight that seems to hold experiences together in such a

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<sup>16</sup> George A. Miller, “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information,” *Psychological Review* 63 (1956): 81–97.

<sup>17</sup> On models and their use in the study of the Greco-Roman world, see Thomas F. Carney, *The Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquity* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1975).

way as to make sense. Models may be polythetic (instances share many features) or monothetic (instances share all features). Models can only be validated. What validation means is that the generalizations or abstract statements deriving from the model have been checked out according to the steps of the scientific method and have been found adequate, given the experiences or data the model is meant to chunk. In other words, in validation all data readily fit the postulated model, and anyone can check it out. The fact that explicit generalizations and models can be validated is what differentiates social-scientific approaches from other methods used in Jesus research. Other approaches use generalizations and models that remain implicit and unclarified.

#### 4.4. *Presupposition Four: How Scientific Thinking Works*

On the basis of their observations of repeated behaviors of persons in society, social scientists conclude to a range of generalizations that are typical of a given society or a part of that society. How might one utilize these social-science generalizations with reference to data deriving from ancient documents?

One might begin with some generalization about contemporary Mediterranean societies (e.g., envy and the evil eye, honor and shame, patronage), hone down the generalization to get rid of any accretions that might have surfaced over the past two millennia, then use the generalization as a net to collect data from first-century Mediterranean documents. With the data, one then reasons to a hypothesis and back again to the data and its embedding generalization. Reasoning from some insight used to collect data to an explicit hypothesis and back again to the data set is called abduction. Abduction consists of circular or spiraling or oscillating reasoning. It is a sort of spiraling circular deductive induction and inductive deduction by means of which hypothetical reconstructions are developed. This sort of reasoning was first explained by Charles Sanders Peirce (d. 1914), who called it abduction. Scheff calls abduction a “kind of shuttling back and forth between deductive and inductive methods.”<sup>18</sup> Fann explains: “Peirce wished to show that reasoning *towards* a hypothesis is of a different kind than reasoning *from* a hypothesis... (Reasoning towards a hypothesis) has usually been considered either as not reasoning at all, or as a species of induction.

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas J. Scheff, “Shame and Conformity: The Deference-Emotion System,” *American Sociological Review* 53 (1988): 402.



Peirce said: 'I don't think the adoption of a hypothesis on probation can properly be called induction; and yet it is reasoning' (8:388).<sup>19</sup> Reilly, in turn, notes: "In opposition to Hume, Peirce emphasizes that our knowledge is not derived from experience alone. In fact 'every item of science came originally from conjecture, which has only been pruned down by experience... The entire matter of our works of solid science consists of conjectures checked by experience.'"<sup>20</sup>

Abduction is reasoning that begins with data collected in terms of some explicit or implicit generalization. The data are then moved toward a hypothesis with the introduction of a new idea. It is reasoning towards a hypothesis; it deals with how a hypothesis is adopted on probation, with reasons for suggesting a hypothesis in the first place. There are reasons for suggesting a hypothesis initially as a plausible type of hypothesis. The verification process makes known the approximation of the suggested hypothesis to the reality it attempts to describe. In turn, the hypothesis may render the observed facts necessary, or at least highly probable. Abduction then entails drawing up a hypothesis for explaining a curious circumstance by supposing it to be a case of a general rule. In the process facts not capable of direct observation are inferred.

Induction "infers the existence of phenomena such as we have observed in cases that are similar" while abduction "supposes something of a different kind from what we have directly observed, and frequently something which it would be impossible for us to observe directly (2.640)... For in induction we generalize from a number of cases of which something is true and infer that the same thing is probably true of a whole class. But in abduction we pass from the observation of certain facts to the supposition of a general principle to account for the facts. Thus induction may be said to be an inference from a sample to a whole, or from particulars to a general law; abduction is an inference from a body of data to an explaining hypothesis, or from effect to cause. The former classifies, the latter explains. Abduction furnishes the reasoner with hypothesis while induction is the method of testing and verifying."<sup>21</sup>

The scientific explanation suggested by abduction has two characteristics that must be pointed out now (along with others that will be dealt with later): 1.) an explanatory hypothesis renders the observed facts necessary or highly probable; 2.) an explanatory hypothesis deals with facts which

<sup>19</sup> K. T. Fann, *Peirce's Theory of Abduction* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Francis E. Reilly, *Charles Peirce's Theory of Scientific Method*, Orestes Brownson Series on Contemporary Thought and Affairs 7 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970), 31.

<sup>21</sup> Fann, *Peirce's Theory*, 9–10.

are different from the facts to be explained, and are frequently not capable of being directly observed.<sup>22</sup>

Hypotheses are of three types: factually not observed but observable, factually not observable (history), and factually and theoretically not observable. A hypothesis would be explained by supposing that it was a case of a certain general rule, and thereupon one could adopt that supposition. This sort of inference is called “making a hypothesis.” When we adopt a certain hypothesis, it is not only because it will explain the observed facts but also because the contrary hypothesis would probably lead to results contrary to those observed.<sup>23</sup>

In sum, the four presuppositions behind social-scientific approaches to Jesus research form the underpinning of the truism that without an understanding of the social system in which the sources of Jesus research were produced one simply cannot understand what those sources meant. And it is a presupposition of all academic Jesus research that it is of primary importance to understand what the sources of Jesus research meant in their original cultural and historical contexts. Consequently if other methods of Jesus research do not employ some explicit model of the social system of the people to and for whom early Jesus group writings were intended, they must necessarily supply social system information simply from their own experience. Such information is invariably anachronistic and/or ethnocentric.

##### 5. *Some Historical Caveats While Using the Social Sciences in Jesus Research*

Social-scientific method applied to historical Jesus research begins with some problem that might arise from claims made about Jesus in some contemporary source (accessible by reading books and articles on US society, for example) or about life in the modern eastern Mediterranean relevant to early Jesus group members (accessible by experience<sup>24</sup> or by reading books and articles on Mediterranean anthropology). Consider

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<sup>22</sup> Reilly, *Charles Peirce's Theory*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> See Fann, *Peirce's Theory*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> For an example of how a Mediterranean scholar's experience might influence interpretation, see Carmen Bernabé, “Of Eunuchs and Predators: Matthew 19:1–12 in a Cultural Context,” *BTB* 33 (2003): 128–134.

the question of person types.<sup>25</sup> Human beings are born one by one. As individuals, human beings are nurtured and cherished and socialized. About 20% of the individual human beings on the planet have been socialized into patterns of behavior that are individualistic, with focus on the individual's self-reliance and the primacy of self. About 80% of the individual human beings on the planet have been socialized into patterns of behavior that are collectivistic, with focus on the integrity of the individual's group, with the primacy of group concerns over the individual.<sup>26</sup> The individualistic orientation emerged in the seventeenth century AD with cultural values among elites which at that time disrupted the bio-psycho-spiritual unity of human consciousness that had existed until then. The result is a sort of "acquired consciousness," whereby individualists dissociate self and look at self "objectively." Western culture socializes individuals to develop a metasef, a critical observer who monitors and comments on experience. The metasef does not allow the total absorption in the lived experience of the group or lived experience in general. The metasef stands in the way of unreflected, unmediated experience which now becomes distanced.<sup>27</sup> No such individualistic persons existed in the first-century eastern Mediterranean.<sup>28</sup> The same holds for Jesus as well. Psychological investigations into Jesus' self-concept are totally misplaced.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Harry Triandis, "Cross-Cultural Studies in Individualism and Collectivism," in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1989*, ed. R. Dienstbier (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 41–133; *Individualism and Collectivism*, New Directions in Social Psychology (San Francisco: Westview, 1995); and the *Journal for Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

<sup>26</sup> Gert Hofstede, "Empirical Models of Cultural Differences," in *Contemporary Issues in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, ed. Nico Bleichrodt and Pieter J. D. Drenth (Amsterdam: Lisse; Berwyn, PA: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1991), 17.

<sup>27</sup> See Arthur Kleinman, *Rethinking Psychiatry* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1970), 50. See also John J. Pilch, "Visions in Revelation and Alternate Consciousness: A Perspective from Cultural Anthropology," *Listening 28* (1993): 231–244.

<sup>28</sup> However there were quasi-individualists that included the 2% elites who acted narcissistically and greedily, with a focus on the individual self at the top of a collectivistic hierarchy, and the 10% "throwaway" people who were compelled to live apart from normal, stable collectivistic society; see Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Ethnocentrism and Historical Questions about Jesus," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Stegemann, Malina, and Theissen, 27–44.

<sup>29</sup> Pilch, "BTB Readers Guide: Psychological and Psychoanalytical Approaches to Interpreting the Bible in Social-Scientific Context," 112–116.

In another direction, consider social institutions. US sociology deals with at least four basic social institutions (and subsets): family, economics, politics and religion. Historians indicate that the separation of church and state (religion and politics) occurred for the first time in the eighteenth century as did the separation of bank/market and state (economics and politics). Anthropologists have frequently noted that peasant societies (presumably first-century Mediterranean societies as well), with their perception of limited good, have substantive economic systems. "Substantive" means that economics is embedded in family (domestic economy) and government (political economy). Likewise, societies not directly influenced by the eighteenth-century Euro-American idea of separation of church and state (e.g. Islamic countries) will have "substantive" religion. This means religion is coterminous with the whole of society embedded both in the family (domestic religion) and the state (political religion). Given that the New Testament antedated the eighteenth century and its separations, the presumption is that in the time of the New Testament there existed domestic religion and political religion as well as domestic economy and political economy but no formal religion or formal economy. Religious and economic concerns were realized through kinship and political norms. To proclaim the kingdom of God (theocracy) or to hail someone as king of Israel is to express political statements. To address one's fellows as "brothers" or "sisters" in Christ is to describe others in kinship terms. Although most contemporary New Testament readers consider those documents to be about religion, the documents originated in social systems where religion was embedded in kinship and/or politics. Hence the documents are about kinship and/or politics in which religion is embedded.<sup>30</sup> For this reason the use of modern sociology of religion based on religion as a formal, free-standing social institution will always produce inaccurate anachronistic and ethnocentric results. Historians are quite aware of these step level changes that have affected western society, yet they still speak endlessly about Jesus as concerned with the religion of Israel.

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<sup>30</sup> Bruce J. Malina, "Religion in the World of Paul: A Preliminary Sketch," *BTB* 16 (1986): 92-101.

6. *Jesus Research and Anthropological History:  
Some High Level Abstractions*

Historians as a rule tell their stories based on research into sources read from a perspective of “immaculate perception.” They frequently believe that the facts, the evidence, is there for the picking: “just read the sources!” Social-science approaches do not for a moment believe in such “immaculate perception.” Ancient sources rarely mean what we foreigners think they meant. However, since social-science approaches proceed with the Enlightenment passion for accurate chronology typical of historians, they share the historians’ chronological data set and come to the following conclusions about Jesus and his story.

Jesus was socialized and enculturated in a specific social system, at a given time and place. Obviously we know quite certainly that Jesus was socialized and enculturated in a society of the eastern Mediterranean that was totally uninfluenced by globalism, universalism, scientism, the modern city, the industrial revolution, nation state, the Enlightenment, international law, the Renaissance, Arab-European scholasticism, Justinian’s Code, Constantine’s Christendom, the Talmudic Jewishness, Ben Zakkai’s Scribalism, and the like. It is certain that he was socialized and enculturated in the Hellenized Israelite peasant society common to the region at the time. In other words, he was influenced by what we today call Hellenism as assimilated in Israelite peasant village life in that section of the Roman province of Syria called Galilee. Because of his socialization and enculturation, he shared meanings with others in his social group, and these meanings were expressed in language, gesture, artifacts and the like. These all derived from and expressed the social system of Galilee in the first century, where and when Jesus, as a person communicating with others, was enculturated. Jesus always perceived and judged in terms of the social presuppositions that he brought to the events he perceived.<sup>31</sup>

Social systems consist of social institutions, value configurations and modal personalities. Social institutions are fixed forms of phases of social life. Since the separation of church and state, and of market/bank and state, occurred in the eighteenth century, we can safely say that in the

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<sup>31</sup> See K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), with rather full bibliography and a CD.

world of Jesus there were only two focal or formal social institutions, kinship and politics. The roles, statuses, and values of kinship and politics were used to express and understand economics and religion. The outcome, from our point of view, is a social system with a political institution along with political religion and political economy, as well as a kinship institution along with domestic religion and domestic economy. The historical sources indicate that the political institution was theocratic and was marked by a range of political theocratic parties. Similarly the kinship institution was endogamous and nucleated, existing alongside elective groupings or coalitions that had the structure of fictive kin groups.<sup>32</sup>

Since the individualistic orientation of modern western societies originated with the metasef of the seventeenth century AD, Jesus, like his contemporaries, was enculturated into a collectivistic society, hence his was a collectivistic personality. He was not individualistic. His general concern was with group integrity, not with standing on his own feet and pursuing his own purposes.<sup>33</sup> The group whose integrity Jesus sought to maintain was the typical collectivistic group of a specific family located in a specific village, which in turn was located in a specific region, which in its turn was located in a common people (tribe, common collectivity). He saw his society in terms of a Russian-doll or Chinese-box arrangement of his family (parents, brothers and sisters), his village (initially Nazareth, then Capernaum), his region (Galilee), and his people (the house of Israel). The family he knew was a nucleated endogamous family, although Israel's story shared the ideal of an extended endogamous family.

His was a high-context society.<sup>34</sup> High context societies produce sketchy and impressionistic conversations and documents leaving much to the reader's or hearer's imagination and common knowledge. Since people believed few things had to be spelled out, few things were in fact spelled out. This is so because people had been socialized into widely

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<sup>32</sup> Santiago Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 42–65; *Fidelidades en conflicto: La ruptura con la familia pro causa del discipulado y de la misión sinóptica* (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> See Rohrbaugh, "Ethnocentrism," 27–44; and on social identity, Henri Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> On high and low context societies, see Malina, "Reading Theory," 19–20.

and rather invariable shared ways of perceiving and acting. Hence, they quite accurately assumed very much about what their interacting partners brought to a conversation. As high-context documents, the gospels are rather full stories touching upon everything people needed to hear about Jesus for a complete presentation. In contrast, for members of low-context societies and their specialized, detailed, introspective descriptions, the all too brief gospels do not work as well as a three-hundred page biography.

The second significant aspect of social systems is the culture or value set into which social system members were enculturated. We are quite sure of the value orientations and the values that Jesus held in his interaction with others. If we consider the standard value objects found in all societies (self, others, nature, time, space, and the All), we know that Jesus and those he recruited defined self in terms of gender, genealogy or ingroup and geography.<sup>35</sup> We previously noted Jesus' family and regional collectivistic concerns. In terms of gender, his society was patriarchal, with females embedded in related males, and lower status bonded males embedded in higher status males as well. A higher status female was of greater value than any male of lesser rank. The patriline (male and female offspring) had entitlements, not the matriline. On the other hand, the matriline (males and females on the mother's side) related to each other not on the basis of entitlements but on the basis of commitment and loyalty mediated through the mother. Social interactions followed the pathways of honor and shame with challenge and riposte, duly engendered, typical of interaction of outgroup persons.

As far as others were concerned, people and groups were assessed in terms of ingroup and outgroup boundaries, drawn in terms of general group patterns (e.g. family, village, region, ethnic group are always the ingroup poised against other families, village, region, ethnic group). This ingroup/outgroup perception replicated thinking in terms of either/or (both/and does not emerge until the seventeenth century).<sup>36</sup> All

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<sup>35</sup> See Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archaeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996) for how selves were described in the Greco-Roman world.

<sup>36</sup> See Gerd Gigerenzer, Zeno Swijtink, Theodore Porter, Lorraine Daston, John Beaty, and Lorenz Krüger, *The Empire of Change: How Probability Changed Science and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Bruce J. Malina, "Three Theses for a More Adequate Reading of the New Testament," in *Practical Theology: Perspectives from the Plains*, ed. Michael G. Lawler and Gail S. Risch (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 2000), 33–60.

groups were ethnocentric, using their ingroup as norm for what is human. Jesus believed that Galilean social norms were proper for his fellow Israelites since Galileans formed his wider ingroup. He was fully cognizant of the wider ingroup known as the house of Israel, but he was enculturated to see the Galilean realization of Israelite norms as normative. Such ethnocentrism was also typical of the authors of the gospels and Paul and their community members. In fact all New Testament documents were ethnocentric, and the “ethnos” in question depended on the ingroup level one considered (e.g. Galilee versus Judea, Israel versus non-Israelites, Hellenistic Israelites versus “barbarian” Israelites, and the like). To find “anti-Semitism” (nineteenth-century coinage for anti-Judaism) in the New Testament is certainly and totally anachronistic and incomprehensible to any first-century person.

Jesus, like his fellow Galileans, lived subject to nature, with great concern to understand those personal entities that impinged on their lives, whether visible like stars and planets or invisible like spirits, angels and demons. For Jesus, human nature, hence human character, never changed. While people could get their lives in order by living up to the norms of their social groups, their choice to do so depended on their character. Some persons simply were unchangeably deviant (“bad seed”) and had to be avoided. Jesus found that stories of Israel’s past were very useful since in them he found direction for behavior in the present. As those stories indicated, the God of Israel was a living God who did not change his intentions for Israel. What Jesus knew for certain was that he was not in control of his existence and, for the most part, he was not responsible for what was happening to him. Like everyone in his society, from king to beggar, he knew that all goods in life were limited. Like land, there was no way to increase the amount of the good things in life without impinging on another. To impinge on others was deviance, a sin or breach of interpersonal relations. Given his perception of limited good, he was quite aware of envy, which in its Mediterranean configuration was usually characterized by the evil eye, which he also knew.<sup>37</sup>

For Jesus, time was focused on a broad present that included the immediate past (to which there were living witnesses) and the forth-

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<sup>37</sup> For a consideration of these values, see Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*. On the evil eye, see John H. Elliott, “The Evil Eye and the Sermon on the Mount: Contours of a Pervasive Belief in Social Scientific Perspective,” *BI* 2, no. 1 (1994): 51–84.



coming future (deriving from present behavior).<sup>38</sup> He was fully aware that any knowledge of the distant past or the distant future was unavailable to human beings. Only the God of Israel knew the past and the future. Of course the God of Israel might reveal that information if necessary to his Israelite prophets, like Moses who describes creation and Samuel who wrote of his own period and of Israel's kings.

Jesus shared this peasant world view. His temporal orientation was to the broad present in a way that was pre-clock, pre-monastic, pre-Newtonian, pre-Enlightenment, pre-Industrial Revolution and pre-Einsteinian. To be on time meant to be some place before the most honorable person arrived. The most honorable person can never be late (similarly there could never be a delay of the Parousia). Like other first-century Mediterranean people, Jesus too knew that society, and nature with it, was running down, in a process of devolution as we would say (an analogy deriving from animate beings).<sup>39</sup>

Jesus interpreted space in terms of the geographical territoriality norms of his day. All the land was marked off and controlled by persons with force to back up their claims. Mountain tops offered closer proximity to the deity. Jesus' society was ruralized, consisting of social givers (the majority of the population) and takers (the elites). The central places (Greek: *polis*, Hebrew: *ir*, translated city) served as part time residences for elite landowners whose wealth in produce and raw materials derived from land holdings. These elites had second homes in cities, where they produced power to control the surround of the city and beyond. Elites saw little clear division between town and country, since elites had their primary residence in the country. But Jesus, like his fellow non-elites, had little interest and concern for cities. City elites maintained their city staffs through taxation which was never expended on behalf of taxpayers. While Jesus experienced geographical territoriality, he also knew about celestial territoriality, with celestial entities having significant impact on the lands over which they were to be found.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Concerning time, see Bruce J. Malina, "Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 1–31, reprinted in *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels* (London: Routledge, 1996), 179–214.

<sup>39</sup> See John J. Pilch, "A Window into the Biblical World: A New Sky and a New Earth," *The Bible Today* 41.1 (2003): 49–53.

<sup>40</sup> Concerning territoriality, see Bruce J. Malina, "Apocalyptic and Territoriality," in *Early Christianity in Context: Monuments and Documents: Essays in Honour of Emmanuel Testa*, ed. Frederic Manns and Eugenio Alliata (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), 369–380.

This limited general overview provides some insight into the type of collectivist person Jesus was. The sources tell us that Jesus recruited a faction to assist him in his task of proclaiming a forthcoming theocracy to Israel. What it meant to join a Jesus group can be understood in terms of a model of social identity. Jesus along with his faction members performed this task in a ruralized society characterized by force, cruelty and extortion on the part of elites toward non-elites. In order to avoid falling victim to the full impact of such elite power, persons had to find duly placed patrons. Distinctively, Jesus sought the patronage of the God of Israel, whom he called “Father” or “Patron.”<sup>41</sup>

### 7. *Jesus Research and Anthropological History: Some Lower Level Abstractions*

#### 7.1. *Jesus Certainly Proclaimed Theocracy*

All historically oriented biblical critics agree that, if Jesus did anything, he proclaimed the kingdom of Heaven (or the Sky), a politically correct Israelite way of saying kingdom of God.<sup>42</sup> The phrase “kingdom of Heaven/God” fell under the category of politics, specifically political religion. In more abstract language, the proclaimed kingdom of Heaven was a form of theocracy. The repentance required for participation in the forthcoming kingdom consisted in persons’ getting their lives in order for living in the new political order.

What would such a theocracy be like? Perhaps the best analogy is that of the well-known contemporary theocratic state of Iran. The theocratic state is rooted in the will of God, expressed in God’s revelation as interpreted by Islamic tradition (the umma or people) and more specifically by those learned in the sacred writings. Whatever their specific names, over five thousand years of Middle Eastern history, these persons were/

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<sup>41</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, “Establishment Violence in the New Testament World,” *Scripture* 51 (1994): 51–78; Torrey Seland, *Establishment Violence in Philo and Luke: A Study of Non-conformity to the Torah and Jewish Vigilante Reactions*, BIS 15 (Leiden: Brill, 1995); on patron-clientelism, see Bruce J. Malina, “Patron and Client: The Analogy Behind Synoptic Theology,” *Forum* 4 (1988): 2–32; John H. Elliott, “Patronage and Clientage,” in *Social Science and New Testament*, ed. Rohrbaugh, 144–156.

<sup>42</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, *The Social Gospel of Jesus: The Kingdom of God in Mediterranean Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001).

are “scribes.” These scribes were arranged in hierarchy, with higher level personages having greater “interpretative” authority, hence power backed by God himself. Israel’s Messiah, like the Mahdi of Islam, leads the fight to establish the theocracy, but then backs off in favor of the “scribes.”

7.2. *Jesus Was an Israelite Holy Man: A Certainty (First Title of Jesus in the Synoptic Story)*

Jesus was an Israelite holy man.<sup>43</sup> Like holy men in the past and present, Jesus had direct contact or communication with the realm of God; control of or power over the spirits; ongoing altered states of consciousness experiences through which he had contact with the realm of God. Like holy men the world over, his activities had a “this worldly” focus on the material world, to help people in distress. He could take sky journeys and travel through the spirit world and the realm of God, although the sources only mention the sky journey at his final appearance to his faction members. As a holy man, in his encounter with spirits, he interacted with them without fear of them possessing him. And typically, healing is a major focus of his activity. Jesus’ own altered state of consciousness experiences made it easy for his core group and his fellow Galileans to consider him a holy man and prophet. He became aware of his role in an altered states of consciousness experience related to the time of his baptism by John. Altered states of consciousness are common to eighty to ninety percent of contemporary human beings (filtered out as non-rational in the West). Hence it is not surprising that the helpers recruited by Jesus were likewise capable of having altered states of consciousness experiences: they saw Jesus walking on the sea, transfigured and raised from the dead. All such visions are a type of altered states of consciousness experience, mentioned along with others by Paul and throughout the story of the Acts of the Apostles.

Jesus coupled his holy man role with that of prophet, like the prophetic holy men of Israelite traditions (Elijah, Elisha). He proclaimed the forthcoming kingdom of God. In this he followed his tutor, John the Baptist, who performed a similar prophetic role.

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<sup>43</sup> On this topic, see Pieter Craffert, “Jesus and the Shamanic Complex: Social Type and Historical Figure”; John J. Pilch, “Altered States of Consciousness in the Synoptics,” in *Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Stegemann, Malina, and Theissen, 103–116; Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 369.

### 7.3. *Jesus Certainly Formed a Political Faction*

All sources agree that, after Jesus' career was over, a group survived that was previously rather closely connected to Jesus. Since such a group did in fact exist, it was previously formed by Jesus within the framework of Jesus' own concern. We know that Jesus' concern was with a forthcoming Israelite theocracy, hence the group formed by Jesus consisted of a set of persons who witnessed to and participated in Jesus' program. Since a program focused on theocracy was a political religious one, within a political institution, a group formed to support someone's program is called a faction. It is beyond doubt that Jesus formed a Galilean faction with a view to communicating information about a forthcoming Israelite theocracy. The sources attest to the political aspirations of Jesus' core group. Factions by definition are coalitions, that is, groups formed by a central person for a specific purpose and for a specific time.<sup>44</sup>

### 7.4. *Jesus Was Concerned with Israel Alone*

The forthcoming theocracy that Jesus and his faction proclaimed looked to the house of Israel alone.<sup>45</sup> As Israelite holy man, Jesus healed non-Israelites, but as Israelite prophet, the theocracy he proclaimed had nothing to do with non-Israelites at all. Jesus' ingroup concerns would preclude concern with outgroup non-Israelites. The God of Israel, Jesus' Patron, had a covenant with the people of Israel alone. Theocracy rooted in the record of the God of Israel's dealings with his people would only be concerned with the house of Israel. Further, only Israel and Israelite tradition have the social role of Messiah. And only Israel's tradition had a celestial or astral figure known as the "son of man" who was to be the harbinger of the theocracy.

### 7.5. *Jesus Certainly Spoke Only of the God of Israel*

In his concern for theocracy in Israel, Jesus proclaimed this theocracy in the name of the God of Israel, the God confessed in the *Shema* "The Lord *our* God."<sup>46</sup> The deity to whom Jesus referred and to whom

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<sup>44</sup> See Malina, "Patron and Client"; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptics*, 342–343; Dennis Duling, "Egalitarian Ideology, Leadership, and Factional Conflict in the Gospel of Matthew," *BTB* 27 (1997): 124–137.

<sup>45</sup> See Malina, "Three Theses."

<sup>46</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, "Is There a Circum-Mediterranean Person: Looking for Stereotypes," *BTB* 22 (1992): 66–87.

he related was always “the God of Israel” (Matt 15:31; Mark 12:29; Luke 1:68; an ancestral God: Matt 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32; Matt 8:11 and compare Luke 13:29). The synoptics report that the theocracy Jesus proclaimed refers to the rule of Israel’s God over Israel. In spite of the best intentions and intuitions of many modern theological commentators, I believe it is fair to say that there really is no evidence of universalism of any sort in antiquity. The deities of various peoples were the traditional gods of the groups, even if Hellenistic theology began to see equivalences among the many deities of the Roman *oikoumene*. But such equivalences would be apparent only to persons in contact with outsiders and living among them. This was not Jesus’ experience, to the best of our knowledge. Just as stars had impact only on the lands over which they were to be found, so too the deities resident in the sky (and often visiting in their temples on the land directly below) had impact only on the lands below their celestial residence.<sup>47</sup>

#### 7.6. *Jesus Necessarily Spoke of Political Religion and Political Economy*

Since the Bible is a book of the Christian church today, the presumption is that it deals with religion in the way that modern formal institutional religion does. However even the separation of pope and state during the Reformation did not produce a formal religion. With Constantine, the Jesus groups and their ideology became part of the political religion of the empire. It was no different for Jesus in Galilee.<sup>48</sup> If Jesus proclaimed theocracy, which is certain, his proclamation was a political religious one with political economic dimensions.<sup>49</sup> The reason for this is that during Jesus’ day, religion and economics were embedded in politics and necessarily included in it. Since Jesus proclaimed a forthcoming theocracy that would transform God’s people, Israel, such a theocracy would entail “proper” approaches to God as well as “proper” provisioning of Israelite society. The details of what this entailed are not spelled out since the proclamation was high context in nature.

<sup>47</sup> See Malina, “Apocalyptic and Territoriality”; “Jesus as Astral Prophet,” *BTB* 27 (1997): 83–98.

<sup>48</sup> See Malina, *The Social Gospel of Jesus*; Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine*; Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God*; Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His place*.

<sup>49</sup> See Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity* 8 (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1986); “The Lord’s Prayer in Social Perspective,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *NTTS* 28.1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 137–186.

### 7.7. *Jesus' Career as Faction Founder: From Forming to Adjourning*

The life of Jesus, like the life of other human beings, had a beginning, a middle and an end. However Jesus is best remembered for the year or so (one dry season, one rainy season and one dry season) of his career that preceded his death. This phase of his life is often called his “public ministry,” a church term for his public career. Since he had such a career, he must have been born and developed before launching on that career as an adult. And since in antiquity all infancy descriptions derive from the time after a person’s career is complete, such infancy accounts might readily be attached to a life of Jesus—with the same verisimilitude as other ancient, unwitnessed infancy stories.<sup>50</sup>

The ancient introduction to a *bios* (life) in this period consisted of mention of ancestry (antecedents), birth and *paideia* (education or formation). While these three features are duly highlighted in Matthew and Luke with their genealogies, infancy stories and description of Jesus’ testing as Son of God, Mark offers instead an introduction to the *bios* of Jesus as holy man and prophet, that is, as a Son of God. Mark presents Jesus’ ancestry based on John the prophet and the citation from Isaiah, his birth as holy man with an inaugural vision, and the formation of a holy man with a wilderness testing.<sup>51</sup> One of the sources claims Jesus was a first-born son (Luke 2:7) who was about 30 when he launched his public career (Luke 3:23). And all of the sources make no mention of his having been married. One can raise the question about why Jesus did not marry. The sources attest to Jesus’ having a number of brothers and sisters (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3; 1 Cor 9:5). What sort of culturally based explanation is available for the non-marriage of a first born son of a family of at least six other children? The oldest son was surrogate father and was responsible for the support of the other children in the family. Today among Palestinians, it would not be odd for males to put off marriage even to their thirties to help with the family. Palestinian males frequently marry at 30+ with females in their late teens.

Be that as it may, we can presume from this information (ancient and modern) that Jesus began his career of promulgating the kingdom of Heaven/Sky/God after he worked for his family to see to the support of

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<sup>50</sup> See Thomas Wiedemann, *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

<sup>51</sup> Noted by Santiago Guijarro, “Why Does the Gospel of Mark Begin as It Does?” *BTB* 33 (2003): 28–38.

his other siblings. The sources trace back Jesus' career as holy man and prophet to an altered state of consciousness experience that occurred at the time of John the Baptist (time in the ancient world was noted by famous personages; for example Jesus died under Pontius Pilate—a date, not an accusation). For what happened subsequently, it is not difficult to produce a rather general description of the career of Jesus from the simple fact that Jesus recruited a faction. This model of a “public life” of Jesus consists of an outline of the chronology of Jesus' activity based on the stages of the social movement organization he founded. This outline does not require any of the time sequences in the synoptics or John. On the other hand, given its higher level of abstraction, it does serve as a factual framework of Jesus' career. Data presented in the sources can then be attached to various dimensions of this outline and thus flesh out a highly probable “public” life of Jesus with the proposed schema (perhaps not unlike the geographical procedure of Mark running from Galilee to Judea).

The reason for this assertion is that at a high level of abstraction, group formation and group development are quite rigidly structured (as rigidly structured as the human skeleton). And the structures have been verified in a wide range of cross-cultural situations so as to be rather self-evident truisms. Some historians will claim that the structures are so abstract as to be historically worthless. Yet such a contention simply denies what historians inevitably do: begin with an abstract pattern of structures, gather data to fit those patterns, then tell a story that unfolds the patterns in terms of the data. It is worth remembering that there is no “immaculate perception.” At least with these structures, which human groups inevitably follow, we have skeletal certitude (the same certitude European scholars used to identify the Alpine “Ice Man” as human!).

### 7.8. *Jesus Formed A Group*

The story of Jesus' career actually begins with his recruiting a small group for his own purposes of proclaiming a forthcoming theocracy.<sup>52</sup> This small group constituted to assist him is a faction. Jesus had a project

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<sup>52</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, “Early Christian Groups: Using Small Group Formation Theory to Explain Christian Organizations,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 96–113.

in mind based on his solution to some problem. Small group formation is always rooted in the solution to some problem. Jesus became aware of a need for change and shared this awareness with others. They then mutually nurtured a hope of success in implementing the change in question. And they joined Jesus because they lived in a societal context in which group formation was expected. Jesus did indeed proclaim a kingdom and looked upon God as Patron. He proclaimed a political, political-religious and political-economic theocracy to his fellow Galilean Israelites. He was aware of a solution to Israel's political problems and was in process of sharing that solution with others. That Jesus offered such a solution likewise indicates that Israel had political problems that some believed required solution.

Those who heard Jesus' solution would compare that solution with other available solutions. Those who found the solution feasible would adopt it and act to implement it, while telling others about it. It was at this point that people became amenable to forming a small group around Jesus. Those who rejected Jesus' solution to the problems facing the house of Israel simply dismissed Jesus' proclamation. In brief, the features of a small group formation may be summed up as: aware—share—compare—declare. Here Jesus is prophet as problem solver.

Group development entails changes in the group as a whole over time as well as changes in the relationship between the group and each of its members. The development of the originating Jesus group marked the unfolding of Jesus' activity over time—a life of Jesus. As previously noted, the cross-cultural study of small groups has produced the following model of the stages that small groups trace over time, with verifiably predictable behavior at each stage. The stages are: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning.<sup>53</sup> First, forming.

The forming stage was the period when Jesus put his core group together. He formed his faction to accomplish a task directed to Israel at large. This extra group orientation differentiated the original Jesus group from the Jesus group gatherings that followed since those gatherings

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<sup>53</sup> This sequence is based on the cross-cultural model developed by Bruce W. Tuckman, "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin* 63 (1965): 384–399; Bruce W. Tuckman and M. A. C. Jansen, "Stages of Small-Group Development Revisited," *Group and Organization Studies* 2 (1977): 419–427. Tuckman's work was further corroborated by Richard L. Moreland and John M. Levine, "Group Dynamics Over Time: Development and Socialization in Small Groups," in *The Social Psychology of Time: New Perspectives* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988), 151–181.



were formed for intragroup social support. Jesus recruited his faction to perform an extra group task. The task activity of this group is articulated variously in the sources. There is reference to “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17; Matt 4:19; Q 10:2 remembers it as a “harvest”; as does John 4:35; Rom 1:13). The so-called “mission” charge recalls Jesus as expanding his vague project: to proclaim God’s taking over the country soon, to urge Israelites to get their affairs in order to this end, and to heal those in need of healing.<sup>54</sup> Mark implies that group members were chosen with healing ability in tow (Mark 3:15 and 6:7 mention only that Jesus gave the Twelve authority over unclean spirits; yet when they return we are told that “they anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them” 6:13). Matt 10:6 and Luke 9:1 (10:9 is unclear on this score), on the other hand, state that Jesus bestowed the healing ability characteristic of holy men on his recruits. During the forming stage, group members discussed the nature of their task and how it might be performed. The behavior of group members toward each other apart from the brothers in the group, was tentative; commitment to the group was low. The sources (Mark) tell of Jesus’ impatience with his followers because of this tentative commitment (“little faith”).

### 7.9. *Storming in the Jesus Group*

The sources tell of Jesus’ disciples eventually jockeying for position and easing into assured interpersonal locations. Consider the dispute about who is greatest (Mark 9:33–37; Matthew 18:1–5; Luke 9:46–48); a general argument about precedence (Mark 10:41–44; Matt 20:24–27; Luke 22:24–27); concern for sitting next to Jesus in the kingdom (Matt 20:20–23—mother; Mark 10:35–40; not in L); and the general concern about rewards (Mark 10:28–31; Matt 19:27–30; Luke 18:28–30—appropriated). Peter’s rebuking Jesus after talk about suffering and death is an attempt to persuade Jesus to change goals to fit what the group is concerned about (Mark 8:32–33; Matt 16:22–23; not in L). These episodes witness to the storming phase of Jesus’ group development. Conflict among the disciples emerged, with emotions getting free

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<sup>54</sup> The anthropology of healing applied to the New Testament has been well developed by John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000); see also the significant contribution by Estévez López, *El poder de una mujer creyente*.

expression.<sup>55</sup> They became more assertive, and each of them tried to change the group's purposes to satisfy his own "personal" needs. Resentment and hostilities erupted among disciples with differing needs. Each of them attempted to persuade the others to adopt group goals that will fulfill their needs. The behavior of group members toward one another became assertive, while their commitment to the group was higher than it was before. Jesus had to deal with the storming postures of his disciples to keep their allegiance and to have them continue with his project. His responses to ingroup conflict looked to how he managed this phase of his group's development.

#### 7.10. *Norming in the Jesus Group*

Early on in the story told by Mark and followed by Matthew and Luke, we find evidence of intergroup conflict resolution in favor of mutually agreed upon patterns of behavior. The task norms for Jesus' core group are listed in the so-called "mission" discourse (Matt 10:5–16 and expanded with vv. 17–25; Mark 6:7–11; see 3:13–15; Luke 9:1–5). These norms point to the norming phase of group development. Jesus set out his ideas for how his disciples should carry out their agreed upon task that would forward Jesus' project. His disciples presumably offered their input concerning the implementation of the task in question (proclaiming, healing, exorcizing, lodging etc.) and the desired level of performance. Norming had Jesus involve his group members in the attempt to resolve earlier conflicts, often by negotiating clearer guidelines for group behavior.

#### 7.11. *Performing in the Jesus Group*

With the performing stage, Jesus' disciples carried out the program for which they were recruited. This was the problem-solving stage of task activity groups. With Jesus, the disciples solved their performance problems and worked together productively. From the evidence provided in the sources, it is clear that the Jesus faction moved into a performing stage (return from successful task performance: Mark 6:12–13; Luke 9:6; no report in Matthew). The sending of the seventy (-two) and their success (Luke 10:1–20) points to enlarged activity. This implies further

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<sup>55</sup> See Bruce J. Malina, "Mark 7: A Conflict Approach," *Forum* 4 (1988): 3–30; Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Conflict in Luke-Acts: A Labelling-Deviance Model," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Neyrey, 97–122.

recruitment or forming, with subsequent storming and norming to lead to greater performing.

By all accounts, the level of performance that Jesus expected of his disciples consisted of proclamation of the kingdom along with healing/exorcism. Obviously the healing that Jesus as well as his disciples carried out took place in a context of political religion. As we know from contemporary experience, such healing threatened those in authority.<sup>56</sup> The purpose of healing was to restore the ill person to his/her station in society. Jesus as well as his disciples healed in the fashion of Israelite folk healers and holy men.<sup>57</sup> The sources describe both Jesus and his disciples readily entering into altered states of consciousness.<sup>58</sup>

At one point in his career, the sources tell us that Jesus went to Jerusalem with his disciples on a Passover pilgrimage. In the city, it was his healing activity that called Jesus to the attention of the Jerusalem authorities (“by what authority do you *do* these things”).<sup>59</sup> This led eventually to the groups adjourning.

### 7.12. *The Jesus Group Adjourns*

The event that precipitated the adjourning of the Jesus group was Jesus’ crucifixion. Crucifixion, like any public execution, was a status degradation ritual.<sup>60</sup> All the typical features of the status degradation ritual are to be found in all the gospel accounts, and even if they were not, they might be easily reconstructed, although at an abstract level. The specific features of a high-context report can be easily described.<sup>61</sup> The motive for Jesus’ being put to death was reported as “envy,” a culturally specific

<sup>56</sup> On the significance of healing in political religion, see Paul W. Hollenbach, “Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study,” *JAAR* 49 (1982): 567–588.

<sup>57</sup> See John J. Pilch, “Insights and Models from Medical Anthropology for Understanding the Healing Activity of the Historical Jesus,” *Hervormde Teologische Studies* 21 (1995): 314–337; and his *Healing in the New Testament*.

<sup>58</sup> See Pilch, “Altered States of Consciousness in the Synoptics,” in *Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Stegemann, Malina, and Theissen, 103–116; see the models in Pilch’s latest book, *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles: How the Early Believers Experienced God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> See Hollenbach, “Jesus, Demoniacs and Public Authorities.”

<sup>60</sup> Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1988), 69–92.

<sup>61</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, “Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative,” *Semeia* 68 (1996): 113–137; John J. Pilch, “Death With Honor: The Mediterranean Style Death of Jesus in Mark,” *BTB* 25 (1995): 65–70.

motive that perfectly fits the general Mediterranean culture area, the perception of limited good, and concern for honor.<sup>62</sup> It seems to be certainly the motive of the collectivistic persons who had Jesus put to death. Furthermore, the death of Jesus is understood in cultural terms as a year-long process during which the cadaver rots in a tomb and atones for deeds that shamed God. At the end of the year, the bones are collected and reburied. The story of Jesus' empty tomb means the year-long process was interrupted in his case, and this by the God of Israel. That would mean he did not go through any atoning process.

### 7.13. *The Resurrected Jesus Group Forms*

In the sources, the performing phase of Jesus and his recruits came to a rather abrupt end, marked by the crucifixion of Jesus. As regards Jesus' core group, the post-crucifixion stories liberally attest to preparations for adjourning, quashed by the experience of the appearance of the Risen Jesus (altered state of consciousness experiences).<sup>63</sup> With this experience, a feedback loop enters the process with new storming, norming and subsequent performing, as described telescopically in the final sections of Matthew and Luke, but at length in the opening of Acts.<sup>64</sup> The trigger event for this loopback was the core group's experience of the appearance of Jesus after his death, an experience understood as the work of the God of Israel, now described as "He who raised Jesus from the dead" (Acts 3:15; Rom 8:11). The God of Israel thus indicated Jesus was Israel's forthcoming Messiah, to usher in the forthcoming kingdom of Heaven. The new storming among the remaining Jesus group members led to what might be called

<sup>62</sup> See Anselm C. Hagedorn and Jerome H. Neyrey, "'It Was Out of Envy That They Handed Jesus Over' (Mark 15.10): The Anatomy of Envy and the Gospel of Mark," *JSNT* 69 (1998): 15–56.

<sup>63</sup> See John J. Pilch, "Appearances of the Risen Jesus in Cultural Context: Experiences of Alternate Reality," *BTB* 28 (1998): 52–60; Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>64</sup> There is no evidence for Jesus' or the subsequent messianic Jesus groups' espousing egalitarianism; see John H. Elliott, "Jesus Was Not An Egalitarian: A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealistic Theory," *BTB* 32 (2002): 75–91; for the community of Matthew, see the series of articles by Dennis Duling, "Matthew and Marginality," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 51 (1995): 1–30; "The Matthean Brotherhood and Marginal Scribal Leadership," in *Modelling*, ed. Esler, 159–182; "Egalitarian Ideology, Leadership, and Factional Conflict in the Gospel of Matthew," *BTB* 27 (1997): 124–137; "Matthew 18:15–17: Conflict, Confrontation, and Conflict Resolution in a 'Fictive Kin' Association," *BTB* 29 (1999): 4–22; for Acts see Pilch, *Visions and Healings in Acts*; F. Scott Spencer, *Journeying through Acts: A Literary-Cultural Reading* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).

a Jesus Messiah group, still faithful to Jesus' original project of proclaiming the forthcoming kingdom of heaven, but this time with greater urgency. (The development running from the political religion of the Jesus Messiah group [second generation] to the kinship religion of messianic Jesus groups [third and fourth generation] permeates the sources as they describe the story of Jesus in terms of their experiences and evoke words of Jesus for their newly discovered way of life "in Christ.")

#### 7.14. *Conclusions*

In sum, we possess quite a bit of general information about Jesus, his collectivistic personality and social concerns from his cultural setting alone. Coupled with further historic information, we know with certainty that Jesus proclaimed theocracy, formed a political faction, was concerned with Israel alone and spoke only of the God of Israel in typical ethnocentric fashion, and thus necessarily dealt with political religion and political economy in Israel. We can with certainty sketch his career in terms of the stages of small group development, from formation to adjournment. We can likewise use social psychology to draw a sketch of the collectivistic modal personality of the time and place, altered state of consciousness experiences and concerns for group integrity. All of this information is useful for assessing the traditions about Jesus presented in the gospels, canonical and otherwise. While it may be too abstract and non-psychological to form an adequate modern biography of Jesus, it surely provides a set of boundaries that will warn us when some historians' Jesus research is erroneous because anachronistic and/or ethnocentric.



## NEW LITERARY CRITICISM AND JESUS RESEARCH

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Since the term “literary criticism” was once applied to what is now known as “source criticism,” the term “new literary criticism” is generally employed to classify those varied approaches to biblical materials that, since the last third of the twentieth century, and especially but not solely in the United States, focus on their literary aspects. These approaches range from narrative criticism, with its concern for the elements of story (plot, characters, setting, rhetoric, etc.); to reader-response criticism, with its interest in the reader or audience, whether implied within the literary work or existing outside it and thus actualizing it; to deconstruction, with its post-structuralist philosophical challenge to unexamined presuppositions of all sorts. After a sketch of some roots of new literary criticism in New Testament studies, this essay will briefly characterize two of its strongest branches—narrative criticism and reader-response criticism<sup>1</sup>—before considering directly the impact of

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<sup>1</sup> For other overviews of or introductions to the “new literary criticism” in New Testament studies, see Edgar V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990); Amos N. Wilder, *The Bible and the Literary Critic* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991); Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, eds., *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2008); Edgar V. McKnight, “Literary Criticism,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 473–481; Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Janice Capel Anderson, “Literary-Critical Methods,” in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 1, *A Feminist Introduction*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 241–254; John R. Donahue, “The Literary Turn and New Testament Theology: Detour or New Direction?” *JR* 76 (1996): 250–275. For overviews and critiques, see Lynn M. Poland, *Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches*, AARAS 48 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985); Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). On deconstruction, not discussed in this essay, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, Stephen D. Moore, Gary A. Phillips, and Regina M. Schwartz, eds., *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 131–170; Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994); A. K. M. Adam, *What Is Postmodern*

new literary criticism in the field of Jesus research. The essay will close with the posing of several questions for discussion between these two well-developed and not yet well-connected areas of the study of the New Testament and Christian origins: new literary criticism and Jesus research.

### 1. *Roots of New Literary Criticism*

New literary criticism of the New Testament may be understood as a development from redaction criticism from the biblical studies side and the New Criticism and structuralism from the side of literary criticism more generally.

To some extent, source, form, and redaction criticism ask literary questions. Source criticism was first called “literary criticism” because it approached Matthew, Mark, and Luke as “literary documents.” But source criticism is a search for literary sources and relationships *in history*. Which gospel was written first? Which gospel was the historical source for the others? These are primarily historical questions. Form criticism is concerned with the literary form of the small stories that make up the gospels. But form criticism is a search for the sources behind the sources *in history*. What do the individual stories tell us about the history of the earliest churches? What may we attribute to the historical Jesus? Redaction criticism, which depends on both source and form criticism, certainly has literary aspects. As the study of the theological motivation of the editing of earlier traditions, it is concerned with the literary framework of the gospels. But redaction criticism is a search for the theology of the churches of the gospel writers or of the evangelists themselves *in history*.<sup>2</sup>

Source, form, and redaction criticism have all made crucial contributions to the quest for the historical Jesus. Source criticism, with its “resolution” of the “synoptic problem” in the theory of Markan priority

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*Biblical Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995). For additional bibliography, see Mark A. Powell, with the assistance of Cecille G. Gray and Melissa C. Curtis, *The Bible and Modern Literary Criticism*, Bibliographies and Indexes in Religious Studies 22 (New York: Greenwood, 1992). New literary critics also adopt and adapt approaches from cultural criticism, new historicism, and post-colonial criticism, which are beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>2</sup> This paragraph is adapted from Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?” in *Mark and Method*, ed. Anderson and Moore, 29–30. Edgar McKnight even comments that “Redaction criticism seeks objectively to find *the* one correct theme, structure and historical setting” (“Literary Criticism,” 478, italics original); this is *not* a goal shared by new literary criticism.



(Mark as the prior source of Matthew and Luke), gave those in quest of the historical Jesus the initial confidence of isolating the oldest source, which seemed at the time to suggest that it was also the most historically accurate source. The work of William Wrede on the Gospel of Mark,<sup>3</sup> however, challenged the Markan hypothesis (the theory that Markan priority implied Markan historicity), finding Mark as theologically motivated as Matthew and Luke. Form criticism then moved the search for historical sources to the sources behind the sources: the oral tradition implied behind the smaller units of sayings and stories that make up the gospels. But form criticism (or “form history,” to use the literal translation of the German term *Formgeschichte*), while foundational for Jesus research in its approach to the gospels as built up of layers of tradition, has complicated the quest for the historical Jesus. Form criticism did not find purely historical sources behind the sources of the gospels. Form criticism reminds us that the New Testament materials were part of a living process of communication within a developing community of faith. While source criticism may be seen as a lasting contribution of the “old quest” of the historical Jesus and form criticism as a lasting contribution of the “no biography” stage associated with Bultmann, redaction criticism was a feature of the “new quest” that began with the work of Käsemann. Early redaction criticism suggested that one could separate the (later) redaction of the evangelists from the (earlier) tradition, yet scholarly consensus in the separation of tradition from redaction has been hard to come by.<sup>4</sup> In addition, redaction criticism in its move toward composition criticism<sup>5</sup> stressed the creativity of the evangelists, thus undercutting their value as reporters of the history of Jesus.

As an heir to redaction criticism (and thus to source and form criticism), literary criticism also complicates the work of Jesus research, as will be discussed below. However, it is worth noting here that Jesus researchers usually begin with the subsidiary units isolated by form

<sup>3</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901; 2nd ed., 1913; 3rd ed., 1963), ET: *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig, Library of Theological Translations (London: James Clarke; Greenwood, SC: Attic Press, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples According to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate*, JSNTSup 27 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> See John R. Donahue, “Redaction Criticism: Has the *Hauptstrasse* Become a *Sackgasse*?” in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight, JSNTSup 109 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 27–57. Stephen Moore (*Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 3–13) observes that the move from composition criticism to narrative criticism was a shift in focus from theology to story.

criticism to reconstruct the “words and deeds” of Jesus,<sup>6</sup> while New Testament literary critics push appreciation of the literary wholeness of the gospels beyond redaction criticism.

But the new literary criticism in biblical studies is also heir to two movements in literary criticism more generally: the New Criticism and structuralism. The shift to a literary paradigm by some biblical interpreters echoed a similar and earlier shift among interpreters of secular literature. In the 1940’s the New Criticism argued that the key to reading a poem, play, novel, or short story is to be found in the work itself. Historical information about the culture and biographical information about the author were pushed aside as external to the work. The New Criticism must be understood as a reaction to previous literary studies that gave such information primary importance. A similar reaction in biblical studies led many to move from redaction criticism to literary criticism.<sup>7</sup> The final lines of a poem by Archibald MacLeish may be understood almost as a slogan for the New Critics: “A poem should not mean/But be.”<sup>8</sup> A critic or reader must not be concerned with a poem’s referential meaning, that is, its reference to some external world. She or he must attend to its being, its presence, its metaphoric power. The poem’s power to speak to us depends neither on the author’s intention nor on the reader’s knowledge of the author’s circumstances. It depends on the poem itself—its words, its rhythms, its images.<sup>9</sup>

The New Criticism made its initial impact in New Testament studies on interpretations of the sayings and parables of Jesus. Amos Wilder’s work on *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* was a precursor, with its reflections on the dialogue, the story, the parable, and the poem in biblical literature.<sup>10</sup> The “significance of forceful and imaginative language” in the synoptic sayings of Jesus was explored by

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<sup>6</sup> See Arland J. Hultgren, “Form Criticism and Jesus Research,” in the present volume.

<sup>7</sup> In fact, in the anthology of critical methods entitled *To Each Its Own Meaning*, structural, narrative, reader-response, poststructuralist, and ideological criticisms are categorized under “Overturning the Tradition”—in distinction from “Traditional Methods of Biblical Criticism” (e.g., redaction criticism) and those that are seen as “Expanding the Tradition” (e.g., social-scientific criticism).

<sup>8</sup> Archibald MacLeish, “Ars Poetica,” in *Collected Poems 1917–1954* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 50–51.

<sup>9</sup> This paragraph and the five succeeding ones are adapted from Malbon, “Narrative Criticism,” 30–32, with permission of Augsburg Fortress Press.

<sup>10</sup> Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (London: SCM; New York: Harper & Row, 1964; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, rev. ed. with new preface, 1971).

Robert Tannehill.<sup>11</sup> Robert Funk considered “language as event and theology” in parable and letter.<sup>12</sup> Dan Via reflected on the “literary and existential dimension” of the parables.<sup>13</sup> And the surprising, challenging, world-shattering potential of the parables was the theme of John Dominic Crossan’s work.<sup>14</sup> “A poem should not mean/But be.” And a parable should not refer but impel.

Structuralism is another critical approach that has influenced new literary criticism. Structuralism was born in linguistics<sup>15</sup> and grew up in anthropology, literature, and other areas. Central to structuralism are three affirmations about language. First, language is communication. Language as communication involves a sender giving a message to a receiver. For literature this means an author giving a text to a reader. Redaction critics focus on the sender/author, and reader-response critics focus on the receiver/reader. Structuralist critics in particular, like literary critics in general, focus on the text. By analogy, structuralist critics note that within a narrative text a “sender” gives an “object” to a “receiver.” For example, in a traditional fairy tale the king gives his daughter in marriage to the most worthy suitor. (Much of the tale works out which suitor is most worthy.) In a synoptic parable a king gives a feast to—surprisingly—the poor and the outcast. This model of language as communication and narrative as language has been worked out by French structuralist A. J. Greimas.<sup>16</sup>

Second, structuralism stresses that language is a system of signs. No sign has meaning on its own. Signs have meaning in relation to other signs. Analogously, no element of a literary work has meaning in isolation. Everything has meaning as part of a system of relationships. A

<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, *The Sword of His Mouth*, SemeiaSup 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

<sup>13</sup> Dan Otto Via, Jr., *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967).

<sup>14</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973); Crossan, *The Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Niles, IL: Argus Communications, 1975; Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988).

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., Roland Barthes, “Éléments de sémiologie,” *Communications* 4 (1964): 91–135, ET: *Elements of Semiology* (Boston: Beacon, 1970); and Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Payot, 1967), ET: *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959).

<sup>16</sup> A. J. Greimas, “Elements of a Narrative Grammar,” trans. Catherine Porter, *Diacritics* 7 (1977): 23–40. For an explanation, see Daniel Patte, *What Is Structural Exegesis?* GBS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 41–43. For an adaptation and application to the parables, see Crossan, *Dark Interval*.

narrative, that is, a literary work that tells a story, must be read in two ways to disclose its system of relations. It must be read diachronically, that is, “through time,” from beginning to end. It must also be read (understood) synchronically, that is, as if everything happened at the “same time.” For a synchronic reading, logical categories (good vs. evil, order vs. chaos, etc.) are more important than chronological categories. The interrelation of parts within a whole is the key. This approach has been worked out by French structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and applied in detail to the spatial settings of Mark’s Gospel.<sup>17</sup>

Third, structuralism focuses on language as a cultural code. This understanding of language builds on the other two. Through careful analysis of the oppositions expressed in a text, the even more basic oppositions implicitly supporting it are revealed. Daniel Patte, the foremost biblical structuralist, has illustrated this and other aspects of structuralism in relation to Paul’s letters and Matthew’s gospel. Patte seeks to uncover the “system of convictions” of Paul and of Matthew.<sup>18</sup> As John Donahue notes, while structuralism “never elicited [a] wide following in the United States,” it “made important contributions to biblical studies” because it “called attention to the need for a close reading of texts and moved scholars away from an atomizing exegesis that centered on particular pericopes toward concern for the total literary and cultural context of any segment of a larger narrative.”<sup>19</sup>

Both the New Criticism and structuralism focus on the text itself—the language of the text and the text as language. Biblical literary criticism has been influenced by both approaches and shares this focus on the text. The first texts examined in detail by New Testament literary critics were the sayings and parables of Jesus. These short and powerful texts are in some ways comparable to the poems that intrigued the

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<sup>17</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955): 428–444; Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Story of Asdiwal,” trans. Nicholas Mann, in *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism*, ed. Edmund Leach, Association of Social Anthropologists Monographs 5 (London: Tavistock, 1967), 1–47. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, New Voices in Biblical Studies/The Biblical Seminar 13 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Patte, *Paul’s Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew’s Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987). See also Daniel Patte, *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics*, GBS (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990). For a brief introduction to structuralism with an application to Luke 24, see Daniel Patte, “Structural Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. Haynes and McKenzie, 153–170.

<sup>19</sup> Donahue, “Literary Turn,” 256–257.

New Critics. The gospels are the texts most explored by current New Testament literary critics. The gospels are narratives, stories, in many ways not unlike the myths and folktales that structuralists often analyzed. One of the strongest branches of New Testament literary criticism is narrative criticism, a label employed by biblical critics but not by literary critics more generally.

## 2. *Narrative Criticism*<sup>20</sup>

For narrative critics, “the text” is not an isolated object but the center of a communication event: author/text/audience. In fact, following Seymour Chatman,<sup>21</sup> the author and the audience are considered implied elements of the text. Literary critics distinguish between the real author and the real audience and the implied author and the implied audience. The implied author and implied audience are creations of the real author that are embedded in the text. The implied audience is the addressees, the one or ones to whom and for whom the story is told. By focusing on the implied author and the implied audience, narrative critics are asserting a certain independence from the presumed intention of the real author and the reconstructed historical circumstances of the original audience in interpreting the work. The chief elements narrative critics investigate are settings (spatial and temporal), characters, plot, and rhetoric.<sup>22</sup> Through the interrelationships of these elements, the implied author communicates with the implied audience; the story unfolds between them.

The way literary critics approach the settings of the gospel narratives illustrates well the difference between historical and literary approaches. Historical critics sift through spatial and temporal references for clues that might reveal the biography of Jesus or the community of the evangelist; they construct a geography and a chronology of Jesus’ ministry or a description of the redactor’s community. Literary critics, however, are

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<sup>20</sup> The first six paragraphs of this section are adapted from a similar section of Malbon and Anderson, “Literary-Critical Methods,” 245–248, drafted by Malbon, with permission of Crossroad Publishing Company.

<sup>21</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> For useful introductions to narrative criticism see Malbon, “Narrative Criticism”; Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*; David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999).

more interested in the connotational or symbolic value of these spatial and temporal markers. Literary critics do not try to locate physically and literally the mountain on which Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. (Geographically, there is no “mountain” on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.) Rather, they observe the association made between Moses as the bearer of Torah (teaching, law) on the mountain and Jesus as the bearer of new Torah on the mountain. Similarly, Mark’s use of the name “Sea of Galilee” (Luke uses the usual “Lake of Gennesaret,” 5:1) for the place where Jesus manifests extraordinary power (calming the sea, walking on water) links Jesus’ power to God’s power over the sea (cf. Psalm 107). The map constructed by literary methods is associative, ideational, and symbolic, rather than literal, physical, and geographic.

Temporal markers are understood similarly. “Forty” is a biblical number indicating a long time. The Hebrew people wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Jesus was in the wilderness tested by Satan for forty days. Here the spatial and temporal settings combine to suggest that Jesus recapitulates the history of the people of God; Jesus passes the test. This story of the prelude to Jesus’ ministry is recounted briefly in each of the synoptic gospels. All four gospels relate the story of Jesus’ passion, the postlude to his ministry, in some detail. And each of them slows down the narrative at this point. We are given a day-by-day and, finally, an hour-by-hour account of Jesus’ end. Narrative critics understand this not as more detailed and accurate biography but as rhetorical emphasis on the most startling aspect of the Jesus story: the messiah comes as one who serves and suffers. The storyteller demands attention to this point; the hearer/reader is forced to let it sink in slowly.<sup>23</sup>

The “Jesus” that narrative critics investigate is not “the historical Jesus” that historical critics quest after, but the central character of the gospel narratives. The audience learns about this Jesus the way it learns about all the characters: through speech and through actions. The audience learns about characters by what they say and do and by what others (both characters and the narrator) say and do in relation to them. The gospels reveal their characters more by “showing” than by “telling,” more by the unfolding action than by the narrator’s direct descriptions. Compared with the complex, psychological characterization of modern novels, the characters of the gospels are quite simply sketched. Most of them are “flat,” that is one-dimensional, manifesting one character

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<sup>23</sup> For a thorough treatment of narrative time, see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. J. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

trait. The “Pharisees” in Matthew’s gospel are hypocritical; the minor characters who seek Jesus’ help in Mark’s gospel are trusting. Only Jesus and the disciples would appear to be “round” characters, that is, multidimensional, exhibiting at least several character traits and, possibly, change and development. The disciples in Mark illustrate trust and fear, initiative and flight.<sup>24</sup> Feminist narrative critics shed light on previously ignored women characters and female images of God in much the same way as feminist critics of secular literature focus on images of women in the literary canon.<sup>25</sup>

Characters interact within the plot. The plot is an ordered sequence of actions and events. Just as the gospels do not rely on complex characterization for their stories, they do not depend on intrigue and suspense for their plots. There are unknowns, of course: Will the Markan disciples come to understand? Will the “Jews” in Luke-Acts ever see and perceive? But the main events of the plot have a certain divine inevitability. What is intriguing about the plots of the gospels is the intertwining of the story lines of two major groups of characters based on their response to Jesus. Jesus’ story is the central cord. Around it are wound the story line of the Jewish religious leaders (from the questioning of Jesus’ authority by the Pharisees in Galilee to the plotting of his death by the chief priests, scribes, and elders in Jerusalem) and the story line of the disciples (following Jesus, preaching and healing, struggling to understand Jesus, abandoning him at his death, being called again at his resurrection). It is the disciples who experience the most ups and downs (especially in Mark), and it is the disciples with whom the

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<sup>24</sup> On characters and characterization in Mark, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Whitney Taylor Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric*, SBLDS 145 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel*, JSNTSup 102 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994). On characters and characterization in Luke-Acts, see John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); James M. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986). On characters and characterization in the Bible more generally, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Adele Berlin, eds., *Characterization in Biblical Literature (Semeia 63 [1993])*; and David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, eds., *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Joanna Dewey, “The Gospel of Mark,” in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 2, *A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 470–509; Mary Ann Tolbert, “Mark,” in *The Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (London: SPCK; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 263–274.

implied author most invites the implied audience to identify. The challenges the disciples experience in the plot are not unlike the challenges the implied audience experiences in its life and faith.

The ability of the gospels to pull the audience into the story, to offer critique and encouragement of the disciples as an implicit word to the hearers and readers, is part of the rhetoric of the gospels. Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. Narrative rhetoric is *how* the story is told. To show the passion story in slow motion is a rhetorical move. To juxtapose Jesus' anointing by an unnamed woman with his betrayal by a named man (Judas), as Mark does in 14:3–11, is a rhetorical move. To imply by careful wording that not Jesus but all who respond to him are on trial, as John does, is a rhetorical move. The rhetoric of the gospels involves symbolic numbers: in Matthew and Mark, twelve baskets of food are left over from the miraculous feeding of the Jews (representing the twelve tribes of Israel), and seven baskets are left over from the feeding of the Gentiles (representing the seventy nations of the Gentiles). And, of course, there are plenty of rhetorical questions—questions that seem not to demand real answers in their immediate contexts but that linger with the implied audience in broader contexts. The disciples, having seen Jesus calm the sea, ask, “Who then is this...?” (Mark 4:41 // Luke 8:25; cf. Matt 8:27). Jesus, having reviewed the miraculous feedings with the disciples, asks, “Do you not yet understand?” (Mark 8:21). Pilate, having questioned Jesus, asks, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Literary methods draw attention to these and other rhetorical devices and patterns whereby the implied author persuades the implied audience to follow the story.

Commentators on the dependence of biblical literary criticism on broader literary criticism (as it is practiced in academic departments of English and comparative literature) often note that while biblical critics have “recapitulated the major critical currents of the past half-century,” they “have often lagged almost a decade behind.”<sup>26</sup> Thus biblical literary critics often embrace “concepts like textual unity” without realizing that these concepts “have been the storm center of recent critical debate” among literary critics more generally.<sup>27</sup> John Donahue urges that “a broad awareness of the critical debate among literary critics themselves

<sup>26</sup> Donahue, “Literary Turn,” 265.

<sup>27</sup> Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 11. See also David Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism: Practices and Prospects,” in *Characterization in the Gospels*, ed. Rhoads and Syreeni.



about the problems attending different methods and approaches to texts be part of the marriage contract between the biblical scholars and the new literary criticism"<sup>28</sup>—surely sound pastoral counseling.

While some biblical interpreters employ literary critical methods to focus on the text, that is, the interrelations of its various elements (settings, characters, plot, rhetoric), others employ literary critical methods to focus on the audience, that is, the hearer or reader of the text, whether the implied reader or the real reader or both. Although these two groups of interpreters, narrative critics and reader-response critics, both assume “the text” is the center of a communication event (author/text/audience), they speak in different ways about the text/audience relationship—and can help to redress imbalances when in conversation with each other.

### 3. Reader-Response Criticism

If narrative critics ask *how* the text means, reader-response critics ask what the text *does*, what effects the text has on its various audiences. The varieties of reader-response criticism derive from (1) varying evaluations of the extent of the role of the reader and (2) varying reconstructions of the reader/hearer/audience. With regard to the extent of the reader’s role, Janice Capel Anderson asks, “does the reader find or make meaning”? She answers that

critics range from those who speak as if the text guides and molds the reader to those who argue that without the reader no text exists. One key reader response critic (Wolfgang Iser) [<sup>29</sup>] compares the text to stars in the night sky. One reader draws lines between the stars to form the Big Dipper, another to form a plough. Nonetheless, there are fixed stars. Another critic (Stanley Fish) [<sup>30</sup>] suggests that without the reader not only are there no constellations, but there are no fixed stars.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Donahue, “Literary Turn,” 265–266.

<sup>29</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *Der Implizite Leser: Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beckett* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1972), ET: *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); also *Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1976), ET: *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

<sup>30</sup> Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); also *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> Malbon and Anderson, “Literary-Critical Methods,” 248, drafted by Anderson. I

But all reader-response critics question the presumed autonomy of the text and presume multiple interpretations as a result of the engagement of multiple readers/hearers or even multiple readings of a single reader.<sup>32</sup>

Reader-response critics conceive of the reader/hearer in a variety of ways, perhaps best depicted as ranging along a continuum from internal to external. According to Anderson, the

*internal* reader is a set of values and a response-inviting structure in the text, a role a real reader must play or resist in reading. *External* readers may be real readers whose interpretations critics examine or a historical audience that the critic constructs from information about readers/hearers at the time the text was written or in subsequent historical periods. Mediating between these two positions are those who view the reader as partly internal and partly external. This *implied* reader exists at the intersection of textual structures and perspectives that control any reading *and* positions outside the text from which the text must be read.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that narrative critics often discuss the “implied reader” makes obvious the connections between narrative criticism and reader-response criticism. However, the focus of other reader-response critics on actual flesh-and-blood readers, whether contemporary with the text or contemporary with the critic or somewhere in between (moving toward reception history), challenges narrative criticism’s tendency to treat the text as autonomous. Reader-response critics also recognize that an individual reader is not autonomous; both ordinary readers and expert readers (or critics) are shaped by the learned linguistic and literary conventions of their (sometimes overlapping, sometimes competing) reading communities.

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am grateful to my former co-author Janice Capel Anderson not only for her work on the article cited here, but also for her careful reading and thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of the present essay.

<sup>32</sup> For reader-response anthologies, see Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, eds., *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); and Jane P. Tompkins, ed., *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). For thorough reader-response interpretations of Mark’s Gospel, see Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991); John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action: A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York: Paulist, 1992); Bas M. F. van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*, trans. W. H. Bisscheroux, JSNTSup 164 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998). For a reader-response interpretation of the Gospel of John, see Jeffrey Lloyd Staley, *The Print’s First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel*, SBLDS 82 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

<sup>33</sup> Malbon and Anderson, “Literary-Critical Methods,” 249, drafted by Anderson.

By focusing on the *process* of reading, reader-response critics have drawn attention to the linear, temporal dimension of the reading experience. Robert Fowler notes that “The ‘response’ in reader-response criticism is always a fluid, shifting response, mutating throughout the time of the reading experience.”<sup>34</sup> Fowler, in introducing reader-response criticism, presents a number of temporal metaphors to suggest how readers read. Readers look forward and look back, anticipating what will happen next and reflecting on what has already been reported in the narrative. The frequently used words *euthus* (immediately) and *palin* (again) direct the reader in this process in a small way in Mark’s gospel; the Markan Jesus’ predictions that are fulfilled in the narrative do the same on a larger scale, as do the two feeding stories (6:30–44 and 8:1–10). In looking forward and looking back “the reader experiences an ironic tension between what he understands about the story and what the characters in the story do not understand.”<sup>35</sup> Another metaphor for the work of the reader has been popularized by Wolfgang Iser: the reader encounters “gaps” and “fills” them. As Fowler notes, “Many of the arguments between readers are over how best to deal with gaps in the texts we read. As long as there are gaps (which is forever), readers will argue about how to handle them.”<sup>36</sup> The gospels of Matthew and Luke may be read as indications of how these two evangelists filled the gaps of their source, Mark.

A metaphor for the process of reading popularized by Wayne Booth is reconstruction, the process of discerning and deciphering irony.<sup>37</sup> The verbal and dramatic irony of the mockery of the Markan Jesus on the cross (15:16–32) manifests the author’s trust in the reader’s ability to figure things out and reconstruct meaning. A metaphor popularized by Stanley Fish is “self-consuming artifact”; sometimes something given in the process of reading is taken back (consumed, subverted, inverted) as the reading process continues.<sup>38</sup> A Markan example is seen in the mysterious saying about speaking in parables, 4:10–13. As Fowler explicates,

<sup>34</sup> Robert M. Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism: Figuring Mark’s Reader,” in *Mark and Method*, ed. Anderson and Moore, 65.

<sup>35</sup> Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism,” 69.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>37</sup> See *ibid.*, 74–79; Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>38</sup> See Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism,” 79–83.

In 4:13 Jesus turns to the ‘insiders’ of 4:11 and asks them: ‘Do *you* not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?’ The tables are turned; roles are reversed. The disciples, the insiders of 4:11, are now revealed to be outsiders, those for whom the parables are riddles. The reader of the Gospel, the outsider of 4:11, now understands that the disciples do not understand. This insight is not much, but it is enough to make the reader a modest insider. . . .

Altogether in 4:10–13 we experience a gap in the discourse in 4:11, a strong possibility of verbal irony in 4:11–12, and an experience of a self-consuming artifact in 4:13.<sup>39</sup>

A final metaphor for the reading experience presented by Fowler is the “resisting reader,” a phrase that comes from Judith Fetterley’s book by this title, a classic work of feminist reader-response criticism.<sup>40</sup> For feminist readers, resisting reading is a defensive strategy in the face of misogyny, but resisting reading “has been and will always be practiced by all kinds of people struggling for dignity, justice, or new relevance for their old traditions,”<sup>41</sup> and resisting reading is manifest within the Bible itself. Resisting reading will likely engage readers in the other processes of reading marked by the metaphors presented by Fowler—looking forward and looking back, filling gaps, reconstruction, appreciating the self-consuming artifact. All together, focusing attention on these aspects of the temporal process of reading increases our self-consciousness as readers. Since all reading is interpretation (there is no “straight” reading), the choice for readers is to read unselfconsciously or self-consciously; reader-response critics aim to encourage readers to choose responsibly for self-consciousness.

Finally, some reader-response critics point out that the emphasis on temporal sequence (a reader encounters the story sequentially, from beginning to end) aids in reconstructing the aural experience of the first-century audience who heard New Testament texts read aloud. In fact, reader-response critics who are interested in first-century readers have come to use the term audience or hearers rather than the anachronistic term “reader,” as have narrative critics concerned with the first-century contexts of the gospels. Here Werner Kelber has served to bring the pioneering work of Walter Ong into New Testament studies and

<sup>39</sup> Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism,” 81–82.

<sup>40</sup> See *ibid.*, 83–90; Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

<sup>41</sup> Fowler, “Reader-Response Criticism,” 84.

to raise critical methodological questions,<sup>42</sup> while Tom Boomershine, Joanna Dewey, and Whitney Shiner have imaginatively drawn out the implications of orality/aurality in interpreting the gospels.<sup>43</sup> This influence of the historical situation of the first century on New Testament literary critics, both narrative and reader-response critics, illustrates that literary criticism has moved beyond the adversarial position of its origin in reaction to the extremes of historical criticism. Increasingly, literary critics are committed to exploring first-century literary paradigms when interpreting gospel texts, and, consequently, the term “literary” must include oral contexts and popular genres, not just elite literature. Yet the cross-fertilization of new literary criticism and historical criticism is still under development, and the sub-fields of Jesus research (within historical criticism) and new literary criticism remain considerably isolated from each other.

#### 4. *New Literary Criticism and Jesus Research*

Since, at least in the United States, new literary criticism of the New Testament has been an important scholarly development of the past thirty years, and the “renewed” or “third” quest for the historical Jesus has also been an important development during the same period, one might expect that literary approaches would have been utilized as one among other helpful tools in the quest of the historical Jesus, at least in

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<sup>42</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967; paperback ed., Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1981); Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (New York: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Eugene Boomershine, “Mark, the Storyteller: A Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Mark’s Passion and Resurrection Narrative” (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1974); Joanna Dewey, “Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark,” *Int* 53 (1989): 32–44; idem, ed., *Orality and Textuality in Early Christian Literature*, *Semeia* 65 (1994); idem, “From Storytelling to Written Text: The Loss of Early Christian Women’s Voices,” *BTB* 26 (1996): 71–78; idem, “The Gospel of Mark as an Oral-Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation,” in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Malbon and McKnight, 145–163; idem, “The Survival of Mark’s Gospel: A Good Story?” *JBL* 123 (2004): 495–507; Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (London: Trinity Press International, 2003). See also Christopher Bryan, “Was Mark Written to Be Read Aloud?” Part 2 of *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in its Literary and Cultural Settings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

the United States. This expectation would be further suggested by the early appreciation of the “poetic” nature of Jesus’ sayings by scholars who have become key figures in the renewed quest of the historical Jesus, for example, Robert Funk and John Dominic Crossan. However, this concern for the poetic language of the Jesus sayings has been largely taken up after the manner of form criticism, with its interest in the smallest units of tradition, and not in the manner of redaction criticism, with its interest in the gospels as edited wholes. In addition, both form criticism and redaction criticism, while manifesting aspects of literary interest (at different levels of the gospel texts: pericope/larger units or an entire gospel), were (and are) at heart historical-critical approaches, interested in the history of the tradition (at different periods of the gospels’ histories: pre-gospel traditions/redacted gospels). Whereas Jesus researchers approach the gospels as source materials to be excavated and sifted, new literary critics approach the gospels as creations in themselves to be explored and appreciated holistically. Thus one finds in key English-language scholars of the quest of the historical Jesus little interest in or use of the results of new literary criticism. New literary criticism and historical Jesus research, at least in the United States and England, seem to have begun and remained as parallel tracks rather than as intersecting approaches. As evidence and qualification of this generalization, I present here brief comments on a sampling from the scholarly and more popular work of perhaps the two most well known current Jesus researchers: John Dominic Crossan and N. Thomas Wright, who might be seen as representing the ends of a spectrum.<sup>44</sup>

John Dominic Crossan has found it crucial to work out an explicit and systematic methodology for Jesus research, which, as he carefully outlines in the prologue to *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, has “a triple triadic process: the campaign, the strategy, and the tactics, as it were.”<sup>45</sup> The first triad—or in the words of Crossan’s popular book, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, the triangulation where three independent vectors cross—involves (1) at the macrocosmic level, cross-cultural and cross-temporal social anthropology, (2) at the

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<sup>44</sup> Both Crossan and Wright differ significantly in their methodology from a more “classical” approach, e.g., that of John P. Meier.

<sup>45</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), xxviii. The prologue of Crossan’s popular book, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), presents a shortened version of this methodological outline; as a whole, the popular book represents a distillation of Part III of the scholarly book.

mesocosmic level, Greco-Roman and especially Jewish history of the first part of the first century, and (3) at the microcosmic level, literary or textual study of the specific traditions about Jesus, both within and beyond the canon. What is most important is that all three levels “must cooperate fully and equally for an effective synthesis.”<sup>46</sup>

The third level or vector, literary or textual study, receives the greatest methodological elaboration, beginning with the affirmations that “The Gospels are neither histories nor biographies, even within the ancient tolerances for those genres”<sup>47</sup> and that both canonical and extra-canonical gospels are made up of “original, developmental, and compositional layers” or “retention, development, and creation.”<sup>48</sup> In addition, Crossan “reject[s] absolutely any pejorative language for those latter processes. Jesus left behind him thinkers not memorizers, disciples not reciters, people not parrots.”<sup>49</sup> These statements, not surprising given Crossan’s earlier work on Jesus’ parables under the influence of the New Criticism, suggest an openness to literary criticism as a tool in Jesus research, although the language of layers is more in tune with the trajectory from source to form to redaction criticism than with the more recent literary criticism (including narrative and reader-response criticism) of the New Testament. Similarly, the opening sentence of *The Historical Jesus*, the downbeat of the “Overture,” manifests Crossan’s openness to newer understandings of orality in the ancient world: “*In the beginning* was the performance; not the word alone, not the deed alone, but both, each indelibly marked with the other forever.”<sup>50</sup>

Both the second and third triads of Crossan’s methodology specify how one examines the literary or textual level, strategically and tactically. The complexity of the Jesus tradition itself calls for a strategy of (1) inventory, listing all the sources to be used, (2) stratification, positioning each source or text in a chronological sequence with a date range, and (3) attestation, presenting the now stratified data base in terms of multiplicity of independent attestation. Crossan does not claim that placing texts “in their historical situation and literary relationship” (notice the redaction-critical ring) will eliminate controversy, only that it must be done by the Jesus researcher “so that a reader knows where

<sup>46</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, xxix.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xxx.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxi.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, xi, italics original. See also the close of this frame on page xxvi.

one stands on every issue.”<sup>51</sup> The final triad specifies Crossan’s tactics for dealing with this collated and categorized literary or textual data: the researcher must focus on (1) the sequence of the strata (even though “Chronologically most close does not, of course, mean historically most accurate,”<sup>52</sup> study must begin with the chronologically first stratum); (2) the hierarchy of attestation (“complexes,” content-related clusters of sayings or deeds rather than single sayings, that occur in the tradition independently more frequently must be given greater consideration, “And, although in abstract theory there could be just as much development and creation in that first stratum as in any of the other three, my method postulates that, at least for the first stratum, everything is original until it is argued otherwise”<sup>53</sup>); and (3) bracketing of singularity (of 522 complexes in his inventory, Crossan counts 342 with only a single attestation and thus methodologically inappropriate for building on; “Plural attestation in the first stratum pushes the trajectory back as far as it can go with at least formal objectivity”).<sup>54</sup>

Why has Crossan felt it necessary to develop and explicate such an elaborate methodology as a Jesus researcher? Because “Historical Jesus research is becoming something of a scholarly bad joke,”<sup>55</sup> “an academic embarrassment. It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, because Crossan is suspicious of what theology can do and has done to history in the quest of the historical Jesus, he strives to separate history and theology, using literary criticism as a tool. However, from a new literary critical point of view, although Crossan’s literary critical sensibility is refreshing and challenging, his presumed literary critical tools are largely source-, form-, and redaction-critical approaches employed to establish historical layers or strata in the Jesus tradition, and Crossan trusts these presumed literary tools in the work of suggesting historical layers far beyond what a new literary critic would. Although many new literary critics might share Crossan’s suspicion of theology, few share his level

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<sup>51</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, xxxi.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxii. Since Crossan shifts the burden of proof between the first stratum and the later ones, a great deal depends on how complexes get assigned to strata.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxiii.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii.



of trust of literary criticism as a tool for reconstructing history because, more basically, new literary criticism begins with a healthy suspicion of history, that is, history as it has been reconstructed by scholars from the literature of the New Testament.

At the other end of the spectrum of current Jesus research is N. Thomas Wright, now Bishop of Durham, Church of England. Because Wright is suspicious of what history can do and has done to theology in the quest of the historical Jesus, he strives to integrate theology and history, rejecting literary criticism as a tool at the level of the gospels as wholes and using it selectively at the level of Jesus' parables. Wright does not trust even the earlier literary tools of form and redaction criticism, which place limits on the history that can be reconstructed. He does find some parables research, influenced by the New Criticism (and perhaps mediated through the work of Crossan), useful in his theological/historical reconstruction. Although new literary criticism begins with a suspicion of history, that is, history as it has been reconstructed by scholars from the literature of the New Testament, it is not, like Wright's, a suspicion based on valuing theology, which has also seemed suspicious to literary critics in its dominating influence on New Testament literature, especially in redaction criticism. For Wright, redaction criticism is too literary in its scope; for literary critics, redaction criticism is too theological and too historical in its interests. The spectrum of Jesus research is broad.

For Wright there are two major ways of knowing about Jesus: history and faith.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, these two ways are not to be understood as in conflict, or even as separate. As Wright affirms early on in *Jesus and the Victory of God*,

The underlying argument of this book is that the split [between history and theology (elsewhere history and faith)] is not warranted: that rigorous history (i.e. open-ended investigation of actual events in first-century

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<sup>57</sup> For a succinct presentation of history and faith as ways of knowing Jesus, see N. T. Wright, "Knowing Jesus: Faith and History," in *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*, by Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 15–27. In *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), Wright employs the terms "history" and "theology" as the two modes of knowing about Jesus, and even works out an interpretation (allegory?) of the parable of the Prodigal Son relevant to historical Jesus research in which the younger son/brother is history (124), "Enlightenment historiography" (117), or "the historical task itself" (137), and the older son/brother is theology (137). Wright sees his historical method as "a penitent history" that "offers itself as the long and dusty road back to reality, to confrontation, and perhaps to reconciliation" (144).

Palestine) and rigorous theology (i.e. open-ended investigation of what the word 'god,' and hence the adjective 'divine,' might actually refer to) belong together, and never more so than in discussion of Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

Any boundary between history and theology seems totally dissolved in Wright's popular book (based on a British television special), *The Original Jesus*, where the sub-categories do not appear specifically, and the sermon-like essay flows in a presumed historical mode from the Lukan Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son to Ezekiel's vision of the valley of the dry bones, and from the Matthean Jesus' Sermon on the Mount to the Lukan Mary's Magnificat ("Maybe his mother had taught him her song...").<sup>59</sup> I must admit that this much togetherness of the categories history and theology/faith is too much for me, but my purpose here is to note that literature (or narrative or story), an obvious, although complex, category of the gospels, our best sources for both history and theology about Jesus, is not mentioned here. There is a promising mention of the mediating role of language:

One important feature of bringing together the worlds of history and faith, and recognizing that other people (notably first-century Jews) did so, too, is that we should make ourselves conscious of the way in which we, and they, use language to do both at the same time.<sup>60</sup>

However, this promise seems to apply only to recognizing the importance of language in the stories Jesus is reported to have told, not in relation to the stories told about him.<sup>61</sup> A brief discussion of the parable of the Prodigal Son in *The Original Jesus* exclaims that "Stories create worlds" (sounding very like an echo of Crossan's *The Dark Interval*),<sup>62</sup> and a chapter that employs the parable of the Prodigal Son as a paradigm in *Jesus and the Victory of God* opens "History proceeds by telling stories."<sup>63</sup> But no mention is made in either place of the world created

<sup>58</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> N. T. Wright, *The Original Jesus* (Oxford: Lion; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 50. Another popular book by Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), is not a presentation of his own research but a review and critique of the books of three "maverick popularizers" (viii) that appeared in 1992: Barbara Thiering, A. N. Wilson, and John Spong.

<sup>60</sup> Wright, "Knowing Jesus," 18–19.

<sup>61</sup> A connection between parable and gospel, although recognized by some Markan literary critics, is denied explicitly by Wright: "My point remains that the genre of the gospels, and that of the individual stories in which Jesus figures, lies along the continuum of history and biography, not of parable" ("The Truth of the Gospel and Christian Living," in *The Meaning of Jesus*, 216).

<sup>62</sup> Wright, *Original Jesus*, 36.

<sup>63</sup> Idem, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 125. In this final chapter of the introductory

by the author of Luke 15 by presenting together three parables of the lost and found, nor of how that might complicate our understanding of “the original Jesus.”<sup>64</sup>

In Wright’s survey of the quest of the historical Jesus in the opening chapters of *Jesus and the Victory of God*, he divides questers into two (largely heuristic) categories: followers of Wrede, manifesting a thoroughgoing skepticism, and followers of Schweitzer, manifesting a thoroughgoing eschatology. It is telling for me to realize that Wright, as a Jesus researcher following Schweitzer, links the work of Wrede with thoroughgoing skepticism, that is, skepticism of Mark’s Gospel as a source for the historical Jesus, and employs negatively in relation to Wrede’s heritage the phrase “Mark as pure fiction.”<sup>65</sup> I, on the other hand, as a Markan narrative critic, link the work of Wrede positively with the beginning of an appreciation of literary characteristics of Mark’s Gospel. Although Wright critiques form criticism and those Jesus researchers who apply criteria to one saying or story at a time (preferring instead a “method of hypothesis and verification”),<sup>66</sup> it is still the smaller units of the gospel tradition that form criticism isolates that he focuses on as well. Wright is also suspicious of redaction criticism as it is generally practiced, which, he complains, “has sometimes misled scholars into supposing that they [the gospels] are therefore of less historical value.”<sup>67</sup> New Testament new literary criticism, redaction criticism’s latter-day stepchild, Wright seems to reject in theory and ignore in practice.<sup>68</sup>

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part of *Jesus and the Victory of God*, the parable of the Prodigal Son serves as a paradigm (allegory?) of both the history of Jesus research (see note 57 above) and of the historical Jesus that Wright constructs: “Thus, in a nutshell, the parable of the prodigal father points to the hypothesis of the prophetic son: the son, Israel-in-person, who will himself go into the far country, who will take upon himself the shame of Israel’s exile, so that the kingdom may come, the covenant be renewed, and the prodigal welcome of Israel’s god, the creator, be extended to the ends of the earth” (132). In volume I of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, entitled *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), Wright performs a Greimasian (French structuralist) analysis of the Markan parable of the Wicked Tenants (69–77).

<sup>64</sup> However, in the chapter in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Wright does comment: “Luke, to be sure, has used the story within his own larger story. There is an interesting parallel, again not always observed, between Luke 15 and Acts 15. In both, people are being welcomed in from beyond the boundaries of normal acceptability” (128).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>68</sup> I find myself somewhat mystified by Wright’s rich chapter on “Literature, Story and the Articulation of Worldviews” (ch. 3 in *The New Testament and the People of God*), especially in light of his claim in the preceding chapter that “the study of the New Testament involves three disciplines in particular: literature, history and theology”

Obviously the intention of this essay is not to review Jesus research in its vast array, even from the point of view of new literary criticism. However, this brief glimpse of the work of two of its foremost practitioners, who are in many ways poles apart, may suggest the range of relationships possible between new literary criticism and Jesus research. To recapitulate, because Crossan is suspicious of what theology can do and has done to history in the quest of the historical Jesus, he strives to separate history and theology, using literary criticism as a tool—perhaps trusting too much how well those presumed literary tools work in delineating historical sources and layers. On the other hand, because Wright is suspicious of what history can do and has done to theology in the quest of the historical Jesus, he strives to integrate theology and history, rejecting literary criticism as a tool at the level of the gospels as wholes and using it selectively at the level of Jesus' parables—perhaps trusting too little what literary criticism might add to both history and theology. New literary criticism, for its part, is suspicious of what history and theology can do and have done to literary critical appreciation of the gospels—perhaps trusting too little in both.

### 5. *Open Questions*

Although it has roots in source, form, and redaction criticism on the biblical studies side as well as roots in the New Criticism and structural-

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(31) and his insistence elsewhere that the *two* sources of knowledge of the historical Jesus are theology and history (with no reference to literature). In this third chapter, Wright ranges over a wide variety of modern and postmodern literary theories, but, somewhere between the incredibly long sentences and the sustained sarcastic tone in describing other literary theories or strategies of reading, I realize I do not know what to believe about what he believes about the inherent importance of literature and the power of story as story. In Wright's usage, "story" is connected with worldviews—and with knowledge and verification (see *The New Testament and the People of God*, 31–46, especially 45), but not especially connected with literature or with the gospels as narratives. I wonder: Is Wright's proposed theory of reading, "critical realism," a cipher for rescuing authorial intent and historical reference from the onslaughts of modern and postmodern literary critical theory? Is he using "story" as a temporary stand-in for history (which is, in his view, quite connected to theology)? Is "literature" subsumed by theology? These are my questions of Wright. The questions Wright raises about literary theories of reading are pertinent, but the proposals he offers seem equally problematic, especially in light of his integration of history and theology without sustained reference to literature or literary criticism in *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Since, in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Wright states that the fourth and fifth questions Jesus researchers must ask, (4) How and why did the early church begin? (see 109–112) and (5) Why are the gospels what they are? (see 112–13), "must be put on hold for the time being" (143), perhaps both redaction criticism and literary criticism will receive fuller attention in a later volume.

ism on the side of literary criticism more generally, new literary criticism in New Testament studies, including two of its strongest branches—narrative criticism and reader-response criticism—has grown up in reaction against certain excesses of historical criticism. It is no wonder that suspicion remains between those questing for the *historical* Jesus and those questioning the *literary*-ness of the gospels.<sup>69</sup> Although suspicion does not generally encourage conversation, it need not preclude it—especially in an age when scholars of many varying points of view and focus recognize the necessity and positive value of a hermeneutic of suspicion. In closing I mention three areas of open questions that would seem to be fertile for cross-pollination between Jesus research and new literary criticism: studies of orality, evaluation of the Q hypothesis, and reconsideration of layers or strands within the gospels. The three areas are connected to each other and to both Jesus research and new literary criticism through the heritage of source, form, and redaction criticism. The hypothesis of Q emerged from source criticism as part of the resolution of the synoptic problem in the two-source hypothesis, along with the assumption of the priority of Mark. The oral tradition implied behind Mark and the other gospels has been the focus of form criticism, while redaction criticism has focused on layers or strands of tradition and redaction in the gospels. However, questions need to be raised about how well the presuppositions of source, form, and redaction criticism that lie at the roots of current new literary criticism and Jesus research continue to serve contemporary scholarship.

First, in terms of orality studies, Jesus researchers have a clear stake in understanding the contexts in which the gospel traditions were transmitted. Form criticism, which intends to explore the oral traditions behind the written gospels, has been formative in the quest of the historical Jesus. However, much has been learned about oral cultures and the transmission of oral tradition since the formation of form criticism.

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<sup>69</sup> David M. Gunn ("Narrative Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. Haynes and McKenzie, 193) comments: "An acute problem remains in biblical studies, namely, that much of the data for any kind of historical discourse must come from texts whose provenance is, despite nearly two centuries of historical investigation, a matter of mere speculation. The question of literary criticism's relation to historical criticism therefore is an important one, but it requires a more sophisticated discussion than it has generally been afforded so far." Donahue ("Literary Turn," 273) proposes "that within biblical studies the developments within rhetorical criticism and the new historicism [see 262–272] offer the best combination of historical research, literary sophistication, and concern for religious experience... Concretely, the new historicism, which views texts at the intersection of historical and social forces, recommends dialogue between biblical 'literary critics' and those engaged in the application of social scientific methods to biblical texts."

Looking back, one can detect models of print culture projected onto form-critical presuppositions about the transmission of oral traditions. As Werner Kelber notes,

The concepts of *original form* and variants have no validity in oral life, nor does the one of *ipissima vox*, if by that one means the authentic version over against secondary ones. In a sense each performance is “an” original, if not “the” original’ [quoting Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1960), 101]. Moreover, if each utterance constitutes an authentic speech act, then the question of transmission can never be kept wholly separate from composition. In speaking, transmission involves an act of composition, or at least recreation. All too often when we think of transmission of traditions, we think of it primarily as the passing on of fixed forms. In other words, we think of it in literary terms. In orality, *tradition is almost always composition in transmission.*<sup>70</sup>

Joanna Dewey extends this implication to the Gospel of Mark—and it can be extended, perhaps to a lesser extent, to all of the gospels:

All we can say with certainty is that our text likely represents only one version among many, one version that may or may not be characteristic of the Markan performance tradition. We do not know if, in our modern sense, there was an ‘original Mark,’ and if there was, precisely what ‘original Mark’ looked like. Nonetheless, our written text is the only text we have. Whether we are doing literary analyses of the text as an object to be read, or trying to reconstruct its meanings in the context of oral performance-reception, it is the text that of necessity we must use. Let us use it; but let us remember how differences between literate and oral-aural worlds affect how we understand Mark. Let us remember that it represents one version among many. Let us remember we do not know how typical it is, and that we do not know which audience it reflects at what time.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, Dewey has recently argued, on the basis of the work of Thorleif Boman and others,<sup>72</sup> that “Studies from the fields of folklore, oral tradition, and oral history all suggest that traditions are likely to coalesce into a continuous narrative or narrative framework quite quickly. . . . All agree against the form-critical assumption of transmission of disparate small episodes.”<sup>73</sup> If this is the case, what effect will

<sup>70</sup> Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 30, italics original; see also Werner H. Kelber, “Jesus and Tradition: Words in Time, Words in Space,” *Semeia* 65 (1994): 139–167.

<sup>71</sup> Joanna Dewey, “Mark as an Oral-Aural Event,” 159.

<sup>72</sup> Thorleif Boman, *Die Jesus-Überlieferung in Lichte der neueren Volkskunde* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967). See Dewey’s discussion in “Survival of Mark’s Gospel,” 500–503.

<sup>73</sup> Dewey, “Survival of Mark’s Gospel,” 500, 501.

this realization have on Jesus researchers who continue to work with the “disparate small episodes” of form criticism? What effect will this pushing back in time and tradition history of a “continuous narrative or narrative framework” have on new literary critics who focus on these very aspects of our written gospels? Are Jesus researchers and new literary critics analyzing these newer investigations of orality and considering fully their implications for our understanding of both the gospels in themselves and the gospels as sources for reconstructing the historical Jesus?<sup>74</sup>

Second, in terms of the Q hypothesis, are Jesus researchers and literary critics remembering that it is just that, a hypothesis? Although the Q hypothesis grew out of the old literary criticism, that is, source criticism, as a way of explaining the non-Markan agreements between Matthew and Luke, questions may be raised about the necessity of hypothesizing such a sayings “source” (*Quelle* in German) from the point of view of new literary criticism.<sup>75</sup> As Mark Goodacre has shown, with a fuller appreciation of the literary characteristics of Luke’s gospel, the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis—that Matthew knew Mark and Luke knew both Mark and Matthew—does make sense and has the advantage of not needing to postulate a hypothetical document.<sup>76</sup> Many Jesus researchers,

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<sup>74</sup> The question of orality seems more problematic for Wright than for Crossan, whose comments on “performance” and focus on “complexes” rather than on exact sayings or stories already seem to interact with certain aspects of current orality studies, although neither scholar’s work takes into account the more recent challenge of form criticism’s assumed “disparate small episodes.” Wright does consider the impact of orality in his reconstruction of the historical Jesus, but he builds not on the model of orality of Walter Ong and his heirs but on the model of Kenneth E. Bailey (“Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *AJT* 5 [1991]: 34–54), who Wright claims “has argued effectively for a position midway between the extremes represented by Bultmann and Gerhardsson” that stories of and about Jesus were passed down through “informal but controlled oral tradition”—giving them, of course, greater historical reliability (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 134). Wright observes, almost with glee, that “if Bailey is anywhere near the mark in his analysis of Mediterranean peasant oral culture, then the case for Mark-the-filmscript writer melts away like morning dew” (137). (I take the phrase “Mark-the-film-script writer” as a caricature of new literary critical approaches.) Dewey also notes that Boman wants “to use orality to argue for greater historicity” but that in her opinion “orality does not support historicity” (“Survival of Mark’s Gospel,” 500 n. 21).

<sup>75</sup> Although it still seems to be the case that the majority of literary critics do not question the Q hypothesis any more than the majority of historical critics do. See, e.g., Dewey’s opening question concerning the survival of Mark: “Why did it not go the way of Q?” (“Survival of Mark’s Gospel,” 495).

<sup>76</sup> Mark Goodacre, *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002). Cf. Austin Farrer, “On Dispensing with Q,” in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 55–58, and reproduced on *The Case Against Q* web

however, are quite invested in Q, which not only gives them another source to count in seeking to meet the criterion of multiple attestation but also, as a hypothetical document, is open to an even wider range of interpretation than documents that are concretely known. As Bart Ehrman notes,

Q is a source that *we don't have*. To reconstruct what we think was in it is hypothetical enough. . . . But to go further and insist that we know what was *not* in the source, for example, a Passion narrative, what its multiple editions were like, and which of these multiple editions was the earliest, and so on, really goes far beyond what we can know—however appealing such ‘knowledge’ might be.<sup>77</sup>

When the Q hypothesis was first developed, most New Testament scholars shared a rather limited evaluation of the abilities and desires of the evangelists in general and Mark in particular. Limiting the creativity of Mark's author served well, of course, those who sought in this first gospel a trustworthy source for the historical Jesus; Markan historicity was as valued as Markan priority. Few remain now who would affirm Markan historicity, but, interestingly enough, there are those who come close to affirming the historicity of that other of the “two sources”: Q! There are reconstructions of the historical Jesus that are built in part not only on the Q hypothesis but on an early dating of Q. The “Markan hypothesis” (if Mark is first, it must be the most historical) dissolved when most scholars let go of Markan historicity while maintaining Markan priority. Now, while some scholars are calling on us to let go not only of Q's priority but its very existence, others are calling on us to assert not only its priority but its historicity!

While the two-source critics assigned priority and historicity to Mark, they favored Matthew for what limited literary creativity they were willing to see. Thus the material shared only by Matthew and Luke, that is, Q, was thought to be more creatively arranged by Matthew, more woodenly inserted by Luke. Perhaps knowledge of the history of interpretation would suggest whether this preference for Matthew was an aesthetic or a theological preference or even a historical accident concerning which

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site, <http://ntgateway.com/Q>; Michael Goulder, “On Putting Q to the Test,” *NTS* 24 (1978): 218–234; Michael Goulder, “Farrer on Q,” *Theology* 83 (1980): 190–195; Michael Goulder, “Is Q a Juggernaut?” *JBL* 115 (1996): 667–681, and reproduced on *The Case Against Q* web site. For other materials, see the bibliographies of Goodacre's book and web site.

<sup>77</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 133.



scholars were working on Matthew, but it is clear that when Matthew's gospel lost the priority implicitly given by its place in the canon and explicitly given by Augustine, it gained status as the more thoughtful of the gospels based on the "two sources." Goodacre regards this preference for Matthew as another fallacy at the heart of the Q hypothesis.

Given these significant changes in the presuppositions about Mark, Matthew, and Luke that were widely shared at the birth of the Q hypothesis, it seems unlikely that such a hypothesis would be developed today, but, being full-grown, the Q hypothesis shows no signs of cardiac arrest with these changes in presuppositions. In fact, the literary creativity first glimpsed in Matthew, then Mark, then Luke that might be thought of as challenging the Q hypothesis is now being appreciated in Q and *Thomas*, first considered just straightforward lists of Jesus sayings. And the model of orality that might seem to make Q problematic is now being applied to Q. Apparently the Q hypothesis is quite adaptable to new conditions—even robust, to continue the human analogy. The advantage of a hypothesis is, of course, its explanatory power. But the disadvantage of a strong hypothesis is that its explanatory power blocks other questions. The assertion that Luke followed Q rather strictly, for example, blocks the question of why so-called Q material is where it is in Luke. If more interpreters were to become more concerned for the questions blocked by the Q hypothesis, its explanatory power would perhaps weaken. It is, I believe, the attraction of new questions, more than the rebuttal of old answers, that brings about a paradigm shift. In any case, the Q hypothesis deserves a fresh evaluation, from its presuppositions through its hypothesized recensions; both new literary critics and Jesus researchers have a stake in this question, and their dialogue may be essential to the endeavor.<sup>78</sup>

Third and finally, cross-fertilization between literary criticism and Jesus research seems called for in the reconsideration of layers or strands within the gospels. Redaction criticism approached the gospels as layered constructions of tradition and redaction. Jesus researchers have been most interested, of course, in isolating the earliest layer of tradition, while new

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<sup>78</sup> The question of Q seems more problematic for Crossan, for whom the "Sayings Gospel Q" is a first stratum source, than for Wright, who raises significant questions about Q—as a part of his critique of the work of the Jesus Seminar (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 41–43, 48). Wright's complaints, however, seem to have more to do with the portrait of the historical Jesus that is painted on the basis of Q (see 43 and 48) than with the literary construction of the hypothetical document; certainly Wright offers no argument in favor of Matthean and Lukan creativity as evidence against Q.

literary critical scholars, although usually approaching the gospels holistically, have been especially interested in the presumed redactional moves of the implied author throughout the narrative. However, new literary criticism raises the question of whether the historical categorization of tradition and redaction is the only or the best way to understand the layers or strands within gospel texts. All strands or layers in a text need not be evidence of *historical* differences (as literary critics of the Hebrew Bible have pointed out with reference to JEDP); such layers or strands clearly have *literary* effects.

One wonders, for example, if the historical Jesus that some scholars have reconstructed might be more fairly described as the Markan Jesus (although Marcus Borg's portrait of Jesus may manifest a partiality toward the Lukan Jesus).<sup>79</sup> Since Markan priority is affirmed by most New Testament scholars—both Jesus researchers and new literary critics, both those who assume the two-source hypothesis and those who find the Farrer-Goulder hypothesis more convincing—Mark's gospel has remained a key source for historical Jesus scholars. While narrative critics have frequently claimed that the Markan narrator and the Markan Jesus share the same point of view,<sup>80</sup> my own work on Jesus as a character in the Gospel of Mark suggests a distinction between the Markan narrator and the character Jesus that parallels a distinction Jesus researchers often take as a distinction between the evangelist and the historical Jesus.<sup>81</sup>

Mark's narrative manifests a significant gap between what the character Jesus says about himself and what other characters and the narrator say about him. Jesus' responses deflect away from himself the recognition,

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<sup>79</sup> See Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); and *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

<sup>80</sup> In his classic, and now also more than twenty-five-year-old, essay on "'Point of View' in Mark's Narrative" (*Semeia* 12 [1978]: 97–121), Norman R. Petersen asserts that the Markan narrator's "ideological standpoint is identical with that of his central character, Jesus, with whom he shares the power of knowing what is in the minds of others" (107). In fact, he argues that "Through this commonality of psychologically internal points of view, and with the support of the plotting of the story by which one actor is rendered central, the narrator is aligned—if not identified—with the central actor" (102). For a discussion of three significant differences between Petersen's assumptions and mine, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Christology of Mark's Gospel: Narrative Christology and the Markan Jesus," in *Who Do You Say That I Am? Essays on Christology: Festschrift Jack Dean Kingsbury*, ed. Mark Allan Powell and David R. Bauer (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 43–44.

<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), especially the concluding chapter.

honor (sincere or sarcastic), or attention a character, group of characters, or the narrator intends to give. The words of the Markan Jesus do not echo the words (titles? labels? descriptions?) of the Markan unclean spirits, crowds, John the Baptizer, Herod, Peter, Bartimaeus, high priest, Pilate, chief priests and scribes, centurion, or narrator. The narrator imparts to Jesus' apparent "shyness" a theological motive: the Markan Jesus wishes to deflect the attention given to him, especially as healer, to the true source of the healing, God. Jesus' negative commands for "christological" secrecy (don't tell about me) are balanced by his positive statements of theology (tell about God). Such a view is not shared by the Markan characters who present statements about or questions to Jesus.

The Markan narrator knows all this. The narrator is aware of Jesus' reticence to receive attention and his desire to deflect honor to God, but the Markan narrator does not entirely share that reticence. The narrator's point of view is not dramatically at odds with the point of view of the Markan Jesus, but they are clearly distinguishable. The narrator boldly asserts that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus is reticent. Perhaps this is why it is so important that God confirm the narrator's point of view; the Markan Jesus hardly does so! Yet the Markan Jesus makes assertions about the Son of Man, about which the narrator is silent, and boldly proclaims the kingdom of God, about which the narrator speaks directly just once, and that after Jesus' death (15:43). There is thus a tension between the Markan narrator who wants to talk about Jesus and the Markan Jesus who wants to talk about God.<sup>82</sup>

In addition, and contrary to what has generally been observed about Mark's gospel, the narrator is not identical with the implied author.<sup>83</sup> Both the Markan narrator and the Markan Jesus are under the control of the implied author. The implied author is the one who allows a character, even the main character, to have a point of view distinct from the narrator—and for a good purpose: a Jesus who talked like the narrator could hardly be a Jesus who "came not to be served but to serve" (10:45). In the Gospel of

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<sup>82</sup> My work summarized here focuses on the character Jesus. In Jack Dean Kingsbury's book, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), concern for the "titles of majesty" applied to Jesus by the other characters, and especially by the narrator, dominates. Kingsbury takes "the narrator's point of view" to be the only "correct" point of view on christology in the Gospel of Mark; all differing points of view expressed by characters (Jesus is not considered in the same way) are wrong; all similar points of view, including God's, are congruent and thus "correct."

<sup>83</sup> See Malbon, "Narrative Criticism," 33, and *Mark's Jesus*.

Mark the tension between the narrator's point of view and Jesus' point of view enables the implied author to present a Jesus whose focus is always on God, even though the narrator keeps focusing on Jesus. One could hardly present the story of Jesus without focusing on Jesus; the narrator is thus not to be blamed. But neither is the implied author to be ignored in creating the gap, the tension, between the narrator's point of view and that of the main character, Jesus. It is not the Markan Jesus' point of view nor the Markan narrator's point of view that is the point of view of Mark's gospel. It is the implied author's point of view. Thus the tension between the narrator and Jesus is not a problem to be resolved, not a gap to be filled in, but a "narrative christological" confession.<sup>84</sup>

To treat the point of view of the character Jesus as the point of view of the historical Jesus and the point of view of the Markan narrator as the point of view of the Markan evangelist would be to make the category mistake of simply equating literary distinctions with historical distinctions. Of course, elements of a narrative *may* reflect both historical realities and literary effects, but that is just what needs to be argued in each case by new literary critics and Jesus researchers in dialogue, not presupposed as a general rule. And this conclusion—concerning the need for argumentation and dialogue between new literary critics and Jesus researchers about their shared and distinctive presuppositions—is true of the open questions in all three areas introduced here: studies of orality, evaluation of the Q hypothesis, and reconsideration of layers or strands within the gospels.

It is clear why these three areas of open questions are important for new literary criticism, which is suspicious of what history and theology can do and have done to literary appreciation of the gospels. (1) New literary criticism's suspicion of literary claims based on historical and theological constructions is manifest in (a) applying current understandings of orality to prior understandings of the formation of gospel traditions and (b) re-evaluating with new literary critical understandings the hypoth-

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<sup>84</sup> Robert C. Tannehill ("The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," *Semeia* 16 [1979]: 57–79) introduced the term "narrative christology" to mean taking "seriously the narrative form of Mark in discussing this gospel's presentation of Jesus Christ" (57). For a detailed and creative exploration of the distinction between the voice of Jesus and the voice of the narrator in Luke, see Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice*. Although Dawsey does not employ the term "the implied author," he does use the term "author" in this sense: "Obviously the author was an accomplished artist who could control the language of his characters. It is also a credit to his ability as a storyteller that the author allowed his narrator and Jesus to hold different views concerning some elements of the story" (75).

esis of Q that was established with old literary critical understandings. (2) New literary criticism's suspicion of historical claims based on literary evidence is manifest in the reconsideration of the meaning of layers or strands within the gospels. It is also clear that these open questions are important for Jesus research, whose varied researchers bring their own scholarly suspicions. Suspicion is good; without it scholarship would come to an end. But conversation around shared and distinctive suspicions is very good; with it scholarship may come to ever-new beginnings.

Realistically, of course, in this age of specialization it has become impossible for researchers to keep up with the scholarly literature of both the quest of the historical Jesus, which has increased exponentially in the past thirty years, and new literary criticism of the gospels, enjoying its initial growth in these years—much less become experts in the study of orality, Q, and gospel layers or strands! This circumstance would seem to suggest that we talk with each other more, not less. These two sub-fields share some common roots in source, form, and redaction criticism and a common period of new growth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as well as, more recently, mutual influence by more sociological approaches. Yet the relative isolation of new literary criticism and Jesus research is not accidental or based solely on the demands of specialization.<sup>85</sup> New literary criticism and Jesus research differ in their basic approaches to the gospels. For Jesus researchers, the challenge is to analyze the gospels for traces of something else—the historical Jesus. For new literary critics, the challenge is to appreciate the gospels in themselves and in relation to their multiple audiences. For the former the gospels are means, for the latter, ends. Can the silence be broken for a challenging conversation?

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<sup>85</sup> Compare Mark Alan Powell's description of the situation in which "literary criticism and Jesus scholarship . . . often placed scholars committed to either enterprise at a distance from those dedicated to the other, with an unfortunate lapse in opportunities to learn from each other" ("Authorial Intent and Historical Reporting: Putting Spong's Literalization Thesis to the Test," *JSHJ* 1 [2003]: 225–249, at 225). Although I do not find Powell's argument about authorial intent entirely convincing, I do find his attempt to engage both literary critics and Jesus researchers in the conversation admirable and encouraging.



## MEMORY THEORY AND JESUS RESEARCH

ALAN KIRK

Gospels scholarship still works with conceptions of memory long abandoned by those who study memory in its social, cognitive, and cultural aspects. The “passivist” model of memory is described by Edward Casey as “the view that all memories of necessity repeat the past in a strictly replicative manner. The contribution of the remembering subject... is nugatory.”<sup>1</sup> The cognitive theory associated with this approach likens memories to traces, “stored up like so many definite impressions, fixed and having only the capacity of being reexcited.”<sup>2</sup> Memory is thereby reduced, in Casey’s words, “to being an inert sedimentation, a mere residuum.”<sup>3</sup> This epitomizes the conception of memory operative in the model of tradition that has been bequeathed to historical Jesus scholarship by classical form criticism. However, at least as early as F. C. Bartlett’s seminal work in 1932, virtually contemporaneous with the second German edition of Bultmann’s *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, memory theorists were beginning to approach memory as an active, constructive faculty.

### 1. *Form Criticism and Memory*

The form critics equated memory with individual eye-witness recollection. While memory traces of this sort lay at the origins of the tradition, they were a residuum, largely inert with respect to developments in the tradition itself. The salient image was of so-called authentic memories of Jesus coming to be buried under multiple layers of “tradition.” Tradition, in other words, had little to do with memory. William Wrede’s

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<sup>1</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 269.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (1932; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 214; also George A. Bonanno, “Remembering and Psychotherapy,” *Psychotherapy* 27 (1990): 175–186, esp. 175.

<sup>3</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 277.

bifurcation of Markan tradition into surviving elements of empirical history on the one hand and Easter-engendered dogma on the other, with the latter occluding the former, was precursor to the form critics' model. Of a "historical view of the real life of Jesus," wrote Wrede, only "pale residues" survive.<sup>4</sup> The analytical task, therefore, was like refining metals from slag: "[H]ow do we separate what belongs properly to Jesus from what is the material of the primitive community?"<sup>5</sup> Bultmann adopted this view of the tradition, positing, for example, that underlying the passion narrative there existed "a short narrative of historical reminiscence about the Arrest, Condemnation, and Execution of Jesus," which had been overgrown and "disfigured" by legend.<sup>6</sup> Martin Dibelius correlated the "Paradigms" chronologically with the period of the eyewitnesses, with eyewitness recollections assigned a role, not in the formation of the tradition itself, but as a sort of external control.<sup>7</sup>

Bultmann connected the formation of tradition with recurrent social settings associated with the life of the early communities. In attributing crucial importance to a community's present social realities in its conceptualizations of the past, Bultmann's approach aligned with a central postulate of memory theory (see below). However, correlating form closely with sociological function, and assuming that the eschatological communities lacked a constitutive orientation to the past, he inferred that contemporary social dynamics were the primary factor in generating the tradition. The gospel tradition was thus construed as a bifurcated entity: fabricated tradition coming to overlay diminishing residues of memory, for their part more or less inert with respect to the traditioning process itself. Tradition thus conceived primarily gave expression to the contemporary debates, predicaments, and developments of the early church.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig (London: James Clarke, 1971), 131. Analysis of this trend can be pushed back to D. F. Strauss; see Jens Schröter, "Von der Historizität der Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den historischen Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektive der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 163–212, esp. 169–173.

<sup>5</sup> Wrede, *Messianic Secret*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 273–274.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf (London: Redwood, 1971), 61–62.

<sup>8</sup> Bultmann acknowledged in a footnote that "memories of Jesus, his words and deeds played their part in the literary productions of the early Church" (*History*, 48 n. 2), but it is clear he assigned these—viewed as individual recollections—no significant role in the formation of the tradition.



Bultmann's analysis was in fact characterized by a programmatic *disconnect* between memory and the growing tradition, his occasional gestures to "reminiscence" notwithstanding. This was the consequence of according to memory little agency and instead locating the decisive generative forces for tradition in contemporary social factors. In Bultmann's additive model, dominical sayings were the tradition's primary point of departure. But authentic sayings, in his view, exercised only an anemic influence upon the expanding tradition, and accordingly he found it "difficult to believe that the changes and revaluation of such meshalim as are to be found in the tradition have in fact retained some reminiscence of such changes and revaluations by Jesus."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, this inertness made possible, indeed necessary, the large-scale incorporation of inauthentic sayings into the Jesus tradition to meet the challenges of contemporary social realities.<sup>10</sup> In consequence, Jesus' radically distinctive message could now be heard only faintly. Bultmann was far from denying all continuity whatsoever between authentic sayings and developments in the tradition. Extraneous materials and community practices often displayed significant congruence with dominical pronouncements. The dogmatic belief in Jesus as Messiah, moreover, did not eradicate the memory of Jesus' "actual work as a teacher of the Law," and this inspired confidence that many of Jesus' sayings about the Law had been preserved.<sup>11</sup> However, on this point also Bultmann's conception of memory—its trace-like existence and marginality vis-à-vis other forces generating the tradition—emerged, for this "picture [of Jesus as rabbi], which must have been distinctly impressed on their memory... was gradually thrust into the background by the figure of the Messiah."<sup>12</sup>

Bultmann accordingly construed the history of the gospel traditions as a sequence of "stages."<sup>13</sup> Each stage generated its own tradition and subsequent stages stood in discontinuity with preceding stages. Hence Bultmann's analytical project was to "clearly distinguish," "separate" the tradition in accordance with these stages.<sup>14</sup> Again, such a procedure was entailed in locating the decisive forces in the creation of tradition in the

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<sup>9</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 125–126.

<sup>12</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus*, 126.

<sup>13</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 155.

<sup>14</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus*, 12.

changing social contexts of the various communities. Particularly notable was his distribution of the tradition into Palestinian and Hellenistic stages respectively, traditions from the latter standing in “distinction” from those of the former.<sup>15</sup> The social and cultural realities of the Hellenistic milieu generated corollary traditions that superimposed upon the older Palestinian tradition, “impressing it with a meaning such as it needed in the Hellenistic Churches. . . .”<sup>16</sup> Notable, in other words, was the inertia of the Palestinian tradition as it and its particular portrayal of Jesus were commandeered by the *religionsgeschichtliche* forces of syncretistic Hellenism. The Gospel of Mark was the resulting artifact: a “cult legend” that combined the κύριος Christ-myth of the Hellenistic cult “with the tradition of the story of Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, “the Christ who is preached is not the historic Jesus, but the Christ of faith and the cult.”<sup>18</sup> In its terminal point in Mark the tradition had moved a distance quite remote from the memory traces that lay at its origins. Given this scenario the task of historical Jesus research was to move back through the developmental stages of the tradition, bracketing materials that could be designated “Hellenistic” as well as other materials that expressed the interests of the church. With the goal being “to distinguish the oldest layer,”<sup>19</sup> the form critics’ procedure was to identify and discard accreted materials and arrive at the authentic residue through application of the dissimilarity criterion, the “original form” axiom, and the so-called laws or “tendencies” of the tradition.

Bultmann put a great deal of effort into defining these tendencies that, in his view, had likewise been key factors in the creation of tradition, for isolating the auto-operations propelling the tradition’s “immanent urge to development”<sup>20</sup> gave him precision tools for further unraveling its history, in particular prior to its fixation in the written sources. These included, for example, the attribution of specific names and labels within a tradition originally marked by anonymity. Others could be sub-categorized under a broad evolutionary tendency of the tradition to develop from simple to complex forms, and apophthegms

<sup>15</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus*, 13; idem, *History*, 239.

<sup>16</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 347.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 347–348.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 371; also Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 297–300.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Jesus*, trans. Charles B. Hedrick and Frederick C. Grant (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949), 34.

<sup>20</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 373.

had a tendency to differentiate into variants.<sup>21</sup> This positing of innate tendencies reflected the form-critical conception of the tradition as a development away from original memory traces under the impulse of not just external but also immanent forces. *The development of the gospel tradition, in other words, was driven by virtually every force except the salient past itself.*

Little of this tradition model can survive scrutiny in light of advances in research on the phenomenology of tradition. The primary factors producing tradition variants are not innate tendencies but social and cultural variables inhering in the settings in which tradition is repeatedly enacted. On these grounds alone the confidence that knowledge of the tradition's "tendencies" opened up paths allowing the critic to move back through its oral stages to isolate earlier forms and perhaps even an authentic residuum was misplaced. Moreover, Bultmann grounded the tendencies of the oral tradition in evidence from written sources. The "tendency of the tradition to enlarge upon older sayings" was established by reference to Ben Sirach, who "combined and enlarged" collections of popular sayings.<sup>22</sup> As regards his claim that proper names and specific labels displace primitive anonymity in the transmission of apophthegms, Bultmann connected up Mark, Matthew, John, and then novelistic developments in the apocrypha into a trajectory to infer this as an inherent tendency of the oral tradition.<sup>23</sup> His derivation of oral tendencies from redactional operations was predicated on his view that "there is no difference in principle" between oral and written processes.<sup>24</sup>

The oral-written juncture, however, is better construed as a break than a continuum, in Jens Schröter's words, "als eine Veränderung im Überlieferungsprozeß."<sup>25</sup> John Miles Foley characterizes writing and orality as distinct communication "channels" or "media."<sup>26</sup> Literary trafficking with oral tradition entails a displacement of oral dynamics, even if the written artifact is composed for oral enactment. The written medium enables new ways for working with tradition, such as incorporation

<sup>21</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 52–53, 62–68, 85–89, 199.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–89.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 87.

<sup>25</sup> Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 464.

<sup>26</sup> John Miles Foley, *Homer's Traditional Art* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 4.

within comprehensive literary frameworks and reworking not under the immediate exigencies of performance settings but in the service of mediated redactional programs. The emblematic multiformity of oral tradition arises from enactment and transmission strategies equal to the immediacy and immateriality of oral communication. Literary editorial operations, therefore, are not prescriptive for the oral medium, and to take them to be so, as Bultmann did, was regrettably to inject into scholarship some quite misleading notions about the history of the gospel tradition.<sup>27</sup> Tradition histories are only possible where the existence of parallel traditions in written sources permits analysis of priority. This is to say that the oral tradition and its history cannot be viewed except through the opacity of the written medium; in other words, “one cannot go beyond the different versions and contextualizations of a saying into the oral phase of transmission.”<sup>28</sup> This spells the end of the form-critical project of arriving at memory traces of the historical Jesus thought to lie near the bottom of a multilayered oral tradition.

Critique of the form-critical model for tradition is hardly a novel enterprise. Our approach has been to assess the model, which in its various permutations still functions as the cognitive framework for much historical Jesus research, in terms of its operative conceptions of memory. We have seen that the form critics, to the extent they reflected on it at all, associated memory with individual eyewitness recollections. These lay as inert traces at the origins of a tradition whose formation and development took place at the primary behest of other factors. Hence the distinguishing of so-called authentic memory from fabricated tradition is the hallmark of historical Jesus analyses indebted to the form-critical model.

The next section will offer a *précis* of social and cultural memory approaches that subsequently will be integrated with our discussion of

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<sup>27</sup> In the new introduction to his classic work that first comprehensively articulated this critique, Werner Kelber summarizes the form critical conception of the history of the gospel tradition with its underlying “print mentality” thus: “[T]he gospel composition is imagined as a revision of antecedent texts carried out with such literary precision and ideological correctness that it enables us to retrace tradition, *stratum by stratum*” (*The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* [1983; repr., with a new introduction by Werner Kelber, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997], xxii). Kelber also has been the pioneer in recognition of the essential connection between memory and tradition.

<sup>28</sup> Jens Schröter, “The Historical Jesus and the Sayings Tradition: Comments on Current Research,” *Neot* 30 (1996): 151–168, esp. 157.

research on the cognitive aspects of memory.<sup>29</sup> We will see that memory theory gives firm methodological grounding to Jesus research by supplying it with a defensible account of the origins and history of the gospel traditions.

## 2. *Memory, Identity, and Community*

Social memory studies originated with Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945), a disciple of Emile Durkheim.<sup>30</sup> Halbwachs argued that memory is constituted by social frameworks, which is to say that the social realities and communicative practices of communities give substance, shape, and duration to the memory of the people belonging to them. Memory emerges in coherent, durable form to the extent remembrances find articulation in communicative interaction within a group; conversely, individual remembrances fade to the extent they are not pertinent to the groups that individuals are affiliated with. Correspondingly, a community bears a complex of memories constitutive of its very existence. “Genuine communities,” writes Jeffrey Olick, “are communities of memory that constantly tell and retell their constitutive memories.”<sup>31</sup> A community marks certain elements of its past as being of constitutive significance, in particular, memories of its origins, “the event that marks the group’s emergence as an independent social entity.”<sup>32</sup> Both identity and continuity, in fact the very survival of a community, depend upon its constant revitalization of these memories.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> For a fuller survey of contemporary social and cultural memory theory see Alan Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” in *Memory, Tradition, Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, ed. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, Semeia Studies 52 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 1–24.

<sup>30</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), originally published as *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1950); idem, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), originally published as *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1952; 1st ed. 1925).

<sup>31</sup> Jeffrey K. Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures,” *Sociological Theory* 17 (1999): 333–348, esp. 344; also James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 25.

<sup>32</sup> Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4–7.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992), 132–133.

Accordingly, *commemoration* is a core activity of viable communities. Commemorative practice counteracts the danger of rupture between a community and its past, the loss of memory that spells the unraveling of its identity and hence its dissolution.<sup>34</sup> Commemoration, in Kirk Savage's words, attempts "to fix the meaning and purpose" of the past (emphasis added).<sup>35</sup> Commemoration picks up "bedrock events experienced with powerful immediacy" but whose meaning and significance must be discerned, precisely through commemorative activities.<sup>36</sup> This entails that through its commemorative activities a community fashions its representations of its formative past.<sup>37</sup>

That memory is highly active and constructive should now be clear. Memory "acts to organize what might otherwise be a mere assemblage of contingently connected events."<sup>38</sup> Its configurations, however, do not thereby assume immobile form. The activity of memory in articulating the past is unceasing because it takes place within the social frameworks of the ever-shifting present. Halbwachs argued that to remember is not to *retrouver*, but to *reconstruire*, to align the image of the past with present social realities.<sup>39</sup> Differential attribution of meaning to the past, a core activity of memory, proceeds from and serves the conditions of the present. Barry Schwartz points out that collective memory thus becomes "a social fact as it is made and remade to serve changing societal interests and needs."<sup>40</sup> However, it is by constantly bringing its commemorated past into alignment with its open-ended series of "presents" that a community maintains continuity of identity across time, a sense of always being vitally connected to its past.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 224–225; also Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 94; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 70.

<sup>35</sup> Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Movement," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 127–149, esp. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of Memory in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 67.

<sup>37</sup> Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 306.

<sup>38</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 291.

<sup>39</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 40.

<sup>40</sup> Barry Schwartz, "Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II," *ASR* 61 (1996): 908–927, esp. 909.

<sup>41</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 40–42, 88.

Powerful forces are at work in the present contexts of a community to shape particular versions of its formative past. In a manner reminiscent of the form critics, some theorists go so far as to suggest that constructions of the past may in all important respects be understood as projections of the ideological factors of the present.<sup>42</sup> However, it is doubtful that strong constructionist approaches of this sort can be generalized into paradigmatic models for memory and tradition. Such tend *a priori* to exclude inquiry into the diachronic question, namely, how the depth of the past might inform, shape, and constrain the dispositions and actions of those situated in the present.<sup>43</sup> Arjun Appadurai argues that the past is not just “a limitless and plastic symbolic resource, infinitely susceptible to the whims of contemporary interest and the distortions of contemporary ideology.”<sup>44</sup> While communities (and for that matter individuals) view and shape their past from perspectives and identities grounded in their present contexts, that identity has emerged from the diachronic depth of memory.<sup>45</sup> It is this identity that orients to the experiences of the present and that encompasses the *predispositions* for a community’s continual reassessment of its own past.

This may be stated as follows: The past, constellated by the work of commemoration and immanent in the narrative patterns in which it has become engrained in the social memory, provides for a community and its members the framework for cognition and interpretation of the experiences of the present.<sup>46</sup> Social memory makes available the moral and symbolic resources for making sense of the present through what Schwartz refers to as its “keying” of present experiences and predicaments to archetypal images and narrative representations of the commemorated past.<sup>47</sup> This entails that *both* present social realities *and* the salient past are potent variables in these semiotic constructions constantly occurring in social memory.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 15.

<sup>43</sup> Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System,” 910; Jeffrey K. Olick and Daniel Levy, “Collective Memory and Cultural Constraint: Holocaust Myth and Rationality in German Politics,” *ASR* 62 (1997): 921–936, esp. 922.

<sup>44</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “The Past as a Scarce Resource,” *Man* NS 16 (1981): 201–219, esp. 201.

<sup>45</sup> Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 126.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 2.

<sup>47</sup> Barry Schwartz, “Frame Image: Towards a Semiotics of Collective Memory,” *Semiotica* 121 (1998): 1–38.

<sup>48</sup> See Olick and Levy, “Collective Memory,” 923.

A community's commemorated past exerts powerful *normative* force. This is to say that its images of archetypal persons and events embody a group's moral order and thus are mnemonic of group-defining norms.<sup>49</sup> The normativity of the past is central to what Jan Assmann refers to as the "*mythomotorisch*" effect of the cultural memory, driving a community's continual articulation of itself, along the lines of its constitutive norms, in the midst of changing realities and in the face of emerging crises.<sup>50</sup> Hence a synergistic relationship exists between *commemorative* and *hortatory* activities. Deaths of significant persons call forth commemorative activities focused in a particularly intense way upon the norms and virtues these individuals embodied in life and in their death. A martyr's death is instrumental in establishing the urgent normative claims of the virtues he or she embodied and died exemplifying, and in mobilizing a social movement cohering around those norms.<sup>51</sup>

Commemorative activities, therefore, drive the formation and transmission of cultural identity. Social memory fashions a "Symbolsystem," which is to say that in commemorated persons, commemorative narratives, and related artifacts and practices, it objectifies a community's archetypal, axiomatic meanings and norms. Through commemorative transposition a community elevates to symbolic, identity-constituting status marked elements of its past. The "symbolische Figuren" of culture are in effect "Erinnerungsfiguren" (memory configurations).<sup>52</sup> These commemorative symbols seem inexhaustibly responsive hermeneutically to complexity and change in a community's social realities. The revisionist and socialist camps within early Zionism, for example, debated fiercely whether the martyrdom of the settler Trumpeldor authorized the sword or the plough, armed resistance or settlement and agriculture as a program for national revitalization. "It was not the historical event per se, but rather the encoding of its symbolic meaning that provided fuel to this controversy."<sup>53</sup> It is this hermeneutical responsive-

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<sup>49</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 59; Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 16–17; idem, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis: Zehn Studien* (Munich: Beck, 2000), 127–128.

<sup>50</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 79–80, 168–169.

<sup>51</sup> Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 175; Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 28–29; Conerton, *How Societies Remember*, 43.

<sup>52</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 52–59, 139–140; also Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, x–xi, 17–18; idem, "Frame Image," 25–26; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 59; Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 188–189.

<sup>53</sup> Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 157.



ness of commemorative symbols that gives rise to the sentiment that salient pasts are little more than ideological projections of the present. However, commemorative projects are dependent upon the core realities they take up, though the nature of this dependence from case to case cannot be *a priori* prescribed. Robin Wagner-Pacifiçi points out that memorializing activities are ignited by “ordering” persons and events, that is, “fraught with conflict and significance” on the larger social scale.<sup>54</sup> Persons and events of this sort form the “adamantine core” of commemoration, generating and shaping the interpretations that can be produced upon them across time.<sup>55</sup> Wagner-Pacifiçi further argues that commemorative artifacts emerge from the interaction among three factors, namely, “the social realities of empirical events, the cultural realities of modes of generic encodings, and the political and aesthetic realities of the work of translators,” the latter being those who effect the transformation of empirical realities into the various artifactual forms of cultural memory.<sup>56</sup>

Social memory, to borrow Appadurai’s phrase, may therefore be understood as the “symbolic negotiation between ‘ritual’ pasts and the contingencies of the present.”<sup>57</sup> Olick and Levy express this principle as follows: “Collective memory *is* this negotiation, rather than pure constraint by, or contemporary strategic manipulation of, the past. . . . The relationship between remembered pasts and constructed presents is one of perpetual but differentiated constraint and renegotiation over time, rather than pure strategic invention in the present or fidelity to (or inability to escape from) a monolithic legacy.”<sup>58</sup> Schwartz describes memory as being simultaneously a “model of” and a “model for” society.<sup>59</sup> “In its reflective (model *of*) aspect, memory is an expressive symbol—a language, as it were, for articulating present predicaments; in its second (model *for*) aspect, memory is an orienting symbol—a map that gets us through these predicaments by relating where we are to where we have been.”<sup>60</sup>

The pertinence of social and cultural memory analysis for clarifying the phenomenology of the gospel tradition should be evident. Along

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<sup>54</sup> Robin Wagner-Pacifiçi, “Memories in the Making: The Shape of Things that Went,” *QS* (1996): 301–321, esp. 302–303.

<sup>55</sup> Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 309; also Casey, *Remembering*, 286.

<sup>56</sup> Wagner-Pacifiçi, “Memories in the Making,” 308–309.

<sup>57</sup> Appadurai, “Past as a Scarce Resource,” 218.

<sup>58</sup> Olick and Levy, “Collective Memory,” 934.

<sup>59</sup> Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 18; similarly Casey, *Remembering*, 284.

<sup>60</sup> Schwartz, “Memory as a Cultural System,” 910.

with its negation of passivistic and individualistic models for memory, it rules out the sharp distinction the form critics made between memory and tradition. Rather, the gospel tradition may be understood as *the artifact of memory*, of the continual negotiation and semantic engagement between a community's present social realities and its memorialized past, with neither factor swallowed up by or made epiphenomenal of the other.<sup>61</sup>

Memory approaches, therefore, make it possible to overcome the polarities of constructionism (tradition as the product of a community's present social realities), and passivism (tradition as a transparent representation of empirical events of the past). By the same token, a social memory model accounts for the proliferation of transformations in the tradition, for as the artifact of memory dynamics tradition is responsive hermeneutically to the social frameworks of its reception. What memory analysis rejects, however, is the denial or even downplaying of vital connections between developments in the tradition and a community's salient past. Rather, it analyzes these very transformations in terms of the charged engagement of that normative past, laid down in tradition, with the present social frameworks of the tradent community. Bultmann, for example, attributed the tense dialogue about forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5–10), an interpolation into the more primitive story of the Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1–12), to the desire of the "Church . . . to trace back to Jesus *its* own right to forgive sins."<sup>62</sup> The secondary element, that is, was generated by the present interests of the church. But criticism informed by memory approaches, while perhaps not disputing *per se* this tradition-history, would question whether the community's right to forgive sins could be accounted for apart from some reference to the salient past. This would entail inquiry into how the community's salient past has furnished it with the moral and symbolic resources for perceiving and mastering its contemporary crises and predicaments.

Social memory analysis, therefore, hardly amounts to drawing naïve correspondences between "memory" and "history." Rather, it provides a research framework for assessing the origins and transformations of the gospel tradition in terms of the constitutive orientation of the Jesus-communities to a commemorated past. The pressing historiographical question, however, is how one might move from memory, of which tra-

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<sup>61</sup> See Schröter, *Erinnerung*, 463.

<sup>62</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 15–16.

dition is the multiform artifact, to history. A methodological response to this problem has been attempted by Jens Schröter. Schröter's approach is predicated upon the semantic vigor of the constitutive past and the effect of present social realities that give particular refractions to that past, as well as upon recognition that the past is accessible only through those refractions. Consequently, one cannot speak about the historical Jesus apart from the acts of reception in the early communities.<sup>63</sup> Common traits perduring in Mark, Q, and *Thomas* as well as the acts of reception themselves become the basis for Schröter to draw inferences about the lineaments of a historical past that exerts a charged influence upon all three reception contexts.<sup>64</sup> Aware that every act of traditioning is an act of remembering in which past and present semantically interact, Schröter's approach instead of discounting exploits interpretive reconstructions of the tradition to draw inferences about Jesus.

Schröter restricts himself to a triangulating analysis of complexes of tradition found in the written sources. Mark and Q nevertheless stand near the threshold with orality. In them oral tradition, to be sure worked over within new literary contexts and hence with earlier reception-contexts effaced, is to an extent still visible.<sup>65</sup> Working back diachronically through "stages" of the oral tradition, we have seen, is nonsensical. Nevertheless it would be a mistake to turn away prematurely from the oral gospel tradition, such as we have it. Memory theory has a great deal to say about the formation and transmission of oral tradition, as well as about the crux problem of the transition from oral to written media. At this point, research on the cognitive aspects of memory becomes pertinent.

### 3. *Cognitive Approaches to Memory and Tradition*

Gospels scholarship, to the limited extent it even reflects upon memory and the transmission of tradition, tends to conceive it in terms of serial communication along chains of isolated individuals, in accord with its

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<sup>63</sup> Schröter, "Historical Jesus," 165.

<sup>64</sup> Idem, *Erinnerung*, 142, 483–485.

<sup>65</sup> John Miles Foley's category *oral-derived texts*, which designates written artifacts characterized by complex interactions of orality and literacy, is pertinent here. See *Homer's Traditional Art*, 4; and idem, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 210–211.

conception of memory as individual recollection. We need only to reference the serious comparison of the transmission of gospel traditions to the children's game "Telephone" made by Bart Ehrman in his widely used college introduction to the New Testament to give a sense of the current understanding of this problem in gospels scholarship.<sup>66</sup> In fact, remarkably little attention is paid to how this individuals-*seriatim* model might be coordinated with the account of the formation and history of the gospel tradition worked out by the form critics and in important respects still standard in the discipline.

Occasionally one finds attempts to support the individuals-*seriatim* model by reference to studies on the cognitive operations of memory, and in particular to experiments by F. C. Bartlett.<sup>67</sup> Bartlett tested individual recollection by asking individuals to reproduce a story, after one or two exposures, multiple times at lengthening intervals. He concluded that "remembering is rapidly affected by unwitting transformations: accurate recall is the exception and not the rule."<sup>68</sup> He also tested "serial reproduction" along a chain of individuals, with this result: "[S]erial reproduction normally brings about startling and radical alterations in the material dealt with... nearly every possible variation seems as if it can take place, even in a relatively short series." He concluded, quite rightly, that human memory "is normally exceedingly subject to error."<sup>69</sup>

Bartlett's results from his transmission experiments, however, are hardly pertinent to the gospel tradition. They correspond to the artificial lab environment of *seriatim* transmission of random information down a chain of randomly selected individuals with no social connections to one another and, therefore, as David Rubin states, tell us more about rumor transmission or "party games" than about the cultivation of

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<sup>66</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 46–47. Robert Funk and Roy Hoover may also be taken as typical: "The evidence provided by the written gospels is hearsay evidence. Hearsay evidence is secondhand evidence. In the case of the gospels, the evangelists are all reporting stories and sayings related to them by intermediate parties; none of them was an ear or eyewitness of the words and events he records. Indeed, the information may have passed through several parties on its way to the authors of the first written gospels" (*The Five Gospels* [New York: Macmillan, 1993], 16). Out of this are worked up weighty "rules of evidence" of the sort relevant to cross-examination of individual recollection in a courtroom setting.

<sup>67</sup> John Crossan appeals to Bartlett's experiment (*The Birth of Christianity* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998], 82).

<sup>68</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 61.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

memory and tradition within communities.<sup>70</sup> Rubin points out that “transmission in oral traditions... is much more complex and much more conducive to stable transmission.”<sup>71</sup> In contrast to the one or two exposures that initiated the lab experiments in recall, cultivation of oral traditions is characterized by “overlearning,” that is, “numerous intermittent repetitions by different members of the group,” by “recitation” in performance mode, and by “spaced practice,” all of which have been experimentally shown to be “important factors in improving long-term retention.”<sup>72</sup> In addition, cultivation of tradition is an enterprise of communities, not isolated individuals. Tradition is enacted within a group knowledgeable of and existentially identified with it; its performance is a shared ritual rehearsal of the cultural memory.

The social dimension of memory and tradition entails, moreover, that transmission does not occur down *seriatim* “chains” of individuals at all, as Bartlett’s experiment had it, but along far more complex “nets” the very complexity of which, Rubin states, “leads to greater stability of transmission than would be expected from laboratory research.”<sup>73</sup> He explains the distinctions as follows:

For a single individual, the chain [model of transmission] would have a single line leading in and a single line leading out. In contrast, for a single individual, the net would have an indefinite number of lines leading in and out. . . . That is, the difference between chains and nets is that in a chain an individual hears only one version and transmits it to only one other person, whereas in a net individuals can hear and combine many versions before passing on their own version any number of times to any number of people.<sup>74</sup>

This has a mnemonically reinforcing and stabilizing effect: “The main advantage of a net over a chain is that if the version transmitted by one singer omits parts or introduces changes that are outside the tradition, then other versions can be substituted for these lapses. . . . Multiple versions from many sources serve another purpose. They allow a listener to

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<sup>70</sup> David C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-Out Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 122. Bartlett readily acknowledged that “much human remembering is influenced directly and strongly by factors which are social in origin. The influence of these factors may be obscured by the ordinary laboratory methods of the study of memory” (*Remembering*, 95).

<sup>71</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 132.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 129, 154, 228.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

learn the range of acceptable variation.”<sup>75</sup> Transmission along nets, taken with its overall community contextualization, leads to the insight that the precariousness of memory and tradition exists not at each of the multiple points of a putative individual-to-individual *seriatim* chain but chiefly in the crisis brought about by a community’s *generational* succession, a threshold that Assmann designates as a “Traditionsbruch” that constitutes a “Krise in der kollektiven Erinnerung.”<sup>76</sup> We will return to this subject below.

Far from being helplessly exposed to the frailties of human memory so well documented in Bartlett’s experiments, oral tradition is better viewed as a set of strategies calibrated precisely to *counter* these frailties.<sup>77</sup> At stake is nothing less than cultural survival. As the deposit of a community’s formative narratives and normative wisdom,<sup>78</sup> tradition must be proof against the limitations of human memory. In Rubin’s words, “Oral traditions must, therefore, have developed forms of organization (i.e., rules, redundancies, constraints) and strategies to decrease the changes that human memory imposes on the more casual transmission of verbal material.”<sup>79</sup> In addition to the learning and retention strategies that have already been mentioned, the *formation* of oral tradition can be understood in terms of memory’s cognitive operations that render memory an extraordinarily efficient faculty.

Researchers have pointed to memory’s radical *economizing* activity. Bonanno states, “[T]he myriad of possible experiential stimuli necessitates that the memory system be prudent. For the purposes of economy, experiences are catalogued schematically into categories, scripts and prototypical units of knowledge.”<sup>80</sup> Exact recall of experiences would entail unmanageable surfeits of detail, inducing, as Casey puts it, “that state of clutter and confusion which Luria’s subject . . . reported as a living nightmare.”<sup>81</sup> Memory in other words is in the literal sense a cognitive *artificer* that renders the raw material of experience and perception

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<sup>75</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 134.

<sup>76</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 218.

<sup>77</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 144.

<sup>78</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 141–142.

<sup>79</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 10.

<sup>80</sup> Bonanno, “Remembering and Psychotherapy,” 177.

<sup>81</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 285, referring to A. R. Luria’s study of an individual with *savant* capabilities of exact recall, in whom external sensory cues triggered overwhelming cascades of detailed remembrances, inducing a kind of cognitive paralysis; see *The Mind of a Mnemonist*, trans. Lynn Solotaroff (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

into manageable, efficient memory artifacts. Bartlett observed this cognitive tendency towards the rapid condensation of remembered stories into concise, economical units through the elimination of details.<sup>82</sup> Rubin compares the newspaper report of an actual train wreck with its commemorative version in the ballad *The Wreck of the Old 97* and its variants: “The article was divided into 100 facts. . . . On the average, only 6 of these 100 facts appeared in each ballad, producing ballads in which only the essentials were preserved.”<sup>83</sup> Rubin points out that memory operates “to abstract and remember the structure from many similar events,” that is, memory *compounds* multiple related remembrances into single, frequently composite memories that take on emblematic, representational functions.<sup>84</sup> This economizing activity of memory likewise accounts for the fading out of precise times, durations, and locales of discrete experiences into more indeterminate spatio-temporal frameworks, for example, “last year. . . .” *Locales* for their part act as clustering points and hence important mnemonic cues for emblematic memories associated with them. This accounts for what Casey describes as the “pastiche” character of memory’s representations of the past: “Between and around the stably situated and relatively well-defined locales of memories are undefined and unlocalized patches of space. . . . Thanks to their very gappiness, memories can be considered *pastiches* of the past—never its full spatial re-presentation.”<sup>85</sup>

Another cognitive operation performed by memory is *conventionalization* or *schematization*, which refers to the rapid reduction of diffusely complex experiences to stereotyped forms and scripts that act as mnemonic mechanisms for their reproduction as memory.<sup>86</sup> This works in close tandem with condensing operations, for as memory reduces empirical remembrances to a type, details “not. . . adding to the representational significance of the whole” are dropped.<sup>87</sup> Rubin’s case study cited above is illuminating in this regard: “Almost 60% of the lines produced could have occurred. . . in a ballad about another train wreck. . . . Thus much of the text of the generated ballads followed a general pattern,

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<sup>82</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 126–127.

<sup>83</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 284.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 7; also Larry R. Squire and Eric R. Kandel, *Memory: From Mind to Molecules* (New York: Scientific American Library, 1999), 46.

<sup>85</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 72–75.

<sup>86</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 53–54, 63, 83, et passim.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 106–107.

including just enough facts that fit the existing ballad pattern to keep the song unique.”<sup>88</sup> We see that assimilation to a type entails significant distancing from the actual empirical realities. It must be stressed though that this distancing is itself a mnemonic and pragmatic strategy. The human mind as we noted is exceedingly inefficient at retaining and reproducing the details of uninterrupted streams of experience. “Memory work,” writes Schwartz, “like a lens filters extraneous materials the better for us to see the kinds of recollecting relevant to our purposes.”<sup>89</sup> We have seen that memory’s radical reduction of detail is what makes possible its efficient operation in the first place. Conformity to formulaic types gives memories simplicity and coherence, enables their categorization, and thereby aids their subsequent recollection. Likewise, with conventionalization of memories comes their greater impregnability to change.<sup>90</sup>

This review of the cognitive operations of memory brings to mind salient features of oral-traditional genres. Here we find ourselves at the place where *the cognitive functions of memory intersect with social and cultural memory dynamics*. Rubin in fact analyzes genres of oral tradition precisely as mnemonic strategies. Before continuing with this line of inquiry, however, we may pause to bring out more clearly the pertinence of this research to analysis of the gospel traditions. Cognitive operations of memory, such as economy of presentation, compounding, temporally indeterminate framing, and schematizing in a typology of forms correspond to characteristic features of the synoptic tradition. These were acutely observed and catalogued by the form critics.<sup>91</sup> Bultmann noted the “gappiness” or “pastiche” (to use Casey’s terms) effect resulting from these modes of representing the past, persisting even beyond the efforts of the evangelists to create contiguity.<sup>92</sup> Both Bultmann and Dibelius posited the existence of initial processes from which the tradition, particularly in its definitive form of the pronouncement story, emerged. But having discounted vital connections of tradition

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<sup>88</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 284. It is important, however, to avoid relapse into notions of “historical residue” or “abbreviated history” as models for the relationship of the tradition artifact to history. Memory transformations are more like alchemy (see below).

<sup>89</sup> Barry Schwartz, “Jesus in First-Century Memory—A Response,” in *Memory, Tradition, Text*, ed. Kirk and Thatcher, 249–262, esp. 251.

<sup>90</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 83–93.

<sup>91</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 188–190.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.



with memory, they could not offer a satisfactory account of these processes. Bultmann made vague reference to “the relatively rapid precipitation of a somewhat fixed tradition” in traditional Jewish genres, while Dibelius located the formation of the “Paradigm” in the pragmatics of preaching.<sup>93</sup> Particularly ironic, though, was Bultmann’s inclination to view the tradition’s distancing from empirical realities, in fact the effect of mnemonic strategies, as evidence that it had come untethered from memory and history.<sup>94</sup>

The *variability* of the tradition is also closely aligned with memory’s cognitive function. Research brings to light the fact that memory as a crucial cognitive resource gives an organism the capability to respond successfully to new environments. In memory the data of experience are shaped into these economical patterns, or “schemas,” that, as Bartlett puts it, “render a specific adaptive reaction [to present and future situations] possible.”<sup>95</sup> The busy-bee condensing, compounding, and conventionalizing activities of memory described above, accordingly, are not merely for the purpose of enhancing memory’s retentive capacities, but to enable its key function as a rapid-response strategy for comprehending and mastering new situations.<sup>96</sup> This occurs through memory’s capacity to perform analogical operations, that is, to cue present experiences directly “to that portion of the organized setting of past responses which is most relevant to the needs of the moment.”<sup>97</sup> The cognitive capacities of memory extend thereby to intellection of and assigning meaning, “a name,” to present experiences, which in turn facilitate the integration of these experiences in their own right into organized, active memory.<sup>98</sup> Casey describes this dynamic as follows, and, moreover, in terms redolent of Schwartz’s characterization of the functions of social memory for a community:

Rather than a mere repository *of* experience, remembering becomes thereby a continually growing fund *for* experience: a source itself, indeed a resource, on which not only future acts of remembering but many other experiential modes can draw as well. . . . It also supplies a supportive *Hintergrund* for ongoing experience: a backdrop which at once unifies and

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<sup>93</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 368; Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 65.

<sup>94</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 63–64.

<sup>95</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 208.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–45; Bonanno, “Remembering and Psychotherapy,” 177.

<sup>97</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 206.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 200.

specifies what comes to appear in the foreground. Any experiential scene... possesses such a background, which contributes depth to an otherwise shallow setting.<sup>99</sup>

Memory, being an active cognitive capacity of this sort, never amounts to mere retrieval of stored “traces” of the past. Rather, memory manifests itself as a “formulation” expressive of the active relationship that the past—as it has come to be configured in memory—enters into with the circumstances of the present for which it has its particular cognitive salience.<sup>100</sup> This is not construction of the past, but *reconstruction*: items are “picked out of [memory] schemes, reshuffled, and used to aid adaptation towards conditions which have perhaps never occurred before. The items picked out are the distant events; the immediate situation sets the problems which they are to help solve.”<sup>101</sup> Casey refers to this as the “thick autonomy of memory”—autonomous with respect to the empirical past because not bound to direct recall, but rather to remembering “the *same* past *differently* on successive occasions.”<sup>102</sup> Memory nevertheless “is enmeshed in its origins even when it seems to be functioning independently of them”; it retains “a commitment to truth concerning the past, a truth that reflects the specificity of the past even if it need not offer an exact likeness of it.”<sup>103</sup>

Analysis of the cognitive dynamics of memory, the focus of experimental psychology or phenomenological studies like Casey’s, naturally takes human memory as embodied in its neural substrate as its object. But that these same dynamics play out in the social context of groups should not be surprising, for as we noted earlier, the locus of communal memory is the memories of individuals whose identities are bound up in their affiliation with a particular community. Social memory, the appropriation of a commemorated past within the frameworks of present social realities, fulfills for a community the cognitive function of memory that Bartlett describes as “the utilisation of the past in the solution of difficulties set by the present.”<sup>104</sup> The “keying” (Schwartz) or

<sup>99</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 284.

<sup>100</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 225.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>102</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 286.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 280, 283; on this point see also Martin A. Conway, “Autobiographical Knowledge and Autobiographical Memories,” in *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory*, ed. David C. Rubin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 67–93, esp. 88.

<sup>104</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 225.

“analogic mapping” (Malkki) operations of social memory reproduce the “effort after meaning” that Bartlett designates as the salient feature of memory cognitively brought to bear upon present situations.<sup>105</sup> The import for the phenomenology of tradition likewise is obvious. Above we suggested that the forms of oral tradition reflect the schematizing, compounding, and transmuting activities of memory and that, accordingly, oral genres can be viewed as pragmatic mnemonic strategies. Tradition, as a community’s deposit of its formative narratives and normative wisdom, is the artifactual manifestation of its cultural memory. The semantically dense, image-rich, formulaic properties of tradition artifacts enhance their utility for cognitive search-and-cue operations that bring apposite aspects of the commemorated past to bear upon a community’s present predicaments.

#### 4. *Oral Genres as Memory Strategies*

Oral tradition can be arranged in culture-specific genre typologies. These genres are strategies that maximize the memorability and therefore the stability of the tradition while simultaneously enabling the flexibility that renders tradition responsive to new situations. Rubin characterizes each genre as “a different solution to the problem of stability.”<sup>106</sup> In cultural environments in which orality predominates, it is a matter of necessity that the normative resources of the community be retained in and transmitted in the medium of memory. Tradition, therefore, may be understood as a collocation of mnemonic strategies that circumvent the natural limitations of human memory while exploiting its remarkable strengths.<sup>107</sup>

Mastery of oral tradition proceeds along lines quite other than rote, verbatim memorization, the goal of the latter being identical recall across numerous enactments. Memory is notoriously inefficient at such tasks, and static formations of this sort typically require the support of the written medium. Rather, oral traditional genres are “systems of multiple constraints” that on the one hand supply cues to memory and on

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<sup>105</sup> Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 232; Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 121; also Bartlett, *Remembering*, 20.

<sup>106</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 251; also Bartlett, *Remembering*, 81.

<sup>107</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 10, 309–319.

the other place limits on variation by limiting choice.<sup>108</sup> Constraints include the schematic form of the genre itself, theme, imagery, association, and (depending on genre) assonance, rhyme, and rhythm. Though their joint operation is a dynamic rather than static process, its outcome is stability in the tradition, or better, a genre-relative equilibrium between stability and variation. Constraints and cues combine to relieve memory of the impossible burden of exact memorization of masses of detail.<sup>109</sup> “Memorization” applied to oral tradition, therefore, does not signify verbatim mastery and rote reproduction, but accurate recall through competency in a system of constraints and cues.<sup>110</sup> Multiformality is an index feature of oral tradition because genre-embodied configurations of constraints and cues permit more than just a single, exact solution.<sup>111</sup> Genres, moreover, vary amongst themselves in the number of interacting constraints each characteristically exhibits. The result is a spectrum running from low-constraint genres that enable a wider range of variation in performance to high-constraint genres that permit minimal variation, perhaps even something approaching verbatim reproduction from performance to performance, though Rubin stresses that “in all genres the overall constraints are enough to prevent drift beyond local variation.”<sup>112</sup> The inherent flexibility of genre-based multiple-constraint systems enables a community to adapt its foundational traditions to its changing social realities. This points, as Rubin puts it, “to the importance of learning the general organization, constraints, or rules of a genre as opposed to the rote learning of a collection of instances without the ability to extend them to new situations.”<sup>113</sup> We observe again the intersection of *cognitive memory* strategies with *social memory* forces operative within a community.

Let us look at how multiple constraint systems work in practice, and then bring this to bear upon selected genres of the gospel tradition. Genres themselves are culturally-inculcated patterns of organization, or scripts, that operate cognitively as memory schemas; in other words, the recurrent pattern definitive of a particular genre functions as an aide to memory. Competence in the conventions of a genre facilitates both

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<sup>108</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 119, 300, et passim.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 90, 101.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 284–285.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>113</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 143.

learning and reproduction of multiple traditions cast in that genre. To the extent that genre patterns cause recitation of a given tradition to unfold in a conventional, scripted order, its individual elements cue one another sequentially. Moreover, component elements of a genre frequently stand in conventional relationships to one another. In the ancient administrative genre of the *petition*, for example, the concrete petitions always follow upon an inaugural honorific address. We see this in the Our Father, which conforms to this genre.<sup>114</sup> Conventional *narrative* scripts may organize sets of motifs constitutively operative within a particular genre, as in the case of healing stories.<sup>115</sup> Interwoven with a genre's infrastructure, accordingly, are *meaning* and *imagery*, which constrain and cue the specific content of a given tradition. "Meaning" designates specific themes conventional to a particular genre. This may include a set of motifs or a plot conventionally constellated with a particular theme, and so cued associatively with the invocation of the theme. Requests for subsistence food and debt relief, for example, are highly recurrent in the ancient petition genre. The powerful mnemonic properties of *images* have long been recognized, and so it is not surprising that oral tradition is characteristically rich in both descriptive and spatial imagery. This (spatial imagery in particular) provides *loci* that cue motifs and—in a non-rote manner—the verbal component of the tradition.<sup>116</sup> That imagery forms the leading edge of the cuing properties of tradition is clear from the fact that it facilitates the searching and combining operations of memory.<sup>117</sup> It emerges that tradition-artifacts are memory-artifacts, systems of "constraints that combine to limit choices for recall and increase stability."<sup>118</sup> Rubin points out that most of these bundled constraints have "their own neural substrates," a testament to the capacity of tradition to muster and combine all the cognitive resources of the brain for the exigency of remembering.<sup>119</sup>

An important goal for research is analysis of the different genres of the gospel tradition as memory strategies. We will focus here on what both Bultmann and Dibelius viewed as the queen of the tradition, the

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<sup>114</sup> See A. Kirk, "Peasant Wisdom, the 'Our Father,' and the Origins of Christianity," *TJT* 15 (1999): 31–50.

<sup>115</sup> See Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 36, 304; Casey, *Remembering*, 74–75.

<sup>116</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 18–19, 48, 94–95, 305.

<sup>117</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 219.

<sup>118</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 101.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 94–95.

pronouncement story. Bultmann observed the *economy* of the form, for instance, its *dramatis personae* portrayed as emblematic types.<sup>120</sup> Both Bultmann and Dibelius in isolating and classifying the genre recognized its distinctive *organizing schema*. This sets the constraints and cues for enactment in all the genre's discrete exemplars: brief narrative contextualization, frequently with conventionalized syntax, culminating in a pungent saying, itself formulated in accordance with cultural conventions for proverbs and maxims for maximum memorability. To assess the pronouncement story's utilization of additional constraints to cue specific content we can take Mark 3:31–35, the Family of Jesus, as an example. The narrative contextualization that inaugurates the unit is dense in *descriptive* and *spatial imagery* (vv. 31–32). The dominant image is “family,” and it is important to note that the imagery cues wording, in a generative, non-rote manner, for the brief lead-in narrative. The image of Jesus' family (mother and brothers), moreover, cues the *theme*: “Who are my mother and my brothers?” (v. 33) The image and the theme are simultaneously a mnemonic for the climactic aphorism: “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother” (v. 35). The image of “mother and brothers” recurs in each component of the unit. Likewise, the image and the aphorism reinforce each other mnemonically, which is to say that the narrative portion could for its part be cued from recollection of the memorable aphorism. In short, the unit is a system of cues that together eliminate the burden of exact recall, that is, of carrying the story around verbatim in one's head as a condition for reproducing it from occasion to occasion. It also renders it capable of variation.

Though an acute observer of the features of the genre, Bultmann failed to recognize its mnemonic orientation and integration. Consequently, he viewed the narrative settings as owing their existence primarily to pedagogic and aesthetic impulses—they were “pictorial concretions” of “universal truths” expressed by the dominical sayings, giving “vividness” or “lively” expression to the latter.<sup>121</sup> This assessment naturally induced him to view narrative settings as secondary derivations of the sayings. Taken with the fact that many sayings had the capacity to circulate inde-

<sup>120</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 309.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–47. Bultmann supported these opinions, moreover, by reasoning from literary analogies (see 61). Dibelius for his part put the origins of the narrative settings of the Paradigms down to the “edifying tendencies” of the sermon, and their narrative economy he attributed to the concern of the preachers that the listeners not be “distracted from the sermon” (*Tradition to Gospel*, 26, 48).

pendently, this led him to isolate dominical sayings as the primary datum of the gospel tradition.<sup>122</sup> Correspondingly, he construed the fact that the *dramatis personae* were ideal, symbolic types as evidence that the scenes were imaginary, that is, generated by the respective saying. While acknowledging that in some cases scene-construction might have drawn upon traditional materials, he viewed this as incidental.<sup>123</sup> This assigning of priority to sayings over narrative, and its corollary, that sayings were the generative seeds of the tradition, were crucial to Bultmann's evolutionary conception of history of the gospel tradition.

Nothing is easier than to show that dominical sayings could and did indeed circulate separately, that individual sayings might subsequently have narrative settings attached to them, or conversely become independent of narrative settings. Nor is there anything to be gained denying that the narrative settings reflect pedagogic and aesthetic concerns, or that sayings influenced the shaping of their narrative frames. By the same token there can be no naïve construing of the ideal-type narratives as simply abbreviated versions of discrete historical occasions on which sayings were pronounced—the relationship between history and the representational powers of memory is far too complex for that (see below). What memory analysis does, however, is destroy Bultmann's grand evolutionary tradition-history inferences, for it shows that memory strategies, enacted in various genres, are an inherent property of the tradition.

As just such a constellation of memory strategies, tradition expresses a community's fundamental orientation to its salient past, its resolute determination to remember. Likewise, as a system of constraints and cues that enable variation in reproducing that past, rather than a technology of static verbatim repetition, tradition speaks in fresh ways to the present social realities of a community without diminishment of the animating moral authority of the salient past. Here we may reiterate our earlier point that enactment of tradition takes place where *social and cultural memory* forces intersect with the *cognitive memory* strategies formative of the tradition itself and enabling its reproduction.

A community's constitutive mnemonic efforts, however, are directed toward remembering the *tradition*. In other words, the historiographical question of the relationship of memory, tradition, and history needs to be posed once again.

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<sup>122</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 47–49.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–30.

### 5. *Memory, Jesus Tradition, and History*

We return to our earlier discussion of memory's cognitive conversion of experience into memory artifacts. We saw that memory forms the undifferentiated streams of experience into conventional patterns, scripts, and types. While the purpose is mnemonic, the effect is to conform events to the representational type. Elements consistent with the pertinent memory schema are assimilated to it, while "discrepant information is ignored or devalued."<sup>124</sup> Rubin describes this process as follows: "Changes in the recall of a particular piece will make it more like the schema, both in order and content. If a detail cannot be recalled, a common substitute from the schema will often be used. . . . Aspects of a piece that are more central or important to a schema will be recalled more quickly than aspects that are not."<sup>125</sup> By way of example Rubin refers to another balladic commemoration, this time the 1896 murder of Pearl Bryan: "[T]he events could fit into either of two existing [narrative] patterns of ballads: the murdered-girl pattern or the criminal-brought-to-justice pattern. . . . The actual murder has enough details to fill both patterns, but the traditional ballad must follow one or the other; it is either the victim's story or the murderer's."<sup>126</sup> The result of these sorts of complex cognitive conversions is memory artifacts in which an exact redescription of the past has been exchanged for enormous mnemonic advantage.

Casey refers to this as "*intensified remembering*" and draws attention to its correspondence to the dynamics of commemoration:

One way to intensify something is to give it a thicker consistency so as to help it last or to remain more substantively. Such thickening is surely the point of any memorialization, whether it be ceremonial, sculptural, scriptural, or psychical. Every kind of commemoration can be considered an effort to create a lasting "remanence" for what we wish to honor in memory—where "remanence" signifies a perduring remainder or residuum (as in the literally thick stone of war memorials or grave markers).<sup>127</sup>

The cognitive activity of memory, in other words, is not just about achieving mnemonic efficiency. Rather, as is the case with all commem-

<sup>124</sup> Bonanno, "Remembering and Psychotherapy," 177.

<sup>125</sup> Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 22.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 280–281. Rubin draws upon A. B. Cohen, *Poor Pearl, Poor Girl: The Murdered-Girl Stereotype in Ballad and Newspaper* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973).

<sup>127</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 273.



oration, it carries out a thorough-going *signification* of the past. Drawing upon all the symbolic resources of the culture, memory infuses past events with *meaning*; it converts them into symbolic forms artficed to be bearers of the truths, moral judgments, and norms perceived to be immanent in the actual empirical events.<sup>128</sup>

This accounts for important features of the Jesus tradition. The tradition is inherently neither calibrated nor concerned for a direct re-description of empirical events. Rather, through complex mnemonic, commemorative operations, it amounts to the conversion, or transmutation, of the diffuse actualities of historical events into mnemonically efficient, image-rich verbal artifacts designed to bear the axiomatic meanings and norms—the emerging cultural memory—of the Jesus-communities. Stated differently, in the Jesus tradition the past is marked and represented in such a way as to enable it to exercise culture-symbolic power for the tradent communities. Malkki's characterization of the formation of tradition in Hutu refugee camps in Tanzania following their flight from the 1972 genocide in Burundi is apposite: "It was most centrally concerned with the reconstitution of a *moral order* of the world. It seized historical events, processes, and relationships, and reinterpreted them within a deeply moral scheme of good and evil."<sup>129</sup> Rehearsal of the tradition thereby constitutes the community in its identity as a moral community. A community's commemorative activity productive of its tradition always occurs, it must be emphasized, in the crucible of its present realities and crises, and by the same token, "it contribute[s] to structuring social action in the present."<sup>130</sup>

The normative concerns driving the formation of tradition, accordingly, account for the prominence of dominical sayings and pronouncement stories in the Jesus tradition. The "ideal types" of narrative settings (Pharisees, Scribes, Disciples, Crowds, Tax Collectors, etc.) function not just as mnemonic shorthand, but as categorical moral types. Typification of narrative scenes and their tight coordination with authoritative sayings reveal the investment of the early communities in the normative dimension of their commemoration of Jesus. The observable form of the

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<sup>128</sup> Casey, *Remembering*, 51, 283; also Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 242–244; Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 52–59, 139–140; Schwartz, "Frame Image," 25–26; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, 59; Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 188–189.

<sup>129</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 56.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

pronouncement story is an artifact of this guiding interest in normative memory, exhibiting, moreover, the convergence of mnemonic strategies with normative goals. The form critics themselves constantly remarked on the tradition's heavy investment in norm inculcation vis-à-vis historical description.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, in Bultmann's repeated characterization of narrative settings as "ideal and symbolic" there lurks a fundamental insight into the phenomenology of tradition, and in this vein it is hard to improve, for example, upon his observation that "Mk. 1.16–20, 2.14 condense[s] into one symbolic moment what was actually a process."<sup>132</sup> Lacking adequate models for memory and tradition, however, and handicapped by superannuated historiographical assumptions,<sup>133</sup> Bultmann failed to recognize the essential memorializing connection of the forms of the tradition with the life of Jesus. For Bultmann, symbolic representation and historical representation were mutually exclusive. The Calling of the Disciples (Mark. 1:16–20), for instance, "is *in no sense* an historical record, but a description of an ideal scene" (emphasis added).<sup>134</sup> The question Bultmann puts in stark terms to Mark 11:28–30 (Challenge to Jesus' Authority) is "*whether* it is an historical record or a creation of the early Church, designed to disarm its opponents of their weapons" (emphasis added).<sup>135</sup> "Ideal," accordingly, is for him largely synonymous with "imaginary." Vague chronological and geographical data suggest to Bultmann that the tradition has lost its moorings in history.<sup>136</sup> "Religious and edifying" is contrasted with "historical."<sup>137</sup> History in his view is in principle accessible apart from symbolic mediation, albeit meagerly, through "historical record[s]," "reports of historical occasions," and "actual historical reports" excavated from the tradition.<sup>138</sup>

Memory analysis suggests skepticism towards this understanding of the tradition and also brings important contributions to the historiographical discussion. Tradition being the product of memory dynamics, we have seen, rules out that it transparently redescribes empirical events.

<sup>131</sup> E.g., Bultmann, *History*, 63; Dibelius, *Tradition to Gospel*, 65.

<sup>132</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 57.

<sup>133</sup> See David S. du Toit, "Der unähnliche Jesus: Eine kritische Evaluierung der Entstehung des Differenzkriteriums und seiner geschichts- und erkenntnistheoretischen Voraussetzungen," in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 89–130.

<sup>134</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 28.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–64.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 29–30, 39–41, 48, 57.

Genre-based mnemonic strategies, moreover, are directed to recalling and enacting the *tradition*. Nevertheless, to return to the point made earlier, the gospel tradition has an essential relationship to the empirical past, one that is *mediated by commemoration*. The tradition may be viewed, in other words, as a commemorative representation of historical events. To deny this historical dynamic to the Jesus tradition would be equivalent to claiming that the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C., because it is the product of politically charged commemorative debates of the 1980's,<sup>139</sup> has no historical relationship to the Vietnam War, or likewise that the Lincoln Memorial, reflective as its design is of the preoccupations of the pre-Civil Rights era,<sup>140</sup> has nothing of historical value to tell us about the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the events of the American Civil War. To the contrary, the changing, even conflicting, interpretations of landmark events evident in these commemorative enterprises amount to the reverberative effects of foundational events into new social contexts and thus are historically informative in their own right. As regards the Jesus-traditions this entails a historiography of reception along the lines sketched out for example by Schröter, summarized above, and one that addresses the relationship between historical events and their symbolic representation.<sup>141</sup>

Memory analysis also traces the social processes through which communities transmute formative historical experiences into commemorative artifacts like tradition. Halbwachs showed that memory is forged in the communicative dynamics of groups. Rosenzweig and Thelen, in a major survey of popular uses of memory, reported of their respondents that "with individuals they trusted . . . they probed experiences and constructed the traditions they wanted to sustain. In these relationships they . . . shaped and reshaped memories into trajectories . . . and generally created the perceptual world they wanted to inhabit."<sup>142</sup> Malkki refers to this as "collective discursive practice" and observed its operations in Hutu refugee camps, where the experience of genocide was

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<sup>139</sup> Robin Wagner-Pacifici and Barry Schwartz, "The Vietnam Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past," *AJS* 97 (1991): 376–420.

<sup>140</sup> Savage, "Politics of Memory," 127–149.

<sup>141</sup> See Schröter, "Von der Historizität der Evangelien," 184–206; and Michael Moxter, "Erzählung und Ereignis: Über den Spielraum historischer Repräsentation," in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 67–88. See also Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellaur (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>142</sup> Rosenzweig and Thelen, *Presence of the Past*, 196.

forged into an enduring tradition under the influence of the present social realities of the camps.<sup>143</sup> Experimental psychologists have observed that stories are transformed into condensed, durable versions conforming to culturally available genres in the course of multiple retellings.<sup>144</sup> Malkki notes that it was by this means that the Hutu stories took on their mnemonic and didactic-symbolic contours:

Accounts of these key events very quickly circulated among the refugees, and, often in a matter of days, acquired what can be characterized as “standard versions” in the telling and retelling. These “standard versions” were not simply isolated accounts of particular events, told for the sake of telling and soon to be forgotten. Rather, they were accounts which, while becoming increasingly formulaic, also became more didactic and progressively more implicated in, and indicative of, something beyond them. In this sense, the “standard versions” acted as diagnostic and mnemonic allegories connecting events of everyday life with wider historical processes impinging on the Hutu refugees.<sup>145</sup>

These social processes render landmark historical events into the commemorative artifacts of tradition which, we have seen, are open to fresh transformations in new social contexts of enactment.

### 6. *Orality, Writing, and Memory*

This essay has focused a great deal on the properties of oral tradition. There is a danger that the abandonment of the form-critics’ project of working back through the oral tradition to its so-called earliest layers may have the collateral effect that scholarship comes to view the oral tradition as inaccessible and hence simply not relevant to analysis. Schröter in fact argues that a reception-based historiography must focus

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<sup>143</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 242; also Gérard Namer, *Mémoire et société* (Paris: Méridiens Lincksieck, 1987), 140–157, on survivor groups supplying the social contexts for Jews, who had been deported to the death camps, to forge a collective memory of their experiences.

<sup>144</sup> Bartlett, *Remembering*, 63, 83, 95; Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions*, 131, 281–282; Jerome Bruner and Carol Fleisher Feldman, “Group Narrative as a Cultural Context of Autobiography,” in *Remembering our Past*, ed. Rubin, 291–317, esp. 293; Mary Susan Weldon and Krystal D. Bellinger, “Collective Memory: Collaborative and Individual Processes in Remembering,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition* 23 (1997): 1160–1175; Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 60, 86.

<sup>145</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, 106.

on the written sources because earlier reception-contexts for the oral tradition are simply irrecoverable.<sup>146</sup> This is true if by analysis is meant de-layering on the form-critical model, but the form critics' notion that the oral tradition is layered or a sequence of diachronic "stages" was a great misunderstanding. Others, however, draw attention to the fluid nature of oral tradition, hence the difficulty of getting an analytical fix on it except as it has survived into the medium of writing.<sup>147</sup> To be sure, reconstructing a history of the performances of the oral tradition is out of the question. Memory analysis, however, throws a great deal of light upon this period that post-form-critical scholarship is prone to view as impenetrably obscure.

This is not just because the genres of oral tradition are mnemonic strategies calibrated, moreover, to bring stability and flexibility into equilibrium. These give us no royal road to the historical Jesus. We have seen that built right in to oral genres, precisely as mnemonic strategies, is not just autonomy from the empirically-described past, but also capacity for variability in recall and, accordingly, for enactments adaptive to diverse social contexts. To be sure, the fact that oral tradition is mnemonically configured is a warning against exaggerating its fluidity or underestimating a community's resolute dedication to remembering its past. What memory analysis does, however, is negate descriptions of the oral history of the gospel traditions as a *diachronic* transmission through multiple stages—a sort of complex regress from the gospels that is simply incapable of reconstruction. According to such accounts, each stage constitutes a caesura, a crisis, and cumulatively a progressive breakdown in transmission, much as in the individuals-*seriatim* model.

Memory analysis, in contrast, indicates that the sphere of oral transmission of the tradition, even given the realities of a community's multiple performance settings and shifting social contexts, is a *synchronic* space defined by a community's generational life-cycle. Stated differently, the crisis in tradition is first significantly triggered by the *generational succession* within an emergent community. This is because foundational memories and their artifact, tradition, are shaped socially and discursively by the community. Moreover, consistent with its social origins and emplacement, tradition circulates *along* nets, not *down* chains, within the ambient context of the entire community and within this generationally-defined

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<sup>146</sup> Schröter, "Historical Jesus," 165; idem, *Erinnerung*, 483–485.

<sup>147</sup> du Toit, "Der unähnliche Jesus," 123.

temporal space. Cast in genres that enable flexibility and multiformity, the tradition is affected by the community's shifting social realities without thereby becoming severed from foundational memories collectively forged and over which the community exercises collective proprietorship. This scenario is supported by sociological research that demonstrates that a generation is defined by shared memories of autobiographically experienced formative events. Formative memories, that is to say, are borne through the life-cycle of the generation, and absent successful strategies for cross-generational transmission they tend to fade with their tradent cohort.<sup>148</sup>

How then does a community respond to the grave crisis generational succession poses for its survival? Jan Assmann's analysis of the transition from "communicative memory" to "cultural memory" illuminates this problem. Broadly conceived, communicative memory encompasses all dimensions of face-to-face communication in predominantly oral societies: "Dieses Gedächtnis gehört in den Zwischenbereich zwischen Individuen, es bildet sich im Verkehr der Menschen untereinander heraus."<sup>149</sup> This draws upon Halbwachs's insight that the social realities and communicative practices of communities give substance and duration to the memory of the people belonging to those communities. Hence communicative memory includes those communicative and cognitive operations through which oral traditions coalesce in emergent communities. *Traditionsbruch* is the term Assmann uses for a serious breakdown of the communicative frameworks enabling transmission of tradition. This confronts a community with loss of connection to memory and hence with the crisis of its own dissolution. It forces it to turn toward more durable media capable of carrying memory in a vital manner across generations, that is, toward the artifactual forms of cultural memory, and in particular, writing.<sup>150</sup>

For emergent communities a *Traditionsbruch* arises out of a breakdown in communicative memory directly connected with its generational lifespan: "Dieses Gedächtnis wächst der Gruppe historisch zu; es

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<sup>148</sup> Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, "Generations and Collective Memories," *ASR* 54 (1989): 359–381.

<sup>149</sup> Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 13.

<sup>150</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 165, 218–221, 275; also idem, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 53–54, 87–88. Assmann's model suffers from a certain ambiguity at this point that in my view is due to "communicative memory" and "cultural memory" being positioned in too categorical a distinction to each other. Assmann wants to reserve

entsteht in der Zeit und vergeht mit ihr, genauer, mit seinen Trägern. . . . Dieser allen durch persönlich verbürgte und kommunizierte Erfahrung gebildete Erinnerungsraum entspricht biblisch den 3–4 Generationen. . . .”<sup>151</sup> The outer limit for the operations of communicative memory, in other words, is the cohort of those still able to claim direct contact with those who knew the first generation, hence three or at the most four generations.<sup>152</sup> Assmann argues that the limitations of communicative memory force themselves upon an emergent community as a *crisis of memory* at approximately the forty-year threshold, that is, when it is becoming apparent that the cohort of its living carriers—the generation that experienced the charismatic period of origins—is disappearing. It is at this point that the community, if it is not eventually to dissolve along with its memory, must accelerate the transformation of communicative memory into the enduring artifacts of cultural memory, a process Assmann characterizes as “die Objektivationen gemeinsam erinnerten Wissens in Gestalt kultureller Formen.”<sup>153</sup> Moreover, “[w]enn wir den typischen Dreigenerationen-Zeitrahmen des kommunikativen Gedächtnisses als einen synchronen Erinnerungsraum auffassen, dann bildet das kulturelle Gedächtnis anhand weit in die Vergangenheit zurückreichenden Überlieferung eine diachrone Achse.”<sup>154</sup> The exigency is the securing of long-term cultural viability in the face of the collapse in the social frameworks, in this case the generational framework, for

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“cultural memory” to refer to new artifactual forms of memory that arise after the breakdown in “communicative memory.” But as we have seen, oral traditions are themselves cultural artifacts forged in the crucible of oral practices Assmann associates with communicative memory. Assmann is nonetheless clear that “eine mündliche Überlieferung gliedert sich genau so nach kommunikativer und kultureller, alltäglicher und feierlicher Erinnerung wie die Erinnerung einer Schriftkultur” (*Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 59). Assmann softens the distinction in a recent essay in which he analyzes tradition as a cultural artifact (“Form as a Mnemonic Device: Cultural Texts and Cultural Memory,” in *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark*, ed. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006], 67–82).

<sup>151</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 50.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 37. Rosalind Thomas’s study of Athenian family traditions is a striking confirmation of the three to four generation life-span of communicative memory (*Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 125–129).

<sup>153</sup> Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 117; also *idem*, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 11, 32–38, 50–56, 218–221. See also Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village: Commemorating the 1944 Massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 197–213.

<sup>154</sup> Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 19, drawing here expressly upon Aleida Assmann’s *Zeit und Tradition: Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer* (Köln: Böhlau, 1999).

oral transmission of normative and formative tradition.<sup>155</sup> The large-scale programmatic shifting of tradition from oral to written media arises out of the crisis of memory.

The gospels (particularly Mark and Q) as oral-derived texts are artifacts of this crisis of memory triggered by generational succession in the Jesus movement. This means, moreover, that the oral tradition therein incorporated has freshly emerged from the synchronic space of memory, namely, the social frameworks constituted by the foundational generation, in whom those memories were autobiographically vested. It is important to emphasize in this regard that the written sources are by no means passive transcriptions of the traditions emerging from the first generation. They constitute fresh acts of memory, fresh enactments of the tradition in their own contemporary social and cultural frameworks, forging in the process a new kind of connection with the past, one that reconstructs it from quite different vistas, from across the *Traditionsbruch*.<sup>156</sup>

### 7. Conclusion

Memory theory does not offer facile solutions to the historiographical challenges of Jesus research. Its initial effect, in fact, should be methodological complication as it is brought into more specific engagement with existing research approaches where with some notable exceptions the category “memory” is remarkably absent. We have seen, however, that memory analysis puts the proper complexion on the core datum of research, the gospel traditions. They are artifacts of memory; they have circulated along memorializing pathways; and by finding their way into the written medium they have navigated the major crisis of memory. The gospels, we might say, are the deep pools of early Christian memory.

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<sup>155</sup> Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 29–30.

<sup>156</sup> Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 274.



# THE BURDEN OF PROOF IN JESUS RESEARCH

DAGMAR WINTER

## 1. *Introduction*

The burden of proof in Jesus research refers to the question of historical veracity of the New Testament accounts of Jesus. As soon as historical scholarship is applied to the Bible, the burden of proof becomes an implicit issue and expresses the various presuppositions held: are biblical accounts basically trustworthy, thus laying the burden of proof on the side arguing against the historicity of certain passages—or are biblical accounts to be fundamentally mistrusted historically so that the burden of proof rests with anyone wishing to uphold the historical content of a passage? The burden of proof may also relate to more specific aspects or elements of the Jesus tradition.

In the course of the quest for authentic Jesus material, various criteria (cf. criteria of authenticity) are used to examine the historical accuracy of the sources. A further role is played by the *opinio communis* on the trustworthiness of certain sources, e.g. the synoptic gospels.

## 2. *The Burden of Proof in the History of Jesus Research*

### 2.1. *The Background to the Discussion*

The issue of the burden of proof is implicit from the very beginning of biblical criticism.

The Reformation period with its emphasis on scripture was followed by Protestant Orthodoxy with its doctrine of divine inspiration of the biblical texts. Critical study of the Bible could therefore not go beyond issues of textual criticism lest the whole dogmatic system of orthodox theology be called into question. When seventeenth-century Socinianism pursued just such a polemical agenda, it did so by joining reason together with scripture to stand against doctrine. While reason was thereby introduced as a critical standard, it was not yet applied to the Bible.

It was English Deism that used reason as a critical argument against scripture.

The antisupernaturalism of the deists led them not only to reject the miracles of the Bible but also to reject the church doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. Having rejected these, the deists felt the necessity for supplying some plausible theory of the natural origin of the Books and of its contents. This led to a study of the origin of the Books of the Bible, to investigations of questions of canon and authorship.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1738, Chubb wrote:

[The] later system of the apostles [was oriented] not to the facts themselves, but the narration of the reported events had to be oriented to their changed system. Consequently, one must put aside everything in their account that bears the marks of the apostles' later system, and not judge Jesus on the basis of their accounts, if one wants to know his true views and intentions.<sup>2</sup>

Thus Chubb stated that there were reliable and unreliable elements in the Jesus tradition and that there was a need to distinguish between them.

The historical-critical studies by H. S. Reimarus in the eighteenth century further developed this approach of distinguishing between the gospel texts and the historical reality which they describe. The hitherto unreflected historical authority of these texts and their veracity were challenged by distinguishing between the historical Jesus and the apostles as sources and writers/editors of the Jesus material.<sup>3</sup> This was further emphasised in D. F. Strauss's introduction of the idea of myth to the Jesus tradition in the gospels.<sup>4</sup>

When the Enlightenment's discovery of history behind scripture led to a conflict between traditional dogmatics and historical insights, the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Orr, *English Deism: Its Roots and Its Fruits* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1934), 246.

<sup>2</sup> This quotation is dated ca. 1750, unpublished at the time. H. S. Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, vol. 2, ed. G. Alexander (Frankfurt: Insel, 1972), trans. M. E. Boring in *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, by G. Theissen and D. Winter (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 264.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that critics such as Chubb and Reimarus were primarily motivated by establishing the essence of Christian faith and practice in their day rather than a historically 'true' account of biblical subject matter. For instance, while Reimarus believed that as a Jew Jesus would have expressed himself in Jewish ways and therefore some of the Johannine Jesus sayings had to be unhistorical, he considered such (historical) Jewish elements to be of little value to the positive religion for which he strove.

<sup>4</sup> D. F. Strauss: *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed. P. C. Hodgson (1835/1836; repr., Ramsey, NJ: Sigler, 1994).

burden of proof was not yet discussed. However, rather than biblical texts having no need to enter the arena of debate and prove anything, a heavy and unshiftable burden was placed on those passages (e.g., miracle stories) that contradicted a rationalist understanding of the world. The idea that elements of biblical narrative could be historically evaluated and proved—and particularly disproved!—opened the door for the burden of proof debate.

Nineteenth-century historicism had a major impact on biblical scholarship and the value such scholarship placed on historicity. As history developed into a scholarly discipline in its own right, history was seen as ‘made’ by human activity, no longer with a divine external reference point<sup>5</sup> or as a source for normativity. Historical truth was understood as historical authenticity; the goal was an objective description of historical facts. L. v. Ranke was historicism’s first outstanding proponent and it is no coincidence that one of his most important legacies is the development of the critical method of source analysis.

Equipped with literary-critical methodology, the liberal quest of the historical Jesus in the nineteenth century set out with great optimism. As can be seen in H. J. Holtzmann’s work,<sup>6</sup> the two-source theory led to Jesus research being based on Mark and Q as principally reliable sources. While the burden of proof was not a point of debate as such, in practice the high historical value appropriated to Mark and Q meant that an almost impossibly heavy burden of proof rested on anyone wishing to uphold the historical authenticity of any material from other sources which did not agree with Mark and Q.

The collapse of the old quest of the historical Jesus has been well described.<sup>7</sup> Of particular interest to us is the rise of form criticism, which saw the gospel accounts as an expression of the early church. This effectively destroyed the ability to rely on Mark and Q without more thoroughgoing research. It also meant that issues of burden of proof

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<sup>5</sup> See E. Troeltsch’s groundbreaking work and application of “historical method” to the New Testament, employing criteria of analogy and correlation. E. Troeltsch, “Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), 729–743.

<sup>6</sup> H. J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien: Ihr Ursprung und geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1863), 9: in our questions about the historical Jesus we find in Mark and Q “eine vollkommen gesicherte und nach allen Seiten gerechtfertigte Antwort.”

<sup>7</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, first complete edition, ed. John Bowden (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001).

were no longer primarily a question of the value of sources. Instead, criteria were needed.

For M. Dibelius, the insights of form criticism meant that "It is proper to speak of non-genuine sayings only where the later circumstances, conditions or problems of the already existing Church are clearly presupposed."<sup>8</sup> Thus the burden of proof came to rest on those wishing to uphold as historically authentic such passages which reflect the life of the early Christian community.

The New Quest of the Historical Jesus was 'new' for scholars who emerged from the influence of Bultmannian theology. With Bultmann, the burden of proof was not an issue since his form-critical work led him to see New Testament sources primarily as sources for the life of the early church. The thrust of the New Quest was to investigate the continuity between the historical Jesus and early Christianity. There was here an apologetic agenda which sought to show how critical biblical scholarship used the tools of its trade in order to strengthen the link between the message of the historical Jesus (the sayings traditions were of particular importance to the New Quest) and the faith of the church.

In the New Quest the burden of proof became a hotly debated issue. Every writer and scholar on Jesus had to come down on one of two sides regarding the credibility of New Testament accounts, and the burden of proof was placed accordingly on the other side. Thus the question of the burden of proof became an explicit touchstone of the conservative and radical wing of gospel research respectively in the twentieth century.

By definition, the use of the burden of proof argument presupposes something to prove or disprove. Consequently, it was used not only for the gospel text in general but also as a marker in stages of research: once certain criteria established a critically assured minimum, anyone putting forward material as authentic which was deemed incompatible in content or genre with the said assured minimum would have to bear the burden of proof. This became a particular issue when the criterion of dissimilarity was used to establish a critically assured minimum, since this criterion produced an image of Jesus which effectively removed him from his Jewish background or from his Christian followers or from both (cf. article on criteria of authenticity/criterion of dissimilarity).

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<sup>8</sup> M. Dibelius: *Jesus: A Study of the Gospels and an Essay on "The Motive for Social Action in the New Testament"* (London: SCM, 1963), 22.

## 2.2. *The Positions Held in the Burden of Proof Debate*

### 2.2.1. *The Burden of Proof Resting with Those Trusting the Historical Authenticity of the Gospel Text*

Käsemann's 1953/54 lecture and essay on "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" heralded not only the advent of the New Quest for the Bultmann school, but also the burden of proof as an issue. In a reversal of the direction of argument by Dibelius, form criticism led Käsemann to state categorically that "the obligation now laid upon us is to investigate and make credible not the possible unauthenticity of the individual unit of material but, on the contrary, its genuineness."<sup>9</sup> This position became the consensus position in most of German language scholarship. Leading English language scholars, Norman Perrin reemphasized that "the nature of the synoptic tradition is such that the burden of proof will be upon the claim to authenticity."<sup>10</sup> This was also the position adopted by Funk's Jesus Seminar: "Supposedly historical elements in these narratives [embellished by mythic elements] must... be demonstrated to be so."<sup>11</sup>

### 2.2.2. *The Burden of Proof Resting with Those Mistrusting the Historical Authenticity of the Gospel Text*

Other scholars soon voiced their concern and argued for the burden of proof to be laid at the door of the sceptics. The presupposition of these generally more conservative scholars like Jeremias was more optimistic concerning the historical reliability of the gospels. Thus McEleney speaks of the criterion of historical presumption.<sup>12</sup> Hare speaks of continuity being more probable than discontinuity.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> E. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), 15–47, esp. 34. See also H. Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus*, trans. J. S. Bowden (New York: Harper, 1960), 107–108: "[W]e no longer have to prove the unauthenticity, but (and this is far harder) their authenticity."

<sup>10</sup> N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 39. Cf. also Leander E. Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971; London: SCM, 1972), 42 n. 15. J. Sauer, *Rückkehr und Vollendung des Heils: Eine Untersuchung zu den ethischen Radikalismen Jesu*, *Theorie und Forschung* 133, *Philosophie und Theologie* 9 (Regensburg: S. Roderer, 1991), 81–84.

<sup>11</sup> R. W. Funk, R. W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 5.

<sup>12</sup> N. J. McEleney, "Authenticating Criteria and Mark 7:1–23," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 431–460, here 445.

<sup>13</sup> D. R. A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 257, seeking to establish the earliest use of "Son of Man," indicates that the burden of proof should rest on those who argue for discontinuity in the tradition.

A more general argument has also been employed, stating that telling the truth and acceptance is the default position for human communication.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.3. *The Burden of Proof Shifting from One Side to the Other—a Compromise*

McArthur<sup>15</sup> offered a compromise by seeing the burden of proof lying initially with those affirming authenticity of particular motifs in the gospel tradition. Using the criterion of multiple attestation, he then shifted the burden of proof onto the side of the sceptics if three or four sources supported authenticity.

### 2.2.4. *The Burden of Proof Resting with Both Sides*

Hooker was one of the first to give voice to this position: “It is the duty of every scholar, in considering every saying, to give a reasonable account of all the evidence; for he is not entitled to assume, simply in the absence of contrary evidence, either that a saying is genuine or that it is not.”<sup>16</sup> This even-handed approach became largely normative for the Third Quest since it concurred with its general historical rather than New Testament centred outlook. Typically, E. P. Sanders spoke of the liberation of “history and exegesis from the control of theology.”<sup>17</sup> Besides E. P. Sanders, the Third Quest proponents of Hooker’s even sharing of the burden of proof include B. Meyer, J. P. Meier and G. Theißen.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.2.5. *Jesus Research in Practice: The Pragmatic Solution*

In practice, a combination of the last two positions is generally accepted. In other words, the criterion of multiple attestation comes into play

<sup>14</sup> For this position, see W. G. Kümmel, “Jesusforschung seit 1950,” *ThR* 31 (1965–1966): 15–46, here 43; S. C. Goetz and C. L. Blomberg, “The Burden of Proof,” *JSNT* 11 (1981): 39–63, here 51–52; R. Latourelle, “Critères d’authenticité historique des Évangiles,” *Greg* 55 (1974): 609–638, at 617.

<sup>15</sup> H. McArthur, “The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research,” *ExpTim* 82 (1970): 116–119.

<sup>16</sup> M. D. Hooker, “On Using the Wrong Tool,” *Theology* 75 (1972): 570–581, here 580. Cf. also R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels: Some Comments on Current Methods*, SCC 4 (London: SPCK, 1972), 11.

<sup>17</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 333–334.

<sup>18</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 13; Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 81–87; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 183; Theissen and Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 204.

when there are enough contradictions between sources to safeguard their mutual independence but also enough agreements to allow for a coherent picture to emerge which one can assume to be consonant with the underlying historical reality. In this case, the burden of proof shifts to the side of the historical sceptics.<sup>19</sup> The historical evaluation of sources thus is part of the process from the outset without which the burden of proof does indeed rest on both sides.

### 3. *The End of the Burden of Proof Debate and Its Limitations*

#### 3.1. *The End of the Debate*

For several reasons, the argument over the burden of proof died down after the early 1970's. First, many scholars agreed that the burden of proof should rest with those presuming historical veracity as much as with those who deny it. Secondly, the burden of proof issue was closely related to a quest for the historical Jesus, which concentrated on authenticity or inauthenticity of gospel texts, if not seeking the *ipsis-sima vox* or *verba Jesu*. This was a clear legacy of the New Quest with its concentration on reconstructing the *message* of Jesus. The gospel texts and their veracity or not were often at least as important as the reconstruction of the historical Jesus. However, the advent of the Third Quest moved away from this approach, and the gospel texts as an issue were subordinated to much more general historical questions about the figure of Jesus. Therefore, it appears that the burden of proof is no longer a live issue of debate.

We should note that the term "burden of proof" is still used in popular debates about Jesus, more recently for example in conjunction with *The Da Vinci Code* (novel by Dan Brown and the movie). Just as the burden of proof is pushed from one side to the other between atheists and theists concerning the existence of God, so debates on Jesus' existence argue over where the burden of proof should lie.

#### 3.2. *The Limitations of the Debate*

One of the great limitations of the debate around the burden of proof in Jesus research was that it was partly a vicarious argument: strongly

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM, 1998), 115–117.

held opinions on the gospels were played out in the criteriological field of Jesus research.

The background of this debate is a time during which theologians and churches were dealing with the fallout of a historical-critical approach to the New Testament. The preoccupation with the historicity of the gospel texts is obvious from the use of emotive courtroom language while discussing the burden of proof. McArthur describes the tradition as being either “innocent” or “guilty,”<sup>20</sup> Goetz and Blomberg speak of “truth-telling” or “lying.”<sup>21</sup> This is telling language for what is ostensibly no more than establishing a starting point for research. The debate around the burden of proof was to some extent more about defining positions on the theological landscape than seeking actual methodological clarity.

There are also, of course, issues around the whole area of authenticity and historicity—what can ‘proof’ concerning historical texts possibly mean?<sup>22</sup> The concept is wide open to the suspicion that it wants to deal with absolute truth, with the apologetic motive of proving the biblical text to be ‘true.’ There is also a hermeneutical circle in which the question of authorship and authenticity of a saying or deed of Jesus is dependent on the meaning of the saying and vice versa. The interpretation and a judgment about a saying’s authenticity mutually condition each other. And finally, authenticity is no longer judged to be about the *ipsissima verba* (the ‘very words’) of Jesus since authenticity in the sense of verbal authorship could only be claimed properly if we had documents composed by Jesus himself. The thrust of historical Jesus research has moved to study the life and work of Jesus as a whole, and researching a picture of this life which ‘proves’ to be historically coherent and plausible appears to be more meaningful—albeit that this will include historical judgements as to the authenticity of individual sayings and deeds.

<sup>20</sup> McArthur, “The Burden of Proof in Historical Jesus Research,” 116.

<sup>21</sup> Goetz and Blomberg, “The Burden of Proof,” 52.

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed reflection on these issues, see Theissen and Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, 191–201. See also J. Riches and A. Millar, “Conceptual Change in the Synoptic Tradition,” in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study*, ed. A. E. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1985), 37–60.



#### 4. *Conclusion*

The common sense approach of Hooker and others can only be commended for researching the gospel tradition. Requiring an explanation if a gospel text is to be judged as not historically authentic does not imply a literalist attitude to the New Testament, nor does demanding a reasonable account of evidence for genuineness mean an indictment of the gospels and their worth—both are simply in keeping with scholarly discipline.

The historical evaluation of gospel texts, whatever it is, and the reconstruction of the source background, need to be historically plausible. This is one important point of the criterion of historical plausibility<sup>23</sup> (cf. criteria of authenticity) which reinforces the closure of the debate on where the burden of proof should lie.

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<sup>23</sup> See Theissen and Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 128–129 and 172–212.



Handbook for the Study of the  
Historical Jesus



# Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus

Volume 2

## The Study of Jesus

*Edited by*

Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2011

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication-Data

Handbook for the study of the historical Jesus / edited by Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-90-04-16372-0 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Jesus Christ—Historicity—  
Study and teaching. I. Holmén, Tom. II. Porter, Stanley E., 1956–  
BT303.2.H364 2010  
232.9'08071—dc22

2010038765

ISBN *Vol.* 1: 978 90 04 17091 9

*Vol.* 2: 978 90 04 17092 6

*Vol.* 3: 978 90 04 17093 3

*Vol.* 4: 978 90 04 17094 0

*Set:* 978 90 04 16372 0

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

# THE HANDBOOK FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN PERSPECTIVE

TOM HOLMÉN AND STANLEY E. PORTER

A hundred years ago, Albert Schweitzer gathered the bulk of the most important (mostly German) Jesus research done during the preceding two centuries (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) within one cover and made an assessment of it. Today, to write a *summa historica* of Jesus studies is not an undertaking that one person could embark on and realistically hope to accomplish (not even two people), but requires a collaboration of a *legio* of the best minds from across many countries and cultures. Albert Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*<sup>1</sup> marked a significant milestone in historical Jesus scholarship, a movement that has continued in various forms and in diverse ways, but in all events unabated, until today. As a result, in a 1994 article, James Charlesworth, who himself has been actively involved in the recent expansion of historical Jesus study, asserted that historical Jesus study was expanding with "chaotic creativity."<sup>2</sup> While an apt and appropriate description of the condition of the times, this characterization is all the more accurate today, fifteen years later. Since its latest renaissance in the 1980s,<sup>3</sup> historical Jesus study has continued to expand, drawing into its broadening scope more and more scholars of the New Testament and cognate areas. There is an abundance of Jesus studies today that displays an almost overwhelming diversity of methods, approaches, hypotheses, assumptions, and results. While creativity and fecundity are theoretically

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906). The second edition was simply entitled: *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1913). The English translation was entitled: *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, with a preface by F. C. Burkitt (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity," in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–41.

<sup>3</sup> See M. J. Borg, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," *TheoIT* 45 (1988): 280–292.

to be welcomed, chaotic creativity works against the scholarly pursuit of orderly understanding, and the sheer mass of material threatens to overwhelm even the heartiest of participants in the quest. However, in some instances such creativity can spur on and nourish various forms of enquiry that result in unpredictable and unplanned results. The future of historical Jesus study rests with the community of scholars being able to harness this chaotic creativity to its service, and to create order out of a morass of growing detail.

What are the purposes of Jesus research? The first one is clearly an abiding academic purpose. This has always been regarded as important and has, together with the latest renaissance of Jesus study, only grown in importance. In fact, if “academic” and “historical” can be seen to correlate, many scholars would claim that this is what the study of Jesus today is all about. According to many representative Jesus questers, a main characteristic of current Jesus research is that it is being spurred and guided by an outspoken historical interest. Indeed, Jesus lies at the juncture of many interests and phenomena that are crucial to understanding great lines of historical development and that form the basis of understanding the world today. There is therefore no doubt about the great historical and academic value of Jesus research. However, several other purposes, motivations, and aspirations obviously feed into the historical pursuit of Jesus. Among these are religious, political, cultural, artistic, fictional, romantic, psychological, financial, apologetic, and simply personal reasons to engage in conversing about Jesus of Nazareth. We merely state this as an observable fact: such purposes for Jesus research exist and are being pursued in practice. Unfortunately, sometimes scholars too easily classify such purposes as either well- or ill-founded. In the post-colonial, post-Einsteinian, post-modern, post-structural (some say even post-human) etc. world of ours, who can be so clear as to be able to tell the difference between relevant and irrelevant motivations, not to speak of labeling them as either good or bad? Nevertheless, in all this it is vital to genuinely retain the concepts of historical Jesus and historical Jesus research around which the variegated conversation centers and revolves. How this happens and is realized may not be an easy or altogether straightforward thing to do.

The Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus (HSHJ) was designed to be one, important means of handling both the growing abundance and the increasing diversity of Jesus scholarship. Such is not an easy task, as we the editors have grown to appreciate in the course of creating this set of volumes. Putting the diversity on display in a

controlled, manageable, and understandable fashion, while acknowledging the numerous and diverse major issues, and ensuring that as many as possible of the important adjacent themes are recognized, has been a significant task. The HSHJ seeks to offer a convenient, even if still circuitous, route through the maze of current historical Jesus research, so that scholars and other interested parties can appreciate the broad and diverse spectrum of current opinion.

There have been a number of recent efforts to survey the history of historical Jesus scholarship, which we have taken into account in planning these volumes. Some of these publications have included individual essays that try to cover the range of major topics, although no effort to date has included as many as this set of volumes.<sup>4</sup> Several of these studies are retrospective accounts that anthologize past statements of significance in the study of the historical Jesus, but they lack the contemporary coordinating force of the HSHJ.<sup>5</sup> Even those publications that attempt to address the contemporary issues in historical Jesus research in a coordinated fashion, because of their encyclopedic nature, are unable to provide the kind of depth and even breadth of exposure that these volumes contain.<sup>6</sup> Whatever merits such previous volumes may have, and they have many, none of them is designed to accomplish the same goals as the Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus.

There are many distinguishable features of the HSHJ. This collection of four volumes of essays first of all seeks to be thorough and inclusive. We realize that there are always other opinions that could be included in volumes such as these, but we have tried to solicit and elicit as much of that diverse opinion as was available for publication. We want this collection to serve, not only as a historical encapsulation of the topics of their day, but as a worthy expression of the range of viable thought currently available in historical Jesus studies.

Besides the inclusive nature of these volumes, we have sought for HSHJ to be international in scope, not simply for the sake of diversity,

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, NTTS 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., H. K. McArthur, ed., *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Scribners, 1969); G. W. Dawes, ed., *The Historical Jesus Quest: A Foundational Anthology* (Leiden: Deo, 1999); C. A. Evans, ed., *The Historical Jesus: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004); J. D. G. Dunn and S. McKnight, eds., *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. C. A. Evans, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (London: Routledge, 2007).

but so that multiple voices can be ably represented in the discussion. The approximately one-hundred contributors to this project come from around twenty different countries. Some countries no doubt are represented more heavily than others, and some other important nationalities may be under-represented or not represented at all. This was not by design, as our purpose from the start has been to try to free the discussion of Jesus from regional or local agendas and schools of thought.

Besides the multiplicity of voices from a wide range of places and people, in the HSHJ we have sought to free study of the historical Jesus from the trammels of a variety of other restraints. We have been conscious that study of Jesus in the past has been directly linked to particular forms and contents of higher education, and even specific methodologies, and that such study has often gone hand-in-hand with particular religious, cultural or even political traditions and histories. This set of volumes has been created to move beyond, or perhaps even rise above, such artificially imposed constraints. As a result, though ideologies will no doubt be present in the individual contributions, the volumes as a whole are not reacting or responding to any particular local or even nationally determined situation with regard to historical Jesus study. Our primary criterion in selecting and welcoming the contributors has been their expertise and their addressing a topic of relevance. Despite our best efforts, there is no doubt that most of the contributors are still “white male western Europeans and European-Americans” (as Richard Horsley states).<sup>7</sup> We accept this comment, while acknowledging also that our best efforts were put into attempts not to fall victim to this as an inevitable conclusion. Nevertheless, it is probably a realistic observation of the situation that prevails in historical Jesus studies to this day. Whether it will be different in the future, we must wait and see.

The efforts above have been undertaken so that we could focus these volumes on what we consider the most important elements in current study of the historical Jesus. In order to do this, we have divided the essays into four structured volumes.

As a result of this process of assessment, what became evident was that one of the most important sources of continued diversity in historical Jesus study is the element of methodological divergence. Methodological diversity entails the formulation of varied and disparate conscious approaches to the study of Jesus. Questions of method are inevitably confronted at the outset of any scientific or historical investi-

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<sup>7</sup> See his article in volume one.

gation, and usually indicate the significant parting of the ways between differing approaches to the same body of data. Consequently, volume one of the HSHJ is dedicated to questions of method. Realizing and being knowledgeable of the different methodological starting points in historical Jesus study not only facilitates one's determination and understanding of the results, but also gives important and necessary insight into the reasons for the results and their implications. In other words, attention to method forces us to ask the question of why it is that a particular scholar comes to a specific set of conclusions, as opposed to a different set of conclusions. In this regard, the first volume of HSHJ itself speaks volumes about historical Jesus research. In this volume, we have attempted to assemble many of the world's leading experts on methodological questions regarding the study of Jesus. They present their approaches to study of the historical Jesus as a means of introducing us to the fundamental issues at stake. This is not to deny that there is some challenging reading to be had in this volume, but within this one volume the reader has easier access than before to the range of methods currently at play in historical Jesus studies. By using this volume, scholars and students alike will be able learn about methods with which they are less familiar, compare the major features of these methods, and determine how the varied hypotheses about the historical figure of Jesus are rooted in methodological choices made at the early stages of thinking and research.

The first volume is, therefore, divided into two parts. The first part includes a wide range of distinct methodological statements by advocates of those methods. This part encompasses the methods that are distinct to historical Jesus study as it has been practiced over the last twenty to thirty years. It is here that we gain further insight into the approaches that have been adopted by a wide range of scholars who have had influence within historical Jesus study, as they have tried to define the nature and characteristics of the study and its results. Part two of this volume extends the range of methodologies to the interaction between historical Jesus study and methods that have proven themselves in other areas of New Testament and cognates studies. Some of these are the traditional methods of biblical study, while others are recent innovations influenced by the rise of various types of social-science criticism. The interface of Jesus study and these methods has provided a range of results that help to ensure that the study of Jesus will not soon grow quiescent.

The second volume of HSHJ focuses on the history and future of historical Jesus research, by identifying many if not most of the specific

issues of contention that have been raised in the broad and long history of Jesus study. This volume is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the notion of quests for the historical Jesus. One of the points of continued contention in study of Jesus is not only whether there are periods in such study, but how current study relates to previous study, in terms of both its methods and its results. Here various authors address the relation of Jesus study to the various quests that have been proposed. The second part of the volume brings to the fore questions that are being asked in the contemporary climate of historical Jesus studies. These include the questions that are currently and recurrently at the forefront of discussion, often suggesting in their questions an alternative to the course that previous research has taken. Part three of this volume addresses some of the perennial topics in Jesus research. In some ways, these are issues that are either assumed or regularly taken into account in formulating various hypotheses about Jesus. They form the convenient and necessary intellectual background for pursuing historical Jesus studies.

The third volume of HSHJ brings Jesus himself as a historical figure directly into the discussion. There are three parts in this volume as well. The first part treats Jesus in regard to primary documents of the ancient world, such as the canonical gospels, other portions of the New Testament, and non-canonical works. The second part of this volume takes the elements of the life of Jesus and exposes them to rigorous critical and scholarly scrutiny. Rather than examine Jesus in terms of how he is depicted in one of the biblical books (as in the previous section of this volume) or in terms of a particular issue, this section dissects the life of Jesus in terms of its logical and necessary components, from issues of historicity to his teaching and message, and many if not most places in between. It is in studies such as these that one realizes the importance of the previous studies and approaches for the explication of these subject areas. These topics bring to bear the variety of issues previously discussed. The third part of this volume relates Jesus to the legacy of Israel. Jesus' Jewish roots and relations have long been an essential item of discussion and contention in historical Jesus studies. In this part, various key elements of his relationship to Israel are scrutinized. The result of this set of studies is to place Jesus firmly within his Jewish context, a desideratum of much recent historical Jesus scholarship.

The fourth and final volume of HSHJ is a collection of individual studies by a range of scholars. It is a positive comment on the state of current historical Jesus study that, even with the best planning and

intention, it is difficult, if not impossible, to plan and anticipate all of the necessary topics for such a comprehensive study. Therefore, we have designed this fourth volume to include important studies that we have solicited and have had submitted for which there was no other place in the volume, but that warranted a position in a compendium of scholarship such as this handbook attempts to be. There is a wide range of valuable research to be found in this fourth volume. Some of the studies explore areas for which there has been very little previous Jesus research but in which the author shows there is a lamentable lacking and oversight in the discipline. Others of the studies take topics on the fringe of either Jesus studies or contemporary culture and try to bridge the two in creative and insightful ways. Finally, some of the studies are designed to focus on particular and specific issues that would otherwise have been overlooked in the course of this study, but that a perceptive scholar realized would make a contribution to the final product.

The results of a project such as this are many and varied. We do not doubt that many of the significant contributions to scholarship found in these volumes will establish themselves as standards in the field and continue to have warranted influence on the study of the historical Jesus. Such studies may well be found in any or all of the volumes. We further believe that there are a number of essays that will have uncovered or discovered or even re-discovered insights that have been lost or lost sight of or not yet sighted, and that will bring these into consideration on the broader canvas of historical Jesus studies. There are other essays within these volumes that have broken some boundaries and will establish themselves as new and innovative ways forward in the discussion. The problem is that it is not easy to tell which essays are which, and what the significance of each individual contribution will be. We are confident, however, that these volumes contain, as much as is possible within the parameters of such a project, a responsible and representative, and in some cases even forthright or contrarian, presentation of the current state of historical Jesus scholarship. Such scholarship is the backbone of a project such as this, and is a mainstay of how one approaches contemporary New Testament scholarship. There are essays within this collection that will prove to be seminal for study of the historical Jesus, as they force both sympathetic and unsympathetic readers to contemplate issues and perspectives in ways that were unanticipated. Such scholarship helps to pave the way forward for further research. Its place of final repose cannot be predicted or estimated.





PART ONE

THE ONGOING QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS



# THE QUEST OF THE UNHISTORICAL JESUS AND THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

COLIN BROWN

For much of its history the Christian church has been—and still is—engaged in a quest of the *unhistorical* Jesus. The quest of the *historical* Jesus is relatively new, and began with the English Deists in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to compare the two quests, focusing on theological issues.

## 1. *The Quest of the Unhistorical Jesus*

The quest of the *unhistorical* Jesus follows two paths. In art, literature, and popular culture Jesus is more *the presupposition of faith* than a historical figure to be investigated.<sup>2</sup> Since this path leads to the domain of social history, which lies outside the scope of this book, I shall venture no further down it. The other path is that of religious belief. The motive for going down it is summed up by the Reformer, Philip Melancthon: “[T]o know Christ means to know his benefits . . . For unless you know why Christ put on flesh and was nailed to the cross, what good will it do you to know merely the history about him?”<sup>3</sup> Luther agreed. “If I had to do without one or the other—either the works or the preaching of Christ—I would rather do without the works than without his preaching. For the works do not help me. But his words

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 1779–1860* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1985; reprint Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press, 2008), 1–55.

<sup>2</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs, eds., *Images of Christ Ancient and Modern* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Richard W. Fox, *Jesus in America: A History of Our National Obsession from Columbus to Columbine* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003); R. Laurence Moore, *Touchdown Jesus: The Mixing of Sacred and Secular in American Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Stephen R. Prothero, *The American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Philip Melancthon, *Loci Communes* (1521), *Melancthon and Bucer*, LCC 19, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (London: SCM, 1969), 21–22.

give life, as he himself says [John 6:63]... Therefore John's Gospel is the one, fine, true, and chief gospel, and is far, far to be preferred over the other three and placed high above them. So, too, the epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter far surpass the other three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke."<sup>4</sup>

From the early church onwards theology was driven by what Wolfhart Pannenberg calls Christology "from above."<sup>5</sup> Christology "from above" purports to give God's perspective, as it attempts to explain the logic of the incarnation from the standpoint of salvation history. The messianic "Son of God" of the gospels became the pre-existent God the Son—the Second Person of the Trinity—who came down to earth for the salvation of humankind. As theology pursued a relentless quest of the *unhistorical* Jesus, it moved increasingly away from the Jesus of Second Temple Judaism.

The church took a step away from the historical Jesus when it adopted the convention of translating the New Testament Greek form of his name Ἰησοῦς (*Iesous*) into the Latin *Jesus*.<sup>6</sup> In so doing, it obscured its Semitic form Yeshua. During Yeshua's lifetime perhaps the only ones who called him *Jesus* were Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers who crucified him. The effect of the transformation of Yeshua into *Jesus* was to contextualize him for the Roman world. The contextualization obliterated the connection between Yeshua of Nazareth and the Yeshua (Joshua) of the Old Testament.<sup>7</sup> The price was to turn Yeshua into a virtual Gentile whose fate was to live among recalcitrant "Jews."

A parallel move was the adoption of "Jew" as the generic term for Judeans, Galileans, and Israelites. Ἰουδαῖος (*Judaios*) strictly means

<sup>4</sup> *Preface to the New Testament* (1522), *Luther's Works*, 35, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1960), 362.

<sup>5</sup> *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (London: SCM, 1968), 21–37.

<sup>6</sup> Yeshua and Yeshu are shortened forms of Yehoshua, the name of Moses' successor and leader of the conquest of the Promised Land, Joshua the son of Nun. The name originally meant "Yahweh helps" or "May Yahweh help." Ἰησοῦς is also used in the LXX, Josephus, and the New Testament (Heb 4:8) for Joshua the son of Nun. See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, I: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 205–208; BDAG, 471–72.

<sup>7</sup> J. D. M. Derrett, "Crumbs in Mark," and "Why and How Jesus Walked on the Sea," in *Studies in the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 4:82–91, 92–111; Colin Brown, "The Jesus of Mark's Gospel," in *Jesus Then & Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 35–36.

Judean, an inhabitant of Judea.<sup>8</sup> “Jew” is an anachronism, which has the effect of pitting Jesus against Jews in general, whereas historically the clash was between Yeshua and the Judeans. The point is highlighted by John 7:1 NRSV: “After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish not go about in Judea, because the Jews [Ἰουδαῖοι] were looking for an opportunity to kill him.” But if we substitute “Judeans” for “Jews,” we get a translation that makes sense: “After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Judeans were looking for an opportunity to kill him.” Having made my point, I regretfully revert to using *Jesus* and *Jews* if only for the sake of communication.

The Arian controversy was the first of a series of clashes that shaped Christology. It dates from dispute of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius (d. 336) with his bishop over the divinity of Christ.<sup>9</sup> Arius saw Jesus as a creature who could not share the divinity of the Father. The dispute led to the Council of Nicea (325) with its condemnation of Arius and its affirmation of “one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father [ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρὶ].”<sup>10</sup> Though never free from controversy, *homoousios* became part of orthodoxy, incorporated into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)<sup>11</sup> and the formula of Chalcedon (451).<sup>12</sup> The concept, though not

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<sup>8</sup> BDAG, 478–479; M. Lowe, “Who Were the Ἰουδαῖοι?” *NovT* 18 (1976): 101–130; Urban C. von Wahlde, “The Johannine ‘Jews’: A Critical Survey,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 33–60; Graham A. P. Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, AGJU 35 (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002); R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988); Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 1:5.

<sup>11</sup> *Decrees* 1:21.

<sup>12</sup> *Decrees* 1:86. Chalcedon was a compromise patchwork of phrases drawn from tradition and the warring schools of Antioch and Alexandria. It affirmed a double *homoousion*: the Son was “consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin.”

necessarily the term, lives on in those churches where the Nicene Creed forms part of their liturgy. Sunday by Sunday members of the Episcopal Church (myself included) profess their faith in “one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father.”<sup>13</sup>

Athanasius (ca. 296–373) of Alexandria vehemently opposed Arianism. His *De Incarnatione* argued that, “He was made man that we might be made God; and he manifested himself by a body that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and he endured the insolence of men that we might inherit immortality” (§54).<sup>14</sup> In the nineteenth century, Alexandrian *word-flesh* Christology won endorsement from John Henry Newman who urged, “Though man, He was not, strictly speaking, in the English sense of the word, a man.”<sup>15</sup>

Two observations may be made. The first concerns the strategy of trying to show that the Savior must possess certain qualities: he must be human (though not a sinner) in order to be our representative, and God in order to overcome evil and death. The argument is like a game that anyone can play and win—if one loads the dice. It was a game played by both the orthodox and the heterodox. The way that Athanasius played it led to vindication of orthodoxy. But an Arian could argue that Christ could not be *consubstantial* with the Father who is immutable and impassible. Jesus suffered and died. One could say that he was *like God*, but not “the only true God” (John 17:3).<sup>16</sup>

My second observation concerns the creeds. One would never imagine from them that Jesus was Jewish. The Apostles’ Creed reduces the life of Jesus to a comma between “born of the Virgin Mary” and “suffered under Pontius Pilate.” The Nicene Creed makes it the presupposition of faith. Should we not silently add with Jürgen Moltmann?

Baptized by John the Baptist,  
Filled with the Holy Spirit:  
to preach the kingdom of God to the poor,

<sup>13</sup> *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979), 358.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Rochie Hardy and Cyril C. Richardson, eds., *The Christology of the Later Fathers*, LCC 3 (London: SCM, 1954), 107–108.

<sup>15</sup> *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (London: Rivingtons, 1868), 6:62; cf. Newman, *Select Treatises of St. Athanasius in Controversy with the Arians, freely Translated*, 7th ed. (London: Longmans, 1897), 2:192; Roderick Strange, *Newman and the Gospel of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 47–67.

<sup>16</sup> Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 109–110, 562–572.

to heal the sick,  
to receive those who have been cast out,  
to revive Israel for the salvation of the nations, and  
to have mercy on all people.<sup>17</sup>

The first theologian to announce his intention of proving the rational necessity of the incarnation “apart from Christ, as if there was never anything about him [*remoto Cbristo, quasi numquam aliquid de illo*]”<sup>18</sup> was Anselm (ca. 1033–1109). Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God Became Man*) resembles a mathematical equation that determines the value of *X* in light of given premises, *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, etc. The premises—“That the redemption of mankind could not have been brought about by any other than a divine person,” “That the devil has no jurisdiction over man,” “that [Christ] died voluntarily,” “That mankind cannot be saved without recompense for sin,” etc.<sup>19</sup>—are supplied by articles of faith. The argument has an internal consistency commensurate with Anselm’s profession *Credo ut intelligam*—“I believe so that I may understand.”<sup>20</sup>

Richard Swinburne’s “Evidence for the Incarnation”<sup>21</sup> updates Athanasius and Anselm.<sup>22</sup> Against the “background evidence”—“that there is a God of the traditional kind” with the “power” and “good reason to become incarnate”<sup>23</sup>—Swinburne identifies five reasons which would qualify a candidate as “God incarnate.” He or she “should have led a perfect life and provided deep moral teaching”; he should state publicly that his death was a sacrifice for sin; his teaching should include that he was “God incarnate”; he should provide means of continuing his faith and practice (the church); and he should provide a “supermiracle” (the resurrection).<sup>24</sup> Jesus is the best candidate for this profile. Finally, Swinburne appeals to Bayes’ Theorem of Probability to show that Chalcedon was right after all.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 150.

<sup>18</sup> *Cur Deus Homo*, Preface (author’s translation, Anselm, *Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt [Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann, reprint 1984], 2:42).

<sup>19</sup> *Why God Became Man* 1.1.

<sup>20</sup> *Proslogion* 1 (*Opera* 1:100).

<sup>21</sup> In *Jesus Then & Now*, ed. Meyer and Hughes, 170–185.

<sup>22</sup> “Evidence”, 173.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 177–179.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 180–183.

The argument runs into two roadblocks. The first is the problem of trying to assign quantifiable values to historical evidence and theological interpretation. Then there is the fact that its ostensibly self-evident premises are themselves faith-based, and whatever logic they have is a consistency internal to the belief-system to which they belong. As with all *a priori* theories of atonement, we are left with the feeling that the theological rationale “from above” and the course of events narrated in the gospels belong to different worlds.

The second roadblock also confronts theologies at the other end of the spectrum. The upside to process christology<sup>26</sup> and feminist christology<sup>27</sup> is their promise of new perspectives. The downside is the creation of christologies that exchange the Jesus of history for one that fits a modern agenda. Even though more orthodox Christians believe in the incarnation, history is not a priority.<sup>28</sup> But the question remains: Has the quest of the historical Jesus brought us any closer to Yeshua of Nazareth?

## 2. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*

The gospels, which are increasingly seen as ancient biography,<sup>29</sup> together with extra-biblical texts,<sup>30</sup> present the sources and challenge to see Jesus as a historical person.

### 2.1. *The Old Quest*

The idea of a concerted quest of the historical Jesus gained currency through the work of Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965). His English title

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<sup>26</sup> D. R. Griffin, *A Process Christology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973); Ronald R. Farmer, “Jesus in Process Christology,” in *Jesus Then & Now*, 201–215.

<sup>27</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus, Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet, Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994).

<sup>28</sup> Scott Cowdell, *Is Jesus Unique? A Study of Recent Christology* (New York: Paulist, 1996); Stephen T. Davis, Daniell Kendall, Gerald O’Collins, eds., *The Incarnation: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Incarnation of the Son of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004); Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst* (Tübingen: Francke, 1997); David E. Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 204–206.

<sup>30</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 56–201; Robert E. van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).



coined by his translator *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical History of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (1906; trans. W. Montgomery, 1910)<sup>31</sup> bestows added drama. To see it in perspective two facts must be noted. The first is that Schweitzer's book was preceded by his Strassburg dissertation, part of which was published as *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*. Building on Johannes Weiss's eschatological interpretation of the kingdom, Schweitzer proposed an "eschatological-historical" solution.<sup>32</sup> In sending out the disciples to proclaim the kingdom, Jesus expected them to inaugurate the messianic woes as prelude to the coming of the Son of Man (Matt 10:23).<sup>33</sup> When they returned unscathed, Jesus realized that he himself was called to initiate the woes by giving his life as a ransom (Mark 10:45).<sup>34</sup> The mystery was Jesus' secret conviction about this vocation. Initially, he revealed it only to Peter, James, and John. Peter told it to the Twelve, and Judas told it to Caiaphas.<sup>35</sup> In a postscript Schweitzer declared that his aim was "to depict the figure of Jesus in its overwhelming heroic greatness and to impress it upon the modern age and upon the modern theology."<sup>36</sup>

The second fact is the coincidence that Schweitzer's *Mystery of the Kingdom of God* and William Wrede's book on the same subject *The Messianic Secret*<sup>37</sup> were published on the same day.<sup>38</sup> Both titles contain the word *Geheimnis*. Whereas Schweitzer's translator took the word to mean "mystery," in Wrede's book it meant "secret." It was bound up with Jesus' injunctions not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah, for Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah. The "messianic

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<sup>31</sup> References are to the reprint with introduction by James M. Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1968). *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, First Complete Edition, ed. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) is based on the 1913 edition. See further Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972); Daniel L. Pals, *The Victorian "Lives" of Jesus* (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1982); Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought*; James A. Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, 1. *From Deism to Tübingen*, 2. *From Jonathan Edwards to Rudolf Bultmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (1901), trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Black, 1914), 83; cf. Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, trans. R. H. Hiers and D. Larrimore Holland ([1892] Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

<sup>33</sup> *Mystery*, 88–89.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 230–236.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 214–218.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 274 (Schweitzer's emphasis).

<sup>37</sup> Trans. J. C. G. Greig (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971).

<sup>38</sup> *Quest*, 330.

secret” was an invention. The scholarly world’s acceptance of Wrede set Schweitzer on a course of self-vindication that resulted in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. It would show the world that the quest led inexorably to the choice: Wrede’s thoroughgoing skepticism or Schweitzer’s thoroughgoing eschatology.

*The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is like a tennis tournament in which competitors progress through successive rounds by knocking out opponents. The simile may be pressed further: “seeded” scholars were destined to win preliminary rounds, though not the championship. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) is declared to be a bolt from the blue, without predecessors or successors,<sup>39</sup> whose work was “perhaps the most splendid achievement in the whole course of the historical investigation of the life of Jesus,” for he was the first to grasp the fact that Jesus’ thought-world was “essentially eschatological.” In view of subsequent neglect of eschatology, “the whole movement of theology, down to Johannes Weiss, appears retrograde.”<sup>40</sup>

Reimarus was well known in the German Enlightenment for his “rational thoughts” on sundry topics. Privately he composed an *Apology or Defence of the Rational Worshippers of God*, which was a vindication of Deism. Shortly before Reimarus’s death, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing moved to Hamburg, where he got to know the Reimarus family and secured a copy. Later, as librarian to the Duke of Brunswick, Lessing published extracts supposedly found in the ducal library at Wolfenbüttel under the title *Fragments of an Unnamed Author*.<sup>41</sup> The “Wolfenbüttel *Fragments*” provoked a bitter pamphlet war affording Lessing occasion to air his views.

The last of the *Fragments* examined *The Intentions of Jesus and his Disciples* (1778). Jesus was a Jewish reformer who had no intention of founding a new religion. His call to repentance was a call for renewal. In a manner evocative of the English Deists, Reimarus insisted that Jesus taught no “mysteries.”<sup>42</sup> “Son of God” simply meant “God’s

<sup>39</sup> *Quest*, 26.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>41</sup> The *Fragments* have been included in editions of Lessing’s works, but the full text is *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes*, ed. Gerhard Alexander, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1972); cf. *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768): Ein “bekannter Unbekannter” der Aufklärung in Hamburg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

<sup>42</sup> *Reimarus: Fragments*, trans. Ralph S. Fraser, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 72–76.

Beloved.”<sup>43</sup> Jesus’ fatal mistake was to embrace political messianism.<sup>44</sup> His dying words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” attest his disillusionment.<sup>45</sup> The resurrection was a fraud perpetrated by the disciples who pretended to the credulous populace that they had encountered Christ alive and that he would return to earth.<sup>46</sup>

The ensuing quest was like a tournament with three decisive rounds. Each was marked by a confrontation that determined its subsequent course. “The first [great alternative] was laid down by Strauss: *either* purely historical *or* purely supernatural. The second had been worked out by the Tübingen school and Holtzmann: *either* synoptic *or* Johannine. Now came the third [with Johannes Weiss]: *either* eschatological *or* noneschatological!”<sup>47</sup> But this was not the end. There remained the final challenge round with the two remaining combatants and their rival theories: Wrede with his “thoroughgoing skepticism” versus Schweitzer with his “thoroughgoing eschatology.”<sup>48</sup> Schweitzer’s portrait of Jesus was determined by the outcome of these engagements: elimination of the supernatural, elimination of John as a historical source, and the triumph of thoroughgoing eschatology. The conclusions drawn in *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* were reiterated. If it seems paradoxical to deny the supernatural while seeing eschatology as the key to understanding the historical Jesus, it must be remembered that, though Jesus was possessed by the *notion* of the imminent kingdom of God, it did not mean that it had objective reality.

Schweitzer concluded the *Quest* on an almost mystical note. “He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: ‘Follow thou me!’ and sets us the task which He has to fulfil for our time.” Those who follow “shall learn in their own experience

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<sup>43</sup> *Fragments*, 76–88.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 136–150.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 153–227.

<sup>47</sup> *Quest*, 238. David Friedrich Strauss’s *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1835–36) trans. George Eliot (London, 1846; reprint with introduction by Peter C. Hodgson, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) argued that the supernatural portrait of Jesus in the gospels was mythological. Strauss’s mentor, F.C. Baur, the leader of the Tübingen School, argued that Matthew was the earliest gospel since it was the most Jewish. John with its docetic dualism was dated in the second half of the second century. Holtzmann was Schweitzer’s mentor.

<sup>48</sup> *Quest*, 330–397.

Who He is.”<sup>49</sup> More bleakly Schweitzer confessed that, “There is nothing more negative than the result of the critical study of the Life of Jesus.”<sup>50</sup> “The true historical Jesus”—“an imperious ruler”—had overthrown “the Modern Jesus” of Liberalism.<sup>51</sup>

From the standpoint of impartial history Schweitzer’s work raises questions. Unsuspecting readers would not guess that the origin of the quest was to be found in the English Deists whose work Reimarus had appropriated and whose ideas were already well known in Germany.<sup>52</sup> Schweitzer paid scant attention to philosophy and culture,<sup>53</sup> or to scholars outside Germany and France. His work, like the quest in general, was characterized by lack of interest in Judaism. No mention is made of Abraham Geiger (1810–74), leader of Reform Judaism and admirer of Strauss and Baur, who sought to reclaim Jesus for Judaism.<sup>54</sup> The reasons for these omissions may be traced to Schweitzer’s organizing principle. The *Quest* was a study in self-vindication, which in the interests of accuracy might have been entitled, as Paul Wernle suggested, *Von Reimarus zu Schweitzer*.<sup>55</sup>

Proponents of the quest have been charged with making Jesus in their own image. The Catholic Modernist George Tyrrell observed: “The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.”<sup>56</sup> Schweitzer described Renan’s *Vie de Jésus* (1863) as a work of “imperishable charm,” written by an author who had to “perfume” the New Testament “with sentimentality in order to feel himself at home in it.”<sup>57</sup> Schweitzer’s Jesus turned out to be Nietzsche’s “superman” in Galilean garb—the *Übermensch*—revaluing all values regardless of pain. Jesus tried to turn “the wheel of

<sup>49</sup> *Quest*, 403.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>52</sup> Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought*, 36–53.

<sup>53</sup> Vincent A. McCarthy, *Quest for a Philosophical Jesus: Christianity and Philosophy in Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling* (Macon: Mercer, 1968); Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought*, 57–104, 133–160.

<sup>54</sup> Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Colin Brown, *Shofar* 18.4 (2000): 138–141.

<sup>55</sup> *TLZ* 31 (1906): 502–506.

<sup>56</sup> *Christianity at the Cross-Roads* (1909; reprint London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), 49; cf. Adolf Harnack, *What is Christianity?* trans. T. B. Saunders (London: Williams and Norgate, 1901).

<sup>57</sup> *Quest*, 192.

the world,” and when it finally moved it crushed him. “The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.”<sup>58</sup>

Schweitzer valued Nietzsche’s critique of Western values. “[O]nly that system of ethics deserves to be accepted which springs from independent reflection on the meaning of life. . . . Men of genius and strong individuality, therefore, should be intent only on allowing the greatness that is in them to have free play.”<sup>59</sup> “Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world.”<sup>60</sup> Schweitzer emerged as the first postmodern theologian.

## 2.2. *From Old Quest to New*

The period following Schweitzer’s *Quest* down to the post-Bultmanian New Quest is sometimes dubbed “the No Quest.”<sup>61</sup> Three factors were responsible. The first was the belief that Schweitzer had said all that was to be said. The second was the dominance in theology of Karl Barth (1886–1968) whose stress on the *otherness* of God and revelation as the sole means of knowing God made the quest seem irrelevant.<sup>62</sup> The third was the ascendancy of Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) whose program of form criticism and demythologizing exalted the kerygma of the cross and resurrection at the expense of the historical Jesus.

Bultmann’s approach was characterized by *Sachkritik* (“subject matter criticism”), which “distinguishes what is said by what is meant and

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<sup>58</sup> *Quest*, 370–371. The similarity was noted by B. H. Streeter in *Foundations* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 111.

<sup>59</sup> *The Philosophy of Civilization*, 2. *Civilization and Ethics*, trans. C. T. Campion, 3rd ed. (London: Black, 1946), 174, 176.

<sup>60</sup> *Quest*, 401.

<sup>61</sup> Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical—Jesus Research*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 45; Leander E. Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 9.

<sup>62</sup> Colin Brown, *Karl Barth and the Christian Message*, 2nd ed. (Portland: Wipf and Stock, 1998); Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

measures what is said by its meaning.”<sup>63</sup> “Since exegetical work is work with concepts, and since the word of the text is never the subject matter itself, but its expression, this subject matter becomes available to the exegete only if he understands the word.”<sup>64</sup> Bultmann insisted that the *Sache* of Scripture was the Word of the transcendent God, the meaning of which had to be separated from its mythical, culturally conditioned forms. *Sachkritik* set Bultmann on a path that led from form criticism to demythologization.

Bultmann’s *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921)<sup>65</sup> leaves the impression that, while much can be known about the early church, little can be known about Jesus himself who remains hidden behind the forms of tradition. This impression was strengthened by Bultmann’s *Jesus* (1926),<sup>66</sup> which initiated a series on “The Immortals—the Spiritual Heroes of Humanity in their Life and Work.” His “New Testament and Mythology” (1948) launched the demythologizing debate that was to preoccupy New Testament scholarship for the next quarter century.<sup>67</sup> It applied to the New Testament the viewpoint of the History of Religions School, of which Bultmann was the last surviving member. Whereas earlier liberals had held that stories like the virgin birth, the magi and the empty tomb were mythical, Bultmann argued that the entire thought-world of the New Testament was mythical. Notions of the heavenly redeemer, salvation, and judgment were drawn from the mythical worlds of Jewish apocalyptic and Hellenistic Gnosticism. The New Testament should be demythologized for the sake of the *Sache* of the kerygma of the cross and resurrection which alone can bring liberation.

Signs of unrest in the Bultmann school surfaced in 1953 when Ernst Käsemann (1906–98) presented a paper on “The Problem of the Historical Jesus.”<sup>68</sup> Like others who followed him in the “New Quest,”

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<sup>63</sup> “The Problem of Theological Exegesis,” in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson (Richmond: John Knox, 1968), 241.

<sup>64</sup> *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, 255.

<sup>65</sup> *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, revised 1972).

<sup>66</sup> *Jesus and the Word*, trans. L. P. Smith and E. H. Lantero (New York: Scribner’s, [1934] 1958), 217–219.

<sup>67</sup> *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans-Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953), 1–44; cf. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (London: SCM, 1960).

<sup>68</sup> *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 15–47.

Käsemann protested fidelity to Bultmannian methodology and disavowed any attempt to write a biography of Jesus. Nevertheless, Käsemann feared a relapse into docetism—the idea that Jesus lacked real humanity—if the exalted Lord of the kerygma was detached from the humiliated Lord in history. The way forward was to discover the earthly Jesus through the kerygma.

The challenge to seek the earthly Jesus through the kerygma was answered in Europe by Ernst Fuchs,<sup>69</sup> Günther Bornkamm,<sup>70</sup> Hans Conzelmann,<sup>71</sup> Ferdinand Hahn,<sup>72</sup> and Eduard Schweizer,<sup>73</sup> and in North America by Schubert M. Ogden,<sup>74</sup> Reginald H. Fuller,<sup>75</sup> Norman Perrin,<sup>76</sup> and James M. Robinson whose work popularized the term, “the New Quest of the Historical Jesus.”<sup>77</sup> In 1959 Bultmann responded in a lecture to the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences.<sup>78</sup> Like a headmaster remonstrating with erring pupils, Bultmann reminded them that, “[I]t is the Christ of the kerygma and not the person of the historical Jesus who is the object of faith . . . the man whom the kerygma addresses may not inquire behind the kerygma for a legitimation offered by historical research.”<sup>79</sup> “To believe in the Christ present in the kerygma is the meaning of the Easter faith.”<sup>80</sup>

Bultmann’s address marked the beginning of the end of the New Quest. Its European protagonists turned to other branches of study.

<sup>69</sup> *Studies in the Historical Jesus*, trans. Andrew Scobie (London: SCM, 1964).

<sup>70</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (New York: Harper, 1960).

<sup>71</sup> *Jesus*, trans. J. Raymond Lord, ed. John Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

<sup>72</sup> *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (1963), trans. Harold Knight and George Ogg (London: Lutterworth, 1969).

<sup>73</sup> *Jesus*, trans. David E. Green (London: SCM, 1971).

<sup>74</sup> *Christ without Myth: A Study Based on the Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (New York: Harper, 1961).

<sup>75</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1965).

<sup>76</sup> *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967); *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

<sup>77</sup> *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959); reprint *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983). The term “New Quest” was suggested by Robinson’s publisher.

<sup>78</sup> “The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 15–42.

<sup>79</sup> “Primitive Christian Kerygma,” 17.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

Robinson plunged into the study of the Nag Hammadi texts<sup>81</sup> and Q, concluding that the earliest stratum of Q gives the best picture of the historical Jesus.<sup>82</sup> Meanwhile, reports of the demise of the Old Quest turned out to have been greatly exaggerated. Its pursuit is documented by Walter P. Weaver's definitive analysis *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900–1950*.<sup>83</sup>

A work that paved the way for locating Jesus within Judaism was *The History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (2nd ed. 1886–87) by Emil Schürer (1844–1910). It began modestly as a textbook but metamorphosed into *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (1973–87).<sup>84</sup> This encyclopedic work is like a background without a portrait, since Jesus himself does not appear. Nevertheless, as Schürer pointed out, “No fact of Gospel history, no word in the preaching of Jesus is thinkable without the presupposition of Jewish history and the entire thought-world of the Jewish people.”<sup>85</sup>

The alternative to Bultmann was Joachim Jeremias (1900–79), who surveyed the scene in “The Present State of the Debate about the Problem of the Historical Jesus” (1956).<sup>86</sup> Jeremias feared a lapse into docetism, if Jesus became a mere presupposition, and Paul's proclamation were to replace the good tidings of Jesus. He urged that, “we *must* continually return to the historical Jesus and his message. The sources demand it; the kerygma, which refers us back from itself, also demands it. To put it in theological terms, the Incarnation implies that the story

<sup>81</sup> *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

<sup>82</sup> James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000); Robinson, “The Image of Jesus in Q,” in *Jesus Then & Now*, ed. Meyer and Hughes, 7–25. Robinson's Jesus was an itinerant who sent out disciples to proclaim God's reign, which involved the bestowal of God's peace and the reception of hospitality. “Son of God” was not originally a christological title, but like “son of peace” it was a designation of a disciple. To become one meant abandoning family and home.

<sup>83</sup> Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999.

<sup>84</sup> Ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, Martin Goodman et al., 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87).

<sup>85</sup> *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesus Christi*, 3rd and 4th ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901), 1:1 (author's translation).

<sup>86</sup> Published as *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964); reedited in K. C. Hanson, ed., *Jesus and the Message of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 1–17.



of Jesus is not only a possible subject for historical research, study, and criticism, but demands all of these.”<sup>87</sup>

Jeremias’s main contributions lay in *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*,<sup>88</sup> *The Parables of Jesus*,<sup>89</sup> and his work on the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>90</sup> Throughout there runs the theme that, even though we might not hear Jesus’ *ipsisima verba* (actual words), we may hear his *ipsissima vox* (authentic voice).<sup>91</sup> Aspects of Jeremias’s work have been called into question—his competence in rabbinics,<sup>92</sup> his interpretation of Jesus’ parables,<sup>93</sup> and the meaning of Abba.<sup>94</sup> If scholarship has moved on from Jeremias, it has moved right away from Bultmann.

### 2.3. *The Third Quest*

To some, the Third Quest embraces all the renewed interest in the historical Jesus from the mid-sixties onwards. However, N. T. Wright,

<sup>87</sup> *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*, 14–15.

<sup>88</sup> 2nd ed. trans. Norman Perrin (London: SCM, 1966).

<sup>89</sup> Revised ed. trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM, 1963).

<sup>90</sup> *The Prayers of Jesus*, tr. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1967).

<sup>91</sup> *The Parables of Jesus*, 22; *The Prayers of Jesus*, 57.

<sup>92</sup> E. P. Sanders claimed that Jeremias knew little beyond what he found in Strack-Billerbeck, a commentary characterized by “miscategorization and incorrect summaries” (“Jesus and the Kingdom: The Restoration of Israel and the New People of God,” in *Jesus, the Gospels and the Church: Essays in Honor of William R. Farmer*, ed. E. P. Sanders [Macon: Mercer, 1987], 225–239; “Defending the Indefensible,” *JBL* 110.3 [1991]: 463–477). Ben F. Meyer replied with “A Caricature of Joachim Jeremias and His Scholarly Work,” *JBL* 110.3 (1991): 451–462.

<sup>93</sup> Jeremias followed Adolf Jülicher in rejecting allegory and looking for Jesus’ intended meaning. His pupil Norman Perrin advocated a literary approach which distinguished two types of symbols. The “steno-symbol” has a one-to-one relationship with what it represents, e.g., a mathematical symbol. The “tensive symbols” in the parables have meanings which cannot be exhausted or represented by any one referent (*Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 30; cf. 198). See also John W. Sider, “Rediscovering the Parables: The Logic of the Jeremias Tradition,” *JBL* 102.1 (1983): 61–83; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 12–14.

<sup>94</sup> Jeremias traced Abba (Mark 14:36; cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6) to children’s talk, and claimed that its use in address to God was unique to Jesus. It showed his complete surrender to the Father (*The Prayers of Jesus*, 57–65). Recent scholarship has rejected this. See James H. Charlesworth, “A Caveat on Textual Transmission and the Meaning of Abba: A Study of the Lord’s Prayer,” in *The Lord’s Prayer and Other Prayer Texts from the Greco-Roman Era*, ed. James M. Charlesworth, Mark Harding, and Mark Kiley (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), 9; James Barr, “Abba isn’t Daddy,” *JTS* 39 (1988): 28–47; “‘Abba, Father’ and the Familiarity of Jesus’ Speech,” *Theology* 91 (1998): 173–79; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (see n. 121), 211. Charlesworth sees Jesus’ use of Abba as a reminder of Israel’s sonship (Hos 11: 11) and that of the king (Ps 2:7).

who is credited with coining the term,<sup>95</sup> claims that the Third Quest is characterized by a methodology which differs from those of the previous quests. The Old Quest was characterized by Source Criticism, the New Quest by Form and Redaction Criticism. The *criterion of dissimilarity* was widely used—Jesus had to be dissimilar to Judaism and to the early church whose picture of Jesus was colored by belief in the resurrection. For teaching to qualify as authentic it had in addition to bear the marks of Aramaic.<sup>96</sup>

Whereas the Old Quest tore Jesus from his Jewish roots to the point of being anti-Semitic,<sup>97</sup> the Third Quest seeks to locate Jesus in Second Temple Judaism. Over against the *criterion of dissimilarity* Wright proposes a *criterion of double similarity and double dissimilarity*: “It is thus decisively *similar* to both the Jewish context and in the early Christian world, and at the same time importantly *dissimilar*. . . [W]hen something can be seen to be credible (though perhaps deeply subversive) within first-century Judaism, *and* credible as the implied starting point (though not the exact replica) of something in later Christianity, there is a strong possibility of our being in touch with the genuine history of Jesus.”<sup>98</sup>

To qualify as a contribution to the Third Quest, accounts of Jesus must follow this approach. Otherwise Wright dismisses them as vestiges of earlier quests, even though they may be contemporary with the Third Quest. In this regard the Jesus Seminar and the writings of its co-chair, John Dominic Crossan, qualify as continuations of the Old Quest. The Jesus Seminar was founded in 1985 by its other co-chair and high-profile publicist, the late Robert W. Funk. The Seminar’s

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<sup>95</sup> Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861–1988* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379–403; cf. William Telford, “Major Trends and Interpretative Issues in the Study of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33–74; Ben Witherington, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997); Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

<sup>96</sup> Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 18; Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, 42–43. Perrin added what he called “the principle of coherence”: “material from the earliest strata of the tradition may be accepted as authentic if it can be shown to cohere with material established as authentic by means of the criterion of dissimilarity.” For critique see Morna D. Hooker, “Christology and Methodology,” NTS 17 (1971): 480–487.

<sup>97</sup> Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, 107–161, 229–242.

<sup>98</sup> *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 132.

“Fellows” met regularly “in pursuit of the historical discrepancy between the historical figure [of Jesus] and the representations of him in the gospels.”<sup>99</sup>

The Seminar’s two most ambitious projects are *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*,<sup>100</sup> which sought to destabilize the canon by including the *Gospel of Thomas* as the fifth gospel, and *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Acts of Jesus*.<sup>101</sup> The two volumes are color-coded in line with the colored balls used in voting. “Red meant that Jesus very probably said or did this. Pink meant that Jesus probably said or did this. Gray meant that Jesus probably did not say or do this (although in practice gray meant that the data were ambiguous and no firm judgment was possible). Black of course meant that Jesus very probably did not say or do this.”<sup>102</sup> 90 aphorisms and parables out of 500 were judged authentic, whereas only 29 of 176 events were deemed historical. These results were reached by stratifying the texts, using only those in the earliest strata, texts multiply attested by canonical and non-canonical sources, and by rigorously applying the *criterion of dissimilarity* to what was left.

The cover of Crossan’s *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant*<sup>103</sup> describes it as “The first comprehensive determination of who Jesus was, what he did, what he said.” The claim rests upon a “triple triadic process.”<sup>104</sup> In the first triad Crossan reconstructs the world of Jesus using the “macrocosmic” tools of cross-cultural and cross-temporal anthropology, the “mesocosmic” tools of Greco-Roman

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<sup>99</sup> Robert W. Funk, “The Jesus Seminar and the Quest,” in *Jesus Then & Now*, Meyer and Hughes, 133; *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

<sup>100</sup> Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

<sup>101</sup> Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999).

<sup>102</sup> Funk, in *Jesus Then & Now*, Meyer and Hughes, 135.

<sup>103</sup> San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991. Spin-offs include *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994); and *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995). See also Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig, eds., *Jesus and Faith: A Conversation on the Work of John Dominic Crossan* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994); John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, Werner H. Kelber, *The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999); Donald L. Denton, *Historiography and Hermeneutics in Jesus Studies: An Examination of the Work of John Dominic Crossan and Ben F. Meyer*, JSNTSup 262 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004).

<sup>104</sup> *The Historical Jesus*, xxviii–xxix.

history, and the “microcosmic” tools of literature. What emerges is a picture of a ruthless empire, which oppressed captive peoples politically and economically. One way of achieving happiness was through the counter-culture adopted by the Cynics.

The second triad focuses on the Jesus tradition. It involves three steps: compilation of an *inventory* of texts; *stratification* into four strata (30–60, 60–80, 80–120, and 120–150 CE); and determination of their *attestation*.<sup>105</sup> None of the canonical gospels is assigned to the First Stratum, though the first layers of the *Gospel of Thomas* and Q, the Egerton Gospel, P. Oxy. 1224, a Miracles Collection, and the Cross Gospel (now embedded in the *Gospel of Peter*) are located in it. The Secret Gospel of Mark (“discovered” by Morton Smith),<sup>106</sup> followed by canonical Mark, is assigned to the Second Stratum. Matthew and Luke are assigned to the Third, and John to the Fourth.

The third triad focuses on “the methodological manipulation” of the inventory. The first step is to focus on the *sequence of strata*. The second step determines *hierarchy of attestation*, and the third brackets *singularity* by discounting all singly attested units.<sup>107</sup> The figure that emerges is “a peasant Jewish Cynic” whose hometown of Nazareth was close enough to the Greco-Roman city of Sepphoris that knowledge of Cynicism was not unlikely. Jesus practiced “magic and meal”<sup>108</sup>—a “combination of *free healing and common eating*, a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power.”<sup>109</sup>

Despite the claim to academic rigor, Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter draw attention to a methodological flaw in Crossan’s insistence upon *multiple attestation*: “When one bases the picture of Jesus exclusively on multiple-attested traditions in canonical and non-canonical texts, one makes oneself dependent on two things: first, on the accidental preservation of a few words and deeds on papyrus fragments, and second on the tendentious selection of sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Since the *Gospel of Thomas* contains the picture of the

<sup>105</sup> *The Historical Jesus*, 427–450.

<sup>106</sup> *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>107</sup> *The Historical Jesus*, xxxii.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 303–353.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

‘noneschatological Jesus,’ one will almost automatically end up with a picture of Jesus that is noneschatological (in the apocalyptic sense).<sup>110</sup> Christopher M. Tuckett notes “a veneer of simplicity and objectivity in setting up ‘databases’ ... that give the impression of security and facticity.”<sup>111</sup> Equally questionable is the priority accorded to the Secret Gospel of Mark, which is now increasingly seen as a hoax based on a pastiche of gospel verses.<sup>112</sup>

Other problems include the sanitized portraits of Cynics<sup>113</sup> and magicians who might have stepped straight out of Disneyland. In the Old Testament and the ancient world the practice of magic was a capital offence.<sup>114</sup> The Cynic magician is a modern construct, for Cynics were not magicians and magicians were not Cynics. Perhaps this is in keeping with Crossan’s explanation in which healings turn out not to be physical changes but changes of attitude, and exorcisms are the liberation of “the almost split-personality position of a colonial people.”<sup>115</sup> The most trenchant criticism comes from Birger A. Pearson who contends that the Seminar is ideologically driven to produce a secular Jesus. “The Jesus of the Jesus Seminar is a non-Jewish Jesus. To

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<sup>110</sup> Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 238.

<sup>111</sup> “The Historical Jesus, Crossan and Methodology,” in *Text und Geschichte: Facetten theologischen Arbeitens aus dem Freundes- und Schülerkreis. Dieter Lührmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Stefan Maser and Egbert Schlarb, Marburger Theologische Studien 50 (Marburg: Elwert, 1999), 257–279, at 278.

<sup>112</sup> Foreword by Jacob Neusner to Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscripts Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity with Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), xxvii. Robert M. Price suggests that Smith based his hoax on J. H. Hunter’s *The Mystery of Mar Saba* (1940) (“Second Thoughts on the Secret Gospel,” *BBR* 14.1 [2004]: 127–32).

<sup>113</sup> Derek Krueger, “The Bawdy and Society: The Shamelessness of Diogenes in Roman Imperial Culture,” in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, ed. Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 222–239.

The leading advocate of the Cynic hypothesis, F. Gerald Downing, admits that there is no solid evidence for a Cynic presence in Galilee at the time of Jesus (*Cynics and Christian Origins* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992], 146–147).

<sup>114</sup> Deut 13; 17; 18; 21; Lev 19 and 20; cf. Eric Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus’ Miracles*, JSNTSup 231 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001); Naomi Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews, Christians* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>115</sup> *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 82, 91. In *A Long Way from Tipperary: A Memoir* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000), 29–52, Crossan muses on how far his perceptions have been shaped by Ireland’s struggles with colonialism.

put it metaphorically, the Seminar has performed a sneak epispasm on the historical Jesus, a surgical procedure removing the marks of circumcision."<sup>116</sup>

The question of authenticating Jesus' words and activities has been handled more thoroughly and even-handedly elsewhere.<sup>117</sup> Whereas previous quests sought to set Jesus apart from Judaism, the chief merit of the current quest is its endeavor to see Jesus in the world of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>118</sup> An important feature is "the Jewish reclamation of Jesus."<sup>119</sup> Among those in the forefront are David Flusser,<sup>120</sup> Geza

<sup>116</sup> "The Gospel according to the 'Jesus Seminar': On Some Recent Trends in Gospel Research," in *The Emergence of the Christian Religion: Essays on Early Christianity* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 56.

<sup>117</sup> Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Handbook to Exegesis of the New Testament*, NTTS 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus*; Chilton and Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Chilton and Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, NTTS 28.2; (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, eds., *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002).

<sup>118</sup> John Kenneth Riches, *The World of Jesus: First-Century Judaism in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Maurice Casey, *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God: The Origins and Development of New Testament Christology* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1991); A. Roy Eckardt, *Reclaiming the Jesus of History: Christology Today* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); Graham N. Stanton, *Gospel Truth? New Light on Jesus and the Gospels* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995); William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins, eds., *Whose Historical Jesus? Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997); Marcus J. Borg, ed., *Jesus at 2000* (Boulder: Westview, 1997); Bryan F. Le Beau, Leonard Greenspoon, and Dennis Hamm, eds., *The Historical Jesus through Catholic and Jewish Eyes* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000); Donald A. Hagner, "An Analysis of Recent 'Historical Jesus' Studies," in *Religious Diversity in the Graeco-Roman World: A Survey of Recent Scholarship*, Dan Cohn-Sherbok and John M. Court, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 81–106; Paul Copan and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Who Was Jesus? A Jewish Christian Dialogue* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Doris Donnelly, ed., *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land* (London: Continuum, 2001); Markus Bockmuehl, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Leander E. Keck, *Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); Bruce Chilton, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner, eds., *The Missing Jesus: Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Sean Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

<sup>119</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: An Analysis and Critique of Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984).

<sup>120</sup> David Flusser with R. Steven Notley, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1997); Flusser, "Hillel and Jesus: Two Ways of Self-Awareness," in *Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Leaders*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Loren S. Johns (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 71–107; Ithamar Gruenwald, Shaul Shaked, and Gedaliahu G. Strousma, eds., *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented*

Vermes,<sup>121</sup> and Paula Fredriksen,<sup>122</sup> though it is not easy to reconcile their portraits of Jesus. Flusser and Vermes depict Jesus as a Hasid, a Galilean charismatic holy man in the tradition of Honi the Circle Drawer and Hanina ben Dosa.<sup>123</sup> Their presumed familiarity with God and confidence in their own teaching offended the Pharisees. Hanina was *a man of deed* (*m. Sotah* 9:15); disciples thought of Jesus as “a prophet mighty in word and deed” (Luke 24:19). Jesus proclaimed the imminent intervention of the Father, maintaining his trust until the terrible moment when he realized that God had abandoned him (Mark 15:34).

Fredriksen’s Jesus is an observant Jew whose orthodoxy has been distorted by Mark, who depicts him engaged in polemic against the Torah, the Pharisees, and the Temple.<sup>124</sup> A feature of her reconstruction is her appeal to John according to whom Jesus paid repeated visits to Jerusalem and the Temple.<sup>125</sup> Jesus’ mistake was to proclaim the kingdom’s imminent arrival to Passover pilgrims, who in turn proclaimed him messianic king.<sup>126</sup> Events got out of hand, and Jesus was put to death to avoid a general uprising.

The most comprehensive investigation of Jesus is the Roman Catholic scholar John P. Meier’s *A Marginal Jew*.<sup>127</sup> Meier sees his task as strictly historical, guided by rigorous criteria.<sup>128</sup> Jesus was “marginal”

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to David Flusser on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday, TSAJ 32 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992).

<sup>121</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973; 2nd ed., 1981); *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984) revised as *Jesus in His Jewish Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); *The Changing Faces of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 2000); *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>122</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

<sup>123</sup> Flusser, *Jesus*, 117; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 80; Vermes, “Hanina ben Dosa,” in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, SJLA 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 178–214.

<sup>124</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, 105–106.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 240–241.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 241–259.

<sup>127</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, I: *The Roots of the Problem of the Person*; II: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*; III: *Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994, 2001).

<sup>128</sup> *A Marginal Jew I*, 167–184; 2:5–6. The criteria are (1) embarrassment, suggesting that the church would not have invented embarrassing material; (2) double discontinuity; (3) multiple attestation; (4) coherence with other accepted material; (5) rejection and execution—“A Jesus whose words and deeds did not threaten or alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus.”

in a number of ways. He is hardly mentioned in Jewish and pagan histories. He died the death of a criminal. He marginalized himself by living in poverty and obscurity. By the time he died he had managed to make himself appear obnoxious and dangerous. Jesus proclaimed “the kingdom of God” which was “a tensive symbol, a multifaceted reality, a whole mythic story in miniature that cannot be adequately grasped in a single formula or definition. This is why Jesus can speak of kingdom as both imminent and yet present.”<sup>129</sup> Whereas Meier holds that the exorcisms and healings rest on a bedrock of fact,<sup>130</sup> he is inclined to treat the “nature miracles” as “a product of early Christian theology.”<sup>131</sup>

Current scholarship sees a variety of Judaisms with differing messiahs.<sup>132</sup> Among the issues are how Jesus relates to the Dead Sea Scrolls,<sup>133</sup> the Nag Hammadi Codices,<sup>134</sup> Josephus,<sup>135</sup> and how he compares with Hillel.<sup>136</sup> Vexed issues are the political climate of Jesus’ day and the nature of his involvement. The modern debate was initiated

<sup>129</sup> *A Marginal Jew II*, 452.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 726–727; cf. 646–772.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 993; cf. 874–1038.

<sup>132</sup> Jacob Neusner, William S. Green, and Ernest Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 1988); *idem*, ed., *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus in Early Judaism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); *idem*, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998); Timo Eskola, *Messiah and Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse*, WUNT 142 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001).

<sup>133</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

<sup>134</sup> Craig A. Evans, Robert L. Webb, and Richard A. Wiebe, eds., *Nag Hammadi Texts and the Bible: A Synopsis and Index*, NTTs 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Majella Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).

<sup>135</sup> In a passage known as the Testimonium Flavianum, Josephus appears to refer to Jesus as “a wise man,” one who wrought “paradoxical works,” and was “the Christ” (*Ant.* 18.63–64). John P. Meier thinks that once the Christian interpolations are removed Josephus regarded Jesus as a sage (*A Marginal Jew I*, 56–88). Others, including F. F. Bruce, Graham N. Stanton, and Graham H. Twelftree, read the passage as a condemnation (van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 81–103).

<sup>136</sup> James H. Charlesworth and Loren S. Johns, eds., *Hillel and Jesus: Comparative Studies of Two Major Leaders*.



by Martin Hengel's *The Zealots* (1961).<sup>137</sup> Hengel sees continuity between a Zealot movement which dates back to the Maccabees and the violent Zealot party that emerged in the Jewish War. The archetypal hero Phinehas "was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the Israelites" (Num 25:6–13; 4 Macc. 18:12). One of Jesus' disciples was Simon the Zealot (Mark 3:18; Matt 4:10; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). Jesus himself was a non-violent revolutionist, a charismatic leader whose call to follow him set him apart from rabbinic Judaism. He dared to act in God's place as he summoned Israel to repent in light of the nearness of God's rule.<sup>138</sup>

Richard A. Horsley challenges the Zealot hypothesis, claiming that the Zealots emerged only during the War with Rome. He sees a mounting spiral of violence, which led from social exploitation to revolution. Horsley's Jesus is a prophetic leader who opposed violence and institutional oppression. Jesus sought social renewal within village life, calling for egalitarian family relations, non-hierarchical communities, canceling of debts, sharing, mutual assistance and reconciliation. Jesus spearheaded a renewal movement, and pronounced divine judgment on Rome and its client rulers in Israel.<sup>139</sup> At issue here is whether Jesus was primarily a religious reformer or an *avant garde* social reformer. There can be no doubt that Mark deliberately pits Jesus as God's Son against the imperial cult of the emperor.<sup>140</sup> At the same time Mark

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<sup>137</sup> *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.*, trans. David Smith (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989).

<sup>138</sup> *The Charismatic Leader and his Followers*, trans. James Greig (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 68–69, 86–88; *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

S. G. F. Brandon went beyond Hengel, and saw links between Jesus' followers and the Zealots, which were suppressed in Christian literature (*Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967]). See also Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule, eds., *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>139</sup> "The Zealots: Their Origin, Relationships and Importance in the Jewish Revolt," *NovT* 28.2 (1986): 159–192; Horsley and John D. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985); Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Order* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

<sup>140</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), lxxx–xciii; cf. Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*, trans. Brian McNeil (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 288–313. Evans observes that Mark "presents Jesus as the true son of God and in doing so deliberately

depicts Jesus as the agent of God's purpose whose mission was to restore Israel to her God.<sup>141</sup>

The Canadian Roman Catholic Ben F. Meyer depicted Jesus as the builder of the messianic Temple of the eschaton—the restored remnant of Israel and the gathered Gentiles.<sup>142</sup> Meyer sought to press beyond positivistic history's attempt to discover "facts" buried in the detritus of history by drawing on the critical realism of the philosopher Bernard Lonergan.<sup>143</sup> Critical realism recognizes that, while the historical Jesus is an intellectual construct, the construct and the process by which it is reached enable one to grasp something of the intelligible reality embedded in the sources.

*Jesus and Judaism* (1985) by E. P. Sanders assessed the state of current scholarship with regard to two questions: Jesus' intention and his relationship to his contemporaries.<sup>144</sup> These questions led to others: the reasons for Jesus' death and for the split between Christianity and Judaism. Sanders broke with convention by refusing to start with Jesus

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presents Jesus in opposition to Rome's candidates for a suitable emperor, savior, and lord. All the features that made up the emperor cult and the various customs associated with the office and title of emperor in various ways find expression in NT Christology" (lxxxix). They include the term *euangelion* "gospel" (found once in the Old Testament [2 Sam 4:10], but frequently in inscriptions, papyri, Josephus), omens, prophecies, the "triumphal procession" of the condemned, being hailed in divine terms, confession of Jesus as Lord, healing, sitting/standing at God's right hand, hope of Jesus' *parousia* and a new order, post-mortem recognition.

<sup>141</sup> G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, ed. L. D. Hurst (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 365–66; Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (London: Athlone, 1965).

<sup>142</sup> *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979); *Critical Realism and the New Testament*, PTMS 17 (Allison Park: Pickwick, 1989); *Christus Faber: The Master-Builder and the House of God*, PTMS 29 (Allison Park: Pickwick, 1992); *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1994). See n. 103.

<sup>143</sup> "Knowing...is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging and believing. The criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The reality known is not just looked at; it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding, posited by judgment and belief" (Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972], 238). Lonergan developed his epistemology in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958; 3rd ed., 1970). It is summed up in "Cognitive Structure," in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 4. *Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 205–221.

<sup>144</sup> *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Sanders has further developed his view of Jesus' orthodoxy in *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990); and *Judaism, Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992). *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1992) presents a summary.

as a teacher. For there is no consensus on what or how he taught, and this procedure tacitly presumes that Jesus was first and foremost a teacher. Sanders's method was to start with what was most certain and look for explanations. Eight facts may be assumed.

1. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.
2. Jesus was a Galilean who preached and healed.
3. Jesus called disciples and spoke of there being twelve.
4. Jesus confined his activity to Israel.
5. Jesus engaged in a controversy about the temple.
6. Jesus was crucified outside Jerusalem by the Roman authorities.
7. After his death Jesus' followers continued as an identifiable movement.
8. At least some Jews persecuted at least parts of the new movement (Gal 1, 13, 22; Phil 3, 6), and it appears that this persecution endured at least to a time near the end of Paul's career (2 Cor 11, 24; Gal 5, 11; 6, 12; cf. Matt 23, 34; 10, 17).<sup>145</sup>

The test of a good hypothesis for explaining these facts is that "it should situate Jesus believably in Judaism and yet explain why the movement initiated by him eventually broke with Judaism."<sup>146</sup> Sanders rejected the traditional view that Jesus intended to "cleanse" the Temple so that "pure" worship might be restored. Any real effort to stop the Temple trade would have required an army.<sup>147</sup> Sanders concluded that Jesus "probably expected a new temple to be given by God from heaven, and that he made a demonstration which prophetically symbolized the coming event."<sup>148</sup> It was this act—not any supposed difference of teaching and religious practice—which led to Jesus' death.<sup>149</sup>

"We do not learn with certainty what Jesus thought of himself, although it is reasonable to think that he, as well as his followers, saw his miracles as testifying to his being a true messenger from or an agent of God."<sup>150</sup> Sanders's Jesus bears an uncanny resemblance to Schweitzer's. Sanders admitted the likeness, but claimed that his version is superior.<sup>151</sup> Schweitzer's Jesus was based chiefly on Matthew 10. Jesus expected a cosmic cataclysm preceded by suffering. Sanders's Jesus was driven by "restoration eschatology" which envisaged that God would establish a new Temple. Both were mistaken.

<sup>145</sup> *Jesus and Judaism*, 11.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 70; cf. Hengel, *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* 16–17.

<sup>148</sup> *Jesus and Judaism*, 75.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 294–318.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

Return to the eschatological Jesus has been urged by Dale C. Allison, Jr.,<sup>152</sup> Bart D. Ehrman,<sup>153</sup> Ben Witherington III,<sup>154</sup> and E. Earle Ellis.<sup>155</sup> Interpretations of Jesus' eschatological discourse have been definitively surveyed by George R. Beasley-Murray.<sup>156</sup> In his multi-volume *Christian Origins and the Question of God*<sup>157</sup> N. T. Wright presents an alternative view. For Schweitzer eschatology meant the end of the world. For Crossan it is a vehicle of socio-political critique. For Wright eschatology is "the climax of Israel's history, involving events for which end-of-the-world language is the only set of metaphors adequate to express the significance of what will happen, but resulting in a new and quite different phase *within* space-time history."<sup>158</sup> "The gospel subverts the normal Jewish apocalyptic tellings of Israel's story, not by renouncing the ideas and literary modes of apocalyptic, but by redirecting its central thrust."<sup>159</sup>

A feature of Wright's reconstruction is his exile theology—the belief of many Israelites that, although they had returned from Babylon and the Temple had been rebuilt, conditions were such that it felt as if they were still in exile. Israel was in bondage to foreigners, and worse, Israel's God had not returned to Zion.<sup>160</sup> "Jesus saw himself as a prophet announcing the kingdom of YHWH; he believed himself to be Israel's true Messiah; he believed that the kingdom would be brought about by means of his own death at the hands of the pagans. He believed, that is, that the message of the Isaianic herald was coming true at last:

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<sup>152</sup> *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

<sup>153</sup> *Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>154</sup> *Jesus, Paul, and the End of the World: A Comparative Study in New Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992). Elsewhere Witherington argues that Jesus cannot be fitted into a single category. His roles include agent, sage, and prophet (*The Christology of Jesus* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990]; *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994]; *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999]).

<sup>155</sup> *Christ and the Future in New Testament History*, NovTSup 97 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>156</sup> *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993).

<sup>157</sup> *The New Testament and the People of God*; *Jesus and the Victory of God*; and *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992, 1996, 2003).

<sup>158</sup> *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 208.

<sup>159</sup> *The New Testament and the People of God*, 392–393; cf. 280–338.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 268–272; *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 126–127, 203–204.

Israel's god [*sic*] was becoming king, 'Babylon' was being defeated, and the exile was over at last."<sup>161</sup>

Wright has proved a catalyst in bringing to the fore the themes of exile and restoration, and has reenergized interest in the historical Jesus.<sup>162</sup> Yet his exile theology<sup>163</sup> and concern for critical history have been questioned. Luke Timothy Johnson faults Wright's consistent adherence to "a theoretical model" and propensity to caricature. "The strength of the model is its simplicity and clarity. The weakness... is that the simplicity is achieved at the cost of a more adequate reading of the evidence." "Wright has taken pieces of evidence that fit his overall schema and rejected or reinterpreted pieces that don't." "Wright seems intent on maintaining the character of the Gospels as accurate historical records basically unaffected by literary shaping, while at the same time he is insisting that they tell the story of Jesus as the story of Israel in miniature." "He provides no reason why he follows now one Gospel and now another; indeed, he fails to acknowledge that this is his procedure."<sup>164</sup>

I am not convinced by Wright's claims that the gospels "are the story of Jesus *told as the story of Israel in miniature*,"<sup>165</sup> and that the point of the parables is to teach this metanarrative.<sup>166</sup> Whereas Wright repeatedly explains his ideas, it has fallen to others to make the case for exile theology and the restoration of Israel.<sup>167</sup> The themes of exile

<sup>161</sup> *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 612.

<sup>162</sup> Carey C. Newman, ed., *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

<sup>163</sup> Reviews by Clive Marsh and Maurice Casey, *JSNT* 69 (1998): 77–94, 95–103; cf. Wright's reply, 105–12.

<sup>164</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, "A Historiographical Response to Wright's Jesus," in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel*, ed. Newman, 207, 214, 217, 218. Wright responds to his critics on pages 244–277.

<sup>165</sup> *The New Testament and the People of God*, 402; cf. *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 631.

<sup>166</sup> See Wright's treatment of the parables of the prodigal son and the sower (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 125–131, 230–239). There are good reasons to think that the former is based on the stubborn and rebellious son (Deut 21:18–21) and the wise and foolish son in wisdom literature (Colin Brown, "The Parable of the Rebellious Son(s)," *SJT* 51.4 [1998]: 391–405). The parable defends Jesus' reception of sinners, and poses the riddle: who is the stubborn and rebellious son—Jesus or his critics?

<sup>167</sup> Craig A. Evans, "Aspects of Exile and Restoration in the Proclamation of Jesus and the Gospels," Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity and Restoration*, AGJU 39 (Leiden: Brill 1997), 263–293; Evans, "Jesus & the Continuing Exile of Israel," in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel*, ed. Newman, 77–100. See also James M. Scott, ed., *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*

and restoration are crucial to understanding the historical Jesus, but they need to be filled out by exploring other areas. Missing is recognition of the importance of purity and holiness.<sup>168</sup> Jacob Neusner has observed: “The land is holy, therefore must be kept clean. It may be profaned by becoming unclean.”<sup>169</sup> The Jesus of the gospels appears repeatedly to cross boundaries of purity.<sup>170</sup> Actions like touching a leper, a woman with a flow of blood, and the corpse of a girl, healing on the Sabbath, consorting with tax collectors and sinners, and challenging dietary laws appear to threaten Temple-centered piety.<sup>171</sup> Bruce Chilton resists these implications and depicts Jesus as a Galilean rabbi in some ways more orthodox than his adversaries. The ultimate conflict turned on Jesus’ Temple action protesting the practice (recently introduced, according to Chilton, by Caiaphas) of selling animals for sacrifice within the Temple precincts.<sup>172</sup> Marcus J. Borg sees the difference between Jesus and his adversaries as one of orthopraxis. For the Pharisees, the dominant paradigm was holiness. For Jesus, it was justice, mercy and faithfulness.<sup>173</sup> Klaus Berger traces the root of the con-

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SJSJ 56 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Scott, ed., *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions*, SJSJ 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>168</sup> Chilton and Evans, *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity and Restoration*.

<sup>169</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, SJLA 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 108; cf. Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbinic Foundations*, SBLDS 143 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993); *Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001); Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 52–54, 65–70, 197–214.

<sup>170</sup> David Rhoads, “Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries,” in *Mark and Method*, Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, ed., 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 145–79.

<sup>171</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus and the Temple,” in *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), 37–56.

<sup>172</sup> *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); *Profiles of a Rabbi: Synoptic Opportunities in Reading about Jesus*, BJS 177 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); *Pure Kingdom: Jesus’ Vision of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Random House, 2000).

Craig A. Evans offers alternative views: “Jesus’ Action in the Temple and Evidence of Corruption in the First-Century Temple,” “Jesus and the ‘Cave of Robbers’: Towards a Jewish Context for the Temple Action,” “Jesus and Predictions of the Destruction of the Herodian Temple,” in *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 319–344, 345–366, 367–380; “Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent,” in Chilton and Evans, *Jesus in Context*, 395–440.

<sup>173</sup> Marcus J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, [1984] 1998), 116; *Jesus A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997).

flict to different conceptions of purity.<sup>174</sup> The Pharisees had a “defensive” attitude, which avoided contact with whatever defiled, and followed prescribed rituals when contact was unavoidable. Jesus’ disregard of “defensive” purity violated Pharisaic practice. His practice of “offensive” holiness conveyed purity to the unclean in virtue of his anointing by the Spirit.<sup>175</sup> Mark’s Jesus makes the impure pure, the common holy, and includes the excluded.<sup>176</sup> Berger’s view puts purity at center stage, and is in my view compelling.

At the same time, Jesus’ “offensive holiness” raises the question of whether Jesus’ healings and exorcisms might be the signs of a seducer, a false prophet who performed signs and wonders in order to lead Israel astray (Deut 13:1–11; 11Q Temple Scroll XLIV, 8–18; *m. Sanh.* 7:4, 10; Mark 3:20–32 par.; Luke 4:27–28; John 7:12; 8:48–49, 59; 11:47–48).<sup>177</sup> In my view this is a central issue in the canonical gospels.<sup>178</sup> The healings and exorcisms<sup>179</sup> of Jesus were not simply acts of

<sup>174</sup> “Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 231–262; cf. Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Idea of Purity in Mark’s Gospel,” *Semeia* 35 (1986): 91–128.

<sup>175</sup> Berger, “Jesus,” 247.

<sup>176</sup> On exclusion of the lame, blind, deaf, and blemished see Num 5:2–3; Lev 21:17–24; 2 Sam 5:6–8; Isa 52:1; Joel 3:17; 1Q28a 2.3–10; 11Q Temple 45.12–14; *Kelim* 1:1–9; cf. S. John Roth, *The Blind, the Lame, and the Poor: Character Types in Luke Acts*, JSNTSup 144 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>177</sup> August Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit: Untersuchungen zum Strafverfahren gegen Jesus*, WUNT 21 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1980); Otto Betz, “Probleme des Prozesses Jesu,” *ANRW II* 25.2 (1982): 566–647; J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Jesus as a Seducer (PLANOS = MAT‘EH),” *Bijdragen* 55 (1994): 43–55.

<sup>178</sup> Colin Brown, “Synoptic Miracle Stories: A Jewish Religious and Social Setting,” *Foundations and Facets Forum* 2.4 (1986): 55–76; “The Jesus of Mark’s Gospel,” in *Jesus Then & Now*, ed. Meyer & Hughes, 26–53; cf. Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); David E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW II* 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557; Edwin M. Yamauchi, “Magic or Miracle? Disease, Demons and Exorcisms,” in *Gospel Perspectives* 6, *The Miracles of Jesus*, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 89–185.

The question was hotly debated in the early centuries. See Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69, 102, 106–107; *First Apology* 30; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.38; Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 3; Acts of Thomas 96; *b. Sanh* 43a; cf. Graham N. Stanton, “Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God’s People?,” *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ*, ed. Evan and Turner, 164–180; Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsum and Origen on Jesus*, SBLDS 64 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century*, PMS 10 (Cambridge: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983); Frederic W. Norris, “Eusebius on Jesus as Deceiver and Sorcerer,” in *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 523–540.

<sup>179</sup> Howard Clark Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle*

compassion, but in the tradition of the sign-working prophets,<sup>180</sup> they were signs (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20).<sup>181</sup> What made them problematic for the Pharisees was their *combination* with deviant teaching and praxis that made Jesus seem to fit the profile of the sign-working false prophet of Deuteronomy 13. The Beelzebul charge was a capital offence, which suggests that Beelzebul was “the other God” whom Jesus was serving. Jesus was under a cloud of suspicion from the early days of his public activity.

The motif of Jesus as a sign-working false prophet is maintained through the hearing before the Sanhedrin with the question about rebuilding the Temple in three days, the taunts to prophesy, the challenge to come down from the cross, and the presumed call to Elijah. The turning point is Jesus’ prophecy of the sign that the high priest would see Jesus as the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power

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*Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, trans. Francis McDonagh, ed. John Riches (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Time*, SNTSMS 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Barry Blackburn, *Theios Aner and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the Theios Aner Concept as an Interpretative Background of the Miracle Traditions in Mark*, WUNT 40 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991); Blackburn, “The Miracles of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 353–94; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 54 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993); *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999); John Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).

See also Susan R. Garrett, *Magic and the Demonic in Luke’s Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Peter G. Bolt, “Jesus, the Daimons and the Dead,” in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 75–102; *Jesus’ Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark’s Early Readers*, SNTSMS 125 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought*, JPTSS 13 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger, and K. F. Diethard Römheld, eds., *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>180</sup> Alan Richardson, *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1941), 50–58; Maria Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen Jesu. Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem geschichtlichen Jesus* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1980); Morna D. Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997). Non-miraculous signs include Jesus’ taking a child in his arms (Mark 9:36; cf. 10:13–16), instructing his disciples to shake off the dust from their feet as a sign (Mark 6:11), entering the Holy City on a colt (Mark 11:1–11; cf. Matt 21:5; Zech 9:9), “cleansing” the Temple (Mark 11:1–19 par.), washing the disciples’ feet (John 13:1–12), sharing bread and wine as his body and blood at the Last Supper (Mark 14:22–24 par.).

<sup>181</sup> Edward J. Woods, *The ‘Finger of God’ and Pneumatology in Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 205 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).



coming with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62 par.; cf. Psalm 110; Dan 7:13). The high priest Caiaphas<sup>182</sup> tears his robes (cf. *m. Sanh.* 7:5) on hearing this blasphemy, and Jesus is condemned.<sup>183</sup>

Two attempts to reexamine the divinity of Christ should be noted. In a series of studies culminating in *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*<sup>184</sup> Larry W. Hurtado has analyzed veneration of Jesus in the context of Jewish Christian monotheism.<sup>185</sup> Spirit christology explores the role of the Spirit in the activity of Jesus (Mark 1:10 par.; 3:29; Luke 4:18; 11:20; Matt 12:18, 28). James D. G. Dunn contends: "Certainly, it is quite clear that if we can indeed properly speak of the 'divinity' of the *historical* Jesus, we can do so in terms of his experience of God: *his 'divinity' means his relationship with the Father as son and the Spirit of God in him.*"<sup>186</sup> The notion of the "incarnation" of the preexistent Son imposes patristic christology on the New Testament.<sup>187</sup> On the other hand, Gerald F. Hawthorne<sup>188</sup> and

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<sup>182</sup> Helen K. Bond, *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

<sup>183</sup> Otto Betz, ANRW II 25.1, 595; Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit*, 81–86; Darrell L. Bock, "The Son of Man Seated at God's Right Hand and the Debate over Jesus' 'Blasphemy,'" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. Green and Turner, 181–191; *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus: A Philological-Historical Study of the Key Jewish Themes Impacting Mark 14:61–64*, WUNT 106 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998); Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:484–515.

<sup>184</sup> Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

<sup>185</sup> Earlier studies are *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>186</sup> *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975), 92; cf. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd ed. 1989, reprint 1996), 138; *The Christ and the Spirit*, 1. *Christology, Pneumatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, and Stephen C. Barton, eds., *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D.G. Dunn* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). Dunn's recent work focuses on the impact made by Jesus (*Jesus Remembered* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003]).

<sup>187</sup> "Christ, Adam, and Preexistence," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philipians* 2, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 74–83.

<sup>188</sup> "In the Form of God and Equal with God (Philippians 2:6), in *Where Christology Began*, ed. Martin and Dodd 96–110; *The Presence and the Power: The Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Ministry of Jesus* (Dallas: Word, 1991).

Ralph Del Colle<sup>189</sup> seek to combine Spirit Christology with traditional Christology. The late Dutch Jesuit, Piet Schoonenberg,<sup>190</sup> saw Spirit Christology as a means of redressing the imbalance of Chalcedonian two-natures Christology. Craig S. Keener argues that early Christian experience centered on the Holy Spirit: Jesus is the bringer of the Spirit.<sup>191</sup>

### 3. *Unfinished Agenda*

The idea of three quests of the historical Jesus is more a convenient tool than accurate account of the situation. Perhaps there are only two quests with many forms—the quest of the *unhistorical* Jesus and the quest of the *historical* Jesus. Both are unfinished. Doubtless many will continue to pursue the quest of the *unhistorical* Jesus, in the belief that the *unhistorical* Jesus is the *real* Jesus. But a Jesus of faith detached from history is a figment of the imagination. For Christians and those of other faiths the reality of Jesus cannot be detached from history. The agenda for the future will emerge out of the questions that exercise us today.

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<sup>189</sup> *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit Christology in Trinitarian Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>190</sup> *The Christ: A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ*, trans. Della Couling (New York: Herder, 1971). Schoonenberg came under censorship for inverting the doctrine of *enhypostasia*, claiming that the Logos became personal in Jesus (*The Christ*, 88–91). Spirit Christology figures in Schoonenberg's later work, *Der Geist, das Wort und der Sohn: Eine Geist-Christologie*, trans. Wilma Immler (Regensburg: Pustet, 1992); cf. Birgit Blankenberg, *Gottes Geist in der Theologie Piet Schoonenbergs* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 2000).

<sup>191</sup> *The Spirit in the Gospels and Acts: Divine Purity and Power* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997).

## FUTURES FOR THE JESUS QUESTS

BENGT HOLMBERG

### 1. *Introduction*

In a well-known article, “Jesus the Victim” (originally a presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature 1991), Helmut Koester criticized “the Third Quest” of the historical Jesus. He noted that what some scholars saw as a new era in Jesus research was in reality more of a return to the position of liberal theology of a hundred years ago: Jesus is again the non-eschatological social reformer:

We are again on the way to a human Jesus who is just like one of us, one who holds values that are very close to our ideological commitments, a Jesus who is a social reformer and who attacks patriarchal orders, a Jesus who, as a real human person, can stand as an example and inspiration for worthy causes.<sup>1</sup>

The “progress” made in the field of Jesus research might then, in Koester’s view, be more of a shift in how present-day scholars want to see Jesus than a real advance in historical understanding of him or in the application of rigorous historical methods.

This critical perspective is a healthy reminder that present-day weaknesses in scholarship might simply be rehearsals of past ones—only so much harder to recognize because we believe them to be safely done with. But from the fact that the historical picture of Jesus today is again more similar to what scholars held a hundred years ago one can draw two different conclusions. Either: we are repeating their mistakes (Koester’s position), or: they were not all that mistaken! Only an ingrained evolutionist who believes that later is always better needs to conclude from the detected similarity between scholarly perspectives a hundred years apart that they must both be wrong, and that the present has not “advanced” beyond the past. But possibly they might both have got some things right. In my opinion, none of the quests should

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<sup>1</sup> Helmut Koester, “Jesus the Victim,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 3–15, at 7, referring to Marcus Borg, Richard Horsley and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

be discarded or accepted as a whole. Looking over weak and strong aspects of the scholarly endeavour of more than two centuries of Jesus research, we might conclude that some of the roads taken are dead-end streets, while others have not been explored enough and still others open possibilities of increased historical understanding.

### 1.1. *A Brief Look at the Three Quests*

It should be admitted at the outset that it is hard to avoid a good amount of simplification in talking about different “quests” (let alone three quests), as if they were fairly unitary and distinct entities in the history of scholarship.<sup>2</sup> But scholarly constructs like labelling and sorting phenomena, books and scholars in patterns, taxonomies, lines of development, and periods of research are inevitable if one wants to make large-scale but interesting generalizations.

So, to characterize very briefly: The First Quest of the historical Jesus (ca. 1780–ca. 1955) aimed at finding the real, “historical” Jesus behind the gospel surface, especially by going back to the oldest layers, or “sources,” in the gospel tradition. After subtracting the considerable amount of Christian interpretation and “mythology” from these sources, they (mainly Mark and Q) were thought to provide a fairly objective historical report of Jesus, depicting him as an ethical reformer and preacher. A typical work in this genre is Adolf von Harnack’s *The Essence of Christianity* (1900).

The “First Quest” of the historical Jesus became a label designating all previous Jesus research only when James M. Robinson published a book in 1959 on the renewed historical Jesus research in Germany. In Robinson’s opinion, what had followed upon the famous lecture of Ernst Käsemann in Marburg in 1953 on the need to take up this scholarly work again was so revolutionary and different from anything that had been done in the field before that he named it *The New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959). So, everything earlier became

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<sup>2</sup> The division of the history of Jesus research into three or even four periods—First Quest, No Quest, Second Quest, Third Quest—has been challenged by several scholars. See e.g. William Telford, “Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus”, in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33–74, esp. 62–64, Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM, 1998), 22–30, opting for five stages in Jesus research; and Clive Marsh, “Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective,” *BibInt* 5 (1997): 403–437, who would rather talk about *nine* different quests.

the “Old” or “First Quest.” The title alluded, of course, to *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, the title of the 1910 English translation of Albert Schweitzer’s important study and critique of all previous historical study of Jesus, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (1906).

In the first half of the twentieth century it had become clearer to Jesus research that even the oldest sources in the tradition about Jesus were saturated with christology and had been formed by a generation of oral transmission in Christian groups. Consequently, pessimism had grown about the possibility of reaching Jesus himself at all by way of historical research (cf. Rudolf Bultmann). The method of the Second Quest (ca. 1955–1990) to penetrate the double barrier of Christian oral tradition and Christian redaction of sources was to use sharply formulated criteria of authenticity to ensure a critically secure minimum of Jesus sayings which could then serve as the basis for an historical picture of him. The paramount criterion was that of double dissimilarity: only that in the Jesus tradition which was unlike *both* contemporary Judaism *and* the earliest Christianity could be considered authentic Jesus material. Typical works in this genre are Günther Bornkamm’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (1956) and Norman Perrin’s *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (1967).<sup>3</sup>

The next time a scholar wanted to indicate that a fresh new start had been made in Jesus research it was inevitable that the “quests” would start being numbered the “first,” “second,” and “third.” This happened in 1988 when N. Tom Wright published the second edition of Stephen E. Neill’s *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1961*, changing the concluding date to 1986, and adding a long chapter on what had happened in the 25 years since the book’s first edition. One of the more remarkable things, in Wright’s opinion, was the major turn-about that had taken place within Jesus research around 1980.

A new optimism with regard to the feasibility of historiography on Jesus had emerged, together with a determined focus on the Jewishness of Jesus and his rootedness in contemporary Judaism (rather than his dissimilarity from it), as well as his undeniable influence on and continuity with the movement that became “the Christians.” While not denying that Second Quest scholars were still active, Wright considered

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<sup>3</sup> G. Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956); N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967).

this new, less theological approach, the Third Quest, to be the way forward for a real historical investigation of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

But even Tom Wright who introduced the label warns against simply lumping together all scholars who have written on the historical Jesus during the last twenty years under the label “Third Quest.” There is still quite an amount of research on Jesus performed in the Second Quest style, and there is no inevitability or necessity of changing to a Third Quest outlook. What distinguishes one “quest” from another has primarily to do with differences in hermeneutical and historical method and historical focus, and many of these differences between scholars remain and are likely to do so.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.2. *And Next?*

The prophetic task that I have accepted from the editors in relation to research on Jesus is of course a very human undertaking. But it shares the properties of prophecy in being a mixture of prediction and prescription. What must happen in Jesus research nobody can say, but to voice an opinion about what ought to and possibly will happen belongs to the responsibility of scholars to reflect upon their trade. So, I will point to a few characteristics of Jesus research that I think will and should prevail in the future. I will pronounce only two “prophecies,” both fairly broad and general:

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<sup>4</sup> Against the impression sometimes given that Jesus research of the Third Quest type is a mostly North American and British enterprise, it should be pointed out that important new books of this kind have been published by or with substantial input from German scholars: Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehr-buch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), English translation: *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt eds., *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, JSNTSup 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Andreas Lindemann, ed., *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven Univ. Press and Peeters, 2001); Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, eds., *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, BZ NW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002); Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce J. Malina and Gerd Theissen, eds., *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), Gerd Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, ed. Annette Merz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003); Gerd Theissen, *Die Jesusbewegung: Sozial-geschichte einer Revolution der Werte* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> See N. Tom Wright’s “Introduction” to the republication of an important work that more or less started the “Third Quest” in 1979: Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, with a New Introduction by N. T. Wright, PTM 48 (San José: Pickwick Publications, 2002), 9a–91, at 9e.

- A. The gospels will be seen as generally trustworthy evidence of Jesus.
- B. Jesus research will use a more holistic method.

2. *“Prophecy” 1: The Gospels Will Be Seen as Generally Trustworthy Evidence of Jesus*

This statement could easily be thought to constitute nothing more than a traditionalist hope or apologetic wishful thinking. Therefore, I want to point to a number of arguments put forward by scholars writing on the methodology of Jesus research in order to indicate that there are good reasons for our discipline to develop in the said direction.

2.1. *Neither Trust nor Mistrust in Historical Sources should be Exaggerated*

The first argument is a very general observation by Gerd Theissen: The very same axiom that prevents us from believing in a perfectly truthful representation of historical reality in human memory and narrative also prevents us from believing in the possibility of a perfectly false representation of that reality. One is not more possible than the other.<sup>6</sup>

Why is it practically impossible to doubt the existence of Pontius Pilate, realizing, as we do, that all historical knowledge is relative and hypothetical? The answer is, in Theissen’s witty formulation, that even if there had existed in the first century a powerful Committee for Deceiving Later Historians intent on presenting a false picture of their own historical reality—including a Roman governor Pilate that never existed—it would be a simply unattainable goal for them to control all sources and remains needed to produce that effect. Should we imagine that they had arranged for false coins with Pilate’s name to be planted in the soil of Palestine and to smuggle in an inscription mentioning him and his official title as part of a stair in the theatre of Caesarea? Did the committee manage to talk Philo, Josephus and Tacitus (or later copyists of their works) into adding some notices about Pilate here and there in their writings, and then also have the evangelists tell

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<sup>6</sup> Gerd Theissen, “Historische Skepsis und Jesusforschung,” in *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Gerd Theissen herausgegeben von Annette Merz*, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 327–363, esp. 333–334.

about him in ways that neither contradict nor borrow information from these other writers? The only possible answer is: impossible!<sup>7</sup>

The practical conclusion or methodological axiom informing historical work with ancient sources like the gospels is therefore necessarily a double one: Human beings are incapable of attaining perfect historical truth, and that is why we have to treat even the best of sources with a methodically disciplined mistrust. Humans are also incapable of attaining perfect historical falsehood, and that is why we ought to treat historical sources with a methodically disciplined trust. So, both reasoned trust and reasoned mistrust should be part of a scholarly historiography.

## 2.2. *Dispensing with Hyperscepticism as Historical Method*

Early nineteenth-century research in ancient history and classical literature was dominated by a strong scepticism. The critical spirit saturated historical work to the extent that eventually scholars disbelieved everything stated by a Greek or Roman historian or writer, including of course all information about authorship of literary works. They wanted instead to build their historical reconstructions only on a critically secure minimum of information that had been excavated and sifted out like grains of gold from the ancient deserts of unreliable texts—and of course a large amount of conjectures and daring hypotheses of their own. The latter were necessary as the textual data had been reduced to a few fragments.<sup>8</sup>

The monumental presumption that lay behind both the consistent scepticism against ancient information and the unmitigated trust in one's own inventiveness as a better source of knowledge was however unmasked and abandoned in the classical disciplines already before 1900. Historians of antiquity and classical philologists were the first to point out that a maximal distrust of information from the available sources must lead to a paralysis of historical research. And very often this attitude results, as it must, in researchers resorting to vastly more fanciful and complicated hypotheses than the ones based on a critical trust in the usefulness of ancient sources in retrieving historical infor-

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<sup>7</sup> In stating the impossibility of complete falsehood in historical sources Theissen is thinking of source material of some scope and complexity, not a single statement of fact, which can of course be completely true or false.

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm F. Lowe, "The Critical and the Skeptical Methods in New Testament Research," *Greg* 81 (2000): 693–721.



mation about ancient times. But in classical scholarship this hypersceptical attitude has been replaced since more than a hundred years by ordinary historical-critical work built on probability judgments reached by the process of hypothesis and verification.

Total historical scepticism is an intoxicating drug that makes its addict think that he or she has reached a very high level of critical scholarship. In a more sober mood historians use more effort in being critical against their own and others' hypotheses than on critiquing away the available historical material. I believe it is high time that the turning away from nineteenth-century hyperscepticism as a methodological postulate should be undertaken also in New Testament studies, including Jesus research.<sup>9</sup> Part of the problem is the reluctance of biblical scholars to appear gullible and pious (*"unkritisch"*). If we exegetes apply the same attitude to the gospels as classicists and historians do in regard to their texts our discipline will produce simpler hypotheses, doubtless closer to the image given by the sources, and that causes discomfort concerning one's scholarly image. But the discomfort will probably wane. In scholarship a simple hypothesis is not evidence of a simpleton, and there is no ban on arriving at answers to historical questions which lie close to the information in our sources.

I predict that in the future historians of Jesus will find it more probable that the originality, inner consistency and daringly innovative appeal to and continuity with biblical and Jewish religious tradition that mark the core of the Jesus tradition of the gospels comes basically from *one* person endowed with a strong intellect and prophetic passion (Jesus), than that this is the result of a many-layered accumulation and redaction process in which any number of early Christian teachers and theologians could and did cooperate.<sup>10</sup> This means that the gospel tradition is more generally seen as fairly (not totally!) reliable evidence about what Jesus said and did, even if the tradition has obviously been worked on and every single saying or story remains with a margin of uncertainty as regards historicity.

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<sup>9</sup> One of the four tendencies that Scot McKnight sees as characteristic for recent Jesus research is scepticism in methodology: "Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic and Leicester: Apollos, 2004): 149–176, esp. 153–162.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Paul W. Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997, repr. 2000).

### 2.3. *Hearing the Voice of Jesus*

Joachim Jeremias put some effort into finding characteristics of what he termed the *ipsissima vox Iesu*, “the very own voice of Jesus.” He reckoned that if a retranslation of Greek Jesus logia into Aramaic reveals structured language, such as word-play, alliteration, or rhythm, this would increase the probability that we really have an Aramaic original from Jesus under the Greek wording. Among such characteristics of Jesus’ diction that Jeremias collected in his last book are: the frequent use of passive when Jesus refers to God, and of antithetical parallelisms (there are more than 100 in the gospels), alliterations and assonances, several types of patterned, poetic rhythms in the wording of sayings, the opening *Amen*, a high frequency of pictorial language, enigmas, metaphors and parables, and frequent use of words from the stem *mlk*, like “kingdom” or “rule.”<sup>11</sup>

Dale C. Allison has taken up and added to this list of literary features of the Jesus material, or “rhetorical strategies” as he names them, by pointing also to a high frequency of rhetorical questions, hyperboles (the beam in the eye, a camel through a needle’s eye), and aphorisms.<sup>12</sup> In these instances one seems really to be in contact with a special way of talking, a personal diction belonging to an individual, his very own voice. This impression is strengthened by the fact that the diction of the evangelists in redactional material is in many ways different from the one found in the Jesus tradition. Jeremias himself was careful, however, to point out that the existence of these “voice imprints” or typical speech patterns in the gospel tradition is not in itself sufficient to determine whether a Jesus saying in the gospel really is a verbatim rendering of something said by Jesus, *ipsissima verba Iesu*. But it increases the probability that it is.

It is of course imaginable that such easily recognized Jesuanic speech patterns were not only admired, remembered and reproduced, but also imitated by others—especially by the earliest, Aramaic-speaking Christians. Dale Allison asks us to imagine such a scenario: There lived a Jewish woman, Faustina, in Jerusalem in the year 35 CE who had heard Peter preach and became an enthusiastic convert to belief in

<sup>11</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 1., *The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1971), ch. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 49–50.

Jesus as the Christ. Soon she found that she had the gift of prophetic speech, and in the frequent meetings of the Christ-believers she started delivering prophetic messages in the name of the Risen Christ Jesus. She was a revered charismatic figure and those who heard her really believed that her oracles were words from Jesus himself. So, many of her prophetic utterances were remembered and transmitted to other believers with the preface "Jesus said."

Allison asks us to imagine for the sake of his argument that Faustina was actually the one who introduced the apocalyptic Son of Man sayings in earliest Christianity. In her prophetic words from Jesus she used the Aramaic term *bar nasha*, "son of man," that Jesus himself had sometimes used as a modest circumlocution for himself, a self-reference as in the saying "The son of man [= I, Jesus] has nowhere where he can rest his head." But Faustina's use of the term was influenced by the book of Daniel, where "Son of Man" in chapter 7 is used about a figure with heavenly properties, symbolizing the whole of Israel, who after oppression shall come in power and glory from Heaven. By using the Jesuanic phrase "son of man" in a new way she thus made the Risen Jesus prophesy about his return as the heavenly Son of Man. And because these words were added to the oral tradition long before the different collections of sayings and events were written down, it is not possible to distinguish the voice and words of Jesus from those of Faustina, and there is no way of doing so by source analysis or further refined stylistic analysis.<sup>13</sup>

Allison puts forward his Faustina hypothesis mainly in order to demonstrate that our standard criteria of authenticity do not suffice to establish indubitably authentic words of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Neither the "Jesus hypothesis" nor the "Faustina hypothesis" can be strictly disproved, which is why Allison concludes: "if the sayings in the earliest Jesus traditions, taken in their entirety, are not roughly congruent with the sort of things Jesus tended to say, then our task is hopeless."<sup>15</sup> So, before we start any historical investigation of Jesus we must answer

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<sup>13</sup> Allison, *Jesus*, 7–10.

<sup>14</sup> He does not, however, believe in his own hypothesis as an explanation of how the Jesus tradition actually was formed. This is clear from the large part of his book where he tries to show that Jesus was really a "millenarian prophet," whose proclamation and mission was saturated with eschatological thinking. See the listing of seventeen dominant themes of the Jesus tradition on pp. 46–48 where the first eight are eschatological, and especially the thorough argument of pp. 95–171.

<sup>15</sup> Allison, *Jesus*, 35.

Yes or No to the question: Do we hear Jesus through the gospels or not? And if the answer is No, we should face the consequences and put down any quest for the historical Jesus.

Allison thinks there are good reasons to give the answer “Yes, we do hear Jesus in the gospels.” The reasons are not found by starting in a detailed investigation of all sayings one by one (or even the larger complexes of sayings) to see which of them are authentic. One should rather look for an explanatory model or matrix, a larger story, research programme or “gestalt” from which the material is understood as a whole. And the best research programme of that kind is “Jesus as an eschatological prophet.”<sup>16</sup> After giving a number of reasons for concluding that this is an adequate way of summarizing Jesus, Allison goes on to show how the first-century Jesus tradition is not a collection of totally disparate and wholly unrelated materials. Certain themes and motifs and rhetorical strategies are consistently attested over a wide range of the material. About half of these themes are clearly eschatological, others show that Jesus—if this material preserves historical memory—was a teacher of compassion, a moral rigorist, and a miracle worker.

In the end it has to be admitted that either most of these themes and strategies are authentic and made by Jesus—or none of them. Allison’s main proposition, following from his discussion of method in Jesus research, is then that the Jesus tradition is evidence about Jesus, not in part (say 18, 33 or even 50 percent), but either in its entirety or not at all.<sup>17</sup>

This “global” acceptance of or trust in the gospels as evidence about Jesus does not mean that an historian should simply accept anything in this tradition or stop using criteria of authenticity at all. It is still quite difficult to pronounce with certainty on the authenticity of a single utterance of Jesus, while on the other hand the total amount of sayings show a historical profile of high probability. It is simply reasonable to believe that we hear Jesus himself in this tradition of sayings that are found so soon after the end of his life and are so distinct both in form and content.

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<sup>16</sup> Allison, *Jesus*, 36–38.

<sup>17</sup> Allison, *Jesus*, 50–51. He points to the fact that other scholars, such as Nils Astrup Dahl or John Riches, take the same either—or stand, and sums up: “Here it is the collective weight of the evidence, the pattern created by the multitude, that is being considered; the accuracy of any particular witness is another matter” (50 n. 171).

This, like so many historical judgments, is not an unavoidable conclusion from some alleged fund of historical “facts” and super-secure rules for historical work (they do not exist). But it is a well-grounded assumption based on inherent probability. In practice it functions as a hypothesis or basic assumption to work from and see whether it provides good historical explanations. This first step is then followed by the application of (five) criteria or, as Allison names them with Meier, “indices” of authenticity, in order to authenticate individual complexes and topics as probably coming from Jesus himself.

#### 2.4. *Is it so Easy to Imitate Jesus?*

The highly hypothetical character of Allison’s Faustina scenario is underlined by the fact that it presupposes something as possible that must be considered unproven and even unlikely: that a human is capable of completely imitating another person’s characteristic way of thinking and expressing himself—especially if this other person is an innovative and creative thinker. Complete and convincing imitation includes more than a few turns of phrase or the rhythm of spoken Aramaic. It requires mastery of matters more difficult to imitate, such as the other person’s symbolical thinking, understanding of reality, poetical strength and spiritual depth.

How easy is it really to shape a single parable that could be added undetected as equal in literary merit and spiritual depth to the ones we have from Jesus in the gospels? Most of his parables can be told in less than a minute and appear at first simple and artless. But once one starts trying to understand what they really and fully mean they turn out to be subtle, many-layered and pregnant with significance—and not easy to imitate.

If one persists and simply postulates that Faustina was sufficiently gifted, both literarily and spiritually, to enrich the Jesus tradition on a level and scope comparable to (or surpassing) the Master’s, one has actually introduced into the argument a “second Jesus,” an invented genius who is the real originator of a good deal of what the gospels tell us was said by Jesus of Nazareth. And if Faustina has been entered into the explanation of how the sayings of Jesus were produced as a second originator, why not a third or fourth or more? Once we allow five or twenty-five Jesuses,<sup>18</sup> all of whom contributed their separate ideas and

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<sup>18</sup> One could perhaps name this imaginary group of anonymous but brilliantly innovative disciples “the Jesus Seminar.”

pieces to the gospel puzzle image of Jesus, the question becomes unavoidable whether the real Jesus need have been a genius—or whether he need have existed at all—in order to explain the existence of the gospels. And by then we have of course arrived at the second of Allison's two alternatives: the gospel traditions about Jesus are totally unusable as material for historical knowledge about Jesus.

As a fact this second alternative has been the dominant one during the last two centuries of Jesus research: Jesus himself was a fairly simple and uncomplicated person with a small programme and simple teaching on whom theologically genial followers hung layer upon layer of exuberant apocalyptic and messianic ideas, more exactly those ideas that we know as the early Christian faith.

### 2.5. *Possible—Plausible—Probable*

It is possible that this is how the gospel tradition was created, but is it probable? No, and I believe that is why nowadays more Jesus researchers choose the first of Allison's alternatives (global trust in gospels), whether they are Christians or Jews, liberals or traditionalists. It is increasingly realized that in historical research a scholar is much more obliged to find the probable than to invent the possible. Consequently, reconstructions of the historical Jesus have tended during the last two decades to start with a basic trust, albeit a critical one, in the possibility of using the gospels as a basis for historiography.

For any historian it is important to distinguish carefully between what is possible, plausible, and probable. Suggestions about possible explanations of historical data can be put forward by the dozen, while plausible hypotheses demand a higher degree of probability than simply being brilliant and theoretically possible. So the number of arguable, i.e. plausible, explanations is seldom higher than a handful. The will and capacity to then move on from the level of plausibility to a historically well-grounded judgment about which hypothesis is the most probable is, in the words of Bernard Lonergan, what separates men from boys in scientific historiography.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The reference is given by Ben F. Meyer in his review of John Dominic Crossan's book *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (1991), *CBQ* 55 (1993): 575–576. Meyer gives a good description of the three levels of historical certainty and how historians should work their way from possibility to probability in the first, methodological part of his *The Aims of Jesus*.

## 2.6. *Form-Critical Arguments against Form-Critical Scepticism*

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz come to much the same conclusion<sup>20</sup> as Dale Allison from another direction: a self-critical analysis of the historical scepticism typical of form criticism. The deep scepticism against the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus so characteristic of the form-critical tradition is overdoing the first and missing the second part of the fundamental double axiom mentioned above:<sup>21</sup> total historical truth and total historical falsehood are both unattainable. So now it is time to turn a bit of scepticism against this sceptical tradition, for reasons that are as socio-historically and sociologically grounded as form criticism itself. Five reasons speak against this now conventional scepticism:<sup>22</sup>

1. What we know of the social situation of the early Christian communities is not mirrored in the synoptic gospels to the extent one would expect according to the principles of form criticism. Questions such as the necessity of circumcision for Christ-believers or what offices/ministries should make up the authority structure were important in the “Jesus movement,” but there is not a single saying of Jesus about these questions.
2. The continuity of behavioural patterns between Jesus and the wandering charismatics that carried and transmitted his radical ethos concerning matters of family, property, social responsibilities and status increases the probability that this tradition was preserved unchanged.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “The Jesus tradition was preserved in accordance with his intention—not as *verbatim* authenticity (Lat. *ipsissima verba*, ‘his very own words’), but as the authenticity of the themes, the literary forms and his intentions (Lat. *ipsissima vox*, ‘his very own voice’),” Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, “Den kontroversielle historiske Jesus,” in *Den historiske Jesus og hans betydning*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1998), 50–71, at 53 (my translation from the author’s Danish).

<sup>21</sup> See n. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Theissen and Merz, “Den kontroversielle historiske Jesus”, esp. 52–55. This line of argument is found also in their article “Der umstrittene historische Jesus. Oder: Wie historisch ist der historische Jesus?” in Gerd Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt. Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, 3–32.

<sup>23</sup> In his recent *Die Jesusbewegung: Sozialgeschichte einer Revolution der Werte* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2004), 33–98, Theissen takes up, defends and develops his well-known hypothesis of the wandering charismatics of the Jesus movement.

3. The Jesus of the gospels fits better and better into the Palestinian Jewish socio-historical, political and cultural context of the first half of the first century the more we learn about it. He is historically better understood as a product of Jewish history than of early Christian imagination. This increases the general historicity of tradition, even if the details are uncertain.
4. The Jesus movement shows a number of similarities with other millenaristic movements. One of the characteristics of such movements is that they are stamped by a charismatic person, a “prophet.” The prophet’s individuality explains the character of the movement much more than the movement explains the picture of the prophet given in its tradition—so why should it be any different in the Jesus movement?
5. Against the “redaction-critical” argument that the multiplicity of Jesus images in the gospels is a result of their growing distance from historic reality and colouring by the Christology of the evangelists, Theissen and Merz object that one can never compare a source with the historical reality it depicts, but only with other sources. Now the very multiplicity and difference between the sources show that they are to some degree independent of each other, and then their remaining points of agreement are stronger evidence of a common kernel of events and words from the person Jesus. If it is possible to reconstruct from differing Jesus images in the first century a logically coherent picture of a historical Jesus, who is also plausible in the context where the gospels place him (Galilee around 30), that also speaks against any taken-for-granted scepticism concerning the historical value of the gospels.

After looking at reasons for trusting the Jesus tradition a bit more and dispensing with hyperscepticism for reasons of general historical method, we will turn to a new (or not so new) understanding of the sources and their character and development.

### *2.7. The Oral Character of the Jesus Tradition Brings us Closer to the Jesus of History*

In his thousand-page book *Jesus Remembered* (2003) and in the brief methodological follow-up to that in *A New Perspective on Jesus* (2005), James Dunn has made a major effort to change the ingrained literary, source-analytical understanding of the gospels and the process that



produced them.<sup>24</sup> This by now centuries-old “default setting” has made scholars for generations think about the gospel tradition from and about Jesus as a literary and very *textual* phenomenon. Every stage in the process is seen as a text that depends on and has used other texts, and in that process almost inevitably “redacted” and changed them. Looking on the gospels as a kind of literary equivalent of an archaeological *tell*, the natural first aim of an historical investigation of Jesus has been to dig down through the layers of distortive editing that has been layered on top of the original tradition and find bedrock, the tradition so old and unchanged that it represents Jesus himself. One notices that the First Quest axiom of the immense difference between the gospel image of Jesus and Jesus as he really was is secretly operative as the presupposition of this conventional orthodoxy.

Whether the prime candidate for this position of bedrock tradition is the Gospel of Mark (as in the First Quest), or Q, or even the oldest layer of Q (as in the Q research of the last decades),<sup>25</sup> the understanding of the tradition process common to the last two centuries is strictly, not to say woodenly, textual and linear. Every piece of tradition is written—or thought of as written—and therefore fixed at a specific date. All differences between sources can ideally be arranged sequentially in an unbroken line of literary dependence. Together, this means that (only) the oldest source or layer is thought to contain the information about the historical Jesus least tainted by interpretative redaction governed by Christian faith. For some undisclosed reason faith always distorts historical reality, and temporal proximity within literary history guarantees a higher degree of correct interpretation of what happened with Jesus and what his mission was all about.

Even if one distances oneself from such too facile equations between literary history and the history of tradition,<sup>26</sup> the question remains: is

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<sup>24</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making, 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), and *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> See John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), and later work by him and others.

<sup>26</sup> See John S. Kloppenborg, “Discursive Practices in the Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus”, in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 149–190, e.g. 159 n. 29. And on pp. 244–245 he admits that material added to the stage Q<sup>2</sup> could be older than Q<sup>1</sup> and even dominical.

the gospel tradition process a literary history at all? Dunn contends that it is not and that this literary, source analytical (mis)understanding of the gospels has seriously marred the quest(s) for the historical Jesus from beginning to now. It makes us misunderstand several basic facts and characteristics of the gospel tradition. He summarizes his own view in the form of three theses:<sup>27</sup>

- a. The ultimate origin of the Jesus tradition is the impact that Jesus made on people who heard him and believed him—and expressed that impact in the first formulations of the Jesus tradition. Faith in Jesus and in the tremendous importance of his teaching did not start only after the resurrection, but governed remembrance from the first day, even if that faith was transformed by the events of cross and resurrection.
- b. Tradition was oral, not a series of written redactions, and it was carried through the first decades by groups whose lives were shaped by the “performance” of these oral traditions. Tradition was not confined to the memory held or collected by individual authors who then wrote it down.
- c. The features in the Jesus tradition that are both characteristic and relatively distinct reflect fairly faithfully the impact of Jesus. This gospel tradition gives us—not Jesus himself or the event itself—but Jesus as he was remembered from the start, which is as close as any historical source can bring us to an historical person or event.

Dunn’s view, that each version or “performance” of the tradition may vary from others but still retains the core elements given it at the start in the life of Jesus, results in reducing the distance between Jesus and the gospel texts quite considerably. Basically all these performances are at the same, fairly close distance from the impact that started the telling. Much in the gospels as we meet them is a written-down version of an oral performance of how Jesus was remembered in that event or saying.

Other attempts at re-envisaging oral tradition are criticized by Dunn as being after all too marked by a literary culture: oral transmission of large cultural tradition complexes by memorization specialists, oral history, and “social memory.” One might counter that Dunn in his turn underplays rather severely the role of memorization and of the

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<sup>27</sup> Dunn, *A New Perspective*, *passim*. For a summary, see p. 77.

authoritative transmitter of tradition, the reliable eyewitness and collector of eyewitness evidence in oral culture, all richly evidenced in ancient sources.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes his image of the anonymous and faceless group only transmitting their important oral tradition by “performing” or “celebrating” it comes uncomfortably close to the faceless “*Gemeinde*” (community) of form criticism that somehow carries on and shapes a very informal and uncontrolled tradition.

Dunn is certainly right in asking that gospel scholars need to understand how oral cultures work and live by their foundational memories in order to understand the emergence of the gospel tradition. His outlook is one further reason to move in the direction of a greater trust in the general reliability of the gospels as historical material—my first hypothesis about future Jesus research.

### 2.8. *Criteria of Authenticity and Historical Trust*

A general indication that I am right in that hypothesis is that scholars already work and probably will work even more with the plausibility criterion when investigating the historicity of the Jesus tradition.

The double dissimilarity criterion typical of the Second Quest was underneath its “scientific” appearance anti-Jewish and anti-Christian dogmatics masquerading as historical method. These scholars did not deny that the gospels had painted a too Christian picture of the originally quite unmessianic Jesus—that was a taken-for-granted inheritance from the First Quest. But they wanted to liberate Jesus even more from his Jewishness, and thus isolated him from his historical context.<sup>29</sup> This double screening process caused a large-scale reduction of the usable source material for knowing about the historical Jesus to fragments of the gospel material, sifted out like gold grains from tons of too Jewish and too Christian sand.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Marcus Bockmuehl’s review of Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered* (2003), *JTS* 56 (2005): 140–149, and especially Samuel Byrskog’s important work *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), and his discussion with Dunn in “A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition: Reflections on James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 459–471 (followed by Dunn’s reply). Cf. also Richard Bauckham, “The Eyewitnesses and the Gospel Tradition,” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 28–60.

<sup>29</sup> This is not only an error in historical methodology, but actually also in Christian theology (which, one should remember, was the main reason for starting the Second Quest), moving as it does toward a denial or spiritualizing of the incarnation.

<sup>30</sup> To give just one recent but typical example of the effects of making the criterion of dissimilarity the final arbiter of authenticity one can point to Philip F. Esler’s

But stating the dissimilarity criterion as a postulate, i.e. that Jesus self-evidently must have been completely unlike both his contemporary Judaism and the Christian movement that he was the cause of, reveals how improbable and weird it really is. Today there is virtual unanimity in Jesus research that he was and wanted to be a Jew, and that he wanted to be heard by and influence his own people, the Jews.

One should, however, keep in mind two things here: first that Jewish society, culture and religion in the days of Jesus was a multiform, variegated entity with many internal conflicts. This very fact of dissension and intra-Jewish conflict makes the assertion that Jesus was thoroughly Jewish less telling than is often imagined.<sup>31</sup> Being Jewish in the first century is not a unitary, clear categorization, and it does not preclude severe disagreement with and hostility from other Jews. And as Jesus was eventually delivered up to be executed by the Romans, he must have been transgressing the constraints of at least the society's rulers in an intolerable fashion. The constraints of the Jewish society he lived in cannot, consequently, be construed as a limit to what he could possibly think, say and do.

Further, it is a necessary part of any historical work on Jesus to elucidate the connections between the life of this person and the early Christian movement that grew out of it. The obvious and undoubted

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treatment of the parable of the good Samaritan: "Jesus and the Reduction of Inter group Conflict," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Stegemann, Malina and Theissen 185–205, the main argument of which is very well worth reading. Esler concludes by discussing the authenticity of this parable that brilliantly subverts group differentiation and stereotyping. He admits that he would like the parable to be authentic (199), but finds that it shows too many likenesses with Lukan emphases to be allowed the degree of dissimilarity in all directions that is necessary for concluding that its origin is Jesus. It does not help that Jesus could very plausibly have said this, to judge from "his undoubtedly historical practice of breaking down other forms of social categorization, by, for example, dining with sinners and tax collectors" (Esler, 200). The dissimilarity criterion takes over historical probability and forces the conclusion that if the answer to "Could Luke have made this parable?" is Yes, the answer to "Could Jesus have made this parable?" is *of necessity* No. Jesus cannot have said anything that others could say, and nobody could say what he had said. This may be good logic (granted the weird presuppositions), but good historical reasoning it is not.

<sup>31</sup> Tom Holmén, "The Jewishness of Jesus in the 'Third Quest'," in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 143–162. Halvor Moxnes, "Jesus the Jew: Dilemmas of Interpretation," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity. Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, ed. I. Dunderberg, C. Tuckett, and K. Syreeni (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 83–103.

personal and social continuity of this movement and its first leaders with Jesus makes the historical relation between him and the early church more compact and rich in content than the form critics imagined when guided by the analogy of the development of folklore across centuries. The faith and life of the early church is actually an explanatory factor for understanding parts of Jesus' life, simply because it provides the effect ("Wirkung") of the effectual plausibility ("Wirkungsplausibilität") of Jesus' words and actions. Facts like the unusual attitude of the early Christ-believers towards divorce, children, purity rules, violence and warfare help us see the profile of Jesus.

The growing realization of these two historical facts, the rich relation between Jesus and contemporary Judaism *and* between him and the emerging Christ-believing movement, has had the effect of bringing to the fore a completely different criterion for authenticity—the (double) criterion of plausibility. This says that only those parts of the Jesus tradition which can be plausibly located in first-century Judaism (contextual plausibility) *and* which can plausibly explain the effect ("Wirkung") of Jesus on early Christianity have a good claim to be historical.<sup>32</sup> Another, slightly earlier formulation of this criterion of Jesus' closeness to both Judaism around him and the "Jesus movement" after him—and of his difference from both—is the following: "When something can be seen to be credible (though perhaps deeply subversive within first-century Judaism), *and* credible as the implied starting point (though not the exact replica) of something in later Christianity, there is a strong possibility of our being in touch with the genuine history of Jesus."<sup>33</sup>

The weakness of some research in regard to admitting this kind of connection between Jesus and the early Christians can be described as a willingness to discard only one half of the dissimilarity criterion.

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<sup>32</sup> See esp. Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), English translation by Eugene Boring: *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Essential Problem of the Criterion of Dissimilarity* (Philadelphia: Westminster and John Knox Press, 2002). Armand Puig y Tàrrach gives a succinct summary of recent developments in thinking about criteria in "La recherche du Jésus historique," *Bib* 81 (2000): 179–201, esp. 185–194. For a thoughtful and sharp methodological discussion of the criterion of plausibility, see Tom Holmén's review essay of Theissen and Winter 1997/2002: "The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: the Question of Criteria," *JTS* 55 (2004): 216–228.

<sup>33</sup> Tom Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 132.

While claiming with good reason that Jesus cannot be cut off from his contemporary Jewish religious and cultural reality, Geza Vermes happily adopts the form-critical perspective of Bultmann and Käsemann when denying any genuine continuity or relation between Jesus and the Christ-believing Jewish *ekklesia* of the first century. But, as the Jewish scholar Joseph Klausner put it, a real historian must be able to explain both how Jesus could be so Jewish and how he could be the origin of a movement that so soon broke off from Judaism.<sup>34</sup>

To summarize this long argument in a very short form, one could say that the basic presupposition that anything historical and human is bound by a thousand fine threads to its weave of surrounding reality is now being applied to Jesus. The investigation of the manifold connections between Jesus and his historical context in all directions has verified that the Jesus described in the gospels belongs squarely in the first third of first-century Jewish Galilee. The corollary of this growing trust in the researchability of Jesus and in the value of the Jesus tradition in the gospels as historical material is the increasing use of the double criterion of plausibility.

### 3. "Prophecy" 2: *Jesus Research Will Use a "Holistic" Method*

#### 3.1. *Research on Jesus Starts from the Total Picture, or Master Narrative, of Jesus, not the Details*

In recent discussion of methodology in Jesus research it is something of a commonplace to state the need of using a "holistic" method, instead of starting with the details. This is a reversal of the methodological paradigm of the Second Quest, where one typically started with the individual sayings of and narratives about Jesus, deciding in every case whether this was authentic material from Jesus or not, before attempting to build a larger picture of Jesus from the few pieces of critically secured historical information. The method of the *Jesus Seminar* scholars voting on each saying is a model example of this approach.

The reason for beginning at the other end, with a plausible picture of the whole of Jesus, is simply that this is how historiography works. It starts grappling with the assembled historical data with the help of

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<sup>34</sup> Noted by Ed P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 3.

an initial hypothesis, research programme (Allison), or *Gestalt* (Meyer), which most often has a narrative character. Data must be at least preliminarily, even experimentally, interpreted in order to be manageable for history. This *Gestalt* or master narrative governs the making of hypotheses, which are then tested and verified. This type of procedure has been used and discussed by many scholars, like Ben F. Meyer (leaning on the work of Collingwood and Lonergan),<sup>35</sup> N. Tom Wright,<sup>36</sup> Dale C. Allison,<sup>37</sup> and James D. G. Dunn.<sup>38</sup>

Applying this approach to Jesus research means that one has to decide from the outset which basic interpretive framework one intends to use in one's reconstruction of Jesus—was he an eschatological prophet, a Cynic peasant, or more of an existentialist vagabond teacher? The fact that the First Quest managed to overlook or at least to leave out the large amount of eschatological material in the teaching of Jesus when writing his life is simply a reflection of the effect of this fundamental methodological procedure. Their *Gestalt* or governing image of Jesus was one of a timeless, universalistic teacher of ethics, completely incompatible with bizarre apocalyptic thinking and acting—and with being a popular healer-cum-exorcist.<sup>39</sup>

For good and for worse this kind of master image of the subject or person investigated is rather resistant to inclusion of data alien to it. Material in the assembly of data that does not fit with one's preconceived over-all image or *Gestalt* of Jesus must be left out, *or* included

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<sup>35</sup> For a good discussion of this procedure used already in his ground-breaking work *The Aims of Jesus*, esp. 76–94, see Ben F. Meyer, “The ‘Inside’ of the Jesus Event,” in his *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1989), 157–172, and “Jesus and His Mission: Finding the *Gestalt*,” in his *Christus Faber: The Master Builder and the House of God* (Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 107–129.

<sup>36</sup> Tom Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 81–120, and *Jesus and the Victory of God*, part I.

<sup>37</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 36–44.

<sup>38</sup> Generally used in James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, more specifically described in Idem, *A New Perspective*, 69–78, where he calls this the “search for the characteristic instead of the distinctive Jesus.”

<sup>39</sup> This has to be judged a major error of the First Quest. The impossibility of eradicating eschatology from authentic Jesus tradition has been strongly argued since Weiss and Schweitzer, e.g. by Ben F. Meyer, Dale C. Allison, and Marius Reiser's vigorous chapter “Eschatology in the Proclamation of Jesus”, in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 216–238.

and allowed to restructure the *Gestalt* completely.<sup>40</sup> The bad side of this is scholarly intransigence, sheer unwillingness to listen to uncomfortable data or other scholars. The good side of having a *Gestalt* to work from is the awareness that data really have to be assembled into a coherent whole if one is to attain a level of historical understanding. The most important function of master narratives or controlling images is precisely their role in hypothesis verification: a good hypothesis should account for all the data, in the most economic way possible. Operating with a controlling *Gestalt* necessitates an attempt to answer all the pertinent questions that a conscientious historian should put to the Jesus event.<sup>41</sup>

In any case, there is no such thing as dispensing with a governing narrative altogether, simply because historical reconstruction *consists in* narrativising the result of scrutinizing the data and testing one's hypotheses. Even if not immediately apparent or articulated, any verdict on the authenticity of this or that Jesus logion or narrative operates with some benchmark idea of what he was like.

Halvor Moxnes discusses a number of recent master narratives in historical work on Jesus, both within the modernist perspective (John P. Meier and Ed P. Sanders) and outside it (Richard Horsley, John Dominic Crossan, and Bruce Malina). He notes that "a paradigm of interpretation can never be based on 'mere facts'; it always implies a hermeneutical decision and a choice of presuppositions."<sup>42</sup> An overarching interpretive construct is necessary to make sense of history, but it is evident that none of the several alternatives has a monopoly

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<sup>40</sup> An illustration of this from another area is the inability of the disciples to take in what Jesus said about his coming suffering and death. As it could in no way be fitted into their *gestalt* or controlling image of Jesus, it was immediately discarded as totally absurd and meaningless (Luke 9:44–45). The restructuring took place only after the Master's death and resurrection.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the five questions that Wright points to as necessary for any historian of Jesus to answer, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 90.

<sup>42</sup> Halvor Moxnes, "The Historical Jesus: From Master Narrative to Cultural Context," *BTB* 28 (1998): 135–49, at 142. James Dunn has criticized the grand narrative approaches of Crossan and Wright (in "'All that glitters is not gold': In Quest of the Right Key to unlock the way to the historical Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNTW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 131–161 (criticizing grand narratives, 140–147). In my opinion, the rightness of his criticism concerns more the insufficient data support for the specific models proposed by Crossan and Wright than the method itself of using a master narrative as a frame of interpretation. See Bengt Holmberg, "Questions of Method in James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 445–457, esp. 453–57.



of interpretation, which is why their proponents can and should engage each other in dialogue.

### 3.2. *Investigating the Aims of Jesus is more Fruitful than Attempting his Psychobiography*

Psychobiography, the interpretation of an historical person with the help of modern personality psychology, is an old genre from the nineteenth century brought to new life in recent years. As could be expected, the more recent books in this genre have a foundation in Freudian developmental psychology and psychoanalytical theory.<sup>43</sup> They are also marked by historical sophistication and a capable reading up of modern Jesus research. Still, they end up in almost diametrically opposed interpretations of the psychobiography of Jesus.

For Donald Capps the behaviour and the teaching of Jesus as critically retrieved from the gospels is evidence that Jesus was not accepted as the son of Joseph, who therefore did not teach him a trade, did not instruct him in the Torah, did not arrange for him to be married, or do him much good in any way. No wonder then that the adult Jesus had a severely wounded personality, and was driven by utopian melancholy and deep needs of reparation and self-assertion all the way to the cross.

John W. Miller interprets the very same gospel material as evidence that Jesus had a harmonious childhood and upbringing, with an excellent relation to his biological father, Joseph (the virgin birth is discarded as legend). The trauma caused by Joseph's premature death was mastered in a mature way by Jesus, who took on the difficult but necessary role of male leadership or (in Erik H. Erikson's term) "generativity" in his family, and came out of this difficult period stronger and

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<sup>43</sup> Among these books one can note: John W. Miller, *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997). Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000). Capps has summarized his own book: "A Summary of Jesus," *Pastoral Psychology* 50 (2002): 391–400; Andries van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus as a Child of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), summarised by the author: "Jesus as a Fatherless Child," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Stegemann, Malina, and Theissen, 65–84. These and other scholars write on the same subject in J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins, eds., *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, 4: *From Christ to Jesus* (Westport: Praeger, 2004). Regrettably, this work came too close to the finishing of this study for me to interact with the many valuable articles in it.

more capable of caring for others than before. Miller can write about Jesus'

joyful creativity and courage (after John's arrest) in his own new-found "calling" as "generative" prophet-evangelist of God's love for the "lost" (a father now himself with a "family" of his own...); his extraordinary faith and intuitively wise "father-like" talent for relating helpfully to all types of people and situations.<sup>44</sup>

Both Capps and Miller relate to the large amount of material about fathers, the Father, and father-like attitudes and sayings of Jesus in the gospels, but the method of psychoanalytical retrodiction is unable by itself to answer the question: Is this material a reflection of Jesus' positive experiences with a good father (Miller), or is it a reflection of his intense longing for a good father he never had (Capps)? The conclusion seems hard to avoid that psychobiography is a poor instrument even for historical retrodiction (explaining afterwards why something had to happen in a specific way in a certain person's life), with no controls against the arbitrary wielding of this "method."<sup>45</sup>

The weakness of the psychobiographical approach to Jesus is, however, not primarily that we have too little material or data to perform it, although that is also a problem. We have reams of historical data on the life of Winston Churchill, but would hardly be persuaded by any thorough-going attempt at explaining all his major speeches and acts as a political leader between 1940 and 1945 as caused by how his relation to his parents had worked out in early childhood or how his emotionality had developed during his adolescence. That is simply an insufficient, to some degree even irrelevant, category or genre of expla-

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<sup>44</sup> Miller, *Jesus at Thirty*, 99. The English psychiatrist Jack Dominian's picture of Jesus and what his childhood and youth must have been like in his book *One Like Us: Psychological Interpretation of Jesus* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998) is much the same as Miller's, as is John P. Meier's in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, I (Garden City: Doubleday, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> The many methodological weaknesses inherent in psychobiography—the lack of evidence especially about the childhood of ancient people, the reductionism of over-emphasizing psychological and psychopathological factors at the expense of social and cultural factors, the multivariant correspondence between a certain type of childhood and a certain psychological behaviour or character in the adult life of that person, the anachronism of supposing that all eras and cultures are the same when it comes to personal psychology—were pointed out in William McKinley Runyan, *Life Histories and Psychobiography: Explorations in Theory and Method* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

nation, and it will not become truer as an historical explanation by adding, say, eight newly found letters from his school years.<sup>46</sup>

Historical actors who make a large impact on the surrounding world are more reasonably explained by finding out about their mindset and intentions in relation to their historical context, what they aimed at in relation to their own society, and how their visions resonated with many other people and made them change and move. As Tom Wright has stated:

There is nothing in principle magical or mystical, nothing in principle inaccessible, about the settled intentions, aims, or ambitions of an individual. Even if little is said about them, they will gradually become apparent in actions performed, in choices made, in lifestyles adopted. In searching for the aims of Jesus, we are looking for a particular mindset within a particular worldview, quite possibly challenging that worldview in some ways, but with intentions that make sense in relation to it.<sup>47</sup>

This is, as Wright points out, actually what historians do all the time, standard historiographical procedure. Reimarus was right in focusing his study of the historical Jesus on his aims (“*Zwecke*”). Historical data remain mute, as long as we do not get hold of their “inside,” the human thought or intention that made the “outside” event into an action and gave it meaning and direction.

### 3.3. *The Key to Jesus’ Aims is his Self-Understanding, Centring on how he Saw his Own Death*

So the fundamental question in historical research on Jesus is whether in the words and actions we can reconstruct as his there existed a fundamental unity, a common purpose and goal that held together everything that Jesus did and said to a comprehensible whole. Did he want to become “the king of the Judaeans”? or the Prophet? or the saviour of Israel? Inevitably, this means that Jesus’ own thinking, his theology as it were, must play a key role in understanding his priorities, choices, and goals. And theology in a broad sense means how he

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<sup>46</sup> In his thoughtful and severe “Review of [Donald Capps’] *Jesus*,” *Pastoral Psychology* 50 (2002): 415–423, Paul N. Anderson summarizes: “Capps views these and other parts of Jesus’ ministry through the lens of projecting the neediness of Jesus upon his actions and teachings rather than seeing Jesus as addressing social, political, and religious issues in the name of God’s redemptive love” (422).

<sup>47</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 101.

thought on God, his election of Israel, his presence and will and coming Rule, and what Jesus' own role was in all this (his "christology").

I thus contend that it is an eminently historical task to engage the theology of Jesus, as it manifests itself both in his actions and way of life and in his teaching. This is how history is done, e.g. by Ben F. Meyer and Tom Wright: working from top down, from the larger or total picture (*Gestalt*) to the details, from the unifying and meaning-giving aims of a person to a historical understanding of him as an actor in history. Jesus' self-understanding peaks in how he viewed his own death, because this clearly foreseen end summarizes and crowns his ministry, even to Jesus himself.

How Jesus saw his death has, in spite of its obvious importance, been rather neglected in (especially American) Jesus research except among German scholars, as Scot McKnight has shown in a masterful overview.<sup>48</sup> And Peter Balla notes that Third Quest scholars such as John Dominic Crossan, the members of the Jesus Seminar, Ed P. Sanders and R. A. Horsley do not even mention and discuss this subject.<sup>49</sup> In his ground-breaking and influential *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), Ed Sanders focused instead on the temple action of Jesus as the key to interpreting what Jesus aimed at, while downplaying the importance of events like the triumphal entry and the crucifixion for understanding what Jesus intended with his ministry.

Not a few scholars agree, however, that Jesus not only knew his inevitable death in advance (he would have had to be reality-blind not to),<sup>50</sup> but that he willingly accepted it as meaningful and willed by God the Father.<sup>51</sup> In Albert Schweitzer's words, Jesus went up to Jerusalem in order to die. The next question must then be: What did Jesus think was God's meaning with such an ignominious end to all his strivings? In my opinion those scholars have the better argument who conclude—especially from the Last Supper—that Jesus saw his death as some kind

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<sup>48</sup> Scot McKnight, "Jesus and His Death: Some Recent Scholarship," *CR: BS* 9 (2001): 185–228.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Balla, "What Did Jesus Think about his Approaching Death?" in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 239–258, at 240–242.

<sup>50</sup> Ulrich Luz, "Warum zog Jesus nach Jerusalem?" in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt BZfNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 409–427, at 414.

<sup>51</sup> See the three preceding footnotes and e.g. the large-scale books on Jesus by Tom Wright (1996), Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz (1996), and James Dunn (2003).

of sacrifice inaugurating the new covenant or even an expiation for the sins of “the many” and Israel.

Whatever answer is given to how Jesus made sense of his death, there is no denying that the answer is important for how one interprets the purpose and meaning that Jesus gave to his life and mission as a whole. And the fact that the question concerning how Jesus understood his freely chosen death receives much fuller treatment in recent books on Jesus (Wright, Theissen–Merz, Dunn) perhaps signals a growing realization that Jesus’ life cannot be fully understood without his death. One is reminded of John P. Meier’s insistence that the execution of Jesus is an important control of authenticity: the picture of Jesus reached by historical reconstruction must be such that his execution on the cross is a logical and reasonable consequence of what he said and did.<sup>52</sup> A Jesus whose words and actions do not irk, provoke and infuriate people, especially the mighty, is not the historical Jesus. But this why-did-Jesus-die authenticity control reaches in the other direction as well; it demands convincing answers both to the question why people wanted Jesus killed and to the question why he accepted that. A Jesus who is simply taken by surprise by his arrest and swift death (Vermes, Fredriksen), or who sees it a mile ahead yet feebly accepts the approaching catastrophe without one communicated thought about *God’s* intention in all this, is not a historically believable Jesus either.<sup>53</sup>

#### 3.4. *Theology must be Included when Looking for the Key to Jesus’ Actions*

I think the Second Quest scholars were right in seeing the self-understanding of Jesus as the most important question for Jesus research, the key to an historical understanding of him. This is an insight that some scholars within the Third Quest tend to pass lightly over, or silently disagree with. Especially Ed P. Sanders writes as if the question of who Jesus claimed to be is somehow a “theological” and therefore illegitimate question for a historian. He considers himself (like Albert

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<sup>52</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus I*, 177.

<sup>53</sup> See the penetrating discussion in Leander E. Keck, *Who Is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense* (Fortess: Minneapolis, 2001), ch. 4: “The Fractured Prism: Jesus’ Death and the Living God,” 113–150.

Schweitzer) as a person who keeps his historical results apart from and uninfluenced by his own theological preferences:

I am a liberal, modern, secularized Protestant, brought up in a church dominated by low christology and the social gospel. I am proud of the things that that religious tradition stands for. I am not bold enough, however, to suppose that Jesus came to establish it, or that he died for the sake of its principles.<sup>54</sup>

This sounds liberal-minded and humble, but only until one realizes that these three “I am”-sayings contain a hidden instruction to other, more orthodox scholars: you too should keep christology out of your image of the historical Jesus! If you arrive at results close to classical christological thinking about Jesus (e.g. he had “messianic” ideas about himself, or saw his approaching death as a covenant-renewing sacrifice), you are necessarily unhistorical and unscholarly, because theology and history are diametrically opposed to each other. Which is of course not a neutral statement but a liberal Protestant theological standpoint.<sup>55</sup>

One could even argue that Sanders and others actually have left “the Quest of the Historical Jesus,” when they for the sake of alleged historical neutrality do not even attempt to grasp the self-understanding of Jesus as an historical factor.<sup>56</sup> If Jesus’ actions and priorities were determined by how he understood himself, and this was determined by his specific ideas about God and his Rule and his own place in it, or in other words, by his theology, how could any ambitious historical investigation of Jesus *not* try to analyze and grasp a factor of such central importance?

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<sup>54</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 334.

<sup>55</sup> Alan G. Padgett criticizes among others Sanders for what he terms “the neutrality two-step.” This is a scholarly attitude “in which the prejudice of perspective is recognized, but then we try and step around it back into scientific neutrality. For the ‘neutrality two-step’ version of the myth [of a purely historical Jesus], the problem of perspective is a problem only for faith—not for the scientific, rational scholar who of course has no faith.” See Padgett, “Advice for Religious Historians: On the Myth of a Purely Historical Jesus,” in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, David Kendall, and Gerald O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 287–307, esp. 292–93. It has also been pointed out that the Third Quest is not so theologically uninterested as some of its representatives claim; Tom Holmén, “A Theologically Disinterested Quest? On the Origins of the ‘Third Quest’ for the Historical Jesus,” *ST* 55 (2001): 175–197.

<sup>56</sup> This is Stephen Fowl’s criticism of Sanders, “Reconstructing and Deconstructing the Quest of the Historical Jesus,” *SJT* 42 (1989): 319–333.

The same modernistic bias is at work in Crossan's often-quoted dictum about his suspicion "...that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography."<sup>57</sup> Here too a total incompatibility between theology and history is taken for granted—as if they could not appear in the same reality, or even in the same text.<sup>58</sup>

The well-worn idea that history and theology relate to each other as fire and water, truth and error, forever different and in irreconcilable conflict, is a philosophical heritage from the European Enlightenment. It has made generations of scholars take for granted that the truth about the historical Jesus cannot have contained any theology or christology, and that any historical conclusion even reminiscent of Christian faith in Jesus must be put aside from the outset of any investigation with historical pretensions—and *never let in again!* To which it must be said that if some results are forbidden from the outset of historiography on Jesus, one is not operating with a scientific attitude. This anti-theological (or rather: anti-faith) stand is rather a mirror image of the dogmatism that scholars wanted to keep out of liberated historical research on Jesus.<sup>59</sup>

But real history does not by some alleged necessity exclude theology or the supernatural, neither from the historical Jesus, nor from the historian writing on Jesus.<sup>60</sup> Jesus himself was through-and-through a

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<sup>57</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), xxvii.

<sup>58</sup> One might also add that Crossan's beautifully thrown stone shatters a lot of glass in his own work on Jesus. His detailed methodology with its very scientific-looking procedure, including an inventory of all gospel material divided into eccentric categories is a good example of doing a highly idiosyncratic theological interpretation of Jesus and calling it history. See especially the sympathetic but cutting criticism of Crossan's methodology by Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 10–33, and by Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 44–66.

<sup>59</sup> A variant of this is the insistence on keeping historical elucidation strictly apart from any attempt to find answers to theological questions, advocated e.g. by Troels Engberg-Pedersen in *Den historiske Jesus og hans betydning* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1998), 37–41. Theological interest is seen as contaminating historical research because it is not bound to the historical material in its possible otherness. Could it be that this methodological purism camouflages a modernist philosophical-theological stand: history drives out theology and *vice versa*?

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Joel Willitts' vigorous methodological analysis of six prominent Jesus scholars (Sanders, Crossan, Meier, Wright, Theissen, and Allison), "Presuppositions and Procedures in the Study of the 'Historical Jesus': Or, Why I Decided Not to be a 'Historical Jesus' Scholar," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 61–108, and his critique of the separation of theology from history, 70–71 and 101–106.

*theologian*, always orienting his opinions, actions and very life to God and claiming to know God very well. He spoke often of God and for God and saw his death as the destiny determined for him by God. If for no other reason than this, Jesus' theology must be the centre of any historical image of Jesus. And "Jesus' death, isolated neither from the life that preceded it nor from his resurrection that followed it, continues to be the prism through which Christian Gentiles [!] must understand both God and themselves."<sup>61</sup>

The historian's "theology" or total interpretation of reality is part of the inevitable subjectivity of any historical work and therefore to be accepted openly.<sup>62</sup> Part of such a non-positivistic consciousness ought to be a diminished emphasis on sheer, "neutral" fact-finding in historical reconstruction. Historiography on Jesus is of course bound to finding facts, but they always come embedded in interpretive frameworks of a "christological" kind (Marsh)—in the texts and in our reconstructions. Therefore, writing history is not so much finding facts about the past as a process of making sense of it, a complex and multi-dimensional process of mediation between past and future. "The 'sense' is as part of the historical object of inquiry as the 'facts' themselves."<sup>63</sup>

The futures for the Jesus quests will probably merge into one, with more interaction of both critical and appreciative character between the different approaches. A narrow modernism will be left behind as a too thin version of historical work on Jesus, which will instead open itself to a greater hermeneutical and theological awareness of both its subject and its method.

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<sup>61</sup> Keck, *Who is Jesus?* 140.

<sup>62</sup> A postmodern New Historicist like Clive Marsh deplors a naïve separation of history and theology and concludes his article "Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective," *BibInt* 5 (1997): 403–437 by asking for "the firm location of Jesus Research within a revised christological framework" (430). "My claim is that when interpreting the figure of Jesus, interpreters of whatever philosophical persuasion, socioeconomic context or religious outlook are inevitably embroiled in a debate which cannot but be called christological"—not because it takes a stand for or against Christian orthodoxy, but "because the task of interpreting the figure of Jesus by definition requires the disclosure, perhaps in a way that the interpretation of few other historical figures does, of commitments as to what one believes 'really is,' how humans behave, what constitutes human community, as well as how one assesses the cultural and ecclesiastical impact of the figure of Jesus" (431).

<sup>63</sup> Bernhard Latagan, "Questing or Sense-Making? Some Thoughts on the Nature of Historiography," *BibInt* 11 (2003): 588–601, 598. Latagan builds on J. Rüsen, "Was heisst: Sinn der Geschichte?," in *Historische Sinnbildung*, ed. K. E. Müller and J. Rüsen (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1997), 17–47.



#### 4. *Summary*

The prophetic task of writing on the futures of the Jesus Quests is fulfilled by mixing prediction and prescription about where Jesus research will and should move. A general sobering concerning historical presuppositions, the (oral) character of our main sources and the method of doing history will lead to a greater trust in the general reliability of the source material we have. Hyperscepticism combined with a strong belief in the uniqueness of Jesus, manifested in the dissimilarity axiom called "criterion," has paralyzed Jesus research, which will be revived by using the double plausibility criterion belonging to normal historiography.

Research on Jesus starts from the total picture or master narrative of Jesus, not the details. This is illustrated by a comparison of psychobiography with the looking for Jesus' aims. The total picture or "Gestalt" of Jesus should be connected to how he understood his mission and what he was out to do. And the key to Jesus' aims is his self-understanding, his "christology," as it were. The reconstruction of his aims is not complete until one has incorporated how Jesus saw his death, the final and complete summary of his achievement under God. This means that the historiographical task of questing for Jesus by finding the interpretative key to his life and ministry not only includes, but even centres on theology.



THE PARABLE OF THE GOOSE AND THE MIRROR:  
THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN THE THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINE

SCOT MCKNIGHT

*In history, as elsewhere, fools rush in,  
and the angels may perhaps be forgiven if rather than  
tread in those treacherous paths they tread upon the fools instead.*

—G. R. Elton<sup>1</sup>

When academics stand before an audience and explain a view of the “historical Jesus,” and do so in the context of a theological discipline and education, they may think they are walking on water, but the voices of truth are calling out to them to watch their step. Toned down, we might say the voices of truth are simply asking three questions: What is history?, What is a historical Jesus?, and What role is that historical Jesus to play in the theological curriculum?

1. *Modern Historiography: A Brief Taxonomy*<sup>2</sup>

Historical Jesus scholars appropriate a historiography, though very few of them spell their historiography out.<sup>3</sup> Those historiographies can be conveniently labeled “postmodernist” and “modernist,” with all sorts of shades within each label as well as a spectrum of how those historiographies have been used by historical Jesus scholars. The most complete historiography by a historical Jesus scholar is probably that of N. T. Wright in the first two volumes of his multi-volume series on Christian Origins and the Question of God,<sup>4</sup> though the recent,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Practice of History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), 89.

<sup>2</sup> For a good survey of the history of historiography, see E. Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> An informed study in this regard is the article by Halvor Moxnes, “The Historical Jesus: From Master Narrative to Cultural Context,” *BTB* 28 (1999): 135–149. He studies the historiography, with reference to “master narratives,” of J. P. Meier, E. P. Sanders, R. A. Horsley, J. D. Crossan, and B. J. Malina.

<sup>4</sup> See *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 29–144. The historiography of Wright was then worked out in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

lengthy (!) introduction by James D. G. Dunn in his *Jesus Remembered* offers a nuanced historiography.<sup>5</sup> While other studies are intensely informed at the level of technical method—one thinks of B. F. Meyer, J. P. Meier, J. D. Crossan, and Dale Allison,<sup>6</sup> few are actually proposing a historiography as Wright has done. Why I say this about Wright and Dunn (with reservations, of course), will become clear in our survey of postmodernist and modernist historiography.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.1. *Postmodernist Historiography*

Whatever *postmodernism* has going for it or against it, it has the confidence that when it comes to the matter of historiography it alone has the goose by the neck. Take, for example, Keith Jenkins, the UK's most confident postmodernist historiographer. Jenkins defines "postmodernism" as the "era of the aporia."<sup>8</sup> That is,

By aporia I mean that this is an era when all the decisions we take—political, ethical, moral, interpretive, representational, etc., are ulti-

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<sup>5</sup> *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 11–336.

<sup>6</sup> B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 76–110; *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1989); *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical [Michael Glazier], 1994); J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1987–2001), esp. 1:1–201; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); on Crossan's method, one must see the heavy evaluation of D. C. Allison, Jr., *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 10–33, as well as his own constructive proposal.

<sup>7</sup> One might say that there are three strands of historiography among historical Jesus scholars: (1) those of a modernist bent include scholars as diverse as N. Perrin, J. P. Meier, E. P. Sanders, B. D. Chilton, and M. Borg, even though their theologies differ wildly; (2) those of a postmodernist bent include E. Schüssler Fiorenza and James D. G. Dunn; and (3) those of a mediating line include N. T. Wright. The critical separation occurs over the relation of Subject (historian) and Object (Jesus/gospels/ancient evidence). The closer one gets to the Subject dominating the discourse, whether that historian is the historical Jesus scholar or the gospels themselves, the closer one gets to the postmodernist enterprise. The closer one gets to seeing the Object as capable of speaking for itself, simply by uncovering the "earliest original material," as is clearly the case with J.P. Meier, the closer one is to the modernist enterprise.

<sup>8</sup> A potent critique of Keith Jenkins, and other postmodernists, can be found in Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History*, rev. ed. (London: Granta, 2000). There is no embracing definition of postmodernism, and what I mean by "postmodernist historiography" essentially can be narrowed down to Jenkins himself. There is not space here to develop the spectrum of postmodernist historiographies. On this, see Richard J. Evans, *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997).

mately undecidable (aporetic). That our chosen ways of seeing things lack foundations and that, as far as a discourse like history is concerned, it is essentially to be thought of as an aesthetic—a shaping, figuring discourse—and not as an objective, true, or foundational epistemology.<sup>9</sup>

And:

... there are not—and nor have there ever been—any “real” foundations of the kind alleged to underpin the experiment of the modern; that we now just have to understand that we live amidst social formations which have no legitimising ontological or epistemological or ethical grounds for our beliefs or actions beyond the status of an ultimately self-referencing (rhetorical) conversation.<sup>10</sup>

Jenkins, who at times fawns over (the earlier) Hayden White,<sup>11</sup> America’s leading postmodernist historiographer,<sup>12</sup> essentially claims that all history writing is a narrative created in the head of the historian out of discrete facts from the past.<sup>13</sup> Scholars often speak of the “linguistic turn” in historiography, a linguistic turn developed by postmodernists shaped by the “logocentrism” of Jacques Derrida. Everything about history, it is claimed by these sorts, is emplotted in a narrative—and it is the narrative that matters in that it shapes the content. The narrative

<sup>9</sup> Keith Jenkins, *Refiguring History: New Thoughts on an Old Discipline* (London: Routledge, 2003), 71 (Introduction, n. 1).

<sup>10</sup> Keith Jenkins, *On “What is History?”: From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995), 7.

<sup>11</sup> Jenkins also utilizes Richard Rorty at a deep level. See his *On “What is History?”* 97–133. While I’m hardly conversant with Rorty, I am aware that Jenkins relies on the “linguistic turn” of Rorty, but fails in his most recent book (*Refiguring History*) substantially to engage Rorty’s later “pragmatist turn” and, even more recently, his “romantic polytheism turn,” both of which put strain on Rorty’s earlier linguistic turn. See R. Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). A summary can be found in J. Boffetti, “How Richard Rorty Found Religion,” *First Things* 143 (2004): 24–30. See also “Religion in the Public Square,” *JRE* 31 (2003): 141–149. According to the English philosopher, Bernard Williams, Rorty’s philosophical pragmatism was running on empty: see *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 59.

<sup>12</sup> See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); and, with some clear modification, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> Keith Jenkins, *Rethinking History* (London: Routledge, 1991/2003); *Why History?* (London: Routledge, 1999).

one historian tells differs from the narrative another historian tells because they are telling a different story. Therefore, history is all rhetoric, all discourse, all language, and in effect all autobiography.<sup>14</sup> History is, after all, nothing but historiography, the history of histories and the history of historians. The impact of this theory is at times quixotic. History, the postmodernist stays, is the study of ancient texts, not the ancient past; it is, in other terms, phenomenalism.

A leading historiography all dressed up in the attire of a previous generation, Sir Geoffrey Elton, calls the postmodernist approach to history the “ultimate heresy” and “frivolous nihilism.”<sup>15</sup> A modernist historiographer<sup>16</sup> like Elton, Jenkins says, thought he was getting at the “facts” and “finding the truth,” but in effect that sort of history can be turned on its head, as deconstructionists gleefully do, to see little but the historian’s own narrative tale. As Richard Evans sums it up:<sup>17</sup>

The implication is that the historian does not in fact capture the past in faithful fashion but rather, like the novelist, only gives the appearance of doing so.

Jenkins throws down the gauntlet more than once: when speaking of (upper case) History, he says, “I mean, nobody really believes in that particular fantasy any more” and when he speaks of (lower case) history, he says that view “is now unsustainable.”<sup>18</sup> Except that there are some who believe the former, including many historical Jesus scholars—who have the bravado, like Marcus Borg, to think that what they find in the past about Jesus has historic significance for understanding both history and life.<sup>19</sup> In fact, nearly every historical Jesus

<sup>14</sup> For another recent study along this line, see F. R. Ankersmit, *Historical Representation, Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> G. P. Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study*, Cook Lectures 1990 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 43, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins defines modernism as follows: “It is a general failure... of the attempt, from around the eighteenth century in Europe, to bring about through the application of reason, science and technology, a level of personal and social wellbeing within social formations which, legislating for an increasingly generous emancipation of their citizens/subjects, we might characterise by saying that they were trying, at best, to become ‘human rights communities’” (*On “What is History?”*, 6).

<sup>17</sup> *In Defence of History*, 98.

<sup>18</sup> *On “What is History?”*, 8, 9.

<sup>19</sup> See the trajectory in Marcus Borg’s writings from his *Jesus, A New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) to his most recent *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper-SanFrancisco, 2003).

Martin Kähler laid down the maxim that Christian faith could not be based on the results of historians; history itself mocks his claim. Nearly every historical Jesus scholar

scholar operates at least with a lower case history. (Roughly speaking, “History” pertains to macroscopic visions of history—like the Bible, like Augustine, Hegel, and Marx [an odd box of chocolates, to be sure], while “history” pertains to the microscopic attempts to shed light on smaller corners of real people in the real past.)

For postmodernist historiographers like Jenkins, there is indeed a “past,” a “present,” and a “future.” That past can be characterized as containing “facts,” i.e. “existential facts” or better yet, “discrete facts.” And, in contrast to what some historical Jesus scholars now claim, the historian can at times determine those facts or find them in spite of their present location within narratives (like the gospels). However, those “facts” are “discrete,” according to the postmodernist, in that they are unrelated, uninterpreted, and meaningless in and of themselves.<sup>20</sup>

Which means that whenever such a proliferation and dispersal is disciplined into some *specific* unity, into some *specific* sort of significance... then that unity is not, and cannot be, one which has arisen from the dispersed facts themselves; is not one which has arisen from the sources, but is a unity which is and can only be logically derived from outside these things—from *theory*; only theory can give history any unity of significance... theory ultimately reasserts itself as the inescapable determinant of meaning.

Historians can make “statements” about those dispersed (or discrete) facts, and they can also connect them chronologically to form a “chronicle,” but that is not what “history” really is. History is the spinning of a narrative out of discrete facts in order to ascertain meaning. But,

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I know believes in the portrait of Jesus he or she has painted on the canvas of historiography. Nor, so I think, can Kähler sustain the claim that “historical” knowledge and “theological” or “systematic” knowledge are epistemologically that different. “Faith” is inevitably shaped by what one knows, and what one knows is shaped by one’s historiography and epistemology. On this, see M. Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, trans. C. E. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964). While it is wise to contend that the Church’s faith is not to shift every time a new historical Jesus study is offered, it is unwise to think that this is an epistemological issue. Put slightly differently, the church’s faith is rooted in the New Testament and in the historic creeds, not in the shifting results of scholars, but that knowledge of the New Testament and the creeds contains a historiography and a “narrative” in the mind of every individual believer. The reason Luke Timothy Johnson’s *The Real Jesus* struck a live nerve with (Christian) historical Jesus scholars is because he contended for a creedal faith, even if he mistakenly appealed to a Kähler-like foundation for such a contention. See *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> On “What is History?,” 82–83.

to discover “facts” is not to discover “meaning.” Meaning is created by the historian, who tells a narrative as a piece of aesthetics. Hayden White, for instance, sees “history” as a form of “literature.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Jenkins claims,<sup>22</sup>

we [all of us, so it seems] recognise that there never has been, and there never will be, any such thing as a past which is expressive of some sort of essence, whilst the idea that the proper study of history is actually “own-sakism” is recognised as just the mystifying way in which a bourgeoisie conveniently articulates its own interests as if they belonged to the past itself... Consequently the whole “modernist” History/history ensemble now appears as a self-referential, problematic expression of “interests,” an ideological-interpretive discourse without any “real” access to the past as such; unable to engage in any dialogue with “reality.” In fact, “history” now appears to be just one more “expression” in a world of postmodern expressions: *which of course is what it is.*

...modernist renditions are now naïve: their historical moment has passed.

Saying true things about the past at the level of the statement is easy—anybody can do that—but saying the right things, getting the picture straight, that is not only another story but an impossible one: you can always get another picture, you can always get another context.

...then precisely insofar as the narrative endows real events with the kind of meaning found otherwise only in myth and literature, we are justified in regarding such a construct as an *allegory*.

In other words, history as a discourse is not an “epistemology.”

Bingo! There you have it: a postmodernist understanding of what historical Jesus scholars are actually (unbeknownst to them) doing. They are simply asserting their power and ideology through an aesthetic presentation about Jesus. Since postmodernism is the only game in town, it is the game historical Jesus scholars are playing. It would not be unfair, though it would be edgy, to describe postmodernist historiography as semiotic fascism. Words, and only words, rule—totally.

Historical Jesus scholarship becomes, in Jenkins’ categories, bourgeoisie—when it is the proletariat (read: postmodernist historiographers) that now run the game. The studies of Joachim Jeremias, Geza Vermes, Ben Meyer, E. P. Sanders, M. Borg, J. P. Meier, J. D. Crossan, N. T. Wright, B. D. Chilton, and James D. G. Dunn turn out to be nothing but ideologies, nothing but personal expressions of power. They

<sup>21</sup> See his *Metahistory*.

<sup>22</sup> On “*What is History?*”, 9, 10, 21, 24. “Own-sakism” is a shot at Sir G. R. Elton, who will be examined below.



simply emplot the events or existential facts about Jesus in a narrative, and it is the narrative that determines which facts are to be emplotted. Each narrative is a game of power, played by the author and his intended audience. And, what makes one presentation of Jesus “true” and another “not true” or “less than true” is that the “true” one is connected to persons in power while the “not true” or “less than true” ones are not. Truth, then, is little more than the voice of privilege.<sup>23</sup>

As Jenkins puts it in a way that “goes all the way down” to the bottom of the soul,<sup>24</sup>

Postmodern historians think that human beings can live ironic, reflexive, historicised lives, without the magic, incantations, mythologisations and mystifications spun by certaintist historians from across the board in both upper and lower cases. Postmodern historians see their own histories as being made not for “the past itself” but for themselves and for people whom they like (for when, they ask, was that ever not the case?).

This is a bitter pill to swallow for most of us. But, Jenkins counsels us, sometimes we have to take our medicine and hope to get better—which would mean we would need to stop thinking what we are doing is what we are really doing, and start recognizing that we are nothing but ideologues. This critique of scholarship is not the old standard stuff of historical Jesus scholarship. This is not E. P. Sanders criticizing Joachim Jeremias for having a Lutheran gospel grid through which he forces Jesus; nor is this Marcus Borg arguing that previous scholars have not sufficiently recognized the religious genius of Jesus; nor is this N. T. Wright claiming that previous scholars have not sufficiently recognized the profound grasp Jesus had on Israel’s story.

No, what Jenkins is accusing us of is far more profound, and it closes the books on nearly every historical Jesus study ever done. He is saying that we are not finding the “real” Jesus behind the texts, the rediscovery of whom sheds light both on the “real” Jesus and on a more genuine faith. He is arguing that we are simply fooling ourselves: what we think we are doing is not what we are doing. We are not finding Jesus back there, hidden for all these years by the church and others. What we are “finding” is nothing; we are “imposing” pleasing narratives about our own ideologies in order to assert our own power

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<sup>23</sup> Jenkins, *On “What is History?”*, 38–39.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

and we do this by using rhetoric about Jesus. Historical Jesus scholars don't have a goose by the neck, after all; instead, they have a mirror by the top and they are looking at themselves. "History," he is saying, is not the "past." "History" is a "narrative" using discrete facts about the past. This sort of "history" is as much imagined as it is found. The "past" remains there, discoverable in its historiographical representations (like the gospels), but meaningless until it is spun into a narrative. "History" makes discoverable, discrete and existential facts "meaningful."

Sometimes, of course, we recognize that historical Jesus scholars have such a heavy agenda that any notion of "objectivity" (which Jenkins excoriates) is tossed into the winds, but I've not yet met many who think they ought to abandon "objectivity" and instead simply tell a narrative of their own choosing, gathering bits and bobs of discrete facts and spinning them into a narrative, a meta-narrative of meaning. At least not at the conscious, intentional level.

### 1.2. (*More or Less*) *Modernist Historiography*

Keith Jenkins remonstrates with two historians whose books have shaped the modern discussion of historiography, the works of E. H. Carr<sup>25</sup> and G. R. Elton.<sup>26</sup> If Carr, in his soft Marxist *modus operandi*, contends that a "fact" becomes history only when it is absorbed into a meaningful history by a historian, Elton represents pure modernism: history is the attempt to find out what happened and why *for its own sake*. Carr thinks what matters is how we can use the past to predict and shape the future, while Elton thinks what matters is not how something can be used but what it was really like—to use the famous Rankean expression (*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*). While both Carr

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<sup>25</sup> *What is History?* The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures (January-March, 1961) (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1962; 2nd ed., 1987). See also J. Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E. H. Carr, 1892-1982* (New York: Verso, 1999); M. Cox ed., *E. H. Carr: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> *Practice of History; Return to Essentials*.

Teachers know that one of the most proven ways to get students to learn is to present polar opposites so that students can hash it out and find their own way. This, I suppose, is why Carr and Elton have proven so popular (though more modern-day historians today are Marxist, and incline toward Carr, than toward Elton). I suspect Jenkins and Evans can replace Carr and Elton as opposites.

and Elton are Rankean to one degree or another, Elton is the post-Rankean Ranke. And Carr and Elton did not get along.<sup>27</sup>

To play with the image we have already used, if Jenkins claims that both Carr and (especially) Elton are not holding the goose by the neck but a mirror instead, Elton has a counter. The modernist will claim that Jenkins, by admitting that his own ideology shapes his “history,” is the one with a mirror in his hands. In addition, the modernist historiographer is ashamed that Jenkins is proud of it. Elton and his ilk will lay claim to the fact that it is they who have the goose by the neck, even if at times they are humble enough to admit their grip is tenuous and at times the goose escapes. But at least, Elton would say, the modernist historian is interested in the goose of (what remains from) the past and not the mirror of a present ideology.

Jenkins thinks Elton’s methodology is as passé as drinking tea from one’s saucer, while Elton thinks Jenkins is cracked—cup and saucer. Jenkins may lay claim that postmodernism is no longer an option for historians but is instead the “fate” and “condition” of all who are at work at all time, but Elton (were he still alive) would simply say . . . perhaps I should use Elton’s own words that get at this with his own savage wit:

No one reads or writes history in a fit of total absentmindedness, though a fair amount of history has been written by people whose minds seem in part to have been on other things.

In other words, Elton would think Jenkins has his mind on other things (and his eyes on a mirror), while Elton thinks he’s got his own hand around the goose’s neck and Jenkins’ neck (the mirror was left at home as he trotted off to the library).

Whether the goose image is useful or not, the majority of historical Jesus scholarship can be categorized as Rankean, post-Rankean, and modernist. That is, it is concerned with finding “facts,” discovering what those “facts” meant at their time and in their original context, and then setting out an interpretation of those facts in a way that best corresponds to the originals. It aims to be scientific—hence preoccupied with method and neutrality and objectivity, and it breathes the air of the hopeful—hence convinced that proper methods, intelligence, and

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<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Elton, *The Practice of History*, 12–22. Carr, who was a Marxist, gets this put-down from Elton: “Marxism . . . [is] a truly remarkable achievement of scientific insight and ill-controlled speculation” (*The Practice of History*, 37).

the suppression of one's own views can lead to an ever enlarging knowledge base about the past and its value (should one care about such matters) for the present and future. This is a modernist historiography at work, though I'm not so sure most historical Jesus scholars are as conscious of this as perhaps they ought to be. What modernist historians assume is that language is not simply self-referential but is also (more or less) other-referential.

It would be unfair, however, to historical Jesus scholarship to suggest that historical Jesus scholars are simply working out the historiography of either Carr or Elton. In fact, the historiography of historical Jesus scholars is eclectic and (often) unconscious or uninformed of a specific historiography. Because historical Jesus scholarship is eclectic, we need to mention three, yea four, other historiographers whose views come into play when one discusses the historiography of historical Jesus scholarship: Marc Bloch,<sup>28</sup> Jacques Le Goff,<sup>29</sup> Richard J. Evans,<sup>30</sup> and John Lewis Gaddis.<sup>31</sup> But, because historical Jesus scholarship seems largely unconscious of its historiography, or at least unwilling to trot out its essential features, it is important for us to bring to the surface some of its essential features.

If we care about the place of the "historical Jesus" in the theological curriculum, it becomes fundamentally important for us to become aware of what we are doing when we "go after" the historical Jesus.

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<sup>28</sup> *The Historian's Craft*, intro. J. R. Strayer, trans. P. Putnam (New York: Random [Vintage], 1953). This book is a draft of a volume that was never completed; Bloch was assassinated by the Third Reich on June 16, 1944, along with twenty-six others. The book has enjoyed enormous popularity.

<sup>29</sup> A member of the French *Annales* school with its social-scientific and "objective" approach, and following the lead of Marc Bloch, Le Goff is a major medievalist, and I am grateful to my colleague, Dr. Susan Rabe, for introducing me to Le Goff. See his *History and Memory, European Perspectives*, trans. S. Rendall, E. Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992). This study is a collection of major articles originally translated into Italian for *Enciclopedia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977–1982).

<sup>30</sup> Closer to Elton than to Carr, but a mediating voice between them nonetheless, is R. J. Evans, *In Defence of History*. His study is an elegantly written masterpiece of a chastened modernist historiography. The decision to respond to his many (mostly postmodernist) critics wounds the elegance of the book by this modern German history scholar.

<sup>31</sup> Standing on the shoulders of E. H. Carr, John Lewis Gaddis, an American historian of the Cold War period, gave a series of lectures at the University of Oxford as the George Eastman Visiting Professor at Balliol. They follow the lines set out by Carr and, like Carr, Gaddis writes masterfully. See his *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Because, so it seems to me, most historical Jesus scholars are fundamentally Eltonian, I will focus on his work.<sup>32</sup>

Sir Geoffrey Elton is best understood if we begin with these two claims:<sup>33</sup>

Historical method is no more than a recognized and tested way of extracting from what the past has left the true facts and events of that past, and so far as possible their true meaning and interrelation, the whole governed by the first principle of historical understanding, namely that the past must be studied in its own right, for its own sake, and on its own terms... Its fundamental principles are only two, and they may be expressed as questions, thus: exactly what evidence is there, and exactly what does it mean? Knowledge of all the sources, and competent criticism of them—these are the basic requirements of a reliable historiography.

The historian must not go against the first conditions of his calling: his knowledge of the past is governed by the evidence of that past, and that evidence must be criticized and interpreted by the canons of historical scholarship.

Never mind that Elton's sharp pen has what amounts to two "firsts," what is evidence?<sup>34</sup>

Evidence is the surviving deposit of an historical event; in order to rediscover the event, the historian must read not only with the analytical eye of the investigator but also with the comprehensive eye of the storyteller.

The historian, so claims the modernist historian G. R. Elton, can be objective:<sup>35</sup>

In the process of learning, he already constructs, and in so far as the first is governed by the integrity imposed by the evidence the second flows from that evidence rather than from the historian's mind. However, it is he who uses the evidence: he chooses, arranges, interprets. As a researcher, he has his defences; we must see whether as a writer he can *escape the relativism of his personality*.

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<sup>32</sup> For Jenkins' relentless critique of Elton, see Jenkins, *On "What is History?"*, 64–96.

<sup>33</sup> Elton, *The Practice of History*, 65, 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. On "objectivity," see Evans, *In Defence of History*, 224–253; Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity" Question and the American Historical Profession*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, 111–128; Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 111–115.

In another context, Elton put it with his usual flair for the dramatic:<sup>36</sup>

Historians' personalities and private views are a fact of life, like the weather; and like the weather they are not really worth worrying about as much as in practice they are worried over. They cannot be eliminated, nor should they be. The historian who thinks that he has removed himself from his work is almost certainly mistaken; what in fact he is likely to have proved is the possession of a colourless personality which renders his work not sovereignly impartial but merely dull.

He can't stop with this, so he continues:

But though dullness is no virtue, neither is self-conscious flamboyance. The historian need not try either to eliminate or to intrude himself; let him stick to the writing of history and forget the importance of his psyche. It will be there all right and will no doubt be served by his labours, but really it matters less to the result than critics lament or friends acclaim, and it matters a great deal less than does his intellect.

Which is not to say that the historian does not hop the rails of objectivity and reveal that he'd rather go at it alone and chase a different path. For Elton, awareness of this bias is critical in keeping the historian on the rails.<sup>37</sup>

The point is rather that whatever piece of the past the historian reconstructs must, to be present to the mind, achieve a shape of beginning and end, of cause and effect, of meaning and intent. If, as he ought to be, the historian is in addition an artist, a man wishing to create (in words) a thing of interest and beauty, the constructive element in the process can become overpowering; and if political motives supervene it becomes really dangerous.

A nasty war has taken place between the historian and the social scientist over whether or not we focus on individuals shaping history or history shaping, because it determines, individuals. A leading light in this discussion was Isaiah Berlin, both in his *Historical Inevitability*, wherein he fought against determinism of all kinds in the name of a humane, free-will-oriented and even moralistic historiography, and in his inimitable essay on Leo Tolstoy's historiography, "The Hedgehog

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<sup>36</sup> *The Practice of History*, 105.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

and the Fox.”<sup>38</sup> But Elton, building on that scholarship, cut to the chase (because he, too, was a hedgehog) with this:<sup>39</sup>

History does not exist without people, and whatever is described happens through and to people. Therefore let us talk about people, by all means imposing categories on them and abstracting generalizations from them, but not about large miasmic clouds like forces or busy little gnomes like trends.

Elton was attacked, especially of late by the postmodernists, and Elton responded with an only slightly chastened claim:<sup>40</sup>

Reality has to be rediscovered and described on the basis of knowledge which is invariably incomplete, often highly ambiguous, and cannot be enlarged once all the relevant survivals have been studied, all of which demands constant decisions based on choice among the possibilities... [but] the present must be kept out of the past... That partial and uneven evidence must be read in the context of the day that produced it... [because] we must study the past for its own sake and guided by its own thoughts and practices.

And, as he ends chapter one of his classic textbook:<sup>41</sup>

*Omnia veritas.*

### 1.3. *What is History?*

There is one fundamental issue in all of historiography today: the relation of the Subject to the Object,<sup>42</sup> of the historian to what that historian wants to study—in our case, Jesus of Nazareth and the historical relics that survive about him and his world. If the postmodernist,

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<sup>38</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, Auguste Comte Memorial Trust Lecture 1, 12 May 1953 (London: Oxford University Press [Geoffrey Cumberlege], 1954); “The Hedgehog and the Fox,” in Isaiah Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, ed. H. Hardy, and R. Hausheer (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 436–498. For an informative setting of Berlin’s historiography in context, at times humorous, see M. Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 203–207.

<sup>39</sup> *The Practice of History*, 102.

<sup>40</sup> *Return to Essentials*, 65.

<sup>41</sup> *The Practice of History*, 50. On p. 51 he states that we are to recognize “that inability to know all the truth is not the same thing as total inability to know the truth.”

<sup>42</sup> Few have discussed, so far as I know, the claim of Elton that the subject matter of history is more objective than that of the natural sciences because the material is independent and has (what he calls a) “dead reality.” See *The Practice of History*, 51–58.

someone like Jenkins, wants to usurp the Object in the Subject by contending that history is narrative, history is rhetoric, and history is ideology, the modernist wants to blanket the Subject and find the Object, pure and simple and untouched. Let this be said: what the modernist wants to do can't be done. The postmodernists have made this clear. Unfortunately, too often they make this point with rhetoric and logic and not examples.<sup>43</sup> Even before the postmodernists, E. H. Carr tossed blocks of ice on the heat of claimed neutrality and objectivity of the modernist, empiricist history, saying that such a day is now over.<sup>44</sup>

This [era of empiricist historiography] was the age of innocence, and historians walked in the Garden of Eden, without a scrap of philosophy to cover them, naked and unashamed before the god of history. Since then, we have known Sin and experienced a Fall; and those historians who today pretend to dispense with a philosophy of history are merely trying, vainly and self-consciously, like members of a nudist colony, to recreate the Garden of Eden in their garden suburb.

Study the historian before you begin to study the facts... When you read a work of history, always listen out for the buzzing. If you detect none, either you are tone deaf or your historian is a dull dog.

...two books cannot be written by the same historian.

But neither is the bold claim of Jenkins do-able; we cannot completely swallow the Object in our subjectivity. We remain differentiated ego masses—and can do nothing about it. This is why the category of Ben F. Meyer, a historical Jesus scholar, namely “critical realism,” is so important to historical Jesus scholarship.<sup>45</sup>

So what then is history? And, for our purposes, what kind of history is the historical Jesus scholar doing? *First, history begins with “facts” that survive from the past as evidence* (“facts” constituent of the Object), this evidence and the facts behind it confront the Subject (observer),<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> A weakness in the approach of Keith Jenkins is his lack of examples from historical work. This, in part, is what Sir Geoffrey Elton despised: he listened only to those who were doing actual historical work (e.g., *Return to Essentials*, 3–26, 34). At the level of style and example, the studies of Richard J. Evans and John Lewis Gaddis carry the day.

<sup>44</sup> *What is History?*, 21, 26, 52.

<sup>45</sup> See his *Critical Realism*.

<sup>46</sup> A nuanced historiography makes this distinction: we study not so much the past but what survives from the past. But, few historians question that they can look “through” what survives to say something about the past itself. “Facts” exist independently of the mind, whether they are discovered or not; that is, things were said and



which facts, even if one follows the dynamic flow of the French phenomenologist Michel Henry on life, time and truth,<sup>47</sup> can be gotten ahold of as “existential facts”—a point permitted even by the postmodernist Keith Jenkins. The Subject does not completely swallow up the Object, and when it is claimed that it does, we are seeing what Richard Evans calls the “narcissism of much postmodernist writing” and “inflated self-importance, solipsism and pretentiousness.”<sup>48</sup> The Object can be distinguished from the Subject, and while Object is always at the level of “perception” or “re-presentation” (what isn’t?),<sup>49</sup> such Objects genuinely exist (even if they need to be sorted out through a critical procedure). The “realism” of the Object requires a “critical” (not naïve) approach, that is, one in which the Subject and the Object interact.<sup>50</sup> To be sure, apart from (perhaps) archaeological remains, all “existential facts” have been through what Elton calls “some cooking process” and no “existential facts” are “raw.”<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, the relic of that past remains and it can be studied—and some things can be known. As Jacques Le Goff puts it,<sup>52</sup>

In sum, I think history is indeed a science of the past, if it is acknowledged that this past becomes an object of history through a reconstitution that is constantly questioned.

John Lewis Gaddis is not alone in countering postmodernity’s fetish worry about the Subject when he states that “Historians are relatively minor actors, therefore, in the coercive process.”<sup>53</sup> But the necessary recognition that Subject and Object interact to form a knowledge rooted in critical realism means that all conclusions must be recognized

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things occurred. “Evidence” is what survives of those “existential facts.” The judgment that “facts” are “discrete” is a claim that “facts” have no meaning in and of themselves and that context and emplotment are not constitutive of those “facts.” I agree with R.J. Evans when he says, “The historian formulates a thesis, goes looking for evidence and discovers facts” (*In Defence of History*, 78).

<sup>47</sup> Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>48</sup> *In Defence of History*, 200.

<sup>49</sup> On this, see Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, 129–151.

<sup>50</sup> A good summary of this can be found in Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 31–46.

<sup>51</sup> See Elton, *The Practice of History*, 58. With his customary wit, Elton goes on: “one could at best then hope to find an historian [from the ancient past] learned, wise and sensitive enough to have cooked his materials in such a way that their natural flavour appears in the dish” (59).

<sup>52</sup> *History and Memory*, 108.

<sup>53</sup> *The Landscape of History*, 146.

as approximate, probabilistic, and contingent—and, not to be missed, shaped by the interaction of Object and the Subject's story.

An example of an “existential fact” would be Jesus' entering into the Jordan River near John the Baptist. If we are the Subject, and Jesus (as represented in the gospels and Josephus) is the Object and one of the “existential facts” is that he entered into the Jordan River, Subject and Object can be distinguished—even if the Object can be known only through the mind of the Subject.

Second, while there is something to be said for treating heuristically the “existential facts” as genuinely discrete, the postmodernist wedge has been driven in too deep: *even “existential facts” emerge from the waters of context and contingency and intention.*<sup>54</sup> The “existential facts” we work with, say Jesus' entering the Jordan River, are embedded and emplotted in their own context because humans intend and humans interpret as part of what makes them human and part of Life itself.<sup>55</sup> It wasn't just any old river he entered; and it wasn't during the night; and the entry wasn't disconnected from a John who was known for baptizing people, etc.

It might be useful to think more clearly about “discrete” facts and “emplotted” or “contextualized” facts. It can be just as easily claimed that no fact is genuinely “discrete,” because all “facts” occur in contexts, as a result of intentions, and therefore have some sort of “narrative” or “meaning” constituent to their very existence.<sup>56</sup> If I were to be seen walking around my car to open the door, one might interpret that (discretely) as an “existential fact” of walking around the car to open a door into which I did not enter. Odd behavior, to be sure, but still “discrete.” But, if one widens the context to see both contingency and intention in my action, one would see that I opened the door for a female, who is from other contexts determined to be my wife (Kris), and which behavior is characteristic of males such as I who were reared

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<sup>54</sup> On these matters, see Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, 71–109. On intention, see G. E. M. Anscombe, *Intention*, Library of Philosophy and Logic (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979). With the rise of Marxism especially, the issue of historical inevitability was pushed to the front by historiographers. A definitive argument in favor of free will and contingency and against determinism is the engaging essay, in his customary style of the winding road, of Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability*, esp. 69–79, where Berlin presents his own view. The rest of the essay is a polemic against determinism as a legitimate hermeneutic of reality.

<sup>55</sup> Again, see Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 33–52.

<sup>56</sup> See the helpful comments in Evans, *In Defence of History*, 75–102.

to open doors as an act of courtesy. In such a context, any kind of “meaning making” would see my action as an act of love and kindness and chivalry. (Of course, there are other truthful explanations of the action on other occasions: maybe the door is jammed and she needs my help in prying the door loose from its lock or maybe her hands are full and mine are not.) In general, in context, my action would be discernible and susceptible to truthful “meaning making.” In such a context, treating my action as “discrete” would tell us less than we could and should know. This is important because, without defense, Jenkins and other postmodernist historiographers assume the fundamental importance of treating “existential facts” as “discrete.”<sup>57</sup> But, if as I have argued, “existential facts” and “events” were originally “emplotted” because of human intention and because humans “read” others’ intentions through actions, etc., then there was an “original meaning,” however inchoate, and it is the aim of the historian to get as close to that “original meaning” as possible by working at the sources to find the “original emplotment.”

Third, *it is at this level, at the level of “contextualizing” the “existential facts,” that “meaning-making” begins to take place.* That is, if I understand Jesus’ entry into the Jordan River to be connected, because of a discernible context, to John the Baptist, to John’s message and mission (which were determined through other “existential facts”), and to Israel’s historic associations with this very location at the Jordan, then some kind of “meaning” can be “made” by the historian of what Jesus was doing and what his baptism meant. This meaning is brought

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<sup>57</sup> It may be observed here that this is precisely the strategy of the early form critics, who isolated events and sayings of Jesus, rendered their current contextual location in the gospels as secondary, and then “imagined” more original and secondary contexts out of which those events or sayings emerged. Redaction critics followed soon after and sought to discover the theology inherent in the “fictive” or “imaginary” “narrative” imposed on the “discrete events” by the redactor. It is perhaps the social scientists, however, who have undercut this simplistic model of the early form critics by arguing that all persons/events/sayings are socially, culturally, and ideologically embedded and emplotted—in and of themselves. For recent studies bringing these issues into the light, see Michael Moxter, “Erzählung und Ereignis: Über den Spielraum historischer Repräsentation,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 67–88; Jens Schröter, *Jesus und der Anfänge der Christologie: Methodologische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens*, BTS 47 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001); G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. E. Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002).

to the surface through narration, through what Paul Ricoeur labeled the “fictive.”<sup>58</sup>

In other words, history involves three “steps”—though we hasten to insert that “steps” gives the wrong impression if one thinks that one proceeds from one to the other. Actual historical study reveals that the three “steps” are taken at the same time because, as Marc Bloch put it so well, “In the beginning, there must be the guiding spirit.”<sup>59</sup> In fact, “meaning-making” occurs from the beginning of the process. This was the insight of several earlier historiographers, including Benedetto Croce and R. G. Collingwood.<sup>60</sup> Back now to these three (interrelated) “steps”: they are (1) the *discovery* of existential facts—in our case the “discovery” of the gospel evidence by exegesis, etc., or of archaeological data, or of political contexts. Then, (2) there is *criticism* of the “existential facts.” It is here that historical Jesus scholars have made big beds with billowy pillows and thick covers. An “existential fact” often becomes “non-existential” at the hand of a sceptical historical Jesus scholar. Some scholars, many perhaps, think Jesus was baptized but do not know where—not because there is not evidence that Jesus was baptized near where the children of Israel reportedly crossed the Jordan (e.g., John 1:22–23, 26) but because that evidence is judged, through criticism, to be unreliable.<sup>61</sup>

Now we get to the significance of the postmodernist enterprise. Next, (3) the historian begins to “*make meaning*” by “*interpreting*” what he or she judges to be critically-reliable fact in its context and for the author’s own intention.<sup>62</sup> It is at this point that “*narration*” *begins to shape the*

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<sup>58</sup> The literature by Ricoeur, not to mention about him and as an extension of him, is immense. I cite his three-volume set of essays: *Time and Narrative*, trans. K. McLaughlin, K. Blamey, D. Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988).

<sup>59</sup> *The Historian’s Craft*, 65.

<sup>60</sup> B. Croce, *Théorie et histoire de l’historiographie* (Paris, 1915); R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946).

<sup>61</sup> So, when James D. G. Dunn disagrees with me because “the tradition contains no indication in that regard,” he must mean that the evidence in John is not to be regarded as an “existential fact.” See his *Jesus Remembered*, 378 n. 182. That is, that John 3:26 is not part of the tradition.

<sup>62</sup> There was a long-standing debate between E. H. Carr and G. R. Elton over whether something becomes historical only when it is swallowed up into a historical narrative, or whether events in and out themselves are historical. Carr, for himself, thought history was about taking facts and placing them into a narrative in order to shape the present and the future, and that objectivity was all about what from the past fit into the course of the future. See *What is History?*, 36–69. Elton, on the other hand, had a different design: all facts were historical; some were more significant than others. But,

*choice of facts*, the order those facts are to find, and what meaning will occur as a result of that *narration*. That is, the historian “makes meaning” through narration, *as a result of imagination*,<sup>63</sup> through sorting through the evidence with a narrative that “puts it all together,” and this whether or not one prefers Ricoeur’s “fictive” label.

This occurs whether the historian is doing something large and formidable, as Peter Brown does in his *The Rise of Western Christendom* or Martin Hengel does with his *Hellenism and Judaism* or E. P. Sanders

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whether or not they had functional use for the future had nothing to do with their being historical or objective. See his *The Practice of History*, 51–87. Carr has been followed in this regard by Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, 1–16.

It is my view that no historian ever studies anything purely for its own sake (though I have undertaken some studies because I had to for an assignment). All historians have a reason for what they are studying, even if that reason is curiosity—but nearly all of them render judgment about their “Object” in the process. As an example, some modern historical Jesus scholars trumpet rather boldly that they are not at the personal level Christians in any ordinary sense and that this makes them more “objective” or “neutral” in their judgments. But, what becomes clear upon examination of their ‘narratives’ about Jesus is that their Jesus tends, more often than not (and I know of almost no exceptions), to lean in the direction of their own belief systems. Jesus, thus, can become an enthusiastic apocalyptic and not worthy of utter devotion and (what I am suggesting) their own non-faith in such a Jesus can be confirmed. What would be rare is someone who came to the conclusion that Jesus was utterly divine but who did not think him worthy of devotion. In other words, all historical Jesus scholars have an aim in what they are writing about Jesus. Thus, knowledge and power are related though I maintain they are not mutually determinative. See the excellent study of this topic in Evans, *In Defence of History*, 191–223.

A good example of this can be seen in J. H. Charlesworth, “The Historical Jesus and Exegetical Theology,” *PSB* 22 (2001): 45–63, who begins his study (45) with this claim: “All scholars who are distinguished in Jesus Research acknowledge that the historical-critical method needs to be employed.” A postmodernist of a deconstructionist spirit could be justified in seeing this as nothing more than the assertion of power—those who don’t do historical Jesus studies by “my” or “our” method will not be acknowledged and, because we acknowledge one another, “our” studies are the best. However, inasmuch as I think Charlesworth does state the “facts” straight in this regard—that the best scholarship is genuinely critical—I tend to think he is not playing the game of power, but “objectively” stating a historiographical truth. This, however, is not to say that genuine insights can be gleaned from those who do not operate with the historical-critical method. Inasmuch as Charlesworth is a modernist historian, his statement intentionally includes the postmodernist approach to Jesus. He speaks on p. 48 of “true historians,” on p. 49 of “virtually *bruta facta*” and includes here “healing miracles”—which is not a “brute fact” but instead an explanation of something else. He also speaks of the “purely historical and scientific methods” that must be “disinterested” (62). In addition, Charlesworth proceeds to say that while the Christian faith is rooted in history it transcends that history (62). This is an excellent article on the topic of this chapter.

<sup>63</sup> On imagination, which is discussed by most historiographers, see Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, 35–52.

does with his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* or James D. G. Dunn with his *The Parting of the Ways*. Or, it occurs when some historian narrows his or her scope to a singular event, theme or saying, as can be seen in Kathleen Corley's *Women and the Historical Jesus* or in Tom Holmén's *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*. In each of these studies, whether big or small, it is the *historian*, not the "existential fact," that *makes meaning* through what some classic historiographers call "interconnectedness." It is the business of a historian to "make meaning" of existential facts by bringing them into a coherent narrative—and the better written the more likely it is that the narrative will catch on. Bloodless historians create bloodless meanings—with the proviso that the sanguine do not necessarily write better histories.

This raises the question of "truth." Are some "narratives" or "meanings" more truthful than others? Is there, at times, "meaning" inherent to an "existential fact"? That is, does the very act of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River at the hand of John the Baptist need anything more than "exegesis" (a "bringing out of what is there")? At this point a wedge can be pushed into the discussion. If, as some postmodernists suppose, all events are indeed "discrete" in the sense that they are not connected and there is no meaning inherent in the event itself, then one must conclude that no historical narrative is "true" in the sense of final. Why? Because there is no standard to which one can measure the narrative against to claim that it is "true" (assuming here some sort of correspondence theory for "true"). It is here that the postmodernist enjoys the role of using the dagger. Because of his or her position of irony, the postmodernist delights in the claim that all is rhetoric, or narrative, or language. But, as Richard J. Evans points out rather more than less often, no postmodernist historiography permits the role to be reversed—that is, no postmodernist permits his or her "narrative" to be seen as nothing more than ideology and language, and nearly all such postmodernists trumpet their claim to have a method (postmodernist) that tells the "true" (even if they don't use that term) story about method and about what can be known.<sup>64</sup> Oddly enough, the postmodernist claims his or her irony as the truth.

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<sup>64</sup> *In Defence of History*, throughout.

Call it common sense realism or critical realism,<sup>65</sup> or whatever else you'd like, no human lives this way. I take one simple example. We live in Chicago. We are fans of the American game of baseball, and that means we cheer for the Chicago Cubs. The Chicago Cubs have not won a "pennant" in decades, and a few years back, when they were on the verge of clinching a decisive game and putting themselves in position to go to the World Series, an event occurred (so far as I can tell) in the sixth game of the National League Playoff Series. That event involved a Cubs fan (may he nonetheless live to a ripe old age). The fan reached up to snatch a baseball that had been hit by a batter, and a Chicago Cubs player (Moises Alou) reached out to catch the ball. The fan interfered and the player did not catch the ball. Had Alou caught the ball, perhaps, just perhaps, the Cubs would have won the game and been able to go to the World Series—and who knows, perhaps they would have brought home the bacon with the pennant.

Now, here's my point: according to a strict postmodernist interpretation, all we know about the game is what newspaper writers told us, what radio announcers relayed to us, and what TV analysts showed us. They told us what they wanted to tell us for their own reasons, according to their own ideologies, and for the assertion of their own power. What we don't know is the "reality" of the event. We could, by analyzing the residue of historical evidence—newspaper reports, eyewitnesses (one of whom was my son), and TV camera shots (which distort depth perceptions), come to our conclusion and "tell our own story." But, no story would be true. All we have is rhetoric and all we have is ideology.

I think this construction of reality to be as difficult to live with as the denial of the law of contradiction. More importantly, I think no postmodernist lives this way—most of them who heard about the game would think they know what happened and most of them could make meaning out of it—and a meaning that they would think truthful at some level. (And this would be so even for those who only heard reports by friends and fans.) Most postmodernist historiographers, also, would have an opinion on what would have happened (contingency) had the man not reached out and touched the ball. Many, and

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<sup>65</sup> On "critical realism," see esp. Meyer, *Critical Realism; Reality and Illusion*.

I am among that group, think Alou would have caught the ball and the Cubs would have (most likely) won the game. None, I think, would say that the fan touching the ball was simply a discrete event that had no connection to the baseball player or even to the outcome of the game.<sup>66</sup>

We live in a world where we have to make meaning to live, and some meanings are more realistic and truthful than others. The person who looks up at a baseball coming at him or her, and has a world in which “meaning making” does not observe the rules of gravity, may get whacked in the face with a small missile that will bring considerable pain—and what I am saying is that people don’t live like this. Not even postmodernists. One who has a “meaning making” narrative in which the laws of gravity are at work has a more truthful narrative than the one who does not.

Returning back from our digression into the pit of nether gloom that is Cubs baseball, we can look once again at what “truth” means when it comes to history and “meaning making.” In contrast to the postmodernist agenda, *if* “facts” are not simply “discrete,” *if* events have context, *if* the contingency of “existential facts” is not simply chaos, *if* humans have intentions in their actions and sayings, that is, in the “existential facts” for which there is a historical residue, *then* some “narratives” and “meanings” are more truthful than others. Those that are most truthful are those that can be demonstrated to correspond more or less to the “existential facts” in their historical contexts. As Richard Evans puts it, in what can only be called a chaste post-postmodernist modernism,<sup>67</sup>

I will look humbly at the past and say despite them all: it really happened, and we really can, if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it happened and reach some tenable though always less than final conclusions about what it all meant.

Postmodernists teach us that our own narratives are not equivalent with that reality in the past, and they remind us that our narratives need to be held lightly with the obvious potential of being revised and even jet-

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<sup>66</sup> So meaningful was that event to some Cubs fans that the ball was enshrined for some time in a bar near Wrigley Field and the next winter was blown up, in front of cheering fans, and at considerable expense. So ended, it is believed, the curse against the Cubs.

<sup>67</sup> *In Defence of History*, 253.



tisoned, but they cannot steal from us this: that our narratives more or less correspond to what we can know about “existential facts” and their “contexts” in such a way that we can derive a narrative that approximates truth. The best histories are those that narrate the most significant events in such a manner that meaning and events are close.

## 2. *The Historical Jesus: Brief Remarks*

We can begin with this: Christianity believes in history. Historiographers are fond of commenting that “history” as we now know it was washed into the tide of generations by Israel and the early Christians who believed, as is now clear, in “events” and “sayings” as put together into a “narrative.”<sup>68</sup> Two brief points draw the issue to the surface.

First, the Apostle Paul contends that the entirety of the Christian faith is founded on the “fact” of Jesus being raised from the dead.<sup>69</sup> He states this is the Christian tradition (i.e., their “narrative representation”) from the very beginning (1 Cor 15:3–7). Perhaps his most pointed lines are these:

*If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And, if Christ has not been raised, then (1) our preaching is useless and (2) so is your faith (15:13–14).*

That is, the Christian gospel is absolutely dependent on the understanding that Jesus Christ was dead, was buried, and came back to life—in the words of N. T. Wright, acquired “life *after* life-after-death.” This, in other words, is the claim that faith is rooted in the facticity of an event, a particular event, namely, the resurrection of Jesus from the grave. This is one reason why historiographers often claim Christianity is a religion of history.

A second example is from The Apostles’ Creed, in which (whenever one dates it) the faith of Christianity is expressed, not so much in the Bible as in the events to which the Bible witnesses—namely those “done” by the Father, Son, and Spirit.<sup>70</sup> Events—as put into a holistic

<sup>68</sup> E.g., Elton, *The Practice of History*, 2; Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, 31.

<sup>69</sup> On how Paul understood the resurrection, see now the exhaustive tome of N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 207–398.

<sup>70</sup> On creeds, see now J. Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). I find L. T. Johnson’s *The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters*

Christian narrative—are at the foundation of this unifying creed of Christians: God creating and the Son dying, descending, rising, and ascending.<sup>71</sup> To be sure, there is a “narrative” understanding of these “existential events” or, to use Ricoeur’s language, a “fictive representation,” but if those events are simple “fictions” or “myths,” then some serious damage is done to the content of what it is that Christians affirm.

What is also affirmed today is that the “historical Jesus” matters. What do historical Jesus scholars mean when they speak of the “historical Jesus”? In light of the brief survey of historiography above, it can only mean this: *the historical Jesus is the narrative re-presentation of the existential facts about Jesus that survive critical scrutiny*. The reason N. T. Wright’s study of Jesus makes a strong case for itself as an instance of history is because he renders “history” into a “story,” as a “narrative representation,” on the basis of a conscious method. That is, his study is not simply a study of “existential facts” that survive scrutiny, but it is a complete “narrative representation” of those “existential facts.” It puts all things together into a robust, engaging “story.”<sup>72</sup> This is what, according to historiographers, genuine history does. I do not mean by this that N. T. Wright’s study of Jesus is the best, though I am partial to much of what he says,<sup>73</sup> but what I do mean is that N. T. Wright’s study of Jesus is exemplary when it comes to the matter of historiography. There is no “Jesus” study on the shelf that is any more complete, historiographically speaking. There are some historiographical rivals, namely the historical Jesus studies of B. F. Meyer, E. P. Sanders, R. A. Horsley, James D. G. Dunn, the imaginative J. D. Crossan and the even more imaginative B. D. Chilton, but none of these provides as rich or as complete of a “narrative representation.”

Scholars will no doubt dispute some, or much, of the evidence that has survived Wright’s critical scrutiny—which they have a right to do

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(New York: Doubleday, 2003) inadequate because it monkeys around too much with words, turning them into “experience” rather than affirmation.

<sup>71</sup> See the comments of Charlesworth, “The Historical Jesus and Exegetical Theology”, 62–63.

<sup>72</sup> My criticism of James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, is precisely along these lines. In contrast to other works of his, this study does not have a guiding story that shapes the entire portrait of Jesus. In this sense, his study is historiographically more modernist and inductivist than it is a chastened form of postmodernist modernism.

<sup>73</sup> As can be seen in my *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

if they are doing history. In disputing the “existential facts” Wright uses, less will survive and a new “narrative representation” will have to be offered. The point here is not which evidence survives, but what one does with the evidence that does survive. For it to be good “history” it must be an engaging “narrative.” To be sure, some studies are only partial (*histoire en miettes*) because, as monographs or articles, they examine only some of the evidence or are narrowly focused. But, for something to pass muster with the historiographers, a “narrative” is needed to give “existential facts” their appropriate meaning.

Others, of course, tell a different narrative. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders, who have had their share of tussles, tell the narrative of the restoration of Israel, J. D. Crossan tells the narrative a counter-cultural Jesus, while Richard Horsley tells the narrative of a socially-engaged Jesus, and Bruce Chilton tells the narrative of a *mamzer* (“illegitimate child”) who was also a mystic . . . and the narratives go on and on. And what needs to be seen as “on and on” is that *each new re-presentation of Jesus is, in effect, a new gospel to be believed by the historical Jesus scholar and by any who care to agree with that scholar*. I know of no other way of putting this. Historical Jesus studies tend to construe “existential facts” into a new narrative, a new gospel.

It is this “on and on” that causes the problem we are facing: what role are these “narrative representations” of Jesus to play in the theological discipline? The issue here is found in one of the words italicized above: *the historical Jesus is the narrative re-presentation of the existential facts about Jesus that survive critical scrutiny*. Every “historical Jesus” placed on the table is a “re-presentation” of Jesus, and it is “re-presentation” of the Jesus in the canonical Four Gospels—sometimes by eschewing the overall “narrative” of those Four Gospels in favor of a non-canonical “re-presentation” or in favor of the historical Jesus scholar’s own rendition of what Jesus was “really like.” It is this “on and on” of “re-presentations” that raises a critical question for the theological discipline.

There are two deep traditions of a “narrative” about Jesus, the four canonical gospels and the various creeds of the church, that have shaped the entire history of the church and the “role” Jesus himself plays in that church. Are the new “narrative representations” of Jesus to oust those two deep traditions? Are they to supplement them? Are they to correct them?

It can be said without exaggeration that the “church’s” own “presentation” of Jesus in the Four Gospels, or in the creeds, is the governing

story of Jesus. It is this “story,” or “history,” that (as Larry Hurtado so ably demonstrates) won the day and that has shaped the self-identity of the church for two millennia.<sup>74</sup> This “presentation” is the church’s “memory,” and it is *both* memorization of past as well as generation of identity and future.<sup>75</sup> The church makes the claim that neither the modernist nor the postmodernist has either the goose by the neck or the mirror by the top. Instead, the church claims it has the gospel and it can be found by reading the four canonical gospels or by studying its creeds. By and large, the church doesn’t eat goose and it does not care to look at itself in a mirror of itself. It believes instead the “narrative of Jesus” found in a singular story about Jesus.

The problem, therefore, with other “re-presentations” of Jesus is scriptural—what role is the scripture to play in the church’s understanding of Jesus? The problem is also christological—what role are the traditional affirmations of Jesus to play in the church’s understanding of other “re-presentations” of Jesus? The problem is epistemological—how do the “re-presentations” of Jesus correspond to the “block” of material we can find about Jesus? And, finally, it is ecclesiological—what role is the church’s own self-identity to play in judging new “re-presentations” of Jesus? Is it not the case, whether we come at this from the angle of postmodernism, tradition history, or just common sense, that a new “narrative” of Jesus will re-shape the church’s own self-identity?

An even more complicating factor, and one into which we cannot delve here, is that the church, in opting for the four canonical gospels (and the creeds to which those very four gospels contributed), also eschewed other “narrative presentations” of Jesus. That is, the church judged that the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Peter* were not consistent enough with the “canonical narrative” to be accepted as authoritative for shaping Christian theology and self-identity.

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<sup>74</sup> Deconstructionists, of course, may suggest that “won the day” is precisely the problem: it was an ideology that had sufficient power to control the story (as did Dante in his *Divine Comedy*). I do not dispute the power inherent in Constantine. But, having admitted that, we must recognize that (1) that story was not invented by Constantine; it had deep, original roots in the Christian tradition. And (2) it is that story that has shaped the identity of the church ever since. To mess with that story is to mess with the identity of the church—which is what some want to do today (e.g., Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* [New York: Random, 2003]).

<sup>75</sup> On which, see esp. Le Goff, *History and Memory*, 51–99.

This presses all other “narrative re-presentations” of Jesus into a corner and leads us to this question: Did the church, by accepting only these Four Gospels, render a judgment once and for all about all other attempted “re-presentations” of Jesus? We could answer this with a “yes” and a “no”—a “yes” for any grand narrative claiming final authority, but a “no” for any narrative claiming some sort of insight into the canonical gospels or some kind of support or supplement to them.

So, we ask again, how do the various “historical Jesus” “re-presentations” fit into the theological discipline?

### 3. *The Historical Jesus and the Theological Discipline*

What lurks behind much of the discussion of both a modernist and postmodernist historiography is the simple observation that a Christian faith embraces, at some level, an upper case “History,” a macro-scheme of where things started and where they are ultimately going. In other words, because Christian faith by nature confesses both *aitia* and *telos*, it cannot be simply postmodernist—for postmodernity rejects such explanations in its disprivileging of any reading. Furthermore, to the degree that modernity eschews the “question of God” it also eschews a Christian understanding of history.<sup>76</sup> So, while technical historiography may need to move, in the public forum where faith assumptions may need to be bracketed for the sake of conversation, along modernist or postmodernist lines, a truly Christian historiography, not to say a Christian historiographical approach to Jesus, will need to carve its own path. To use the inimitable terms of Isaiah Berlin, Christian historiographers are more or less hedgehogs.<sup>77</sup>

In light of our discussions above about both historiography and the historical Jesus, what can we say about the role of the historical Jesus in the theological discipline?

First, we can back up to the postmodernist claim about what “history” is and make this observation: if our understanding of “history” and the “historical Jesus” is near the mark and we are concerned about

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<sup>76</sup> On which, see N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles/Centenary, 1945); *The Destiny of Man* (London: Geoffrey Bles/Centenary, 1945); C. Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1950); S. J. Case, *The Christian Philosophy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

<sup>77</sup> See Berlin, “The Hedgehog and the Fox.”

how the “historical Jesus” fits into the theological discipline, historical Jesus scholars can only offer “narrative representations” of Jesus *that fit with the relics about Jesus in the surviving evidence*. That is, they cannot make of him what they will without being accused of the charge of historical misrepresentation. At this point the historical Jesus scholar (and nearly all agree so far as I can see) parts company with the post-modernist radical who thinks we can make of history whatever we want because, after all, it is all rhetoric, language, and ideology. After all, it is a branch of aesthetics and literature and so the task of the historian is to offer as good a narrative as he or she can. I would counter with the words of Marc Bloch: “Explorers of the past are never quite free. The past is their tyrant.”<sup>78</sup>

(The limitation of every historical representation of Jesus to the evidence inevitably means that the canonical gospels themselves are often held accountable to the evidence as well. At some level, at least for most historical Jesus scholars, the gospels themselves become “authoritative” to the degree that they themselves correspond to the evidence that can be discovered about Jesus.)

The evidence, and we can bring every bit of it that we can find into one large marble block, determines the parameters of what a historical Jesus scholar should say about Jesus. “In some cases,” as Richard Evans states it, “the narrative is there in the sources.”<sup>79</sup> The old cry of Sir Geoffrey Elton, “to the evidence” (*ad fontes*), is at the foundation of nearly every historical Jesus study I know of. We have wildly different portraits of Jesus in the studies of B. F. Meyer, E. P. Sanders, R. A. Horsley, J. D. Crossan, J. P. Meier, N. T. Wright, (to some degree) James D. G. Dunn, and B. D. Chilton, but each of them claims—overtly—that his “re-presentation” of Jesus is grounded in the facts and that it comes from those facts. They are each, to use our historiographical taxonomy, modernists through and through. They believe we can discover the evidence, judge it through a critical process, “find” (rather than “impose”) its meaning in its context with clarity, and that they can, sometimes with more potency than other times, “re-present” it all in a compelling “narrative.” But, as modernist historiographers, each believes in the “evidence”—and each is not all that unlike Sir Geoffrey Elton in orientation.

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<sup>78</sup> *The Historian's Craft*, 59.

<sup>79</sup> *In Defence of History*, 147.

In that I have placed Carr and Elton in the same category of a modernist historiographer, I must add that many if not most historical Jesus scholars tend to make a presentation of Jesus that “fits” with what they think the “future” of Christianity holds, as E. H. Carr so clearly argued. While each may make the claim that they are simply after the facts and simply trying to figure out what Jesus was “really like”—and while most don’t quite say this, most do think this is what they are doing—what nearly everyone of them presents is what they’d like the church, or others with faith, to think about Jesus. Crystal clear examples of this can be found in the studies of Marcus Borg, N. T. Wright, E. P. Sanders, and B. D. Chilton—in fact, we would not be far short of the mark if we claimed that this pertains to each scholar—always and forever.<sup>80</sup> And each claims that his or her presentation of Jesus is rooted in the evidence, and only in the evidence.

If that evidence is likened to a marble block, then the historical Jesus scholar may have to chisel away chunk after chunk, but the historical Jesus scholar is not permitted to add marble to the already determined block. Some historical Jesus scholars will chisel away more than others—E. P. Sanders, J. D. Crossan, Kathleen Corley, N. T. Wright, and James D. G. Dunn, for instance, each chisel away different parts of the marble block, but each (confessedly) is working on the same block and trying to find what the block was intended to be—as a good sculptor will always admit.

Second, a word about hermeneutics, a topic which (again) cannot be given here the attention it deserves. I build here on the profound work of A. C. Thiselton in his *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* and F. Watson in his *Text and Truth*.<sup>81</sup> Thiselton demonstrates that post-modernity operates with a “hermeneutic of suspicion,” and, as Keith Jenkins’ works on historiography reveal, it is a hermeneutic that sees “texts” as ideological grasplings for power written for a cadre who utilize that text as an assertion of power. Watson, for his part, demonstrates satisfactorily an older notion: a text is an attempt at communication. As Kevin Vanhoozer argues, texts are (at some level)

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<sup>80</sup> This is precisely why Martin Kähler’s famous claim that faith is not based on historical study is disproven by history. Scholars, and those who follow them—in the church or not in the church—believe in their own narratives.

<sup>81</sup> *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

persons and, as Alan Jacobs contends, texts must be treated as our “neighbors.”<sup>82</sup>

I contend that a hermeneutic of suspicion is fundamentally at odds with the gospel, which is what a theological discipline is most concerned with. In other words, what a Christian needs is not a hermeneutic of suspicion but, as Alan Jacobs brilliantly presents, a “hermeneutics of love”<sup>83</sup> or a “hermeneutic of trust.”<sup>84</sup> Jacobs, building on the profound but often-neglected study *On Christian Doctrine* by Augustine, writes that a “charitable interpretation” not only fully embraces the distinction between “Subject” and “Object,” but also knows that genuine “hearing” can take place only when the reader “subordinates” himself to the Other (or, Object) in order to hear and to understand and to love. This is not some soft-kneed nonsense that Jacobs offers us. As Jacobs states it,<sup>85</sup>

Discernment is required to know what kind of gift one is being presented with, and in what spirit to accept it (if at all), *but a universal suspicion of gifts and givers, like an indiscriminate acceptance of all gifts, constitutes an abdication of discernment in favor of a simplistic a prioriism that smothers the spirit.*

Because the hermeneutic of love knows that genuine love is righteous and holy, it speaks the truth about what it reads, judges some things good and some things bad, but it nonetheless operates on the basis of “trust” and “love” rather than suspicion. While it may conclude that some texts are genuinely ideological and graspings for power—who would not judge the Marquis de Sade’s *In Praise of Folly* as a monstrosity?—a proper reading cannot begin with “suspicion.” Instead, a (Christian or not) reader needs to recognize that “texts” are intended to be “communication events” between two humans made in the image of God and that a genuinely humane reader is one who

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<sup>82</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 455–468; Alan Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading: The Hermeneutics of Love* (Boulder, CO: Westview [Perseus], 2001), 9–35.

<sup>83</sup> I recently noticed that N.T. Wright spoke of this in his 1992 study; see *The New Testament and the People of God*, 64; Wright himself points to Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 604–611.

<sup>84</sup> See Jacobs, *A Theology of Reading*.

<sup>85</sup> *A Theology of Reading*, 24. Italics added.



trusts the words of the others.<sup>86</sup> This approach is as humane as it is Christian.

When it comes to the “historical Jesus,” I am not claiming that a Christian, because he or she adopts a chaste but genuine “hermeneutics of love and trust,” thinks everything in the gospels is, simply by inclusion, “historical.” This would miss the general strength of our point about hermeneutics. What it means is that the historical Jesus scholar would not assume the texts are “unhistorical” or so ideologically-driven that they must be deconstructed and re-shaped by one’s own ideology. This sort of treatment of the gospels is, in my view, the destruction of communication because it refuses to listen to the Other (Object, the gospels) and it intends the Subject (reader) to swallow up the Object in his or her own ideological agenda. Communication, which is what happens in any genuine love, is broken when suspicion gains the upper hand. Again, this does not mean that the gospels contain only “red” letters—to use the coding of the Jesus Seminar—but it does delay the judgment until after genuine encounter and reading of the text occurs.

Third, “history” as defined by historiographers involves the “narration” of “existential facts.” When it comes to the theological discipline, therefore, there are “narrations” and there are “narrations,” which means there are some that are good and there are some that are bad, with both “good” and “bad” defined by what the “theological discipline” itself defines as its own narrative. Which means this: since history is a “narrative,” there is either one defining narrative or there are an infinite number of narratives. Since the theological disciplines involve Scriptures and creeds, there is a single normative narrative, or what we could also call a “four-fold” normative narrative about Jesus. That is, if history is a narrative, and if we are concerned with the role of modern historical narratives in the overall theological discipline, we have no options other than surrendering to no normative narrative or to the Church’s normative narrative. To use the words of my professor’s own book on the historical Jesus, all we have at the normative level is the “remembered Jesus.” It is this “remembered Jesus” that was the normative narrative.

I offer now a fourth, but final, observation and it is a bit of a trump card. If we are dealing with the theological discipline, we are probably

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<sup>86</sup> See here Watson, *Text and Truth*.

dealing with both faith-based seminaries or colleges as well as state-based or university-based schooling. What is expected in one differs from the other. But we can perhaps cut to the chase with a rather simple observation: *to the degree that the school that shapes the curriculum is itself shaped by the two deep traditions about Jesus (the canonical gospels, the creeds), to the same degree its openness or closedness to the historical Jesus is determined.*

In a university setting, where freedom of thought (along with political correctness) is championed as the one and only creedal statement, there will be almost no restrictions on what a historical Jesus scholar may say and teach about Jesus. In a more ecclesiastically-shaped institution, the sort of institution I teach in at North Park University, there will be restrictions (at different levels) on what can be said and taught about Jesus. Institutions of this sort vary on what is permitted and what is not permitted.

My trump card is now clear: *if a theological curriculum is based on a traditional confession in the narrative depiction of Jesus in the gospels, or the historic creeds, then the historical Jesus has a distinct but limited role.* The historical Jesus scholar's narrative representation of Jesus is of value only insofar as it supplements or supports the grand narrative of Jesus that is found in the gospels or the creeds. It may have lesser values: showing how we got from the "original Jesus" to the present "canonical Jesus"; offering an apologetic for what the church believes by filtering through non-canonical evidence or other sorts of evidence and arguments; or simply writing out a "history" of early Christianity in order to provide for students and Christians "how things became what they did." But, what is clear is that for the person who is committed to the canonical gospels, or to the creeds, as the church's definitive "narrative" about Jesus, another "narrative" about Jesus will not play a faith-determining role. It will not because it cannot.

The reason for this is clear: theological curricula are shaped by larger bodies, by administrative and church-based boards, and they are shaped to foster students into the faith that body confesses. The faith of such bodies, in most cases, is the result of two millennia of study of the Bible and the creeds, the result of two millennia of intense theological debate and discussion. It is unlikely, one, that a single historical Jesus scholar will completely change the theological conclusions of either the church or even of a smaller church body. Two, the swirl of ideas that emerge from a wide variety of historical Jesus scholarship

makes clear that not every one of these can be adapted or adopted for use in the life of the church or in the theological curriculum.

In his recent, brilliant *magnum opus*, Larry Hurtado traces with exacting nuance how the early churches expressed Christ devotion.<sup>87</sup> The church itself came from the trajectory Hurtado sorts out. And many historical Jesus studies today would fit within the parameters sketched by Hurtado. Many, also, would not fit. Those narrative representations of Jesus that do not fit into that grid would also not fit into a theological curriculum intent on teaching a traditional understanding of Jesus.

Most theological curricula permit enough freedom of thought for the individual scholar to offer suggestions here and there, and to offer, under the watchful eye of both scholarship and theological context, a new narrative representation of Jesus. It is no surprise that both N. T. Wright and B. D. Chilton serve in the same church body: the Church of England and its American family member, the Episcopal Church. Other church bodies would not be so supple, and they have a right to determine their own parameters. Such parameter-making, after all, is an expression of freedom of thought. As free as any science discipline that requires its professors and students to learn to explore the world within a set of categories well-established by others.

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<sup>87</sup> *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).



# HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH IN GLOBAL CULTURAL CONTEXT

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## 1. *Introduction*

The historical Jesus research as a global cultural phenomenon did not begin in modern times. It started right from the New Testament era itself. By historical Jesus is meant the question whether Jesus of Nazareth (ca. 4 BCE/6 CE–33 CE) really existed, whether he personally said, taught and did all the things attributed to him; and whether from the extant “historical” records we today can gain a glimpse of his historical person “as he really was.” Global research could mean attempts to discover what the different nations and scholars worldwide are saying or have said in their different cultural contexts about the historical Jesus as here outlined. This study, however, focuses on how each epoch and culture, starting from the New Testament era, understands and appropriates the global Jesus whose global cultural nature is given by God, in virtue of his being God’s universal Messiah, not a human construct. It acknowledges that the main resources in any discussion of the historical Jesus are the canonical gospels, though recently the “historical” value of the apocryphal gospels is being emphasized.<sup>1</sup> As *Dei Verbum* rightly observes, “even among the New Testament, the Gospels have a special place, and rightly so, because they are our primary source for the life and the teaching of the Incarnate Word, Our Savior.”<sup>2</sup> The debate on the historical nature or otherwise of these documents cannot invalidate their irreplaceability as our unique primary

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Christopher Tuckett, “Sources and Methods” in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 121–137, esp. 128–130; J. D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), and the rich bibliography cited in these works.

<sup>2</sup> Austin Flannery, O.P., *Vatican Council II, 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, rev. ed., 1988), 760.

sources for meeting the Jesus of history, or their value in themselves as historical documents.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, these historical documents on the historical Jesus, we recall, were not written for Christians of the twentieth or twenty-first centuries. It is even doubtful that New Testament authors ever thought the world would last this long, given their expressed belief in the Lord's promise to return soon or that the generation then alive would not pass away until all his words and promises had been fulfilled, notwithstanding the Lukan parables warning against expectation of immediate return (Luke 19:11–27) of the master going on a long journey (cf. Luke 20:9–19).<sup>4</sup> Any discourse on the historical Jesus, therefore, needs to bear in mind the short term, contextualized, localized, even personalized, community-based and faith-motivated nature of these documents and, above all, their interpretative nature.<sup>5</sup> Reception, digestion/assimilation and transmission are integral aspects of the New Testament writings, especially the gospels (cf. Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31). This applies also to what they record about the historical Jesus. All history, not only the “history” of the historical Jesus, is interpretation, as is all human endeavor, since to be human is to be a hermeneut, an interpreter, one who is able to read, understand and respond to the signs

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<sup>3</sup> We may situate this issue in the context of other historical persons, ancient and modern. How, for instance, do we know that a Plato, an Aristotle, a Socrates, a Hammurabi, or a Pharaoh really lived and did the things attributed to them? How and what do we know about the historical Moses, by all indications founder of the Israelite nation and religion? The answers to these questions may vary, yet one thing is certain, that to gain even a glimmer of truth about these historical persons, we depend, at least as a starting point, even if only in faith, on the records about them transmitted down the centuries by those who knew them or claimed and thought they knew them. The New Testament records cannot be an exception to the rule, especially since they date much closer to the events they narrate than those other ancient documents.

<sup>4</sup> Scholars have unfairly accused Luke of converting the Parousia into an indefinite period of history. For Albert Schweitzer (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Raimarus to Wrede*, ed. J. M. Robinson, trans. W. B. D. Montgomery, reprint 1968 [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998], 4), Jesus was the first to be disappointed in his expectation of the immediate return of the Son of Man, a figure Schweitzer distinguishes from Jesus himself.

<sup>5</sup> “Personalized” in the sense that the gospels were primarily concerned with the immediate persons and communities to whom they addressed their work in order to elicit from them a life-giving faith in the historical Jesus; “community-based,” because the authors did not write independently of the community of faith from which they received and to which they directed their writings.

and symbols of one's community and world if one is to survive and function in that community and world.<sup>6</sup>

Redaction criticism and contextual New Testament readings have long established that the gospels are not verbatim recordings of the *ipsissima verba* or *acta* of Jesus but his words and deeds as the eyewitnesses understood and transmitted them to their immediate audience and as subsequent generations also understood/interpreted the transmitted records, both oral and written, to their own audience. Contextual studies from the perspective of two-thirds world have consolidated this by emphasizing the life context of the audience addressed (not just the *Sitz-im-Leben* or context in which a text was used). John, for instance, emphasizes both the selective and interpretative nature of his gospel, adding that if all the things Jesus did and said were written down, the world itself would be unable to contain such books (John 20:30–31; 21:25); an exaggeration perhaps, but the point is made nonetheless.<sup>7</sup>

These observations draw attention to the need to accept the faith-based, life-oriented or hortatory nature of New Testament sources. We find peace in accepting that the authors were interested not in pure historical documentation of events about Jesus, but rather primarily in underscoring their own expected response to this historical person.<sup>8</sup> Their struggle with faith response clearly colored their works and give a different orientation to the facts about the historical Jesus than does contemporary classroom, scientific research whereby the researcher, even if an atheist, can write “authoritatively” on the historical Jesus without making a personal contact with him or being touched and transformed by the positive fruits of his or her research.

Furthermore, we recall that our contemporary concern with historicity was not that of New Testament authors, that our classroom, library, Internet “scientific/academic” contexts for discussing the

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<sup>6</sup> See further, T. Okure, “I will open my mouth in parables (Matt 13:35): A Case for a Gospel-Based Biblical Hermeneutics,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 445–463, esp. 447–449; S. C. Bates, *Human Life is Cultural: Introducing Anthropology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> It is possible, for instance, to read all four gospels, and even the whole of the New Testament in a maximum of one day. Yet Jesus taught and ministered for at least three years.

<sup>8</sup> Were it not for the problems in the Corinthian community, for instance, we would probably never have known Paul's version of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:23–26) or the resurrection creed he received from the tradition “as of first importance” (1 Cor 15:3–8).

nature of the historical Jesus were not theirs, nor was their understanding of history. Rather, according to the declared intention of at least two of the evangelists (Luke 1:1–4; John 20:30–31) their purpose was to urge their audience to root their lives, their own life history, in the stream of Jesus' own life history. As 1 Peter observes, "Although you have not seen him [or known him, according to some witnesses], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet 1:8). Discipleship for the early Christians meant summatively: following and learning from Jesus, loving him, drawing life from him and living as he lived, in the hope of sharing his victory over sin and death. Their concern with the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth lay in its unique significance for their own lives. This itself was rooted in the belief that Jesus' own life effected a radical change in the history and status of every believer, of humanity as a whole and of the entire creation.<sup>9</sup>

For the New Testament authors, therefore, research into the historical Jesus made little or no sense apart from themselves, that is, without their sustained effort to understand, personally accept Jesus and live by his teaching in their diverse socio-cultural and life locations. They themselves, the faith-filled, faith-based community, were very much part or extensions of the historical Jesus. In them (*en christo*), Jesus continued to live visibly; they found new individual and communal identity and worth through their believing in him. Paul sums up the significance of the historical Jesus for the individual and community when he states: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is in vain...we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:14–19). Equally today, the historical Jesus continues to live on in the faith, the strengths and weaknesses of committed believers. To leave out this dimension, that believers form part of the historical Jesus by rooting their own lives in him, would be to

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. Okure, "'In him all things hold together': A Missiological Reading of Col 1:15–20," *International Review of Mission* 91.360 (2002): 62–72; eadem, "The Global Jesus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl 237–249; eadem, "Colossians," in *Global Bible Commentary*, ed. Daniel Patte, Teresa Okure et al. (henceforth *GBC*) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 490–499.



greatly impoverish the New Testament understanding of the historical Jesus, and consequently, too, our research into his historicity.<sup>10</sup>

The last observation, offers, arguably, an essential key for discussing the historical Jesus research in a global cultural context. If research here means discovering what the nations are saying about the historical Jesus, the implication is that the global community locates its interest in Jesus in the discourse about his historicity as is currently posed by western scholars in the historical Jesus research, typified at its lowest value by the so-called “Jesus Seminar.”<sup>11</sup> This writer’s experience does not corroborate such an assumption. In light of this, our concern with the historical Jesus research in a global cultural context leads us to focus on how different peoples worldwide understand in faith, appropriate and reap the fruits of the historical Jesus portrayed in the New Testament, especially in the gospels. The New Testament and gospel authors themselves adopted this approach, since their writings are largely a collective witness to their efforts to understand and get to know the historical Jesus and relate their own lives, that of their diverse audience, of humanity as a whole and the entire creation to his life. Outside this life-centered, faith-based optic and orbit, the discourse or research on the historical Jesus, especially from a global perspective, risks losing much of its relevance and significance.

As a way forward, this current research examines the question of the historical Jesus research in a global context first by identifying the salient features of this life-oriented “research” among the New Testament Christians themselves in their own time and world; then it attempts a brief survey of how today people in different parts of the world conduct the same life-oriented research and reception of the historical Jesus in their diverse socio-cultural contexts on the basis of their concrete life-experiences and needs.<sup>12</sup> How did the life issues on

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<sup>10</sup> Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in John 17:21 (that their lives of unity, modeled on that of the Trinity, would persuade the world to believe in him) can be cited as evidence of this observation.

<sup>11</sup> This was started in 1965 by Robert Funk of the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California; see Marcus J. Borg, “Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship,” *HTR* 84 (1992): 1–22; Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); Robert W. Funk, ed., *The Acts of Jesus: What Did Jesus Really Do? The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins).

<sup>12</sup> In my previous study on “The Global Jesus” (n. 9 above), I attempted a survey of the reception of the historical Jesus in major historical epochs. Here, I concentrate only on the New Testament era, as a foundational era, and on our own era.

the ground and the diverse intentions/interests of the New Testament authors fashion and condition their understanding and proclamation of the historical Jesus? If the gospels, and New Testament generally, summatively see Jesus as the Savior of the World (cf. John 4:42), God's lamb "who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), God's good news to the poor and marginalized and agent in granting a general amnesty (Luke 4:18–19) and reconciling the world to the divine self (2 Cor 5:19), how today do peoples in diverse cultural settings view this same historical Jesus? What motivates, conditions and even delimits their interpretations of the historical Jesus they receive through the canonical gospels? Two basic principles guide this study. First it posits that the global Jesus research from a global cultural perspective goes back to the New Testament itself; and second that the process by which the historical Jesus is received in this historical research both in the New Testament and today is the exact opposite of what obtains in secular exploitative and capitalist globalization.

## 2. *The Historical Jesus Research in the New Testament*

Interest in the historical Jesus in the New Testament seems to have been initiated by Jesus himself, according to the synoptic tradition, when he asked his disciples at Caesarea Philippi: "Who do people say the son of man is? . . . But who do you say that I am?" (Matt 16:13, 16).<sup>13</sup> Jesus was physically present with his disciples and the people, yet he felt the question about his identity needed to be openly raised and discussed. The disciples seem to have been the only ones who had no previous thought about his identity apart from seeing him as Rabbi, Master, teacher, though some, in the Johannine tradition, saw him as the one "of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote" (John 1:45) or, in a rare confession, as "the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (11:27).<sup>14</sup> Yet even this designation

<sup>13</sup> See also Mark 8:27, 29; Luke 9:18, 20. Unlike Matthew, Mark and Luke both have "that I am?" in both questions.

<sup>14</sup> John here incredibly places on the lips of Martha, a woman, confession of the faith, which inspires and undergirds his entire Gospel (John 20:30–31). See further on this, Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4:1–42*, WUNT 2.31 (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988), 246–248; eadem, "John," in *International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Resource for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. William R. Farmer et al. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 1438–1502, esp. 1482.

had a problem, since the Christ was to come from Bethlehem in Judea, not from Nazareth in Galilee, a village from which no good could come and a region which never produced a prophet, not to mention the Messiah (John 1:46; 7:52). The people's answers to Jesus' question ("John the Baptist, Elijah or one of the prophets") reveal the different receptive frames his audience used to view him and the hopes they reposed on him.

The question of Jesus' identity raised at Caesarea Philippi may seem irrelevant in a discourse on the historical Jesus research; but this is not so.<sup>15</sup> Normally, how we view a person determines the value or worth we attach to their words and deeds. Third world women, especially from sub-Saharan Africa, experience this regularly. Often, a groundbreaking idea from such scholars may fail to command the attention of the academic world. But if a "better placed" scholar ("better" in terms of sex, race, class and geographical location) picks up the same idea, gives it a new name and presents it to the academic world, then the idea receives great attention and generates much discussion in the field. Records of what Jesus said and did and how this was received depended largely on how his contemporaries viewed him. Scholars are perhaps right that the disciples themselves did not think much of him till after the resurrection. Emphasis on the post-Easter faith as coloring the gospel accounts of Jesus is no new discovery; the gospels themselves testify the same. Only after Jesus had risen from the dead did they remember some of the things he had told them and learned to believe in him (cf. John 2:22). Years later they committed to writing only a tiny selection of what he said and did (John 20:30–31; 21:25).

If this is the reality about the historical Jesus research in our primary sources, our contemporary research on the same cannot hope to fare better.<sup>16</sup> Awareness of this keeps us realistic and radically humble about the results of such research (a term that has replaced "quest" in the earlier researches). What we can hope to discover is the historical Jesus, portrayed conjointly by the faith communities of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. For besides sharing bread and other possessions in common, the early Christians also held in common their

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<sup>15</sup> For further discussion on the issue, see Francis Watson, "The Quest for the Real Jesus", in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 156–169, esp. 163.

<sup>16</sup> James Carlton Paget, for instance ("Quests for the Historical Jesus", in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 138–155), asks whether "we know more about the historical Jesus than our forebears" and answers in the negative (150).

faith-based and interpreted knowledge about Jesus, added to it in the process and passed it on, depending on their receptive frames and the situation on the ground, all for stereological reasons. No research for the historical Jesus is or has ever been neutral and objective. This is particularly true of the Jesus Seminar mentioned earlier. It has been observed, for instance, that the historical Jesus issue today is an obsession of first world white male scholars. Is there behind it a search for a male historical Jesus who would validate the white male self?<sup>17</sup> Awareness of the inevitable personal interest of the researcher in the research is as sobering as it is liberating. Once this truth is openly acknowledged, the historical Jesus research will not thereby end but will rather come truly into its own, as each researcher, in each generation, seeks to make a life-giving encounter with the living historical Jesus of the gospels who wants to continue to live in his brothers and sisters believers.

### 3. *Salient Features of the Global Jesus Research in the New Testament*

The historical Jesus research in the New Testament seems to have started around Jesus' resurrection, the core of New Testament faith. Some scholars believe the problem about the resurrection in Corinth included doubt in Jesus' own resurrection, not only the resurrection of dead Christians. Equally, Thomas's doubt, when told that Jesus had indeed risen and appeared to Simon, and Jesus' response to it a week later (John 20:24–26), are often interpreted as being calculated towards addressing doubt about Jesus' resurrection in the Johannine and other early Christian communities. This is understandable, for Jesus' resurrection was not just one belief among others concerning the historical Jesus. It was the bedrock of their faith and life. If Jesus was not raised from the dead, then the entire Christian kerygma, faith and life (which had their rationale and *raison d'être* in his resurrection) were useless; worse still, God was implicated (1 Cor 15:12–19). If Jesus' resurrection

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<sup>17</sup> Nicole Wilkenson Duran, "Jesus: A Western Perspective", in *GBC*, 346–349, esp. 346 where she asks, "Why are western male scholars and virtually no others drawn to this project? What are they looking to define, in defining the historical Jesus over and over again, each in his own way?" Similarly, Scott M. Lewis (*What Are They Saying about New Testament Apocalyptic* [New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004], 9) remarks that Schweitzer's "haunting portrayal of the meaning and mission of Jesus could well be used to describe his own life."

is not an historical fact, other facts about him (that he lived, taught, died, was buried) lose their meaning. Indeed not only the early Christian kerygma and life stand or fall by this truth; biblical scholarship itself and the Christian faith of the past 2,000 years are equally a sham. Awareness that Jesus did not simply die and rise from the dead in the first century CE for the first-century Christians, but that he lives on physically in every age, in his own person and in the lives of authentic believers (Paul, Priscilla, Teresa of Avila, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Francis of Assisi, John Paul II, and in each living committed Christian of today) forms an integral part of the global reception (a more appropriate term perhaps than research) of the New Testament faith in the historical Jesus on the part of committed Christians.

The life-oriented nature of the New Testament witness about Jesus requires that particular attention be paid to how New Testament authors and their addressees used their diverse cultural frames of reference to receive, interpret, understand, articulate, proclaim and transmit (first orally and later in writing) their knowledge of the historical Jesus. The process by which Jesus of Nazareth becomes progressively and increasingly global (the process by which he is proclaimed, encountered, received, and transmitted in diverse world cultures) differs radically from that which governs contemporary secular globalization. Secular globalization tends to make global by imposition what was originally local in nature (e.g., individualism, corruption, terrorism, militarism, sex tourism) and in the process subsumes and eventually destroys the local.<sup>18</sup> The globalization of Jesus, on the contrary, tends to enlarge and enrich what was originally local with the norms and values of the new locality and cultures to which it moves; in the process, the new cultures may even replace the original with their own norms and concepts. This happens wherever the proclamation of Jesus, God's gospel, spreads. The New Testament authors had their own type of secular globalization, Hellenism. Alexander's unique contribution, perhaps, lay in making Greek the lingua franca of the empire, thus providing a major linguistic tool and cultural framework for the spread of the gospel from Palestine (a predominantly Jewish milieu) to the Hellenistic-Roman world. As the gospel moved out of the Jewish

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<sup>18</sup> See further, T. Okure, "Africa: Globalisation and the Loss of Cultural Identity," in *Globalisation and Its Victims*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred, Concilium 2001.5 (London: SCM, 2001), 67-74.

matrix, it encountered other cultures and belief systems with which it needed to interact and evangelize. In the process, it developed its own new language for understanding Jesus of Nazareth (the historical Jesus) in that global cultural context. That Greek replaced Aramaic as extant New Testament language (arguably the dominant language Jesus used), is an outstanding example of this.<sup>19</sup> Vestiges of this original language are found in such gospel sayings as *talitha koum/i* (Mark 5:41) and *eloi eloi lama sabachthani* (Mark 15:34), which interested researchers treasure as germs of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.

The historical Jesus preached in Palestine in a largely Jewish context wore new clothes and put on a new face when he moved into the Hellenistic-Jewish and Greco-Roman World. Some of the more prominent Hellenistic titles given to him include *Logos* (Divine Word and Reason), *Sophia* (Widom), the New Humanity (Adam) and the First Born of All Creation (*prōtotokos pasēs ktiseōs*).<sup>20</sup> He has done the same ever since, though some scholars hold that the Christian message, having passed from the Jewish to the Hellenistic-Jewish milieu, remained essentially the same till after the Second Vatican Council, when it became open once more to other cultures and became for the first time truly a world religion.<sup>21</sup> In this ever-evolving process, the person of historical Jesus remains constant and unchanged. Yet this constancy of his historical person embodies within its very scope the necessity for each generation and culture to accept and embrace it according to its own norms and values. The Pentecost event (Acts 2) where each nation under heaven heard the great works of God proclaimed in their own mother tongue confirms this. This process is essentially that of inculturation, modeled on the incarnation, understood as a “self-emptying and selective assumption.” The culture that embraces the gospel needs a self-emptying of what is contrary to Jesus of Nazareth and an assumption of gospel values that are authentically of the historical Jesus. At

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<sup>19</sup> Jesus’ rootedness in his Jewish culture and the influence of this is well brought out by Brad Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995; fourth reprint, 1999), and in the four-volume work by John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1999–2009).

<sup>20</sup> I discussed this in some detail in “The Global Jesus,” 241–242.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Virgil Elizondo, “The Emergence of a World Church and the Irruption of the Poor,” in *The Twentieth Century: A Theological Overview*, ed. Gregory Baum (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 104–107 and the literature cited in the work.

the same time, the culture is free to discard those elements in the proclamation that have their roots in the unredeemed cultures of the New Testament authors and use those that have gospel values, what Eusebius would call “seeds of the word” (*sperma verbi*). This process of inculturation is not an invention of African or third world theologians. It is an indispensable process in the proclamation of the gospel or the historical Jesus.<sup>22</sup> Indeed for the Catholic Church, it is impossible to plant the gospel firmly in any culture at any age without this process of inculturation, understood as “the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures.”<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. *The Global Jesus Research in the Canonical Gospels*

The gospels themselves give evidence of this ever-expanding understanding of the person and mission of the historical Jesus even at the level of Jesus, during his lifetime. A striking example is Matthew’s Gospel. Here Jesus at first understood his mission as being “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 15:2), an understanding reiterated in the sending of the Twelve (Matt 10:5–6). But after his encounter with the Syrophenician woman and her invincible faith (Matt 15:21–28), he seems to have reached out to Gentiles. By the end the gospel, his concern to include the Gentiles of all times and ages becomes an essential aspect of his gospel mission and takes the form of the Great Commission, “Go therefore, make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19). In other words, they are to tell all peoples of all ages without exception about God’s good news of their liberation and invite them to appropriate this as disciples—those who live the same kind of self-giving life as Jesus did (and ultimately as God does). As

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<sup>22</sup> See further Teresa Okure, “Inculturation: Biblical Theological Bases,” in T. Okure, Paul van Thiel, et al., *32 Articles Evaluating the Inculturation of Christianity in Africa*, Spearhead 112–114 (Eldoret: AMECEA Gaba Publications, n.d.), 55–88.

<sup>23</sup> Second Extraordinary Assembly of Bishops (December 7, 1985), Final Report, II, C, 6, cited in John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 52.2. Indeed, the literature on this topic is legion. It includes *Ad Gentes* of the Second Vatican Council and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI. An easy reference to these works can be found in the footnotes of *Redemptoris Missio*, especially in the section “Inculturating the Gospel in people’s culture,” nos. 52–54, in J. Michael Miller, (with Notes and Introductions), *The Encyclicals of John Paul II* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), 537–540.

Emmanuel, God with us, with humanity, he enables this life to happen among believers, in whom he also lives.

Luke's process of globalizing the historical Jesus differs from Matthew's. The process may be termed "his hermeneutic of self-inclusion" (his transformation of a local christology into a universal one and his reinterpretation of the Jesus traditions to include himself and his gentile friends while not excluding the Jews).<sup>24</sup> Indicators of this self-inclusion are many and diverse. Here we examine three. *First*, he studies the available historical resources and interviews the witnesses and ministers of the word, then highlights in his own account those aspects and encounters of the historical Jesus that were of no interest to mainstream Jewish Christians but were crucial to him and his predominantly Gentile audience. Critics have long noted, for example, his leaning towards the marginalized, and social and moral outcasts (women, Samaritans, tax collectors). Though some feminist scholars lately interpret his inclusion of women negatively (that Luke subjugates women rather than liberates them, especially in the incident of Martha and Mary), the very fact that these women are mentioned as following Jesus publicly in his evangelizing tours of the villages of Galilee (some of them married women like Joanna the wife of Herod's steward, Chuza), is sufficient indication of the cultural breakthrough that the Lukan Jesus brought to women in his time. These women follow him not only through the towns and villages of Galilee, but in his great missionary journey (Luke 9:51) from Galilee to Jerusalem where they emerge at the Passion and Resurrection as "the women who had come up with him from Galilee" and became the first witnesses and heralds of the resurrection (Luke 23:55; 24:1-11).

Is this cultural and theological breakthrough a Lukan invention or an action of the historical Jesus, which gives insight into his counter-cultural life-style and mission in his own culture? Where do we begin and end in our quest of the historical Jesus in this context? How is it that Matthew, reputed to be the most Jewish of the gospels, does not mention the women except at the resurrection episode? Whatever the case, the presence of the women in Luke's Gospel alongside their men counterparts, the Twelve, shows Luke's interest to include them and

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<sup>24</sup> See Teresa Okure, "Who do you say that I am?' 'The Christ of God'", in *Cristologia e Missione oggi. Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Missiologia, Roma 17-20 ottobre 2000*, ed. G. Colzani, P. Giglioli, and S. Karotemprel (Vatican City: Urbaniana University Press, 2001), 267-279, esp. 269.



present them. He gave them a visibility which New Testament scholarship hardly noticed till the advent of women scholars into the field. The interpreter, the interests and the interpretative frames of reference used are all very much part of the historical Jesus research.

Luke's *second* strategy in his historical Jesus research lies in his account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. Unlike the Matthean Peter who confesses him as "the Christ" (the Messiah, and in this context the reference is to the Jewish Messiah), Luke identifies him as "the Christ of God." By this designation Luke moves Jesus beyond being merely a Jewish Messiah to seeing him in his own way as God's Messiah for everybody. He does the same with Jesus' genealogy, extending this to "Son of Adam, Son of God" where none can be excluded, whereas Matthew simply terminates his genealogy with the proto-ancestor of the Jewish nation "Son of Abraham." In the infancy narrative, while an angel announces the birth of Jesus to Jewish shepherds, a multitude of the heavenly host proclaim "peace among people" with whom God is pleased, or of goodwill (Luke 2:14) everywhere, understood. The Matthean account on the contrary focuses on Jesus as the one who would "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). Which of these versions gives the correct account of the life of the historical Jesus or of what Peter at Caesarea and the angel at Jesus' birth said? A plausible interpretation is that each evangelist tailored his understanding of the "events which happened among [them]" according to their life concerns at the time of writing and those of their immediate audience. Both give us insight into the historical Jesus research in a global/universal context even in the New Testament era. It would be a mistake, if we take their perspective seriously, to dismiss one as being historical and the other not.

Luke's *third* method of his globalizing Jesus occurs in the second volume of his work. At Pentecost, the disciples in the Upper Room were "all Galileans" (Acts 2:7), and presumably would have spoken Aramaic as their mother tongue. The global community ("from every nation under heaven," v. 5), however, heard, experienced and received the event in their own mother tongues. What they heard challenged them to move beyond useless arguments (whether or not the disciples had had their fill of new wine), to ask the life-giving question for themselves: "Brethren, what shall we do?" (v. 37). In the end, they repented, were baptized, received the Holy Spirit, joined the nascent community and became themselves testimonies to the effectiveness of the life of the historical Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and died for them

(vv. 41–46). In Acts 1:8, Jesus asks his disciples to be his witnesses “to the ends of the earth.” Not stopping there, Luke moves the seat of Christianity progressively from Jerusalem to Rome, the capital of the then worldwide empire. At the same time, he moves the focus on the leadership of the church from Peter and James in Jerusalem to Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles in Rome, in whose camp Luke himself belongs. In Rome, Paul gains full freedom to proclaim the gospel unhindered by anybody (Acts 28:31), though we know from history that Paul was martyred about 63 CE in the persecution of Nero for preaching this same gospel. Luke’s approach in globalizing Jesus is thus the very reverse of modern secular globalization.

After narrating the event of Pentecost (which embraced peoples from “every nation under heaven,” Acts 2:5), Luke still felt the need to report a Gentile Pentecost in the house of Cornelius as a distinct event (Acts 10). Yet the more general one in Acts 2 had a universal scope. Peter, using the prophecy of Joel (3:1–5; Acts 2:17–21), explained this event as God’s baptism of the earth with fire.<sup>25</sup> Luke’s point in narrating this exclusively Gentile Pentecost seems to be, not that Gentiles were not included in the first one, but that Peter as leader of the church needed to become fully aware of the scope of his own previous interpretation of the first Pentecost, that God’s gift of the Holy Spirit embraced everybody regardless of race, sex, class and age. He needed to become personally (not just theologically) aware of the truth that God has no favorites (Acts 10:34–35), since he witnessed God give the Gentiles exactly the same Holy Spirit as he gave to the Jews. His first-hand experience of the Gentile Pentecost served as his preparation for leading the universal church forward when the question of the inclusion of the Gentiles became an ecclesiastical and canonical affair (Acts 15). By narrating this experience at the Council (Acts 15:7–11), he was able to persuade the assembled church to decide by a decree to admit Gentiles to full membership without requiring that they first become Jews by being circumcised. The struggle of the early church on the inclusion of the Gentiles was itself a struggle to make the historical Jesus they proclaimed relevant in their lives.

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<sup>25</sup> See further on this, Teresa Okure, ed., *To Cast Fire Upon the Earth: Bible and Mission Collaborating in Today’s Multicultural Global Context* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2000), 5–6.

The most significant Johannine parallel to Jesus' move from the Jewish into the Gentile, global community is perhaps the episode of his encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–42). Here, the woman also becomes the bearer of the good news of Jesus as the Christ to the Samaritans who, in turn, confess him as the global Jesus or “Savior of the World” (John 4:42). This distinctively Johannine version of his global Jesus research is to be taken along with his marked emphasis on the universal nature of the incarnation and mission of the God-Word: that the Word became a human being (*ho logos sarx egeneto*, where *sarx* in biblical language refers to the human as opposed to the divine [cf., Isa 40:6, MT]) and lived among us (John 1:14), and that acceptance of him knows no racial or gender bounds. His key recurrent phrases here are *pas ho* (“all” or “anybody who”), and *ean tis* (“if anyone”) (e.g., John 14:22–23 where Judas not Iscariot asks Jesus why he will reveal himself to the disciples only and not to the world).

To these emphases may be added those passages where Jesus promises to draw all to himself (12:32); where the gospel states that God loved the world to the extent of sending the uniquely beloved son to redeem it (3:16); that Jesus died not only for the nation but to gather together all God's scattered children (11:52); and that Jesus saw the advent of the Greeks to him as the signal of the arrival of his long awaited hour (12:20–23). Another Johannine indicator occurs in the prologue (1:1–14) where the evangelist dresses up the Jewish concept of Wisdom (*sophia*), the divine principle of creation, with the clothes of the Greek *logos* (*panta di'autou egeneto*; 1:3; Prov 8:22; Wis 9:1) whose mission is to enlighten every human being (*ho phōtizei panta anthrōpon*). His frequent use of *pas ho* is neutral in terms of race, sex, class, age and geographical location. Ironically, this Johannine emphasis on the universality of Jesus' mission exists alongside what appears to be his marked or negative attitude towards the world. This apparent contradiction, found mostly in the farewell discourses which scholars see as written under persecution of the Johannine community, is evidence that the gospel accounts of Jesus are by no means neutral but are determined by the total situation of the audience on the ground.

Is the Johannine portrait of Jesus, like that of Luke, therefore less historical than that of Matthew's, which focuses more on the Jewish nature of Jesus? Scholars are becoming increasingly aware that John's Gospel is as equally Jewish, if not more Jewish than the synoptics. Jewish scholars cite John as evidence of aspects of Jewish life and practice in the first century. Moreover, for John, Jesus is not merely

the Savior of the World or a Jewish Messiah. As the *monogenēs theos* (1.18, according to some MSS) and *hyios tou theou*, he reveals God absolutely and exclusively, so that true or full knowledge of God by anybody in any age is impossible apart from him. Accordingly, he alone has the key to gaining true knowledge of God (John 17:4). Whether one believes/accepts or rejects this Johannine faith-based testimony is a question which lies outside the interest of this study. The point is that this faith is integral to the Johannine portrait of the historical Jesus in a global perspective. Are we, therefore, asking the right question when we seek to know which of the gospel narratives gives us the true account of the historical Jesus as proclaimed?

##### 5. *The Research into the Historical Jesus in Paul*

Other articles in this book treat the historical Jesus research from the Pauline position. Our interest, however, is to examine how Paul, a Pharisee of Pharisees, carried out the globalization of Jesus in his own life and mission, and the forces which shaped his approach. Paul, more than any New Testament author, perhaps best substantiates the thesis of this study that the historicity of Jesus on the global cultural level is placed on the disciples who accept and make him part of the organizing principle of their own lives. Though Paul did not meet the historical Jesus (the Christ “according to the flesh,” 2 Cor 5:16), he nevertheless claimed to have seen himself in a way that qualified him to be a witness to his resurrection (1 Cor 15:8). According to the three Lukan accounts of his conversion (Acts 9:1–29; 22:3–21; 26:9–20), Paul did not actually see Jesus. He only saw a light and heard a voice. But Paul claimed by that experience to have seen the risen Lord in much the same way as the disciples who knew him during his lifetime.

When Paul found the historical Jesus, he also found his own true and authentic life and worth: “Life to me means Christ.” “All I want is to know Christ Jesus and be given a place in him.” “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth” or supreme privilege “of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” If only “I may gain Christ and be given a place in him” (Phil 3:7–8). He bequeathed or wished the same privilege for his converts: “When anyone is in Christ that person is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). All who are “baptized in Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:27–28); in other

words, for one who is in Christ, there is no longer racism, classism or sexism. In the light of that finding, he realized the need to radically revise his own prejudiced socio-cultural and theological upbringing, encapsulated in his attitude towards those the culture regarded as “Gentile sinners” (Gal 3:15).

The rereading led him to go beyond exclusivist election (that the Messiah was for Jews only and that any who wished to have a place in him needed to become Jews) to recognizing that God’s promise given to Abraham as pure grace embraced the whole of humanity. That is not all: Paul, seeing with the lenses of Christ, was able to realize that both Jew and Gentile stood equal before God as sinners, and the claim that the Jews were better off because they had the law and the covenant was simply false: “All have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory,” the Jews through the law of the covenant, the Gentiles through the law of conscience (Rom 3:23). Both are therefore justified by “God’s grace as a free gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth forward as an expiation by his blood” (vv. 24–25). While maintaining equally firmly that God had not rejected his people, Paul recognized that God was not bound to subscribe to his people’s misunderstanding of the purpose and dynamics of their divine election and covenant.

Paul did not develop these theses through abstract reflection in a library. When faced with flesh and blood believers like himself, whom he baptized and won for Christ, he had to make room in himself for these other peoples if his belief that both of them were equally in Christ was to be taken seriously. That belief gave him the physical, psychic and spiritual energy to proclaim to all and sundry that Jesus of Nazareth, sprung from the race of David according to the flesh (Rom 1:2–4), was indeed God’s universal gospel offered to all without discrimination or prejudice. He was not ashamed of that gospel. Instead, he was prepared to die, and actually did die for that gospel in the persecution of Nero in Rome (ca. 65 CE).

Paul’s perception of the historical Jesus led him also to cosmological reconciliation. The meaning of the historical Jesus signified a transformation of the fate of creation as well as of humanity. The entire creation is groaning in one great act of giving birth to become a new heaven and a new earth, just as humanity is waiting for the revelation of God’s children; since all died in the first Adam all will be made alive in the second Adam, Jesus (1 Cor 15:22). That some Jews refused to recognize Jesus as the expected Messiah in no way diminished Jesus’

universality for all peoples and creation. In the Pauline Colossians, the reconciliation embraces the entire creation, “everything in heaven and everything on earth.” This reconciliation is done, not through the Christ of faith, but through the historical Jesus: “making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:20). Paul’s attachment to the historical Jesus as the basis of all his theologizing, proclamation of the gospel and personal life lies perhaps in his perception of the redemptive meaning of the cross of Christ.

Paul did not gain this insight into Christ’s cross and sufferings through abstract reflection. He personally carried in his body the sufferings of Jesus, and so knew from experience the liberating nature of Christ’s suffering (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–32). He realized that his own suffering too had a redemptive value, that it helped him to complete in his “flesh” what still needed to be experienced in the suffering Christ “for the sake of his body, the church” (Col 1:24). Consequently, he wanted to boast of nothing except the cross of Christ, through which the world stood crucified to him and he to the world. For him, the exaltation and divinization of Jesus embraces that of the believer, irrespective of race, sex and class. This emerges polemically in the letter to the Colossians. The polemical tone suggests again that a problem of the audience about principalities and powers, perhaps a nascent Gnostic teaching about the *plērōma*, gave rise to his designation of the historical Jesus globally as the one in whom “the *plērōma* of the deity dwells bodily” (*sōmatikōs*, Col 1:9).

The first formative influence on Paul’s all-inclusive approach to the historical Jesus goes back to his first encounter with the risen Jesus on the way to Damascus. “Who are you Lord?” ... “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5). Actually, Paul was not persecuting Jesus, but followers of the Way, men, women and children. Yet here the risen Jesus made it plain that he identifies himself with these different classes of people who believe in him: “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” This identification is not only with individuals, but also with the entire believing community, “the followers of the Way.” Paul would later return to this in his letter to the Corinthians, where he sees the believing community as the Body of Christ with different members and functions (1 Corinthians 12).

His second formative experience lay in the obstacles and strong opposition he encountered in proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles without first requiring that they became Jews, a task mission he claimed he received directly from God and Christ, not from human beings. In

his case the common saying was true, "Obstacles are there to be overcome." Paul did not simply overcome the obstacle posed by the Judaizers among and outside the believers. The experience enabled him to grow in his knowledge and insight into the person of Jesus and his own place in him along with others. As I said earlier, Paul's research into the historical Jesus called and challenged him to place his own life history, past present and future, in Jesus' own life and to persuade his converts to do the same. His ensuing theologies of grace, salvation, sin and Jew/Gentile relation grew from these two basic insights into the historical Jesus: namely, the ontological equality of all human beings before God, and on the level of grace. God has no favorites, but treats all equally. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to the divine self" (2 Cor 5:19). All in all, Paul's theology and life are inseparably rooted in that of the historical Jesus, though he recognizes that after the resurrection this historical Jesus transcends the boundaries of Jewish race and Messianic expectation. The transcendence does not diminish the value of the historical Jesus. On the contrary, it makes him accessible to peoples of all cultures and locations, thereby bringing out clearly his true meaning and nature: that of his being God's gospel for humanity and the entire creation.

This New Testament evidence is not exhaustive either in the individual cases examined or in the perspective of the entire collection. But one point establishes itself across the board, namely, that the globalization of the historical research arose in the context of faith life and as an effort to claim his graces for the self and relate intimately to him using concepts familiar or meaningful to the researcher; and allowing the concrete faith struggles and obstacles to deepen one's understanding of the global significance of Jesus. Every search for the historical Jesus, like all theology, is rooted in life in one way or the other. Even this current book is occasioned by the diverse questions raised, especially in western academia, concerning the historical Jesus. The New Testament witnesses examined here give concerted witness that whatever else one might say, the historical Jesus for them was a person who lived in the particular time, culture, race and nation, a fullness of life in a way that his life had radical and irreversible significance for them, for the whole of humanity and for creation. Today's faith-filled researchers of the historical Jesus do the same, using their own cultural frames of reference, life questions and concerns to articulate and embrace who the historical Jesus means for them and their world.

### 6. *Historical Jesus Research in Today's Global Cultural Context*

If the view is right that after the Second Vatican Council for the first time in history, Christianity moved from being a largely Hellenistic-Jewish religion to becoming a world religion, nowhere is this more true than in the historical Jesus research in global context, as understood in this study, namely, efforts of committed Christians to appropriate Jesus and relate his meaning to their lives and world. The name, Jesus, fundamentally means Savior (Hebrew *Yeshua*, Matt 1:21). If it is accepted that recipients of the good news of Jesus of Nazareth are themselves part of the historical Jesus research, when this research is placed within the optic and scope of biblical revelation, then such research requires us to observe how Christians today continue the process of receiving (hearing the proclamation), accepting (believing), appropriating (living according to the Christ received), and transmitting (proclaiming) this same historical Jesus. As noted in a previous study already cited (note 9 above), this type of search for the historical Jesus is as rich and diversified as are believers worldwide. Recipients/researches span race, color, sex, age, profession and so forth. Without repeating the findings of this previous study, this current study focuses on the more recent works (of a survey kind) on the topic.

The global literature on the topic is vast and ever expanding.<sup>26</sup> Comprehensively, the historical Jesus research in our contemporary world lies in the sustained efforts of believers of all persuasions, walks of life and socio-cultural and geographical locations to articulate for themselves what Jesus of Nazareth, proclaimed as the risen Christ,

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<sup>26</sup> One may cite such works as *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, already referred to many times in this work (e.g., n. 9); Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994); and with a pardonable leaning for works in African context: Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro, eds., *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992); J. N. K. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, eds., *Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology*, African Christianity Series (Nairobi: Initiatives Ltd., 1989); John S. Pobee, "Jesus Christ—the Life of the World: An African Perspective," *Ministerial Formation* 21 (1983): 5–64; Diane B. Stinton, *Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christologies*, Faith and Culture Series (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), gives a selective survey of some of the significant researches of the historical Jesus by African scholars; "Christologies" in Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah, eds., *Dictionary of Third World Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000) gives perspectives of the research from global third-world regions; similarly, *GBC* has entries from the African, Asian, Latin American, Orthodox and Western Perspectives. We will refer to these latter articles in greater detail in this next section of the work.



means for them. This research is perhaps more intensive in the two-thirds or developing world than in the first and industrialized world. The Jesus movement in the gospel itself was basically a grassroots movement whereby the poor and marginalized of society found in him a champion and advocate for their cause. He was their prophet, teacher and expected Messiah/Son of David. He not only told them the kingdom of God belonged to such as them (cf. the Beatitudes), but chided their leaders for exploiting and oppressing them in the name of God and of religion (Matthew 23) and swallowing widows' properties under cover of their long prayers (Luke 12:40). In the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–11), he reversed on their behalf the traditional theology which proclaimed that wealth was a sign of one's good standing before God, a sign that God was with the rich, and that poverty was a sign of lack of holiness on the part of the poor. This theology was so radically new that his disciples were amazed. If the rich could enter heaven only with difficulty, the poor had even a lesser chance of getting there. Jesus of Nazareth met every aspect of their needs and used their humdrum or daily chores to model the kingdom (e.g., a women kneading dough; a fisherman casting a net into the sea; a sower sowing seed, etc.). Summatively, he was good news to them, one who liberated them from all kinds of oppression and diseases and proclaimed God's reign to them.

The research/reception of the proclamation of the historical Jesus follows the same trend in our times, especially in the two-thirds world, as in the time of Jesus. As has been remarked, "The theologies and spiritualities of the developing world represent a significant challenge already to individualistic and historical readings of the believer's relation to Jesus... There are bridges to be built here with the substantial historical resources... if we can overcome both western and modernist snobberies."<sup>27</sup> It is impossible to separate the portrayal of Jesus from the cultural frameworks of the recipient. Once the recipient accepts that Jesus is "the Christ of God," God's universal Messiah, or "God's *truly human identity* and *truly God's human identity*,"<sup>28</sup> one cannot but attribute to him concepts and titles in one's culture and spirituality that express hopes for a better life and a better world order. As Jewish recipients mined their scriptures to identify and attribute to

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<sup>27</sup> Rowan Williams, "A History of Faith in Jesus," in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 220–236, at 234.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Bauckham, "The future of Jesus Christ," in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 265–280, at 275.

Jesus a whole string of designations that were rooted in their Messianic expectation (Isaiah's suffering Servant, Son of David, Messiah, the Prophet who is to come, Rabbi, Teacher, Master, Son of God, Lamb of God and King of Israel), even so do the recipients of the two-thirds world mine their traditions and cultures to find adequate and life-oriented meanings and expressions for him.

A perspective of the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, the outcasts, those excluded on the basis of sex or color and so forth dominates the research thinking of this two-thirds world: the masses, the unemployed, the socially, economically and politically disadvantaged, the powerless who are considered expendable within the evil social, economic, political and even ecclesiastical systems, except where they serve or are ab/used as a cheap labor force for the rich (both individuals or nations). These poor wear different faces in the different continents and even within the continents, but they suffer basically the same fate. The two-thirds world women figure prominently in these categories of the poor and marginalized, both because they are women and from Africa (this applies mainly to "Black" African women). These poor and marginalized see and seek in Jesus of Nazareth, the historical Jesus, a person who shares their lot personally and who champions their cause on two fronts. First by becoming *solidaire* with them (though he was rich for our/their sake he became poor to enrich us out of his poverty; 2 Cor 8:9), and secondly by openly confronting and challenging the evil systems that dominate, oppress and exclude them (e.g., Matthew 23). They see Jesus as one who understands them from within, on the basis of his own personal experience of rejection even unto death; one who gives them hope because of his own triumph over the system through his resurrection from the dead, and who promises to liberate those who endure the same fate as he did.

They find courage when they hear Jesus turn their state of poverty into a blessing (a beatitude), making them sure candidates for and models of God's kingdom. Their state of powerlessness makes them more open to receive God's salvation, redemption and transformation as a free gift than are the rich who put their trust in their wealth and have no need of God (like the rich fool, Luke 12:13-21). Jesus reverses the values of the dominant and dominative systems by throwing down the mighty, those who consider themselves to be something, and raising the lowly (cf. the Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55). They are encouraged by his attitude to lepers (social outcasts), Samaritans (racial outcasts) and tax collectors (religious and moral outcasts), prostitutes (sex

workers), those stigmatized and blamed for their illness (the woman with the hemorrhage and today those with all kinds of incurable diseases in the two-thirds world), and even zealots (political insurgents) to believe that they too can approach him as they are and find acceptance from and transformation by him.

All this requires faith. Belief in (perhaps a more correct term where the two-thirds world is concerned than research into) the historical Jesus is like a two edged sword. On the one hand, it seeks out and affirms in the culture what enables peoples to understand Jesus better in their own language and terms, while at the same time challenging those values of the cultures that are anti-gospel or anti-Christ in the Johannine sense of the word. This is an integral aspect of inculturation hermeneutics. On the other hand, the research takes a more liberative approach in openly exposing and denouncing the oppressive and exploitative systems and their practices. Jesus himself did this by proclaiming the Beatitudes as the *magna carta* of his kingdom, while declaring woes to those who staunchly refuse to be transformed and embrace the values of the kingdom.

In Africa's academic sphere, for instance, male scholars see Jesus as the Ancestor (God being the proto-ancestor), Healer (Native Doctor), Elder Brother and African chief. Understandably, Black South African and African American theologians see him as the Black Christ, one with whom they can identify in contra-distinction to the White Christ of their oppressors. If Jesus is what the historical/gospel records portray him to be, one who shared the lives of the poor and the oppressed, and stood up to the system to the point of death, then their historical Jesus needs to be divested of, even liberated from the clothing of the oppressor imposed on him (to domesticate him) and re-clothed with that of the oppressed and marginalized he came to liberate from all kinds of oppression: social (class), cultural (taboos, e.g., about food and ritual purity), and religious (a hypocritical and exploitative worship of God, or a religion that would make a poor widow—by all reckoning the poorest of the poor in Jesus' society—put all she had to live on into the temple treasury [Mark 12:41–44] or that would use the pretext of prayers to appropriate the property of widows). Restoration of the land, an underlying jubilee motif in Jesus' proclamation of a general amnesty to all (Luke 4:18–19) offers a spiritual energy for standing up against the usurpation of the majority by a minority elite (as in apartheid South Africa), or the forced eviction of the poor from their lands by unscrupulous rich citizens and governments.

African women theologians see Jesus essentially as a liberator, an instrument of God's justice. Justice here is understood not only in terms of retributive justice (giving to another what is his or her due), but also more especially as moral "truth in relationship," the truth being that all human beings are created equal in God's image and likeness, and that as the 1948 United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights posits, nobody is to be discriminated against on the basis of sex, race, color or religion. More significantly, African women theologians see Jesus as a nurturer of life, one who enables, empowers and gives them courage and authority to take up their lives and live, break with the cultural and church taboos that exclude them yet claim support from the Bible (forgetting that the Bible itself contains many unredeemed Jewish cultural practices rooted in patriarchy). As a nurturer of life, Jesus images women and is essentially a Mother. He serves as a mother to men, women and children. His "motherhood is characterized by nourishment, protection of the oppressed, care for the poor, the vulnerable, the oppressed and the marginalized (Mark 10:13–16). The way Jesus relates to people, especially to the disciples shows a warm tenderness, affection, receptivity and a readiness to restore life to an integrated wholeness."<sup>29</sup> Among his works as liberator is liberation of African women from childlessness as happened with Elizabeth in connection with his birth, or even his own miraculous birth from his Mother. As healer, Jesus not only restores wholeness to the sick, the wounded, the broken hearted, but also restores wholeness to creation and to whole communities, especially when he frees people from cultural taboos, like the leper and the woman with the hemorrhage, and reinstates them in the community.

One lacks words to describe the diversity and richness of popular reception of Jesus. The diversity here goes beyond what happens in the academia among both men and women, for the popular sphere knows no bounds between men and women when it comes to discovering and applying images for Jesus. Both theologians (men and women) and the people accept, on the New Testament evidence, that Jesus is unquestionably God. Popular piety, however, tends to appropriate to Jesus what belong to the entire deity. A refrain for the Nicene Creed,

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<sup>29</sup> Anne Nasimiyu Wazike, "Jesus: An African Perspective," in *GBC*, 329–332; see further Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology*, Introductions in *Feminist Theology* 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), esp. "Jesus the Divine—Human: Christology," 51–65.

for instance, sings: “I believe in one God, Jesus Christ the Only Son of God.” Another chorus sings: “I have a Father that will never, never fail me/ I have a Father that will never, never fail me./ Jesus is my Father that will never, never fail me./ Rock of Ages never, never fails.” Another chorus (original in Ibibio, Nigeria) sings: “Jesus is my good friend,/ I am happy to walk with him./ Never he no play me *wayo-o*./ I am happy to walk with him.” This rendering is partly in pidgin English. “*Wayo*” is deception or cheating, though translated into English, it loses much of the emotional hurt caused by the deception as registered by *wayo*. Secondly, what is translated “Good Friend” in English is “Lover” (*Ama ami*, one who loves me and whom I love) in the original Ibibio. “*Ama ami*” has a warmth, tenderness, reciprocity and deep respect lacking in the English word “lover” as used these days. Perhaps it is to avoid the erotic connotations embodied by the English “lover” that the translators instinctively preferred “Good Friend.” Most importantly for the research interests, it is noteworthy that in this and similar choruses (and they are countless), the people do not refer to Jesus as the Christ, but by his life-time, historical name, “Jesus”: Jesus is my good friend, Jesus is my Father, and Jesus is my darling as in another chorus: “Darling Jesus, darling Jesus/ O my darling Jesus you’re a wonderful love./ I love you so my darling Jesus,/ O my darling Jesus you’re a wonderful love.” Only in the chorus of the Creed (with its doctrinal formulation) is Jesus joined to Christ: “Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.”

This entry hardly does justice to the rich, dynamic and wholly life-centered nature of the reception of the historical Jesus in the richly diversified African cultures. The receptive images used depend on the user’s culture and gender. Interestingly, while men theologians emphasize male images of Jesus—Ancestor, Elder Brother, Chief, Master of Initiation Rites, and so forth—African women emphasize his life-giving, tender, compassionate and life-nurturing roles. Yet within these complexes of readings, whether of women and men theologians or of the people, Jesus as Liberator and Savior informs and inspires the African view of the historical Jesus, be it liberation from oppressive cultural and social practices, liberation from exploitative foreign economic powers, liberation from oppressive and exploitative personal and national economic and political practices or liberation from evil forces (attacks by the devil, people of the underworld, evil spirits, etc.), from hunger, disease, childlessness, unemployment, and so forth. The suffering Jesus is also a staunch friend, perhaps more so than the Jesus

of Easter, since the African continent seems to be consigned with him to death all day long, crucified in the world media and by self-serving and unscrupulous leaders with their gang of foreign collaborative thieves who receive, keep and share their loot of their national treasures and natural resources with them.

The same life-centered reception of Jesus applies in Latin America. The region's theology of liberation drew its rationale from Jesus the liberator, while the Exodus from Egypt, the watershed of biblical history, served as its prototype and provided the psychic energy for the theology. However, now that the communist ideology (of a Marxist type) is no longer in vogue, theologians of the region are faced with the challenge to still see Jesus as liberator, not simply in socio-political and economic terms, but also and more especially as the liberator of all human beings from whatever deceives and dehumanizes them. This includes exploitative capitalism, usurpation of the land by multinational companies from the First (or one-third) World, corruption among political leaders of the diverse countries and fear on the part of church leaders to confront the oppressive systems both within and outside the church.

A recent study has highlighted salient points of the research into the historical Jesus in the region.<sup>30</sup> Jesus, according to this study, has many faces in Latin America. The most traditional and popular are: "the child Jesus, the merciful Jesus (the Sacred Heart) and the suffering Jesus." Among the newly appearing faces are "the Indian Jesus, the black Jesus, the Campesino Jesus, the young Jesus (almost a hippie), the revolutionary Jesus (with Che Guevara's face), Jesus interacting with women, the itinerant or charismatic Jesus, Jesus as liberator of the poor, and Jesus confronting the authorities." Similarly, base community Bible studies (*el movimiento biblico popular*) in the region have highlighted "many faces of the historical Jesus implicit in the gospels." This region's "quest for the historical Jesus" is thus "a joint venture of exegetes with pastoral orientation and community workers with biblical training" (337). While the region appreciates the three faces of the quest in the First World, it is now engaged in its own "fourth search." This search "does not presumptuously claim to supersede the insights

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<sup>30</sup> Pablo Richard, "Jesus: A Latin American Perspective," in *GBC*, 337-341. For easier reference, the number of pages in the *GBC* in this and the next survey from Asia will be entered in the text itself.

of the former quests, as if the goal were to invalidate their results.” It is “rather a constructive effort to use and adapt the best of this First-World research to a different context” (338).

Three characteristics of this research are: its being done from the perspective of the poor and the marginalized, its attention to the historical Jesus in the context of the origins of Christianity, and to the historical Jesus understood as a function in the church’s re-formation (338–340). The region is conscious that the re/searches of America and Europe “ignore the social, cultural and religious reality of the Third World.” Thus, while using the best in their research, scholars in the region feel free to focus their search on what promotes and sustains life. It therefore carries out its research of the historical Jesus “from the perspective of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized by considering the economic, social, political, cultural and religious contexts and the related issues of gender and generation gap.” Summatively, while “behind the scholars of the First World there is a library,” “behind the scholars of the Third world there are continents of poor and marginalized peoples” (338).

The research for the historical Jesus in Asia follows the same life-and-poor-centered orientation.<sup>31</sup> As in Latin America, Abesamis uses “the valid exegetical methods of historical criticism and sociological analysis” to attempt “to offer a biblical reading of Jesus based on how the text presents him.” He does this reading by wearing “‘eyeglasses’ of the poor.” This reading through the eyes of the poor enables one “to see Jesus of the gospels as if for the first time and challenges the traditional views of Jesus and his mission” held by many throughout the world (333). The reading highlights two aspects of Jesus: he is one “connected with the Source, his Abba” and he is also “totally poured out in mission—a mission for total salvation, both human and cosmic. The reading underscores the same fact that the poor and marginalized are closely identified with Jesus; to them he preaches the good news, understood as “nothing more and nothing less than justice and liberation for the poor” (335). The reading brings salvation down to earth as freedom from sin and also “liberation from all evils: personal evil (Jesus restored sick individuals to health), social evil (he blessed the hungry at large) and cosmic evil (he will come again to vanquish all evil cosmic powers” [336]). The salvation which Jesus brings has a

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<sup>31</sup> Carlo Abesamis, “Jesus: An Asian Perspective,” in *GBC*, 333–336.

socio-economic dimension: "life-blessing, such as food, land, health," as well as a spiritual dimension: "forgiveness of sins and life with God." As in Africa and Latin America, the search for the historical Jesus in the region is rooted in life; it requires that we see this Jesus alive and suffering in the poor and marginalized; but also that "we be charged with hope and divine energy that this same Jesus will defeat all oppressive forces even as he did in his own time by rising from the dead and promising to put an end to evil in his second coming."

Missing in this brief survey is the historical Jesus research from the perspective of women and from other complex cultural contexts of receiving Jesus in Asia, especially that of religious pluralism and the caste system (*dalits* and free-borns). Works by Asian women theologians draw attention to these dimensions.<sup>32</sup> In a context where women are treated as third-class citizens and denied personhood especially in the context of marriage and the dowry system,<sup>33</sup> the women's reception of the historical Jesus, though firmly rooted in scripture, emboldens them to guard against and resist the use or abuse of Jesus to victimize women. "While we seek in Jesus' passion, death and resurrection a meaning for our own suffering, we cannot passively submit ourselves as women to practices that are ultimately anti-life."<sup>34</sup> It is against the liberating gospel of Jesus to victimize others in his name. The reception of Jesus in the context of interfaith leads people in the region to affirm their own biblical faith in the divinity of Jesus, but at the same time to respect the other religions, some older than Christianity, who make similar claims for their prophets.

Research into the historical Jesus in an Orthodox faith context highlights the humanity and divinity of Christ, based on the cultural tradi-

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<sup>32</sup> Monica J. Melanchthon, "Asian" under "Christologies," in *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, ed. Fabella and Sugirtharaja, 47–50; Virginia Fabella and Sun Ai Lee Park, eds., *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women* (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology, 1989); see especially the articles by Virginia Fabella, "Christology from an Asian Woman's Perspective," 3–14; and Monica Melanchthon, "Christology and Women," 15–23.

<sup>33</sup> In India, for instance, the woman pays the dowry to the husband and for every female child she gives birth to, her family has to bring additional dowry to the husband, so that he may supposedly have enough dowry to pay for her when her time comes to get married or even for his own sisters. Little wonder that baby girls in poor families are at times stuffed to death with rice balls.

<sup>34</sup> Fabella, "Christology from an Asian Women's Perspective," in *We dare to Dream*, ed. Fabella and Park, 8.



tions of the Greek Fathers.<sup>35</sup> In all that Jesus of Nazareth was, said and did, “he was not only a human being, but also God. He suffered death as a man [*sic*] but by his resurrection from the dead the real hypostasis of Christ was proved to be not the biological one, but the eschatological or Trinitarian hypostasis.” Since he is a person who exists “in freedom and love,” humans can, thanks to him, “exist and affirm their existence as personal” (345). Thus, while the search appears to be inspired by the pronouncements of the Nicene Creed and such Councils as Chalcedon (451 CE) on the nature and person of Christ as truly God and truly human, it equally explores the implications of these traditional christological affirmations for the individual and the church or community of believers. “The incarnation of the Son of God, his earthly work of proclaiming the gospel, his death on the cross, his resurrection and ascension to be at the right hand of the Father and his second coming are all stages of God’s work for the salvation of the world.” “We confess the Lord Jesus as the Parousia, as the one who comes in the glory of God.” The crowning value of Christ’s life and work for humanity will be the Parousia when everything will be made new (344). Thus, as in the readings from the other marginalized regions already examined, the search for the historical Jesus, though overlaid with inspiration from the creedal formulae of the Greek Fathers, still has its feet firmly planted in the life of Jesus of Nazareth and his significance both for the individual and for humanity.

The search for the historical Jesus in the West, it has been observed, focuses on “the educated, Euro-American Christian elite.”<sup>36</sup> This reading sees the quest for the historical Jesus as mainly a white male undertaking, a western project that is both “theological and ideological.” The research tags the “rejection of Jesus” by American scholars “revolutionary.” To say that Jesus is not western by origin is to admit that this observation disguises “the degree to which Jesus is western historically” for “this Jesus has spent so long in his exile in the West that even when he seeks to return to other parts of the world closer to his original birthplace, he has to do so most often in western ships and planes, western languages, and the pursuit of western interests.” How then can this privileged, westernized Jesus, who is white and elitist, liberate the westerner from his/her sins? This can happen only if the researches

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<sup>35</sup> Vasile Milhoc, “Jesus Christ: An Orthodox Perspective,” in *GBC*, 342–345.

<sup>36</sup> Nicole Wilkenson Duran, “Jesus: A Western Perspective,” in *GBC*, 346–349.

into the historical Jesus “speed up the inevitable end of the dominance of [their] Jesus” so that the real Jesus of the gospels discovered by the rest of the world may stand up and liberate the West as well as the whole of humanity from the complex systemic, structural and individual sins.

It was necessary to give some space to these recent and accessible researches into the historical Jesus. Understandably, the reports on the state of the research in these regions are those of individuals (even as is this current study itself) offering a glimpse of what they see happening in their regions on the search of the historical Jesus. Other reviewers might discover other trends in this research for the historical Jesus. Fragmentary as they are, these surveys pinpoint the main directions and areas of concern in the historical Jesus research in a global cultural context. Whatever the cultural situation, one fact clearly emerges from this entire study: that the quest or research of the historical Jesus, from the New Testament times until now, makes little or no sense unless it is related to the life of real men, women and children for whose sake alone the historical Jesus of the gospels, God-Word, became a human being, lived, taught and proclaimed the advent of God’s reign and good news for all and sundry. For proclaiming this good news of salvation and liberation, he was put to death but rose from the dead to prove that evil could never overcome the good, nor hatred, love. “The light shines in darkness and the darkness was unable to overcome it’ (John 1:5).

Perhaps time has come to join in the fifth search for the historical Jesus, already in progress, one whereby every believer will see himself or herself as another Christ in the world, not just ideologically but in spirit and in truth. When, just before his ascension, Jesus asked his disciples to be his witnesses to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8), he was not merely asking them to simply tell peoples and nations about his historical life and teaching, or argue among themselves about what they heard him say; he was telling them above all to model him in their way of living and relating to one another and to all and sundry, so that seeing their lives (as an audio-visual), the world may indeed come to believe that God did send him and that he was in deed and in truth God’s good news to humanity. Seeing him thus alive in the disciples/Christians of today, the world might be drawn to him to receive, in turn, the enduring gift of salvation understood as liberation from all evils: physical, moral, spiritual, political, ecological and economic, and people may themselves experience with the entire creation the glorious

liberty of God's children (Rom 8:21). A research into the historical Jesus which ignores or relegates to the background this vital and dynamic aspect of the historical Jesus in the life of believers, loses much of its relevance to Jesus of Nazareth himself and to the researcher.

### 7. *Conclusion?*

The study has emphasized that the historical Jesus research in a global cultural context lies not so much in the concern to discover the historical Jesus as he really was in first-century Palestine, but also as he continues to live in believers in every generation worldwide, with focus on the New Testament and our own times. Believers themselves are very much part and parcel of the historical Jesus. They become so through a process of christological globalization (or inculturation) that is radically different from and even opposed to modern, secular globalization. While modern globalization exploits, dominates and destroys the local, the globalization of Jesus on the contrary, in a process of "self-emptying" and "selective assumption" (incarnation-like), seeks and employs ways of enriching, enhancing, perfecting (cleansing) and revitalizing the local. This is perhaps one way of interpreting the dictum of Jesus in John's Gospel that he has come so that people may have life in its fullness, that as the shepherd he lays down his life for his sheep, and that those who believe in him will be able to do even greater things than he.

The focus and approach adopted in this study may not be what the reader expected from a research on the proposed topic, viz. the historical Jesus research in a global cultural context. If so, then this study itself can be seen as evidence of the rich diversity of concerns and expectations which the topic itself generates. Would our research into the historical Jesus assume a different significance and dimension if we focused more on this life-centered aspect of the question just as much as we focus on the need to discover elusive historical facts about him? Might focus on the life of the Christian as a living extension of the historical Jesus (the Body of Christ) put the research of the historical Jesus on a different platform and so help to find an answer to the age-old quests of him? What will the historical Jesus research look like in the third millennium (if the Parousia or the new heaven and new earth do not come by then to put an end to all researches into the historical

Jesus question, because by then all will see him as he really is, because all will become like him)?

While the North or West seems bent on and committed to endless “quests” or “research” into the historical Jesus, the South prefers to devote its psychic, intellectual and spiritual energy and resources to the “reception” of this same historical Jesus. Both approaches have the historical Jesus in common. Ultimately, reception is what the historical Jesus himself would prefer from North and South, East and West: “Whoever receives me receives the one who sent me” (Matt 10:40). There is more joy in receiving than in pursuing the historical Jesus. Jesus, God’s Word and Wisdom, would be happy that the research/quests for him that have gone on for over a century now bear fruit in finding him: As Wisdom says, “Finding me is finding life and wins salvation from the Lord.” So Jesus, the power and wisdom of God, proclaims: “I have come so that the [all] may have life and have it in ever greater abundance” (John 10:10), and “at the cost of my own life.” That is the historical Jesus, God’s good news, for all, a person worth looking for and receiving with warm hospitality and love.

## DIVERSE AGENDAS AT WORK IN THE JESUS QUEST

CLIVE MARSH

The Quest of the Historical Jesus has never only been about the quest for Jesus. This simple yet significant conclusion is a major legacy of the Quest's history. A reading of the Quest's history as a story of the search for the grail of historical objectivity in the face of the obfuscating irritations of ideology or subjectivity proves both oversimplified and dangerously misleading. However laudable the quest for historical objectivity might have been and be, it remains elusive. Objectivity needs to be respected lest the narratives or pictorial portrayals of Jesus which continue to prove culturally (religiously, socially, ethically and politically) influential lose all connection with the man from Nazareth.<sup>1</sup> Attention to the many "interests" at work alongside the quest for historical objectivity is, however, essential. These interests may not prove of equal weight or be worth commending. But as some of these "interests" might coincide with Jesus' interests, the historical task of narrating the life of this hugely significant figure entails teasing out what interests these might have been, and whether such interests are worth pressing in the way that the story of Jesus itself is written. The historical Quest for Jesus is thus always also an ideological Quest too. How the "agendas" at work within the various quests are to be understood is the focus of this chapter.

In an earlier article, I conducted a survey of the history of the various Quests built on a dissatisfaction with the customary linear Old Quest-No Quest-New Quest-Third Quest account.<sup>2</sup> In identifying nine

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<sup>1</sup> This is, then, the same conclusion reached by Ernst Troeltsch about the significance of historical research in his social-psychological study of the place of the historical figure of Jesus in Christianity ("The Significance of the Historical Existence of Jesus for Faith," in idem, *Writings on Theology and Religion* [London: Duckworth, 1977], 182–207), i.e. "Jesus" always inevitably means more than "the Jesus of history" for Christianity, but some link between the two always has to be sought. I in fact press Troeltsch's insight further: "Jesus" as a cultural figure is always more than the "Jesus of history," yet the same need to establish a link between the two applies. Troeltsch's "social psychological law" thus applies not only in theology and religion.

<sup>2</sup> "Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective," *BibInt* 5 (1997): 403–447.

interlocking Quests I interpreted the Quest's two-century history more thematically than has often been the case.<sup>3</sup> Here I take that approach a stage further. Rather than offering a taxonomy of approaches based on methodological approaches, I cut across the various Quests in search of what appear to be the basic intentions (purposes, drives) of differing contributions to the Quest. This is not a study of "presuppositions." Nor is it a (pseudo-)psychoanalytical attempt to understand contributors better than they understood themselves. Its purpose is to examine the Quests from the point of view of what contributors have been contributing *for*. Why have people been bothering to find out what Jesus was like? As will become clear, the Quest has always been a hyphenated Quest (a "historico-something else" Quest). For historical research always serves some interest or other. As a continuing chapter in human intellectual history, the Quest should be seen as historical research in the service of the flourishing of humankind and the fostering of better forms of human society, via theology, ethics, politics etc.

The chapter is divided into eight sections. I begin by distilling from the Quest's history seven interweaving agendas that have been at work. In the eighth I take a step back and offer a brief summary of findings. Throughout the chapter I take it as read that every contributor discussed believes they are saying something about Jesus of Nazareth as he was.<sup>4</sup> I offer here no detailed summaries or assessments of their contributions. The "what else?" question constitutes this chapter's main concern.

### 1. *A Theological Agenda*

The most prominent agenda at work in the Quest's history has been a theological agenda, usually in a specifically Christian form. Many scholars have sought to clarify the accuracy of the judgment made of

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<sup>3</sup> The nine Quests identified were: The Positivist Quest, Form 1 (insufficiently ideologically aware, non-eschatological Jesus resulting); The Positivist Quest, Form 2 (insufficiently ideologically aware, eschatological Jesus resulting); The Romantic Quest; The Form-Critical Quest; The Quest of the Non-Jewish Jesus; The Traditio-Historical Quest; The Existentialist Quest; The Jewish Christian Quest and The Postmodern Quest.

<sup>4</sup> In my earlier article I called this the "positivist moment" contained in all contributions to the Quest ("Quests," 416, 426, 432–433).

Jesus that when you have to do with Jesus you are dealing directly with God. The theological agenda has, however, taken many forms.

The contribution of Heinrich Julius Holtzmann (1832–1910) was to ground the two-source theory of the emergence of the canonical gospels (Mark and Q).<sup>5</sup> Though Markan priority had been supported in the work of Wilke and Weisse in the 1830s, Holtzmann's work proved decisive. After the appearance of Holtzmann's *Die synoptischen Evangelien: Ihr Ursprung und ihr geschichtlicher Charakter* in 1863, orthodox Christians could breathe a sigh of relief that Strauss's scepticism had not destroyed the historical basis of faith. Jesus could be all that faith claimed him to be. It was believed that finding a satisfactory answer to the synoptic problem meant that solid historical evidence about Jesus had been located.

Solving the synoptic problem, of course, meant nothing of the sort. Solving a literary puzzle does not in itself necessarily deliver historically reliable data. Within fifty years, Wrede and the Form Critics, whilst being indebted to Holtzmann's enquiries, would demonstrate this. But the drive to locate historically reliable data, which meant tackling the literary complexity of the best available resources, at least revealed the theological importance of the endeavour.<sup>6</sup> The development of New Testament study as a discipline in the modern period and the needs of the Quest were thus inextricably linked from the start within a theological interest. The theological agenda simply took a literary form.

Theological agendas have, however, taken other forms. The enormous stimulus provided to the Quest by Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) added an eschatological twist. With an almost evangelistic drive, the urgency of the call of the figure of Jesus to contemporary people reverberates through Bultmann's writings. Bultmann knew that a call to faith could never be dependent on the findings of historians.<sup>7</sup> The theoretical framework within which he located his own quest for Jesus linked ethical responsibility with ultimate demand. Jesus required a response to the Kingdom of God which he proclaimed. Likewise, any

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<sup>5</sup> Holtzmann believed he could trace a source behind canonical Mark (*Urmarkus*).

<sup>6</sup> The concern to clarify the best available sources remains alive even in our post-positivist times, as Crossan's work on the stratification of early Christian literary sources makes clear.

<sup>7</sup> Bultmann did, though, recognize that the fact of Jesus having lived (and above all having died on the cross) was theologically necessary.

encounter with the figure of Jesus in the context of Christian proclamation (Kähler's "preached Christ") in turn called for a response which was an answer to an existential question posed by God.<sup>8</sup> Despite his notorious statement that he thought "that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus," Bultmann also declared: "No sane person can doubt that Jesus stands as founder behind the historical movement whose first distinct stage is represented by the oldest Palestinian community."<sup>9</sup> At issue in Bultmann's eschatological agenda is how the presence of God with Jesus is to be reflected in the form of eschatological ethics in the present.

Bultmann's eschatological-existential position can, of course, be considered wholly compatible with Christian orthodoxy even if such a conclusion has been disputed. Many other contributors to the Quest have been more overt in claiming such compatibility. For every Reimarus and David Friedrich Strauss there has been not only a Pastor Goeze,<sup>10</sup> but also a Daniel Schenkel (1813–1885),<sup>11</sup> a T. W. Manson (1893–1958),<sup>12</sup> or, most prominently of late, an N. T. Wright (1948–).<sup>13</sup> The compatibility of the Quest's results with Christian orthodoxy will, however, have been more evident in the preaching and pastoral work of Christian churches over two centuries than in scholarly tomes. If it is "known" what Jesus was basically like, and that "basic likeness" is preserved in the gospels, then the detail of what scholars get up to is neither here nor there. In that sense, the practical impact of the whole

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<sup>8</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (1934; London: Fontana, 1958), II.4: "Future and Present: The Necessity of Decision."

<sup>9</sup> Bultmann, *Jesus*, 14 and 17.

<sup>10</sup> Lessing's opponent in the debate which followed the publication of Reimarus's *Fragments* from 1774.

<sup>11</sup> Schenkel's *Das Charakterbild Jesu* (1864) is rightly categorized as a "Liberal Life" in Schweitzer's account of the Quest (A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus—First Complete Edition* [London: SCM, 2000], ch. 14, esp. 177–181), and its author's ecclesiastical involvement was not without controversy. As Schweitzer notes, "the Jesus portrayed here can be imagined plunging into the midst of the debates in any pastors' conference" (Schweitzer, *The Quest*, 179).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of Manson, see e.g. W. P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 154–8.

<sup>13</sup> Wright is quite clear about the significance of the theological results of his enquiries (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, [London: SPCK and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996], 660–2), though he clearly states that the Jesus he presents is neither like himself, nor the one he expected to find when setting out (xv).



history of the Quest upon Christian orthodoxy, it could be argued, has been minimal.

As a scholarly enterprise, however, the Quest's history is inevitably defined more by its controversial boundary-stretchers than by those for whom Historical Jesus Research does not prove problematic for Christian faith. This is for three simple reasons. First, whether Reimarus can be said to have launched the Quest, he certainly sets its tone: one of hostility towards Christian orthodoxy. Second, history and theology are different pursuits. Though the disciplines are integrally related, historians are not going to deliver all that the theologians need to be able to do their work. Third, uncontroversial works do not normally sell as many copies, and this applies in the scholarly world, even if not on the same scale as with tabloid journalism. The "theological agenda" as it surfaces within the Quest and in accounts of its history is thus more likely to be a theological questioning of Christian orthodoxy or, as the next section shows, take the form of an anti-ecclesiastical stance.

Theological explorations deriving from Christian contributors working within the academy have thus been critical of orthodoxy from within. This was the tenor of a century of enquiry post-Reimarus. Martin Kähler's sober, if over-simplified, warning to the church about what it was doing in constructing a picture of the "historical Jesus" was well-made and rightly influential.<sup>14</sup> Christian theological reflection would always be doing more with the figure of Jesus than the strictest findings of the historians would permit. The danger of Kähler's warning is that it implied that historical enquiry could never offer a *theological* challenge to orthodoxy. But what if historians discovered that orthodoxy remained more fluid or incomplete than frequently supposed? What if orthodoxy could benefit from theologically sensitive analysis of and interaction with the critical findings of historians? The history of various forms of the theological agenda present within the Quest reveal, then, that the Quest has too easily been seen to throw up challenges to Christian orthodoxy, as if historical-critical enquiry is inevitably undertaken from *outside* a community of faith. From the perspective of late- or post-modernity, such a view looks too simple.<sup>15</sup> Historical-criticism does not simply serve Christian orthodoxy. But

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<sup>14</sup> Not least on Barth, Bultmann and Tillich.

<sup>15</sup> I shall comment further on this point in "A Philosophical Agenda" below.

nor is it itself value-free. At issue, then, is what further interests (and communities) are being served when historians practice their art.

One final aspect under the heading of “theological agenda” needs to be addressed. I have so far discussed only Christian theology, an obvious theological conversation-partner in the Quest. One major legacy of the Quest has been the reminder that Jesus was never a Christian but a Jew. Broader developments in history, not only intellectual history, through the nineteenth and especially in the first half of the twentieth century would mean that such a reminder would not be able to be given with ease. Yet its significance for the Quest, for its theological appropriation and for the relationship between Christianity and Judaism is clear. In the Third Quest period, the character of Jesus’ Judaism features as an aspect of any Historical Jesus Research. Contributors to the Quest now address the question of Judaism more in the form of what kind of Judaism Jesus emerged from or allied himself with, rather than the degree to which he detached himself from Judaism. With hindsight, the absence of the likes of Abraham Geiger (1810–74), Claude Montefiore (1858–1938), and Joseph Klausner (1874–1958) from standard histories of the Quest is both striking and shocking.

Admittedly, even in circles more directly Christian in orientation, attention to Jesus’ Jewishness did not begin with the important work of Geza Vermes (b. 1924), whose comments on the lack of knowledge of Judaism on the part of so many New Testament scholars were timely when first made.<sup>16</sup> With hindsight again, it can be seen to be more than a merely intellectual tragedy that the history-of-religion school did not have more of a *theological* impact upon Christianity. The exploration of the religious world out of which Jesus came, conducted with great vigour at the end of the nineteenth century, seemed too easily to imply a theological relativism more dangerous and complex than most Christian theology could handle. Over a century later, the fact of Jesus’ Judaism is well-established, the existence of religious and theological pluralism is accepted, yet complete relativism is not recognized as an inevitable corollary.

Theological interest in finding the Jesus of history does not, then, inevitably lead to a Christian conclusion. It may, however, be a driving force behind the desire to layer the literary sources accurately and to

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<sup>16</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM, 1983), ch. 5.

sift the sayings diligently. It is often the expectation that the figure encountered will have some positive benefit for what it means to speak of God which keeps scholars at their desks. Christian enquirers are certainly prominent in the Quest because of this. But ultimately, all theologically interested contributors recognize that the question of whose tradition of God, past or present, is being worked with in the process, cannot be far away. Theological enquiry does not happen in a vacuum.

## 2. *An Anti-ecclesiastical Agenda*

The work of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) is usually held to have launched the modern Quest.<sup>17</sup> His contribution may appear anti-theological. More accurately, he was driven by opposition to Christian orthodoxy, and hence his agenda was anti-ecclesiastical. Reimarus's deception theory—according to which the disciples stole the body of Jesus and fabricated the story of Jesus' resurrection and the strand of suffering and rising predictions within the gospel texts—set up an extreme example of what would accompany the Quest throughout its history. The search for the Jesus of history and the detailed critical scrutiny of the canonical gospels which went with it would inevitably lead to the asking of awkward questions of Christian orthodox claims made about Jesus the Christ.

On occasions, an anti-ecclesiastical stance may have become anti-theological too. Where Bruno Bauer (1809–82), for example, ended up on the question of God may not be clear. But his conclusion that Jesus never even existed, and that the story of his life was invented by an original evangelist,<sup>18</sup> at least leads to a savage critique of the theologians of his day, who did not seem able to face what he regarded as

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<sup>17</sup> Though Reimarus was initially hidden behind Lessing's publication of his work anonymously from 1774 onwards. He is the starting-point in most standard accounts of the Quest (e.g. W. B. Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus: A Guidebook* [Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982 and London: SCM, 1983]; C. Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought 1778–1860* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988). Dawes traces the Quest's origins back further to Spinoza (G. Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question: The Challenge of History to Religious Authority* [Louisville, London and Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press], 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Whether this be Mark or a precursor of Mark.

facts.<sup>19</sup> Arthur Drews (1865–1935) is now the more widely cited proponent from the “Jesus never existed” school.

Common to these anti-ecclesiastical contributions is the view that religion is to be viewed as a human invention. The God question can be shelved rather than answered negatively. What unites them is the view that Christian orthodoxy has got history badly wrong. This view is supported, and sometimes defended passionately, whatever views individual writers may have held about the potentially positive function of religion in society.

In the present, a different anti-ecclesiastical stance is evident in the work of Robert Funk (1926–2005) and the Jesus Seminar.<sup>20</sup> The work of these scholars, and the Westar Institute (host of the Jesus Seminar) to which they relate, is not anti-theological. Whether it is “anti-ecclesiastical” is a more moot point. Funk is at times vehement in his criticism of what the Christian church has made of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> What differentiates some of these more recent critics of Christian orthodoxy from their predecessors is the lack of clarity about whether they see themselves as standing inside or outside churches as they offer both the results of their historical Jesus research and their assessment of its theological significance. It is now much more culturally acceptable than was the case earlier to be a contributor to the Quest whilst having an institutional home in the academy alone. This would scarcely have been possible in the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

In this regard the ‘liberal lives’ of the nineteenth century remain instructive, regardless of their inadequacies on many fronts. They functioned as both theological defences *and* critiques of orthodoxy. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) is now scarcely mentioned in

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<sup>19</sup> In Bauer’s defence, as Schweitzer demonstrates, the literary puzzles presented by the canonical gospels were sharply identified by Bauer. The basic accuracy of the conclusion he drew from his attention to the literary inter-relationship between the gospels (earliest is not necessarily historical) was re-presented later by William Wrede (1859–1906). Bauer’s own historical deduction admittedly does not follow from his literary conclusion. It took more than half a century for his literary insights to receive a fairer hearing, and even then not without controversy.

<sup>20</sup> Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg are also members of the Jesus Seminar but cannot be claimed to be anti-ecclesiastical even whilst they are creative and critical in their theological positions.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. R. W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 6, 53–54 and 305–306, though there are also more hopeful statements on 11–12 and 306.

<sup>22</sup> Though therefore also all the more difficult to offer radical proposals, as Strauss and Bruno Bauer both discovered.

the context of the Quest and his *Life of Jesus* lectures are not positioned within Schweitzer's listing of "liberal lives," but they stand as a good example of how historical interest in Jesus has in practice functioned throughout the Quest. His primary interest was dogmatic.<sup>23</sup> His achievement was therefore an easy target for Strauss, whose *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History* (1865) offered a devastating critique of Schleiermacher's lectures a year after their publication. Strauss was, however, judging Schleiermacher's work in terms of the historical quest. Schleiermacher had let the historical cat out of the bag in the playground of orthodoxy, and in Strauss's judgment had not fully recognized the consequences. All of those who followed and who tried to remain orthodox were simply facing up more to the challenge which Schleiermacher ducked (by leaning heavily on the Gospel of John). Theologically speaking, the adequacy of orthodoxy was at issue.<sup>24</sup> Historical enquiry into the life of Jesus was merely one aspect of the task of trying to express a viable contemporary form of orthodoxy.

Contributors to the historical Quest for Jesus may, then, rarely be anti-theological. Believers in secular, neutral historical enquiry could, in any case, bracket off all theological questions as beyond their frame of reference. Such a stance is unlikely in late modernity. Participants in the Quest are more likely to have some theological interest, however tenuously that interest may link them to organized religion. An anti-ecclesiastical inclination usually becomes but a different form of theological agenda from a desire to support a form of orthodoxy (Christian or Jewish). Questioning of Christian orthodoxy from within need not amount to an *anti-ecclesiastical* frame of mind. The history of the Quest has, however, supplied many examples of ways in which Historical Jesus Research is uncomfortable for Christianity. It could be argued that it has simply taken a long time for the consequences of the question which nineteenth century liberals had stumbled upon to be worked through, i.e. if you find a historical Jesus who does not fit easily within Christian orthodoxy, then do you have to let go of a Christian view of God?

<sup>23</sup> Though in dogmatics as it served practical Christian living.

<sup>24</sup> Schleiermacher saw this, though the fuller version of his response in the field of Christology is to be found in *The Christian Faith* (1821–22; 2nd ed., 1830–31; Eng. trans.: Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928). For a study of the Quest's history from the perspective of its challenge to religious authority, see Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*.

### 3. *An Ethical Agenda*

Theological agendas in the Quest, be they ecclesiastically interested or not, have always accompanied other interests. Agendas beyond the explicitly theological have, however, not always been combined with a theological concern. To take ethics as an example: those who have wanted to find a Jesus who can help people to work out how to live have sometimes been theologically inclined, sometimes not.

The most prominent contributor to the Quest who was both theologically and ethically interested is also the most famous historian of the Quest itself: Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965).<sup>25</sup> One of the most often-quoted paragraphs in Jesus Research—the concluding paragraph of Schweitzer’s *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (“He comes to us as one unknown...”)—is more an exhortation to mystical, ethical discipleship than an expression of the difficulties of historical research, though it remains the latter too.<sup>26</sup> Schweitzer’s ethical intent is clear: it is the following that matters. Whatever their initial intent or the nature or level of their grasp of what Jesus of Nazareth stood for, Schweitzer suggests, those who follow will go on discovering what drove Jesus through participation in their own, contemporary versions of the efforts, conflicts and sufferings entailed in trying to live in a similar way to Jesus and his first followers.

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<sup>25</sup> The first complete English translation of the last edition which Schweitzer worked on (the 6th German edition) finally appeared in 2000. On Schweitzer’s contribution to Jesus research, see e.g. D. E. Nineham’s article in *Jesus in History, Thought and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, ed. J. L. Houlden (Santa Barbara, Denver and London: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 764–769, and his Foreword to the 2000 edition, though also Part III of E. Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer als Theologe* (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1979).

<sup>26</sup> The full text reads: “He comes to us as one unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, he came to those men who did not know who he was. He says the same words, ‘Follow me!’, and sets us to those tasks which he must fulfil in our time. He commands. And to those who hearken to him, whether wise or unwise, he will reveal himself in the peace, the labours, the conflicts and the suffering that they may experience in his fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery they will learn who he is...” (Schweitzer, *The Quest*, 487). The paragraph remained the final words of every edition, despite the addition of three new chapters to the second edition of 1913. Significant changes in the English translation are worth noting, reflecting a changed climate. The “One unknown” has become “one unknown,” satisfying publishing conventions, but making Jesus more accessible to those who may not share Christian convictions. And Bowden has changed Montgomery’s “to those who obey him” to “to those who hearken to him” (German: *denjenigen, welche ihm gehorchen*). Obedience has more negative connotations in an age of greater autonomy and choice.

This is not a customary method amongst historical-critics. The search for objectivity means that historians must do their best to become detached from their subject-matter and deal as neutrally as possible with sources before them. It is usually assumed that although historians know that they *are* involved in their work, they should not be as personally wrapped up in engagement with the historical person under scrutiny as Schweitzer is suggesting is inevitable with Jesus. Distortions cannot but result.

History has not been kind to Schweitzer. His view of a deluded, eschatological Jesus who tried to force the hand of God by his launch of the disciples' mission and his journey to Jerusalem did not find widespread support. Inevitably, it did not please orthodox Christians. It is, however, historically suspect too, being much too dependent on Matthew (certain texts in Matt 10 and 15 especially). Morgan comments that Schweitzer "popularized and corrupted" Johannes Weiss's insights into Jesus' eschatology.<sup>27</sup> Weaver notes that Schweitzer added little to the development of work on the primary sources and, rather than offering something wholly different in kind from the nineteenth-century liberals he so roundly criticized, merely used the sources in the same way to produce a different picture of Jesus. Grässer cites Helmut Groos's identification of exegetical weaknesses in the "four main pillars" of Schweitzer's account.<sup>28</sup>

All that said, Schweitzer's critics remain appreciative. The popularizing of Weiss's insights was important, as it emphasized the strangeness of Jesus to Christian believers always prone to seeking and finding a Jesus like themselves. Schweitzer merely highlighted a struggle with which Weiss himself wrestled. Though the writer of *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (1892), in which he established the case for the eschatological Jesus, Weiss also wrote *Die Nachfolge Christi und die Predigt der Gegenwart* (1895) and *Die Idee des Reiches Gottes in der Theologie* (1901). In both of these works Weiss addressed the difficulties produced by his findings with regard to systematic theology and ethics: how do you make use of the view of the kingdom of God which

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<sup>27</sup> R. Morgan with J. Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 329.

<sup>28</sup> These are: the summoning of the kingdom of God through human effort; the sending of the disciples; the change in Jesus' approach due to the delay of the parousia; and the purpose of the journey to Jerusalem (Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer*, 126–129). See also Nineham in *Jesus in History, Thought and Culture*, ed. Houlden, 767.

Jesus apparently held, and how do you follow such a distant and alien figure?<sup>29</sup> Weiss's own response was to resort to a liberal position not very different from that of the father-in-law he, as exegete, opposed (Albrecht Ritschl). Weiss wanted as much as anyone to work out a way of supporting the view that this "kingdom of God" somehow had to be "lived."<sup>30</sup>

Schweitzer's impact can be acknowledged in further respects. If his *Interimsethik*—his "in-the-meantime-ethics" which awaits an imminent End—is found wanting, the urgent necessity of response produced by any encounter with the texts which bear witness to Jesus is exemplified in Schweitzer's life. His own life demonstrates that history cannot be an indifferent discipline, despite the objectivity it seeks. Historians who wrestle with texts about Jesus and fail to be ethically challenged are to be pitied. This is both Schweitzer's legacy to the Quest and evidence of the extent to which he was a classic German Romantic. The notion that you can actually learn more about a historical figure in the act of following is at least continuous with Schleiermacher's hermeneutical insight into the subjective dimension of interpretation. Schweitzer's approach is merely an extreme form of the "subjective-historical" attempt to get inside the shoes of an author, recognizing that as "author" here, Jesus is at least one stage removed from the contemporary hearer/reader.<sup>31</sup>

Schweitzer finds an unlikely ally here in Liberation Theology. In a powerful passage within his assessment of "The Importance of the Historical Jesus in Latin American Christology," Jon Sobrino writes:

Christ's demythologization is important...; but more urgent in Latin America is his rescue from manipulation and connivance with idols. Demythologization is important because without it Christ remains dangerously abstract and ideal; but it is insufficient unless it leads to Christ's rescue from manipulation. Demythologizing Christ in Latin America

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<sup>29</sup> The later texts have never been translated into English, and therefore this aspect of Weiss's own struggle has not been fully represented throughout a significant proportion of the scholarly world. I also note with surprise that Weiss merits no article of his own in Houlden, ed., *Jesus in History, Thought and Culture*.

<sup>30</sup> For a helpful summary of these points, see the Introduction to J. Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1971), by Hiers and Holland, esp. 16–24.

<sup>31</sup> And developments in literary theory have extended discussion on two fronts since Schweitzer: with respect to the gospel texts themselves (form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism etc.) and with respect to the act of reading (identification of implied author, implied reader and the role played by "real readers" especially).



does not primarily mean giving an account of his historical faith in the face of rational criticism...; primarily it means avoiding a situation in which, by reason of Jesus' historical abstraction, reality can be left to its misery. More urgent than Christ's demythologization, therefore, will be his "depacification," if we may be permitted the neologism. Christ must not be forced to leave reality in peace.

Sobrino's language reflects later debates (the Bultmann-initiated "demythologization debate" above all). Its context in theological discourse is also apparent (references to "Christ," not "Jesus"). But the shared ground with Schweitzer's ethical agenda is clear. Whether or not historians are satisfied with the picture of "the historical Jesus" being worked with in Latin American (or other) liberation theologies, an ethical agenda within the Quest means being clear about whose interests are served by any picture of Jesus created. Historical research may not be able to produce a rational, objectively-neutral "figure of Jesus." But Christianity and human cultures need an image of some sort with which to work, if for no other reason than that the figure of Jesus has been, and will remain, influential on each. This image cannot be "abstract and ideal" in the sense of being unrelated and unrelatable to human life as it is actually lived, if it is a past historical figure who is being interpreted for present purposes. The task of the Quest in the eyes of Liberation Theology, then, is the construction of an image of Jesus which, whilst not defensible to the satisfaction of historians at all points, is not un-historical (i.e. historically implausible) and which serves a liberative cause. More will be discovered about Jesus, in any case, in the course of following a liberative path.<sup>32</sup>

The claim that more can be understood about Jesus in the context of the practice of following may be supportive background as far as contributors to the Quest are concerned. It is not likely to surface in the list of criteria of authenticity for Jesus-sayings.<sup>33</sup> But ethically-

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<sup>32</sup> A further alliance between Liberation Theology and early twentieth-century German theology which may at first seem surprising, and which echoes this link with Schweitzer, is between Segundo and Bultmann. Segundo writes: "...I see no reason to be upset by the circular character of the interpretative method proposed by Bultmann for speaking meaningfully today about Jesus of Nazareth. While I disagree with him on specific points, I think it is the one which best integrates, in principle, the present-day interest of the human being with the summons issued to us by the Absolute in Jesus" (J. L. Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics* [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985], 35).

<sup>33</sup> I discuss Kümmel's blanket dismissal of the historical value of Segundo's work in Marsh, "Quests," 416-417.

interested enquirers after Jesus are onto something here. The insight does not amount to a general principle that a biographer better understands their subject by trying to become like them.<sup>34</sup> Rather, the recognition that engagement with the (historical) figure of Jesus is very often ethically-driven turns an interpreter's attention to the task of contributing to human flourishing. If Jesus has an interest in human flourishing, then participation in activities in the present that are focused on human flourishing may better equip those who try to understand his life.

The interplay between ethics and the Quest thus has a pay-off in both directions: both for the understanding of Jesus and for ethics. An excellent example of this occurs in the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose writings over nearly three decades have constantly questioned the ethics of biblical study itself, whilst making creative contributions to the field. In terms of Jesus Research, her major contribution is the extent to which she has sought to encourage a shift of focus from the individual Jesus to "Jesus and his movement."<sup>35</sup> Arguably, this shift undermines the Quest itself, something which, on the evidence of the later work, Schüssler Fiorenza herself might not dispute.<sup>36</sup> In terms of the discussion of this chapter, however, the value of Fiorenza's work lies in three areas. First, Schüssler Fiorenza is upfront at every stage about the hermeneutical complexity and "interestedness" of historical enquiry. She is clear that her liberationist agenda stands in a circular relationship with the early Christian texts she is examining. She is conscious that the texts she reads have contributed to the liberative agenda she adopts, whilst also proving problematic for the support of that agenda in the present. Second, she is clear about how many of the contributors to the Quest have been operating: men in search of a heroic, individual male Jesus.<sup>37</sup> When the first two points are brought together, the Quest's history can be viewed as a history of too many individual males unaware of their own agendas or methods underplaying the extent to which their historical reconstructions

<sup>34</sup> For what, for example, would happen to biographers of Hitler or Stalin?

<sup>35</sup> See E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1983), esp. ch. 4.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet* (London: SCM, 1995), 82–88.

<sup>37</sup> This point is echoed from a different perspective recently in H. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

of Jesus are precisely that: *reconstructions*.<sup>38</sup> The result is an exercise in individualism: individual biographers focussing on the isolated male. Third, Schüssler Fiorenza is clear also about what all her work is intended to contribute to: feminist liberation. The goal is the liberation of all humanity, but Schüssler Fiorenza retains the adjective “feminist” because her approach must rigorously examine through a feminist lens all efforts to speak of liberation, when ultimately liberation may not, in fact, be in view.<sup>39</sup> Her ethical intent is, in other words, transparent.

As a result of such emphases, Schüssler Fiorenza can see things clearly about Jesus. In her discussion of Jacqueline Grant’s work, she comments: “I do not think that we can derive the criterion and norm of a feminist Christian theology from the option of the historical Jesus for the poor and outcast.”<sup>40</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza’s overtly theological-ethical-liberationist approach to her historical task functions, in other words, as a restraint on what she can conclude about Jesus the historical figure. Rather than claim too much for the Jesus of history, Schüssler Fiorenza is realistic about what Jesus in the context of his first-century movement is likely and unlikely to have been able to think and do.<sup>41</sup> But it is a circular approach, and historical imagination is at work. Schüssler Fiorenza is, however, quite open about this: she conducts historical enquiry with an ethical agenda.

In the realm of ethics, Schüssler Fiorenza maintains a rigorous stance with respect to the socio-political dimensions of human life. She therefore has little time for enquiry into the origins of Christianity which loses sight of the particular, contextual location of all forms of thought and the social structures in which thoughts and beliefs take shape.<sup>42</sup> In the same way that understanding the Quest as individual interpreters seeking an isolated Jesus is misguided, so also exploring

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<sup>38</sup> Though not all Questers are guilty of this, of course, as Crossan’s work makes clear.

<sup>39</sup> Her rigorous critique of many forms of feminist Christology in Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus*, ch. 2 is striking in this respect. Ruether, Grant, Brock, Heyward and Grey, for example, are all found wanting. It should also be said that Fiorenza stresses the need for women to be liberated: “Feminist movements and theologies must seek to overcome the oppression of all persons exploited by kyriarchy, women and men, but they nevertheless must focus their efforts especially on the liberation of women who live on the bottom of the pyramid of multiplicative oppressions” (Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus*, 48).

<sup>40</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus*, 48.

<sup>41</sup> Christian theology is, for example, always prone to claim too much in wanting to warrant historically its theological claims about Jesus.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus*, 18–24.

Jesus and his movement without looking for contemporary social locations of liberation is equally distorting. Schüssler Fiorenza thus takes Schweitzer's attention to the act of following Jesus into the socio-political domain. Like other liberationists, she in effect claims (to gloss Schweitzer) that "to those who hearken to him *in the context of communities which seek liberation*, he will reveal himself in the peace, the labours, the conflicts and the suffering that they may experience in his fellowship, *which is itself the struggle for and enjoyment of liberation*, and as an ineffable mystery they will learn who he is..." If Schweitzer's approach could ultimately be described as a form of "Jesus-mysticism,"<sup>43</sup> then perhaps Schüssler Fiorenza's ethically-driven historical enquiries can be seen as linked to a socio-political Christ-mysticism which focuses on the *ekklesia* of wo/men.<sup>44</sup>

I have dwelt on two quite different examples of contributors to Jesus Research who have exhibited a clear ethical agenda. Both are theologically concerned and ecclesiastically committed. Others could have been added (e.g. Shailer Mathews). There are also questers with a clear ethical agenda who are theologically inclined though less ecclesiastically concerned (Robert Funk, for example).<sup>45</sup> Others are historians whose religious affiliation is either indistinct or non-existent, yet who carry an ethical intent (Renan).<sup>46</sup> Plenty more, whether religious or not, may believe that questing after Jesus stimulates ethical reflection, though this plays no direct part in the historical work itself (John P. Meier, for example).

I have tried to show in this section that an ethical agenda in Jesus Research takes shape not simply in the form of "applying" the consequences of historical findings about Jesus. At its most creative, an

<sup>43</sup> On which, see e.g. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, 41.

<sup>44</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus*, 24–31.

<sup>45</sup> Funk concludes the final chapter of *Honest to Jesus*, in which he outlines a number of consequences of his historical enquiries, with the statement: "These are my twenty-one theses. If I had a church, I would scotch tape them to the door" (314).

<sup>46</sup> There is much debate about Renan's intentions and achievements. Schweitzer's damning critique (Schweitzer, *The Quest*, 158–167, esp. 165–167) is often taken on trust (e.g. Wright, *Jesus*, 18) and his sincerity is questioned (e.g. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997], 1383). For all its faults, Renan achieved something that most scholars do not: he wrote a popular book in a style which communicated the results of scholarship with a light touch. The work was controversial, certainly unorthodox and lodged within a framework of Romantic Idealism. But it got its readers thinking about the spirit of the human Jesus. Bennett is right when he says that: "What Renan was actually doing was pioneering a new genre of Jesus literature" (C. Bennett, *In Search of Jesus: Insider and Outsider Images* [London and New York: Continuum, 2001], 193).

ethical intent is bound up with how one asks the questions of, and draws conclusions from, one's sources. An ethical agenda may best be expressed in this form: what do you have to conclude about Jesus to encourage people to act in a way which is in continuity with him?<sup>47</sup> Such an interest can, of course, distort one's enquiries to the point of mishearing. Equally, as I have sought to show, it can become part of a *historian's* methodology. In this way, orthopraxy, as a form of orthodoxy, can function in critical conversation with the texts with which a Jesus Researcher works.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4. A Political Agenda

A more specific form of the ethical agenda is that of the political. To some extent I have anticipated what needs to be said here in my comments on Schüssler Fiorenza. Schüssler Fiorenza's enquiries are socio-politically committed. A political agenda may, however, take a less sociological form (e.g. as an *ekklesia* of wo/men) and portray Jesus as the precursor and promoter of a particular political programme.<sup>49</sup> At issue in this section, however, is more the question whether contributors to the Quest view insights from Jesus as having contemporary political implications, or use their own political inclinations as part of their interpretative strategy. There are many writers on Jesus who can be considered. I shall use four: Horsley, Weitling, Kalthoff and Grundmann.

Richard Horsley is a contributor to the current Quest who most explicitly draws out the political dimensions of Jesus' preaching and activity, both in first-century and contemporary contexts. In a series of persuasive publications, he has actively resisted what he perceived as the dominant ethos of Jesus scholarship: "Much of the 'quest for the historical Jesus' as well as much of the mainline scholarship on Jesus in the twentieth century could be understood as a systematic attempt to ward off the political reading of Jesus originally broached by

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<sup>47</sup> Working on the assumption that a basic continuity is going to be a good thing and lead to human flourishing.

<sup>48</sup> This approach to the study of Jesus has taken a pedagogical form recently in Alice Batten's "Studying the Historical Jesus Through Service," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8.2 (2005): 107–113.

<sup>49</sup> Scholars are, however, virtually unanimous that to ask about a "political" Jesus is to pose an anachronistic question, given the integration of religion and politics in first-century Palestine.

Reimarus.”<sup>50</sup> By contrast, Horsley stresses not merely the location of Jesus within the political and economic turbulence of the first century, but also the interplay between historical enquiries into first-century imperialism and current political debate.<sup>51</sup> The interplay is especially striking in his Rauschenbusch Lectures of 2001, published as *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Order*. Two features are prominent in Horsley’s account.

First, Horsley develops what he terms a “relational approach to Jesus.”<sup>52</sup> By this he means that Jesus must be made sense of in five respects. He attempts to understand how, “(1) in the particular historical conditions that had created a crisis for the ancient Judean and Galilean people (2) and working out of the Israelite cultural tradition in which those people were rooted, (3) Jesus emerged as a leader (4) by assuming/adapting particular social role(s) (5) in interaction with particular people who responded by forming a movement that became historically significant...”<sup>53</sup> Like Schüssler Fiorenza, Horsley seeks a “Jesus-in-movement.”<sup>54</sup> By following this line of enquiry he hopes to resist the atomistic individualism, depoliticization and dehistoricization which has bedeviled much Jesus Research. It is on the basis of his relational approach that he constructs as full an account as possible of the political and economic context in which, in his view, the subversive peasant movement which Jesus “spearheaded” took shape.<sup>55</sup>

The second strand of Horsley’s approach which is of especial interest is the parallelism he notes between Rome and the “American Empire” and the contrast he draws between the latter and the “Christian Empire.”<sup>56</sup> This is admittedly an Epilogue in Horsley’s 2003 book, by

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<sup>50</sup> R. Horsley, “The Death of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 395–422, at 406.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. R. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper and Row), 1985; idem, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); idem, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995); idem, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 55–78.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 57–58.

<sup>54</sup> It is noteworthy that he makes no reference to Schüssler Fiorenza’s work, nor indicates any way in which he might be indebted to feminist insights in moving to such a “relational” emphasis.

<sup>55</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 79.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 129–149.

which time he has moved beyond historical enquiry to political preaching. But we should resist seeing Horsley's insights as mere *applications* of dispassionately drawn historical conclusions. The methodological framework within which Horsley has conducted his enquiries means that he cannot step out of the political climate in which he writes. Indeed, he wants to see how the critical discussion with Jesus-in-movement which he undertakes will affect his reading of his own political world.

In no way am I claiming that Horsley's awareness of his own political context has clouded his vision and distorted his reading of the gospels. Furthermore, I do not need to make a judgment as to whether or not I think his reading of Jesus is *in fact* historically accurate when noting that a political agenda is at work here. I am simply observing that Horsley is clear about what his historical task entails *and* how there is interplay between his subject-matter and his own self-awareness about his particular context.

As Horsley rightly notes, this has not always been so in the Quest. Arguably, one of the Quest's deepest flaws, especially in its twentieth-century form, was precisely its avoidance of the political dimensions of Jesus Research.<sup>57</sup> Political ideologies uncomfortable for, and sometimes unwelcome in, Western democracies were thus able to fill the void left by mainstream Jesus-questers. This can be illustrated with reference to a number of writers on Jesus from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

Wilhelm Weitling (1808–71), Albert Kalthoff (1850–1906) and Walter Grundmann (1906–76) rarely feature in accounts of the Quest.<sup>58</sup> Attention to their work does, however, add further twists to recognition of the political nature of historical enquiry into the life of Jesus.

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<sup>57</sup> Dieter Georgi's work, which tracks the alliance between the rise of bourgeois culture and the Quest's history is important here ("The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism," *HTR* 85 [1992]: 51–83).

<sup>58</sup> Kalthoff, but not Weitling, is mentioned in Schweitzer, and merits a four-page discussion (Schweitzer, *The Quest*, 279–283). There are extracts (in German) from Weitling and Kalthoff in M. Baumotte, ed., *Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus: Texte aus drei Jahrhunderten* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1984). Weaver mentions Grundmann briefly (Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, 246). For a discussion of Grundmann, see most recently P. Head, "The Nazi Quest for an Aryan Jesus," *JSHJ* 2.1 (2004): 55–89.

Weitling's *Das Evangelium des armen Sünders* appeared in 1843.<sup>59</sup> It was a communist tract, reflecting Weitling's failed contribution to the task of giving emergent European socialism a religious shape and content.<sup>60</sup> In Weitling's understanding, Jesus preached a gospel of equality and action, seeking to create a society in which private ownership of property, inheritance and money would be abolished. Jesus looked beyond the family as the basic social unit in the interests of a new form of community. The love feast became for Weitling a symbol of this new form. The chapter in which these ideas are contained ("The Pure Teaching of Jesus") is the longest in the book and lies at its heart. It is a collage of quotations from, and references to, the canonical gospels with interspersed paragraphs of commentary.

Weitling is no competitor with contemporaries such as Strauss, Bruno Bauer or Daniel Schenkel as an original contributor to the historical Quest. The work's relevance for our immediate purposes lies in the use to which he put his reading of the gospels in the historical context in which he wrote. Like many who interpret Jesus politically, Weitling focuses on the teaching of Jesus in a way which implies that the teaching can be detached from the person. In this way, Jesus is prone to being unhistorically received, i.e. his words are taken out of context. But Weitling also stands as evidence of what all do when interpreting Jesus, even if not for explicitly political purposes: all interpret Jesus for something. The lack of disinterestedness is blatant in Weitling's account. Political interpreters therefore merely make the interests being served in Jesus Research most apparent.

Albert Kalthoff was a pastor in Bremen from 1888. He was also one of the founders, with Ernst Haeckel, of the German Federation of Monists (*Deutscher Monistenbund*). He lectured on Jesus in 1880 and at that point, as Schweitzer notes, was happy to accept the general findings of contemporary theologians.<sup>61</sup> As time went on, however, he became skeptical of the conclusions theologians were drawing from their historical enquiries. Jesus was in his view being tamed by their presentations of him. Mixing skepticism with philosophical idealism,

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<sup>59</sup> The latest English translation (by Dinah Livingstone) is W. Weitling, *The Poor Sinner's Gospel* (London and Sydney: Sheed and Ward, 1969).

<sup>60</sup> Engels called Weitling the "first German communist." For a summary of Weitling's life and an assessment of the significance of *The Poor Sinner's Gospel*, see David McClellan's Foreword to the 1969 English edition.

<sup>61</sup> Schweitzer notes that Kalthoff later disowned his 1880 lectures (Schweitzer, *The Quest*, 279–280).



by the turn of the century, in *Das Christus-Problem* (1902) and *Die Entstehung des Christentums* (1905), Jesus “the Christ” had become a principle rather than a historical figure. It was the Messianic idea and the impact upon a community of followers that were most important for Kalthoff. His purpose in contributing to the Quest at all, then, was political. He both believed that Jesus “the Christ” is best understood out of the cauldron of political unrest in first-century Palestine and that the responsible way of speaking of the Christ in the present was to recover the spark of political activism (primitive Christian communism) which Christianity possessed in its origins. Jesus is thus dispensable for Kalthoff. He may or may not have existed, but this question is in any case beside the point.<sup>62</sup> The purpose of writing about Jesus “the Christ” at all, is to recover the community of the Messiah as a social and ethical movement.

Kalthoff may have had laudable aims, and his political intent will even now find many supporters. The history of the Quest reveals, however, that the strategy he adopted—the detachment of the Christ idea from any interest whatever in the Jesus of history—has disastrous consequences. This is nowhere better illustrated than in the work of Walter Grundmann, whose *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (1940) has until recently received little attention in surveys of the Quest’s history.<sup>63</sup> In a work to which its author later in life never referred, Grundmann argues that Jesus was not, in fact, indebted to Judaism. His task was to oppose it. Furthermore, he was probably not ethnically Jewish. Crucial to Grundmann’s argument is the Galilean origin of Jesus. Galilee had, according to Grundmann, long been populated by Aryan tribes, and in the centuries immediately prior to Jesus was largely Hellenistic. If, then, Grundmann reflects in his conclusion, one asks how the redemptive work of Jesus could have nevertheless come about out of a Jewish milieu in the context of a struggle against Judaism, then this is simply on the basis that, as John 1:5 states: “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Kalthoff is writing in the context of discussion of the work of Arthur Drews.

<sup>63</sup> See now Marsh, “Quests,” 413–414; brief references in S. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), and Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, and above all Head, “The Nazi Quest,” 70–86, esp. 81–86.

<sup>64</sup> W. Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, 1940), 207.

Grundmann's work remains, even with the benefit of hindsight, a shock to read, given its scholarly origins and the starkness of its anti-Judaism. A number of comments are necessary. First, and most importantly, what Grundmann is doing here is no different in kind from what any interpreter of Jesus is doing, i.e. constructing an image which serves a particular purpose. As suggested above, it is simply that with political interests at work, the purpose becomes more explicit. Common to each of the political Jesuses here considered, however, is the way in which Jesus is ultimately detached from his first-century socio-political context. It is both intriguing and disturbing that at first glance Grundmann's account seems to be the least guilty of this detachment. His exploration of Jesus' Galilean location is substantial.<sup>65</sup> However, Grundmann's purpose is to find a geographical context for Jesus which enables Jesus to be deracinated from Judaism.

This leads to a second, highly topical, observation: the function of Galilee in Jesus Research. It is striking that many enquiries in the Third Quest have focused on the social and political significance of Galilee for understanding Jesus.<sup>66</sup> Rather than confirming Grundmann's conclusion, such studies have simply drawn attention to the political complexity of the region, the likelihood of Jesus' being caught up in peasant hostility to Roman rule, and the different types of Judaism within which Jesus, as a Galilean, might have operated. Thus, knowledge of Galilee is vitally important for an understanding of Jesus. But it is for an understanding of Jesus *the Galilean Jew*.

Third, a different kind of political point emerges from a discussion of Grundmann's work. Head comments:

There are some indications of the impact of Nazi ideology on the faculty at Jena [where Grundmann lectured]... Nevertheless the primary realm for Grundmann's activity was in a separate church-based research institute... The Institute for the Study and Eradication of Jewish Influence from German Church Life... founded in Eisenach on 6 May 1939 under the leadership of Grundmann and Siegfried Leffler...<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Grundmann, *Jesus*, 166–175.

<sup>66</sup> Esp. the studies by S. Freyne (e.g. *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* [Wilmington, DE: Glazier and Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1980]; *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988]; and, most recently, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story* [New York and London: T&T Clark Continuum, 2004]) and Horsley, *Galilee*.

<sup>67</sup> Head, "The Nazi Quest," 75–76.

There are warnings here for both religious groups and the academy about how research is best undertaken. Universities are not value-free. But they do (usually) provide a good location for encounter with and critical examination of ideas, interests and ideological (including religious and theological) commitments. Where religious groups (such as the “German Christians”) set up a research institute on a particular political platform, institutionally detached from a context of encounter with those of different views, then the purpose of research is skewed.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, to exclude religious or theological exploration from university settings, or to pretend that some form of value-free consideration of religion and theology is possible, are identifiable as dangerous tendencies in the light of the Grundmann experience. Research is not disinterested. But Historical Jesus Research, it becomes clear, needs the interplay of diverse institutional contexts in order to enable it to deal effectively with the many interests and approaches being served by those who participate.

A political agenda in Jesus Research therefore has two clear aspects to it: the giving of attention to Jesus’ socio-political, economic and geographical context in first-century Palestine, and the recognition that an image of Jesus constructed can be made to serve many political ends. It would be desirable to be able to conclude that the greater attention that is given to the first, the more fruitful the latter will be. This is much too simple. There is no guarantee that the Jesus discovered will be politically useful. And the political interest which people may *want* their Jesus to serve may not be easily defensible on the grounds disclosed by historical research. One conclusion is, however, permissible. If a link between a contemporary political outlook or programme and the Jesus of history is claimed, then the socio-political context of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be neglected. A contemporary programme may not be able to be defended point for point. But detachment from Jesus and his context, or the turning of Jesus into a set of teachings, a principle or an idea, or an ethnically pure individual who seemed to have no real roots, merely raises the suspicion that it is not really Jesus who is being interpreted.

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<sup>68</sup> In Germany in the 1930’s and 1940’s, of course, things were more complex still, as the universities themselves were under Nazi control.

### 5. *A Cultural-Religious Agenda*

The next interest to be considered explores the border between scholarly endeavour and wider cultural interest in the figure of Jesus. On the one hand I shall pay attention to a recent example of how the work of scholars is popularized. On the other, I shall address the fact that the Quest and its findings serve religion, though in a less specific case than religious traditions themselves might wish. In current terminology, we might call this “spirituality’s” interest in Jesus. I prefer, however, to call this the “cultural-religious” agenda in order to indicate that the interest under consideration inevitably remains connected to religious traditions, even if those links are not always clear.

Nearly seventy years ago, Henry Cadbury’s *The Perils of Modernizing Jesus* was a challenge to contributors to the Quest to do justice to Jesus’ sheer uncongeniality to many contemporary concerns. As Weaver rightly notes: “The book contained a capsule picture of Jesus, though its main intent was to issue a warning against reading into the historical Jesus all our own presuppositions, a point that Schweitzer as well as others (Tyrrell) had made much earlier, but which could not be made often enough.”<sup>69</sup> For Cadbury, Jesus was a loyal Jew who differed in his own views only in few, if significant, ways, from the Judaism in which he was immersed. Jesus was a bit of a mystic, an apocalypticist focused on the will of God, and addressed individuals rather than proclaiming a social or political programme.

That the book appeared three years prior to Grundmann’s is noteworthy. Though Cadbury’s challenge came out of a need to challenge the modernization of Jesus within the social gospel, its significance moves beyond that immediate debate: Jesus will undoubtedly always be claimed for many causes. Abuse of the figure of Jesus is easy. And some of the details of Cadbury’s own picture which are not in dispute—Jesus’ Jewishness above all—offer a significant corrective to tendencies present in so much Jesus Research which was emerging in Christian circles.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, 185.

<sup>70</sup> The social gospel was not in any simple sense anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. Nor do Jesus-Questers of a Christian background inevitably downplay or misread Jesus’ Jewishness. Within the social gospel movement, Shailer Mathews, for example, sought to locate Jesus firmly in first-century Jewish eschatology (see esp. ch. 3 of W. D. Lindsey, *Shailer Mathews’s Lives of Jesus: The Search for a Theological Foundation for the Social Gospel* [Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997]). Questions can admit-

Seven decades after Cadbury, of course, things appear less simple. Though his charge and word of warning can be well-heeded, the difficulty of constructing the “capsule picture” to which Weaver refers remains. Furthermore, his position rests on the over-optimistic positivism which has accompanied the Quest in all its forms. I have myself supported the notion that a “positivist moment” inevitably remains part of the Quest, for otherwise Jesus/the Christ can indeed become a cipher, symbol, or principle without any reference to the historical person who gave rise to the “figure” which must go on being interpreted. But support for such a “moment” resists going as far as claiming that any image of the Jesus of history is fully warranted on satisfactory historical-critical grounds.<sup>71</sup>

The pressure to “modernize” does, however, remain inevitable on moral grounds. People beyond church and academy have a right to know what difference it makes to go on interpreting this figure who has proved influential in many cultures. Many in church and academy also recognize that the task of interpreting Jesus has consequences not simply for those attached to these institutions. “Modernization” need not mean “adapt to contemporary concerns.” It could simply mean “try to make accessible.” In this context, what I am calling the “cultural-religious” agenda becomes prominent. As the Jesus Seminar acknowledges, academic study of Jesus has an ethical responsibility which not only affects religions, but society and culture too. In Weaver’s term, this amounts to exploration of “Jesus as Public Icon.”<sup>72</sup>

To get at how the “cultural-religious” agenda takes shape in Western culture, I am using the example of the *Lives of Jesus* documentaries

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tedly be raised about Rauschenbusch’s references to Judaism (see e.g. C. Marsh, *Christ in Focus: Radical Christocentrism in Christian Theology* [London: SCM, 2005], ch. 5). Beyond the social gospel, Bultmann was as clear as anyone about Jesus’ Jewishness, and about the impossibility of presuppositionless exegesis (Bultmann, *Jesus*, ch. 1 and his famous essay “Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?” in his *Existence and Faith* [London: Fontana, 1964], 342–351). He was, however, also located within a thought-world (socio-cultural and theological) which required him to accentuate discontinuity between Jesus and his Jewish faith. On this whole question, see now esp. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger*, esp. chs. 4–5, and S. Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), ch. 5.

<sup>71</sup> This will become more apparent in the “Psychological Agenda” section below.

<sup>72</sup> Weaver, *The Historical Jesus*, ch. 9, a chapter devoted to an assortment of writers who sought to “popularize” the Quest. Here, by contrast, I am dealing not merely with the popularization of the Quest, but trying to assess also what interest such popularization serves.

made for the BBC in 1996.<sup>73</sup> Mark Tully is a Cambridge theology and history graduate who has spent a large part of his life working for the BBC in India. He made his own forays into the Third Quest material, wanting to offer an evaluation of the “explosion of scholarly interest over the last twenty-five years in discovering more about Jesus the man.”<sup>74</sup> In the course of making his documentaries, he conducted informed interviews with a range of contemporary scholars.<sup>75</sup> His assessment of his qualification for this reads: “I am certainly not a scholar. I am a journalist, a profession not always regarded very kindly by scholars. But journalists do have a role as simplifiers of scholarship.”<sup>76</sup> Tully immediately locates himself, therefore, in the role of popularizer.

His work is, however, more than merely illustrative of the popularization of the scholarly Quest. It is instructive in so far as it explains what human cultures are doing with the figure of Jesus, even when professing secularity, or at least a disinterestedness in religion. Tully again: “From my youngest days I have been fascinated by Jesus, and although I could not claim to be a card-carrying Christian I am certainly no sceptic.”<sup>77</sup> Admittedly, Tully had a fairly traditional introduction to the Christian faith through English Anglicanism and he even began at one stage to study for the priesthood. His time in the Indian sub-continent has, however, left him asking about the ongoing spiritual and cultural significance of the figure of Jesus in a way which cannot easily be contained within Christian orthodoxy in a straightforward way. Tully is thus an example of someone who combines in a highly contemporary way a concern for “spirituality” in the way that Jesus is handled within human cultures. He shows a respect for, but

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<sup>73</sup> Four documentaries were broadcast, and Tully wrote an accompanying book, *God, Jew, Rebel, the Hidden Jesus: An Investigation into the Lives of Jesus* (London: BBC Books, 1996). A *Study Guide* was also produced (ed. P. Millson) containing complete transcripts of the interviews (Manchester: BBC North, 1996).

<sup>74</sup> Tully, *God, Jew, Rebel*, 6.

<sup>75</sup> Including Richard Burridge, John Dominic Crossan, Gerald Downing, Richard Horsley, Ya'akov Meshorer, Marvin Meyer, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, Elaine Pagels, David Rosen, E. P. Sanders, and Tom Wright. In addition, Tully made use of the writings of, amongst others, Marcus Borg, the Jesus Seminar and Geza Vermes. His conversation partners outside of Jesus studies included Bishop Azariah of the Diocese of Madras in the Church of South India, Luke Dysinger, Ursula King, Jyoti Sahi, Bishop Kallistos Ware, and Zwi Werblowsky.

<sup>76</sup> Tully, *God, Jew, Rebel*, 7.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

awareness of the limitations of trying to identify and explore by historical-critical means alone, the person who lies behind the figure now portrayed.

The cultural religious agenda at work in the Quest for Jesus recognizes, then, I suggest, that: "... the image of Jesus is inescapably bound up with the archetype of the self in our Western culture... No matter whether one takes an affirming view of Jesus or a devaluing view of Jesus, it is always going to be in order to support a particular view of life, a theology or philosophy."<sup>78</sup> Even those professing no religious interest in Jesus, in other words, are still tangled up in the way in which the figure of Jesus functions in culture. And given that "Jesus" denotes a historical person from the past as well as a symbol of so much else (be it archetypal self, spiritual master, embodiment of God, or whatever), then historians' work is relevant to, even if not wholly determinative of, what cultures do with the image of Jesus.

If historians do not do their own popularizing, however, then someone else has to. The necessary cultural carrying of the figure of Jesus does not, then, depend upon the church and the academy alone. Church and academy are both indebted to the way the figure of Jesus is carried (and used and abused) within cultural life more broadly, in all its ambiguity. This constitutes the cultural-religious agenda bound up within the Quest.

### 6. *A Psychological Agenda*

Talk of the "archetypal self" inevitably raises the question of the extent to which a psychological agenda is also at work in the Quest of the Historical Jesus. For do not all contributors come to their task not only with theologies and philosophies as presuppositions, but also with basic understandings of the human self? And do not these theories of the self, and the psychological backgrounds of the contributors, shape what people see in Jesus?

In this section, I shall confirm that psychology is important, though resist the reductionism implied in the two questions just posed. To adapt an already-famous quotation from Crossan, "Life of Jesus research is a safe place to do autobiography and call it biography,

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<sup>78</sup> H. Childs, *The Myth of the Historical Jesus and the Evolution of Consciousness* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 246–247 (cf. 14).

although as all historical writing is inevitably affected by autobiography, Life of Jesus research cannot escape this.”<sup>79</sup> The fact that in this exploration of the agendas within Jesus Research the cultural-religious and psychological agendas connect discloses two consequences of the cultural conveying of the figure of Jesus. First, the figure of Jesus carries an existential significance beyond that of the claims made by church and academy alone. Neither an orthodox theological reading nor the work of academic specialists is therefore adequate to identify the functions played by the figure of Jesus. Second, even within the task of undertaking *historical* Jesus Research, it is inadequate to see the task of interpretation in terms of the lingering impact of a past figure. Interpreters are always themselves caught up in their own enquiries.<sup>80</sup> Thus, though the “positivist moment” remains a necessary component of Jesus Research to serve as a reminder of the limits of projection of all sorts of interests onto the figure of Jesus, it is precisely that: a moment. Projection (be it theological, ethical, political or whatever) remains part of the reconstructive task.<sup>81</sup>

I shall dwell more on the subjectivity of the interpreter shortly. First we must note that that a psychological agenda can, more obviously, take the form of an attempt to offer a psychological reading of Jesus himself. Despite the apparent paucity of available evidence, this is a path many interpreters have taken during the Quest.<sup>82</sup> Albert Schweitzer offered *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* in 1948. But this is only one of twenty-four such studies listed by Hal Childs.<sup>83</sup> Capps addresses the “problem of inadequate evidence” as one of seven criticisms made of

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<sup>79</sup> The original Crossan quotation reads: “...historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography” (J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991], xxviii).

<sup>80</sup> This aspect of historical study has, of course, been prevalent since Schleiermacher and then Dilthey, and was accentuated especially through Hans-Georg Gadamer. In the present, the self-involving character of historical enquiry has received a new twist with postmodernism, especially in the work of Hayden White. The relevance of this development is examined in Childs, *The Myth* (esp. ch. 3).

<sup>81</sup> See Childs’ critical comments on Crossan (*The Myth*, 39–40, 226).

<sup>82</sup> This objection has force, given that psychological studies of any depth would usually be expected to be based on interviews with subjects.

<sup>83</sup> Childs, *The Myth*, 17 n. 45. J. Miller, *Jesus at Thirty: A Psychological and Historical Portrait* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), and D. Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000) can now also be added to the list. Miller reviews some of the most notable contributions in an Appendix to his 1997 study.



psychobiography.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, both he and Miller have made thoughtful and stimulating contributions to discussion about Jesus' possible psychological background and development. Miller majors on the possibility that the death of his father Joseph may have contributed directly to the reconfigurations Jesus experienced and commended in family and household life.<sup>85</sup> Capps interacts directly with four contemporary Jesus Questers (Sanders, Meier, Crossan and Borg) in working out a reading of Jesus which concludes that his personality type was that of a "utopian melancholic."<sup>86</sup> As with Miller, exploration of Jesus' relationship with Joseph, and the possibility of his father's early death, features prominently in Capps' study. Especially helpful is the extent to which Capps interacts with recent studies of Jesus' social world and offers his psychological portrait within a realistic assessment of Jesus' social context. The social psychological dimensions of Jesus' healing activity are read in this light. A psychological reading of Jesus as "the village healer" is thus located within a "peasant style" approach to the world.

Both of these works remain highly speculative. But they are not for that reason to be neglected. They emphasize how much imagination is needed for the task of historical reconstruction. Capps also summarizes well the obstacle which faces all would-be interpreters of Jesus:

Given two millennia of viewing Jesus as the most perfect human being who ever lived, one is tempted to portray him as having reconciled, in both his internal dynamics and social role, the contradiction not only of his own culture but of human experience itself. This temptation was a major impulse toward the transformation of the historical Jesus into the Christ of Christianity.<sup>87</sup>

Though Capps's second sentence offers an unwarranted claim about theological causality, his first statement stands. To express the point differently: Christian theological claims for Jesus may in fact prevent the possibility of his being appreciated as a human being, despite the fact that full humanity is contained within those theological claims.

That such an approach to Jesus (Jesus as perfect human being) has been implied throughout Western history and has thus affected contemporary engagement with the figure of Jesus, is made clear in Hal

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<sup>84</sup> Capps, *Jesus*, 50–59.

<sup>85</sup> For a summary, see Miller, *Jesus at Thirty*, 97–99.

<sup>86</sup> Capps, *Jesus*, ch. 8.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

Childs' study *The Myth of the Historical Jesus and the Evolution of Consciousness*. Here, though, the emphasis shifts from statements made about Jesus as a past historical figure, to the recognition that because history-writing is never simply about the past, then what is offered in constructed images of Jesus is always also a combination of disputed data about a past figure and projections of some sort derived from the world of the interpreter.

As already noted, that a psychological dimension is present in hermeneutics has been known since Schleiermacher. The subjectivity of the interpreter has thus been a commonplace of Romanticism's critique of Enlightenment rationalism. Both of these strands of thinking have accompanied the Quest's history. Bultmann's theological-existential encounter with the figure of Jesus can be interpreted as an early twentieth-century form of the same subjective interest. At the end of the century, Crossan can be viewed on the one hand as in continuity with that same Romantic tradition, and on the other (e.g. by Childs) as not nearly continuous enough.<sup>88</sup> What is at stake here?

To assess adequately the psychological agenda at work within the inevitable subjective dimension to Jesus Research we must mention the roles played by projection, imagination and emotion in the interpretative task. By "projection" here I simply mean that whenever an interpreter takes a basically positive view of Jesus, i.e. interprets Jesus as worth studying because of his force for good on humanity, then some form of projection occurs.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore: "Imagination is at the heart of projection... it is this deep sense of imagination that plays a central role in creating images of Jesus."<sup>90</sup> Imagination is not, then, made use of in Jesus Research simply in the form of the historian's speculative leaps between items of "hard" data about Jesus. Imagination also comes into play within the interest implied in what contributors think they are doing their study of Jesus *for*. No one studies history as if it will not teach us anything. In studying Jesus the individual in the context of what has been made of him, historians know they are dealing with more than the life of a past figure. Emotion is significant too,

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<sup>88</sup> In Childs' view, despite all indications to the contrary Crossan remains locked in Enlightenment positivism.

<sup>89</sup> Childs develops his thinking along Jungian lines (*The Myth*, 155 and 171) and considers that projection is at work in Jesus Research. Whether or not his particular Jungian argument can be accepted in full, I think he is right in his basic insight.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 237 (see also 99, 124, 244 and 246).

if only to remind an interpreter that history is not a dispassionate discipline and that attention to one's own subjectivity as a historian acknowledges the limits of rationality alone, and the need to treat people as whole persons.<sup>91</sup>

Rather than being reductionist, the adoption of such a psychological agenda to Jesus Research therefore enables greater transparency within the historian's art.<sup>92</sup> Objectivity remains in view in the acknowledgements that it is *Jesus* who is being interpreted and that a narrative about him is not spun solely out of the interpreter's world. Recognition of a psychological interest at work identifies that there is more to what an interpreter presents than the data they select and expound.

### 7. A Philosophical Agenda

Finally, I consider the way in which a philosophical agenda is evident in Jesus Research. Clearly, all that has been said so far could be subsumed under the term "philosophical." Anyone respecting a particular political or ethical slant, or acknowledging a specific view of the human self, is adopting a "philosophical position" in a general sense. Here, however, I am being narrow in my definition in recognizing that contributions to the Jesus Quest are inevitably accompanied by some form of philosophical outlook which contains a particular understanding of the nature of reality and which therefore shapes how the historical enquiry is conducted. Sometimes, contributors have actively sought to promote their philosophical viewpoint whilst undertaking Jesus Research. Strauss is a clear example of this in his attempt to promote Hegelian Idealism. In many cases, however, the philosophical standpoint is dealt with cursorily or left unacknowledged. Again, I can only deal with examples and broad sweeps.<sup>93</sup>

Much of the Quest's history has been undertaken under the influence of two main philosophical positions: positivism in historical

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<sup>91</sup> Childs, *The Myth*, 14–15 and 99.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>93</sup> The philosophical background to the Quest has been more commented upon in the past than many of the other agendas dealt with in this chapter. Other studies are therefore available. On the so-called "Old Quest," see e.g. Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought 1778–1860*. For Old Quest through to New Quest see Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question*. On philosophical aspects of the latest Quest see e.g. R. Martin, *The Elusive Messiah: A Philosophical Overview of the Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999).

research, and Idealism in metaphysics. Both are hallmarks of the Enlightenment, and thus the Quest is clearly identifiable as an Enlightenment project. Positivism means that the Quest has always been engaged to a greater or lesser degree in the search for the one, original Jesus. Because there was a historical person Jesus, the search is pursued by rational means, making the best use of hard data (texts especially, but also archaeological finds) and a variety of disciplinary approaches in search of Jesus and his world. The positivist Quest proceeds on the assumption of the existence of agreed principles of universal rationality.

The Idealist background to the Quest means that for much of the Quest's history the search has been concerned with Jesus' teaching or beliefs, with the thought-world in which Jesus moved, or with the God in whom Jesus believed. Though positivism and Idealism do stand in conflict in so far as positivism is more materialist in practice (in its interest in hard data), and Idealism is more concerned with immaterial consciousness or mind, their unifying point lies in the universality which each assumes. There is one Jesus who must be sought; there is *one* universal reality in which all things participate. Such an approach is, of course, highly complementary with a theological agenda, especially in the latter case. Theology can live more easily with a diversity of Jesus images than it can with a notion of fundamentally fragmented notion of reality, or an absence of any sense of "out-there-ness" beyond the material realm. The irony of the fate of David Friedrich Strauss was that he was far from being untheological in the attention he gave to "myth." By accentuating his philosophical Idealism (towards seeing the divine Spirit as embodied in humanity as a whole, following the example of the "God-man"), Strauss's critics obscured his achievements in recognizing how the gospels needed to be read. The fruitful aspects of his challenge to positivism were overlooked for a long time.

Though dominant, these two philosophical tendencies have, however, not been the only philosophical currents at work in the Quest, and certainly not of late. The methodological relativism in the study of religion which was encouraged especially in the wake of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (The History of Religion School) could be contained by the overarching Idealist framework within which their work was undertaken.<sup>94</sup> Exposure to comparative beliefs and ideas in

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<sup>94</sup> This insight pertains directly to Bultmann and his school, including even those of his pupils who were critical of him (e.g. Käsemann and J. M. Robinson) and sought to set off on a fresh tack in the so-called "New Quest."

other religious traditions, especially those prior to Christianity's emergence, was a major challenge to Christian theologians. But theologically speaking, the originality of Jesus could still be maintained given the assumption that the one God oversaw all such developments. The "kingdom of God" could still be uniquely shaped by Jesus' preaching and activity whilst lying beyond all earthly manifestations of it.

Diversity could, however, become problematic when Idealism itself was challenged; and it has been challenged on many fronts. In metaphysics, it has been confronted by the challenge to all notions of any sense of "out-there-ness" to human reality, so that God has either disappeared altogether, or become, in the minds of non-realists, a necessary fiction in human living. Even when unity in human experience might be considered retainable,<sup>95</sup> the extent of human diversity, evident in cultural difference, radical social and geographical particularity ("in religion, you are where you were born") could not but affect the philosophical climate in which all historical enquiry was undertaken. In the Quest itself, as N. T. Wright has rightly noted, "a 'history of ideas' will never get to the bottom either of Jesus or the early church."<sup>96</sup>

It is in this philosophical climate that the Quest is now undertaken. Positivism and Idealism are not dead, but things are not what they used to be. Past certainties are less certain than once thought, and even those astute enough to see what is at stake (Crossan, for example) receive the charge of not being astute enough.<sup>97</sup>

There are counters to this trend, in the post- or late-modern context within which the Quest is now pursued. Craig Evans states quite baldly of the Third Quest that it "is not driven by theological-philosophical concerns."<sup>98</sup> My quibble is with the word "driven." Maybe it is not driven by them. But if it fails to show awareness of them and take account of them, then it may simply be shown to be theologically and philosophically unhelpful. N. T. Wright is one example of a creative New Testament scholar always willing to look at the biggest possible picture of what was going on in the first century. He has also undertaken much philosophical homework in arguing for a "critically

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<sup>95</sup> Such as Jung, for example, was supplying with his notion of the "collective unconscious."

<sup>96</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 660.

<sup>97</sup> E.g. Childs, *The Myth*, 226.

<sup>98</sup> C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 11.

realist" position in his approach to history.<sup>99</sup> The results of his endeavours are contained in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996). Wright feels more able than many to draw conclusions from his historical enquiries which complement Christian orthodoxy. Jesus was actively interpreting his life and work in the context of the hope of Yahweh's return to Zion. Jesus saw himself, in Wright's view, as embodying the return of the king.

Wright's confidence in the widespread reliability (for historical purposes) of the canonical gospels is marked, and not shared by all. But whether his assured handling of the texts quite does justice to the freight, and multiple agendas, which the search for Jesus has always carried also beyond the Christian church has yet to be seen. Be that as it may, it is appropriate that at the end of this lengthy exploration of the multiple agendas at work in the Quest we have returned to theology. This is not because it should inevitably have the first and last word, but because it is unavoidable as a conversation-partner when handling questions about Jesus of Nazareth. Whether or not contributors to the Quest are religiously or theologically inclined, the philosophical framework within which the Quest operates requires its contributors to come clean about what they think history, the human self, and reality are all about. There is no escaping this. And in this sense, Childs is quite right to say: "The quest for the historical Jesus will always have a christological agenda—either for some christ or against some christ. Denying the christological agenda simply allows it to remain an unconscious ideology."<sup>100</sup>

#### 8. *And Where, and What, is Jesus in All of This?*

What can be said in response to this trawl through the many and varied agendas which always accompany the Quest for the historical Jesus? A number of concluding comments suggest themselves.

First, it could be claimed that despite the inevitability of agendas supplementing the historical aim, these other agendas are to be exposed and stripped away. They obscure, rather than assist, the immediate historical task. From all that has been said it should be clear by now

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<sup>99</sup> See esp. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and The People of God* (London: SPCK and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), part II.

<sup>100</sup> Childs, *The Myth*, 221.

that I do not think this is either possible or desirable. Historical enquiry is not value-free and therefore one or more of the agendas described are unavoidably present when historical research into Jesus is undertaken.

Does this then mean, second, that Jesus now only “exists” as narrative? Has the figure from history wholly disappeared from view and his image therefore become no more than an ideological playground (battleground, even) in which one narrative Jesus competes against another? In one sense it must be true that Jesus is only narrative now. The person behind the narrative is no more and is lost from view. However, to say this without qualification overlooks how the agendas described actually function. Ethically-orientated interpreters can say that Jesus also exists as performance, for the narrative constructed must *do* something to people, to encourage or require them to act in certain Jesus-like ways. Religiously or theologically inclined interpreters might say that Jesus also exists as “Spirit,” for the God who was with him can continue to be experienced in and through the images of Jesus constructed in the present. The Quest’s theological and psychological agendas thus imply an ontology and an aesthetics too. To say then, with post-modern historians, that all history is narrative is in danger of stifling the recognition of what narrative history is for and the interests it serves, and the complex, multi-dimensional way in which narratives actually work in human living.

Third, however, we must return to the “positivist moment” which inevitably features within the Quest. Though all seven agendas can be deemed valid,<sup>101</sup> and though positivism in its strongest form really is dead (or should be quietly put to sleep if it is not), there remains the question of how the conflict of multiple interpretations is to be handled. This is especially so when the hard evidence available will never satisfactorily solve the question of how the Jesus of history is portrayed. History does not work like that, and Jesus cannot be captured in that way. Attention to the positivist moment is simply a way of acknowledging that Jesus was not a fictional figure, and that the Quest’s history shows how dangerous it can be when Jesus is turned into a principle or idea, or his teachings are detached from his person.

Perhaps, though, this positivist moment is best respected by means of respect for the significance of the clash of institutional contexts in

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<sup>101</sup> Even if disputes are inevitable as to their relative importance or usefulness.

which the figure of Jesus is explored: church, synagogue, seminary, university, media, political party or campaign.<sup>102</sup> Only through the interplay of a variety of images respecting diverse agendas—as well as the historical—can the one historical Jesus have much of a chance of being adequately grasped. It is not, then, the hard data demanded by a positivist approach which will keep historical research in check. The mutual critique offered by other interpreters of the theologically orthodox (Jesus) Christ, of Jesus as “the Christ ideal,” as “the Christ myth,” as “the archetypal self,” as the spiritual hero, as the perfect human worthy of imitation, or as the centre of a mystical movement will enable Jesus to be kept in view. Even if Jesus will only always “exist” in this contested space in hotly-disputed narrative form, the mutual critique is vital. In this way, the agendas which constantly accompany the historical Quest will be respected, whilst the figure of Jesus continues to do what he/it has always done: sought to promote life in all its fullness.

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<sup>102</sup> One could also add the arts here, though this would take us much further beyond the historical Quest as such, towards theology, christology and culture more generally.



JESUS OF NAZARETH AND THE CHRIST OF FAITH:  
APPROACHES TO THE QUESTION IN  
HISTORICAL JESUS RESEARCH

SVEN-OLAV BACK

1. *Introduction*

According to the faith of the Church Catholic, Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and the Son of God. Where does the origin of this faith lie? Is it with Jesus himself, or was it born in the post-Easter church? In that case, is there nevertheless some sort of continuity between Jesus' view of himself and the christology of the church? Or is the christological dogma of the church rather something radically new, perhaps even representing a betrayal of Jesus and his message? Questions like these have been on the agenda of historical Jesus research since the Old Quest.

As Albert Schweitzer pointed out, "the historical investigation of the life of Jesus did not take its rise from a purely historical interest."<sup>1</sup> There was, rather, an anti-dogmatic agenda from the very beginning of Jesus research: "it turned to the Jesus of history as an ally in the struggle against the tyranny of dogma."<sup>2</sup> In his assessment of the Old Quest for the historical Jesus, Schweitzer further noted that "each successive epoch of theology found its own thoughts in Jesus" and even, that "each individual created Jesus in accordance with his own character."<sup>3</sup> In other words, having rejected the Christ of faith, the questers, in their flight from dogma, did not find the real Jesus, but the Christ of their respective private judgments.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, First Complete (English) Edition, ed. John Bowden (London: SCM, 2000), 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Nevertheless, Schweitzer found some exceptions to this rule, e.g., Johannes Weiß and Schweitzer himself.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Martin Kähler, *Der sogenannte historische Jesus und der geschichtliche, biblische Christus*, ed. E. Wolf (München: Kaiser, 1953 [1st ed. 1892]), 30, commenting on the nineteenth century life-of-Jesus research: "Es ist zumeist der Herren eigener Geist, in dem Jesus sich spiegelt." *Ibid.*, 29: "Vor einem Dogma, wenn es ehrlich als solches geboten wird, ist heute jedermann auf seiner Hut. Erscheint aber die Christologie als

In the New Quest there was also an interest in christology. Indeed, as John Reumann notes, “at bottom it represented a new interest in allowing or finding in Jesus some glint of Christology,”<sup>5</sup> be that an explicit or an implicit one. Ironically, the wide use (or abuse) of the criterion of dissimilarity worked somewhat in the opposite direction.

The problem of the relationship between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of faith is, of course, still there in Jesus research. Even today, the interest in the question, generally speaking, is hardly of a purely historical kind. Rather, James D. G. Dunn argues, “the flight from dogma continues to be a motivating force in attempts to reconstruct the historical Jesus.”<sup>6</sup> And Jörg Frey, looking back at the Old Quest and comparing it with recent research, comments: “Die historische Frage nach Jesus wird... zunächst formuliert als Infragestellung der Christologie, und sie lebt—zumindst in manchen ihrer Vertreter—bis heute von diesem antidogmatischen Impetus, der freilich alles andere als eine ‘undogmatische’ Haltung widerspiegelt.”<sup>7</sup>

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Leben Jesu, dann sind nicht mehr viele, welche den dogmatisierenden Regisseur hinter den fesselnden Schauspiel des farbenreich gemalten Lebensbildes spüren.” In spite of the criticism of Schweitzer and Kähler, the modernizing of Jesus continued; see the observations and warnings in Henry J. Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1962 [1st ed. 1937]).

<sup>5</sup> John Reumann, “Jesus and Christology”, in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 501.

<sup>6</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003), 65, referring primarily to what he terms the “neo-Liberal” quest (ibid., 58–65). According to Dieter Lührmann, the conflict with dogma is nowadays mostly a phenomenon in the Roman Catholic context, where “they still have a dogma which can be criticized” (“Marinus de Jonge’s Shaffer Lectures: Where Does Jesus Research Now Stand?” in *From Jesus to John: Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology in Honour of Marinus de Jonge*, ed. Martinus C. de Boer, JSNTSup 84 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 57).

<sup>7</sup> Jörg Frey, “Der historische Jesus und der Christus der Evangelien,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 275. According to M. Eugene Borings, theological concerns tend to be “implicit and inescapable” even in Third Quest-reconstructions of Jesus (“The ‘Third Quest’ and the Apostolic Faith”, *Int* 50 [1996]: 46–47). Barry W. Henaut, commenting on Jesus research in general, argues that “every presentation of Jesus’ life and thought creates a *de facto* Christ of faith” (“Is the ‘Historical Jesus’ a Christological Construct?”, in *Whose Historical Jesus?*, ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins (Studies in Christianity and Judaism 7 [Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997], 241). By “Christ of faith,” Henaut means what I would rather term a “Christ of private judgment.” For a perspective other than that of Frey, cf. Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 65: scholars involved in the so-called Third Quest “are really conducting a search primarily for historical evidence to sup-

This article looks at some recent approaches and theses in Jesus research concerning the question of continuity (or discontinuity) between Jesus of Nazareth and the Christ of faith.<sup>8</sup> By “Christ of faith” I refer to the christological dogma of the Church Catholic, as it is expressed in the Nicene and Apostolic creeds.<sup>9</sup> In these creeds, Jesus is confessed as the Messiah/Christ (*Apostolicum*) and as the incarnate Wisdom of God (*Nicaenum*).<sup>10</sup> Hence, the following pages focus on the question whether Jesus might have understood himself as the Messiah and/or the Wisdom of God in person, or rather, how this question has been dealt with in recent Jesus research.<sup>11</sup> The

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port claims made on behalf of creedal Christianity and the canonical gospels. In other words, the third quest is an apologetic ploy.” Funk himself thinks “we should either revise or eliminate the creeds” (312).

<sup>8</sup> There is no need here to discuss the distinction between Jesus-as-he-really was (or is) and the Jesus reconstructed by scholars working with certain methods and sources. We are dealing with reconstructions by scholars, who know that their historical reconstructions cannot be equated with the “real Jesus.” Cf. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, I: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 21–40; Boring, “Third Quest,” 345–354; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 81–86; Dunn, *Jesus*, 125–126.

<sup>9</sup> “The Christ of faith,” then, is not a shortcut for, e.g., “Christian faith” in general, or the *fides qua* of individuals, or the “Christ” of private judgments. The “faith” in question is, of course, the faith of the church.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100–600)*, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 1 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971); Robert M. Grant, *Jesus after the Gospels: The Christ of the Second Century* (London: SCM, 1990); Oskar Skarsaune, *Inkarnasjonen—myte eller faktum?* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 1988); idem, *Og Ordet ble kjød: Studier i oldkirkens teologi* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> This is part of the broader question regarding the emergence and development of Christology in earliest times. Cf., e.g., Martin Hengel, *Der Sohn Gottes: Die Entstehung der Christologie und die jüdisch-hellenistische Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1975); James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: An Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980); Christopher M. Tuckett, *Christology and the New Testament: Jesus and His Earliest Followers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001). Here I do not enter into the broader question, but try to focus on Jesus research in spite of the fact that there is no clear dividing line between the different areas of research. I will also disregard discussions of the relationship between “history” and “revelation,” or of the “relevance” of Jesus research for “faith.” For different perspectives, cf. Johnson, *Jesus*; Matthias Kreplin, *Das Selbstverständnis Jesu: hermeneutische und christologische Reflexion; historisch-kritische Analyse*, WUNT 2.141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 9–73. Some recent reflections from a systematic theologian may be studied in Asger Chr. Højlund, “Den historiske Jesus og kristologien”, *Ichthys* 7 (2001): 27–40.

question of (a possibly Jesuanic) Wisdom Christology is handled very briefly; the emphasis is placed on the problem of Jesus' messiahship.<sup>12</sup>

By "Wisdom Christology" I here mean an interpretation of the person of Jesus in terms of Prov 8:22–31 and/or other texts referring to the divine person/hypostasis Wisdom.<sup>13</sup>

The problem of defining the Messiah concept is more complicated. A reasonable definition is the one proposed by Collins: "[A] messiah is an eschatological figure who sometimes, but not necessarily always, is designated as a משיח in the ancient sources."<sup>14</sup> As Collins explains, royal, priestly and prophetic eschatological figures may be designated in this way in ancient Jewish literature.<sup>15</sup> We will see below, however, that other views have also been espoused in both older and more recent scholarly literature.

This paper is not an attempt at writing anything like a full history of recent research, but rather a glance at some—perhaps quite randomly selected—theses. As a rule I have tried to avoid straying onto the ground covered by John Reumann's 1989 article "Jesus and Christology,"<sup>16</sup> although there is, at some points, an inevitable overlap.

Initially this paper turns to the problem of Jesus' messiahship. Firstly, we will look at some proposals to the effect that Jesus made no messianic claims, but that his ministry was a non-messianic one (2); secondly, there is an overview of the arguments of a few scholars for an implicit Christology on the part of Jesus (3);<sup>17</sup> thirdly, some

<sup>12</sup> The "son of man" problem, however, will not receive more than cursory attention within the limits of this article.

<sup>13</sup> For this christology in some early Christian hymns/formulae, see John 1:1–18; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:5–11; Col 1:15–18; Heb 1:2–3; Rev 3:14. For the most important Old Testament and ancient Jewish wisdom texts, see n. 168 below.

<sup>14</sup> John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 12. Cf. the discussion in Johannes Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*, WUNT 2.104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 16–18.

<sup>15</sup> Collins, *Scepter*. On the prophetic Messiah, see in particular Florentino García Martínez, "Messianische Erwartungen in den Qumranschriften," in *Der Messias*, Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie 8 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 203–207; Collins, *Scepter*, 116–122; Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte*, 312–417.

<sup>16</sup> See above, n. 5.

<sup>17</sup> These scholars argue that Jesus made a distinct self-claim without making any use of messianic (or Christological) titles. For the sake of convenience—rather than clarity—I have chosen the broader category "christology" here, not the stricter "messianology." Now and then we will also run into the phenomenon of an "evoked" christology. Since this is by definition a christology of others than Jesus, there is no point in treating it in its own right here.

works, where the case is made for Jesus having made an explicit messianic self-claim, are discussed (4). In a further section, the question regarding a Wisdom Christology in the Jesus tradition receives our attention (5). Finally, there are some tentative reflections (6).

## 2. *A Non-Messianic Ministry?*

The hypothesis of Jesus' pre-Easter ministry as a non-messianic one—and the “resurrection” as the *terminus post quem* and the cause of the belief in Jesus' messiahship—was proposed by William Wrede in his work *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*.<sup>18</sup> Among Wrede's nineteenth-century *prodromoi*,<sup>19</sup> Gustav Volkmar had contended that, since Jesus' contemporaries thought of the Messiah solely in political terms, it was clear that “had Jesus desired the messiahship, he could have claimed it only in this political sense.” The only alternative was “to suppose that he did not desire it.”<sup>20</sup>

At this point, some reflections should be made regarding the methodological problem that comes into focus here. A century before Volkmar, Reimarus (1694–1768) had argued that Jesus must have shared his contemporaries' views on the kingdom of God and the Messiah.<sup>21</sup> Against Reimarus, Semler (1725–1791) maintained that Jesus had modified and transformed the contemporary Jewish view into something new.<sup>22</sup> Colani later (1864) argued in a way that was similar to Semler's,<sup>23</sup> whereas Volkmar followed the same path as Reimarus. The alternatives are still there today. As is well known, Harvey discussed the matter in *Jesus and the Constraints of History*,

<sup>18</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913). Although Wrede tries to be cautious when phrasing his conclusions, he nevertheless seems to have made up his mind regarding the non-messianic character of Jesus' ministry (221–222, 229, 239).

<sup>19</sup> In addition to Volkmar, Wrede refers to Bruno Bauer and S. Hoekstra (*Messiasgeheimnis*, 280–286).

<sup>20</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, 193, discussing Volkmar's 1882 work *Jesus Nazarenus und die erste christliche Zeit, mit den beiden ersten Erzählern*.

<sup>21</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, 17–18, on Reimarus' *Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger* (1778).

<sup>22</sup> Colin Brown, *Jesus in Protestant Thought 1778–1860* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1985), 11, on Johann Salomo Semler, *Beantwortung der Fragmente eines Ungenannten insbesondere vom Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger* (1779).

<sup>23</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, 190–192, on Timothée Colani, *Jésus-Christ et les croyances messianiques de son temps* (1864).

stating among other things: “No individual, if he wishes to influence others, is totally free to choose his own style of action and persuasion: he is subject to constraints imposed by the culture in which he finds himself.”<sup>24</sup> As far as Jesus is concerned, “he had to speak a language they [sc. his contemporaries] could understand.”<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, however, we cannot insist “that he must have been totally subject to these constraints. Like any truly creative person, he could doubtless bend them to his purpose.”<sup>26</sup>

Now we return to Volkmar. He simply rejected the idea that Jesus may have “set himself up as Messiah but in another than the popular sense” and, accordingly, asserted that “Jesus could not possibly have come forward with messianic claims.”<sup>27</sup>

The above-mentioned and some other suggestions by Volkmar were incorporated by Wrede in his *Messiasgeheimnis*. The leading critics of the day were far from convinced by Wrede’s argument,<sup>28</sup> but his views were later on well received by Rudolf Bultmann and strongly promoted by him.<sup>29</sup>

The Bultmann version of the hypothesis is as follows: (1) According to the traditional Jewish view, the Messiah is a king (e.g. *Pss. Sol.* 17:23). Jesus, however, was a rabbi, a prophet, and an exorcist, but did not

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<sup>24</sup> Anthony E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History: The Bampton Lectures, 1980* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. the criterion of “The Plausibility of Historical Context” as defined by Theissen and Winter in their discussion of the criteria of authenticity in Jesus research: “Contextual Appropriateness” must be combined with and balanced by “Contextual Distinctiveness.” “We are looking for distinctive individual traits of Jesus within the framework of the Judaism of his own time” (Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 179–188, at 185).

<sup>27</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, 193.

<sup>28</sup> See Martin Hengel, “Jesus der Messias Israels,” in Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien*, WUNT 138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 20–25, with references to H. J. Holtzmann, Wilhelm Bousset, Julius Wellhausen, Johannes Weiß, Paul Wernle, and Hermann von Soden. For Schweitzer’s criticism of Wrede, see *Quest*, 309–310. Cf. however Martin Dibelius, *Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer*, FRLANT 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911), 64.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 9th ed. (Tübingen: Otto Merk, Mohr Siebeck, 1984) 26–34. See also “Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewußtsein Jesu und das Petrus-Bekenntnis,” in idem, *Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments*, ed. Erich Dinkler (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 1–9.

claim to be a king.<sup>30</sup> (2) There is no evidence for the view that Jesus should have transformed or spiritualized “the traditional Messiah concept,”<sup>31</sup> (3) nor did Jesus claim to be the future Messiah. True, he probably spoke about the coming Son of Man, but he did not thereby refer to himself, but to some other figure.<sup>32</sup> (4) Texts such as Rom 1:4 and Acts 2:36 are the remains of an early view, according to which Jesus’ messiahship did not begin until after the resurrection.<sup>33</sup> (5) The gospel stories that indicate belief in Jesus’ messiahship or describe him as the Messiah during his earthly ministry are unhistorical legends or retrojected Easter stories.<sup>34</sup> (6) That the life of Jesus should have been non-messianic soon became an intolerable enigma, and Jesus’ past ministry was instead seen in the light of the messianic faith of Hellenistic Christian circles. The theory of the *Messiasgeheimnis* was developed, but due to its self-contradictory character this theory reveals more than it conceals; Jesus’ command in Mark 9:9 is especially telling.<sup>35</sup>

Through the influence of Bultmann and his school, Wrede’s hypothesis did not remain a path less travelled by, but became a well-trodden one. (The fact that Wrede himself had second thoughts on the question towards the end of his life went almost completely unnoticed during the twentieth century.)<sup>36</sup> Even today, the hypothesis of a non-messianic ministry of Jesus appears to be quite popular. It is endorsed not only by “revisionists” arguing for a non-eschatological

<sup>30</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 28–29; cf. Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 216–217.

<sup>31</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 29–30; and earlier Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 43–45, 220. But what about the suffering of the Messiah? “In den Leidensweissagungen ist freilich der jüdische Messias-Menschensohn-Begriff umgeprägt... Aber diese Neuprägung ist nicht von Jesus selbst, sondern von der Gemeinde *ex eventu* vorgenommen worden” (Bultmann, *Theologie*, 32). “Wir haben den nackten Ausdruck der Gemeindegemeinschaft vor uns und weiter nichts” (Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 91).

<sup>32</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 30–32. In Wrede’s opinion, the sayings concerning the coming Son of Man presuppose a Christian understanding of the Messiah (*Messiasgeheimnis*, 219).

<sup>33</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 28; see also Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 213–215, 235.

<sup>34</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 27–28; cf. Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 31, 47–51 and *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> Bultmann, *Theologie*, 33; Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 66–69 and *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> In a letter to Adolf von Harnack (January 2, 1906), Wrede was prepared to accept that Jesus saw himself as *Messias designatus*: “Ich bin geneigter als früher zu glauben, daß Jesus selbst sich als zum Messias ausersehen betrachtet hat.” The letter was not published until 2001. See references and comments in Hengel and Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu*, IX–XI.

Jesus,<sup>37</sup> but also by scholars who defend a more “traditional” eschatological interpretation of Jesus’ ministry and message.

In his work *Jesus after Two Thousand Years*, Gerd Lüdemann emphasises the importance of separating the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith, and sounds a warning against attempts to “unify” Jesus and Christ, for this would imply an attempt to “overturn the historical consciousness of modernity.”<sup>38</sup> That consciousness, however, is of utmost importance, and “since the great confessions and religions have failed, it is the only approach which is capable of building up peace between human beings and their ideologies and religions.”<sup>39</sup>

According to Lüdemann, Jesus was a proclaimer of the eschatological kingdom of God. He understood his miracles as signs of the in-breaking of this Kingdom. He hoped that, by divine intervention, the twelve tribes of Israel would soon be restored. Then, he and his twelve disciples would be judges of Israel and rulers in the Kingdom.<sup>40</sup>

But there is no authentic evidence to show that Jesus should have made any messianic claims. There are no implicit messianic claims in authentic sayings such as Luke 7:22–23/Matt 11:5–6 or Mark 14:58.<sup>41</sup> The Markan account of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem does have clear messianic connotations, but it is a post-Easter “messianic legend.”<sup>42</sup> The account of the trial and condemnation in Mark 14 has no historical value (apart from Mark 14:58), and Mark 14:61–62 is a “compendium” of Markan Christology.<sup>43</sup>

Jesus’ temple action was the cause of the Jewish authorities’ delivering him to the Romans, who—for some reason—crucified him as “an emergent political messiah.”<sup>44</sup> This was exactly what Jesus did not

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<sup>37</sup> The works of these scholars (Crossan, Borg, Mack, etc.) have been discussed extensively by others; see, e.g., N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 28–82. There is no need here to go over the same ground once more.

<sup>38</sup> Gerd Lüdemann, *Jesus after Two Thousand Years: What He Really Said and Did* (London: SCM, 2000), 3. At the end of this book, there is a helpful “Index of All the Authentic Sayings and Actions of Jesus” (694–695).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 25, 211–212, 689–690.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 78, 306.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 75–76.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 101–102. Lüdemann asserts that Mark 14:53–65 was composed on the basis of the account of the hearing before Pilate (Mark 15:1–5.15b–20a); hence, it is unhistorical.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 102, 108. Lüdemann accepts the *titulus crucis* (Mark 15:26) as authentic (*ibid.*, 108).



want to be, for when Peter “confessed” him as the Messiah (i.e., the political Messiah), Jesus rejected this “confession” as a satanic misunderstanding.<sup>45</sup>

According to H. J. de Jonge, Jesus regarded the proclamation of the kingdom of God as his primary task. Moreover, he saw his own actions as the beginning of the Kingdom.<sup>46</sup> Jesus understood himself as one in the line of the prophets of Israel, but since time was “up,” Jesus thought he was “God’s definitive prophet.”<sup>47</sup>

Contrary to the Wrede/Bultmann hypothesis, de Jonge also argues that Jesus must indeed have been regarded as the Messiah, the “anointed one,” during his earthly ministry.<sup>48</sup> Now the term “anointed,” when applied to Jesus, clearly implies the idea of a (future) “king.” Jesus, however, had no ordinary political ambitions and would not, then, have considered himself to be “anointed.” Hence, we can assume that “it was not Jesus who applied the title of ‘anointed one’ to himself but some of his followers.”<sup>49</sup> This assumption receives support from the fact that the Q-source does not use the term Χριστός for Jesus, suggesting that not all followers of Jesus regarded him as Χριστός, which, in turn, is hard to understand if he indeed had proclaimed himself as the Messiah.<sup>50</sup>

In de Jonge’s view, then, Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah (nor did he refer to himself as the Son of Man).<sup>51</sup> De Jonge reasons that this reconstruction is not only harmless but also salutary, since “it makes him [Jesus] more worthy of belief” if others applied these

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<sup>45</sup> Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 56–57. For a classical statement of this thesis, see Erich Dinkler, “Petrusbekenntnis und Satanswort: das Problem der Messianität Jesu”, in idem, *Signum Crucis: Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament und zur christlichen Archäologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1967), 283–312.

<sup>46</sup> H. J. de Jonge, “The Historical Jesus’ View of Himself and of His Mission,” in *From Jesus to John*, 35–36. In this article, H. J. de Jonge offers a critical examination of the views of Marinus de Jonge regarding Jesus’ messianic claims (cf. n. 49).

<sup>47</sup> de Jonge, “Jesus’ View,” 36.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, with reference to early and frequent pre-Pauline formulae such as “Christ has died,” as well as to the pointlessness of applying the title “anointed” to Jesus after his death, “as something new, if it had not already been bestowed on him.”

<sup>49</sup> de Jonge, “Jesus View,” 24–27, at 27. H. J. de Jonge rejects the suggestion of Marinus de Jonge to the effect that Jesus may have understood himself as the Messiah in another sense than the national-political one, viz. as a “prophetic Son of David” (27). Cf. Marinus de Jonge, *Jesus, the Servant-Messiah* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 68–72.

<sup>50</sup> de Jonge, “Jesus’ View,” 27.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–34.

titles to him rather than if he had used them himself.<sup>52</sup> And, “Would theology and the church not do better, when putting into words the meaning of Jesus for a present-day audience, to refrain from using such unclear, misleading functional terms as ‘Christ,’ ‘Messiah’ and ‘Son of Man’?”<sup>53</sup>

Jürgen Becker must also be mentioned in this context. According to Becker, Jesus understood himself as a prophet of the end-time. He did not proclaim himself, but God’s kingdom. Moreover, he not only proclaimed the Kingdom, but was bringing it in through his person and work. “Jesus versteht sich in besonderer Weise als Prophet der Endzeit, der Gottes Herrschaft bei den Menschen Realität werden läßt.”<sup>54</sup>

In spite of the fact that Jesus, as understood by Becker, saw himself as bringing in the Kingdom and thus fulfilling a decisive role in the eschatological salvation of Israel, he had nothing to say about himself that could be understood as christology. In no way did he claim to be the Messiah (or the Son of Man), and it makes no sense to describe Jesus’ self-understanding in terms such as “christology in the making” (“Christologie im Vollzug”) or “indirect christology.” Jesus was “ganz innerhalb des frühjüdischen Prophetismus.”<sup>55</sup>

Becker rejects some of the evidence that could be brought into play against this position: Peter’s confession before Jesus (Mark 8:27–33) is a post-Easter construction,<sup>56</sup> as is Jesus’ own messianic confession before Caiaphas in Mark 14:62. Against the authenticity of the latter, Becker has a collection of arguments that is sizeable, but of slightly doubtful value.<sup>57</sup> Further, he finds no synoptic passages representing Jesus as a prophetic Messiah.<sup>58</sup> As far as the *titulus crucis* (Mark 15:26) is concerned, Becker accepts its historicity, but he sees no connection at all to a messianic confession of Jesus. In fact, the reader

<sup>52</sup> de Jonge, “Jesus’ View,” 37.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1996), 266–274, at 266.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 246–267, 272 (here the quotations).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 248, 428–429. Becker’s main point is that Mark 14:61–62 belongs to the redactional layer of the trial scene. The reasons for this suggestion, as indicated by Becker, are quite scant (428–429).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 246: “Die synoptische Tradition bedient sich der Erwartung eines gesalbten Propheten nicht.”

does not get to know why Jesus, in Becker's view, should have been crucified as a "king of the Jews."<sup>59</sup>

The Fellows of the Jesus Seminar want to set the real Jesus free from creed and dogma. However, as Jesus was also misunderstood by biblical scholarship during most of the twentieth century, "the liberation of the non-eschatological Jesus of the aphorisms and parables from Schweitzer's eschatological Jesus" is also an important task.<sup>60</sup>

The eschatological misrepresentation of Jesus arose among his followers "once Jesus was not there to remind them." One of the ingredients in this false reinterpretation of Jesus was the belief in his messiahship.<sup>61</sup> This idea is reflected in, e.g., the stories about Peter's confession ("the creation of the storyteller"), the triumphal entry into Jerusalem ("a contrivance of the evangelist"), and the trial scene with Jesus' answer to Caiaphas ("mostly a fabrication of the Christian imagination"). As far as Jesus' response to the Baptist is concerned (Luke 7:22–23/Matt 11:5–6), the list of activities is taken from the scriptures, "which means (!) that this response is a piece of Christian apologetic, designed to demonstrate that these activities fulfil ancient prophecies."<sup>62</sup>

These judgments are related to the "rules of evidence" that enable scholars to "pick out a distinctive voice in a Galilean crowd."<sup>63</sup> One of these rules (!) is this: "Jesus makes no claim to be the Anointed, the messiah."<sup>64</sup> On what basis was this rule formulated? The Fellows explain:

Jesus taught that the last will be first and the first will be last. He admonished his followers to be servants of everyone. He urged humility as the cardinal virtue by both word and example. Given these terms, it is difficult to imagine Jesus making claims for himself—I am the son of God, I am the expected One, the Anointed—unless, of course, he thought that nothing he said applied to himself.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Becker, *Jesus*, 435–437.

<sup>60</sup> Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 1–8, at 4.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, 97, 121, 177–178.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–34, at 30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 33. The Fellows, however, deem it probable that Jesus made the "outrageous" demand, "Follow me, and leave it to the dead to bury their own dead" (Matt 8:22). Also, he does not seem to have avoided insulting his audience: "You phony, first

### 3. *Implicit Christology?*

Ernst Käsemann and Günther Bornkamm were prominent among earlier scholars who detected an implicit christology in Jesus' proclamation, i.e., they held that Jesus made a distinct self-claim—he was more than, say, a rabbi or a prophet—without making any use of messianic (or christological) titles.<sup>66</sup>

Käsemann turned his attention to gospel material that may be regarded as authentic on the basis of the criterion of dissimilarity.<sup>67</sup> Here, he found a claim to authority that implied that Jesus wanted to be more than a rabbi or a prophet:

Die einzige Kategorie, die seinem Anspruch gerecht wird, ist, völlig unabhängig davon, ob er sie selber benutzt und gefordert hat oder nicht, diejenige, welche seine Jünger ihm denn auch beigemessen haben, nämlich die des Messias.<sup>68</sup>

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take the timber out of your own eye..." (Matt 7:5) (Funk et al., *Five Gospels*, 153–154, 160–161). Apparently, then, Jesus' demand of humility did not apply to himself.

<sup>66</sup> Ernst Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," in idem, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, 1, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 187–214; Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 13th ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983). On Jesus' non-use of titles, see Käsemann, "Problem," 211, 213; Bornkamm, *Jesus*, 61, 150–157, 198–202. The idea of an implicit christology on the part of Jesus seems to have been introduced by Bultmann; see a discussion with references in Jacques Schlosser, "Q et la christologie implicite," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 290–292. Bultmann, however, did not see any great significance here; see Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: ein Lehrbuch*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 27 n. 17.

<sup>67</sup> Käsemann, "Problem," 205. As both the context and the wording make clear, Käsemann does not indicate that the criterion should be used negatively. Rather, it is the only criterion which is able to provide some certainty: "Einigermaßen sicheren Boden haben wir nur in einem einzigen Fall unter den Füßen..." (205, emphasis added). Cf. 204–206, 211–212. Many others have mistakenly used the criterion as a criterion of non-authenticity. A mistake made by Käsemann himself is the demand of a double dissimilarity: "...wenn nämlich Tradition aus irgendwelchen Gründen weder aus dem Judentum abgeleitet noch der Urchristenheit zugeschrieben werden kann..." (205). This demand "errs by excess," as Ben F. Meyer noted (*The Aims of Jesus* [London: SCM, 1979], 86). Käsemann also introduced some confusion by linking the criterion of dissimilarity to the question of characteristic features in Jesus' proclamation ("Problem," 211, 213). For recent discussions of the dissimilarity criterion, see Theissen and Winter, *Quest*; Tom Holmén, "Doubts About Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-history Research," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80.

<sup>68</sup> Käsemann, "Problem," 206, commenting on the "But I say to you..." in the first, second and fourth antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount. Other sayings that

However, all passages containing a *Messiasprädikat* are to be understood as *Gemeindekerygma*.<sup>69</sup>

Bornkamm followed the reasoning of Wrede and Bultmann up to a certain point,<sup>70</sup> but rejected their conclusion regarding the non-messianic character of Jesus' ministry, pointing out the messianic expectations that Jesus must have evoked.<sup>71</sup> He argued that Jesus was unwilling to encourage these expectations,<sup>72</sup> but he also noted the *Anspruch* of Jesus embedded in the Kingdom proclamation, and observed here the pre-Easter roots of the titles that the post-Easter church bestowed on the risen Jesus.<sup>73</sup> This *Anspruch*, however, was only an implicit one, and Jesus did not make his status a main theme in his proclamation: "[D]ies gerade gehört zu der Eigenart seiner Botschaft und seines Tuns, daß Jesus *in* seinem Wort und seinem Tun aufgeht und nicht seine Würde zu einem eigenen Thema seiner Botschaft vor allem andern macht."<sup>74</sup>

Of the many scholars reasoning along the lines indicated above, Helmut Merklein must without doubt be mentioned here.<sup>75</sup> Merklein

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Käsemann finds authentic on the basis of the dissimilarity criterion include Mark 2:27; 7:15; Matt 6:25–34; 10:26–27; 11:12–13; in addition, he refers to the "Amen" sayings (206–211). For another *Spitzenaussage* on implicit christology, cf. 213: "Das Evangelium ist an den gebunden, der sich vor und nach Ostern den Seinigen als Herr offenbarte, indem er sie vor den nahen Gott... stellte. Er tat es einst ohne jede ausweisbare Legitimation und selbst ohne den Anspruch, der Messias zu sein, und tat es doch in der Vollmacht dessen, den das vierte Evangelium den eingeborenen Sohn nennt."

<sup>69</sup> Käsemann, "Problem," 211. This position results from a sceptical attitude towards the gospel tradition: one must start from the presupposition that the tradition is inauthentic (203); and the criterion of dissimilarity cannot authenticate sayings that agree with the early Christian understanding of Jesus. A consistently sceptical scholar would, of course, not accept the use of the criterion of dissimilarity, but would attribute the allegedly "dissimilar" stuff to otherwise unknown circles that agreed with its contents and so passed it on. Cf. Tom Holmén, "Knowing about Q and Knowing About Jesus: Mutually Exclusive Undertakings?," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Lindemann, 497–514.

<sup>70</sup> Bornkamm, *Jesus*, 150–151.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 151–152; cf. 59: the *titulus crucis* "zeigt, daß Pontius Pilatus ihn als einen der vielen messianischen Thronprätendenten hinrichten ließ."

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 153; cf. 51–55, 60, 88–90, 150.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 149 (emphasis original); cf. 150, 157.

<sup>75</sup> Helmut Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, SBS 111, (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983). See also Joachim Gnilka, *Jesus von Nazaret: Botschaft und Geschichte*, HTKNTSup 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), 251–267.

argues that christological or messianic titles do not lead us to the heart of Jesus' self-understanding (*Selbstverständnis*).<sup>76</sup> One must instead start from the Kingdom proclamation.

The decisive point, Merklein contends, is the fact that Jesus did not only proclaim the future coming of the Kingdom, but the Kingdom "als bereits in Gang gekommenes Geschehen."<sup>77</sup> It is important to realise that the Kingdom cannot be separated from the person of Jesus, since it is through *his* ministry of healing, exorcism and proclamation that the kingdom of God enters the world and offers divine salvation to Israel.<sup>78</sup> Hence, Jesus implicitly claimed to be "der irdische Repräsentant des göttlichen Geschehens der Gottesherrschaft."<sup>79</sup> This implied self-understanding has an important corollary:

Diese Repräsentanz des eschatologisch handelnden Gottes ist nicht denkbar ohne ein *singuläres, unmittelbares Gottesverhältnis*, das dann in der nachösterlichen Reflexion seinen wohl tiefsten Ausdruck in der Rede von Jesus als dem präexistenten Sohn (Gottes) gefunden hat.<sup>80</sup>

Merklein also suggests that Jesus may have understood himself as the representative of Israel as well, and that this self-understanding may have influenced the later (post-Easter) reception of the title "Messiah."<sup>81</sup>

The main reason why the earliest church made use of the title "Messiah" with reference to Jesus was probably his death as a messianic pretender, the "king of the Jews."<sup>82</sup> Yet Merklein has no real answer to the question why Jesus was crucified as the "king of the Jews" in the first place.<sup>83</sup>

The main ideas in Matthias Kreplin's recent work are clearly related to the solutions proposed by Bornkamm and Merklein.<sup>84</sup> According to Kreplin, Jesus neither used any *Hoheitstitel* with reference to himself nor allowed other people to apply such titles to him.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Merklein, *Jesu*, 145–149: Jesus may have evoked messianic expectations. Yet in that case he must have rejected them, since he certainly did not want to be the royal/political Messiah. There were other messianic alternatives, but the royal one was predominant.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 59–91, 149.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 65–66, 150 and *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis original).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 146; cf. 131.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–134.

<sup>84</sup> Matthias Kreplin, *Das Selbstverständnis Jesu: Hermeneutische und christologische Reflexion; historisch-kritische Analyse*, WUNT 2.141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

<sup>85</sup> Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 83–197.

In connection with his Kingdom proclamation, however, Jesus implicitly raised a distinctive self-claim: he was God's eschatological representative. Through him, God was offering the forgiveness of sins, driving out demons and performing other acts of healing. There is an "Aufblitzen der Gottesherrschaft" in the ministry of Jesus. On the other hand, Jesus did not emphasize his role, but was unwilling to make his person or status a theme in his proclamation.<sup>86</sup>

Therein lies a tension: on one hand, Jesus accepted no titles and did not emphasize his own status; on the other hand, he implicitly claimed to be the eschatological representative of God. How should this tension be resolved? According to Kreplin, the nearness of the Kingdom demanded that people refrain from all claims to a status that would place a person above his fellow human beings; in short, Jesus' Kingdom teaching included the ideal of equality. And Jesus, being a "listener" to his own teaching, must also on his own part conform to the demands of the Kingdom.<sup>87</sup>

We must remember, though, that Jesus, according to Kreplin, did claim to be *the* eschatological representative of God,<sup>88</sup> even if this claim was only an implicit one. Moreover, he explicitly emphasized his ἐγώ over against the Mosaic Torah.<sup>89</sup> So the tension between equality and self-claim seems to remain.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 198–271. Throughout this section, the influence of Bornkamm and Merklein is obvious.

<sup>87</sup> Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 272–302.

<sup>88</sup> I.e., in distinction to, e.g., John the Baptist or the disciples of Jesus (Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 221–224, 240–242).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 253–256. Kreplin explains, "In den Antithesen findet sich... *eine der wenigen Stellen*, an denen Jesus seine eigene Person durch ein betontes ἐγώ hervorhebt" (254, emphasis added).

<sup>90</sup> The problems with Kreplin's argument increase towards the end of his study. Having argued that Jesus accepted no *Hoheitstitel* and showed clear restraint against pointing to his own status, and having explained why this restraint was an inevitable consequence of the Kingdom teaching (Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 83–302), Kreplin now turns to a discussion of the "consequences for wider fields in New Testament exegesis" (303). In this context, he discusses the trial scene, including Jesus' answer to Caiaphas, and reaches the conclusion that Jesus indeed probably made a messianic confession, which was a main cause of his execution (317–322). The *Fremdkörper* character of this surprising section is made clear by Kreplin's later comment on p. 343: "Der historische Jesus verzichtete darauf, sich selbst mit einem Hoheitstitel zu bezeichnen oder sich so anreden zu lassen."

James D. G. Dunn is another contemporary scholar travelling the path trodden by Bornkamm and others.<sup>91</sup> Arguing against the Wrede/Bultmann hypothesis, Dunn insists that Jesus' messiahship was indeed an issue during Jesus' mission. The incidents reflected by stories such as the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:32–44 pars.), the entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–11 pars.), and the "cleansing" of the temple (Mark 11:15–17) are likely to have triggered the question whether Jesus was, or wanted to be, the expected royal Messiah. It is also highly probable that the story about Peter's confession of Jesus as the royal Messiah (Mark 8:27–30) is founded on a well-rooted memory. And the probability is "strong beyond plausible rebuttal, that the issue of messiahship was raised at the hearing before Caiaphas" (Mark 14:55–64).<sup>92</sup>

Now Dunn argues, as did Bornkamm, that Jesus declined the role as a royal Messiah.<sup>93</sup> He did not welcome Peter's confession,<sup>94</sup> his entry into Jerusalem on an ass was "a statement of some significance" but not necessarily a deliberate allusion to Zech 9:9,<sup>95</sup> and—above all—his answer to Caiaphas ("You say," Matt 26:64) indicated "an unwillingness to accept the title of Messiah/king."<sup>96</sup> In spite of this

<sup>91</sup> James D. G. Dunn, "Messianic Ideas and Their Influence on the Jesus of History", in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 365–381; idem, "'Are You the Messiah?': Is the Crux of Mark 14.61–62 Resolvable?", in *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, ed. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1–22; idem, *Jesus*, esp. 615–762.

<sup>92</sup> *Jesus*, 627–647, at 633–634; "Messianic Ideas," 373–374; "'Are You the Messiah?'," 7–10. Dunn points out that Caiaphas' move from the temple saying (Mark 14:58) to the Messiah question is quite logical. For, as Otto Betz has shown, the messianic implications of the temple saying are obvious (Dunn, *Jesus*, 633). On this, see e.g. Betz, "Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewußtsein Jesu," in idem, *Jesus der Messias Israels: Aufsätze zur biblischen Theologie*, WUNT 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 144–146, 155–156. Betz's main point is that an eschatological interpretation of 2 Sam 7:13 (as in 4QFlor) implies the view that the building of a new temple is a task assigned to the Messiah.

<sup>93</sup> *Jesus*, 647–654; "Messianic Ideas," 375–376. Dunn refers explicitly to Bornkamm (*Jesus*, 652, n. 173).

<sup>94</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 648.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 642 (here the quotation), 649.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 652. Dunn has given up his earlier proposal that Mark 14:62 originally read  $\sigma\upsilon\ \epsilon\dot{\iota}\pi\alpha\varsigma\ \acute{\upsilon}\tau\iota\ \epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\ \epsilon\dot{\iota}\mu\iota$  ("Messianic Ideas," 375–376), and now accepts the unambiguous  $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega}\ \epsilon\dot{\iota}\mu\iota$  as the original Markan reading. Yet in terms of the history of tradition he thinks Matthew's  $\sigma\upsilon\ \epsilon\dot{\iota}\pi\alpha\varsigma$  has the better claim to originality ("Are You the Messiah?," 11–12; *Jesus*, 652). As far as the implications of the "You say" answer are concerned, Dunn's proposal in the 1992 article was that Jesus was unwilling to accept the title "Messiah," but did not reject it outright; he "may have attempted to redefine



unwillingness on the part of Jesus, Caiaphas turned him over to Pilate “on the charge of claiming to be David’s royal successor, in the full knowledge that one who claimed to be a king was likely to receive short shrift from the prefect.”<sup>97</sup> This charge was plainly false.

Yet the fact that Jesus rejected the role of a royal Messiah does not imply that he understood himself as just another prophet, or healer, or teacher; these categories are appropriate but insufficient to describe Jesus’ view of his own role.<sup>98</sup> According to Dunn, Jesus drew especially on Isa 61:1–3 to inform his own prophetic and healing mission (Matt 5:3/Luke 6:20; Matt 11:5/Luke 7:22), and hence laid claim to “a special anointing by the Spirit.”<sup>99</sup> Yet Dunn seems to be unwilling to use the category of a “prophetic Messiah” when discussing Jesus’ self-claim. He emphasizes, though, that Jesus implicitly claimed an astonishing authority, which found a particular expression in the *amen* formula.<sup>100</sup>

But there is more. *Abba* must have been Jesus’ distinctive and consistent address to God. This address is a family word, and Jesus’ consistent use of it is an indication that he “experienced his relationship

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the content of the title in terms of the role he saw himself as filling” (“Messianic Ideas,” 376; cf. 381). In the 2000 article, Dunn suggested that the answer could be paraphrased as “It depends on what you mean by the term” (“‘Are You the Messiah?’,” 12). In the 2003 work, however, these suggestions are dropped, and only Jesus’ unwillingness to accept the title “Messiah” is left. It was Jesus’ first disciples who made the redefinition: “[T]hey had in fact been convinced that Jesus was Messiah, son of David, during his mission, but... their conception of his messiahship was radically transformed by the events of Good Friday. In that light they in effect emptied the title of its traditional content and filled it with new content provided by the law and the prophets and the psalms” (*Jesus*, 653).

<sup>97</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 634. The Markan account implies that the claim to be the Messiah and “the son of the blessed one” (14:61–62) was “translated” as a claim to kingship and then brought before Pilate (15:1–2). According to Dunn’s reconstruction, however, there was nothing to “translate”; hence Caiaphas is implicitly seen as a completely dishonest person. In the 2000 article the implied picture of Caiaphas is not quite so dark. Here, Jesus’ answer is paraphrased as “It depends on what you mean by the term” (see above), and Caiaphas, then, has at least some material to work with: “[A]part from an outright denial by Jesus, whatever he said in response would provide sufficient grounds for him to be ‘handed over’ to the Roman authorities” (“‘Are You the Messiah?’,” 22).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 655–704.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 694; cf. 664, 706; “Messianic Ideas,” 376–378. Dunn observes that the anointed prophet in Isa 61 is seen as an eschatological figure, “the anointed of the Spirit,” in 11QMelch II, 15–16 (*Jesus*, 656). He also notes that 4Q521 mentions a future Messiah in connection with a list of acts of healing (and preaching to the “poor”) which is quite similar to the list in Matt 11:5/Luke 7:22 (*ibid.*, 448–449).

<sup>100</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 702–704; “Messianic Ideas,” 381.

with God as an intimate family relationship.” He “thought of himself as God’s son,” and this sense of sonship must have been central to Jesus’ self-understanding.<sup>101</sup> Dunn underlines that the sonship of the disciples (expressed in the *abba* address) is derivative from Jesus’ sonship.<sup>102</sup>

According to Dunn, Jesus cannot easily be placed within any of the categories—e.g., “the Messiah”—that were available in his days; he broke through the established categories. The best we can do is to see him as “the man who was remembered as one who above all took on the role of eschatological spokesman for God.”<sup>103</sup>

#### 4. *Messianic Claims?*

A messianic claim can be made in different ways, and with varying degrees of explicitness. The following few pages are a discussion of some proposals to the effect that Jesus’ self-claim was more distinct than an *Anspruch*, the implications of which must be teased out: he claimed to be the Messiah.

Martin Hengel, together with Anna Maria Schwemer, argues that “the hypothesis of a non-messianic Jesus” is one of the fundamental mistakes in New Testament exegesis during the twentieth century.<sup>104</sup> Hengel criticizes the Wrede/Bultmann hypothesis and makes a case for the opposite standpoint: the view of Jesus as the Messiah was by no means a new interpretation by the post-Easter church, but arose

<sup>101</sup> *Jesus*, 711–724, at 717–718. Dunn does not want to press the reference to the “son” in Mark 12:6, and shows great hesitation regarding the authenticity of the explicit son-sayings (Matt 11:27/Luke 10:22; Mark 13:32) (718–723).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 717.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 762.

<sup>104</sup> Hengel and Schwemer, *Anspruch*, XII–XIII. The four studies in this important volume are the following: Hengel, “Jesus der Messias Israels” (1–80); *idem*, “Jesus als messianischer Lehrer der Weisheit und die Anfänge der Christologie” (81–131); Schwemer, “Die Passion des Messias nach Markus und der Vorwurf des Antijudaismus” (133–163); *eadem*, “Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester: Das *munus triplex* und die frühe Christologie” (165–230). “Jesus der Messias Israels” is a new version of a study that appeared earlier in Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). There is a much shorter version in I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked, and G. Stroumsa, eds., *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity*, TSAJ 32 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). Several other studies by Hengel are relevant in this connection, e.g., “Setze dich zu meiner Rechten! Die Inthronisation Christi zur Rechten Gottes und Psalm 110,1,” in *Le Trône de Dieu*, ed. M. Philonenko, WUNT 69 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 108–194.

during Jesus' pre-Easter ministry and was accepted by Jesus himself, who indeed claimed to be the Messiah.<sup>105</sup>

An important point made by Hengel concerns the impossibility of accepting, with Wrede and others, the view of a strictly defined messianic concept in ancient Judaism, especially before 70 CE. There was no monolithic *Messiasdogmatik*, but rather a string of different pictures of the Messiah. Thus, a messianic claim would not necessarily have brought to mind, say, the idea of a kingly warrior in the style of *Pss. Sol.* 17. There were other options, such as a prophetic Messiah.<sup>106</sup> In Jesus' time, it was surely possible to bring in yet another messianic image—different from the existing ones, but still conspicuously messianic—and Jesus may have done precisely this.<sup>107</sup> Hengel refers to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God as another example of this kind of reinterpretation.<sup>108</sup>

The Wrede/Bultmann hypothesis, then, is undermined at a crucial point. But what are the reasons for assuming a messianic claim of Jesus in the first place?

Hengel observes, first, the use of Χριστός in Paul—the earliest Christian writer—and in pre-Pauline formulae: not only is Χριστός quite massively applied to Jesus, but the word has already, less than twenty years after the crucifixion, almost completely lost its original titular value (“the Messiah,” “the Christ”) and has become a name: “Christ.” This remarkable fact reflects a situation in the early Church when Jesus' messiahship is regarded as self-evident: there is only one Messiah/Christ, i.e. Jesus Christ himself.<sup>109</sup> This belief in the messiahship of Jesus must be very early indeed; it can be traced back to the earliest Jerusalem church and its putative confession משיחא ישוע.<sup>110</sup> Now, this belief in Jesus' messiahship is not only early, but it must be pre-Easter as well; it cannot have been caused by the resurrection, as in the Wrede/Bultmann hypothesis, as there is no real evidence in ancient Judaism or in earliest Christianity for the idea that the status

<sup>105</sup> See esp. Hengel, “Messias.”

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 34–45; see also Frey, “Jesus,” 308–312.

<sup>107</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 31, 35, 69, 76, 79.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 31. Hengel (34 n. 129) points out that Wellhausen observed this analogy long ago. In his *Messiasgeheimnis*, Wrede rejected this line of reasoning: “Ich gestehe, dass ich mir davon keine Vorstellung machen kann” (220).

<sup>109</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 1–8, 12.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–10; similarly Frey, “Jesus,” 301–303.

of Messiah is a consequence of resurrection from the dead.<sup>111</sup> There are no remains of an “adoptionist” Christology in Rom 1:3–4 and Acts 2:36; these passages concern Jesus’ elevation to “the right hand” of God rather than the beginning of his messiahship.<sup>112</sup>

Secondly, Hengel points to the *titulus crucis*, which is historical: Jesus was in fact sentenced and executed by Pilate for having claimed to be a “king of the Jews.”<sup>113</sup> Now, “es greift hier das eine ins andere”:<sup>114</sup> Pilate could not have invented the accusation regarding Jesus’ self-claim on his own, but must have got it from the Jerusalem hierarchs.<sup>115</sup> The hierarchs, in turn, presented Jesus’ self-claim in a language that Pilate could understand, i.e. in political terms: this man claims to be a “king.”<sup>116</sup> This accusation, however, was hardly fabricated out of nothing. It was, rather, founded on Caiaphas’s interrogation, during which Jesus probably made a messianic claim or confession, more or less in the way Mark reports (14:61–62).<sup>117</sup>

<sup>111</sup> For the lack of Jewish evidence, see Hengel, “Messias,” 10, 12, 14. As Hengel notes (14–15), Johannes Weiß made the same point.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 13: “[I]n Röm 1,4 wird nicht gesagt, daß der Sohn vor der Auferstehung keine messianische Würde beansprucht habe, dieselbe wird ja bereits durch das ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυιδ κατὰ σάρκα angedeutet. Vielmehr geht es um die Einsetzung als Sohn Gottes ἐν δυνάμει, d.h. in seine volle eschatologische Würde und Machtposition zur Rechten Gottes (vgl. 8,34).” And on Acts 2:36: “In diesem, doch wohl von Lukas selbst formulierten Text wird nicht eine alte adoptianische Christologie—von der weiß ein Lukas nichts—, sondern die radikale Umkehrung der ‘Machtverhältnisse’ zur Sprache gebracht: Gott hat den, den die Führer des Volkes zur Kreuzigung auslieferten... zum ‘Herrn und Gesalbten’ gemacht, d.h. in seine endzeitliche Funktion als Gottes Gesalbter, Herr und Richter eingesetzt” (13); similarly Frey, “Jesus,” 303.

<sup>113</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 50–54; see also Frey, “Jesus,” 304–305.

<sup>114</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 57.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; thus also Frey, “Jesus,” 306.

<sup>116</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 59; cf. Frey, “Jesus,” 313.

<sup>117</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 51, 57, 59–60, 77; similarly Frey, “Jesus,” 307, 317. Hengel (“Messias,” 58) notes the following points in favour of the general reliability of the Markan account (14:55–64): (1) “die sonderbare Notiz über das angebliche Tempelwort Jesu, die erzählerisch unnötig ist,” (2) “der Hinweis auf die Widersprüche zwischen den Zeugenaussagen, die auf ein relativ ordentliches Verfahren... hinweisen,” (3) Otto Betz’s observation on the inner connection between the temple saying and the question regarding Jesus’ messianic claim (cf. above, n. 84). Hence, “Ich kann diesen durch und durch jüdischen, komplizierten und zugleich hochdramatischen Text nicht in toto als christologische Dichtung erklären” (Hengel, “Messias,” 58). True, one cannot *demonstrate* in a binding way what was said during the interrogation, but: “Wenn Jesus unter der Anklage, er sei ein jüdischer Messiasprätendent... ausgeliefert und gekreuzigt wurde, dann muß die Messiasfrage doch schon im Mittelpunkt des Verhörs durch die jüdischen Behörden gestanden haben” (*ibid.*, 59; emphasis by Hengel). On Jesus’ answer cf. also Hengel, “Setze dich...,” 163: “Ob Jesus in dieser oder ähnlicher Weise selbst zu den Volksführern gesprochen hat, läßt sich natürlich nicht mehr

Thus, on one hand, pressing backward from the use of Χριστός in Paul, we arrive at the pre-Easter origin of the belief in Jesus' messiahship, and, pressing backward from the *titulus crucis*, we arrive at Jesus' own messianic claim. On the other hand, Hengel argues, the hypothesis of a non-messianic Jesus is not able to explain either of these data in a satisfactory manner.<sup>118</sup>

If Jesus, then, wanted to be the Messiah—at least in some sense—this claim would probably have been recognizable even before his last days (or hours) in Jerusalem. And, in fact, it does shimmer through during the Galilean ministry as well. True, Jesus does not seem to have explicitly proclaimed himself as the Messiah.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless, there is a “messianic” quality to Jesus' Galilean ministry as a whole and in its parts: his “service” is “messianic,” as are his “teaching,” his “acts,” his “authority,” his “knowledge,” and so on.<sup>120</sup> Here, “messianic” seems to be a term just as all-embracing as “eschatological.”<sup>121</sup> Hengel justifies the broad use of the term in the following way: “Nicht eine vorgegebene jüdische ‘Messianologie’ bestimmte seinen Dienst..., sondern sein Dienst setzte die Maßstäbe dafür, was im wahren Sinne als ‘messianisch’ zu gelten hatte.”<sup>122</sup>

At this point, one could of course raise critical questions concerning circular reasoning.<sup>123</sup> However, this sort of criticism might be too simple. For, as Hengel emphasizes, there is an important saying (Luke 7:22–23/Matt 11:4–6) which links Jesus' healing and preaching ministry to the depiction of the “anointed” prophet in Isa 61:1–3. Further,

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beweisen, er scheint sie aber zumindest durch den Hinweis auf seine ‘messianisch-richterliche’ Vollmacht so provoziert zu haben, daß sie ihn als messianischen Prä-tendenten an Pilatus auslieferten.” On Jesus' “blasphemous” answer to Caiaphas, see Darrell L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus: A Philological-Historical Study of the Key Jewish Themes Impacting Mark 14:61–64*, WUNT 2.106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

<sup>118</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 60.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 64; idem, “Lehrer,” 120; similarly Frey, “Jesus,” 306, 317. Hengel regards the lack of explicitness of the gospel tradition in this regard as a sign of its relative reliability (“Messias,” 64).

<sup>120</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 69–70, 75–76, 78–79.

<sup>121</sup> The terms “messianic” and “eschatological” seem almost synonymous; cf. Hengel, “Messias,” 72.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 69 (emphasis removed).

<sup>123</sup> Cf., e.g., Wrede's description of the development of “ein neuer, ein spezifisch christlicher Messiasbegriff”: “alles Wesentliche, was man von Jesu Leben wusste und zu wissen meinte, (wurde) zum Begriff des Messias selber geschlagen” (*Messias-geheimnis*, 218; emphasis removed).

there is some Qumran evidence (11QMelch 4Q521) for the interpretation of this figure in Isaiah 61 as an eschatological prophet and a prophetic Messiah in ancient Judaism. Reading the Jesuanic saying against the background of Isa 61:1–2 and with an eye also on the Qumran texts, one may well understand Jesus as making a messianic claim here.<sup>124</sup> “Man könnte Jesus von diesem Profetenwort [*sc.* Isa 61:1–2] her—mit allen Vorbehalten—als prophetischen Messias, als ‘Geistgesalbten’ bezeichnen.”<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, it seems clear that Jesus showed no eagerness to conform exactly to any fixed messianic role, but rather adapted and molded existing messianic thinking into something new.<sup>126</sup>

Jostein Ådna regards the temple act and the temple saying as expressions of Jesus’ messianic self-claim, his “messianische Sendung.”<sup>127</sup> For Ådna, an important starting point is provided by Peter Stuhlmacher’s position on Jesus’ messianic claims.<sup>128</sup>

According to Stuhlmacher, Jesus evoked messianic expectations through several symbolic actions, such as the founding of the circle of the twelve. He did *not* reject these expectations, but, on the contrary, affirmed them in the midst of his disciples, and, finally, when facing Caiaphas. He identified himself with the messianic son of man proclaimed by John the Baptist, without, however, simply copying the Baptist’s messianism. For Jesus radically transformed it in terms of a suffering son of man: “er wollte Messias nur als leidender

<sup>124</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 31, 42–44, 72–73; idem, “Lehrer,” 122–125.

<sup>125</sup> Hengel, “Lehrer,” 123. Jürgen Becker rejects this interpretation with the comment, “steht nicht im Text” (Review of Hengel and Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu*, TLZ 127 [2002]: 1051). Cf. Becker’s assertion above, n. 58.

<sup>126</sup> Hengel, “Messias,” 76 and *passim* (see n. 107 above).

<sup>127</sup> Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel: Die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung*, WUNT 2.119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). See further Ådna, “Jesus’ Symbolic Act in the Temple (Mark 11:15–17): The Replacement of the Sacrificial Cult by his Atoning Death,” in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange, and Peter Pilhofer, WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 461–475.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1: *Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 61–66, 81–84, 107–125. See also idem, *Jesus von Nazareth—Christus des Glaubens* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1988), 27–36; idem, “Der messianische Gottesknecht,” in *Der Messias*, 131–154.

Menschensohn sein.”<sup>129</sup> In the end, however, he expected to be enthroned in terms of Ps 110:1 and receive “das endzeitliche Richteramt des Menschensohnes.”<sup>130</sup>

Accepting this position in all essentials,<sup>131</sup> Ådna takes a closer look at the temple saying (Mark 14:58) and the temple act (Mark 11:14–17). He makes a case for the authenticity of the temple saying<sup>132</sup> and proposes a retranslation into Aramaic.<sup>133</sup> With this saying, Ådna argues, Jesus alluded to the idea of the Messiah as the builder of the eschatological temple on Mount Zion. The roots of this idea are in the Old Testament, where not only David’s son Solomon, but also Cyrus, the Lord’s “anointed one,” and Zerubbabel, the messianic “Branch” in the book of Zechariah, are temple builders.<sup>134</sup> The view of the Messiah as a temple builder lived on in ancient Judaism, as is shown by several texts.<sup>135</sup>

When Jesus—probably during the last week in Jerusalem—announced that he would tear down the old temple and within a short lapse of time build a new one, the implications could not have been missed by anyone. Jesus had been proclaiming the kingdom of God as “bereits in Gang gekommenes Geschehen” (Merklein). He had also accepted the old ideas of God ruling from Mount Zion. Further, he was surrounded by messianic expectations. Now he added to all this an announcement of his future role as the builder of the eschatological temple. Herein lays a messianic claim which is crystal clear, even if it is only an implicit one.<sup>136</sup> In the temple saying there is

<sup>129</sup> Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 114. On Jesus’ transformation of Jewish messianism, see *ibid.*, 114–115, 117, 121, 125.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>131</sup> Ådna, *Stellung*, 136–142.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 113–116, 128–30, 151–153.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 127–128.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 50–65, with references to 2 Sam 7:13; Isa 44:24–45:7; Zech 6:12–13, and other texts.

<sup>135</sup> Ådna (*Stellung* 65–87) examines texts such as *Pss. Sol.* 17; *1 En.* 53.6; *Sib. Or.* 5.414–433; *Tg. Neb.* Zech 6:12–13; *Lev. Rb.* 57 (on 9:6). In 4QFlor the son of David in 2 Sam 7 is interpreted as the Messiah (“the Branch of David” who shall arise at the end of days), but it is God rather than the Messiah who will build the eschatological temple according to this text; see *Stellung*, 87–88, 101–105. On God as the builder of the temple, cf. below.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 130–151, at 143: “Wenn einer, an den... messianische Erwartungen herangetragen werden, mit seiner Botschaft von der hereinbrechenden Basileia Gottes nach Jerusalem zieht und in diesem Zusammenhang auch noch ankündigt, er werde den Tempel abbrechen und durch einen anderen ersetzen, dann muß sich... fast zwangsläufig

also a connection to the idea that the eschatological temple will not be made by human beings, i.e., “with hands”; rather, it will be a work of God. This idea has its root in Exod 15:17b–18, and is reflected in a number of ancient Jewish texts (4QFlor is one of them).<sup>137</sup> Jesus’ announcement regarding the building of the temple means that he, as the Messiah, steps into God’s area of competence and claims to work on behalf of God and as his representative.<sup>138</sup>

Jesus’ temple act was a symbolic one. He consciously directed it especially against the temple cult,<sup>139</sup> thereby indicating that there was neither room nor a need for it in the realized Kingdom of God.<sup>140</sup> The act should be interpreted in connection with the view expressed in sayings such as Mark 10:45 and 14:24: Jesus’ wish and intention was to replace the atoning temple cult by his own atoning death.<sup>141</sup> His symbolic temple act, together with the aforementioned sayings, completes the picture of Jesus’ messianic claims: through his willingness to suffer, he transforms the traditional messianic role.<sup>142</sup> Ådna, then, does not understand Jesus’ readiness to suffer as being in tension to his messianic role (or as an addition to it), but rather sees it as being included therein.

Scholars such as Hengel, Stuhlmacher and Ådna, then, do not see Jesus as having been tied to a fixed messianic concept. With different emphases, they suggest that Jesus may have adapted or transformed contemporary messianic ideas into something new.<sup>143</sup> Other scholars,

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der Eindruck einstellen, hier trete jemand mit dem Anspruch auf, der messianische Bauherr des eschatologischen Tempels auf dem Zion zu sein.”

<sup>137</sup> Ådna, *Stellung*, 91–110.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 145–47, 382.

<sup>139</sup> Ådna emphasizes that Jesus’ choice of targets—the dove vendors, the money changers, and the vessels—cannot have been coincidental. The dove vendors provided sacrificial victims, the money changers collected the Temple tax (which supported the cult), and the vessels were needed “for the transport of money and offering ingredients between the Royal Stoa and the inner precincts.” Aiming at these targets, Jesus symbolically interfered with the atoning cult of the temple. See Ådna, “Act,” 464–469 (quotation from p. 469); *idem*, *Stellung*, 251–265, 384–385.

<sup>140</sup> Ådna, “Act,” 472; *idem*, *Stellung*, 385.

<sup>141</sup> Ådna, “Act,” 469–473; *idem*, *Stellung*, 412–30.

<sup>142</sup> Ådna, “Act,” 417: “(D)ie Umprägung der Messiasrolle zu der eines gedemütigt Leidenden ist so radikal und unerhört gewesen, daß sie auch von Jesu engsten Jüngern nicht akzeptiert und verstanden worden ist (vgl. Mk 8,27–33 par.; 9,32 par.)” On this *Umprägung* on the part of Jesus, see also Ådna, *Stellung*, 140–142, 416, and Stuhlmacher, *Theologie*, 114–115 and *passim*.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. also Theissen’s suggestion to the effect that Jesus transferred royal messianic functions to the circle of the Twelve (Matt 19:28–29/Luke 22:28–31), thus giving



such as John J. Collins and John P. Meier, while more or less affirming Jesus' messianic self-claim, are reluctant to emphasize any Jesuanic transformation of contemporary ideas. Instead, they prefer to focus on the idea of the Davidic Messiah and reflect on Jesus' wish to clothe himself in royal robes.

Collins' work *The Scepter and the Star* (1995) includes a condensed and important discussion of Jesus' messianic claims.<sup>144</sup> Collins accepts the line of reasoning involving the *titulus crucis* and Χριστός as a virtual name in Paul, rejects the hypothesis of a post-Easter origin of the belief in Jesus' messiahship, and reasons that "the messianic identity of Jesus must be grounded in some way before his crucifixion."<sup>145</sup>

By "messianic identity," Collins refers primarily to the idea of the royal, Davidic, Messiah. For it is precisely this idea which is prominent in the early Christian sources. However, we are then confronted with the classical dilemma of the discrepancy between Jesus as he is portrayed by the gospel tradition and the Jewish expectation of the Davidic Messiah, who is a militant character.<sup>146</sup> How can this problem be resolved?

As we indicated above, Collins rejects a solution which would involve a redefinition or a transformation of the concept of a royal messiahship, for "new meanings of the word 'messiah' cannot be coined at will."<sup>147</sup> But perhaps Jesus was seen as a *prophetic* Messiah?

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them the status of a "messianic collective"; see his "Gruppenmessianismus: Überlegungen zum Ursprung der Kirche im Jüngerkreis Jesu," in Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, ed. Annette Merz, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 255–281.

<sup>144</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 204–210, 212–214. See also idem, "Jesus, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls", in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Gerbern S. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 100–119.

<sup>145</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 204; idem, "Jesus," 112. For the arguments in question, cf. above, pp. 1039–1041. On Rom 1:3–4, Collins remarks that Paul probably refers to "the full realization of Jesus' kingship by his heavenly enthronement" (*Scepter*, 204).

<sup>146</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 204; idem, "Jesus," 112. Collins does not support the old view of a fixed messianic dogma in ancient Judaism, but he argues, firstly, that the expectation of a royal Messiah was the most widespread one, and, secondly—this is the important point here—that the royal Messiah "was consistently expected to drive out the Gentiles by force." See *Scepter*, 49–73; "Jesus," 102–112, at 105. Collins does not accept the suggestion that Jesus might have been a militant revolutionary (*Scepter*, 213 n. 55).

<sup>147</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 205. The target of this criticism is E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 234: "'Messiah' will do perfectly well for a person who is superior to the judges of Israel [Matt 19:28], even if he was not a warrior."

This suggestion should be taken seriously, Collins argues, pointing to Jesus' answer to the Baptist's question (Luke 7:18–23/Matt 11:2–6) and the parallel in 4Q521, where God heals the wounded and preaches good news to the poor—through “his Messiah,” a prophetic figure.<sup>148</sup> However, this is no solution to the problem at hand, namely, why Jesus should have come to be regarded as the *royal* Messiah and crucified as the “king of the Jews.”<sup>149</sup>

Instead, Collins turns his attention to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–10). If the historicity of the gospel account may be upheld—and Collins seems prepared to consider it seriously<sup>150</sup>—we might have the decisive link that could hold together Jesus' prophetic ministry on the one hand and his execution as a “king” on the other hand. For the royal connotations of the triumphal entry must have been clear to people familiar with the scriptures: “Lo, your king comes to you . . .” (Zech 9:9). If historical, the incident shows a change of roles on the part of Jesus, “from that of the prophetic herald of the kingdom to that of the king who ushers it in.”<sup>151</sup>

According to Collins, Jesus' (possible) re-enactment of Zechariah 9 does not necessarily mean that he would have wanted to transform the traditional concept of the royal Messiah, for in the context of the prophecy, there is a reference to the achievement of peace *by military victory*.<sup>152</sup>

On the whole, John P. Meier's reconstruction is similar to Collins' 1995 suggestions. According to Meier, Jesus thought—or rather, came to think—of himself as a royal Davidic Messiah.<sup>153</sup> The argument for

<sup>148</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 117–122, 205–206; “Jesus,” 112–116. See also Collins' article on 4Q521, “The works of the messiah,” *DSD* 1 (1994): 98–112.

<sup>149</sup> Collins, *Scepter*, 206.

<sup>150</sup> Collins' reasons for accepting the historicity of the account are mainly the following: (a) the triumphal entry fits well together with the crucifixion as a “king”; (b) the re-enactment of biblical paradigms was typical of eschatological prophets (*Scepter*, 206).

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 207. In his 1998 article, Collins plays down the role of the triumphal entry in his reconstruction. Instead, he now points to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God as an important factor in Jesus' transition from prophet or prophetic Messiah to “king.” Both Romans and Jews (at least some) may have had difficulties in making a distinction “between prophets who preached about a kingdom and pretenders who aspired to rule” (“Jesus,” 116–117).

<sup>153</sup> John P. Meier, “From Elijah-like Prophet to Royal Davidic Messiah,” in *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land*, ed. Doris Donnelly (New York: Continuum, 2001), 45–83.

this thesis includes two steps. First, the Son-of-David Christology, being so broadly and multiply attested in the New Testament, must be very early.<sup>154</sup> Second, this picture of Jesus can hardly have been a consequence of belief in his resurrection,<sup>155</sup> nor of the fact that he was crucified as “king of the Jews.”<sup>156</sup> Rather, one must suppose that it reaches back into the days of the earthly Jesus.<sup>157</sup>

Now, until the last week in Jerusalem, Jesus’ ministry was a prophetic one: he appeared as an eschatological prophet “clothed in the mantle of Elijah.”<sup>158</sup> At the gates of Jerusalem, however, Jesus decided to “clothe himself as well, by metaphorical actions, in the royal robes of the Son of David.”<sup>159</sup> These actions were the triumphal entry and the temple demonstration: as the Son of David, Jesus took symbolic possession of his capital city, and proceeded to “express symbolically his control over the temple.”<sup>160</sup> “Jesus was claiming to be the royal Davidic Messiah coming to his capital and symbolically claiming control over the capital’s temple.”<sup>161</sup>

These actions, seen together with Jesus kingdom proclamation, were at least in part understood by the authorities: they discerned that a messianic claim was being made.<sup>162</sup> There was, however, a “fateful hermeneutical divide” between Jesus on one hand, and Caiaphas and Pilate on the other, over the question of the coherence between the prophetic and the royal element in Jesus’ self-understanding.

Priest and prefect understood the coherence in terms of a popular prophet and leader of the masses now revealing that he was also a rebel messianic pretender preparing to seize power, possibly by armed revolt. Jesus understood the coherence in terms of the coming kingdom of God somehow already present.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Meier, “Prophet,” 48–61.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–62.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 62–63. Meier points out that there was no self-evident connection between being a king of the Jews, like Herod the Great or the Hasmonean kings, and being Son of David.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–4.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>162</sup> “Jesus, a popular prophet, was claiming to be royal Son of David foretold by the prophets” (Meier, “Prophet”)

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

The understanding of priest and prefect resulted in Jesus' arrest and crucifixion as the "king of the Jews."<sup>164</sup> In Meier's reconstruction, Caiaphas apparently did not need any messianic confession from Jesus' mouth; his actions (together with the Kingdom proclamation) were enough. Meier does not refer to Mark 14:61–62 at all.

### 5. *Wisdom in Person?*

Earlier, in the section on implicit christology, we came across Käsemann's declaration to the effect that Jesus acted and spoke without claiming to be the Messiah, and yet "in der Vollmacht dessen, den das vierte Evangelium den eingeborenen Sohn nennt."<sup>165</sup> We also noted Merklein's comment on Jesus' implicit claim to a close relation to God, "das dann in der nachösterlichen Reflexion seinen wohl tiefsten Ausdruck in der Rede von Jesus als dem präexistenten Sohn (Gottes) gefunden hat."<sup>166</sup> Here instead of following up these hints concerning a continuity from Jesus of Nazareth to the post-Easter church and then on to the Christological dogma of the Church Catholic, this paper will take a brief look at some proposals regarding a Wisdom Christology in sayings of Jesus in the synoptic gospels.

The sayings in the centre of the discussion are as follows: (i) Luke 7:31–35/Matt 11:16–19; (ii) Luke 10:21–22/Matt 11:25–27; (iii) Luke 11:31–32/Matt 12:42; (iv) Luke 11:49–51/Matt 23:34–36; (v) Luke 13:34–35/Matt 23:37–39; (vi) Matt 11:28–30. Sometimes (vii) Luke 9:58/Matt 8:20 is also brought into play.<sup>167</sup> It is widely recognised that these sayings—in addition to the explicit mention of σοφία in (i) and (iv)—contain motifs that in the Old Testament and ancient Jewish wisdom literature are connected with Wisdom as a person or hypostasis, e.g., the motif of Wisdom inviting and calling people to obedience but meeting rejection.<sup>168</sup> In this context there are two crucial

<sup>164</sup> Meier, "Prophet," 71.

<sup>165</sup> "Problem," 213 (above, n. 68).

<sup>166</sup> *Botschaft*, 150 (above, p. 1034).

<sup>167</sup> In the following discussion, these sayings are termed "wisdom sayings."

<sup>168</sup> The most important texts are Job 28; Prov 1:20–33; 8:1–21, 22–31; 9; Sir 1:1–20; 24; Bar 3:9–4:4; Wis 6–9; 1 *Enoch* 42; 4 *Ezra* 5.9–11; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 48.33, 36; 2 *Enoch* 30.8; 33.4; 11QPs<sup>a</sup> XVIII. The list is taken from Hermann von Lips, *Weisheitliche Traditionen im Neuen Testament*, WMANT 64 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 153. For a discussion of the terms "personification" and "hypostasation," see 153–166.

questions, viz. (a) whether Jesus is identified with Wisdom, in which case there is a Wisdom Christology in the strict sense of the term, and (b) whether this identification was made by Jesus himself.

The alternatives were set out clearly in three works that appeared in 1970. David W. Smith and M. Jack Suggs argued that there is a Wisdom Christology in Matthew, but none in Q, for here Jesus is seen as an envoy of Wisdom rather than “incarnate Wisdom.”<sup>169</sup> Felix Christ, however, insisted that not only Matthew, but also Luke and Q identify Jesus with Wisdom, and concluded his investigation with the following words: “Möglich bleibt schließlich, wenn auch nicht beweisbar, daß schon Jesus selbst sich als Sophia verstand.”<sup>170</sup> Sverre Aalen, working independently of Felix Christ, went one step further. He concluded that Jesus himself was indeed the originator of Wisdom Christology, and noted that Jesus’ own christology, then, was more related to the christology of the patristic church than to “the one found in the picture of Jesus made by present-day scholarship.”<sup>171</sup>

In more recent research, a position like that of Felix Christ (or Aalen) seems quite unusual, whereas Suggs’ exegesis is widely accepted.<sup>172</sup> Thus Tuckett explains that in Q, “Jesus’ position is seen... as one of Wisdom’s messengers, and it is primarily Matthew who ‘upgrades’

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<sup>169</sup> David W. Smith, *Wisdom Christology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Rome: Pontificia Studiorum Universitas, 1970); M. Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew’s Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970). Suggs’ conclusions were accepted by R. G. Hamerton-Kelly; see his *Pre-existence, Wisdom, and the Son of Man: A Study of the Idea of Pre-existence in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 29–36. The phrase “incarnate Wisdom” is used by Suggs.

<sup>170</sup> Felix Christ, *Jesus Sophia: Die Sophia-Christologie bei den Synoptikern*, ATANT 57 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1970), 154. Christ investigated sayings (i), (ii), (iv), (v), and (vi). An interesting and puzzling element in his thesis is that the wisdom sayings are said to portray Jesus both as “Sprecher und Träger der Weisheit” and as “die Weisheit selbst” (153 and *passim*).

<sup>171</sup> Sverre Aalen, “Visdomsforestillingen og Jesu kristologiske selvbevissthet,” *SEÅ* 37/38 (1972/73): 45. Aalen’s proposal had a broader basis than just a few sayings. He argued that the categories “eschatological” or “definitive prophet,” or even “Messiah,” are not enough to explain the way the synoptic Jesus speaks and acts; only “Wisdom in person” will do (37–46).

<sup>172</sup> See, e.g., J. Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 260; von Lips, *Traditionen*, 268–277; Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 166–179, 188–189, 218–221; Schlosser, “Q,” 298–302. Cf. Schlosser’s crisp comment: “[L]a portée d’une éventuelle identification de Jésus avec la sagesse divine est évidente, mais... cette piste paraît bouchée” (298).

the Christology to identify Jesus with Wisdom.”<sup>173</sup> To mention just one point: In Matt 11:19 (saying [i]), the “works” of Wisdom are clearly Jesus’ works; but this is made clear only by the redactional context (11:2, 20) and by Matthew’s replacement of “children” (Luke 7:35) by “works.” In the original Q-saying, however, the “children” of Wisdom are “die, die die Botschaft ihrer Boten Johannes und Jesus annahmen.”<sup>174</sup>

Yet there are dissenters, arguing along the lines of Felix Christ and Sverre Aalen, e.g., Ben Witherington.<sup>175</sup> According to Witherington, not only Matthew but also Q regards Jesus as the embodiment of Wisdom.<sup>176</sup> For instance, discussing saying (i), Witherington maintains that Matthew kept the original “works” in 11:19, whereas Luke changed it into “children” to make 7:35 fit with the preceding parable (7:31–34).<sup>177</sup> Hence, Matthew did not upgrade the Q Christology, but preserved it.<sup>178</sup>

Witherington presses further, and suggests that the Wisdom Christology arose before Q; indeed, Jesus represented himself as “divine Wisdom incarnate,” “God’s Wisdom in the flesh.”<sup>179</sup> As far as the authenticity of the wisdom sayings is concerned, Witherington tries to make a case for a couple of them.<sup>180</sup> On a more general level, he makes two points. First, he argues that Jesus, understanding himself as God’s agent or שליח, must have felt he knew the sender’s mind; and “[t]his profile describes the portrait of Wisdom we find in

<sup>173</sup> Tuckett, Q, 219. Saying (ii) is seen as an exception by several scholars, but Tuckett sees no identification of Jesus and Wisdom here; see 276–281 for references and discussion. Von Lips seems undecided (*Traditionen*, 272–273, 276–277).

<sup>174</sup> von Lips, *Traditionen*, 269.

<sup>175</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); idem, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994). Witherington refers explicitly to Felix Christ (esp. *Jesus*, 236) but does not seem to know the work of Aalen. See also Hartmut Gese, “Die Weisheit, der Menschensohn und die Ursprünge der Christologie als konsequente Entfaltung der biblischen Theologie,” *SEÅ* 44 (1979): 77–114. Gese sees a Wisdom Christology in Matthew as well as in the Q wisdom sayings (ii, iv, v, and vi), but does not discuss the authenticity of the sayings (ibid., 98–102).

<sup>176</sup> *Christology*, 49–53 on saying (i); 221–228 on (ii); *Jesus*, 202 on (iii); 228 on (iv); 205–207 on (vi); 202–203 on (vii).

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 49, 51.

<sup>178</sup> Witherington does not raise the question whether this exegesis of the saying is possible without the redactional context in Matthew 11.

<sup>179</sup> Witherington, *Christology*, 51, 52 (here the quotations), 53, 221–228, 269, 274–275; *Jesus*, 201–208.

<sup>180</sup> *Christology*, 224–227 on saying (ii); *Jesus*, 205–206 on saying (vi).

Proverbs 8 and elsewhere.”<sup>181</sup> Secondly, he appeals to the explaining force of the hypothesis that Jesus regarded himself as Wisdom incarnate:

[S]parked by the catalyst of this... association by Jesus of a historical individual with God’s personified Wisdom, the early church took this seed, planted it and raised a vast harvest of Wisdom Christologies, found in such varied contexts as Q, christological hymns, Paul, and the narrative framework of Gospels. How better to explain the appearance of the idea... than to assume that Jesus in some way presented himself as Wisdom?<sup>182</sup>

The position of Martin Hengel should not be equated with Witherington’s proposal. In the earliest wisdom sayings, Hengel observes no Wisdom Christology in the strict sense of the word; rather, Jesus is portrayed as an envoy of Wisdom.<sup>183</sup> Since it is highly unlikely that the post-Easter church should have developed such a picture, Hengel concludes that the earliest sayings are on the whole authentic and that Jesus did understand himself as Wisdom’s representative.<sup>184</sup>

Jesus’ view of himself as a representative of Wisdom coheres well with his claim to be a prophetic Messiah and anointed by the Spirit in terms of Isa 61:1–3, Hengel contends, and quotes several texts that portray the Messiah both as a *Geistträger* and as an exponent of divine wisdom.<sup>185</sup> This is the case also with the messianic “son of man”-figure in *1 Enoch* 48–51. This “anointed” figure, however, is not

<sup>181</sup> *Christology*, 51.

<sup>182</sup> *Jesus*, 208; cf. *Christology*, 275. The somewhat vague phrase “association... with... Wisdom” (cf. “in some way”) does not seem to cohere with the rest of the argument on the preceding pages, where the point is that Jesus understood himself as “Wisdom in person,” not only as being in “association” with Wisdom.

<sup>183</sup> Hengel, “Lehrer,” 84–99.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 96: “[D]aß in den späteren Gemeinden die präexistente Weisheit als eigenständige Größe neben, ja hinter dem Menschensohn und Messias Jesus erschien, fügt sich schwer in die nachösterliche Entwicklung der Christologie ein.” For Hengel’s discussion of the authenticity of individual sayings, see 84–99. Hengel observes an identification of Jesus and Wisdom in saying (vi), but only in its present Matthean form (96–99). An earlier version of saying (ii) might well be authentic, as Joachim Jeremias argued, but even in that case Jesus would not speak as Wisdom in person, but “im Auftrag und in der Vollmacht der Weisheit Gottes” (97). For Jeremias’ proposal, see his *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, 1: *Die Verkündigung Jesu*, 3rd ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), 65–67.

<sup>185</sup> “Lehrer,” 108–113. The principal text is Isa 11:1–4 (cf. Prov 8:12–14). In addition, the following texts are discussed: *Pss. Sol.* 17.23, 29, 35, 37, 43; 18.6–7; *T. Levi* 18; *T. Jud.* 24; *Tg. Isa.* 53:5, 11; 11QPs<sup>a</sup> XXVII, 2–11; 4Q534. For Jesus’ claim to be a prophetic Messiah and anointed by the Spirit, see above, pp. 1041–1042.

only a *Geistträger* and an exponent of wisdom, but is also interpreted in terms of Proverbs 8 and seen as pre-existent (1 En. 48.3, 6); he is the representative and even the embodiment of Wisdom.<sup>186</sup>

This messianic pattern serves, first, as an analogy to Jesus' self-understanding; secondly, it might have provided some of the impulses that very soon caused the post-Easter church to take the step that had not been taken earlier, viz., to see Jesus as Wisdom in person.<sup>187</sup>

### 6. Some Points in Conclusion

More could be said on our subject. There are, no doubt, other approaches and proposals that would also merit attention. However, the time has now come to put forward some simple observations on the approaches we have seen above, the focus being on sections 2.–4.

1. First, some remarks on the suggestion that Jesus' view of himself may be described in terms of an implicit christology. At first sight, the both and quality of this proposal makes it attractive: Volkmar, Wrede, and Bultmann were right up to a certain point, but the "traditional" view of Jesus also has a grain of truth in it.

However, problems tend to appear precisely because of the give-and-take character of this basic solution: The "but I say to you..." sayings allegedly imply a messianic self-understanding;<sup>188</sup> Jesus' view of himself as an eschatological representative of God was subsequently (in the post-Easter situation) expressed in talk of Jesus as the pre-existent Son of God, we are told;<sup>189</sup> the *abba* address of the disciples implied their divine sonship, but this was supposedly derivative of Jesus' sonship.<sup>190</sup> And so on. With explanations like these the classical non-messianic view of Jesus is avoided, it is true, but there seems to be need for some "intuition" to produce these readings.

The notion of a messianic self-claim of Jesus must also be kept at a distance. Hence, it is said, even if Jesus made it clear that he was the

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<sup>186</sup> Hengel, "Lehrer," 117–119. Important in this context is Gottfried Schimanowski, *Weisheit und Messias: Die jüdischen Voraussetzungen der urchristlichen Präexistenzchristologie*, WUNT 2.17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); cf. also William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 86–108 (on the pre-existence and "spiritual" character of the Messiah in ancient Jewish literature).

<sup>187</sup> Hengel, "Lehrer," 120–131.

<sup>188</sup> Käsemann, "Problem," 206.

<sup>189</sup> Merklein, *Botschaft*, 150.

<sup>190</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 717.



eschatological representative of God in a unique sense, due to his humility he made no messianic claim;<sup>191</sup> time and again, he did evoke messianic expectations—but always unintentionally;<sup>192</sup> his “triumphal” entry into Jerusalem was “a statement of some significance,” but no messianic claim was intended;<sup>193</sup> his *Anspruch* can only be understood in messianic terms, but every *Messiasprädikat* is *Gemeindekerygma*;<sup>194</sup> Jesus was indeed crucified as ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, but the reason for this must be other than the one implied by Mark.<sup>195</sup> And so on.

If these observations reveal real problems and if the problems arise from the compromising character of the implicit-christology approach, this approach must be rejected and a clear-cut Schweitzer-like alternative must be stated: Jesus’ ministry was either non-messianic or messianic. Either he made an explicit messianic claim or he made no distinct self-claim at all.

2. Secondly, some words on the non-messianic view of Jesus. Volkmar’s point is still reiterated: had Jesus desired the messiahship, he could have claimed it only in a “political” sense; but this he most certainly did not do, and he could not have modified the popular messianic idea either.<sup>196</sup> In order to make any sense, this line of argument must assume a monolithic Jewish *Messiasdogmatik* in Jesus’ time; but this assumption is false.<sup>197</sup>

A “negative” use of the criterion of coherence was observed—due to his humility, Jesus could not have made any messianic claim—and found whimsical.<sup>198</sup> It is also clear that the criterion of dissimilarity cannot be invoked in this context; in principle, it cannot function as an indication of non-authenticity. Sometimes the absence of the word Χριστός in Q is stressed; but this is an argument from silence and cannot be insisted on. The strongest point in favour of the non-messianic alternative would still seem to be the one built on the

<sup>191</sup> Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 198–302.

<sup>192</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 627–654.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 642, 649.

<sup>194</sup> Käsemann, “Problem,” 206, 211.

<sup>195</sup> Merklein, *Botschaft*, 131–134; Dunn, *Jesus*, 652.

<sup>196</sup> Lüdemann, *Jesus*, 56–57; de Jonge, “Jesus’ View,” 24–27; cf. Dunn, *Jesus*, 647–654.

<sup>197</sup> Volkmar’s point may be “softened” in at least two ways: (a) the idea of the royal Messiah was the predominant one (—so what?); (b) a messianic claimant would have had to choose between the available messianic options; he could not have made any modifications at all (—really?).

<sup>198</sup> Funk et al., *Gospels*, 33. Cf. above, n. 65.

“adoptionist” (?) passages Rom 1:3–4 and Acts 2:36. The weakness of the non-messianic view of Jesus is above all its inability to explain the *titulus crucis*.

3. Thirdly and finally, a few comments on the view that Jesus—in different ways and with varying degrees of explicitness—claimed to be the Messiah. Against this view, it seems, Volkmar’s point can hardly be raised any more. The most serious problem would seem to be the allegedly “adoptionist” passages. These texts, however, might perhaps be interpreted in terms of *sessio ad dexteram* rather than in terms of the beginning of messiahship. In that case the messianic view of Jesus and his ministry, in comparison with the non-messianic one, probably has the better claim. For this solution does provide a truly satisfactory explanation both of the *titulus crucis* and of the rapid transformation of the title משיח or ὁ Χριστός into a personal name.

## THE JESUS QUEST AND JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

DONALD A. HAGNER

The point of contention that has always been decisive in the Jewish-Christian dialogue has been the person of Jesus. If we have now begun to see through historical Jesus studies that Jesus Christ binds Jews and Christians together, it is also clear that he remains the main dividing point between Jews and Christians.<sup>1</sup> It is understandable that Jews and Christians have always shared a very large amount of their theology—in fact, a much greater amount than is usually expected. The first Christians, all of whom were Jewish, believed that their faith was the fulfillment of the Jewish scriptures and that they were beginning to receive what had been promised in the covenants and the prophets. They thought of their faith not as a new religion but as the true Judaism. There was nevertheless a key dividing point between the earliest Christians and the Jews, and it centered in the Christian confession of the crucified Jesus as both Messiah and Lord, as the one who had inaugurated a new era in the history of salvation, an era of eschatological fulfillment. The situation was effectively captured in the aphorism of Schalom Ben-Chorin, himself the author of a book entitled *Brother Jesus*: “The faith of Jesus unites us—faith in Jesus separates us.”<sup>2</sup>

If the estimate of Jesus is the fundamental cause of disagreement between Jews and Christians, one may well ask whether or not the quest of the “historical Jesus,” assuming it arrives at something other than the traditional Christian view of Jesus, might not be a boon for Jewish-Christian dialogue. Without doubt the quest has been an ameliorating factor in the dialogue, as we shall see, but one could hardly call it a boon. We will explore the reasons for this conclusion in this essay. We begin with a brief look at the history of the Jewish study of Jesus that parallels the liberal Protestant quest, proceed to an analysis

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<sup>1</sup> *The Common Bond: Christians and Jews—Notes for Preaching and Teaching*, Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, 1986.

<sup>2</sup> *Bruder Jesus: Der Nazarener in jüdischer Sicht* (München, 1967), now available in English translation, *Brother Jesus: The Nazarene through Jewish Eyes*, trans. Jared S. Klein and Max Reinhart (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

of some of the specific conclusions of the quest that bear upon our subject, follow this with a discussion of the obstacles posed by the quest, and conclude with some comments about the dialogue itself.

### 1. *The Jewish Study of Jesus and the Quest*

The nineteenth-century quest for the historical Jesus, as documented in Albert Schweitzer's famous book, was—from Reimarus to Wrede—almost exclusively a Gentile undertaking. Nevertheless, already with Reimarus (1778),<sup>3</sup>—anticipated by the English Deists—and with a considerable number of the others described by Schweitzer, the Jewishness of Jesus began to emerge with striking clarity, and concomitantly the disjuncture between Jesus and the Christ who was the center of the church's faith. Influential scholars such as Ferdinand Christian Baur<sup>4</sup> and William Wrede<sup>5</sup> drove a great wedge between Jesus and Paul, stressing the discontinuity between the two, and making Paul the de facto creator of Christianity. This is a viewpoint that would eventually be taken up by Jewish scholars in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Apart from the scandalous *Toledot Yeshu*, an ancient folk-tale based partly on Talmudic anecdotes about Jesus, written down first in the tenth century, but still read by orthodox Jews in the nineteenth century, Jews wrote little about Jesus until the twentieth century. The emancipation of the Jews from the ghettos of Europe over a two-hundred year period, ending in 1933, and the birth of the *Haskalah* (the Jewish "Enlightenment") movement among the Jews in the eighteenth century, enabled the Jews to escape their isolation and to enter, and adapt themselves to, the world of modern thinking. The

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<sup>3</sup> German available in Paul Rilla, ed., *Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: Gesammelte Werke*, vols. 7 and 8 (Berlin: Aufbau, 1956); Eng. trans.: *Reimarus Fragments*, trans. Ralph S. Fraser, ed. C. H. Talbert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> *Paulus, der Apostel Jesu Christi: Sein Leben und Wirken, seine Lehre: Ein Beitrag zu einer kritischen Geschichte des Urchristentums*, ed. by Eduard Zeller, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Fues, 1866); Eng. trans.: *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine: A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, trans. A. Menzies, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Williams & Norgate, 1876), reprinted as *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> *Paulus*, Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher 1.5/6, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1907). Eng. trans.: *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (London: Green, 1907; reprinted, Lexington: American Theological Association, 1962).

changes occurring for the Jews in this period were enormous and had highly significant results. Not least, the new situation was responsible for the emergence of Reform Judaism. And it was primarily in Reform Judaism that the critical thinking spawned by the Enlightenment began to be applied to the study of Judaism in what became known as *die Wissenschaft des Judentums*, “the science of Judaism.” Now Jews began to defend Judaism as a religion in the face of the Enlightenment’s rationalistic polemic against all established religion. Gradually, but inevitably, the Pharisees and the Judaism of the New Testament came under scrutiny, and then, at long last, Jesus himself.

Although there were some nineteenth-century pioneers, such as Joseph Salvador, Abraham Geiger, and Heinrich Graetz (all ignored by Schweitzer, except for a brief note about Salvador that misspells his name), it was the twentieth century that brought the flowering of the Jewish study of Jesus, with such notable scholars as Claude Goldsmid Montefiore, Israel Abrahams, Joseph Klausner, Samuel Sandmel, Schalom Ben-Chorin, David Flusser, Pinchas Lapide, and Geza Vermes. There is no need here to review this interesting history.<sup>6</sup> But it will be useful to summarize the general results of the modern Jewish study of Jesus. Enough is held in common by these scholars, in my opinion, to speak of them collectively. The first and most important conclusion of these scholars is that Jesus was a Jew, through and through. There is a surprising amount of openness to concluding that he may have claimed to be the Messiah (thus Montefiore, Hyman Enelow, Klausner, Samuel Cohon, Sandmel, Hugh Schonfield) although it is also clear to these scholars that if he made such a claim he was mistaken, since the messianic age did not come and he died as a common criminal. He

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<sup>6</sup> This history has been reviewed by Gösta Lindeskog, *Die Jesusfrage im neuzeitlichen Judentum: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1938), reprinted with new postscript (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973); and D. A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: A Critique and Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). See too, the two volumes of Jacob Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: A Study in the Relationship between the Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (London: SPCK, 1949; 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979) and *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ after Auschwitz: A Study in the Controversy between Church and Synagogue* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981). Reviews from the Jewish side can be found in Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Jesus im Judentum* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1970), an English distillation of which is found in *The Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 11 (1974): 401–430; and Pinchas Lapide, *Ist das nicht Josephs Sohn? Jesus im heutigen Judentum* (München: Calwer, Kösel, 1976; Eng. trans.: *Israelis, Jews, and Jesus* [New York: Doubleday, 1979]).

was faithful to the Law in his life and teaching, and the seriousness of his concern about its meaning qualifies him, in the minds of some, to be considered as a Pharisee or at least Pharisee-like, or rabbi-like (thus, e.g., Klausner, Geiger, Martin Buber, Paul Winter, Ben-Chorin, and Hyam Maccoby). Others have categorized Jesus as an Essene (Heinrich Graetz; several others see Essenic traits in Jesus without identifying him as an Essene), a Zealot (Joel Carmichael, Lapide), or as a charismatic, miracle-working *hasid* (Kaufmann Kohler, Flusser, Vermes). One of the most interesting designations is that of prophet, since it confers a special dignity upon Jesus that would separate him from his contemporaries (thus Montefiore, Hyman Enelow, Flusser). Although there is obviously little agreement as to what is the most appropriate category in which to position Jesus, it is also clear that all of these categories are eminently Jewish.<sup>7</sup> We may further note that Jewish scholars generally give little or no attention to the classic christological titles, except in the case of Vermes, who finds the minimum content in each: Lord (an address of respect), Son of Man (a circumlocution for "I"), Son of God (a term applied to a wide variety of individuals).

Now the extent to which these results overlap with those of the quest outlined by Schweitzer, and of the twentieth century more particularly, is remarkable. For all of the uncertainty about exactly where to place Jesus in the spectrum of first-century Judaism, it is the Jewishness of Jesus that eventually emerges with striking clarity. Furthermore, equally important is the conclusion that Jesus was very different from the Christ that became the center of Christian faith. The "real" Jesus is not the Jesus of the church. The gospels are documents so colored with the patina of Christian faith that, as they stand, they are historically untrustworthy.

What relationship, if any, is there between this flowering of the Jewish study of Jesus and the Jesus quest of Christian scholars? From the beginning there seems to have been no direct dependence of Jewish scholarship upon Christian scholarship; the former was capable of generating its own momentum. In this field of study Jewish scholars had no need of Christian scholars to assist them. The similarity in conclusions we have noted was rather the result of a common predisposition against the usual convictions of Christianity, caused on the

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<sup>7</sup> For a fuller and more precise discussion, see Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus*, 227–271.

one side by religious reasons<sup>8</sup> and on the other by the demands of critical historiography. Eventually, however—indeed already in the case of Montefiore—it becomes more and more evident that Christian scholarship begins to exert an influence upon Jewish writers. Reform Jews, who were not threatened by the rationalism of the Enlightenment, realized that the scientific historiography practiced by liberal Protestant scholarship could become a helpful ally in showing the error of Christianity. It was hardly discouraging to Jewish scholars that liberal Protestant scholarship continued to assert that the gospel accounts of Jesus reflected *Gemeindetheologie*, the theology of the church, more than it did actual history. The conclusions of Christian scholarship seemed eminently reasonable to Jewish scholars and to square with their reading of the gospels. The result was that the Christian questers became increasingly influential upon Jewish scholarship, as the twentieth century progressed.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, eventually Jewish scholars writing about Jesus become nearly indistinguishable from others involved in the quest as, for example, in the case of Vermes (who goes out of his way to note that he writes as a historian rather than a Jew) and Paula Fredriksen. It would seem now that the Jewish reclamation of Jesus has fully merged with the quest of the historical Jesus.<sup>10</sup> “Und auf jüdischer Seite hat die ‘Heimholung Jesu ins Judentum’ heute den Wind der historischen Jesusforschung nicht gegen sich, sondern im Rücken.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See W. Riggans, “The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus and its Implications for Jewish-Christian Relations,” *Themelios* 18 (1992): 9–16.

<sup>9</sup> E. Bammel may overstate the matter, however, when he writes: “And when Jewish scholars started to develop an interest in Jesus they based their interpretation on the concepts of liberal German scholarship” (“Christian Origins in Jewish Tradition,” *NTS* 13 [1966–67]: 317).

<sup>10</sup> H. D. Betz concludes: “Modern Jewish interpretations [of Jesus] are again different in that they interact with or are part of historical-critical scholarship of the 19th and 20th century. These contributions also share in the shifts and changes, the loyalties and animosities of modern scholarship, and they must therefore be carefully assessed within the history of scholarship and the cultural and political circumstances in which they came into existence” (“Wellhausen’s Dictum ‘Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew’ in Light of Present Scholarship,” *Studia Theologica* 45 [1991]: 83–110, at 97).

<sup>11</sup> K. Haacker, *Versöhnung mit Israel: Exegetische Beiträge*, Veröffentlichungen der Kirchlichen Hochschule Wuppertal, NF 5 (Neukirchener: Foedus, 2002), 201.

## 2. *Positive Results of the Quest for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*

The primary underlying concern of Jewish-Christian dialogue—of supreme and self-evident importance—has been to counteract the kind of misinformed, hateful thinking that ultimately caused the Holocaust. Christians and Jews have accordingly worked together on two fronts: to bring about a better understanding of Judaism, on the one hand, and a better understanding of Jesus, on the other. The quest of the historical Jesus in its recent manifestations<sup>12</sup> has been of great help on both fronts.

1. One of the distinguishing marks of the so-called, but misnamed, third quest, is the amount of attention given to *Second Temple Judaism as the context in which the historical Jesus must be understood*. Here we encounter influence in the opposite direction: Christian scholars have benefited greatly from the work of Jewish scholars, as one might well expect. There is much agreement between the two on fundamental matters. A great amount of helpful knowledge has been compiled concerning such things as the social conditions, politics, economics, and religious life of first-century Palestine, and there is a unified conviction that if the historical Jesus is to be explained, he must somehow be placed squarely into this context.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, we have acquired a better understanding of Judaism as a religion marked by covenantal nomism, a religion of grace and not merit.<sup>14</sup> Judaism then appears not so much as a foil for the Christian gospel of grace, but rather a parallel expression of a divinely ordained religion. If Jews are saved by the grace of God as much as Christians, then it would seem unnecessary for Christians to proselytize Jews.

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<sup>12</sup> For helpful surveys, see W. R. Telford, "Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTs 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33–74; and David A. du Toit, "Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research," in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt, JSNTSup 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 82–124.

<sup>13</sup> An exception that may be said to prove the rule is Burton L. Mack, who regards Jesus as a Hellenistic Cynic sage with little or no concern with things Jewish. See his *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Fully articulated first by E. P. Sanders in his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London/Philadelphia: SCM/Fortress, 1977), and developed in various later publications.



2. In 1905 Julius Wellhausen articulated the now famous dictum "Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew."<sup>15</sup> It is clear that the great accomplishment of the quest, general though it is, is the establishment of *the Jewishness of Jesus*.<sup>16</sup> When Jewish scholars look at the Jesus of the gospels they are able immediately to recognize his intense Jewishness in a wide-ranging variety of respects that need not be reviewed here,<sup>17</sup> and that Jesus belongs as much, if not more, to the Jews as he does to the Christians. The realization of the Jewishness of Jesus may not at first seem to be much of an accomplishment, until one realizes that as the early church became more and more Gentile, and focused more and more upon the risen Lord, the Jewishness of Jesus began to recede, and indeed virtually disappeared from Christian consciousness. Christians lost any sense of their Jewish heritage and this loss soon produced fertile ground in which anti-Semitism could and did flourish.<sup>18</sup> A corollary to the conclusion that Jesus was fully Jewish is that to be Jewish is therefore something good.<sup>19</sup>

3. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly for dialogue, it is widely concluded by the quest and by Jewish scholars that *the historical Jesus is of necessity to be separated from the later church's understanding of him*. The faith of the church, it is usually argued, apparently transformed Jesus into something he was not, and something that was very far from his mind. Here we encounter head-on the high christology of the New Testament documents. There is obviously an affirmation and heightening of the divinity of Jesus in the New Testament that necessarily goes beyond the actuality of the historical

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<sup>15</sup> *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1905), 113; see Betz, "Wellhausen's Dictum."

<sup>16</sup> See Tom Holmén, "The Jewishness of Jesus in the 'Third Quest,'" in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 143–62. Holmén points out that "Jewishness," as widely defined, has become too broad to be helpful in understanding Jesus. He suggests the need for an "essentialist" approach that specifies core elements of Judaism, against which Jesus can be measured.

<sup>17</sup> See J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus' Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991); and idem, *Jesus within Judaism: New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> See R. T. Olson, "The Christian Blasphemy: A Non-Jewish Jesus," in *Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present, and Future*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990) 211–238, reprint of an article that appeared originally in *JAAR* 53 (1985).

<sup>19</sup> L. Keck notes that "theologically the Jewishness of Jesus has made this disagreement about him rather like a family quarrel," *Who is Jesus? History in the Perfect Tense* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 63.

Jesus. Rosemary Ruether is famous for her description of anti-Semitism as “the left hand of christology,”<sup>20</sup> meaning that the christology of the church is a primary cause of anti-Semitism. It is well known that the admirable desire to avoid anti-Semitism has led to frequent calls for a major overhaul of Christian theology in general and christology in particular. If, as the quest maintains—at least as it does for the most part—that the historical Jesus is to be understood as some type of Jewish teacher, healer, and reformer, then he need no longer be the great dividing point between Jews and Christians. But, as we will see below, such a minimalist conclusion is problematic for the explanation of the rise of Christianity, and therefore, problematic precisely from the perspective of sound historical method.

4. Furthermore, *Jesus did not intend to create a new faith*. The historical Jesus is fundamentally about Judaism, not about Christianity. He came, it is commonly argued, as a reformer of Judaism. Jesus thus did not intend—on the contrary, would have been offended by—the creation of a new community of faith, over against the Jewish faith, and especially one that made him the center of its theology and worship. It is, rather, the disciples of Jesus who are the creators of Christianity. It is they who transform Jesus into something he was not, and they who are responsible for the separation from Judaism. Jesus of course did not have as his purpose the creation of a new religion. Such a platitude, however, fails to reckon with the complexity of the fulfillment stressed by the New Testament, which involves continuity as well as discontinuity. Christianity entails newness, but the first generation of Christians thought of their faith as the true form of Judaism, not as a new religion.

5. As the obverse of the preceding point, *in no way was Jesus disloyal to the Jewish faith*. Quite the contrary, the gospels provide abundant evidence that despite his criticism of the Pharisees, Jesus remained fundamentally loyal to the faith of the Jews. “Instead, there is substantial evidence that *Jesus accepted all of the major tenets of the Jewish faith*: the unity and sovereignty of God, the value and sanctity of the Temple of Jerusalem, the authority of the Jewish Scriptures, the election of the people of Israel, and the hope of Israel’s redemption.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury, 1974), 64–65.

<sup>21</sup> Craig A. Evans, “The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith: Toward Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *Who Was Jesus? A Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. P. Copan

Jesus accepted the Torah and never intended to overthrow its authority. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt 5:17). The teaching of Jesus in the gospels is not meant to undermine the law, but rather to fulfill it, in the sense of bringing to expression its intended meaning.

### 3. *Problematic Aspects of the Quest for Jewish-Christian Dialogue*

If there are, as we have seen, undeniably some positive results of the quest of the historical Jesus for Jewish-Christian dialogue, there are also problematic aspects. Some of these have to do with the intrinsic methodological weaknesses of the quest, others with results of the quest. We turn now to look at these.

1. The quest *has shed more light on the context of Jesus than on Jesus himself*. The immense amount of attention given to the socio-cultural milieu of first-century Palestine and Second Temple Judaism has produced a richer understanding of the context of Jesus than ever before, and it has thereby opened up numerous options for the classification of Jesus. At the same time, however, there is little agreement concerning how to understand Jesus himself. Indeed, the current quest has produced as many Jesuses as did the old quest described by Schweitzer.<sup>22</sup> And despite the clear advances in scholarship, it seems no less true today than in the nineteenth century that scholars tend to see in Jesus a reflection of their own image. Which historical Jesus, if any, is the "real" Jesus?

Furthermore, better knowledge of the context has itself brought other new problems. The quest has revealed how complex first-century Judaism was. It seems that we must now speak of a variety of Judaisms.<sup>23</sup> What sort of Judaism does Jesus reflect? Was the Jewish background

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and C. A. Evans (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 59–72, at 61, italics are Evans'.

<sup>22</sup> "Thus, the major disputed issue in the 'Third Quest' is what kind of person Jesus was and what the essence of his message, ministry, and intention was": M. E. Boring, "The 'Third Quest' and the Apostolic Faith," in *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-Critical and Social-Scientific Approaches*, ed. J. D. Kingsbury (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 237–252, at 240; reprint of an article that first appeared in *Interpretation* 50 (1996): 341–354, at 343–344.

<sup>23</sup> The classic example nowadays of a diverse Judaism is that of the Dead Sea Scroll community. See C. A. Evans, "The New Quest for Jesus and the New Research on the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 163–183.

against which Jewish scholars have understood Jesus accurate? Did it possibly make the explanation of Jesus too easy?<sup>24</sup>

2. The main criteria used by the quest to decide authenticity have not proved to be very effective. In particular, *the criterion of double dissimilarity as classically employed cuts Jesus off not only from his followers but also from the Jewish context in which he lived*. According to this criterion, only that which is unparalleled in the New Testament and in contemporary Judaism can be trusted as reliable history. The result is a Jesus who is totally isolated from his context. What is accepted as authentic concerning the historical Jesus becomes that which marks him out as eccentric and idiosyncratic. As a consequence the Jewishness of Jesus—an element of great importance for the Jewish-Christian dialogue—recedes into the background. According to Theissen and Winter, the theological motive behind this criterion is “anti-Judaism”—namely “the theological rejection of the Jewish religion, expressed especially in a strongly negative portrayal of Jewish faith and life,” a portrayal that functions as “a negative foil for the advent of Jesus and/or Christianity.”<sup>25</sup>

In recent years, however, a growing dissatisfaction with the dissimilarity criterion has developed. Theissen and Winter comment: “It is therefore time to replace the criterion of dissimilarity with a new criterion, in the process keeping its legitimate elements and correcting its distortions and one-sidedness.”<sup>26</sup> They advocate the “criterion of historical plausibility,” giving more positive consideration to contextual plausibility on the Jewish side, and to the plausibility of historical effects, on the Christian side. This new criterion will bring with it a positive and a negative result for Jewish-Christian dialogue: it will help

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<sup>24</sup> D. J. Harrington raises the problem of the variety of Judaisms in the time of Jesus: “The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing Some Problems,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 1–13, reprinted in *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism*, ed., Charlesworth, 123–36. See also J. Neusner, W. S. Green and E. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and T. Holmén, “The Jewishness of Jesus in the ‘Third Quest,’” in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 150–52.

<sup>25</sup> G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. E. Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 67.

<sup>26</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Quest* 172. For a similar critique, see T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-history Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, *NTTS* 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80.

establish the Jewishness of Jesus, but it will also help build connections with the Christian view of Jesus.

3. *The determination of Jesus' self-understanding* remains an important aspect of the quest. Thus far, however, the quest has not been very successful here. In the opinion of Craig Evans, "probably no feature of Jesus research has been more divisive than the question of the claims that Jesus made for himself."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, this is an issue that can have extremely important implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

It is clear that Jesus was unique in some respects. One of the immediate impressions one gains from the synoptic gospels is that Jesus was perceived as possessing a unique authority. Both in his deeds and his words, Jesus constantly amazed those around him. That pattern of authority stems from personal claims, explicit or implicit. A range of possibilities confronts the interpreter, as we have already seen. Some of these, e.g., proto-rabbi, charismatic healer, reformer, or prophet,<sup>28</sup> are not necessarily problematic for the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Other options—those that move toward a "high" christology—such as Messiah, Messianic Son of Man, unique Agent of God, one who is uniquely the Son of God, and the personification of Wisdom—since they accord more with the Christian estimate of Jesus, can complicate the dialogue.

The quest, armed with the criterion of dissimilarity, has essentially put a question mark over the perspective of the gospel writers, and seems, thus far, unable to come to a conclusion concerning Jesus' self-perception. But we may well see more progress on this issue in the future,<sup>29</sup> and the implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue are significant.

4. Another issue that is of the greatest interest to Jews is *the cause of, and the responsibility for, the death of Jesus*. This is crucial for Jewish-Christian dialogue since blaming Jews for the death of Christ—the crime of deicide, as it has unfortunately been called—is perhaps the root cause of anti-Semitism. The dominant Jewish point of view is

<sup>27</sup> "The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith," 63.

<sup>28</sup> See Markus Öhler, "Jesus as Prophet: Remarks on Terminology," in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 125–42.

<sup>29</sup> As examples of encouraging directions, see Marinus de Jonge, *God's Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus' Own View of His Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) and Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); cf. C. A. Evans, "The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith," 63–66.

that Jesus was put to death by the Romans for fomenting political revolt. Since crucifixion was a Roman, and not a Jewish, form of punishment, this is obviously true at one level. But is it the whole story?

The role of the Jews in the death of Jesus seems clear from the gospels. But if there is Jewish complicity in the death of Jesus, it is to be limited primarily to the Jewish leadership,<sup>30</sup> rather than to the Jewish people as a whole. Furthermore, the Jewish mob who yelled for the crucifixion of Jesus with the words "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children," is hardly representative of the totality of the Jewish people. Certainly the Jews of later generations down to the present had nothing to do with the death of Jesus. A further point that gospel scholarship has made clear is that the New Testament's hostility toward the Jews is heightened by, and a reflection of, the increasing animosity between Jews and Christians as the first century wore on. This undoubtedly has had its impact upon the passion narrative, as well as other parts of the gospel narratives.

What was it about Jesus that drew forth the wrath of the Jewish leadership? The gospels call attention to Jesus' stance towards two pillars of Judaism, the Law and the Temple.<sup>31</sup> The controversy stories in the early chapters of Mark illustrate the opposition of the leadership stirred up by Jesus' attitude toward typical Sabbath observance (e.g., Mark 3:6). Jesus does appear to have a transcendent authority concerning the law ("the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath," Mark 2:28). Nevertheless, Jesus must finally be judged as being fundamentally loyal to the Law (Matt 5:17). The quest has turned to the Temple as a more promising explanation, for Jesus not only prophesied its destruction (though some doubt this), but he also acted with uncharacteristic violence in ousting the money-changers from the Temple area (Mark 11:15–17 and parallels). The Markan account is followed by the notice that "the chief priests and the scribes heard it

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<sup>30</sup> One must balk, however, at the excessive portrayal of the Jewish leadership in Mel Gibson's much-discussed movie, *The Passion*.

<sup>31</sup> "Torah and temple, it is often correctly said, were the two foci of Judaism, and Jesus either threatened or was perceived as threatening both": W. D. Davies and E. P. Sanders, "Jesus: From the Jewish Point of View," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, ed. W. Horbury, W. D. Davies and J. Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 618–677, at 674. Davies and Sanders conclude that four factors were responsible for the death of Jesus: the question of who speaks for God; proclamation of the kingdom with the implication that Jesus was a king; the political situation that posed danger for a charismatic leader; and the temple incident (675).

and sought a way to destroy him” (Mark 11:18). This revolutionary attack against the establishment could hardly have been overlooked by the Jewish authorities—certainly not at Passover time, and not by one who had previously entered the city to the sound of messianic acclamation (Mark 11:1–10 and parallels).<sup>32</sup>

It is clear that the question concerning the reason for the death of Jesus can hardly be answered if he is understood as only an unusual teacher, with unusual interpretations of the commandments. The more solidly scholars place Jesus comfortably into his Jewish context the more difficult it becomes to explain his death. H.-D. Betz rightly faults Wellhausen for his inability to provide a plausible explanation for the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>33</sup> Why, it is normally and correctly asked, would anyone bother to crucify an exceptional teacher? In response to a similar question, about why anyone would crucify a charismatic hasid and healer, Vermes writes “He died on the cross for having done the wrong thing (caused a commotion) in the wrong place (the Temple) at the wrong time (just before Passover). Here lies the real tragedy of Jesus the Jew.”<sup>34</sup> Jesus was thus ultimately crucified for political reasons, as the authorities tried to keep control of a potentially inflammatory situation. Here again we find a concordance between the conclusions of the quest and those of Jewish scholarship.

At the same time, Jesus’ stance toward both the Law and the Temple clearly implies a unique authority, an authority in which messianic claims are implicit. The irony of the inscription on the cross, “King of the Jews,” is remarkable for several reasons. What is meant as a parody ironically conveys truth. The death of Jesus was probably due to a combination of things, but it is difficult to rule out the unique personal authority and implicit claims of Jesus as major factors in the mix. The reference to blasphemy in the scene of Jesus’ “trial” or hearing before the Sanhedrin seems connected with the unacceptable personal claims either made or implied by Jesus.

The trend today seems more and more to underline the Jewishness of Jesus and to fit him into his Jewish context. To the extent, however, that the conclusions of some questers point to the authority of Jesus

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<sup>32</sup> For a full study of the crucial temple incident, see Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel: Die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung*, WUNT 2.119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

<sup>33</sup> “Wellhausen’s Dictum,” 86.

<sup>34</sup> G. Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), x.

vis-à-vis the Law and the Temple, and to the extent that personal claims are also regarded as implied, the more the quest provides an obstacle to Jewish-Christian dialogue.

5. A final, key issue that confronts the quest is how to frame *an adequate explanation of the faith of the first Christians and the birth of the church*. Here again, the more “ordinary” Jesus is made to appear, the more he fits into his context, the more unconvincing the explanation becomes. Any construal of the evidence that fails to provide a plausible account of Christian origins can hardly be regarded as acceptable.<sup>35</sup>

To begin with, the matter of the resurrection experience of the disciples must be considered. The resurrection itself, of course, has traditionally been regarded as off-limits for historical study. The historian *per se* has no access to that which is outside the normal, closed system of cause and effect.<sup>36</sup> Recently, however, from one deeply involved in the Jesus quest, the issue of the resurrection has been addressed head on. In a bold, path-breaking book, N. T. Wright argues that the resurrection is both a legitimate and necessary subject for historical inquiry.<sup>37</sup> At the end of his long investigation, he concludes: “We are left with the secure historical conclusion: the tomb was empty, and various ‘meetings’ took place not only between Jesus and his followers (including at least one initial sceptic) but also, in at least one case (that of Paul, possibly, too, that of James), between Jesus and people who had

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<sup>35</sup> Betz points out that “Wellhausen has no explanation of a historical connection between Jesus and the early church” (“Wellhausen’s Dictum,” 87).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. J. P. Meier, who at the beginning of his multi-volume study of the historical Jesus writes: “a treatment of the resurrection is omitted not because it is denied but simply because the restrictive definition of the historical Jesus I will be using does not allow us to proceed into matters that can be affirmed only by faith” (*A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus I* [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 13). Volume 4 thus promises no discussion of the resurrection, but rather a treatment of why Jesus was crucified, “the starkest, most disturbing, and most central of all the enigmas Jesus posed and was” (III, 646 [2001]).

<sup>37</sup> *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). The empty tomb and the resurrection appearances “took place as real events... they are, in the normal sense required by historians, provable events; historians can and should write about them” (709). “Provable” here means reaching the high probability that is within the province of the historian. Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 102–105. “In historical scholarship the judgment ‘probable’ is a very positive verdict” (103). See, too, W. P. Alston, “Biblical Criticism and the Resurrection,” in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. S. T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O’Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 148–183.



not been among his followers.”<sup>38</sup> In Wright’s view, “the combination of empty tomb and appearances of the living Jesus forms a set of circumstances which is itself *both necessary and sufficient* for the rise of early Christian belief. Without these phenomena, we cannot explain why this belief came into existence, and took the shape it did. With them we can explain it exactly and precisely.”<sup>39</sup>

If the resurrection is taken as a historical datum, what are the implications for the understanding of Jesus? Wright addresses this question in the final chapter of his book, concluding that it points not merely to Jesus as being the Messiah, but as being uniquely the Son of God. Wright’s perspective is bound to be controversial among those questioning after the historical Jesus, but his argument is not easy to dismiss.

Another factor that must be explained in the quest is the surprisingly early devotion to Jesus in the early church, a topic now taken up fully in the recent book by Larry Hurtado.<sup>40</sup> Devotion to Jesus, writes Hurtado, does not appear at a secondary stage, but “emerges phenomenally early,” an occurrence without contemporary religious analogy, and “this intense devotion to Jesus, which includes reverencing him as divine, was offered and articulated characteristically within a firm stance of exclusivist monotheism.”<sup>41</sup> Hurtado examines the fact of this devotion to Jesus from the beginning, and not its cause. But lying behind it must be an adequate explanation—one that undoubtedly goes back not only to the impact made by Jesus but also to the resurrection. There are many interesting ramifications of Hurtado’s book that we cannot go into here—e.g., when can we first speak of “Christianity” and when does the “parting of the ways” between synagogue and church begin? Perhaps some currently popular conclusions will need revision.

Another recent and remarkable book makes a similar point, but pushes the question of the faith of the disciples back into the ministry of Jesus itself. J. D. G. Dunn presents a compelling argument that the

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<sup>38</sup> He adds: “I regard this conclusion as virtually certain, as the death of Augustus in AD 14 or the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70” (Wright, *Resurrection*, 710).

<sup>39</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 696.

<sup>40</sup> *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003). The earlier work of Franz Mussner along these lines should be noted, as well as his treatment of other themes pertinent to the present essay. See now his collected essays, *Jesus von Nazareth im Umfeld Israels und der Urkirche*, WUNT 111, ed. Michael Theobald (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999); and, of course, his classic *Tractate on the Jews*, trans. L. Swidler (1979; London and Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 2–3.

faith of the early Christians goes back to the earliest encounters of the disciples with Jesus, and does not begin with or after the resurrection.<sup>42</sup> Dunn finds the essence of the synoptic tradition as already the product of the pre-Easter impact of Jesus and the resultant faith of the disciples.

Inevitably the attempt to explain the origin of the faith and worship of the earliest Christians drives us back to the person of Jesus and inevitably we are brought back to an early and very “high” christology. Insofar as that is the case, it is clear that the results of the work of Wright, Hurtado, and Dunn will be problematic for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

6. Two further matters—now concerning the methodology of the quest—deserve mention here. The first is the well-known *problem of the inadequacy of the historical method*. Because of the self-imposed limitations of the method, Jesus will always be more than the historians can describe or analyze.<sup>43</sup> The quest for the historical Jesus must play by the rules, but the problem is that the rules predetermine the outcome in a way that may not be fair to reality. With no room for the possibility of recognizing God at work in the historical process, thereby negating the very assertion of the gospels, the method is seemingly bound to produce a severely diminished Jesus, at least so far as those of Christian faith are concerned. “It is precisely in the material that is most problematic to the secular historian (for example, the birth and resurrection stories) that this acknowledgment of the true scope and significance of the event of Jesus’ life is most clearly manifested.”<sup>44</sup> The gospel portraits of Jesus continually challenge the adequacy of the historical method. As a result, the historian’s Jesus is necessarily an artificial Jesus. John P. Meier begins his monumental multi-volume study of the historical Jesus with the paradoxical words: “The historical Jesus is not the real Jesus. The real Jesus is not the historical Jesus.”<sup>45</sup> M. E. Boring has called attention to the problem with these words: “If, how-

<sup>42</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 125–126.

<sup>44</sup> Francis Watson, “The Quest for the Real Jesus,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. M. Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 156–169, at 165. Cf. L. Keck: “What must not be missed is that by deleting from Jesus’ history all references to divine action, critics set aside precisely those parts of the gospels by which the Evangelists expressed the most explicitly their understanding of the ongoing significance of Jesus, his perfect tense” (*Who is Jesus?*, 5).

<sup>45</sup> *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus I*, 21.

ever, one wishes to engage in the perfectly legitimate, perhaps for us in our time even theologically necessary, enterprise of reconstructing a historian's Jesus that can be argued about by historians limiting themselves to historical methods, the Jesus so reconstructed will always be less than the 'real Jesus'.<sup>46</sup>

Once one is required by the historical method to reject the interpretive framework and perspective of the gospel writers, the possible interpretations quickly multiply, as has happened in the third quest, and the resultant Jesus necessarily becomes the reflection of the interpreter's image, even as Schweitzer demonstrated in his review of the nineteenth-century quest.

Insofar as the basic method of the quest by its nature can say nothing about items central to the Christian faith, its results remove a traditional obstacle to dialogue and are accordingly looked upon favorably by Jewish scholars. The resultant predicament of Christian scholars, however, is that "having been deprived of the pivotal figure of Jesus, Christianity is left either without a historical foundation or with the extremely difficult task of finding another way to relate to the historical Jesus."<sup>47</sup>

For those thoroughly bogged down in this quandary, Wright's approach to the resurrection (see above) holds considerable promise. Can the historical method, in any meaningful sense, deal responsibly with the miracles of Jesus?<sup>48</sup> At this point, not unexpectedly, many will

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<sup>46</sup> "The 'Third Quest' and the Apostolic Faith," 249. Boring rightly adds, "Even so, there must also be lines of continuity between the reconstructed historian's Jesus and the 'real Jesus'—these cannot be utterly discontinuous, or one of them is wrong" (249).

<sup>47</sup> Betz, "Wellhausen's Dictum," 98.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. N. T. Wright: "But one cannot rule out *a priori* the possibility of things occurring in ways not normally expected, since to do so would be to begin from the fixed point that a particular worldview, namely the eighteenth-century rationalist one, or its twentieth-century positivist successor, is correct in postulating that the universe is simply a 'closed continuum' of cause and effect" (*The New Testament and the People of God* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], 92). Cf. Dunn: "the question remains whether a viable concept and practice of 'historical method' can also be retrieved from the blinkered historicist and positivist perspectives of modernity, from the narrowing rationalist and scientific assumptions of the Enlightenment" (*Jesus Remembered*, 29). Particularly helpful on the subject is C. S. Evans, *The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). Cf. Graham H. Twelftree, "The History of Miracles in the History of Jesus," in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. S. McKnight and G. R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker/Apollos, 2004), 191–208: "No less than in the nineteenth century, the fluctuating fortunes of the way the miracles of Jesus are treated has remained theologically driven and often philosophically shackled by rationalism or

decline the invitation. And this brings us to our second observation concerning methodology.

7. There is no need here to go into the vagaries of post-modernism.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, it is worth calling attention again to *the impossibility of a neutral history*. We are much more sensitive now, than earlier in the last century, to the biased character of all our observation and knowledge. We have no access to pure facts; there is no escape from interpretation. The hermeneutical circle, which no-one fully escapes, means that all of us incline to see things the way we have been taught to see them, and the way our respective communities see them. The positivist ideal of objective facts has had to give way to the reality of socially constructed, and community-influenced, knowledge.

Those who have the eyes of faith will, of course, tend to deal with the historical evidence differently from those who are skeptical. Christians will see the Jesus of history one way; Jews will see him in a different way. There is no neutral ground from which to decide who is right and who is wrong. This is not a counsel of despair. All can make the attempt to step outside their prior understandings. All can take a new look at the evidence. There is still room for the use of reason, evaluation of evidence, and the presentation of arguments. But under the circumstances there will also be plenty of room for humility and charity.

In fact, we cannot give up on the importance of historical research and the rational consideration of evidence. We simply cannot do without it unless we choose the comfort of solitude and silence and cut ourselves off from the realm of public discourse. Because we cannot have absolute knowledge does not mean that we cannot have knowledge.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. *The Quest and Jewish-Christian Dialogue*

Having looked at the positive and negative aspects of the quest for Jewish-Christian dialogue, we may now turn to some concluding

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naturalism. It cannot be otherwise until historiographers are able to challenge successfully this ascendant paradigm of reality supposed by most Jesus questers" (208).

<sup>49</sup> Dunn is one of the few who addresses the matter head-on: *Jesus Remembered*, 92–97.

<sup>50</sup> See Alan G. Padgett's helpful article, "Advice for Religious Historians: On the Myth of a Purely Historical Jesus," in *The Resurrection*, ed. Davis et al., 287–307.

remarks on the subject. Given the mixed results that we have noted, what can we say about the quest of the historical Jesus and its impact upon Jewish-Christian relations? How far have we come? How much further can we go? What can we realistically expect?

1. To begin with, we must be grateful for what has been accomplished, which at least deserves the evaluation *so far, so good*. If we had only the two main achievements of the quest, namely, our increased knowledge of Second Temple Judaism, and the firm establishment of the Jewishness of Jesus, our gratitude would be justified. These are indeed significant contributions that have had a positive effect on Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The quest to this point has focused on areas upon which Jews and Christians can often readily agree, and to this extent we may judge the quest as helpful. But how far has the quest come, and how successfully?

2. Since it is widely agreed that thus far the quest can itself hardly be called an unalloyed success, *the potential of the quest for Jewish-Christian relations remains unclear*. The trouble is that the quest has not been able to get very far in arriving at its announced goal. Focusing more on the context than on Jesus himself, the quest, as we have noted, has failed to address the ultimately decisive questions. The historical method has seemed ill-suited to its subject matter in this case. Perhaps with the recent works of Wright, Dunn, and Hurtado, however, this may have begun to change.

Problems remain even with some agreed-upon positive conclusions mentioned above that have importance for Jewish-Christian dialogue. Thus, the quest's insistence that Jesus was fundamentally loyal to the Jewish faith and did not intend to create a new religion, while true enough on the one hand, can also conceal the newness that is implicit in so much of Jesus, his message and the new community of faith. It is clearly wrong to speak of that newness in terms of the creation of a new religion or of disloyalty to the Jewish faith. The only adequate word is "fulfillment," with all the continuity (and discontinuity) implied by that word, but "fulfillment" is not exactly a term that will promote positive responses from Jewish scholarship, or enhance Jewish-Christian relations. Not unexpectedly, "fulfillment" has the ring of supersessionism to Jewish ears. Supersessionism, however, we must insist, cannot be an option to any Christian who has read Romans 11.

3. In the final analysis, it would appear that *the "historical" Jesus arrived at through the historical method as traditionally practiced, cannot*

*finally become a bridge strong enough to cross the chasm that divides Jews and Christians.* "...Christians and Jews have drawn different conclusions and can stay together regarding Jesus' identity only part of the way. At some point along that way we necessarily confront the theological issues..."<sup>51</sup> This should not be a distressing conclusion. The limited agreement that the quest has been able to provide has been helpful, but productive dialogue and good relations do not depend on the ability to agree on everything.

In fact, Jewish and Christian scholars who look at Jesus will continue to disagree, and therefore we must learn how to face and cope with our disagreements. "Why are we so reluctant, in this age of dialogue, to emphasize those things that *separate* or *differentiate* Jews and Christians?" asks Isabel Wollaston.<sup>52</sup> The point of dialogue, after all, is not to erase disagreements or to overcome all differences, but rather to come to a better understanding and to learn to respect those with whom we disagree. Post-holocaust sensitivities, as highly appropriate as they are, have unfortunately made it difficult—indeed, sometimes nearly impossible—for Christian scholars to arrive at any negative conclusions about the Judaism of the New Testament, or things Jewish, such as the Pharisees or the Law, without being considered anti-Semitic, or at least potentially so.

For that very important reason, however, one very important caveat must be insisted upon at this point. Christians can disagree with Judaism only if they remain highly vigilant against any semblance of anti-Semitism. Here we are required to speak in absolute, non-negotiable, terms: Christians cannot and will not tolerate anti-Semitism.

4. *Dialogue must finally take place within the framework of the faith of the other, as defined by the other.* Jacob Neusner has called attention to the futility of Christians defining Judaism, and Jews defining Christianity, in such ways as to minimize the differences between the two.<sup>53</sup> In this way the distinctive character of each is compromised. One of the most common instruments used in this regard is the his-

<sup>51</sup> Harrington, "The Jewishness of Jesus: Facing Some Problems," 13.

<sup>52</sup> "Responses to Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Christian-Jewish Relations," in *The Future of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. D. Cohn-Sherbok (Lewiston: Mellen, 1999), 31–48, at 44.

<sup>53</sup> *Telling Tales: Making Sense of Christian and Judaic Nonsense: The Urgency and Basis for Judeo-Christian Dialogue* (Louisville: Westminster and John Knox, 1993). See his earlier *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition* (New York and London: Trinity Press International/SCM, 1990).

torical Jesus, who is seen more and more as the common denominator that can pull together the two religions. Neusner refers to the minimalist or “Judaic Christology” of the Jewish Jesus as the product of what he calls a “dual monologue.”

Similarly, Christians who in their eagerness to build bridges or repair the damage to relations caused by the holocaust, appeal to the “historical” Jesus, and speak of a Jesus fully explainable within Jewish categories, hardly recognizable as the Lord of the church, do no service to dialogue. Facing the differences candidly, Neusner concludes “‘the historical Jesus’ is simply inconsequential when it comes to a dialogue between Judaism and Christianity. Either Judaism addresses Jesus Christ God Incarnate (or equivalently critical formulations of Christian theology) or it fails to address Christianity at all.”<sup>54</sup>

New Testament scholar David Catchpole articulates a similar perspective when he argues that Christians who participate in Jewish-Christian dialogue “must be more careful than they have sometimes been to work *to* and then *from* a clear definition of the essence of Christianity.”<sup>55</sup> “This pattern of faith,” he continues, “does not invest in the historical Jesus as such, nor in Jesus the Jew, nor in the Jesus who confined his mission to the Jewish people, nor in the Jesus who worked within the parameters of the Mosaic law and thus understood the ‘boundary markers’ of the people of God to be circumcision, food laws, and sabbath.”<sup>56</sup>

Catchpole nevertheless does not dismiss the importance of the historical Jesus. He calls attention to the importance of historical elements within the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed itself. One of

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<sup>54</sup> *Telling Tales*, 89. “On the Jewish side, by focusing upon the man Jesus—presenting him, for example, as a Reform rabbi or a marginal Jew or a Galilean pietist (Hasid) or in numerous other this-worldly Christologies—Jews have avoided stating forthrightly what in the Middle Ages, under different circumstances, they found the courage to state on pain of death: he was not and is not what the Christians say he was and is” (103).

<sup>55</sup> “The Role of the Historical Jesus in Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” in *The Future of Jewish-Christian Dialogue*, ed. Cohn-Sherbok, 183–216, at 211. “My suggestion is that the absolutely crucial and essential core of that position is to be found in post-historical-Jesus realities: the resurrection itself, the inclusive and corporate Christ who is the eschatological Adam and the embodiment of a new humanity; the worldwide community, drawing into itself persons of any and every ethnic background without distinction; the one baptism which makes legally binding and determinative the faith experience of the one God who is the God of the whole world, and whose sovereignty over that one world is effected through the lordship of the risen one” (211).

<sup>56</sup> Catchpole, “Role of the Historical Jesus,” 211.

the central elements in that creed is the crucifixion of Jesus, which already points to what remains a remarkable tension within the historical Jesus.

Himself *a member of* the Jewish people, [Jesus] was in his mission *in conflict with* the Jewish people, and in the end he believed he was *dying for* the Jewish people. That essential identification with, and at the same time critical distance from, his people represents a tension in the mission of the historical Jesus which, I submit, the Jewish-Christian dialogue at any and every later time must not relax.<sup>57</sup>

### 5. *Concluding Observations*

It is clear that we have reason to be grateful for the significant achievements of the quest of the historical Jesus. We have been deeply enriched by an increased knowledge of Second Temple Judaism and the emphasis upon the Jewishness of Jesus. At the same time, however, we have had to criticize the quest at points and to deem its method as, in the last analysis, inadequate to the task. It remains to be seen whether the historical-critical method can be refined, as some are attempting to do, so as to make it a more effective tool in understanding the Jesus of history.

In light of the calls of Neusner and Catchpole for the necessity of Jewish-Christian dialogue to come to terms with the full christology of the church, some might conclude that the quest of the historical Jesus is not merely impossible, but unnecessary too. This would be a grave mistake, however, since it would result in the heresy of docetism, wherein the humanity of Jesus becomes a mere illusion. The creeds, like the New Testament itself, affirm with equal vigor the humanity *and* the deity of Jesus. This fact alone warrants the robust study of Jesus as a man set fully in his own historical context.

It is clear that dialogue worthy of the name cannot succeed if it works with the severely reduced data base that the quest of the historical Jesus provides. But, as Catchpole and others have indicated, even within the criteria normally mandated of the historical Jesus there are surprising indicators that do not fit the Jewish context well—

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<sup>57</sup> Catchpole, "Role of the Historical Jesus," 212. On the death of Jesus, see Peter Balla, "What Did Jesus Think about his Approaching Death?" in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 239–258.



the unusual, the unexpected, the problematic. We cannot expect the historical Jesus to correspond exactly to the Christology of the church, impacted—but not created by!—the experience of the resurrection. The post-resurrection perspective of the church has its inevitable effect upon the gospel narratives. But if we cannot look for a one-to-one correspondence between the historical Jesus and the Jesus believed upon in the early church, we can at least establish a degree of continuity between the two.<sup>58</sup> And that continuity is of the greatest importance, since without it the Christian faith becomes like a vaporous cloud, the phantasm of deluded minds.

The quest of the historical Jesus has much importance for Jewish-Christian relations. It is not, however, a panacea. True dialogue will always have to go beyond the historical Jesus to consideration of the Jesus confessed by the faith of the church. But there are positive contributions of the quest that can and ought to lead not merely to tolerance, but also to mutual respect, good will, and, yes, even love for the other. After all, Christians are, because of Jesus, kinsfolk of the Jews—indeed, Gentiles come into the larger family through adoption—even if at the same time they remain members of different families.<sup>59</sup>

We end where we began, with the comment that Jesus Christ is paradoxically the one who divides and unites Jews and Christians. Jewish scholar Lewis John Eron makes the point in the following words:

Jesus, the Jew, neither binds us nor separates us. He is historically interesting. Jesus, the Christ of the Church, is the one who brings us together and draws us apart. It is because of Christ that religious Jews can meet with religious Christians, realize the depth of our experiences, and learn that we are truly not the same but refreshingly different.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> There will, of course, always be those who dissent, such as Geza Vermes who, having concluded that Jesus the Jew “does not reflect, but rather clashes with, traditional, dogmatic, Christocentric, Trinitarian Christianity” and that “historic Christianity is not the religion of Jesus the Jew, nor the religion taught by him,” speaks of the serious questions “awaiting Christian answers”: “Jesus the Jew: Christian and Jewish Reactions,” in *Jews and Christians in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde and Edward Shils (New York: St. Martin’s, 1991), 25–42, at 39.

<sup>59</sup> As Keck points out, “that Jesus links Gentiles to Israel is as true today as it was in the first century,” *Who is Jesus?*, 63.

<sup>60</sup> “Jesus and Judaism,” in Leonard Swidler, Lewis John Eron, Gerard Sloyan, and Lester Dean, *Bursting the Bonds? A Jewish-Christian Dialogue on Jesus and Paul* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), 108.



# HISTORIC JESUSES

CEES DEN HEYER

## 1. *Albert Schweitzer*

A hundred years ago, Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) wrote his famous book about the research being done on the Jesus of history.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter he became a well-known figure in this field of theological study. In his work he provided an overview—as complete as possible—of the many publications of the nineteenth century that had resulted from the interest in historical questions concerning Jesus. Who was he really? The traditional christological dogma had no doubt about that: Jesus was the son of God, “of one substance with the Father.” With their critical questions, theologians, as a direct consequence of Enlightenment thought, challenged these statements which had been vindicated through the centuries. Driven by their curiosity, they probed beyond confessions and dogmas in search of the *real* Jesus.

Schweitzer reports on this quest in his well-written book. He also points out the weaknesses of this investigation. Researchers claimed to present an objective image of Jesus, but it was not consistent. Each researcher found his “own” Jesus. He was a conservative for the conservative, a progressive for the progressive, a capitalist or a Communist, a moralist, a revolutionary, an artist, a thinker of genius or a man of humble origin from Galilee.<sup>2</sup> It is to Schweitzer’s credit that he demonstrated how much the course of this “objective” research was determined by subjective assumptions.

Schweitzer expressed the problem in a very striking way:

The research into the life of Jesus has gone through a strange process. The intention was to find the Jesus of history with the idea of placing him in this form into our time as teacher and saviour. The tie binding him to the rock of church teaching for centuries was loosened, and those

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906); *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913; ET: Tübingen: Mohr, 1966).

<sup>2</sup> J. Jeremias, “Der gegenwärtigen Stand der Debatte um das Problem des historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatischen Christus*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: Topelmann, 1961), 12–25.

involved were glad that there was life and movement again in this figure and that they saw the human Jesus of history approaching. But he did not stop; he went past our time and returned to his own. The theology of the past decennia felt estranged and shocked by the fact that it could not, with all its forced explanations and violence, retain him in our time, but had to let him go. He returned to his own time the way a released sling returns to its original position.

Nineteenth-century research produced no single image of Jesus, but a confusing multitude of perceptions and ideas.<sup>3</sup> Consciously or not, each researcher created a Jesus who corresponded to his wishes and desires. This assertion raises the question whether it is possible to construct a research method that will lead to an objective conclusion. Schweitzer thought he could provide an affirmative answer to this question. His assumption was that Jesus would remain a stranger to people of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Schweitzer was thoroughly convinced of this. The man from Nazareth is no contemporary of the people of today. He lived in another time and in another world of thought. This fact should be taken absolutely seriously. It sounds like a paradox, and it is one: Only as the “stranger” from an ancient past can Jesus be a source of inspiration for people living twenty centuries later.

In summary, the fact of Jesus being a “stranger” forms the essence of Schweitzer’s view. In the chapter titled “The Solution of Consistent Theology,” he sketches an image of Jesus as an apocalyptic who expected the Kingdom of God to come *during* his lifetime. Typical for Schweitzer’s position is his preference for the Gospel of Matthew. Otherwise than most exegetes, he chose not to go along with the hypothesis of two sources which is based on the priority of Mark. In chapter 10 of his gospel, Matthew includes a lengthy discourse by Jesus directed to his disciples, whom he is sending off to proclaim the message of the Kingdom of heaven. Schweitzer considers the passage that follows to be the central one: “When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes” (Matt 10:23).<sup>4</sup> Jesus was convinced that he would not see his disciples again on this earth, so close at hand was the Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> C. J. den Heyer, *Jesus Matters, 150 Years of Research* (London: SCM, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> All Bible quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version (1972).

<sup>5</sup> M. Künzi, *Das Nahwartungslogion Matthäus 10,23. Geschichte seiner Auslegung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1970).

Jesus' commandments, such as those written down in the Sermon on the Mount, fit into this scheme. Jesus' ethics are to be understood as ethics "for the interim." It is not the ethics of the Kingdom of God itself, but it is ethics intended for people who are expectantly awaiting that Kingdom—people who, like Jesus, are living in the "interim," in the short period of time presaging God's final intervention in this world. For Schweitzer, this is the ongoing meaning of Jesus' words and deeds, life and death. He has shown us that it is always worthwhile to live, anew, "apocalyptically"—to live, following the example of Jesus, in expectant anticipation of God's victory.

## 2. *Reactions*<sup>6</sup>

The results of Schweitzer's research have ongoing significance for the discussion on the Jesus of history. To this day his conclusions are mentioned in every scholarly study. In our time we can no longer approach the subject as uncritically—not to say: naively—as they did in the nineteenth century. This is the lesson Schweitzer taught not only his contemporaries but also following generations. Jesus lived in the Jewish world in the first decades of the Common Era. He was a man of *his* time.

Schweitzer's words of warning were heard and taken to heart, but his view of Jesus met with very little favour. He was attacked from two directions. His apocalyptic Jesus raised the unmitigated ire of orthodox believers. The idea that Christ could have been mistaken was rejected as blasphemous. His critics drew support from the fourth-century confession in which the divinity of Jesus was claimed as being established beyond the shadow of a doubt.

However, a critical voice could be heard even in the circle of exegetes trained in the historical-critical approach. Their objection was not that Schweitzer's view conflicted with classical dogma, but that he did more or less the same thing as those he so sharply criticized. After all, in his book he did not call for an end to researching the life of Jesus. In spite of his cautioning, he maintained the opinion that the gospels allow access to the historical Jesus. While his choice for the priority of Matthew's Gospel was original, his way of using it as a

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<sup>6</sup> E. Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer als Theologe* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1979).

source did not differ from what his contemporaries did with respect to the Gospel of Mark.

Albert Schweitzer was at the brink of the twentieth century when he completed his study on the research concerning the Jesus of history. He was situated on the frontier of two periods in several respects. It is tempting to assign him a place at the beginning of a new period of theological investigation. And yet, it does not seem advisable to do so. Schweitzer's view that it is possible to reconstruct the life of Jesus marks him as a nineteenth-century man after all. He did offer sharp and correct criticism of his predecessors, he quite rightly espoused caution, but he did not bring any renewal.

### 3. *Rudolf Bultmann*

A second name we cannot ignore on this issue is that of Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), the eminent and very influential German scholar of the New Testament. He was involved in New Testament research on a broad scale.<sup>7</sup> This also included intensive concern with the origins of the four gospels. His extensive study dedicated to *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* appeared in print at an early stage of his academic career.<sup>8</sup> Later, while preparing his commentary on the Gospel of John, he developed a complicated thesis on the literary sources on which this document is based.<sup>9</sup> In this article it will suffice to provide a short summary of his findings. Although Bultmann had great appreciation for the Fourth Evangelist's theological insights, he considered the gospel inadequate to serve as a source for reconstructing the life of Jesus. He viewed Paul and John as the two greatest theologians from the first century of church history. The author of the Fourth Gospel may have been a profound theologian, but he was no historian. Bultmann expressed less enthusiasm for the level of theological profundity in the synoptic gospels. They directed their vision on the past and tried, each in their own way, to sketch "a life of Jesus." This does not mean that the synoptic gospels may be compared with

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<sup>7</sup> B. Jaspert, ed., *Rudolf Bultmann. Werk und Wirkung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984).

<sup>8</sup> R. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921).

<sup>9</sup> R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, Meyers Kommentar (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941).

biographies in the modern sense of the word. But Bultmann was convinced that those three documents make it possible to trace a “profile” of Jesus. For this very reason he responded affirmatively, in the twenties of the twentieth century, to a request to write a historical study of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> The book was published in a series of biographies of influential figures in the history of humanity.

According to Bultmann, Jesus did not see himself as the Messiah. He presented himself as prophet for the Kingdom of God that was to come. The obvious conclusion would seem to be that Bultmann does not contribute much that is new in comparison to Schweitzer. Indeed, Bultmann’s interpretation of Jesus’ message could be considered “consistently eschatological.” However, there are noteworthy differences between the two theologians. For Schweitzer the key to a good understanding of Jesus’ words and deeds lay in his apocalyptic expectations for the future. Rather than calling Jesus an apocalyptic, Bultmann refers to him as an “eschatologist.” In Jesus’ proclamation, the Kingdom of God did, indeed, have a major role, but his expectations were not—or very minimally—influenced by apocalyptic conceptions. In his preaching it was not so much the dramatic end of the world that formed the central theme, but the call to his contemporaries to repent, with a view to the near advent of the Kingdom of God. According to Bultmann, Jesus was not bent on terrifying his listeners with exhaustive graphic descriptions of the horrors presaging the end of the world. Jesus did not appear as a prophet of repentance. He was the prophet for God’s love for people.

A second difference between Schweitzer and Bultmann is in how the research on the Jesus of history is evaluated. We have seen that the former considered it very important and was, besides, convinced that it could bring trustworthy results, provided it is carried out in the right way. Bultmann was extremely sceptical about this historical research. He wrote a book about Jesus, but subsequent to his scholarly publications he emphasized again and again that faith could not be based on historical research. He positioned the Jesus of history over against the Christ of kerygma—that is to say Christ as proclaimed in the early Christian community. Bultmann had come to see that, in fact, there is no way beyond the writings of the New Testament leading to the Jesus of history. We have only the Jesus of kerygma. One could say that in

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<sup>10</sup> R. Bultmann, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926).

this way Bultmann attempted to evade the problem of historicity. His view found wide support for a long time in the twentieth century. This does not mean, however, that a satisfactory solution has been found. For who is this kerygmatic Christ? What is the content of this kerygma (= the proclamation concerning Jesus)? Bultmann put emphasis on the theological views of Paul and John, in his opinion the two greatest theologians from the earliest beginnings of Christianity.<sup>11</sup> But what, then, is the significance of, for example, the synoptic gospels?

#### 4. *Creative Evangelists*

Anyone looking for the “real” Jesus will not be able to avoid providing an answer to the question of the *historical* value of the various gospels. I shall offer a few examples to illustrate this. Matthew and Luke relate that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.<sup>12</sup> Mark says nothing about that, while John even seems to deny it (John 7:40–44). Is the story about Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem of real significance for Christian faith? Matthew and Luke give an affirmative answer to this question. Matthew in particular regards this event as evidence that Jesus’ “roots” are firmly anchored in scripture. Was Jesus really born in Bethlehem? The other two evangelists, Mark and John, evidently have no idea of it. Did Matthew and Luke have access to supplementary information? Or should their stories about Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem be read as theological treatises and not as reports of historical events?

Mark evidently enjoyed telling stories about healings by Jesus (Mark 2:1–12; 5:1–20, 21–43). Sometimes, however, the writer of the earliest gospel is strikingly frugal in his reporting. For example, in telling about the “temptations” of Jesus in the wilderness, he does not say much more than *that* he was tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12–13). Matthew and Luke have far more to tell about it (Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). They derived these facts from the Q-source. Ascertaining this does not, of course, resolve the difficulty: how do you explain that the Q-source has more information than the Gospel of Mark?

A long list of differences between the four gospels can, without any difficulty, be added to these two examples. Since that is not the pur-

<sup>11</sup> R. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953).

<sup>12</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary of the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1979).



pose of this publication, I shall confine myself to one more example. Practically everyone would regard a profile of the historical Jesus as incomplete without some attention in it for the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Through the ages this discourse has given people the courage and the spiritual strength to rise up against oppression and violence, to protest against injustice and inhumanity, and to stand up for those who are plagued by poverty and hunger. And yet, one must face up to the question whether Jesus ever spoke the *whole discourse*. To begin with: a search for the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospels of Mark and John turns up nothing. The Third Gospel includes only a much shortened version (Luke 6:17–49). It is because of Matthew that the term “sermon on the mount” has found its way into church and theology: “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain . . .” (Matt 5:1). Again Matthew points to scripture. He does not desire his reader to hunt up “the mountain of the beatitudes” on a map. Matthew believes that for anyone who knows the Bible, half a word is sufficient: just as Moses in the olden days went up Mount Sinai to receive God’s Torah (Exodus 19), so, too, does Jesus now, as the new Moses, climb the “mount” to make known his interpretation of the laws in public for the first time. Matthew was no historian in the modern sense. He was a scribe (Matt 13:52). Using tradition—the memories of Jesus’ statements—he has created *his* Sermon on the Mount. In scholarly publications an attempt is often made to find Jesus’ *actual* words underneath the words of the evangelist. A uniform judgment appeared to be an impossibility. In all honesty it must be admitted that we cannot say precisely when it is Jesus speaking and when it is the evangelist presenting his own interpretation and his view.

Jesus lived in the land of the Jews in the first decades of the first century. At the beginning of the thirties he died on a cross in Jerusalem. The canonical gospels were written forty or fifty years later. In that relatively short period, much had happened, much had changed. After the cross and the resurrection, the earliest disciples started reflecting on—or, in modern terms, working through—the past. The apostle Paul felt called (Gal 1:15–16) to approach the Gentile world with the gospel of Christ. His activities beyond borders made theological reorientation essential.<sup>13</sup> Dramatic events in the land of the Jews

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<sup>13</sup> J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980).

during the sixties and seventies—a revolt against the Romans, the conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple, the growing influence of the Pharisaic group—aggravated the antitheses between the early Christian community and the Jewish tradition and led, finally, to the schism between Jewry and Christianity. This was the complex situation in which the evangelists wrote their gospels. They brought the past to memory, but not, in the first place, out of historical interest. They looked backwards in the hope of finding answers to questions and problems of their own time.

##### 5. *Various Images of Jesus in the New Testament*<sup>14</sup>

Every comparison of the gospels reveals that the evangelists used the available sources—whether written or oral—creatively. According to a saying in Matthew, he and his colleagues can be compared with “a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old” (Matt 13:52). This combination of continuity and discontinuity is the reason that Jesus’ life cannot be described in detail. Thanks to more than one hundred and fifty years of intensive historical-critical investigation concerning the four canonical gospels, much has become known about their origins, but at the same time it has to be acknowledged that a great deal remains hidden in the mystery of the past.

The evangelists did not write fiction. However, they do not hesitate to express their preferences, their wishes and their desires in their stories about Jesus. For Mark, Jesus was, first and foremost, a miracle worker and an exorcist. With compassion the earliest evangelist describes the hopeless situation of the sick and the possessed, who are healed and liberated from ailments and evil spirits by Jesus (Mark 5:1–20 and 5:21–43). Laying the passages from Mark and Matthew side by side renders surprising discoveries. Usually Matthew follows Mark’s text more or less word for word. However, at the very moment that his evangelist colleague gives attention to the serious nature of the illness or the case of possession, he starts abbreviating the story considerably (Matt 8:28–34 and 9:18–26). Evidently Matthew is not particularly interested in the miracle working power of Jesus. The result is that his narrative is strikingly frugal. He deems a few words

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<sup>14</sup> H. Köster and J. M. Robinson, *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971).

sufficient. Matthew is primarily interested in the interpretation of the commandments of Torah. For him, Jesus is the scribe and teacher who teaches his followers what to do and how to live with a view to the speedy advent of the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5–7; 25:31–46).

The Third Evangelist is directed to another address and therefore writes a different gospel. Luke addresses himself to Theophilus, obviously an important man, a high official in the Roman Empire (Luke 1:1–4). Luke is absolutely clear about the fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ is also intended for Gentiles. He emphasizes that the gospel consists in a glad message (Luke 2:10). Even the heavens celebrate when a sinner repents and a human being is saved from the threat of ruin (Luke 15). The poor receive free passage through the Kingdom of God (Luke 6:20–26). In the parable, the poor man Lazarus is carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham immediately after his death (Luke 16:19–31). While writing his gospel, Luke had the wealthy man of status Theophilus constantly in mind—and he probably also thought of himself. He, too, belonged to the better situated of his time. He was a man of letters, with a broad education, of Greek-Hellenistic background but also very familiar with Jewish Scripture. Luke, too, must have struggled with the cogent question how a rich man can be saved. He created unrivalled stories (= parables) in which can be found answers to this question. The remarkable parable about the unjust steward ends as follows: “make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations” (Luke 16:9). The conclusion is clear: money is and always will be, for the possessor of it, a danger that must not be underrated, but one can also do good things with it, and then a bright future is in sight.

His view of Jesus—the christology of Luke’s Gospel—fits into this way of thinking. In the conversations that, according to this evangelist, were held by Jesus and his disciples after the last supper, we find a typical statement put in Jesus’ mouth by Luke: “For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27). Roles are radically reversed in the Kingdom: lords become servants, those who are last become first.

The Fourth Evangelist follows a line of his own and sketches an image of Jesus that can be understood only with difficulty by those who have intimate knowledge of the synoptic gospels. The following sentence from the famous prologue of the Fourth Gospel can be

considered the point of departure: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus is a human being among human beings, but as such he also reveals the glory of God. This “duality” shows up in all the stories of the Fourth Gospel. Going by outward appearances, a tired Jewish man is sitting at Jacob’s well (John 4:6), but on closer acquaintance he appears to be “the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42). In Jesus’ work, God’s work is revealed (John 5:17–18). Father and son are one. God and Jesus are wholly one in spirit: in works, will and purpose.

The four canonical gospels speak extensively about Jesus’ suffering and death. The fact that he is crucified forms part of their narrative, but—contrary to Paul’s letters—it is not given a special, soteriological meaning in any of the four gospels. Mark emphasizes in his passion story that he dies on the cross as the suffering righteous one (Mark 15:34). His dying is the ultimate consequence of his life: he lived for others; therefore his death on the cross, also, can be interpreted as a suffering and a dying “for others.” His words and acts at the last supper with his disciples will need to be interpreted in this light as well (Mark 14:22–25).

The Fourth Gospel follows a line of its own also in this aspect of Jesus’ life. In his passion story, Jesus is not the victim, but rather the director. He knows what he can expect *and* what he must do. He does not hesitate, nor does he doubt. The Fourth Evangelist says nothing of a spiritual struggle in Gethsemane. Jesus has no difficulty fulfilling his task. He goes, and conquers darkness. The cross is no defeat or humiliation, but victory and exaltation (John 18–19).<sup>15</sup>

The apostle Paul views his suffering in general and his crucifixion in particular differently. This event is central to his view of what forms the core of Christian faith. According to his understanding, the cross is first and foremost a symbol of humiliation and certainly not of exaltation (Phil 2:6–11). According to Torah, a man crucified is a man accursed of God (Gal 3:13). His death on the cross is a stumbling block and folly (1 Cor 1:23). After an encounter with the Risen Lord near Damascus, Paul knows that the curse has become a blessing, and that what is foolishness for human beings, can turn out to be wisdom

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<sup>15</sup> M. C. de Boer, *Johannine Perspectives on the Death of Jesus* (Kampen: Pharos, 1996).

for God. From that moment he regards the crucified as the source of his life, his liberty and his reconciliation (2 Cor 5:16–21).<sup>16</sup>

The limitations of the space allotted me lead me to confine my observations to what is written above. Should anyone wish to include other biblical writings—such as the letter to the Hebrews, the letters of Peter and the last book of the Bible—in his or her considerations, he or she will discover new aspects besides what has already been named. For this reason, the exegete cannot, ultimately, be satisfied with concentrating on the Christ of kerygma or, as is said in orthodox circles, the Christ of Scripture. The one who claims that should not be astonished when he or she is asked: which Jesus or which Christ of Scripture is meant, exactly? Which image of Jesus or of Christ is preferred?

#### 6. *Reinterpretation of the Kingdom of God*

The Bible is a many-coloured book.<sup>17</sup> The writings of the New Testament voice views and counter-views. Matthew creates a different image of Jesus than he met up with in his most important source, the Gospel of Mark. One can even show thought developing within one and the same gospel. This is particularly the case for the Gospel of Matthew: under pressure from changed circumstances, a strong relationship to the Jewish and Old Testament tradition is converted to a view that could, instead, be typified as anti-Jewish. As a consequence of the Kingdom of God not arriving as speedily as expected, that conception, too, is examined critically. The apocalyptic Kingdom of God has a central place in Mark's Gospel. This is also the case with many passages in Matthew. But in a few pericopes we also hear other voices. The suggestion that corrections have taken place in a later re-working of the gospel seems to find support: not the *coming* of the Kingdom is important, but the *going to* the Kingdom (Matt 21:31). Such shifts can also be found in the Gospel of Luke: "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:20–21). The Gospel of John, finally, bids farewell to the expectation of the kingdom of God; if, indeed, it is

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<sup>16</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 207–233.

<sup>17</sup> J. Reumann, *Variety and Unity in New Testament Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

mentioned at all—and that is not often—the reference is to *seeing* or *entering* the kingdom (John 3:3, 5).

Corrections and appositions based on increasing understanding? It seems to me that we need to characterize the developments described above in this way. The fact that the coming of the Kingdom of God was not realized required the early Christian community to re-orient itself drastically. The result was a *Gnostic* understanding of the concept of the apocalyptic Kingdom of God. It is no longer necessary to wait for its advent. It is already present. It is simply a matter of having the ability—and this requires knowledge and insight—to discover and to see it. This saying from the *Gospel of Thomas* is significant: “His disciples said to him: ‘When will the kingdom come?’ (Jesus said) ‘It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying “here it is” or “there it is.” Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it’” (Logion 113).<sup>18</sup> The above quoted passage from the Gospel of Luke influenced this saying.

The change in the message has consequences for the image of the one who proclaims it. Already within the New Testament, the apocalyptic Jesus is being *de-apocalypticized*. He changes with respect to his outer appearance as well as his inner self. The strange, perhaps frightening prophet full of the end changes into a teacher of wisdom, and the image of the crucified is altered as well: the reality of suffering disappears into the background and is replaced by the sublimity and the untouchability of the pre-existent son of God. The result is that the interpretation of the concept “redemption” also shifts. In his earliest letter Paul writes, short and snappy, in a totally apocalyptic context: “Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess 1:10). In the Gospel of John it is not the future that has the central position, nor the cross, but the incarnation, the son of God being sent into the world: “He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already” (John 3:18).

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<sup>18</sup> J. M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1988).

### 7. *Jesus in the Non-Canonical Writings*<sup>19</sup>

In the introduction to his gospel, Luke reports that he is not the first to have attempted to write down memories of Jesus' words and deeds. Others before him have done so. Luke even says that *many* did it (Luke 1:1). Evidently many gospels were in circulation in the first centuries. The evangelist probably completed his book in the eighties of the first century. One can conclude from writings of church fathers that they were not only aware of the existence of non-canonical gospels but also of their content. They refer to them and sometimes even quote from them. Usually they do not do this to show agreement. Church fathers warn their readers concerning the heretical character of these non-canonical gospels.

A few of the non-canonical gospels have a Jewish-Christian origin, such as *The Gospel of the Hebrews*, *The Gospel of the Nazarenes* and *The Gospel of the Ebionites*. The authors of these writings were very conscious of their being Jews and placed great value on fulfilling the commandments of Torah. Basing their view on Scripture, they regarded Jesus as the "eschatological" prophet following the example of Moses (Deut 18:15–18). They resisted on principle the idea that Jesus could really be the Son of God—an idea that gained increasing influence in the Gentile Christian church from the second to the third century partly through the *logos* christology arising from the prologue of the Fourth Gospel. The result was that Jewish Christians who did not want to deny their Old Testament-Jewish background became more and more isolated. Their accentuation of Jesus' humanity came into conflict with the high christology that began dominating. Their deviant christological conceptions were challenged and dismissed by the church fathers for this reason. They are declared to be heretics. Their writings, including the gospels mentioned, disappear from the stage. At the end of the first century Luke already wrote about "the many" who were supposed to have attempted to write a gospel. Very likely he was unaware that his would not be the last of a stream of publications, but the first. In the following centuries as well, "many" took to the pen to write down their view of Jesus and preserve it for descendants.

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<sup>19</sup> H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990).

Jewish Christians sketched the image of a Jesus who remained within the boundaries of Jewish tradition. In Gnostic circles, writings appeared in which Jesus was drawn as a teacher of wisdom who had distanced himself completely from his Jewish background. It is not possible to include an extensive treatment of these developments. In connection with the discussion about the Jesus of history, I shall limit myself to the *Gospel of Thomas*. To an increasing degree, this document, since its discovery and publication, plays a major role in the research.

### 8. *The Gospel of Thomas*

In 1945 an amazing discovery was made at Nag Hammadi, in southern Egypt, concerning fifty documents dating from the first centuries of Christianity. The *Gospel of Thomas* was part of this small library. It is customary to call this document a "gospel," but that gives rise to misunderstandings. In terms of form it cannot be compared to the four canonical gospels. It does not contain a continuous story beginning with Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, followed by his public appearance in Galilee and ending with his death on a cross in Jerusalem. In the *Gospel of Thomas* one looks in vain for something like a birth story; neither is a passion story found in it. This "gospel" consists of a hundred and fourteen sayings of Jesus. The length of the sayings is very diverse. Some include only a few words, others consist of a few sentences. Jesus seldom holds discussions with anyone; usually he is delivering a monologue. Where there is no story, there can hardly be a chronology. Until now it has also proved impossible to demonstrate convincingly any thought development in the successive sayings.

Although the *Gospel of Thomas* is part of a Gnostic library, in the course of time it became evident that not all the sayings can be called Gnostic without further ado. In the twelfth saying, Jesus gives his disciples some remarkable advice. They ask him who is to be their leader when he is gone. Jesus' answer is surprising: "The disciples said to Jesus, 'We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?' Jesus said to them: 'Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being'" (Logion 12). In the New Testament this James is called "the Lord's brother" (Gal 1:19).

A plausible conclusion is that the *Gospel of Thomas* includes several "layers": a later layer that has a Gnostic character, but also earlier



layers which have not (yet) been influenced by Gnostic conceptions. The one who has got onto this trail can dig in this gospel like an archaeologist in search of earlier layers. In this way the researcher comes upon a few sayings that are similar to words of Jesus in the canonical gospels.<sup>20</sup> As illustration, the following example:

He said, 'there was a good man who owned a vineyard. He leased it to tenant farmers so that they might work it and he might collect the produce from them. He sent his servant so that the tenants might give him the produce of the vineyard. They seized his servant and beat him, all but killing him. The servant went back and told his master. The master said, "Perhaps he did not recognize them." He sent another servant. The tenants beat this one as well. Then the owner sent his son and said, "Perhaps they will show respect to my son." Because the tenants knew that it was he who was the heir to the vineyard, they seized him and killed him. Let him who has ears hear' (Logion 65).

People knowledgeable in the New Testament will have heard many familiar notes in this story. But very likely it will not have escaped their notice that the story sometimes differs considerably from what they retain in their memory. A comparison with the parable of the unjust tenants in the three synoptic gospels (Mark 12:1–12; Matt 21:33–46; Luke 20:9–19) reveals that the version in the *Gospel of Thomas* is short and simple. Long before the Nag Hammadi discovery, exegetes pointed to the possibility that the parable in the canonical gospels may be strongly influenced by the christological reflection of the early Christian community.

Does this "gospel," hidden during the fourth century among a collection of Gnostic writings in a jar in Egypt, bring us closer to the historical Jesus? Does this "gospel," with its complex origins, include elements that could be assessed as authentic words of Jesus? It seems almost too good to be true, but there are exegetes who defend such a thesis and take into account that the earliest "layers" in the *Gospel of Thomas* could possibly be of an early date, perhaps even earlier than the canonical gospels.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> C. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition: Synoptic Tradition in the Nag Hammadi Library* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986).

<sup>21</sup> M. J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994).

### 9. *Jesus Has Many Faces*

In the first half of the first century there lived a Jewish man in Galilee who made history. He answered to the name Jeshua but later became known worldwide as Jesus Christ. He came from Nazareth, at that time an unimportant little town without traditions or pretensions. Almost nothing is known with certainty about his youth. He grew up as the oldest son of Joseph the carpenter and his wife Miriam/Mary. The family consisted of five sons and an unknown number of daughters. Probably both parents had sympathy for Pharisaic ideals and brought up their children in such a way that they became familiar with the scriptures and obeyed the commandments of Torah. Joseph practiced the carpentry trade and, as was customary at that time, Jeshua, as eldest son, followed in his father's footsteps. He learned carpentry in practice from his father.

Marriage and family were honoured in the early Jewish tradition. Measured by today's standards, the marriageable age was exceptionally young: for girls it was around thirteen or fourteen, for boys a few years later. Anyone who was not yet married at age twenty was considered eccentric. The parents on both sides played an important role in bringing about a marriage. Joseph and Mary probably also went looking for a wife for their eldest son in Nazareth and its surroundings. It is not known whether a marriage ever occurred. But something else happens. At a certain moment, Jeshua's life takes a radical turn. It is not clear when, exactly, this change took place. It probably occurred somewhere between his twentieth and his thirtieth year. Jeshua leaves Nazareth and begins the life of a wanderer. However, he remains in the northern part of the land of the Jews. By preference, he stays in the regions around Lake Galilee. He is seen frequently in a few little towns, beautifully situated on the shores of this lake, such as Magdala and, above all, Capernaum; he appears to have friends and acquaintances there who offer him hospitality.

Jeshua quickly attracts much public interest. The former carpenter of Nazareth gathers a group of disciples around him, men and women who have been caught in his spell and become fascinated by the words he speaks and the things he does. His interpretation of commandments is frequently surprisingly creative. Besides that, he has the use of special powers. The sick are healed by him, lepers cleansed; and evil spirits, on his orders, leave their victims alone from that time on. Jeshua is a spiritually gifted human being, a real charismatic. He

appears to be a mystic, besides. To him, the God of Israel is not distant. He experiences him as a reality in his own life. Jeshua is aware of his profound spiritual bond with the God who has made himself known to his people Israel in scripture and tradition and who reveals himself to him now as well.

Jeshua leads an “exemplary” life. And yet, he does not only spread gladness and joy. He also evokes irritation. His piety and his steadfastness in fulfilling the commandments of Torah do not keep him from seeking the company of people whose way of life is not all that meticulous. He associates with sinners and tax-collectors as friends. He even shares their meals. Asked for an explanation for this—as viewed by the pious—offensive behaviour, he replies that he has come to seek that which is lost. As a shepherd goes to much trouble to bring a lost sheep back to the herd, so he, too, concerns himself with the fate of people who are on the verge of becoming lost.

Jeshua’s doings arouse curiosity. Who is he? What can one expect from him? Nearly a century earlier, the land of the Jews became part of the Roman Empire. This situation leaves a deep impression on society and divides the Jewish population into parties which have disdain for each other, hate and even fight each other. Great are the contrasts. Some do not shy away from the struggle. They encourage their adherents to resist the Romans by force. They are absolutely convinced that God is their ally and that he will not desert them. Others fear that a revolt will end in a blood bath and consider it more sensible to drop the weapons and wait for God to take a hand. There are also Jews who cooperate with Roman occupation authorities. For fanatics, they are collaborators, and they can expect God’s wrath to come upon them at the time of victory.

Jeshua lives in this deeply divided society. Which side does he choose? It is not easy to provide a clear answer to this question. He is evidently not a hothead. Neither is he a fanatic. Jeshua declares openly that he does not support the use of violence. He refuses to write people off or treat them as heretics simply because they take a different position than he. He appears to be notably forgiving toward tax-collectors, who grow rich thanks to Rome’s unjust tax system. In the judgment of fanatic Zealots, Jesus is far too “meek.” He concerns himself with people’s fate, but he shows little interest in political matters.

Jeshua is cautious and reserved. He does not employ great rhetoric. In general he rejects the term Messiah. Sometimes he talks about the coming of the Son of man. However, it remains vague to whom this

refers: to himself or to someone else? On many occasions he points to the proximity of the Kingdom of God. And yet, even then his view is of an ambiguous nature. In general he creates the impression that the Kingdom is as yet hidden in the—near—future. On one occasion, however, he seems to suggest that the Kingdom of God is basically already present in this world.

In accordance with the commandments, he journeys to Jerusalem as a pilgrim as the annual Passover feast approaches. When he arrives in the city, the situation starts becoming dangerous for him. Amazingly enough, this man of peace and meekness no longer avoids the confrontation. On the contrary, he consciously creates tensions. He organizes a procession into the city, with the result that he invites the suspicion that he claims kingship. In the temple he astonishes both friend and foe by his unexpected attack on the tradesmen found there. His criticism of what is done there calls some Old Testament prophets to mind.

What does Jeshua of Nazareth want? On one point at least, the authorities are in full agreement: he is dangerous and must therefore be eliminated as soon as possible. His strange behaviour can inspire others to take action and is therefore a serious threat in a situation which can best be described as armed peace. Jewish leaders and Roman occupation authorities have quickly joined forces on this and made a monstrous covenant. In the darkness of night they arrest Jeshua, and then they sentence him to death in a mockery of a trial. As early as the next day the execution is carried out; Jeshua dies on a cross.

Is this the tragic end of a good man? A short time later the mood in the group of disciples has changed like day and night. They take courage again in spite of the death of their teacher, their spiritual leader and source of inspiration. They tell an amazing story. Some of them have seen Jeshua again in the flesh. They believe that God has raised him from the dead. His followers tell the stories with so much conviction and joy that others start believing it, too. Jeshua is not dead, he lives!

In New Testament scholarship there is a great diversity of opinion. This does not mean, however, that there is never any consensus of a kind. It is not too daring, for instance, to presume that the above sketch of Jesus' life—a mini-biography—will find basic support with most current scholars. Of course, all the aspects mentioned could receive more attention, but that is not possible, or necessary, in this article.

It must be said that historical investigation has its limits. New Testament scholars have been looking fervently for the real Jesus since the nineteenth century, and the result of all their efforts is a short biographical sketch of a human being who lived a long time ago. He appears to have been an unusual human being, an interesting, creative personality, a man with an inspiring and liberating message. That is all true, and yet, readers are assailed by a sense of disappointment. Is that all there is to say? The historian will have to answer this question affirmatively. According to current standards of scholarship, at this time nothing more can be achieved than the above mini-biography.

Has all this, then, been a waste of time? In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, theologians hoped to disengage themselves from the centuries-old Christ of dogma. In optimistic mood they went searching for the *real* Jesus, using what they saw as *objective*, historical methods. However, they found the *historical* Jesus. At first they assumed that they had achieved their purpose after all: the historical Jesus and the real Jesus were one and the same. Gradually they came down to earth, and they came to see that they had not succeeded in their object. Theologians began to realize that historical research into the real Jesus was evidently doomed to failure. The one who looks at the past using historical methods can map out only part of the past. It is possible to sketch an image of the historical Jesus, but this does not mean that we are any closer to an understanding of the real Jesus. It is common knowledge that, argued from the historical point of view, the Gospel of John is considerably less trustworthy than the three synoptic gospels. Does the Fourth Gospel therefore have nothing to say to us? The thought cannot be excluded out of hand that it nevertheless offers more information about the real Jesus than a modern historian who has conceived a historically trustworthy image of Jesus with the help of methods standard in current scholarship.

#### 10. *The Discussion Begins in the New Testament*

The Bible is a many-coloured book. The New Testament includes a great number of images of Jesus. Perhaps I am being unjust to someone, but I cannot escape the impression that anyone who makes the case for concentrating on the “Christ of the kerygma” or the “Christ of Scripture” is insufficiently aware of the danger of playing down the differences between the various books of the New Testament. He or

she is assuming and constructing a unity that simply does not exist. Already in the first centuries of church history, theologians developed christological dogma on this assumption. Of course, they, too, observed nuances and differences between the gospels, but they felt called to look for similarities and therefore attempted, patiently and carefully, to put together the differences like the pieces of a puzzle so that in the end a single image of Jesus Christ came to the fore. Thereafter an effort was made to put this image of Jesus into words in an explicit way in written confessions and dogmatic formulas. This striving for unity had consequences for the church community. The one who had difficulty coming to terms with the accepted image ran the risk of being put out of the church as a heretic. The assumed unity in New Testament christology must provide the fundament for church unity. Church history has taught us that this ideal rarely, if ever, became reality.

In the New Testament there is no single clear, rounded off image of Jesus Christ. Each biblical writer, depending on the period, circumstances, desires and wishes, has his own way of looking at the past. A century ago, Schweitzer showed that in the nineteenth century every researcher sketched his or her own image of Jesus. A hundred years later, this statement appears not to have lost any of its significance or relevance. It has become increasingly clear in the debate that New Testament writers actually do nothing else. They, too, sketch their own image of Jesus. Again I will provide a few examples—to liven up the discussion I am assuming that the biblical writers had knowledge of each other's work and then put critical questions.

An interesting conversation could be set up between the four gospels and Paul concerning the value and purpose of stories about Jesus' doings. It is not impossible that Matthew and Paul get caught up in a hefty battle of words during this discussion about the place and the function of Torah commandments. It seems to be ruled out that the two could ever come to an agreement in this area. When these fighting-cocks are worn out from the struggle, the voice of Mark may sound. He will ask Paul in astonishment why he has consistently called Jesus *Christ* in all his letters. Mark will advance as clarification that he, on the contrary, had learned that Jesus himself several times impressed on his disciples not to use the term. Is the injunction to silence no longer in force since the resurrection? The Fourth Evangelist will hold a separate position in the whole debate. His colleagues will want to

hear from him how he came to know so many stories they never heard of: the wedding at Cana, the conversation with Nicodemus, the meeting with the Samaritan woman, the healing at Bethesda, the resurrection of Lazarus—where did he get all this material? And then they preserve silence about all those long discourses that Jesus is supposed to have held according to the Fourth Evangelist. John, how come you know more than we do? Paul waits impatiently for his turn and finds it difficult not to interrupt the others. The discussion about the origin of these stories is of little interest to him. What bothers him most is how the Gospel of John can speak about Jesus' suffering in such a—for him, that is—strange way. Humiliation or exaltation? Paul and John will not readily reach unity on this point.

Who will be the first to raise the subject of “the future”? It is a certainty that the conversation at that point threatens to disintegrate into a true cacophony of voices that sometimes supplement, but more frequently contradict each other. Are we now hearing, for the first time, the voice of the writer of the *Gospel of Thomas*? Does he get mixed up in the debate because he considers all the attention to the future objectionable? In his writing he concentrates entirely on the words of Jesus. How will the circle of “canonical” writers, who tend to see him as an “apocryphal” misfit in any case, receive his contribution to the discussion? Of course his voice may be heard as well.

### 11. *A Many-Coloured Jesus*

The debate that began in the New Testament is continued in church history and has still not been rounded off today. It need not astonish us that there is no unity in the church, for the New Testament is a many-coloured book. How can that be explained?

In the first place, each person—including the biblical writers—views events in past and present in his or her own way. What happened, exactly? Experience tells us that even witnesses on the spot can contradict each other. This also holds true for the image we have of others. People react to one another, and change because of it. In the encounter with one person I am a little different than in the encounter with another. The image I have of someone is never wholly consistent with the image that someone else has of that person. Evangelists and apostles, each in his own way, in their turn wrote their own view of Jesus. They were not objective, nor could they ever be.

In the second place, Jesus was probably a many-faceted personality. Words are inadequate to do him justice, traditional titles appeared to be insufficient. Which aspect of his public appearance should be emphasized? The cross? Naturally there is a lot to say for this. But why should we not give at least as much attention to his life on earth? Is it meaningful to accentuate that he performed miracles? To this question as well, an affirmative answer may be given. But why should we not begin with putting emphasis on his radical interpretation of the commandments of Torah? And is not his concern for finding lost people equally “miraculous”?

Jesus has many faces. No written confession or dogmatic formula is able to sketch an image of Jesus that gives all these “faces” their proper place. It can even be ruled out that this goal could be attained, because some interpretations seem to contradict each other. Honesty requires acknowledgment of the fact that even the Christ of the kerygma is not, strictly speaking, the real Jesus but the result of a selection of facts. In my view, therefore, the exegete can never escape going the way back again and again and investigating the Jesus of history. The mini-biography at the beginning of this chapter could function as a kind of “conscience” in this. It is, after all, tempting to concentrate completely on the crucified, in the manner of Paul. The history of church and theology provides many examples showing what a liberating effect Paul’s *theologia crucis* has had. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge that this view of Jesus is also one-sided and needs revision. The one who bases himself exclusively on Christ crucified forgets all too easily to tell the stories that show Jesus’ life had an ‘exemplary’ character: his doings can shape the life of his followers. Jesus has many faces. We know the Jesus of Paul, of Mark, of Matthew, of Luke, of John, but also of Thomas. We know that Jesus hoped for a speedy advent of the Kingdom of God, but we also know that he thought he experienced that same Kingdom in his own life and the world. Jesus could be called an apocalyptic, but he appears also to be a source of inspiration for Gnostic thinkers. We know stories about Jesus’ doings: liberating and healing, giver of hope and lover of human beings, creative and sometimes provocative. We also know that Jesus died on the cross and we believe that God raised him from the dead. The New Testament is surprisingly open and broadminded. Jesus is not fixed to formulas and sealed up in statements that should be valid everywhere and at all times. The one who tries to do that, evokes the suggestion that he or she has spoken the final and definitive word on Jesus. The interesting



thing about the encounter with Jesus is that, on the contrary, the final word has obviously still not been spoken concerning him and perhaps never will be. Jesus is constantly different; he is surprising and confusing; he is known and familiar and then again a strange rebel and unexpectedly novel. Jesus lived in the land of the Jews and lives on even now in the stories that people tell each other.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Translated by Lydia Penner.



PART TWO

CURRENT QUESTIONS OF JESUS RESEARCH



## JESUS AND CYNICISM

F. GERALD DOWNING

That Cynic tradition had positive significance for Christian ethical reflection, and thus for reflection on Jesus' life and teaching as presented in the gospels, was widely acknowledged among the early fathers, even those who disapproved of some aspects or variants of Cynicism.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that a predominantly positive evaluation of Cynic ascetic life-style and teaching then emerged once more among western Christians in the early Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> It may seem that it was only when Diogenes was enlisted as a critic of established Christianity by thinkers such as Valla, and later Rousseau, that a similarly measured response among Christian thinkers may have become less acceptable, despite a sympathetic appraisal by Kant. Nietzsche's avowal of Cynicism in his rejection of conventional Christianity may well have further discouraged any positive appraisal of Cynic resonances in the Jesus tradition on the part of continental European students of the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, it would seem that some English-speaking scholars in Britain at least, and up to the 1930's, were willing to make such connections, if only with idealized strands in Cynicism. We find instances in such eminently "respectable" writers as Edwin Hatch, Samuel Dill,

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<sup>1</sup> G. Dorival, "L'image des Cyniques chez les Pères grecs," in *Le cynisme ancien et ses prolongements*, ed. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), 419-444, at 432-439, "L'éloge du cynisme"; cf. idem, "Cyniques et Chrétiens au temps des Pères grecs," in *Valeurs dans le stoïcisme. Du Portique à nos jours. Textes rassemblés en hommage à Michel Spanneut*, ed. M. Soetard (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1993), 57-88; cf. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque impériale," *ANRW II* 36.4, 2720-2823, at 2778-2800; and F. G. Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 169-301.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matton, "Cynicism and Christianity from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance," in *The Cynics*, ed. B. Branham and M.-O. Goulet-Cazé (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 240-264.

<sup>3</sup> D. Kinney, "Cynic Selfhood in Mediaeval and Renaissance Culture," in *The Cynics*, ed. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 294-328; and H. Niehues-Pröbsting, "The Modern Reception of Cynicism: Diogenes in the Enlightenment," in *The Cynics*, ed. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 329-365, citing 353-365; but compare H. D. Betz, "Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of a Hypothesis," *JR* 74.4 (1994): 453-475.

and W. R. Halliday.<sup>4</sup> Among gospel scholars 1945–1980 we then seem to find that Cynics were granted at best walking-on parts.<sup>5</sup> In more recent times the first attempts to sketch a more embracing comparison appear to have come from the present author, based on an initially very general exploration of available ancient Greco-Roman sources, only slowly being made aware of the history of Cynicism and then of earlier reflections on Christian origins in the light of Cynic sources.<sup>6</sup> Much more influential, however, have been publications on Jesus and Cynicism by North American scholars, especially members of “the Jesus Seminar.”<sup>7</sup> Proposals have varied, but attention has generally been focused on apparent similarities in the itinerant life-styles, including dress, of Cynics and of Jesus and his followers, their espousal of poverty, their eschewing gainful employment and so their dependence on others, their reliance on models drawn from non-human “nature,” acting in a determined opposition to codes of civic respectability; together with particular attention to comparisons of their styles of communication and individual recorded actions and utterances.

These suggestions have, of course, met with criticisms, some more carefully argued than others.<sup>8</sup> The most forceful seem to be as follows:

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<sup>4</sup> E. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (1890; repr. New York: Harper, 1957), 139–158; S. Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (1905; repr. New York: Meridian, 1956), 334–383, noting especially 355, 361; W. R. Halliday, *The Pagan Background of Early Christianity* (Liverpool and London: Liverpool University Press and Hodder & Stoughton, 1925), 126; 169–170; 190–191; compare D. B. Dudley, *A History of Cynicism* (London: Methuen, 1937), 172–174; 202–208.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., C. Schneider, *Geistesgeschichte des antiken Christentums*, 2 vols. (München: Beck, 1954), 1:21–35; G. Theissen, “Wanderradikalismus: Literatursoziologische Aspekte der Überlieferung von Worten Jesu im Urchristentum,” *ZTK* 70.3 (1973): 245–271, at 255–257.

<sup>6</sup> *Inter alia*, F. G. Downing, “The Politics of Jesus,” *The Modern Churchman* 25.1 (1982): 19–27; “Cynics and Christians,” *NTS* 30.4 (1984): 584–93; “The Social Contexts of Jesus the Teacher,” *NTS* 33.3 (1987): 435–491; *Jesus and the Threat of Freedom* (London: SCM, 1987); *Christ and the Cynics* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> E.g., J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); H. Taussig, “Jesus in the Company of Sages,” in *Profiles of Jesus*, ed. R. W. Hoover (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2002), 169–193; L. E. Vaage, “The Ethos and Ethics of an Itinerant Intelligence” (PhD Thesis, Claremont Graduate School, California, 1987); idem, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus’ First Followers According to Q* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994); B. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence. Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); idem, *The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> I note in particular, Betz, “Jesus and the Cynics”; C. M. Tuckett, “A Cynic Q?” *Bib* 70.2 (1989): 349–76 and idem, *Q and the History of Early Christianity. Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), esp. 355–391; B. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The*

1. Much of the evidence adduced stems from dates too early or too late to be relevant, and Cynicism itself had lain dormant until a late first-century CE revival.
2. There is no independent evidence for any Cynic presence in Galilee.
3. There are *essential* features of Cynicism missing in the Jesus tradition; especially “shameless” behaviour, displays of “indifference,” an urban base, and individualism; and despite this individualism, they all wore a uniform of cloak, staff and satchel, quite different from the habit(s) of Jesus’ followers.
4. Cynics regularly deployed slogans, key words or catch-phrases that are absent from the Jesus tradition.
5. Cynics frequently deployed “apothegms” or “chreiai”; and these constitute a consistent *Gattung* that rarely appears in the Jesus tradition, which itself deploys distinctively Jewish parables.
6. There are essential elements in the Jesus tradition that are incompatible with the supposed essence of Cynicism, such as an interventionist deity concerned with healing and with imminent cosmic renewal.
7. Such similarities as do appear are superficial, and there is an underlying difference of ethos. Jesus is gentle, and a bon viveur rather than a harsh ascetic.
8. If any similarities seem more striking, they are nonetheless coincidental, independent responses to similar socio-economic conditions.

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*Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); P. R. Eddy, “Jesus as Diogenes? Reflections on the Cynic Jesus Thesis,” *JBL* 115.3 (1996): 449–469; M. Ebner, “Kynische Jesusinterpretation—‘disciplined esaggeration’?”, *BZ NF* 40 (1996): 93–100; and idem, *Jesus—Ein Weisheitler?*, HBS 15 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 26–31 and 399–416. There are replies to Betz and to Eddy by D. Seeley, “Jesus and the Cynics: A Reply to Hans Dieter Betz,” *JHC* 3.2 (1996): 284–290; and “Jesus and the Cynics Revisited,” *JBL* 116.4 (1997): 704–712; and from J. Kloppenborg, “A Dog among the Pigeons: The ‘Cynic Hypothesis’ as a Theological Problem,” in *From Quest to Q: Festschrift J. M. Robinson*, ed. J. M. Asgeirsson et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 73–118; largely repr. in his “Social Characterizations in Theological Perspective,” in idem, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), ch. 9, 409–444; and F. G. Downing, “Deeper Reflections on the Jewish Cynic Jesus,” *JBL* 17.1 (1998): 97–104; and “The Jewish Cynic Jesus,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. M. Labahn and A. Schmidt, JSNTSup 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); from the latter I have kind permission to reproduce matter here.

All of these warrant a brief response before a positive case is outlined. First, however, it seems worth noting John Kloppenborg Verbin's comment on the debate, to the effect that the hypothesis of a Jewish-Cynic strand in Christian origins seems to be expected to meet much higher standards than the critics deploy in their own alternative reconstructions.<sup>9</sup> It is also important to add that the defence that follows is of the present author's own procedures, and it will include an occasional distancing from some other writers' reconstructions of a Cynic Jesus, both for their accounts of Cynicism and for their accounts of Jesus.

### 1. *Dating*

Excluding the historical Antisthenes as questionably Cynic, we start with Diogenes himself in the early fourth century BCE; and specialists work with the assumption that something of this original figure is recoverable, and that accounts of him, albeit added to and adapted, continued to be available, as were works by successors, including Menippus of Gadara (available to Varro in Rome, first century BCE, through to Lucian of Samosata in the second century CE), and Meleager of Gadara. Important is Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 6, probably late second or early third century CE, but widely taken to have used much earlier sources. The (pseudonymous) *Cynic Epistles*, displaying variants on Cynic themes, also span our period. With care these, and Cicero, Musonius, Epictetus, Dio of Prusa, Oenomaus of Gadara, Philo, Seneca and others can be used, and are by specialists in the field in their reconstructions, including reconstructions of Cynicism in the first century CE.<sup>10</sup> New Testament scholars also work with similar carefully reasoned conventional reconstructions, arguing for continuities where no physical evidence (for instance, of synoptic gospel texts) exists. Many New Testament scholars also use matter from Jewish writings becoming canonical to illustrate the culture of

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<sup>9</sup> Kloppenborg, "A Dog among the Pigeons: A Cynic Q?"; and "Social Characterisations."

<sup>10</sup> Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque impériale"; compare her *L'ascèse cynique: Un commentaire de Diogène Laërce VI 70–71* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), and *Les Kynika du stoïcisme*, *Hermes* 89 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2003); and notes 1 and 2 above; and R. Hoistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Uppsala: Bloms, 1948); there is a fuller survey of sources accepted as relevant for "Cynicism" by various classicists, in Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 340–342.



first-century Galilee, without direct independent evidence that they were at all well known there, or, if known, understood as suggested. Rabbinic material from writings dated only very much later than most of the Cynic sources quoted is often also adduced. The procedures are the same in principle, and, if carried out with care, neither is any less or more valid than the another.

It is true that we have for the first century CE no records of named Cynics literate enough to be noted, until Seneca's friend Demetrius, and then Dio of Prusa, Demonax, Oenomaus, Peregrinus and others. Such literary figures are of course relevant, but it is not at that level that Cynic influence in Jesus' Galilee is imagined. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, on whose judgment scholars on all sides tend to rely, argues, with evidence, that popular Cynicism continued as an unbroken chain.<sup>11</sup> The currency of Cynic ideas in Paul's world has also been argued by many scholars.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. *Cynics in Galilee*

There is in fact very little independent evidence of any sort for popular culture in early first-century CE Galilee. The only at all extensive documents we possess that even claim relevance are the four gospels. The only other evidence adduced is mostly drawn from older (unlocated) canonical writings, or south Judean sectarian writings, or later rabbinica (as noted); and from accounts of nineteenth- and twentieth-century CE peasant communities. The relevance of these may be argued, but there is no independent evidence by which to verify (or falsify) the conclusions proposed, as is shown by the varied and often conflicting conclusions reached by those who do restrict themselves to the sources listed.<sup>13</sup> There is simply a powerful conventional and often unreflective restriction to this choice of illustrative material.

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<sup>11</sup> Goulet-Cazé, "Le cynisme à l'époque impériale", 2724, "la chaîne ne s'était point interrompue"; compare Branham and Goulet-Cazé, eds., *The Cynics*, "Introduction," 13–14.

<sup>12</sup> One may also compare A. J. Malherbe, e.g., in his *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); or M. Ebner, *Leidenlisten und Apostelbrief*, FzB 66 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1991); and the evidence adduced in F. G. Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> This is argued at greater length in Downing, "The Jewish Cynic Jesus," 187–195, referring especially to work by S. Freyne and R. A. Horsley; compare F. G. Downing, "In Quest of First Century CE Galilee," *CBQ* 66.1 (2004): 78–97; repr. in F. G. Downing,

We do know that over the centuries three named Cynics, Menippus, Meleager and Oenomaus, originated in Gadara. That is more than for any Greek city apart from Athens. We know that Gadara was proud of its intellectual tradition; and we know of just one Gadarene scholar of another school, the Epicurean Philodemus, a vigorous critic of Cynicism. Gadara is a few kilometres south-east of the Galilean lake, and the easiest route to the coast would pass near Jesus' Nazareth. This *proves* very little: only that Cynic influence in Galilee, at a popular level, is not completely implausible. But it does mean that *if* we find that some gospel matter significantly resembles Cynic tradition, and the similarity is greater than with any known contemporary native Jewish traditions, then we are justified in considering an hypothesis to account for this as being other than "pure coincidence." One such hypothesis would be that strands of popular Cynicism had been assimilated in Galilee over the centuries since the time of Menippus, sufficiently so for such motifs to be communicable, to make enough sense for Jesus' own critical variant of some such popular Cynic-tinged Jewish culture to be understood. The synoptic gospels are then themselves to be taken as evidence for a measure of popular Cynicism in the culture of Jewish Galilee. Clearly this argument is circular, taking the gospels as evidence for their own context, but that is inevitable, short of arbitrarily refusing to take as potential evidence for Jesus' Galilee the only material that actually purports to emanate from there.

### 3. *A Missing Essence of Cynicism*

Ancient Cynicism, like the early Christian movement, was very diverse, and many of our informants were overtly eclectic (Cicero, Philo, Seneca, Dio, Lucian's *Demonax*). Cynicism was "more a way of life than a philosophical system."<sup>14</sup> Attempts to define an elaborate "essence" of the early Christian "way" will meet these days with incredulity. Unfortunately many of those who do posit Cynic influence on Jesus themselves maintain an unjustifiably monochrome picture of Cynicism, encouraging superficial rebuttals. What the evidence suggests are various "family resemblances" within each grouping as dis-

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*God with Everything: The Divine in the Discourse of the First Christian Century*, SWBA 2.2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 151–173.

<sup>14</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.103.

cerned both by insiders and by outsiders.<sup>15</sup> Some commentators seem particularly fascinated by the sexual and excretory “shamelessness” of Diogenes in some strands of the tradition, ignoring the absence of these examples from accounts of other, later Cynics, but also ignoring other actions then seen as shameless, such as eating in public and dressing badly. Cynic “indifference” is thus taken, contrary to the texts, as indiscriminate.

Cynics do appear mostly in larger towns, where the literate who record them lived; but they also travel on foot between towns, and some are found staying in the countryside. And these are not solitary individualists, but teachers with groups of disciples, and a socially disruptive message and practice (family, work, civic authority, cults), recognized as such by others.<sup>16</sup> To demand that every item of all variants of Cynicism be matched in any Jewish Cynicism ascribed to Jesus is to ask for more to be included together there than is found together in any acknowledged Cynic source.

#### 4. *Cynic Slogans*

In the ancient texts, the key-words commentators pick on, such as ἀυτάρκεια, ἀπάθεια, and even κυνικός, occur mainly in comments by outsiders. They are rare or even absent in many writings normally taken to be Cynic.<sup>17</sup> Their absence from the gospels is of but minor significance.

#### 5. *Diverse “Genres” or “Gattungen”*

Scholars have picked on the definitions of the “*chreia*” form in ancient manuals, relating incidents where a speaker responds to a word or action with a further word or action, or with both. In the “Q” tradition, the material common to Matthew and Luke, and taken by most in the debate to stem from a mainly sayings collection, there are few

<sup>15</sup> On “family resemblance,” L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), 31–32.

<sup>16</sup> In more detail, Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 18, 26–30, 50–56, 82–84, 148–149; and 79 on groupings, on which see Goulet-Cazé, “Le cynisme à l’époque impériale,” 2736–2738.

<sup>17</sup> Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 45–50.

such, although there is a slightly larger tally in Mark. Cynics, to be sure, very likely used this form; but that they spoke solely or mainly in this style has by no means been demonstrated. Neither the *Cynic Epistles* nor Dio of Prusa's nor Lucian's imaginary Cynic dialogues suggest anything of the sort. *Chreiai* so defined constitute a large part of Diogenes Laertius's collection; but it is noteworthy that he also felt free to present Cynic opinions in much more "gnomic" form, without any account of circumstance.<sup>18</sup> What makes the utterances and other significant actions distinctive and gives them their specific colour is their attribution to a particular figure. The same is true of the narrated sayings and other actions in the synoptic gospels.

It has in fact not been shown, only asserted (and contrary to evidence) that ancient authors felt at all tightly bound by the "forms" which they for pedagogic purposes discerned; and Cynic teaching on most matters of concern is preserved for us in various styles.<sup>19</sup> As varied in form is matter ascribed to Jesus.

We have no independent evidence for anyone, distinctively Jewish or not, deploying shorter or longer still-life or narrative "parables" in Galilee in the early first century CE.<sup>20</sup> We have evidence for later rabbis using illustrative parables; but neither Josephus nor Paul, self-styled contemporary Pharisees, do so; while Dio of Prusa could say that crowds would come up to people dressed as he was in his Cynic period, expecting vivid word pictures.<sup>21</sup> We shall return to parables below (13.7); but, if their presence in the gospel material is indicative of anything, it aligns the Jesus tradition with Cynicism, rather than distinguishing it.

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<sup>18</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.22–24; 27b–31, 33, 35b (with a few exceptions; 70–73, 75–76).

<sup>19</sup> Compare J. F. Kindstrand, "Diogenes Laertius and the *Chreia* tradition," *Elenchos* 7 (1986): 219–243; perhaps also, on scholars' inventions of genres, Pedro Pablo Fuentes González, *Les Diatribes de Teles* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), 47–78.

<sup>20</sup> Compare B. B. Scott, "Essaying the Rock," *Foundations and Facets Forum* 2 (1986): 3–11, at 5, "nothing of the sort"; idem, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 14; and Downing, "The Jewish Cynic Jesus," 197–198.

<sup>21</sup> Dio of Prusa, *Discourses* 55.9, 11, 22; cf. 72.13.

6. *Elements in the Jesus Tradition Supposedly  
Incompatible with "Cynicism"*

All reconstructions of Jesus' teaching allow, often explicitly, for his having made his own selection from diverse Judaism as represented. No known contemporary Jew—not even Josephus—could include every variant. Adherence to Torah meant to Torah as interpreted, if not as re-written (the *Temple Scroll*). But critics of the hypothesis of Cynic strands in Jesus' convictions seem to assume that from Cynicism he must be taken to have accepted all or nothing, rather than to have made his own selection (from what was also, as argued just above, itself also diverse). Jesus cannot be allowed to have left out elements, if such there were, that might seem to us incompatible. Yet Cynics argued among themselves, made their own selections; people on the fringes (Musonius, Epictetus, even Seneca) made their own individual selections; people with still less sympathy (Cicero, Philo) made some selections. But, it would seem, it cannot be imagined that Jesus of Nazareth might have picked and chosen from whatever of Cynicism might have come his way.

Talk of God or Gods is common in many Cynic sources,<sup>22</sup> even while the Homeric myths are derided. Deciding how best to interpret this, including talk of Cynics as messengers of the Gods and friends of the Gods, is difficult. But any notion of God over-riding human freedom would seem likely to have been unacceptable among any of the Cynics whose convictions have come down to us; so, if that scepticism came Jesus' way, he excluded it. On the other hand, seeing humans as receiving shared general divine care is, as we shall recall later, very much a common strand. One variant of the Diogenes story even allows him to seek oracular guidance, a practice contemptuously dismissed by a later Cynic, Oenomaus.<sup>23</sup>

Cynics were expected to oppose what they saw as false, as pretence; and included in that could be insincere recourse to purifications, initiations, sacrifices, and localizations of God or Gods in temples or

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. H. Moles, "Le cosmopolitanisme cynique," in *Le cynisme ancien*, ed. Goulet-Cazé and Goulet, 259–278; repr. (ET) in Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *The Cynics*, 105–120.

<sup>23</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.20–21; Oenomaus in Eusebius, *Praeparatio euangelica* 4–7 and 13.

images. Much of this, as ascribed to Oenomaus, was welcomed by later rabbis, as it was by Eusebius.<sup>24</sup>

Physical health was important to Cynics as it was to the Jesus of the tradition; but illness for a Cynic would probably be a hardship to be borne, rather than a matter for divine healing.<sup>25</sup> Here again, if Jesus met with such Cynic scepticism, he chose to reject it (as the movement around the Cynic Peregrinus may have done in the next century, according to Lucian).<sup>26</sup>

Along with refusing divine determination of human life, the Diogenes of the *chreia* tradition rejects any cosmological speculation,<sup>27</sup> and this would seem to rule out cosmic eschatology. Some North American proponents of a Jewish Cynic Jesus avoid this conflict by categorizing any promise of an imminent end as part of a later intrusion (*stratum*) in the tradition. If one is not convinced that *strata*, let alone *strata* from differing sources, are there to be discerned in the tradition, this ready solution is not available, and simply pruning the Jesus tradition to fit the Cynic hypothesis would be even harder to justify.<sup>28</sup> So we would have to have Jesus reject one more element, if scepticism on eschatology was there in any selection of Cynic convictions available to him. It is still worth noting, however (if only as one more illustration of the variety in Cynicism as discerned around the time), that there are other Cynic motifs that might seem at least to use language and images that may seem to resonate with motifs in apocalyptic eschatology. There are Lucian's Menippean dialogues involving travel to the realm of the Gods, and to Hades; and there are the assurances that great Cynic figures will have judicial authority after death.<sup>29</sup> We may well suppose any original intention in these to have been metaphoric; but the imagery might well seem familiar.

<sup>24</sup> Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 42–44 and, for Oenomaus, 147–148.

<sup>25</sup> Jerome, *Ad Jovinianum* 2.14, on Diogenes and his fever.

<sup>26</sup> Lucian, *Peregrinus* 28.

<sup>27</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.28a, 29a.

<sup>28</sup> “*Strata*” in the Q tradition were proposed by J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), without judging the ultimate provenance of their contents; that was a deduction others made and that Kloppenborg has resisted; see, further, F. G. Downing, “Word-processing in the Ancient World,” *JSNT* 64 (1996): 29–48; repr. in idem, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century*, *JSNTSup* 200 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 75–94.

<sup>29</sup> “The ethereal dwellings will receive me and I shall prosecute the Ephesians,” Pseudo-Heraclitus 5.2; compare Pseudo-Diogenes 39.2; Socrates, *Epistle* 25.1; Lucian, *Downward Journey* 23; cf. Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 15 (of Heraclitus and Diogenes).

With so much variety and internal disagreement among designated Cynic sources, and so much evidence for eclecticism across named schools of thought, we are in no position to decide in advance what sets of Cynic practices and ideas could have been around in Gadara or in other towns of the Decapolis; nor that any Galilaeen encountering any such variant set must have felt bound to take it or leave it whole and entire.

### 7. *A Difference of Ethos*

Luke 7:31–34 (//Matt 11:16–19), together with other notes of Jesus at shared meals, can be seized on to insist that this Jesus is no ascetic (even if John was). This simply ignores divisions between harsh and gentle Cynics, and differences of opinion among them on luxury foods.<sup>30</sup> Whether there are similarities which are more than superficial is a question to be considered in more detail, below.

### 8. *Coincidence?*

In biology, similar exigencies can produce similar responses. There are, it seems, around ten different kinds of “eyes.” Mammalian eyes in fact share a common inheritance. Similar socio-economic situations may prompt similar social structures. But some similarities suggest a direct inheritance. Whether the similarities between Jesus tradition and Cynic tradition suggest a direct inheritance also has to be discussed in some detail (see further, below, 15.1).

I have responded to eight theses hostile to the case for seeing Jesus as a Cynic of any kind, even a very Jewish one. If the reader is not persuaded, I still hope she or he will accept at least that there is a case to be made. I now advance some theses of my own, in more positive support of the case.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 27–31, 68–69, 78–79.

9. *We May Have Much or Little Valid Data,  
But We Do Not Know for Sure*

It is entirely possible though by no means provable that the synoptic traditions include quite a lot of quite good information about the meaningful activities of Jesus of Nazareth. It is, of course, also imaginable that very little if any of what is recorded goes back at all closely to Jesus ("the Jesus Seminar"), and scholarly reconstructions of the traditions can be assembled which instead ascribe most if not all to later creativity in the Christian communities. The trouble with this choice of attribution is, as I argued some forty years ago, "*We do not know enough about Jesus to allow us to construct a clear account of the primitive church because we do not know enough about the primitive church to allow us to construct a clear account of Jesus.*"<sup>31</sup> But (as I also then went on to argue), neither do we have a clear enough picture of the contexts of Jesus (see also 2, above) or of the early communities to shed decisive light on either. We are left with rival reconstructions that compete in terms of coherence and inclusiveness.<sup>32</sup> There is nothing to tell us before we start drafting our reconstructions where the best balance of attributions must lie. The "criteria" we may use, albeit often shared, have force only internally, within our reconstructions. If I (for instance) rule out some item from my reconstructed sketch of Jesus and his early followers by the "criterion of dissimilarity," that does not mean it must be ruled out of yours. What is "dissimilar" or is contextually validated, "plausible," in your reconstruction of Galilean Judaism and of Jesus and of the communities that nursed the traditions of Jesus, may not be so in mine.<sup>33</sup> And, in whichever way the

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<sup>31</sup> F. G. Downing, *The Church and Jesus*, SBT 2.10 (London: SCM, 1968), 51. This conclusion is quoted with approval by D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 5 n. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Downing, "The Social Contexts of Jesus the Teacher"; and F. G. Downing, *Jesus and the Threat of Freedom* (London: SCM, 1987), 147–160. For brevity my own previous work is listed, but it includes extensive interaction with others.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Downing, *The Church and Jesus*, 93–131; and the references, n. 32, above, and *idem* "Shifting Sands," in *idem*, *Doing Things with Words*, esp. 220–224; and among other recent discussions of "criteria" (or "indices"), J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, I: The Roots of the Problem and the Person. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 6, "Criteria", 167–195; G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002).



attributions of authorship go, the Cynic-seeming elements still warrant attention.

### 10. *Actions Communicate, Words Perform*

In our reconstructions we do best to discuss intentional actions, with verbal communication as a major sub-group of actions, rather than divide “sayings” from “narratives” (even though many scholars do that). “Speech-act” analysis (J. L. Austin) has been taken up quite widely, but it has to work both ways: actions communicate, words perform.<sup>34</sup> Intentional actions (whether involving speech or not) presuppose a community with a shared even if diverse culture, a “language” of behaviour, including verbal behaviour. For innovation (innovative non-verbal/part-verbal action included) to register, be noteworthy, it must still reflect convention (“langue-parole-idiolect”).<sup>35</sup> A chosen public life-style (such as that ascribed to Jesus) most likely presupposes its own social intelligibility.

So (to come a little closer to my announced subject matter), Jesus *could*, for instance, have deployed parable form(s) quite spontaneously, and/or chosen his particular range of subject matter (labourers, landowners, housewives, children, plants...) without precedent; and the same could apply to his dress code. However, it is more or most likely that others had been doing and saying some things of similar kinds, for Jesus (or anyone else) to repeat and/or innovate on that basis, and be understood, and be taken seriously by some. We must always attempt to sketch a plausible context for deeds (including utterances).<sup>36</sup>

However, as already argued at (2), above, we have little if any evidence independent of the gospels for the socio-cultural life of Galilee

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. F. G. Downing, “Words as Deeds and Deeds as Words,” *BibInt* 3.2 (1995): 129–143; repr. in idem, *Doing Things with Words*, 41–56; J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962). Austin is taken up by, among others, J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) and by J. Habermas, e.g. *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (ET, London: Heinemann, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> Searle, *Speech Acts*, 17, with reference to F. de Saussure.

<sup>36</sup> “Plausibility” is a term favoured by Gerd Theissen. I acknowledge the value of many of his detailed suggestions, while disagreeing with the main thrust of many of his conclusions. See G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM, 1998); and Theissen and Winter, *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*.

in Jesus' day. The absence of pig bones, and the presence of stone water jars (later said to resist impurity) indicates an observant Jewish population, but it does not tell us how the observance was interpreted.<sup>37</sup>

### 11. *Sociological/Anthropological/Economic Models*

Sociological/anthropological/economic models may have considerable heuristic value, but they do not provide us with historical "laws." There are no such laws of a kind that may tell us that some events (including reactions of participants) otherwise unevidenced "must" have happened, nor that events "must have been" interpreted in a particular way even if unexpressed, nor that specific social pressures "must have been exerted" irrespective of the data available to us, nor that happenings apparently evidenced could not have occurred.<sup>38</sup>

Physical laws are in a different category; even those who accept "miracle" presuppose physical regularities in creating their reconstructions.

### 12. *In Quest of a Plausible Fit*

In attempting to reconstruct an interpretative context for Jesus and his first followers we can still, of course, exclude by dictat any matter that does not bear a distinctive Judaic label. Or we may examine such Judaic matter with care, and see what sort of "fit" it offers the Jesus tradition. And if elements, more or less extensive, of Jesus tradition seem to fit well with our Judaic matter, that is to be expected, and welcomed. But if a sizable amount fails to fit at all comfortably, we

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<sup>37</sup> See S. Freyne, "Archaeology and the Historical Jesus," in idem, *Galilee and Gospel*, WUNT 125 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 160–182; M. A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, SNTMS 118 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002). *Miqwaoth*, ritual baths, are noted, but only in towns; and ossuaries, bone-boxes; but these seem to appear only rarely and later in Galilee; see L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994), 21–27; and, more recently, M. Aviam and D. Syon, "Jewish Ossuaries in Galilee," in *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem*, ed. L. V. Rutgers (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 151–187, at 183, have concluded, "It seems, therefore, that the custom of secondary burial in ossuaries arrived in Galilee towards the end of the first century C.E.;" with thanks to Dr. John Kane and doctoral student Tamlin Lizius, Manchester.

<sup>38</sup> Downing, *The Church and Jesus*, 150–159.

may reasonably look round for any other (perhaps supplementary) socio-cultural contextual strands that may plausibly be held also to have been available. And we shall then attempt as objective an assessment of this further suggested context as we may attain.

### 13. *Jesus the Jew*

First, as most of us interpret the evidence, Jesus is presented in the gospels as they stand, and in what seems to many as tradition on which the gospels depend, as a Galilean Jew (though not a Ἰουδαῖος, Judean).

13.1. Jesus has a very real concern (at the least) for Jerusalem and the Temple, even if the latter needs drastic renewal (Luke/Q 13:34; the Passion Narratives, etc.). There is no strong reason for excluding this matter.

13.2. He is from time to time represented as attending congregational meetings (“synagogues”), in the gospels, though not in Q.

13.3. He respects Torah; and even if he interprets it at times distinctively, so do other contemporaries (Luke/Q 16:16–17; Mark 7:1–13; 10:1–12).

13.4. He is from time to time represented as citing scriptural traditions—very occasionally the text (most full quotations being editorial), more often allusively. Here I would agree readily with Richard Horsley, that Jesus is represented as alluding to a selection of orally retold and transmitted traditions, even elements with an Israelite (northern) bias (e.g., Elijah and Elisha).<sup>39</sup> It seems too readily assumed that every village (Nazareth included) will have had available for repeated reading most if not all the emergent canon of scriptures. Cost, and the absence of a community building for storing so valuable a collection, would seem to have made it unlikely.<sup>40</sup> The only evidence adduced seems to point in a different direction. The Roman soldier executed, so Josephus tells us, for desecrating a scroll of the law he found in one village (*War* 2:229) found only *that* to burn, not a library. It would hardly have been all five books in one scroll, for that would have been far too

<sup>39</sup> R. A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 148–156.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. C. Hezser, *Jewish literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

cumbersome; compare the Qumran finds. If a village had only one book, one might conjecture that it would be Deuteronomy, the most frequently found at Qumran; and one may compare the one “copy of the laws of Moses” brandished by Jesus son of Sapphias in a confrontation at Tarichaeae (Josephus, *Life* 134–135). The other two books most frequently found at Qumran (Isaiah and the Psalter) also figure quite often in the tradition. But there seems no good reason to imagine Jesus immersed in reading and re-reading any extensive set of books. Even the traditions that portray him as literate (Mark 7:6; Luke/Q 7:27; Luke 4:16–21, 10:26; John 8:6–8) do not suggest he was bookish.<sup>41</sup> His intellectual–religious–cultural food would be received for the most part orally and visually and in other sensuous ways, and he would not have needed to be torn away from books to engage with it, absorb it, digest it, talk it over, live it, interact with others living it, ruminate on it, interpret it, sort it, select and reject within it, reinterpret it, recast it, elaborate it, expand it, add to it...

However, since only quite a small proportion of the activity ascribed to Jesus finds a context clearly provided by Temple, synagogue, Torah and scripture, we need to search more widely for what might have provided the “langue” and the stimulus for the rest of what he seems to have tried to do and share, by reproducing, adapting, innovating, in interaction with others.

13.5. Jesus, according to the gospels, experienced revelations of divine reality, and expected a universal divine judgment and a new beginning.<sup>42</sup> The language in which this is expressed does seem to tally for the most part with the emergent canon of scripture, rather than stemming from the surviving eschatological apocalypses (“Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha”). However, “Son of Man” becomes a title with eschatological significance only later and “Kingdom of God” has few precise antecedents in surviving documents, but is anyway mostly editorial and so less significant than it is often made out to be. The gospel

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<sup>41</sup> Contra, e.g., J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 1 (London: SCM, 1971; ET of *Neutestamentliche Theologie I: Die Verkündigung Jesu*, Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971), 205, “Jesus lived in the Old Testament”; cited with approval by R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT 2.7, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 225; cf. W. Popkes, in “James and Scripture: An Exercise in Intertextuality,” *NTS* 45.2 (1999): 213–229: there was no ready access to texts.

<sup>42</sup> I find myself often in qualified agreement on the latter two themes with Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*; however, Allison does not sufficiently allow for revelatory experience.

traditions with their comparative lack of elaborate details (even in Mark 13 etc.) seem only distantly related to surviving eschatological documents. Perhaps something like the traditions in *The Lives of the Prophets* was important to Jesus, but he does not use any of the most prominent prophetic forms; there is no “thus says the Lord.”<sup>43</sup> Geza Vermes’ attempt to discern a tradition of “charismatic” Galilean wonder-workers has no *compelling* evidence to support it, and what is adduced has little if anything in common with Jesus the teacher as narrated. We have no independent evidence of other healers, though in the gospel traditions there are notes of other exorcists (Luke/Q 11:19; Mark 9:38).<sup>44</sup>

13.6. Apart from allusions to Solomon, Jesus does not seem to quote the literary wisdom tradition and his ethos is quite different (see below). Furthermore, there is no clear evidence for a living Galilean wisdom tradition of wandering sages continuous with some or all the very diverse standpoints and forms of Sirach, Qoheleth, Proverbs, Wisdom of Solomon, Pseudo-Phocylides...<sup>45</sup>

13.7. We are not told of any first-century Galilean other than Jesus using the various figurative speech-forms termed “parables” in the gospel tradition. We may well imagine such forms were already in circulation, and that Jesus did not invent the forms nor introduce to the later (much later) rabbis those *genres* they also subsequently used; but we have no compelling reason to suppose such forms were used by contemporary Pharisees or by Scribes whether Pharisaic or not. Pharisees do not seem to have set out to teach as such, but simply to set an example of strict adherence to chosen norms of behaviour. In the gospels Pharisees appear in Galilee, but Josephus would lead us to suppose few if any lived there. Scribal lawyers helped to interpret law and apply it, perhaps on the staff of Jewish rulers and other wealthy landowners (especially the priests among them) and we may presume lawyers taught apprentice lawyers; but even the scribalism of the much

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<sup>43</sup> Against, for instance, Migaku Sato, *Q und Prophetie: Studien zur Gattungs- und Traditionsgeschichte der Quelle Q* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

<sup>44</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973), 69–80. Onias/Honi is a pacific Judaeen rain-maker, Hanina ben Dosa survives snake-bite and heals by prayer (not word and touch etc.) and his link with Galilee is tenuous. Neither Honi nor Hanina teaches, collects disciples, nor wanders the countryside.

<sup>45</sup> Against, for instance, B. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); and, e.g., Eddy, “Jesus as Diogenes?”, 460–461.

later Mishnah does not deploy parable forms for its exposition.<sup>46</sup> If parabolic communication was in circulation, affording precedent for Rabbis later, and for Jesus in the first century, it was circulating in other circles than those of the scribes or the Pharisees.

## 14

So we have in quite specifically Jewish sources a reasonable fit for some substantial elements of the Jesus tradition. Yet there is much else; and for these remaining elements of the Jesus tradition lacking close analogies in other available near-contemporary Jewish sources, popular contemporary Cynicism, with some roots in Palestine, seems to afford some quite close analogies, and thus a possible context.

But, it must be noted, if we do find in Jesus Cynic elements from the Greek tradition he remains no less a Jew than does Philo or Josephus or the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, or the writer of 4 *Maccabees*—or those responsible for the Mishnah, and the Talmuds, with the Greek influence discernible there.

14.1. It has been quite often noted that itinerant Christians obeying some version of the synoptic mission-charge (Mark 6:8–10; Matt 10:9–10; Luke 9:3–4, 10:4–5) might well have looked to spectators somewhat like Cynics. The point was made by Gerd Theissen, for instance, in his 1973 article, “Wanderradikalismus.” Theissen then went on to argue that the specific prohibitions in Luke 9:3 were “probably intended to avoid the least shadow of an impression that the Christian missionaries

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<sup>46</sup> Some Sadducees respond to Jesus imaginatively (Mark 12:18–23); no one else does. On this (limited) account of Pharisees, see, e.g., M. Goodman, “A Note on Josephus, the Pharisees, and Ancestral Tradition,” *JJS* 50.1 (1999): 17–20; Scott, “Essay-ing the Rock,” 5: “as to such similitudes as master/servant, tower/war, lost sheep/lost coin, the heir, faithful servant, children at play, leaven . . . we have nothing of the sort”; and in *Hear then the Parable*, 14, “in those layers of the [rabbinic] tradition that can be isolated as belonging to the Pharisees there are no parables” (citing J. Neusner, “Types and Forms in Ancient Jewish Literature: Some Comparison,” *History of Religions* 11 [1972]: 354–390). Paul, as a self-professed Pharisee, uses figurative language, but none at all close to the synoptic parables. See also A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1988), for the scribes as “bureaucrats . . . and experts on Jewish life,” but nothing more, 266, summarizing a detailed argument.

were these [Cynic] beggars or were like them.”<sup>47</sup> This supposed deliberate difference in “uniform” has then been widely accepted by others.<sup>48</sup>

The evidence for a supposed uniformity in Cynic dress is in fact derived from a small number of caricatures derived from outsiders. If one looks at the Cynic sources themselves in detail (rather than at today’s or yesterday’s generalizations—Theißen quotes a few secondary sources and Diogenes Laertius 6.13 only) there was even more variety in Cynic get-up (and in the terminology<sup>49</sup> for the various items of “equipment” that might or might not be deployed) than we find among the sets of instructions in the synoptic gospels. Mark allows both sandals and staff, which many Cynics would carry; Matthew forbids the staff, as Luke does in one list, and Matthew forbids sandals, as Luke does in his other list. Paul, of course, interprets the tradition differently again: 1 Cor 9:14–15, with 4:11–12, γυμνιτεύομεν, probably only “half naked.” “Barefoot” is how Dio describes Diogenes; on this sculptors vary in their depictions of Cynics. (Particularly significant in fact are the photographs of acknowledged statues of Cynics available in various published collections, but perhaps now especially those in Diskin Clay’s recent essay.)<sup>50</sup> Some Cynics forgo a staff; for some the begging bag (or, for others, bowl) is a positive symbol, others would prefer to earn their keep. Though Jesus’ followers do not beg (αἰτεῖν), they are expected to depend on others’ hospitality, as some Cynics did.<sup>51</sup> The critics of any Jewish Cynic Jesus thesis tend to ignore or

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<sup>47</sup> Theissen, “Wanderradikalismus”, 245–271, at 255–259, “Das Verbot von Tasche und Stab zielt wahrscheinlich darauf hin, auch den geringsten Anschein zu vermeiden, die christlichen Missionare seien solche oder ähnliche Bettler,” as in the ET, “The Wandering Radicals,” in *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology Ethics and the World of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 47. This distinction is repeated without argument in Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 216; cf. R. A. Horsley and N. A. Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (Minneapolis: Fortress 1997), 58–59.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., by R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 230; C. M. Tuckett, variously, including *Q and the History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 385–389; Eddy, “Jesus as Diogenes,” 461–462.

<sup>49</sup> Goulet-Cazé, “Le cynisme à l’époque impériale,” 2738–2746. I am grateful to Prof. J. M. Robinson, for helping me, in conversation, clarify and strengthen (I hope) this and some of the following points.

<sup>50</sup> D. Clay, “Picturing Diogenes,” in *The Cynics*, ed. Branham and Goulet-Cazé 366–387; especially fig. 9, p. 381, naked with bowl; and fig.10, p. 384, with no cup, staff or satchel, but here with sandals and cloak draped around his midriff.

<sup>51</sup> See Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 10–11, 32–33, 133–34, for some long lists; but cf. Dio Chrysostom 6.15, 60; Musonius 19 (Lutz 120–122); Pseudo-Lucian,

dismiss such inconvenient data, preferring, as noted earlier, a clearly defined Cynic appearance with which to contrast a clearly defined early Christian self-presentation. Yet to appear poorly dressed, to draw attention to yourself with a message encouraging poverty while relying on others' support, is, in much of the first-century east Mediterranean world, certainly quite enough to risk being seen as a Cynic.<sup>52</sup> The variegated Cynic tradition could provide an intelligible context for the variations the early Christians allowed themselves in response to these injunctions from Jesus.

Would this hold, however, in Galilee? Negatively we have no evidence from outside the gospels for *anyone* in Galilee around Jesus' day behaving in any closely similar way. Josephus's account of Essenes travelling light to visit other known or unknown members of their dispersed community affords no close analogy at all; nor, in ancient tradition, does Elijah or Elisha. But eye-catching actions of this sort are only at all fully significant, even in some measure recognizable, where they can presuppose a context in which people know how to interpret them (a commonplace of "sociology of knowledge" so-called). We can of course always still posit coincidence—and that could be the correct assessment. Jesus could just have chanced on a method of approach with (apparently) no precedent in his own culture, but one that happened to have been adopted over the past few centuries by innumerable others travelling through the countryside among the Hellenistic towns of the Mediterranean world, not excluding Gadara, a few kilometres to the south east of Nazareth, Gadara where two significant named Cynics, two famous sons, had originated (and at least one vigorous critic of Cynicism) and where another, Oenomaus, would emerge. Well, coincidences do occur. Jesus himself may have thought he was innovating. And still no one (no more widely travelled merchant, soldier, artisan, scribe, Pharisee, Herodian or Sadducee, no one acquainted with the Greek-speaking world) told him or his followers what sort of itinerants they might be mistaken for, even without staff or shoes or satchel. Or, if anyone did exclaim, "Why get yourselves up like a Cynic? Get back to Gadara!" Jesus and his friends (or the later

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*The Cynic* 3; Teles, Stobaeus IVA, Hense 44; Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 488; Pseudo-Crates 2.19.2; Pseudo-Diogenes 38.4; R. F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 37–42.

<sup>52</sup> On not begging, but expecting support: Luke 10:7; and cf. Pseudo-Crates 2.19, 22; Pseudo-Diogenes 38.4.



tradents at least) remained content with the image and the likely interpretation.

14.2. Freyne and Horsley (as leading examples) differ as to the extent and depth of poverty in Jesus' Galilee. We have no evidence in older or contemporary Jewish thought of poverty being commended as a condition for the good life. The dangers of wealth, of seeking it, placing too much reliance on it (Ps 49:6, 62:10; Prov 30:7–9), are noted; and there are scriptural references to "the poor" who may be God's special concern, without our knowing the kind of poverty in question. But nowhere else in Jewish sources do we seem to find poverty as such commended, let alone commanded, until we reach Philo in Alexandria.<sup>53</sup>

Jesus in the tradition commends the blessedness of the poor, forbids the accumulation of wealth, and judges it incompatible with service to God, demanding dispossession (Luke/Q[?] 6:21–25; Luke/Q 12:22–31, 33–34; Luke/Q 16:13; Mark 10:17–26). So, again, we find Jesus, with no clear precedent in his own culture, hitting on poverty as constitutive of the good life, of blessedness: an approach that for centuries in the Hellenistic world had been exhibited and commended and talked about and related in lively Cynic anecdotes that could be part of the school curriculum for anyone learning to write Greek. But Jesus, we are asked to guess, reached this Cynic conclusion independently, and expressed it in Cynic-like dress, also independently; and with no cultural precedent some Galileans accepted his lead, while no one with contacts in the world where Greek was the first language ever said, "You're just another Cynic!" or put him off by telling him it was not just non-Jewish, it was foreign, it was Greek. Well, coincidences do occur.

14.3. It is not just the fact that Jesus adopted poverty and commended it (so we are told), but the way in which we are told he commended it that is also striking. He urged people to accept the example of birds and flowers, and not bother about food, clothes, or stores. In "On avoiding bothersome busyness: Q/Luke 12:22–31 in its Greco-Roman Context," in the companion volume 4, I offer a very full

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<sup>53</sup> T. E. Schmidt, *Hostility to Wealth in the Synoptic Gospels*, JSNTSup 15 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 49, concludes that no canonical passages listed "puts poverty in a favourable light"; 73, "none can be said to laud poverty"; and on Philo, 82. Cf. also R. J. Coggins, "The Old Testament and the Poor," *ExpT* 99 (1987–88): 11–14; R. N. Whybray, "Poverty, Wealth and the Point of View in Proverbs," *ExpT* 100 (1989–90): 332–336.

discussion of this passage, one which can only be summarized here. Commentators have noted how similar this passage, whether in Luke's or Matthew's version, seems to Greco-Roman concerns about anxiety.<sup>54</sup> Comparing it in detail with two nearly contemporary treatises, the *De tranquillitate* of Seneca and that of Plutarch respectively, as well as with a large number of shorter passages from various authors, brings out these affinities still more clearly.

One may discern over all in this material at least fifteen sub-themes: (1) bothersome concerns detailed; (2) body and soul talk; (3) inner resources; (4) wild beasts; (5) flowers; (6) opulence; (7) human worth; (8) women's work and men's work; (9) busy toil; (10) possessions; (11) food's availability; (12) divine provision; (13) human limitations; (14) the divine realm; (15) sufficient to the day. Of these, all but (3), inner resources, occur in Matthew; and all but (3) and (15) in Luke. Various shorter selections of these themes occur in various settings in various orders. Dio of Prusa deploys eleven in his *Discourse 6, Diogenes, or On Tyranny*, and seven in *Discourse 10*, debating what counts as useful. Musonius (*Discourse 15*) has seven or possibly eight in a discussion of family life; Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.9.7–9) uses seven in a consideration of human kinship with deity. Much later, Clement of Alexandria includes with an echo of the gospel passage others of these themes in forms much closer to those in our pagan authors, to discuss fussily obtaining exotic foods (*Paid.* 2.1.5–6).

What emerges as distinctive in this comparison is a divide between passages that stress inner resources (and thus are emphasizing *feelings* of anxiety) on the one hand; and those that make no mention of inner resources, but are concerned with bothersome, fussy *activity*: toil. The gospel pericope is usually interpreted as dealing with the former, feelings of anxiety. Yet what the birds and flowers are commended for is none such. They are commended for not doing things, not doing toil-some things, not sowing, harvesting, storing, spinning, weaving. And that is a distinguishing mark of much Cynicism, the refusal of bothersome toil for results seen as valueless.

Might not Jesus or the tradition have produced this cluster of themes, complex though it is, out of "native" Jewish resources? The

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<sup>54</sup> E.g., F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas 2, Lk 9,51–14,35*, EKK III.2 (Zurich: Benziger, 1996), 292–318; for further references, Downing, "On avoiding bothersome busyness."

search for such has not been very productive. Yes, ants may be admired (Prov 6:6): but precisely for careful storing. Certainly, God is seen as provider for beasts and for humans; but that encourages humans, at least, to work, not to abstain from it (e.g., Ps 104:21–23; Sir 39:30–40:7).

So, if this is not reliant on Greco-Roman, and specifically Cynic tradition, we are asked to believe that Jesus, by coincidence, and quite independently, chooses thirteen or fourteen such strands, and to make what is a frequent Cynic point, unprecedented otherwise in his native culture.<sup>55</sup> And, as it happens, this complex sequence, though lacking Galilean Jewish cultural precedent is meaningful enough to have been remembered, recorded, repeated, in detail. Coincidences certainly do seem to be piling up.

14.4. Although in one strand Jesus affirms respect for father and mother (Mark 7:10–13) and for marriage (Mark 10:4–9), elsewhere he enjoins the fracturing of families (Luke/Q 12:51–53; Mark 10:29–30) and even forbids the pious duty of burial for a parent (Luke/Q 9:59–60). As Tom Wright notes, this presents “a shocking challenge to the Jewish world of Jesus’ day.”<sup>56</sup> It is significant that while D. C. Allison places considerable stress on voluntary celibacy as undertaken in the light of an imminent end, the only explicit passage he can cite in illustration is from 1 Cor 7:26.<sup>57</sup> Allison’s Jewish eschatological sources promote other kinds of renunciation, but not this. There is precedent for such radicalism, however, in Cynic teaching, where it formed part

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<sup>55</sup> Many commentators agree on excising elements from the passage, as disturbing its logic. Without them the passage would still have more motifs than have any set noted by me, bar the two full dissertations cited, and the remainder would still be distinctively Cynic. However, the fact that so many such sub-motifs in various sequences, whether to our minds logical or not, can be evidenced suggests, as argued in Downing, “On avoiding bothersome busyness,” that such insistence on a logic with which both Luke and Matthew were content is itself over-fussy and anachronistic.

<sup>56</sup> T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 402.

<sup>57</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 188–197, referring to 190. It is a weakness of Allison’s argument that he places so much stress on sexual renunciation (and elaborate arguments to enhance its importance in the tradition) and simply lists in passing other items, 174–175. This emphasis fits Allison’s own estimate of the importance in the tradition of “intention” whereas that is a Matthaean theme, and the other synoptic passages cited as instances of “intention” are concerned with enacted commitment (186 compared with 47 §12 and n. 151). The Jesus tradition as a whole (like those of many Cynics, and in this case, like some Jewish tradition) places its emphasis on what is done, not on intention on its own: Philo, *De mutatione* 241–243; 4 *Macc.* 3.3–5; cf. *m. Makk.* 3:15.

of a considered and fairly coherent rejection of the civic values of which family values are an integral part, and this gives it sense.<sup>58</sup> We are again asked to imagine Jesus arriving at this apparently graceless irresponsibility within no supporting context known to us, yet he is (or is presented as being) understood and followed by some.

14.5. To return to the issue of parables, where we noted (13.7) that we have no independent evidence for such communication being used in Jesus' Galilee. We are assured, however, by one critic that "one of the most characteristic forms of Jesus' teaching style—the parable—has no real Cynic parallels."<sup>59</sup> In fact, most of the short metaphors and similes in the synoptic tradition do have close parallels in Cynic and related sources; and that is most of the material.<sup>60</sup> In the synoptic gospels we can also see longer and shorter versions (of, for instance, The Thief in the Night, The Sower, and The Mustard Seed; and different "expansions" of The Pounds/Talents). Longer figurative constructions are admittedly not frequent in our Cynic materials (they are not frequent in the gospels); but when we do find such in Cynic sources, we realize how readily the short forms may have been condensed from the longer ones or shorter ones expanded. We may instance Antisthenes on "strongholds" in Diogenes Laertius compared with the preserved fragment of his Odysseus; or the brief example of "athletic prizes" in Paul compared with the treatment of the same model in Dio; and in Dio in particular do we find other "expansions" of metaphors and similes found in brief elsewhere. The metaphor of "fighting with wild beasts" used with reference to controlling the passions can be used in Cynic writing as briefly as by Paul (1 Cor 15:32), or as expanded by Dio into his "Libyan Myth."<sup>61</sup> Dio's "Good Euboean" has formal as

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. W. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7*, SNTSMS 83 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 2, "The Stoic-Cynic Marriage Debate," 50–61; and F. G. Downing, *Christ and the Cynics*, JSOT Manuals 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 44, 79. (To supplement the latter on the break with family: Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.20–21; 54; 72; Pseudo-Diogenes 21, 38.5, 47; cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.47, 67–82; 4.1.153); and idem, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 133, 139. As in the Jesus tradition, one can find a counter-balance among Cynics, too: in favour of marriage, Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.96–98; and respect for an abandoned parent, Pseudo-Diogenes 7.30, 34.

<sup>59</sup> Eddy, "Reflections," 461.

<sup>60</sup> See Downing, *Christ and the Cynics*.

<sup>61</sup> Arguing that the metaphor is shared, A. J. Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," *JBL* 87 (1968): 71–80, repr. in his *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 79–89. Q/Luke 11:24–26 (the returning unclean spirit) also affords an interesting comparison with Dio's Libyan Myth, *Discourse* 5.

well as substantial similarities with Luke's "Good Samaritan." Dio here writes at very much greater length, but uses an everyday rural setting and an unexpected generous "hero" to challenge narrow-minded expectations (besides portraying a rural Cynic "natural" simplicity).<sup>62</sup> Dio says that people come to men dressed as he was (as a Cynic) expecting such stories. To quote an earlier conclusion of my own, "the sheer quantity of parable, metaphor and simile [in the synoptic tradition] would strongly reinforce the impression that anyone repeating this material was some sort of Cynic."<sup>63</sup>

14.6. Mark, Matthew and Paul in 1 Corinthians, together with some longer texts of Luke and also Justin Martyr, supported allusively by John, indicate that Jesus encouraged his immediate entourage to share bread and wine designated as his body and his blood. There is no plausible Jewish context, no otherwise suggested Galilean Jewish context in which this might seem acceptable. Of course food and drink could be consumed in a way we might term "symbolic," and "blood" might be used as a metaphor ("the blood of the grape," Deut 32:14; cf. Prov 5:15). But the idea of drinking blood, even symbolically, simply horrifies (2 Sam 23:17), as is often noted.<sup>64</sup> Although pagan mysteries as an alternative context have often been canvassed for such an apparently "Thyestean" feast, I have shown elsewhere that when such charges are later levelled at Christians, it is always in combination with "Oedipean intercourse"; and this combination (cannibalism and incest) is only ever proposed for Cynics in our most nearly contemporary sources. In theory Cynics could accept both such possibilities as "natural" (without there being any record of their putting theory into practice).<sup>65</sup> Again, Jesus could quite independently have hit on an idea—eating human flesh, drinking human blood—that only Cynics

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<sup>62</sup> Malherbe discusses the Antisthenes passages in "Antisthenes and Odysseus and Paul at War," now in his *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 91–119; H. Funke discusses the prizes in "Antisthenes bei Paulus," *Hermes* 98 (1970): 459–471; the passages can be found in G. Giannantoni, *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae* II (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1990); the "Good Euboean" is in Dio 7.1–80.

<sup>63</sup> Dio 55.9, 11, 22; cf. 72.13; quoting Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 139; this entire present paragraph is drawn from Downing, "Deeper Reflections on the Jewish Cynic Jesus," 100–101.

<sup>64</sup> H. Maccoby, *Paul and Hellenism* (London: SCM, 1991), 99, citing John 6:60–66; M. Casey, "No Cannibals at Passover," *Theology* 96.771 (1993): 199–205, esp. 203.

<sup>65</sup> F. G. Downing, "Cynics and Christians, Oedipus and Thyestes," *JEH* 44.1 (1993): 1–10, repr. in idem, *Making Sense*, 134–147. Zeno and the earliest Stoics seem to have retained this twin motif, but by Jesus' day the Stoics had long abandoned it.

are known to have contemplated with serious equanimity. Just one more coincidence.

14.7. It has also been difficult to find earlier “purely Jewish” antecedents for Jesus’ teaching on love of enemies (Luke/Q 6:27–29, 35), and on not judging (Luke/Q 6:37–38, 41–42). Again there are plentiful Cynic or Cynic-influenced instances. As I have in the past noted, there are also inconsistencies: Diogenes in the tradition can be very vindictive; but, in the wider tradition at least, so, too, can Jesus.

14.8. Jesus speaks in his own name, and uses none of the canonical prophetic formulae (“the word of the Lord,” etc.), and, as we noted above, rarely quotes and infrequently even alludes to scripture. Similar forthrightness, readily interpretable as self-opinionated, was characteristic of many Cynics, who also eschewed references to authority or technical arguments. The tradition assumes that Jesus’ hearers were unfazed by his self-assurance; only once in the combined synoptic tradition is Jesus challenged on this score (Mark 11:27).

14.9. From strands I have discussed in more detail elsewhere<sup>66</sup> I have here picked out a number of very significant items and themes where activity including teaching ascribed to Jesus has no at all obvious known Jewish precedent to render it persuasive, let alone intelligible, even “thinkable” or “enactable” for him and his Galilean audiences (or his followers and their audiences), and even runs counter to otherwise evidenced varieties of Jewish ethos, but where an otherwise still very Jewish Jesus is displayed exhibiting and articulating ideas, attitudes and practices resembling strands of Cynicism in recognizably Cynic ways: and being understood and persuasive.

14.10. There are many other issues on which known Jewish and Cynic sources together say similar things (as shown in my *Christ and the Cynics*). If these common strands were recognized in Jesus’ Galilee, they could have made assimilation of some of the more distinctive Cynic themes much easier. In fact in these areas, where there *are* non-Cynic Jewish analogies, teaching ascribed to Jesus is still often closer in content to the Cynic than to the non-Cynic Jewish sources.

14.11. We have carefully noted in advance (13.1–7, above) areas where Jesus in the tradition *does* also recall for us close precedents in “non-Cynic” Judaism, for which I have only been able to argue else-

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<sup>66</sup> Downing, *Jesus and the Threat of Freedom*; *Christ and the Cynics*; *Cynics and Christian Origins*; and other work listed there and in other notes here.

where that even these are not without some analogies among some Cynics. So, as noted, his eschatology is Jewish; yet eschatological themes are widely shared, and the rhetoric of his “subversive kingdom” talk can strike a fairly detached observer (L. G. Bloomquist) as similar in its drive to the kingdom language of Cynics.<sup>67</sup> This Jesus can speak of himself or of attitudes to himself as significant for a coming judgment (but so, as we saw, can some Cynics). He heals and exorcises (or heals exorcistically). We have only a very general analogy in Cynic concern for physical well-being, and one very partial later Cynic analogy noted in the apparent therapeutic value of relics of the self-immolated Cynic Peregrinus (but then we have no independent evidence for healers of any other kind in Jesus’ Galilee). And so on.<sup>68</sup>

## 15

How are we to interpret all this? We can stress (or invent by general re-description) dissimilarities between Christian and Cynic sources, stress or invent by general re-description similarities between the Christian and non-Cynic Jewish sources. I prefer to try to allow for both similarities and differences on all sides.<sup>69</sup>

15.1. We can allow that there are real similarities, but, as noted above in (8), argue that they are culturally simply coincidental, they are epiphenomenal, simply a function of similar economic and social conditions (Theißen, Horsley, Vaage, and others, in their various ways.)<sup>70</sup> This seems to me hard to credit. Similar attitudes may well be

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<sup>67</sup> L. G. Bloomquist, “Methodological Considerations in the Determination of the Social Context of Cynic Rhetorical Practice: Implications for our present Studies of the Jesus Traditions,” in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, ed. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 200–231, at 222–230.

<sup>68</sup> See Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, 140–141 (on eschatology; now adding Socrates, *Letter* 25.1 and Lucian, *Downward Journey* 23, to Pseudo-Heraclitus 5 and 9, Pseudo-Diogenes 39, Epictetus, *Encheiridion* 15); and F. G. Downing, “Common Strands in Pagan, Jewish and Christian Eschatologies in the First Century,” *ThZ* 51.3 (1995): 197–211; and *Cynics and Christian Origins* 130–131 (on healing; for the miraculous relic of a Cynic, Lucian, *Peregrinus* 39).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Kloppenborg, “A Dog among the Pigeons.”

<sup>70</sup> Theissen and Horsley as above; Vaage, *Galilaeen Upstarts*; and review of Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*, *CBQ* 56 (1994): 587–589; and “Q and Cynicism: On Comparison and Social Identity,” in *The Gospel behind the Gospels. Current Studies on Q*, ed. R. A. Piper (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 199–229; J. D. Crossan, *Jesus, A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994), 122, perhaps Jesus was “just re-inventing

evinced in similar socio-economic circumstances in different cultures; but we have no evidence elsewhere for as closely similar significant action-and-articulation as is discussed above simply arising spontaneously from parallel socio-economic conditions in distinct cultures. Why should we resort to such a “marvellous” conclusion here?<sup>71</sup>

We may, however, note, that the general socio-economic situation that we are able to reconstruct from our archaeological and other sources for Galilee in Jesus’ day would indicate that his attitude to wealth and security would at least be relevant, even if not necessarily popular, let alone inevitable.

*The gospel evidence (in the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary) seems to indicate a sufficient presence of popular Cynic influence within Galilean Israelite culture, to allow Jesus to make his own selection and form his own Jewish-Cynic synthesis, and be understood.*<sup>72</sup>

## 16

It would seem that Paul perceived the young Jesus movement as a sort of Jewish Cynicism (or Cynic Judaism), and so quite naturally deployed major strands of Cynic praxis and articulation in living, developing and propagating his new commitment.

16.1. I have argued all this at length, in my *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*.<sup>73</sup> In that work I have attempted to show, on the basis of others’ researches, and fresh work of my own, that the Paul of the Thessalonian and Corinthian and Galatian letters depicts and articulates a life-style in terms that would so clearly look and sound Cynic to the ordinary townspeople he met that he must have been aware of that, and content with it. What he had to say on “neither Jew

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the Cynic wheel all by himself”; cited by M. A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 97.

<sup>71</sup> So, when Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, argues that similar situations produce millenarian prophets with often very similar attitudes, but in instances quite independently of each other, we nonetheless note that the precise articulation argued is still culturally specific.

<sup>72</sup> D. Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements and the Leader of the Jesus Movement,” *JSNT* 74 (1999): 3–27, suggests that Jesus as a carpenter would have been in a good position to “network,” to encounter a variety of people, and so, of ideas.

<sup>73</sup> Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*, ch. 10, 287–295. Along with my own researches I rely particularly on work by A. J. Malherbe (without claiming his support for my conclusions).



nor Greek, neither bond nor free, no male and female” would sound Cynic, as would his disparagement of law, and much of the discussion of sexual and dietary taboos, along with the consuming of bread and wine as body and blood; but also his ostentatious poverty, half-naked, showing the scars of shameful beatings, in fact his entire self-presentation as a teacher working with his hands to gain a living, would look Cynic. A recognizably Cynic deviancy constituted much of the initial thrust of his invitation to a Christian deviancy.<sup>74</sup> When Paul joined the Christians he seems to have supposed it appropriate to behave and talk in ways that must often have seemed Cynic.

16.2. Well before his letters, and as a zealot for his people and their sacred traditions, Paul had originally persecuted some early Christian communities (Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:6). Presumably he saw their life-style and their announced views as a threat to the security and integrity of both nation and inheritance. The insistence of these followers of Jesus that a man whom God had allowed to suffer crucifixion was nonetheless God’s anointed leader, God’s Messiah, on its own might well have disturbed Paul (“a stumbling-block,” 1 Cor 1:23);<sup>75</sup> but much more significant would have been the life-style these “Messianic Jews” had adopted. As we are often reminded of Judaism over the ages, it is “orthopraxis” that is central; ideas are secondary, important only if they threaten or actually disturb the faithful observance of the *Torah* as interpreted.<sup>76</sup>

Yet Paul became convinced that he had been encountered by (and himself enlisted by) the Christians’ crucified leader, now totally vindicated by God, glorified Messiah and Lord (as his disciples had been claiming). So what Jesus’ followers had apparently been *doing* wrong, would now be seen by Paul as pre-eminently right. The life-style Paul had tried to eradicate he would now himself adopt and propagate. The Christian-Cynic way of life we can see Paul enacting and articulating must, then, be presumed to have been his version (even if not a precise imitation) of what he had up to then seen and detested. He now

<sup>74</sup> See also F.G. Downing, “Paul’s Drive for Deviants,” *NTS* 49.2 (2003): 360–371.

<sup>75</sup> Philo says, “A merciful and forgiving God would never surrender an innocent man to be done to death,” *Spec.* 3.121.

<sup>76</sup> G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 110–111; though in our period there was clearly less uniformity of practice than Moore supposed before the Qumran library had been discovered; cf., e.g., J. Neusner, *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), ix–xiii.

propagated the πίστις, the faithful response to God, that he had tried to destroy (Gal 1:23). At least in broad terms the conclusion seems irresistible; otherwise one would be imagining a Paul become convinced that what his erstwhile opponents had been doing was right, yet himself then in response still doing something quite different.

To live a life that matched his new convictions in a way that would also create the appropriate impression in the Greek towns where he was at home, he would seem to have had to adopt many facets of a fairly gentle but still rigorously self-disciplined Cynicism. His praxis and its articulation obviously must be presumed to have mirrored quite closely, if not precisely, that of those he had been opposing, but with whom he now had allied himself. To draw people away from their ancestral gods (neither Jew nor Greek), and to proclaim an end to linked basic social conventions (neither bond nor free, no male and female) could only be seen as a Cynic deviancy; and this is what Paul espoused as the appropriate way to be a follower of the Galilean Jesus in some of the Greek towns of the eastern Mediterranean.

16.3. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 9 that Paul is responding to the Jesus tradition represented by the synoptic “mission charge.”<sup>77</sup> Paul parading himself “hungry and thirsty, [half-]naked and homeless” is (as noted above) also displaying an image and deploying slogans from Cynic stock; but he does all this precisely because it is the appropriate working out of the new life he has been drawn into. It provides the appropriate “spectacle,” it is to imitate Christ so others may too, it is to allow Christ’s power (his characteristic power) to be effective. It may well be that it is by living so that Paul is “crucified with Christ” and thus able to portray him publicly (Gal 2:20; 3:1).<sup>78</sup> Certainly it is by accepting tribulations in a Christian–Cynic way, he tells us, that he “carries round in his body the death of Jesus” (2 Cor 4:8–11). Paul himself, of course, maintains a Cynic freedom to adopt a variant method of obtaining a livelihood (one that puts him in effective touch with people (1 Thess 2:1–12); but it is still “in poverty” that he makes others rich (2 Cor 6:10; as in his own way his Lord has done, 2 Cor 8:9). Though quite obviously it is the match between his life-style and

<sup>77</sup> D. Wenham, *Paul—Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 190–200.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. B. S. Davis, “The Meaning of προεργάφη in the Context of Galatians 3.1,” *NTS* 45.2 (1999): 194–212.

his understanding of Jesus Christ his Lord that is most important to Paul, he is fully aware that this Cynic-seeming way of living is rooted in a part of the wider church's Jesus tradition.

What we should conclude from this is that on many fundamental programmatic issues Paul is at one both with Cynic-seeming strands in the Jesus tradition and also with such strands among the wider Christian communities.

16.4. Obviously these findings (if in fact found at all persuasive) are important for our understanding of Paul's perception of nascent Christianity but they are also highly significant for our understanding of other Christians' reaction to Paul's Cynic-Christian Judaism. Paul tells us that "after fourteen years" he checked out the message he had been sharing with leading Christians in Jerusalem "lest somehow I should be running or had been running in vain" (Gal 2:2). It was apparently agreed that in essentials he was on the right lines. The implications for legal matters (circumcision, diet and Sabbath, in particular) of the "neither Jew nor Greek" in the baptismal formula did become controversial. On no other point where Paul appears Cynic in his behaviour and his articulation of it does he have to defend himself: in fact, quite the opposite. His Cynic-seeming practice and Cynic-sounding accounts of it are deployed as having considerable apologetic value in controversy, and especially in 2 Corinthians, in response to those who (even if not original apostles) represent a rival "conservative" and Jewish strand among the early communities. Paul can match their claims both to Jewish inheritance and to Cynic life-style: "Hebrews ... Israelites ... descendents of Abraham ... ministers of Christ ... in laborious hard work, going without sleep, hungry, thirsty, fasting, cold, [half-]naked" (2 Cor 11:22, 27). For his response to have seemed to Paul himself to have worthwhile force, he must have seen the Cynic presentation of these central strands in his practice as affording quite uncontroversially important and agreed common ground.

16.5. *Already before Paul joined them around 33 CE, within a year or within at most three of the crucifixion of Jesus, the early Christian communities in many significant ways looked and sounded Cynic, to Paul, who responded in the light of this perception, and to others, and to themselves; and they went on doing so. This Cynic Judaism (or Jewish Cynicism) must seem to have been part of the earliest origins of the movement, in the life, activity and shared thoughts of Jesus himself.*

*17. Concluding Thesis*

Deploying much the same standards with much the same rigour as serve other competing hypotheses (no easier, no harsher), Jewish and Cynic elements in the early Christian movement, and specifically in the Jesus tradition, seem clearly arguable, along the lines sketched above, and to deserve open-minded appraisal.

# JESUS AND THE SCRIPTURES OF ISRAEL

STEVE MOYISE

## 1. *Introduction*

If the gospels portray Jesus as a healer and teacher of wisdom, they also portray him as an interpreter of scripture. The four gospels record Jesus quoting about fifty different passages of scripture,<sup>1</sup> along with at least twice that number of allusions and echoes.<sup>2</sup> Of course, we know from the rest of the New Testament that scripture interpretation was important to the early church and so we must reckon with the possibility that some of their exegesis has been read back into the life of Jesus. We cannot, therefore, agree with Kimball's assumption that the "Jesus tradition as it is preserved in the canonical Gospels is historically reliable, and consequently also that Jesus was an expositor of the OT as the Gospels depict him."<sup>3</sup> But neither should we adopt an unduly sceptical approach and assume that "citations of scripture are usually a sign of the interpretive voice of the evangelist or the early Christian community."<sup>4</sup> In fact, less than 20% of the quotations attributed to

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<sup>1</sup> According to *UBSGNT*: *Genesis*: 1:27 (Matt 19:4 //), 2:24 (Matt 19:5 //), 5:2 (Matt 19:5 //); *Exodus*: 3:6 (Matt 22:32 //), 12:46 (John 19:36), 20:12–16 (Matt 19:18–19), 20:12 (Matt 15:4 //), 20:13 (Matt 5:21), 20:14 (Matt 5:27), 21:17 (Matt 15:4 //), 21:24 (Matt 5:38); *Leviticus*: 19:12 (Matt 5:33), 19:18 (Matt 5:43, 19:19, 22:39 //), 24:20 (Matt 5:38); *Numbers*: 30:2 (Matt 5:33); *Deuteronomy*: 5:16 (Matt 15:4 //), 5:17 (Matt 5:21), 5:18 (Matt 5:27), 6:4–5 (Mark 12:29–30), 6:5 (Matt 22:37 //), 6:13 (Matt 4:10 //), 6:16 (Matt 4:7 //), 8:3 (Matt 4:4 //), 19:15 (Matt 18:16), 19:21 (Matt 5:38), 24:1 (Matt 5:31; 19:7 //); *Psalms*: 8:3 (Matt 21:16), 22:1 (Matt 27:46 //), 31:5 (Luke 23:46), 35:19 (John 15:25), 41:9 (John 13:18), 69:4 (John 15:25), 69:9 (John 2:17), 78:2 (Matt 13:35), 78:24 (John 6:31), 82:6 (John 10:34), 91:11–12 (Matt 4:6 //), 110:1 (Matt 22:44 //, 26:64 //), 118:22–23 (Matt 21:42 //), 118:25–26 (Matt 21:9 //, 23:39 //); *Isaiah*: 6:9–10 (Matt 13:14–15 //, John 12:40), 29:13 (Matt 15:8–9 //), 53:12 (Luke 22:37), 54:13 (John 6:45), 56:7 (Matt 21:13 //), 61:1–2 (Matt 11:5 //, Luke 4:18–19); *Daniel*: 7:13 (Matt 24:30 //, 26:64 //); *Hosea*: 6:6 (Matt 9:13; 12:7), 10:8 (Luke 23:30); *Jonah*: 1:17 (Matt 12:40); *Micah*: 7:6 (Matt 10:35–66); *Zechariah*: 13:7 (Matt 26:31 //); *Malachi*: 3:1 (Matt 11:10 //).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. references to biblical characters such as Abel, Abraham, Noah, Lot, Moses, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Daniel, Jonah.

<sup>3</sup> C. A. Kimball, *Jesus' Exposition of the Old Testament in Luke's Gospel*, JSNTSup 94 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 43–44.

<sup>4</sup> R. W. Funk, R. W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Polebridge Press, 1993), 98.

Jesus in the gospels are quoted elsewhere in the New Testament, suggesting that far too much weight has been placed on this argument.<sup>5</sup> As Meier says, “Jesus would have been a very strange Jewish teacher in 1st-century Palestine if he had never quoted, commented on, or argued about the meaning of the Jewish Scriptures.”<sup>6</sup>

Having said that, we should not disguise the fact that formidable difficulties stand in the way of reconstructing *how* Jesus used scripture. For a start, the gospels are written in Greek, whereas Jesus’ quotations and allusions would have been in Aramaic or Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> This makes it very difficult to determine whether agreements or disagreements with known manuscripts are evidence for how Jesus used scripture or the translating and editing processes that led to the written gospels (or the transmission of the LXX). Not surprisingly, the majority of studies in this field have been redactional studies of how the gospel writers used scripture.<sup>8</sup>

Second, though the early church may have preserved the memory that Jesus used particular texts, differences between the gospels show

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<sup>5</sup> Gen 2:24 (1 Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31), Exod 3:6 (Acts 3:13), Lev 19:18 (Rom 13:9; Jas 2:8), Deut 19:15 (2 Cor 13:1), Ps 69:9 (Rom 15:3—but not the same phrase), Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:34–35; Heb 1:13), Ps 118:22 (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7) and the second table of the Decalogue (Exod 20:12–16/Deut 5:16–20). The list would be much greater if we included allusions (e.g. the combination of Dan 7:13 and Zech 13:7 in Rev 1:7) but then so would the list of Jesus’ references. One might also add that the New Testament use of the Decalogue is hardly an argument against Jesus’ use of it (and perhaps also the command to love one’s neighbour).

<sup>6</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, II: Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 141. For this reason, while we regard the primary criteria for authenticity as (1) Plausibility in a first-century Jewish context; and (2) Dissimilarity with later church usage, we agree with Wright and others that the second criteria can include traditions that are not identical with later church usage but offer a plausible explanation for their development. See N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, 2: Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 125–144; G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus. The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. E. Boring (Louisville/London: John Knox Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> It is quite possible that a τέκτων like Jesus had a working knowledge of Greek and S. E. Porter argues that Jesus probably used it when conversing with Pilate, the centurion and the Syrophenician woman. However, despite a sustained attempt to use this to develop new criteria for authenticity, only two Old Testament texts appear in the index of the book (Lev 16:12–21; Ps 22:1). Jesus may have used some Greek in conversation but it is unlikely that he based his teaching on the LXX. See S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> E.g., M. J. J. Menken, *Matthew’s Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist*, BETL 173 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2004); R. Beaton, *Isaiah’s Christ in Matthew’s Gospel*, SNTSMS 123 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

that they have not always preserved the context in which the words were spoken.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes we might be able to offer a plausible reconstruction of the context and make deductions based on that. But on other occasions, we simply have to admit our ignorance. In these cases, it will be difficult to say much more than that Jesus wished to make some sort of point using this particular text.

Third, though we do not accept the argument that quotations and allusions are necessarily secondary if they are also used by the early church, there is nevertheless evidence that the evangelists (or their sources) were *sometimes* willing to place quotations on the lips of Jesus. For example, very few scholars would defend the authenticity of the scriptural exchange between Jesus and the devil in Matt 4:1–11/Luke 4:1–13 (absent from Mark). Though it can never be a hard and fast rule, quotations and allusions that seem more at home in the life of the early church than in the life of Jesus are rightly regarded as less probable (though not impossible).

It is important to clarify the implication of these three points. Vermes analyzes forty-one examples of Jesus' use of scripture and concludes that the "Old Testament did not play an important role in the preaching of Jesus."<sup>10</sup> But if the tradition is as unreliable as that, it would be safer to conclude that Jesus probably did use scripture, since most of his contemporaries did, but that our sources do not allow us to say very much more than that. In other words, if the sources are so poor, why opt for a reconstruction that makes Jesus such a singular figure? As Allison asks, "What Jewish teachers do we know of who did not feel constrained to relate their words continually to the Tanak?"<sup>11</sup> If the gospels were silent on this matter, it is likely that we would hypothesize that a Jewish teacher like Jesus probably did use scripture, but the Gentile-dominated church which followed had little interest in it. It is surely a methodological error to think that this view is somehow weakened because the gospels do in fact present Jesus as an interpreter of scripture.

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<sup>9</sup> A good example is the double command to love God and neighbour. If we only had Mark's account (12:28–34), we might conclude that this was an original and creative use of scripture by Jesus. But according to Luke's account (10:25–37), it is the lawyer who cites the double command, suggesting perhaps that it was a commonplace.

<sup>10</sup> G. Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 212.

<sup>11</sup> D. C. Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus: Studies in Q* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 213.

We will proceed cautiously by looking at a selection of texts where a case for authenticity has been argued. For reasons of space, we will confine our examples to Jesus' use of the Law (section 2) and Jesus' use of the Prophets (section 3). Our guiding principle is that a Jewish teacher like Jesus is likely to have related his teaching to scripture, but whether there is enough evidence to say *how* he used it remains to be seen. We begin then with Jesus' use of the Law.

## 2. *Jesus and the Law*

### 2.1. *Divorce*

That Jesus discussed and commented on texts concerning marriage and divorce is accepted by most scholars.<sup>12</sup> The traditions have come down to us in three forms: (1) A wisdom saying that forbids divorce in Matt 5:31–32 (except for adultery), Luke 16:18, and in a different context, Mark 10:11–12; (2) A pronouncement story in Mark 10:2–9/ Matt 19:3–9 which has Jesus contrasting God's intention for marriage (Gen 1:27/2:24) with Deut 24:1–4, a text which permits divorce; and (3) Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 7:10–16 that seek to apply (some would say circumvent) the tradition to Christians married to unbelieving spouses. Some scholars think the wisdom saying has been constructed by Matthew on the basis of the pronouncement story, since the so-called exception clause (παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας/μὴ ἐπὶ πορνείᾳ), generally thought to be later redaction, appears in both.<sup>13</sup> Holmén accepts the point but does not consider it fatal to reconstructing a Q text that lacked the exception clause and is close to what we now find in Luke 16:18.<sup>14</sup> Given the evident difficulties of applying the absolute prohibition in the early church, it is “virtually certain that the historical Jesus actually held this position.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 256–260; Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, 180–181; T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 162–169; J. D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making, 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 577.

<sup>13</sup> U. Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 269; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 122–123.

<sup>14</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 164–166.

<sup>15</sup> H. D. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 251–252. It would appear to be John the Baptist's position also (Mark 6:18), though Betz's claim that this is why Jesus “preferred to stay unmarried” (252) is speculative.



It would appear that marriage and divorce were keenly debated in the Second Temple period, and in rabbinic literature, an entire tractate is devoted to it (*Gittin*). This is not surprising, as scripture appears to contain an ambiguity on the subject. On the one hand, the creation stories envisage a permanent bond between the couple (“and they become one flesh”) and adultery (נִאֵף/μοιχεύω) is expressly forbidden in the seventh commandment (Exod 20:14). On the other hand, while not addressing the question of divorce in general, Deut 24:1–4 implies that a man may divorce his wife if he finds in her something objectionable (דָּבָר / ἄσχημον πρᾶγμα). The meaning of this phrase was debated by the schools of Shammai and Hillel. Shammai emphasized ערוה and only allowed divorce for some “shameful” behaviour. Hillel, however, stressed the word דָּבָר and famously concluded that this could be for something as trivial as spoiling the dinner (*m. Git.* 9:10). Josephus appears to support this position when he paraphrases Deut 24:1 with the words, “He who desires to be divorced from the wife who is living with him for whatsoever cause—and with mortals many such may arise—must certify in writing that he will have no further intercourse with her” (*Ant.* 5.253).

The evidence from Qumran is disputed. Divorce is accepted in CD XIII, 17 and 11QT XLIV, 4–5 without comment but CD IV, 20–V, 2 accuses the “builders of the wall” of unchastity (זנות) because “they take two wives in their lives (בחייהם), while the foundation of creation is male and female he created them.” The suffix on “lives” is masculine, which, according to Westerholm, “suggests that the sectarians were opposed to any second marriage for a man, whether the first had been terminated by death or divorce.”<sup>16</sup> However, Brewer has argued that this text is primarily about polygamy (not having two wives simultaneously) and does not contradict the permissive view found elsewhere in the scrolls. We know of no Jewish group, he says, which forbade divorce on any grounds.<sup>17</sup>

Neither is it absolutely clear that Jesus forbade divorce on any grounds. Though the majority of commentators hold that Matthew’s

<sup>16</sup> S. Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, ConBNT 7 (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 116. So also W. R. G. Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude to the Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002 [1997]), 89; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 252. 11QT LVII, 17–19 (“And he shall not take in addition to her another wife, for she alone shall be with him all the days of her life”) is also quoted in support of this position.

<sup>17</sup> D. I. Brewer, “Jesus’ Old Testament Basis for Monogamy,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament. Essays in Honour of J. L. North*, ed. S. Moyise, JSNTSup 189 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 75–105.

“exception” clauses are redactional, they might well be a correct interpretation of Jesus’ words. Within his Jewish milieu, it was assumed that adultery led to divorce; the debate was about the level of seriousness required in more mundane causes (like spoiling the dinner). Jesus takes a rigorous stance and in the light of CD IV, 20–V, 2, it is probably correct that he had the Genesis story in mind,<sup>18</sup> even if the tradition has been elaborated.<sup>19</sup> Sanders suggests this *might* reflect Jesus’ eschatological outlook, but Vermes is more definite:

The immediacy of the Kingdom of God made for Jesus and his followers the restoration of the paradisiacal conditions of matrimonial morality (indissoluble marriage of one man and one woman) an absolute imperative.<sup>20</sup>

More controversial is whether Jesus actually commented on Deut 24:1–4 and if so, to what effect? Becker thinks it comes from the early church, reflecting “church rules on marriage” rather than Jesus’ uncompromising stance based on his own authority.<sup>21</sup> However, it is not clear that a *Sitz im Leben* in the early church is more persuasive than one in Jesus’ time. When Paul accepts that separation might be the only option if an unbelieving spouse insists on it (1 Cor 7:15), there is no hint that Deuteronomy 24 has figured in the discussion. Neither is it easy to imagine why the early church would insert it, since it plays no role in Christian debates. While acknowledging that the tradition does not come from Jesus “word for word,” Betz thinks it “may truthfully reflect his concerns and his methods regarding the Jewish Torah,”<sup>22</sup> namely, an interpretation rather than a rejection of the Law:

The true meaning of the famous passage Deut 24:1–4 is the curbing of divorce as a social instrument that produces injustice in the form of adultery, which is prohibited by the Decalogue... Divorce can be allowed only if defilement already exists through “sexual immorality” (πορνεία); divorce cannot be allowed if it will produce adultery.<sup>23</sup>

Holmén agrees that “Jesus probably did not intend his words to contradict, oppose or be directed against the law” but adds that “Jesus’ prohibition on divorce cannot be taken as merely interpreting the

<sup>18</sup> So Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 257.

<sup>19</sup> Mark’s quotation agrees with the LXX in reading the numeral “two” (“the two shall become one flesh”) and goes on to emphasize it (“So they are no longer two, but one flesh”). The numeral is lacking in the Hebrew text.

<sup>20</sup> Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, 56.

<sup>21</sup> J. C. Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 292.

<sup>22</sup> Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 212.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

law... On the contrary, the prohibition dissolves any attempt to speculate about sufficient cause for divorce.”<sup>24</sup> Powery goes further and even speaks of Jesus “correcting” the tradition. He also thinks this offers a good example of Jesus’ hermeneutical method, though we will have cause to question this later in our study:

By the use of this wider narrative or script, Jesus levels the Mosaic law to a post-creation period for “hardened” humanity. That is, it is not the ideal. Jesus’ scriptural choice serves as a *corrective*. This interpretative tension (script against scripture) sets up elements in a hermeneutical (preferential) system: (1) God’s act over Moses’ commands; (2) the creation period as the ideal; and (3) historical narrative balances law.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2. Oaths

Though the swearing of oaths played an important role in the Law, both by people<sup>26</sup> and by God,<sup>27</sup> the consequences of failing to keep an oath led in one of two directions: (1) A growing reluctance to swear oaths, as in Sir 23:11: “The one who swears many oaths is full of iniquity, and the scourge will not leave his house”; or (2) A multiplicity of circumlocutions so as to avoid directly mentioning the name of God (“heaven,” “heaven and earth,” “the almighty,” “the temple,” “the altar,” “the covenant,” “the Torah,” “Moses”). Interestingly, the Jesus tradition preserves sayings relevant to each of these.

### *Matt 5:33–37*

Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.” But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you

### *Matt 23:16–22*

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, “Whoever swears by the sanctuary is bound by nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the sanctuary is bound by the oath.” You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the sanctuary that has made the gold sacred...?

### *James 5:12*

Above all, my beloved, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any

<sup>24</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 168–169.

<sup>25</sup> E. B. Powery, *Jesus Reads Scripture. The Function of Jesus’ Use of Scripture in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 52.

<sup>26</sup> Exod 22:11; Num 5:19, 21; 30:2, 10, 13.

<sup>27</sup> Deut 6:23; 7:8; 8:1; 9:5; 29:12, 15, 19; 31:20, 21.

cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be “Yes, Yes” or “No, No” (ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν ναὶ ναὶ οὐ οὐ); anything more than this comes from the evil one.

other oath, but let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no (ἦτω δὲ ὑμῶν τὸ ναὶ ναὶ καὶ τὸ οὐ οὐ) so that you may not fall under condemnation.

The tradition that Jesus prohibited the swearing of oaths is preserved in Matthew’s fourth antithesis and in the epistle of James. Most scholars consider James to be the more original form, though some have argued that it might stem from a genuine antithesis.<sup>28</sup> It does not seem likely that literary dependence between Matthew and James explains the parallel and an absolute prohibition of oaths appears contrary to the practices of the early church (Rom 9:1; 2 Cor 11:10, 31; Gal 1:20). Thus there is a case for regarding such a prohibition as going back to Jesus, if not the antithesis.<sup>29</sup> What then are we to make of Matt 23:16–22, where Jesus challenges scribal law concerning which oaths are permanently valid and which may be broken? Since this “woe” is not present in Luke’s collection (11:42–52), the obvious answer is that it is Matthean redaction aimed at presenting Jesus as an expert in *halakha*. On the other hand, it could be that on occasion, Jesus was content to demonstrate the faulty reasoning behind such scribal exegesis, without prohibiting oaths altogether.

Loader understands the prohibition as condemning the manipulative use of oaths; one should not take an oath “made on the basis of a surety that, in fact, God provides, and not the swearer.”<sup>30</sup> Holmén reaches a more radical conclusion: “The total prohibition on oaths ascribed to Jesus—very much unlike Old Testament and contemporary Jewish criticism of swearing falsely or loosely—implies criticism of the law itself.”<sup>31</sup> He sees this as very similar to the prohibition on divorce. On the other hand, Crossley points out that Philo regarded the “abstinence from oaths” (ἀνώμοστον) as one of the ways the Essenes demonstrated their love for God. If Philo did not regard it as a criticism of the Law, it is “very unlikely that anyone would have perceived the Matthean Jesus to be speaking against biblical commandments in

<sup>28</sup> K. H. Tan, *The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus*, SNTSMS 91 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 86–96.

<sup>29</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 176–187.

<sup>30</sup> Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude to the Law*, 177.

<sup>31</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 180.

Mt. 5:33–37.”<sup>32</sup> There is clearly no consensus on whether Jesus’ radical interpretations of the Law passes over into its “correction” or even its “rejection.”

### 2.3. *Love of Enemies/Neighbour*

The command to “love your enemies” (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35) is universally recognized as authentic (printed red by the Jesus Seminar) and at the heart of Jesus’ teaching. It is not itself a quotation from scripture but is almost certainly linked to Lev 19:18 (“love your neighbour”) in some way or other. This is made explicit in Matthew’s version, where Jesus says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5:43–45). While this is most likely Matthew’s own formulation, a number of scholars have argued that the Q text from which it is drawn (Q 6:27–38) is dependent on Leviticus 19. Allison, for example, notes the following parallels:<sup>33</sup>

<i>Leviticus 19</i>	<i>Q 6:27–38</i>
be holy because God is holy	be merciful because God is merciful
command to judge one’s neighbour	command not to judge others
the golden rule (negative form)	the golden rule (positive form)
love your neighbour	love your enemy
maintain good fraternal relations	it is not enough to do good to “brothers”

If most of Q 6:27–38 goes back to Jesus, as Allison believes, then this appears to be a deliberate interpretation of scripture, not least in the omission of the command to love one’s neighbour. Both Leviticus 19 and Q 6:27–38 are concerned with “vengeance, love, and judging others,”<sup>34</sup> but Jesus emphasises that “neighbour” should not be limited to one’s own people. And neither should the pursuit of holiness lead

<sup>32</sup> J. G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark’s Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSup 266 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 102.

<sup>33</sup> Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus*, 33 (wording slightly adjusted). The golden rule is not found in the Hebrew text of Leviticus 19 but is present in the Targum (“You will love your neighbour, so that what is hateful to you, you will not do to him”).

<sup>34</sup> Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus*, 29.

to a lack of mercy.<sup>35</sup> This is of course illustrated by Luke when he later includes the parable of the Good Samaritan (almost certainly authentic), which focuses on the question, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29). For Allison, this as an example of Jesus’ “ironic” use of scripture, designed to provoke and unsettle.<sup>36</sup>

If Allison is correct, it would appear that Matthew wishes to avoid the implication that Jesus criticized Lev 19:18 by focusing the criticism on the gloss (“and hate your enemies”). He may also have been concerned that the tradition preserves a story where Jesus specifically upholds this commandment, in conjunction with Deut 6:4:

*Matt 22:34–40*

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.

And a second is like it: “‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

*Mark 12:28–32*

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?”

Jesus answered, “The first is ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher . . .

*Luke 10:25–37*

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind;

and your neighbour as yourself.”

And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to justify him-

<sup>35</sup> The deliberate replacement of “holiness” in Lev 19:2 by “mercy” is important for Borg’s reconstruction of Jesus’ alternative holiness paradigm. See M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998 [1984]), 135–155.

<sup>36</sup> Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus*, 220. He also sees the divorce saying (Q 16:18) and the requirement for disciples to hate mother and father (Q 14:26) as evidence of an “ironic” use of scripture.

<p>“to love one’s neighbour as oneself,”—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”</p>	<p>self, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho...</p>
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There is nothing intrinsically unlikely about Jesus combining these key texts, but the very different settings make it difficult to say very much more than this. Indeed, in Luke’s account, it is not Jesus that links the two texts but the lawyer, perhaps suggesting that the link was something of a commonplace.<sup>37</sup> Matthew and Mark clearly draw different conclusions from the episode (foundation of all the law and prophets/more important than sacrificial laws) and Luke follows it with the parable of the Good Samaritan. This would appear to be an example of what was set out in the introduction: Jesus probably did cite the two texts but the traditions that have come down to us do not allow us to say anything more definite.

#### 2.4. Food Laws

Though the Jesus tradition does not include any explicit quotations concerning the food laws, many scholars have taken the aside in Mark 7:19 (“Thus he declared all foods clean”) as correctly deducing the implication of the inside/outside aphorism.<sup>38</sup> The aphorism (“there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile”) is found in Mark 7:15, Matt 15:11 and also *Gos. Thom.* 14, where it supports the missionary advice to “eat that which they will set before you.” Matthew and Luke also have a further (obscure) saying which urges the Pharisees to focus on cleaning the “inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean” (Matt 23:25–26/Luke 11:39–41). Bryan acknowledges that Jesus himself observed the purity laws and even urged others to do the same (Mark

<sup>37</sup> Though it is rare in extant texts. It occurs in *T. Iss.* 5.2 (“love the Lord and your neighbour”) and *T. Dan.* 5.3 (“love the Lord and one another with a true heart”), but these might be Christian interpolations.

<sup>38</sup> Funk (*The Five Gospels*, 69): “The aphorism—it’s not what goes in but what comes out that defiles—is a categorical challenge to the laws governing pollution and purity”; Wright (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 398): “the traditions which attempted to bolster Israel’s national identity were out of date and out of line”; Becker (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 291): “An examination of Jesus’ total proclamation makes clear that he consistently intensifies social norms, while he shows little or no interest in cultic norms” (291).

1:44) but thinks that Jesus is claiming that “bodily impurity posed no threat to holiness,” a stance that inevitably led to their role being “drastically attenuated.”<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, had Jesus taken such a stance on the food laws, it is difficult to see why it was such an issue for the early church (Acts 10:14; 15:29; Gal 2:12).<sup>40</sup> As Sanders notes, the debate in Mark 7 begins with a question about hand-washing, not food laws. He thinks the connection in 7:14 (“Then he called the crowd again and said”) is so obviously artificial that the teaching that follows clearly reflects the needs of Mark’s Gentile readers.<sup>41</sup> Crossley takes this further and argues that not only did Jesus uphold the food laws, so also does Mark. He takes the opening debate on hand-washing as the key to the whole episode, which concerns “the expansion of Jewish law where it was believed that impurity passed from hands to food to eater via liquid.”<sup>42</sup> Mark understands Jesus to be denying this and so concludes that “he declared all foods clean,” meaning that food is not contaminated in this way. Since Mark’s readers have already heard Jesus say to the Pharisees, “You abandon the commandments of God and hold to human tradition,” they would hardly have deduced from Mark’s aside that Jesus was nullifying the food laws. He was simply stating that those foods that the Law recognizes as clean are not defiled through hand-washing, contrary to recent *halakha*.

## 2.5. Resurrection

Jesus said to them, “Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in

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<sup>39</sup> Steven W. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, SNTSMS 117 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 167. He adds: “Concerns about bodily uncleanness could scarcely remain central when the impurity which gave bodily uncleanness its significance had already so penetrated the life of the nation as to make its judgement certain” (188).

<sup>40</sup> “This great fact, which overrides all others, sets a definite limit to what can be said about Jesus and the law” (Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 268). Becker represents a minority view when he says, “our safest assumption is still that the position of the Hellenists around Stephen, of the *pillars* at the Council, and of Peter in Antioch, who soon after the so-called lapse in Antioch obviously reverts to his Gentile-Christian orientation, is based on the authority of Jesus” (*Jesus of Nazareth*, 305).

<sup>41</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 266.

<sup>42</sup> Crossley, *The Date of Mark’s Gospel*, 204. See also T. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* ConBNT 38 (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2002), 228–231.



heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong." (Mark 12:24–26)

The rabbinical style of argument, whereby a general truth is inferred from a particular verse, has been used as an argument both for the authenticity<sup>43</sup> of this episode and against it.<sup>44</sup> I am inclined to accept the argument of Chilton and Evans that had the exchange belonged to later debates between Christians and Pharisees, one would have expected a more specific reference to Jesus' resurrection. As it stands, Jesus upholds the Pharisaic doctrine of resurrection by quoting from the Law, hardly a polemical point against the Pharisees. It might also be significant that Jesus constructs his proof from the Law, rather than making use of more obvious texts such as Dan 12:2, because the Sadducees would not have recognized the authority of Daniel. Meier cites the idiosyncratic use of Exod 3:6 as evidence for authenticity, a view accepted by Dunn.<sup>45</sup>

Powery thinks this is a critical passage for understanding Jesus' use of scripture as presented by Mark. It is not a literal or historical interpretation of Exod 3:15 but one that stems from a specific theological conviction. According to Jesus, the error of the Sadducees is their faulty theology. Jesus *corrects* this ("God is not a God of the dead but of the living") and then *accommodates* the text accordingly.<sup>46</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza makes a different point. The Sadducees not only have a faulty theology of resurrection, they also have a faulty patriarchal understanding of marriage ("whose wife will she be?"). Jesus challenges this with his view of the afterlife, where "they neither marry nor are given in marriage."<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, we should guard against the implication that a theological disposition is taking precedence over scripture. There is no suggestion that the theological disposition (or the power

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<sup>43</sup> B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, "Jesus and Israel's Scripture," in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. Chilton and Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 290–291.

<sup>44</sup> Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, 188.

<sup>45</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, III: Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 431–444; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 426 n. 234.

<sup>46</sup> Powery, *Jesus Reads Scripture*, 69. The categories are from J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," *NTS* 7 (1960–61): 297–333.

<sup>47</sup> E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, rev. ed. (London: SCM, 1994), 143–145.

of God) is something other than what scripture teaches. Meier summarizes the logic of the argument thus:

1. *Major Premise*: According to God's self-chosen definition, the very being of God involves being the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is his permanent self-definition.
2. *Minor Premise*: But, as the whole of the OT proclaims, God is God only of the living, not the defiling, unclean dead, with whom he has no relation.
3. *Unspoken Conclusion*: Therefore, if God's being is truly defined by his permanent relationship to the three patriarchs, the three patriarchs must be (now or in the future) living and in living relationship to God.<sup>48</sup>

## 2.6. Summary

Though the saying recorded in Mark 7:9 ("You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!") was probably crafted by Mark, most scholars agree that it accurately represents Jesus' position. Whether Jesus offered a theological interpretation of the Law, a rigorous application of it or simply its true (divine) intent, it seems clear that he used his interpretations to challenge a number of contemporary *halakha*. The point of debate concerns the implications of this for the ongoing validity of the Law.

At one end of the spectrum, Crossley argues that there are no implications for relativizing the Law, and readings of Mark's Gospel which assume this are mistaken. Jesus upheld the Law in word and deed and only ever criticized *halakha*, which he viewed as extending the Law beyond its original intent. At the other end of the spectrum, Becker asserts that "in post-Maccabean Judaism prior to Jesus one can think of no comparable example of such a critical attitude toward the Law."<sup>49</sup> He adds that "Jesus does not require his disciples and hearers to study and obey the Law" and that he taught "a life that is independent of the Torah and whose authority comes from the Kingdom of God alone."<sup>50</sup> These are extraordinary statements and are soon qualified when discussing particular texts. For example, he says that Jesus' teaching on divorce "is for Jewish ears an intolerably negative judgment," but then

<sup>48</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, III: *Companions and Competitors*, 429–430.

<sup>49</sup> Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 281–282.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

adds that “Jesus’ statement is similar to the marriage laws of the Essenes.”<sup>51</sup> Thus there is at least one community of Jewish ears for which it was not an “intolerably negative judgment.” In terms of oaths, Becker acknowledges that “refusing to do something that the Torah permits is not a violation of the Torah,”<sup>52</sup> and in terms of food laws, he makes it clear that Jesus would not have agreed with Paul that “nothing is unclean in itself” (Rom 14:14).

Holmén offers an innovative approach, which he calls “covenant path searching,” i.e. the practical matters by which Jews of all persuasions demonstrated their covenant loyalty. This offers a more nuanced approach to whether Jesus upheld the Law or not. In a certain formal sense, nothing Jesus said is contrary to the Law (forbidding what is permitted is not a contradiction). But this is a blunt tool which fails to distinguish Jesus’ teaching from countless future rabbis who discuss and debate *halakha*. According to Holmén, in a rather conspicuous way, Jesus does not attempt to *demonstrate* covenant loyalty but sits rather loosely to it.

One of the reasons that Jesus does not go out of his way to demonstrate covenant loyalty is thought to be his eschatological outlook. Thus Vermes understands the debates about divorce as reflecting an eschatology whereby the conditions of paradise would return. Bryan’s view that the purity laws are relativized is based on his understanding that Jesus judges the Jerusalem Temple for not fulfilling the conditions of the eschatological Temple.<sup>53</sup> And Allison ends his study by stating that “Jesus reformulated and in some cases we might say even deformed tradition in order to convey his urgent message.”<sup>54</sup> That message was of a “millenarian prophet who longed for the fulfillment of Jewish eschatological expectations and so necessarily looked for the fulfillment of the scriptural texts that grounded those expectations.”<sup>55</sup>

Lastly, we have seen some evidence of Jesus’ use of contemporary exegetical methods. The juxtaposition and mutual interpretation of texts (Genesis and Deuteronomy) resembles the second of Hillel’s rules, while the deduction of a general principle (resurrection) from a

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<sup>51</sup> Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 292.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>53</sup> Leading to an interesting explanation of the cursing of the fig tree. Jesus expected to find figs out of season because in the eschatological age, there would be fruitfulness all year round (Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions*, 224).

<sup>54</sup> Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus*, 222.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

particular text (“I am the God of Abraham”) is a good example of the third rule. Chilton and Evans also regard the summarizing of particular commandments in the greatest commandment(s) as an example of the fifth rule, though the authenticity of this episode is debated. There is no suggestion that Jesus “applied” these rules in a mechanical way, but they do situate Jesus within the broad spectrum of Jewish exegetical debate.

### 3. *Jesus and Prophetic Traditions*

#### 3.1. *Vineyard Parables*

In his chapter on “Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel,” Bryan focuses his study on the vineyard parables, since they almost certainly go back to Jesus in some form or other.<sup>56</sup> It is also widely held that to a first-century Jewish audience, any story about a vineyard not producing fruit would automatically suggest the allegory of Isaiah 5.<sup>57</sup> This is not negated by the observation that the parable of the tenants (Matt 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19) has clearly been elaborated to make such links more explicit. Even if the less allegorical version in *Gos. Thom.* 65 is closer to what Jesus actually said (which is by no means certain), we still have a story where a landowner plants a vineyard, intends to collect its fruit, sends a servant who is abused, and then sends his son, who is killed. This is sufficient to show that Jesus both appropriated the vineyard allegory and introduced new elements (the emissaries) which took it in new directions.

In the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9), a story is told about a landowner who returns to his vineyard three times in the hope of finding fruit from a particular fig tree, but finds none. He thus tells the vinekeeper (ἀμπελουργός) to destroy the offending fig tree. The vinekeeper responds by urging one last attempt to make it fruitful. The repeated visits by the landowner and the plea by the vinekeeper echo

<sup>56</sup> According to the Jesus Seminar, the parable of the workers (Matt 20:1–16) is in red; the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9) and the version of the parable of the tenants in *Gos. Thom.* 65 are in pink; the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32) is in grey, though we are told that 58% of the Fellows voted red or pink.

<sup>57</sup> Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions*, 46–49; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 722; W. J. C. Weren, “The Use of Isaiah 5,1–7 in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12,1–12; Matthew 21,33–46),” *Bib* 79 (1998): 1–26; Chilton and Evans, “Jesus and Israel's Scriptures,” 304–306. The Jesus Seminar take a contrary view.

the pathos of Isa 5:4 (“What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?”). The novel element in Jesus’ parable is the introduction of the fig tree, an image often used for Israel’s fruitfulness (blessing) or barrenness (curse).<sup>58</sup> Some regard this as an insuperable difficulty for linking the parable with Isaiah 5,<sup>59</sup> but this is only true if we insist that Jesus must have used the same decoding in all of his parables. As we have seen with the parable of the tenants (even from *Gospel of Thomas*), Jesus can both appropriate a tradition and add new elements to it (the emissaries). According to Bryan, the reason why Jesus introduces the fig tree is because it concentrates the divine judgment in one single act. Isaiah 5 describes the destruction of the vineyard in a series of actions: hedge removed; wall broken; trampled underfoot; laid waste; unpruned; overgrown; parched. But cutting down a fig tree is swift and decisive (cf. John the Baptist: “Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees”). The message is that Israel, now symbolized as a fig tree, is on the verge of being cut off, though it has been given one final chance. In this parable, the fig tree does not stand for something *within* Israel but Israel itself.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, the focus in the parable of the tenants is on the behaviour of the tenants and this is commonly understood as a reference to Israel’s leadership. Furthermore, the sending of a servant and his subsequent abuse is almost certainly a reference to a prophet,<sup>61</sup> which Mark or the tradition before him has made more explicit by speaking of “many” servants, some of whom were killed (Mark 12:5).

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<sup>58</sup> Funk (*Five Gospels*, 345) says: “References in both Hebrew scriptures and rabbinic literature to the fruitful fig tree as a sign of blessing and to the barren fig tree as a sign of curse or judgement are numerous.” Strangely, the Seminar is so adamant that scripture was of little importance to Jesus that they conclude that “the parable has been drawn from common lore.”

<sup>59</sup> So K. R. Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Inquiry Into Parable Interpretation*, WUNT 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983). For a critique, see G. J. Brooke, “4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard,” *DSD* 2 (1995): 268–294.

<sup>60</sup> Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions*, 75, 49. Bryan accepts the location of the parable in Luke and uses this to heighten the sense of impending doom: “It is not the possibility of sudden and unexpected death for some but the prospect of a sudden and impending judgement for all which underscores the urgency of repentance” (75).

<sup>61</sup> “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” (Matt 23:37/Luke 13:34). As Dunn notes, it is hard to imagine the early church inventing a prediction of Jesus’ death that talks about stoning (*Jesus Remembered*, 792).

But who is the son, mentioned even in the *Gospel of Thomas*? It is clearly a royal figure, uniquely related to the landowner (God) and able to act on his behalf. Since Jesus was in the habit of addressing God as Father,<sup>62</sup> it seems perverse to deny that Jesus was referring to himself (even if “beloved son” is an embellishment). Indeed, the targum of Ps 118:22 has changed the “rejected stone” to the “boy whom the builders abandoned was among the sons of Jesse and he is worthy to be appointed king and ruler.” If this reading was known in Jesus’ day, then it not only offers a precedent for Jesus introducing a rejected (royal) son into the parable, it also offers an explanation for why Ps 118:22 is quoted at the end of the parable.<sup>63</sup>

All four traditions also state that the son was killed, though only the synoptic accounts speak of the subsequent transfer of the vineyard “to others,” which looks like the hand of the early church. Bryan defends it, noting that Isaiah 27 had already prophesied a restored vineyard which will “fill the whole world with fruit.” Thus it is by no means impossible that Jesus could have depicted “simultaneously both Israel’s destruction (through the fate of the tenants) as well as the preservation of all that it meant to be Israel (through the giving of the vineyard to others).”<sup>64</sup> But even if this has been added by the early church, there remains a story where Jesus tells a parable about Israel that includes a climactic role for himself. Lee says that “when we consider that the parable is told by someone who, in the light of other passages, showed a self-consciousness of being uniquely related to God as his Father and of coming from God, it is entirely legitimate to interpret the christological significance attached to the parable in the whole context of his self-consciousness.”<sup>65</sup> Others will be more reticent in speaking about Jesus’ self-consciousness, but “christological” is not an inappropriate adjective to describe Jesus’ use of scripture here. After all, he

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<sup>62</sup> The one word printed in red by the Jesus Seminar in the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9; Luke 11:2).

<sup>63</sup> Since Ps 118:22 is quoted in the New Testament (Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7), we are rightly cautious about its authenticity but Hebrew word-play (אבן/בן: stone/son), Targumic features (“among the sons of Jesse”) and Qumran parallels (4Q500) have convinced a number of scholars that it derives from Jesus. See C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 397–406; Brooke, “4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard,” 268–294.

<sup>64</sup> Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions*, 56.

<sup>65</sup> A. H. I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son*, WUNT 2.192 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 165.

has taken scriptural traditions of vineyard and rejected stone and given himself a role in their fulfilment.

### 3.2. *Targum Isa 6:9–10*

The possibility that Jesus new and used (what was to become) the Isaiah Targum has particularly been argued for the quotation of Isa 6:9–10 in Mark 4:12.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the MT and LXX, both Mark and the Targum speak of “forgiving” rather than “healing” and use third person statements (“they may indeed look... and may indeed listen”) rather than imperatives (“keep listening...keep looking”). Manson went on to speculate that the problematic  $\dot{\iota}\nu\alpha$  in Mark (“in order that...they may not turn again and be forgiven”) can then be explained as a mistranslation of the Aramaic relative  $\daleth$  (“that”). However, in the light of Mark 9:12, this explanation is unnecessary<sup>67</sup> and the various differences between Mark and the Targum show that it is more a summarizing allusion than an actual quotation. Whether it was originally linked to the parables is difficult to determine. The problems it has caused for interpretation could count in its favour but the more usual explanation is that Mark or the tradition before him is responsible for the erroneous link with the parables. Perhaps all we can say with confidence is that at some point in his ministry, Jesus compared the lack of responsiveness to his teaching with the commission given to Isaiah.

### 3.3. *The Anointed One Who Brings Good News (Isaiah 61)*

According to Luke 4:16–21, Jesus attends a synagogue service, is handed the scroll of Isaiah and reads the passage that we know as Isa 61:1–2. He then returns to his seat and declares, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” If authentic, this would be a key passage for understanding Jesus’ use of scripture, but there are

<sup>66</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931); B. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Own Interpretation of Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1984); C. A. Evans, *To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6.9–10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation*, JSOTSup 64 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989). This connection has been strenuously denied by M. D. Goulder, “Those Outside (Mk. 4.10–12),” *NovT* 33 (1991): 289–302 but see the critique in Chilton and Evans, “Jesus and Israel’s Scriptures,” 300–304.

<sup>67</sup> As Chilton and Evans (“Jesus and Israel’s Scriptures,” 301) note, the  $\dot{\iota}\nu\alpha$  in Mark 9:12 clearly means that the “Scriptures speak to the effect that the son of man should suffer, but surely not with the express intention or purpose of making him suffer.”

several reasons for doubting its authenticity: (1) It is clearly based on the “rejection in his home town” story, which occurs much later in Matthew and Mark; (2) The purported reading (Isa 61:1–2) omits a phrase from Isa 61:1 (“to bind up the brokenhearted”), includes a phrase from Isa 58:6 (“to let the oppressed go free”) and agrees with the LXX on reading “recovery of sight to the blind” rather than “release to the prisoners” (MT); (3) The most likely link between Isa 61:1 and Isa 58:6 is the Greek word ἀφέσις (“release”), whereas the Hebrew uses two different words. Though the import of these can be lessened,<sup>68</sup> even Kimball suggests that what we have here is most likely a summary of Jesus’ sermon (not recorded) rather than an actual reading from a scroll.<sup>69</sup>

*Isa 61:3–5*

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners (LXX: τυφολοις ἀνάβλεψιν); to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who

*Luke 4:16–21*

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind (τυφολοις ἀνάβλεψιν), to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the

*Luke 7:22*

“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.”

*Luke 6:20–21*

“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

*Matt 11:4–5*

“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.”

*Matt 5:3–6*

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted

<sup>68</sup> For example: (1) it is unlikely that Mark’s “rejection in his home town” is his only source for this incident; (2) the LXX reading (“recovery of sight to the blind”) was known at Qumran; and (3) if Porter is correct that Jesus would have known some Greek, it can hardly be said that Jesus could not have known that both texts use the common word ἀφέσις.

<sup>69</sup> Kimball, *Jesus Exposition*, 108. This then allows him to make deductions about Jesus’ use of scripture because he thinks we have the remnants of an actual sermon: “Jesus defined his ministry in terms of OT prophecy and fulfillment: he cited Isa. 61.1–2 to claim that he was the herald who proclaimed the messianic release and inserted Isa. 58.6d to emphasize that he was also the agent of this spiritual liberation” (110).



mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness... foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines.

attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh."

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

There are, however, two other traditions which echo Isa 61:1–3, whose claim to authenticity is stronger. The first is Jesus' reply to followers of John the Baptist recorded in Matt 11:4–5/Luke 7:22. Now this could be a convenient fabrication, rather like the Baptist's question about whether it is more appropriate for him to be baptised by Jesus (Matt 3:11–12). On the other hand, there are several reasons for accepting the authenticity of the dialogue, even if the context (John being allowed to send emissaries from prison) is more doubtful:<sup>70</sup> (1) given John's emphasis on judgement, it is quite plausible that he later came to doubt whether Jesus was "the one to come"; (2) we know from 11QMelch and 4Q521 that the Qumran community reflected on the figure of Isaiah 61, so it is quite plausible that Jesus did; (3) the saying reflects the activities narrated in the gospels more than the christological affirmations of the early church; and (4) had it originated in the early church, one might have expected a statement that John was convinced by Jesus' reply. Thus there are good reasons to suggest that Jesus saw in Isaiah a description of his miracle working activity and fashioned a reply to John by crafting a short *florilegium* or *cento* of quotations from Isa 35:5–6; 29:18–19 and 61:1. As Meier points out, it

<sup>70</sup> "[A]s if Herod Antipas would have granted his prisoner the leisure and liberty to discuss messianic claims" (B. Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate biography* [Doubleday: New York, 2000], 63). P. M. Casey also doubts the historicity of the setting but argues for the authenticity of the dialogue (*An Aramaic Approach to Q*, SNTSMS 122 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 105–145). On the other hand, Allison (*The Intertextual Jesus*, 113) finds it significant that Jesus' reply omits any reference to setting prisoners free; most apt if John is communicating from prison.

is noteworthy that Jesus omits any mention of the vengeance or judgement that occurs in neighbouring texts (Isa 35:4; 29:20; 61:2) for “the accent is now on what a loving, merciful God is already doing to save Israel.”<sup>71</sup>

The second passage is Matt 5:3–6/Luke 6:20–21, where the kingdom of God/Heaven is promised to the poor/poor in spirit (Isa 61:1), comfort to those who weep/mourn (Isa 61:3), and in Matthew’s version, there follows a promise of inheriting the earth (Isa 61:5, 7). This latter promise is not in Luke and agrees exactly with the LXX of Isa 61:7 (κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν), against the Hebrew text. Meier is thus sceptical that the earliest form of these beatitudes can be traced to Isa 61:1–3, though he accepts that the promise of comfort to those who mourn shows “clear influence of Isaiah 61.”<sup>72</sup> Dunn summarizes:

[E]ven if Luke’s portrayal of Jesus reading the passage and explicitly claiming its fulfilment (Luke 4.16–21) is an elaboration of the briefer tradition in Mark 6.1–6a, we can still be confident that this elaboration was based on a strong remembrance of Jesus making clear allusion to the passage on more than one occasion.<sup>73</sup>

### 3.4. *Isaiah 56:7/Jeremiah 7:11*

While some scholars doubt whether the so-called “cleansing of the Temple” actually occurred,<sup>74</sup> the majority of scholars accept that something must have happened to provoke Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion. However, not all accept the authenticity of the quotations, partly because of their Septuagintal character and partly because of the nature of the accusation (“den of robbers”).<sup>75</sup> The first is not significant: (1) because the LXX is a close rendering of the Hebrew, even maintaining its word order; and (2) the fact that the gospel writers cite texts from the LXX is not in itself evidence that they created them. For the second point, if Jeremiah can say that the Temple of his day had become a “den or robbers,” there seems no reason why Jesus could not have done likewise. Furthermore, the link between the two verses is clearly

<sup>71</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, III: *Companions and Competitors*, 134. On the other hand, “Jesus has not given up John’s hope of a consummation yet to come, including punishment for those who harden themselves against the final offer of salvation” (134).

<sup>72</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, II: *Mentor, Message and Miracles*, 380 n. 124.

<sup>73</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 516–517.

<sup>74</sup> Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 333, 345.

<sup>75</sup> Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, 185.

the word “house,” a Jewish exegetical procedure that Jesus uses on more than one occasion. A positive argument can also be put forward based on Mark’s inclusion of “for all the nations.” Had he, or the tradition before him, wished to place a quotation on the lips of Jesus to justify the Gentile mission, Isaiah 56 would be a surprising choice.

<i>Isa 56:7</i> these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.	<i>Jer 7:11</i> Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight?	<i>Mark 11:17</i> “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”	<i>Matt 21:13</i> “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers.”
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Recent writers have focused on Jesus’ use of Jer 7:11. Thus Holmén suggests that the emphasis should fall on “den” rather than “robbers.” Jesus is not accusing the buyers and sellers of “robbery” as they carry out their (essential) Temple business. Like Jeremiah and the prophets before him, Jesus accuses them of hypocrisy, namely, attempting to fulfil their Temple duties while continuing to live immoral lives (Jer 7:8–10).<sup>76</sup> Wright has a more specific view. The meaning of *ληστής* is not just “robber” but “armed robber” or “bandit.” According to Wright, “the Temple had become, in Jesus’ day as in Jeremiah’s, the talisman of nationalist violence, the guarantee that YHWH would act for Israel and defend her against her enemies.”<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, Bryan thinks that Jesus is deliberately citing traditions concerning judgment (Jeremiah 7) and restoration (Isaiah 56). This is not a contrast between the present material Temple and a future eschatological Temple, but the fact that the Temple should by now have become the eschatological Temple. In support, he cites the fig tree episode where Mark (confusingly) explains that Jesus did not

<sup>76</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 312–328.

<sup>77</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 420.

find fruit because it was not the season for figs. Bryan suggests that in “Jesus’ estimation, the tree should have been laden with figs whatever the season, for it was the time of eschatological fulfilment.”<sup>78</sup>

There is clearly no consensus on the precise meaning of Jesus’ words and all we can conclude is that: (1) The two texts were most likely combined by the common word “house”; (2) Jesus endorsed Isaiah’s promise of restoration; and (3) Jesus appropriated Jeremiah’s judgment as applicable to some aspect of the Temple service in his own day.

### 3.5. *Elijah Traditions*

In contrast to the wealth of rabbinic material on the returning Elijah, Sir 48:10 and 4Q558 are the only texts that can confidently be dated to the first century.<sup>79</sup> The latter does not tell us anything other than the hope of his return. For the former, the original text of Sir 48:10 has not survived but from the LXX, Peshitta and a late Hebrew text from the Cairo Geniza, it appears that the promise of Mal 3:23–24 had been extended to “restoring” or perhaps “preparing” the tribes of Israel (καταστήσαι φυλάς Ιακωβ).

#### *Mal 3:1*

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

#### *Mal 4:5–6*

Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of

#### *Mark 9:11–13*

Then they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” He said to them, “Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things. How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him.”

#### *Matt 11:9–14*

“What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered

<sup>78</sup> Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions*, 225.

<sup>79</sup> J. J. Collins has suggested that the anointed figure in 4Q521 is a reference to Elijah, but this has not won much support. See J. J. Collins, *The Sceptre and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 117–121.

children to their parents,  
so that I will not come and  
strike the land with a curse.

violence, and the violent take  
it by force. For all the proph-  
ets and the law prophesied  
until John came; and if you  
are willing to accept it, he is  
Elijah who is to come.'

There are four main difficulties with Jesus' recorded sayings about Elijah: (1) The composite quotation of Mal 3:1 and Exod 23:20 appears in Mark 1:2 as an editorial comment rather than words of Jesus;<sup>80</sup> (2) in Mark 9:11–13, Jesus appears to identify the returning Elijah with John the Baptist, whose recent death makes it difficult to understand how he “restored all things”; (3) it is difficult to see how the Aramaic (most likely) spoken by Jesus can bear a titular meaning (“the Son of Man”); and (4) in any case, it is difficult to identify any scriptures that speak of the suffering of “the Son of man.”

Casey thinks these can be answered by setting aside the assumption that Elijah is the forerunner of the Messiah, for which there is no early evidence, and focusing on the underlying Aramaic spoken by Jesus. Based on Mal 3:24 (ET 4:6), Casey thinks that Jesus probably said that Elijah “turns back all” (ומתיב כולא), which would not have been taken in a literal sense (“everybody”) but “many,” a not unreasonable description of John's popular and largely successful ministry. The difficulty is that John's ministry ended in rejection and there are no traditions that forecast the returning Elijah's death. But there are texts that can be linked to Malachi 3 (*gezarah šawa*) that forecast the suffering (Job 14), death (Isaiah 40) and rejection (Jeremiah 6–7) of “man” in general, and according to Casey, this explains the presence of a generic “son of man” saying with special reference to John.<sup>81</sup> Casey thus offers the following literal translation of his reconstructed Aramaic:

<sup>80</sup> Meier (*A Marginal Jew*, III: *Companions and Competitions*, 141) also cites the rather formal introduction (“This is the one about whom it is written”) and the change from Malachi's “before me,” meaning God, to “before you,” probably meaning Christ, as reasons for doubting its authenticity.

<sup>81</sup> Casey suggests that Mal 3:1a would have easily led Jesus to the almost identical Isa 40:3a, and hence to the statement that all flesh fades like grass in Isa 40:6, and hence to Job 14:2. Less convincing is his suggestion that the refining mentioned in Mal 3:2 led Jesus to Jer 6:27–30 and hence the rejection of “man” by God in Jer 7:29. Though it is of interest that Jesus uses Jer 7:11 in the Temple incident, it is not clear how God's rejection of “man in general” is applicable to John the Baptist, who was God's prophet. See P. M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 111–137.

And he said to them, "Elijah comes first and turns back all, and how it is written of (a/the son of) man that he suffers much and is rejected! And I tell you that, moreover, Elijah has come, and they did in the case of him whom they desired according as it is written concerning him/it."<sup>82</sup>

Bryan, however, thinks the key is not the reference to "the Son of man," but the reference to resurrection. He thinks Jesus is engaging in the well-known exegetical practice of reconciling texts that appear contradictory. He paraphrases Jesus meaning:

Elijah comes just prior to the establishment of the kingdom and restores all things, but restoration cannot mean the re-establishment of the twelve tribes, as you assume, because that idea cannot be reconciled with the Danielic tradition whereby God's holy ones are to suffer just prior to the establishment of the kingdom.<sup>83</sup>

Both Casey and Bryan think that Jesus was involved in the subtle exegesis of multiple texts, though neither thinks that Jesus was identifying with a figure called "the Son of Man" from Dan 7:13.

### 3.6. *Daniel 7:13*

It is the additional phrase of "coming in/on clouds" in Mark 13:26/14:62 and parallels that has convinced some scholars that Jesus did identify with the figure of Dan 7:13. Thus Kimball speaks of Jesus expounding Dan 7:13 "to proclaim his coming not merely as a man or divine figure but as Yahweh on the eschatological day of Yahweh."<sup>84</sup> He calls it a *peshering* use of scripture, "a type of implicit midrash in which the biblical text was altered for exegetical purposes to show an 'eschatological' fulfillment of the OT."<sup>85</sup>

Wright has a different understanding of Dan 7:13. He does not think that it is talking about the 'coming' of a divine figure, as if the clouds were a mode of heavenly transport, but the vindication of God's people, using traditional apocalyptic language (cf. Isa 13:10; 34:4; Ezek 32:7). Jesus alludes to Dan 7:13 not because it speaks about his "return" but because it speaks about vindication. Jesus has predicted the destruction of the Temple, for which he will pay with his life, but the "divine

<sup>82</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Sources*, 121–122.

<sup>83</sup> Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions*, 110. Original in italics.

<sup>84</sup> Kimball, *Jesus Exposition*, 196.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 193 n. 168.

kingdom will be manifest within a generation, when Jesus and his followers are vindicated in and through the destruction of Jerusalem.”<sup>86</sup>

A third interpretation is that of Chilton, who seeks to integrate the “generic” interpretation of “son of man” with a specific reference to what he calls, “Israel’s advocate in the heavenly court.”<sup>87</sup> Jesus was not claiming “identity” with this figure but a special (mystical) connection. As a “son of man” or person like any other, Jesus “enjoyed access to the heavenly court through the angelic figure who was like a person.” The allusion to Dan 7:13 indicates the (esoteric) source of Jesus’ authority.

In the light of such diverse interpretations, Dunn’s assessment that the “parallels on which historical research so much depends, both in linguistic and apocalyptic usage, are so disputed as to dating and relevance as to leave any historical hypothesis vulnerable to attack”<sup>88</sup> seems correct. Though Jesus may have had Daniel 7 in mind, it is difficult to say with any confidence what type of use of Scripture is implied by it.

### 3.7. *Isaiah 52:13–53:12*

The debate as to whether Jesus ever alluded to this passage has been frequently summarized and need not be repeated here.<sup>89</sup> The three main contenders are Mark 10:45; 14:24 and Luke 22:37. The linguistic evidence is interesting. Luke 22:37 (καὶ μετὰ ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη) is close to the LXX of Isa 53:12 (καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη) and the introductory formula (“this scripture must be fulfilled”) identifies it as a quotation. However, λογίζομαι is not the usual rendering of מנח. Furthermore, the formula reflects characteristic Lukan language and appears to disrupt the flow from vv. 36, 38. Dunn concludes that a “tradition-historical analysis cannot trace it back to Jesus with any confidence.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 365.

<sup>87</sup> B. Chilton, “(The) Son of (The) Man, and Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 282.

<sup>88</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 759.

<sup>89</sup> W. H. Bellinger and W. R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998).

<sup>90</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 812.

As for the other two sayings, there are no close parallels with the LXX,<sup>91</sup> so that any argument must depend on thematic similarities. For those like Wright, who see Deutero-Isaiah as an overarching “meta-narrative” for understanding Jesus’ mission, this is not a problem. It is assumed that the passage was well known, so that the faintest of echoes (“handed over,” “poured out,” “the many”) would be enough to evoke the controlling story.<sup>92</sup> As a general theory, this is quite possible but for our purposes, its strength is also its weakness. If a few phrases are sufficient to evoke the *general* story, it is difficult to deduce anything *specific* about Jesus’ use of that story. In particular, one should not use such a general theory to argue for something as specific as vicarious atonement, especially as that aspect of the story was not widely known.<sup>93</sup> As with Daniel 7, it is possible that Jesus alluded to Isaiah 53, but it is hazardous to make any deductions about Jesus’ use of scripture from it.

#### 4. Conclusion

We saw in our second section that Jesus appears to use a number of exegetical practices that were later codified as Hillel’s seven exegetical rules. We can now add to that. The combination of Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11 was probably suggested by the common word “house.” Though there is little agreement about Jesus’ intended meaning, it is safe to say that he was juxtaposing traditions of restoration and judgment. In the parable of the tenants, the connection between the rejected stone and the death of the son appears to be the wordplay בן/בן/בן, perhaps evidence for authenticity, though the early (Aramaic speaking) church could be responsible for it. Thirdly, the response to John the Baptist’s question produces a *cento* of phrases from Isaiah, a mini *florilegium*.

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<sup>91</sup> The nub of M. D. Hooker’s challenge in *The Servant of God* (London: SPCK, 1959) and reiterated in “Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, ed. Bellinger and Farmer, 88–103.

<sup>92</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 602–604. Powery (*Jesus Reads Scripture*, 252) offers a contrary view. The fact that Jesus only alludes to or echoes these texts, rather than explicitly quoting them, shows that “christological issues are not central to Jesus’ use of scripture.”

<sup>93</sup> For a recent assessment, see D. D. Hannah, “Isaiah within Judaism of the Second Temple Period,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 7–33.



It is Casey's opinion that Jesus' mastery of scripture made it "obvious" to associate Malachi 3 with Isaiah 40, Job 14 and Jeremiah 6–7.

We have also seen examples where Jesus introduces an innovative element into the interpretation of texts. In the parable of the barren fig tree, the action focuses on the fate of a fig tree placed within the vineyard, which nevertheless represents the vineyard. In the parable of the tenants, Jesus introduces emissaries sent by the owner to obtain a share of the produce. This allows the parable to speak about their shameful treatment and, in particular, the death of the owner's son. Though the connection with Psalm 118 is less certain, these elements are sufficient to take the allegory of Isaiah 5 in new directions. Indeed, since Jesus is interpreting texts in the light of his own role in salvation history, some might go as far as to call this a christological interpretation. Thus Meyer concludes that, "Jesus, in the consciousness of election to a climactic and definitive mission to Israel, sought and found in the Scriptures the specifications of God's eschatological deed and the specifications of his own role as the chosen instrumental doer of that deed."<sup>94</sup>

We also saw in our first section that Jesus' radical teaching about marriage and the relativizing (though not abolishing) of certain purity laws has been explained by his eschatological vision. This can take a futurist perspective (purpose of temple, death of the son) but its leading characteristic is present fulfilment. Thus Elijah has come and "restored all things," just as Malachi predicted; the miracles spoken about in Isaiah are present in Jesus' ministry; the blindness exhibited by some of Jesus' hearers is a "fulfilment" of Isaiah's commission. Most importantly, Jesus identified with the anointed prophet of Isaiah 61, who comes to preach good news to the poor. According to Bryan, what is most characteristic of Jesus' use of scripture is his selection of texts:

Unlike many of his contemporaries whose understanding of Israel's situation was shaped by biblical traditions which anticipated Israel's restoration and the judgement of the nation's Gentile oppressors, Jesus' expectations were heavily informed by traditions which declared that the heat of God's wrath would be vented on Israel for covenant unfaithfulness.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> B. F. Meyer, "Appointed Deed, Appointed Doer: Jesus and the Scriptures," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 172–173.

<sup>95</sup> Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions*, 86.

However, in the light of Jesus' use of Isaiah 61, his focus on the positive rather than negative aspects of Isaiah 29 and 35, and his general habit of combining texts, a better summary might be his purposeful *juxtaposition* of traditions of restoration and judgement, rather than emphasizing one to the exclusion of the other.

In terms of function, Powery concludes that Jesus uses scripture primarily to *correct* (divorce, purpose of Temple), to *defend* (resurrection, role of John), to *instruct* (adultery, oaths), and to *agree* or reinforce (commandments).<sup>96</sup> Powery's study focuses on how the synoptic gospels portray Jesus' use of scripture but his comments on the texts that we have discussed are instructive. Drawing on Fitzmyer's categories, he suggests that Jesus corrects contemporary views about divorce by *accommodating* the Genesis text to the present situation, whereas the use of Isa 56:7 to declare the purpose of the Temple is more an *eschatological* appropriation. Reciting the commandments is an example of a *literal* appropriation, while applying Isaiah's commission to himself and his contemporary hearers is a *modernizing* use.<sup>97</sup> These broader conclusions suggest that his comment on the divorce text ("Jesus levels the Mosaic law to a post-creation period") should not be generalized beyond this pericope. In fact, the law of Moses as articulated in Deut 6:4 ("You shall love your God"), is quoted as the greatest commandment. There is no suggestion in this exchange (Mark 12:28–32//) that there is something "higher" than this in Genesis. Indeed, the second commandment (if original), comes from Leviticus, further indicating that Jesus did not operate with a hermeneutic that automatically gave priority to Genesis—and perhaps it was not Powery's intention to suggest this.

We began our study by noting that some scholars think Jesus made little reference to scripture and, when he did, it was only to confirm a conclusion reached on other grounds. Though some of our conclusions are necessarily tentative, they are sufficient to refute this view. Indeed, Vermes opens his chapter on Jesus and scripture by saying: "The Bible played a fundamental part in the religious and literary cre-

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<sup>96</sup> He also has a fifth category, to *predict*, but his only two examples are the use of Isa 58:6 in Luke's synagogue reading and the use of Zech 13:7 to predict the desertion of the disciples (Mark 14:27).

<sup>97</sup> As the categories were derived from a study of quotations in the New Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Powery's study further roots Jesus in the exegetical practices of the day.

ativity of the Jews in the intertestamental era when the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the earliest rabbinic writings were produced.”<sup>98</sup> Since he goes on to assign the majority of the quotations found in the gospels to the early church, he presumably also includes the apostles in this list. How strange then that he concludes that scripture was of little importance to Jesus. The most “plausible” Jesus is the one who discusses, debates and argues the meaning of Israel’s scriptures—for they were also his scriptures.

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<sup>98</sup> Vermes, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, 173.



# IMPLICIT CHRISTOLOGY AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

EDWIN K. BROADHEAD

Implicit christology represents diverse attempts to find christological motifs embedded in the words, deeds, and person of the historical Jesus. This quest originates as a response to the scholarly excision of all christological dogma from the historical Jesus.

## 1. *Faith and History*

The demarcation between history and dogma was inherent in the basic tenets of the Enlightenment and in the modernity to which it gave birth. In particular, the insistence upon scientific analysis of all historical events in order to separate myth, dogma, and ideology from historical reality presumed a critical analysis of the New Testament images of Jesus.

By the late seventeenth century scientific criticism had already turned to the texts of the New Testament and to their portraits of Jesus. Spinoza (1632–77) questioned the miracle stories, and English Deists challenged traditional views of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> A more significant challenge came from Hermann Reimarus (1694–1768), who saw a conflict between Jesus' own intentions and the fraudulent conspiracy by Jesus' disciples in the days following his death. Reimarus's Jesus was distinct from the Christ described in the gospels:

The former was a Jewish revolutionary who attempted unsuccessfully to establish a messianic kingdom on earth, while the latter was the fictional projection of those who stole his body and pretended he had risen from the dead.<sup>2</sup>

By 1836 D. F. Strauss saw the miraculous accounts of the New Testament as myths created in the faith response to Jesus. Strauss believed

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<sup>1</sup> See James Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 29.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 817.

this generative process made it almost impossible to illuminate the historical life which lay behind these ideas and myths.<sup>3</sup>

The decisive blow came in the opening years of the twentieth century, and it was delivered along three fronts. At the turn of the century Adolf Harnack argued that the true image of Jesus must be distilled from the Christ of dogma—from the metaphysical overlay of Greek philosophy.<sup>4</sup> While Harnack framed a theological distinction, a second front rooted the demarcation in the gospels themselves. The lives of Jesus written in the nineteenth century abandoned the Gospel of John as theological mythmaking. For a time the Gospel of Mark was granted priority, both chronologically and theologically: the earliest of the gospels was assumed to be a rather straightforward account of Jesus' messianic mission. The third front came with Wrede and Schweitzer, who took the division into the heart of the Gospel of Mark. William Wrede argued that the Gospel of Mark, with its motif of a secret messiahship, is a theological construction and not a direct historical account of Jesus' ministry.<sup>5</sup> In the same year Albert Schweitzer severed the link between the Marcan portrait so favored by the liberal quest and the realities of the historical Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Schweitzer argued that the liberal portrait of Jesus, based on the Gospel of Mark, had fallen before a double blow—the thoroughgoing scepticism of Wrede and the thoroughgoing eschatology of Schweitzer:

Thoroughgoing scepticism and thoroughgoing eschatology, between them, are compelling theology to read the Marcan text again with simplicity of mind... The material with which it has hitherto been usual to solder the sections together into a life of Jesus will not stand the temperature test. Exposed to the cold air of critical scepticism it cracks; when the furnace of eschatology is heated to a certain point the solderings melt. In both cases the sections fall apart.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Brown, *Introduction*, 818; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 29–34.

<sup>4</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), ET: *What is Christianity?* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1901).

<sup>5</sup> William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971 [1901]).

<sup>6</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion* (New York: Macmillan, 1950 [1901]).

<sup>7</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A&C Black, 1948 [1906]), 331.

Schweitzer's 1906 survey of the historical quest for Jesus dismissed the liberal quest and defined Jesus as an eschatological figure who remains a mystery and an enigma to the modern world.<sup>8</sup>

The demarcation of the historical Jesus from the Christ of faith was completed in the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Kähler. While Bultmann believed that numerous facts could be known about the historical Jesus, he considered this scattered data neither relevant nor helpful. Though some things could be known about the message of Jesus, the search for his personality and inner life was pointless.<sup>9</sup> For Bultmann, Jesus can be known only in an existential encounter with the word of proclamation about Christ. This position was based on Bultmann's form-critical analysis of the gospels and his conclusion that the earliest traditions show no interest in specific locations or in the development of Jesus' self-consciousness. Bultmann's textual work thus affirmed the theological stance taken in 1892 by Martin Kähler: Jesus can be known in confidence as the Christ preached in the writings of the Bible, quite apart from the transient efforts to attain the external validation of historical data.<sup>10</sup> With Kähler and Bultmann, description of a Jesus verified through historical analysis was not only impossible; it was also unnecessary.

## 2. *From Closed Quest to Implicit Christology*

While Bultmann is seen as the scholar who closed the Quest, it was also he who left open the possibility of further investigation. By 1948 Bultmann would note that for the church, as for Jesus himself, the central importance was not found in the content of his message; it was found instead in his call.

In his lifetime he had demanded decision for his person as the bearer of the Word; the Church has now made this decision. Jesus' call to decision implies a christology. That call does not justify speculation about him as a heavenly being. Nor does it support the Messiah-consciousness attributed to him. But it does imply a christology which will unfold the implications of a positive answer to his demand for the decision, the obedient response which acknowledges God's revelation in Jesus. Such

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<sup>8</sup> Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

<sup>9</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ*, trans. C. Braaten (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964 [1892]).

christology became explicit in the earliest Church to the extent that they understood Jesus as the one whom God by the resurrection has made Messiah, and that they awaited him as the coming Son of Man. For it is apparent that in that very fact they understood his sending as God's decisive act.<sup>11</sup>

Bultmann suggested that the kerygma of the risen Christ could be understood only on the basis of a unique historical figure such as Jesus; therefore the life of Jesus, particularly his call to decision, *implied* a christology.

The New Quest, initiated by students of Bultmann in the 1950's, declared that a historical portrait of Jesus was important and that such a description, in limited form, could be attained through historical-critical analysis. The New Quest believed that Jesus exercised a unique authority that distinguished him from the Judaism of his day. This authority constitutes an implied christology that stands in continuity with the explicit christology formulated by the early church.

The New Quest sought to build on Bultmann's form-critical results and gave primary attention to what Jesus said. Since the criterion of dissimilarity, which was central to New Quest analysis, removed sayings with any hint of Jewish tradition or church confession, the New Quest looked as well to other aspects of the Jesus tradition. Extensive research was applied to the christological titles in the gospels in an effort to sort out what Jesus called himself and what he meant by any such titles. No consensus was reached on the general use of titles or on any one title. In addition to the limited list of authentic sayings and the complex issue of titles, the New Quest searched Jesus' words, deeds, and presence for signs that might imply a messianic self-awareness. This search for an implicit christology represents a conscious attempt to leap over the line of demarcation separating the Christ of faith from the Jesus of history.

The New Quest sought to establish continuity between the post-Easter preaching (kerygma) and its christology on the one hand and the historical life of Jesus on the other. Theissen and Metz note that this connection was attempted along various lines:

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<sup>11</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951 [1948]), 42-43.



- as an existential experience of the call of Jesus to the Kingdom of God (Bultmann)
- as Jesus' critique of the Law and his call to freedom (Käsemann)
- as the immediacy of Jesus in contrast to the legalism and apocalypticism of his day (Bornkamm)
- as the impending claim of God's love for sinners, present in Jesus' words and deeds (Fuchs)
- as the paradox of radical obedience to the Torah and radical grace, a paradox found in Jesus (Herbert Braun)
- as the model of faith initiated by Jesus' own faith in God (Ebeling).<sup>12</sup>

These New Quest connections to a pre-dogmatic understanding of Jesus are each constructed through a criterion of dissimilarity: all traits which may be attributed to Christian doctrine or to a Jewish worldview are excluded in order to define the uniqueness of Jesus. The result, of course, is that Jesus is isolated from both Judaism and early Christianity. Moreover, Judaism becomes a foil (legalistic, apocalyptic, particularistic) against which to define the uniqueness of Jesus.

### 3. *Extending the New Quest*

In the wake of the New Quest, various areas suggested themselves as fertile ground for extracting the messianic consciousness of Jesus. Almost all of these involved a search for elements of Jesus' words and deeds which implied something about his identity and his self-awareness. A sampling of these treatments reveals some common patterns.

For some, it is the concept of *existence* which connects the Christian kerygma to the Jesus of history. James M. Robinson notes that Jesus called people to a radical break with the present in light of the future, which was determined by the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God. Robinson believes that behind the eschatological terminology of Jesus lies a deeper message: "in accepting one's death there is life for others; in suffering, there is glory; in submitting to judgement, one

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<sup>12</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annete Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998 [1996]), 8.

finds grace; in accepting one's finitude resides the only transcendence."<sup>13</sup> For Robinson, there exists a clear line of continuity between this deeper meaning and the christological confessions of the early church: "It is this existential meaning latent in Jesus' message which is constitutive of his selfhood, expresses itself in his action, and is finally codified in the Church's *kerygma*."<sup>14</sup>

The *voice* of Jesus—the manner in which he spoke—was seen by many as a pointer to his self-awareness.<sup>15</sup> This connection was sought at three different levels. For some scholars the *ipsissima verba* (the very words of Jesus) may be heard, and these are the basis of later christological confessions. Two specific terms are seen to reveal the identity of Jesus. In his use of *Abba* to address God as Father, Jesus' Sonship is unveiled. The unique authority of Jesus is seen in his twofold use of *amen* to begin a statement. While Joachim Jeremias was intrigued by Jesus' use of such terms, he gave particular attention to the *ipsissima vox Jesu* (the very voice of Jesus). Jeremias identified two important lines of linguistic and stylistic characteristics in the sayings of Jesus: (1) those patterns which are not new, but appear with unusual frequency, and (2) those patterns which are without analogy and may be identified as the *ipsissima vox Jesu*.<sup>16</sup> Jeremias was confident that these patterns, along with attention to content, placed one close to the authentic words of Jesus. Jeremias also found inherent in this voice a clear expression of Jesus' self-conscious sonship and authority. Later scholars would suggest the key to Jesus is found in the manner in which he spoke—the *ipsissima structura*.

The *authority* of Jesus was understood by many to imply a messianic consciousness. A comprehensive development of this approach is found in the work of Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz. The authority of the historical Jesus is evident in his person—that is, in his charisma. This charisma operates in both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. The horizontal dimension is relational: "Jesus was a charismatic who had an almost inexplicable aura: fascinating to followers, provocative

<sup>13</sup> James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959), 123.

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, *A New Quest*, 123.

<sup>15</sup> John Reumann, "Jesus and Christology," in *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. E. Epp and G. MacRae (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 501–564.

<sup>16</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1971), 8–37.

to opponents.”<sup>17</sup> This charisma is seen in Jesus’ relationship to his family, to John the Baptist, to his disciples, to women followers, and to his opponents.<sup>18</sup> The vertical dimension of Jesus’ charisma is seen in his special closeness to God. This characteristic is seen in Jesus’ use of the *amen* formula, in his emphatic “I” in the antitheses and the “I have come” sayings, in the use of *Abba*, in the forgiveness of sins, in the causal attribution of his miracles to the working of God, and in the evaluation of the Baptist’s greatness (which implies an even greater status for Jesus).<sup>19</sup>

Christopher Tuckett believes there is a christology implicit in various elements of Jesus’ ministry—the proclamation of an eschatological Kingdom, the relation to John the Baptist, the presence of the Kingdom in the deeds of Jesus.<sup>20</sup> Further evidence is found in Jesus’ appointment of precisely twelve in addition to himself. For Tuckett, Jesus’ words and deeds articulate an implicit christology: Jesus is the agent through whom God’s eschatological activity is taking place, and he has placed himself at the head of the twelve who represent Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Bart Ehrman suggests there is a confluence between Jesus’ proclamation on the one hand and his deeds and experiences on the other; various aspects of Jesus’ words and deeds imply a christology.<sup>22</sup> In a similar vein, John P. Meier builds on the response of the people to Jesus: “This belief in Jesus as a prophet who was at the same time a miracle-worker—a belief that goes back to his ministry—furnishes an important key to understanding who people thought Jesus was and perhaps even who *he* thought he was.”<sup>23</sup> For Meier, “the so-called ‘charismatic’ nature of Jesus, which one can observe in his prophetic

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<sup>17</sup> Theissen and Metz, *The Historical Jesus*, 235.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 235–237.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 523–531.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Tuckett, *Christology and the New Testament: Jesus and His Earliest Followers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 206–210.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 209–210.

<sup>22</sup> Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 183–226. Among these sources of implied christology are Jesus’ baptism, his relationship with his associates (including Jesus’ followers, the Twelve, sinners and outcasts, women followers), Jesus’ early ministry in Galilee, his miraculous deeds, the reception of Jesus (including widespread rejection and his controversy with the Pharisees), and Jesus’ death.

<sup>23</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, II: Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (London: Doubleday, 1994), 1044.

ministry and miracle-working, also surfaces in his teaching on the Law."<sup>24</sup>

The most comprehensive schema for linking Jesus' activity with the christological kerygma of the early church was formulated by Willi Marxsen. For Marxsen the faith of Jesus is enacted in history and creates a *Jesus kerygma*; the faith of the early church is formulated as an explicit *Christ kerygma*; this is expressed in the gospels as a formalized *Jesus Christ kerygma*.<sup>25</sup>

A more recent attempt to connect the faith of the early church to the reality of Jesus is found in the work of James Dunn. Dunn believes that the Jesus tradition as found in the gospels demonstrates *that* there was a concern to remember Jesus and it shows us *how* Jesus was remembered. For Dunn, the primary force for shaping the Jesus tradition is the impact made by Jesus upon his first disciples. The initiating impact was the pre-Easter call to faith, and behind that impact stands Jesus.<sup>26</sup> Dunn concludes that "In short, it is not only the impression of Jesus' words and actions which is imprinted in the Jesus tradition, but also the impression of who Jesus *was*."<sup>27</sup>

This complex range of portraits, all claiming to be rooted in the historical Jesus, led in part to the critical turn to literary analysis or narrative criticism. Here the story itself became the focus of analysis, with various tools borrowed from secular literary criticism. Attention was given to how the story was told, then eventually to the hearer of the story. Even in this self-contained world, the possibility of implied christology emerged. The narrator, a persona wholly contained within the world of the story, usually serves as the voice of the implied author, who may or may not represent the image of the real author. The implied author speaks through the devices of the story world to an implied reader, who may or may not represent the real reader. One of the key means of communication is the use of implicit commentary. For many literary critics, this hermeneutical process (reading) carries an underlying hope that the story signifies something real about Jesus and his message.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew II*, 1046.

<sup>25</sup> Willi Marxsen, "Christology in the NT," *IDBSup*, 146-156.

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 881-893.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 892.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

The so-called “Third Quest”<sup>29</sup> for the historical Jesus has been marked by attention to social history, to the role of Jesus within Judaism, and to the use of non-canonical sources.<sup>30</sup> While this movement has split into two streams over the question of whether Jesus was eschatological or non-eschatological, there is consistent unity in the rejection of the criterion of dissimilarity. This has been replaced with a criterion of plausibility: “what is plausible in the Jewish context and makes the rise of Christianity understandable may be historical.”<sup>31</sup> As a consequence, implied christology plays a diminished role in the so-called “Third Quest.”

#### 4. *Retrospective*

While various other studies could be cited, attention to the line of development makes clear the place of implicit christology. Faced with the excision of all christological dogma from the historical Jesus and confronted by a wall of separation between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history, alternate routes were explored. If no explicit christological claims could be credited to Jesus himself, then implicit claims kept open the hope of knowing something about Jesus and the hope of connecting the confessional preaching of the early church to Jesus himself. Even where explicit claims were accepted, implied christology served to bolster the portrait of Jesus.

#### 5. *A Critical Assessment of Implicit Christology*

The attempt to frame an implicit christology on the facts of Jesus’ life is fraught with danger. Numerous critical issues are evoked by this quest.

First, implicit christology is not an obvious or necessary hermeneutical step; it is a response to the failed attempt to locate a clear, explicit christology with Jesus himself.

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<sup>29</sup> The name is credited to Tom Wright, who used it in his 1988 updating of Stephen Neill’s *The Interpretation of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379.

<sup>30</sup> See the summary by Theissen and Metz, *The Historical Jesus*, 10–12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Secondly, implicit christology often thrives on a supposed contrast between Jesus and Judaism. The criterion of dissimilarity, by definition, separates Jesus from Judaism. The dangers inherent in this approach are evident: the persistence of anti-Jewish scholarship, a sterile portrait of Jesus, and a supersessionist view of Christian faith.

In the third place, implicit christology is in danger of being uncritical. Redactional and theological interests are not limited to explicit portraits of Jesus but may be present as well in implicit descriptions. If there is an implied christology in the gospels, who implied it—Jesus, the tradition, or the redactor? For example, the idea that Jesus affirms the decisive role of the Baptist but sees himself as more than John implies a christology, but this motif is likely a redactional effort to place Jesus above John rather than behind him. Implicit motifs may tell us more about traditional or redactional interests than about Jesus himself.

Fourthly, implicit Christology is equally subject to Schweitzer's critique of liberal portraits of Jesus. For example, Ernst Käsemann, in the aftermath of the Nazi era and of Fascism, found implicit christology in Jesus' new call to freedom.<sup>32</sup> It is ironic that Käsemann sketched this post-war image of Jesus as a contrast to a failed Judaism, thus extending the anti-Judaism of the Nazi era. It is possible that the image of Jesus framed as an implication of authentic material may stand no closer to Jesus than did the liberal quest.

Fifthly, the quest for an implicit christology may combine two problems: the absence of explicit material and the insertion of redactional interests. For example, the messianic secret has been understood as a Markan solution to an embarrassing reality—Jesus was not proclaimed and followed as the messiah in his own lifetime. Mark addresses this reality by claiming that Jesus himself made this determination: he could not and would not be identified as messiah until after his death and resurrection. By crediting this secrecy motif to Jesus himself, Mark implies something about Jesus' authority and about his true identity: Jesus reveals himself as the crucified messiah who will return shortly as the conquering Son of Man. Thus, the absence of explicit christology (the messianic secret) is turned into evidence of a messianic consciousness (by Mark). Mark claims that Jesus was not known because he did not want to be known, and this shows that what he is to us is what he

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<sup>32</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Jesus Means Freedom*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM, 1969).

has always been. But it is precisely this Markan messianic motif, with its implied christology, which has been judged to be not historical.

In the sixth place, when a christology is implied in some aspect of Jesus' life, it is not always clear *what* is implied. The charismatic authority of Jesus is an example. For Käsemann and Bornkamm, this sets Jesus in contrast to the Judaism of his day.<sup>33</sup> For Geza Vermes, however, it is the charisma of Jesus which places him precisely within Judaism.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, as with the earlier quest for an explicit christology, a collection of implied data or images about Jesus might not articulate a coherent portrait of who he was as a real person (the real Jesus).

#### 6. *What is Implied By What We Know About Jesus?*

In light of this history of development and these critical warnings, is there any positive role for implicit christology? The time has come to explore an approach that is perhaps more grounded and more productive. Rather than beginning with isolated fragments of authentic material and seeking some implicit thread that unites them, it is possible to begin with a broad outline of the major features of Jesus identified through historical critical analysis and then ask what is implied by such features. This analysis would not focus on what is dissimilar in Jesus' ministry, but would measure data along a continuum of what is possible, what is plausible, and what is probable. Rather than using implicit christology to establish the profile of Jesus, it would be fruitful to explore what is implied by what we think we already know about Jesus. In this approach, implied christology could play a positive role in filling out an already established profile.

I would contend the following are plausible, probable descriptions of Jesus, firmly grounded in historical analysis and widely affirmed in critical scholarship. (1) Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Galilean Jew. (2) He lived all of his life, and all aspects of his life, under the oppressive hand of Rome. (3) Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. (4) Jesus spoke primarily about Yahweh, the God of Israel. (5) The

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<sup>33</sup> Reconstructing the Judaism of Jesus' day presents its own problems!

<sup>34</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981 [1973]), 58–82.

content of Jesus' message about God centered in the concept of God's Reign. (6) The manner of Jesus' message presented a distinctly Jewish rhetoric grounded in parables, proverbs, sayings, and similes. (7) Jesus employed a prophetic rhetoric of urgency and demand. (8) Jesus stood at a distance from the cultic centers of Jewish faith. (9) Jesus engaged in ongoing controversy with the leaders of Israel. (10) Jesus died in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans.

If the broad lines of this profile are true, what do they imply about Jesus as a historical figure?

1. Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Galilean Jew. This implies:
  - Jesus believed that Yahweh alone is sovereign over all creation and over all nations
  - Jesus affirmed God's special work for and with and through Israel.
  - Jesus believed that God's will should dominate all of life.
  - Jesus believed the current age stood in irresolvable tension with the purposes of God; thus, catastrophe was imminent and unavoidable.
  - Jesus spoke Aramaic, but likely understood some Greek
  - Jesus was likely married.
2. Jesus lived all of his life, and all aspects of his life, under the oppressive hand of Rome. This implies:
  - Like most faithful Jews, Jesus saw the Roman Empire as the antithesis of God's Reign, as an oppressive challenge to the sovereignty of God
  - Jesus believed that Rome, like all nations, was subject to the judgment of God
  - Jesus' silence about Roman power and his refusal to engage it directly implies his opinion that Rome is irrelevant in the larger scheme of history.
3. Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. This implies:
  - Jesus knew well the person and the preaching of John
  - Jesus accepted John's call to repentance
  - Jesus was a follower of John
  - Jesus affirmed, at least initially, the judgment pronounced by John.
4. Jesus spoke primarily about Yahweh, the God of Israel. This implies:
  - Jesus was driven by a theology rather than by a christology



- Jesus believed the destiny of the world depended on God's actions, not his own
  - Jesus believed that the current age belonged to God's enduring work with Israel.
5. The content of Jesus' message about God centered in the concept of God's Reign. This implies:
- the created order stands already under the sovereign control of Yahweh
  - the Roman Empire, because it stands in opposition to God's Reign, will cease
  - the tension between the present order and God's purpose is irresolvable and unbearable; catastrophic change is imminent
  - Jesus' identity is consistent with the content of his message: Jesus is the herald of the Kingdom of God.
6. The manner of Jesus' message employed a distinctly Jewish rhetoric grounded in parables, proverbs, sayings, and similes. This implies:
- Jesus embraced the prophetic tradition of Israel and placed himself within that tradition
  - Jesus understood the social implications of his eschatological message
  - Jesus understood himself as the distinct voice announcing the arrival of God's Reign; one's response to Jesus validated one's standing before God.
  - Jesus' role is consistent with the manner of his message: he is the Jewish prophet who speaks the word of the Lord.
7. Jesus employed a prophetic rhetoric of urgency and demand: repent, believe in the gospel, follow me. This implies:
- Jesus' understanding of his role is consistent with the rhetoric of his message. He is the one in whose words and deeds the message is realized; his message demands a response and this response is final.
8. Jesus stood at a distance from the cultic centers of Jewish faith. This implies:
- Jesus believed holiness was a spiritual value grounded in common places and common people
  - Jesus believed his call and his teaching on the Kingdom of God set the standard for holiness
  - Jesus believed the leadership of Israel, particularly the Jerusalem temple, had failed God and God's people.

9. Jesus engaged in ongoing controversy with the leaders of Israel. This implies:
  - Jesus was a part of the lively Jewish dialogue about what it means to be faithful to God
  - Jesus initiated some of this controversy
  - Jesus saw this controversy, especially with the temple leaders, as a part of his prophetic calling.
10. Jesus died in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. This implies:
  - the Romans interpreted Jesus' words and deeds as politically dangerous
  - Jesus' dispute over the role of the temple played a part in his arrest.

What is known about Jesus carries important implications for analyzing what is not yet fully known. Underlying this analysis is the hermeneutical presumption that the identity of the messenger is congruent with the context, manner, and content of his message. If this is true, the teaching of Jesus implies that he is a faithful Jew who stands in the prophetic tradition, calling Israel to repent and to practice public, persistent holiness in light of the imminent catastrophe that will sweep away the current era and establish the sovereignty of God. Standing in the steps of John the Baptist, Jesus issues a final call to God's Kingdom. Jesus thus framed his own work and his own being in the blinding light of the coming Reign of God.

In this approach implicit christology need no longer serve in a desperate attempt to preserve or to bolster some thread of connection to the historical Jesus. Implicit christology is no longer building upon scattered fragments, but upon broad historical characteristics and contexts. Implicit christology now serves a positive role as it considers the implications of Jesus' mission and shines further light upon the contours of his identity.

Of course, different assumptions about the profile of Jesus would hold different implications. But these different assumptions must first stand the test of critical analysis and sway the discourse of wider audiences.

The quest continues.

# JESUS AND THE “PARTINGS OF THE WAYS”

MICHAEL F. BIRD

## 1. *Introduction*

The “partings of the ways”<sup>1</sup> between Christianity and Judaism is a facet of Christian origins that continues to fascinate scholars. A constellation of questions calls for resolution, such as why the ways parted in the first place, what facilitated or accelerated the separation, and when was the parting finally complete? In the course of answering these questions a concerted amount of attention has been paid to Paul and the gospel communities and their contribution to the eventual split. However, one particular aspect of the debate remains particularly contentious, viz., the role and the significance of the historical Jesus for the parting of the ways.

In the past there have been a number of attempts to postulate Jesus as causing (though perhaps not intending) the eventual division between Judaism and Christianity. Julius Wellhausen wrote: “The parting occurred first through the crucifixion, and for practical purposes first through Paul. But it lay in the consequences of Jesus’ own teaching and his own behaviour.”<sup>2</sup> Given that Wellhausen was part of nineteenth-century German scholarship that was hardly amicable towards the Jews, his perspective is not surprising. On a different tack, however, a number of Jewish scholars think that the parting did in some way originate with Jesus.

Joseph Klausner maintained that there is something at the root of Jesus’ ministry that led to the split despite the fact that Jesus’ teaching

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<sup>1</sup> The term “partings of the ways” is itself disputed: Judith M. Lieu, “The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101–114, esp. 101–109; Stanley E. Porter and Brook W. R. Pearson, “Why the Split? Christians and Jews by the Fourth Century,” *JGRChJ* 1 (2000): 82–119, esp. 107–109; Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, TSAJ 95 (Tubingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1905), 114: “Der Schnitt erfolgte erst durch die Kreuzigung, und praktisch erst durch Paulus. Er lag aber in der Consequenz von Jesu eigener Lehre und seinem eigenen Verhalten.”

is thoroughly indebted to Judaism. Klausner censures late nineteenth-century Christian scholarship for seeing Jesus as opposing Judaism rather than regarding Jesus as one Pharisee who opposed other Pharisees.<sup>3</sup> For Klausner, Christianity is a hybrid of Judaism and Hellenistic philosophy that stands at some distance from Jesus the Jew.<sup>4</sup> In the mind of interpreters: “Jesus was not a Christian,’ but he *became* a Christian.”<sup>5</sup> Unsurprisingly Klausner maintains that “Jesus was a Jew and a Jew he remained till his last breath,” but he also adds that: “*Ex nihilo nihil fit*: had not Jesus’ teaching contained a kernel of opposition to Judaism, Paul could never *in the name of Jesus* have set aside the ceremonial laws, and broken through the barriers of national Judaism.”<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Jacob Neusner contends that Jesus instituted a movement and a ritual that could not conceivably remain within the orbit of Judaism. In Neusner’s understanding, Jesus’ act of overturning the moneychangers’ table (which Israelites paid to participate in the upkeep of the daily offering) was a rejection of the most important rite of the Israelite cult, the daily whole-offering, and was a statement that the means of atonement was null and void. Jesus wanted to replace the table of the moneychangers with the table of Eucharist which would offer atonement and expiation.<sup>7</sup> Jesus’ demonstration in the Temple and his institution of a quasi-cultic meal set Jesus and his followers on a trajectory away from Judaism. The result is that the holy place has shifted from the Temple to Jesus and his followers as the locus of the divine presence.<sup>8</sup> This can be coupled with Jesus’ teaching where he announces in his own name what the Torah says in God’s name. Jesus effectively sets himself up as an authority equal to or above Torah.<sup>9</sup> It

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching*, trans. Herbert Danby (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), 106.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 413; cf. Wellhausen, *Einleitung*, 113: “Jesus war kein Christ, sondern Jude. Er verkündete keinen neuen Glauben, sondern er lehrte den Willen Gottes tun.”

<sup>6</sup> Klausner, *Jesus*, 368–369. Similarly, another Jewish scholar Richard L. Rubenstein wrote (*My Brother Paul* [New York: Harper & Row, 1972], 121): “In reality it was not Paul but Jesus who instituted the irreparable breach with established Judaism.”

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Neusner, “Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 287–290.

<sup>8</sup> Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus: An Intermillennial, Interfaith Exchange* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 69.

<sup>9</sup> Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, 30–31.

is Jesus' elevation of himself over Temple and Torah that constitutes the tectonic fault line between Jesus and the Judaism of his time. The consequence is that: "The two religious traditions, Christianity and Judaism, in their first statements really do represent different people talking about different things to different people."<sup>10</sup> Viewed this way the very idea of a common Judeo-Christian tradition is a "myth."<sup>11</sup>

On the Christian side, C. H. Dodd argued that Jesus was, in effect, the founder of Christianity.<sup>12</sup> Jesus' ethical teaching, despite some similarities to rabbinic Judaism, was oriented to a different direction, due to Jesus' eschatological perspective where the kingdom was already a present reality confronting people with its demands.<sup>13</sup> Although there is an organic relationship between Jesus' teachings and the matrix of Judaism, his teaching represented a "new departure" from that matrix since his ethical praxis was anchored in a radical imitation of God's attributes rather than in legal casuistry.<sup>14</sup> In Dodd's opinion, Jesus shared many positions with other Jewish teachers, but he went beyond them and this eventually gave way to a "rift" between himself and them on disputed matters. There came a time when this disputation became "an irreconcilable breach."<sup>15</sup> According to Dodd, Jesus' critics rightly observed that his "teaching threatened the integrity of Judaism as a system in which religion and national solidarity were inseparable."<sup>16</sup> It is quite significant for Dodd that Jesus was not trying to *reform* Judaism, but was seeking to embody a *new* Israel who would embrace the call of the kingdom.<sup>17</sup> The parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:1–12) acknowledges that Israel is the Lord's vineyard, but the "existing establishment is doomed" and the new Israel will be under a different leadership.<sup>18</sup> The final breach, as it were, occurs in the Last Supper where the announcement of a "new covenant" implies the

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<sup>10</sup> Neusner, "Moneychangers," 290; similarly Bruce Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practices and Beliefs* (London: Routledge, 1995), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Jews and Christians: The Myth of a Common Tradition* (London: SCM, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (Bristol: Shoreline, 1993 [1970]).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 63–65.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 68, 75.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 75–76.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 85–86.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–132.

inauguration of a covenant charter for a new Israel and Jesus installed his disciples as its founding members.<sup>19</sup>

E. P. Sanders has done more than most scholars to situate Jesus in Judaism and to argue that Jesus had no significant dispute with either Judaism in general or the Pharisees in particular. Nonetheless he writes: "I am inclined to look for basic disagreement, beginning even with Jesus, as the source of the Jewish-Christian split."<sup>20</sup> What brought Jesus into conflict with his contemporaries was not abstractions over whether God was merciful or not, but the disputes took concrete form over specific issues that separated Jesus from the Jewish hierarchy. The disputes were symptomatic of a larger question: who spoke for God?<sup>21</sup>

Craig Evans supposes that the "roots of early Christianity's separation from Judaism are found in the teaching of Jesus, the apostles and the New Testament writings; that is, the roots of the separation are found in the earliest forms of Christianity."<sup>22</sup> That is not to say that Jesus or his followers intended to found a new religion that would break away from the mother faith since both Jesus and the early church sought and/or proclaimed eschatological renewal in the context of Jewish faith. In the case of Jesus, every aspect of his social and religious life was thoroughly Jewish, but he also enacted a form of "inclusiveness" with sinners and outcasts that was to have a formative impact upon the later church, which included non-Torah-observant persons within its ranks.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Stanley Porter and B. R. Pearson state that, rather than a gradual split, the early polemic about Jesus' birth and teaching suggests an early division going back to Jesus' lifetime itself.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Dodd, *Founder*, 89–90.

<sup>20</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 280.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 279–281; *idem*, "Jesus, Ancient Judaism, and Modern Christianity: The Quest Continues," in *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002), 31–55; *idem*, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 236–237.

<sup>22</sup> Craig A. Evans, "Christianity and Judaism: Partings of the Ways," in *Dictionary of the Late New Testament*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 159–170, esp. 160; *idem*, "Root Causes of the Jewish-Christian Rift: From Jesus to Justin," in *Christian-Jewish Relations through the Centuries*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Brook W. R. Pearson, JSNTSup 192 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 20–35.

<sup>23</sup> Evans, "Christianity and Judaism," 160.

<sup>24</sup> Porter and Pearson, "Why the Split?" 110.

In contrast, several studies have argued that all of Jesus' controversial actions and attitudes are plausible within the diverse milieu of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>25</sup> As such Jesus' ministry, however subversive and provocative it was, remained securely within the orbit of "common Judaism"; a Judaism that could accommodate Jesus as much as it could accommodate groups as diverse as the Qumranites, Enochic Jews, Philo, and John the Baptist. The upshot of this view is that Jesus is not directly responsible (or liable) for what became Christianity and its eventual divorce from its parental religion. The parting then has to be attributed to other influences and factors such as the ministry of Paul, the gentilization of the church, and the spread of Christianity into its Greco-Roman environs.

In Geza Vermes' opinion the real founder of Christianity is Paul. It was Paul who incorporated Gentiles into the church without proselytization. In contrast to Jesus, it was Paul who declared the Torah not merely optional but revoked, abolished, and superseded. The creeds of Christianity have very little to do with Jesus the charismatic Galilean Holy Man. The parting is between Jesus and Judaism on the one side and Paul and Christianity on the other side.<sup>26</sup>

To give a Christian example of this perspective, James Dunn contends that there is nothing about Jesus' attitude towards the Temple, nothing in his stance on Torah and Covenant, or even monotheism, that would mark a departure from Judaism since all of Jesus' actions and teachings remain intelligible within the diversity of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>27</sup> Even so, Dunn can still claim: "[I]t is impossible to reasonably dispute that the movement which became known as Christianity has been the most direct and lasting effects of his work. The above

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<sup>25</sup> The use of the criterion of dissimilarity, especially in relation to Judaism, has had a detrimental effect in pre-empting a separation between Jesus and Judaism. See Tom Holmén, "Doubts About Dissimilarity: Restructuring the main criterion of Jesus-of-history research," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce D. Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80.

<sup>26</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM, 1973), 15–17; idem, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM, 1983), 54–57; idem, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 2004), 413–417.

<sup>27</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), 55–56, 116, 182; idem, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 563–566.

study, however, makes it clear that there was a very substantive *continuity* between Jesus' mission and what followed."<sup>28</sup>

This last remark of Dunn is hardly a concession, but is a sober reminder that the Jewish-Christian split, however it relates to Jesus himself, should still be regarded as being part of his "effective history."<sup>29</sup> The controversy and notoriety surrounding Jesus that resulted in his death was replicated by his followers who found themselves initially experiencing persecution from their co-religionists in Jerusalem, regarded with suspicion in the synagogues in the Diaspora, expelled from the synagogues in certain places, and later anathematized by post-70 CE representatives of Judaism. Now Judaism may have been diverse and multifarious, centred on orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy, but somewhere along the way Christians were deemed to have departed from the web of social and religious commitments that marked out Jewish identity in the Greco-Roman world. The realities of apostasy and idolatry signify that Jewish belief and identity had limits.<sup>30</sup> Thus, there came a point where some Jews believed that, in either ethos or ethnos, those who expressed devotion to Jesus had transgressed the boundaries of Jewishness.<sup>31</sup> Lest we think that the expul-

<sup>28</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 890–891.

<sup>29</sup> Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, SNTSMS 117 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 9.

<sup>30</sup> CD I, 18–20; 2 Macc 5:15; 13:7; 3 Macc 1.3; 2.28–33; 7.10–15; 4 Macc 4.11; Wis 3:10; Philo, *Virt.* 34–44, 182; *Vit. Mos.* 1.31, 295–305; 2.193; *Spec.* 1.54–58; 3.29; QG 3.3; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.240; 18.141; 20.100, 145–146, 200; *War* 7.46–62; *Apion* 2.123; Mark 14:64; Acts 6:11–15; 8:1–2; 12:1–3; 14:1–6; 17:1–15; 18:4–7; 21:28; John 9:22; 10:33; 12:42; 16:2; *m. Sanh.* 10:1; *Amidah* 12. Root causes of apostasy are normally attributed to idolatry, intermarriage with pagans, hellenization, blasphemy, speaking against Moses and the Prophets, being a "law-breaker," and not observing the covenant "boundary markers" (i.e., food laws, Sabbath-keeping, and circumcision). Of course we must be aware of the problems of defining "heresy" and "apostasy" as rigid and monolithic categories in Second Temple Judaism and also differentiate these from nominal or lax observance of Jewish customs (e.g. Philo, *Spec.* 1.186). See further J. M. G. Barclay, "Who was Considered an Apostate in the Jewish Diaspora?" in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Strouma (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 80–98; idem, "Deviance and Apostasy: Some Applications of Deviance Theory to First Century Judaism and Christianity," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. Philip Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 114–127; Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM, 1992), 536–537; W. Horbury, "The Benediction of the *Minim* and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *JTS* 33 (1982): 19–61; Daniel Boyarin, *The Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 66; Stephen G. Wilson, *Leaving the Fold: Apostates and Defectors in Antiquity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

<sup>31</sup> Jack T. Sanders (*Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants: The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christians Relations* [London: SCM, 1993], 88–89) notes that



sion of Christians from Jewish communities was one-sided, we have every reason to think that the separation was probably accelerated by Christians who purposely wanted to break away from Jewish communities.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, the diverse character of Second Temple Judaism and the Jewishness of Jesus in no way guarantee that Jesus and his followers would continue to exist within the matrix of Judaism. The implication to be drawn is that responsibility for the parting of the ways between Christianity and Judaism cannot be borne alone by later forms of Gentile Christianity, but may well derive from the very genesis of the Jesus movement and owe some debt to the historical Jesus. I am not suggesting that Jesus intended to establish a religious movement independent of Judaism or that the parting is wholly attributable to Jesus. I am advocating instead that several of Jesus' controversial attitudes and actions sowed seeds of division that would eventually evolve into a prickly hedge that partitioned off his later followers from other Jewish groups.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the role and significance of the historical Jesus for the parting of the ways. The manner in which this will be pursued is through outlining (1) the reason for Jesus' execution, and (2) Jesus' disputes with his contemporaries. This study hopes to establish that the mission and message of the historical Jesus were a contributing factor to the eventual parting between Christianity and Judaism.

## 2. *The Death of Jesus*

That Jesus was crucified by a coalition of Jewish priests and aristocrats in belated cooperation with a Roman official may not be due purely to the sinister machinations of his accusers. It might have followed on

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Judaism was not always tolerant and groups like the Samaritans and Essenes were persecuted in the Hasmonean period and James was martyred during a time when Roman power was directly absent from Jerusalem. Paula Fredriksen ("The Birth of Christianity and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002], 8–30, esp. 14) maintains that Diaspora Judaism was inclusive towards outsiders, but exclusive about the conduct of insiders.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch* (London: Routledge, 2003); Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, *A History of the First Christians*, UBW (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 37–38.

from the opposition that Jesus himself fostered in light of what was deemed politically, socially, and religiously responsible in the context of first-century Palestine.<sup>33</sup> The crucifixion of Jesus may tell us something about Jesus' relationship with the Jewish ruling class, but also about Jesus' position vis-à-vis common Judaism. Jesus' execution is symptomatic of some degree of hostility and rivalry between Jesus and other Jewish leaders. Jesus' death may be taken as the first sure historical marker in a gradual and successive series of hostile encounters between Jews and the Jesus movement. This is evident enough from the passion narratives which are also told from the vantage point of those in a later period who have experienced hostility from various Jewish groups. In which case, we must reckon with the possibility that Jewish opposition to Christians (pre- and post-70 CE) stands in some historical relation to Jewish opposition to Jesus. That Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem ca. 30 CE is arguably the most secure historical fact about the historical Jesus that we possess (1 Cor 15:3; Mark 15:25–26, 37; John 19:18–19, 30; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63–64).<sup>34</sup> Problems occur, however, when we try to penetrate beyond the mere fact of Jesus' death and attempt to exploit the passion narratives for further information about its precise circumstances. We have to contend with significant issues relating to the authenticity of the trial/interrogation stories, the tendency of the evangelists to exonerate the Romans and implicate the Jewish leadership/crowds, and the theological overlay that clearly pervades the stories in relation to early Christian theology.<sup>35</sup> We must unfortunately bypass the majority of the debate and focus on one particular subject: why did Jesus die and what does that have to do with subsequent Jewish-Christian relations? On the first part, Vermes asserts that Jesus died because he did the wrong thing (caused a commotion), in the wrong place (the Temple), and at the wrong time (Passover).<sup>36</sup> Vermes is correct in so far as Jesus' provocative action in the Temple was the trigger (or final straw) that drove the Jewish leadership to move against him. From the Roman side (and acknowledged by the pragmatic Jewish leaders in John

<sup>33</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:391–92.

<sup>34</sup> N. A. Dahl, "The Crucified Messiah," in *Jesus the Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 27–47, esp. 29; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 11; idem, *Historical Figure*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> See Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998 [1996]), 440–473.

<sup>36</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM, 1993), x.

11:48–50) the death of a religious radical was necessary to keep the peace amidst the swelling of crowds in Jerusalem at Passover when nationalistic feelings would be most acute (cf. Josephus, *War* 1:88). But there may have been other factors as well and it is no surprise that our sources are variegated and complex on the actual *cause* of Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion. The reasons the sources offer are as follows:

(1) *A false prophet who was leading the nation astray.* This charge is made explicit in the Babylonian Talmud, "Jesus was hanged on the eve of Passover... He is going forth to be stoned because he practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray" (*b. Sanh.* 43a; cf. 107b). The accusation of leading Israel astray also appears in Christian literature (Luke 23:2, 14; Matt 27:63–64; John 7:11–12, 47; Justin, *Dial.* 69.7; 108.2; *T. Levi* 16.3; *Acts of Thomas* 48, 96, 102, 106, 107). Theissen and Merz object to the authenticity of the charge since it does not appear in the earliest source (Mark 14), Luke reflects political agitation rather than religious matters, Jesus did not lead anyone into idolatry, and the charge of leading the nation astray derives from a period in which Jews and Christians had separated.<sup>37</sup> In response several things can be said. First, the indictment in the Talmud seems to have been made independently of Christian interpretation of Jesus' death and is probably rooted in historical tradition.<sup>38</sup> The Jewish sources are dissimilar from Christian accounts in that the former have a double charge of magic and false prophecy and also refer to stoning rather than crucifixion, which are absent from the gospels. Second, in the Talmudic horizon, the apostasy of (Jewish) Christians may comprise the target of the accusation from the Jewish side (i.e. they are the ones led astray by Jesus), but that does not necessarily establish the origin of the charge itself. It is far more probable that Jewish leaders have uplifted a known charge against Jesus and applied it to his followers, than that the evangelists have taken a known Jewish polemic against them and applied it to Jesus since the accusation of being a false prophet is attested in multiple pre-passion complexes (Mark 6:4/Luke 4:24/John 4:44/*Gos. Thom.* 31/P. Oxy 1.6; Luke 7:39; John 7:52). Third, contra Theissen, in the Markan passion narrative there is an implicit allegation of false

<sup>37</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 463; cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 300–301.

<sup>38</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, COQG 2 (London: SPCK, 1996), 548.

prophecy (Mark 14:65; 15:29). Fourth, this type of accusation might also explain elements of the trial itself since in the Tosefta those accused of such a crime could have the normal rules for a trial set aside (*t. Sanh.* 10:11) and be killed during the time of a festival (*t. Sanh.* 11:7). Additionally, the charge that a Jewish prophet was leading people astray remains historically plausible in the first-century context given that Josephus said similar things about impostors who purportedly filled Judea with deceptions (*War* 2.259). Fifth, Luke may depict the Sanhedrin as touting Jesus as a political “agitator,” but that is only because they knew Jesus to have stated objectives that would interfere with the political status quo.<sup>39</sup> Sixth, blasphemy can be connected with more than idolatry, as it can also pertain to slander (e.g. Exod 22:28; Lev 24:16). By speaking against God’s Temple or by claiming that he would destroy the Temple, Jesus was potentially committing an act of slander.

The background to the charge derives from Deuteronomy 13 and 18 about false prophets and diviners who lead the nation into idolatry and make false prophecies. Jesus was purportedly leading the nation astray not in the sense of guiding Israel into idolatry, but in so far as his attitudes represented a competing model for how to be Israel. Jesus was a false prophet in the sense that he was performing “signs” like the sign prophets and was filling many Jews with hopes of liberation.<sup>40</sup> Jesus’ dramatic action in the Temple may likewise have promoted a concern that he was a false prophet as later was Jesus ben Ananias for his prediction of Jerusalem’s destruction (Josephus, *War* 6.300–309). This assumes that Jesus’ contemporaries recognized him as a prophet. Something is discernible from the contours of Jesus’ ministry that fol-

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. further August Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit*, WUNT 21 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1980), 80–92; Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. James C. G. Greig (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 42; D. Neale, “Was Jesus a Mesith?” *TynBul* 44 (1993): 89–101; Graham N. Stanton, “Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and False Prophet Who Deceived God’s People,” in *Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 164–180; Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:541–544; Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 95–96.

<sup>40</sup> On the sign prophets see *Ant.* 18.85–87 (Samaritan); *Ant.* 20.97–98; Acts 5:36 (Theudas); *Ant.* 20.169–172; *War* 2.261–263; Acts 21:38 (Egyptian); *Life* 424–425; *War* 7.437–442 (Jonathan the refugee); and in general *War* 2.259. Jesus’ mighty deeds should be understood similarly as comprising part of a prophetic program that produced “signs” which, in light of scripture, indicated that the restoration of the nation was at hand. On the expectations for (political) liberation created by Jesus’ ministry see Luke 9:54–55, 24:19–21, John 6:14–15 and Acts 1:6.

lowed the pattern of Elijah (Luke 4:24–27; 7:11–17; Luke 7:59–60/Matt 8:21–22) and the script of Isaiah (Luke 4:16–21; Luke 7:22/Matt 11:5). Jesus' prophetic actions would have broadcasted this further (Luke 11:20/Matt 12:28; Luke 7:18–23/Matt 11:4–6; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 22:28–30/Matt 19:28–30; Mark 3:16/Matt 16:17–19; Mark 2:13–17, 18–22, 23–28; 6:11, 30–44; 7:1–23; 11:1–10, 11–19; 14:22–25; Luke 5:1–11)<sup>41</sup> and he was regarded by the crowds as a prophet (Mark 6:14–16; 8:28; Matt 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16–17, 39; John 4:19; 6:14–15; 7:40; 9:17).

In primitive christology Jesus was regarded not merely as a prophet but as *the* prophet of Deut 18:15 (Acts 3:22; 7:37). Thus, Christians claimed not only that Jesus spoke for God, but that he did so in a final and definitive way (e.g. Heb 1:1–2; Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). That itself was properly grounded in Jesus' own perception of his role as the agent *par excellence* of eschatological restoration (e.g. Mark 12:1–12; Luke 13:34–45/Matt 23:37–39) where he was, to use Marinus de Jonge's term, *God's final envoy*.<sup>42</sup> Christians were not accused of being false prophets themselves, but they were regarded as maintaining a perception of Israel's *raison d'être* and exhibiting a praxis that seriously endangered the boundaries of Jewish identity, hence the charge of changing the "customs" of the Jews (Acts 6:14; 21:21; 28:17). This is beyond mere debates about the minutiae of law observance; it includes a charge of reconfiguring Jewish identity and the boundaries that marked out Jews from Gentiles. The prophetic ministry of Jesus and his subversive agenda for national salvation were maintained and intensified by the early church and it continued to be a point of contention with other Jewish groups. If Jesus was accused of leading the nation astray, then the post-70 CE Jewish polemic tacitly mirrored in Matt 27:63–64 and John 7:11–12 suggests that many Jews thought that Jewish Christians had in fact gone astray (cf. Polycarp, *Mart.* 12.2).<sup>43</sup>

(2) *Blasphemy*. Mark and Matthew both agree that a charge of blasphemy was included at Jesus' trial (Mark 14:64; Matt 26:65). Such an

<sup>41</sup> Cf. M. D. Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Scot McKnight, "Jesus and Prophetic Actions," *BBR* 10 (2000): 197–232 (esp. 223–224).

<sup>42</sup> Marinus de Jonge, *God's Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus' own View of his Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 64–81, 158–160.

allegation is known elsewhere outside of the passion narratives (Mark 2:7; John 10:33–36).<sup>44</sup>

E. P. Sanders, among others, rejects the authenticity of this charge at Jesus' trial.<sup>45</sup> The most compelling objections of Sanders are that Jesus' statement in Mark 14:62 about the enthronement of the Son of Man is likely to be a Christian creation and it is hard to imagine an actual train of transmission whereby the events of the trial were transmitted to others. As for a chain of transmission that communicated the proceedings of trial to others, it was perhaps sympathizers of Jesus among the Sanhedrin such as Joseph of Arimathea (e.g. Mark 15:43) or the priests themselves who reported the outcome of the trial to the crowds. Crowds, sympathizers, and followers would have been anxious to know the circumstances surrounding Jesus' death. Sanders concedes that speaking against the Temple could have conceivably led to a charge of blasphemy, but the evangelists attribute the blasphemy charge not to the accusation about Jesus destroying and rebuilding the Temple, but to Jesus' answer to the high priest's question. Speaking against the Temple does appear to be a legitimate basis for blasphemy leading to punishment as is evident from Jeremiah (Jer 26:18–19), the exile of the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab IX, 9–10; XI, 4–8), Stephen (Acts 6:11, 14), and Jesus ben Ananias (*War* 6.300–309). The reason why this was not sufficient of itself to condemn Jesus is provided by the evangelists: the witnesses could not agree (Mark 14:56–57). What is more, speaking against the Temple may have been an insufficient charge to warrant the intervention of the Romans and to justify the death penalty. Speaking against the Temple might also have been inadequate to achieve another of the high priest's aims, which was to have Jesus' reputation disgraced on religious grounds. If the high priest can pin both a messianic claim and a charge of blasphemy on Jesus then he achieves both aims, viz., he gives ample rationale for Roman involvement in a capital offence and has Jesus utter something that would be religiously offensive to the pious pilgrims in Jerusalem for

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:544–547.

<sup>45</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 297–298; see the response by Darrell L. Bock, “The Son of Man Seated at God's Right Hand and the Debate over Jesus' ‘Blasphemy,’” in *Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ*, ed. Green and Turner, 181–91; idem, “Jewish Expressions in Mark 14.61–62 and the Authenticity of the Jewish Examination of Jesus,” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 147–59; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 902–903. More agnostic is Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:532–547.

Passover. Thus, the switch from a charge of speaking against the Temple to a messianic question in search of a political and religious offence by Jesus was not the invention of Mark, but a reasonable action by the high priest in light of the circumstances.

Caiaphas asks Jesus an explicit messianic question to which Jesus retorts with an enigmatic allusion to the enthronement of the Son of Man. The authenticity and meaning of the Son of Man sayings are among the most disputed areas of gospel scholarship; still, I would be prepared to argue that they are largely authentic and identify Jesus as the messianic representative of Israel. In Mark 14:62, Jesus is saying that he shall be enthroned as God's vice-regent and that, in contrast to the current circumstances, he is the one who is entitled to render judgment and exercise the divine prerogatives. That coheres with the Rabbinic tradition that Rabbi Aqiba was reported to have said that the multiple thrones referred to in Dan 7:9 include one for God and one for the son of David, a view that was denounced by Rabbi Yose as profaning God (*b. Hag.* 14a; *b. Sanh.* 38b). The charge of blasphemy is then intelligible not as a result of Jesus' uttering the tetragrammaton (e.g. *m. Sanh.* 7:5), but because of his speaking against the Temple and claiming for himself the status or privileges that belonged to one enthroned beside God.<sup>46</sup>

It is noteworthy that at certain points Christians were regarded as committing blasphemy by their Jewish opponents. In Acts 6, Luke records that Stephen was stoned for speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God (6:11) to the effect that "Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us" (6:14).<sup>47</sup> I shall have more to say later about Jesus' attitude to

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Charge of Blasphemy in Mark 14.64," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 379–401.

<sup>47</sup> The fact that the witnesses against Stephen are called "false" (ψευδής) does not mean that the charge itself is false (contra Craig Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992]). Jesus may well have said things about the Mosaic law and the Temple that were regarded as offensive to Jews. What is "false" in their testimony is that they accuse Stephen of speaking blasphemies against Moses and God (Robert W. Wall, "Acts of the Apostles," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander Keck, 10 vols. [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 122). On the historical tradition behind the accusation against Stephen see Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 82–83. A similar prediction is found in Mark 14:57–58 (cf. 15:29) where the witnesses also bear "false witness" (ψευδομαρτυρέω) against Jesus on the charge. But Mark thinks that the testimony is only partly false.

Torah and Temple; for the moment we can note that the charge brought against Stephen in Luke's telling is one that is taken directly from dominical tradition (Mark 14:58; 15:29; Matt 26:61; John 2:19; *Gos. Thom.* 71).<sup>48</sup> Whereas, for matters of survival, the Aramaic-speaking church emphasized those aspects of Jesus' teaching that fitted comfortably within Judaism, a group of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians began to emphasize those elements of Jesus' teaching that were at odds with commonly held convictions in Judaism. In Justin's *Dialogues with Trypho the Jew*, Justin depicts Trypho as saying: "For you utter many blasphemies, in that you seek to persuade us that this crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, and spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud; then that he became man, was crucified, and ascended up to heaven, and comes again to earth, and ought to be worshipped" (*Dial. Tryph.* 38; cf. 79).<sup>49</sup> What is blasphemous to Trypho is not any particular aspect of Jesus' teaching, but rather the entire christological narrative. It is blasphemous in the sense that this narrative makes claims about Christ and God that Jews are unable to accept. For Trypho the redefinition of theism, the crucifixion of the messiah, and the incorporation of Jesus into a form of binitarian worship by Christians cannot be accommodated within the web of Jewish belief.<sup>50</sup> Although I maintain that the blasphemy charge against Jesus has a historical kernel, its retention in the tradition owes its existence to the fact that the memory continued to be relevant for communities that were assaulted with claims that their basic christological convictions about messiahship and divine sonship were blasphemous.<sup>51</sup> Thus, like Jesus, Christians were also accused of blasphemy sometimes for exhibiting similar beliefs about Torah and the Temple and sometimes for

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The error is their assumption that Jesus would build "another" (ἄλλον) Temple of the same kind, that is, another physical temple (Bryan, *Jesus*, 231–232).

<sup>48</sup> On authenticity see e.g. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 71–76; Dunn, *Partings*, 167; idem, *Jesus Remembered*, 631.

<sup>49</sup> Elsewhere, Justin (*Dial. Tryph.* 35, 80, 82) can concede to Trypho that some things Christians say are blasphemous, but they are uttered by heretics who are just as blasphemous to Christians as they are to Jews.

<sup>50</sup> On this latter point see Larry W. Hurtado, "Pre-70 CE Jewish Opposition to Christ-Devotion," *JTS* 50 (1999): 35–58; idem, *Lord Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Hurtado, "Pre-70 CE Jewish Opposition," 37; cf. C. P. Anderson, "The Trial of Jesus as Jewish-Christian Polarization: Blasphemy and Polemic in Mark's Gospel," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Paul and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Richardson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 107–125.



their claims that Jesus participated in the divine identity and was an object of religious devotion of the order that was normally afforded only to Yahweh. Of course Christians did not accept the blasphemy charge lying down and there is good evidence that they thought that the accusation could be returned.<sup>52</sup>

(3) *A messianic claimant.* That Jesus was crucified due to a perceived messianic claim is evident from the question posed to him by the high priest (Mark 14:61) and from the titulus "King of the Jews" on the cross (Mark 15:26; John 19:19).<sup>53</sup> Whether Jesus claimed to be the Messiah is mooted in scholarship. It has been customary to argue that a messianic christology owes its origin to the post-Easter church which thought that Jesus' resurrection implied his messianic identity.<sup>54</sup> Several scholars suppose that Jesus never accepted the designation and expressly rejected it. If the Messianism of Jesus does have a pre-Easter origin then the association of Jesus with the Messiah may have been due to the enthusiasm of his followers who began to proclaim him as such especially upon his entrance into Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup> According to Hengel: "Today the unmessianic Jesus has almost become a dogma among many New Testament scholars."<sup>56</sup>

There remain, nevertheless, strong indications that Jesus did make an implicit claim to be the Messiah and that it was determinative for his being handed over to the Romans.<sup>57</sup> In the first place, as Weiss and Schweitzer pointed out, there is absolutely no reason why the resurrection should be said to necessitate the messianic identity of Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Acts 13:45; Jas 2:7; Rev 2:9; Ignatius, *Eph.* 10.2.

<sup>53</sup> It was customary in Roman executions to display the charge of the victim during the execution process (Suetonius, *Caligula* 32.2; *Domitian* 10.1; Dio Cassius 54.3.6-7; Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.230; Pliny, *Ep.* 6.10.3; 9.19.3; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.1.44). On the authenticity of the titulus see E. Bammel, "Titulus," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 353-364, esp. 363.

<sup>54</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. e.g. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 148-149; Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (New York: Random, 1999), 234-59; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1:475-483; Dunn, *Partings*, 167-169; idem, *Jesus Remembered*, 652-654.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 16.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 477-539; Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 1-71; Michael F. Bird, *Are You the One Who is to Come? The Historical Jesus and the Messianic Question* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009).

<sup>58</sup> J. Weiss, *Das Urchristentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917), 22; Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (London: A&C Black, 1945 [1906]), 335-345 (esp. 343); Dahl, "Crucified Messiah," 38.

Second, elements of Jesus' pre-passion ministry have messianic overtones. Jesus' action in preaching a gospel and his work of healings and exorcisms correspond to the messianic vocation as spelled out in the *Messianic Apocalypse* from Qumran: "He [Messiah] will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead alive, he will proclaim good news to the poor" (4Q521 II, 12). In fact, in a pericope from Q (Luke 7:18–23/Matt 11:2–6) Jesus answers an explicit messianic question from followers of John the Baptist with an answer along the lines of 4Q521, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor" (Luke 7:22/Matt 11:5).<sup>59</sup> There was indeed a "messianic secret" operative during Jesus' ministry that was designed to disassociate Jesus from the messianism of other Jews such as that found in *Pss. Sol.* 17.21–46 and the would-be kings like Simon and Athronges (*Ant.* 17.273–274, 278). The "messianic secret" is historically authentic as apocalyptic figures often believed themselves to be recipients of divine information not yet ready to be publicly manifested.<sup>60</sup> The confession of Jesus' messiahship at Caesarea-Philippi is perhaps one such incident where, following Peter's confession, Jesus identifies his messiahship with the sufferings of the coming tribulation (Mark 8:27–31). The self-reference of Jesus as the "Son of Man" opens up a series of perennial debates, but the notion that it was a cryptic messianic title is not unmerited.<sup>61</sup> Third, Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem in his final days can be said to have a messianic motif in so far as the triumphal entry, the cleansing of the Temple, and parabolic utterances like the parable of the tenants all point in the direction of a carefully crafted messianic claim. Ben Meyers wrote, "the entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple constituted a messianic demonstration, a messianic critique, a messianic fulfilment event, and a sign of the messianic restoration of

<sup>59</sup> On authenticity see Michael F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 64–67.

<sup>60</sup> Jonathan Knight, *Jesus: An Historical and Theological Investigation* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 138–145.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. K. Müller, "Menschensohn," *BZ* 16 (1972): 161–87; 17 (1973): 52–66; William Horbury, "The Messianic Associations of the Son of Man," in *Messianism Among Jews and Christians* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 125–155; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 512–519.

Israel."<sup>62</sup> The Temple and messiah are intimately linked since, according to 2 Sam 7:14 and Zech 6:12, the Davidic Son/Heir is also builder of the Temple (cf. 1Q174 III, 10–13; *Tg. Zech.* 6:12).<sup>63</sup> Herod had tried to legitimize his rights to the Jewish throne precisely by refurbishing the Temple on a grand scale. Ultimately we should accept that Jesus spoke of a kingdom, Jesus saw himself as having a unique role in establishing and ordering that kingdom, Jesus was executed as a messianic pretender, and after his death his followers continued to believe that he would return to establish the kingdom.<sup>64</sup> We may not have here an unassailable case for Jesus' messiahship, but one as good as we could imagine given the nature of our sources.

The title Χριστός ("Christ") is ubiquitous in early Christian usage.<sup>65</sup> When the title is taken together with the designation χριστιανοί ("Christians")<sup>66</sup> they hold some significance for the parting of the ways. The very act of proclaiming a Messiah could prove divisive. For a start, not all Jews believed in a Messiah or even wanted one. For someone to make a messianic claim during the Roman period would always lead, intentionally or not, to one sure outcome: bloodshed. A Jewish Messiah climbs to the Jewish throne over the bodies of Jewish martyrs. Furthermore, those that did hope for a Messiah had varied perspectives on what kind of Messiah would come.

What is incredible in the Christian claim is that it is a crucified Jew who is identified as Israel's Messiah. Paul states that a crucified Messiah was a point of contention with his Jewish compatriots and a point of compromise with his Jewish Christian opponents (1 Cor 1:18–23; Rom 9:32–33; Gal 5:11; 6:12–14; Phil 3:18). Mark's Gospel is arguably an apology for the cross.<sup>67</sup> A crucified Messiah is more than an "insufferable paradox"<sup>68</sup> or an "obstacle to Jewish conversion to Christianity."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 199; cf. Ben Witherington, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 215.

<sup>63</sup> Otto Betz, "Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu," *NovT* 6 (1963): 24–37.

<sup>64</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 307–308.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 1–15.

<sup>66</sup> Acts 11:26; 26:28–29; 1 Pet 4:16; Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44; Suetonius, *Nero* 16; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10.96.1–5; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.64; Ignatius, *Rom.* 3.2.

<sup>67</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 1022–26; Michael F. Bird, "Jesus is the Christ: Messianic Apologetics in the Gospel of Mark," *RTR* 64 (2005): 1–14.

<sup>68</sup> Jacob Neusner, "Varieties of Judaism in the Formative Age," in *Jewish Spirituality*, ed. A. Green (London: SCM, 1989), 171–197, esp. 190.

<sup>69</sup> Sanders, *Schismatics*, 92–93.

There was a real offence here, but why? In short, the Messiah was meant to be the representative of Israel *par excellence*, thus “[t]he cross is offensive to Jews because a crucified Messiah implies a crucified Israel.”<sup>70</sup> A crucified Messiah forced a reconfiguration of the Jewish belief mosaic on topics such as kingship, vindication, eschatology, restoration, and the fate of the Gentiles. The messiahship of Jesus was an obvious dividing point between Jewish and Christian communities (see John 9:22; Justin, *1 Apol.* 31.5–6; *Dial. Tryph.* 108), but its significance for the Jewish-Christian split can be easily exaggerated.<sup>71</sup> In the second century Rabbi Aqiba proposed that Simon bar Kochba was the Messiah (*y. Taan.* 68d) and when Kochba was crucified by the Romans it was fairly evident that Aqiba was gravely mistaken. But no one thought that Aqiba had apostatized or departed from Judaism.<sup>72</sup> J. Weiss noted that: “It was no breach of the law if they chose to consider a dead teacher as the Messiah.”<sup>73</sup> Similarly, Günther Bornkamm argued that we should reject the idea that “for an orthodox Jew like [Paul] belief in Jesus as the Messiah was of itself sufficient reason for persecution.”<sup>74</sup> That would be true for the followers of Jesus as it was for the followers of Sabbatai Svi.<sup>75</sup> More likely, then, it was the persistent proclamation of a *crucified* Messiah coupled with devotion centred on Jesus by Christians that constituted the christological component of the parting.

The very name *χριστιανοί* signifies that Jesus as “Christ” contributed to the parting in some locations. According to Luke, the title was first used to describe Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Was the title “Christians” first created by Jesus-followers themselves<sup>76</sup> or by outsid-

<sup>70</sup> N. T. Wright, “The Paul of History and the Apostle of Faith,” *TynBul* 29 (1978): 61–88, esp. 68.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. C. J. Setzer, “‘You Invent a Christ!’ Christological Claims as Points of Jewish-Christian Dispute,” *USQR* 44 (1991): 315–328; Evans, “Root Causes,” 20–35; A. J. Hultgren, “Paul’s Pre-Christian Persecutions of the Church: Their Purpose Locale and Nature,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 97–111, esp. 103; Paula A. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 147–148.

<sup>72</sup> Wedderburn, *First Christians*, 34; Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1985), 78–79.

<sup>73</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30–150* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 170.

<sup>74</sup> Günther Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 15.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. W. D. Davies, “From Schweitzer to Scholem: Reflections on Sabbatai Svi,” *JBL* 95 (1976): 529–558.

<sup>76</sup> Helge Botermann, *Das Judendikt des Kaisers Claudius: Römische Stadt und Christiani im 1. Jahrhundert*, *Hermes Einzelschriften* 71 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), 144–188.

ers like pagan authorities?<sup>77</sup> The Jesus movement already had their own names to identify themselves including "the Way," "disciples," and "the *ekklesia*." The use of "Christian" as self-designation does not appear until Ignatius of Antioch. Non-Christian Jews, it seems, referred to Christians as a *αἵρεσις* ("sect") and *Ναζωραῖοι* or *Nasrayya* ("Nazarenes").<sup>78</sup> The use of "Christian" could refer to any number of Jewish groups with messianic aspirations. What is more, the *-ανοί/-iani* suffix is a Latinism and points to a non-Jewish origin by pagans. It was used predominantly of political groupings around figures like Herod (Ἡρωδῖανοί) and Caesar (Καίσαρειανοί).<sup>79</sup> The political dimension of the term is probably indebted to the description of Jesus as *κύριος* by the early church which could quite easily elicit a perceived counter-imperial connotation especially in conjunction with a messianic claim (e.g. Acts 17:3.7). That would be significant because Jewish messianic expectations were known to pagans (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13; Seutonius, *Vesp.* 4.5) and the veneration of a Jew known to have been crucified by a Roman official was likely to provoke suspicion by authorities (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). So why did pagans coin the designation "Christians"? It did not come about as a way of designating a religious group that had both Jewish and Gentile adherents, since synagogues in Antioch had Gentile sympathizers and pagan associations had Jewish members.<sup>80</sup> What probably stood out was that Gentiles were attaching themselves to a Jewish messianic group that was either separate from or on the fringe of Jewish communities in Antioch. Just

<sup>77</sup> G. Schneider, *EDNT* 3:478; W. Grundmann, *TDNT* 9:536–537; Wedderburn, *First Christians*, 69–70; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004 [2002]), 1:794; Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology*, trans. D. Scott (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 112; Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, trans. John Bowden (London, SCM, 1997), 203, 225–230; Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961 [1904–1905]), 1:53–54, 411–412; E. A. Judge, "Judaism and the Rise of Christianity: A Roman Perspective," *TynBul* 45 (1994): 355–368.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22; Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 108; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.8. See Richard Bauckham, "Why Were the Early Christians Called Nazarenes?" *Mishkan* 38 (2003): 80–85.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Martin Hengel, "Das früheste Christentum als eine jüdische messianische und universalistische Bewegung," in *Judaica, Hellenistica et Christiana: Kleine Schriften 2*, WUNT 109 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999), 200–218; Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul*, 228–229.

<sup>80</sup> Contra Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 112; W. A. Meeks and R. W. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries*, SBLBS 13 (Ann Arbor: Scholars Press, 1978), 15–16.

as “Judaizer” could refer to Gentiles who took to Jewish customs in Antioch (Josephus, *War* 2.463; cf. Gal 2:14), “Christian” denoted those who joined this Jewish messianic sect. There might also be a pejorative sense to the term as “partisan of Christ,” “client of Christ,” or perhaps even “sycophant of Christ.” 1 Peter, also from Asia Minor, states that persons should not be ashamed to suffer as a “Christian” and a sense of derision is implicit (1 Pet 4:16). By the time of Ignatius, however, “Christian” has become an established and celebrated self-reference by Christians in Asia Minor, so that Ignatius can urge the Romans to pray that: “I may not merely be called a Christian, but really found to be one” (*Rom.* 3.2). Not only did Ignatius prompt reaction from pagan authorities, but he also warned of too close association of Christianity with Judaism (*Phil.* 6.1; *Magn.* 10.3). In Syria, then, the appellation of “Christian” was coined by pagans in the early 40’s to describe a movement somehow of but not in the Jewish synagogues of Antioch, and it was used by Christians in the early second century to differentiate themselves from Jews.

A separate identity for Christians seems to have developed also in Rome by the mid-first century. Suetonius reports that Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome on account of a certain “Chrestus” (*Claud.* 25.4) in ca. 49 CE. There is no reference to “Jesus” or *Iousiani*, but to “Chrestus” (a probable Latinism of Χριστός). The origin of the tumult in the Jewish communities in Rome probably concerned the application of the title of “Christ” to Jesus by Jewish Christians.<sup>81</sup> The expulsion, which was not the first exile of Jews from Rome (others happened in 139 BCE and 19 CE), resulted also in the expulsion of Jewish Christians from Rome as evidenced by the arrival of Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth (Acts 18:2) and the return of the Jewish Christians in 54 CE arguably occasioned Paul’s epistle to the Romans (esp. Rom 14:1–15:13). Yet in a period less than ten years later, Tacitus can refer to those “the crowd called Christians” as experiencing a merciless pogrom at the hand of Nero in the early 60’s CE (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). These Christians were perceived by the public and by the imperial

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<sup>81</sup> It is quite possible that the Jewish Christians in Rome were preaching a gospel similar to Paul that created *furor* (Wedderburn, *First Christians*, 186). After the expulsion, Romans Jews would be naturally wary of associations with Christians (J. C. Walters, “Romans, Jews, and Christians: The Impact of the Romans on Jewish/Christian Relations in First-Century Rome,” in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome*, ed. K. P. Donfried and Peter Richardson [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998], 175–194, esp. 178–179).

apparatus as separate from the Jewish community in Rome. There is no hint that Tacitus has confused them with Roman Jews, since Tacitus knew full well about Jewish communities in Rome (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5). Thus, there was a transition going on, since in 49 CE Christians were simply part of the Roman Jewish community, while in the early 60's Christians appear to have become a recognizably separate social entity from the Jewish community. The development of Christianity in Rome from the 40's to 60's is complex and there were undoubtedly a number of social, political, and religious factors that contributed to a differentiation between Jews and Christians.<sup>82</sup> This differentiation is partly attributable to the house churches in Rome which were constituted by a Gentile majority with a Jewish minority (cf. Rom 1:13; 11:1–25; 15:16–20, 27; 16:4).

What should be clear is that: (1) Jesus' messianic claim was partly responsible for his execution by the Jewish leaders in co-operation with Rome; (2) Jesus as Messiah was an obvious point of contention between Jews and Christians; (3) the designation "Christian" was probably coined by pagan authorities in locations such as Antioch and Rome to distinguish adherents of the Jesus movement from Jews.

### 3. *Jesus' Dispute with his Contemporaries*

Jack T. Sanders commences his study of first-century Jewish-Christians relations with the death of Jesus, but never really looks before that, to the period of Jesus' ministry to see if anything of Jesus' message was of significance for the hostility in later Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>83</sup> In contrast, the approach outlined here contends that constituent factors in the Jewish-Christian rift do have their roots in Jesus' ministry. James Dunn and others have maintained that all of Jesus' disputes with his contemporaries can be understood as intra-Jewish debates which are paralleled in the conflicts of Jewish factionalism. This is undoubtedly true and is a necessary caveat with which to preface our discussion. Sociological factors such as group identity,

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 34–36; Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (London: T&T Clark, 2003); Donfried and Richardson, eds., *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome*.

<sup>83</sup> Sanders, *Schismatics*, 1.

deviant labelling, and sectarian rivalry likewise provide reasons why Jesus provoked opposition. I am not advocating that Jesus urged a departure from Judaism, but various facets of his aims and actions were controversial precisely within Judaism. When those convictions were taken up and developed further by followers in the post-Easter church, in conjunction with a continuing process of self-definition in Judaism especially in the aftermath of 70 CE, with significant increases in the number Gentile adherents to Christianity who had no former Jewish association, amidst diverse socio-religious settings permeated by Hellenism to various degrees, then the parting of the ways was probably inevitable. But before the destruction of Jerusalem, before the Gentile mission, and before Easter, there were several fault lines developing. I wish to briefly explicate those here, and I begin with Jesus' confrontation with his contemporaries.

In the gospels, the disputes between Jesus and various figures and authorities over purity, tithing, oaths, divorce etc. are plausible as intra-Jewish halakhic debates. In many ways, the debates between Jesus and the Pharisees were over who spoke for God and who had the most viable program to achieve national restoration. It was a debate between two competing Jewish renewal movements. One must recognize, however, that the sharp polemics and invective between Jesus and the Pharisees depicted in the gospels were coloured by debates between Christians and the synagogues in the post-Easter period. I have argued elsewhere that these passages ultimately have an origin in the life of Jesus, and they cannot be deposited at the door of a later Gentile church.<sup>84</sup> This is reinforced by the fact that many religious people disliked Jesus, and it was not because their religion was full of hypocrisy, externality, legalism and manufactured dogma, whereas Jesus taught a religion of love, relationships, and peace. The fundamental breach was over several root issues: who spoke for God, whose way of being Israel avails before God, and who is the faithful interpreter of Moses and the Prophets? This is what occasioned, at times, ruthless conflict and vitriolic debate. Raymond Brown correctly notes

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<sup>84</sup> Michael F. Bird, "The Purpose and Preservation of the Jesus Tradition: Moderate Evidence for a Conserving Force in its Transmission," *BBR* 15 (2005): 161–185, esp. 167–169; idem, "Jesus the Law-Breaker," in *Who Do My Opponents Say That I Am? Investigating the Accusations Against Jesus*, ed. Joseph B. Modica and Scot McKnight, LHJS (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 3–26.



that Jesus was “capable of generating intense dislike.”<sup>85</sup> Larry Hurtado remarks that Jesus was a figure of “notoriety and controversy.” He adds:

This is, whatever may have been Jesus’ intention (often difficult to establish with certainty for historical figures, even when we have their statements on the subject!), the *effect* of his public activity was very much to polarize a good many of his contemporaries over the question of how to regard him, whether to take a negative or a positive stance about him. It is, I think, a reasonable inference that there was likely something in Jesus’ own actions and statements that generated, or at least contributed to, this polarization.<sup>86</sup>

Graham Stanton takes a similar view:

It is generally accepted that in the first and second centuries Christians and Jews were at odds about christology and the law. It is less frequently appreciated that both the actions and the teaching of Jesus were also a source of tension: they were assessed very differently by his later followers and opponents.<sup>87</sup>

To suggest that Jesus was controversial places him beside Judas the Galilean, Rabbi Hillel, John the Baptist, and the Teacher of Righteousness as figures who fostered division and hostility. But unlike these other individuals who launched religious movements that continued to propagate their ideas within Judaism, the one launched by Jesus would eventually split off from Judaism. The question is why?

#### 4. *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Pillars*

In this section I wish to highlight Jesus’ relationship to the pillars of Judaism and suggest how they eventually opened the way for more stark divisions between Jews and Christians.

(1) *God*.<sup>88</sup> There is no reason to see Jesus as anything other than a pious monotheist.<sup>89</sup> Harvey goes so far as to speak of the “constraint

<sup>85</sup> Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:392.

<sup>86</sup> Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 55.

<sup>87</sup> Stanton, “Jesus of Nazareth,” 180.

<sup>88</sup> I have chosen not to cite material unique to the Fourth Gospel since the history of its tradition is strongly contested. Instead, I have only cited Johannine material that parallels synoptic evidence (see Dunn, *Partings*, 176–178).

<sup>89</sup> The term “monotheism” is itself elastic and we must acknowledge the debate about how “strict” Jewish monotheism was. See for a helpful approach Richard

of monotheism” for understanding Jesus.<sup>90</sup> After all, Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God, the gospel of God (e.g. Mark 1:14–15), he prays to God as Father (Mark 14:36; Luke 11:1–4/Matt 6:9–13; John 11:41–42), and calls for steadfast devotion to God (Matt 6:24/Luke 16:13). In the Jesus tradition, only God is to be worshipped (Luke 4:7–8/Matt 4:9–10) and God alone is good (Mark 10:18). Many of the parables have the purpose of explicating the character of God (e.g. Luke 15).<sup>91</sup> In particular, Jesus affirms the *Shema* of Deut 6:4 (Mark 12:29–30).

Nevertheless, there are multiply-attested units where Jesus refers to himself as the “Son” and so refers to his unique filial relation to God and his special role in ushering in the kingdom (Q [Luke 10:22/Matt 11:27], Mark [12:1–12], and John [3:35–36; 5:19–47; 6:45–46]). This is affirmed by Jesus’ own experience of God in baptism (Mark 1:11), temptation (Matt 4:1–11/Luke 4:1–13), and the transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8). Jesus expressed a sense of unmediated divine authority that led the authorities to question him about its origin (Mark 11:27–33) and public opinion about him was that he spoke with a *distinct* authority that set him apart from the scribes (Mark 1:22.27; cf. Matt 8:9/Luke 7:8).<sup>92</sup> Claims to speak for God do not imply divinity, as several prophetic figures often claimed to speak for God, but no-one thought them divine. But in the case of Jesus this authority became unusually acute. Jesus pronounces the forgiveness of sins, which leads to the charge of blasphemy (Mark 2:5.10; Luke 7:36–50). The allegation, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7) demonstrates that Jesus appropriated the role of the priest in relation to atonement, but outside of the cult. Here Jesus does not claim to be a rogue priest, but he offers the forgiveness that was available only through the divinely instituted system of sacrifices (cult of Yahweh) at the place of God’s dwelling (Temple of Yahweh). Jesus also reconfigures divine commandments based on his own authority (e.g. Matt 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43). We can add that Jesus’ eschatology implies a christology: not only is

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Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998).

<sup>90</sup> A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 157.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. P. B. Payne, “Jesus’ Implicit Claim to Deity in His Parables,” *TrinJ* 2 (1981): 3–23.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Morna D. Hooker, “Creative Conflict: the Torah and Christology,” in *Christology, Controversy and Community* ed. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 117–136, esp. 134.

the kingdom coming, but Jesus is the one who inaugurates it through his mighty deeds, healings, exorcisms, and preaching. In Luke 11:20 Jesus is remembered as saying: "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."<sup>93</sup> It is simplistic therefore to say that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom and that the church proclaimed Jesus.<sup>94</sup> Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom always carried with it an implied self-reference, as he is the agent bringing it. It is response to Jesus' message that determines one's standing in the covenant and entrance into the kingdom (Matt 10:40/Luke 10:16; Mark 1:15; 8:34–9:1; 10:32; 12:1–12; Matt 7:24–27; 21:31; John 13:20). Moreover, there are instances where Jesus apparently refers to himself as one who is like Wisdom (Matt 11:19/Luke 7:35 [Sir 4:11]; Matt 11:28–30 [Sir 24:19]; Luke 11:49), is greater than the Temple (Matt 12:6), and greater than Satan (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29/Luke 11:21–22). *Torah*, Wisdom, and Temple were symbols of God's presence with his people and were in a sense incarnational, and it is these symbols that Jesus associates with his own vocation and identity.<sup>95</sup> Jesus' use of Psalm 110 in Mark 12:35–37, though muted in meaning and authenticity,<sup>96</sup> testifies to Jesus' belief that the Messiah is somehow more than a Son of David and destined for an enthronement on a par with Dan 7:13–14 or *1 En.* 55.4, 62.3–5. In Luke 19:44, Jesus is remembered as saying: "And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation." The background to this saying is probably Ezekiel 34 which depicts the coming of God in the coming of the Davidic Shepherd-King. Wright is correct when he posits Jesus as entering Jerusalem believing that he is embodying the return of God to Zion and offering divine salvation to the populace of Jerusalem.<sup>97</sup>

In the early church there arose rather quickly the integration of Jesus into patterns of worship. Religious devotion became largely

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 217–224.

<sup>94</sup> Howard Clark Kee, *The Beginnings of Christianity: An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 65, 80; cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel (London: SCM, 1952), 1:33.

<sup>95</sup> On the pre-existence of Jesus in the synoptic gospels see Simon Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 722; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 507–509; Bird, *One to Come*.

<sup>97</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 631–653.

binitarian,<sup>98</sup> centred on Jesus and God, and Jesus was accordingly regarded as participating in the divine identity, which goes back as early as the Aramaic speaking church (e.g. 1 Cor 16:22). It is important to realize that although Christianity was still within the domain of monotheism it has metamorphosed into *messianic monotheism*, whereby the very meaning of “God” is redefined in view of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus (Phil 2:5–11; 1 Cor 8:6; Rom 9:5; Col 1:15–20 and John 1:1–14). This was to be a singular and lasting point of division with Jews,<sup>99</sup> and yet this event is not unprecedented, since Jesus’ claim to authority, his claim to act and speak on behalf of God, his mission to embody the presence of God in Jerusalem is the presupposition for the binitarian Christ-devotion of the primitive church. While it may be true that Jesus stood within the boundaries of monotheism,<sup>100</sup> he ascribed to himself a role in the divine design that was unprecedented and blurred the line between author and agent. Jesus is a prophet, and *more* than a prophet, and it is this “more” that prompted deeper reflection in light of belief in his resurrection and exaltation as to how Jesus related to the identity and personification of God. The worship patterns of the primitive church did not occur *ex nihilo*; belief in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus would not be sufficient of itself to effect the belief that Jesus had been co-enthroned with God and incorporated into the divine identity, any more than it would be for Enoch or Elijah to be worshipped. Rather, the seed bed upon which this faith in Jesus grew was Jesus’ belief that he was the divine agent *par excellence*. As Evans states: “The New Testament deification of Jesus Christ, as seen especially in the theologies of Paul and the fourth evangelist, has its roots in the words and activities of the historical Jesus.”<sup>101</sup>

(2) *Torah*. There is no area of historical Jesus research that is more controversial and complex than that of Jesus and the Torah. We must

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Larry W. Hurtado, “The Binitarian Shape of Early Christian Worship,” in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, ed. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila, and G. S. Lewis, JSJSup 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 187–213.

<sup>99</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca’s Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 151–157. Contra Sanders (*Schismatics*, 93) who does not think that the high christology of John, though outlandish, would have constituted blasphemy with the Roman period of Judaism.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Partings*, 182.

<sup>101</sup> Craig A. Evans, “The Historical Jesus and the Deified Christ: How Did the One Lead to the Other?” in *The Nature of Religious Language: A Colloquium*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 47–67, esp. 67.

appreciate a tension that is reflected in the Jesus tradition, as Jesus is portrayed as both a legal radical in some matters (e.g. fasting, Sabbath keeping, and food laws) but also as pious and *Torah* obedient (especially toward the Temple).<sup>102</sup> Relaxation and intensification of certain commandments is a distinguishing feature of Jewish renewal movements.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, Jesus can set the imperatives of the kingdom against the commands of *Torah* when those commands conflict with one another. If Nickelsburg is right to claim that it was the preference for eschatology over *Torah* that facilitated the separation between Jewish and Christian groups, then this process commenced with Jesus himself.<sup>104</sup>

Jesus challenged and flouted many of the legal interpretations of his contemporaries. Jesus stood not against Moses, but against other renewal movements like the Pharisees on matters of the law. For them, text and interpretation were not neatly separable, so that Jesus' affront to their *halakah* was a *de facto* challenge to *Torah*. Hence, in the view of his opponents, Jesus' fidelity to the *Torah* was regarded as suspect to the point that Jesus and his disciples were regarded as performing unlawful acts (Mark 2:24; 3:4; 7:2–4; Luke 11:38). While there was a significant amount of diversity in early Christianity about the law,<sup>105</sup> we find that Stephen (Acts 6:11–14), Paul (Acts 21:28; 25:8; Rom 3:8), and James the brother of Jesus (*Ant.* 20.200) were also accused of breaking the law.<sup>106</sup> Importantly, the opposition that all three provoked resulted eventually in their execution just like Jesus. That is not to say that Jesus or Christians consciously abrogated the law or deliberately flouted its requirements. But it is unassailable that the Christian approaches to the Jewish law fostered persecution and ultimately contributed to the parting of the ways (see also Justin, *Dial. Tryph.* 108).

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<sup>102</sup> Hooker, "Creative Conflict," 117.

<sup>103</sup> Marcus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 10; Gerd Theissen, *The Sociology of Palestinian Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 78–80.

<sup>104</sup> G. E. Nickelsburg, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 194.

<sup>105</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, "The Law as a Topic of Biblical Theology," in *Reconciliation, Law and Righteousness* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 110–133; Raymond Brown and John P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist, 1983), 1–9; James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insights from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSup 266 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 125–158.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Bird, "Jesus the Law-Breaker."

Is the origin of this divide, however it developed in different Christian trajectories, attributable to Jesus? Hengel thinks so:

Jesus' attitude towards the Torah and the temple possesses, over against that of all other Jewish groups, an unmistakable, original stamp. He thereby brings something really *new*, and he continues this new thing in the Church made up of his disciples. Both Jesus and the Church fall outside the framework provided by the idea—valued so highly by Sanders—of a harmonious “common Judaism.” After all, it is no accident that the movement initiated by Jesus opened itself step by step to an increasingly “law-free” Gentile mission just a short time after his death. Nor is it an accident that the three “pillars” at the Apostolic Council about eighteen years later, who were closely associated with Jesus, acknowledge uncircumcised Gentile Christians who were not under obligations to the Torah as full members of the Church, destined to experience eschatological salvation. Must that not also ultimately have something to do with Jesus' attitude? *Ex nihilo nihil fit*—or, to take up the illustration which Sanders himself uses (and rejects): from our historical distance, we *must* conclude from the smoke that there is also a fire. The persecutions of the early Palestinian Church were connected with this partially critical attitude toward Torah and cult, as well as with Christology (this whole complex cannot be torn apart.) Jesus himself provided the first impetus for persecution. Early Christianity's relatively quick break with Sanders' “common Judaism,” despite the fact that it rested entirely on Jewish roots, is a phenomenon which we believe *ultimately* goes back historically and theologically to Jesus' words and deeds, in combination with his claim to have been sent from God. This development is without analogy in Palestinian Judaism.<sup>107</sup>

In primitive circles of the early church, the controversies about the law and the Gentiles impinged upon another pillar of Judaism, that of (3) *Election*. A central tenet of Jewish belief was that the Creator God has chosen Israel to be his people.<sup>108</sup> Yet “Who is Israel?” was the burning question of Jewish factionalism.<sup>109</sup> What divided Jews and Christians was not differences over systems of salvation, but rather the question “Who are the people of God?” According to early Christian responses, the feature that marks out God's chosen people is not ethnicity but faith in Israel's Messiah. The early church saw itself, ostentatiously, in

<sup>107</sup> Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, “E. P. Sanders' ‘Common Judaism,’ Jesus, and the Pharisees,” *JTS* 46 (1995): 1–70, esp. 15–16; cf. Sanders, *Schismatics*, 95–99.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Deut 7:6–7; 14:2; 32:8–9; Exod 19:5; Pss 33:12; 135:4; Isa 41:8–9; 44:1–2; 45:4; Wis 4:15; Tob 8:15; 4 *Ezra* 2:15–17; 5:23–29; 6:54; Philo, *Migr.* 60; *Spec.* 1.303; *Mos.* 1.278; *Jub.* 15.30–32; *Pss. Sol.* 9.9–11; 4Q381 frags. 76–77, 14–16.

<sup>109</sup> 1 Macc 1:43, 52–53; 9:23–25; 10:14; 3 Macc 1:3; 4 *Ezra* 3:36.

the position of Israel. For this reason Paul can say that a Jew is not one outwardly but inwardly (Rom 2:27–28) and not all from Israel belong to Israel (Rom 9:6). Paul states in Phil: 3:3 that Christians are the circumcision. He concludes Galatians with a blessing for the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16). By the end of the first century Exod 19:6 was taken up and applied to Christians.<sup>110</sup> The word ἐκλεκτός ("elect") in the Septuagint frequently denotes Israel,<sup>111</sup> but in the New Testament it often signifies Christians.<sup>112</sup> *1 Clement* applies the election passages of Deuteronomy (4:34; 14:2; 32:8–9) to Christians (*1 Clem.* 29.1–3). It is true that the phrases "new Israel" or "true Israel" do not appear in the New Testament,<sup>113</sup> but many Christians appear to have redefined the meaning of election in view of their own allegiance to Israel's Messiah, with the result of understanding themselves as the eschatological representatives of Israel in the messianic age. The fact that other Jewish groups could describe themselves as Israel over against their fellow Jews shows that this is congruent within Second Temple Judaism.<sup>114</sup>

That Jesus focused his mission on Israel (Matt 10:5–6; 15:24) and chose twelve disciples as symbolic of Israel (Mark 3:13–16; Luke 22:30/Matt 19:28) is an indicator that he assumed God's election of the nation.<sup>115</sup> Yet the transference of designations used for Israel to followers of Jesus most likely began with Jesus himself. The parable of the wedding banquet ends with the warning that many are called but few are "chosen" (Matt 22:14). In the Markan apocalypse Jesus is presented as saying that God will save the "elect" (Mark 13:20, 27). In the Lukan parable of the unjust judge, Jesus promises that God will grant justice to his "elect who cry out to him" (Luke 18:7). Jesus spoke of his followers, as other apocalyptic groups did of themselves, as specially chosen by God.<sup>116</sup>

There were those who pointed out that one cannot trust in the inviolability of Israel's election to maintain their own status in the

<sup>110</sup> 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. e.g. 1 Chron 16:13; Pss 88:4; 104:6, 43; Isa 65:9, 15, 23; Tob 8:15.

<sup>112</sup> Rom 8:33; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:10; Tit 1:1; 1 Pet: 1:1; 2:4, 6, 9; 2 John 1:13; Rev 17:14; *1 Clem.* 1.1; 2.4; 46.3–4; 49.5; 59.2; *2 Clem.* 14.5; Hermas, *Vis.* 1.3.4; 2.1.3; 2.2.5; 2.4.2; 3.5.1; 3.8.3; 3.9.10; 4.2.5; 4.3.5.

<sup>113</sup> M. A. Elliott, "Israel," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 356–363, esp. 357.

<sup>114</sup> *Pss. Sol.* 10.6; 1 Macc 1:53; 7:9; 9:51; CD IV, 4; 1QS V, 22; VIII, 4; 1QSa I, 6; IQM X, 9; Philo, *Migr.* 113–14; *Conf.* 56; *Her.* 78.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, 54–70.

<sup>116</sup> 1QS VIII, 6; *1 En.* 1.1; 38.2–4; 62.7–8.

covenant. John the Baptist is recorded as saying that descent from Abraham is no guarantee of deliverance in view of the coming eschatological judgment (Luke 3:8/Matt 3:9). Even the Maccabean literature is careful to note that Jewish ethnicity is no defence against apostasy (3 Macc 1:3). In a similar way, Jesus warned Israel about the danger of rejecting his message in light of the coming eschatological crisis. He is all too aware that his message affects a division in Israel. Weeds and wheat would be gathered together, but the weeds are separated and burned (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43). A dragnet would bring in fish of every type and the bad would be thrown out (Matt 13:47–50). A returning king would reward faithful stewards, but punish severely those citizens who petitioned against him or failed to do his will (Luke 19:11–27/Matt 25:14–30). Wicked tenants who killed the messengers and the son of the absentee landlord would see the vineyard given to others (Mark 12:1–10; *Gos. Thom.* 65).<sup>117</sup> These warning oracles do not suppose that Israel's election was something that had been used up; but belonging to Israel does not guarantee that one will belong to the coming age.

Moreover, Jesus implied that those whom many would exclude from covenant membership and participation in the future kingdom would in fact participate. Against the Jewish leadership, Jesus can say, “tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matt 21:31). A passage like Luke 4:25–27 arguably represents a form of prophetic criticism that reconfigures the election of Israel as including outcasts like Gentile lepers and foreign widows.<sup>118</sup> In various Jewish sects table-fellowship functioned as a social boundary indicating who was inside and who was outside the restrictions of the group identity.<sup>119</sup> Jesus' table-fellowship with “sinners”<sup>120</sup> (and “sinners” can be a synonym for Gentiles)<sup>121</sup> is further proof that the identity of the renewed Israel that Jesus is reconstituting around himself is broader than any sectarian or ethnic horizon. That is something that set him apart from both the Pharisees and the Qumranites. To

<sup>117</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 328.

<sup>118</sup> James A. Sanders, “From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4,” in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Traditions in Luke-Acts*, ed. James A. Sanders and Craig A. Evans (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 46–69.

<sup>119</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 602.

<sup>120</sup> Luke 7:31–35/Matt 11:16–19; Mark 2:15–17; 14:3; Luke 15:2; 19:1–10.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. e.g. Ps 9:17; Isa 14:5; Gal 2:15; 1 Macc 2:44, 48; *Jub.* 23.23–24; *Pss. Sol.* 1.1; 2.1–2; 17.21–25.



dine with sinners or persons of Gentile-like status would provoke umbrage (Acts 10–11; Gal 2:11–14), but it would not separate Jesus from Judaism. Yet Jesus' openness to Gentiles, his willingness to associate with sinners, and his claim that they shall be vindicated at the eschaton while other Jews with greater claim to covenant standing will be ejected was genuinely shocking (e.g. Matt 8:11–12/Luke 13:28–29). In fact, it is acceptance of Gentiles *as Gentiles* and integration of them into Christian fellowship that is arguably a point of contact between Hellenists and Jesus.<sup>122</sup> Once others like Paul began regarding Gentiles as part of the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) without coming via the route of proselytism, the seeds of division were well and truly sown. The Pauline conviction was that one did not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian, and this divorced election from ethnicity. This led to the gentilization of the church and a supersessionist theology.<sup>123</sup> The influx of Gentiles prompted numerous problems for Jewish Christians and for Jewish-Christian relationships, especially after 70 CE. Eventually: "[t]he *parting of the ways* arose because, for most other Jews, that Christian Jewish claim was incredible. The inclusion of pagans and the devastation by pagans were irreconcilable."<sup>124</sup>

(4) *Temple*.<sup>125</sup> A final area we must consider briefly is Jesus and the Temple. First, a significant amount of material in the gospels depicts Jesus not only as law observant, but as observant of the regulations of the Temple.<sup>126</sup> These sayings and actions are significant when juxtaposed with another body of tradition that predicts the destruction of the Temple.<sup>127</sup> In terms of authenticity, the motif is multiply-attested

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Wedderburn, *First Christians*, 50–51; Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 57–58.

<sup>123</sup> Porter and Pearson, "Why the Split?" 91, 108.

<sup>124</sup> Jonathan L. Reed and John Dominic Crossan, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 324.

<sup>125</sup> On the significance of the Temple for the partings see Richard Bauckham, "The Parting of the Way: What Happened and Why," *ST* 47 (1993): 135–151.

<sup>126</sup> Vermes, *Religion of Jesus*, 11–17. Jesus is remembered for affirming payment of the Temple tax (Matt 17:24–27), sending supplicants of healing to the Temple for reintegration into Jewish society (Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14, 17:14; John 9:7). He upholds the sanctity of the Temple in relation to oaths (Matt 23:16–22), denounces the murder of Zechariah between the sanctuary and the altar (Luke 11:51/Matt 23:35), teaches and heals in the Temple (Matt 21:14; Mark 12:35; 14:49; John 5:1–15; 7:14–15.28; 8:2, 20; 18:20), and the Johannine Jesus makes several trips to the festivals (John 2, 5, 7, 10, 12).

<sup>127</sup> Luke 13:34–35/Matt 23:37–39; Mark 13:2; 14:58; 15:29; Matt 26:61; Luke 19:41–44; 21:20–24; 23:27–31; Acts 6:14; John 2:19; *Gos. Thom.* 71; *Gos. Eb.* § 6; *Gos. Pet.* 7.25–26; cf. Craig A. Evans, "Prediction of the Destruction of the Herodian Temple in

(Q, Mark, "L," John). Jesus was not the first Jewish prophet to predict the destruction of the Temple (Jeremiah), nor the last (Jesus ben Ananias).<sup>128</sup> This is an obvious point of continuity with Stephen, who was stoned for reiterating Jesus' promise that the Temple would be destroyed. One should avoid the position that Stephen (or Luke's) view of the Temple is influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, which thought of the Temple as "relatively useless."<sup>129</sup> The opposite is true, as several Hellenistic authors give glowing reports about the Temple (Josephus, *War* 5.223; *Ep. Arist.* 83–104; Philo, *Spec.* 1.67–77; *Sib. Or.* 3.657–60). Several writings arguably stemming from a Palestinian provenance regard the Temple as impure and defiled (1QpHab XII, 8–9; CD V, 6–8; 4Q390 I, 8–10; *1 En.* 89.73–74; *Pss. Sol.* 2.3; 8.11–13; *T. Levi* 14.5–8; 16.1; *Jub.* 23.21; *T. Mos.* 5.3–6.1; *Ps.-Clem. Hom.* 2.44.2; 3.52.1; Epiphanius, *Adv. Haer.* 19.3.6; *Gos. Eb.* § 6). The tendency to transcendentalize the Temple or to point out the inadequacies of the physical structure to contain the divine presence was already embedded in Israel's sacred scriptures and intertestamental literature (e.g. 1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chron 6:18; Isa 6:1–13; 66:1; Pss 11:4; 103:19; Bar 2:16; *1 En.* 14.16–20; *T. Levi* 3.4–6; 5.1–2; *Sib. Or.* 4.6–11, 27–28; Philo, *Cher.* 100–101; cf. Plato, *Republic* 9.592a, b; Euripides, *Frag.* 968).

On the surface, Jesus' utterances against the Temple would not necessitate a division between Jews and Christians since other Jews made similar remarks, but we must add three other factors. First, even if other Jews were sympathetic, speaking against the Temple would be sufficient itself to warrant exile (Teacher of Righteousness) or even death (Jesus, Stephen, Jesus ben Ananias), highlighting the seriousness of the offence against what was the religious, political, and economic hub of Judaism. Second, it is possible that Jesus intended to replace the Temple with something else such as a "symbolic meal"<sup>130</sup> or his own circle of followers who would be the "new Temple."<sup>131</sup> This could

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the Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Scrolls, and Related Texts," *JSP* 10 (1992): 89–147, esp. 97–98.

<sup>128</sup> Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, 255–256.

<sup>129</sup> Harnack, *Expansion of Christianity*, 1:56–57.

<sup>130</sup> Neusner, "Money-changers," 291–95; Bruce D. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Jostein Ådna, "Jesus' Symbolic Act in the Temple (Mark 11:15–17): The Replacement of the Sacrificial Cult by his Atoning Death," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel* (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1999), 461–475.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Barnett, *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 170–71; Neusner, "Varieties of Judaism," 189–190.

potentially have been regarded as an act of apostasy, as the Samaritan Temple<sup>132</sup> and the Temple at Leontopolis<sup>133</sup> were thought of as apostate institutes of worship. Third, Christians identified themselves (Gal 2:9; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 3:12; 11:1–2; *Did.* 10.2; Ignatius, *Eph.* 9.1; *Barn.* 4.11; 6.15; 16.1–10) and Jesus (Matt 12:6; 18:20; John 1:14; 2:19; Eph 2:21; Rev 21:22; Ignatius, *Magn.* 7.2; *Smyrn.* 2.1 [longer text]) as the Temple, and this could have been viewed as an act of religious rivalry as to who or what was the nexus into the divine realm.

### 5. Conclusion

This study has argued that constituent elements of the Jewish-Christian rift find their germinal roots in the historical Jesus. The reasons for Jesus' death (a false prophet, blasphemy, Messiah) and his debates with his contemporaries that touched upon the pillars of Judaism (God, Torah, election and Temple) illustrate points of contention between Jesus and his contemporaries. Although Jesus himself remained within the orbit of a "common Judaism," his attitudes and actions did push those boundaries to the point that he incurred violent opposition from other Jews. These actions and attitudes of Jesus were subsequently developed in the early church in a new religious and social context where a split between Jews and Christians became inevitable. The ongoing process of Jewish and Christian self-definition in light of the political developments of the first century prompted persons from both groups to see the other as excluded from the designation "the people of God."

<sup>132</sup> *Ant.* 12.257–264; 18.29–30; 2 Macc 6:2; *b. Nid.* 4.1; *b. Bek.* 71; *b. Roš Haš.* 22b.

<sup>133</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 13.65–70.



PROPHET, SAGE, HEALER, MESSIAH, AND MARTYR:  
TYPES AND IDENTITIES OF JESUS

CRAIG A. EVANS

One of the oft-heard complaints in historical Jesus research in the last half century or so has to do with the diverse portraits of Jesus. According to the popular view, Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and the Son of God, but in many more-or-less learned books Jesus is presented as a prophet, sage, magician, Pharisee, Essene, or holy man. In more eccentric studies Jesus is presented as an eastern mystic or as an embodiment of some mythical religious construct.

Some critics take this diversity as evidence of the impossibility of the task, either due to the limited historical value of the principal sources or to the subjectivity of the scholars involved. It must be admitted that our sources are not as full and corroborated as we would like, and scholars are humans, after all, and therefore are prone to subjectivity. However, the diversity of scholarly results could also be interpreted as evidence that Jesus functioned and understood himself in more than one category. Indeed, the evidence suggests that this was very probably the case; and there is nothing strange in finding two or more categories. For example, to be regarded as Israel's Messiah does not preclude functions associated with the office of prophet or miracle-working holy man, nor does it preclude identification as a sage or even as a martyr, as Jesus faced the likelihood of his death during his final week in Jerusalem. In short, Jesus could have seen himself as called and empowered in several of these functions and offices.

Having said this, of course, does not mean that Jesus' contemporaries necessarily interpreted Jesus in the light of all of these typologies. Some no doubt thought of Jesus as a Davidic, royal Messiah, who would drive out the Romans and establish Israel's sovereignty. Others may have seen Jesus primarily as a miracle-working healer, while still others may have seen Jesus as a teacher. At the outset of his public ministry, Jesus may well have been viewed as simply a prophet who proclaimed the coming rule of God, a rule in which Jesus himself would play a role hardly beyond that of the one who

proclaimed it. Indeed, I suspect that it was the appeal to the typology of the righteous martyr, whose death will benefit Israel, that motivated Judas Iscariot to betray his master. So long as Jesus proclaimed God's rule, so long as it appeared that Jesus himself might reign over Israel, along with his disciples, Judas was strongly supportive. But talk of suffering and death led this disciple to abandon the cause.

Openness to seeing in Jesus a combination of identities and functions is justified in principle by the recognition that in our sources from late antiquity we in fact find these typologies mixed and diverse. To mention a few examples: The great lawgiver Moses is also a prophet (Deut 18:15–19; 34:10). David the king is a prophet (cf. 11QPs<sup>a</sup> XXVII, 2–11, esp. line 11 [David “composed through prophecy”]; Acts 1:16; 4:25; *Epistula Apostolorum* §19 [“the prophecy of the prophet David”], §35; P. Oxy. 5 verso). His son Solomon is a healer and wise man (*T. Sol.* 3.5; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.45–49), as well as prophet (*Tg. Ps* 72:1 [“composed by Solomon, uttered in prophecy”]). Moses and Elijah are sometimes linked in eschatological contexts (Mark 9:4; *Deut. Rab.* 3.17 [on Deut 10:1]; *Pesiq. Rab.* 4.2); the Messiah and Elijah are sometimes linked (Mark 9:11–13; *b. Erubin* 43a–b; *Pesiq. Rab.* 35.3; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 30:4; *Exod. Rab.* 18.12 [on Exod 12:42]); and the Messiah is sometimes linked with Moses (*Frag. Tg.* [and perhaps *Neof.*] Exod 12:42; *Tg. Song* 4:5 “Messiah son of David...like Moses”). Some prophets are workers of miracles (e.g., Elijah and Elisha, and Isaiah).

Some Old Testament figures served more than one function. One thinks of Melchizedek, who is identified as both king and priest (Gen 14:18–24), as well as the great Samuel, who was both priest and prophet (1 Sam 2:35; 3:20) and, until the anointing of Saul the Benjaminite, functioned more or less as Israel's *de facto* king (1 Sam 8:4–9). Jesus himself, though regularly addressed as Rabbi or teacher and sometimes acknowledged as a prophet, at times acted in a quasi-priestly manner, declaring someone clean (Mark 1:41), forgiving sins (Mark 2:5; Luke 7:47–48), pronouncing on offerings and sacrifices (Matt 5:23–24; 23:18–20; Mark 12:32–34), and in demonstrating in the Temple precincts criticizing the ruling priests (Mark 11:15–18, with appeals to Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11, both concerned with Temple matters).

In the discussion that follows I shall consider Jesus under five categories or identities: prophet, sage, healer, messiah, and martyr. I put

them in this sequence, because I think this is how, over time, Jesus was perceived by the general public and by his closest followers.

### 1. *Jesus as Prophet*

The evidence that Jesus saw himself as a prophet is compelling.<sup>1</sup> It is implicit in his proclamation of the rule of God, call for repentance, and warning of judgment (Mark 1:15; Luke 4:43; 11:20). Jesus' announcement stands in the tradition of Israel's classic prophets, who likewise proclaimed the rule of God.<sup>2</sup> Indeed Jesus' proclamation was in all probability based on Isaiah's proclamation, especially as interpreted and paraphrased in the Aramaic-speaking synagogue.<sup>3</sup> As did the classic prophets,<sup>4</sup> as well as John the Baptist (Matt 3:2, 8, 11; par.), Jesus also called on Israel to repent (Matt 11:20–21; 12:41; Mark 6:12; Luke 5:32; 13:3; 15:7, 10).

Direct evidence that Jesus understood himself as a prophet is seen in his declaration: "A prophet is not without honor [οὐκ ἔστιν προφήτης ἄτιμος], except in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house" (Mark 6:4; cf. Matt 13:57; John 4:44).<sup>5</sup> To be sure, the saying is proverbial, especially in the Greek-speaking

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<sup>1</sup> For recent studies, see M. D. Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997); M. Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in Its Jewish Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); D. C. Allison Jr., *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); W. R. Herzog II, *Prophet and Teacher: An Introduction to the Historical Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See Isa 6:5; 33:22; 43:15; 44:6; Jer 8:19; 10:10; Ezek 20:33; cf. Pss 5:2; 44:4; 47:7; 68:24; 74:12; 84:3; 95:3; 145:1.

<sup>3</sup> The proclamation, "Behold your God!" (Isa 40:9), in the Aramaic is rendered, "The kingdom [or rule] of your God is revealed!" See also Isa 52:7 in Hebrew and Aramaic. For more on the "kingdom of God" in Aramaic Isaiah, see B. D. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum*, JSOTSup 23 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982), 77–81. For analysis of the Old Testament backdrop, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); B. D. Chilton, "The Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 255–280.

<sup>4</sup> See Isa 1:27; Jer 5:3; 8:6; 9:5; 26:19; 34:15; Ezek 14:6; 18:30; Zech 1:6; cf. 1 Kgs 8:47–48; 2 Chron 6:37–38.

<sup>5</sup> The differences in Luke's form of the saying ("Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable [δεκτός] in his own country") are likely redactional, to link Jesus' utterance with the concluding portion of the quotation from Isaiah 61 ("to proclaim the acceptable [δεκτός] day of the Lord." Compare Luke 4:19 with 4:24.

world,<sup>6</sup> but this hardly argues against the authenticity of the saying. Given the exalted assessment of Jesus in the post-Easter setting, one should hardly expect the creation of sayings in which Jesus is regarded as (only) a prophet, indeed, as a prophet accorded no honor in the very village in which he was raised.<sup>7</sup>

There are other passages that lend further important support. Jesus' lament over obstinate Jerusalem, a lament preserved in Q, with a strong claim to authenticity, implies that Jesus be identified with the prophets rejected by Israel: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" (Matt 23:37 = Luke 13:34). The public rumor that Jesus was a prophet (cf. Mark 6:14–15; 8:27–28, "one of the prophets") is also very probable.

There are also two passages in which Jesus is challenged that corroborate further his identity as a prophet. In one passage (Mark 8:11–12) Pharisees request of Jesus "a sign from heaven" (σημεῖον ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), which Jesus refuses: "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation." The request for a "sign from heaven" carries with it prophetic implications. One thinks of Isaiah's appeal to Ahaz: "Ask a sign [תִּיָּא / σημεῖον] of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (Isa 7:11; cf. v. 14, "the Lord himself will give you a sign"). Signs are offered in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The association of signs with prophets is almost formalized in the Mosaic law (e.g., Deut 13:1 "If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign [תִּיָּא / σημεῖον]..."). In the second passage, where the question of authority is raised (Mark 11:27–33), Jesus compares himself with John the Baptist, regarded by the Jewish people as a prophet (v. 32). The logic of Jesus' counter-question is that,

<sup>6</sup> As in Dio Chrysostom, *Disc.* 47.6 ("it is the opinion of all the philosophers that life is difficult in their home country"); Apollonius of Tyana, *Ep.* 44 ("until now my own country alone ignores me"); and others.

<sup>7</sup> The latter part of the saying, "and among his own kin, and in his own house," may well be a later gloss, perhaps reflecting the experience of the early Christian community. So also in the case of the Thomasine version (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 31: "...physicians do not heal those who know them"), whose latter part is surely secondary, reflecting Lukan influence (cf. Luke 4:23, "Physician, heal yourself"), as well as the esoteric, if not gnostic orientation of the later Syrian context in which *Thomas* was composed.



like John, Jesus is a prophet whose authority derives from heaven and not from humans.

There are other materials, whose antiquity and authenticity are less certain. After Jesus raised the widow's son (Luke 7:11–17), the astounded crowd “glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us!’ and ‘God has visited his people!’” (v. 16). Whereas the first declaration could be authentic, the second is probably a Lukan gloss.<sup>8</sup> In the story of the sinful woman (Luke 7:36–50), Simon the Pharisee is said to suppose: “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner” (v. 39). Although the historicity of the episode is not easy to settle, at least in all of its details, the question of Jesus' prophetic status does reflect what in reference to Jesus was being affirmed by some and denied by others. Undoubtedly many of his followers believed that Jesus was a prophet, while many critics did not. The evangelist Luke presents yet another saying, whose authenticity is difficult to gauge. After receiving a warning from Pharisees, Jesus declares: “Nevertheless I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33).<sup>9</sup>

The saying just considered could well form a body of negative comments about the dismal fate of the prophet to Israel. In one saying (Mark 6:4) Jesus declares that no prophet is without honor except in his home country. In another (Matt 23:37 = Luke 13:34) he laments that Jerusalem kills the prophets; and in a third he asserts that a prophet cannot perish away from Jerusalem (Luke 13:33). The coherence of these three sayings encourages us to view them as authentically reflecting Jesus' self-understanding. He is the prophet who proclaims the rule of God, calls on Israel to repent, and expects rejection at home and especially in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The Lukan evangelist is fond of the theme of visitation (ἐπισκοπή / ἐπισκέπτομαι); cf. Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; 19:44.

<sup>9</sup> For critical assessments of the origin of this saying, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV*, AB 24A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985) 1028; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 569–70.

<sup>10</sup> Other sayings, in which the prophetic status of Jesus is affirmed, are either secondary creations or glosses composed by the respective evangelists. Among such sayings is the declaration of the crowd, on occasion of the entry into Jerusalem: “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matt 21:11). Narrating the activities in the temple precincts, the Matthean evangelist says the ruling priests “feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet” (21:46). In the post-Easter setting,

One must not overlook the mockery that Jesus suffered at the hands of his enemies upon his arrest and interrogation. After the ruling priests and Jewish council condemn Jesus, officers cover his head, strike him, and ask him to “prophesy” (Mark 14:65), that is, demonstrate prophetic clairvoyance by identifying who has struck him, even though he is blindfolded (Matt 26:68 = Luke 22:64). The jeering demands that Jesus prophesy make sense only if Jesus came to them with the reputation of being a prophet.

Some of Jesus’ miracles recall miracles associated with Israel’s prophets. The Lukan evangelist exploits some of this tradition, underscoring points of contact between Jesus and the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Jesus’ appointment of twelve apostles, which surely had to do with the restoration and completion of Israel (i.e., the twelve tribes of Israel), may have brought to the mind of some the altar that Elijah built with twelve stones, “according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name’” (1 Kgs 18:31; cf. Exod 28:21; 39:14). What we have here is the employment of typology. Typology also underlies Jesus’ appeal to the “sign of Jonah,” whatever its original meaning, again encourages us to place Jesus in the category of prophet. So also when Jesus warns his impenitent generation of their condemnation by the people of Nineveh, who repented at the preaching of Jonah (Matt 12:39, 41 = Luke 11:30, 32).

Sayings attributed to Jesus with good claim to authenticity, as well as a number of other sayings and actions, give us every reason to conclude that Jesus understood himself as a prophet.<sup>11</sup> This understanding was accepted by his followers and probably a great number of others who were not necessarily counted among his followers, but it was challenged by various critics, opponents, and enemies.

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Luke has the disciples say to the risen but not yet recognized Jesus: “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19). Three times in the Fourth Gospel Jesus is said to be *a* or *the* prophet (John 4:19; 7:40; 9:17). Even the angry retort, “Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee” (John 7:52), implies that some regarded Jesus as a prophet, even if others did not.

<sup>11</sup> Jesus’ prophetic status is probably reflected in the parable of the Vineyard (Mark 12:1–9), where the rejected and murdered son (surely to be understood as Jesus himself) is linked by function to the dishonored servants (surely to be understood as Israel’s rejected and persecuted prophets).

## 2. *Jesus as Sage (or Rabbi)*

Bruce Chilton and others have identified Jesus as a rabbi or sage.<sup>12</sup> After all, Jesus is called rabbi by his disciples and others (Matt 26:25, 49; Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8).<sup>13</sup> The number of occurrences increases if we include instances where Jesus is addressed as “teacher” (that is, διδάσκαλος; cf. Mark 4:38; 5:35; 9:17, 38; 10:17, 35; 12:14, 19; and many more). That “teacher” is understood to be the meaning of rabbi is explicitly stated (John 1:38; 20:16; cf. Matt 23:8; John 3:2).<sup>14</sup> The number of occurrences increases further if we include instances of “master” (ἐπιστάτα), which is a favorite of the Lukan evangelist (cf. 5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13).<sup>15</sup>

Not only is Jesus addressed as “rabbi” or “teacher,” his closest followers are called “disciples” (μαθηταί),<sup>16</sup> whose Hebrew/Aramaic equivalent is תַּלְמִידִים,<sup>17</sup> that is, “learners” or “students” (from μαθάνειν and לָמַד, respectively). This language corresponds with the terminology of early rabbinic Judaism, though there is much earlier evidence.<sup>18</sup>

The numerous parallels between Jesus’ teaching and the rabbinic tradition, as well as the many points of agreement between Jesus’ interpretation of scripture and the rabbinic tradition, confirm the

<sup>12</sup> B. D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time*, GNS 8 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1984); idem, *Profiles of a Rabbi: Synoptic Opportunities in Reading about Jesus*, BJS 177 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); idem, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography. The Jewish Life and Teaching that Inspired Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); W. E. Phipps, *The Wisdom and Wit of Rabbi Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); B. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); B. H. Young, *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995); idem, *Meet the Rabbinic: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> In the Greek gospels we find more than one dozen occurrences of ῥαββί, which transliterates רַבִּי, and twice we find ῥαββουί (Mark 10:51; John 20:16), which transliterates רַבִּנּוּי. There are spelling and pronunciation variations among the Greek and Aramaic forms of this title.

<sup>14</sup> Rabbi literally means “my great one.”

<sup>15</sup> Prior to 70 CE the designation “Rabbi” is informal, even imprecise, and lacks the later connotations of formal training and ordination, which obtain sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 2:15, 16, 18, 23; 3:7, 9; 4:34; 5:31; and Q: Luke 6:20; 10:23; 12:22; 14:26.27.

<sup>17</sup> For examples, see *m. ’Abot* 1:1, 11; 2:8; 5:12; 6:6.

<sup>18</sup> “This, in turn, is education in the law [ἡ τοῦ νόμου παιδεία], by which we learn [μαθάνομεν] divine matters reverently and human affairs to our advantage” (4 Macc 1:17).

identification of Jesus as a rabbi.<sup>19</sup> Jesus frequented the synagogues of his day, which is consistent with his identity as rabbi and teacher (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:15; 6:6; 13:10; John 6:59). In the style of the sages and rabbis of his day, Jesus “sat down” when he taught (Matt 5:1; 26:55; Mark 12:41; Luke 4:20; 5:3; cf. Matt 23:2, where Jesus refers to the scribes and Pharisees who sit on the “seat of Moses” [ἐπὶ τῆς Μωϋσέως καθέδρας], as well as the discussion in *b. Meg.* 21a concerning when to sit or stand). Moreover, Jesus’ contemporaries compared him with scribes, who were students of scripture: “And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22). On occasion Jesus himself refers to reading scripture. He asks Pharisees who criticized his disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath: “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry...?” (Mark 2:25; cf. Matt 12:3). In another polemical context, Jesus asks the ruling priests and elders: “Have you not read this scripture: ‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner...?’” (Mark 12:10). Later he asks the Sadducees, who had raised a question about resurrection: “And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’?” (Mark 12:26). In a discussion with a legal expert (νομικός τις), who has asked what one must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus asks in turn: “What is written in the Law? How do you read?” (Luke 10:26). Jesus’ style of debate accords with what we find in rabbinic literature: “Similarly you read” (e.g., *b. Sabb.* 97a; *b. Ketub.* 111a, 111b); or “How would you read this verse?” (e.g., *b. Ketub.* 81b; *b. Qid.* 22a, 40a, 81b).

Jesus’ interpretation of scripture also coheres with rabbinic interpretation. Rabbinic tradition holds that midrash was pursued following seven rules (or “measurements,” from מִדּוֹת—*middot*) of Hillel the Elder (cf. *t. Sanh.* 7.11; *Baraita R. Ishmael* §1; *’Abot R. Nat.* [A] 37.10).<sup>20</sup> Several, perhaps even all, of these rules or close approxima-

<sup>19</sup> R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981; 4th ed., 1994); B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans, “Jesus and Israel’s Scriptures,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 281–335, here 285–298.

<sup>20</sup> According to *Sipre Deut.* §2 (on 1:3) even Moses is said to have taught several of these rules.

tions of them were employed by Jesus. Here are examples from three of them:<sup>21</sup>

According to the rule of *qal wa-homer* (lit. “light and heavy,” from קָל וְחוֹמֶר) what is true or applicable in a “light” (or less important) instance is surely true or applicable in a “heavy” (or more important) instance. Such a principle is at work when Jesus assures his disciples (cf. Matt 6:26 = Luke 12:24) that because God cares for the birds (= light), as taught in scripture (cf. Ps 147:9; *Pss. Sol.* 5:8–19), they can be sure that he cares for them (= heavy). A similar saying is attributed to Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar: “Have you ever seen a wild animal or a bird practicing a craft?—yet they have their sustenance without care and were not created for anything else but to serve me? But I was created to serve my Maker. How much more then ought not I to have my sustenance without care? But I have wrought evil, and [so] forfeited my [right to] sustenance [without care]” (*m. Qidd.* 4:14). Although Simeon ben Eleazar applies similar logic, he has drawn a very different inference from the comparison. Adam sinned, therefore humanity must toil for its food. The inference drawn by Jesus may have reflected the belief that with the dawning of the kingdom living conditions could approximate those that existed prior to the fall.<sup>22</sup> Other dominical examples are readily at hand: “If God so clothes the grass of the field...” (Matt 6:30 = Luke 12:28; cf. *Mek.* on Exod 16:4 [*Vayassa*’ §3]: “He who has what he will eat today and says, ‘What shall I eat tomorrow,’ behold, this man lacks faith”); “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...” (Matt 7:11 = Luke 11:13; cf. *y. Seb.* 9.1: “Rabbi Simeon ben

<sup>21</sup> Some of the examples have been taken from J. Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1954), 91–118; A. Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth: A Study of Their Background, Their Halachic and Midrashic Teachings, the Similarities and Differences*, AGSU 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 123–128, 155–175; E. E. Ellis, “Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder, CRINT 2.1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 691–725, esp. 700–702; idem, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity*, WUNT 54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 130–132; R. Kasher, “The Interpretation of Scripture in Rabbinic Literature,” in *Mikra*, ed. Mulder, 547–594; H. L. Strack and G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 21–23. For further discussion of the *middot*, see S. Zeitlin, “Hillel and the Hermeneutical Rules,” *JQR* 54 (1963–64), 161–73.

<sup>22</sup> See D. C. Allison Jr. and W. D. Davies, *Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), 1:648–651; S. T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1987), 132.

Yohai...said: 'A bird apart from heaven will not perish, how much less (the) son of (the) man!"; *Lev. Rab.* 34.14 [on 25:25]: "If this man, who is flesh and blood, cruel and not responsible for [his wife's] maintenance, was filled with compassion for her and gave her [what she needed], how much more should you be filled with compassion for us who are the children of your children, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and are dependent on you for our maintenance!").<sup>23</sup>

According to the rule of *gezera sawa* (lit. "an equivalent regulation," from גְּזֵירָה שְׂוָוָה) one passage may be explained by another, if similar words or phrases are present (*m. Betza* 1:6). When Jesus took action in the Temple precincts, he quoted phrases from Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a 'cave of robbers'" (Mark 11:17).<sup>24</sup> What has drawn these two passages together is the word "house," which appears in the quotation drawn from Isa 56:7 and also appears in the part of Jer 7:11 not quoted: "Has this house, which is called by my name, become a cave of robbers in your eyes?" Jeremiah 7 qualifies the positive eschatological expectation expressed in Isaiah 56. The principle of *gezera sawa* may have lain behind Jesus' appeal to the example of David, when accused of violating the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28). As "son of man," to whom the kingdom has been promised (Dan 7:13–14), Jesus may rightfully claim the prerogative assumed by David, to whom the kingdom was also promised,

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, 1:656, 683–685; Lachs, *Rabbinic Commentary*, 133, 142–143. A similar saying is attributed to Yohanan ben Zakkai in *b. Ber.* 28b. For discussion of the saying attributed to Simeon ben Yohai, see Chilton, *Profiles of a Rabbi*, 91–103.

<sup>24</sup> Some interpreters have claimed that Mark 11:15–17 is inauthentic, at least in part, because Jer 7:11 refers to "robbers" (λησταιί), not "thieves" (κλέπται). According to E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 66: "'robber' always means raider, never swindler." Sanders wonders why Jesus would cite a passage that talks about robbers, instead of swindlers. Given what Josephus says about the behavior of the first-century ruling priests (*Ant.* 20.179–181; 20.205–206; for rabbinic criticisms of the ruling priests, see *t. Menah.* 13.18–22; *t. Zebah.* 11.16; *b. Pesah.* 57a), Sanders's objection is hardly persuasive.

when he and his men ate the consecrated bread (1 Sam 21:1–6).<sup>25</sup> Examples of *gezera sawa* are common among the rabbis.<sup>26</sup>

According to the rule of *binyan 'ab mikkatub 'ehad* (lit. “constructing a father [i.e., principal rule] from one [passage],” from בִּינְיָן אֶבְיָן אֶחָד (מִכְּתוּב אֶחָד)) a general principle may be established from one verse or phrase. Other verses, which contain this key phrase, can be viewed as belonging to a family. Jesus’ defense of the resurrection evidently presupposed this rule. Since God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, the revelation at the burning bush, “I am the God of Abraham” (Exod 3:14–15), implies that Abraham is to be resurrected. From this one text and its inference one may further infer, as Jesus did (Mark 12:26),<sup>27</sup> the truth of the general resurrection. Similarly,

<sup>25</sup> Some interpreters believe that Mark 2:25–26 was created by the early church to justify its violation of the Sabbath and answer the Pharisaic criticism prompted by it. One should then wonder why the early church, perusing scripture for a word of justification to place on the lips of Jesus, should create a saying that contains no actual citation of Scripture (which is what the church usually does), but instead a difficult reference to “Abiathar the high priest,” which the early church will then have to mitigate through omission (cf. Matt 12:4 = Luke 6:4). The retort, “Have you never read,” and an appeal to an Old Testament passage that has nothing to do with Sabbath law reflect a spontaneous *Sitz im Leben Jesu* rather than a later community setting.

P. Sigal (*The Halakah of Jesus of Nazareth according to the Gospel of Matthew* [Lanham: University Press of America, 1986]) has recently argued that the anonymous Tannaitic interpretation of Exod 31:14 (“‘And you shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you’: This means: the Sabbath is given to you but you are not surrendered to the Sabbath”) may actually derive from Jesus (cf. *Mek.* on Exod 31:12–17 [*Sab.* §1]).

D. M. Cohn-Sherbok (“An Analysis of Jesus’ Arguments concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath,” *JSNT* 2 [1979]: 31–41) acknowledges that Mark 2:23–28 provides evidence that Jesus was familiar with rabbinic hermeneutics, but he thinks that Jesus’ arguments were “not valid from a rabbinic point of view,” adding that this “misuse of rabbinic reasoning should not surprise us since it bears out the truth of the Gospel in asserting that Jesus was not a skilled casuist in the style of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (40). By describing Jesus’ exegesis as “not valid” and as a “misuse of rabbinic reasoning” Cohn-Sherbok is guilty of anachronism in his use of rabbinic sources. Jesus’ exegesis is “not valid” only when compared to later practice. Such a judgment is without warrant when describing early first-century Jewish exegetical practice. Cohn-Sherbok seems to read later rabbinic practices into the pre-70 CE Pharisees and Sadducees.

<sup>26</sup> Although from a later period, the opinion of Rab Ashi illustrates the importance that rabbis attached to *gezera sawa*: “Do not lightly regard a *gezera sawa*, for the cases to which death by stoning applies are essential laws of the Torah, yet Scripture teaches (most of them) by *gezera sawa*” (*b. Ker.* 5a). For more examples, see *b. Pesah.* 66a; *Gen. Rab.* 27.3 (on Gen 6:5); *Pesiq. R.* 4.2.

<sup>27</sup> Some interpreters doubt the authenticity of the passage, supposing that it reflects a rabbinic-style argument characteristic of the early church’s dispute with Judaism. This line of reasoning is dubious. First of all, given the common ground

from *נמצא*? (“he is found”) the rabbis deduced that two or three witnesses are always required, since this command precedes a series of examples in Deuteronomy 17 (*Sipre Deut.* §148 [on 17:2]). There are many other examples.<sup>28</sup>

### 3. *Jesus as Healer*

The healing dimension of Jesus’ ministry was diverse, including not only healing, but exorcism, and even, in a certain sense, medicine. As recent studies have shown, the lines between miracle, medicine, and magic were not clearly drawn in antiquity.<sup>29</sup> How one assessed an unusual deed often depended on one’s assessment of the doer of the deed.

Today many scholars agree that Jesus’ contemporaries viewed him as a worker of miracles. At the very least, it is conceded that Jesus did things and that things happened around him that eyewitnesses regarded as supernatural events. It is rightly recognized that the his-

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shared by Christians and Pharisees (both believe in the resurrection) and the fact that it is with the Pharisees that early Christians quarreled, why was the invention of such a dominical saying necessary? And, secondly, if the early church felt it necessary to defend the truth of the general resurrection, how do we account for no allusion to Jesus’ resurrection (which was the real bone of contention between Christians and non-Christians)? There is nothing in this pericope that is specifically Christian and nothing that suggests that it did not originate with Jesus.

<sup>28</sup> Among others, see *b. Mak.* 5b; *Sipra Lev.* §209 (on Lev 20:13–16).

<sup>29</sup> For a representative sampling of bibliography, see D. E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW* II 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557; E. Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus’ Miracles*, *JSNTSup* 231 (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); C. J. Hemer, “Medicine in the New Testament World,” in *Medicine and the Bible* B. Palmer, ed. (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 43–83; J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, *SBT* 2.28 (London: SCM, 1974); H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); idem, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in the Roman World* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1985); idem, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times*, *SNTSMS* 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); M. Labahn and B. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, eds., *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, *LNTS* 306 (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2007); J. J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); J. Scarborough, “Medicine,” in *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. M. Grant and R. Kitzinger (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1988), 1227–1248; M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); G. Theissen, *Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999).



torian need not pass judgment with regard to the metaphysical or supernatural causes, nor try to find “scientific” explanations for what Jesus’ contemporaries say they saw or experienced. It is sufficient to inquire into what Jesus did and how people assessed what he did and then evaluate the antiquity and credibility of the sources that report these events.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of Jesus what we see is that not everyone was favorably impressed. There was no uniform assessment of Jesus’ teaching and his works of power. This is an interesting observation. The degree of ambivalence expressed in the gospels with respect to the miracles of Jesus in my opinion lends additional support to the authenticity of the tradition. One would think that a spurious tradition, generated out of apologetic interests and unchecked gullibility, would present Jesus’ words of power in an unambiguously positive light, as in fact we often see in the later gospels and gospel-like writings, which have no credible link to eyewitness testimony. But in the synoptic gospels the public response to the miracles of Jesus is mixed and often non-committal.

In response to Jesus’ exorcistic activities we are told that people reacted with surprise and astonishment: “What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mark 1:27). “We never saw anything like this!” (Mark 2:12). Narrating responses such as these may have served some apologetic purposes, but even so they hardly constitute a ringing endorsement of Jesus’ divine credentials and truth of his message.<sup>31</sup>

Other responses are anything but positive. After the wild encounter with the Gerasene demoniac, the locals “beg Jesus to depart” (Mark 5:17). This too hardly serves Christian apologetic interests. After he preaches in Nazareth and presumably performs some works of power (as the full context suggests), residents ask: “Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him? What mighty works are wrought by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are

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<sup>30</sup> For more on this topic, see B. Saler, “Supernatural as a Western Category,” *Ethos* 5 (1977), 21–33; C. Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

<sup>31</sup> See the important study by G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2.54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993; repr. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993).

not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:2b–3a). The evangelist adds: "And they took offense at him... And he marveled because of their unbelief" (Mark 6:3b, 6a).<sup>32</sup> In Luke's longer version of the Nazareth visit, Jesus has the words flung at him: "Physician, heal yourself! Do here what you have done at Capernaum" (Luke 4:23). At the very least these words have the ring of a challenge;<sup>33</sup> they reflect little, if any, faith.

The unenthusiastic response of the people of Nazareth is consistent with reservations expressed by Jesus' family. The evangelist tells us that on one occasion when a crowd gathered (probably because of healings and exorcisms), "his family, hearing of it, went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is beside himself'" (Mark 3:21). The Greek is not clear: καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐξῆλθον κρατῆσαι αὐτόν: ἔλεγον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξέστη. The RSV translates οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ "his family." Literally it means "those by him." It surely does not refer to his disciples. So it refers either to people in the crowd (3:20) or to members of his family. The other problem concerns who is speaking the words, "He is beside himself" (ἐξέστη). Grammatically and contextually one should think that the subject of "they were saying" (ἔλεγον) is οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ. If so, the evangelist seems to be saying that members of Jesus' family attempted to seize Jesus, for they (members of his family) were saying that Jesus was in a state. But Markan syntax is sometimes less than clear. Here the evangelist may be saying that Jesus' family attempted to seize him because they (i.e., *people* in the crowd—so the RSV) were saying that Jesus was in a state. In other words, Jesus' family was in a sense trying to protect Jesus. However the text is understood, readers are left with the impression that Jesus did not enjoy the full support of his family (cf. John 7:5, "even his brothers did not believe in him"). The awkwardness of this material argues strongly for the authenticity of Jesus' reputation as healer and exorcist.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> On the Markan evangelist's understanding of miracle and faith, see M. E. Glasswell, "The Use of Miracles in the Markan Gospel," in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London: Mowbray, 1965), 151–162.

<sup>33</sup> J. Nolland, "Classical and Rabbinical Parallels to 'Physician, Heal Yourself' (Lk. IV 23)," *NovT* 21 (1979): 193–209.

<sup>34</sup> This diversity of opinion with regard to Jesus' miracles, along with its ubiquity, virtually guarantees the historicity of Jesus' reputation as a worker of miracles. I believe this point is quite significant, notwithstanding the objections recently raised

Jesus' reputation as a healer even reaches the ears of the tetrarch of Galilee, Herod Antipas. Although opinions regarding Jesus differed, Herod, along with others, thinks he is perhaps John the Baptist, who had been beheaded, raised from the dead (Mark 6:14–16). Speculation such as this would have meant several things. First, it suggests the reputation of Jesus had grown a great deal. Though not the intention, Herod's opinion pays Jesus a compliment, in that Jesus' power is viewed as so great that it can be explained only in reference to a return from the dead, in which the prophet *redivivus* has brought back power from the immortal realm. Second, the comparison with John is ominous, for one would expect the tetrarch to seek Jesus' life, even as he had taken John's life. This, in fact, is what we are told in Luke (13:31; cf. 23:7–11).

More ominously, we are told that scribes from Jerusalem leveled a pretty serious charge against Jesus, saying: "He is possessed by Beelzebul and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons" (Mark 3:22). Such a charge not only discredits the healings and exorcisms of Jesus, it may also bring into play Mosaic teaching with regard to a false prophet, who, though he performs signs, leads Israel astray, urging the people to worship other gods (Deut 13:1–11). The people are not to listen to such a prophet. Even the prophet's family is to take no pity on him (13:6–9). The false prophet is to be killed (13:10). I am not certain that the accusation in Mark 3:22 carries this connotation, but it is interesting to observe that Jewish criticism of Jesus in the second century and later sometimes alluded to Deuteronomy 13.<sup>35</sup>

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by Eric Eve, "Meier, Miracle and Multiple Attestation," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 23–45. I have to agree with John Meier's point: "To sum up: the historical fact that Jesus performed extraordinary deeds deemed by himself and others to be miracles is supported most impressively by the criterion of multiple attestation of source and forms and the criterion of coherence. The miracle traditions about Jesus' public ministry are already so widely attested in various sources and literary forms by the end of the first Christian generation that total fabrication by the early church is, practically speaking, impossible." See J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, II: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 630. Eve underestimates the strength of the eyewitness testimony lying behind the New Testament gospels. On this point, see S. Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); R. J. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> As seen in Justin Martyr, *Dial. Tryph.* 69.7; *b. Sanh.* 43a, 107b. For discussion of the possibility of Deuteronomy 13 lying behind the accusation, see G. N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?"

Jesus' healing and exorcistic powers seemed to elicit the most amazement and comment. His actions are explicitly compared to those of the scribes: "And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). The crowd was astonished, because Jesus invoked no authoritative names, uttered no incantations, and employed no paraphernalia. He commanded the evil spirit to depart, and it departed. Thanks to a few eyewitness accounts and the survival of a number of magical texts, we have some idea of what the typical exorcist did, in attempting to cast out an evil spirit. One of the most helpful accounts is provided by Josephus.

According to Josephus (*Ant.* 8.46–49), a certain Eleazar, who employed incantations attributed to king Solomon, could draw out demons through a person's nostrils, through use of the Baaras root (a root further described in *War* 7.180–85) and a ring and seal (δακτύλιον ἔχοντα ὑπὸ τῆ σφραγίδι ῥίζαν) handed down, supposedly given to Solomon by an angel (cf. *T. Sol.* 1:6 δακτυλίδιον ἔχον σφραγίδα). Josephus tells us that Eleazar "in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, tribunes, and a number of soldiers, could free people possessed by demons." He could do this because Solomon had "composed incantations by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return" (*Ant.* 8.45–46).

The tradition of Solomon as exorcist par excellence was widespread in late antiquity. It begins in the Bible itself where Solomon is described as unsurpassed in knowledge (1 Kgs 4:29–34). His knowledge of proverbs and plants (1 Kgs 4:32–33) contributed to later speculation that he had mastered the secrets of herbs and spells. And with his knowledge of herbs and spells the king had power over spirits. According to the Wisdom of Solomon God gave the monarch knowledge of "the powers of spirits [πνευμάτων βίαις] and the reasonings of men, the varieties of plants and the virtues of roots; [he] learned what is both secret and what is manifest" (*Wis* 7:17–21).

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in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 164–180. Stanton concludes that "it would be surprising if some opponents did not dub [Jesus] as a false prophet, perhaps even with Deuteronomy 13 in mind" (180). See also P. W. Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study," *JAAR* 49 (1982): 567–88.

Solomon's power over demonic forces was appealed to for protection, as has been shown by Aramaic and Hebrew incantations dating from the early centuries of the Common Era. It is to this tradition that Josephus refers in mentioning Eleazar.

The tradition of Solomon as master healer and exorcist was well known in Christian circles. Origen refers to those who attempted exorcisms according to the spells written by Solomon (*Comm. Matthew* 33 [on Matt 26:63]). The pseudepigraphal *Testament of Solomon*, probably written by a Greek-speaking Christian in the second or third century, though based on earlier Jewish material, is wholly dedicated to this theme.<sup>36</sup>

The name of Solomon was invoked in Jewish charms and incantations. In an Aramaic incantation bowl we read: "Bound are the demons...with the bond of 'El Shaddai and with the sealing of King Solomon, son [of David]...Amen..."<sup>37</sup> Solomon's name appears in the Aramaic version of Psalm 91, a psalm that in late antiquity was understood as providing protection from demons.<sup>38</sup> Even in pagan incantations the name of Solomon is invoked: "I conjure you by the seal [κατὰ τῆς σφραγίδος] that Solomon placed on the tongue of Jeremiah" (*PGM* IV.3007–3086, at lines 39–41). The seal (σφραγίς) mentioned here is that mentioned in Josephus and in *Testament of Solomon*.<sup>39</sup>

Three gospel passages are particularly interesting in the light of this Solomonic tradition. The first is Jesus' assertion: "Behold, something

<sup>36</sup> D. C. Duling, "The Eleazar Miracle and Solomon's Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42–49," *HTR* 78 (1985): 1–25.

<sup>37</sup> From C. H. Gordon, "Aramaic Incantation Bowls," *Orientalia* 10 (1991): 116–141, 272–280, at 273–276 (no. 11, lines 17–18).

<sup>38</sup> See v. 3, which reads: "For he will deliver you, Solomon my son, from the snare and the obstacle, from death and confusion," and v. 9, which reads: "Solomon answered and said: 'For you are my confidence, O Lord...'" Solomon's name does not appear in the Hebrew or Greek versions of Psalm 91. The demonic orientation of the Aramaic version is seen in vv. 5–6, which read: "Be not afraid of the terror of demons who walk at night, of the arrow of the angel of death that he looses during the day; of the death that walks in darkness, of the band of demons that attacks at noon," and in v. 10, which reads: "The lord of the world responded and thus he said: 'No harm shall happen to you; and no plague or demon shall come near to your tents.'"

<sup>39</sup> For more on this topic, see C. C. McCown, "The Christian Tradition as to the Magical Wisdom of Solomon," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 2 (1922): 1–24; D. C. Duling, "Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David," *HTR* 68 (1975): 235–252.

greater than Solomon is here [πλεῖον Σολομῶνος ᾧδε!]” (Matt 12:42). In itself this assertion is astonishing. But more than that, the language of the formula, namely, that someone important is “here” (ᾧδε), is echoed in other incantations, e.g., “Abraham dwells here [ᾧδε]” (P.Rainer gr. 19889). In other words, Jesus’ choice of words may have deliberately echoed the language of incantation. Coherent with Jesus’ comparison of himself with Solomon is a second passage, in which blind Bartimaeus appeals to Jesus for healing, addressing him as “Son of David” (Mark 10:46–52, esp. vv. 47–48). Given Solomon’s reputation as healer, the epithet that the blind man chose may allude to Solomon, son of David, as much as it alludes to David’s messianic descendent.<sup>40</sup>

The third passage concerns the exorcist, outside Jesus’ following, who casts out demons in the name of Jesus (Mark 9:38–40):

John said to him, “Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name [ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου ἐκβάλλοντα δαιμόνια], and we forbade him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us.”

What is remarkable is that this activity evidently was taking place during the pre-Easter ministry. The probability that this is authentic pre-Easter tradition is seen in the surprising response of Jesus, which stands in tension with early Christian teaching and practice, in which only *Christian* leaders, especially the apostles, have the authority to invoke the name of Jesus for purposes of healing and exorcism. This point is dramatically illustrated in Acts, in the story of the young slave girl with the python spirit (Acts 16:16–18) and in the story of the seven sons of Sceva, the Jewish high priest (Acts 19:13–20). Not just anyone can invoke the name of Jesus, certainly not professional soothsayers and exorcists. Given the probability that we have here the post-Easter Christian perspective, it is more than probable that the

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<sup>40</sup> For more on this passage, see Duling, “Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David”; J. H. Charlesworth, “Solomon and Jesus: The Son of David in Ante-Markan Traditions (Mk 10:47),” in *Biblical and Humane: A Festschrift for John F. Priest*, ed. L. B. Elder et al., *Homage* 20 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 125–151; idem, “The Son of David: Solomon and Jesus (Mark 10.47),” in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*, ed. P. Borgen and S. Giversen (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1995), 72–87.

story found in Mark 9 represents genuine pre-Easter tradition.<sup>41</sup> Of course, well after the timeframe of the book of Acts, the name of Jesus is invoked, not only by Christians, but by pagans (e.g., *PGM* IV.3019–3020: “I adjure you by the God of the Hebrews, Jesus”) and even non-Christian Jews (*t. Hullin* 2.22; cf. *b. Sanh.* 43a; *b. Gittin* 57a, ms M).

The implications are extraordinary: Professional exorcists in the time of Jesus invoked his name, much as they invoked the name of Solomon, whose name and reputation in late antiquity were highly regarded. Perhaps others shared Jesus’ opinion, namely, that indeed one greater than Solomon was here.

Before concluding the discussion of Jesus as healer and exorcist, something needs to be said about the mystical or visionary dimension of his life and ministry. In a recent book on the life and spiritual development of Jesus Bruce Chilton has appealed to Jewish *Merkabah* (“Chariot”) mysticism as the probable backdrop of Jesus’ mysticism and access to divine insight and empowerment.<sup>42</sup> Few know the Jewish world of Jesus as well as Chilton and his book is filled with helpful, clarifying insight, not least his treatment of Jesus’ status as *mamzer*, or one of suspect birth. Although the degree of influence of *Merkabah* mysticism in the development of Jesus has been challenged,<sup>43</sup> the significance of the ecstatic and visionary dimension cannot any longer be ignored.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For more on Mark 9:38–40, see G. H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 125–127.

<sup>42</sup> Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus*.

<sup>43</sup> See C. L. Quarles, “Jesus as *Merkabah* Mystic,” *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 5–22.

<sup>44</sup> The question of *Merkabah* mysticism in the time of Jesus is as difficult as it is interesting. There does seem to be evidence of antiquity, as seen in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls and here and there in early Christian writings. One thinks of Paul’s ascent into the “third heaven,” where he heard things that cannot be repeated (2 Cor 12:1–7), of those at Colossae who, having entered heaven, have participated in angelic liturgy (Col 2:18), and of the visionary at Qumran, who has acquired learning in heaven and therefore has no equal on earth (4Q491c). For a study on the general topic, see T. Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse*, WUNT 2.142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). For studies of the possible presence of early *Merkabah* ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the LXX, and Christian tradition, see D. J. Halperin, “*Merkabah* Midrash in the Septuagint,” *JBL* 101 (1982): 351–363; J. M. Baumgarten, “The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and Rabbinic *Merkabah* Traditions,” *RevQ* 13 (1988): 199–213; J. Schaberg, “Mark 14.62: Early Christian *Merkabah* Imagery?” in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. J. Marcus and M. Soards, JSNTSup 24 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 69–94; D. Dimant, “The *Merkabah* Vision in Second Ezekiel

Jesus' vision of heaven (Mark 1:10–11; 9:2–8; Luke 10:18–19), identification with the human being, or “son of man,” of Dan 7:13–14 (Mark 2:10), as well as his bold assertion to be seated at the right hand of God himself (Mark 14:61–62), attest this mystical and visionary dimension. Moreover, Jesus' encounter with Satan in the wilderness temptation (Mark 1:12–13; Matt 4:1–11 = Luke 4:1–13) and his declaration, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18), add further documentation to Jesus as healer, exorcist, and mystic.

#### 4. *Jesus as Messiah*

For Jesus the beginning of the messianic trajectory is probably to be traced to his appeal to passages from Isaiah. He is the prophetic herald of good news who is “anointed” with the Spirit of God. His announcement, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15), reflects the language of Isa 40:9 and 52:7, which in the Aramaic the text reads: “The kingdom of your God is revealed.” Isaiah's “gospel” (בשרה = εὐαγγέλιον) is understood to be the revelation of the kingdom (or rule) of God.<sup>45</sup>

Jesus is qualified and equipped to proclaim this message, because he is the prophet anointed by the Spirit of the Lord. We see this in the Lukan version of the Nazareth Sermon (Luke 4:16–30), where Isa 61:1–2 is quoted (“the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news”) and is said to be fulfilled “today” (Luke 4:21). Although some critic have expressed reserva-

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(4Q385 4),” *RevQ* 14 (1990): 331–48; B. Nitzan, “The Merkabah Descriptions in 4Q Berakhot,” in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies. Division A: The Bible and its World*, ed. D. Assaf, (1994), 87–94 (Hebrew); and M. G. Abegg Jr., “Who Ascended to Heaven? 4Q491, 4Q427, and the Teacher of Righteousness,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint, *Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature* 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 61–73. Quarles (“Jesus as *Merkabah* Mystic”) expresses reservations about the conclusions reached in some of these studies.

<sup>45</sup> The dictional and thematic coherence between Jesus' proclamation and the Aramaic paraphrase of Isaiah has been adequately clarified and defended by B. D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time*, GNS 8 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1984); idem, “The Kingdom of God in Recent Discussion,” 255–280.



tions about the historicity of this version of Jesus' proclamation in Nazareth (cf. Mark 6:1–6), there is little reason for skepticism with regard to the allusions to Isaiah in Jesus' reply to the imprisoned John the Baptist (Matt 11:2–6 = Luke 7:19–23).<sup>46</sup> The significance of Jesus' allusion to words and phrases from Isaiah has been greatly clarified by one of the fragmentary scrolls from Qumran.

4Q521 speaks of a "Messiah, whom heaven and earth will obey." The text goes on to describe things expected to take place: God's "Spirit will hover over the poor, and he will renew the faithful with his strength." He will free prisoners, restore the sight of the blind, heal the wounded, make alive the dead, and proclaim good news to the poor. The parallels to Jesus' reply to the imprisoned John the Baptist have been pointed out (Matt 11:5 = Luke 7:22).<sup>47</sup> Jesus' reply, as in the case of 4Q521, is heavily dependent upon words and phrases drawn from Isa 26:19; 35:5–6; and 61:1–2.<sup>48</sup> The parallels suggest at the very least that Jesus' reply would have been understood as an implicit claim to a messianic role (though whether principally in a royal or prophetic capacity must be settled on other terms).

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<sup>46</sup> In my opinion, when in Mark's briefer version Jesus declares, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country..." (Mark 6:4), in all probability he has alluded to Isa 61:1, which in the Aramaic says, "The prophet said, 'A spirit of prophecy before the Lord God is upon me...,'" the very text presented in the longer Lukan version (Luke 4:17–19). On the eschatological understanding of Isa 61:1–3 in Jewish late antiquity, see 11Q13.

<sup>47</sup> For principal literature, see É. Puech, "Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)," *RevQ* 15 (1992): 475–522; J. D. Tabor and M. O. Wise, "On 'Resurrection' and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study," *JSP* 10 (1992): 150–161; R. Bergmeier, "Beobachtungen zu 4Q521 f 2, ii 1–13," *ZDMG* 145 (1995): 38–48; J. J. Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," *DSD* 1 (1994): 98–112; idem, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 117–122; M. Becker, "4Q521 und die Gesalbten," *RevQ* 18 (1997): 73–96; K.-W. Niebuhr, "Die Werke des eschatologischen Freudenboten (4Q521 und die Jesusüberlieferung)," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. C. M. Tuckett, BETL 131 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 637–647; E. Puech, "Some Remarks on 4Q246 and 4Q521 and Qumran Messianism," in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. D. W. Parry and E. Ulrich, STDJ 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 545–565; M. Labahn, "The Significance of Signs in Luke 7:22–23 in the Light of Isaiah 61 and the Messianic Apocalypse," in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. C. A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 146–168.

<sup>48</sup> The authenticity of the exchange between Jesus and John should not be doubted. No plausible explanation can be found for why Christians would invent a conversation between Jesus and John, where the latter openly expresses doubt about the identity and mission of the former.

Recognition as the anointed eschatological prophet does not preclude identification as the messianic “son of David.” As already mentioned, in late antiquity David was viewed as a prophet. Nor does recognition as a healer and exorcist preclude identification as the messianic “son of David,” for David himself, on whom the Spirit of the Lord came mightily (1 Sam 16:13), could drive away evil spirits (1 Sam 16:23), and, as already reviewed above, his famous son Solomon was exorcist par excellence.

Accordingly, we should not be surprised that Jesus, well known prophet, healer, and exorcist, was hailed as “son of David” by blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47–48), and when he entered Jerusalem, mounted on the royal mule (Mark 11:7–11; cf. 1 Kgs 1:32–48), was greeted with the words of Ps 118:25–26, influenced again by the Aramaic interpretive tradition, “Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming!” (Mark 11:10).

Jesus’ royal messianic self-understanding is confirmed in his reply to the high priest. Caiaphas asked Jesus directly: “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” The epithet “Messiah, Son of God,” is most naturally interpreted as in reference to the anticipated Davidic Messiah (2 Sam 7:14; Pss 2:1, 7; 89:20, 26–27; 4Q174 I, 11; Rom 1:3–4). Jesus not only affirmed that he is the Messiah, Son of God (as is clear in the words “[Yes,] I am”), he combined Davidic material with his favorite self-designation as “the Son of man” in a conflation of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13: “you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62). Both Psalm 110 and Daniel 7 envision scenes of judgment upon God’s enemies.<sup>49</sup> Thus, in replying the way he did Jesus threatened Caiaphas and his colleagues with judgment, a judgment that will some day be carried out when Jesus sits on the very chariot throne of his heavenly father. The high priest understandably reacted in horror, tearing his garments in response to such blasphemy.

That Roman authority understood the royal implications of Jesus’ claim is seen in his subsequent crucifixion as “king of the Jews” (Mark 15:2, 18, 26), the title reserved for Israel’s ruler appointed by Rome (Josephus, *War* 1.282; *Ant.* 14.36; 15.373, 409). Jesus’ earliest followers understood their master in terms of Davidic messianism as

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<sup>49</sup> See M. Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” in *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 119–225, esp. 181–189.

well. Jesus' physical descent from David is acknowledged, with surprisingly little emphasis (as seen especially in Rom 1:3), and Jesus is so commonly referred to as Messiah (i.e., "Christ" in Greek) that the title takes on the function of a name.

### 5. *Jesus as Martyr*

There are several utterances that suggest that Jesus anticipated martyrdom for himself and some of his followers. The obvious place to begin is with Jesus' formal predictions of his suffering and death (e.g., Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32–34, among others).<sup>50</sup> Of course, many critical scholars claim that these Passion predictions are prophecies after the fact, or what are sometimes called *vaticinia ex eventu* ("prophecies from the event"). It must be admitted that these predictions have a formulaic appearance and contain details (such as being mocked, spat upon, and scourged) that suggest knowledge of what in the end actually happened to Jesus. But even if it is acknowledged that the Passion predictions have been edited in the light of what happened, that does not necessarily mean that Jesus in fact did not anticipate his death, even death specifically by crucifixion. What is the evidence outside the formal Passion predictions that suggests that Jesus really did anticipate suffering and death?

First, Jesus' warning that those who wish to follow him had better be prepared to take up the cross (Mark 8:34). John Dominic Crossan thinks this saying is probably authentic, because of a similar saying credited to a Cynic!<sup>51</sup> This argument is hardly compelling, not least because Jesus was no Cynic. What makes the cross saying likely genuine is that in the end Jesus was unable to take up his cross and carry it to the place of crucifixion. Someone else has to carry it (Mark 15:21). What post-Easter follower of Jesus would invent a saying that reflects an ideal that Jesus himself could not fulfill?

Taking up one's cross would for the first-century inhabitant of the Roman Empire call to mind the condemned person carrying his cross

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<sup>50</sup> H. F. Bayer, *Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection: The Provenance, Meaning and Correlation of the Synoptic Predictions*, WUNT 2.20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

<sup>51</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 353. Crossan cites Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.2.10: "If you want to be crucified, just wait. The cross will come."

to the place of execution.<sup>52</sup> Crucifixion was common enough in Palestine itself (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 17.295) that we need not think Jesus' saying must have originated later and elsewhere. But the saying is strange nonetheless. In rabbinic parlance a disciple is urged to take up the yoke of Torah, or the yoke of the commandments (e.g. *m. 'Abot* 3:5; *m. Ber.* 2:2); never to take up the cross. Jesus' summons would have struck a somber, if not macabre note in the ears of his audience.

Closely related to Jesus' exhortation and warning regarding the cross are his sayings about the dangers of temptation and the dreadful consequences of causing others to stumble (Mark 9:42–48):

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

The fearsome injuries described (amputated limbs, gouged out eyes) parallel the horrors described in 2 Maccabees 6–7 inflicted upon the faithful who refused to commit apostasy during the pogroms of Antiochus IV. The opening statement, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,” may allude to the steadfast testimony of the righteous elder Eleazar (2 Macc 6:18–31). When asked only to pretend to eat pork and thereby escape torture and death, he refused, saying

“Such pretense is not worthy of our time of life,” he said, “lest many of the young should suppose that Eleazar in his ninetieth year has gone over to an alien religion, and through my pretense, for the sake of living a brief moment longer, they should be led astray because of me, while I defile and disgrace my old age. For even if for the present I should avoid the punishment of men, yet whether I live or die I shall not escape the hands of the Almighty.”

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<sup>52</sup> M. Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 62: “People were all too aware of what it meant to bear the cross through the city and then to be nailed to it.”

The courageous words of Eleazar cohere with the point that Jesus has made. Jesus warns his followers not to cause “one of these little ones who believe in me to sin,” just as Eleazar tells his tormentors that he will not, through pretense, cause “the young” to “be led astray.” If he does engage in pretense, to avoid the punishment of men (which as we see in 2 Maccabees 7 includes amputated limbs and gouged out eyes), he will “not escape the hands of the Almighty.”<sup>53</sup>

Second, the questions that Jesus put to James and John about drinking the cup also attest his anticipation of suffering and martyrdom (Mark 10:38–39):

“Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized.”

The entire dialogue smacks of authenticity. When the disciples learn of the request of James and John (to sit on the right and left of Jesus when he rules) they are indignant. The self-interest of the sons of Zebedee and the anger of the other disciples hardly paint a flattering

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<sup>53</sup> In recent years a great number of studies concerned with martyrdom have appeared, many of them treating the Maccabean martyrs. For a selection of studies, see K. Grayston, “Atonement and Martyrdom,” in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context: Festschrift M. D. Hooker*, ed. J. Barclay and J. Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250–263; J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, JSJSup 57 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); D. Boyarin, “Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 577–627; J. W. van Henten, “Martyrism and Martyrdom: Some Remarks about Noble Death in Josephus,” in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Brüssel 1998*, ed. J. U. Kalms, Münsteraner judaistische Studien 4 (Münster: Lit, 1999), 124–141; S. A. Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2*, SNTSMS 114 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); T. Rajak, “Dying for the Law: The Martyr’s Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature,” in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction*, AGJU 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2001): 99–133; P. B. Munoa, “Jesus, the Merkavah, and Martyrdom in Early Christian Tradition,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 303–25; J. W. van Henten and F. Avemarie, *Martyrdom and Noble Death: Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002); S. M. Passamaneck, “The Jewish Mandate of Martyrdom: Logic and Illogic in the Halakhah,” *HUCA* 74 (2003): 215–241; J. W. van Henten, “Jewish Martyrdom and Jesus’ Death,” in *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, ed. J. Frey, WUNT 181 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005): 139–68; K. R. Atkinson, “Taxo’s Martyrdom and the Role of the Nuntius in the Testament of Moses: Implications for Understanding the Role of Other Intermediary Figures,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 453–76.

portrait of Jesus' closest followers. But what is especially interesting is that here again Jesus is not able to fulfill his own words. He asked James and John if they were able to drink the cup that he will drink and they said that they were able. Yet, in prayer in Gethsemane, shortly before his arrest, Jesus fell on his face and begged God to take the cup of suffering from him (Mark 14:33–36). This is not the stuff of pious fiction or post-Easter dogma. It is authentic material, even if awkward and unflattering.

Third, Jesus' widely attested Words of Institution (Mark 14:22–25; 1 Cor 11:23–25; *Did.* 9:1–5), provide further evidence that Jesus anticipated his martyrdom and sought to understand it. His words allude to several important scriptures (Exod 24:8; Jer 31:31; Zech 9:11). In the shedding of his blood, Jesus finds the guarantee of the covenant and the kingdom of God. Luke's addition of "new," as in "the new covenant" (Luke 22:20), may well reflect Christian editing, but in all probability correctly captured the sense of Jesus' words. The "new covenant" hearkens back to the promise of the prophet long ago: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer 31:31). The new covenant cannot be established until the blood of God's Son, Israel's Messiah, is shed.

The idea of the saving benefit of a righteous man's death is hardly unusual in the Jewish world, or in the Mediterranean world in general for that matter. There are several expressions of the belief that the death of the righteous will benefit, or even save, God's people (e.g., 1 Macc 6:44; 4 Macc 1:11; 17:21–22; 18:3–4; *T. Moses* 9–10; Ps.-Philo, *L.A.B.* 18:5). Among the most important are traditions associated with the torture and death of the already mentioned Maccabean martyrs, who in the second century BCE bravely opposed the Syrian tyrant Antiochus IV: "If our living Lord is angry for a little while, to rebuke and discipline us, he will again be reconciled with his own servants...I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our fathers, appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nature...and *through me and my brothers* to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty which has justly fallen on our whole nation" (2 Macc 7:33, 37–38, RSV, with emphasis added). Similarly, Jesus

believed that God was angry with his people for having rejected his message. We see this in Jesus' weeping over the city (Luke 19:41–44; Matt 23:37–39 = Luke 13:34–35) and in his ominous allusion to the shepherd in Zech 13:7, whom God would strike down.

### 6. *Conclusion*

The principal difficulty in attempting to classify or categorize Jesus is that he exhibited characteristics of several categories and the categories themselves overlap. Because Jesus probably exhibited features characteristic of all of them, he was regarded by many—among his following and among those not of his following—as prophet, sage, healer, Messiah, and martyr, including combinations of these categories. That his movement settled on “Messiah” as the title of office and “Son of God” as the personal or metaphysical title strongly suggests that the messianic identity of Jesus took hold early in the tradition, probably in the pre-Easter setting and not after Easter, as one perspective among several competing perspectives. If the latter were the case, one would expect evidence of competing, different interpretations of Jesus. Jesus as Messiah is ubiquitous in the tradition. Indeed, to deny Jesus as the Messiah is to deny the faith (e.g., 1 John 2:22–23).





# JESUS IM LICHT DER QUMRANGEMEINDE<sup>1</sup>

HEINZ-WOLFGANG KUHN

Da vor der Auffindung der Qumrantexte so gut wie keine jüdischen Texte im Original aus der zeitlichen und örtlichen Nachbarschaft Jesu zur Verfügung standen, hat die Entdeckung von weithin nur in Fragmenten erhaltenen über 900 Qumranschriften (davon über 200 Handschriften des späteren hebräischen Kanons)<sup>2</sup> der Erforschung des historischen Jesus neue Perspektiven eröffnet. Die Entdeckung erfolgte insbesondere in elf Höhlen um Chirbet Qumran am Toten Meer zwischen 1947–1956;<sup>3</sup> die Veröffentlichung der Texte liegt seit 1993 in einer Microfiche-Ausgabe<sup>4</sup> und jetzt auch in ca. 30 Qumranbänden der Reihe “Discoveries in the Judaean Desert”<sup>5</sup> fast

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<sup>1</sup> Der hier veröffentlichten Darstellung liegen folgende Vorarbeiten des Verf. zum Thema zugrunde: 1) „Eschatologie und Gegenwart in der Verkündigung Jesu“, Anhang in H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung*, 189–204; 2) “Qumran Texts”; 3) “Jesus”; 4) „Hintergrund“ (siehe zu allen „Ausgewählte Literatur“). Der Aufbau der letzten beiden Arbeiten ist hier im Wesentlichen beibehalten worden. Ich danke Herrn Dr. Jacob Nordhofen für die Mithilfe vor allem bei der Literatursuche und der Gestaltung des Manuskripts und meiner derzeitigen Qumran-Mitarbeiterin Frau Astrid Stacklies, M.A. für Korrekturlesen und Suche und Auswertung der Literatur. Frau Dr. Regina Franke, Frau Dr. Stephanie Keim, Frau Annedore Becker, Herr Paul Henke und Frau Andrea Krakau haben ebenfalls bei der Korrektur geholfen.

<sup>2</sup> Vgl. Emanuel Tov, *Revised Lists of the Texts from the Judaean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 113.

<sup>3</sup> In der Niederlassung selbst (abgesehen von 7–9 Q) sind zwar keine Handschriften gefunden worden, aber u.a. mit Schrift drei Ostraka (KhQ1–KhQ3, veröffentlicht in DJD 36 [2000]). Es sind Scherben von Krügen, die um die Niederlassung herum entdeckt wurden, von denen KhQ1 eventuell das für die Qumrangemeinde charakteristische Wort  $\text{תן}$  („Einung“) enthält (Z. 8).

<sup>4</sup> Emanuel Tov und Stephen J. Pfann (Hrsg.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls on Microfiche: A Comprehensive Facsimile Edition of the Texts from the Judean Desert* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), mit *Inventory List of Photographs*, zusammengestellt von Stephen A. Reed, hrsg. von Marilyn J. Lundberg. Zu benutzen mit: dies.en (Hrsg.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Catalogue: Documents, Photographs and Museum Inventory Numbers*, SBLRBS 32 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1994). Siehe ferner bes. Emanuel Tov (Hrsg.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Electronic Library* (rev. ed.; Provo, UT: Brigham Young Univ. / Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Oxford: Clarendon, 1955–. Es fehlen für die Qumrantexte noch die Bände 5a (Neuausgabe des Allegro-Bandes 5 [4Q158–186], 1968); 32 (die beiden Jesaja-Rollen aus 1Q; erscheint in Kürze) und ein Band mit Korrekturen und Ergänzungen, der die Fragmente “Cryptic A texts”: 4Q313c (ohne lesbaren Text), 4Q317 und 4Q324 d–i enthalten soll, die bisher nur in Fotografien in DJD 28 (2001) vorliegen; für den zuletzt genannten Band siehe DJD 39 (2002), IX, Anm. 1. Nicht in dieser Reihe,

vollständig vor (nach den Bänden dieser Reihe richtet sich hier die Zählung der Fragmente und der Zeilen, soweit dort publiziert).<sup>6</sup> Die außerbiblischen Qumrantexte (bis auf das Buch Ester sind Fragmente aller Bücher des späteren hebräischen Kanons, einschließlich Sirach, gefunden worden)<sup>7</sup> gehören in die Zeit von ca. 300 v. Chr. bis 68 n. Chr.,<sup>8</sup> sie sind neben wenigen Texten in Griechisch so gut wie alle in Hebräisch und Aramäisch auf bearbeiteter Tierhaut und zum Teil vor allem auf Papyrus geschrieben. Die Untersuchung der Qumrantexte ist durch die Veröffentlichung einer Konkordanz für alle (!) nichtbiblischen Qumrantexte (bis auf offenbar nur ganz geringe, seit den letzten Jahren erst bekannt werdende Ausnahmen, wie der in Anm. 20 genannte Text 4Q230) ungemein gefördert worden; sie ist auf Papier<sup>9</sup> und elektronisch<sup>10</sup> zugänglich.

Auch wenn sich zeigt, dass ein Vergleich der Jesusbewegung mit der Qumrangemeinde theologisch mehr Unterschiede als Gemeinsamkeiten ergibt, sind doch der verwandte jüdische Hintergrund und gerade auch die theologischen und soziologischen Unterschiede von höchstem Interesse. Die älteren abwegigen Spekulationen, die Jesus und die Essener schon vor der Entdeckung der Qumrantexte in eine größere Nähe brachten, lebten nach der Entdeckung der Qumrantexte in neuer Gestalt selbst in wissenschaftlichem Umfeld wieder auf

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sondern in anderen wissenschaftlichen Editionen sind erschienen: 1QS, 1QpHab, 1QM, 1QapGen und 11QT<sup>a</sup> (11Q19); außerdem CD. Die zurzeit gültige, aber freilich schon wieder korrekturbedürftige Liste aller Qumranschriften mit dem Ort ihrer Veröffentlichung findet sich bei Tov, *Revised Lists*, 5–80.

<sup>6</sup> Für 1QH<sup>a</sup> siehe jetzt Hartmut Stegemann und Eileen Schuller in DJD 40 (2009); für 11QT<sup>a</sup> (11Q19) siehe die neue Zählung der Zeilen bei Annette Steudel (Hrsg.), *Die Texte von Qumran II: Mit Masoretischer Punktation: Übersetzung, Einführung und Anmerkungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 1–157.

<sup>7</sup> Von Esra-Nehemia sind nur Esra-Fragmente (4Q117) vorhanden. Siehe zu den gefundenen Texten des späteren hebräischen Kanons Eugene Ulrich in DJD 39 (2002) "Index of Passages in the 'Biblical Texts'" (185–201).

<sup>8</sup> Zu 68 n. Chr. siehe gleich unten.

<sup>9</sup> Martin G. Abegg, Jr. u.a. (Hrsg.), *The Non-Biblical Texts from Qumran*, Bd. 1 von *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); als Bd. 3 sind 2010 *The Biblical Texts from the Judaean Desert*, hrsg. von Abegg u.a., erschienen.

<sup>10</sup> Martin G. Abegg, Jr., *Qumran Sectarian Manuscripts: Qumran Text and Grammatical Tags* [on CD-ROM]. Version 2.1 in Accordance 6.5 (Alamonte Springs, FL: Oaktree Software, 2005 [zurzeit in Accordance 8, 2010]); die Computer-Version enthält u. a. alle hebräischen und aramäischen nichtbiblischen Qumrantexte "grammatically tagged" und eine englische Übersetzung der Texte. Die Konkordanz und die Computer-Version berücksichtigen auch schon die in DJD 37 und 40 soeben (2009) erschienenen Texte (nur der Accordance-Text, überprüft an Version 2.8 in Accordance 7.3 von 2007, enthält ferner schon 4Q230).

(von André Dupont-Sommer seit den fünfziger Jahren bis Barbara Thiering). Die Qumranforschung unterscheidet, soweit dies möglich ist, zwischen Schriften, die direkt auf die Qumrangemeinde (bzw. die Essener) zurückgehen (vor allem 1Q/4QS,<sup>11</sup> 1QSa/4QSE, CD/4QD, 4QMMT, die Pescharim, 1Q/4QH, 4QMidrEschat), ferner solchen, die nur zu ihrer Bibliothek gehörten (gerade in diesem Fall ist aber auch die Zahl der Exemplare zu berücksichtigen; z. B. existiert 1Q/4QInstruction [1Q26/4Q415ff.] in mindestens sieben Exemplaren), und auch solchen, die von außen kamen, aber in der Gemeinde eine Überarbeitung erfuhren (1Q/4Q/11QM) oder Texten, die in ihre Schriften in mehr oder weniger redaktionell überarbeiteter Fassung integriert wurden (die in Anm. 11 genannte Zwei-Geister-Lehre).

Mit „Qumrangemeinde“ sind hier gemäß der Gemeinderegel „alle ihre Niederlassungen“ gemeint (1QS VI, 2 par. 4QS<sup>d</sup> [4Q258] II, 6). Die Existenz der Qumrangemeinde in diesem weiteren Sinn, auf deren Texten hier der Schwerpunkt liegt, beginnt mit ihrem eigentlichen Gründer, dem sog. Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit, um die Mitte des 2. Jh. v. Chr. Aufgrund der spärlichen archäologischen Hinweise auf eine Niederlassung schon in der Mitte des 2. Jh. (sog. Periode 1a von Roland de Vaux) wird heute eine Besiedelung in Qumran durch die Qumranfrommen meistens nach 100 v. Chr. angenommen,<sup>12</sup> was hier nicht diskutiert werden kann. Die Meinung, dass die Textfunde und die Niederlassung sachlich nicht zusammengehören,<sup>13</sup> halte ich zwar

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<sup>11</sup> Wohl mit Ausnahme der mehr oder weniger redaktionell überarbeiteten Zwei-Geister-Lehre 1QS III, 13–IV, 26 (mit Parallele in 4QS<sup>c</sup>), deren Dualismus jedoch einen deutlichen Einfluss auf die Qumrangemeinde zeigt, wie z. B. 1Q/4QS selbst, CD/4QD, 1Q/4QH und 4QMidrEschat (4Q174 und 177) zeigen (vgl. Jörg Frey, „Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought in the Qumran Library: Reflections on their Background and History,” in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues*, hrsg. M. Bernstein u.a., STDJ 23 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 275–335: 277–278; vgl. auch jüngst Albert L. A. Hogterp, „The Eschatology of the Two Spirits Treatise Revisited,” *RevQ* 23 [Nr. 90, 2007]: 247–259).

<sup>12</sup> Vgl. Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), bes. 49–50, 63–66 (anders Yaakov Meshorer, „Numismatics,” *EncDSS* 2:619–620: 619a). Magness hält es für „reasonable to date the initial establishment of the sectarian settlement to the first half of the 1st century BCE” (S. 65), was bedeuten würde, dass der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit die Qumran-Niederlassung nicht mehr erlebte und sie also nicht der „Ort seines Exils“ von 1QpHab XI, 6 war.

<sup>13</sup> Ich nenne nur Yizhar Hirschfeld, *Qumran in Context: Reassessing the Archaeological Evidence* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004) (die Niederlassung sei das Herrenhaus eines landwirtschaftlichen Gutsbesitzers, der priesterlichen Kreisen in Jerusalem vor der Zerstörung der Stadt im Jahr 70 n. Chr. einräumte, die Rollen in

mit der überwiegenden Mehrzahl der Qumranforscher für irrig, sie betrifft aber kaum die folgende, von den Texten ausgehende Darstellung. Die genaue Datierung der Zerstörung der Niederlassung in Qumran durch die Römer auf das Jahr 68 n. Chr. (und das offenbar baldige Ende auch ihrer sonstigen Niederlassungen) wird aus Josephus, *Bell.* 4:449 erschlossen. Auf die auch von mir geteilte Annahme einer weitgehenden Gleichsetzung der Qumrangemeinde mit den bei Josephus und anderen antiken Autoren dargestellten Essenern gehe ich hier im Allgemeinen nicht ein,<sup>14</sup> weil auf den Qumrantexten selbst der Schwerpunkt liegen soll.

### 1. *Zum Stand der Jesusforschung und zur Differenz zwischen Jesus und der Qumrangemeinde*

Jesus ist als Jude in Nazaret in Galiläa in der Tetrarchie des Herodes Antipas (4 v. Chr.–39 n. Chr.) aufgewachsen. Dass er von Johannes dem Täufer getauft wurde, ist historisch sicher, dass aber der Täufer ursprünglich zur Qumrangemeinde gehörte, ist sicherlich nicht der Fall gewesen (siehe unten). Als Wirkungsstätten Jesu sind—bei kritischer Lektüre der Evangelien—in Galiläa und der östlich vom Jordan gelegenen Gaulanitis neben Kafarnaum noch Betsaida und Chorazin (siehe das authentische oder wenigstens sehr alte Logion Q 10:13–15)<sup>15</sup> wie überhaupt das Gebiet um das Nordende des Sees Gennesa-

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der Nähe zu verstecken). Es gibt viele Varianten der Auffassung einer Nichtzugehörigkeit von Niederlassung und Rollenverstecken. Gegen solche Auffassung spricht schon, dass viele Texte eine bestimmte „Gemeinde“ (קִיָּה) voraussetzen, die überdies gemäß 1Q/4QS die „Steppe/Wüste (מִדְבָּר)“ im Blick hat (1QS VIII, 13–14 par. 4QS<sup>d</sup> [4Q258] VI, 7 [offenbar ohne Zitat von Jes 40:3] und 4QS<sup>e</sup> [4Q259] III, 3–4; 1QS IX, 19–20 par. 4QS<sup>b</sup> [4Q256] XVIII, 3 und 4QS<sup>e</sup> [4Q259] III, 19).

<sup>14</sup> Hierzu siehe vor allem die umfassende Zusammenstellung der Originaltexte bei Karl Adam und Christoph Burchard, *Antike Berichte über die Essener*, KIT 182 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972). Vgl. auch die Textsammlung von Geza Vermes und Martin D. Goodman, *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources*, OCT 1 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Dazu zuletzt Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, „Betsaida und et-Tell in frühromischer Zeit: Historische, archäologische und philologische Probleme einer als Wirkungsstätte Jesu angenommenen Ortslage“, Teile I und II, *ZNW* 101 (2010): 1–32 und 174–203 (mit zusammen acht Tafeln), hier II, 194–196. Siehe ferner ders. in Bd. 4 des vorliegenden *Handbook*. Mit Q + Stellenangabe ist entsprechend der Konvention des „Internationalen Q-Projekts“ (siehe unten in Abschnitt 1) die vermutliche Rekonstruktion eines Q-Textes aus dem Matthäus- und Lukasevangelium gemeint; die Stellenangabe richtet sich nach dem Lukasevangelium.

ret (vgl. in den kanonischen Evangelien neben den Orten Kafarnaum und Betsaida auch die häufige Erwähnung des Sees)<sup>16</sup> deutlich erkennbar; Jerusalem mit Judäa waren wohl nur kurze Zeit bzw. für kurze Zeiten Wirkungsstätte Jesu. Die Qumrangemeinde und ihre Niederlassungen sind offenbar nur in Judäa zu suchen.

Jesus trat in einer Weise als Wanderprediger und Wundertäter auf, die so gut wie keine Entsprechungen in den Qumrantexten hat. Für den Wanderprediger Jesus sind die Redeformen der Gleichnisse und die Wendung „Königsherrschaft Gottes“ (βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) charakteristisch (zur „Königsherrschaft Gottes“ vgl. nur die zweite Bitte des Vaterunsers, einige Gleichnisse im Markusevangelium und in der Logienquelle und Worte Jesu wie z. B. Mk 9:47; 10:25; Q 11:20; zum eschatologischen Verständnis der Botschaft Jesu siehe unten in Abschnitt 2.4). Die Redeform der Gleichnisse und die Wendung „Königsherrschaft Gottes“ haben nur sehr bedingt Parallelen in den Qumrantexten. Soweit ich bisher sehe, enthalten die Qumranschriften nur ein Gleichnis, nämlich die wohl auch nicht in der Gemeinde formulierte<sup>17</sup> sog. Baumparabel in 4QpapAdmonitory Parable (4Q302) 2 II–III. Was die Königsherrschaft Gottes betrifft, so kennen die Qumrantexte zwar öfter die Wendung, vor allem in der wohl doch aus der Qumrangemeinde stammenden und dort in offenbar neun Exemplaren vorhandenen Engelliturgie (ShirShabb: 4Q400–407; 11Q17; Mas1k). Gerade dieser Text spricht sehr oft von Gott als „König“ und sogar über 20-mal von Gottes „Königtum“ (מלכות). Die Königsherrschaft Gottes bezieht sich aber in den Qumrantexten, zumindest in der Regel, nicht, wie bei Jesus, auf das eschatologische Kommen (z. B. Q 11:2) oder Gekommensein (z. B. Q 11:20) der Gottesherrschaft (beides z. B. im Gleichnis vom Senfkorn Mk 4:30–32; vgl. Q 13:18–19), sondern allgemein darauf, dass Gott herrscht.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> θάλασσα, bei Lukas immer λίμνη. Außerdem sind für Jesu Wirken gemäß den kanonischen Evangelien für den nordwestlichen Bereich am See noch folgende Orte oder Gebiete zu nennen: (1) Gennesaret (Ort oder Landschaft?); (2) Dalmanuta bzw. Magadan (= Magdala?) als Ort am Westufer des Sees, wohl im nördlichen Teil; (3) gemäß einigen Evangelienhandschriften Gergesa am nördlichen Ostufer; (4) eventuell die Dekapolis am südlichen Ostufer.

<sup>17</sup> Bilhah Nitzan, „302. 4QpapAdmonitory Parable,“ in DJD 20 (1997), 125–149, pl. X–XII: 127. Vgl. noch die „Allegory of the Vine“ in 6Q11 in DJD 3 (1962).

<sup>18</sup> In 4QapocrDan ar (4Q246) II, 5 („sein Königtum“) ist der Bezug auf Gott nicht sicher (vgl. zu den Formulierungen Dan 3:33 mit 7:27 und auch 7:14). Vgl. zur „Königsherrschaft Gottes“ Koch, „Gegenwart und Zukunft“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“).

Der historische Jesus hat zweifellos auch in besonderem Maße als Wundertäter gewirkt. Heilungen und speziell Exorzismen sind für ihn kennzeichnend.<sup>19</sup> Aber Erzählungen über solch aktuelles Wunderhandeln gibt es, soweit ich sehe, überhaupt nicht in den Qumrantexten, wenngleich gerade der Dämonismus in den Qumrantexten und anderen qumrannahen Schriften, wie im Jubiläenbuch, belegt ist.<sup>20</sup> Zum Handauflegen zwecks Heilung, die für Jesus z. B. Mk 8:23, 25 und Lk 13:13 erzählt wird, sei auf die Parallele im sicherlich nicht der Gemeinde entstammenden Genesis-Apokryphon in 1QapGen ar XX, 22, 29 verwiesen: Hier soll Abraham für den Pharao beten, dass er von dem „bösen Geist“, den Gott ihm geschickt hatte, befreit werde; Abraham legt die Hände auf den Kopf Pharaos und heilt ihn.<sup>21</sup>

Jesus und die Qumrangemeinde gehen, wie viele Fromme damals, von einem baldigen Kommen des Eschaton aus, also von einer neuen und endgültigen Welt Gottes in der nahen Zukunft. Dass Jesus für sich selbst die Bezeichnung „Messias“ in Anspruch genommen hat,

<sup>19</sup> Vgl. für den heutigen Stand der Forschung Michael Becker, *Wunder und Wundertäter im frührabbinischen Judentum: Studien zum Phänomen und seiner Überlieferung im Horizont von Magie und Dämonismus*, WUNT 2.144 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), bes. 181, 417–442; siehe auch z. B. Bernd Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum*, FRLANT 170 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Vgl. Eric Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, JSNTSup 231 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) (mit einem eigenen Kapitel über die Qumrantexte: 174–216); Becker, *Wunder*, 146–147 (zu den Qumrantexten bes. 144–148); Lichtenberger, „Qumran and the New Testament,” 121–126 („Spirits and Demons in the Dead Sea Scrolls“); ders., „Demonology” (siehe für beides „Ausgewählte Literatur“). Vgl. auch Clinton Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels*, WUNT 2.185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004); Wahlen behandelt u. a. auch die Qumrantexte. Verwiesen sei noch auf den lange unveröffentlichten Text 4QCatalogue of Spirits (4Q230), wo in Fragment 1, Z. 1 vom „unrei[nen] Geist“ die Rede ist: Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, „These are the Names of the Spirits of . . .’: A Preliminary Edition of 4QCatalogue of Spirits (4Q230) and New Manuscript Evidence for the Two Spirits Treatise (4Q257 and 1Q29a),” *RevQ* 21 (Nr. 84, 2004): 529–547, siehe bes. 531–532; siehe auch ders., „Catalogue of Spirits, Liturgical Manuscript with Angelological Content, Incantation? Reflections on the Character of a Fragment from Qumran (4Q230 1), with Appendix: Edition of the Fragments of IAA #114,” in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, hrsg. M. J. Labahn und B. J. Lietaert Peerbolte (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 133–146; siehe auch oben Anm. 10.

<sup>21</sup> Die drei zusammengehörenden Fragmente 4QPrNab ar (4Q242) 1–3, die kein genaues Verständnis des Textes zulassen, verbinden mit dem letzten babylonischen König Nabonid Krankheit, Heilung (ergänzt) und Sündenvergebung, und zwar im Zusammenhang mit einem als „jüdisch“ bezeichneten גזר („Seher“/„Wahrsager“; vgl. z. B. Dan 2:27). Gern verweist man in diesem Zusammenhang auf die jüdisch belegte, aber in Mk 2:1–12 (mit Parallelen) nachträgliche Verbindung von Sündenvergebung und Heilung.

wird von der kritischen Forschung (auch bei Berücksichtigung vielfältiger „Messias“-Vorstellungen in den Qumrantexten) fast allgemein verneint. Entscheidend für Jesu Verständnis von sich selbst ist sein einzigartiger Anspruch (siehe unten insbesondere Abschnitt 2.4), dem der Gebrauch des damals vieldeutigen Wortes „Messias“ eher im Wege gestanden wäre. Deswegen wird auf die Messiaserwartungen der Qumrangemeinde hier nicht eingegangen.<sup>22</sup> Um 30 n. Chr. ließ der römische Präfekt Pontius Pilatus (26–36 n. Chr.) Jesus kreuzigen (zur Hinrichtung Jesu und zum Tod des Lehrers der Gerechtigkeit siehe unten in Abschnitt 3).

Die sog. Zwei-Quellen-Theorie für die synoptischen Evangelien (das Matthäus- und das Lukasevangelium haben außer ihrem Sondergut das Markusevangelium und die Logienquelle [Q] als Vorlage benutzt) gilt weithin unangefochten weiter (ausgereift schon bei Heinrich Julius Holtzmann in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts). Die Annahme eines Ur-Markus, abgesehen von kleineren Unterschieden zum heutigen Markusevangelium, hat sich nicht bewährt (trotz eines 1958 eventuell entdeckten „Geheimen Markus-evangeliums“). Die Erforschung der weithin angenommenen Logienquelle hat schon seit dem Ende der fünfziger Jahre des letzten Jahrhunderts eine neue Blüte erfahren<sup>23</sup> und gipfelte dann in dem „Internationalen Q-Projekt“, das vor allem von Forschern aus den USA, Kanada und Deutschland getragen wird.<sup>24</sup> Die Formgeschichte hat bereits seit ca. 1920 (Rudolf Bultmann, Martin Dibelius, Karl Ludwig Schmidt) die immer noch gültige Einsicht gebracht, dass der

<sup>22</sup> Vgl. aber Hengel, „Jesus der Messias Israels“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 34–45 und jüngst ders. und Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 498–548. Zu den Messiaserwartungen in den Qumrantexten siehe insbesondere Johannes Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*, WUNT 2.104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998); siehe auch Lichtenberger, „Messiasvorstellungen“ bzw. „Qumran-Messianism“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), und etwa Heinz-Josef Fabry, „Die Messiaserwartung in den Handschriften von Qumran“, in *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, hrsg. F. García Martínez, BETL 168 (Löwen: Leuven University Press, 2003), 357–384.

<sup>23</sup> Siehe z. B. A. Lindemann (Hrsg.), *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, BETL 158 (Löwen: Leuven University Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Siehe insbesondere J. M. Robinson u.a. (Hrsg.), *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas* (Löwen: Peeters, 2000). Außerhalb des „Internationalen Q-Projekts“ erschien (mit fast 1000 Seiten) Harry T. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, Biblical Tools and Studies 1 (Löwen: Peeters, 2005).

älteste Evangelist (abgesehen von der Passionsgeschichte) im Wesentlichen nur Einzellogien, Einzelgeschichten und ältere Sammlungen zur Verfügung hatte und dass der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu auf die Evangelien selbst zurückgeht (zu präzisieren ist diese Erkenntnis nur dadurch, dass der Evangelist schon eine ältere zusammenhängende Passionsgeschichte vorfand, dass Mk 13 eine kürzere „kleine Apokalypse“ zugrunde liegt und dass Markus bereits einige ältere Sammlungen, wie ich zu zeigen versuchte, vorfand).<sup>25</sup> Bewegung ist in die Frage der Kriterien für authentisches Jesusgut gekommen: Das Differenzkriterium als das wichtigste Kriterium ist im Blick auf die eine Seite der Differenz, nämlich die jüdische Umwelt (die andere Seite der Differenz ist die werdende Kirche), in die Kritik geraten, weil man vor allem fürchtete, Jesus dem Judentum zu entziehen. Das ist aber oft nur ein Missverständnis eines falsch angewendeten Kriteriums gewesen (wie überhaupt manchmal eine zu theoretische Kriteriendiskussion den Details kritischer Erkenntnisse nicht gerecht wird). Gerd Theißen (der sein betreffendes Buch zusammen mit Dagmar Winter verfasst hat)<sup>26</sup> spricht von einem „Plausibilitätskriterium“, was freilich recht undifferenziert klingt. Die beiden Seiten des Differenzkriteriums (zum Teil in Verbindung mit anderen herkömmlichen „Kriterien“) heißen bei ihm nun „(jüdische) Kontextplausibilität“ und „wirkungsgeschichtliche Plausibilität“, das Erstere

<sup>25</sup> Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, SUNT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971). Ich nahm solche Sammlungen an innerhalb von Mk 2:1–3:6, 4:1–34, 10:1–45 und eventuell 4:35–6:52; für Mk 10 meine ich später den sicheren Nachweis erbracht zu haben in „Neuere Wege in der Synoptiker-Exegese am Beispiel des Markusevangeliums“, in *Bilanz und Perspektiven gegenwärtiger Auslegungen des Neuen Testaments: Symposium zum 65. Geburtstag von Georg Strecker*, hrsg. F. W. Horn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 60–90, speziell 68–72, 87–90.

<sup>26</sup> Gerd Theißen und Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) (Eng. trans.: *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002]); vgl. auch ders. und Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (3. durchges. Aufl.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 116–120 (Eng. trans.: *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* [London: SCM Press, 1998], 115–118). Wenig brauchbar als Kriterium erscheinen mir die drei „neuen“ Kriterien, die Stanley E. Porter jüngst aufgestellt hat und die ich hier nur nennen kann: griechische Sprache (Jesus habe in bestimmten Situationen Griechisch gesprochen); griechische Textvarianten (unter denen man den authentischen Wortlaut eventuell finden kann); „discourse features“ (die auf Unterschiede zum übrigen Evangelium hinweisen). Siehe *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).



durchaus mit Recht vor allem im Blick auf Galiläa, aber auch im Blick auf Jesu Individualität, was ja beides (!) der Frage nach der Differenz wieder entgegenkommt. Bei der Kontextplausibilität und der Wirkungsplausibilität geht es Theißen jeweils um die „Auswertung von Übereinstimmungen“ und von „Nichtübereinstimmungen“,<sup>27</sup> was freilich selbstverständlich ist.

Ohne das in der Regel im Einzelnen auch aufzuführen, setzt die folgende Darstellung des Wirkens Jesu natürlich die Kriterienfrage voraus, weiß aber, dass uns das Judentum zur Zeit Jesu in Galiläa und der Gaulanitis nur relativ bekannt ist (die sog. „dritte Frage“ nach dem historischen Jesus bemüht sich gegenwärtig gerade um Galiläa; von den Qumrantexten gibt es hierzu freilich überhaupt keine direkte Hilfe). Ferner kann man mit Gerd Theißen den Unterschied zwischen dem Jesus der Historie und der Jesusbewegung nach Ostern nicht mehr so scharf wie früher ziehen (das konnte man nicht zuletzt aus seiner „Soziologie der Jesusbewegung“ zwischen ca. 30–70 n. Chr. lernen).<sup>28</sup> Mit diesen Hinweisen zum Stand der Jesusforschung sind die Voraussetzungen im Blick auf den historischen Jesus, dessen Leben kaum (abgesehen vom Kreuzestod) und dessen Verkündigung nur bedingt dargestellt werden können, für die folgende Darlegung gegeben.

## 2. Hauptgesichtspunkte des theologischen Vergleichs

Nur die vier wesentlichen Vergleichspunkte können hier dargestellt werden.<sup>29</sup> Die von der kritischen Forschung als abseitig aufgefassten Thesen (vor und nach der Entdeckung der Qumrantexte), die Jesus direkt mit den Essenern bzw. der Qumrangemeinde verbinden, werden nicht behandelt. Ferner bleiben solche Thesen unberücksichtigt, die zu spekulativ sind, wie die meines Erachtens abzulehnende Vermutung, dass Johannes der Täufer ein Mitglied der Qumrangemeinde

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<sup>27</sup> Siehe die Übersicht in Theißen und Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 217.

<sup>28</sup> Gerd Theißen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums*, TEH 194 (7. Aufl.; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1997; zuerst München: Kaiser, 1977); außer in vielen anderen Sprachen auch Eng. trans.: *The First Followers of Jesus: A Sociological Analysis of the Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 1978).

<sup>29</sup> Vgl. z. B. die kurze Zusammenstellung von in der Forschung vertretenen Vergleichen zwischen Jesus und den Qumrantexten bei Brooke, „Dead Sea Scrolls“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 20–25.

gewesen sei.<sup>30</sup> Nicht belegbar ist die These, die Jesus in Verbindung mit den Essenern in Jerusalem (insbesondere beim Essentor) bringt<sup>31</sup> (vor allem nicht die Annahme, dass Jesus nach dem essenischen Kalender das letzte Mahl gefeiert habe, wobei schon ein letztes Mahl Jesu aufgrund der neutestamentlichen Abendmahlsberichte historisch kaum zu erfassen ist).<sup>32</sup> Übereinstimmungen etwa zwischen den Seligpreisungen der Bergpredigt (Mt 5:3–12), deren Herkunft aus der Gemeinde bzw. deren teilweise Authentizität nur in einer komplexen Diskussion erörtert werden könnte, und den Qumrantexten müssen hier ebenfalls unbesprochen bleiben.<sup>33</sup> In den Qumrantexten gibt es keinerlei Hinweis auf Jesus oder frühe Christen (in 7Q sind zweifellos

<sup>30</sup> Die Literatur hinsichtlich einer Beziehung zwischen Johannes dem Täufer und der Qumrangemeinde bzw. den Essenern ist uferlos. Vgl. nur die vier folgenden, sich im Aufbau und in der Sache weithin entsprechenden Aufsätze, darunter zwei längere Fassungen, zum Verhältnis Qumrantexte und Neues Testament von Jörg Frey, „Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für das Verständnis des Neuen Testaments“, in *Qumran—Die Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer: Vorträge des St. Galler Qumran-Symposiums vom 2./3. Juli 1999*, hrsg. M. Fieger u.a., NTOA 47 (Freiburg, CH: Universitätsverlag, 2001), 129–208: 164–177; ders., „The Relevance of the Dead Sea Scrolls for New Testament Interpretation with a Bibliographical Appendix,” *AcT* 23 (2003): 86–116: 99–103; ders., „Zur Bedeutung der Qumran-Funde“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 46–51; ders., „The Impact“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 443–450; siehe ferner z.B. H. Stegemann, *Essener* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 292–313, bes. 306–311 (Eng. trans.: *Library* [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“], 211–227, bes. 221–225); Webb, „John the Baptist“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“). Alle drei Autoren ablehnend; dagegen vertritt Charlesworth jüngst wieder ausführlich die These, dass der Täufer die Qumrangemeinde wegen gravierender Differenzen verlassen habe („John the Baptizer“ [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“]); anders—in Auseinandersetzung mit einer früheren ähnlichen Veröffentlichung von Charlesworth („John the Baptizer and Qumran Barriers in Light of the Rule of the Community,” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, hrsg. D. W. Parry und E. Ulrich, STDJ 30 [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 353–375)—mit Recht Frey auch in den beiden oben zuletzt genannten Aufsätzen, „Zur Bedeutung“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 47–51; ders., „The Impact“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 446–450.

<sup>31</sup> Vgl. die kritischen Ausführungen bei Frey, „Die Bedeutung“, 146–152; „Relevance“, 95–96; vgl. auch ders., „The Impact“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 430–435.

<sup>32</sup> Siehe unten Abschnitt 2.1.

<sup>33</sup> Vgl. den nicht spezifisch zur Qumrangemeinde gehörenden Weisheitstext 4QBeatitudes (4Q525) und vor allem die Entsprechungen von οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι („die geistlich Armen“ oder ähnlich) in V. 3 zu עֲנִי רֹחַ („geistlich Arme“ oder ähnlich) in IQM XIV, 7 und IQH<sup>a</sup> VI, 14 (XIV, 3 Sukenik). Unter den häufigen Arbeiten zu den Makarismen sei nur verwiesen auf Lichtenberger, „Makarismen“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“) und „Qumran and the New Testament“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 112–120.

auch keine neutestamentlichen Texte gefunden worden),<sup>34</sup> und das gilt, jedenfalls für ausdrückliche oder eindeutige Hinweise, auch umgekehrt.

### 2.1. Jüngerschaft bzw. Gemeinde

„Nachfolge“ Jesu im engeren Sinn ist in den ältesten Schichten des Evangelienstoffes keine Voraussetzung für die Teilhabe an der Gottesherrschaft. Soweit es die älteste Überlieferung noch erkennen lässt, hat der Jesus der Historie nur Einzelne in die Nachfolge aufgenommen, während er allen, denen er predigte, die Annahme der Gottesherrschaft anbot. Dass Jesus nur Einzelne zur Nachfolge aufforderte, zeigen ausnahmslos die Berufungsszenen der vier kanonischen Evangelien, wie z. B. die fünf Berufungen in den beiden Berufungsgeschichten des Markusevangeliums (1:16–20; 2:14) und auch noch die Annahme von fünf Jüngern in Joh 1:35–51.<sup>35</sup> Ganz anders verhält es sich mit der Qumrangemeinde: Die Qumranfrommen organisierten sich als eine geschlossene Gemeinde (charakteristisch dafür ist die Selbstbezeichnung  $\tau\tau'$  „Einung“) mit dreimaligen Prüfungen und einem zweijährigen Aufnahmeverfahren (so 1QS VI, 13–23; par. 4QS<sup>b</sup> [4Q256] XI, 8–13 und 4QS<sup>s</sup> [4Q261] 3 1).<sup>36</sup> Von „Jüngerinnen“ sprechen die kanonischen Evangelien nicht,<sup>37</sup> aber davon, dass auch Frauen Jesus „nachfolgen“.<sup>38</sup> Wieweit auch Frauen zur Gemeinde gehörten, die in Qumran ansässig war, ist immer noch umstritten; auf keinen Fall waren es viele.<sup>39</sup> Bei Jesus muss die ständige

<sup>34</sup> Vgl. nur Enste, *Kein Markustext* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“).

<sup>35</sup> Siehe Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, „Nachfolge nach Ostern“, in *Kirche*, hrsg. D. Lührmann und G. Strecker (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 105–132, bes. 107–108.

<sup>36</sup> Siehe James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 87–89 (deutsch: *Einführung in die Qumranforschung: Geschichte und Bedeutung der Schriften vom Toten Meer* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], 109–111).

<sup>37</sup> So aber ausdrücklich  $\mu\alpha\theta\eta\tau\iota\alpha$  („Jüngerin“) in EvPet 12 (50) von Maria Magdalena am Ostertag und in Apg 9:36 von einer Christin Tabita in Joppe.

<sup>38</sup> Mk 15:41 par. Mt 27:55 und Lk 23:49; Lk 23:55; an den beiden Lukasstellen begegnet das Verb  $\acute{\alpha}\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$  aber nicht absolut als *terminus technicus*, sondern nur mit einer Präposition verbunden ( $\sigma\upsilon\upsilon\text{-}$ ,  $\kappa\alpha\tau\text{-}$ ). Vgl. auch Lk 8:1–3.

<sup>39</sup> Vgl. nur Jodi Magness, „Women at Qumran?“, in *Debating Qumran: Collected Essays on its Archaeology*, hrsg. Jodi Magness, ISACR 4 (Löwen: Peeters, 2004), 113–149; dies., *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002) (siehe Kap. 8: „Women and the Cemetery at Qumran“ [S. 163–187]).

Begleitung durch Frauen (vgl. Mk 15:40–41; Lk 8:2–3; 23:55) eher auffallend gewesen sein. Jesus hat also allen, die ihm begegneten, insbesondere seinen jüdischen Landsleuten, die Gottesherrschaft angeboten, ohne seine Anhänger aber dann in einer Gemeinde oder Gemeinden zu sammeln. Das haben erst die sich als „Kirche“ (ἐκκλησία) verstehenden Christen nach der Kreuzigung Jesu und den Auferstehungserfahrungen getan, und insofern sind die christlichen Gemeinden (ἐκκλησία), deren Initiationsritus die Taufe war (inwieweit ein Tauchbad auch mit dem Eintritt in die Gemeinde verbunden war, ist in den Texten nicht deutlich),<sup>40</sup> gruppensoziologisch mit der Qumrangemeinde bzw. den Qumrangemeinden verwandter als die älteste Jesusbewegung.

Der ganz Israel repräsentierende Zwölferkreis Jesu dürfte historisch wohl noch nicht in die Zeit Jesu gehören (was allerdings umstritten ist),<sup>41</sup> und insofern ist auch die Repräsentation der zwölf Stämme durch zwölf Laien in 1QS VIII, 1–4 (par. 4QS<sup>e</sup> [4Q259] II, 9–13) hier nur bedingt heranzuziehen. In der Gemeinderegel heißt es von diesem Kreis: „In der Gemeinschaft der Gemeinde“ (בְּעֵצַת הַיְחִיד)<sup>42</sup> soll es „zwölf Männer (sc. aus den Laien) und drei Priester“ geben, die „vollkommen sind in allem, was aus der ganzen Tora offenbart ist“.<sup>43</sup> Der Bezug der Zwölfzahl auf die zwölf Stämme Israels (siehe z. B. 1QM V, 1) dürfte sicher sein.

Diejenigen, die Jesu Jünger werden, verlassen wohl in der Regel Familie und Besitz (wenngleich das Markusevangelium voraussetzt,

<sup>40</sup> Vgl. H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 84.

<sup>41</sup> Man vergleiche die heute sogar beliebte gegenteilige Sicht. Ausführlich H.-W. Kuhn, „Nachfolge nach Ostern“, 108–109, 111–113, vor allem unter Hinweis auf die mangelnde Verwurzelung in der älteren synoptischen Tradition. Für eine vorösterliche Entstehung siehe neben z. B. John P. Meier, „The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?“ *JBL* 116 (1997): 635–672, auch Theißen und Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 216–217: hier bleibt unberücksichtigt, dass das als primärer Beleg angeführte Wort Q 22:30 (vorausgesetzt, dass das Logion authentisch ist) wohl nur vom Sitzen auf Thronen und nicht auf zwölf Thronen spricht (vgl. die „Throne“ in Offb 3:21, TLevi 3:8 und das Fehlen der Zwölf in der Logionquelle, obgleich auch die „Jünger“ Jesu bis auf immerhin offensichtlich Q 7:18 und 6:40 nicht als solche zweifelsfrei genannt sind).

<sup>42</sup> עֵצַת הַיְחִיד meint hier die Gesamtgemeinde, wie z. B. auch in 1QS VI, 13–14 (par. 4QS<sup>b</sup> [4Q256] XI, 8).

<sup>43</sup> Gemeint sind 15 Mitglieder, wie 4QMiscellaneous Rules (4Q265) 7 7 zeigt. Genannt sei noch die Gruppe von „Zwölf“ in 4QpJes<sup>d</sup> (4Q164) 1 4, die aber wegen des zum Teil zerstörten Kontextes nicht ganz deutlich ist (vgl. dazu auch Steudel, *Die Texte von Qumran II*, 234–235, 275).

dass sich Jesus öfter in Kafarnaum im Haus des Petrus und seiner Schwiegermutter aufhielt),<sup>44</sup> und Frauen unterstützen offenbar die Gruppe unter anderem „aus ihrem Vermögen“ (Lk 8:3). Eine Über-eignung des Besitzes an die neue Gruppe wie in der Qumrange-meinde (z. B. 1QS I, 12–13; VI, 19–20, 22) findet in der Gefolgschaft Jesu nicht statt.

Auch die folgenden vier Parallelen betreffen die spätere christliche Gemeinde: Die Regelung von Bruderpflichten in Mt 18:15–17, die eine große Nähe zu 1QS VI, 1 (par. 4QS<sup>d</sup> [4Q258] II, 5–6 und 4QS<sup>i</sup> [4Q263] 1–2) und CD IX, 3 (par. 4QD<sup>e</sup> [4Q270] 6 III, 17–18) zeigt, gehört eindeutig in die Zeit christlicher Gemeinden nach Jesu Tod.

Die an die Qumrangemeinde erinnernde Selbstbezeichnung „Kin-der des Lichts“ (ἅγιοι τοῦ φωτός / בני אור, selten בני האור)<sup>45</sup> im Gleich-nis vom ungerechten Haushalter (Lk 16:1ff.; hier V. 8b) ist nicht auf Jesus zurückzuführen, denn mindestens V. 8b ist (wegen des Stil-bruchs), wenn nicht schon V. 8a (wegen des κύριος, der wohl schon Jesus ist, wie auch Lk 18:6 nahelegt), bereits eine sekundäre Anfügung an das Gleichnis.

Das Gemeinschaftsmahl in der Qumrangemeinde<sup>46</sup> und das letzte Mahl Jesu können im Blick auf den historischen Jesus nicht mitein-ander verglichen werden, weil die neutestamentlichen Berichte über das Herrenmahl (bis auf Mk 14:25 und Parallelen) schon soweit aus der urchristlichen Liturgie stammen, dass sie keinen direkten Zugriff mehr auf das Mahl Jesu erlauben.<sup>47</sup> Die Spekulationen darüber, dass die verschiedenen Datierungen des letzten Mahls Jesu in den Synopti-kern einerseits (Jesu Kreuzigung am Freitagmorgen, erst nach der Pas-sanacht) und im Johannesevangelium andererseits (Jesu Kreuzigung

<sup>44</sup> Siehe Mk 1:29–31 (das Dauer ausdrückende Imperfekt von „dienen“ ist in V. 31 zu beachten); 2:1, 15; 9:33.

<sup>45</sup> Die Wendung ist in jüdischen Texten vom Alten Testament bis in die ältere rabbinische Literatur für Menschen nicht bezeugt; in den Qumrantexten findet sie sich aber in dieser Bedeutung ca. 20-mal, davon jedenfalls fast immer in Gemein-de-texten oder Texten, die wohl in eine Gemeindegemeinschaft übernommen wurden (so 1QS III, 13–IV, 26 par. 4QpapS<sup>c</sup> [4Q257] V–VI); außerdem aramäisch in dem wohl vor-qumranischen Text 4QVisions of Amram (4Q543ff.).

<sup>46</sup> 1QS VI, 2–7 mit Parallelen in 4Q; 1QSa (1Q28a) II, 11–22 mit Parallelen in 4Q.

<sup>47</sup> Zum Vergleich zwischen dem Qumranmahl und dem Herrenmahl in der christ-lichen Gemeinde siehe Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, „The Qumran Meal and the Lord’s Supper in Paul in the Context of the Graeco-Roman World,” in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World*, hrsg. A. Christophersen u.a., JSNTSup 217 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 221–248.

am Freitagnachmittag, direkt vor der Passanacht) auf ein Passamahl Jesu gemäß dem qumranischen, primär von der Sonne bestimmten Kalender, in der Nacht von Dienstag auf Mittwoch zurückzuführen seien,<sup>48</sup> haben die kritische Forschung (trotz einer solchen Chronologie für die Passionswoche zuerst in der Didaskalia des 3. Jh. n. Chr. [Kap. 21]) nicht überzeugt.<sup>49</sup>

Vom Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit wird in 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (4Q171) III, 16 gesagt, dass er von Gott den Auftrag erhalten habe, er solle „ihm eine Gemeinde von [...] erbauen“ ([...] לבנות לו עדת). Die einzige wörtliche Parallele zum „Bauen“ einer Gemeinde stellt Mt 16:18 dar, ein Jesuswort, das jedoch zweifellos erst in die Zeit nach Jesu Tod gehört.

## 2.2. Die Tora und die Halacha

Das Verhältnis Jesu zur Tora und ihrer zeitgenössischen Auslegung ist schwer zu beschreiben,<sup>50</sup> zumal auch nicht geklärt ist, wieweit sein Wirken in Galiläa und der Golanitis vom dortigen, wohl mit Jerusalem nicht voll übereinstimmenden Toraverständnis beeinflusst ist. Die Tendenz der archäologischen Erforschung Galiläas, genauer Unter-galiläas, geht heute dahin (vor allem aufgrund der in der Mitte der achtziger Jahre begonnenen Ausgrabungen in Sepphoris, der Hauptstadt Galiläas in der Jugendzeit Jesu), dass die Bevölkerung Galiläas jedenfalls seit der Besiedlungspolitik der Hasmonäer um 100 v. Chr.

<sup>48</sup> Die These hat Annie Jaubert begründet, vor allem durch ihr Buch *La date de la cène: Calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne*, EBib 27 (Paris: Gabalda, 1957); vgl. Bargil Pixner, „Das letzte Abendmahl Jesu“, in ders., *Wege des Messias und Stätten der Urkirche: Jesus und das Judentum im Licht neuer archäologischer Erkenntnisse*, hrsg. R. Riesner (Gießen: Brunnen, 1996), 219–228: 222–224.

<sup>49</sup> Siehe nur J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea* (London: SCM, 1959), 112–113; Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu* (4. Aufl.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 18–19; Braun, *Qumran und das Neue Testament* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), Bd. 2, 43–54.

<sup>50</sup> Siehe jetzt vor allem John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Bd. 4: *Law and Love* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). Vgl. auch den an einer „theoretical method“ ausgerichteten Aufsatz von Meier, „Historical Jesus“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“ bei 2003); das Zitat S. 79. Einen neuen Ansatz zur grundsätzlichen Frage nach Jesu Verhältnis zur Tora bietet Tom Holmén, „Jesus, Judaism and the Covenant“, *Journ. for the Study of the Hist. Jesus* 2 (2004): 3–27. Er legt dar, dass sich Jesus nicht an der üblichen Suche nach der richtigen Auslegung von Tora und Halacha beteiligt habe (von Holmén zusammenfassend auf S. 3 formuliert als „the activity of trying to find out how to keep faithful to the covenant“). Jesus sei offenbar vielmehr von den eschatologischen Erwartungen eines Bundes gemäß Jeremia (z. B. 31:31–34) und Ezechiel (z. B. 37:24 mit 26) bestimmt gewesen. Vgl. auch schon ders., *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill 2001).

weithin jüdisch gewesen ist.<sup>51</sup> Aber dass sie im Toragehorsam Judäa nicht nachstand, ist nicht in gleicher Weise deutlich, auch wenn man dem Ausspruch, der Jochanan ben Zakkai (um die Mitte des 1. Jh. n. Chr.) zugeschrieben wird, nicht zu viel Gewicht beimisst („Galiläa, Galiläa, du hasst die Tora“ [y. Šabb., Ms. Leiden, 16, 15d]). Herodes Antipas leistete es sich, seine neue Hauptstadt Tiberias um 20 n. Chr. auf einem Friedhof zu errichten, freilich nicht ohne Schwierigkeiten wegen seines „ungesetzlichen“ Handelns (Josephus, Ant. 18:38). Immerhin fällt auf, dass Herodes der Große keine heidnischen Tempel oder entsprechende hellenistische Bauten in Galiläa errichtete,<sup>52</sup> was wohl aus Rücksicht gegenüber der jüdischen Bevölkerung geschehen ist. Auch der Nachfolger in Galiläa, Herodes Antipas, baute keine heidnischen Tempel dort und verzichtete, entsprechend dem jüdischen Bilderverbot, auf Münzen mit Abbildern von Menschen oder Gottwesen, was sein Halbbruder Philippus (4 v. Chr.–33/34 n. Chr.) jenseits des Jordan, wo Betsaida lag, nicht tat. Josephus berichtet auch, wie er z. B. auf die Sabbatobservanz in Tarichea, das mit Magdala gleichzusetzen ist, Rücksicht nahm (Vita 159). Die archäologischen Funde im Sepphoris der frühromischen Zeit, insbesondere von Ritualbädern in Häusern und von Steingefäßen, sprechen für die Einhaltung der jüdischen Halacha.<sup>53</sup> Sollte Untergaliläa eine strenge Torafrömmigkeit gehabt haben, würde sich das Auftreten Jesu umso mehr in dieser Hinsicht abheben. Anders steht es aber mit der stärker heidnisch geprägten Gaulanitis, zu der das siebenmal in den Evangelien erwähnte Betsaida gehörte, ein Ort, in dem Jesus mit Sicherheit aufgetreten ist.<sup>54</sup> Die Grabungen seit 1987 haben in dieser Frage noch nicht zu einem eindeutigen Ergebnis

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<sup>51</sup> Vgl. nur die manchmal ihre Argumente überziehende, aber trotzdem nützliche Arbeit von Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, SNTSMS 118 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); ferner z. B. Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); aus der Fülle der weiteren Literatur seien hier noch Sean Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), und Eric M. Meyers, „Jesus und seine galiläische Lebenswelt“, *Zeitschr. f. NT 1* (1998): 27–39 genannt.

<sup>52</sup> Vgl. Chancey, *The Myth*, 50–51.

<sup>53</sup> Chancey, *The Myth*, 79–80.

<sup>54</sup> H.-W. Kuhn, zuletzt: „Betsaida und et-Tell“, Teil II, 191–196. Siehe ferner meinen Beitrag in Bd. 4 des vorliegenden *Handbook*.

geführt, obgleich kein Zweifel besteht, dass Betsaida auch deutlich jüdisch bestimmt war.<sup>55</sup> Jedenfalls ist der Gegensatz zwischen dem rigorosen Toraverständnis, wie es in den Qumrantexten entgegentritt, und Jesu Verhalten gegenüber der Tora, insbesondere hinsichtlich der Fragen von rein und unrein und des Sabbats, unübersehbar.<sup>56</sup>

Die vielleicht umstrittenste Stelle der kanonischen Evangelien hinsichtlich Jesu Stellung zur Tora ist Mk 7:15 (par. Mt 15:11 und EvThom 14),<sup>57</sup> ein Satz, der die Kernaussage von V. 14–23 darstellt und wohl Jesus zuzuschreiben ist, wie weitgehend in der kritischen Forschung anerkannt ist.<sup>58</sup> Hat Matthäus die schroffe Formulierung seiner Vorlage entsprechend seinem Toraverständnis etwas abgeschwächt (οὐ „nicht“ statt οὐδέν „nichts“) oder sollte der einfachere, vielleicht doch auch sprachlich geglättete *Parallelismus membrorum* bei Matthäus (und im Thomasevangelium) ursprünglicher sein? Kaum! Die erstere Gestalt (Markus) ist nicht aus der letzteren (Matthäus) zu erklären.

<p>Mk 7:15  οὐδέν ἐστὶν ἔξωθεν τοῦ  ἀνθρώπου  εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτὸν  ὃ δύναιται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν,  ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου  ἐκπορευόμενά  ἐστὶν τὰ κοινῶντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον.</p>	<p>Mt 15:11  οὐ  τὸ εἰσερχόμενον εἰς τὸ στόμα  κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον,  ἀλλὰ  τὸ ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος  τοῦτο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον.</p>
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<sup>55</sup> Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, „Jesu Hinwendung zu den Heiden im Markusevangelium im Verhältnis zu Jesu historischem Wirken in Betsaida mit einem Zwischenbericht zur Ausgrabung eines vermuteten heidnischen Tempels auf et-Tell (Betsaida)“, in *Die Weite des Mysteriums: Christliche Identität im Dialog. Für Horst Bürkle*, hrsg. K. Krämer und A. Paus (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 204–240.

<sup>56</sup> Vgl. die Besprechung der Reinheitsfragen in den Texten der Qumran-Bibliothek: Hannah K. Harrington, *The Purity Texts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004). In Übernahme des Terminus „hyper-nomism“ von Shemaryahu Talmon schreibt die Autorin: „This ‘hyper-nomism’ is nowhere more evident than in the laws of purity“ (S. 46).

<sup>57</sup> Bei Lukas gehört der Vers zu seiner zwischen 9:17 und 9:18 erfolgten Streichung des sog. Betsaida-Abschnitts bei Markus, der von Mk 6:45 (V. 45 „Betsaida“) bis Mk 8:26 (V. 22 „Betsaida“) reicht (siehe H.-W. Kuhn, „Betsaida und et-Tell“, Teil II, 192–193 und ders. in Bd. 4 des vorliegenden *Handbook*).

<sup>58</sup> Dass das Wort νόμος („Gesetz, Weisung“) im Markusevangelium nicht begegnet, bedeutet keinesfalls, dass Jesus nicht zu Fragen der Tora und der Halacha Stellung bezieht. Auch in der Logienquelle kommt νόμος nur in Q 16:16–17 vor. Das fast völlige Fehlen des Nomens νόμος in der älteren Jesusüberlieferung (im Gegensatz zum über hundertmaligen Vorkommen in den nichtbiblischen Texten der Qumran-Bibliothek) dürfte freilich für den Jesus der Historie charakteristisch sein. Siehe auch unten im Abschnitt zur Ehe.



Es gibt nichts, das von außerhalb des Menschen	Nicht das,
in ihn hineinkommt,	was in den Mund hineinkommt,
was ihn unrein machen kann,	macht den Menschen unrein,
sondern, was aus dem Menschen	sondern,
herauskommt,	was aus dem Mund herauskommt,
macht den Menschen unrein.	das macht den Menschen unrein.

Wenn das jüdisch anstößige Wort, auf das vielleicht schon Paulus als eines der relativ wenigen Jesusworte bei ihm anspielt (Röm 14:14;<sup>59</sup> vgl. V. 20), authentisch ist, dann liegt hier keine dogmatische Aussage über die Gültigkeit der Tora vor, sondern ein von Jesus radikalisiertes weisheitliches Wort, wie auch das Logion in der weiteren Überlieferung bei Matthäus verstanden worden ist. Einerseits verschärft Jesus hier die Tora durch den Gegensatz von äußerer Nahrungsaufnahme und ethischer Haltung, andererseits stößt er dabei freilich an eine Grenze zur Aufhebung der Tora (vgl. Lev 11 und Dtn 14:3–21; siehe bes. Lev 11:41–45). Eine ähnliche Haltung im Blick auf den Opferkult verraten prophetische Formulierungen wie Hos 6:6 und Jer 7:21–23. Aber aus dem zeitgenössischen Judentum sind mir Formulierungen wie Mk 7:15 nicht mehr bekannt.

Wenn ich die Literatur recht übersehe, kann hier eine neue Lösung angeboten werden, die das Wort im Munde Jesu verständlich macht. Jesus hebt hier nicht die Tora auf oder auch nur die Halacha über rein und unrein, vielmehr argumentiert er indirekt so, dass es von der Schöpfung her, genauer vom Menschen (deutlicher in der

<sup>59</sup> So leitet Paulus das Wort ein: οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ ὅτι... („ich weiß und bin im Herrn Jesus überzeugt, dass...“). Ein eindeutiger Hinweis auf die Jesusüberlieferung ist das nicht. Sieht man von dem nicht voll vergleichbaren πέποιθα... (bzw. nur δέ) ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι („ich vertraue... im Herrn darauf, dass...“) in Gal 5:10 und Phil 2:24 ab, so zeigt sich: Wenigstens an drei weiteren Stellen (gemäß dem Text von Nestle/Aland), aber bei vielen anderen ähnlichen, ist der Bezug auf den irdischen Jesus mit einem Hinweis auf „(den) Herrn Jesus“ in der Tat gegeben: 1. Kor 11:23 (Herrenmahl), 1. Thess 2:15 (Tötung Jesu) und 2. Kor 4:14 (Auferweckung Jesu). Schon deutlicher ist der Bezug auf den irdischen Jesus bei bloßem „Jesus“ (ich zähle bei Paulus sieben von neun Stellen). Wo Paulus sich aber eindeutig auf ein Herrenwort beruft, gebraucht er (ὁ) κύριος (1. Thess 4:15; 1. Kor 7:10–11; 9:14). Zu οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι („ich weiß und bin überzeugt“) vgl. den vermutlichen Hinweis auf ein Jesuswort in 1. Thess 5:2: ἀκριβῶς οἴδατε („ihr wisst genau“). Der Nachweis, dass Paulus hier an ein Jesuswort denkt, ist also nicht möglich, aber es bleiben einige Auffälligkeiten. Vgl. zum Problem u.a. Cilliers Breytenbach, „Vormarkinische Logientradition: Parallelen in der urchristlichen Briefliteratur“, in *The Four Gospels 1992*, hrsg. F. Van Segbroeck u.a., Bd. 2; BETL 100-B (Löwen: Leuven University Press, 1992), 725–749: 733–735.

Markusfassung erhalten), nicht auf kultisch reine oder unreine Nahrung ankommt. Ein Wort des oben schon genannten Jochanan ben Zakkai, der offenbar bereits zur Zeit Jesu für 20 Jahre in Galiläa lebte, kann zum Verständnis des Jesuswortes beitragen (Pesiq. Rab Kah. [ed. Mandelbaum] 4:7). Das Wort klingt fast so, als ob es auf Jesu Argumentation über rein und unrein antworten würde, und zwar in dieser Weise: „Du, Jesus, hast an sich schon recht, wenn Du von der Schöpfung her denkst, aber Gott hat es eben nun einmal anders in der Tora geboten.“ Das Logion in der Pesiqta de Rab Kahana lautet:

Bei eurem Leben (sagt Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai zu seinen Schülern), nicht der Tote verunreinigt und nicht das Wasser macht rein (ähnlich sagt es auch Jesus), sondern eine Verordnung des Heiligen—gepriesen sei er—ist es. Der Heilige—gepriesen sei er—hat gesagt: Ein Gebot habe ich festgesetzt, eine Verordnung habe ich verordnet, und du hast keine Erlaubnis, meine Verordnungen zu übertreten, (wie es heißt): „Dies ist das Gebot der Tora“ (Num 19:2).

In diesem rabbinischen Text wird also eine Einsicht von der Schöpfung her mit der Mose-tora zurückgewiesen. Bei Jesus ist es offenbar gerade umgekehrt. Hannah K. Harrington, die sich ausführlich mit der kultischen Reinheit in den Qumrantexten beschäftigt hat,<sup>60</sup> beschreibt die Differenz so: “the scrolls emphasize the necessity of observing all the ritual purity laws of the Torah.<sup>61</sup> Jesus, by contrast, appears to marginalize the whole issue of ritual purity...”,<sup>62</sup> worin ihm freilich Christen in Jerusalem nicht folgen konnten (siehe Gal 2:12–13) und andere, die heidenchristlich orientiert waren, umge-

<sup>60</sup> Hannah K. Harrington, *The Impurity Systems of Qumran and the Rabbis: Biblical Foundations*, SBLDS 143 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993); dies., “Purity,” *EncDSS* 2:724–728. Siehe auch Ian C. Werrett, *Ritual Purity and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 72 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> “The key to understanding the maximal interpretations of purity in the scrolls” liege im priesterlichen Charakter der Gemeinde, wobei auch darauf verwiesen wird: “the community was a substitute for the Temple” (H. K. Harrington, “Purity,” 2:727b).

<sup>62</sup> H. K. Harrington, “Purity,” 2:727b. Vgl. auch Kazen, *Jesus* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“). Unter substanzieller Berücksichtigung der Qumrantexte versucht Kazen, Jesu Relativierung der Reinheitshalacha von drei Gesichtspunkten her zu erklären, nämlich den prophetischen und frühjüdischen Vorstellungen von innerer Reinheit, der schwer zugänglichen galiläischen Halacha und Jesu eschatologischer Verkündigung der Gottesherrschaft, die mit Dämonen, Krankheiten und bestimmten Unreinheiten in Verbindung gebracht wird. Trotz Rückgriffs auf innerjüdische Traditionen und Kontexte stellt Kazen fest, “that Jesus’ attitude to impurity did not represent that of any of the known major groups within Second Temple Judaism” (S. 297).

kehrt das Wort absolut verstanden (so offenbar die Interpretation von Mk 7:15 in V. 19 am Schluss). Das verbreitete Verständnis des Wortes in der Forschung im Sinne eines „nicht so sehr...als“<sup>63</sup> führt in die gleiche Richtung einer relativen Deutung wie die oben für möglich gehaltene. Das Problem der kultischen Reinheit begegnet vor allem innerhalb der folgenden Texte aus der Qumrangemeinde: 4QMMT, 1Q/4QS, 1QSa bzw. 4QSE, CD bzw. 4Q-6QD und 4QFlor = 4QMidrEschat<sup>a</sup>.<sup>64</sup>

Auch die Tischgemeinschaft mit „Zöllnern und Sündern“ ist für Jesus offenbar charakteristisch gewesen. Verwiesen sei auf einige mögliche Belege dafür, die authentisch sind oder Jesu Wirken wohl widerspiegeln: Mk 2:15–17 par. Mt 9:10–13 und Lk 5:29–32 (Zöllnermahl); Q 7:33–34 (Kontrast zu Johannes dem Täufer), 19:7 (Zachäus).<sup>65</sup> In der Qumrangemeinde dagegen dürfen noch nicht einmal die Novizen, auch wenn sie nach einer vorhergehenden Prüfung (1QS VI, 14–16 par. 4QS<sup>b</sup> [4Q256] XI, 11) danach schon ein ganzes Jahr in der Gemeinde gelebt haben, „die Reinheit (der Speise)<sup>66</sup> der Vielen (d.h. der Vollmitglieder) berühren“ (1QS VI, 16–20 par. 4QS<sup>b</sup> [4Q256] XI, 12–13) und selbst in einem weiteren Jahr noch nicht „das Getränk der Vielen“ (1QS VI, 20–23 par. 4QS<sup>s</sup> [4Q261] 3 1).

In der priesterlich bestimmten Qumrangemeinde existiert eine ältere Gemeindeordnung (1QSa [1Q28a]/4QSE), die das Kommen eines Messias oder zweier Messiasgestalten erwartet.<sup>67</sup> Die eschatologische Zukunft steht noch aus, da es noch körperlich Behinderte gibt, die als kultisch unrein verstanden wurden (1QSa II, 3–11).<sup>68</sup> In Anlehnung an Lev 21:16–24, einem Abschnitt, der von der Untauglichkeit zum Priestertum handelt, wird ein Ausschluss von der eigentlichen Gemeinde für alle körperlich Behinderten (unter anderem Gelähmte, Hinkende und Blinde) gefordert (II, 3–11). Es klingt wie

<sup>63</sup> Siehe Friedrich Blass und Albert Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, bearb. F. Rehkopf (18. Aufl.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), § 448 Anm. 1. Vgl. z. B. Holmén, *Covenant Thinking*, 239–246.

<sup>64</sup> Vgl. H. K. Harrington, „Purity,” 2:724a.

<sup>65</sup> Wie Lukas das Wirken des irdischen Jesus in dieser Hinsicht gestaltet, zeigt seine Einleitung zum Gleichnis vom verlorenen Schaf in 15:1–2 (vgl. François Bovon, *Lk 15,1–19, 27*, Bd. 3 von *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, EKK 3 [Düsseldorf: Benziger, 2001], 19–21).

<sup>66</sup> H. K. Harrington, „Purity,” 2:725b.

<sup>67</sup> Siehe H.-W. Kuhn, „The Qumran Meal,” 221–248, bes. 234–236.

<sup>68</sup> Vgl. Hartmut Stegemann, „Some Remarks to 1QSa, to 1QSB, and to Qumran Messianism,” *RevQ* 17 (Nr. 65–68, 1996): 479–505, bes. 494–495.

ein Kontrastprogramm gegen die Qumranfrommen, wenn Jesus gemäß dem Lukasevangelium in einem Logion in 14:12–14 neben den „Armen“ (eine positive Selbstbezeichnung der Qumrangemeinde!) gerade auch „Krüppel, Lahme und Blinde“ als einzuladende Tischgenossen nennt, was der Evangelist im nachfolgenden Gleichnis vom Festmahl im Reich Gottes in 14:21 wiederholt.

Die drei zuvor behandelten Themen (Nahrungsaufnahme, Tischgemeinschaft, Behinderte) haben gemäß den zitierten Texten mit kultureller „Reinheit“ zu tun (vgl. Mk 7:15: 2-mal κοινῶν „unrein machen“; 1QS VI, 16–17 par. 4QS<sup>b</sup> [4Q256] XI, 12: „Reinheit der Vielen“; 1QSa [1Q28a] II, 3–4 par. 4Qpap cryptA SE<sup>s</sup> [4Q249g] 3–7 l: „mit irgendeiner der menschlichen Unreinheiten“). Was die Speisegebote betrifft, so bewegt sich Jesus hier offenbar überhaupt an der Grenze dessen, was in der damaligen Zeit als jüdisch möglich erscheint. Das gilt auch in Fragen des Sabbats. Jesu Haltung zum Sabbat ist mit jener der Qumrangemeinde nicht vereinbar. Wenden wir uns zunächst dem zweifellos authentischen Logion Mk 2:27 zu, das wieder von der Schöpfung her argumentiert. In der Erzählung vom Ährenraufen am Sabbat, einem Apophthegma (Mk 2:23–28 par. Mt 12:1–8 und Lk 6:1–5), heißt es bei Markus in V. 27: „Der Sabbat ist wegen des Menschen geschaffen worden (ἐγένετο; der folgende zweite Teil des Satzes nimmt auf die Schöpfung Bezug)<sup>69</sup> und nicht der Mensch wegen des Sabbats.“<sup>70</sup> Schon im Markusevangelium ist das Wort in V. 28 in seiner Liberalität abgeschwächt; das Matthäus- und Lukasevangelium haben das Logion offensichtlich unabhängig voneinander gestrichen.<sup>71</sup> Gerne wird eine rabbinische Parallele zu diesem Wort zitiert, aber dort ist nicht, wie schon Ernst Lohmeyer

<sup>69</sup> Walter Bauer, „γίνομαι“, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur* (6. Aufl.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 316–321 (Eng. trans.: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* [überarbeitet und hrsg. von F. W. Danker auf der Basis von W. Bauers Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur; 3. Aufl.; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 196–199). Unter 2a schlägt Bauer als Übersetzung „angeordnet sein“ (Eng.: „be established“) vor, aber eine Übersetzung mit „geschaffen werden“ entspricht besser dem zweiten Teil des Satzes, wie oben gesagt, und damit aber auch der Kongruenz mit Jesu Verweisen auf die Schöpfung.

<sup>70</sup> Vgl. z. B. die ausführliche Diskussion dieses Logions bei Frans Neiryck, „Jesus and the Sabbath: Some Observations on Mark II, 27,“ in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, hrsg. J. Dupont, BETL 40 (Löwen: Leuven University Press, 1975), 227–270.

<sup>71</sup> Vgl. H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen*, 73–74.

erkannte,<sup>72</sup> allgemein vom Menschen die Rede, sondern spezieller von Israel, was im Blick auf Jesu Predigt durchaus einen Unterschied macht. Zu Ex 31 ([V. 12] „Und Jahwe sprach zu Mose:... [V. 14] ‚Ihr sollt den Sabbat halten, denn er ist für euch heilig‘“) heißt es im tannaitischen Midrasch Mekhilta de Rabbi Yischma'el (ed. Horowitz und Rabin, 2nd ed.) zu Ex 31:13 (wiederholt zu V. 14): „Euch ist der Sabbat übergeben worden (מסורה), und nicht ihr seid dem Sabbat übergeben“,<sup>73</sup> eben weil es Ausnahmen geben kann, wie der Kontext zu V. 13 sagt. Freilich wäre das Ährenraufen am Sabbat kaum eine zulässige Ausnahme (weder die Frage der ursprünglichen Zusammengehörigkeit von V. 27 mit V. 23–24<sup>74</sup> noch die halachische Frage des Ährenraufens am Sabbat kann hier weiter verfolgt werden). Es zeigt sich wieder, Jesus bewegt sich durchaus noch im Rahmen des damaligen Judentums, aber doch wohl eher an der Grenze. Genannt sei auch noch aus der Jesusüberlieferung die darauf folgende Sabbatgeschichte Mk 3:1–5 (par. Mt 12:9–13 und Lk 6:6–10),<sup>75</sup> die für den Jesus der Historie besonders charakteristisch zu sein scheint, weil die Erzählung schon bereits Gutestun am Sabbat mit Lebensrettung gleichsetzt. Lebensrettung am Sabbat war ja in jedem Fall erlaubt (siehe z. B. wiederum Mek. zu Ex 31:13). Jesus radikalisiert hyperbolisch in einer für ihn typischen Weise (vgl. nur Mk 10:25 par. Mt 19:24 und Lk 18:25) das Tun des Guten zur Lebensrettung und das Tun des Bösen zum Töten und führt so seine kritischen Beobachter in der Synagoge *ad absurdum*.

In der Qumrangemeinde herrschte dagegen strengste Sabbatobservanz, wie z. B. die in der Gemeinde (im weiteren Sinn) verfasste Damaskusschrift (CD) in X, 14–XI, 18 (teilweise par. in den Handschriften 4QD<sup>a,b,e,f</sup> [4Q266, 267, 270, 271]) zeigt. In CD XI, 13–14 (auch zum Teil in den Parallelhandschriften 4QD<sup>e,f</sup>) und

<sup>72</sup> Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, KEK 1.2 (17. Aufl. + *Ergänzungsheft* [3. Aufl. bearbeitet von Gerhard Saß]; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 66.

<sup>73</sup> Das Wort wird R. Schim'on b. M'enasja (um 180) zugeschrieben.

<sup>74</sup> Siehe H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen*, 73–76.

<sup>75</sup> Mk 3:6 ist nach meiner Auffassung der markinische Abschluss der Streitgespräche 2:1–3:5 (siehe H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen*, 18–24, 53–98, bes. 87–88). Vgl. zu Mk 3:1–5 Meier, „Historical Jesus“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“ bei 2008), bes. 304 (die Feststellung zu den synoptischen Heilungen am Sabbat „first manifestations of a rabbinic position“ ist einleuchtend, der Schluss auf generell nichthistorisch hingegen voreilig).

4QMiscellaneous Rules (4Q265) 6 5–6 gibt es das Verbot, einem Tier herauszuhelfen, das am Sabbat in eine Zisterne oder in eine Grube bzw. ins Wasser gefallen ist. CD XI, 13–14 lautet:

Niemand soll am Sabbat Vieh beim Gebären helfen. Und wenn es in eine Zisterne (14) oder in eine Grube fällt, soll man es am Sabbat nicht herausholen.

Diese Vorschrift wäre für Jesus so absurd, dass er in einem Wort in Q 14:5 ganz selbstverständlich von dem Gegenteil ausgeht.

Ausdrücklich von der Schöpfung her argumentiert Jesus auch in Mk 10:2–9 (par. Mt 19:3ff.) gegen die Möglichkeit der Ehescheidung, die „Mose“ einräume. Genau dieser Ansatz, mit der Schöpfung zu argumentieren, findet sich aber auch in ähnlichem Zusammenhang einmal in CD IV, 20–21 (par. 4QD<sup>d</sup> [4Q269] 3 2 und 6QD [6Q15] 1 2–3), wo außerdem auf die gleiche Bibelstelle Gen 1:27 zurückgegriffen wird. Wieder zeigt sich, wie sich die Argumentation bei Jesus und die in seiner jüdischen Umwelt ähneln können. Während Jesus in Mk 10:9 par. Mt 19:6 die Scheidung untersagt und in einem in Mk 10:11–12 par. Mt 19:9 und Q 16:18 überlieferten Jesuswort auch die Wiederverheiratung nach einer Scheidung (siehe auch 1. Kor 7:10–11), fordert die Qumrangemeinde—natürlich ohne Abgrenzung gegenüber Mose—für Männer, „in ihrem Leben“ (בַּחַיִּיהֶם) nur mit *einer* Frau verheiratet zu sein.<sup>76</sup> Die Scheidung wird für Qumranfromme jedenfalls nicht ausgeschlossen, wie CD XIII, 17–18 zusammen mit der Parallele 4QD<sup>a</sup> (4Q266) 9 III, 5–7 zeigt. Sollte die

<sup>76</sup> Oder ist etwa—philologisch bedenklich—gemeint: keine Wiederverheiratung, solange die Geschiedene lebt (so Broshi, „Matrimony“ [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“], 254), oder ist gar nur Polygamie verboten (so Schremer, „Qumran Polemic“ [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“], 160 und D. J. Harrington, „Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls“ [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“], 38). Der sprachliche Kontrast zu „Frauen“ legt eher nahe, dass mit dem maskulinen Suffix (trotz Vorkommen in femininer Bedeutung, z.B. in 4QMMT B 59 [4Q394 8 IV, 9 par.]) hier „Männer“ angesprochen sind. Von der Formulierung her wären Polygamie und Wiederverheiratung nach einer Scheidung oder dem Tod der Frau ausgeschlossen (gegen das Letztere könnte allerdings die vorqumranische Tempelrolle in 11QT<sup>a</sup> [11Q19] LVII, 24–25 [17–18 Yadin/Qimron] sprechen, wo speziell für den König Wiederverheiratung nach dem Tod seiner einen Frau ausdrücklich vorgesehen ist; die Scheidung ist für den Israeliten gemäß 11QT<sup>a</sup> [11Q19] LIV, 11–12 [4–5 Yadin/Qimron] nicht ausgeschlossen). Die vielfältige Diskussion insbesondere über den CD-Text kann hier nicht weiter dokumentiert werden (vgl. zum CD-Text etwa Meier, „Historical Jesus“ [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“], bes. 73–75). Speziell zur Frage der Scheidung siehe außer Meier in dem eben zitierten Aufsatz S. 64–79 noch Tom Holmén, „Divorce in CD 4:20–5:2 and in 11QT 57:17–18: Some Remarks on the Pertinence of the Question,” *RevQ* 18 (Nr. 71, 1998): 397–408, und überhaupt zu den Textproblemen jetzt auch Lichtenberger, „Schöpfung und Ehe“, Doering, „Marriage“ und Kister, „Divorce,” 199–212 (siehe zu allen drei Aufsätzen „Ausgewählte Literatur“).

zurückhaltende Abgrenzung gegenüber Mose in Mk 10:3–4 (par. Mt 19:7–8) authentisch sein, würde das gut zu Jesu Gesetzesverständnis passen. Ist es Zufall, dass Jesus weder vom Exodus noch vom Sinai-bund mit Israel her seine Botschaft entfaltet?

Zu der antithetischen Form der sog. Antithesen in der Bergpredigt (Mt 5:21–48), von denen insbesondere die erste und zweite authentisch sein dürften, gibt es wiederum eine gewisse Parallele. Jesus stellt ein „Ich aber sage euch“ einer anderen Tradition entgegen. In der aus der Frühzeit der Qumrangemeinde stammenden Streitschrift 4QMMT<sup>a-f</sup> (4Q394–399)<sup>77</sup> wird die gegnerische Meinung öfter mit „wir (aber) sagen“ abgelehnt: B 55,<sup>78</sup> B 64–65,<sup>79</sup> B 73.<sup>80, 81</sup>

### 2.3. Das Liebesgebot

Auch das Liebesgebot spielt in der Qumrangemeinde eine herausragende Rolle: Das Gebot in Lev 19:18 „Du sollst Deinen Nächsten lieben wie dich selbst“ klingt in CD VI, 20–21 (par. 4QD<sup>d</sup> [4Q269] 4 II, 2–3 und 6QD [6Q15] 4 1–3) in der Fassung „man liebe seinen Bruder“ (Lev 19:17) „wie sich selbst“ an; aber auch an den Fremden wird hier gedacht: „man nehme sich... des Fremden an“. In allen kleineren sog. Tugendkatalogen in 1QS begegnet die Liebe als „treue Liebe“ (אהבת חסד; II, 24; V, 4, 25; VIII, 2; X, 26), und in dem großen Tugendkatalog in IV, 3ab–6a findet sich in Z. 3 „unendliche Güte“ (טוב עולמים); in allen Fällen ist zweifellos an die Gemeindemitglieder als Gegenüber gedacht. Anders steht es mit der Feindesliebe. Dieses Gebot Jesu in Mt 5:44–45 par. Lk 6:27, 35 wird immer wieder mit Sätzen der Qumrangemeinde kontrastiert, weil 1QS ausdrücklich davon spricht, „alle Kinder des Lichts zu lieben, aber alle Kinder der Finsternis zu hassen“ (I, 9–10; siehe auch IX, 21–22).<sup>82</sup> Dass Jesus sich hier gegen die Qumrangemeinde wendet, lässt sich jedoch keineswegs

<sup>77</sup> Die Bezeichnung für 4Q398 lautet genauer: 4QpapMMT<sup>e</sup>. Gehörte zu MMT auch 4QcryptA MMT<sup>g</sup> (4Q313)?

<sup>78</sup> 4QMMT<sup>a</sup> (4Q394) 8 IV, 5 par. 4QMMT<sup>c</sup> (4Q396) 1–2 II, 7.

<sup>79</sup> 4QMMT<sup>c</sup> (4Q396) 1–2 III, 4–5 par. 4QMMT<sup>a</sup> (4Q394) 8 IV, 14.

<sup>80</sup> 4QMMT<sup>c</sup> (4Q396) 1–2 IV, 2 par. 4QMMT<sup>d</sup> (4Q397) 6–13 11.

<sup>81</sup> Neben öfter „wir aber meinen“. Vgl. „ihr aber wisst“ in B 68, 80; C 8 (hier wird auf die nähere Kennzeichnung der Fragmente verzichtet). Vgl. in der rabbinischen Literatur z. B. t. Bik. (ed. Rengstorf) 1, 2 („Aber ich sage“). Zur rabbinischen Formel „aber ich sage“ siehe Berndt Schaller, „The Character and Function of the Antitheses in Matt 5:21–48 in the Light of Rabbinical Exegetic Disputes“, in *The Sermon on the Mount and Its Jewish Setting*, hrsg. H.-J. Becker und S. Ruzer, CRB 60 (Paris: Gabalda, 2005), 70–88: 77–78.

<sup>82</sup> Die letztere Stelle ist teilweise auch in den Parallelhandschriften 4QS<sup>b,d,e</sup> (4Q256, 258, 259) erhalten.

erhärten. Dieser „Hass“ in Texten der Qumrangemeinde geschieht aus religiösen Gründen und hat einen dualistischen Hintergrund, der letztlich ein Jesus fremdes Gottesbild voraussetzt. Er ist von dem bei Jesus abgelehnten Hass zu unterscheiden, der allgemein menschlich zu deuten ist.<sup>83</sup> Die ausdrückliche Feindesliebe in dieser überfordernenden, von der Gegenwart des Eschaton her (siehe unten in Abschnitt 2.4) zu verstehenden Formulierung, wie sie bei Jesus begegnet, hat in der jüdischen Literatur der Antike keine Parallele<sup>84</sup> und ist zweifellos auf Jesus selbst zurückzuführen, der offenbar wieder von der Schöpfung her argumentiert, zumal selbst die frühen Christen ihre Schwierigkeiten mit dem Gebot der Feindesliebe hatten.<sup>85</sup> Vermutlich lautete der für die Logienquelle aus Mt 5:44–45 + Lk 6:(27), 35 zu gewinnende Text etwa so (in Mt 5:45 liegt gegenüber Lk 6:35 wohl die ursprünglichere Fassung vor; die Fassungen, die die beiden Evangelien benutzten, mögen freilich vielleicht schon unterschiedlich gewesen sein).<sup>86</sup>

ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν,  
καὶ ἔσεσθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς,  
ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς  
καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους.

Liebt eure Feinde,  
und ihr werdet Kinder eures Vaters im Himmel sein,  
denn er lässt seine Sonne aufgehen über Böse und Gute  
und lässt regnen über Gerechte und Ungerechte.

Das Gebot der Nächstenliebe aus Lev 19:18 lässt sich—in der Damaskusschrift immerhin anklingend (siehe oben)—auch für den historischen Jesus feststellen, und zwar im Apophthegma der Frage nach

<sup>83</sup> Anders liegt es mit dem rabbinischen Midrasch Sifra Lev 19:18, wo der Hass als „Rache“ und „Zorn“ gegenüber Heiden erlaubt ist (siehe dazu Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, „Das Liebesgebot Jesu als Tora und als Evangelium: Zur Feindesliebe und zur christlichen und jüdischen Auslegung der Bergpredigt“, in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus*, hrsg. H. Frankemölle und K. Kertelge [Freiburg: Herder, 1989], 194–230: 206–209; 208 zu den herangezogenen Textausgaben).

<sup>84</sup> Siehe dazu H.-W. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot Jesu“, 224–226.

<sup>85</sup> Siehe H.-W. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot Jesu“, 196–197. Ich war natürlich der Meinung, dass das von mir aufgezeigte weitgehende Fehlen des Gebots der Feindesliebe in christlichen Texten vor der Mitte des 2. Jh. n. Chr. Relevanz für die Frage der Authentizität des Jesuswortes hat, obgleich ich es in der nachfolgenden Behandlung der Differenz dieses Wortes zu zeitgenössischen Texten und der Authentizität des Logions (S. 224–226) nicht mehr ausdrücklich zur Sprache brachte (zu Tom Holmén, „Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research“, in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, hrsg. B. Chilton und C. A. Evans, NTS 28 [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 47–80: 69 Anm. 87).

<sup>86</sup> Vgl. im Einzelnen zu der Rekonstruktion H.-W. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot Jesu“, 223–224. Eine etwas andere Rekonstruktion bei Robinson u.a., *Critical Edition of Q*.



dem obersten Gebot (Mk 12:28–34 par. Mt 22:34–40 und Lk 10:25–28).<sup>87</sup> Es handelt sich hier nicht, wie man früher meinte, um ein „Erbstück aus dem hellenistischen Judentum“,<sup>88</sup> genauer aus dem griechisch sprechenden Judentum. Diese Sicht wurde mir schon Ende der achtziger Jahre fraglich. Jesus geht hier offenbar nicht von der hellenistischen Verbindung von „Frömmigkeit“ und „Menschenliebe“ oder ähnlich als „Inbegriff des göttlichen Willens“<sup>89</sup> aus, sondern ordnet vielmehr betont die Nächstenliebe (Lev 19:18) der Basis des Judentums, dem schon damals herausgehobenen Sch<sup>c</sup>ma Jisrael (Höre, Israel), das mit Dtn 6:4–9 beginnt, zu. Die Verbindung der beiden Zitate Dtn 6:5 und Lev 19:18 ist in zeitgenössischen jüdischen Texten, soweit ich sehe, nicht belegt, das Nebeneinander von Gottesfurcht und Liebeswerken oder ähnlich in hebräisch-aramäischen Texten selten (z. B. Jub 36:7–8 = 4QpapJub<sup>h</sup> [4Q223–224] Unit 2 II, 48–49 [weithin ergänzt]). Dann spricht vieles dafür, dass wir es hier mit einem authentischen Jesuswort zu tun haben, das die Rolle der Nächstenliebe in besonderer Weise zu einem herausragenden Grundsatz erhebt.<sup>90</sup>

#### 2.4. Die Eschatologie

Besonders überraschend erwies sich die Hilfestellung der Qumrantexte für ein besseres Verständnis der Eschatologie Jesu. Wie wir jetzt wesentlich sicherer erkennen können, enthält diese sowohl futurische Aussagen als auch solche, die dieses von der Zukunft erwartete Heil schon für die Gegenwart behaupten. Bis zur Entdeckung der Qumrantexte meinte man, dass Jesus gegenüber seiner jüdischen Umwelt entweder ein völlig neues Verständnis von Eschatologie gehabt habe (Werner Georg Kümmel)<sup>91</sup> oder dass diese Interpretation der

<sup>87</sup> Das Matthäusevangelium leitet damit auch das Gebot der Feindesliebe ein (5:43) und fügt es Dekaloggeboten in 19:19 zu. Die zahlreichen „minor agreements“ in der Matthäus- und Lukasfassung beruhen offenbar auf einer jüngeren Fassung des Apophthegmas.

<sup>88</sup> Christoph Burchard, „Das doppelte Liebesgebot in der frühen christlichen Überlieferung“, in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde*, hrsg. E. Lohse (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 39–62: 57. Der Vergleich des Zitats von Dtn 6:5 mit der Hebräischen Bibel und der LXX kann dafür sprechen, dass nur das Zitat von Dtn 6:5 im Munde Jesu (ohne *διάνοια* „Denken“ und die sonstige Angleichung an die LXX), aber nicht die Wiederholung durch den Schriftgelehrten authentisch ist.

<sup>89</sup> Burchard, „Liebesgebot“.

<sup>90</sup> Vgl. H.-W. Kuhn, „Liebesgebot Jesu“, 223 Anm. 76a.

<sup>91</sup> *Verheißung und Erfüllung: Untersuchungen zur eschatologischen Verkündigung Jesu*, ATANT 6 (3. Aufl.; Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1956).

Eschatologie Jesu falsch sei, da sie sich im zeitgenössischen Judentum nicht belegen lasse (Rudolf Bultmann).<sup>92</sup> Vor einiger Zeit ging zwar das sog. Jesus-Seminar in Nordamerika sogar von einem völligen Fehlen von Eschatologie und Apokalyptik bei Jesus aus,<sup>93</sup> aber diese Ansicht lässt sich exegetisch nicht halten (man vergleiche nur die Bitte des Vaterunsers „Dein Reich komme“ in Q 11:2 und einige der Gleichnisse Jesu). Zu den wichtigsten authentischen Jesusworten, die von der Gegenwart des erst in der Zukunft erwarteten Heils sprechen, gehören Q 11:20 (hier wird gesagt, dass mit Jesu Dämonenbannungen schon die Gottesherrschaft angebrochen sei), ferner Q 10:23–24 (die Seligpreisungen der Augen- und Ohrenzeugen), Q 7:22 (Schilderung der eschatologischen Heilszeit mit Motiven des Jesajabuches) und Mk 2:19αβ par. Lk 5:34 (Aufhebung des Fastens).<sup>94</sup>

Wegen des Vergleichs mit den Qumrantexten gleich unten seien hier die sechs Aussagen über die Heilszeit im Mund Jesu zitiert (Q 7:22), die alle bis auf die Reinigung der Aussätzigen ihre Parallele vor allem im Jesajabuch haben; das gilt auch für die Auferstehung der Toten, wie oft übersehen wird. In den alttestamentlichen Stellen ist in der Regel Gott das Subjekt. Der Text in der Logienquelle dürfte etwa so gelautet haben (wieweit der Kontext in Q 7:18–23 ursprünglich ist, braucht hier nicht diskutiert zu werden):<sup>95</sup>

τυφλοὶ ἀνοβλέπουσιν<sup>96</sup>  
καὶ χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν,<sup>97</sup>

<sup>92</sup> „Zur eschatologischen Verkündigung Jesu“, *ThLZ* 72 (1947): 271–274.

<sup>93</sup> Es wurde 1979 von Robert W. Funk gegründet und begann 1985 mit den offiziellen Treffen. Per Abstimmung unter Zuhilfenahme farbiger Kügelchen kam es zu seinen Ergebnissen. Siehe Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1993); Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

<sup>94</sup> Siehe zu den vier Logien: H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 189–204, bes. 193–199.

<sup>95</sup> Auch für Robinson u.a., *Critical Edition of Q* lautet der Text so.

<sup>96</sup> Vgl. Jes 29:18b (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): עיני עורים תראינה „die Augen der Blinden sehen“; Jes 35:5a (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): תפקחנה עיני עורים „es werden die Augen der Blinden aufgetan“; Jes 42:7a (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): עינים עורות (1Q: לפקח) לפקח „blinde Augen zu öffnen“ (vom Gottesknecht ausgesagt); Ps 146:8a פקח עורים „er öffnet die (Augen der) Blinden“. Wegen des gleich zu besprechenden Qumrantextes wird der hebräische Text zitiert; die gegebenenfalls nachträgliche Nähe zur LXX braucht hier nicht diskutiert zu werden.

<sup>97</sup> Vgl. Jes 35:6a (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): פסח (1Q: כאיל) ידלג כאיל „es springt der Lahme wie ein Hirsch“.

λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται  
καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν,<sup>98</sup>  
καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται<sup>99</sup>  
καὶ πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται<sup>100</sup>

Blinde sehen wieder,  
und Lahme gehen umher,  
Aussätzige werden rein,  
und Taube hören,  
und Tote stehen auf,  
ja Armen wird eine frohe Botschaft verkündet.

Das hier zitierte Jesuswort über die Gegenwart des Eschaton (Q 7:22) hat nun eine Parallele in 4Q521,<sup>101</sup> wobei aber dieser Qumrantext in traditioneller Weise nur von der Zukunft spricht. In dem Text der Spruchquelle Q malt Jesus, wie wir gesehen haben, vor allem mit Worten des Jesajabuches (35:5–6; 29:18–19; 26:19; 61:1) ein Bild des künftigen eschatologischen Heils, das er als bereits gegenwärtig versteht. Der erste Höhepunkt der Aufzählung der eschatologischen Heilsereignisse ist die Auferstehung der Toten, der eigentliche Höhepunkt aber Jesu Botschaft an die Armen (es geht nicht einfach um eine Aufzählung der Taten Jesu, sondern um eschatologische Bilder). Bei dem Qumrantext handelt es sich um Fragmente einer Schrift, die zurzeit den vielleicht nicht zutreffenden Namen „Messianic Apocalypse“ trägt;<sup>102</sup> der Text muss nicht in der Qumrangemeinde entstanden sein. Fragment 2 II enthält zwei Listen, die ebenfalls mit

<sup>98</sup> Vgl. Jes 29:18a (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): **וּשְׁמַעוּ... הַחֲרָשִׁים** „und es hören... die Tauben“; Jes 35:5b (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): **חֲרָשִׁים תִּפְתַּחְנָה** (1Q: **וְאוֹזְנִי וְאוֹזְנִי**) „und die Ohren der Tauben werden geöffnet.“

<sup>99</sup> Vgl. Jes 26:19a (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): **יַחֲיוּ מִתֵּיךְ (מִיַּתִּיךְ) נִבְלָתִי יִקְוֹמוּן הַקִּיצוֹ** (1Q: **וְרִנְנוּ (וְרִנְנוּ) וְרִנְנוּ (וְרִנְנוּ) וְרִנְנוּ (וְרִנְנוּ)**) „deine Toten werden leben, meine Leichen werden auferstehen; wacht auf und jubelt, die ihr im Staub liegt“ (1Q: es werden jubeln und aufwachen, die im Staub liegen).

<sup>100</sup> Vgl. Jes 61:1b (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a,b</sup>), von einem Propheten ausgesagt: **לְבַשׂר עֲנוּיִם** „er hat mich gesandt, den Armen die frohe Botschaft zu verkünden“; Jes 29:19b (BHS und 1QJes<sup>a</sup>): **וְאֲבִינֵי אָדָם... יִגִּילוּ** „und die armen Menschen... jubeln“.

<sup>101</sup> Siehe aus der Fülle von Literatur zu diesem Text M. Becker, „Die ‚messianische Apokalypse‘ 4Q521“ und Novakovic, „4Q521“ (siehe für beide Aufsätze „Ausgewählte Literatur“).

<sup>102</sup> Mit **מְשִׁיחוֹ** (zu lesen als **מְשִׁיחוֹ**) „seine Gesalbten“ und wohl nicht als **מְשִׁיחוֹ** „sein Gesalbter“ [= der Messias] in 2 II, 1 sind hier sicherlich die biblischen Propheten gemeint, entsprechend dem Plural „Heilige“ in der zweiten Zeile des Parallelismus membrorum (Z. 2) und entsprechend dem Plural **מְשִׁיחֵיהֶם** „und alle (!) ihre (was ist das Bezugswort?) Gesalbten“ in Z. 9 von Fragment 8. Falcetta, „Logion of Matthew“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), bes. 228–229, übersetzt 2 II, 1: „his messiah(s)“.

biblischen Aussagen das eschatologische Heil beschreiben, dessen Subjekt hier aber Gott ist (siehe Z. 5; auch in der zweiten Liste gemäß Z. 11). Die Übereinstimmung betrifft in der ersten Liste (Z. 4–8) die Heilung von Blindheit (Z. 8):

...	
<sup>103</sup> פוקח עורים	τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν
...	...
...	
er öffnet blinde (Augen),	Blinde sehen wieder,
...	...

In der zweiten Liste (Z. 12ff.) liegen folgende Übereinstimmungen vor. Hier findet sich das gleiche Nacheinander von Totenaufstehung gemäß Jes 26:19 und Predigt an die Armen gemäß Jes 61:1.<sup>104</sup>

...	...
<sup>105</sup> ומתים יחיה	καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται
<sup>106</sup> ענוים יבשר	καὶ πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται.
...	
...	...
und Tote wird er lebendig machen,	und Tote stehen auf,
Armen wird er eine frohe Botschaft verkünden,	ja Armen wird eine frohe Botschaft verkündet.
...	

Hinter dem Jesuswort und hinter dem Text 4Q521, der wohl von außen in die Qumrangemeinde kam, dürfte eine gemeinsame jüdische Tradition der Beschreibung der Heilszeit stehen.

Wir wenden uns jetzt noch den eschatologischen Gegenwartsausagen zu. Während die in den Qumrantexten öfter begegnende Gemeinschaft der Gemeinde mit den Engeln<sup>107</sup> an sich noch keine Vorwegnahme einer futurischen Heilserwartung bedeutet, ist jedoch von einem Selbstverständnis der Gemeinde als Tempel Gottes her

<sup>103</sup> Siehe Ps 146:8 (BHS): פוקח עורים „er öffnet die (Augen der) Blinden“.

<sup>104</sup> Der Qumrantext fährt nach der Botschaft an die Armen mit weiteren Aussagen fort, so dass diese hier nicht der Höhepunkt ist.

<sup>105</sup> Vgl. oben Anm. 99.

<sup>106</sup> Vgl. oben Anm. 100.

<sup>107</sup> Z. B. 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 22–24 (III, 21–23 Sukenik); XIX, 16f. (XI, 13f. Sukenik); 4QAgescreat B (4Q181) 1 II, 3–4; auch die wohl doch aus der Qumrangemeinde stammende Engelliturgie (ShirShabb).

(siehe bes. 1QS VIII, 5, 8–9) deutlich, dass für sie die Gegenwart nicht mehr, wie in der Apokalyptik, nur heilsleer sein kann. Das ist offenbar der Hintergrund dafür, dass die Qumrangemeinde futurisch-eschatologische Vorstellungen in die Gegenwart transponiert, wie ich vor einigen Jahrzehnten zu zeigen versuchte.<sup>108</sup> Das geschieht besonders deutlich in Gemeindeliedern in 1Q/4QH und im Schlusslied von 1QS (genauer XI, 2–9 par. 4QS<sup>d</sup> [4Q258] XII). Aus den oben genannten Jesusworten sei hier beispielhaft Q 11:20 zitiert:<sup>109</sup>

εἰ δὲ ἐν δακτύλῳ θεοῦ  
 ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια,  
 ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς  
 ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

Wenn ich durch den Finger Gottes  
 die Dämonen austreibe,  
 dann ist (bereits) zu euch gelangt  
 die Königsherrschaft Gottes.

Das Wort wurde einzeln überliefert, wie der parallele Kontext im Markusevangelium zeigt. Das Verb φθάνειν („hingelangen“) sollte deutlich von dem Verb ἐγγίζειν („nahekommen“)<sup>110</sup> unterschieden werden. Hinter φθάνειν könnte das aramäische Verb נִשְׁמַח/נִשְׁמַח „hinzugelangen“ stehen (in den Qumrantexten begegnet das Verb z. B. in 4QEnGiants<sup>a</sup> ar [4Q203] 8 12). Die „Königsherrschaft Gottes“ begegnet häufig in den Qumrantexten,<sup>111</sup> aber niemals ist dort, soweit ich sehe, vom (eschatologischen) Kommen der Gottesherrschaft die Rede. Ich konnte eschatologische Gegenwartsaussagen in mehreren Texten der Qumrangemeinde feststellen.<sup>112</sup> Die Untersuchung kann hier nicht auf weitere Qumrantexte ausgedehnt werden. Ich nenne nur zusätzlich einen Text aus 4QH, der erst nach meiner früheren Untersuchung zu den eschatologischen Gegenwartsaussagen bekannt wurde und die damaligen Deutungen bestätigt. Zunächst seien aus den Gemeindeliedern in 1Q/4QH zwei schon damals herangezogene Texte angeführt, die offenbar in Abhängigkeit voneinander entstanden sind, d.h., 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX, 13–17 (XI, 10–14 Sukenik) scheint 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 21–24

<sup>108</sup> H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“).

<sup>109</sup> Siehe dazu H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), bes. 190–193. Der hier angenommene Q-Wortlaut entspricht Robinson u.a., *Critical Edition of Q*.

<sup>110</sup> Vgl. Mk 1:15 (par. Mt 4:17); Q 10:9; Lk 10:11.

<sup>111</sup> Siehe oben in Abschnitt 1.

<sup>112</sup> H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“).

(III, 20–23 Sukenik) vorauszusetzen.<sup>113</sup> Die Texte stammen aus den beiden fast vollständig erhaltenen Gemeindeliedern 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 20–37 (III, 19–36 Sukenik) und 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX, 6–17 (XI, 3–14 Sukenik).<sup>114</sup> Bei den beiden im Folgenden nebeneinandergestellten Abschnitten (mit jeweils fortlaufendem Text) geht es hinsichtlich der eschatologischen Gegenwartsaussagen um Totenaufstehung (1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX) und um Neuschöpfung (1QH<sup>a</sup> XI und XIX). Die Parallelen in beiden Texten sind durch unterschiedliche Schrift gekennzeichnet (sie gehen aber noch über den hier abgedruckten Text hinaus).

	1QH <sup>a</sup> XI, 21–24 (III, 20–23 Sukenik)	1QH <sup>a</sup> XIX, 13–17 (XI, 10–14 Sukenik)
a		(siehe g) טהרתה אנוש מפשע...
b		...
c		...
d		...
e	...	...

<sup>113</sup> In meiner Untersuchung *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), hatte ich außer den oben genannten Zeilen aus dem Schlusslied von 1Q/4QS und den gleich unten zu besprechenden Liedabschnitten in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI und XIX noch das Lied 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX, 18ff. (XI, 15ff. Sukenik) und den Liedabschnitt 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII, 27–38 (XV, 14–25 Sukenik) behandelt (siehe vor allem VII, 29–30 [XV, 16–17 Sukenik]). Der erstere Text in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX, 18ff. hat nun Parallelen in 4QH<sup>a,b</sup>; nach Stegemann/Schuller, in DJD 40 (2009), 252 bzw. 110–111, reicht das Lied selbst bis XX, 6 (XII, 3 Sukenik) und der letztere Text in 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII, 27–38 gehöre zu dem Lied VII, 21–VIII, 41 (XV, 8–XVI, 20 Sukenik). Hingewiesen sei auch noch auf 4QAgasCreat B (4Q181) 1 II, 3–4: Einige der „Menschen“ seien bereits auf dem „Platz zum ewigen Leben“ (במעמד לחיי עולם).

<sup>114</sup> Zu den beiden Liedern siehe die Details in H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), bes. 44–66 und 78–90 (zur Abhängigkeit der beiden Texte voneinander S. 80–85). Nach Stegemann/Schuller, in DJD 40 (2009), 242–243, reicht das Lied in Kolumne XIX von Z. 6 bis XX, 6; XIX, 18 stelle nur einen Abschnittsanfang dar. Schon formgeschichtliche Gründe legen aber einen Neuanfang in XIX, 18 (Z. 15 Sukenik) nahe (siehe Kuhn, *Enderwartung*, 94 ff.). Es wäre außerdem die einzige Stelle in den Hodajot, an der mit אודך / אודכה („ich will dich loben“), das in den Hodajot immer als erstes Wort in einer neuen Zeile steht (11- bis 12-mal), nicht auch ein neues Lied anfängt. Könnte der vermeintliche Buchstabenrest vor א nicht ein besonders dunkler Lederfleck sein (wie solche sehr dunklen Stellen im Kontext gleich mehrmals vorhanden sind)? Die Ergänzung <sup>g</sup>[ואנ] am Anfang von Z. 18 ist von diversen Fotografien (!) her (Sukenik- u. Stegemann/Schuller-Ed. bzw. das vergrößerungsfähige Infrarotfoto SHR 4249 in Tov, *Electronic Library* [s.o. Anm. 4]) paläografisch zwar möglich (anscheinend Buchstabenrest, Größe der Lücke, andernfalls eigentümlich kleine Lücke am Zeilenbeginn), aber die Wendung אודך / אודכה / אודכה ist außerdem in den Hodajot und sog. hodajotähnlichen Texten nicht belegt (die Ergänzung in 4Q511 [4QShir<sup>b</sup>], 28+29, 2 ist äußerst fraglich). In der vorangehenden Zeile gibt es nach dem Ende des Textes, der etwa 40 Prozent der Zeile ausmacht, jedenfalls aufgrund diverser Fotografien, keinen wirklichen Hinweis auf weiteren Text.

Table (cont.)

	1QH <sup>a</sup> XI, 21–24 (III, 20–23 Sukenik)	1QH <sup>a</sup> XIX, 13–17 (XI, 10–14 Sukenik)
f	לאשר יצרתה מעפר לסוד עולם	להרים מעפר תולעת מתים לסוד א[מתכה]
g	ורוח נעוה טהרתה מפשע רב (siehe a)	ומרוח נעוה לבינת[כ]ה
h	...	...
i	...	...
j	עם רוחות דעת (siehe k)...	[[הויה]] כול [הויה] ... [הויה] נהיה
k	להלל שמכה ביחד ר[נ]ה	ועם ידעים ביחד רנה
a		... du hast den Menschen vom Verbrechen gereinigt (siehe g),
b		...
c		...
d		...
e	...	...
f	für den, den du <i>aus dem Staub</i> <i>heraus</i> geschaffen hast für eine ewige Gemeinschaft.	damit du <i>aus dem Staub heraus</i> das Totengewürm zur Gemein- schaft [deiner Wahrheit] erhebst
g	Damit hast du <i>verkehrten Geist</i> von großem <i>Verbrechen gereinigt</i> (siehe a),	und weg von <i>verkehrtem Geist</i> zu deiner Einsich[t]
h	...	
i	...	
j	... <i>mit den Geistern der Erkenntnis</i> (siehe k),	[...(und)] erneuert zu werden mit allem, was geworden ist (oder: was ist und sein wird)
k	deinen Namen zu preisen in <i>gemeinsamem Jubel</i>	und <i>mit den Wissenden in</i> <i>gemeinsamem Jubel</i> zu sein

In der Diskussion um den Text in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI ging es vor allem darum, ob *יצרתה מעפר* („du hast aus dem Staub heraus geschaffen“) an die erste Schöpfung des Menschen bzw. seine Geburt oder an die eschatologische Neuschöpfung zu denken ist, die dann schon mit dem Eintritt in die Gemeinde stattfindet. Diese Deutung hatte bereits Karl Georg Kuhn vor über einem halben Jahrhundert vorgeschlagen.<sup>115</sup> Vom Kontext her, von der theologischen Sprache der Qumrangemeinde her und aufgrund der vermutlichen Parallele in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX ist

<sup>115</sup> Karl Georg Kuhn, „Die in Palästina gefundenen hebräischen Texte und das Neue Testament“, *ZTK* 47 (1950): 192–211: 201 Anm. 7.

eine klare Entscheidung möglich: Die auf Zeile f folgende Zeile in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI stellt wegen der Inversion des Verbs<sup>116</sup> zweifellos eine Deutung der vorangehenden Zeile dar, d.h., die Schöpfung „aus dem Staub heraus“ wird als Sündenvergebung interpretiert. Bekanntlich ist auch im biblischen und rabbinischen Hebräisch ein „von neuem“ oder „wiederum“ zu ergänzen, wenn der Gedanke der Neuschöpfung verbal ausgedrückt wird.<sup>117</sup> Dass **מעפר** sich auf das irdische Dasein beziehen kann, ist in den Texten der Qumrangemeinde eindeutig zu belegen (siehe den gleich unten zitierten Text 4QH<sup>a</sup> [4Q427] IV, 8 und ferner 1QM XIV, 14 par. 4QM<sup>a</sup> [4Q491] 8–10 I, 12) und hat schon in der Hebräischen Bibel seine Vorläufer.<sup>118</sup> Vor allem der Text in 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII, 29–30 (XV, 16–17 Sukenik) aus einem Gemeindelied zeigt, dass **מעפר** „aus dem Staub heraus“ bzw. „weg vom Staub“ und **מבשר** „weg vom Fleisch“ in der theologischen Sprache der Gemeinde quasi synonym verwendet werden können: **ותרם מבשר כבודו** „und so hast du (mit dem Eintritt in die Gemeinde) weg vom Fleisch seine Herrlichkeit aufgerichtet“.<sup>119</sup> Neben dem Kontext der in Frage stehenden Wendung und sprachlichen Beobachtungen wird diese Deutung auch durch die vermutliche Parallele in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX bestätigt: Der Psalmist in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX benutzt das Vokabular der Zeile f in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI dazu, um von der Totenaufstehung zu sprechen, eine Vorstellung, die nun ebenfalls in einem Qumrantext eindeutig bezeugt ist (siehe den oben zitierten Text 4Q521 2 II, 12). Dass es sich hier ebenfalls um eine Gegenwartsaussage handelt, zeigt wiederum die folgende Zeile, die die Totenaufweckung als Weggang von einem verkehrten Geist zur göttlichen Weisheit deutet, was wie die Sündenvergebung den Eintritt in die Gemeinde beschreibt (vgl. für den Eintritt in die Gemeinde die sog. Heilspferkta in den Gemeindeliedern).<sup>120</sup> Darüber hinaus führt der Psalmist zusätzlich in der Zeile j die Neuschöpfung

<sup>116</sup> Siehe dazu Emil Kautzsch, *Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebräische Grammatik* (28. Aufl.; Leipzig: Vogel, 1909), § 142; siehe auch H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 21 Anm. 3.

<sup>117</sup> In der Hebräischen Bibel und in der rabbinischen Literatur fehlt ein Wort für „neu“, wenn auf eine Neuschöpfung Bezug genommen wird (z. B. Ps 102:19: **עם נברא** „das Volk, das [neu] erschaffen wird“).

<sup>118</sup> Siehe H.-W. Kuhn, „Qumran Texts and the Historical Jesus“ (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), bes. die Tabelle auf S. 580.

<sup>119</sup> Siehe zu diesem Lied H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 103–112.

<sup>120</sup> Siehe H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), bes. 11.



ein,<sup>121</sup> die zu einer Gemeinschaft mit den Engeln im eschatologischen Jubel führt (Zeile k). Ob man die Auferstehung und die Neuschöpfung mit dem Eintritt in die Gemeinde als reale Erfahrung oder als bildliche Rede versteht, sei einer angemessenen Berücksichtigung des hebräischen Denkens überlassen.<sup>122</sup>

Der oben erwähnte, erst später bekannt gewordene Text ist ein Lied, das am vollständigsten in 4Q erhalten ist: 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) II, 18–V, 3 (= 3 4–8 I, 3) par. 1QH<sup>a</sup> XXV, 34–XXVII, ca. 3<sup>123</sup> (und weitere Parallelstücke in 4Q). Wie immer das wegen der „Self-Glorification“ des Ich in 4QH<sup>a</sup> III, 6–13 (= 7 I, 6–13) (par. 1QH<sup>a</sup> XXVI, 6–9 und 4QSelf-Glorification Hymn 4Q471b [= 4QH<sup>e</sup>] 1a–d 3–10) schwer zu deutende Lied zu interpretieren ist, in dem gleich zitierten Satz ist jedenfalls allgemein der Qumranfromme gemeint, der die Bezeichnung „Armer“ (אביון) trägt. Der Text in 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) IV, 7–9 (= 7 II, 7–9) par. 4QH<sup>e</sup> (4Q431) II, 16–18 (= 2 6–8) und 1QH<sup>a</sup> XXVI, 26–28 (= 1QH<sup>a</sup> 7 II, 2–3 [Sukenik]) lautet:

Groß ist Gott, der [Wunderbares] wirkt,  
 (8) denn er erniedrigt den hochmütigen Geist(?) gänzlich,  
 aber erhebt aus dem Staub heraus den Armen zur  
 [ewigen Höhe] (וירם מעפר אביון לרום עולם)  
 (9) und bis zu den Wolken macht er ihn an Hochsein überlegen,  
 so dass er sich zusammen mit den göttlichen Wesen in einer  
 gemeinsamen Gemeinde befindet.

Die Versetzung des „Armen“ in den Himmel begegnet hier wie auch in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 20–21 (III, 19–20 Sukenik); an der zitierten Stelle ist zusätzlich wichtig, dass die in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 22 (III, 21 Sukenik) im Zusammenhang der Neuschöpfung gebrauchte Wendung „aus dem Staub heraus“ (מעפר) auch hier begegnet, wo natürlich nicht die erste Schöpfung bzw. die Geburt des Menschen gemeint sein kann.

In der besonderen Ausprägung des Verständnisses der Gegenwart, wie es in Gemeindetexten aus Qumran und bei Jesus vorliegt, besteht kein Zusammenhang. Die eschatologisch-gegenwärtigen Aussagen

<sup>121</sup> Das Hitpael hat hier passivischen Sinn (siehe die ausführliche Begründung in H.-W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung* [siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“], 84 Anm. 7). Eventuell ist der vorhandene Text wegen eines vielleicht zu ergänzenden Buchstabens am Anfang von Z. 16 (Z. 13 Sukenik), wie oben vorgeschlagen, zu lesen (vgl. 1QM XVII, 5).

<sup>122</sup> Siehe Christoph Barth, *Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon, CH: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947).

<sup>123</sup> So Stegemann/Schuller, DJD 40 (2009), 310.

der Qumrantexte gründen in der Heilsgegenwart Gottes auf Grund des Selbstverständnisses der Gemeinde, und sie ist der Ort, an dem schon das künftige Heil präsent ist. Ganz anders bei Jesus: Die Verkündigung der Gegenwart der Königsherrschaft Gottes gründet in dem Anspruch Jesu, dass in seinem Wirken Gottes Herrsein aufgerichtet wird. Ein direkter Zusammenhang zwischen Jesus und der Qumrangemeinde ist hier also nicht gegeben.

### 3. *Jesus und der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit*

Die äußeren Umstände beider Leben sind sehr verschieden: Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit war Priester (4QpPs<sup>a</sup> [4Q171] III, 15; vgl. 1QpHab II, 8) und vielleicht sogar Hohepriester, wie Hartmut Stegemann annahm,<sup>124</sup> während Jesus wohl aus einer einfachen Familie in Nazaret stammt, deren Herkunft aus dem Haus David (Röm 1:3; Mk 10:47–48; 11:10; Mt 1; Lk 1–2 u.a.) historisch nicht zu verifizieren ist (Davidsohnschaft galt für den königlichen Messias, z. B. PsSal 17:21; 4MidrEschat<sup>a</sup> [4Q174 = 4QFlor] III, 11 zu 2. Sam 7:11ff.). Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit ist um 110 v. Chr. eines natürlichen Todes gestorben (vgl. CD XIX, 35–XX, 1; XX, 13–14), während Jesus, offenbar von den jüdischen Autoritäten den Römern übergeben, in den Jahren ± 30 gekreuzigt wurde.<sup>125</sup> Es bestehen aber erstaunliche Übereinstimmungen zwischen dem Sendungsbewusstsein Jesu und dem des Lehrers der Gerechtigkeit. Gemäß den eigenen Liedern des Lehrers in den Lobliedern in 1Q/4QH hat Gott dem Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit nicht nur „alle Geheimnisse“ der Propheten „kundgetan“ (1QpHab VII, 4–5), sondern Gott hat ihn „zum Zeichen für die gerechten Erwählten gesetzt“ (1QH<sup>a</sup> X, 15 [II, 13 Sukenik]) und zum „Vater für die Kinder der Gnade“ (XV, 23 [VII, 20 Sukenik]). Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit wird „zur Falle für Übeltäter, aber zur Heilung für alle, die von der Sünde umkehren“ (X, 10–11 [II, 8–9 Sukenik]).<sup>126</sup> Dem Selbstbewusstsein des Lehrers der Gerechtigkeit entspricht es, wenn

<sup>124</sup> H. Stegemann, *Essener* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 205–206; zurückhalten-der z. B. VanderKam und Flint, *Meaning* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 284–285.

<sup>125</sup> Vgl. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, „Kreuz II. Neues Testament und frühe Kirche (bis vor Justin)“, *TRE* 19:713–725, dort 719.

<sup>126</sup> Wer das Ich in dem Liedabschnitt der „Self-Glorification“ in 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) III, 6–13 (par. 1QH<sup>a</sup> XXVI, 6ff. und 4QSelf-Glorification Hymn [4Q471b = 4QH<sup>et</sup>] 1a–d 3–10) ist, ist meines Erachtens noch nicht geklärt.

Jesus in einem sicherlich in der Grundstruktur authentischen Logion sagt, dass sich an der Stellung ihm gegenüber das Heil entscheidet, weil dies für den künftigen Menschensohn der Maßstab beim Gericht sein wird (siehe in der Spruchquelle die ältere Fassung in Lk 12:8–9 und im Markusevangelium 8:38). Die Städte, die Jesus verwerfen, fallen nach seinen Worten dem Gericht Gottes anheim (Q 10:13–14). Sein Wirken ist bereits der Einbruch der Gottesherrschaft, wie wir in Abschnitt 2.4 gesehen haben. Das Letztere geht über den Anspruch des Lehrers deutlich hinaus.

Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit wird zum Gründer einer der bedeutendsten frommen Vereinigungen des damaligen Judentums; Jesus hingegen schart nur am äußersten Rande des damaligen jüdischen Kernlands eine kleine Gruppe von wenigen Leuten um sich und wird dabei zu einem Grenzgänger in die Gaulanitis: Wie schon oben gesagt, lag historisch jedenfalls ein wichtiger Ort seines Wirkens in einem stärker heidnisch bestimmten Gebiet jenseits des Jordan, in der Tetrarchie des Herodessohnes Philippus, genauer Betsaida (siehe vor allem Q 10:13–14). Wie auch schon oben erwähnt, wissen wir von Betsaida zurzeit aufgrund der Ausgrabungen seit 1987 noch nicht genau, wie jüdisch und wie heidnisch der Ort nach der makkabäischen Besetzung und den folgenden politischen Wechselfällen gewesen ist.<sup>127</sup> Abgesehen davon, dass sich Jesus sicherlich auch am östlichen Ufer des Sees Gennesaret aufgehalten hat (im Bereich der Gaulanitis und vielleicht auch der Dekapolis),<sup>128</sup> sind die weiteren Orte und Gebiete nicht mit einiger Sicherheit für Jesus zu verifizieren, am ehesten noch das „Gebiet von Tyrus“ (Mk 7:24), noch weniger sicher die „Dörfer von Caesarea Philippi“ (Mk 8:27).<sup>129</sup>

Mit Jesu Wirken zweifellos nicht vereinbar ist eine Forderung in CD XI, 14–15 (par. 4QD<sup>b</sup> [4Q267] 9 II, 8 und 4QD<sup>f</sup> [4Q271] 5 I, 9),

<sup>127</sup> Für die Gaulanitis und weitere Regionen dort sagt Josephus, Bell. 3:56–58, dass in diesen offenbar für ihn von Juden dominierten Gebieten zu seiner Zeit (2. Hälfte des 1. Jh. n. Chr.) „Juden und Syrer gemischt“ lebten. Siehe auch oben in Abschnitt 2.2.

<sup>128</sup> Das älteste Evangelium nennt die Dekapolis aber nur in einer redaktionellen Formulierung in 7:31 und als Gegend, wo ein Geheilter Jesus verkündigt (5:20, vielleicht identisch mit der Gegend, in der Jesus gemäß 5:1 auftritt). Wäre in 5:1 „Gergesa“ die richtige Lesart, ist vielleicht die südliche Gaulanitis betroffen. Diese massive Wundergeschichte in 5:1–20 lässt sich historisch nicht irgendwie auf Jesus zurückführen.

<sup>129</sup> Vgl. H.-W. Kuhn, „Jesu Hinwendung“, 204–240, bes. 214–215 (Tyrus) und 209–211 (Caesarea Philippi).

man solle „am Sabbat den Ruhetag nicht an einem Ort in der Nähe der Heiden begehen“.<sup>130</sup>

Dem Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit wird zwar von dem „Frevelpriester“ nach dem Leben getrachtet (4QpPs<sup>a</sup> IV, 8; vgl. 1QpHab XI, 4–8), er stirbt aber, wie schon gesagt, offenbar eines natürlichen Todes, während Jesus, wohl ausgeliefert von Autoritäten seines eigenen Volkes, fälschlicherweise als politischer Revolutionär durch den römischen Präfekten über Judäa, Pontius Pilatus, mit der schändlichen Strafe der Kreuzigung zu Tode kommt. Gemäß allen vier kanonischen Evangelien geschah die Übergabe an die Römer unter führender Beteiligung des Hohepriesters Kaiphas. In beiden Fällen gibt es eine Verfolgung durch den Hohepriester: durch den Hohepriester zur Zeit des Lehrers der Gerechtigkeit, wohl Jonathan, bzw. durch den Hohepriester Kaiphas. Das gilt übrigens auch für die Steinigung des Jakobus, des Leiters der Urgemeinde in Jerusalem und Bruders Jesu; hier ist der Verursacher der Hohepriester Ananus, der Jüngere (siehe Josephus, Ant. 20:200). Die sog. Tempelrolle, die voessenisches ist, gibt in 11QT<sup>a</sup> (11Q19) LXIV, 13–20 (6–13 Yadin/Qimron) für das Verständnis eines eventuellen Prozesses vor jüdischen Autoritäten und Jesu Hinrichtung keine Hilfe; 4QSefer ha-Milḥamah (4Q285) 5 spricht auch nicht von einem getöteten oder gar gekreuzigten Messias.

Erstaunlich ist, wie schließlich die Wirkungsgeschichte alles umkehrt: Der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit hat zunächst für gut einhalb Jahrhunderte ein bedeutendes Nachwirken in seiner hervorragend organisierten Qumrangemeinde (ca. 120 v. Chr. bis 68 n. Chr.) und ihren Niederlassungen. Aus CD VI, 10–11<sup>131</sup> kann man aber nicht auf einen Glauben an seine Wiederkehr schließen.<sup>132</sup> Während das Judentum insgesamt die Katastrophen der beiden jüdischen Kriege im 1. und 2. Jh. n. Chr. überwindet, spielen jedoch der Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit und seine Anhänger nach der Zerstörung der Qumransiedlung im Jahr 68 n. Chr. durch die Römer<sup>133</sup> und dem offenbar baldigen Untergang der Gesamtgemeinde keine Rolle mehr. Jesu Anhänger dagegen beginnen nach seinem Tod sich auf Augenzeugen dafür zu berufen, dass Gott ihn von den Toten auferweckt habe (siehe

<sup>130</sup> In 4QD<sup>e</sup> (4Q270) 6 V, 18 ist aber der ganze Satz ausgelassen.

<sup>131</sup> Zum „Self-Glorification“-Text 4QH<sup>a</sup> III, 6–13 und Parallelen siehe oben in diesem Abschnitt und in Abschnitt 2.4.

<sup>132</sup> Vgl. Jeremias, *Lehrer der Gerechtigkeit* (siehe „Ausgewählte Literatur“), 283–295.

<sup>133</sup> Zur Datierung siehe den Anfang dieses Beitrags.

besonders die alte Überlieferung in 1. Kor 15:3–5). Christen verstehen ihn von jüdischen Kategorien her unter anderem als Messias (so schon das alte Traditionsstück, das Paulus in Röm 1:3b–4a zitiert),<sup>134</sup> von solchen den Heiden leichter zugänglichen Kategorien als präexistentes göttliches Wesen (so in dem von Paulus bereits übernommenen Christuslied in Phil 2:6–11), und die als jüdische Splittergruppe angetretene Jesusbewegung erfasst bald weithin die ganze damalige Welt, was für Paulus faktisch schon selbstverständlich ist (vgl. nur den Hinweis auf Spanien in Röm 15:24, 28) und vom ältesten Evangelisten als Programm formuliert wird (Mk 13:10; vgl. 14:9).

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<sup>134</sup> Hier wird gesagt, dass Jesus erst mit der Auferstehung zum Gottessohn, d.h. hier zum Messias (!), eingesetzt wird.

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## JESUS WITHOUT Q

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Accounts of the historical Jesus have to be based on two foundations, supposed sources and proposed criteria. It is my conviction that one main source normally assumed, Q, never existed; and that some of the criteria normally employed are invalid. In this essay I therefore offer a different point of view; but before I do so I should say something to excuse my unorthodoxy.

### 1. *Q: the Standard Theory and the Farrer Theory*

There are in practice only two horses running in the synoptic race, the Standard Two-Source Theory and the Farrer Theory.<sup>1</sup> They are agreed that Mark wrote first, and that his gospel was known to Matthew and Luke. Matthew and Luke have some two hundred further verses in common: Farrer thought that Luke took these over from Matthew as the most congenial part of the latter's material; while the Standard Theory supposes that they both took them from a lost source, Q. The Q hypothesis is vulnerable on two counts: it is implausible in face of the Minor Agreements (MAs), and it is involved in self-contradiction.

There are more than a thousand small changes which Matthew makes to Mark, and which Luke also makes. Some of these are striking, because the change is typical of Matthew but untypical of Luke: this might then suggest that Luke took the change over from Matthew.<sup>2</sup> For instance:

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<sup>1</sup> So called from its proposal by A. M. Farrer in an essay, "On Dispensing with Q," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 55–88.

<sup>2</sup> The Minor Agreements have been a recognized problem for the Standard Theory since the nineteenth century. J. C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), 208 invented the term. The criteria for evaluating them, outlined here, were suggested by me in "On Putting Q to the Test," *NTS* 24 (1978), with twelve examples. These have been criticized and further discussed in G. Strecker, ed., *Minor Agreements: Symposium Göttingen 1991*, GTA 50 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

Matt 22:27 ὕστερον δὲ πάντων ἀπέθανεν ἡ γυνή.  
 Mark 12:22 ἔσχατον πάντων καὶ ἡ γυνή ἀπέθανεν.  
 Luke 20:32 ὕστερον καὶ ἡ γυνή ἀπέθανεν.

Matthew's change from ἔσχατον to ὕστερον is characteristic: he uses the word six times elsewhere in his gospel, introducing it in a Markan context also at 21:37. But ὕστερον is uncharacteristic of Luke; he never uses it elsewhere in Luke-Acts. So it looks as if Luke is following Mark in the Markan context, but inserts the ὕστερον by a reminiscence of Matthew. There is a sufficient number of such striking MAs to cast severe doubt on the Q theory. The most notorious case is at Mark 14:65, where both Matthew and Luke add the same five words in the same order to Mark's taunt, "Prophecy!," τίς ἐστὶν ὁ παίσις σε; The verb παίειν is a hapax in both Matthew and Luke.<sup>3</sup> Naturally Luke's use of Matthew does not *disprove* the existence of Q, but it makes Q redundant: entities should not be multiplied beyond what is necessary.

But the Q theory is not only in this way implausible; it is also self-contradictory.<sup>4</sup> The method by which Q-scholars reconstruct Q is again by isolating Matthew's and Luke's characteristic styles. For instance, Matthew frequently writes "the kingdom of heaven" and "my/your Father in heaven," phrases which hardly ever occur, if at all, in Mark or Luke. So if these expressions come in a Q passage, and Luke has "the kingdom of God" or "my/your Father," it is taken that Luke has retained the Q form, and Matthew has adapted it to his own style, *which was different from Q's*.

However among the typical Matthaean phrases are a number of striking instances which also occur once in "Q," i.e. in the parallel text of Luke. These include "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," "O ye of little faith," "you offspring of vipers." But there are more wide-ranging things. For example, there are ten instances in the gospels of double animal symbols, like "Be ye wise as serpents and

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Ruprecht, 1993). For a recent comment see M. S. Goodacre, *The Case against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 152–169.

<sup>3</sup> A defence of the Standard Theory was offered by F. Neirynck, "ΤΙΣ ΕΣΤΙΝ Ο ΠΑΙΣΙΑΣ ΣΕ. (Mat. 26,68/Luk. 22,64 (diff. Mk. 14,65)), *ETL* 63 (1987): 5–47: that the story in Matthew does not make logical sense, and all witnesses must go back to an early corruption. I have defended the coherence of the Matthaean account in "Two Significant Minor Agreements (Mat. 4:13 Parr.; Mat. 26:67–68 Parr.)," *NovT* 45 (2003): 366–373.

<sup>4</sup> M. D. Goulder, "Self-Contradiction in the IQP," *JBL* 118 (1999): 506–517.

harmless as doves”; all of these come in Matthew, and three of them in “Q,” i.e. in parallel texts in Luke; but not in Mark or “L” or John. So it seems that over a considerable area *Matthew’s style and Q’s are very similar*. So at the least there is a contradiction in the method of reconstructing Q: when Matthew and Luke differ in Q-passages, it is taken that Matthew’s style is different from Q’s; but when the wording is the same, that has to be Q’s wording, which is then very similar to Matthew’s. Another view (of mine) would be that Q and Matthew were the same person, or in other words that Matthew was the author of the Q material, and that Luke copied it, edited it, and reordered it, as Farrer said.

## 2. Criteria

All criteria for accounts of Jesus are theory-laden. The multiple source criterion assumes the existence of Q and other lost traditions. Aramaic retranslations assume verbatim memories. Dissimilarity criteria presuppose Jesus’ originality over against Judaism, and the church’s invariable development of Jesus’ message.<sup>5</sup> I have accepted two widely approved criteria, and adopted a third one of my own. (i) Any account must be *coherent*. (ii) We may cautiously trust anything told us *incidentally*. (iii) I have argued elsewhere that there were *two missions* in the early church, one headed by the “pillars” in Jerusalem, and the other by Paul.<sup>6</sup> While it is easy to see motives for development by followers of Paul like Mark and John, who might wish to think that Jesus agreed with Paul, it is likely that in general the Jerusalem church maintained a continuity with the teaching of Jesus.

For our purposes the gospels are central. Mark is strongly Pauline. He is very critical of Jesus’ family (3:21, 31–35; 6:4), and rather critical of the Twelve, and especially of Peter and the sons of Zebedee; he supports Paul’s position on such matters as Sabbath and the

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<sup>5</sup> These criteria are widely cited; for instance by Paula Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 5–6; or more fully in J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, I (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 168–184. For a careful account of criteria in using Q for reconstructing a life of Jesus see J. S. Kloppenborg, “The Sayings-Gospel, Q, and the Historical Jesus”, *HTR* 89 (1996): 307–344.

<sup>6</sup> M. D. Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions* (London: SCM, 1994; US edition *St Paul versus St Peter*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995); *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

food-laws. These positions are all softened by both Matthew and Luke, both of whom retain Pauline emphases like the cross and (some form of) incarnation. They are thus both concerned to bridge the gap between the two missions, from their different angles, Matthew more Jewish, Luke more Gentile. Insofar as Matthew “re-judaizes” Jesus, his version of events is often interesting.<sup>7</sup> John is an ultra-Pauline, who has tried to write an account of Jesus assuming the Incarnation; hence Ernst Käsemann’s Jesus who is God striding over the earth and walking an inch above the ground.<sup>8</sup> I take it that John has developed the synoptic tradition for polemical purposes (against “the Jews,” and especially the Jewish-Christians), and that we get only incidental help from his gospel.

This perspective gives us the basis for a criterion to assess the gospel traditions. If Mark gives a Pauline picture of Jesus, we shall suspect it. If he gives a non-Pauline picture, it will look like undigested tradition, and so to be cautiously credited. In general what goes *against the grain* of an author’s thought is to be treated seriously; anything he finds *embarrassing* is probably true.

### 3. John the Baptist

Josephus includes a brief paragraph on John the Baptist, which confirms the gospel accounts on two points.<sup>9</sup> John’s ministry was a success. He drew large crowds and was taken seriously enough for Herod to execute him; Josephus gives him more notice than he does to Jesus, even if we credit the *testimonium*. Secondly, his preaching was

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<sup>7</sup> This means that in practice the *Matthaean* form of the Q-material does sometimes have its place in the picture, though I have argued that virtually all the non-Markan matter in Matthew is Matthew’s own expansion of Mark, Paul or Old Testament texts: see my *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974). Matthew was thus assimilating the Jesus tradition to the background in Judaism to which Jesus belonged historically. Similarly the “L” and “Q” material in Luke is almost all Luke’s own creation from matter in Matthew, especially the Lukan parables: see my *Luke: A New Paradigm*, JSNTSup 20 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Expounded in his *The Testament of Jesus*, OTL (London: SCM, 1968 = *Jesu letzte Wille nach Johannes 17*, 1966), ch. 2, “Glory.”

<sup>9</sup> *Ant.* 18:117–119. English version and comments in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus (175 BC to AD 135)*, new English edition ed. by G. Vermes and F. Millar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973–1987), 1:345.

distinctive in requiring baptism: he was known as John the Baptist, or Baptizer.

Josephus produces a hellenized version of the meaning of baptism, but there is no doubt of its significance for John. Judaism, both mainstream and Essene, prescribed various repeatable lustrations, but John's was a once-for-all rite, a "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). He proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt 3:2), and this would mean judgement for all. Matthew provides a sparkling version of this message (3:7–10, 12), albeit in highly Matthaean phrasing. Such a threatening approach would fit well with the demand for baptism, which would constitute a passport to the coming kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Baptism washed away past sins, and genuineness of repentance must be shown by future righteousness. The themes of judgement and salvation thus cohere with baptism as an eschatological sacrament.

Biblical prophecy had foretold a ministry such as John's: Mal 3:23 said, "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord." Mark understood this text to refer to John. At 1:2 he cites the similar Mal 3:1 as speaking of John, "Behold, I send my messenger..." At 1:4–6 he says that John appeared (ἐγένετο), and that he was clothed in camel hair and a leather belt round his loins: this is the same garb which Elijah wore in 2 Kgs 1:8, shortly before he was assumed into heaven. Mark is thus portraying John as Elijah *redivivus*. At 9:11–13 he specifically says that John was the coming Elijah. The same identification is made by Matthew (11:14), but is made ambiguous by Luke (1:17), and is denied in the Fourth Gospel (John 1:21).

The Fourth Gospel's steady anti-Baptist polemic suggests that John's disciples were an increasing threat by the end of the century; but it is less easy to be sure of Mark's tendency over John. He wants to exalt the Baptist as the initiator of the Christian movement, but he wants even more to diminish him as inferior to Jesus. The latter concern is evident. He amends his Mal 3:1 citation to have John go not before God's face but before Jesus', and to prepare Jesus' way; and he

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<sup>10</sup> Many scholars insist that the Greek ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ should be translated "the reign of God," and often this seems justified; but other texts speak of entering the βασιλεία, and similar expressions, for which "kingdom" would be more suitable. I have used both renderings.

reduces John's preaching to a statement of his own inferiority, and that of his baptism, in view of the mightier coming Jesus.

This may suggest that John's position of destiny as the prophesied Elijah is not the invention of the Markan church but was how John saw himself. The fact that people imagined Jesus to be the coming Elijah (Mark 6:15; 8:28) shows the idea to have been current. There are few texts in the Old Testament about a prophet of the end, and Mal 3:23 is obtrusive, both by its colourfulness and by its prominence at the very end of the Twelve (Prophets). It was a well-known text in contemporary Judaism.<sup>11</sup> Of course John did not think he had descended from heaven wearing ninth-century BCE clothes: he felt himself called to proclaim the imminent Judgement, and inferred from scripture that he was the destined Elijah.<sup>12</sup>

John's baptism was for the remission of sin, and Jesus will have accepted his message and his baptism as a means to the forgiveness of his own sins. This is confirmed by the universal embarrassment which the baptism causes. Mark turns it into the moment of revelation for Jesus' own destiny (1:9–11); Matthew has John object, and Jesus respond with the obscure explanation that they are fulfilling all righteousness (3:14–17); Luke somehow manages to have John arrested before he can perform the baptism (3:20); the Fourth Gospel does not mention Jesus' baptism at all (John 1:32).

#### 4. *John's Disciples*

We hear incidentally a number of times of John's disciples, and the Fourth Gospel tells us that Andrew and probably Peter were among them (John 1:35–41). There is no obvious tendency behind the allegation, and it should be credited. What is not said by any evangelist is that Jesus became one of John's disciples, and there is a transparent motive for such silence—a disciple is not greater than his master. But Jesus' discipleship is plainly implied by Mark. After his baptism Mark keeps him safely in the desert for forty days, but it is not until John's arrest that he comes into Galilee: where has he been in the

<sup>11</sup> Sir 48:10; Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 48:1; *Sib. Or.* 5:187–189, 194–202.

<sup>12</sup> M. Öhler, "The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God," *JBL* 118 (1999): 461–476, argues for historicity because John's diet of locusts and wild honey was not mentioned in 2 Kings.



meantime? He has been with John's community by the Jordan.<sup>13</sup> When their master is removed, part of the group moves for safety to Capernaum, the home of Simon and Andrew, where Jesus becomes their new leader. A rump remained by the Jordan, and became "John's disciples."

Jesus' movement is shown to be continuous with John's by the universal practice of once-for-all baptism in the church. The synoptists do not mention Jesus baptizing, because again they wish to pass over in silence any suggestion of his being John's follower. The Fourth Gospel refers to it with some embarrassment at John 4:1–2: Jesus did not baptize himself, only his disciples. But all branches of the church regarded baptism as essential, a passport to salvation; and this must have been taken over from Jesus, and ultimately from John.

On the position of John, the least defensive evangelist is Matthew, and the most likely to be historical. He makes John's preaching and Jesus' virtually identical. John said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2), and Jesus says the same at Matt 4:17. John's colourful abuse in 3:7–12—offspring of vipers, trees cast in the fire, corn gathered in the barn—all recur in Jesus' mouth later in the gospel. Matthew sets the two men side by side at 11:16–19, with "this generation" rejecting both: John was an ascetic and proclaimed judgement followed by salvation; Jesus was a convivial type who proclaimed salvation followed by judgement. But Matthew himself is quite clear that the two are not in the same league. John is the last and greatest of the prophets, but his place in heaven is dubious (11:11–14); Jesus is the Son of God.

### 5. *The Kingdom of God*

Jesus' proclamation is understood in the synoptics in terms of the later chapters in Isaiah. Mark says that John's mission was the beginning of the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον), recalling the εὐαγγελιζόμενος of Isa LXX 40:9; 52:7; and the descent of the Spirit on Jesus suggests a particular reference to Isa LXX 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, therefore he has sent me to bring good news (εὐαγγελίσασθαι) to the

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<sup>13</sup> So, hesitantly, G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1997), 209.

poor.” Mark cites Isa 40:3 as a prophecy of John’s crying in the wilderness. He gives Jesus’ first words as “The time (καιρός) is fulfilled. The kingdom of God has drawn near (ἤγγικεν). Repent and believe the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον)” (1:15). The good news proclaimed in Isa LXX 52:7 is of the reign of God: “Your God βασιλεύσει.” Isa LXX 56:1 says, ἤγγισεν γὰρ τὸ σωτήριόν μου. Isa LXX 60:22, the verse before 61:1, says that God will gather his people κατὰ καιρόν. Matthew makes Jesus open his preaching (5:3–4) with blessings on the poor (in spirit) and the mourners, echoing Isa 61:1–2; and Luke makes Jesus preach his first sermon at Nazareth on the same text (4:18–19).

There is thus a united but varied tradition that Jesus’ message was a proclamation of the kingdom of God. What is initially less clear is whether Jesus thought it was at the gates or had actually arrived; ἤγγικεν is ambiguous. With his catalogue of healing miracles, it would seem that he must have seen God’s reign as already in action, and Matthew again puts this into words, “If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has arrived upon you” (12:28);<sup>14</sup> again there was Isaiah’s word for the healings in Isa 35:5–6.

That this was in fact Jesus’ understanding is confirmed by an alteration in 1 Corinthians. There Paul reproaches sarcastically those “of Cephas” (1:12), who “boast of men” (3:21; 4:6; i.e. that their leader was Jesus’ chief disciple), “Already you are sated! Already you are enriched! Without us you have begun to reign (ἐβασίλευσατε)” (4:8). 4:20 shows that the “reigning” is in the supposed reign of God, “For the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is not in talk but in power.” Paul returns to the same issue over the resurrection at 15:50, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s kingdom.” Jerusalem Christians, claiming Peter’s authority, think that God’s reign is here already, and that they should give up work (4:12; 1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:11), and generally behave unrealistically; but to Paul this is just talk, God’s reign will begin with the Last Trump. Matthew includes Jesus’ realized view at 12:28 (above), but he inserts his own (Pauline) position in his ideal Prayer, “Thy kingdom come!”<sup>15</sup> at 16:28, and in the parables of Matthew 24–25.

<sup>14</sup> 4Q521 expects Isa 35:3–5 and 62:1–2 to be fulfilled with the coming of Messiah; Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 212.

<sup>15</sup> For Matthew as the author of the Lord’s Prayer, see M. D. Goulder, “The Composition of the Lord’s Prayer,” *JTS* 14 (1964): 32–45; for the realized eschatology

### 6. *Jesus as a Prophet*

John was a prophet, and if Jesus took over the leadership of his movement, Jesus will have seen himself as a prophet also. This is latent in the late-Isaiah texts which have been cited above, especially Isa 61:1: the speaker is a prophet on whom the Spirit has come for him to proclaim the gospel. There was no Jewish tradition that Elijah would be followed by Messiah.<sup>16</sup> Mark himself thinks that Jesus was the Son of God (1:1; 15:39), and has the heavenly voice reveal this to him at 1:11, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα). “Thou art my son” comes in Ps 2:7, but the remainder seems to echo Isa 42:1, “Here is my servant...in whom my soul delights.” This is the NRSV version of the Hebrew, from which our LXX diverges, but Matthew gives the text as ἰδοὺ, ὁ παῖς μου...ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου (12:18). Whether Matthew knew a different form of the Greek here, or assimilated his citation to Mark 1:11, Matthew knows a tradition that Jesus can be spoken of as God’s servant (παῖς, cf. Acts 3:13; 4:27, 30). It is likely that this was the form of the earliest tradition of the voice at Jesus’ baptism, and that Mark has changed it to “Son” in line with his Pauline theology.

It was natural for John’s successor to be seen as a prophet like him; but there was a theological problem just the same. Malachi said that Elijah would come before the great and terrible Day of the Lord: well, Elijah had now come in the form of John, but the Day of the Lord was still ahead—what then was Jesus’ position? A solution was suggested by Jesus’ healing gift, and perhaps by an early healing of a disfiguring skin affliction, thought of as “cleansing a leper.” This recalled Elisha’s famous cleansing of Naaman, and suggested an answer to the problem. Elijah was a great prophet, but he cast his mantle on Elisha, who received a double portion of his spirit, and performed twice as many miracles as his master. There are repeated signs that Jesus was thought of as a kind of new Elisha. As Elisha restored to life the son of the Shunamite woman, so does Jesus bring back to life the daughter of the synagogue ruler (Mark 5:21–43). A man brought Elisha

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issue, see my “Already?” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, ed. T. Schmidt and M. Silva, JSNTSup 100 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 1–18.

<sup>16</sup> Öhler, “Expectation,” 461–464.

twenty loaves, and he told his servant to feed the people with them; the servant asks, "How can I set this before a hundred people?," but is bidden, "Give them to eat," and they eat, and leave a remainder (2 Kgs 4:42–4). Jesus' disciples ask him to send the five thousand away to buy food, but he says, "You give them to eat"; they in turn are sceptical, having but five loaves, but Jesus repeats the command, and basketfuls of crumbs are taken up (Mark 6:35–44). Whereas Elijah slept under a juniper bush and was fed by the ravens, Elisha had his own room at the house of the wealthy woman at Shunem; and in the same way Jesus dines with Pharisees, and tells his disciples not to go from house to house (Mark 6:10). There is a constant echo of these Elisha-type stories: "Blind see and lame walk; *lepers are cleansed* and deaf hear; and *dead are raised...*" (Matt 11:5); "Heal the sick, *raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons*" (Matt 10:8). In the Fourth Gospel the five thousand are fed with barley loaves (John 6:9), like Elisha's crowd in 2 Kings 4. It is difficult to be sure where such thinking has stopped. It was at the Jordan that Elijah cast his mantle on Elisha to give him a double portion of his spirit (2 Kgs 2:9): and it is at the Jordan that John baptizes Jesus, and he receives the Holy Spirit. It is true that Elijah also restored a boy to life, and marvellously fed the widow at Zarephath, but the Elisha legends are closer to the gospel. It is easy to think that Jesus was seen as a new Elisha.

The understanding of Jesus as a prophet was to persist in Jewish Christianity. We have two lines of evidence from later times. The Pseudo-Clementines, the *Homilies* and the *Recognitions*, go back to a second-century work, the *Kerygmata Petrou*: in this Jewish-Christian tradition Jesus is normally spoken of as "the Prophet." Behind this title lies a theory of "the true Prophet" who is incarnated in a series of figures, and ultimately comes to rest in Jesus.<sup>17</sup> The other line is known to us through the Fathers' accounts of the heresies, and especially Irenaeus's and Epiphanius's descriptions of the Ebionites, the only clearly Jewish-Christian heresy. The Ebionites (from Hebrew *'ebionim*, the Poor People) thought that Jesus was conceived naturally, the son of Joseph and Mary, and that at his baptism a divine

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<sup>17</sup> H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1949); G. Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, TUGAL 70 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958). Cf. G. Friedrich, "προφήτης," *TDNT* 6:781–861.

spirit, Christ, entered him. This spirit enabled him to work miracles and to reveal the unknown Father; but being spiritual it could not suffer, and left Jesus before the Passion. In this way Christ comes upon Jesus and for a period takes him over, much as the word of the Lord came upon the prophets.<sup>18</sup>

An Ebionite link with the Jerusalem church is quite plausible. The “pillars” asked Paul to raise money for “the Poor,” i.e. their church (Gal 2:10). Pauline Christians believed in the Incarnation (Phil 2:6–11; 2 Cor 8:9), but in 2 Cor 11:1 comes a Jewish Christian missionary proclaiming a different gospel with “another Jesus.” So a prophetic christology seems likely to be deeply rooted in Jewish Christianity; even back to Jesus’ own time; according to John 7 his brothers, later the leaders of the Jerusalem church, did not believe in him.

### 7. *Jesus the Healer*

Much of the gospel tradition is concerned with Jesus’ healings, and it is not likely that so strong a tradition is fictitious; nor could we form a consistent picture of his proclamation of the kingdom without some visible sign of its arrival. Modern rationalists have dispensed with miracles, and will have to be content with explanations of psychosomatic disease. Certainly, modern experience suggests that such afflictions are widespread where there is belief in demon-possession, and the synoptics often imply such a background.<sup>19</sup> The Fourth Gospel has no such exorcisms, perhaps because the evangelist rates them as second-class wonders.

But a second element is also the influence of the prophetic tradition, examples of which have been cited above from the Elisha legends. Here again the early church turned to the later chapters of Isaiah for inspiration: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the stammerers (μογιλόλων) sing for joy” (Isa LXX 35:5–6).<sup>20</sup> Such a passage would certainly encourage belief that

<sup>18</sup> M. D. Goulder, “A Poor Man’s Christology,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 332–348.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion see Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer* (London: SCM, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> J. A. Emerton, “*Maranatha* and *Ephphatha*,” *JTS* 18 (1967): 427–429, argues that Jesus’ *Ephphatha* is an echo of the Hebrew of Isa 35, not of Aramaic.

Jesus had healed blind and deaf people, and it is striking that we find the rare Greek word *μογιλάλος* used of the sufferer at Mark 7:31.

### 8. *The Twelve*

A significant element in the tradition is the presence of an inner group of Jesus' followers known as "the Twelve." They are primary witnesses of his risen presence after his death (1 Cor 15:5); their names are given, in slightly different forms, by the synoptists; and rather extensive instructions to them are alleged. There can be no doubt that they were a key element in Jesus' understanding of his mission. He was sent to the twelve tribes, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In his own activity and through them he was to renew Israel as the holy people of God; God's reign would be evidently realized in the exorcisms and healings they would perform; when Judgement Day came there would be a people prepared. Matthew again puts this into words (whether historical or not): "You shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (19:28).

Within the Twelve there was a central core, Peter and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee. Several of these men had probably been disciples of the Baptist (see above), and this would explain the ease with which, according to the synoptists, they left all and followed Jesus. They had been fellow-disciples for months, and knew that Jesus was something exceptional. Mark has Jesus call them from their trade, on the model of Elijah's call of Elisha (1 Kgs 19:19).

Mark says that Jesus wanted the Twelve to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom, and to cast out demons (3:13–15). For the new movement to have any hope of success he needed commitment from his followers, and he pitched the price high. The disciples had to commit themselves. They must claim the power to exorcise, and risk being found wanting (Mark 9:14–29); they must take no provisions with them, and depend entirely on the charity of their audience for food and shelter (1 Cor 9:14). They must expect often to be rejected (Mark 6:7–13). Jesus also expected commitment from his women followers, whether relatives of the men or sufferers he had healed (Mark 15:40; Luke 8:1–3); it is unclear whether their "ministering" (*διακονεῖν*) consisted in cooking or contributing money.

A further open question concerns Jesus' forbidding of divorce. In the gospels this is understood as referring to marital discord, as with the debates in Judaism; but in 1 Cor 7:10 the first initiative is with the wife, and the context is the demands of devotion to the movement. It may be that when men left their homes to go on mission their wives were left unsupported and wished to have their freedom; but Jesus said No—wives could go round with their husbands, as happens in 1 Cor 9:5.

But Jesus' own self-commitment was primary. John had proclaimed his expectation of the kingdom by his asceticism, the renunciation of wife and home, and of a normal diet and clothes: to dispense with such apparent necessities was a clear testimony to the imminence of a different order. Jesus partly followed suit. He had no home nor wife of his own, and lived rough (Matt 8:20). But why did he abandon his master's Spartan ways and desert location? Perhaps from experience. The people who streamed out of Jerusalem to hear John may have been mainly good religious people like those who attend a modern evangelist's crusade; tax-collectors and harlots might feel uncomfortable in such a context, and in any case the Judaeen desert was too close to Herod. So Jesus showed his independence of social norms in a different way. He ate and drank with the outcasts of society, and even included the tax-collector Levi among his core followers. In this way he could make it plain that he was serious about bringing forgiveness to sinners before Judgement Day. People were scandalized that he should be the friend of publicans and sinners (Matt 11:18), but the new policy showed itself to be effective as well as scandalous.

### *9. Jesus and the Law*

There are two contradictory traditions in the synoptics on Jesus' attitude to the Torah. Mark pictures him as a liberal. In a long discussion in Mark 7 he describes the "tradition of the elders," that is the interpretations of the Law by the learned, as "commandments of men," and repeals the food laws by declaring all food clean; what defiles a man is not what goes into him but what comes out of him, impure thoughts of all kinds. Elsewhere Mark has Jesus excuse Sabbath-breaking, and encourage a lax attitude to the Sabbath: "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28).

*There is a far more conservative Jesus in Matthew.* Here Jesus came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law, no jot of which shall pass away, i.e. lose its validity. Anyone breaking the least of these laws and teaching men so will rank low in the kingdom (Matt 5:17–19). Matthew leaves out the offensive comment on the Sabbath (12:8), and carefully glosses the dangerous line of Mark 7 (Matt 15).

Of these two positions there is an *a priori* likelihood that Matthew's is the more historical. How could a preacher in first-century Israel hope to be accepted as a man of God if he countermanded the divine Torah?<sup>21</sup> But further, there was a dispute in Gal 2:11–14 between Paul and Peter about food and purity laws, and here Peter takes the conservative line, which he would hardly do if he had been chief disciple of a liberal Jesus. It seems probable that Mark, as a disciple of Paul and critic of James and Peter, has turned Jesus into a Pauline liberal.

This appears to be further confirmed by a passage in Heb 6:1–2. The author is appealing to Jewish-type Christians to move on to consider his soteriology of the cross, “not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith in God, of teaching of baptisms and laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.”<sup>22</sup> This “foundation” sounds very like the preaching of the Baptist or the early Jesus, “Repent and believe the gospel!” Faith is required in God, not in Christ. The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement are identical with the great and terrible day of the Lord, the wrath to come. The teaching of baptisms and laying on of hands recalls the “teachings of men” about the baptisms of pots and vessels, and unclean hands which the Markan Jesus attacks in Mark 7:1–7. The Jewish Christians of the 60's addressed in Hebrews still have as their foundation the conservative theology of Judaism taught by John and Jesus: keep the whole Torah, written and oral, and believe the gospel; judgement is coming.

### 10. *The Son of Man*

In all four gospels Jesus frequently speaks of himself as “the Son of Man,” especially in connection with his return at the Parousia. This

<sup>21</sup> A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 140–142.

<sup>22</sup> M. D. Goulder, “Hebrews and the Ebionites,” *NTS* 49 (2003): 393–406.



tradition is almost certainly unhistorical. (i) There is no sign that such a title was current in first-century Judaism. (ii) In Aramaic “a son of man” just meant a human being; attempts to reconstruct some of the traditional sayings with this meaning have not been generally persuasive. (iii) If Jesus thought that the kingdom had arrived, there would be no place for a figure coming on the clouds. (iv) If Jesus had used the expression of himself, meaningfully and often, we should expect it to be reflected in all branches of early Christianity; but it never occurs in Paul.

The Epistle to the Hebrews seems to be written to confute the Jewish-Christian (later, Ebionite) view that Jesus had been a man possessed by a heavenly power, an “angel.”<sup>23</sup> The author believed he was the Son of God made incarnate, and appealed to Psalm 8, where it is said of the Son of Man (υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου), “Thou madest him for a little while lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour; Thou hast subjected all things under his feet” (Heb 2:7–8). He interprets the glory and honour as “because of the suffering of death” (2:9). The passage seems to him accordingly an ideal proof-text. It showed the angel theory to be wrong; Jesus had been incarnate, lower than the angels for a short time. He had suffered death and so been glorified in the resurrection, and enthroned over the angelic powers. It even gave his heavenly title, “the Son of Man,” since it was his destiny to be a human being. This title is then fully exploited by the evangelists, especially in prophecies of his death, resurrection and return in glory.

### 11. *From Prophet to Messiah*

Mark 8:27 makes a break in the narrative: Jesus is hailed as the Christ by Peter, and shortly after leaves Galilee for Jerusalem. Although we do well to be sceptical about Mark’s account—and even more about psychological explanations derived from it—no consistent picture can be built up without Jesus seeing himself as Messiah.

Jesus’ Galilean ministry was that of a prophet like Elisha proclaiming the advent of God’s reign, following the prophecy of Isa 61:1. But such a vision of his vocation concealed a possible contradiction.

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<sup>23</sup> M. D. Goulder, “Psalm 8 and the Son of Man,” *NTS* 48 (2002): 18–29.

There was a variety of expectations of how God's reign would be inaugurated, and Jesus might well have supposed that God would institute it himself, as is implied in Isa 40:9. But the idea of a Messiah was also widely current. There were false Messiahs at the time, both historical, like Theudas, and imagined, as in Mark 13:22. It is impossible that Jesus should have been unaware of this, or for him not to wonder how such a figure would fit in with his own proclamation. But the identity of the Messiah with the prophet of good tidings was itself suggested by Isaiah. Isa 61:1 said, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings..." But earlier the prophet had said (Isa 11:1-2), "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse... And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." I have already mentioned Isa 42:1 as probably underlying the divine words at the baptism, "Behold, my servant... my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him." Jesus' power, both as a healer and as a preacher who could inspire crowds, must have seemed a guarantee that he had indeed received the divine spirit; from that it was but a step, and perhaps an inevitable step, to coalesce the image of the anointed prophet of good news with that of God's servant, the shoot from the stock of Jesse, the Lord's Anointed. Naturally such an account on its own would be much too cerebral. Jesus' awareness of being Messiah must surely rest upon some religious experience, but this is veiled from us. He addresses God as Abba, the normal Aramaic word for Father, but many Jewish liturgical prayers use the same (Hebrew) word. Perhaps the account of his baptism is evidence that he was a visionary; but, as I have suggested above, other forces are at work in this passage.

In this way we have some explanation for the division in Christian tradition over Jesus' identity. Jewish Christians in the Pseudo-Clementines spoke of Jesus primarily as a prophet, and the (Jewish-Christian) Ebionites held something close to a prophetic christology, in which the human Jesus was temporarily possessed by a heavenly power. But the church generally proclaimed Jesus as Messiah, both the Pauline Gentile churches and, according to Acts, Peter and the Twelve to the Jews. This would be understandable if Jesus had seen himself as a prophet in Galilean days, but towards the end of his life accepted that he was Messiah. It would have been suicide to publish such a claim, so he kept it to his intimates, and so the confession that he was the Christ comes to be associated with Peter. But his family were late-comers to the inner circle, and had been accustomed to the

prophetic image, which corresponded so much better to his actual history; and it may well be that claims of Davidic ancestry were strange and embarrassing to them.<sup>24</sup> Thus Peter would have said one thing and James another, and after Peter's death the view taken by the family would prevail in the Jewish wing of the church.

That James should have maintained the earlier prophetic christology is suggested by some later tradition. Messianic claims were divisive. They led to unrest and to Roman suppression with the loss of life. Jewish authorities wanted peace, unless there was a really strong candidate, supported by religious opinion, as Bar Kochba was by Aqiba. James wanted good relations with the Jewish leadership, and Hegesippus says that they asked him to deny claims that Jesus was Messiah, and that he did so.<sup>25</sup>

## 12. Jerusalem

In the preceding paragraphs I have accepted two hypotheses: (i) that late in his life Jesus came to believe that he was the promised Messiah; and (ii) that he reached this conclusion at least partly by meditating on scripture. These two notions seem to be borne out by the subsequent narrative.

In the synoptic tradition, Peter's confession is followed by the community's departure for Jerusalem. Mark says that Jesus arranged for his disciples to bring a colt, on which he rode into the city. The crowds hailed his entry as messianic, with the words, "Blessed be the coming kingdom of our father David" (Mark 11:1–10). Matthew describes the scene as a fulfilment of Zech 9:9, "Behold, thy king cometh to thee, humble and riding on an ass, and a colt the offspring of a beast of burden" (Matt 21:5). Although it is theoretically possible that the incident is legendary, being created from the Zechariah prophecy, this is unlikely because Mark gives so little hint of a link with Zechariah. Pilgrims commonly walked to Jerusalem for the

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<sup>24</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.19.1, 20.7, cites Hegesippus for a tradition that Domitian arrested two grandsons of Jesus' brother Jude as being descendants of David. R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 94–105, treats this seriously; but it bears many hallmarks of a legend, and if the family kept a genealogy going back centuries, it is curious that Matthew and Luke differ so widely on the names.

<sup>25</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.10–16.

festivals, and we never hear elsewhere of Jesus riding. It might be, as Morna Hooker suggests, that the act of riding was in itself an assertion of authority;<sup>26</sup> or it might be that Jesus was familiar with the prophecy and staged the scene as a deliberate public claim of messiahship.<sup>27</sup> It is probable at any rate that this is how the Roman authorities understood it, for the claim to kingship was the ground of his execution (Mark 15:26).

Mark says that the day after the triumphal entry Jesus went into the Temple, turning out the sellers of sacrificial animals and the money-changers. Again we have a number of possible interpretations. (i) The priests and other traders were fleecing the people, overcharging, finding blemishes in unblemished animals, etc. (ii) Jesus objected to trade of any kind in the Temple *per se*. (iii) Jesus, like the prophets, saw sacrifice without social justice as hypocrisy. (iv) Jesus was not *cleansing* the Temple, but symbolizing its *destruction*.

While the fleecing theory remains possible, Mark does not suggest it, and there is no evidence for such sharp practice in Jewish sources. Mark does say that Jesus cited Jer 7:11 on the den of thieves, but the context of that verse is concerned with the adulteries, murders, and so on which go on alongside the sacrifices. Mark has set the Temple scene between two references to the barren fig-tree, and it is clear that he takes the parallel seriously: Israel has not brought forth fruit, above all in its rejection of Jesus, and the withering of the fig-tree answers to the destruction of the Temple which Mark lived through in 70. But it would be difficult for those present to understand Jesus' action in this sense. E. P. Sanders says correctly that the high priest's decision to have Jesus executed can be explained as due to his attack on the Temple, which would be blasphemy; and Jesus is portrayed as prophesying the destruction of the Temple, both by Mark (13:2) and by Jesus' accusers (14:58).<sup>28</sup> But if this were in Jesus' mind, the symbolism would not be very obvious: when Jeremiah wished to symbolize the coming destruction of the Temple, he publicly smashed a potter's vessel (Jer 19).

Sanders is right to say that an efficient sacrificial system requires the provision of such services as were on offer. People needed proper

<sup>26</sup> M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to St Mark* (London: A&C Black, 1991), 257.

<sup>27</sup> So E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 235, 306.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61–71.

currency to pay their Temple tax, and animals that were guaranteed unblemished; and such services have to be paid for. But this need not be relevant. The Fourth Gospel's account of the incident has Jesus say. "Make not my Father's house a house of trade" (ἐμπορίου, John 2:16). Here the offence is seen as trade in itself, and suggests a reference to Zech 14:21, "In that day there shall be no more a trader in the house of the Lord of Hosts."

Mark adds a further detail: "and he did not allow anyone to carry a vessel (σκεῦος) through the Temple" (11:16). The echo of Zech 14:21 suggests a reference to the preceding phrases in Zech 14:20, "In that day...the vessels in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every vessel in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the Lord of Hosts."<sup>29</sup> We may think then that the prophecy of Zechariah was in Jesus' own mind throughout. He rode into Jerusalem in deliberate fulfilment of Zech 9:9. He drove out the traders in deliberate fulfilment of Zech 14:21. He stopped the carrying of unconsecrated vessels through the Temple in fulfilment of Zech 14:20. "That day," so beloved of the prophet, had arrived with the coming of the kingdom. Later the church was to find further fulfilments of Zechariah in "I will smite the shepherd...", the thirty pieces of silver, and the potter's field.

### 13. *Jesus' Death*

The hypothesis of a conscious fulfilment of prophecy carries with it certain corollaries. Jesus will hardly have had access to copies of the Prophets, so we have to think of a devout community leader at Nazareth, a scribe perhaps teaching the village boys in the synagogue. This is not unlikely, for we find a broad familiarity with the scriptures in the writings of Paul, Matthew and John the Seer, to name but a few; and this was a period of high religious seriousness among Jewish people generally. We also need to think of Jesus as a meditative person, turning over these texts and asking how they applied to him. He will have needed a good memory and a sharp intelligence, both of

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<sup>29</sup> C. Roth, "The Cleansing of the Temple and Zechariah xiv:21," *NovT* 4 (1960): 174–181. Roth includes a discussion of Zech 14:20. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 67, objects that Jesus would be requiring the traders to move further out, with the sanctification of the whole city; but this does not seem absurd.

which may be conceded. The New Testament seems in fact to require something of the same atmosphere more generally. John knew the prophecy of Malachi well enough to see his vocation as the Elijah who was to come.<sup>30</sup> Jesus seems likely to have discerned his own destiny first as the prophet of good news in Isaiah 61 and later as the Messiah of Isaiah 11. Paul read from Isa 49:1 his calling to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles as ordained from his mother's womb (Gal 1:15).

This brings us then to the controversial issue of Jesus' death: did he foresee it, as is said repeatedly in the gospels, and if so how did he interpret it? We have two indications of answers to these questions: one in Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many"; the other in the eucharistic words, variously given in the synoptics, 1 Corinthians 11 and the *Didache*. It is often thought that at least the former text is related to Isaiah 53, though this is disputed,<sup>31</sup> and I have already indicated that the phrase "the Son of Man" is probably a creation of the church. However, Jesus saw his proclamation of the gospel as prophesied in Isaiah 40. This consisted of the reign of God according to Isa 52:7. His salvation had drawn near according to Isa 56:1. He was God's servant of Isa 42:1, on whom God had set his spirit according to Isa 61:1 now that the time of Isa 60:22 had come. He had healed the blind, the deaf and the lame following Isa 35. With so broad an appeal to the later chapters of Isaiah, it is difficult to believe that Jesus missed the passage on the Servant in Isaiah 52–53.

It behoves us to be cautious. Isaiah's (LXX) word "My παῖς" does not occur in Mark, though it is repeated in Peter's speeches in Acts (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 29). Mark's word διακοπεῖν does not occur in Isaiah LXX 52–53. Isaiah's *'asham*, a sin-offering, is not the same as Mark's λύτρον, a ransom. The latter root is used in the LXX for the substitution of say an ass as sacrifice in place of a first-born son, or of the payment to redeem a slave, or for God's redemption of his people from Egypt. Nevertheless the instinct that Isaiah 53 may have been in Jesus' mind may not be mistaken. Mark says that in

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<sup>30</sup> "The Twelve" Minor Prophets were treated as a unity in Judaism, and Zechariah-Malachi marks their end, and the end of the Prophets as a whole in the Hebrew Bible. It is not an accident that the end of history is so much in evidence in Zech 14–Mal 3.

<sup>31</sup> M. D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959).

Gethsemane Jesus prayed that “this cup,” the cup of his passion, might be taken from him. The image comes from Isa 51:17, 22, where Jerusalem has drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury. Soon afterwards comes God’s Servant in 52:13–53:12. As a lamb led to the slaughter *he opened not his mouth* (53:7); as Jesus *answered nothing* to the high priest (Mark 14:59). *He poured out his life unto death* as he bare the sin of *many* (53:12); as Jesus was to say, “*This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many*” (Mark 14:28). The life is in the blood, and the one can be seen poured out in the other. For Jesus, as for the Servant, the “many” are the people of Israel. The church’s earliest creed was that “Christ died *for our sins* according to the scriptures”—presumably Isa 53:10–12.

There are other problems about the Last Supper which cannot be considered here. Was it a Passover meal, as Mark says, or the last of a series of fellowship meals, taken the day before Passover, as implied in the Fourth Gospel? Were the words of institution those in Mark or those in Paul (and Luke)? What is to be made of the claim made by Aramaic scholars that the phrase “my blood of the covenant” cannot be retranslated into Aramaic?

Nevertheless, the main outlines are clear for the understanding of the crucifixion. Jesus scandalized the Jewish hierarchy by publicly interfering with the Temple sacrificial system. He felt called to do this because his vocation was to proclaim that God’s reign had come, “that day” when there would be no more traders in the Temple, nor any unholy vessel (Zech 14:20–21). To the priests the Temple sacrifices were the means of sustaining Israel’s covenant with God; God had ordained them, and to obstruct them was blasphemy. But Jesus had also estranged the Roman authorities. He needed to proclaim his Messiahship as part of the incoming reign of God, and he did this by riding into Jerusalem in the way prophesied in Zech 9:9. To a governor familiar with messianic pretenders and their ability to rouse unrest, this was asking for trouble. The Jewish leaders arrested Jesus and gave him a rapid trial, for whose details Mark had no evidence, and was compelled to fill them in from the Old Testament. The high priest then delated Jesus to Pilate, and the crucifixion followed.

Jesus was probably a political innocent, and had at first little idea of the hideous consequences such actions would entail. But as Holy Week passed, the situation became increasingly transparent. A contemporary author wrote of the Maccabaeen martyrs that they became an atonement (ἀντίψυχον) for the nation’s sin (4 Macc 17:21, also

ἰλαστήριον), an idea which is likely to derive similarly from Isaiah 53, the only clear statement in scripture of the idea that an innocent man might bear the sins of many. With his familiarity with so many passages in later Isaiah, it is likely that Jesus saw his passion as destined in prophecy. It was a cup which, like anyone, he still hoped not to drink; but if this pleased the Lord he would take it, and his blood would seal a covenant that would cover Israel's sin and restore its relation to God for the in-breaking of his reign.

#### 14. *The Resurrection*

It would hardly be proper to end an account of Jesus with his death, when so much turns on the claim of his resurrection. The evidence for this may be split into two categories: the primary evidence in 1 Cor 15:5–8, which tells of his having been *seen* by Peter, the Twelve, five hundred Christians, James, “all the apostles,” and finally Paul; and later accounts in the gospels and subsequent writings, which describe more *physical* events—touching, eating, drinking, an empty tomb, etc.

All Christians believed that Jesus had been raised on the third day (ἐγήγερται, 1 Cor 15:4, where this is part of the pre-Pauline gospel); but there were different ways of understanding the expression. To Paul, when Jesus died, he “fell asleep” in Sheol, like the rest of humankind; when he was raised, his body returned to earth, as understood in Dan 12:2, but transformed. The same process will befall all Christians who die before the Parousia (1 Cor 15:51–54). But there are some in Corinth who do not accept this for Christians. They say, “There is no resurrection of corpses” (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν οὐκ ἔστιν, 15:12), at least for Christians. They think the idea of physical resurrection absurd: “How are the corpses raised? And with what sort of body do they come [back to earth]?” (15:35). Paul tries to persuade them by appealing to Jesus' resurrection (15:13–20). But this is too easy: if they had believed in a bodily resurrection for Jesus, they would have believed in the same for themselves.

Mark 12:18–27 records a tradition in which Jesus says that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are alive, and therefore the Sadducees are in error in saying that there is no resurrection (ἀνάστασιν μὴ εἶναι). The patriarchs are not thought of as having returned to earth in their bodies; they are just alive in heaven, not dead in their graves.



Similarly, Judas Maccabaeus sees the high priest Onias III and the prophet Jeremiah alive in heaven interceding for Israel (2 Macc 15:13–15), rather as Jesus is pictured as interceding with God in heaven by Stephen (Acts 7:56), or by Paul (Rom 8:34). Hellenistic ideas of a soul in a body have infected Judaism by New Testament times (cf. Matt 10:28), and Philo gives such a picture when describing the death of Moses:

The time came when he had to make his pilgrimage from earth to heaven and leave this mortal life for immortality, summoned thither by the Father who resolved his twofold nature of body and soul into a singularity, transforming his whole being into mind (νοῦς), pure as the sunlight (*Mos.* 2.228).

Philo thinks of Moses as transformed at death into “mind,” and some such notions, often vague and unspecific, seem to have been widespread at the time.<sup>32</sup> It is clear that the opposition at Corinth think that the personality survives death, for they practise baptism on behalf of their dead relatives and friends (15:29). They think the kingdom of God has come (15:50), and hold some unreal views of themselves as reigning, glorified, enriched with spiritual powers, etc. (4:8–21; 12; 14). They think that for them death has been overcome already (unlike Paul, for whom it is the last enemy to be destroyed, 15:26). So no doubt when they said that Jesus had been raised, they thought of him somewhat as Philo thought of Moses.

Those who thought they were already reigning in the kingdom of God at 1 Cor 4:8 boasted in men, i.e. in Cephas as their authority at 3:21, and were puffed up on behalf of the one apostle Peter against the other, Paul, at 4:8. In 15:45–49 the opposition is revealed as appealing to a sophisticated Jewish exegesis of the two accounts of the creation of man in Genesis 1–2, and at 15:56 Paul criticizes their appeal to the Law. It seems clear then that those who deny the physicality of the resurrection both for Christians and for Jesus, are the followers of the Jerusalem apostles. This appears to be confirmed by Mark, who comments at 9:10 that Peter, James and John “questioned what the rising from the dead was.” Similarly at Mark 6:49 the disciples see Jesus walking physically on the water and think he is a ghost.

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<sup>32</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 298.

This division between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders then illuminates the empty tomb story in Mark, and the other traditions of Jesus' post-mortal physicality. Martin Hengel says that the Romans almost always left the bodies of crucified criminals on the cross, where unburied and a prey to birds, they would be a horror and a warning to passers-by.<sup>33</sup> He cites Petronius, for example, who speaks of a soldier guarding the corpse of such a victim.<sup>34</sup> We should assume that Jesus' fate followed the normal pattern, and that his body was left hanging for perhaps forty-eight hours. For the Jerusalem view of resurrection all that was necessary was that Jesus should have been *seen*. That proved that he was alive after his passion, in process of making his pilgrimage from earth to heaven, transformed into a bodiless spirit.

But for Paulines this was not enough, and the gospel stories of Jesus' post-mortal physicality correspond with the Pauline doctrine. In Mark 16 the "young man" says to the women, "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified: he has been raised, he is not here; look, the place where they laid him!" The physical, crucified Jesus has gone from where he was laid in the tomb, and is now on his way to Galilee. Luke has a succession of physical appearances. He is known to the Emmaus road disciples by breaking bread; he says to the Eleven, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is me" (24:39), and asks for something to eat (cf. Acts 1:4). John 20 emphasizes the touching theme memorably by the interaction with Thomas. Ignatius, a strong admirer of Paul, cites the Lukan text in the form, "Handle me and see that I am not a bodiless demon" (*Smyrn.* 3:2). This physical stress was important to the Paulines.

But was not at least the empty tomb story historical? Its trouble is that at so many points it is implausible, and even contradictory. If Jesus' body is to be found missing, it will have to be buried in the tomb of a wealthy sympathizer. Joseph of Arimathaea supplies this need: he is an honourable councillor and has been expecting the kingdom of God. But then surely this is what Jesus has spent the week proclaiming in the Temple; and if he is a councillor, presumably that means a member of the Sanhedrin, and he will have been

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<sup>33</sup> M. Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Eng. trans.: London: SCM, 1977), 87–88.

<sup>34</sup> *Satyricon*, 111–112.

present at the recent meeting, and so have been part of the unanimous vote condemning Jesus for blasphemy. A group of women goes out to anoint Jesus' body "exceedingly early," not knowing who is to roll away the enormous stone covering the tomb: although they are part of a community of tough men, some of them their relations, they would rather take a chance on meeting a gardener, or some such person, who happened to be around at 4 a.m. The point of the angel's message is to have the disciples directed to Galilee, but the women say nothing to anyone in their fear, so the whole tale is pointless. The thought must arise that it is a late development of the Markan church, and that the women's silence is an explanation of why it has not been heard before. In a divided church, those who thought physical resurrection an absurdity would not take kindly to a brand new story that Jesus' body was buried in a stranger's tomb, and had left it in the night. They would inevitably ask, "Why have we never heard this before?" "Ah," replies the wily evangelist, "the women said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid."

An early tradition, known to Paul (1 Cor 15:5) spoke of Jesus' burial before his resurrection; but this includes no reference to Joseph. Josephus describes the crucifixion of many thousands of Jews, but the bones of only one such victim have been uncovered, and this has raised the suspicion that often when a criminal's body had hung long enough on the cross, it was taken down and thrown in a common grave. If this happened with Jesus, we should still have an explanation for all the New Testament traditions. The Jerusalem Christians held to some form of spiritual resurrection. And they only *saw* the risen Jesus. The tales of Jesus' body leaving a tomb, and of his eating and touching, are in our later evidence, especially in the Pauline gospels of Mark, Luke and John.



## DISPENSING WITH THE PRIORITY OF MARK

DAVID L. DUNGAN\*

### 1. *Introduction*

The basic starting point for any reconstruction of the historical Jesus based on the canonical gospels is the Enlightenment distinction between the original Jesus of Nazareth on the one hand, and the narratives written about him written later by disciples and their assistants, on the other hand. Modern scholarship (since Form and Redaction Criticism) has refined that distinction into the recognition that one encounters *three levels* of tradition in the gospel text:<sup>1</sup> passages that stem from the first or earliest level consisting of authentic reminiscences or sayings of the historical Jesus; other passages that stem from the second level, namely, the oral tradition period, which elaborated and shaped and augmented the original historical Jesus material, as the earliest followers handed on their reminiscences and applied them to the life of the Christian community; finally, passages that stem from the third level when the gospel we have now was composed (more or less), where the two prior levels of tradition have been combined and theologically elaborated in a composition “written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Reconstructing a historical portrait of Jesus and the disciples within a consistent hypothetical reconstruction of the development of earliest Christianity, using the gospels and related materials as your basic data, essentially consists in distinguishing in each pericope—following the standard Enlightenment-inspired definition of a historical event—the different levels: genuine, historical, Jesus material, or subsequent oral tradition, or authorial redaction.

The primary evidence for recognizing these three levels is given already in the prologue of the Gospel of Luke, which clearly mentions

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I use “gospel” when I mean the generic term to refer to any gospel, “Gospel” when I refer to one of the four canonical Gospels, since it is part of their title.

all three levels in a strikingly matter-of-fact manner, i.e., without the reference to supernatural influence typical of second- and third-century accounts.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us [third, redactional level], just as they were delivered to us by those who [second, oral level] from the beginning [historical Jesus, primary level] were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word [second, oral level], it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account [third, redactional level] for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth [this term involves a complex mixture of all three] concerning the things of which you have been informed (Luke 1:1–4 RSV).

The chief alternative to the three levels identified by Enlightenment-oriented gospel interpretation is to interpret the text as it stands, whether as literal truth or as complete myth. These approaches have been adopted by literalists of all times and places, both those within the church who believe that by doing so they will support the credibility of the gospels, and those outside the Christian faith intent on debunking it as a fraud, from ancient times until today. The chief danger of this approach, for both groups, is that of seriously misunderstanding the text, as such interpreters use nothing more than their imaginations to guide them.

## *2. Fundamental Decisions Prior to the Choice of a Synoptic Source Theory*

Source theories are important but other choices are logically prior for the task of reconstructing the life and activity of the historical Jesus. The proof of this can be seen in the fact that very different reconstructions can and do arise, even when scholars use the same source theory. Conversely, largely similar results can be obtained even if scholars use different source theories. These prior choices have a logical progression to them. First of all, what is the field of data to be examined? Will one include the Gospel of John in one's purview or not? Will one include the non-canonical gospels of Thomas, Mary, and other *agrapha Iesu* in one's data-base? Will one include the evidence from the Apostle Paul?

Once one's field of data has been chosen, the next question is what *criteria of authenticity* will be used to sort them out in the spectrum

of highly probable to highly improbable? For example, are all self-referential sayings involving Jesus' messiahship, son of God, divinity, suspect? Are only sayings and actions that do *not* conform to contemporary Judaism or subsequent Christianity genuine and all others suspect (principle of dissimilarity)? Are shorter sayings always more original than longer versions of the same saying? What about the presence of clear formal characteristics? Are these more original than broken form, poor form, or mixed form? Or just the opposite; is a highly intricate, balanced form always later than a broken, crude form? Is it always the case that a saying existing in poor Greek in one source cannot depend upon the same saying existing in good Greek in another source? What about "high theology," compared to "low theology"? Is it always the case that there is only one kind of theological development in early Christianity, from low theology (or low christology, e.g., "Jesus as prophet") to a "high" christology (e.g., Jesus as Son of God)? These kinds of choices (and there are others) directly affect the decisions on "early" and "late" tradition, leading to the division of the gospel materials into the three basic levels: the historical Jesus, oral tradition, and final redaction. Most of them were invented during the hey-day of Form Criticism in the middle of the last century, and are still commonly used today.

The following question affects the third level: the final redaction.<sup>2</sup> It focuses on the question of "authorial creativity" and bears on the question: generally speaking, how reliable for reconstructing the historical Jesus is the gospel redaction as a whole? That is, how much did the final author or redactor of a gospel over-write or modify the traditions (sources) received? Did this redactor just repeat traditions more or less intact (like a scribe), or did he thoroughly revise, rewrite, recast, create the accounts now found in his gospel (like an author)? This holistic judgment affects the writing as a whole, but it should be kept in mind that gospel authors could treat different kinds of material with greater or lesser degrees of freedom or creativity. Thus for instance, liturgical material such as hymns and prayers were usually treated more conservatively (left unchanged); the same applies to

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<sup>2</sup> In this essay, "Matthew," "Mark," "Luke" and "John" refer to the final author or redactor. I am aware that the notion of a "final redactor" is increasingly dubious, as there may have been a succession of "final redactions," giving rise to some of the major textual variants (e.g., the Longer Ending of Mark; the Western Text of Luke/Acts, etc.). "Mt," "Mk," "Lk," and "Jn" refer to the canonical text as it stands.

certain kinds of sayings material such as parables. On the other hand, narrative material, apocalyptic predictions, various kinds of hortatory and ethical sayings were treated with more freedom.

There is a useful control for general decisions regarding redactional creativity: if a gospel author has written anything else, the style, vocabulary, theology, and ecclesiastical themes in the *second* writing are a good guide to ascertaining the author's tendencies in the first writing. For example, one can get a good idea of the style, vocabulary, theological concerns, and ecclesiology of the author of the Gospel of John from his genuine, first epistle, 1 John. Likewise, one can obtain a good sense of the style, vocabulary, theological concerns, and ecclesiology of the author of the Gospel of Luke from his second writing, the Acts of the Apostles. (In both cases I assume with the majority of scholars that the same person wrote both writings.)

This control principle is not available for Matthew or Mark. In these cases, the first step toward identifying the prime redactional level should be the application of what we may call the "Peabody principle" (after its discoverer): identify the top redactional level by focusing on those repeated summary phrases that function to link together two or more widely separated narrative units.<sup>3</sup> This kind of "redactional connective tissue" cannot stem from the historical Jesus level, or from the oral tradition material, since they bind disparate segments of the gospel redaction. Hence, identifying them is the first step in identifying the final gospel author's style, narrative concerns, theological point of view, etc. Matthew's repeated concluding phrase: "when Jesus had finished these sayings..." was used by the final redactor to delimit one part of his narrative and begin the next. Mark's use of "*and again...*" was used by the final redactor of the Gospel of Mark to link together two or more disparate segments of his narrative.<sup>4</sup> As one identifies such stylistic devices created by the final redactor, one begins to get a picture of the entire redactional activity of the author, in order to distinguish it from the oral tradition level and the historical Jesus level.

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<sup>3</sup> See D. B. Peabody, *Mark as Composer* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 26: "Those passages that seem to provide structure or some principle of organization for the gospel as a whole have the highest probability of coming from the hand of the author of Mark."

<sup>4</sup> Peabody, *Mark*, 27: "πάλιν used retrospectively to unite two or more separated pericopes" is the kind of redactional "connective tissue" I am talking about.



As these decisions are made and modified, it is obvious that one has gone well beyond analyzing individual pericopes to comparing strings or groups of pericopes among several gospels for signs and indications of the various levels and the direction of change across pericopes. The hard way to do this is to put one's fingers in various places in the gospels and carry out the comparisons in one's head. Typically, scholars *create a synopsis* because no printed synopsis can adequately reveal all of the evidence one wants to consider. To do *that* properly, one must select some kind of source theory to help one arrange the material in one's synopsis since it is impossible to create a source neutral synopsis.<sup>5</sup>

### 3. *Synopses and Source Theories*

Every source theory so far invented has strengths and weaknesses. I know from long experience that there are no theories which are uniformly convincing all the time, no theories which do not involve serious problems of some kind. Why is this? Because the whole network of literary and oral relationships among the gospels is so intricate and subtle and complex that all existing attempts at visualizing a solution cannot help but ignore important data, contain glaring inconsistencies, misconstrue evidence, and over- or under-estimate important phenomena.

Moreover, since all source theories arise out of the very gospels they seek to explain, with little by way of external controls to control them, it is unavoidable that every approach falls prey to the perils and pitfalls of circular reasoning. It begins immediately with the first two essential steps any critic must take to study the gospels: determining the text to be examined and ascertaining the meaning units (pericopes) to compare.

Every attempt at a critical text is a fundamentally circular process involving numerous subjective judgments, including a source theory to guide the decision-making process even though the resulting text is then used as evidence for one's preferred source theory.<sup>6</sup> Both

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<sup>5</sup> See D. L. Dungan, "Theory of Synopsis Construction," *Bib* 61 (1980): 305-329.

<sup>6</sup> See D. L. Dungan, "Synopses of the Future," *Bib* 66 (1985): 476-484: "The division into pericopes cannot be 'neutral'." Bruce Metzger was a rare example of a leading text critic admitting what most text critics used to deny, namely reliance on a

scholars of Old Testament and New Testament textual criticism are beginning to propose the idea of abandoning the whole idea of reconstructing “the original text” as seriously misleading,<sup>7</sup> and Reuben Swanson’s recently published display of textual variants of the gospels has already given it up: it is no more than a collection of the most important *variant readings* with no attempt to evaluate them.<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that the choice of which text to use does not make any difference; it does. There are many variant readings that directly contribute to the evidence one brings to “solve” the synoptic problem. For example, many possible readings in Luke were rejected by the United Bible Societies editorial board—all believers in Markan Priority—as “late harmonizations.” Yet many of these same readings are accepted as original to Luke by adherents of the Two Gospel Group (the Austin Farrer School would concur) because in their view Luke copied directly from Matthew.<sup>9</sup>

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source-theory. See B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament. A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), xxvii–xxviii, which notes that the Hypothesis of the Priority of Mark helped them decide in certain cases, “what the author [of Luke or Matthew or Mark] was more likely to have written.”

<sup>7</sup> See E. Tov, “The Status of the Masoretic Text in Modern Text Editions of the Hebrew Bible: The Relevance of the Canon,” in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002) 234–252 (240): “When the Qumran scrolls were written at Qumran and elsewhere, scribes created and consulted without distinction different texts of the Bible; all of which reflected the ‘Bible’ [to them] and all were authoritative, though not to the same extent... The goal of [striving for] textual uniformity [did not appear until] later in the Judaism of the first century CE onward.” Again, “... all of these literary stages were equally original, or alternatively, none of these stages should be thought to constitute ‘the original text’” (248). And again, “Insurmountable problems confront the evaluation of variant readings... In my view, the data compel us to discontinue such valuations and record these variants without evaluation in *parallel columns* so as to facilitate our understanding of these texts” (249–250; emphasis in original). For New Testament text criticism, consider the similar opinion of E. J. Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HTR* (1999): 245–281, at 263: “Recently the task of New Testament criticism... [has] turned away from the search for merely one ‘original text’ to an understanding of earlier stages of composition and to earlier texts—earlier ‘originals’—that lie behind what textual critics had become accustomed to consider *the* ‘original.’ Which ‘original’ or ‘originals’ ought we to seek?... Should text critics seek for an ‘original’ at all?” (emphasis in original).

<sup>8</sup> See R. J. Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*, 4 vols. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> For examples of circular reasoning involved in establishing the text of the Gospels, see Dungan, “Synopses of the Future,” 458–463.

Once the text is more or less chosen, the next step involves breaking up the long stream of Greek letters into words and sentences (with attendant punctuation), both of which are missing in the early manuscripts. These two actions are necessary preludes to the next step, dividing the gospels up into meaning units or pericopes. It is not possible to compare the gospels without some sense of the meaning units within the gospels, call them what you will: anecdotes, stories, pericopes, sections. But meaning unit divisions are not provided in the early Greek manuscripts (Eusebius's sections, based on Ammonius's pericopes, are the first step in that direction) and must be provided by the critic. Of course, most scholars skip all of these early steps and simply turn to the current "critical text" which has already broken the Greek text into sentences and meaning units (with handy paragraph titles and cross-references to facilitate comparison). But this expedient does not solve the problem of participation in circular reasoning, it just sweeps it under the rug.

As a matter of fact, most scholars go on and use some current synopsis (pretending to be "neutral") which has already paralleled the pericopes for them. But as I have shown, it is not possible to provide any objective, neutral parallelization of pericopes. All synopses necessarily *presuppose* some sort of source in their construction, and then they are used to provide evidence in discussions of the synoptic problem, an obvious exercise in circular reasoning.<sup>10</sup>

One reason why it is not possible to create an objective or neutral synopsis is because it is impossible to arrive at an objective definition of pericope endings and beginnings. Mark Regazzi has recently examined some 300 synopses, gospel parallels, and harmonies in the twentieth century, as well as the more famous early parallelizations (Eusebius, Augustine, Calvin, etc.) and the early lectionary evidence, and come to the conclusion that "There is no uniformity in the determination of pericopes in gospel comparators. A pericope is what the author or editor determines it to be. This lack of standardization also applies to commentaries and studies on the gospels."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Dungan, "Synopses of the Future," 463–476: "the arrangement of any synopsis cannot be neutral."

<sup>11</sup> M. B. Regazzi, "The Delimitation of Pericopes. A Case Study in Matthew" (unpubl. Ph.D. dissertation; Andrews University, Berien Springs, Michigan, 2000), abstract, 643–651.

Another reason why it is not possible to create an objective or neutral synopsis is because it is impossible objectively to determine what are the parallels to specific pericopes to print in the synopsis. I have shown that there are two kinds of parallels typically used in modern synopses: primary and secondary. But in fact the concept of “parallel” shades off indeterminately into further tertiary parallels, possible allusions, echoes, and minor resonances. As Joseph B. Tyson has said, “the principles for judging parallelism are by no means clear. Most scholars seem to apply judgments which are neither explained nor defended.”<sup>12</sup> Regazzi comments, “the problem with attempts to define ‘parallels’ in the Gospels is the same problem as attempting to define ‘pericope.’ There is too much variety within the Gospels to admit of any standard definition.”<sup>13</sup>

These are some of the reasons why I say that *we create the evidence we use to understand the gospels*. It is impossible to investigate the gospels without unknowingly selecting some phenomena to study and overlooking other phenomena. It is not possible to investigate the gospels directly, objectively, without “disturbing” the phenomena. This situation resembles the Heisenberg Principle of Indeterminacy, originally discovered in the field of sub-atomic physics, but here applied to gospel research: one cannot examine the phenomena without breaking them up in the act of creating a synopsis to study them.

I suggest that the methodological corollary atomic physicists drew from this principle also applies to gospel research: one cannot investigate an individual phenomenon directly (without modifying it) but one can *predict the statistical probabilities of large blocks of data (quanta)*. That is what quantum mechanics is, identifying the probabilities of statistically significant aggregations of data. A comparable application in gospel research would be comparing hypotheses that identify putative general trends or large-scale probabilities. That hypothesis would be preferable that can give a “convincing” description of large numbers of putative tendencies covering many phenomena in all four (or three) gospels. Analysis of a single double- or triple-tradition passage is statistically meaningless as far as buttressing a particular source hypothesis is concerned.

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<sup>12</sup> J. B. Tyson, “Sequential Parallelism in the Synoptic Gospels,” *NTS* 22 (1976): 276–308, at 277.

<sup>13</sup> Regazzi, “Delimitation,” 659.

This brings me to the end of the ancillary considerations. Let us now consider some texts. I suggest that the best place to begin is a significant event in the life of Jesus where there is the highest degree of overlap or mutual correspondence in order and content among the four gospels.

#### 4. *The Accounts of Jesus' Crucifixion*

The greatest degree of unanimity among all four gospels in the New Testament occurs within the narratives describing Jesus' arrest, "trial," torture, and crucifixion. It is true that even here there are many significant differences among the four accounts, but, compared to the widely divergent narrative and saying material prior to this part of the gospels, and the extremely divergent resurrection accounts among the four gospels, the greatest *degree of convergence* occurs in the account of Jesus' crucifixion. This strikingly higher degree of correspondence among the four gospels at just this point has been provided with many explanations. I agree with those who say that it is no accident. It reflects the profound significance the earliest Christians felt toward the brutal death of their Lord. For this reason, the Crucifixion should be the starting point for our reconstruction of the historical Jesus.

The fact of its great importance does not mean that all four gospels depicted the Crucifixion in exactly similar fashion. The Resurrection was also of fundamental significance, yet observe the variety in the accounts of it: they are so divergent (and do not forget 1 Cor 15:1-11) that they cannot be placed in the usual synoptic parallel columns! Let us examine the accounts of the Crucifixion in each of the gospels in turn, to see the distinctive elements.

Matt 27:33-56 describes a grim and brutal scene, a continuation of the mocking and torture Jesus has just received from the Roman guard (Matt 27:27-32). Friday morning Jesus is taken out and crucified between two criminals, with a mocking sign fastened to the cross over his head. The people and Jerusalem officials shout scornful things at him. Suddenly, around noon, the sun's light fails, a terrifying celestial portent signifying God's wrath. Pitch darkness remains for almost three hours, when, just as unexpectedly, the sun's light reappears around three in the afternoon. In anguish, Jesus cries out in a loud voice, "My God, My God! Why have you forsaken me?!" and with another loud cry, he dies.

It is a scene of overwhelming grief and horror. We might be inclined to say, “Something this terrible must be historical. They would never have made this up.” Perhaps, but in a narrative dealing with an event this important, there is all the more reason to proceed with utmost caution. For example, it is widely recognized that the climax of the scene, Jesus’ “Hebrew” words from the cross, is in fact a quote from Ps 22:1 “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*”<sup>14</sup> which Mt’s text immediately translates into Greek, “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” If we examine the larger context, we find several more quotations, echoes, and allusions to Psalm 22, seven or eight to be precise. The following chart lays out the evidence.

Psalm 22	Matthew 27–28
“But I am a worm, and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, <i>they wag their heads...</i> ” (Ps 22:6–7)	“And those who passed by derided him, <i>wagging their heads...</i> ” (Matt 27:39)
“He committed his cause to the LORD; <i>let him deliver him</i> , let him rescue him, for he delights in him!” (Ps 22:8)	“He trusts in God; <i>let God deliver him</i> now, if he desires him; for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matt 27:43; cf. Matt 27:40)
Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion (Ps 22:12)	(Palace guard mocking and beating Jesus: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the praetorium, and they gathered the whole battalion before him” Matt 27:27)

<sup>14</sup> The Hebrew of Ps 22:1 is *אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי* *azavtani* not *sabach-thani*. At mid-phrase Mt’s version switches to the Aramaic *שְׁבַקְתָּנִי*. As might be expected, there is a long and complex textual history to this Word of the Lord and its Markan parallel; see the comments by Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 70, 119–120. Metzger points out that Mt’s wording is half Hebrew *אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לָמָּה*, and half Aramaic *שְׁבַקְתָּנִי*, while Mark’s *ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι* is consistent Aramaic *אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לָמָּה שְׁבַקְתָּנִי*. See further W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 3:264, for evidence from the Aramaic Targum, MT Hebrew, and first-century Palestinian linguistic possibilities.

Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet (Ps 22:16)

... they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots (Ps 22:18)

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death (Ps 22:14–15)

But thou, O LORD, be not far off! O thou my help, hasten to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion, my afflicted soul from the horns of the wild oxen! (Ps 22:19–21)

I will tell of thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee: ... All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. Posterity shall serve him; men shall tell of the Lord to the coming generation (Ps 22:22–30)

And when they had crucified him ... (Matt 27:35a)

And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots (Matt 27:35b)

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" ... And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave it to him to drink (Matt 27:46–48)

(Tomb/Resurrection)

Great Commission:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:18–20)

What are all of these allusions and quotations of Psalm 22 doing here? How do they affect our sense of the historical value of Mt's Crucifixion account, coming, as they do, at key junctures throughout the entire account?

We cannot deal with this question in isolation; the intertextuality of this passage ties into the larger question of the role of *Matthew's repeated explicit quotations of the Old Testament to structure his narrative*. These occur after Matthew describes some action of Jesus and adds, "Jesus did this in order to fulfill what was spoken by the

prophet” and then a quotation. This pattern occurs in Mt’s text more than sixty times and is basic to the entire structure of the Gospel. The many tacit allusions to Psalm 22 in the Crucifixion account suggest that there are likely many more times that number of *tacit allusions* to the Old Testament (LXX) throughout Mt playing a similar role in shaping the narrative.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, the massive presence of this phenomenon greatly undermines the historical value of the whole Gospel because, in so many cases (including the key Crucifixion account we are considering), the narrative may have been shaped to *make events conform* to the Old Testament “prophecies.”

This suspicion on the part of modern critics is quite ironic, since precisely Mt’s prophecy-fulfillment feature helped make the Gospel of Matthew popular among first- and second-century Jews and Gentiles.<sup>16</sup> Edouard Massaux conducted an exhaustive study of gospel quotations in all Christian literature down to the end of the second century, and discovered that Matthew’s Gospel was by far the most popular.<sup>17</sup> In those days, Mt’s prophecy-fulfillment scheme was not regarded with suspicion, just the reverse. As George Buchanan has correctly said, “Convinced that Jesus was the Messiah and armed with these two Psalms (22 and 69), the author of this narrative did not at all presume that he was composing fiction. As a good research student, he was simply applying the scripture that was available to him.”<sup>18</sup>

I am not saying that we should reject the whole Gospel because of this feature. To begin with, in individual cases, there may in fact be a

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<sup>15</sup> By far the most detailed discussion of the complex pattern of intertextuality of the entire Gospel of Matthew with the LXX, as well as later echoes in rabbinic literature, is G. W. Buchanan’s two-volume intertextual commentary *The Gospel of Matthew* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1996); also particularly rich in this kind of intertextual investigation is the three-volume commentary by Davies and Allison, *Matthew*. Focusing specifically on the formula-quotations is the classic study by K. Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Lund: Gleerup, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> This is the most important reason the mid-second-century Christian philosopher Justin Martyr can bring forward to convince the Emperor Antoninus of the veracity of the gospels; see *1 Apol.* 30, followed by an extended citation of fulfilled Old Testament prophecies with frequent explanations, §§31 to 53.

<sup>17</sup> E. Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus*, 3 vols., ed. A. J. Bellinzoni (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 3:186–187: “Of all the New Testament writings, the Gospel of Mt. was the one whose literary influence was the most widespread and the most profound in the Christian literature that extended to the last decades of the second century.”

<sup>18</sup> Buchanan, *Matthew*, 2:1016; see further 2:1009.



valid historical memory that was subsequently (whether during the oral tradition level or at the redaction level) framed and interpreted by an Old Testament quotation by the early community. On the cross, Jesus may actually have cried out, “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me!” intentionally beginning to say Psalm 22.<sup>19</sup> When the well-known second century Rabbi Aqiba was having his skin peeled off in strips by Roman soldiers in retaliation for his involvement with the Bar Kochba rebellion, he died trying to recite the *Shema*.<sup>20</sup> Of course, we cannot be certain of the historical value of this account either, but it is plausible. In other words, we need to assess each case.

In Mt, these scripture quotations are applied to miracles, teachings, and actions, beginning with Jesus’ birth and circumcision. Insofar as they apply to his healing and nature miracles, they raise a separate question: how should the historical critic respond to the widespread miraculous element in the gospels? Once again, this brings us into a fundamental “judgment call” far removed from the debate over source theories. As important as it is, given the scope of this essay, I must put it to one side. Before I do, I need to bring in an important part of Matthew’s Crucifixion story: the resurrection of the saints *during* the final stages of the Crucifixion (Matt 27:52–53).<sup>21</sup>

This passage, which is unique to Mt, clearly locates Jesus’ death (and resurrection) *within* the final Eschatological Drama. First would come the General Resurrection foretold by Ezekiel 37. After this would come, in the traditional scenario, God’s Judgment (Dan 7), followed by eternal reward or punishment. In other words, for Matthew, Jesus’ resurrection is not an isolated supernatural occurrence as it is in Lk (see below). For Matthew—as for Paul—it is

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<sup>19</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew* 3:624–625, explain the differing vocalization of the saying in Matt 27:46 cf. Mark 15:34, and give a plausible historical reason for Jesus trying to speak the words of Ps 22 while on the cross.

<sup>20</sup> See *b. Ber.* 61b; this famous story is available in David R. Cartlidge and David L. Dungan, *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 182–183.

<sup>21</sup> Buchanan, *Matthew*, 2:1015–1016 collects scriptural and rabbinic passages that provide further traditional meaning for this enigmatic passage. He does not mention any link between the darkness and the earthquake and rending of the Temple veil (Matt 27:45, 51), which are all signs of divine wrath at the death of his Righteous One, which—in Mt’s scenario—provides the rationale for God beginning the final eschatological events with the General Resurrection. On the culminating effect of the “woes of the Messiah,” see the Synoptic Apocalypse (Matt 24:9–22 and pars.), Dan 9:22–27; *Did.* 16:4–5; and for rabbinic parallels, Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 95–103, “the pangs of the times.”

viewed as part of the great and terrible events of the last days: “Christ has been raised from the dead, *the first fruits* of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20, 23), and Paul gives the rest of the scenario in 1 Cor 15:23–26 (cf. 1 Thess 4:16). It should be noted that this thoroughly eschatological interpretive framework provided by Matthew is immediately abandoned by his successors: Luke, Mark, and John (more on that below). What the historian makes of the strong eschatology in the Gospel of Mt is another fundamental question, the answer to which far transcends the scope of this essay since it must be dealt with apart from any source hypothesis.

All of these features of Mt: the repeated prophecy/fulfillments worked into every aspect of the narrative, the manifold miraculous events beginning with the Virgin Birth and culminating with the Ascension, the distinctive eschatological orientation, all make it quite obvious that the Gospel of Matthew, like the other three gospels, has a fundamental theological and apologetic purpose well summed-up in the (first) conclusion to the Gospel of John: “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30–31). Although in the past scholars, noting the heavy theological component of the Gospel narratives, dismissed them as “myth,” I do not think such sweeping skepticism is justified. Many critics have learned how to make allowances for the faith-based approach of the gospels as they “read between the lines” for authentic historical reminiscences of Jesus and the disciples and the events in his life. It is at this point that we should be especially grateful for the presence of *four* gospels in the New Testament, not just one; each gospel has a unique agenda and a unique compositional technique. By comparing each one to the others, and working back and forth between all four, it is possible to produce a surprisingly resilient and clear-cut picture of the historical Jesus.

For this kind of comparative study, a source theory is indispensable; the alternative is a confusing, eclectic, arbitrary analysis. But not just any source theory; the wrong source theory will scramble the evidence just as surely as no source theory at all. That is precisely why so much rests on discovering the correct relationship among the gospels.

We discovered that the Crucifixion narrative in Mt exhibited the author’s (and/or possibly the oral tradition’s) custom of interweaving of the event with quotations from and/or allusions to the Old

Testament, in this case especially Psalm 22. We also noted that recognizing this authorial pattern (which he may have gotten from the oral tradition) did not automatically signify that none of it was historical. The historical Jesus most likely taught his disciples and acted in conformity with some Old Testament text to make a point.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, this kind of scriptural application to the life of Jesus was typical in early first-century Palestinian Pharisaism, suggesting that the author(s) had a kind of *scribal* approach to telling the life of Jesus, in contrast to Luke's more *authorial* approach. This fact, and other features of Mt, indicated that the Gospel of Matthew, while containing a clear overall compositional narrative framework, still grouped its material by genre (sayings, miracles, mission instructions) far more than any of the other gospels. In other words, there is relatively little "overwriting"—especially as compared to the Gospel of John. For that reason, I am inclined to say that in the Gospel of Matthew, we *often* have the genuine words of Jesus, and many of his historical actions.

Luke's depiction of the Crucifixion of Jesus (Luke 23:33–49), while containing similar broad structural elements, differs from Mt's account (and all other Crucifixion accounts) in striking, detailed ways. First, Luke 23:34 describes Jesus forgiving those crucifying him (NB the significant textual problem with this verse), an action not found in any other gospel (but conforming to Lk's emphasis upon the non-retaliation sayings in Mt's Sermon on the Mount; see Lk 6:27–36). Luke then has the various groups mocking and deriding him (not in the same order as Mt), but, when it comes to the two thieves, instead of having them merely shout at him, as in Mt, one of the criminals cries out to Jesus to save himself and them, but the other rebukes the first, adding, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingly power!" Jesus replies, "This day you will be with me in paradise!" In other words, precisely in the midst of Jesus' brutal death, Luke's Jesus makes it crystal-clear that he is not in any real danger, he is not terribly concerned, since he (and the thief) will soon be in "Paradise." Then comes the darkness and the Temple curtain is torn and with a loud voice, Jesus cries—now quoting Ps 31:5 not Psalm 22—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

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<sup>22</sup> On Jesus' teaching methods, see B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

In sum, Luke's subtle alterations throughout create the effect of assuring his Greek audiences that Jesus was in complete control of the situation. In addition, Mt's apocalyptic framework has been completely dropped: Jesus' death is not portrayed as inaugurating the great events of the final Eschatological Drama. Instead, a new framework has been created according to which Jesus' death is presented as the courageous, selfless act of the Savior, providing an example for Christians martyrs to follow. They, too, are to forgive their tormentors and trustingly commend their spirits to God when they are unjustly arrested and executed, and Luke underlines this lesson in Acts, in his account of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, who did precisely those things Jesus did *where Luke's account differed from Mt's*: he forgave his tormentors (Acts 7:60) and commended his spirit to God/Christ (Acts 7:59).<sup>23</sup> In short, wherever Lk's account differs from Mt's, we can clearly see Luke's hand making secondary alterations intended to edify the Gentile Christian congregations to whom Luke addressed his Gospel. (At this point one can see an illustration of the value of the source theory I am presupposing.)

Mark 15:22–41 is very similar to Mt's account and thus like it differs greatly from Lk both in order of pericopes and in the contents of individual pericopes. What differences there are between Mk and Mt (and Lk) stand out clearly. Mk's version of Jesus' cry from the cross is consistent Aramaic "*Eloi, Eloi...*" not like Mt's mixed Hebrew-Aramaic "*Eli...*" I take Mark's version to be secondary to Mt, since "rougher is likely to be more original." Moreover, elsewhere Mark seems to have a penchant for having Jesus say (semi-)Aramaic words, e.g. "*Talitha cumi*," Mark 5:41 (missing in the parallels Matt 9:25 and Luke 8:54); "*Ephphata*" Mark 7:34 (missing in the parallel at Matt 15:30). I think Mark inserted these strange foreign words himself because his Jesus spoke magic-sounding commands when he healed, as in the modern English phrase: "*Abracadabra!*" Second, Mark, like Luke (and John), deleted Mt's apocalyptic framework for the Crucifixion account; another secondary characteristic.<sup>24</sup> In other words, contrary to the claims of critics utilizing any hypothesis

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<sup>23</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the secondary character of Lk's crucifixion account vis-a-vis Mt's, see A. J. McNicol et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse: Luke's Use of Matthew. A Demonstration by the Research Team of the International Institute for Gospel Studies* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 301–307.

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed analysis of all of the secondary characteristics of Mk's account vis-à-vis both Mt's and Lk's account, see D. B. Peabody, L. Cope, and A. J. McNicol,

involving the priority of Mark, there are no important historic reminiscences in Mk's account not already better represented in Mt's account.

John 19:16–37 differs from the synoptic accounts at numerous points. Most important is the date of Jesus' Crucifixion, namely, on the day *before* Passover, i.e., Thursday, "the Day of Preparation" (John 19:14, 31). Scholars have offered many explanations for this strange disagreement between John and the synoptics, beginning already in patristic times.<sup>25</sup> Within the crucifixion account as such there are many themes also found in the synoptic account, including a literalistic fulfillment of Ps 22:18, "they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots" in John 19:23–24, followed by John 19:28: "After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), 'I thirst'"—which echoes Ps 22:15, "my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws." With all of these echoes, one might expect Jn to have also included the same last word found in Mt and Mk, but this would have gone directly counter to Jn's whole purpose and goal in composing his gospel. "In deliberate contrast to the passion tradition preserved for us in the Markan, synoptic line of tradition, the Crucifixion in John is Jesus' triumph... [Jesus] carries his own cross and closes his life's words with an announcement of completion and offers up his own spirit in death."<sup>26</sup> In other words, the trend we can see of "softening" the impact of Jesus' death (that it was some sort of terrible catastrophe), at the same time increasing the theme that Jesus was in complete control of events, that began in Mt and extended to Luke now culminates in John's account where Christ's death is a victory and the central event of the entire Gospel. While John's interpretation is theologically very significant, the synoptic tradition as represented by Mt is far closer to the original historical events.

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eds., *One Gospel from Two: Mark's Use of Matthew and Luke* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002), 311–321.

<sup>25</sup> C. S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:1100–1103 gives a good overview of the main problems and solutions, including the possibility that Jesus and his disciples were following a sectarian calendar. He concludes that "John has simply provided a theological interpretation of Jesus' death, the way he opens Jesus' ministry with the temple cleansing [the other major chronological clash with the synoptic outline], so that the shadow of passion week may cover the whole period" (1102).

<sup>26</sup> Keener, *Commentary on John*, 2.1133.

### 5. *The Last Supper and Words of Institution*

In keeping with the central task of this article to focus mainly on those aspects of the gospel tradition where use of the Two Gospel Hypothesis—without recourse to the Q hypothesis or the priority of Mark—makes the most difference in interpreting the synoptic tradition, I would like to branch off from the Crucifixion account and turn next to the Last Supper account, and Jesus' words of institution regarding the cup and the bread. A reconstruction of the historical Jesus must link together closely what happened on the day of his death with the equally significant account of his last meal with his disciples, where he explains to them the purpose of his death and how he understands it. As will become evident, the Two Gospel Hypothesis becomes very useful in helping to clear up famous and long-standing areas of confusion (largely caused by exegesis assuming the Two Source Hypothesis) regarding what actually happened on that occasion.

As before, on the Two Gospel Hypothesis, one begins by considering Mt's account, compares it to Lk's, and then the others. In general, critics have noted how terse and brief Mt's account of the Last Supper is; it is the shortest of the three synoptic accounts. Nevertheless it has a definite, step-wise, internal logic.<sup>27</sup>

- a. Matt 26:20: Jesus is with the twelve disciples: his "family" (Passover is a family festival), who will be judges in the New Israel (cf. Matt 19:28 where Jesus had said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"). In this way, Matthew decisively sets the scene for what is to follow.
- b. Matt 26:21–25: Everything else about the beginning of the meal is ignored. In the midst of the Passover meal, Jesus warns them that one of them will betray him and he will soon die, so that "the Son of Man goes as it is written of him"—referring to the suffering and death of the Servant (Isa 53) as the Son of Man (see further below on "Son of Man"). This reference to his impending betrayal and death provides

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<sup>27</sup> For the points made here, see the more complete discussions in William R. Farmer, *The Gospel of Jesus: The Pastoral Relevance of the Synoptic Problem* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 52–63, ch. 5: "The Lord's Supper," and A. Leske, "Commentary on Matthew" in William R. Farmer et al., *The International Bible Commentary. A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 1388–1389.

- the motivation for the next act: Jesus ritually inducts the Twelve, the nucleus of the eschatological Israel, into the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah.
- c. Matt 26:26–28: Jesus blesses, breaks and shares the bread and the cup of wine and commands his disciples to partake of *his body and blood of the New Covenant* “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” combining the redemptive death of the Servant in Isa 53:1–12 with the eschatological prophecy in Jer 31:31 and the covenant ceremony in Exod 24:8, and Zech 9:11. In this way they can be participants in the eschatological covenant predicted by the prophets.
  - d. Matt 26:29: After the dramatic complex of thoughts uttered so far, Jesus reassures his beloved disciples that he is doing all this voluntarily, on purpose, and will soon “drink [the cup] new in my Father’s kingdom” *with them*.
  - e. Matt 26:30: They sing a hymn and head out for the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

For decades critics have tried to understand the historical Jesus by down-playing elements of Mt not found in Mk, and trying to interpret the remainder of Mt’s account as a “Judaizing” revision of Mk. In the process, they have simultaneously not noticed the coherence of Mt’s portrayal, disregarded sound evidence for the historical Jesus level in Mt, and undermined the theology of the church based on this important pericope.<sup>28</sup> My reaction to the carefully structured account in Mt 27 is to grant that we can see the hand of the final redactor here, tying together many theological strands that go back to key passages in his gospel.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the basic outlines of the scene seem historical to me: Jesus could have been quite aware who would play the traitor in his small band; whether he urged him on or made some sort of comment during the Meal can no longer be decided but seems secondary. More importantly, Jesus’ portraying himself as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, while referring to the Eschatological Covenant of Jer 31:31, and tying in the Danielic Son of Man, all correspond to so many earlier authentic sayings and actions of Jesus that I find it excessively skeptical to dismiss the statements in the Words of Institution as completely unhistorical (as the Bultmann School and

<sup>28</sup> See the great cost to the church resulting from the enormous distortions caused by this approach, described in Farmer, *Gospel of Jesus*, 61–63, “The Lord’s Supper and the Two Source Hypothesis.”

<sup>29</sup> For a brief account of the main ones, see Peabody, *One Gospel from Two*, 284–288, “The Secondary Character of Mark to Matthew in the Account of the Last Supper.”

their recent descendants in the Jesus Seminar have done). Moreover, if Jesus actually chose *twelve disciples* and if he knew he would die soon because of a plot against him, would he not have enacted some sort of symbolic deed or ritual to underline the eschatological significance of “the Twelve”—drawing upon the rich symbolism of the Passover Meal—at their last meal together?

These conclusions are consistent with the likely historical scenario lying behind the passion narrative in the Gospel of Matthew as a whole: Jesus allowed himself to be arrested, objected to the bogus “trial” as it went through its illegal process, voluntarily submitted to his death while protesting against the gross injustice of it, and announced to friend (disciples) and foe (High Priest) alike that he would soon be with “his Father” while they would see the Hand of Judgment drawing nigh (Matt 26:64–65).

Lk’s account of the Last Supper (Luke 22:7–38) differs markedly from Mt’s account, re-arranging the pericopes and adding much new content. On the Two Gospel Hypothesis, I would argue that Luke has revised Mt for a number of reasons arising from his desire to communicate a differently nuanced *kerygma* to the Gentile Christian churches of Paul’s mission field. Most important, Luke desired to portray a very different understanding of *Jesus’ death* (as a moral example) and of *the disciples* (standing for both the church leadership of his own time, and also the suffering, waiting community). On the over-arching redactional level, Luke needed to revise Mt’s entire passion/resurrection account because he wanted to prepare the conclusion of his gospel so that it would flow smoothly into his second narrative, the Acts of the Apostles, which is the story of the adventures of the leadership of the immediate post-Easter community. Viewed from this perspective, all of the parts of Luke’s account of the Last Supper that differ from Mt’s account stand out sharply and can be identified and accounted for.<sup>30</sup> This does not mean that all of them are secondary, coming from the redactional level of tradition, so that none of them stems from the historical Jesus level; I feel confident

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<sup>30</sup> For a thorough account of the secondary character of Lk’s Last Supper account vis-à-vis Mt, see McNicol et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse*, 276–287, “Luke’s Revision of Matthew’s Account of the Last Supper,” with three synoptic charts more exact and complete than any currently in print.



that for many of his alterations, Luke was following another source beside Mt, namely what he learned from Jesus' family.<sup>31</sup>

What are the main outlines of the Lukan redactional alterations and additions? To start with, Luke has transformed Mt's terse, somewhat abrupt scene into a longer story having several parts, each with considerable drama, worthy of the occasion. Luke sets to one side Mt's rough and abrupt "When it was evening and the twelve were sitting at the table, he said, 'Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me...'" (Matt 26:20–21), and creates Luke 22:15–17 which simultaneously announces his impending suffering (Luke 22:15), utters a prophecy about not eating "it" (i.e., bread) until "it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16)—which is precisely what happens when he breaks bread with Cleopas and the other man at Emmaus (Luke 24:30)—and creates a bond of brotherhood in the Paschal "cup of thanksgiving" (Luke 22:17). Luke 22:18 concludes the opening unit by reaching forward to Matt 26:29, Jesus' eschatological hope to be with them all again in "the Kingdom of my Father," and uses it to end the first speech, greatly weakening the eschatological hope and inadvertently(?) introducing a second reference to a cup.

The next unit introduces the Words of Institution (Luke 22:19–20) and it contains a major textual problem because centuries of copyists tried to reconcile Lk's reference to *two cups* with the *one cup* of the other gospels. The profusion of textual alternatives has led modern text critics to question the originality of Luke 22:19b–20, but I regard this passage as belonging to original Luke. Part of the problem results from the fact that Luke has blended 1 Cor 11:24–25 with Matt 26:26–28,<sup>32</sup> because his audience would be composed of Gentile Christians

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<sup>31</sup> I consider it very significant that Simeon, Jesus' nephew and son of Clopas/Cleopas, was bishop of Jerusalem (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.11; 4.5.3; 4.22.4) at the time Luke was composing his Gospel. It helps me understand the extraordinary fact that in Luke's post-resurrection narrative, the first male the Risen Jesus explains "all the scriptures" to is not one of the Eleven, but *Cleopas, Jesus' uncle* (the same person as Clopas and his wife Mary, mentioned in John 19:25)—*not one of the Twelve*. Why did Luke portray the Risen Lord explaining all the scriptures to *his uncle*? Something major is going on here. Luke would not give such a big signal for no reason. I believe it gives a window into the rationale for Luke's meticulous rearrangement of the Matthean narrative so that events were "in the proper order." How did he know what to put where? On the basis of inside information directly from Jesus' family. For further discussion, see McNicol et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse*, 314.

<sup>32</sup> For a lengthy discussion of the important textual variants in Luke's version of the Last Supper, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 173–177; for a discussion of the textual evidence from a Two Gospel point of view, see McNicol et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse*, 283–284.

in Paul's churches used to Paul's liturgical tradition for the Eucharist. Modern Two Source critics merely see "harmonization" (which it is), but it is original.

Without a pause, Luke introduces the third part of the Last Supper, Jesus' announcement that one from among them will soon betray him, adding the shocked reaction of the disciples (missing in Mt; see Luke 22:21–23). This reaction, in light of what comes next, comes across as totally hypocritical, "What?! Who would *do* such a terrible thing? Tsk Tsk." Because, at that point, Luke moves with exquisite irony to the fourth part of his version of the Last Supper story: a shocking scene—in light of all that Jesus has just said—of petty squabbling among the disciples as to who would be the boss after Jesus died: "A dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest" (τὸ μείζων 'the most important,' Luke 22:24). This verse is missing in Mt, indicating that Luke is now departing from Mt's order, and the next words of Jesus in Luke, a response to the portrayal of wretched egotism among his disciples, are two sayings imported from locations several chapters earlier: the word on selfless leadership from Matt 20:25–28, and the reference to eating and drinking with Christ in "his" Kingdom (Luke 22:29–30//Matt 19:28). I believe Luke's purpose for bringing this subject up precisely here, with the attendant words of advice from the Lord, is because the Christian community of Luke's day (roughly the late sixth decade of the first century) was plagued by squabbling between factions and, no doubt, church leaders claiming supreme apostolic authority (Paul mentions this problem). When better to have a "word from the Lord" on who was the "most important"?

For the next speech, Luke reaches forward in Mt's outline (Matt 26:34–35) and brings Jesus' prophecy of Peter's denial back into the middle of the Last Supper. Looking at Mt's outline, it is in fact strikingly awkward to have Jesus bring the theme of betrayal *after* the supper while they are walking in the dark toward Gethsemane, after they had just sung a hymn together (what hymn was that?)—a detail both Luke and Mark omit because it clashes so much with the dramatic context. Luke wants to soften Mt's version of the prediction of Peter's denial and has the Lord combine the prediction of the denial with an affirmation, "after you have repented, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:32)—which Peter immediately lives up to in the early chapters of Acts.

Finally, Luke's Last Supper comes to an end with a curious little interchange between Jesus and the twelve which ends by Jesus rec-

ommending that they should arm themselves with a sword because they will need it. As far as I can see, exegetes should be careful not to read too much into this pericope, since its sole purpose is to make it clear that one of the disciples had a sword ready to use in the next pericope, the Arrest at Gethsemane, a typical Lukan compositional technique.

Most if not all of Luke's changes seem to me clearly secondary to Mt's account (and Mk as well, since Mk is so similar to Mt). The words of institution are different since this Gospel was intended to be read in the churches using Paul's tradition of the Last Supper Words of Institution. The prophecy about Peter seems clearly intended to prepare for the later leadership role in the first part of Acts. And the business about the swords—which has elicited great anguish from pacifist interpreters of Jesus' ethics—is simply Luke's way of having one of Jesus' disciples ready to use it during the mob-scene at Gethsemane (Luke 22:49). In short, little in Luke's Last Supper account reflects significant reminiscences of the historical Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

Mk's account of the Last Supper (Mark 14:12–26) is almost as brief as Mt's and much of it is identical in wording (66 out of 77 total words). It has, of course, been widely considered as Mt's main source and the slight differences have been explained as due to Matthew's stylistic preferences. What has not been noticed in the past is that Mk's text can be viewed as a careful blending of all of the points where Mt and Lk have the same or similar wording in the same relative order. This linguistic phenomenon conforms to one of the basic compositional objectives of the author of Mark claimed by advocates of the Two Gospel Hypothesis: namely, it was one of Mark's goals to record similar traditions in Mt and Lk that occur in the same order.<sup>34</sup> In this scene, Mk has elected to not include any of Lk's additions, with the result that Mk's account is as short, or actually shorter, than Mt's. Any evidence as to its secondary character will be in some of the important details.<sup>35</sup>

Thus we have discussed the Words of Institution in the synoptic gospels (there are none in the Gospel of John) and seen that the

<sup>33</sup> For explanations of these elaborations and redeployments of Matthean texts, see McNicol et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse*, 284–285.

<sup>34</sup> See for a further elaboration Peabody, *One Gospel from Two*, 60–63.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed exploration of the secondary character of Mk's account vis-à-vis Matthew, see Peabody et al., eds., *One Gospel from Two*, 284–288.

Matthean redaction is clearly more original than Luke's or Mark's, and that at the base of the Matthean account is a historical foundation whereby Jesus prepared his disciples for the terrible events about to unfold, inducted his disciples into the New eschatological Covenant in his blood, combining the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 with Jeremiah 31, and announced the subsequent, glorious dénouement when they would be with him in "his Father's kingdom" sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, whatever that may have meant originally.

We have come to the end of what I regard as the most historically reliable starting point in the reconstruction of the historical Jesus: the Crucifixion Account and the Last Supper. It now remains to add further examples from pericopes usually thought of as Q material (or Q–Mark Overlaps) to flesh out what we have established so far.

#### 6. *The Parables of Jesus—a Uniquely Reliable Type of Tradition*

The choice of the best place to begin examining the sayings material is exceedingly important. As with the narrative tradition, I think also here the thing to do is begin with sayings material that is, according to a consensus of historians, the most likely to go back to the historical Jesus: the parables.

I concur with J. Jeremias and others who claim that the parables in the gospels are a uniquely reliable tradition.<sup>36</sup> There are three reasons for this view: first, while widely used in contemporaneous and later rabbinic teaching,<sup>37</sup> genuine parables are not found anywhere else in the New Testament or anywhere else in all of early Christianity. That means that Jesus was unique in all of early Christianity in his frequent, habitual use of parables. There are extended metaphors (the body analogy in 1 Cor 12:12–31), apocalyptic visions and typologies (Apocalypse of John), and moral exhortations, but no parables. Why

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<sup>36</sup> See J. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1963), 10–22; further B. H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 37–38.

<sup>37</sup> Young, *Parables*, 4; D. Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 188–189, cites David Flusser's pioneering work in proving that "Jesus' parables and the Rabbinic meshalim share compositional similarities—formulaic elements of diction, stereotyped themes, and motifs—which indicate that they were both part of a single genre of traditional narrative."

not? There are many proposed explanations for this fact, which are not necessary to rehearse here. The point I am interested in is the opposite inference: since there were no other creators/users of parables in early Christianity, the chances that the parable tradition was a complete invention and introduced into the sayings tradition during the second, oral period, or at the third, redactional level by the gospel authors, are much lower.

Secondly, they have a clear, distinctive form.<sup>38</sup> Alterations, insertions, secondary additions stand out clearly and can be removed, so that the original parable can be seen. In this they are like sonnets: a sonnet is supposed to have 14 lines. If there is a sonnet with 22 lines, there is a good chance some lines have been added. If the suspicious lines are removed and the sonnet makes better sense, that is also evidence that they were secondary accretions. The same applies to the parables. This applies especially to the allegorical interpretations fastened to them in the tradition; they are all secondary.<sup>39</sup>

Third, we get the impression of a single “voice” or personality in the gospel parables; a distinctive point of view.<sup>40</sup> The problem is that these parables have been lifted out of their original historical context. Each one is like hearing one-half of a phone conversation. The interpretive task is to reconstruct the other half of the conversation, that is, reconstruct the original historical situation in which they were spoken.

Two examples where parables may have fragments of their original historical context still attached to them are in Luke 7. They are the parable of the children in the market-place, where both Jesus and John the Baptist are criticized and rejected (Luke 7:24–35), followed by the parable of the two debtors, told in the context of a dinner visit of Jesus to Simon, a Pharisee (Luke 7:36–50). These two settings, especially the latter, are rich with irony, full of color, and vividly illustrate Jesus’ wit and penetrating insight. No doubt Luke enhanced and sharpened the vivid details in the latter scene of the woman “crashing the party” at Simon’s house, but even so, the parable of the two debtors fits the context like a glove, and so is a good example of

<sup>38</sup> Young, *Parables*, 23–24.

<sup>39</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 12–13, Young, *Parables*, 14; but see the nuanced rejection of the hyper-strict division between parable and allegory in Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 10–13.

<sup>40</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 12 and *passim*; Young, *Parables*.

what would certainly be the case if we only knew the original historical settings of all the other parables in Matthew 13//Luke 6//Mark 4. As Jeremias says, the original parables “correct, reprove, attack... Every one of them calls for immediate response.”<sup>41</sup> As it is, these chapters contain “strings of pearls”—a chain of mysterious comparisons, with the first one, the Parable of the Sower, allegorically interpreted to suggest to the reader how to interpret the rest. The early church Fathers certainly took the hint.

Once one has studied the parables and worked at understanding their original meanings (which means reconstructing their original settings, Jesus’ original audiences, etc.), one has the beginnings of an understanding of Jesus’ message to various groups.<sup>42</sup> To do this with any hope of historical accuracy one must know the original order of composition of the gospels, so as to compare the evolving parable tradition correctly.

### 7. *The Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes*

Q theoreticians stumble around trying to decide if the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9–15//Luke 11:2–4) was a Q text or a liturgical tradition transmitted in two (or more) versions. The problem is that their usual methods of argumentation (Luke is usually more original than Mt) does not work in this case because while Lk’s version is shorter (and therefore presumably more original), Mt’s version has several obviously original features.<sup>43</sup> In fact, the secondary features of Lk’s version stand out and can easily be explained. The main difference is that Lk’s version has de-eschatologized the prayer almost completely: the omission of Matt 6:10b, the change of Mt’s “bread of tomorrow” = Kingdom of God to a practical petition for “daily bread” (compare the similarly de-eschatologized, practical realism of Lk’s Beatitudes,

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<sup>41</sup> Jeremias, *Parables*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Many important studies of the “message of the parables” have been published recently. Some of my favorites are Jeremias, *Parables* (still useful); Young, *Parables*; K. E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant*; and, *Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); R. W. Funk, *Jesus as Precursor*, ed. E. F. Beutner (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> See the evidence of hesitancy and confusion in the discussion of John Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes & Concordance* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988), 84–85.

discussed below), and the omission of the reference to Satan and the eschatological time of testing (Matt 6:13b). Other features: Mt's "debts" (Matt 6:12) is more original; Lk's "sins" (Luke 11:4) is what Mt's version means, but has been altered to conform to the usage in Paul's churches.<sup>44</sup>

Luke's abbreviations and other changes are neither surprising nor indications of superior historical value, as they are clearly driven by a desire to make the prayer conform to the worship customs in his Gentile context. Moreover, the de-eschatologizing can be found throughout the Gospel of Luke whenever there is a parallel pericope in Mt redolent of eschatological perspectives and language. What Luke always does (and we have seen two examples already in the Crucifixion and the Last Supper) is to drive the content in ethical, moralistic directions, an agenda provided with a dramatic starting-point in Luke's creation of Jesus' Inaugural Sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30). Bringing the account of the Rejection at Nazareth in Matt 13:54–58 forward to the context of Jesus' return to Capernaum/Nazareth after the Temptation (Luke 4:14//Matt 4:12), Luke creates a vignette of Jesus giving the first public speech of his career in the synagogue of his home town, where he reads a "prophecy" from the prophet Isa 61:1–2 which enunciates an exclusively this-worldly social reform program: "release to the captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed."

Luke's extensive changes to the Beatitudes (Matt 5:3–12//Luke 6:20–26) arise from the same practical agenda. Not only is Mt's liturgical, poetic structure destroyed, but Luke introduces a striking shift of Mt's spiritual emphasis ("Blessed are the poor *in spirit*" ... "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst *for righteousness*") to a strictly utilitarian, social reform agenda: "Blessed are you poor, you who are hungry, you who weep..." and the converse: "Woe to you who are rich, to you who are full (of food), to you who laugh..." (Luke 6:24). This pronounced anti-wealth, anti-establishment theme runs throughout Lk, from the Infancy narrative, where Jesus is born in a stable with society's lowest classes to welcome him, through the anti-extortion preaching of the John the Baptist (Luke 3:10–14), and on to such

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<sup>44</sup> For further discussion of the secondary character of Lk's Lord's Prayer, see McNicol, et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse*, 174.

parables as the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13–21) and Lazarus and Dives (Luke 16:19–31), and the calling of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Luke 19:1–10). It fits in with Lk's downplaying of Jesus' Jewish Messianism in favor of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Savior of the poor, outcast, and disenfranchised of the world.

### 8. *Son of Man—Son of God*

Suppose one desired to look into the question of what Jesus thought of himself? One of the best places to look would be the Son of Man sayings—a notorious *crux interpretum*. All references to the Son of Man are on the lips of Jesus and they seem alternatively to be substitutes for “I,” references to an eschatological person (not himself), and still other references that are difficult to categorize. They occur in all four gospels, as well as the *Gospel of Thomas*. Paul never uses the term, but it is found in an Old Testament quotation cited in the Epistle to the Hebrews and twice in the Apocalypse of John.

I will not enter into a detailed discussion here (it would greatly exceed the intended confines of this essay), but simply make some methodological observations and give a few tentative conclusions based on the Two Gospel approach. First of all, it is critical which synopsis one uses. Evidence visible in one synopsis disappears altogether in another, so create your own and use more than one.<sup>45</sup> Second, be sure to use a concordance to the *Greek* text; some recent dis-genderized translations, such as the New Revised Standard Version, cause “son of man” to disappear into “people.” Better yet, use a computer program like Accordance Software for Biblical Studies (available only for Macintosh computers), or other similar computer applications that can perform concordance searches, and compile a complete list of all occurrences of Son of Man in the Bible. The resulting list will reveal:

- pericopes where Son of Man in Mt is parallel to “I” in Lk and Mk: Mt 9:6, cf. Luke 5:24//Mark 2:10; Matt 16:13, cf. Luke 9:18//Mark 8:27. It

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<sup>45</sup> I recommend the recently published, color-coded synopsis created by David B. Peabody with Lamar Cope and Allan J. McNicol, *A Synopsis of Mark: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels Showing the Parallels to the Markan Text*, available only on CD from Trinity Press International (1992). It can also be gotten from D. Peabody or T. R. W. Longstaff; contact <http://www.synoptic.info>.



is used thirteen times in the Gospel of John as a cryptic kind of self-reference (equivalent to “I”).

- pericopes where the Son of Man is a future, eschatological figure of judgment as in Dan 7, Wisdom of Solomon 1–6, the Parables of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71), and *4 Ezra* 11–13: Matt 10:23; 13:37; 13:41; 16:27; 19:28 cf. Luke 22:30; 24:27 cf. 17:24; 24:30; 24:37 cf. Luke 17:26; 24:39; 24:44 cf. Luke 12:40; 25:31; 26:64.
- pericopes where the suffering and death of the Son of Man are predicted, similar to the Servant passages in Isa 52–53: Matt 12:40 cf. Luke 11:30; 17:19 cf. Mark 9:9; 17:12; 17:22 cf. Luke 9:44//Mark 9:31; 20:18 cf. Luke 18:31//Mark 10:33; 20:28 cf. Mark 10:45; 26:2; 26:24 cf. Luke 22:22//Mark 14:21; 26:45 cf. Mark 14:41.
- pericopes having a kind of wisdom orientation: Matt 8:20; 11:19.
- pericopes with Son of Man sayings difficult to categorize: Matt 11:19 cf. Luke 7:34; 12:8 cf. Luke 6:5//Mark 2:27; 12:32 cf. Luke 12:10 (this group includes the examples in the first category).

These sayings reveal a rich, dense mixture of traditions reaching back to Daniel (the eschatological Judge), the Parables of Enoch (a royal, messianic figure), the Wisdom of Solomon (a suffering, persecuted person who will be the eschatological judge), and Isaiah 52–53 (suffering Servant personification of righteous Israel).<sup>46</sup> As such, this dense, complex, composite portrait corresponds in its main outlines to the historical picture we get from the Crucifixion, the Last Supper, and the parables. Using the correct source theory to sort out the true, original relationships among the gospels is of course absolutely critical. On the Two Gospel Hypothesis, Matthew’s Danielic eschatological one like a son of man is joined with the suffering and dying Servant of Isaiah 52–53, while other sayings closely parallel *1 Enoch’s* eschatological Messiah/Judge Son of Man (esp. in Matthew 24).<sup>47</sup> This complex *persona* is clearly simplified and narrowed in Luke and Mark; the Gospel of John takes it in a very different direction, combining it with his Logos typology. By the second century, it has lost its original significance altogether. Ignatius uses “son of man” in parallel with “son of God” to depict the two aspects of Christ’s nature, human and divine (*Eph.* 20.2), as do the *Epistle of Barnabas* 12.10 and Justin Martyr in *Dial. Tryph.* 100.3.

<sup>46</sup> See the superb discussion on Son of Man by George Nicklesburg, “Son of Man,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman et al. (Doubleday 1992), 6:137–150.

<sup>47</sup> For a good overview of Mt’s Son of Man Christology, see Adrian Leske, Dennis Farkasfalvy, and Rudolf Pesch, “Commentary on Matthew,” in W. R. Farmer et al., *The International Bible*, 1258–1259.

### 9. Conclusion

Much more could be said about the topics I have covered, as well as the many other major issues involved in reconstructing the historical Jesus without recourse to the Q Hypothesis, and the previous hypothesis upon which it depends: the Priority of Mark. To see detailed discussions of many of them, I recommend Adrian Leske's commentary on Matthew,<sup>48</sup> David Peabody, Lamar Cope, and Allan McNicol's study of the composition of the Gospel of Mark,<sup>49</sup> Allan McNicol, David Dungan, and David Peabody's study of the composition of the Gospel of Luke,<sup>50</sup> and William Farmer's introduction to the ethical and theological consequences of following the Two Gospel Hypothesis as opposed to the Two Source Hypothesis.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Leske, *Commentary on Matthew*.

<sup>49</sup> Peabody et al., eds., *One Gospel from Two*.

<sup>50</sup> McNicol et al., *Beyond the Q Impasse*.

<sup>51</sup> Farmer, *Gospel of Jesus*.

# THE ROLE OF ARAMAIC IN RECONSTRUCTING THE TEACHING OF JESUS

MAURICE CASEY

## 1. *Introduction*

Jesus spoke Aramaic, both when conversing with his disciples, and when teaching crowds of ordinary Jews. His teaching is however transmitted to us in gospels written in Greek. The occasional Aramaic word alone survives, and most of these occur in comments made by him or his disciples rather than in his teaching. For example, *ταλιθα κουμ* (Mark 5:41) correctly represents the Aramaic *טליתא קום*, “girl, get up,” so we have two of Jesus’ *ipsissima verba*.<sup>1</sup> Occasional reports by the church fathers show us that more was once available. For example, at Matt 6:11, Jerome comments on the most difficult word in the Lord’s Prayer:

In Evangelio quod appellatur secundum Hebraeos, pro supersubstantiali pane mahar reperi, quod dicitur crastinum, ut sit sensus: *Panem nostrum crastinum, id est futurum, da nobis hodie*.<sup>2</sup>

In the Gospel which is called “according to the Hebrews,” for “bread necessary for existence” I found “mahar,” which means “tomorrow’s,” so that the meaning is, “Give us today our bread ‘for tomorrow’” that is, “for the future.”

Here Jerome found a correct tradition that behind the difficult *ἐπιούσιον* lay the straightforward Aramaic word *מחר*, which means “to-morrow’s.” This supplies us with one more of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus, one used in a fundamental piece of his teaching, and it helps us greatly to interpret this piece of his teaching. It also tells us that there was once a gospel written in Aramaic. Unfortunately, however, all such source material has long since vanished. The nearest we get

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<sup>1</sup> For more detailed discussion, see P. M. Casey, “Aramaic Idiom and the Son of Man Problem: A Response to Owen and Shepherd,” *JSNT* 25 (2002): 3–32, at 9–10.

<sup>2</sup> For the text, D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, eds., *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera. Pars I, 7. Commentariorum in Matheum Libri IV*, CCSL 77 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1969). I have followed the reading “mahar,” other readings being due to scribal difficulties over an unfamiliar word.

to Aramaic gospels are the translations of our canonical Greek gospels into Syriac.<sup>3</sup> These do not show significant signs of independent transmission of the teaching of Jesus.

There is no agreement among scholars as to what to do about this. At one end of the spectrum, I have argued that we can reconstruct Aramaic sources of parts of the Gospel of Mark and of what scholars call "Q." This helps us to locate the teaching of Jesus in its original cultural context. In this way, we can demonstrate that he really did say some of the things attributed to him in our oldest sources, and we can see much more clearly and accurately what he originally meant.<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, the role of Aramaic is central to reconstructing and understanding the teaching of Jesus. At the other end of the spectrum, some scholars have argued that Jesus taught in Greek, and this view has recently been revived by Stanley Porter.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective, Aramaic has no role to play in reconstructing the teaching of Jesus. In practice, the majority of New Testament scholars suppose that Jesus generally taught in Aramaic, but they do not learn it properly, and make little use of it in interpreting his teaching.

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<sup>3</sup> G. A. Kiraz, ed., *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshîttâ and Harklean Versions*, 4 vols., NTTTS 21 (Leiden: Brill, 1996); cf. also A. S. Lewis and M. D. Gibson, eds., *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels, Re-edited from Two Sinai MSS. and from P. de Lagarde's Edition of the "Evangelium Hierosolymitanum"* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1899).

<sup>4</sup> P. M. Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, SNTSMS 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); idem, *An Aramaic Approach to Q: Sources for the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, SNTSMS 122 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> See especially D. Diodati, *DE CHRISTO GRAECE LOQUENTE EXERCITATIO* (Naples: Raymundus, 1767; repr. London: Gladding, 1843); A. Roberts, *Greek: The Language of Christ and his Apostles* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1888); T. K. Abbott, *Essays, Chiefly on the Original Texts of the Old and New Testaments* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1891), 129–182; N. Turner, "The Language of Jesus and his Disciples," in *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965), 174–188, repr. in *The Language of the New Testament: Classic Essays*, ed. S. E. Porter, JSNTSup 60 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 174–190; S. E. Porter, "Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?," *TynBul* 44 (1993): 199–235, rev. as "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 123–154; S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), esp. 95–97, 164–180.

## 2. *History of Research*

Serious modern research into the Aramaic level of the teaching of Jesus effectively began with J. T. Marshall in the 1890's.<sup>6</sup> Marshall put forward clear arguments for supposing that Jesus spoke Aramaic. For example, he explained ταλιθα κουμι (Mark 5:41) as Jesus' native Aramaic.<sup>7</sup> His account of the problems which arise in the translation process was the best produced at that time.<sup>8</sup> He was not however able to make his case for a detectable Aramaic *Urevangelium*. One major problem was that there was not enough ancient Aramaic for scholars to work with. A major problem within scholarship was that Aramaic explanations were sought for synoptic variants when editing by Matthew or Luke was altogether more probable. For example, Marshall proposed that ὀφειλήματα at Matt 6:12, and ἁμαρτίας at Luke 11:4, were two translations from the Aramaic ܐܘܪܝܢܐ ("our debts" in the sense of "our sins").<sup>9</sup> In response, W. C. Allen properly pointed out that the extraordinary Greek ἐπιούσιον at both Matt 6:11 and Luke 11:3 implies a single Greek translation of the whole Lord's prayer.<sup>10</sup> It follows that revision of the Aramaizing ὀφειλήματα by Luke, who preferred to write the more normal Greek ἁμαρτίας, is a more probable explanation of this difference. Indeed, following criticisms of his work by Allen and by S. R. Driver,<sup>11</sup> Marshall did not revise his articles to produce a monograph, though he did write a very vigorous reply.<sup>12</sup> This was regrettable, because in the succeeding decades, other English-speaking scholars do not seem to have been properly acquainted

<sup>6</sup> J. T. Marshall, "The Aramaic Gospel," *Expositor* 4.3 (1891): 1-17, 109-124, 205-220, 275-291, 375-390, 452-467; 4 (1891): 208-223, 373-388, 435-448; 6 (1892): 81-97. For brief reviews of comments from the pre-critical era, see A. Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache: Das galiläische Aramäisch in seiner Bedeutung für die Erklärung der Reden Jesus und der Evangelien überhaupt* (Freiburg i.B./Leipzig: Mohr [Siebeck], 1896), 7-27; Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, 1-6.

<sup>7</sup> Marshall, "Aramaic Gospel," *Expositor* 4.3 (1891): 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*: 116-118.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*: 124, 281-282.

<sup>10</sup> W. C. Allen, "The Aramaic Gospel," *Expositor* 4.7 (1893): 454-470 (at 468-469).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Allen, "The Aramaic Gospel"; S. R. Driver, "Professor Marshall's Aramaic Gospel," *Expositor* 4.8 (1893): 388-400, 419-431.

<sup>12</sup> J. T. Marshall, "The Aramaic Gospel. Reply to Dr. Driver and Mr. Allen," *Expositor* 4.8 (1893): 176-192.

with the first outstanding monograph on this subject: Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache* (1896).<sup>13</sup>

Meyer set out the main evidence that Jesus taught in Aramaic.<sup>14</sup> He also attempted the well-nigh impossible task of determining which Aramaic sources should be used in reconstructing Jesus' teaching. He naturally wanted to use Galilean Aramaic, but then as now there were no first-century sources for this dialect. Meyer used the Jewish Aramaic of the Yerushalmi and Christian Palestinian Syriac, because this was the best he could do. He made the fundamental advance of offering reconstructions of whole Aramaic sentences, and showed that, despite the rather late date of the sources which he used, this was a great help in locating Jesus' teaching in its original cultural context. For example, he offered this reconstruction from Mark 2:27–28:<sup>15</sup>

שבתא בגין ברנשא איתעבידת ולא ברנשא בגין שבתא:  
גגלל כן מריה הוא דשבתא ברנשא.

The greatest advantage of this reconstruction is that the final example of ברנשא appears as it must appear in Aramaic, as a normal term for "man." This is an inevitable effect of a complete reconstruction, and only a complete reconstruction can do this. This illustrates what an important advance Meyer made.

At the same time, Meyer's work left behind difficult problems for any scholar interested in continuing such work. The most serious was the lack of early Aramaic source material. This was not Meyer's fault, and there was nothing anyone could do about it until more source material was discovered. Consequently, Meyer used a wider range of Aramaic than was available to Jesus. This made his results very difficult to assess. It also meant that he produced too many puns, some of them in very unlikely places. The most serious was the Fourth Gospel. For example, Meyer proposed this for Jesus' saying at John 8:34:<sup>16</sup>

כל עבדי (דְעֵבִיד) עוויא עבדא הוא דעוויא

<sup>13</sup> Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache: Das galiläische Aramäisch in seiner Bedeutung für die Erklärung der Reden Jesus und der Evangelien überhaupt* (see n. 6).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, esp. 35–72.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 79, using the wordplay suggested by A. Smith Lewis, *A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest* (London: Macmillan, 1894), xv.

This suggestion is quite misleading because the Fourth Gospel was written in Greek, and suggestions like this could persuade people that there was really a genuine Aramaic underlay, and this could have a deleterious effect on the quest of the historical Jesus. In Meyer's day, no one could see that this was a result of learned men using their creative ingenuity to play with too wide a range of Aramaic. Nonetheless, Meyer took a major step forward, and produced the best piece of work until Black fifty years later.

The next major work was Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu* (1898).<sup>17</sup> This book made some good points. For example, Dalman provided a sound presentation of the reasons why we should believe that Jesus taught in Aramaic.<sup>18</sup> He also put forward criticisms of the views expressed by other scholars, and many of these criticisms were useful. For example, he argued that where different gospel writers have synonyms, merely pointing out that one Hebrew word could be used for both of them does not establish that there was a Hebrew original, an important point when everyone did not agree that Jesus taught in Aramaic.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, however, Dalman also made serious mistakes. One of the worst was his regrettably influential view that Jesus used מלכותא דשמיא ("the kingdom of heaven") rather than מלכותא דאלהא ("the kingdom of God") to avoid the divine name.<sup>20</sup> It should have been obvious that אלהא was not the divine name, so that this argument is quite wrong. Dalman was also handicapped by the absence of sufficient Aramaic sources of early date. Accordingly, he could not confirm that רבע means "recline," nor present an Aramaic equivalent of κύριος as a term for "God," despite his abundant knowledge of both in late source material.<sup>21</sup> Such problems were so serious that, despite its importance in its day, Dalman's work on the Aramaic

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<sup>17</sup> G. H. Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu: mit Berücksichtigung des nachkanonischen jüdischen Schrifttums und der arämaischen Sprache*, 1: *Einleitung und wichtige Begriffe* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1898; 2nd ed., 1930; there was no second volume); Eng. trans.: *The Words of Jesus, Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language*, 1: *Introduction and Fundamental Ideas*, trans. D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902). See further also G. H. Dalman, *Jesus-Jeschua: Die drei Sprachen Jesu* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922); Eng. trans.: *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels* trans. P. P. Levertoff (London: SPCK, 1929).

<sup>18</sup> Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, 1-72; *Words of Jesus*, 1-88.

<sup>19</sup> Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, 34-35; *Words of Jesus*, 44-45.

<sup>20</sup> Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, 75-79, 159-162, 223; *Words of Jesus*, 91-94, 194-197, 272.

<sup>21</sup> Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, 91-92, 180-182; *Words of Jesus*, 112, 179-181.

substratum of the teaching of Jesus should now be regarded as out of date.

Despite the problems of working at that time, some progress was also made with the investigation of some details. For example, Lietzmann surveyed the use of **בר נשא** in the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, the Palestinian Syriac Gospels, and several tractates of the Palestinian Talmud.<sup>22</sup> This was much the most extensive investigation conducted up to that time, and Lietzmann concluded correctly that **בר נשא** was a straightforward term for a person. This was a permanent gain, and Lietzmann concluded in the light of it, "Jesus hat sich selbst nie den Titel 'Menschensohn' beigelegt, weil derselbe im Aramäischen nicht existiert und aus sprachlichen Gründen nicht existieren kann."<sup>23</sup> Where he believed that **בר נשא** was original in a saying of Jesus, however, Lietzmann did not offer reconstructions. His further conclusion that *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* was a technical term of Hellenistic theology was also unsatisfactory. His work on the Aramaic material was accordingly not as influential as it might have been.

A number of detailed suggestions were made by Wellhausen, and several of them have stood the test of time. For example, he suggested that *achi* ("give life to," "save") was the Aramaic original behind *σωσαι* at Mark 3:4, a suggestion which I adopted when I reconstructed the whole pericope.<sup>24</sup> Again, he proposed that at Matt 23:26, *κάθαρσον* was a correct translation of the Aramaic *dakkau* (*reinigt*), whereas in the parallel passage Luke 11:41, *δοτε ἐλεημοσύνην* resulted from misreading *dakkau* as *zakkau*. This is not merely plausible in itself, and a great help towards understanding the otherwise strange text of Luke; it was also a useful contribution to the question of the relationship between the different forms of the Q material. It was often repeated, and I adopted it when I reconstructed and interpreted the whole passage Matt 23:23–36//Luke 11:39–51.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, Wellhausen usually discussed only single words, so that even

<sup>22</sup> H. Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn: Ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Freiburg i.B./Leipzig: Mohr [Siebeck], 1896).

<sup>23</sup> Lietzmann, *Menschensohn*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin: Reimer, 1903), 23; Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, ch. 4.

<sup>25</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Reimer, 1911), 27; Casey, *Aramaic Approach to Q*, ch. 3.



his brightest ideas could never be satisfactory on their own, but would need taking up into much more extensive discussions.

The next major monographs were by Burney and Torrey in the 1920's and 1930's.<sup>26</sup> Each of them made some sound points. For example, Burney pointed out a number of features of Semitic writing in the gospels, such as parataxis.<sup>27</sup> He also offered complete Aramaic reconstructions of some passages, including for example Matt 8:20// Luke 9:58.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, however, the work of both these scholars suffered from such serious errors of method that none of it has stood the test of time. For example, Burney tried to write rhyming Aramaic verse, whereas rhyme is not a feature of Aramaic verse as old as the time of Jesus. The passages which he attempted included John 10:1–3,<sup>29</sup> part of a document which was not written in Aramaic. Both scholars made mistakes in their choice of Aramaic words. For example, at Matt 8:20//Luke 9:58, Burney has *ḵinnīn* for Q's *κατασκηνώσεις*. But the Aramaic *קנין* means "nests," so any reasonable Greek translator would have rendered it *νοσσιόζς*. Accordingly, the original Aramaic must have been *משכנין* or the like.<sup>30</sup> At Mark 7:3, Torrey suggested that *πυγμῆ* was a translation of *לגמך*, "with the fist," and that the translator should have read *לגמך*, and translated it "at all."<sup>31</sup> But neither of these words occurs in Aramaic of anything like the right period, and there is no Aramaic word *גמד* for "fist." Both scholars posited misunderstandings like this, and misreadings of conjectured Aramaic originals, in passages which make perfect sense as they stand in Greek. Perhaps the worst example was John 1:13–14, where Burney, followed by Torrey, reconstructed the singular *אֵיתִילִיד*, "was born," from the Greek plural *ἐγεννήθησαν*, "were born," the last word of John 1:13.<sup>32</sup> He proposed that *ἵ*, which he put for *καί*, the first word of John 1:14, had become accidentally doubled, and this had caused the last word of John 1:13 to be read as the

<sup>26</sup> C. F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922); idem, *The Poetry of Our Lord* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925); C. C. Torrey, *Our Translated Gospels: Some of the Evidence* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1937).

<sup>27</sup> Burney, *Fourth Gospel*, 5–6, 56–59.

<sup>28</sup> Burney, *Poetry*, 132, 169.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 132, 169; for proper discussion, P. M. Casey, "The Jackals and the Son of Man (Matt. 8.20//Luke 9.58)," *JSNT* 23 (1985): 3–22, at 8, 20–21.

<sup>31</sup> Torrey, *Translated Gospels*, 93–94.

<sup>32</sup> Burney, *Fourth Gospel*, 34–35, 41–42, followed by Torrey, *Translated Gospels*, 151–153.

plural אֵיתִילִידוּ, “were born.” This argument is quite implausible, and it enabled Burney and Torrey to get the virgin birth of Jesus into the Fourth Gospel, a document from which it is notoriously absent.

When this was the standard of scholarship in the two major monographs of the time, too much could not be expected of other scholars, not even the most distinguished. For example, at Mark 1:15, C. H. Dodd proposed that the Aramaic behind ἤγγικεν was *m'ta* so that the text really meant that the kingdom of God “has come.”<sup>33</sup> This is a one-word naughty trick which changes the meaning of a text at the hand of a completely improbable conjecture.<sup>34</sup> It was easier to leave out Aramaic altogether, or almost so. For example, Bultmann and Dibelius mentioned only a very occasional item in their pioneering works of *Formgeschichte*.<sup>35</sup>

The next major event was the publication in 1946 of the outstanding monograph of Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*.<sup>36</sup> In assessing previous work, Black laid down a number of correct principles. For proposed mistranslations, he declared that “the mistranslation must at least be credible; and the conjectured Aramaic must be possible.”<sup>37</sup> It is a shocking comment on the work of his predecessors that it was important to state this, and that it excluded a high proportion of their suggestions. In this matter, Black naturally observed his own principles, and criticized Torrey’s Aramaic, noting that some of his supposed words are not attested.<sup>38</sup> Black also followed Driver in calling for the presentation of whole sentences.<sup>39</sup> In this matter, however, Black was not always able to follow his perfectly correct principle. Black also offered a sound summary of the range of Aramaic sources then available, of Aramaic

<sup>33</sup> C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935; 2nd ed., 1961), 36–37.

<sup>34</sup> For more detailed discussion, Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1919; 2nd ed., 1933); Eng. trans.: *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. B. L. Woolf (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1934); R. K. Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 29 NF 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1921); Eng. trans.: *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963).

<sup>36</sup> M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946; 2nd ed., 1954; 3rd ed., 1967).

<sup>37</sup> Black, *Aramaic Approach* (1946), 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

dialects, and of the languages which Jesus is likely to have known. He concluded that Jesus taught almost entirely in Aramaic, and that his task was to determine the extent of Aramaic influence in the gospels.<sup>40</sup> His discussions of major features of Aramaic included for example a section on asyndeton.<sup>41</sup> This includes discussion of whether the extent of asyndeton might be due to Jewish or Syrian Greek, rather than translation from Aramaic. Black's separation out of these possibilities was much more careful than the work of his predecessors. Equally, Black did not continue Burney's efforts to find rhyme in Aramaic poetry behind the gospels.<sup>42</sup> Black also contributed helpful reconstructions of some gospel passages, and helpful comments on a number of passages where he did not offer a complete reconstruction. For example, he noted that there must be wordplay on "son" (*b<sup>e</sup>ra*) and "ox" (*b<sup>e</sup>cira*) at Luke 14:5. His discussions of linguistic features included aorists such as ἐβόπτισα at Mark 1:8, which must represent a Semitic perfect.<sup>43</sup> Altogether, in addition to sound principles, Black contributed the largest number of sound examples of Aramaic influence in New Testament Greek so far collected.

Black's extensive and sober discussions of all these features, with ample examples, are the main points which made this book the best treatment of its subject. Nonetheless, serious problems remained. The most profound underlying problem was still the small quantity of ancient Aramaic which survived. For example, Black supposed that "the construct has largely fallen into abeyance in all Aramaic dialects."<sup>44</sup> This was a fair comment on the sources available to him, but we now know that it was not the case. The small quantity of extant documents also made those which had been discovered more difficult to date than they are now, and this is one reason why Black accepted too early a date for the Palestinian Pentateuch Targum, and for the Targums to the Hagiographa.<sup>45</sup> Black's massive improvements in methodology still left him with criteria which were too loose. For example, he suggested that at John 3:33 ἀληθῆς was a translation of the Aramaic שְׂרִירָא, which was a misreading of שְׂדִרְיָה, so that the

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<sup>40</sup> Black, *Aramaic Approach* (1946), ch. 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–43.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 93, 126.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–22.

original text meant "sent him," and Black believed that this had enabled him to restore the original parallelism.<sup>46</sup> But the text makes perfectly good sense as it stands, and a more watertight case for the Fourth Gospel being a translation from Aramaic cannot be made. Neither conjectured misreadings, nor parallelism, are sufficiently controllable to demonstrate this. Much more work on these problems would therefore be necessary, especially when more source material was discovered and published.

In the next years, further advances on a smaller scale were made by scholars who used Aramaic when writing about aspects of the life and teaching of Jesus. Perhaps the most notable was Jeremias. For example, it was often suggested that the Greek ἄρτος could not designate unleavened bread.<sup>47</sup> Since Mark uses ἄρτος in describing the Last Supper, it might seem to follow that the Last Supper was not a Passover meal. In a fine scholarly discussion, securely based in primary source material presented in its original languages, Jeremias showed that both ἄρτος and the Aramaic and Hebrew לחם were normal terms for referring to the unleavened bread at Passover.<sup>48</sup> This was essential for establishing the cultural context of Jesus' important teaching about his forthcoming death, and it illustrates the massive potential for careful and methodologically sound research into the Aramaic substratum of the synoptic gospels. Jeremias also offered Aramaic reconstructions of some gospel passages to help with the task of interpreting Jesus' teaching, including most notably the Lord's Prayer.<sup>49</sup>

There was also a seminal paper by Vermes on the use of בר (א)נש(א) in Jewish Aramaic.<sup>50</sup> Vermes argued that בר (א)נש(א) was used as a circumlocution for "I." While this did not convince everyone, the evidence presented by Vermes impressed scholars who interpreted it

<sup>46</sup> Black, *Aramaic Approach* (1946), 110–111.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. J. Wellhausen, "Ἄρτον ἔλασεν, Mc 14,22," *ZNW* 7 (1906): 182.

<sup>48</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. N. Perrin (London: SCM, 1966), 62–66.

<sup>49</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, trans. J. Bowden et al. (London: SCM, 1967), 94, with extensive discussion; idem, *New Testament Theology*, 1: *The Proclamation of Jesus*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1971), 196.

<sup>50</sup> G. Vermes, "The Use of בר (א)נש(א) in Jewish Aramaic," App. E. in Black, *Aramaic Approach* (3rd ed. 1967), 310–328; repr. in G. Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 147–165.

differently.<sup>51</sup> In the long term, more Aramaic evidence and developments in Pragmatics and Translation Studies would be required for a complete solution to the Son of man problem to be found.<sup>52</sup> Chilton used his detailed study of the Isaiah Targum to help interpret Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God, offering a detailed discussion of Jesus' sayings in the light of this background.<sup>53</sup> Wilcox provided a useful summary of the current state of scholarship, together with learned and incisive comments of his own.<sup>54</sup> In particular, while accepting the importance of using Aramaic of relatively early date, Wilcox brought forward specific examples to justify the careful use of later Aramaic sources as well. Taken together, the work of all these scholars formed an advance in knowledge from which we all had much to learn.

Two more attempts at major monographs were made by Zimmermann in 1979 and Schwarz in 1985.<sup>55</sup> Zimmermann deliberately presented himself as carrying forward the work of Torrey. Consequently, his work is full of methodological errors, and should be regarded as out of date already when it was written. Most of his examples are changes in single words, supposedly mistranslations of an Aramaic substratum. His worst example was in the Johannine prologue. Where Burney and Torrey, coming in from a Christian perspective, had used an Aramaic trick to get the virgin birth *into* the Johannine prologue, Zimmermann, coming in from a Jewish perspective, used a different Aramaic trick to get the deified λόγος *out* of it! He proposed that λόγος represented an Aramaic ܠܘܘܢ, which was intended to mean "lamb."<sup>56</sup> This is creative rewriting of a text, not sober exegesis. Nor did Zimmermann provide a reasonable account

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<sup>51</sup> For an early attempt to do this, P. M. Casey, "The Son of Man Problem," *ZNW* 67 (1976): 147–154.

<sup>52</sup> See now P. M. Casey, *The Solution to the Son of Man Problem* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> B. D. Chilton, *Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom, God in Strength*: SNTU B1 (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1979; repr. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum*, JSOTSup 23 (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1982); *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Own Interpretation of Isaiah* (London: SCM, 1984).

<sup>54</sup> M. Wilcox, "Semitisms in the New Testament," *ANRW* II 25.2 (1984): 978–1029.

<sup>55</sup> F. Zimmermann, *The Aramaic Origin of the Four Gospels* (New York: Ktav, 1979); G. Schwarz, "Und Jesus sprach": *Untersuchungen zur aramäischen Urgestalt der Worte Jesu*, BWANT 118 = 6.18 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985; 2nd ed., 1987).

<sup>56</sup> Zimmermann, *Aramaic Origin*, 167–170.

of Johannine theology about a pre-existent lamb, and, like earlier scholarship, he presupposed an incomprehensible translator. More generally, his suggestion that the Aramaic behind the gospels was what he called “proto-Syriac” was completely unconvincing. He in fact used ordinary Syriac and later Jewish Aramaic, and omitted the Dead Sea Scrolls and all earlier Aramaic sources, thereby failing to take any advantage of the increased resources which were becoming available, and which would permit more accurate work. He also played one-word naughty tricks with other parts of the Fourth Gospel, which has never been shown to have had Aramaic sources.

The 1985 monograph of Gunther Schwarz is the most recent attempt to write a major monograph using Aramaic to reconstruct the teaching of Jesus as a whole.<sup>57</sup> This is a very learned book, which makes many good points. For example, Schwarz provides a list of all the Aramaic words in the gospels, with correct explanations of their use.<sup>58</sup> He also offers many Aramaic reconstructions of sayings of Jesus. These show great learning and ingenuity, and in doing them Schwarz follows the basic principle of reconstructing whole sentences. Unfortunately, however, his work suffers from serious problems of method inherited from traditional scholarship. One is that Schwarz continues to use late Aramaic sources, and occasionally labels them Galilean when they are not specific to Galilee. For example, in reconstructing Matt 6:2, he cites *Tg. Jer. Lev 19:13* for אַרְטוּס as the source of Matthew’s μισθόν.<sup>59</sup> But Targum *Ps-Jonathan*, as it is better known, is a late source, it is not particularly Galilean, and it is translation Aramaic. Moreover, אַרְטוּס is not attested in earlier Aramaic. We should therefore prefer אַרְטוּ, which is attested both earlier and later than the time of Jesus, and with the right meaning at 4Q196 frg. 16, so it is much more likely to be the word which Jesus used. Secondly, despite his methodologically sound procedure of reconstructing some whole sentences, Schwarz continues the methodologically unsound tradition of playing one-word naughty tricks. For example, Schwarz criticises the use of ἀληθῶς with Ἰσραηλίτης at John 1:47. He would prefer ἀληθινὸς Ἰσραηλίτης, and proposes that ἀληθῶς is a misunderstanding of the Aramaic יִשְׂרָאֵלִי.<sup>60</sup> We have already seen that this

<sup>57</sup> Schwarz, *Und Jesus sprach*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–48.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 112–114.

method of changing the text is faulty, and Schwarz never demonstrates that there was an Aramaic source of John 1:47, nor of any part of the Fourth Gospel. Thirdly, Schwarz uses traditional scholarly methods to remove glosses and the like, so that even some of his reconstructed passages have been arbitrarily shortened. For example, in a further monograph devoted to the Aramaic background of the Son of man problem, Schwarz shortens Mark 10:45 on the ground that each *stichos* is differently constructed, so that the verse has a rhythm unknown in Semitic poetry.<sup>61</sup> But Mark 10:45 is written in Greek prose, and we have no reason to think that its source was in Semitic verse rather than Aramaic prose. By such means Schwarz deletes οὐκ...διακονηθῆναι ἀλλὰ διακονῆσαι, which removes the connection of this saying with its context, and ἀντὶ πολλῶν, which reduces the clarity of the saying. He thus reconstructs the following:

אתא בר נשא למיתן נפשיה פורקן

*Ich kam, um mich selbst als Lösegeld zu geben.*

This interpretation of **בר נשא**, which follows the seminal paper of Vermes, also removes the connection of this saying with Jesus' answer to James and John earlier in this passage. Thus, instead of the use of Aramaic helping us to see the teaching of Jesus in its original cultural context, this "reconstruction" has removed it from its context altogether. Thus Schwarz's work, learned and ingenious though it is, has not been very influential either.

Apart from the outstanding work of Meyer and Black, with excellent but occasional contributions from scholars such as Wellhausen and Jeremias, it will be evident that the history of research shows a drastic degree of methodological faults, leading to a very small proportion of acceptable results. It is not surprising that a few scholars have sought to bring order into chaos with rules, some of which should be regarded as too strict. The most notable has been Fitzmyer. Fitzmyer has made many positive contributions to the study of the Aramaic background of the teaching of Jesus, and to the illumination of particular expressions. Some of these are background material which barely fall for discussion here, such as meticulous editions of

<sup>61</sup> G. Schwarz, *Jesus "der Menschensohn": Aramäistische Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Menschensohnworten Jesu*, BWANT 119 = 6.19 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1986), 89–94, 171–176.

texts with proper discussions of Aramaic grammar and syntax.<sup>62</sup> More important for present purposes is a fine 1970 article on the languages of Palestine at the time of Jesus. This is a model of clarity, learning and sound judgement.<sup>63</sup> Detailed studies include an article on *קרבן* (Mark 7:11), the Aramaic *קרבן*, which was found on an ossuary.<sup>64</sup> While he did not himself attempt much work on reconstructing Aramaic sources of the teaching of Jesus, Fitzmyer did reaffirm the central principle that whole sayings should be reconstructed.<sup>65</sup>

Problems arose from Fitzmyer's bold and necessary attempt to classify the development of Aramaic into different phases.<sup>66</sup> He proposed five such phases: (1) Old Aramaic, roughly 925–700 BCE; (2) Official Aramaic, roughly 700–200 BCE; (3) Middle Aramaic, roughly 200 BCE–200 CE; (4) Late Aramaic, roughly 200–700 CE; (5) Modern Aramaic. It is Middle Aramaic which is the most important for present purposes, and the most open to abuse. It was almost inevitable that some conservative scholars would use the starting date of this phase to date the conservative Aramaic of the book of Daniel too early.<sup>67</sup> More serious for present purposes was Fitzmyer's own use of his closing date of this phase to exclude the use of what he labelled "Late Aramaic" for reconstructing the sayings of Jesus. There is still too little Aramaic extant from the period of "Middle Aramaic" for this to be satisfactory. By excluding too much Aramaic, this arbitrarily pre-

<sup>62</sup> E.g. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave I: A Commentary*, BibOr 18 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966; rev. ed., BibOr 18A, 1971; 3rd ed., BibOr 18B, 2004); *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire*, BibOr 19 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967; rev. ed., BibOr 19A, 1995).

<sup>63</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD," CBQ 32 (1970): 501–31; rev. ed., *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*, SBLMS 25 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979; repr. *The Semitic Background of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids/Livonia: Eerdmans/Dove, 1997), 29–56; more generally, "Problems of the Semitic Background of the New Testament," in *The Yahweh/Baal Confrontation and Other Studies in Biblical Literature and Archaeology: Essays in Honour of E. W. Hamrick*, ed. J. M. O'Brien and F. L. Horton (Lampeter: Mellen, 1995), 80–93.

<sup>64</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic *qorbān* Inscription from Jabel Ḥallet eṭ Ṭūri and Mk 7:11//Matt 15:5," JBL 78 (1959): 60–65; rev. ed., *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971; repr. Missoula: Scholars Press, 1974; repr. *Semitic Background of the New Testament*), 93–100.

<sup>65</sup> E.g. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB 28–28A, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1981–85), 2:947.

<sup>66</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Phases of the Aramaic Language," in *Wandering Aramean*, 57–84, a revision of a 1974 lecture; cf. "Problems of the Semitic Background," 87–93.

<sup>67</sup> So B. Witherington III, *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 197.



vents us from fulfilling the basic methodological principle of reconstructing whole pieces of the teaching of Jesus.

Moreover, there is sufficient direct evidence that the Aramaic of Jesus' words included features which are not extant in "Middle Aramaic" texts. I have noted two of Jesus' *ipsissima verba* at Mark 5:41: קום טליתא. The word טליתא does not occur in Aramaic texts until the phase of "Late Aramaic" (except perhaps in two undated inscriptions from Palmyra). Nor does the precise form קום rather than קומי, to which some mss have corrected it (reading κουμι). While the "correct" form of the 2 f. sg. impv. is קומי, final vowels after the tone syllable were quiescent in Syriac and in Christian Palestinian Aramaic.<sup>68</sup> This shows that Jesus' spoken idiolect had this particular isogloss in common with these later dialects, and that this oral form was written down. It follows that we should not exclude other features of these dialects from consideration when the (still meagre) remains of "Middle Aramaic" are not sufficient for our purposes. The same applies to many detailed features of Jesus' teaching where it survives only in Greek. For example, Jesus compared his opponents to whitewashed tombs, τάφοις κεκοιναμένοις (Matt 23:27). "Whitewash" is not a very common term, and Luke misconstrued it, but we should not hesitate to reconstruct מתטשין merely because the word does not occur in "Middle Aramaic" texts.<sup>69</sup> Again, at his last meal with his disciples, Jesus instructed them about his forthcoming death, using the metaphor of "go." Mark has ὑπάγει, for which we must reconstruct אזל, undeterred by scholars who think (reasonably) that this reference is not extant in "Middle Aramaic" texts, and who infer (unreasonably) that Jesus did not use this common early Aramaic word with such a reference.<sup>70</sup>

Fitzmyer himself made the most serious detailed mistake of this kind. He argued that the examples of the idiomatic use of בר נש(א) collected by Vermes should not be accepted because they do not have the prosthetic א. There is not enough "Middle Aramaic" left for us to expect בר נש(א) to be used in this idiomatic way, complete with

<sup>68</sup> T. Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar*, trans. J. A. Crichton (London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), 35–36, 103–104; F. Schulthess, *Grammatik des christlich-palästinischen Aramäisch* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1924), 16, 62.

<sup>69</sup> See further Casey, *Aramaic Approach to Q*, 64–65, 89–92.

<sup>70</sup> For more detailed discussion, see Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, 220, 233–236.

the prosthetic א, in extant texts. Subsequent work has moreover shown that the semantic area of (א)נש(א) בר is not affected by whether it has the prosthetic א, and it is entirely possible that, like the ׳ at the end of קומי, it was not pronounced by Jesus because it was not pronounced in Galilee.<sup>71</sup> What is worse, the application of such a strict rule is sufficient to prevent us from finding a solution to the Son of man problem.

It follows that Fitzmyer's rules are not a satisfactory solution to the problems posed by the meagre remains of Aramaic from the time of Jesus, nor to the methodological chaos of most earlier scholarship. Much further work would therefore need to be done. This is so recent that it falls for discussion in the following sections.

### 3. *The State of Play*

The most remarkable feature of recent scholarship is the widespread omission of the Aramaic background to the teaching of Jesus. Perhaps the most brilliant work incorporating extensive use of Jesus' Jewish culture is that of E. P. Sanders. In addition to work on the Jewish material as such, Sanders has contributed *Jesus and Judaism* (1985), perhaps the most brilliant book on the historical Jesus so far, and *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993), arguably the best single-volume Life of Jesus ever written.<sup>72</sup> Neither book makes or depends on significant use of Aramaic. So, for example, in discussing the Cleansing of the Temple in *Jesus and Judaism*, Sanders repeats the view that Mark 11:17 is a secondary addition, quoting the scholarly tradition that this is indicated by the introductory words, "and he taught them and said." Sanders does not even discuss the possibility

<sup>71</sup> For the detailed debate sparked off by Vermes, "Use of נש/בר א in Jewish Aramaic," see further G. Vermes, "The Present State of the 'Son of Man' Debate," *JJS* 29 (1978): 123–134, at 127–130; idem, "The 'Son of Man' Debate," *JSNT* 1 (1978): 19–32, at 23–25; J. A. Fitzmyer, "The New Testament Title 'Son of Man' Philologically Considered," in *Wandering Aramean*, 143–160, at 149–153; idem, "Another View of the 'Son of Man' Debate," *JSNT* 4 (1979): 58–68, esp. 61–64; Schwarz, *Menschensohn*, 71–73, 84; P. M. Casey, "The Use of the Term (א)נש(א) בר in the Aramaic Translations of the Hebrew Bible," *JSNT* 54 (1994): 87–118.

<sup>72</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993). More recently, cf. W. D. Davies and E. P. Sanders, "Jesus: from the Jewish point of view," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 3: *The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 618–677.

of an Aramaic source.<sup>73</sup> When this is reconstructed as **וּאֵלֶּף הוּהּ וְאָמַר**, it emerges as a natural way of writing an Aramaic narrative, adding to the existing narrative Jesus' most important words. These embody quotations from Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11, which are essential for understanding what Jesus taught about the significance of his action.<sup>74</sup> Again, in offering an innovative hypothesis about Jesus' relationships with "sinners," Sanders suggested that behind the Greek ἀμαρτωλοί stood the Hebrew **רשעים** or its Aramaic equivalent.<sup>75</sup> Sanders could have offered reconstructions of whole sentences, with full philological discussion of contentious words. His published work shows that he is learned enough to do so, and includes discussion of **רשע**, ἀμαρτωλός and some other relevant words.<sup>76</sup> That one of our very best scholars chose not to produce and interpret Aramaic reconstructions illustrates only too well the current state of scholarship.

In the largest Life of Jesus currently being written, J. P. Meier also makes very little use of Aramaic.<sup>77</sup> This is in spite of the fact that the opening volume contains quite a reasonable demonstration that Jesus usually taught in Aramaic.<sup>78</sup> He does offer a "possible Aramaic retroversion of this primitive saying," namely Mark 8:35 with Matt 10:39// Luke 17:33,<sup>79</sup> but it is printed in English letters, and it is very unusual for him to do even this much. He does discuss the occasional Aramaic word, such as *talitha koum* (Mark 5:41), but he does not note the later attestation of the quiescent form **קום**, not even in a discussion which shows that this is the original Markan form.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, his discussion of other Semitisms in the same passage is very dependent on the secondary literature.<sup>81</sup> Again, he discusses βουνηργες (Mark 3:17), but he does not give proper weight to the fact that the

<sup>73</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, esp. 66, 367 n. 41.

<sup>74</sup> For a complete reconstruction, showing how helpful the Aramaic source is for reconstructing Jesus' actions and teaching, see P. M. Casey, "Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 306–332.

<sup>75</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 177.

<sup>76</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London/Minneapolis: SCM/Fortress, 1977), 342–345, 357–358, 402; "Jesus," 636–643. Sanders does not however offer proper discussion of the Aramaic **רשעים** and **חייבין**: cf. Casey, *Aramaic Approach to Q*, 137–142.

<sup>77</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL, 4 vols (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009).

<sup>78</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 264–266, 296–299.

<sup>79</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 61.

<sup>80</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 265–266, 297–298, cf. II, 759.

<sup>81</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 785–786, 848–849.

Aramaic word for “thunder” is רעם.<sup>82</sup> He treats Mark 3:6 as “probably a redactional creation of Mark,” and in any case he declares it to be the conclusion of a story which does not go back to a historical event in Jesus’ ministry, without considering any possible Aramaic background to it.<sup>83</sup>

The real reason for all this emerges, not in his three enormous volumes on the life of Jesus, but in a regrettable 2004 article on Mark 2:23–28, in which Meier rejects the use of Aramaic as a tool for interpreting this passage.<sup>84</sup> Meier discusses my original attempt to reconstruct an Aramaic source of this pericope in 1988, but ignores my 1998 book *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, which contains a reconstruction of the immediately following pericope Mark 3:1–6 as well, argues that these two pericopes were originally associated in genuine historical events, and offers a full discussion of the proposed methodology.<sup>85</sup> For example, it is notorious that ὁδὸν ποιεῖν at Mark 2:23 does not make proper sense in Greek. Accordingly, in reconstructing the whole of both pericopes, I suggested that Mark’s ἤρξαντο ὁδὸν ποιεῖν went back to a source which read שריו למעבר אורח, so that the disciples “began to go along a path.”<sup>86</sup> This makes perfect sense both of the incident and of the translator, who suffered from interference and misread למעבר (“to go along”) as למעבד (“to make”), one of the simplest possible mistakes. Despite my offering abundant additional evidence that Mark’s text is a translation of an Aramaic source, of which the son of man saying at Mark 2:28 is only the most obvious, Meier casts doubt on whether the whole story ever existed in Aramaic, and complains about my tendency to “rewrite the text.”<sup>87</sup> Thus he omits most of the evidence for an Aramaic source, does not discuss the most recent and extensive work of secondary literature, and criticizes a travesty of the proposed methodology. That so distinguished an author of the largest current scholarly attempt to write a

<sup>82</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew III*, 214–215, 261 n. 40.

<sup>83</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 682–684, 730–731.

<sup>84</sup> J. P. Meier, “The Historical Jesus and the Plucking of the Grain on the Sabbath,” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 561–581.

<sup>85</sup> Meier, “Plucking of the Grain,” discussing P. M. Casey, “Culture and Historicity: The Plucking of the Grain (Mark 2.23–28),” *NTS* 34 (1988): 1–23, but not *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, notably not ch. 2, “Method” (73–110), nor ch. 4, “Two Sabbath Controversies: Mark 2.23–3.6” (138–192).

<sup>86</sup> Casey, “Plucking,” 1–2; *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, 138–141.

<sup>87</sup> Meier, “Plucking of the Grain,” 565, n. 6 from p. 564.

Life of Jesus should proceed like this illustrates again the unsatisfactory state of scholarship.

With problems like this in serious scholarship, it is hardly surprising that other distinguished scholars have recently contributed some strange remarks about aspects of the language which Jesus spoke. For example, in *Jesus Remembered* (2004), Dunn makes a number of positive remarks on the use of Aramaic which I had made in previous published work.<sup>88</sup> Nonetheless, he is quite uncritical of Burney's work,<sup>89</sup> and his section on the notorious Aramaism "son of man" contains a number of peculiarities. For example, he declares that we must suppose that Jesus used the term "*the* Son of Man" (my italics) of himself, without sufficient discussion of the use of the definite and indefinite states in Aramaic, and he further supposes that the "articular form" may be rendered "that son of man."<sup>90</sup> When Aramaic does not have a separate article as Greek and English do, there is no excuse for the description "articular form" with reference to Jesus' usage, nor for the further replacement of the definite article with the demonstrative "that." On the other hand, Dunn declares that Jesus' use may be deliberately "ambiguous,"<sup>91</sup> without proper discussion of Aramaic sources in which the use of בר (א)נש(א) is not ambiguous. When distinguished scholars deal with the term "son of man" in this way, it is not surprising that the Son of man problem should continue to seem insoluble.

Despite the abundant evidence of Semitisms in the synoptic gospels, some scholars still suppose that Jesus taught in Greek. The most notable at present is Stanley Porter.<sup>92</sup> In principle, we should of course consider the possibility that Jesus taught in Greek as well as in Aramaic, but the primary evidence is not sufficient to support such a conclusion. This is illustrated by the two major mistakes which Porter makes. One is to downplay or even omit the evidence that Jesus spoke and consequently taught in Aramaic, in an environment in

<sup>88</sup> J.D.G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making, 1: Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), e.g. 225 n. 221; 408 n. 130; 427 n. 242.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 739, 741 n. 151, 759.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 743, 746, 760.

<sup>92</sup> Porter, "Teach in Greek?"; "Jesus and the Use of Greek"; "Jesus and the Use of Greek: A Response to Maurice Casey," *BBR* 10 (2000): 71–87; *Criteria for Authenticity*, esp. 95–97, 164–180, "Excursus: A Response to Maurice Casey on the Languages of Jesus"; cf. P. M. Casey, "In Which Language Did Jesus Teach?", *ExpTim* 108 (1997): 326–328; *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, 65–68.

which normal Jews understood Aramaic, which Jesus would therefore have to speak in order to communicate with them. For example, noting quotations in Aramaic in the synoptic gospels which are often and rightly taken as evidence that Jesus spoke Aramaic, Porter comments, "By this reasoning it is more plausible to argue that Jesus did most of his teaching in Greek, since the gospels are all Greek documents."<sup>93</sup> This misrepresents the nature of the gospels themselves. They were written in Greek to communicate the good news to Greek-speaking Christians. This mere fact does not tell us in which language Jesus taught, whereas the Aramaic words in the synoptic gospels cannot be explained unless the gospel writers could expect their audiences to know that the ministry took place in an Aramaic-speaking environment, and this is part of the evidence that Jesus must have taught in Aramaic. This is supported by peculiarities such as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, which is not normal monoglot Greek, and which makes excellent sense as a translation of (א)נש(א) בר.<sup>94</sup> Porter seeks to diminish the importance of even this by noting quite correctly that the "adjectival attributive genitive pattern, of *nomen rectum* following the *nomen regens* without repetition of the article, was very common in classical Greek." He argues that this became more common, and concludes, "This increase makes the idea of Semitic influence on the use of this pattern in the Greek of the New Testament difficult to sustain."<sup>95</sup> This misses the point. The point is not this common pattern, but rather that ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου itself is not normal monoglot Greek, can be understood as a translation of (א)נש(א) בר, and makes sense in some sayings when they are reconstructed in Aramaic in accordance with Aramaic rather than Greek usage (e.g. Mark 2:28; 9:12).<sup>96</sup>

Porter's second major mistake is to exaggerate the use of Greek in Israel. This is an important point, for if Porter were right, it would be possible to argue that Jesus taught in Greek as well as in Aramaic, and to consider gospel passages which show no clear signs of

<sup>93</sup> Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek," 125 n. 9, repeated in Porter, "Excursus," 171, with a complaint that I have taken it out of context. I cannot see that this argument has any validity, whatever its context.

<sup>94</sup> Porter, "Excursus," 167, admits only this of the arguments presented by Casey, "In Which Language," 327, cf. *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, 65, 111–121, as "germane."

<sup>95</sup> Porter, "Excursus," 167–168, n. 113 from p. 167.

<sup>96</sup> For full discussion see now Casey, *The Solution to the Son of Man Problem*.

Semitisms as examples of this. For example, Porter has Galilee “completely surrounded by hellenistic culture.”<sup>97</sup> This hellenistic culture was however Gentile, and its presence in cities such as Tyre and Scythopolis is entirely consistent with its rejection by Aramaic-speaking Jews. Again, Porter cites the funerary inscriptions from Beth She‘arim, noting that they date from the first to the *sixth* centuries CE, and subsequently responding to criticism by continuing to maintain them as evidence that “some from that area, including possibly Jesus, used Greek.”<sup>98</sup> But “only a few of the village’s tombs date to the first century CE, and these do not contain inscriptions.”<sup>99</sup> So much of Porter’s evidence is from a later time or the wrong place that it should not be used to support the notion of Jesus conducting a Greek-speaking ministry in the Galilean countryside or in relatively small towns such as Capernaum. Porter also draws on what was then recent research to support his view, but this has now been exposed as a temporary trend, and the Jewishness of the area of the historic ministry has been recognized.<sup>100</sup> Accordingly, Porter’s view should not be accepted.<sup>101</sup>

Some scholars continue to argue that Jesus taught in Aramaic, and that reconstruction of Aramaic sources from the synoptic gospels enables us to cast much light on his life and teaching. Having recently done extensive work in this area, I proceed with a review of this. In 1988, I offered the first reconstruction of the proposed Aramaic source of a complete pericope, Mark 2:23–28, as noted above.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Porter, “Jesus and the Use of Greek,” 135.

<sup>98</sup> Porter, “Jesus and the Use of Greek,” 146–147; “Excursus,” 172–173, responding to Casey, “In Which Language,” 327, and *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, 66.

<sup>99</sup> M. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, SNTSMS 118 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108–109, citing N. Avigad, *Beth She‘arim. Report on the Excavations during 1953–1958*, 3: *Catacombs 12–23* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 260–261. Avigad (124–125, 261) has catacomb 21 as the earliest, dating perhaps from the Herodian period, but perhaps later, and with no inscriptions.

<sup>100</sup> See especially M. Chancey, “The Cultural Milieu of Ancient Sepphoris,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 127–145; idem, *Myth of a Gentile Galilee*; idem, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, SNTSMS 134 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>101</sup> See further Casey, “In Which Language”; *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, 63–68. A fuller response to Porter, “Excursus,” is not possible here. I profoundly regret that administrative duties, followed by a lengthy period of illness, have prevented me from responding at greater length elsewhere. I hope to do so in due course.

<sup>102</sup> Casey, “Plucking.”

Compared with previous generations of scholars, I was able to do this because of the increased quantity of Aramaic sources which were discovered and published. The most important were the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls, which were written in the right language among people of the right culture not too long before the time of Jesus. With this complete reconstruction, I was able to propose a solution of the main interpretative problems of this pericope. With a source which read שדיו למעבר אודח, I could argue that the disciples “began to go along a path,” and then infer that they were taking Peah, a cultural assumption which could be taken for granted when the source was transmitted by Aramaic-speaking Jews. Faced with the notorious ἐπὶ Ἀβιαθᾶρ ἄρχιερέως, I reconstructed ביומי אביתר כהן רב, which does not imply that Abiathar was high priest at the time, and is consistent with him being isolated as exceptionally important. Equally important, I was able to recover the cultural assumption that the incident of David eating the shewbread, and giving some to his men to eat, took place on the Sabbath, which makes Jesus’ argument of obvious relevance to the situation of his disciples. I was also able to recover the original force of the Son of man statement with which the passage ends, for this makes proper sense only when the original Aramaic idiom is reconstructed.

Reviewing the current state of scholarship in 1994, Wilcox not only saw this as “a rather important article,” but summarized his own essay as arguing that “the whole approach to the Aramaic and Hebrew background of the New Testament must be linked in with as full an historical, social and midrashic perspective as possible, and that the atomistic ‘spot the Aramaism’ endeavours of the past, whatever their merits, must give way to that new approach.”<sup>103</sup> There are two major points here. One is that we need the reconstruction of whole passages. The second is this enables us to put such passages in their original cultural context. This is now possible, and we need no more one word naughty tricks. This “new approach,” so much facilitated by the discovery of additional Aramaic sources, enables us to recover the teaching of Jesus within his own cultural background.

I carried this work further in a 1998 book.<sup>104</sup> After surveying previous work in the opening chapter, I wrote a whole chapter on meth-

<sup>103</sup> M. Wilcox, “The Aramaic Background of the New Testament”, in *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*, ed. D. R. G. Beattie and M. J. McNamara, JSOTSup 166 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 362–378, at 376–377.

<sup>104</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*.



odology. In both of these chapters, I noted the reasons why we must now suppose that Jesus taught in Aramaic. First, we have early evidence that Jews needed the Torah translated from Hebrew into Aramaic so that they could understand it (e.g. Neh 8:1–8). Secondly, we have an ample quantity of Aramaic documents from Israel from before the time of Jesus, including the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls. These documents show significant interference from Hebrew, but not from Greek. Thirdly, there are a number of small pieces of information which fit into the pattern of Aramaic being the normal tongue of Jews in Israel, and which do not fit any other pattern. For example, the inscriptions on the shekel trumpets in the Temple were in Aramaic (*m. Segal* 6:5), and Gamaliel wrote a letter to Galilean Jews in Aramaic (*t. Sanh.* 2:6//*y. Sanh.* I.2.18d.12–19//*b. Sanh.* 11b). Fourthly, Aramaic continued to be used in Israel later. This is shown by massive evidence including the Palestinian Talmud for Jews, and the Christian Palestinian Syriac lectionary among Christians. The Targums show that many Jews needed an Aramaic version of the scriptures to help them understand them. These points form a massive argument of cumulative weight, showing that Jesus would be brought up with Aramaic as his native tongue, and that he would have to teach in Aramaic in order to be understood by normal Jews. They are complemented by the evidence of the synoptic gospels that this is what actually happened. We have already seen that this includes a small number of Jesus' *ipsissima verba*, such as טְלִיתָא קוּם from Mark 5:41, and features of his teaching such as his use of בַּר (א)נִשְׂא (א). This is the aspect of the evidence which I began to consider at great length in a number of reconstructions of Mark's Aramaic sources, which included accounts of Jesus' actions as well as his teaching. These should not be considered separately at a point like this, because the composition of complete accounts of Jesus' teaching during a variety of incidents is part of an argument of cumulative weight that he did in fact teach in Aramaic.

In the two introductory chapters, I also drew on important facets of the work of colleagues in Bilingualism, Translation Studies and the study of the LXX to illuminate the most fruitful way of reconstructing and interpreting possible Aramaic sources of Mark's Gospel. I concluded the chapter on methodology with a seven-point procedure for finding and reconstructing these sources,<sup>105</sup> and I now offer an updated summary of this.

<sup>105</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Source of Mark's Gospel*, 107–110.

1. Select passages which show some signs of being translations of Aramaic sources. The simplest are those which show signs of very literal translation, especially mistakes such as ὁδὸν ποιεῖν (Mark 2:23). We must also take seriously linguistic features such as parataxis, and Semitic features such as the use of the term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Thirdly, we should also consider passages which provide non-linguistic reasons for believing that events in them took place, and that the teaching of Jesus found in them is authentic. This is because the language of Jesus was Aramaic, as was the language of at least the majority of eyewitnesses and the majority of original tradents.

2. Attempt to reconstruct a possible Aramaic source. For this purpose, we should use in the first instance the Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, because it is so close to the right date and cultural environment. When these scrolls do not contain the words which we need, we should use other Aramaic with care. This is a perfectly legitimate procedure, because Aramaic was an exceptionally stable language.<sup>106</sup> It is consequently possible to exclude forms such as ܝܝ which is known to have become out of date, and specific uses of words such as ܘܥܪܝܚ, which can be shown to have developed the meaning “necessary,” equivalent to the Greek δεῖ, only later.<sup>107</sup> The bulk of the language, however, did not change like this, so that earlier and later sources provide us with a wealth of material, provided that we use them judiciously.

3. Check that the proposed reconstruction is written in genuinely idiomatic Aramaic.

4. Interpret the resulting reconstruction from a first-century Jewish perspective. We must pay particular attention to any respect in which it differs from the Greek translation in front of us, as for example in the striking difference between (א)גש(א) בר and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. We must then use all necessary criteria to determine whether Jesus really said and did what our proposed source attributes to him. Our Aramaic sentences should be extremely helpful in reconstructing Jesus' life and teaching in their original cultural setting, but they cannot function without their complete cultural context.

5. Consider the passage from the perspective of an ancient translator. In the light of what is now known about ancient translators and

<sup>106</sup> Casey, “Response to Owen and Shepherd,” 5–12.

<sup>107</sup> P. M. Casey, “The Aramaic Background of Mark 9:11: A Response to J. K. Aitken,” *JTS* NS 55 (2004): 92–102 (at 96–101).

the translation process itself, we must ensure that we have a possible source of such a kind that an ancient translator might reasonably have used it to produce the Greek text which we have got. We must look for consistent habits, and for strategies such as the translation of (א)נש(א) בר with ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, but we must be careful not to invent either of them.

6. Isolate any deliberate editing by the gospel writers. For example, considering the central group of Mark's passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34) in the light of possible Aramaic sources makes his editorial procedures clearer than we could see otherwise.<sup>108</sup> This is an especially important procedure in dealing with Q passages, where the two versions in Matthew and Luke sometimes differ from each other in ways characteristic of each gospel writer.

7. Assess the probability that the reconstruction of the proposed Aramaic source is accurate, determine how accurate the proposed interpretation of it should be considered to be, and consider whether it represents correctly the teaching of Jesus, and any narrative framework as well. While his teaching is the focus of this article, it is methodologically important that, in doing culturally informed historical work of this kind, his life and teaching cannot reasonably be separated.

The importance of these principles was illustrated by the four passages which I reconstructed: Mark 2:23–3:6; 9:11–13; 10:35–45; 14:12–26. From a purely technical point of view, perhaps the most important was Mark 9:11–13, because the Aramaic reconstruction permitted the solution of all the problems traditionally posed by this passage.<sup>109</sup> The Son of man saying in v. 12 is especially difficult if ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is interpreted in accordance with Christian tradition as a reference to Jesus alone, not least because the previous and following comments seem to refer to John the Baptist/Elijah. The following reconstruction removes the problem: והיכה כתיב על בר אנש דיכאב שגיא ואתבשר. This is a general statement which looks backwards to the death of John the Baptist/Elijah, as well as forwards to the death of Jesus. Moreover, once we realize that this is a general statement, we can find the scriptural passages referred to in vv. 12 and 13, looking for general statements in passages such as Isaiah 40 and Job 14. It should also be noted that this reconstruction could not

<sup>108</sup> For detailed discussion, see Casey, *Solution to the Son of Man Problem*, ch. 9.

<sup>109</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, ch. 3.

be done before the publication of the *second* set of Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls. The gradual publication of the first scrolls made it clear that Hebrew penetrated Aramaic during the Second Temple period to a greater degree than we had previously realized. However, we still did not have an Aramaic word for “suffer” which could underlie Mark’s πάθη. Writing in 1994–96, however, I was able to point out that “The noun מכאב is now extant at 4QTL Levi VIII, 1; VIII, 3, with... ]מכאב at VII.3, so there should be no doubt that כאב could be used in the Aramaic of our period, and meditation on this Hebrew scripture [sc. Job 14:22, with יכאב] is precisely what would make Jesus choose it.”<sup>110</sup> This is a dramatic example of how dependent we are on having sufficient Aramaic available to us to do these reconstructions. Work of this kind was simply not an option for the great scholars of the past, Meyer, Wellhausen, Black and Jeremias, because there was not sufficient Aramaic material for them to work with. It is now our responsibility to carry this work forward.

I was able to make progress with each of the other passages studied in detail in this book, though this can only be illustrated briefly here. For example, in discussing Mark 3:1–6, I was able to illuminate the information that the Pharisees were watching Jesus to see if he would heal on the Sabbath with the cultural assumption that they might be able to enforce the death penalty for two violations of the Sabbath, but not for one. This makes perfectly good sense of the death threat at the end of the passage, where Mark’s unsatisfactory Greek συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν should be regarded as a translation of יהבין עיצה, “gave counsel.” The translator used συμβούλιον rather than συμβουλία because he was suffering from interference as is normal among bilingual translators.<sup>111</sup> In discussing Mark 10:35–45, I was able to recover the unity of the passage, and defend its historicity, partly by reconstructing the final verse, where the Aramaic בר (א)נש(א) must have a general level of meaning. This enables us to see it as the natural conclusion to the incident in which James and John agreed to die with Jesus, so that the general level of meaning includes their death with his, and includes cultural assumptions about martyrdom.<sup>112</sup> In discussing Mark 14:12–26, I was able to solve the

<sup>110</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel*, 128.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 138–139, 173–175, 185–186.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 194, 211–218.

problems posed by Jesus' word over the cup with an Aramaic reconstruction, carefully distinguished from translations of it *into* Aramaic, which caused such trouble to previous scholars. I could then place it in its cultural context as part of Jesus' final Passover with his disciples rather than the institution of the Eucharist.<sup>113</sup> All these passages have one major point in common. The Aramaic reconstructions have to be seen in their original cultural contexts as part of accounts of Jesus' life and teaching. They are then an essential element in enabling us to understand the historic ministry.

I carried this further in my 2002 book, *An Aramaic Approach to Q*.<sup>114</sup> In a survey of previous scholarship, I was able to point to only a few scholars who had made any positive contribution to the study of the teaching of Jesus in Q by considering its possible Aramaic background: most scholars simply left it out. After a chapter on method oriented especially towards the Q material, I proceeded with the seven principles outlined above to investigate three passages of different kinds. From Matt 23:23–36//Luke 11:39–51, I reconstructed one Aramaic source which had been translated twice. From Matt 11:2–19//Luke 7:18–35, I reconstructed one Greek source which was used by both evangelists, and an Aramaic source from which it had been translated into Greek. The most complicated was Mark 3:20–30, Matt 12:22–32 and Luke 11:14–23; 12:10. Here I reconstructed one Aramaic source from Mark 3:20–29, which was translated and edited to form Mark 3:20–30. I reconstructed a Greek source from Matt 12:22–32//Luke 11:14–23, with help in the opening two verses from the less heavily edited Matt 9:32–33. I also reconstructed an Aramaic source which was translated to form this Greek source. I found that Mark 3:28–29, Matt 12:32 and Luke 12:10 were due to no less than *three* translations of the same Aramaic saying, now found in its original context in Mark and Matthew. In all three cases, I was able to use the Aramaic reconstructions to help with the interpretation of the teaching of Jesus and with the editing of the evangelists. Again, I can only exemplify this briefly here.

For example, I was able to reconstruct from Matt 23:23 ἀφήκατε τὰ βαρύτερα the Aramaic עברתון על חומריא, using the technical legal

<sup>113</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, 220, 241–242; earlier, cf. P. M. Casey, "The Original Aramaic Form of Jesus' Interpretation of the Cup," *JTS* NS 41 (1990): 1–12.

<sup>114</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Approach to Q*.

term חומרִיא for the “heavy” or more important points of the Law, a term which Luke left out because it would be difficult to explain to Gentile Christian readers. I also recovered the unavoidable play on words between עבד (Matt 23:23//Luke 11:42 ποιῆσαι), “do,” and עבר (Matt 23:23 ἀφῆκατε...ἀφιέναι, Luke 11:42 παρέργεσθε...παρεῖναι), “transgress,” “pass over,” and followed Matthew’s ἄνηθον in reconstructing שבתא, “dill,” which Luke misread as שברש, producing the inappropriate πήγανον, “rue.” All this made it much more possible to put in its cultural context the way in which Jesus was attacking the Torah observance of scribes and Pharisees. He did not teach that there was anything wrong with tithing, not even with tithing mint, dill and cummin, which would provide the priests in the Temple with herbs as well as corn, wine and oil. He taught that scribes and Pharisees were at fault in combining this observance of their detailed expansion of the Torah with neglect of fundamentals, justice, mercy and trust.<sup>115</sup>

Again, I was able to reconstruct and interpret Jesus’ teaching at Matt 12:30//Luke 11:23. Here the reading με after σκοπίζει has generally been found impossible, rather than the more difficult, and the saying has been interpreted as a generality not properly related to its context. I was able to reconstruct בדרני, “scatters me,” for in Aramaic, as in Hebrew (פזר), one can scatter a single animal or person, as one cannot in Greek or English. Jesus taught that anyone who did not gather with him, that is, participate in his successful ministry to gather in the lost sheep of the house of Israel (cf. Matt 10:6), was effectively scattering him, that is, treating him as someone who was cast out from Israel. This fits perfectly with the accusation that he cast out demons by means of the devil, for some scribes and Pharisees who made such an accusation would very much have like to see him removed.<sup>116</sup> It follows that these two books have proposed a methodology for reconstructing the teaching of Jesus, and that this could prove even more fruitful in increasing our understanding of his teaching, in demonstrating that some of his teaching recorded in the synoptic gospels is indeed authentic, and in helping to fit it into the ministry as a whole.

<sup>115</sup> Casey, *Aramaic Approach to Q*, 64–65, 72–76.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 148–149, 176–177.

A few other scholars have done work of this kind very recently, albeit on a much smaller scale. For example, in expounding the Lord's prayer, Chilton offered a complete Aramaic reconstruction of it.<sup>117</sup> In another book, his discussion of possible Aramaic background to teaching of Jesus included a retroversion of an original saying from Mark 14:25, with an appendix on method.<sup>118</sup> Without doing complete Aramaic reconstructions, Crossley has shown the importance of careful linguistic study of the background to some gospel passages. For example, drawing on rabbinic literature and the Syriac versions of the gospels, he showed that the view that the Aramaic תוֹב (and Hebrew טוֹב) forms the background for the teaching of Jesus on repentance is correct.<sup>119</sup> Detailed linguistic research of this kind remains essential for the task of reconstructing Jesus' teaching.

Aus has advanced the study of traditions about Jesus in several books, with very careful study of Jewish texts though without Aramaic reconstructions. Much of this work concerns actions of Jesus rather than teaching, and even traditions about him.<sup>120</sup> Whether literally concerned with the teaching of Jesus or not,<sup>121</sup> Aus's work is of methodological relevance and of great importance, because Aramaic reconstructions of the teaching of Jesus must be seen with equal care and learning in the context of Jewish tradition.

In a book published after this article went to press, I carried the work of the previous two books further, but on a narrower front, in proposing a solution to the notoriously difficult Son of man problem.<sup>122</sup> Those parts concerned with the teaching of Jesus are based on the methodology discussed earlier in this section. I also discussed

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<sup>117</sup> B. D. Chilton, *Jesus' Prayer and Jesus' Eucharist: His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997): 24–51.

<sup>118</sup> B. D. Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles*, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 44–45, with 177–181, App. Four, "Aramaic Retroversions of Jesus' Sayings."

<sup>119</sup> J. G. Crossley, "The Semitic Background to Repentance in the Teaching of John the Baptist and Jesus," *JSHJ* 2 (2004): 138–157.

<sup>120</sup> E.g. R. D. Aus, *My name is "Legion": Palestinian Judaic Traditions in Mark 5:1–20 and Other Gospel Texts* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003); *Matthew 1–2 and the Virginal Conception: In Light of Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaic Traditions on the Birth of Israel's First Redeemer, Moses* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004).

<sup>121</sup> Cf. further R. D. Aus, *Weihnachtsgeschichte, barmherziger Samaritaner, verlorener Sohn: Studien zu ihrem jüdischen Hintergrund* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1988).

<sup>122</sup> Casey, *The Solution to the Son of Man Problem*.

extensively the translation process, especially in discussing further the strategy of rendering (א)נש(א) בר with ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου when the reference is to Jesus, but not otherwise. I also made extensive use of a point of method which has had a chequered history, partly because previous generations of scholars did not have a sufficient understanding of the translation process. This is to argue that when sayings of Jesus cannot be reconstructed in any feasible Aramaic, he cannot have spoken them. This point of method has to be handled with extreme care. It is vulnerable to our failure to realize that a slightly free translation has resulted in a gospel saying, as most notoriously in Jesus' interpretation of the wine at the last supper.<sup>123</sup> The term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is however a special case, because it is a strategic translation of (א)נש(א) בר, which cannot function as a christological title, as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is in many sayings attributed to Jesus. In the case of most secondary Son of man sayings, therefore, we can demonstrate with quite unusual ease that an Aramaic version of a saying would not be feasible. Moreover, in ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου itself, these sayings contain the most notorious Semitism in the New Testament, so that arguments for their secondary nature would not even be vulnerable to a conviction that Jesus spoke Greek. This point of method is essential to my proposed solution of the Son of man problem, but it remains to be seen whether much fruitful use can be made of it in studying more generally the teaching of Jesus.

We must therefore conclude that the present state of scholarship is very mixed. On the one hand, many scholars refuse to utilize Aramaic reconstructions of the teaching of Jesus, to the point where they do not become competent to do so. On the other hand, many passages have been reconstructed, and having been central to this work, I have argued that it has been very fruitful. In the final section of this article, I indicate what else could be done.

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<sup>123</sup> See above, with n. 111, citing Casey, "Jesus' Interpretation of the Cup."



#### 4. *Future Work*

There are many other passages which include teaching of Jesus which could benefit from the exploration of further Aramaic reconstructions. For example, Mark 1:44 contains Jesus' instructions to a man whom he had healed of a skin disease to go and show himself to a priest and offer the sacrifice prescribed by Moses, which shows Jesus conspicuously teaching within the Law of Moses. Here the article in  $\tau\tilde{\omega}$   $\text{\textcircled{I}}\text{\textcircled{E}}\text{\textcircled{P}}\text{\textcircled{E}}$  probably reflects the use of the Aramaic definite state. The more difficult and surely correct reading in 1:41,  $\delta\rho\gamma\iota\sigma\theta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma$ , must go back to the Aramaic  $\text{\textcircled{I}}\text{\textcircled{G}}\text{\textcircled{R}}$ , the semantic area of which is much broader than the English word "be angry" and the Greek  $\delta\rho\gamma\acute{\iota}\zeta\omicron\mu\alpha\iota$ . A full study of this might illuminate what state the narrator thought Jesus, or perhaps the man, was in, "trembling" or "deeply moved," and show once more a translator suffering from interference. The narrative of Mark 1:41–45 as a whole has several unmarked changes of subject, as Aramaic narratives often do. It also has a lot of parataxis. A complete Aramaic reconstruction of the whole passage would surely be fruitful, and enable us to see Jesus' actions and teaching more clearly together within their cultural framework and within the framework of the historic ministry.

At Mark 12:1–12, a parable of Jesus sets off from Isaiah 5, and portrays in parabolic form Jesus' rejection by official Jewish leaders, his death, and his final triumph in accordance with one of the scriptures set for Passover. If authentic, this passage contains important teaching of Jesus about his forthcoming death and subsequent triumph. There has however been a lot of scholarly dispute about its authenticity, partly because of problems over its cultural background, and no-one seems to be able to understand the unique occurrence of  $\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega\sigma\alpha\nu$  at Mark 12:4. We should accordingly explore the rare and colourful Aramaic word  $\text{\textcircled{P}}\text{\textcircled{R}}$ , which has a semantic area approximately equivalent to the English "pound," "bray." This is just the sort of word which Jesus might use and which a bilingual translator might not know. Moreover, the plural of its present participle,  $\text{\textcircled{P}}\text{\textcircled{R}}\text{\textcircled{A}}\text{\textcircled{S}}$ , might well be thought to be a verb derived from the noun  $\text{\textcircled{P}}\text{\textcircled{R}}\text{\textcircled{A}}$ , "head." These are precisely the circumstances in which a struggling translator might produce the neologism  $\epsilon\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega\sigma\alpha\nu$ . An attempt at a complete Aramaic reconstruction of the whole passage might prove fruitful. It might enable us to take an informed decision about which parts, if any, are authentic, and whether or not this

provides valuable evidence of Jesus looking forward to his death and resurrection, and his subsequent rule of a restored Israel, with the twelve judging the twelve tribes and someone important on his right and his left (cf. Mark 10:35–45, Matt 19:28//Luke 22:30).

There are further passages of Q which could benefit from this kind of investigation. Some are isolated items not in common order. For example, Matt 12:11 has been put by Matthew into his version of Mark 3:1–6, whereas its parallel at Luke 14:5 occurs in a narrative which shows many signs of Lukan construction. The saying itself, however, has a perfectly good *Sitz im Leben* in Jesus' teaching about the Sabbath, and I noted above that a suggestion of Black implied an Aramaic level of the tradition. This should be carried further, and might cast further light on the chaotic model of Q which I have proposed elsewhere, as well as on the teaching of Jesus.<sup>124</sup> A major passage worthy of further consideration is the Lord's Prayer. Several attempts to discuss this in the light of Aramaic reconstructions have already been made, a remarkable testimony to its iconic status.<sup>125</sup> Nonetheless, further progress is surely possible, and here as elsewhere an Aramaic reconstruction has an important role to play in locating Jesus' teaching in its original context.

The passages discussed in this section are no more than suggestions for further research. They are also only examples. Many more passages could be suggested, to the point where I conclude that serious work on the Aramaic level of the transmission of gospel traditions about the life and teaching of Jesus is only just beginning.

## 5. Conclusions

The following conclusions may therefore be suggested. Serious academic research into the role of Aramaic in reconstructing the Teach-

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<sup>124</sup> See above, noting Black, *Aramaic Approach* (1946) on Luke 14:5, and Casey, *Aramaic Approach to Q*.

<sup>125</sup> See notably Dalman, *Worte* (2nd ed., 1930), 283–365, Anhang A, "Das Vater-unser"; Burney, *Poetry*, 112–113; E. Lohmeyer, *Das Vater-unser* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1946), Eng. trans.: *The Lord's Prayer*, trans. J. Bowden (London: Collins, 1965); Jeremias, *Prayers*, 82–107; Schwarz, *Und Jesus Sprach*, 209–226; Chilton, *Jesus' Prayer*, 24–51; R. Antonisz, *The Original "Our Father" in Aramaic: A New Discovery, A New Reconstruction of the "Our Father"* (Coulsdon: Lamp, 1999). For detailed discussion of an attempted reconstruction in Hebrew, J. Carmignac, *Recherches sur le "Notre Père"* (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1969).

ing of Jesus effectively began in the 1890's. It was extremely difficult to do, owing to the lack of sufficient Aramaic sources. Consequently, only two brilliant books on the whole subject were written in the following century, those of Meyer in 1896 and Black in 1946.<sup>126</sup> These were complemented by a small number of works which fruitfully discussed particular aspects of Jesus' teaching, studying Aramaic which was of especial relevance. Most work was however methodologically unsatisfactory, and it may be this which has made most New Testament scholars unwilling to become properly competent in the language which Jesus spoke. Even the work of Meyer and Black, complemented by the studies of other outstanding scholars such as Wellhausen and Jeremias, had severe methodological problems caused primarily by the lack of sufficient Aramaic sources.

This situation gradually changed with the discovery and publication of further Aramaic sources, among which the most important and dramatic were the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls. We are now in a position to do much more extensive and fruitful work than was possible even for our most able and learned predecessors. In this article I have illustrated this with a number of passages of Mark and of Q which have already been reconstructed, and made suggestions for further work. In so doing, I have also proposed a clear methodology by which scholarship could proceed. It is profoundly to be hoped that many more scholars will rise to this challenge, so that together we can make a major contribution to the Quest of the historical Jesus.

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<sup>126</sup> Meyer, *Jesu Muttersprache*; Black, *Aramaic Approach*.



# THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE: A HYPOTHETICAL ARGUMENT\*

MOISÉS MAYORDOMO AND PETER-BEN SMIT

[*Baudolino:*] And I said to myself, [...] on the basis of these notes I would compose the Gesta Baudolini. So in the course of my journeys I carried with me the story of my life. But in the escape [...] I lost these pages. It was like losing life itself. [*Niketas Choniates, Byzantine historian:*] You will tell me what you remember. I receive scraps of events, fragments of actions, and I extract a story from them, woven by a design of Providence. In saving my life you have given me what little future remains to me and I will repay you by giving you back the past you have lost... [*Baudolino:*] But maybe my story has no meaning. [*Niketas:*] There are no stories without meaning. And I am one of those men who can find it even when others fail to see it. Afterwards the story becomes the book of the living, like a blaring trumpet that raises from the tomb those who have been dust for centuries... Still it takes time, you have to consider the events, arrange them in order, find the connections, even the least visible ones.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction: Building a Hypothesis in a “War Zone”

In the 1970’s, when “post-structuralism” first appeared on the academic stage, many critical voices warned against what they considered a “repeated and often extremely subtle denial of,” a “hedonist withdrawal from” or “the randomization of” history.<sup>2</sup> In spite of these

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\* We would like to thank Sam van Leer for correcting our English, Julia Müller-Clemm for graphical help and Ulrike Sals for some critical comments. All remaining mistakes are our own responsibility.

<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco, *Baudolino* (New York: Harcourt, 2002), 11–12.

<sup>2</sup> In that order: Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), xiii; Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 150; Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (London: Verso, 1983), 48. For an early assessment cf. Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young, eds., *Post-structuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

early attacks, post-structuralism has not only survived (often under the broader umbrella of “postmodernism”) but also established itself in the field of historical studies.<sup>3</sup> The postmodern challenge, though, has sparked a debate often marked by semi-religious zeal.<sup>4</sup> Critics

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<sup>3</sup> The following theoretical contributions arguably belong to the vastly heterogeneous field of “postmodern historiography”: Frank R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian’s Language* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983); *History and Tropology: The Rise and Fall of Metaphor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); *Historical Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); *Sublime Historical Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005); F. R. Ankersmit and Hans Kellner, eds., *A New Philosophy of History* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995); Robert F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language and Practices* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Elizabeth D. Ermarth, *Sequel to History: Postmodernism and the Crisis of Representational Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Unsichere Geschichte: Zur Theorie historischer Referentialität* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001); Keith Jenkins, *On “What is History?”: From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995); *Refiguring History: New Thoughts on an Old Discipline* (London: Routledge, 2003); Patrick Joyce, “The Return of History: Postmodernism and the Politics of Academic History in Britain,” *Past & Present* 158 (1998): 207–235; Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Allan Megill, ed., *Rethinking Objectivity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 1997); *The New History* (Harlow: Longman, 2003); Philipp Sarasin, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse*, stw 1639 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2003); Joan W. Scott, ed., *Feminism and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Beverley C. Southgate, *History: What and Why? Ancient, Modern and Postmodern Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996); *Postmodernism in History: Fear or Freedom?* (London: Routledge, 2003); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987). Two important journals debating theory issues are *History and Theory* (Blackwell) and *Rethinking History* (Routledge). Some useful introductions and anthologies include Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Harlow: Longman, 2004); Christoph Conrad and Martina Kessel, eds., *Geschichte schreiben in der Postmoderne: Beiträge zur aktuellen Diskussion* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994); Herta Nagl-Docekal, ed., *Der Sinn des Historischen: Geschichtsphilosophische Debatten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1996); Keith Jenkins, ed., *The Postmodern History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997); Kevin Passmore, “Poststructuralism and History,” in *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, ed. Stefan Berger et al. (London: Arnold, 2003), 118–140; Willie Thompson, *Postmodernism and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Mainly because of this controversy, a number of historians resigned from the “American Historical Association” (founded in 1884) and formed “The Historical Society” with the aim of “reorienting the historical profession toward an accessible, integrated history free from fragmentation, over-specialization, and political proscription” (cf. <http://www.bu.edu/historic/index.html> and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

wonder “if history might be on the way to becoming an endangered species,” they fear that their profession “has been shaken right down to its scientific and cultural foundations,” they diagnose “Clio under cultural shock” and it is even suggested that literary critics and social theorists are doing nothing less than “murdering our past.”<sup>5</sup> The dramatic dimension of this conflict has reached its (preliminary?) climax in an (in)famous and much cited statement from one of the leading British historians:

[I]n battling against people who would subject historical studies to the dictates of literary critics we historians are, in a way, fighting for our lives. Certainly, we are fighting for the lives of innocent young people beset by devilish tempters who claim to offer higher forms of thought and deeper truths and insights—the intellectual equivalent of crack, in fact. Any acceptance of these theories—even the most gentle or modest bow in their direction—can prove fatal. [...] *Ad fontes* remains the necessary war cry.<sup>6</sup>

So far the reports from the war zone.<sup>7</sup>

Although postmodern thinking has exerted some influence on exegesis and theology, it has not been integrated in any substantial way into mainstream historically-oriented biblical exegesis.<sup>8</sup> We would,

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and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn, eds., *Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society* [New York: Routledge, 1999]). For an instructive entry into the British debate cf. Lawrence Stone’s short critical note “History and Post-Modernism” (*Past & Present* 131 [1991]: 217–218) and the following interchange between Patrick Joyce and Catriona Kelly on the one hand (ibid. 133 [1991]: 204–213) and L. Stone and Gabrielle M. Spiegel on the other (ibid. 135 [1992]: 189–208). For further examples cf. <http://www.history.ac.uk/projects/discourse/index.html> (May, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> In that order: Stone, “History and Post-Modernism,” 218; Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton & Company, 1994), 1; Ute Daniel, “Clio unter Kulturschock: Zu den aktuellen Debatten der Geschichtswissenschaft,” *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 48 (1997): 195–218, 259–279; Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering our Past*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey R. Elton, *Return to Essentials: Some Reflections on the Present State of Historical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 41, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Other defenders of “traditional” historical study include John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History* (London: Longman, 1984); Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present Revisited* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987); Gertrude Himmelfarb, *On Looking into the Abyss: Untimely Thoughts on Culture and Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994); Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta Books, 1997); Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1997); Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the overview in section 3.

thus, like to raise the question as to how historical Jesus research relates to the epistemological problems at stake in this ongoing debate. Since discussions on “postmodernism” have often been marred by prejudices and suspicion on both sides, we would like to lay open our own stance in this regard.<sup>9</sup> As far as the daily use of postmodern epistemology is concerned we may call ourselves “interested outsiders.” We do not think that postmodernism in all its multifaceted guises can be simply dismissed as “fashionable nonsense”;<sup>10</sup> nor do we think that the tremendous scholarly efforts made under the banner of “modernism” are worthless. To state it positively, we think that the questions raised by postmodernism can enrich our critical agenda.<sup>11</sup> We would therefore wish to develop an experimental argument based on postmodern historiography as its basic hypothesis,<sup>12</sup> outlining the questions at stake and probing the depths of their consequences. The question, thus, is not a normative one but a hypothetical one: *Assuming the epistemological legitimacy of postmodern historiography, what would historical Jesus research look like?*<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Mapping the Field of Postmodern Historiography

### 2.1. “Postmodernism”: Entering a Hall of Mirrors

The conventional organization of knowledge assigns definitions a place of honour at the beginning of every critical inquiry. However, when it comes to defining a term like “postmodernism” we enter a linguistic hall of mirrors. The term itself has been assimilated to so many different

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<sup>9</sup> Both authors are male, educated at European universities, concentrating on New Testament studies, currently employed at the University of Berne, Switzerland. In spite of these similarities, it should be noted that they have significantly different ecclesial and social backgrounds: the one Mennonite and Reformed, the other an ordained Old Catholic priest, the one married with children, from a Spanish-emigrant cultural background, the other unmarried and Dutch. But then again, this sort of autobiographical data discloses as much as it covers, guides as much as it misguides.

<sup>10</sup> As suggested in Alan D. Sokal and Jean Bricmont, *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science* (New York: Picador, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> In any case, a philosophical argument for or against one of these positions would go far beyond our competence.

<sup>12</sup> The best model for a hypothetical argument remains Plato's *Meno*, where the dialogue partners take as a starting point the assumption that they actually *know* what virtue is, though it cannot be known with certainty.

<sup>13</sup> An undertaking not dissimilar to the contribution of David J. Clines, “The Postmodern Adventure in Biblical Studies,” in *The Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Jože Krašovec, JSOTSup 289 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1998), 1603–1616.



contexts inside and outside academia that it “resists” any attempt to circumscribe it.<sup>14</sup> As a consequence of its having a “‘nudging’ commitment to doubleness, or duplicity,”<sup>15</sup> definitions of it can only end in self-contradiction. Nevertheless, some common features can be singled out:

[I]ndeterminacy and immanence; ubiquitous simulacra, pseudo-events; a conscious lack of mastery, lightness and evanescence everywhere; a new temporality, or rather intemporality, a polychronic sense of history; a patchwork or ludic, transgressive or deconstructive approach to knowledge and authority; an ironic, parodic, reflexive, fantastic awareness of the moment; a linguistic turn, semiotic imperative in culture; and in society generally the violence of local desires diffused into a terminology of seduction and force.<sup>16</sup>

More than marking a threshold from one epoch called “modernism” to an epoch which, purportedly, has moved *beyond* it,<sup>17</sup> the prefix “post” expresses a more intricate relationship of aversion and addiction towards a form of modernity, which to a great extent is a product of postmodern boundary-marking. It is the modernism of Cartesian stable subjectivity and not the modernism of Freud’s psychoanalysis, of Hegel’s determinist philosophy of history and not of Einstein’s

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<sup>14</sup> Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winquist, eds., *Postmodernism: Critical Concepts*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 1998) offer the most comprehensive inventory of foundational and critical studies. Both have also edited a useful *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2001). The history of this term from 1880 (!) is traced in Michael Köhler, “‘Postmodernismus’: Ein begriffsgeschichtlicher Überblick,” *Amerikastudien* 22 (1977): 8–18 and Wolfgang Welsch, “Postmoderne: Genealogie und Bedeutung eines umstrittenen Begriffs,” in *“Postmoderne” oder Der Kampf um die Zukunft*, ed. Peter Kemper (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1988), 9–36. Besides its early use in arts and literature, it was within the field of social analysis that the endemic use of the term started its career, especially through Jean-François Lyotard’s highly influential analysis of the developments within post-industrialised societies in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986; French: 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1987), xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Doubts concerning the adequacy of the term as an epoch label are expressed by Birgit Aschmann, “Moderne versus Postmoderne: Gedanken zur Debatte über vergangene, gegenwärtige und künftige Forschungsansätze,” in *Historische Debatten und Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jürgen Elvert and Susanne Krauss (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 2002), 256–275; Dieter Langewiesche, “‘Postmoderne’ als Ende der ‘Moderne’? Überlegungen eines Historikers in einem interdisziplinären Gespräch,” in *Gestaltungskraft des Politischen: Festschrift Eberhard Kolb*, ed. Wolfram Pyta and Ludwig Richter, *Historische Forschungen* 63 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1998), 331–347.

theory of relativity, of interpretive positivism and not of Joycean fragmentation of meaning. However, for the sake of the argument we may *assume* that “modernism” is (not: “was”)<sup>18</sup>

marked by belief in the unity of experience, the predominance of universals, and a determinate sense of referentiality. [...] In the most basic terms, modernism represents the residual belief in the (self-evident) supremacy of logic and scientific rationalism that assumes reality as a whole can be rendered and comprehended, that ideas and concepts are determinate, and that human beings share a level of universal experience with one another that is transcultural and transhistorical.

“Modernism” is, further, characterized by an optimistic attitude towards the possibilities of progress in understanding, control and growth, and by its firm belief in absolute truth and objective knowledge. This picture of modernism is pivotal for the postmodern stress on the uncertainty of knowledge, the fragility of reality, the self-referentiality of language and the deconstruction of oppositions. Lyotard’s now classic description of postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives [*métarécits*]”<sup>19</sup> and Jacques Derrida’s concept of deconstruction<sup>20</sup> remain central points of reference.

Obviously any form of historiography aiming at reconstructing the past simply “wie es eigentlich gewesen”<sup>21</sup> cannot remain unaffected by postmodernism. Typical facets of “modern” historiography have come under critical cross fire, like the pursuit of objectivity, the precise representability of the past, the basic distinction between fact and fiction, the possibility of verifying historical truth on the basis of the available evidence or of explaining the course of past events by means of laws

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<sup>18</sup> The following quotation from David Clippinger, “Modernism,” in *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism*, ed. Taylor and Winkler, 251 is, significantly, formulated in the past tense.

<sup>19</sup> Lyotard, *Postmodern condition*, xxiv.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; French: 1967) and *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1978; French: 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494–1514*, Sämtliche Werke 33/34 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1885), 7. When read in context, though, it becomes clear that Ranke’s famous dictum was directed against the moralizing tone of enlightenment historiography: “Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, beigemessen: so hoher Aemter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloß zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen.”

of causality,<sup>22</sup> and the idea that history is in itself meaningful and intentional. Postmodern critique, though, does not start at zero, but incorporates and duplicates many “modern” critical voices from the fields of Marxist studies, feminism, post-colonialism, the psychology of perception and philosophical constructivism.<sup>23</sup>

Probably the most important impetus came from linguistics, especially from what has been labelled the “linguistic turn.”<sup>24</sup> In the wake of the (re)discovery of Saussurian linguistics the evaluation of language changed from being simply a neutral and ingenuous instrument humans use to refer to the “reality” (simple referential view) to forming the cultural “matrix” which actually constitutes reality (constructivist view). Every language-orientated “science” has to face the fact that the very language it uses determines in very substantial ways how critics relate, interpret and interact with their objects in the “outside” world. The arbitrariness of signs, the distinction between synchronic and diachronic and the production of meaning by a relation of difference to other signs have raised important questions concerning the relation between written history and the “past” which it pretends to comprehend.<sup>25</sup> The problematic relation between language and world affects the classical understanding of truth as correspondence and blurs the basic differences between fact and fiction, historical source and literature.<sup>26</sup> Once the products of historians as well as their sources are regarded as linguistic signs, an endless interplay starts between the

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. its classical expression in Carl Gustav Hempel, “The Function of General Laws in History,” *Journal of Philosophy* 39 (1942): 35–48 = *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 231–243. Clayton Roberts, *The Logic of Historical Explanation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) offers a neo-positivist version.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. especially Southgate, *History: What and Why?*, 58–107. For a brief account of “postmodern affinities” in the first half of the twentieth century, cf. Ernst Breisach, *On the Future of History: The Postmodernist Challenge and its Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 33–51. Of course, the most important early critic of the historicist paradigm was Friedrich Nietzsche. He uncovered the connection between objectivity claims and the interests of the middle-classes in his “Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben” (English: *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980]).

<sup>24</sup> The term has been popularized by Richard Rorty, ed., *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

<sup>25</sup> Passmore, “Poststructuralism and History,” 120–121.

<sup>26</sup> Fred W. Burnett, “Historiography,” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. A. K. M. Adam (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 108: “The blurring of the line between history and fiction [...] is perhaps the main upshot of the linguistic turn in historical studies.”

texts historians use, the texts historians produce, and the “historical reality” which they (re)construct.<sup>27</sup>

## 2.2. *Some General Positions—A Brief Sketch*

Postmodern historians (cf. n. 3) approach problems which “modern” historians have avoided or left unresolved,<sup>28</sup> like:

Can empiricism legitimately constitute history as a separate epistemology? What is the character of historical evidence and what function does it perform? What is the role of the historian, his/her use of social theory, and the construction of explanatory frameworks in historical understanding? How insignificant to historical explanation is its narrative form?<sup>29</sup>

Postmodern historiography is not only “postmodern” for raising such critical questions but also for its absence of “schools of thought,” textbooks and clear-cut methodological instructions.<sup>30</sup> It is even disputable what credentials are required for admission into the “postmodern club.”<sup>31</sup> Some main lines within postmodern historiography are nevertheless palpable:

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<sup>27</sup> For further discussion cf. Elizabeth Ann Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Sarasin, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse*, 11–31.

<sup>28</sup> Aschmann, “Moderne versus Postmoderne,” 259 sums up succinctly: “In der Geschichtswissenschaft [...] befindet man sich offenbar tatsächlich inmitten einer schweren epistemologischen Krise, die man [...] nur deshalb den ‘Postmodernen’ anlastet, weil man die Herausforderungen der Moderne, ihre Ambivalenzen und Infragestellungen zu lange nicht recht wahrgenommen hat.”

<sup>29</sup> Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 3.

<sup>30</sup> However, Allan Megill, “‘Grand Narrative’ and the Discipline of History,” in *New Philosophy of History*, ed. Ankersmit and Kellner, 151–173 formulates four “prescriptive postulates”: “The Multiplicity Postulate: Never assume that there is a single authorized historical method or subject matter. [...] The Hybridization Postulate: Always establish residences outside the discipline. [...] The Fictionality Postulate: Always confront, in an explicit way, the fictionality implicit in all works of history. [...] The Theory Postulate: Always theorize” (168–173).

<sup>31</sup> For instance, the openly anti-methodical “New Historicism,” associated with the work of Stephen Greenblatt, has been left out of consideration here for two reasons: First, Greenblatt is not a historian trying to discover the rhetorical status of history but a literary critic trying to relate literature to history in typical postmodern ways. Then, this field of studies has been already ploughed from the perspective of biblical criticism in a special number of *Biblical Interpretation* 5/4 (1997): 289–481 (ed. Stephen D. Moore) with two articles on the Historical Jesus.

### 2.2.1. *History without fixed meaning*

The question whether there is fixed meaning and rationality inherent to history (governed, for instance, by its teleological orientation) is answered negatively. Within a postmodern paradigm the existence of hidden historical laws clearly cannot claim the status of an epistemological *a priori*.<sup>32</sup> If there are no binding principles, no hidden structures, no grounding chains of causality, then the mere possibility of finding a specifically *historical* explanation is called into question. To give an “explanation” means to account for something as following on from something else by causality, logic or common sense. However, a de-centered history cannot provide causal explanations. What historians *can* do is to tell a story, encrypting *their* explanations within the plot of that story. In a precise sense, this *is* an explanation of the past, but it is not a *historical* one, rather more generally, a *narrative* one.<sup>33</sup>

### 2.2.2. *History without object—History as text*

If the “past” is the main object of history, then historical research is ironically characterised by the *absence* of its object.<sup>34</sup> Without a seizable object, though, it is impossible to validate a historical proposition—given as an “objective description” of what “really” happened—by simply *recalling* the past.<sup>35</sup> Of course, historians are aware of the fact that the only access they have to the past is through an appeal to “evidence,” so-called source material, which again has to be discovered, edited, prepared, preserved, described, catalogued, indexed, selected, weighed, interpreted, related to other evidence and integrated into a meaningful narrative. One of the few things that we should be able to say with a fair amount of certainty is that historians write texts (mainly, if not exclusively, narratives) on the basis of other texts (or artefacts) which they judge relevant to the enterprise of (re)constructing a partial

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Agnes Heller, *A Philosophy of History in Fragments* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 1–35; M. C. Lemon, *The Discipline of History and the History of Thought* (London: Routledge, 1995), 135–144.

<sup>33</sup> Lemon, *Discipline of History*, 144.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Tony Bennett, *Outside Literature* (London: Routledge, 1990), 49–51. Goertz, *Unsichere Geschichte*, 7: “Die Geschichtswissenschaft hat keinen Gegenstand, der ihre Existenz rechtfertigt, sie hat nur Probleme bzw. ein Problem. Sie muß damit fertig werden, daß die Vergangenheit tot ist, die Gegenwart ihr entgleitet und die Zukunft noch nicht begonnen hat.”

<sup>35</sup> From a Popperian perspective on the principles of critical research, this would render historical utterances utterly unscientific.

aspect of the past. Postmodern historiography leaves objectivity claims behind, not simply because the historian cannot be objective, but because history has no object or, one should better say, no object *beyond texts*.<sup>36</sup>

### 2.2.3. *History as hermeneutics*

If the proper object of history is not the past in itself but the historical interpretation of textual “evidence,” then the hermeneutical question cannot be evaded. Of course, the hermeneutical field offers a wide range of positions from one single meaning validated by appeal to the *intentio auctoris* to the immateriality of the text and its being re-written in every act of reading.<sup>37</sup> The point, though, is that historians, just like literary critics, have to subject their own hermeneutical premises to scrutiny.<sup>38</sup> Especially after Bultmann’s critique of the idea of “exegesis without presuppositions”<sup>39</sup> and Gadamer’s subsequent hermeneutical reappraisal of prejudice and “Wirkungsgeschichte,”<sup>40</sup> they should be critical of their own contextual (dis)position<sup>41</sup> and, in consequence,

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<sup>36</sup> Klaus Weimar, “Der Text, den (Literar-)Historiker schreiben,” in *Geschichte als Literatur: Formen und Grenzen der Repräsentation von Vergangenheit*, ed. Hartmut Eggert, Ulrich Profitlich and Klaus R. Scherpe (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), 29–39 defines this point very well: “Historiker erforschen nicht Geschichte, sie lesen *Texte über* Vergangenes; Historiker schreiben nicht Geschichte, vielmehr schreiben sie *Texte über* Geschichte. [...] Texte stehen am Anfang ihrer Arbeit, Texte stehen auch am Ende, und die Arbeit der Historiker bestünde demnach darin, aus den Texten am Anfang die Texte am Ende zu machen. Das Sicherste, das man über Historiographie sagen kann, ist, daß sie Neuvertextung ist” (29); “[H]istoriographische Texte haben keinen vorgegebenen Gegenstand, den sie beschreiben können, weder ‘die Geschichte’, noch auch nur ‘Ereignisse’; sie beschreiben vielmehr in einem ganz genauen und wörtlichen Sinne die Abwesenheit—sie füllen die Abwesenheit mit Schrift” (36).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. for discussion on these issues Moisés Mayordomo, *Den Anfang hören: Leserorientierte Evangelienexegese am Beispiel von Matthäus 1–2*, FRLANT 180 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 11–195, 366–392.

<sup>38</sup> Hans Robert Jauss once stated that no text has ever been written in order to be interpreted philologically by philologists or historically by historians (*Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*, stw 955 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1982], 688). We wonder, though, how historians who search for a *determinate* meaning of the past cope with the contradiction that they can reach this “goal” only by reading the textual evidence *against* its (supposed) intention.

<sup>39</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible,” in *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Schubert M. Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 145–153 (German: 1957).

<sup>40</sup> Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Continuum, 1989).

<sup>41</sup> Michael Stanford, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 53: “The historian not only writes *about* the constant flow of events; she also writes from *within* the flow.”

question the possibility of reaching complete congruence between a text used as historical evidence and its interpretation.<sup>42</sup> Even first-hand autobiographical evidence is not free of interpretation.<sup>43</sup> The ideal, thus, of a decontextualized historian runs up against the insurmountable problem that—to borrow a formulation of Moxter—“ein solcher Chronist kann die Geschichte nur um den Preis erfassen, daß er selbst keine hat.”<sup>44</sup>

#### 2.2.4. *History in plural forms, also in “classical vesture”*

The plurality of perspectives is one of the most important concerns of postmodern historical writing. It seems impossible to deduce from it an *imperative* to desist from all approaches hitherto used. One can share the idea that all history-making moves within the limits of textuality and nevertheless write history in ways very similar to the well-known projects of “modernism.” All methodological approaches can “continue just as before, but with the proviso that none of them can continue to think that they gain direct access to, or ‘ground’ their textuality in, a ‘reality’ appropriated plain.”<sup>45</sup> Postmodernism is not about replacing but about expanding, which again opens up possibilities for exploring alternative forms of historiography, especially in the field of narrativity.<sup>46</sup>

#### 2.2.5. *History as referential language*

The thorny question of whether language constructs or represents reality is becoming more and more of an exasperating burden to the

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<sup>42</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, sw 757 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979; 4th ed., 2000), 204: “Eine Geschichte ist nie identisch mit der Quelle, die von dieser Geschichte zeugt.”

<sup>43</sup> Sarasin, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Moxter, “Erzählung und Ereignis. Über den Spielraum historischer Repräsentation,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 67–88: here 74.

<sup>45</sup> Jenkins, *What is History?*, 32.

<sup>46</sup> In spite of the impression that “the few books and articles that have supposedly [...] followed the linguistic or rhetorical turns look more like the old history” (Berkhofer, *Great Story*, 25) there are creative examples of postmodern historical writing: Simon Schama, *Dead Certainties (Unwarranted Speculations)* (New York: Vintage, 1992); Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robin Bisha, “Reconstructing the Voice of a Noblewoman of the Time of Peter the Great: Daria Mikhailovna Menshikova,” *Rethinking History* 2 (1998): 51–63.

theoretical debate.<sup>47</sup> The problems the answer to this question poses may be by-passed, however, by focusing on the way language is actually approached. The basic rules of the “language game” suggest that we can appropriate an utterance in any meaningful way only by relating it to *something*. Even postmodernists “refer” to the theories and works of others; and they do it in such ways that we as readers cannot avoid the impression of dealing with entities *outside* of the present text. Historiography, thus, should not express its fear of the so-called “linguistic turn” by invoking the perils of becoming a “mere” language-game—as long as “reference” is part of the game.

In conclusion, this leads to a much more complex view of the historiographical work which can be graphically illustrated:<sup>48</sup>

### 2.3. Hayden White’s “Metahistory”

One of the main impulses for postmodern historiography stems from the analysis of social discourse and power by Michel Foucault (1926–1984).<sup>49</sup> At present, the most widely discussed exponent of postmodern historiography is Hayden White<sup>50</sup>—a thinker who has been given the dubious credit of being responsible for “the most damaging undertaking ever performed by a historian on his profession.”<sup>51</sup> His main concern is to show that history is basically a narrative discourse, both found and invented.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> The main positions in the so-called “realism-debate” are sketched in Marcus Willaschek, ed., *Realismus*, UTB 2143 (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story*, 29–30, 38–39, 65; also in “The challenges of poetics to (normal) historical practice,” *Poetics Today* 9 (1988): 435–452 = Jenkins, *Postmodern History Reader*, 139–155. Lines moving in both directions indicate reciprocal influence, dashed lines signal an indeterminate relation.

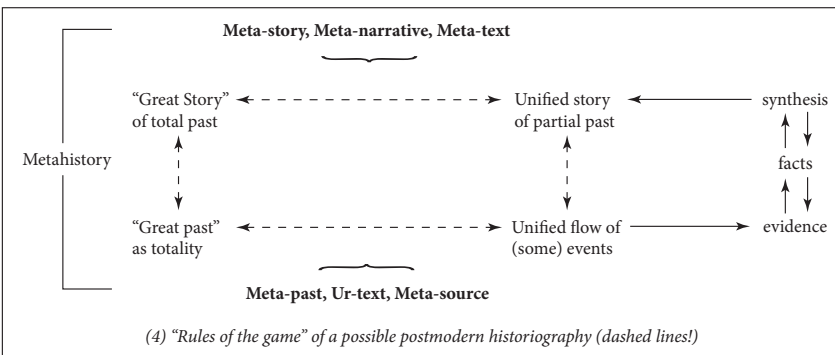
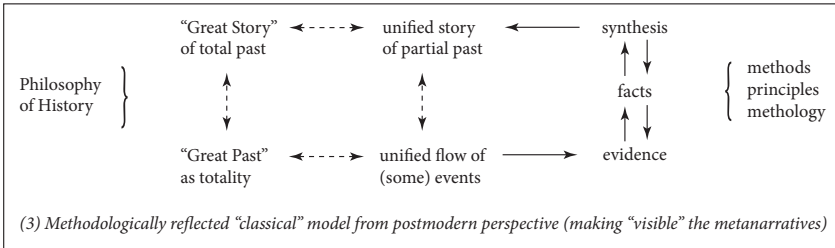
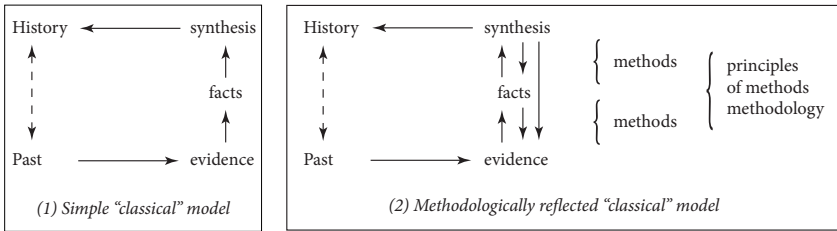
<sup>49</sup> Cf. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970; French: 1966); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1977; French: 1975); “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977; French: 1971), 139–164.

<sup>50</sup> White’s three main works are: *Metahistory* (1973), *Tropics of Discourse* (1978) and *The Content of the Form* (1987). For the ongoing debate cf. Hans Kellner, “White’s Linguistic Humanism,” *History and Theory*, Beiheft 19 (1980): 1–29; Wulf Kansteiner, “Hayden White’s Critique of the Writing of History,” *History and Theory* 32.3 (1993): 273–295; Jenkins, *What is History*, 134–179.

<sup>51</sup> Phyllis Grosskurth in a review of White’s *Metahistory* in *Canadian Historical Review* 56 (1975): 193, as quoted in Richard T. Vann, “The Reception of Hayden White,” *History and Theory* 37 (1998): 143–161; here 146.

<sup>52</sup> The narrativity of history has been the object of many studies before and after White: Cf. (in chronological order) Arthur C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), revised as: *Narration and Knowledge*





An early foray into postmodern theory is White's essay "The Burden of History," in which—following Nietzsche, Burckhardt, Schopenhauer and European existentialists—he calls into question the notion that

(New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Roland Barthes, "The Discourse of History," *Comparative Criticism* 3 (1981): 7–20 (translated by Stephen Bann; French: 1967); also translated by Peter Wexler in Michael Lane, ed., *Structuralism: A Reader* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 145–155; Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative," *Past & Present* 85 (1979): 3–24 = *The Past and the Present* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 77–96; Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*; Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–1988; French: 1983–1985), esp. 1:91–295 ("History and Narrative"), 3:99–240 ("Poetics of Narrative: History, Fiction, Time"); Peter Burke, "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 283–300.

history is guided by rationally deducible laws and thus can be interpreted in one meaningful way.<sup>53</sup> The writing of history is a way of “imposing upon the chaos of the world a momentary form.”<sup>54</sup> This concept of history-without-meaning is one of White’s fundamental axioms.<sup>55</sup> His own history of historiography leads him to the conclusion that it was not until the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that liberal as well as conservative historians tried to make the past amenable to their corresponding ideologies by driving a wedge between history and rhetoric:

[F]or both the Left and the Right this same aesthetics of the beautiful presides over the process in which historical studies are constituted as an autonomous scholarly discipline. It takes little reflection to perceive that aestheticism is endemic to what is regarded as a proper attitude towards objects of historical study in a certain tradition, deriving from Leopold von Ranke and his epigones [...]. For this tradition, whatever ‘confusion’ is displayed by the historical record is only a surface phenomenon: a product of lacunae in the documentary sources, of mistakes in ordering the archives, or of previous inattention or scholarly errors.<sup>56</sup>

On the basis of this notion of history as chaos, White develops his main thesis that historical study can only articulate itself in the form of a narrative discourse which both finds its content and imagines or invents it.<sup>57</sup> He does not negate the existence of historical facts as given; but these facts can be made significant only by weaving them into a picture of the past which again presupposes a notion of totality.<sup>58</sup> The problem, though, is that the complete past context cannot simply be recovered like a treasure from the ocean depths. The historian does not imagine

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<sup>53</sup> *History and Theory* 5.2 (1966): 111–134; reprinted in *Tropics of Discourse*, 27–50.

<sup>54</sup> *Tropics of Discourse*, 44.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Content of the Form*, 72: “[M]odern ideologies [...] impute a meaning to history that renders its manifest confusion comprehensible to either reason, understanding, or aesthetic sensibility. To the extent that they succeed in doing so, these ideologies deprive history of the kind of meaninglessness that alone can goad living human beings to make their lives different for themselves and their children, which is to say, to endow their lives with a meaning for which they alone are fully responsible.” Curiously, White uses the chaotic openness of the past as an impulse for taking responsibility for our present choices.

<sup>56</sup> *Content of the Form*, 70.

<sup>57</sup> *Tropics of Discourse*, 82; *Metahistory*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Despite claims to the contrary, no historian connected to postmodernism, and certainly not Hayden White, argues that past or present are not endowed with a material existence. What has been called “textualism” is not an essence of the past but our basic condition for approaching and constructing the past (cf. Jenkins, *What is History*, 29–33).

facts, but has to imagine all the missing bits of those contexts which make facts meaningful for us. On the other hand, by telling a story, historians tend to believe that they are actually retelling the life stories of individuals or groups from the past. But there are good reasons to doubt that people in the past simply lived “stories” which can be reproduced in later times. The dilemma is that historians cannot avoid narrative form, but precisely in narrating history, they also fictionalize it.<sup>59</sup>

White tries to describe the narrative grammar, the so-called “meta-history,” which forms the basis of history.<sup>60</sup> He distinguishes between “the following levels of conceptualization in the historical work: (1) chronicle; (2) story; (3) mode of emplotment; (4) mode of argument; and (5) mode of ideological implication.”<sup>61</sup> Chronicle and story form the “primitive elements” of every historical account. Whereas the former arranges events and people without plot-interconnections, the latter is marked by inaugurations, processes and end points according to a “hierarchy of significance.”<sup>62</sup> Historians cannot remain in the state of a simple chronicler and have thus to “translate” the raw primitive material into a story by deciding what to include, by arranging and interconnecting events, thus assigning relevance or irrelevance to each element within an imagined plot structure.

- (1) A b c d e...n
- (2) a B c d e...n
- (3) a b C d e...n                      (and so on)

As events have no unambiguous inherent story, the operations which transform a chronicle into a story are partly instructed by the subjectivity of the historian.<sup>63</sup> There are no critical methods capable of controlling this transformation from chronicle to narrative.<sup>64</sup> The most

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. for a similar view F. R. Ankersmit, “Reply to Professor Zagorin,” *History and Theory* 29 (1990): 275–296; Hans Kellner, “Narrativity in History: Post-Structuralism and Since,” *History and Theory*, Beiheft 26 (1987): 1–29.

<sup>60</sup> The following refers mainly to the introductory chapter “The Poetics of History” in *Metahistory*, 1–42.

<sup>61</sup> *Metahistory*, 5.

<sup>62</sup> In its simplest form a chronicle would record: “The Queen dies. The King dies.” Whereas a story would read: “The queen died and then the King died.”

<sup>63</sup> Cf. his article “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” in *Tropics of Discourse*, 81–100.

<sup>64</sup> The notion that history has no method, no controllable modes of explanation, is one of the main threads in Paul Veyne’s stimulating *Writing History: Essay on Epistemology* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1984; French: 1971).

basic operation in the writing of history, *emplotment*, is an implicit form of explanation guided by culturally sanctioned types of narration.<sup>65</sup> Following literary critic Northrop Frye, White distinguishes four archetypal modes of emplotment:

romance	drama of self-identification, stressing the triumph of good over evil (e.g. victory of democracy over fascism)
satire	opposite of romance, human beings as captives in the world rather than masters, decay and death are the end of everything, suffering does not lead to redemption (e.g. the Holocaust)
comedy	at least for a time, human beings can triumph over their situations and celebrate this; although things can go wrong, there is a harmony between the natural and the social
tragedy	human beings learn through resignation to work within the limitations of the world

Two other means of explanation are through *argument* and *ideology*: In order to grasp the historical field historians use four modes of argument: (1) the precise description of a reduced set of objects by classifying them according to their uniqueness, variety and color (“formism”), (2) the setting of broader contexts by analyzing trends and eras (“contextualism”), (3) the Hegelian-like synthesis of the whole field (“organicism”) and (4) the mechanistic reduction to universal causal laws (“mechanism”). Historians are furthermore led to argue on the basis of the ideologies they hold, which may be conservative (history moves naturally for the better), liberal (progression as the result of law, government and market), radical (revolution as means to bring about the better future) or anarchist (only destruction will lead to a new community).<sup>66</sup>

Since history does not have its own, unique technical vocabulary (like physics or mathematics) historians can only use the normal figurative language of ordinary educated speech according to the rhetorical tropes natural to every form of communication.<sup>67</sup> Again, White finds four basic types:

<sup>65</sup> The importance of emplotment is also emphasized by Berkhofer, *Great Story*, 106–137.

<sup>66</sup> White builds upon Karl Mannheim’s classic *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968; German: 1929).

<sup>67</sup> *Metahistory*, 34: “[Tropes] are especially useful for understanding the operations by which the contents of experience which resist description in unambiguous prose representations can be prefiguratively grasped and prepared for conscious apprehension.”

Trope	Explanation	Argument	Relation	Example
metaphor	one phenomenon is compared or contrasted to another in the manner of analogy or simile	formist	representational	working classes as "saviours of humanity"
metonymy	reduction of the whole to the part (e.g., "sail" for "ship")	mechanist	reductionist	individual acts as general "resistance to colonialism"
synecdoche	extension of a part in order to symbolize the quality of the whole (e.g. "he is all heart")	organicist	integrative	class struggle is to be found in every human act
irony	literal meaning makes no sense, examples are paradox (oxymoron) or "manifestly absurd" (catachresis)	comedy / tragedy	negational	working classes as "saviours" (?) of humanity

All in all, the writing of history as the narrativization of a primitive chronicle is conditioned by a whole set of factors:

mode of emplotment	mode of argument	mode of ideology	poetic structure (tropes)
romance	formist	anarchist	metaphor
comedy	organicist	conservative	metonymy
tragedy	mechanistic	radical	synecdoche
satire	contextualist	liberal	irony

White's positions lead to a number of conclusions which can be considered typical of postmodern historiography: (1) Since the past carries no meaning in itself, it is not possible to approach it from an

ideologically neutral point of view which by-passes the task of interpretation. (2) Historiography always has a hidden agenda, an interest *vis-à-vis* the present as its practitioners perceive it. (3) Those who claim to be doing “proper” history—as opposed to “ideological” history—displace their ideologies into the narrative, where they nevertheless remain visible. (4) Consequently, “[o]ne must face the fact that when it comes to apprehending the historical record, there are no grounds to be found in the historical record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another.”<sup>68</sup> (5) The best that historians can do is to tell different stories from different perspectives.<sup>69</sup>

### 3. *The Postmodern in Historical Jesus Studies*

In what follows, we aim to offer a representative rather than an exhaustive overview of recent historical Jesus research, focusing on its attitude towards postmodern epistemological considerations. It can well be read as an illustration of Schröter’s thesis that “in the more recent discussion the hermeneutical question about the appropriation of the past has [...] largely receded into the background.”<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> “The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation,” *Critical Inquiry* 9 (1982): 113–137 = *Content of the Form*, 58–82, at 75.

<sup>69</sup> White’s textual relativism has been recently criticized in the light of the problems surrounding the historical representation of the Holocaust and the scandal of its denial (!); cf. Saul Friedlander, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final solution”* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). Cf. also Dominick LaCapra, ed., *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), the special number “Representing the Holocaust” of *History and Theory* 33.2 (1994) with the response by Berel Lang, “Is It Possible to Misrepresent the Holocaust?” *History and Theory* 34.1 (1995): 84–89 (= Jenkins, *Postmodern History Reader*, 426–433) and Passmore, “Poststructuralism and History,” 134–136.

<sup>70</sup> Jens Schröter, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie: Methodologische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens*, BThS 47 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2001), 13: “Die hermeneutische Frage nach der Aneignung der Vergangenheit ist in der neueren Diskussion dagegen weitgehend in den Hintergrund getreten.” Cf. further on Schröter, *Jesus*, 14–36; “Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und der Charakter historischer Erkenntnis,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 207–254; “Von der Historizität der Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 163–212; “Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Historiographie und Hermeneutik in der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Petr Pokorný and Jan Roskovec, WUNT 153 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 191–203; “Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft jenseits des Historismus: Neuere Entwicklun-

Postmodern epistemological and historiographical questions have not been ignored in biblical studies or theology, generally speaking.<sup>71</sup> Our focus will be on the way these questions have (or have not) been integrated into the discussion of the historical Jesus, which is, to a certain extent, a rather particular field in biblical studies, as here the question of “historical truth” has arguably been regarded as more central than elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> The following overview covers works ranging from those that more or less ignore the postmodern agenda to those where there is self-conscious application of postmodern hermeneutical insights to historical Jesus research.

1. No interaction with postmodern theories:

Many (recent) influential works on the historical Jesus, written well within the “postmodern era” remain, surprisingly, without the respective historiographical considerations. They tend rather to use “modern” and “enlightened” epistemology with more or less theoretical foundation. Certainly, without otherwise discrediting their achievements, this

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gen in der Geschichtstheorie und ihre Bedeutung für die Exegese urchristlicher Schriften,” *ThLZ* 128 (2003): 855–866; “Konstruktion von Geschichte und die Anfänge des Christentums: Reflexionen zur christlichen Geschichtsdeutung aus neutestamentlicher Perspektive,” in *Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit: Beiträge aus geschichtstheoretischer, philosophischer und theologischer Perspektive*, ed. Jens Schröter and Antje Edelbüttel, *TBT* 127 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 201–219.

<sup>71</sup> Since they have provoked similar reactions to those sketched above for the field of historical criticism, no broad survey of them is required here. Cf. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and further contributions by authors such as A. K. M. Adam, George Aichele, David J. A. Clines, Stephen D. Moore (from the exegetical guild), John D. Caputo, Don Cupitt, Brian D. Ingraffia, Mark C. Taylor, David Tracy, Graham Ward, Edith Wyschogrod (from the field of systematic theology). The Bible and Culture Collective, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), outlines different postmodern hermeneutical models and the ways they have been (or could be) applied to biblical studies. A. K. M. Adam, ed., *Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible: A Reader* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), gives a representative overview. Reflections on postmodern historiography from exegetes (besides Schröter) are found in Burnett, “Historiography,” 106–112; Eckart Reinmuth, *Neutestamentliche Historik: Probleme und Perspektiven*, *ThLZ Forum* 8 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 40–47.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. the statements of the influential Jesus scholars Lüdemann, Crossan and Funk, for whom the “enlightened” conception of truth in terms of historical truth has become part of a creed—precisely what they seek to avoid. All three authors bear the marks of this quest for the (historical) truth about Jesus in their biographies: they all moved from a confessional setting to a (non-confessional) academic context. Cf. Robert W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996), 1–14; for Lüdemann, cf. [www.user.gwdg.de/~gluedem/ger/index.htm](http://www.user.gwdg.de/~gluedem/ger/index.htm) (May 2005), and for Crossan, cf. [www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R\\_Articles/Crossan\\_bio/crossan\\_bio.html](http://www.westarinstitute.org/Periodicals/4R_Articles/Crossan_bio/crossan_bio.html) (May 2005).

may be said about the contributions of Sanders,<sup>73</sup> Flusser,<sup>74</sup> Becker,<sup>75</sup> Crossan,<sup>76</sup> Lüdemann,<sup>77</sup> and Funk.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, some recent studies in

<sup>73</sup> Ed P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993).

<sup>74</sup> David Flusser, *Jesus* (in collaboration with R. Steven Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2nd ed., 1998).

<sup>75</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), cf. for his methodology: 1–20.

<sup>76</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), xxvii–xxxiv, in spite of his remark that “methodology in Jesus research at the end of this century is about where methodology in archaeological research was at the end of the last” (xxviii). His undertaking, however, is not exempt from his own “suspicion that historical Jesus research is a very safe place to do theology and call it history, to do autobiography and call it biography” (xxviii). Later on Crossan acknowledged his neglect of epistemological considerations, which had been pointed out by N. T. Wright, “Taking the Text with Her Pleasure: A Post-Post-Modernist Response to J. Dominic Crossan *The Historical Jesus*,” *Theology* 96 (1993): 303–310, and Susan Lochrie Graham and Stephen D. Moore, “The Quest for the New Historicist Jesus,” *BibInt* 5 (1997): 438–464. In his reaction (“Our Own Faces in Deep Wells: A Future for Historical Jesus Research,” in *God, the Gift and the Postmodern*, ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scaloni [Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999], 282–310) he notes that “when I wrote *The Historical Jesus* in 1991 I did not think it necessary to defend the validity of that enterprise. I considered historical Jesus research an established part of the scholarly landscape. I concentrated there on the *how* of methods and the *what* of the results” (283). However, in this later essay he proposes a theory of various types of gospels, which interact with one another, without taking into consideration postmodern historiographical thought. Crossan emphasizes the importance of history for what he terms “Catholic Christianity,” as opposed to “Gnostic Christianity.” Similarly Piet A. Geysler, “Historicity and Theology, and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,” *HTS* 55 (1999): 827–844, takes into account postmodern concerns, but finally does not move beyond the statement that Christian theology cannot do without either the historical Jesus or the kerygmatic Christ (844).

<sup>77</sup> Gerd Lüdemann, “Fakten und Fantasien in der neuen Jesus-Literatur und im Neuen Testament,” in *Jesus von Nazareth und das Christentum: Braucht die pluralistische Gesellschaft ein neues Jesusbild?*, ed. Sigurd Daecke and Peter R. Sahn (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2000), 130–152, makes a clear distinction between “facts” and “fantasies” and postulates: “Aber hinter *eine* Einsicht kommen wir nicht mehr zurück: Wer ihm [= Jesus] näherkommen will, muß kritisch mit den Quellen umgehen, Vorsicht vor übereilten Schlüssen walten lassen und sich seiner Voraussetzungen mit dem Ziel größtmöglicher Objektivität bewußt werden” (131). His “objective” and “critical” approach brings as a result: “Von den biblischen Erzählungen über Jesus sind nach meiner Einschätzung nur ca. 15 Prozent echt. Alles andere ist Gemeindegemachtheit...” (149). After making his case that Christianity cannot be based on the historical Jesus he closes with a flaming plea for the blessings of rationality and enlightenment: “So bleibt nur der Blick nach vorn, wo allein Aufklärung dem überall pulsierenden Leben auf dieser Erde eine bleibende Statt bereiten kann. Denn die in der Vernunft gegründete Aufklärung samt ihrer Kritik an Offenbarungsansprüchen und Erkenntnisprivilegien jeglicher Art bleibt ein fester Bestandteil der modernen Welt. Allein Aufklärung ermöglicht einen konstruktiven Dialog zwischen den Angehörigen verschiedener Nationalitäten und Kulturen, und sie allein dürfte in der Lage sein, in dem kommenden Jahrtausend Frieden zwischen den Menschen unterschiedlichster Ideologien und Religionen anzubahnen” (152). This is clearly a profession of faith in modernism!

<sup>78</sup> Funk, *Honest*.



the methodology of historical Jesus research remain silent about post-modern challenges.<sup>79</sup>

2. Contributions which seem to move towards postmodern positions, but in the end turn back towards “classical” historiographical axioms:

In his brief discussion of the problem of constructing reasonably correct pictures of people from the past, Meier does not explicitly address issues of postmodern historiography.<sup>80</sup> However, he clearly distinguishes between the “real” (now lost) Jesus and the historical one,<sup>81</sup> which is of significance for the way he perceives his own undertaking, though without integrating it explicitly into the discourse we are interested in here.

Similarly, Theissen and Merz offer a brief hermeneutical reflection, using the term “historical imagination,” but still concluding, in the best of classical historiographical traditions, that scholarly discussions of the life of Jesus are “relativ willkürfreie, an Quellen korrigierbare und in ihren Voraussetzungen durchschaubare Gebilde.”<sup>82</sup> Through this statement, the importance of imagination is blotted out again.

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. e.g. Christopher Tuckett, “Sources and Methods,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 121–137; James Carleton Paget, “Quests for the Historical Jesus,” in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 138–155; Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, Press, 1995), esp. 233–248; Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the Current Research*, NTTS 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Cf. in the latter volume esp. Marcus J. Borg, “Reflections on a Discipline: A North American Perspective” (9–31), and William R. Telford, “Major Trends and Interpretative Issues in the Study of Jesus,” (33–74, merely mentioning “philosophical questions” on pp. 61–62). In Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, ed., *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999) Evans, Chilton, Malina, Holmén, and Porter with O’Donnell offer methodological considerations. Cf. also the contributions to the sister volume: *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, NTTS 28.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>80</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, I, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 21–31.

<sup>81</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 21–26.

<sup>82</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 31. This impression is confirmed by their co-authored introductory essay “Der umstrittene historische Jesus. Oder: Wie historisch ist der historische Jesus” in Gerd Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, ed. Annette Merz, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002),

Allison includes, in good postmodern fashion, an “unscientific post-script” in the methodological section of his study on the historical Jesus, thereby blurring scholarly with “unscientific” writing. He dwells for a long time on the (problems of) historical-critical methodology and includes—in discussion with the Jesus Seminar—considerations about the important role of personal convictions and personality in research, but at the end he concludes that “our goal should [...] be to emulate the judge, whose hard business it is to look for the truth.”<sup>83</sup>

3. Scholars who do not subscribe explicitly to postmodern historiographical concerns, but come on the basis of very similar assumptions to conclusions which differ little from “postmodern” ones:<sup>84</sup>

Johnson, in his manifesto against the work of the Jesus Seminar, has drawn attention to the limits of historical research in a twofold way: first, with respect to the available sources, and, secondly, on an epistemological level, suggesting that there is much less to “know” than the Jesus Seminar claims. Without engaging with postmodern historiographical theories Johnson makes nevertheless a quite “postmodern” point.<sup>85</sup>

Dunn offers an extensive epistemological discussion, analyzing the postmodern condition before outlining his own historiographical stance:<sup>86</sup>

[T]he model of historical study as a *dialogue* between present and past, is the one which has always appealed to me, not least because it recognizes that the historian not only asks the questions, but, in genuine engagement with the subject matter, often finds him/herself put in question.<sup>87</sup>

Without explicitly using a postmodern epistemology, Dunn has taken on board quite a few typically “postmodern” concerns; his emphasis

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3–32, esp. 7–12, where various criteria are discussed without touching upon the larger epistemological picture.

<sup>83</sup> Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 77, after extensive methodological considerations (1–77).

<sup>84</sup> One reason is perhaps that these contributions also apply the questions asked by the “Enlightenment” to historical research once more.

<sup>85</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 81–104.

<sup>86</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 92–97. His position is strongly influenced by Lonergan’s “critical realism.”

<sup>87</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 111. See for the whole of his considerations 99–136.

on “Jesus *remembered*” is one of the most significant of these.<sup>88</sup> In spite of the size of his work, he presents it as a modest proposal, acknowledging its relativity.<sup>89</sup>

“There is [...] no such thing as ‘mere history’.”<sup>90</sup> Although this statement is taken from the work of an author who is not particularly willing to allow postmodern historiography to enter his own methodological considerations,<sup>91</sup> it is precisely Wright whose whole enterprise sails under the flag of one fundamental postmodern insight, amply illustrated not only in the preceding quotation, but especially in the following:

The underlying argument of this book is that the split [between history and theology] is not warranted: that rigorous history (i.e. open-ended investigation of actual events in first-century Palestine) and rigorous theology (i.e. open-ended investigation of what the word ‘god,’ and hence the adjective ‘divine,’ might actually refer to) belong together, and never more so than in discussion of Jesus. If this means that we end up needing a new metaphysic, so be it.<sup>92</sup>

This statement succinctly formulates one consequence of letting postmodern epistemological considerations enter the field of historical Jesus research: acknowledging that both christology and “historical research” are legitimate ways of imagining Jesus, i.e. of telling a story about a past (lost!) person.

Furthermore, Rau, in a critical discussion of the preoccupation of historical Jesus research with criteriology rather than historiography,

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<sup>88</sup> For the historiographical importance of “memory” cf. e.g. Frank R. Ankersmit, “Die postmoderne ‘Privatisierung’ der Vergangenheit,” in *Der Sinn des Historischen*, ed. Nagl-Docekal, 201–234; Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 2nd ed. (München: Beck, 1997); Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004; French: 2000).

<sup>89</sup> Bengt Holmberg, “Questions of Method in James Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 445–457, argues that Dunn’s concern to remain at the level of “memory” does not go far enough: the historian has indeed to reconstruct the “real Jesus.” Samuel Byrskog, “A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition. Reflections on James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 459–471, questions Dunn’s concept of memory. Cf. Dunn’s reply: “On History, Memory and Eyewitnesses: In Response to Bengt Holmberg and Samuel Byrskog,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 473–487, where he acknowledges that his emphasis on memory and recollection has much to do with history as a creative undertaking (cf. e.g. 475).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 5–6.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. e.g. Wright, “Taking” and *Victory*, 3–124.

<sup>92</sup> Wright, *Victory*, 8.

takes up one important point, which has already been made by Schweitzer in his radical contextualisation and deconstruction of much of the nineteenth-century quest for the historical Jesus: the heuristic value of the interpreter's subjectivity and the necessity of imagination, when attempting to imagine a person from the past.<sup>93</sup> Rau does not so much present this as a postmodern insight, although this emphasis on the positive value of subjectivity and imagination—and thus contextuality—fits well into postmodern thinking. This position comes very close to that of Evans, who argues that scholars are only an interpretative community (“tribe”), “that has a right and a duty to put forward its views into the conversation, but one which has no right to disparage and consider illegitimate other communities of interpretation, particularly religious ones.”<sup>94</sup>

4. Contributions addressing postmodern epistemology directly in view of historical Jesus research.

Schröter<sup>95</sup> has offered a strong and well-argued plea for considering postmodern historiographical concerns. To begin with, the epistemological problem should (again) be regarded as a theological problem, more precisely: the “quest” should be redefined as a “vergegenwärtigende Erinnerung an Jesus im Sinne der Orientierung und Identitätsbildung in der Gegenwart.”<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, it belongs to the task of theology to outline the significance of Jesus through images of him (“Jesusdarstellungen”),<sup>97</sup> as do scholars such as Rösen, recognizing their fundamentally narrative character.<sup>98</sup> Still, this scholarly project can distinguish between possible and impossible (or no longer possible) images of Jesus, while at the same time safeguarding a plurality of

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Eckhard Rau, *Jesus—Freund von Zöllnern und Sündern. Eine methodenkritische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), 74–75; cf. also Leif E. Vaage, “Recent Concerns: The Scholar as *Engagé*,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?*, ed. William E. Arnal and Michael Desjardins, *Studies in Christianity and Judaism* 7 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 181–187.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. C. Stephen Evans, *The Historical Christ & The Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 346, arguing on the basis of Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).

<sup>95</sup> Schröter, “Frage.”

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 253.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Jörn Rösen, “Anmerkungen zum Thema Christologie und Narration,” in *Gegenwart des Absoluten. Philosophisch-theologische Diskurse zur Christologie*, ed. Klaus-Michael Kodalle (Güterloh: Gerd Mohn, 1984), 90–96.

these images,<sup>99</sup> all in the context of an overarching process of existential orientation.<sup>100</sup>

A similar proposal has been put forward by Marsh in his new historicist critique of the Third Quest and its self-perception.<sup>101</sup> By contextualizing it he uncovers hidden agenda(s),<sup>102</sup> including its key christological one.<sup>103</sup> At the same time, having de-privileged this western historical approach, he champions the inclusion of other voices in the debate, i.e. voices with different agendas.<sup>104</sup>

In this context reference should also be made to two further contributions: Arnal stresses the fundamentally ideological character of historical Jesus research qua historical research.<sup>105</sup> Kelber notes that the privileging of “historical truth” over “narratives” implies the denial of plurality and is thus, in view of the history of earliest Christianity, all too reductionist.<sup>106</sup>

In the final considerations of his recent contribution Knight includes historical images of Jesus into the “existential” and interreligious debate about his significance,<sup>107</sup> agreeing thereby with Marsh’s conclusion concerning the inevitability of christology. A similar direction is taken by Watson<sup>108</sup> and by Borg in his effort to bring personal

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. Schröter, “Frage,” 253. Unfortunately, it remains relatively unclear how precisely this should work.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 253–254.

<sup>101</sup> Clive Marsh, “Quests for the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective,” *BibInt* 5 (1997): 403–437.

<sup>102</sup> Partially based on the insights of Dieter Georgi’s fundamental contribution “Leben-Jesu-Theologie/Leben-Jesu-Forschung,” *TRE* 20 (1990): 566–575 and idem, “The Interest in Life of Jesus Theology as a Paradigm for the Social History of Biblical Criticism,” *HTR* 85 (1992): 51–83. A similar undertaking is Joel Willitts, “Presuppositions and Procedures in the Study of the ‘Historical Jesus’: Or, Why I Decided Not to be a ‘Historical Jesus’ Scholar,” *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 61–108, arguing (e.g. 108) that in view of the fact that both the gospels and the output of “Historical Jesus research” are historical narratives, there is no good reason to replace the gospels with these newer narratives.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Marsh, “Quests,” 430–433.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Marsh, “Quests,” 428.

<sup>105</sup> William E. Arnal, “Making and Re-Making the Jesus-Sign: Contemporary Markings on the Body of Christ,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?*, ed. Arnal and Desjardins, 308–319, at 317.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Werner H. Kelber, “Der historische Jesus. Bedenken zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion aus der Perspektive mittelalterlicher, moderner und postmoderner Hermeneutik,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 15–66, at 60.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Jonathan Knight, *Jesus: An Historical and Theological Investigation* (London: Continuum, 2004), 244–245.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Francis Watson, “The Quest for the Real Jesus,” in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 156–169.

relationship to Jesus<sup>109</sup> and scholarly research together by showing how christology, faith and the quest for the historical Jesus can merge.<sup>110</sup>

A different form of interacting with postmodern historiographical theory is offered by Bauckham, who pits his own understanding of the Jesus story as an open, non-suppressing meta-narrative against Lyotard's conception of meta-narratives and their postmodern end, on the basis of "Jesus' loving self-identification with all, which reached its furthest point in his death."<sup>111</sup> In other words, the Jesus story can withstand Lyotard's postmodern critique, as it is a different kind of meta-narrative.

5. Finally, two contributions should be mentioned, since they present themselves as postmodern approaches. By taking them as examples, other accounts of the historical Jesus may be regarded as postmodern too.

One quite unique contribution to the discussion is that of William Hamilton,<sup>112</sup> who while undertaking a search for a "post-historical Jesus," has, in fact, achieved a kind of postmodern construction (or: narrative, or: pastiche) of Jesus. By treating artistic and historical representations of Jesus as peers he moves beyond viewing artistic voices merely as props on the stage of the history of reception of a text.<sup>113</sup>

A quite different example of an attempt to integrate most (referentiality *remains* significant) implications of postmodern historiographical theory is the work of Schüssler Fiorenza, especially *Jesus and the*

<sup>109</sup> Not to be understood in pietistic terms only: it is all about relating personally to the object of one's interest, which has, in the case of Jesus (but certainly in many other cases too), to do with one's own passion and worldview.

<sup>110</sup> Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), esp. 119–137, under the heading "Images of Jesus and Images of the Christian Life."

<sup>111</sup> Richard Bauckham, "The Future of Jesus Christ," in *Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Bockmuehl, 265–280, at 279.

<sup>112</sup> William Hamilton, *A Quest for the Post-Historical Jesus* (New York: Continuum, 1990).

<sup>113</sup> More recently, Hamilton's work has gained companions in the form of other books especially on Jesus and film, which share his concern for imagination and narratives. Cf. e.g. Richard Walsh, *Reading the Gospels in the Dark: Portrayals of Jesus in Film* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003); Georg Langenhorst, *Jesus ging nach Hollywood: Die Wiederentdeckung Jesu in Literatur und Film der Gegenwart* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1998). The discussion around Mel Gibson's *Passion*, as documented in e.g. Kathleen E. Corley and Robert L. Webb, eds. *Jesus and Mel Gibson's, "The Passion of the Christ": The Film, the Gospels and the Claims of History* (London: Continuum, 2004), is certainly a christological one.

*Politics of Interpretation*.<sup>114</sup> She reads the quest for the historical Jesus consciously in terms of the exercise of and struggle for influence and power, in this context raising the voice of a liberationist, feminist biblical scholar. One of the results of this enterprise, which aims at unmasking the innocence of historical research, is the dissolution of the fundamental difference between historical Jesus scholarship and christology. Of course, many ideology-critical Jesus books, such as those by Segundo,<sup>115</sup> Sobrino,<sup>116</sup> and other liberation theologians could be added here, but Schüssler Fiorenza's contribution is probably the most recent and most striking.

#### 4. *Imagining a Postmodern Historical Jesus*

In view of the considerations offered above, we venture to formulate some "postmodern" perspectives for further explorations in the study of the historical Jesus.

##### 4.1. *Jesus as Object of History—Absent, Fragmented, Multilayered*

Postmodern historiography clearly destabilizes the notion that Jesus as the object of history can be approached by a simple combination of facts, sources and historical reconstruction. The implicit belief in the historian's ability to "rewind" the linear process of history by reading back from the sources to the "real" Jesus (aided, of course, by a set of unambiguous criteria of authenticity) is highly suspect as the possible fruit of naïveté and/or wishful thinking. Even within a classical historiographical paradigm the approach to Jesus faces insurmountable problems. The whole history that has led from the "original" events through a labyrinthine process of memory, tradition, translation, narrativization, transmission, circulation, selection, and canonization

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<sup>114</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2000), esp. 1–29, cf. also her earlier *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet. Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (London: SCM, 1994), 3–31, again consciously merging christology and research into the historical Jesus.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Juan Luis Segundo, *Jesus of Nazareth Yesterday and Today, 2: The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics*, trans. J. Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985), consciously approaching the historical Jesus with a liberation theological agenda (cf. esp. 3–41).

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, trans. P. Burns and F. McDonagh (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), esp. 36–63, emphasizing (63), that he sees a "mutual relationship of doing theology by writing history and writing history by doing theology."

to our direct source material in form of eclectic critical editions has moved through many critical stages where the past breaks, transforms, changes into a new mode and reappears wrapped with layers of fictionality. Whereas a “modern” approach would perceive this state of affairs negatively as an impasse for the historical profession or positively as a challenge with which every serious historian should undertake all possible efforts to cope, postmodern historiography would not regard this as a deficient situation at all. The complexities inherent in the whole Jesus tradition are a heuristic playground for the postmodern combinatorics in its longing for disruptions, voices and traces.

#### 4.2. *Jesus With and Without “Background”*

One of the few methodological innovations of the so-called “third quest” may be the special status that the socio-historical “context” in which Jesus lived has gained.<sup>117</sup> The emphasis which is put on historical embedding is a coin with two sides: It serves to secure the Jewishness of Jesus, marking out a common “neutral” territory for Christian and Jewish Jesus studies to co-operate. However, once a context is delimited, every aspect of Jesus’ teaching which cannot be accounted for within this “reconstructed” frame becomes an outstanding attribute of his uniqueness, a sign of Jesus’ implicit christology and a “historical” explanation for the place of Jesus as the point of origin of worldwide Christianity.<sup>118</sup> Postmodern historiography invites us to rethink the lines of demarcation between individual and context, agency and structure. Arguments which rest on a neat construction of “foreground and background,” “individual genius and social structure,” “the extraordinary and the ordinary” presuppose a linear development within a coherent whole on the basis of rational laws, which alone would allow us to point out analogies and influences as well as breaks and peculiarities. If the past were chaotic and unpredictable,

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<sup>117</sup> Most modern lives of Jesus include sections on “context.” There is, though, an inherent problem in every social-historic approach which centers on a *single* person: By assigning to Jesus the role of “object of investigation” and to “first-century Judaism” the role of “shedding light on the figure of Jesus,” historians are building from the outset a stage for a single performer.

<sup>118</sup> The possibility of tracing a line between the remarkable and the “normal” on the basis of historical analogies looks like a historicist replica of the christological understanding of Jesus as God and man.



there could be no analogies on which to decide what is especially remarkable about a person.<sup>119</sup> A further problem lies in the sheer possibility of arriving at a total picture of the “historical background” of Jesus. In view of the scarcity of “sources,” Hayden White’s position that the historical past is informed both by a selection of given evidence and by an act of imagination seems to hit the mark. Thus, the context which historians use as their stage for Jesus is not only influenced by imagined pictures of an abstract entity called “first-century Judaism” but, once it is dislocated from the realm of “historical laws,” it says virtually nothing about what Jesus could have been able to say and do.

#### 4.3. *Historical Jesus as Jesus-Story*

Having gone that far, the study of the historical Jesus can no longer control the boundaries between history and literature, science and art. If we follow Hayden White’s assertion that history always blends the given and the invented, fact and fiction, then the difference between the gospels and the products of modern historical Jesus research has to be reconsidered: We may perceive a quantitative difference (with respect to the amount of data being considered) or a formal difference (with respect to the rhetorical modes of presentation). But it would be difficult to point out a *qualitative* difference concerning the notion of being “more” or “less” near to the “historical Jesus” as he “really” was. Once the borders are open a whole set of corollaries follow:

- a. Jesus historians could lose the basis for an important ideology-critical strategy which has been in use since the days of the father of modern Jesus research, Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), viz. to employ the “historical Jesus” as the critical cornerstone against all totalitarian claims of politics, church and theology, and finally, also as the external Archimedean point over against the theological constructs of the canonical gospels.

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<sup>119</sup> Although we should be fair enough to recognize that it is very difficult for historians to dispense with the idea of an ingenious individual—and even more so for theologians in the case of the figure of Jesus.

- b. The presentation of a history of Jesus could open up to a plurality of genres, especially to those which include narrative forms.<sup>120</sup> In what may be called a search for the “post-historical Jesus”<sup>121</sup> we may take into consideration other sources of historical imagination as well, at least as equally legitimate ways of imagining Jesus. This would include film, literature, other visual arts, sermons, etc. Whether all proposals should be regarded as equally valid, is a question which cannot be answered on the basis of “historical reasoning,” but belongs rather to the field of ethical considerations.<sup>122</sup>
- c. As a further consequence and in line with the considerations of scholars such as Wright, Schröter and Marsh, the opposition between “theological” christological proposals and reconstructions of the “historical Jesus” should be given up as artificial, i.e. as a by-product of the privileging of the “historical” narrative over all others.<sup>123</sup> The quest for the historical Jesus is first and foremost a christological undertaking.<sup>124</sup>
- d. One final consequence may be to drop the term “historical Jesus” altogether and move toward the radical questioning of the “origin-myth” of Christianity. It should be stressed, however, that we should

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<sup>120</sup> Gerd Theissen’s *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1987) has, significantly, been labelled “a cross between a novel and a work of scholarship” (Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 396). Theissen himself brings up the problems of a scholar writing literature in his fictive correspondence with a skeptical colleague (e.g. 1–2). What looks like a soliloquy is a form of revoking the creative character of his book. From a postmodern perspective this would be a perfectly fitting form of doing history—without any need for implicit apologies!

<sup>121</sup> With Hamilton, *Quest*.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. in this respect Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), esp. 17–81, presenting an emancipatory, liberationist ethic of interpretation; Daniel Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). More generally Richard A. Cohen, *Ethics, Exegesis and Philosophy: Interpretation after Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>123</sup> In view of the emancipation of biblical studies from systems of theological and political closure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this option for the “historical” was a necessary strategy.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Ulrich H. J. Körtner, “Historischer Jesus—geschichtlicher Christus: Zum Ansatz einer rezeptionsästhetischen Christologie,” in *Lesen und Leben: Drei Essays zur Grundlegung einer Lesetheologie*, ed., Klaas Huizing, Ulrich H.J. Körtner and Paul Müller (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1997), 99–135: “Der geschichtliche Jesus der Evangelien [...] ist der erzählte Jesus” (104). Reinmuth, *Neutestamentliche Historik*, 59–63 speaks consistently of “Jesus-Christus-Geschichte.”

not necessarily question the procedure of relating to the (lost) past by means of historical research. Within a society, or community of interpretation, which still considers itself a “child of the Enlightenment” such that it chooses to use the norm of historicity to decide over the value of a certain account of the historical Jesus, the concerns will probably not change the narrative and (in the broadest sense of the word) “intertextual” praxis of historical research. What is being questioned, though, is its self-perception, to the extent that it claims universal validity.

#### 4.4. *Rethinking the Rhetorical and Political Discourse of Jesus Studies*

If we apply Foucaultian sensibilities about the operations of power to the current Life-of-Jesus-research, we may start anew from “the recognition of the inescapable operations of power in the creation of historical discourse, in short by an understanding of the politics of academic history.”<sup>125</sup> The fascination with “history” and with the figure of Jesus is so prominent in the Western mind that whoever can control the production of meaning within this field of study holds a position of power.<sup>126</sup> Ignoring the institutional, ideological, cultural and political implications of current historical Jesus studies is a luxury which after Marxist, feminist, liberationist (cf. Schüssler Fiorenza), and *a fortiori* postmodern challenges historians can no longer afford.

#### 4.5. *Imagination as Mediation—Imagination’s Contextuality*

In a way, postmodern historiographical theory invites us to take seriously Albert Schweitzer’s seminal work once more. This not so much in terms of his own portrayal of Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher but rather in his strong argument against most nineteenth-century images of and narratives about the historical Jesus, dismantling them as the artefacts of a highly “bourgeois” (*bürgerlich*) society, whose view of history and of the historical Jesus functioned mainly to cement its own identity.<sup>127</sup> Schweitzer’s argument in this respect could profitably be

<sup>125</sup> Joyce, “Return of History,” 210.

<sup>126</sup> By emphasizing right from the outset the paramount importance and great complexity of their object of study, many Jesus-historians establish themselves as one of the few able to control this field of knowledge. It would be interesting to analyze some of the classics of historical Jesus research from a Foucaultian or Whitean angle.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. for an explicit attempt in this direction Georgi, “Leben-Jesu-Theologie.”

(re)conceptualized in terms of—now more generally accepted—hermeneutical insights. In fact, his analysis of the nineteenth century's quest for the historical Jesus recognizes its fruits largely as a broadly self-legitimizing narrative, i.e. the legitimation of a society's discourse at large, thus radically contextualizing it and refusing to acknowledge its authority, but rather replacing it with his own image of (the historical) Jesus. The insights of Schweitzer and others imply that *any* enquiry into the shape and significance of the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth should be presented with due humility, restriction, and an awareness of the fact that it is inscribed in the personal and general vocabulary of the scholar and of his or her context. Every construction reveals as much as it hides about Jesus, thus making it possible to relate one's image to the discourse one is part of, with all the unavoidable limitations this entails. This would not mean discouraging research into the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth, but rather acknowledging fundamentally its contextuality and learning to live with it, indeed even appreciating it, as these insights open new horizons of (scholarly) interaction.

#### 4.6. *The Interpreter's Freedom and Responsibility: Ethical Considerations*

A question which is raised in the wider field of historiography, and will be of concern in the field of historical Jesus studies as well, is that of the ethics of interpretation. The privileged historical point of reference to evaluate proposals is lost, and nothing has yet replaced it. This question cannot be definitively answered here, though it forces oneself upon the researcher, who can no longer hide behind a generally acknowledged, objective method and methodology, but will have to take responsibility for his or her account of the historical Jesus. The person of the interpreter comes to the fore, and thereby also his or her responsibility.

### 5. *Afterword*

At this point we can pause. The strategy of assuming a positive hypothesis concerning postmodern historiography has proven hermeneutically rewarding, since it allows us to realize more clearly what sort of questions are raised, what avenues are opened and what common

operations are questioned— in short: what can be gained and what can be lost. Any decision concerning the undertaking of a “postmodern historical Jesus” can thus be taken on the basis of a proper examination of the issues at stake. For some this will reinforce their conviction that ignoring postmodern historiography entails no disadvantage for their own research. For others this may open up a legitimate possibility for struggling, decentering, displacing, dismantling and delegitimizing current metanarratives.<sup>128</sup> For others again, operating in the tradition of Foucault and White, this may lead to respect for the contingency, fragility and sublimity of history and to an “ethos” of looking at “objects” with patience, self-criticism and a deep awareness for the intricacies of the discourses of which we form a part.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> All these concepts appear on just two pages in Victor Taylor’s “General commentary” to *Postmodernism*, ed. Taylor and Winqvist, 1: xi–xii.

<sup>129</sup> The present article was finished in June 2005.



## WHY STUDY THE HISTORICAL JESUS?

COLIN BROWN

This article is a companion piece to my article on “The Quest of the Unhistorical Jesus and the Quest of the Historical Jesus.” In both quests the results were mixed. The driving factor of the quest of the *unhistorical* Jesus is summed up by the Reformer, Philip Melanchthon: “[T]o know Christ means to know his benefits... For unless you know why Christ put on flesh and was nailed to the cross, what good will it do you to know merely the history about him?”<sup>1</sup> The downside is that orthodoxy moved increasingly on a trajectory away from the historical Jesus in pursuit of “christology from above.” All too often the quest of the *historical* Jesus led to a makeover of Jesus with a modern image. Harnack’s was seen as “the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face seen at the bottom of a deep well.” Schweitzer’s Jesus turned out to be Nietzsche’s “superman” in Galilean garb, “the one immeasurably great Man who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind.” Dominic Crossan’s Jesus is a subversive Cynic who combated colonial oppression with *magic and meal*. With such confusion can we hope to get at the truth? My answer is an argument in four stages which explores reasons for studying the historical Jesus and what they entail.

### 1. *Reasons for Studying the Historical Jesus*

1. Incredible as it may seem for a man aged barely thirty who died the death of a criminal, Jesus of Nazareth is the most compelling figure in history. Although he may not have intended to found a new religion, he not only gave rise to Christianity, but also has a place in Judaism and in Islam. With the world becoming increasingly a global village in which Moslems, Jews, and Christians are next-door-neighbors, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Melanchthon, *Loci Communes* (1521), *Melanchthon and Bucer*, LCC 19, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (London: SCM, 1969), 21–22.

more than ever important to investigate the identity of the historical Jesus.

2. John P. Meier, author of the magisterial *A Marginal Jew*, draws sharp distinctions between the “real Jesus,” the “theological Jesus,” and the “historical Jesus.” The “real Jesus” denotes the totality of what Jesus ever was and did. Because of distance in time and limited materials, it is impossible to recover the “real Jesus.” The “theological Jesus” is the Christ of Christian theology. The “historical Jesus” is the construct of critical history.<sup>2</sup> Meier goes on to say that, “the Jesus of history is not and cannot be the object of Christian faith . . . More than a millennium and a half of Christians believed firmly in Jesus Christ without having any clear idea of or access to the historical Jesus as understood today, yet no one will deny the validity and strength of their faith. The same can be said of many pious Christians in developed as well as undeveloping countries today.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, “the constantly changing, often contradictory portraits of the historical Jesus served up by scholars, however useful in academia, cannot be the object of Christian faith for the universal Church.”<sup>4</sup>

I agree with Meier over the “real Jesus,” but question his determination to keep apart the “theological Jesus” and the “historical Jesus.” As a Roman Catholic he may defer to the Church’s Magisterium. But as a Protestant, an Episcopal priest, and a professor of systematic theology since 1978, I shudder at the thought of leaving theology to the theologians. Nor can I treat Jesus studies as a pastime for academics. Meier points to the changing and contradictory portraits of the historical Jesus. But one can equally point to the constantly changing and often contradictory portraits presented by orthodoxy. One needs only think of the feuding schools of Antioch and Alexandria, the patchwork compromise formula of Chalcedon, the Apostles’ Creed which reduces the life of Jesus to a mere comma between “born of the Virgin Mary” and “suffered under Pontius Pilate,” and John Henry Newman’s bizarre insistence that Jesus was not “in the English sense of the word, a man.”

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<sup>2</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, I: The Roots of the Problem of the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 21–26.

<sup>3</sup> *A Marginal Jew I*, 197.

<sup>4</sup> *A Marginal Jew I*, 198.



The object of faith of the millions who lived in the pre-critical age and of many today is certainly not the Christ of the formula of Chalcedon, but the Christ who comes to them through the scriptures. The passage of time has caused us to forget the feuds that shaped orthodoxy and its shortcomings. The Spirit was given a decisive role in the prenatal life of Jesus but not afterwards. Orthodoxy systematically eliminated the Jewishness of Jesus from the time when he was given a Latin name to more recent times when the Jewish religion was made a foil for Christianity. In so doing Christians have misrepresented Judaism, and they have misrepresented Jesus. We do not have to choose between the Jesus of faith and the Jesus of history. We cannot have one without the other. We need the study of the historical Jesus to correct these omissions and misrepresentations, and to inform faith.

3. I sometimes think that encountering the world of the gospels is like my first encounter with baseball. In 1973 I was a visiting professor from England at a seminary outside Chicago. High on my list of things-to-do was to live the American experience and see a major league baseball game. It was an unforgettable experience for one who had been brought up on cricket (but was never any good at it). I thought that I could understand some of the plays, but in fact I didn't. Much that was going on before my eyes lacked meaning.

So much of the religious and social world of the gospels lies in structures that are hidden from us. Like Jewish concepts of purity and holiness, the structures and conventions of the ancient world are not immediately visible. They are like rules of a game that are followed, but not seen. Those who lived in the world of Jesus followed them, but we today have to learn them by study. Among the conventions are honor and shame, patronage and clientage, meals, concepts of time, and the ancient economy. These issues played no part in the first two quests—or for that matter in traditional Christian theology—but are vital if we are to penetrate the world of Jesus.

4. We need to study the historical Jesus as a corrective to habits of thought. A common way of resolving moral dilemmas is to ask, "What would Jesus do?" Too often the answer is based on imaginative projection and feelings rather than on a study of the teaching and praxis of the historical Jesus.

The study of the historical Jesus is needed in both Christian devotion and Christian preaching. As a priest in the Anglican Communion and part-time associate rector of my parish church for over twenty

years, I find that congregations are enriched by learning about the historical Jesus and his world.

The study of the historical Jesus is needed by systematic theology. Too often systematic theology is reduced to the inculcation of the systems of bygone centuries, presented as solutions to today's problems. Perhaps the biggest curse of systematic theology is what in German is called *Sachexegese* and in English is euphemistically translated as "theological exegesis."<sup>5</sup> "Theological exegesis" claims that it is the "matter [*Sache*]" of scripture that is important—not its scriptural form. Invariably the "matter" turns out to be the theologian's way of looking at things, which he uses to justify discarding the "scriptural form" or treating it in a selective way. We need to study the historical Jesus in order to discover the real "matter" of scripture.

5. We need to study the historical Jesus in order to help sort fact from fiction. The original quest spawned a vogue in fictitious lives of Jesus. Their names mean nothing today, but in the early years of the first quest Karl Friedrich Bahrtdt and Karl Heinrich Venturini made a stir with their revelations of Jesus' involvement with secret societies and Essene plots to manipulate society.<sup>6</sup> History is currently repeating itself, except that now movies give fantasy a new level of vividness and plausibility. Since its publication in 2003 Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*<sup>7</sup> remained long at the top of the bestseller lists. Soon Hollywood turned it into a blockbuster movie. The novel reads like a James Bond story, with the action shifted from Cold War struggles for world control to conspiracies within the Roman Catholic Church. At stake is the truth about Jesus, known by a secret society and encoded in the work of Leonardo Da Vinci. The only thing that seems to be lacking—until I read to the end—is the evil genius of a superrich mastermind. The book poses questions like: Was Jesus really married to Mary Magdalene? Did they have a family? Did the church really suppress important gospels that contradict the canonical gospels? *The Da Vinci Code* implies an affirmative answer to these questions. To see them in perspective

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<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "The Problem of Theological Exegesis" in *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology*, ed. James M. Robinson, trans. Keith R. Crim and Loius De Grazia (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1968), 236–256; Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), xxi–xxii.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought, 1778–1860* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1985; reprint Pasadena, CA: Fuller Seminary Press), 163–164.

<sup>7</sup> Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

we need to turn to books like Bart D. Ehrman's *Truth and Fiction in The Da Vinci Code*<sup>8</sup> and Darrell L. Bock's *Breaking The Da Vinci Code*.<sup>9</sup>

On another level is Mel Gibson's blockbuster movie *The Passion of the Christ* with its seemingly endless harrowing scenes of Jesus being scourged. For added authenticity the characters speak Aramaic. The movie begins with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane with a female Satan hovering in the background. A shot of a snake being stamped on evokes echoes of Gen 3:15. Later on Pilate's wife takes linen cloths to Mary Magdalene to wipe the sacred blood from the floor. Throughout the film flashbacks give glimpses of Jesus' earlier life. But the abiding impression is of cruelty, evil, and suffering on a scale without precedent. It is so vivid that we feel that we are actually witnessing the passion of Jesus as related by the gospels. But are we?

Before I saw the movie my attention was drawn by my colleague Dr. Charles Scalise to the fact that one cannot fully comprehend Mel Gibson's view of the passion without understanding his dependence on the works of the recently beatified Sister Anna Katharina Emmerich (1774–1824).<sup>10</sup> In 1803 she entered an Augustinian order of nuns in Westphalia, where she aroused the dislike of the laxer members on account of her spiritual fervor and ecstatic visions. Around 1812 she received the stigmata of Christ. She fell seriously ill and her last years were spent in the home of the poet Clemens Brentano (1778–1842). Her "Meditations on the Passion," written down by Brentano after sickbed visits, were published as *Das bittere Leiden unseres Herrn und Heilandes Jesus Christus* (1833).<sup>11</sup> Scenes in Jerusalem are pictured in such vivid detail that they were later used as a guide by visiting pilgrims. Following Brentano's death guidebooks to Jerusalem were found in a wardrobe.

The most balanced and thorough appraisal that I have come across is *Jesus and Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ: The Film, The Gospels and the Claims of History*, edited by Kathleen E. Corley and

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<sup>8</sup> B. D. Ehrman, *Truth and Fiction in the Da Vinci Code: A Historian Reveals What We Really Know about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> D. L. Bock, *Breaking The Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everyone's Asking* (Nashville: Nelson, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Life and bibliography in *ODCC*, 3rd ed., 1997, 544.

<sup>11</sup> *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (1862) is available in various editions.

Robert L. Webb.<sup>12</sup> Dominic Crossan observes that in the interests of accuracy “the opening credit should read: ‘A Mel Gibson Film’, followed by ‘Based on the Book by Anne Catherine Emmerich.’”<sup>13</sup> For detailed analysis I recommend Robert L. Webb’s chapter on “*The Passion and the Influence of Emmerich’s The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*”<sup>14</sup> All this shows two facts, first, that there is intense interest in the historical figure of Jesus both inside and outside the church, and second, that in order to take part in the ongoing conversation we need to be familiar with the culture and we need to study the historical Jesus.

6. We have to admit that the many portraits of Jesus contain contradictory features. But there is also much overlap. My experience is that even those with which I disagree contain much to stimulate. The quest of the historical Jesus is a work in progress—all the more reason to study the historical Jesus.

## 2. *What is History?*

John P. Meier whimsically envisages an “unpapal conclave,” convened not to elect a Pope, but to reach a consensus on the historical Jesus. “[A] Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, and an agnostic—all honest historians cognizant of first-century religious movements—are locked up in the bowels of the Harvard Divinity School library, put on a Spartan diet, and not allowed to emerge until they have hammered out a consensus document on Jesus of Nazareth.” An essential requirement is that the document would be based on “purely historical sources and arguments.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kathleen E. Corley and Robert L. Webb, eds., *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ: The Film, The Gospels and the Claims of History* (London New York: Continuum, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 160–72.

<sup>15</sup> *A Marginal Jew II*, 5–6; cf. I, 1; II, 509; III, 9. The criteria are (1) embarrassment, suggesting that the church would not have invented embarrassing material; (2) double discontinuity; (3) multiple attestation; (4) coherence with other accepted material; (5) rejection and execution—“A Jesus whose words and deeds did not threaten or alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus” (1:167–84; 2:5–6).

At the other end of the spectrum, when the original quest was at its height, Martin Kähler denounced the whole undertaking. “The real Christ, that is, the Christ who has exercised an influence in history, with whom millions have communed in childlike faith, and with whom the great witnesses of faith have been in communion—while striving, apprehending, triumphing, and proclaiming—*this real Christ is the Christ who is preached*. The Christ who is preached, however, is precisely the Christ of faith.”<sup>16</sup> In our day the Roman Catholic scholar, Luke Timothy Johnson, has devastatingly critiqued the Jesus Seminar and what he calls “the misguided quest of the historical Jesus.”<sup>17</sup> “History is a limited mode of human knowing... If the expression *the real Jesus* is used, it should not refer to a historically reconstructed Jesus. Such a Jesus is not ‘real’ in any sense, except as a product of scholarly imagination.”<sup>18</sup> “The ‘real’ Jesus is first of all the powerful, resurrected Lord whose transforming Spirit is active in the community... The ‘real Jesus’ is therefore also the one who through the Spirit replicates in the lives of believers faithful obedience to God and loving service to others.”<sup>19</sup>

I am in sympathy with both sides, but cannot go along with either. I suspect that Meier’s “unpapal conclave” might yield only the most minimal statement, like the passing reference to Jesus made by Tacitus in his account of Nero’s treatment of Christians following the great fire of Rome in 64 CE. “Christus, the founder of the name [Christians], had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilatus.”<sup>20</sup> Tacitus’s next remark is unlikely to command the assent of Meier’s Catholic and Protestant scholars, even if his Jew and agnostic were inclined to agree with it. “[A]nd the pernicious superstition [*exitiabilis superstitio*] was checked for a moment, only to break out once more, not merely in

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<sup>16</sup> *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (1896), trans. and ed. Carl E. Braaten with foreword by Paul Tillich (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 66 (Kähler’s emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest of the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); cf. Johnson, *Living Jesus: Learning the Heart of the Gospel* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> *The Real Jesus*, 167.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>20</sup> *Annals* 15.44, trans. John Jackson, cited from *Tacitus* 4 (1937), 283 (LCL).

Judea the home of the disease, but in the capital itself where all things horrible or shameful in the world collect and find a vogue.” What has happened is that Tacitus has moved from “*fact*” to *interpretation*. To be more precise, one would have to say that he has moved from what is generally accepted as a historical fact (that Jesus underwent the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius by sentence of Pontius Pilate—which coheres with the gospel evidence) to an interpretation (that Jesus was the originator of a pernicious superstition—magic) which he proffers as self-evident justification for Pilate’s action.

Facts are not like fish swimming around in the sea—there to be caught if one has the right net. Philosopher Alasdair McIntyre observes that the modern notion of facts was a seventeenth-century invention like telescopes and wigs for gentlemen. It is misleading “to conceive of a realm of facts independent of judgment or of any other form of linguistic expression, so that judgments or statements or sentences could be paired off with facts, truth or falsity being the alleged relationship between such paired items.”<sup>21</sup> McIntyre prefers the Thomistic notion of truth as the adequacy of the mind to the thing.<sup>22</sup>

I find myself in agreement with the critical realism of the Thomist philosopher Bernard Lonergan who held that knowledge is more than taking a look and seeing what is there. It involves experiencing, understanding, judging and believing.<sup>23</sup> Lonergan’s thinking on method has also influenced Ben F. Meyer,<sup>24</sup> N. T. Wright, and James D. G. Dunn.

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<sup>21</sup> *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 357–358.

<sup>22</sup> “Truth is the equalizing of the thing and the mind [*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*]; “Accordingly truth is defined as conformity between intellect and thing [*conformatatem intellectus et rei veritas*]” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 1.16.1 and 1.16.2, trans. Thomas Gornall [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964], 78, 81).

<sup>23</sup> “Knowing... is not just seeing; it is experiencing, understanding, judging and believing. The criteria of objectivity are not just the criteria of ocular vision; they are the compounded criteria of experiencing, of understanding, of judging, and of believing. The reality known is not just looked at; it is given in experience, organized and extrapolated by understanding, posited by judgment and belief” (Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972], 238). Lonergan developed his epistemology in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958; 3rd ed., 1970). It is summed up in “Cognitive Structure,” in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, 4. *Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 205–221.

<sup>24</sup> *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979); *Critical Realism and the New Testament*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 17 (Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1989); *Christus Faber: The Master-BUILDER and the House of God*, Princeton Theologi-

Wright sees critical realism as “the process of ‘knowing’ that acknowledges the *reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (hence ‘realism’), while also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (hence ‘critical’).”<sup>25</sup> Dunn adds that the notion of a dialogue between the historian and history has always appealed to him, “not least because I recognize that the historian not only asks questions, but, in genuine engagement with the subject matter, often finds him/herself put in question.”<sup>26</sup> I would want to add that this process is not a solitary dialogue between the historian and the texts but a collective, ongoing conversation between many partners, past and present (as the writings of Wright and Dunn abundantly show). Lonergan’s critical realism does not offer a set of techniques for getting at the “facts.” It is more an anatomy of knowledge, which involves experiencing, understanding, judging, and believing.

Martin Kähler has been hailed as the theologian who rescued Jesus from the hands of the critical historian. But it is a Pyrrhic victory, for it is not as if anyone has *direct* access to Jesus. The access that we have is always *mediated* in some way or other—by hymns, prayers, mystical experiences, sermons, liturgy, sacrament. The Jesus to whom we have access is mediated by those who composed them, by their choice of words and images, and by how they are used now, and by what they evoke. Our access to Jesus may be mediated by our reading of the New Testament. In any case, it will be affected by *what we bring* to our reading—our knowledge of the language and world of the gospels, our personal situations, which cause us to relate to some passages more than others, our world-view, and our ability to interpret. Contemporary hermeneutics and reader-response criticism are making us increasingly aware that all reading involves interpretation, and that texts

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cal Monograph Series 29 (Allison Park: Pickwick Publications, 1992); *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1994). See further the work of my doctoral student, Donald L. Denton, Jr., *Historiography and Hermeneutics in Jesus Studies: An Examination of the Work of John Dominic Crossan and Ben F. Meyer*, JSNTSup 262 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004),

<sup>25</sup> *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 35.

<sup>26</sup> *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 111.

speak to us only as *interpreted texts*. In short, the choice is not between what the historians say and a direct knowledge of Jesus that we can get for ourselves. Rather, it is a question of which *interpretation* we follow. If we look again at Kähler's remark, it can be read to mean that it is not the historical Jesus as a person who has made an impact on history, but *the Christ that is proclaimed in preaching*. In that case, Christ has been taken out of the hands of the historian only to be placed in the hands of the preacher.

There is something troubling about "liberating" Jesus from the historian only to put him into the hands of the preacher. I am reminded of recent American presidential elections, which pushed the art of image making to new heights, and the man who pushed it highest ended up the winner. The dubious logic of Kähler's statement is made apparent, if we make a name substitution. Take, for example, the 1992 election. "The real George W. Bush, that is the George W. Bush who has exercised an influence in history, with whom millions have communed in childlike faith... *this real George W. Bush is the George W. Bush who is preached.*"<sup>27</sup> The same holds good if, instead of George W. Bush, we write in Bill Clinton, or the names of other candidates. Nor is image making confined to America. Sooner or later the public ask probing questions—historical questions about whether the image that they have been led to believe really fits. The same is true in religion—not least in the case of Jesus and the charges leveled against him. We cannot avoid historical questions. But if they are faced squarely, the outcome can only be beneficial.

Perhaps the most-quoted remark ever made by a historian is Leopold von Ranke's declaration that his aim was to show *wie es eigentlich gewesen*—"how it actually was."<sup>28</sup> Today the remark is seen as naïve and pretentious. In context it was a disclaimer of the idea that the historian should draw lessons from the past. Even so, the fact remains that history is not exactly a reconstruction of the past.<sup>29</sup> The past no

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Colin Brown, "Christology and the Quest of the Historical Jesus," in *Doing Theology for the People of God: Studies in Honor of J. I. Packer*, ed. Donald Lewis and Alister McGrath (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 67–83 (72–74).

<sup>28</sup> *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker, 1494–1535* (Berlin: Reimer, 1824), preface.

<sup>29</sup> Colin Brown, *History and Faith: A Personal Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 51–60; cf. E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (London: Macmillan, 1961); Alan Richardson, *History—Sacred and Profane*, Bampton Lectures 1962 (London: SCM, 1964); Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical*



longer exists. The dead cannot be brought back for an action replay. We may get fragments from the past (buildings, ruins, artifacts, records, texts), but we cannot go back into the past. The nearest that we might get is TV “virtual history”—*virtual* being the operative word. Actors dressed up as look-alikes deliver lines in a film crafted to persuade. Inevitably there is selection and interpretation. The great British authority on eighteenth-century politics, Sir Lewis Namier, compared the role of a historian with that of a painter. “To distinguish a tree you look at its shape, its bark and leaf; counting and measuring the branches would get you nowhere. Similarly what matters in history is *the great outline and the significant detail*; what must be avoided is the deadly mass of irrelevant narrative.”<sup>30</sup>

The gospel narratives present their versions of *the great outline and the significant detail* of the historical Jesus. They are not verbal videos. Consider the statement: “They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught” (Mark 1:21 NRSV). Mark is not transferring to our minds the picture that he saw in his mind, for we cannot see what he and his sources saw. We do not know what the synagogue looked like—or, for that matter, what Jesus looked like. We do not know how many people were there, what time it was, or how or what Jesus taught.

Words are not photographs. They are more like computer codes that activate our memory banks. We have some idea of the meaning of words like “Capernaum,” “they,” “he,” “Sabbath,” “synagogue,” and “taught.” When put together to form a sentence they activate our memory banks, and we are able to form some idea of what they refer to. The outcome might be described as a *verbal model*. In speaking of models we must acknowledge the limitations of the imagery. Nevertheless, the concept of the model has proved its worth in helping to envisage what scientists are doing in constructing theories about

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*Knowledge and Christian Belief* (New York: Macmillan, 1966); Fritz Wagner, *Geschichtswissenschaft*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1966); Fritz Stern, ed., *The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1970); David Carr, *Time, Narrative and History* (Bloomington / Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991); Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> “History,” in *Avenues of History* (1952), cited from Stern, *The Varieties of History*, 379 (emphasis mine).

the physical world.<sup>31</sup> It is also useful in historical work. A distinction may be drawn between primary, secondary, and tertiary models. Primary models consist of primary sources. Secondary models are the interpretative constructs of critical historians. Tertiary models are our reader-response to the primary and secondary models.

This model-making process is continuous. It is not that the latest critical construct supersedes earlier models, or that the primary models can ever be dispensed with. Nor can we avoid making our own constructs, whether they are technical and critical, or unreflective. Critical constructs attempt to correct unreflective understanding and to see earlier constructs in new perspective and depth. They proceed by *successive approximation*, as they seek to discern the intelligibility of events, actions, and people. We must admit that no single account can represent *the* historical Jesus, for no single account can represent every perspective. But we can approach Jesus *historically*.

The goal of the study of history is not model making as an end in itself but the apprehension and understanding of reality through it. Wilhelm Dilthey saw history as a means of transcending the bounds of our limited experience.<sup>32</sup> R. G. Collingwood described it as “the re-enactment of past experience.”<sup>33</sup> But we can never know whether our experience is the same as the narrated past experience. Marc Bloch remarked, “When all is said and done, a single word, ‘understanding,’ is the beacon light of our studies.”<sup>34</sup> I myself prefer to describe history as the attempt to replicate the past with a view to apprehending and understanding its reality. In pursuing the historical Jesus I am not ruling out the Christ of faith, but am trying to see how the two are related.

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<sup>31</sup> R. B. Braithwaite, *Scientific Explanation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953); Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962); Ian G. Barbour, *Myths, Models and Paradigms: the Nature of Scientific and Religious Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> “Plan der Fortsetzung zum Aufbau der christlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften,” in *Gesammelte Schriften* 7 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), 215.

<sup>33</sup> Title of §4 of ch. 5 of R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 282–302; cf. John P. Hogan, *Collingwood and Theological Hermeneutics* (Lanham / New York / London: University Press of America, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1954), 143.

### 3. *The Quest for Credible Criteria*

The quest for credible criteria is considerably older than the quest of the historical Jesus. Its roots may be traced to Pyrrho of Elis (c. 360–275 BCE) who would not commit himself to any judgment that went beyond empirical observation. His teaching was preserved in the *Hypotyposes* (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*) and *Adversus Mathematicos* of Sextus Empiricus (fl. 200 CE). An account of his life was included by Diogenius Laertius in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries experienced a revival of Pyrrhonism—the belief that no firm knowledge of anything was possible—which forms the background for the great debates over skepticism involving rationalism, empiricism, and deism.<sup>35</sup> It set the agenda for questioning the truth claims of science and religion—not least those regarding the identity of Jesus.

David Hume advocated “a more *mitigated* skepticism,” using “a small tincture of Pyrrhonism.”<sup>36</sup> Ever since his celebrated essay “Of Miracles,” analogy has been an important tool in critical history for determining what is feasible. It underlies Hume’s definition of miracles, which encapsulates his reasons for rejecting them. “A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.”<sup>37</sup> Hume had not proved that miracles could not happen, but that they were so tenuously attested, and so at variance with normal expectations that they could not be used to legitimate the Christian belief system. Analogy would prove to be a key factor in subsequent debates about the historical Jesus.

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<sup>35</sup> Richard Popkin, *The History of Skepticism, From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought: From the Ancient World to the Age of Enlightenment* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, §129 (Hume’s *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H. Nidditch [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975]).

<sup>37</sup> *Enquiry*, §90. Hume uses the word analogy in §89. Cf. R. M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles, From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University; London: Associated Universities Presses, 1981); Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

Ernst Troeltsch declared that, "Analogy with what happens before our eyes and comes to pass in us is the key to criticism... The universal power of analogy includes the essential homogeneity [*Gleichartigkeit*] of all historical events."<sup>38</sup> Commitment to this principle underlies the modern secularization of history. But to Wolfhart Pannenberg wholesale use of analogy in this way is fundamentally flawed. "The cognitive power of analogy depends upon the fact that it teaches us to see contents of the same kind in *nonhomogeneous things* [*das Gleichartige im Ungleichartigen*]. If the historian keeps his eye on the nonexchangeable individuality and contingency of an event, then he will see that he is dealing with nonhomogeneous things, which cannot be contained in any analogy."<sup>39</sup> "That a reported event bursts analogies with otherwise usual or repeatedly attested events is still no ground for disputing its facticity. It is another matter when positive analogies to forms of tradition (such as myths and even legends) relating to unreal objects, phenomena referring to states of consciousness (like visions) may be found in the historical sources... [A negative] judgment will be rendered not because of the unusualness of something reported about, but rather because it exhibits a positive analogy to some form of consciousness which has no objective referent."<sup>40</sup> In Pannenberg's theology the resurrection is a historical event, which bursts analogies with usual and repeatedly attested events, and establishes Jesus' unity with God.<sup>41</sup>

Analogy played a role in the *criterion of dissimilarity* used in the Bultmann era by the New Quest—Jesus had to be dissimilar to Judaism and to the early church whose picture of Jesus was colored by its Easter faith. For teaching to qualify as authentic, it had in addition to bear the marks of Aramaic.<sup>42</sup> Whereas Hume used analogy negatively to

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<sup>38</sup> "Über historische und dogmatische Methode" (1898), in Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesammelte Schriften 2* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, reprint of 2nd ed. [1922], 1962), 729–53, at 732; author's translation).

<sup>39</sup> "Redemptive Event and History," in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology*, trans. George H. Keim (London: SCM, 1970), 1:15–80, at 46.

<sup>40</sup> *Basic Questions in Theology*, 1:48–49.

<sup>41</sup> *Jesus—God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 53–114; Pannenberg, "Die Auferstehung Jesu—Historie und Theologie," *ZTK* 91 (1994): 318–328.

<sup>42</sup> Reginald H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1965), 18; Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967), 42–43. Perrin added what he called "the principle of coher-

undermine Christian truth claims, the New Quest used it to filter out Jewish and Christian influence in the interests of constructing a historically “scientific” account of Jesus. But it soon became apparent that the enterprise was unrealistic, and the New Quest ended as abruptly as it had begun.

Whereas the Old Quest was bent on tearing Jesus from his Jewish roots to the point of being anti-Semitic,<sup>43</sup> the Third Quest seeks to locate Jesus in the context of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>44</sup> Any account of the historical Jesus must depict him as a *plausible* figure in the worlds of Galilee and Jerusalem. It must also show how Christian belief may *plausibly* be traced back to this figure. Over against the *criterion of dissimilarity* N. T. Wright proposes a *criterion of double similarity and double dissimilarity*: “It is thus decisively *similar* to both the Jewish context and in the early Christian world, and at the same time importantly *dissimilar*... [W]hen something can be seen to be credible (though perhaps deeply subversive) within first-century Judaism, *and* credible as the implied starting point (though not the exact replica) of something in later Christianity, there is a strong possibility of our being in touch with the genuine history of Jesus.”<sup>45</sup>

The most extensive treatment of criteria is that of Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus* (2002).<sup>46</sup> They begin

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ence”: “material from the earliest strata of the tradition may be accepted as authentic if it can be shown to cohere with material established as authentic by means of the criterion of dissimilarity.” For a critique see Morna D. Hooker, “Christology and Methodology,” *NTS* 17 (1971): 480–487.

<sup>43</sup> Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*, Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), reviewed by Colin Brown in *Shofar* 18.4 (2000): 138–141.

<sup>44</sup> William Telford, “Major Trends and Interpretative Issues in the Study of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *NTTS* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33–74; Ben Witherington, III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 132; cf. 85–86.

<sup>46</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). See also Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Gerd Theissen

with a survey of the quest for criteria in Jesus research, and plot in detail the history of the *criterion of dissimilarity* from the Renaissance to the present. Theissen and Winter see their enterprise as a refinement of the *criterion of dissimilarity*. They identify two main criteria, both with two subcriteria. The first is the “criterion of historical plausibility [*Wirkungsplausibilität*].” “It is the responsibility of historical research to interpret texts so that they can be perceived as the effects of the history they report (or the history of their authors). In other words historical research not only has the assignment of narrating the events but of narrating them in such a way that the sources generated by them can be understood as the effects of these events (or, in the case of unreliable sources, that they can be understandable in these terms). This means that in Jesus research we must explain and interpret the historical effect of Jesus as presented to us in the form of the sources generated by him.”<sup>47</sup>

The first of the subcriteria is “opposition to traditional bias [*Tendenzwidrigkeit*].” Historical credibility may be given to “unintentional evidence that is not influenced by the tendency of its source.”<sup>48</sup> The second subcriterion is “coherence of sources [*Quellenkohärenz*].” “When sources independently of each other testify to the same event, the prospect that we are dealing with authentic material is enhanced... When particular characteristics of Jesus’ words and deeds have survived in most of the complexes of tradition, we could then have the effects of Jesus himself.”<sup>49</sup>

In developing this idea Theissen and Winter use two further terms. “Cross-section evidence [*Querschnittsbeweis*]” refers to “recurring items of content, or formal motifs and structures in different streams

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and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); and Annette Merz, ed., *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Gerd Theissen*, collected articles by Theissen, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003).

<sup>47</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 231.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 174. This seems close to the criterion of “embarrassment” (see above). The examples given appear to fit this category, e.g. the attempt by Jesus’ family to seize him as though he were out of his mind (Mark 3:21). “Embarrassment” seems to be a broader category, because it allows the embarrassing material to be either intentional or unintentional. Theissen and Winter opt for the latter, but it is possible that the evangelists had reasons for including the embarrassing material.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

of tradition.”<sup>50</sup> “Genre-constancy [*Gattungsinvarianz*]” refers to “features and motifs that have maintained themselves in different genres.” The motif of seeking the lost is found in the parables of Luke 15:1–32, apothegms connected with Jesus’ mixing with publicans and sinners (Mark 2:15–17), and Jesus being sent to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 15:24). “The motif is so well documented and present in such different genres that nothing speaks against its attribution to the historical Jesus.”<sup>51</sup>

The second main criterion is “contextual plausibility [*Kontext-plausibilität*].” “The more a Jesus tradition fits into the context of contemporary events, local circumstances, Jewish traditions, and Jewish mentality, the more confidence develops within us that Jesus cannot be the creation of early Christian imagination.”<sup>52</sup> The point is amplified by the subcriterion of “contextual correspondence [*Kontextentsprechung*],” and by turning the *criterion of dissimilarity* vis-à-vis Judaism into the subcriterion of contextual “historical individuality [*historische Individualität*].”<sup>53</sup>

“Contextual plausibility” requires that the historical Jesus be located in a Jewish context. What is plausibly “Jewish” enjoys a high degree of historical plausibility in being traced back to the historical Jesus. At least, “authentic” Jesus material must be material that in the broadest sense can be integrated into the multi-sided picture of the Judaism of his time. This is what we call “*Jewish contextual plausibility*.”<sup>54</sup> “[C]orrespondence with its Jewish context is a necessary (though not a sufficient) condition for the recognition and identification of sayings as authentic sayings of Jesus.”<sup>55</sup> The subcriterion of “historical individuality” addresses *Christian traditional plausibility*. Traditions that do not fit a Jewish context but “can well be explained from the history of early Christianity are to be regarded as inauthentic. Conversely, an authentic tradition is one that does fit into our (so far reconstructed) picture of Jesus and his Jewish context but is in tension with the

<sup>50</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 178.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 178, where attention is drawn to C. H. Dodd who anticipated this point in *History and the Gospel* (London: Nisbet, 1938), 90–101.

<sup>52</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 246

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

tendencies of early Christianity, or is repeatedly found despite the variety of tendencies in different streams of Christianity.”<sup>56</sup>

The furthest we can go is to attempt to present *plausible* accounts of Jesus. Theissen and Winter frankly admit that “the concept of plausibility contains a *probability* factor. Probability is based on comparison of different possibilities.”<sup>57</sup> Pictures of Jesus are subject to revision and falsification. “A naïve ‘falsificationism’ would be satisfied with evidence of the inauthenticity of individual Jesus traditions and would suppose that such evidence had refuted the picture of Jesus that presumes the disputed traditions to be authentic. In contrast to this, we plead for an intelligent falsificationism (‘sophisticated falsificationism’): ‘Contrary to naïve falsificationism, *no experiment, experimental report, observation statement or well-corroborated low level falsifying hypothesis alone can lead to falsification. There is no falsification before the emergence of a better theory.*’ This double demand of an intelligent falsification can be adopted by Jesus research at two levels: the level of the comprehensive picture of Jesus and the level of concrete individual traditions.”<sup>58</sup>

There remains a further consideration—the strangeness of Jesus. “Who was this Jesus? In part, a sensitive poet, in part an apocalyptic prophet, in part a miracle worker and exorcist, and besides that, a charismatic leader and ethical extremist! We would experience his strangeness even more, if the Jesus tradition were not already so familiar to us.”<sup>59</sup>

Despite their thoroughness Theissen and Winter have not put the question of criteria to rest. While welcoming the many insights contained in their work especially the discussion of historical plausibility, Tom Holmén finds confusing the claim that their criteria with their elaborate terminology represent a *replacement* for the criterion of dis-

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<sup>56</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 209.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 203, citing Imre Lakatos, “Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes,” in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 119 (Lakatos’s emphasis). As an example, Theissen and Winter suggest that it is not enough to overthrow the model of “the eschatological Jesus” by showing that individual eschatological sayings are inauthentic. Rather, one must present a more credible model of “a non-eschatological Jesus.” Such a model might be a Jewish Cynic Jesus, but Theissen and Winter remain unconvinced.

<sup>59</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 254.



similarity.<sup>60</sup> The word “criterion” is used in such a variety of ways that one is left wondering whether some are criteria in the strict sense of the term. Holmén’s most serious challenge is to question the criterion of *double dissimilarity*.<sup>61</sup> “The criterion of dissimilarity is not suited for cases where there is no dissimilarity.”<sup>62</sup> Following the lead of Ben F. Meyer, Holmén argues that, “dissimilarity to the views of the primitive Church alone suffices as an indication of authenticity.”<sup>63</sup> Dissimilarity to Judaism does not guarantee that a saying preserves the authentic words of Jesus; it may indicate that it is “a secondary fabrication.”<sup>64</sup> The *criterion of dissimilarity* should consist of only one principle: “Sayings or deeds of Jesus which are discontinuous with the views of the primitive Church have a claim for authenticity.”<sup>65</sup> But it needs to be supplemented by other tools, especially the criterion of *embarrassment*, as illustrated by the discussions of James Breech, John P. Meier, and Craig A. Evans.<sup>66</sup>

Also needed are better guidelines for defining what is Jewish so that we might determine more precisely what kind of a Jew was Jesus.<sup>67</sup> Holmén proposes the use of what he calls “covenant *path searching*.” The many forms of Judaism in Jesus’ day were characterized by the search for the right path for keeping faithful to the covenant. Jesus refrained from this activity. The eschatological covenant prophesied by Jeremiah 31:34, 32:40 and Ezekiel 11:19–20, 36:27, 37:24 foretold a restoration of Israel bringing with it direct knowledge of God’s will. Jesus’ distinctive behavior appears to have been characterized by his

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<sup>60</sup> Review of *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, *JTS* 55.1 (2004): 216–228.

<sup>61</sup> “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 48–80.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; cf. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 86.

<sup>64</sup> *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, 73.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 75; cf. James Breech, *The Silence of Jesus: The Authentic Voice of the Historical Man* (Philadelphia: Fortress, [1983] 1987), 22–26; Meier, *A Marginal Jew I*, 168–71; Craig A. Evans, “Recent Developments in Jesus Research: Presuppositions, Criteria, and Sources,” in *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–49, at 18–19.

<sup>67</sup> Holmén, “The Jewishness of Jesus in the ‘Third Quest,’” in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt, JSNTSup 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 143–62; Holmén, “A Theologically Disinterested Quest? On the Origins of the ‘Third Quest’ for the Historical Jesus,” *Studia Theologica* 55 (2001): 175–197.

embrace of this vision of Judaism.<sup>68</sup> Holmén's proposal makes it possible to study the link between covenant and kingdom at the Last Supper (Mark 14:24–25) from this vantage-point.

A richly referenced work that deserves to stand alongside that of Theissen and Winter is Stanley E. Porter's *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*.<sup>69</sup> Porter does not buy into the Old Quest, No Quest, New Quest, Third Quest scenario. "One cannot help but question the advisability of referring to anything other than a single multi-faceted quest of the historical Jesus, with various modifications and adjustments in approach, some of them perhaps influenced by method and others perhaps by personality or nationality."<sup>70</sup>

Despite its entrenched status, the *criterion of dissimilarity* turns out to be not as useful as was thought. Sayings that do not meet this criterion are "not thereby proved to be inauthentic, since it is not possible to prove a negative such as this." The criterion cannot address specific words of Jesus but only the content of his teaching in comparison with that of Judaism and the early church. "This is a knowledge that scholarship arguably still does not possess to the degree that is required to make sure pronouncement using this criterion. One needs only to compare how much more is known of Judaism contemporary with Jesus after the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls than was known before to appreciate the strength of this criticism."<sup>71</sup>

The criteria of coherence and multiple attestation fare scarcely better. The former claims that material that coheres with previously established material should be regarded as authentic. But it is highly subjective, and by its nature depends upon material established by other criteria.<sup>72</sup> Multiple attestation may indicate earlier stages in the tradition, but it does not guarantee authenticity. Some scholars see Q as the earliest record of the Jesus movement, while others reject Q altogether and thus exclude Q as an independent source.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> "Jesus, Judaism and the Covenant," *JSHJ* 2.1 (2004): 3–27; Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 86–89.

From time to time scholars have attempted to retrovert the Greek of the New Testament into Aramaic in the belief that this step will bring us closer to the words of Jesus. Among the most notable Aramaic scholars in recent times are Matthew Black, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Bruce Chilton, and Maurice Casey.<sup>74</sup> Yet the enterprise is fraught with problems. Among them is the polysemous nature of words—the capacity for multiple meanings—within languages.<sup>75</sup> Mathew Black believed that translation from Aramaic could be considered only with regard to the words of Jesus. Even so, in the case of the longer parables the translation was not *literal* but *literary*.<sup>76</sup> Maurice Casey claims to have made an advance on previous attempts at retroversion by using the Aramaic of the Dead Sea Scrolls to reconstruct the Aramaic of Jesus' day. But his work has not met with universal acclaim, not least by his beginning with passages with purported mistakes in the Greek—which raises questions like how one recognizes a mistranslation and checks the Aramaic reconstruction.<sup>77</sup> But the biggest issues are the assumptions that Jesus spoke exclusively in Aramaic, and that the Aramaic environment was the sole source of his teaching.<sup>78</sup>

Porter belongs to a growing number of experts who contend that Jesus, like many of his followers, was multilingual. Jesus certainly spoke Aramaic, but probably also Greek, the *lingua franca* of Mediterranean society, and possibly classical Hebrew when debating with scribes and Pharisees.<sup>79</sup> With this in mind, Porter develops new proposals for criteria based on the Greek language and its context,<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *The Criteria for Authenticity*, 89–99; cf. Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (1946), 3rd ed. with introduction by Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998); Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); Bruce Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984); Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, SNTSMS 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> *The Criteria for Authenticity*, 94; cf. L. D. Hurst, "The Neglected Role of Semantics in the Search for the Aramaic Words of Jesus," *ISNT* 28 (1986): 63–80; reprinted in Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *The Historical Jesus: A Sheffield Reader*, BibSem 33 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 219–236.

<sup>76</sup> *The Criteria for Authenticity*, 95; cf. Black, *An Aramaic Approach*, 274.

<sup>77</sup> *The Criteria for Authenticity*, 96.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 99; cf. "Excursus: A Response to Maurice Casey on the Languages of Jesus," 164–180.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 126–141.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 126–141.

Greek textual variance,<sup>81</sup> and discourse features.<sup>82</sup> The first seeks to establish that Jesus spoke Greek on particular occasions, but does not determine with certainty what his words might have been. The second seeks to determine specific wording. The third relies on recent work in discourse analysis combined with traditional stylistic analysis. Porter believes that it will allow us to determine whether any given episode may be authentic to the Jesus tradition. If Porter is right, historical Jesus studies are about to undergo a paradigm shift.

#### 4. *A Way Forward*

Looking back on all this, it strikes me that no one has succeeded in making a portrait of Jesus that will drive out all rivals. There are multiple portraits that complement each other. The same is true of methods and criteria. They constitute a work in progress. In the end we have to make judgment calls and commitments of faith. In closing I wish to offer some comments on *the criterion of embarrassment*. The criterion refers to episodes that one might expect to be suppressed since they appear to put Jesus in a bad light. It is *presumed* that the material found its way into the gospels because it belonged to tradition, which would not have been preserved if deemed inauthentic.

John P. Meier lists the baptism of Jesus by John, which was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:5, 9—a point softened in the other gospels), Jesus’ admission that he did not know the day or hour of the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 13:32), and the cry “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46).<sup>83</sup> To this shortlist other examples can be added: the blasphemy charge (Mark 2:7), the attempt to lynch Jesus (Luke 4:29), his family’s attempt to restrain him for people were saying “He has gone out of his mind” (Mark 3:21),<sup>84</sup> the charge that Jesus was casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons (Mark 3:22), the second attempt by the family to restrain him and Jesus’ repudiation of them (Mark 3:31–35), Jesus’ disruptive action in the Temple (Mark 11:15–

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<sup>81</sup> *The Criteria for Authenticity*, 181–209.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 210–237.

<sup>83</sup> *A Marginal Jew I*, 168–71.

<sup>84</sup> For the sake of economy I am not attempting to give references to parallels.

18, 27–33), his condemnation for blasphemy (Mark 14:64) and subsequent execution as a criminal. “Cross section evidence” from John includes the accusation that Jesus was leading the people astray (7:12), the charge that he was a Samaritan who had a demon (8:48), and the high priest’s capital charge that Jesus was a sign-working prophet who, if not liquidated, would lead the whole nation astray and bring down the wrath of the Romans (11:47–48; cf. Deut 13:1–5). In addition, there are the numerous instances where Jesus appears to cross the bounds of purity.<sup>85</sup> Actions like touching a leper, a woman with a flow of blood, and the corpse of a girl, healing on the Sabbath, consorting with tax collectors and sinners, and challenging dietary laws appear to threaten Temple-centered piety.<sup>86</sup>

John P. Meier observes that his list of embarrassing material is not enough to make a full portrait of Jesus, but adds as a separate criterion based on Jesus’ violent end, “The Criterion of Rejection and Execution.” “A Jesus whose words and deeds would not alienate people, especially powerful people, is not the historical Jesus.”<sup>87</sup> Theissen and Winter see embarrassing material as “unintentional evidence that is not influenced by the tendency of its source.”<sup>88</sup> By and large, Christian tradition has shrugged off the embarrassing material and painted a portrait of a gentle Jesus who gave himself for humanity in love. None of these interpretations is satisfactory. Meier’s “criterion of rejection and execution” focuses on Jesus’ violent end, but does not link up with the litany of charges against Jesus that date from his early days. Theissen and Winter assume that the embarrassing material is *unintentional*, and that it goes against the general tendency of the evangelists’ aims. The pietistic portrait of Jesus is selective in its reading of the gospels, and assumes that the charges against Jesus were simply unfounded. But what if they were true?

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<sup>85</sup> David Rhoads, “Social Criticism: Crossing Boundaries,” in *Mark and Method*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 145–179.

<sup>86</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus and the Temple,” in *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 37–56.

<sup>87</sup> *A Marginal Jew I*, 170, 177.

<sup>88</sup> *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, 174.

In order to do justice to the gospels, we have to read them with what I call a *bifocal vision*—we need to read them through the eyes of the evangelists and we need to read them through the eyes of Jesus' adversaries. Another way of putting it is to read them *with the grain* and *against the grain*. It also means a holistic reading of the narratives both individually and as a whole.<sup>89</sup> John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright represent opposite extremes. Crossan's synthetic portrait of Jesus is based on his stratified inventory of canonical and non-canonical texts detached from their context of meaning.<sup>90</sup> But it is precisely the *context* and *use* of texts that give them their meaning. The other extreme is exemplified by Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*, which moves from gospel to gospel in a manner reminiscent of the old gospel harmonies.

Before we can achieve a synthesis, I believe that we need to read texts as wholes in order to determine their *tendencies*—what they are aiming to promote and what they are trying to refute. For some years now I have been experimenting with a heuristic tool in order to lay bare these tendencies. I call it Thesis A and Thesis B. Thesis A represents the standpoint of the evangelist, and Thesis B represents that of Jesus' adversaries. It is important to realize that both theses are trying to look at *the same events*, but from opposing standpoints.<sup>91</sup>

Thesis A identifies the activity of Jesus in terms of a Spirit christology, which sees great significance in the coming of the Spirit on Jesus after his baptism and the determinative role of the Spirit throughout Jesus' public activity. It is this anointing by the Spirit that makes Jesus the *Christ*. The gospels may be said to be an elaboration of Acts 10:38, recalling "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who

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<sup>89</sup> An example is Robin Griffith-Jones, *The Four Witnesses: The Rebel, the Rabbi, the Chronicler, and the Mystic* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000).

<sup>90</sup> *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco, 1991), xxvii–xxxiv, 427–466.

<sup>91</sup> Colin Brown, "Synoptic Miracle Stories: A Jewish Religious and Social Setting," *Foundations and Facets Forum* 2.4 (1986): 55–76; Brown, "The Jesus of Mark's Gospel," in *Jesus Then & Now: Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 26–53. The term "tendency" is evocative of F. C. Baur's *Tendenzkritik* (cf. Brown, *Jesus in European Protestant Thought*, 210–16), but whereas Baur used it to differentiate and date the gospels, my use of it focuses on details of narrative with a view to determining their content and character.

were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” Jesus is presented as God’s agent who prepares Israel for the end of the exile, the kingdom of God—God’s presence in power. He does this through a ministry of purification in which the unclean are made clean, unclean spirits are cast out through the power of the Spirit of God, and God’s word is proclaimed in purity.

The other side of the coin is presented by Thesis B, which attempts to see Jesus through the eyes of his critics. When they saw Jesus violating the Sabbath and the purity laws, propounding deviant teaching, and gaining a following through his healings and exorcisms, they naturally turned to the Torah for guidance. In light of instructions concerning prophets who perform signs and wonders in order to lead astray (Deut 13:1–8; 18:20–22), they concluded that Jesus fitted this profile. The result was the Beelzebul charge, which identified Beelzebul as “the other God” whom Jesus was serving. Implied here is also an undercurrent of magic, which was also a capital offence (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:10). The expression “a glutton and a drunkard” (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34) is not merely a description of Jesus’ eating habits; it is a code word for “the stubborn and rebellious son” (Deut 21:18–21) who disobeys the voice of his father and mother. Both the Beelzebul charge and “the stubborn and rebellious son” charge carried with them the penalty of death by stoning so that the evil might be purged from the midst of the people. There is reason to think that the procedure for dealing with “the stubborn and rebellious son” forms the subtext for Jesus’ mother and brothers coming to him (Mark 3:31–35) and for the parable that we call the parable of the Prodigal Son, which is full of echoes of the language of Deut 21:18–21. It poses the riddle: Which son is really the stubborn and rebellious son?<sup>92</sup>

The question of the historical Jesus is not just a question of material evidence. It is a hermeneutical question. It may even be said that Jesus was executed over a question of hermeneutics. The hermeneutical question was one that divided Jesus’ contemporaries, and divides people today. John P. Meier observes that, “a full portrait of Jesus could never be drawn” on the basis of his shortlist of embarrassing items.<sup>93</sup> But a *negative portrait* of Jesus could be drawn from my far from

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<sup>92</sup> Colin Brown, “The Parable of the Rebellious Son(s),” *SJT* 51.4 (1998): 391–405.

<sup>93</sup> *A Marginal Jew I*, 170.

complete list of embarrassing episodes. Two conclusions follow. The first is that this negative material provides the roots for the negative images of Jesus in Jewish tradition.<sup>94</sup> The second is that the preservation of embarrassing material may not be accidental. It is sometimes said that history is always written from the standpoint of the winners. This was not so in the case of the gospels, which belong to “the parting of the ways” of Judaism and Christianity at time when Christianity was a persecuted minority religion. It may be noted that the gospels are increasingly seen as ancient biography.<sup>95</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith observes that the characteristic of every major *religious* biography in the Greco-Roman era is a “double defense against the charge of magic—against the calumny of outsiders and the sincere misunderstanding of insiders.”<sup>96</sup> These observations point to the conclusion that the embarrassing material was deliberately included for the reasons that Smith gives: the gospels were polemical vindications of Jesus.

A word must be said about genre and rhetoric.<sup>97</sup> My example is based on my study of Mark. At first I was inclined to follow Raymond E. Brown’s straightforward suggestion that Mark falls into two parts: a ministry of healing and preaching in Galilee and the narrative of

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<sup>94</sup> William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); and more briefly S. David Sperling, “Jewish Perspectives on Jesus,” in *Jesus Then & Now*, ed. Meyer and Hughes, 251–59.

<sup>95</sup> Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching*, SNTSMS 27 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 117–36; David E. Aune, *The New Testament and its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 17–76; Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, SNTSMS 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1992] 1995); Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählerkunst* (Tübingen: Francke, 1997).

<sup>96</sup> “Good News is No News: Aretology and the Gospel,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Graeco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SJLA 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 1:21–38, at 24–25; cf. David E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” ANRW II 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557, at 1540.

<sup>97</sup> John Goldingay, *Models for Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Stanley E. Porter and Thomas Olbricht, eds., *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference*, JSNTSup 146 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Craig A. Evans and Shemaryahu Talmon, eds., *The Quest for Context and Meaning: Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders*, BIS 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht, and Walter Übelacker, eds., *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002).



Jesus' death in Jerusalem, joined by a brief travel period containing Peter's confession and Jesus' passion predictions.<sup>98</sup> But turning to Martin Hengel for a second opinion, I was pointed in the direction of reading Mark as a tragic epic, which follows the canons laid down by Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Poetic Art*.<sup>99</sup>

Aristotle viewed epic and tragedy as an "imitation" of life. The rules were basically the same, except that tragedy was acted and epics were declaimed. The aim was to arouse pity and fear in order to produce a catharsis. Whereas the poet describes what might happen, the historian describes what has happened. Tragedy and epic are characterized by three elements: "discovery" or "recognition," "reversal," and "suffering." Mark has them in abundance. I have come to see Mark as an epic intended to be declaimed. The five acts are separated by teaching sections that function like a chorus giving comment on what has happened and linkage to what follows. The prologue (Mark 1:1–15) sets up the dynamic for what follows. The epilogue (Mark 15:40–16:8) transforms what would have been bleak tragedy into triumph. Jesus is a new Joshua, empowered by the Spirit, engaged in a pacific conquest of purification in preparation for the kingdom of God. He is the messianic Son of God whose gospel and divine sonship challenge and surpass those of Caesar (Mark 1:1; 15:39).

The fact that Mark has the form of an epic defense of Jesus does not necessarily undermine the underlying history. It means that we are dealing with a literary work which has a form appropriate for an oral first-century defense of Jesus. Inevitably there is selection and development. Mark's chronology, his choice of events, and his geographical settings are doubtless affected by his story line. Repeated visits to Jerusalem recounted by John would not fit very well into Mark's narrative of Jesus' momentous journey to Jerusalem with its dénouement in the Temple, followed by the catastrophe of Jesus' arrest, interrogation, and hideous death. Each of the canonical gospels has its own

<sup>98</sup> *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 127.

<sup>99</sup> Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 185), 34–37; Brown, "The Jesus of Mark's Gospel," 29–30, at 47, where details of primary and secondary literature are given. Subsequent literature includes Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

perspective and literary form, which must be factored into the ongoing quest of the historical Jesus.<sup>100</sup> But this is a theme for another article in another volume.

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<sup>100</sup> Matthew is even more explicit in developing Spirit christology (Matt 12:17–21, citing Isa 42:1–4). It is accompanied by a wisdom christology. Matthew is structured in three books stressing Jesus as the teacher of Israel, a new Moses delivering a new law for the new people of God, an Isaianic Christ. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1975); Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992); Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel*, SNTSMS 123 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Luke is part of a two-volume work, locating Jesus in world history from Adam to the time of writing. Jesus is the fulfiller of the promise made in the Babylonian exile about the one on whom God would put his Spirit, because he has anointed him to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18–19, citing Isa 61:1–2). See Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); Max Turner, *Power from on High: The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); David P. Moessner, ed., *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim on Israel's Legacy* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); Joseph B. Tyson, *Luke, Judaism and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).

All four gospels contain the negative elements that I have identified by Thesis B. But John goes furthest by structuring the entire gospel as a cosmic lawsuit between God and the world modeled on the Old Testament lawsuits brought by Yahweh against Israel. John is replete with legal language: multiple witnesses, charges and counter charges, judgment, the casting out of the ruler of this world, the Spirit as “another advocate” who will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 14:16–17; 16:8–11). In addition, elements of Greek tragedy have also been detected in John—structure, speeches as action, dramatis personae, and the illusion of identity. See Allison A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, SNTSMS 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78–127; A. E. Harvey, *Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1976); Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, JSNTSup 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); Andrew T. Lincoln, “Trials, Plots and the Narrative of the Fourth Gospel,” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 3–30; idem, *Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000); Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).

PART THREE

PERSISTING ISSUES ADJACENT TO THE JESUS QUEST



# THE CONTEXT OF JESUS: JEWISH AND/OR HELLENISTIC?

STANLEY E. PORTER

## 1. *Introduction*

The formulation of the title of this paper poignantly illustrates one of the major and recurring problems of recent historical Jesus research. In determining the context for the proper study of Jesus, the question is virtually always almost immediately raised whether the context should be one that is seen to be primarily Jewish or primarily Hellenistic, or is to be seen as both, as if these are two equally viable options that with equanimity mesh together while retaining their individual identities. In approaching this problem, there are a number of issues that require attention. First is to discuss briefly the significance of raising the question at all. The second is to address a number of subsidiary definitional issues that figure into this equation. These include: (a) the issue of context; (b) the logical question of what constitutes “or” and “and”; (c) what is meant by Judaism; and (d) what is meant by Hellenism. Once these are addressed, as a third step we can briefly consider various possibilities and ways of answering the question of the relation between the two, before concluding regarding the appropriate context for the study of Jesus, that is, whether that context is Jewish and/or Hellenistic.

## 2. *The Third Quest and the Jewishness of Jesus*

One of the major claims of the so-called Third Quest for the historical Jesus is that this quest—unlike the previous ones—appreciates the Jewishness of Jesus. For example, N. T. Wright, apparently the first to coin the term Third Quest,<sup>1</sup> outlines the distinctive features of the

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<sup>1</sup> Apparently in N. T. Wright, “Towards a Third ‘Quest’: Jesus Then and Now,” *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada* 10:20–27. Needless to say, this relatively unknown journal (there is no reference to it in the SBL list of abbreviations) did not get much circulation. The “public”

Third Quest in relation to the Second or New Quest. He says that the previous quest “made no real effort to locate Jesus, the early communities or the evangelists within Judaism itself as we know it from the Scrolls, Josephus, and so on. Indeed, it often seemed concerned to keep Jesus at arm’s length from anything too obviously Jewish. The third Quest, on the contrary, sees that the Jewish background is vital...”<sup>2</sup> Wright is one of many who make similar statements regarding the importance of studying the Jewish context of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Wright lists a number of specific features of what, to him, would constitute a Jewish orientation to the study of Jesus, although he subsumes all of these under the rubric of “Jewish background.”

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announcement was in S. Neill and T. Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379, with discussion on 379–403. 1988 is the effective date of naming the Third Quest. Interestingly, in his first significant treatment, Wright names four who exemplify the Third Quest: B. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1965); A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982); M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1984); and E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985). Apparently rethinking his choices, in his *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 84, Wright gives a list of now twenty authors he considers important to the Third Quest. One might expect that they would all date since his 1988 venture, but only five do. Instead, Wright goes back and names authors as early as the 1960’s as important to the Third Quest (G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* [London: Athlone Press, 1965]; S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967]; and O. Betz, *What Do We Know about Jesus?* trans. M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1968 (1965))). In other words, within fifteen years of the New Quest beginning, unbeknownst to anyone (until Wright informs us), and going on for nearly thirty-five years before its being identified, was the Third Quest, while, according to Wright, the New Quest also continued (Wright, *Jesus*, 28–82).

<sup>2</sup> Neill and Wright, *Interpretation*, 397.

<sup>3</sup> A sample of others who repeat what is now almost a platitude includes: Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 1; C. Brown, “Historical Jesus, Quest of,” in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green, S. McKnight, I. H. Marshall (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 326–341, at 337; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, III: *Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 3 (but who notes neglect among some Third Quest practitioners to focus on Jesus’ Jewishness!); B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 41; J. D. G. Dunn, “Can the Third Quest Hope to Succeed?” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NCTS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 31–48, esp. 33; L. M. McDonald and S. E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 104; C. A. Evans, “Assessing Progress in the Third Quest of the Historical Jesus,” *JSHJ* 4.1 (2006): 35–54, esp. 36–43.

There are several possible responses to Wright's claim. One that has been recently promoted and developed is simply to call into question the entire tripartite schematic outline that ends up positing a Third Quest. This language is meaningful only in terms of the stylized outline that proceeds from the original eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries' First Quest for the historical Jesus (so-called Life-of-Jesus research or *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*), to the no-quest period of the first half of the twentieth century, to the New or Second Quest of the 1950's to 1980's, and then to the Third Quest. A number of scholars have recently called major parts of this programmatic analysis into serious question, including the reality of a Third Quest.<sup>4</sup> If this schematic outline falls, then the question of a Third Quest is moot. However, a second response, and one more pertinent to this essay, is to address the issue of whether, according to the evidence, the claim can be sustained that study of Jesus' Jewish context or background only really began with the Third Quest, dating such a quest to the 1980's (not the 1960's!).

Despite the claims of Third Questers to the contrary, the evidence simply does not bear out the claim that there was not "serious" study of the Jewishness of Jesus before the Third Quest. Craig Evans himself claims that "it has been Jewish scholars themselves who have tried to correct this neglect and distortion."<sup>5</sup> Although he says that they merely

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. W. O. Walker, "The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Discussion of Methodology," *ATR* 51 (1969), 38–56; R. J. Banks, "Setting 'The Quest for the Historical Jesus' in a Broader Framework," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels II*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 61–82, esp. 61; Brown, "Historical Jesus, Quest of," 334–335; S. E. Fowl, "Reconstructing and Deconstructing the Quest of the Historical Jesus," *SJT* 42 (1989): 319–333; J. Reumann, "Jesus and Christology," in *The New Testament and its Modern Interpreters*, ed. E. J. Epp and G. W. MacRae (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 501–564, esp. 502; W. Telford, "Major Trends and Interpretive Issues," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, *NTS* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33–74, esp. 55–61; M. Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 6; idem, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 200–201; R. H. Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 13; C. Marsh, "Quests of the Historical Jesus in New Historicist Perspective," *BibInt* 5 (1997): 403–437; W. P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, *JSNTSup* 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 28–62; D. C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and its Interpreters* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), esp. 1–4; F. Bermejo Rubio, "The Fiction of the 'Three Quests': An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm," *JSHJ* 7 (2009): 211–253.

<sup>5</sup> Evans, "Assessing Progress," 36.

“adumbrate things to come,”<sup>6</sup> every one of them pre-dates the Third Quest. These include Joseph Klausner, who published his work on Jesus in Hebrew in 1922, with an English translation in 1925 (which appeared in both American and British editions).<sup>7</sup> This book has a chapter devoted to sources, including pp. 18–24 devoted to Jewish sources.<sup>8</sup> Evans claims that Klausner’s book “unfortunately had little impact in Europe.”<sup>9</sup> This may be so, but someone was paying attention to it. Not only did it appear in an English version in 1925, but it was translated into German in 1930 and French in 1933.<sup>10</sup> Evans further singles out several scholars that Klausner notes. In fact, Klausner offers a thorough survey of historical Jesus research (pp. 71–124), and then singles out Jewish scholars in particular (pp. 106–24).<sup>11</sup> He lists Joseph Salvador,<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Graetz,<sup>13</sup> H. G. Enelow,<sup>14</sup> C. G. Montefiore,<sup>15</sup> Abraham Geiger,<sup>16</sup> and four works by “converted Jews”: Alfred

<sup>6</sup> Evans, “Assessing Progress,” 38.

<sup>7</sup> J. Klausner, *Yeshu ha-Notzri*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Shtibel, 1922); ET: *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1925; 1952).

<sup>8</sup> It is hard to fault Klausner for not referring to the Dead Sea Scrolls, as they had not yet been discovered when his book was first published. He does have a section (pp. 67–70) devoted to apocryphal and non-canonical sources, another of the supposed hallmarks of the Third Quest (see Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 11).

<sup>9</sup> Evans, “Assessing Progress,” 37.

<sup>10</sup> J. Klausner, *Jesus von Nazareth: Seine Zeit, sein Leben und seine Lehre* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930); *Jésus de Nazareth: Son temps, sa vie, sa doctrine* (Paris: Payot, 1933). My US edition indicates that the book was reprinted in 1927, reissued in 1929, and then reprinted in 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946. Someone was buying this book!

<sup>11</sup> The information below is primarily from Evans’s article and Klausner’s book. Unfortunately, I have not been able to secure complete information for each author.

<sup>12</sup> J. Salvador, *Jésus Christ et sa doctrine: Histoire de la naissance de l’église, de son organisation et de ses progrès pendant le premier siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Guyot et Scribe, 1838); *Das Leben Jesu und sein Lehre: Die Geschichte der Entstehung der christlichen Kirche, ihrer Organisation und Fortschritte während des ersten Jahrhunderts* (Dresden: Walther’s, 1841).

<sup>13</sup> H. Gaetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, III (Leipzig: Institut zur Förderung der Israelitischen Literatur, 1856); *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1891–98).

<sup>14</sup> H. G. Enelow, *A Jewish View of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1920; repr. 1931)

<sup>15</sup> C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1909). Montefiore also wrote *The Old Testament and After* (London: Macmillan, 1923) and *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (London: Macmillan, 1930).

<sup>16</sup> A. Geiger, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte in zwölf Vorlesungen*, 3 vols. (Breslau: Schletter, 1864).



Edersheim,<sup>17</sup> Daniel Chwolsohn,<sup>18</sup> M. De Jonge,<sup>19</sup> and Paul Levertoff.<sup>20</sup> Other significant scholars can be added as well. Dale Allison traces the study of Jesus as a Jew back to such scholars as John Lightfoot<sup>21</sup> and Johann Salomo Semler,<sup>22</sup> and then names others also.<sup>23</sup>

I think that it is worth recounting some of the most important scholars in the history of interpretation who have been concerned with the relationship of Jesus and Judaism. It is far from an insignificant group, and certainly not one that has been neglected or simply adumbrated more recent developments. I do not pretend to include a full or complete list, but here are a number that I have come across and note. One can begin as far back as J. A. Bengel and his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*,<sup>24</sup> and Jacob Wettstein, with his New Testament text with full apparatus and ancient parallels.<sup>25</sup> In more recent times, the

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<sup>17</sup> A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1883), as well as other books, such as *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904) and *The Temple: Its Ministry and its Services* (London: Longmans, 1883). Evans describes Edersheim's *Life* as "rich with Jewish background" in his *Life of Jesus Research: An Annotated Bibliography*, NTTS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 251, one of only two of these authors included in his bibliography (the other is Montefiore).

<sup>18</sup> D. Chwolsohn, *Das letzte Passamahl Christi und der Tag seines Todes* (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, 1892; 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1908 [1875 in Russian]).

<sup>19</sup> M. de Jonge, *Jeschua, der klassische jüdische Mann: Zerstörung des kirchlichen, Enthüllung des jüdischen Jesus-Bildes* (Berlin, 1904).

<sup>20</sup> P. Levertoff, *Ben ha-Adam: Hayye Yeshua ha-Mashiach u-po'alav* (London: Edut leYisrael 1904; repr. Jerusalem: Dolphin, 1968). This is the "first book written on Jesus and Christianity's early beginnings by a Jewish scholar in Modern Hebrew" (J. Quinónez, "Paul Phillip Levertoff: Pioneering Hebrew-Christian Scholar and Leader," *MISHKAN* 37 [2002]: 21–34, at 25).

<sup>21</sup> J. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*, 6 vols. (Cambridge and London, 1658–78; repr. ed. R. Gandell; 4 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859).

<sup>22</sup> J. S. Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon*, 4 vols. (Halle: Hemmerde, 1771–75).

<sup>23</sup> Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> J. A. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti, in quo ex nativa verborum vi simplicitas, profunditas, concinnitas, salubritas sensuum coelestium indicatur* (1742); ed. M. E. Bengel and J. Steudel, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Fues, 1850); *Gnomon of the New Testament*, trans. J. Bandinel and A. R. Fausset, ed. A. R. Fausset, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866).

<sup>25</sup> J. J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum editionis receptae cum lectionibus variantibus codicum MSS., Editionum aliarum, Versionum et Patrum nec non commentario pleniore, Ex Scriptoribus veteribus Hebraeis, Graecis et Latinis, Historiam et vim verborum illustrante opera et studio Joannis Jacobi Wettsteinii* (Amsterdam: Dommerian, 1751–52). W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*, trans. S. McL. Gilmour and H. C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon,

following scholars should be considered, including a number of Jewish scholars, converted or otherwise. I also include a number of works on Josephus in relation to the New Testament. These authors include: Paul Fiebig,<sup>26</sup> Gustaf Dalman,<sup>27</sup> Israel Abrahams,<sup>28</sup> Adolf Schlatter,<sup>29</sup> C. F. Burney,<sup>30</sup> Henry St. John Thackeray,<sup>31</sup> F. J. Foakes Jackson,<sup>32</sup> Bennett Harvie Branscom,<sup>33</sup> T. W. Manson,<sup>34</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley,<sup>35</sup> C. Guignebert,<sup>36</sup> Matthew Black,<sup>37</sup> Jakób Jocz,<sup>38</sup> Morton Smith,<sup>39</sup> Joachim

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1972), 49, says that Wettstein includes “a collection of parallel passages from classical and Jewish literature, unsurpassed to this day...”

<sup>26</sup> P. Fiebig, *Der Menschensohn: Jesu Selbstbezeichnung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des aramäischen Sprachgebrauches für “Mensch”* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1901); *Altjüdische Gleichnisse und die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1904).

<sup>27</sup> G. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus, Considered in the Light of Post-Biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language*, trans. D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909 [1898]); *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*, trans. P. P. Levertoff (London: SPCK, 1929 [1922]); cf. *Jesaja 53 das Prophetenwort vom Sühnleiden des Gottesknechtes*, SIJ 13 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1914). The use of the study of Aramaic as a tool in talking about Jesus goes back to the sixteenth century. See the chapter on criteria in these volumes, and Porter, *Criteria*, 89–99.

<sup>28</sup> I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917).

<sup>29</sup> A. Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1923).

<sup>30</sup> C. F. Burney, *The Poetry of our Lord: An Examination of the Formal Elements of Hebrew Poetry in the Discourses of Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925).

<sup>31</sup> H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (1929), preface by G. F. Moore, introduction by S. Sandmel (New York: KTAV, 1967).

<sup>32</sup> F. J. Foakes Jackson, *Josephus and the Jews: The Religion and History of the Jews as Explained by Flavius Josephus* (London: SPCK, 1930).

<sup>33</sup> B. H. Branscomb, *Jesus and the Law of Moses* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930).

<sup>34</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus: Studies of its Form and Content* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939 [1931]).

<sup>35</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Gospel Parables in the Light of their Jewish Background* (London: SPCK, 1936).

<sup>36</sup> C. Guignebert, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1939).

<sup>37</sup> M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).

<sup>38</sup> J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ: A Study in the Relationship between the Jewish People and Jesus Christ* (London: SPCK, 1949).

<sup>39</sup> M. Smith, *Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels*, JBLMS 6 (Philadelphia: SBL, 1951).

Jeremias,<sup>40</sup> Eric Bishop,<sup>41</sup> Samuel Sandmel,<sup>42</sup> Sherman Johnson,<sup>43</sup> Paul Winter,<sup>44</sup> Morton Enslin,<sup>45</sup> R. J. H. Shutt,<sup>46</sup> François Amiot, Jean Daniélou, Amédée Brunot and Daniel-Rops,<sup>47</sup> W. D. Davies,<sup>48</sup> Asher Finkel,<sup>49</sup> David Flusser,<sup>50</sup> Günther Baumbach,<sup>51</sup> and a host of others who have small sections in their books devoted to the Jewish background or context of the gospels or Jesus. As Allison nicely expresses it: “we may now regard their use of Jewish sources as less sophisticated than our own; and Christian scholars may further—with the guilt of the Holocaust hanging over our heads and the modern spirit of relativism urging us not to reckon our religion better than any other—see more continuity with Judaism, whereas our predecessors saw less. Yet we are not walking down some new, hitherto-undiscovered path but rather just going further down the old one.”<sup>52</sup>

In terms of the issue of the introduction of the study of Jesus’ Jewish background that helps set the agenda for this paper, we can say with some certainty that this is not a new topic of discussion. In fact, it is

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<sup>40</sup> J. Jeremias, *Das Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960 [1935]); *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke (New York: Scribners, 1972 [1947]); *The Prayers of Jesus*, SBT Second Series 6 (London: SCM, 1967); *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, trans. F. H. and C. H. Cave (London: SCM, 1969).

<sup>41</sup> E. F. F. Bishop, *Jesus of Palestine: The Local Background to the Gospel Documents* (London: Lutterworth, 1955).

<sup>42</sup> S. Sandmel, *A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1957).

<sup>43</sup> S. E. Johnson, *Jesus in his Land* (New York: Scribners, 1957).

<sup>44</sup> P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, SJ (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1961).

<sup>45</sup> M. S. Enslin, *The Prophet from Nazareth* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

<sup>46</sup> R. J. H. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus* (London: SPCK, 1961).

<sup>47</sup> F. Amiot, J. Daniélou, A. Brunot, H. Daniel-Rops, *The Sources for the Life of Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), with a chapter on the Dead Sea Scrolls (pp. 22–32).

<sup>48</sup> W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

<sup>49</sup> A. Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth: A Study of their Background, their Halachic and Midrashic Teachings, the Similarities and Differences*, AGSU (Leiden: Brill, 1964).

<sup>50</sup> D. Flusser, *Jesus* (1968; in collaboration with R. S. Notley; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1997).

<sup>51</sup> G. Baumbach, *Jesus von Nazareth im Lichte der jüdischen Gruppenbildung* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1971).

<sup>52</sup> Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 12. I cannot help observing that many of these scholars wrote during the supposed “no quest” period, and, perhaps in an effort to force the tripartite schematic, their work is intentionally pushed out of view.

quite surprising that scholars can even say that it is something distinctive of the Third Quest when it so clearly is not. The study of the Jewish background or context of the New Testament has been an agenda item for New Testament study since the development of historical criticism, and has been a part of the discussion of the historical Jesus from its earliest times.

### 3. *Definitional Issues*

As stated above, the second major task is to address a number of subsidiary definitional issues that figure into this equation. These include: (a) the issue of context; (b) the logical question of what constitutes “or” and “and”; (c) what is meant by Jesus being Jewish; and (d) what is meant by Jesus being Hellenistic. I will take them in order.

#### 3.1. *The Issue of Context*

Defining context continues to be one of the most difficult tasks in exegesis of the New Testament. In works on exegesis, it can be used in a wide variety of ways, even within the same work.<sup>53</sup> One notes above that the title of this essay uses the word “context,” but the formulation in terms of historical Jesus research often uses the term “background.” I believe that in most contexts they are used roughly synonymously. However, in several ways this is a terminological imprecision that should be corrected for three reasons. One reason is that approaches to exegesis often make a distinction between context and background. A second is that the notion of background, as it is often used, implies a secondary backdrop against which to distinguish the primary subject. One could speak of the Jewish background of Jesus as a way of distinguishing Jesus from that background that has already been determined. That does not seem to be the focus of those discussing the issue in historical Jesus studies. A third is that the notion of background seems to imply a predetermined conceptualization of what this background is. This is probably truer to the orientation of much historical Jesus research, although, as I will argue below, it probably is not the

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<sup>53</sup> E.g. R. J. Erickson, *A Beginner's Guide to New Testament Exegesis: Taking the Fear out of Critical Method* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

best approach to the issue. Therefore, the use of “background” does not seem to be the best formulation of the issues involved.<sup>54</sup>

The use of the notion of context is, itself, not without its own problems, however. In linguistics, as in historical and literary studies, defining context is not an easy task. A quick survey of a range of volumes on exegesis shows that the notion of context is treated in any number of ways. These range from no treatment at all to a brief paragraph to highly nuanced treatments.<sup>55</sup> The best formulation of the concept of context is probably found in those works that make a workable distinction between what might be termed immediate context, literary context and historical context (these terms are sometimes further differentiated as well).<sup>56</sup> Immediate context, similar to what is in some linguistic circles referred to as co-text,<sup>57</sup> indicates the immediate linguistic environment. The literary context is the one created by the particular literary work under discussion, and involves knowledge of a variety of larger literary issues. The historical context is the larger context in which the literary work is found, and involves knowledge of a variety of larger historical, cultural, religious and related issues.<sup>58</sup> Although at its best historical Jesus research will ideally make use of all levels of context in the course of its analysis of Jesus, the one that

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<sup>54</sup> See also T. Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide,” in *Paul beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1–16, at 1–2.

<sup>55</sup> It is odd that one author, after treating “immediate context” (pp. 102–104), has a section on “absence of context” (pp. 112–113). See A. B. Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).

<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 69–85; D. A. Hagner, *New Testament Exegesis and Research: A Guide for Seminarians* (privately published, 1992), 3–4; D. McCartney and C. Clayton, *Let the Reader Understand: A Guide to Interpreting and Applying the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1994), 141–46; G. R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 37–56, esp. 39; H. A. Virkler and K. G. Ayayo, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 81–92.

<sup>57</sup> See J. T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity*, JSNTSup 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 42. I do not mean to imply that these are exactly the same, but the literary context is in some ways similar to the context of situation and the historical situation to the context of culture.

<sup>58</sup> See, e.g., the three chapters on cultural, religious and political background (pp. 489–544) in D. S. Dockery, K. A. Mathews, and R. B. Sloan, eds., *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994).

seems most pertinent to the discussion at hand is the historical context. The historical context involves the world surrounding the text, in the sense of the world in which the text is placed, the world out of which it was written, and the world in which it was read.

The question regarding the context of Jesus is, then, on the basis of the written documents that we have, within the larger historical context, what is the appropriate context for understanding Jesus? The formulation of historical Jesus research in terms of “Jewish background” seems to imply a singular answer to this question. I would suggest that this is a problematic notion, as it seems to imply that we know exactly what Judaism was at the time, and that that is the pertinent context. I believe that both are questionable presuppositions to bring to the discussion.

### 3.2. *The Logical Question of “or” and “and”*

This is not the place for an extended discussion of formal logic. However, the language used in the chapter title, and how this is formulated in actual practice, does bear some attention. I would suggest that both “or” and “and” are problematic for getting at the context of Jesus.

The use of “or,” whether explicitly or implicitly, runs the risk of the logical fallacy of the false disjunction or excluded middle. As David Hackett Fischer states, “The law of the excluded middle may demand instant obedience in formal logic, but in history it is as intricate in its applications as the internal revenue code. Dichotomy is used incorrectly when a question is constructed so that it demands a choice between two answers which are in fact not exclusive or not exhaustive. But it is used often by historians in this improper way.”<sup>59</sup> The title of this essay formulates this question in a potentially disjunctive manner. Leaving the use of “and” out of the discussion for a moment, we see that it asks us to decide in exclusive terms whether the proper context for Jesus was either Jewish or Hellenistic. This formulation suggests several things: that these are two equal and viable choices, and that they are categorically and distinctly different from each other so that

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<sup>59</sup> D. H. Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper, 1970), 10. Cf. D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 90–92, 105–106; J. D. Fantin, “Background Studies: Grounding the Text in Reality,” in *Interpreting the New Testament Text: Introduction to the Art and Science of Exegesis*, ed. D. L. Bock and B. M. Fanning (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 167–196, esp. 170–171.

to be one is not to be the other. By choosing one, one is saying that Jesus' context cannot be the other. Logically, this formulation asks us to believe that there was no interplay between Judaism and Hellenism, as if they existed in splendid isolation. From a logical standpoint, however, is it not possible to think of Jewish forms of Hellenism or Hellenistic forms of Judaism, or even a Jewish-Hellenism? All of these are logical possibilities that such a formulation excludes. What if, pushing this further, on the basis of historical evidence, we were to find evidence that there was such a thing as Hellenistic Judaism or Jewish forms of Hellenism, even some of them in Palestine? From a historical standpoint as well, the false disjunction hinders exploration of the question. One notices, however, that in the formulation by Wright above there is no disjunction stated. In fact, Wright's formulation offers no choice. It simply asserts that one must choose the Jewish context (he uses the term "background") as the appropriate sphere for discussion. In that sense, there is a suppressed choice already made that answers the question before it is even asked, without leaving open the possibility that there is something other than a simple bifurcation at play. I would contend that, from a logical (and historical, as we shall see below) standpoint, we should reformulate the question regarding the context in which to place Jesus.

The use of "and" is no doubt designed to aid this by introducing a further set of considerations, and in that sense is definitely an improvement. Rather than simply being confined to the disjunctive choice between a Jewish and Hellenistic context, the use of "and" indicates that we may combine them in some way. This is a step forward, as it introduces the possibility of Judaism and Hellenism being the proper context for the study of Jesus. However, there are further problems with this formulation. The use of "and" with two elements seems to indicate that the two are equal choices, in the sense that they are two things of a similar type and sort that one can, rather than choosing between them, combine on the same terms and possibly in equal measure. Logically, this may make some sense, but this type of formulation may need to be rethought in terms of historical, cultural and other realities of the ancient world.

As I show below, I think that it is better to formulate the proper context for the study of Jesus as one of Judaism within Hellenism. More than just addressing the logical issues, this formulation addresses the historical, cultural and related realities of the ancient world, including that of Palestine. This formulation indicates a relationship in which

Judaism, however it is defined, is seen as an entity in and of itself, but one that is to be understood within the larger world of Hellenism.

### 3.3. *What is Meant by Judaism*

This is not the place to describe all of the features of Judaism at the time of Jesus. The facts of the Judaism of Jesus' time are sufficiently well-known—note above that there has been serious study of Jesus and Judaism for well over one hundred years—to not require it here. What is worth noting, however, are some of the features of that Judaism as they would be pertinent in terms of the relation of Judaism to Hellenism.

One of the most important factors to realize is that Judaism, without necessarily using the term *Judaisms* in the plural, had a number of different expressions of what has come to be called “common Judaism.”<sup>60</sup> These expressions were evident in a number of different ways.

1. They manifested themselves in different forms of religious expression. Support for Temple worship was apparently a fundamental Jewish belief, so that those of the Diaspora desired to come to Jerusalem to worship and quite possibly even sent money for the cult, as did those in Palestine.<sup>61</sup> However, apparently not all were pleased with the religious practices associated with the Temple, and so it is likely that this precipitated those of the Qumran community to withdraw from the cult in Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup>

2. There were different languages of Judaism. Most Jews indigenous to Palestine probably spoke Aramaic, the language that Judaism learned during the exile. Most Jews indigenous to the Diaspora probably spoke Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world, since the time of Alexander.<sup>63</sup> This was true not only in Egypt, where the Old Greek

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<sup>60</sup> This common Judaism is seen in the work of G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of Tannaim*, 2 vols. (repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997 [1927]) and continued in E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992).

<sup>61</sup> See Sanders, *Judaism*, 51–54.

<sup>62</sup> See J. J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 239–260, esp. 247–248. Discussion of these issues continues. See, e.g., G. Boccaccini, ed., *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> See V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 347–348.



(Septuagint) version was translated, but elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, including in Palestine, where there were always a number of Greek-speaking Jews. A few Jews, perhaps for religious purposes, whether they were in Palestine or the Diaspora, probably spoke Hebrew. The number that knew Hebrew was not great, either inside or outside Palestine. Jews throughout the Roman empire probably also spoke local indigenous languages in some outlying places where the influence of Greek had not fully permeated.<sup>64</sup>

3. There were different literatures of Judaism that were considered important to their respective groups (i.e., scriptural and possibly scriptural, if not finally canonical).<sup>65</sup> These can be classified in different ways—for example, by language of composition (for the most part Hebrew or Greek, but also Aramaic), place of composition (e.g. outside Palestine, inside Palestine, within the Qumran or another sectarian community), and type of text (e.g. biblical, rewritten or expanded Bible, history, wisdom literature, testaments, oracular literature, apocalyptic literature, strictly sectarian literature, and psalms, hymns and prayer material).<sup>66</sup> It is clear that we are in a period before the fixing of the scriptural canon, and during a time when various groups used a variety of different texts that had at least what appears to be scriptural significance.<sup>67</sup>

4. There were different messianic expectations. Debate continues on the amount of continuity and diversity in messianic expectation in Judaism at the turn of the eras.<sup>68</sup> Even if one finds a common core to messianic expectation, there certainly seems to be evidence of a number of different conceptions of the Messiah, most of them finding their

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<sup>64</sup> See J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 24–25.

<sup>65</sup> For discussion and classification, see G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

<sup>66</sup> These categories are taken from M. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT 2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984). See also Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, passim.

<sup>67</sup> The most obvious, but not the only, group were those at Qumran. See J. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 29–70. Not all the sectarian texts at Qumran probably originated with the group.

<sup>68</sup> For continuity, see W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 64–108; for discontinuity, see J. J. Collins, “Jesus, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. Charlesworth, H. Lichtenberger and G. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 100–119, esp. 101.

roots in earlier biblical thought. There are images of a royal Messiah following in the line of David, a prophetic Messiah following in the line of Moses, a priestly Messiah in the line of Melchizedek,<sup>69</sup> and a variety of messianic depictions in the Dead Sea Scrolls, including a possible two Messiahs.<sup>70</sup>

5. There were different currents of thought and behavior that joined certain groups together within Judaism. Grabbe has identified three that are of significance here.<sup>71</sup> The first is the textual current, that is, those who emphasized interpretation of scripture. These include the priests and scribes who were responsible for cultic practice, the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes. The second current is the revolutionaries. These included the Sicarii and the Zealots who fomented the first Jewish Revolt. The third current is eschatological Judaism, which held to an apocalyptic viewpoint and expected a heavenly Messiah at the end times.

6. There were different theological beliefs, even among those who were interpreters of scripture. The priests were perhaps those who are to be linked with the Wisdom tradition.<sup>72</sup> The Pharisees had an oral tradition besides the Hebrew Bible,<sup>73</sup> were concerned with application of their law and traditions to everyday life,<sup>74</sup> and, like many Jews of the time, held to expectation of resurrection or life after death.<sup>75</sup> The Sadducees held to a written scripture only, and denied an oral tradition, they did not believe in resurrection because they probably had a smaller canon of scripture, and they were probably of smaller numbers

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<sup>69</sup> C. A. Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 53–81; cf. 83–154, for messianic texts from Qumran.

<sup>70</sup> See J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 74–101; C. A. Evans, “The Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Israel’s Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. R. S. Hess and M. D. Carroll R. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 85–101, esp. 94–95.

<sup>71</sup> L. L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to First Century Judaism: Jewish Religion and History in the Second Temple Period* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 29–93.

<sup>72</sup> Grabbe, *Introduction*, 36–37.

<sup>73</sup> See E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM, 1990), 97–130.

<sup>74</sup> Grabbe, *Introduction*, 44. Grabbe links the Pharisees with trying to imitate the Temple cult at home. See A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 12–15.

<sup>75</sup> See G. Stemmerger, *Jewish Contemporaries of Jesus: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes*, trans. A. W. Mahnke (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 70–73.

than the other groups and possibly of a higher socio-economic status.<sup>76</sup> The Essenes, who probably lived at Qumran, and elsewhere in Judea, had their own method of interpreting scripture, as well as their own communal documents.<sup>77</sup>

Though we may speak of a “common” Judaism, there is plenty of diversity within this concept to include a number of factors that might prove instructive in the larger historical context in which Jesus lived, and that might more or less easily find a relationship with Hellenism. Not all of it is suitable as providing a context for Jesus, but much of it has some bearing on understanding him.

### 3.4. *What is Meant by Hellenism?*

Recent research has widely accepted the notion that Judaism outside of Palestine was Hellenistic, or perhaps better Hellenistic-Roman, because of the obvious fact that, even if Jews attempted to live in community within the larger Greco-Roman world, they could not help but be in the midst of and interact with such a world. There have been numerous studies that have addressed the various questions associated with this, in terms of cultural, educational, linguistic, social, economic, and related assimilation.<sup>78</sup> Admittedly Hellenism was not a homogeneous cultural phenomenon that embraced or overwhelmed all peoples similarly,<sup>79</sup> but certain facts seem to emerge in terms of Judaism and Hellenism. These are that Jews, like others in the Mediterranean world of the time, used Greek as their *lingua franca*, participated in the wider cultural, social, economic and even military functions of life, and had

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<sup>76</sup> Grabbe, *Introduction*, 45–46. See A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Livonia, MI: Dove, 2001), 304.

<sup>77</sup> Grabbe, *Introduction*, 46–48. On Qumran interpretation, see J. VanderKam and P. Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 221–223, 293–307.

<sup>78</sup> E.g. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, esp. 39–265; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974); Hengel with C. Marksches, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1989). For broader perspectives, see W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilization*, ed. G. T. Griffith, 3rd ed. (London: Arnold, 1952); M. Cary and T. J. Haarhoff, *Life and Thought in the Greek and Roman World* (London: Methuen, 1940). On the pre-Alexandrian period in particular, see M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), 43–61.

<sup>79</sup> See F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1981), 60–78.

various levels of religious separatism and assimilation as they confronted a highly religious Roman world.

The question of the Hellenism of Palestine has been a more highly contested issue, however. There are certainly significant amounts of evidence that have been discussed in relation to Hellenism and Palestine. The question is how one assesses this evidence to see whether it indicates that the culture had become Hellenized. As a result, there have been various attempts to marshal and assess evidence regarding Hellenism in relation to the Jews of the first century. Jonathan Goldstein has formulated six criteria that he believes would claim common consent:<sup>80</sup>

1. Hellenism, to him “implies that some Greeks are present, and that the non-Greeks have some contacts with them,” even in an environment that is not expressly Greek.<sup>81</sup>
2. There is some knowledge and use of Greek as a language.
3. There was development of “rational philosophies” that were often “skeptical of traditional religion.”
4. Hellenism “typically produced highly emotional epic, dramatic, and lyric poetry.”
5. Greek gymnasias were built for purposes of athletics and education.
6. There were Greek architectural products, such as stadiums and theaters.

Goldstein has discussed these six criteria in terms of four strategic periods in the history of Judaism. There are several conclusions that he reaches that are of importance in determining whether the context of Jesus was Hellenistic.

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<sup>80</sup> See J. A. Goldstein, *Semites, Iranians, Greeks, and Romans: Studies in their Interactions*, BJS 217 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 6. This essay was earlier published as “Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E. P. Sanders with A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (London: SCM, 1981), 64–87. Cf. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 88–90.

<sup>81</sup> I take it that Goldstein means here by Greeks not only Greeks proper but those who are non-Jews and part of the Greco-Roman world, and who spoke Greek, as he includes Herod in his discussion. There were relatively few actual Greeks in the Roman world of the time, with the vast majority of those who were promoters of Hellenism not being Greek at all (e.g. Alexander himself).

1. Goldstein finds that none of the six criteria is forbidden expressly in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>82</sup> Even though some Jews would reject such cultural influence, others would embrace it, but there was nothing expressly forbidding it.

2. There were others of the first century who resisted Hellenism. Goldstein cites a number of what he calls “conservative Romans” who resisted such influence. There are cases where Greek communities in Italy were isolated and efforts were made to expel them. There were complaints about the use of Greek, even in Rome, and a general contempt for Greek philosophy, even among Roman thinkers such as Cicero, as well as some Greek literature. There was also a resistance to the Greek gymnasium and other forms of architecture.<sup>83</sup>

3. Goldstein notes that there are a number of statements within Jewish literature against non-Jews; however, he further notes that they never reproached things Greek.<sup>84</sup>

In terms of the overall pattern of Hellenism, Goldstein concludes that “The general picture is that the Jews regarded each one—with the exception of participation in the gymnasium and unlimited association with Greeks—as permissible and sometimes even desirable.”<sup>85</sup> It is worth assessing the evidence more closely, if only briefly.

1. Greeks, or at least those who were not Jews and who spoke Greek as a first language, were present in Judea, Galilee and other northern areas in the first century and came into contact with non-Greeks. In the New Testament, we find those called Greeks (e.g. John 12:20–22, where several of Jesus’ disciples are connected with these Greeks; Mark 7:26, where Jesus speaks with a “Greek” woman),<sup>86</sup> Roman officials such as Pilate and centurions (e.g. Acts 21:37), and the Herods and their families and followers, who were Hellenophiles.<sup>87</sup> Jesus is recorded as having many points of contact with Hellenized areas, such as the

<sup>82</sup> Goldstein, *Semites*, 7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–11.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 29.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>86</sup> Two other episodes where Jesus encounters Greeks may be his healing of the demoniac on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (Matt 8:28–34), on the basis of a herd of swine being present; and Jesus’ healing a deaf mute (Mark 9:14–27) in the region of the Decapolis. See W. Fairweather, *Jesus and the Greeks, or Early Christianity in the Tideway of Hellenism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 250 n. 1.

<sup>87</sup> On the love of things Greek by the Herods and those around them, see N. Kokinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse*, JSPS 30 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), esp. 79–84.

Decapolis, Tyre, Bethsaida (the home of Andrew, Peter and Philip, according to John 1:44; 12:21), and Caesarea Philippi in Gaulanitis, among others, that surrounded Galilee.<sup>88</sup> Extra-biblical evidence notes that there were numerous trade routes through Judea and Galilee, which brought non-Jewish traders from the surrounding Hellenized areas of Roman Egypt and Syria into contact with the local population.<sup>89</sup> Jerusalem itself was an international metropolis,<sup>90</sup> and the courts of Herod, Philip, Archelaus and Antipas attracted visitors from throughout the Roman empire to such cities as Jerusalem, Caesarea, the Hellenized Caesarea Philippi (Pnias), and Sepphoris and Tiberias, both Greek *poleis*.<sup>91</sup>

2. There was use of Greek throughout Judea and Galilee. The Roman officials, such as Pilate and his commanders (see Acts 21:37), used Greek.<sup>92</sup> The three sons of Herod who came to rule, Archelaus, Philip and Antipas, like their father, were thoroughly Hellenized, having been educated in Rome where they would have learned Greek,<sup>93</sup> and Herod's official historiographer was Nicolaus of Damascus, whose Greek writings have now been virtually lost.<sup>94</sup> There is significant evidence from throughout the territories concerned that Greek was in use. The New Testament records incidents where it is likely that Greek was spoken by Jesus and his followers (e.g. Pilate in Mark 15:1–5 and parallels; the Syro-Phoenician "Greek" woman in Mark 7:24–30),<sup>95</sup> and Acts 6:1, 9 bear witness to Greek-speaking Jews and a synagogue

<sup>88</sup> See H. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 317–318, 320–323, 326–327; P. Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 303–304.

<sup>89</sup> See Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 90, 91–116 on Greek towns in Palestine. For maps of the trade routes, see J. Monson, *Student Map Manual: Historical Geography of the Bible Lands* (Jerusalem: Pictorial Archive, 1979) maps 12–1, 12–2, 12–3.

<sup>90</sup> Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 58–71, esp. 63–64, where he notes, among others, that Herod had Thracian (Greek) soldiers as his bodyguards (see Josephus, *Ant.* 17.198; *War* 1.672).

<sup>91</sup> Hengel, *Hellenization*, 14; cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 84–87, 90–100.

<sup>92</sup> H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 256.

<sup>93</sup> Marrou, *History of Education*, 255–256; cf. Kokkinos, *Herodian Dynasty*, 123–126.

<sup>94</sup> See E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 3 vols., rev. G. Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87), 1:28–32.

<sup>95</sup> I argue in more detail for these and other episodes in Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity* and "Luke 17.11–19 and the Criteria for Authenticity Revisited," *JSHJ* 1.2 (2003): 201–224. See also the article on Jesus and the Use of Greek in these volumes.

in Jerusalem. There are also a number of important first-century Greek inscriptions from the territories concerned.<sup>96</sup> Most of these inscriptions make sense only if there were those who used Greek in these areas to read and respond to them. The Temple inscription warned foreigners in Greek to stay outside of the Temple precinct,<sup>97</sup> the pre-70 CE Theodotos inscription indicates that a Greek-speaker was a benefactor of a synagogue,<sup>98</sup> an imperial decree found in Nazareth warns in Greek against desecrating tombs,<sup>99</sup> and a significant percentage (c. 40%) of the funerary inscriptions from the early Roman period in Jerusalem are in Greek,<sup>100</sup> among other possible evidence.<sup>101</sup>

3. Two examples of the kind of rationalistic philosophies Goldstein mentions can be cited. One is the influence of such thought on the Essenes and more particularly on the Qumran documents. Hengel notes that the *War Scroll* reflects Hellenistic military tactics, the Qumran community assumed the shape of what resembles a private association, they adopted the “doctrine of two spirits,” they took on a wide variety of astrological and magically related practices and beliefs, and the *Temple Scroll* has systematic features reflecting Hellenistic

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<sup>96</sup> M. A. Chancey (*Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, SNTSMS 134 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 135–137) wants to minimize the Greek evidence from inscriptions in Galilee. However, by his own reckoning there are fewer Semitic inscriptions. He also must admit: “... few, if any, scholars would argue that Greek was spoken nowhere in Galilee” (124) and “Obviously, at least some Herodian administrators and supporters did [use Greek]. The use of Greek on Herodian coins shows that officials could speak and/or read it... At least some elites in Sepphoris and Tiberias had facility in Greek” (162). He claims to wish to dispute the notion that use of Greek was “widespread” (124). At the end of his discussion of language, he notes that the direct linguistic evidence is limited, but refuses to believe that sociolinguistics can aid discussion (164).

<sup>97</sup> *OGIS* 2.598; *SEG* 8.169; *CIJ* 2.1400. See L. Boffo, *Iscrizioni Greche e Latine per lo Studio della Bibbia* (Brescia: Paideia, 1994), 283–290.

<sup>98</sup> *SEG* 8.170; *CIJ* 2.1404. Boffo, *Iscrizioni*, 274–282.

<sup>99</sup> *SEG* 8.13. Boffo, *Iscrizioni*, 319–333. Chancey (*Greco-Roman Culture*, 56–58) takes this inscription as post AD 44, when the Romans took direct power in Galilee. However, C. A. Evans (*Jesus and the Ossuaries* [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003], 35–37) dates it to the age of Augustus.

<sup>100</sup> See P. W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), 129–130.

<sup>101</sup> E.g. the first-century Goliath family of Jericho, with over half of its funerary epitaphs in Greek, and the first-century Nicanor tomb inscription: see R. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 178–188, 172–173; and pagan temple inscriptions from Mount Hermon dating to the first or second centuries CE: S. Dar and N. Kokkinos, “The Greek Inscriptions from Senaim on Mount Hermon,” *PEQ* (January-June 1992): 9–25.

rationalism.<sup>102</sup> The second example is Ben Sira, who reflects Stoic thought with his use of the two ways doctrine.<sup>103</sup>

4. As for the literature of the time, Goldstein himself cites the example of translating the book of Esther from Hebrew into Greek, into a work that fits “the patterns of Greek romances.”<sup>104</sup> Other examples that can be cited: 1 Maccabees, which Hengel characterizes as a “piece of Hasmonaean propaganda,” was probably translated in Palestine; 1 Esdras was probably translated in Palestine, and there given its “novelistic additions,” according to Hengel; Jason of Cyrene “composed a highly rhetorical work in five books” (used by 2 Maccabees), writing outside of Palestine though as an eyewitness to events there; the Tobiad Romance is preserved by Josephus (see *Ant.* 12.154–224, 228–238); and the *Testament of Joseph* appears to have “strong echoes of the Greek Phaedra legend in the version in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*.”<sup>105</sup> Other works might be cited as well.<sup>106</sup>

5. The construction of gymnasia is the one area where Goldstein believes that there is no confirmed evidence during the time with which we are concerned. There was a gymnasium in Jerusalem in the second century BCE (see 2 Macc 4.7–10). Most scholars believe this institution had disappeared by the time of the first century; however, Duane Roller thinks that the *xystos* mentioned by Josephus (*War* 2.344) as being near the Temple (*War* 5.144) was “perhaps the Hellenistic gymnasium of the second century BC.”<sup>107</sup> We do know that Herod brought games to Jerusalem.<sup>108</sup> Herod built a number of gymnasia elsewhere (e.g. Ptolemais and Damascus),<sup>109</sup> but apparently he did not build any in Judea or Galilee. It is perhaps possible that in the

<sup>102</sup> Hengel, *Hellenization*, 47–48. See also M. Hengel, “Qumran and Hellenism,” in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. J. Collins and R. A. Kugler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 46–56.

<sup>103</sup> Hengel, *Hellenization*, 48.

<sup>104</sup> Goldstein, *Semites*, 29. See E. J. Bickerman, “The Colophon of the Greek Book of Esther,” in his *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1:218–237.

<sup>105</sup> On the above examples, see Hengel, *Hellenization*, 25–28 (quotations, pp. 25, 28). On the Tobiad Romance, see E. J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 231–234.

<sup>106</sup> See Schürer, *History*, 3.509–566, for possibilities.

<sup>107</sup> D. W. Roller, *The Building Program of Herod the Great* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 178.

<sup>108</sup> Schürer, *History*, 2.55.

<sup>109</sup> See Schürer, *History*, 2.47.



first or second century a gymnasium was built at Tiberias, although this is open to dispute.<sup>110</sup>

6. The Herodian building program is well known, with many stadiums and theaters being built, including in Judea and Galilee.<sup>111</sup>

The evidence certainly seems to confirm a high degree of Hellenization of Judaism, even during the first century CE, and throughout Judea and Galilee.

#### 4. *The Relation of Judaism and Hellenism: Reformulation of the Dichotomy*

Rather than thinking of Judaism or Hellenism as the context for Jesus, or even Judaism *and* Hellenism as the proper context, I would suggest that a reformulation of the dichotomy is necessary. There are several ways that this might be done. One fairly recent book is entitled: *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans*.<sup>112</sup> This is one way of formulating the relationship of Judaism and Hellenism. I believe that this still perhaps retains a divide that should be rethought. Another, as already noted above, would be to think in terms of Judaism *within* Hellenism. There are a number of implications of this reformulation that are worth broaching, even if they cannot be explored in sufficient detail here.

1. Hellenism is seen to constitute the larger world in which Judaism was a part. We have focused in this essay upon the Judaism and Hellenism of Judea and Galilee, but this could be extended to include Judaism and Hellenism within the larger Mediterranean world of the first century. In either case, I believe that it is proper to think of Judaism as within Hellenism. Hellenism provides the overarching cultural, linguistic, educational and socio-economic framework in which Judaism existed, wither inside or outside of Palestine.

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<sup>110</sup> See Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture*, 89.

<sup>111</sup> See Richardson, *Herod*, 197–202, for a list. See also Roller, *Building Program*, 125–238, for a catalogue of his building achievements.

<sup>112</sup> M. H. Williams, *The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook* (London: Duckworth, 1998).

2. This framework retains the distinctive features of Judaism. Judaism retains its own identity within the larger Hellenized world of which it is a part. There will be different dimensions of Judaism that will relate to Hellenism in various ways. As noted above, there was resistance to the kind of public display associated with the gymnasium, which probably accounts for the relatively little evidence of building of gymnasia in Palestine in the first century. However, in other regards, Judaism was more closely integrated with the prevailing culture, such as its economy, its politics, and even its creation of literature in Greek. The formulation does not prejudge how these various factors relate to each other, but it does force a recognition and individualized treatment of them.

3. Finally, this formulation creates a meaningful prioritization regarding how to discuss the two. One can discuss Hellenism without necessarily discussing Judaism, except as one wishes to focus on one particular geographical location (e.g. Jews in Rome or Corinth), or one particular ethnic group within the larger empire. However, one cannot speak of Judaism of the first century without seeing it within the larger framework of Hellenism. In that sense, Judaism is not simply “among” the Greeks and Romans, as if it can be sifted out, but “within” the Greeks and Romans, intertwined in ways that interface with each other.

In her summary of the issues, Tessa Rajak acknowledges that the evidence marshaled by those in support of Hellenism is overwhelming, yet she also acknowledges that on specific issues Judaism retained its identity. As she states, “if the debate about the Hellenization of the Jews has seemed inconclusive, this, I would further suggest, is because both sides are right in their own terms. The quest for resolution may then be superfluous, since the agendas are simply disparate.” By this she means that the “cumulative impact” of the data regarding Hellenism is “incontrovertible,” but that one may still select instances of “difference between the Jews and their conquerors, or even their neighbours.”<sup>113</sup> This perhaps strikes the best balance between the two. It is not simply either/or or both/and; it is instead yes, but...

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<sup>113</sup> T. Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 5.

### 5. *Conclusion*

Within the framework of Judaism within Hellenism, one must then ask the question where Jesus fits. As the history of scholarship above shows, in one sense the on-going quest for Jesus in terms of his relation to his surrounding cultures has always recognized and explored the Jewishness of Jesus. This is not something new to a supposed Third Quest, but has been a factor for at least one hundred or more years. If anything, appreciation for the Hellenistic context in which Jesus lived has been brought to the fore over the last thirty to forty years, as scholars have explored the post-classical world and come to terms with the spread of Hellenism to the furthest reaches of the Roman empire. It is within this context that the question of Jesus' relation to Judaism and Hellenism must be asked and answered.



## THE TRANSMISSION OF THE JESUS TRADITION

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It is a curious phenomenon of recent research into the historical Jesus that the contours of how the Jesus tradition emerged and developed rarely are given much attention. The criteria for historical reconstruction have aroused considerably more interest. They are dealt with in separate studies by scholars engaged in the third quest and regularly discussed in books about the historical Jesus.<sup>1</sup> These criteria need to be corroborated with a view as to how tradition functions. The debate about the tradition history is however mostly conducted independently of the history-of-Jesus research and only casually incorporated into this field of study. James D. G. Dunn's recent book on Jesus is a splendid exception and stands out precisely as an attempt to apply consistently an articulated perspective on the Jesus tradition. It is significant, however, that his history of research concerning oral tradition lists mainly scholars who have not conducted extensive study of the historical Jesus.<sup>2</sup> This very modest discussion among scholars of the third quest is all the more remarkable as there is no consensus about tradition and transmission in early Christianity.

Even if no consensus is in view, and precisely because of this, each person with a scientific interest in the historical Jesus needs to declare how s/he looks at the pre-gospel tradition. Almost no scholar would deny that the documents which we employ as sources betray a use of traditional material and that this material presents the avenue from the gospels back to Jesus. History is available in the form of traditional accounts, and to enter the road of tradition means entering into a

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<sup>1</sup> The most influential book on this subject is by Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 192–210. Dunn mentions J. G. Herder, Rudolf Bultmann, C. F. D. Moule, Helmut Koester, Birger Gerhardsson, Werner Kelber, Richard A. Horsley and J. Draper, and Kenneth Bailey.

landscape of intricate and subtle means of communication. It is appropriate therefore to try as clearly as possible to give a view of the contours of that landscape.

### 1. *Tradition and Tradition—Definitions*

A basic point is what we mean by tradition and transmission. For the sake of theoretical clarity, it is appropriate to speak of “tradition” as that which is being transmitted and “transmission” as denoting the process of preserving and handing on the tradition.<sup>3</sup> However, the two words—lat. *traditum* and *traditio*—describe something which cannot be strictly separated.<sup>4</sup> There is no tradition without transmission and there is no transmission without tradition. They define each other mutually to the extent that the characteristics of the one determine the other, producing a kind of circular tradition-historical development. The more or less technical the tradition, the more or less technical its transmission; the more or less technical the transmission, the more or less technical the tradition tends to become. There is a constant interchange between the two.

#### 1.1. *Tradition Between the Past and the Present*

Tradition can be many things. The sociologist Edward Shils, who cared deeply about the traditional character of modern societies, defined it as “anything which is transmitted or handed down from the past to the present.”<sup>5</sup> This is a broad definition. The decisive criterion of tradition is temporal, focusing on it as something that existed before the situation arises.<sup>6</sup> Not only the pastness of tradition, but also its present dimension is important. The constitutive temporal feature of tradition is precisely that it connects the past with the present. This sociological view is congruent with what is to be learned from socio-cultural anthropology. Jan Vansina stresses the double temporal aspect of

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<sup>3</sup> The term “transmission” may be replaced with less technical expressions when the actual communication (performance) of tradition is in view.

<sup>4</sup> I am here developing some insights from my study *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*, ConBNT 24 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994), 20–21.

<sup>5</sup> *Tradition* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 12.

<sup>6</sup> So also Øivind Andersen, “Oral Tradition,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Henry Wansbrough, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 17–58, at 26.

(oral) traditions: “They are the representations of the past in the present.”<sup>7</sup> They are of the present, he insists, because they are told in the present; and they embody a message from the past, because they are expressions from the past at the same time. One cannot deny either the past or the present in them.

It is important to notice what tradition is not. The definition suggested above is free from a number of characteristics that often are attached to a tradition as it is being used and developed in different settings, but which are not constitutive of it as such. While tradition comes from the past, it does not have to speak about the past or to speak at all; while it might become the manifestation of the collective memory and identity of a group, it does not have to be embraced by a large number of people; while it might be normative for an individual or a group, it does not necessarily carry inherent claims to immediate acceptance; while it can survive the changes of time, it does not have to span over several generations; while it might conform to present concerns, it is not empty of diachronic dimensions. The Jesus tradition integrated several of these characteristics, but when speaking of the material as tradition we are essentially classifying it only as something which is handed down from the past to the present.

### 1.2. *Verbal and Behavioral Tradition*

Biblical scholars mostly think of tradition as words conveyed orally or in writing. We tend to discuss it as an object consisting of verbal utterances. This is a narrow understanding of tradition. It springs perhaps from our belief in the written and spoken word as a superior means of communication.

I have suggested that tradition is *anything* which is handed down from the past to the present, and that it does not have to be written or orally communicated at all. It is essential to realize that verbal tradition is a part of a broader landscape of tradition. It is an expression of inner convictions and values and inextricably connected to other such

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<sup>7</sup> *Oral Tradition as History* (London: James Currey, and Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1985), xii. Vansina distinguishes oral tradition from oral history, but there is a significant overlapping between the two. See Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 2001, and Leiden: Brill, 2003), 30–33.

traditional manifestations in the form of behaviors and institutions.<sup>8</sup> The words of tradition are not isolated items unto themselves, but interact with various kinds of practices in the context of the collective identity of groups and communities. The transmitters are involved to the extent that the tradition affects their behavior and sense of belonging. These practices and identity formations are also entities of tradition, not merely a form of conveying the verbal tradition, and they form a body of behavioral tradition. They differ from verbal tradition in being appropriated by imitation and social internalization.

## 2. *Form Criticism Revisited*

Form criticism constituted the most sustained and influential method of tradition history during the last century. It was essentially an attempt to methodologically trace the traditions of the words and the deeds of Jesus and the narration about him back to their earliest forms. Separate studies of the Gospel of Mark had prepared its way. William Wrede claimed that the framework of the Markan story was the author's own creation.<sup>9</sup> The author had imposed his own patterns on independently circulating units. Karl Ludwig Schmidt examined the Markan framework more thoroughly and came to the conclusion that the gospel narrative is chronologically and geographically unreliable.<sup>10</sup> The words and the narration had to be strictly separated in terms of their traditionality and historicity. Rudolf Bultmann brought these insights further. He divided his analysis of the history of the synoptic tradition into a study of the words and the deeds of Jesus, and the narration about him, and stressed the importance of the various activities in the early church for the creation and development of its differ-

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<sup>8</sup> Birger Gerhardsson distinguishes between the inner and the outer tradition. The inner tradition has to do with basic convictions and values. The outer tradition manifests the inner tradition as verbal, behavioral, institutional, and material tradition. The material tradition, which was not part of the early Christian tradition, has to do with localities, clothes, equipment, etc., which became necessary for the efficient function of tradition. See Gerhardsson, *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 89–143.

<sup>9</sup> *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangeliums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901).

<sup>10</sup> *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Eine literarkritische Untersuchung zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919).



ent parts.<sup>11</sup> Martin Dibelius diverged on several points from Bultmann, being more positively inclined towards tradition in its pastness.<sup>12</sup> Yet his central idea was that all tradition first existed in the preaching directed to non-Christians, to Christians, and to converts and later added to by more developed forms adaptable to other needs in the community.

### 2.1. *Early Critique*

Form criticism failed for several reasons as a way to trace the origin and development of the Jesus tradition.<sup>13</sup> Erich Fascher was one of the most outspoken German critics at the time of its advance in Europe and elsewhere. As early as 1924, he questioned the use of form and *Sitz im Leben* as analytical categories and pointed to the narrow *circulus vitiosus* of the form-critical method.<sup>14</sup> Fascher's critique went largely unheard at the time. Form criticism was not seriously questioned until Krister Stendahl and Birger Gerhardsson realized that the more advanced use of the Old Testament and the Jesus tradition implied a separate *Sitz im Leben* of transmission and a more complex correlation between this setting and the formation of traditional units.<sup>15</sup> Ed P. Sanders' attention to the irregularities of transmission was a further

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<sup>11</sup> *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 29, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931).

<sup>12</sup> *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933). His sensitivity to the pastness of tradition is evident in a statement concerning paraenesis: "Wie sich im Urchristentum von Anfang an neben enthusiastischen auch nomistische Gedanken gezeigt haben, so steht neben dem pneumatischen Interesse, für das alle christliche Paränese den einen göttlichen Ursprung hat, die Wertschätzung der Tradition, der Authentie und der Autorität" (243).

<sup>13</sup> Rhetorical criticism might be regarded as a modified kind of form criticism. Cf. Klaus Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1984). The monograph develops insights from Berger's extensive article "Hellenistische Gattungen und Neues Testament," *ANRW II* 23.2 (1984): 1031–1432.

<sup>14</sup> *Die formgeschichtliche Methode: Eine Darstellung und Kritik. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des synoptischen Problems*, BZNW 2 (Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1924).

<sup>15</sup> Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament*, ASNU 20 (Lund: Gleerup, 2d ed., 1968; 1st ed., 1954); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, ASNU 22 (Lund: Gleerup, 1964, reprint of the 1961 ed.; republished: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, and Livonia: Dove, 1998).

call for caution.<sup>16</sup> Today, the form-critical method has been strongly modified as a method of diachronic inquiry.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2. *The Notion of Orality*

The fundamental correlation between the form of a tradition and its *Sitz im Leben* was based on a notion of orality which did not take seriously the more advanced and sophisticated strategies of composition and communication in the gospels. Such strategies do not easily yield to a one-dimensional connection between a form and its *Sitz im Leben*, which was basic to the form-critical method, even less to any attempt to strip away the secondary modifications and trace the tradition back to its pure form.<sup>18</sup>

The insights from folkloristic is still of significance,<sup>19</sup> most recently in Dunn's use of Kenneth E. Bailey's study of the performance of tradition in the gatherings of Arab villages as an explanatory model of the Jesus tradition.<sup>20</sup> It remains unclear how this kind of orality relates to the more advanced patterns of oral composition and communication which have been unveiled in recent studies of the narrative and rhetorical dimensions in the gospels.

## 2.3. *The Concept of Community*

The confidence of the form critics in the creative dynamics of the community blinded them to the presence of individuals. What Peter, James,

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<sup>16</sup> *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>17</sup> The criticism is spelled out more fully in my review of Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, *JBL* 122 (2003): 549–555.

<sup>18</sup> For a survey and evaluation of the use of the expression "Sitz im Leben," see my article "A Century with the *Sitz im Leben*: From Form-Critical Setting to Gospel Community and Beyond," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 1–27.

<sup>19</sup> Werner H. Kelber was of vital importance for initiating a renewed interest in orality among New Testament scholars. See his book *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*, *Voices in Performance and Text* (with a new introduction by the author; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). The book was first published in 1983. Kelber has developed and modified his view in several articles.

<sup>20</sup> *Jesus Remembered*, 205–210. Bailey envisioned also other settings where tradition was transmitted. See his "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 34–54; idem, "Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *ExpT* 106 (1995): 363–367. For a critique of Dunn on this point, see Samuel Byrskog, "A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition: Reflections on James D. G. Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 459–471.

Mary, and others recalled was insignificant in comparison to the ingenious kerygmatic performances of the Christian communities.

It is still fashionable to point out—rightly so—that communal and social structures are decisive for how the past and the present reality is perceived and interconnected. While the stress on the community today recurs in the attempt to understand tradition and the process of recall as a kind of social or collective memory,<sup>21</sup> the notion that the community created and shaped tradition solely on the basis of future-oriented interests has given way to an attention to the boundaries of the collective force of perception. One such boundary would have been the existence of important eyewitnesses during the initial stages of the Jesus tradition.<sup>22</sup> Their presence does not imply a straight way from tradition back to Jesus, to be sure. Each act of observation and recall involves interpretation.<sup>23</sup> But it is important precisely as a reminder of the interactive nature of individual and communal components in the Jesus tradition and a call for further precision in estimating the social and the collective dimension of memory.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. for instance Cillers Breytenbach, “MNHMONEYEIN: Das ‘Sich-Erinnern’ in der urchristlichen Überlieferung. Die Bethanienepisode (Mk 14,3–9/Jh 12,1–8) als Beispiel,” in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Aldebert Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: University Press and Peeters, 1992), 548–557; Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 462–466; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 173 n. 1, 209, passim. There is a volume dealing with the subject extensively: Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, SBLSS 52 (Atlanta: SBL, 2005). For informative surveys of research, see Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, “Social Memory Studies: From ‘Collective Memory’ to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 104–140; Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003). For a recent theoretical discussion of memory, cf. Alan Kirk, “Memory,” in *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Practice*, ed. Werner H. Kelber and Samuel Byrskog (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 155–172.

<sup>22</sup> The possibility that eyewitnesses exerted influence on the tradition was an obstacle to the form-critical approach. Dennis Nineham tried to refute their significance. Cf. his three interrelated articles entitled “Eye-Witness Testimony and the Gospel Tradition,” *JTS* 9 (1958): 13–25; *JTS* 9 (1958): 243–252; *JTS* 11 (1960): 253–264. For critique, see Byrskog, *Story as History*, 133–134, 247–253, 274–275, 297–299. Cf. now Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. my review articles, “The Eyewitnesses as Interpreters of the Past: Reflections on Richard Bauckham’s, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*,” *JSHJ* 6.2 (2008): 157–168; and “A ‘Truer’ History: Reflections on Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses The Gospel as Eyewitness Testimony*,” *Nova et Vetera* 6 (2008): 483–490.

<sup>24</sup> The social and the collective memory are often confused. For clarification, see Eviatar Zerubavel, “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19 (1996): 283–299 (293–295). I have explained my view on social memory

#### 2.4. *The Dichotomy Between Sayings and Narratives*

Another point, which is still not taken fully into account, is that the transmission of the Jesus tradition has its peculiar characteristic in that it hands down material which relates a vital message of revelation to the life of a historical person. It is insufficient, therefore, to approach and conceptualize the initial stages of transmission only from the viewpoint of how abstract forms of teaching are conveyed, because such models often fail to appreciate the narrative dynamics at work when the tradition concerns words and actions intrinsically bound to each other in the life story of a venerated person.

The tendency to dichotomize the sayings material and the narrative material at a pre-synoptic stage fails to consider how ancient orality and communication function. The oral mind-set, in its different manifestations, tends to recall and speak about the past as episodes. Moreover, the narrative character of the Jesus event itself probably fostered a kind of tradition that held together smaller and larger units of words and happenings and initiated an integration of verbal and behavioral tradition. Some of Jesus' sayings would be incomprehensible without an episodal frame and, vice versa, his behavior was an important part of his teaching and proclamation. His miracles were themselves a kind of visual teaching. The Hellenization of Palestine makes it unlikely that such narrative elements can be ascribed to late Hellenistic redaction, as the early form critics believed. Narrative material in the double tradition also points to a narrativizing tendency even in clusters which were predominantly focused on sayings;<sup>25</sup> and it is likely that any kind of collection of sayings at this time—whether Q or the *Gospel of Thomas*—was part of an oral environment of narrative comment and elaboration. In addition, the pre-Markan tradition was not void of narrativity. The form-critical conviction that Markan apophthegms can be reduced to bare dominical sayings is not mandatory as soon as they are seen as elaborations of *chreiai*, which by definition were reminiscences relating sayings or acts to particular persons.<sup>26</sup> The gospel writers were not the first ones interested in the

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and the Jesus tradition more fully in "A New Quest for the *Sitz im Leben*: Social Memory, the Jesus Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew," *NTS* 52 (2006): 319–336.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hultgren, *Narrative Elements in the Double Tradition: A Study of Their Place within the Framework of the Gospel Narrative*, BZNW 113 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> See my article "The Early Church as a Narrative Fellowship: An Exploratory Study of the Performance of the *Chreia*," *TTKi* 78 (2007): 207–226.

narrative dimension of the Jesus tradition, though they were the first to employ the flexibility of the *bios* genre for the purpose of the narrative.<sup>27</sup> For all we know, in early Christianity the Jesus tradition was, from the beginning, recalled as a grand narrative event.

Gerd Theissen's influential idea that itinerant charismatics cared for the sayings material in the context of discipleship while other people transmitted brief episodes concerning Jesus' miracles is a more recent extension of form-critical thinking.<sup>28</sup> It is weakened precisely by the kind of dichotomy assumed between sayings and narrative material. We have little evidence that wandering charismatics played such a significant role at an early time.<sup>29</sup> The contours of the persons with narrative competence among the ordinary folk are likewise very vague. Theissen reconstructs the social situation of tradition on the basis of who plays the significant role and whose ideological, geographical, and temporal perspective is represented in the various units of the gospels. It is only by setting the sayings and episodes into the contexts which Theissen presupposes that he is able to interpret them as he does.

### 3. *The Beginnings*

If form criticism failed in its attempt to trace the Jesus tradition back to the collective activities of the early church, the endeavor to find its beginnings before Easter becomes interesting. It is unfortunate that this work is occasionally conceived as a theological defense of the historical reliability of the Jesus tradition. Some of its advocates may regard it as such, to be sure, but it constitutes essentially a modification and diachronic extension of some form-critical insights.<sup>30</sup> The old

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<sup>27</sup> Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst*, TANZ 22 (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1997); Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. for instance Gerd Theissen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 25–131.

<sup>29</sup> For an evaluation, cf. Markus Tiwald, *Wanderradikalismus: Jesu erste Jünger—ein Anfang und was davon bleibt*, Österreichische Biblische Studien 20 (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> In *Story as History*, 6, 306, I tried to point out that my own interest is not in the reliability of the Jesus tradition. In fact, the historicity of tradition in terms of its correlation with the “brute facts” of history is of little theological importance to me. The dynamic of existing within the interactive matrix of the past, the present, and the future is more fascinating. I have indicated this interest in the article “Exegetisk teologi

notion that a tradition relates to a setting is still of significance, but in a different and less one-dimensional way.

### 3.1. *Teacher and Disciples*

There are two basic sociological factors recorded in the gospels which indicate that the Jesus tradition had its beginning in the ministry of Jesus: first, he appeared as a teacher; secondly, he gathered a group of devoted followers. The role of a teacher implies a consistent attempt to communicate comprehensibly; the followers are sustained in their social and collective identity by reference to what the master said and did.

The data are impressive.<sup>31</sup> The terms used for “teacher”—*ῥαββί* or *ῥαββουνί* and *διδάσκαλος*—occur sixty-five times in address to Jesus (except John 8:4). Luke also employs *ἐπιστάτης* didactically seven times.<sup>32</sup> On four or five occasions people speak about him in the third person as teacher;<sup>33</sup> on six occasions he refers to himself as teacher.<sup>34</sup> We find the verb “to teach” (*διδάσκειν*) fifty-six times (except John 8:2) and the noun “teaching” (*διδασχὴ*) nine times, both of them almost always referring to the activity of Jesus.

The term “disciple” (*μαθητής*)—“student,” “the one taught” (*דַּרְשָׁן*)—is used in the gospels 234 times, mostly for the Twelve, but also for the adherents of other teachers (e.g. Matt 9:14; 22:16; Acts 9:25) and—in Lukan material—for additional followers of Jesus and Christians in general (e.g. Luke 6:17; Acts 9:1; 11:26). In John the Jews are disciples of Moses (John 9:28). The verb “to make disciples” (*μαθητεύειν*) is never employed in the active mode to describe what

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i nytestamentligt perspektiv: Reflektioner kring bibelvetenskapens uppgift vid en teologisk högskola,” *Tro & Liv* 62 (2003): 10–14. I discuss it partly in reference to the important philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer in “Räisänen through Theissen: A Program and a Theory,” in *Moving Beyond New Testament Theology? Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline vander Stichele, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 88 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 197–220.

<sup>31</sup> For more complete lists of references, see Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, 3rd ed., WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 246–276; Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 202–204, 221–224.

<sup>32</sup> Luke 5:5; 8:24 (*bis*), 45; 9:33, 49; 17:13.

<sup>33</sup> Matt 9:11; 17:24; Mark 5:35; John 11:28. Cf. John 3:2.

<sup>34</sup> Mark 14:14 pars.; Matt 10:24–25/Luke 6:40 (*bis*); Matt 23:8; John 13:13–14 (*bis*).

Jesus does, only for what the disciples themselves and Paul and Barnabas do (Matt 28:19; Acts 14:21), but it is twice found in the passive mode—or possibly medium—in reference to persons who have become disciples of Jesus (Matt 13:52; 27:57). Three times we find the verb “to learn” (μανθάνειν) describing the appropriation of something that Jesus refers to (Mark 13:28 par.; Matt 9:13; 11:29). This is however not a prominent term in the gospels. Primarily the disciples learn by following (ἀκολουθεῖν) Jesus, that is, by hearing, seeing, and imitating their master.

These data in the gospels become significant when compared with the rest of the New Testament. While leaders in the early Christian congregations are called teachers, Jesus is never given this didactic label outside the gospels. The rest of the New Testament is surprisingly reserved in this regard. Only Acts 1:1 describes his activity didactically, and perhaps Paul alludes to him as an exemplary teacher in Rom 6:17, but these instances are exceptions and provide no evidence for the use of the term “teacher” in regard to Jesus. By the same token, the terms “disciple” and “to make disciples”—or “to become a disciple”—are employed only in the gospels and Acts. It never became a prominent label for the early Christians.

### 3.2. *Jesus the Teacher*

By the standards and criteria of historical-Jesus research, this strikingly statistical feature is a clear indication of Jesus’ own didactic role. Rainer Riesner’s attempt to situate the origin of the Jesus tradition within Jesus’ didactic identity and activity has been criticized on account of its picture of the transmission process,<sup>35</sup> but it is to his merit to have placed Jesus’ teaching role on firm footing. Scholars who minimize the importance of his didactic appearance and place him in other roles which allegedly spurred the beginning of the Jesus tradition have to confront the data outlined above.

In stressing the didactic aspect of Jesus’ person and mission we single out one dimension of his appearance and the narrative interpretation of him. Didactic categories were intrinsically related to prophetic roles. It is not to be denied that he exhibited also significant charismatic traits. Moreover, each gospel has incorporated the notion of

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<sup>35</sup> *Jesus als Lehrer*. Cf. also idem, “Jesus as Preacher and Teacher,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Wansbrough, 185–210.

Jesus as teacher into its characteristic plot and added significance to it, integrating the teaching into the revelatory importance of Jesus' person and ministry. In the gospels Jesus is both the subject and—implicitly—the object of teaching, the teacher and the one taught.<sup>36</sup> The author of Matthew, in particular, enhanced it into a didactic christology of his own.<sup>37</sup> We should also note that each and every occurrence of ῥαββί and ῥαββουví cannot be regarded as a reflection of a didactic designation of Jesus, as these terms were employed as full-blown titles only after 70 CE.

### 3.3. *The Disciples as a Jesus Community*

While Riesner established the didactic role of the historical Jesus, Heinz Schürmann had already given the group of disciples its contours as a transmitting body of Jesus followers.<sup>38</sup> He had the ambition of bridging the gulf between the post-Easter community and the pre-Easter group of disciples. It was essential for him to establish a sociological continuity between the two in order to substantiate the idea of the post-Easter act of remembrance as a careful act of transmission. This continuity becomes formally and substantially evident, he argued, once we realize that both settings consisted of groups which confessed their alliance to Jesus' words and to the eschatological event of his person. The confessional character of the pre-Easter group of disciples served as the form-critically important typical situation and condition and thus resembled sociologically, despite the differences, the post-Easter community. Schürmann further distinguished between the

<sup>36</sup> This is the basic argument in Samuel Byrskog, "Das Lernen der Jesusgeschichte nach den synoptischen Evangelien," in *Religiöses Lernen in der biblischen, frühjüdischen und frühchristlichen Überlieferung*, ed. Beate Ego and Helmut Merkel, WUNT 180 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 191–209.

<sup>37</sup> Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher*; idem, "Jesus as Messianic Teacher in the Gospel According to Matthew: Tradition History and/or Narrative Christology," in *The New Testament as Reception*, ed. Mogens Müller and Henrik Tronier, JSNTSup 230 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 83–100; Mogens Müller, "The Theological Interpretation of the Figure of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: Some Principal Features in Matthean Christology," *NTS* 45 (1999): 157–173. Cf. also John Yueh-Han Yieh, *One Teacher: Jesus' Teaching Role in Matthew's Gospel Report*, BZNW 124 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004).

<sup>38</sup> Heinz Schürmann, "Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition: Versuch eines formgeschichtlichen Zugangs zum Leben Jesu" (1960), in idem, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Evangelien*, KBANT (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968), 39–65.



inner and the outer *Sitz im Leben* of the pre-Easter group of disciples. Internally the group found its identity as confessing students caring for the words of Jesus for their own sake and forming them in accordance with their perception of him. Externally the group was motivated to transmission by the typical situation and condition of their preaching of the Kingdom and their life together.

Schürmann's article is important because it extends the locus of tradition diachronically back to the ministry of Jesus, while at the same time acknowledging the basic tenets of the form-critical correlation between a literary form and the typical situation and condition of a group. He takes seriously the basic insight that tradition often relates to recurring activities of a group of people with a keen interest in conveying the tradition to others. In this sense he is a (neglected) forerunner of the modern emphasis on tradition as the manifestation of social or collective memory, but with a more consistent focus on memory as a deliberate medium of transmission and a more modest interest in the popular kind of orality inherent in the tradition process.<sup>39</sup> To be sure, the continuity he calls for has to be tested from case to case—devotion can produce both close adherence to and pious elaboration of tradition—and we could question whether the commissioning of the disciples played such a dominant role, considering the possibility that Jesus was teaching them on several other occasions. Nonetheless, Schürmann has established a social basis for assuming that the teaching of Jesus did not become tradition only after Easter and independently of that teaching, but in close proximity to his own ministry as a teacher of a devoted group of followers.

#### 4. *Teaching Becoming Tradition*

The role of a teacher implies that a teaching is conveyed to one or several attentive students. This is the beginning of tradition and transmission. The teaching becomes tradition at the moment it is communicated in a meaningful way and received by others. Few scholars

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<sup>39</sup> Schürmann subsequently argued for the involvement of pneumatically inspired teachers. See his article "... und Lehrer": Die geistliche Eigenart des Lehrdienstes und sein Verhältnis zu anderen geistlichen Diensten im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter," in idem, *Orientierungen am Neuen Testament: Exegetische Gesprächsbeiträge*, Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1978), 116–156.

today doubt that Jesus in fact drew a circle of more intimate followers to be with him. He might even have chosen to limit the number to twelve.<sup>40</sup> It is significant that he deliberately selected disciples, instead of their selecting him as teacher (Matt 8:18–22/Luke 9:57–62). Following him meant being deliberately chosen by him and for ever and exclusively attached to him. This kind of relationship provides the best possible condition for an emerging tradition.

#### 4.1. *The Impact of Jesus*

Unless the students are sufficiently affected by the teaching, it is unlikely that it is conveyed further to others. It has to make an impact in order to turn into tradition. By the same token, a devoted group of followers may remember thoughts, feelings, and experiences from their time with the master, but unless the master spoke and acted comprehensibly, it is unlikely that their thoughts, feelings, and experiences would be reasonably handed on to others. The impact has to be grounded in successful communication in order to become tradition. It is therefore essential to have a synoptic view of Jesus as teacher and the disciples as his devoted followers. Both are necessary in order for the tradition to emerge. The gospels, as we have seen, provide sufficient data for assuming that these conditions were at work in the ministry of Jesus and suggest that there existed, in the midst of other activities, a teach-and-learn situation.

Dunn rightly stresses that the initial impact of Jesus was decisive for the beginning of the Jesus tradition as an act of remembering and oral performance.<sup>41</sup> The impact and the shared experience of it included the formation of the tradition to recall what had made that impact. The impacting word or event became the tradition of that word or event in a communal process and constituted the constants which successive retellings could elaborate. Dunn, like Schürmann, regards the preaching of the disciples as a particular occasion which stimulated the articulation of the disciple-effecting impact which they had experienced. The focus on the experience of Jesus' decisive impact holds together the tradition-forming role of words and events and avoids the outdated way of separating the two in the Jesus tradition. Memory

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<sup>40</sup> John P. Meier, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did It Exist during Jesus' Public Ministry?" *JBL* 116 (1997): 635–672.

<sup>41</sup> *Jesus Remembered*, 239–245.

tends to immediately narrativize the past into an integrated whole, and the disciples recalled the impact of a person whose deeds formed a message as vital as his words.

#### 4.2. *The Didactic Authority of Jesus*

Dunn's notion of Jesus' impact has to be supplemented by a more consistent attention to Jesus' didactic authority and techniques. Dunn gives them only little attention and the step from initial impact and disciple response to traditioning therefore remains unclear.

Jesus' verbal teaching was impressive to the audience, but the gospels show that his impact often had to do with the unusual didactic authority emerging from his words coupled with his deeds. When he is teaching (*περιπατεῖν, διδάσκειν*) in the temple the Jewish leaders ask him by what authority he is doing (*ποιεῖν*) the things previously narrated (Mark 11:27–33 pars.). He was a teacher who not only taught his students words of wisdom, but who also did remarkable things. That authority was intrinsically related to the unusual impact he made when teaching *and* performing deeds of power in the synagogues on the Sabbath (Mark 1:21–28 par.; Mark 6:1–6 par.).<sup>42</sup> Jesus was different from an ordinary teacher, to be sure, but it was precisely when he transcended the didactic conventions that he appeared as a teacher with an extraordinary authority and made the most profound impact. The gospel authors report that his fame began to spread as a result (Mark 1:28 par.). The authority they were asking about in the temple was a didactic authority which expressed itself in words and unexpected deeds.

#### 4.3. *The Didactic Techniques of Jesus*

Jesus taught publicly not only in the synagogues and the temple, but also in other places: in private houses—meals could have been important occasions for teaching (cf. Luke 7:36–47; 14:1–24)—and in the open air. In the saying in Mark 1:38 (par.) he programmatically envisions himself as a wandering teacher.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Mark 3:1–6 pars.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. also Matt 8:20, 22/Luke 9:58, 60.

His public impact was not made only casually. The form of the verbal teaching was deliberately impressive.<sup>44</sup> He made use of exaggeration,<sup>45</sup> play on words,<sup>46</sup> proverbs,<sup>47</sup> obscure and paradoxical sayings,<sup>48</sup> irony,<sup>49</sup> questions,<sup>50</sup> and—above all—parables, most of them formulated in Aramaic and Hebrew, but some perhaps tentatively in Greek.<sup>51</sup> They all, even the parables,<sup>52</sup> functioned as pedagogical means to convey the teaching in a way that made a profound impression and promoted further reflection and understanding.<sup>53</sup>

The teaching was followed up in the circle of disciples. His impressive words and deeds in public were likely to be commented upon and transformed into a meaningful message and embryonic tradition within the smaller setting of disciples. The synoptic gospels several times depict situations where the disciples ask Jesus for private explanation, especially concerning the difficult parables,<sup>54</sup> but also about other matters,<sup>55</sup> and where he takes them aside in order to teach them.<sup>56</sup> The custom of conveying special (esoteric) teaching to a group of selected people was wide spread in Jewish and Greco-Roman antiq-

<sup>44</sup> I cannot discuss the authenticity of each saying separately, but list examples that are accepted as characteristic of Jesus' teaching by a majority of scholars.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. Matt 10:37/Luke 14:26; Matt 5:29–30.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. Matt 16:18; 23:24 (Aram.: כְּלִמָּא or קְלִמָּא, “vermin,” and גַּמְלָא “camel”).

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Mark 3:24 pars.; 6:4 pars.; Matt 6:21/Luke 12:34; Matt 6:34c; 26:52b.

<sup>48</sup> E.g. Matt 11:11/Luke 7:28; Matt 11:12/Luke 16:16; Luke 13:32.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. Matt 11:16–19/Luke 7:31–35; Matt 16:2–3 (cf. Luke 12:54–55).

<sup>50</sup> E.g. Mark 4:30 par.; 8:27–29 pars.; 9:50 pars.; 11:29–30 pars.

<sup>51</sup> The major argument in favor of Jesus teaching in Greek is circumstantial, namely, the bilingual character of Palestine. We should also note the passages claiming that Jesus spoke to others who plausibly did not understand a Semitic language (Mark 7:26–30 par.; 15:2–5 pars.; Matt 8:5–13/Luke 7:2–10; John 12:20–28). Cf. Stanley E. Porter, “Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 123–154. The study by Mark A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee*, SNTSMS 118 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), shows that the arguments for the heavy influence of Greek language and culture in lower Galilee have to be reconsidered.

<sup>52</sup> See Birger Gerhardsson, “Illuminating the Kingdom: Narrative Meshalim in the Synoptic Gospels,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Wansbrough, 266–309.

<sup>53</sup> See Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teaching* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 7–25, 27–59; Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 353–498, 510–512; PHEME PERKINS, *Jesus as Teacher*, Understanding Jesus Today (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 38–61.

<sup>54</sup> Mark 4:10 pars.; 4:34; 7:17 par.; Matt 13:36.

<sup>55</sup> Mark 9:11 par.; 9:28 par.; 10:10; 10:26 pars.

<sup>56</sup> Mark 9:30–31; 9:35; 10:32 pars.

uity. The curious saying in Matt 10:26–27/Luke 12:2–3—with a similar saying also in Mark 4:22 par.—was perhaps related to Jesus’ own practice of teaching the disciples “in the dark.” Possibly Jesus withdrew from public more often as the opposition towards him increased. However, the synoptic gospels indicate that it was an intentional procedure of Jesus that the disciples should be given (to know) the secret(s) of the Kingdom (Mark 4:11 pars.).<sup>57</sup> This certainly implies revelation, and the saying is quite similar to the (other?) one from the Q-material that the Son reveals the Father to whom he chooses (Matt 11:25–26/Luke 10:21–22). But revelation may come in unveiled words of instruction for those attentive to the teaching. The private teaching could take place in a house or outside.<sup>58</sup> In Jerusalem, the garden at the western slope of the Mount of Olives seems to have been a place which Jesus regularly visited together with his disciples (Luke 22:39; John 18:1–2).

We have no indication that the disciples made written notes of the teaching.<sup>59</sup> Considering the low appreciation of written material in Jewish and Greco-Roman antiquity in general, and the preference for the *viva vox* rather than the written word in some Christian circles of the early second century (Papias in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.4),<sup>60</sup> it is unlikely that such notes played any significant role.<sup>61</sup> Even if they existed to some limited extent, they were probably, as most ancient

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<sup>57</sup> There are significant agreements between Matt 13:11/Luke 8:10 as against Mark 4:11, but they do not affect the point that the disciples are recipients of a special secret.

<sup>58</sup> The mention of a house for Jesus’ activity in Mark and Matthew is peculiar. Matthew does not repeat any of the references to it in Mark 2:1; 3:20; 7:17, 24; 9:28, 33; 10:10. Yet he adds it in 13:1 (cf. Mark 4:1) and includes it in special material in 9:28; 13:36; 17:25. At least Mark 9:33 (cf. Mark 1:29; 2:1; 3:20) and Matt 17:24 could indicate that he taught the disciples in a specific house in Capernaum.

<sup>59</sup> Differently Allan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, BS 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 223–229.

<sup>60</sup> See William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). We should however note that Second Temple Judaism put a great emphasis on reading and writing as part of the study of the Torah. I have surveyed the evidence for elementary and scribal schools in ancient Israel in *Jesus the Only Teacher*, 63–67. Cf. now also David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>61</sup> Luke reports that John and Peter “were uneducated and untrained men.” Although the text is strongly rhetorical, it indicates that the author of Luke-Acts would have been surprised to find such notes among that which was handed down to him.

writings, an integrated part of the oral currencies of discussion and performance.

### 5. *Tradition Being Transmitted*

The way of the tradition from Jesus and his disciples to the gospels is difficult to trace with precision. His death must have caused an abrupt pause in the process of his teaching becoming tradition. We are in the dark concerning what precisely happened to the emerging tradition immediately after the crucifixion. Regardless of how we estimate the reason for Jesus' death and the possibility that he intentionally went up to Jerusalem to meet his fatal destiny, from the earliest Passion narrative in Mark 14–16 we receive the impression that his followers—men and women—were disillusioned, afraid, and poorly motivated to transmit and celebrate what they had learned publicly and privately from him. The immediate impact of his presence was gone; there was no reason for the celebration of tradition. At this moment of crisis and strong cognitive dissonance among all those who had been closest to him, the initial Jesus tradition must have been at great risk.

#### 5.1. *Transmission Terminology*

It is noteworthy that Jesus' disciples did not disband after his death. They kept their cohesive group and enlarged it. At some point they began to recall what Jesus had said and done and what had happened to him.

The Pauline letters indicate that in the 50's the Jesus tradition was established as something to be not only recalled and celebrated, but transmitted in a more technical sense. Scholars who emphasize the performance of the Jesus tradition often neglect the indications of a more deliberate kind of transmission.<sup>62</sup> The terms "deliver" (παράδιδόναι/מסר) and "receive" (παραλαμβάνειν/קבל) were, as is

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. Gerhardsson's critique of Dunn in "Innan evangelierna skrevs," *SEÅ* 69 (2004): 167–189 (at 177); and "The Secret of the Transmission of the Unwritten Jesus Tradition," *NTS* 51 (2005): 1–18 (at 9). Dunn does not explain these indications, but stresses the living and adaptable character of the tradition as it was actually used. Cf. already his "Jesus Tradition in Paul," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 155–178.

well known, technical terminology for the transmission of Torah in rabbinic Judaism. Mark 7:4–5, 13 show that they carried the connotation of handing on and receiving tradition (παράδοσις) already before 70 CE. It is difficult to escape the impression that this is exactly what Paul, the former proto-rabbi, has in mind when he twice uses both terms to describe what he received and passed on to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3). The first time it concerns the Lord's Supper; the second time Jesus' death, resurrection, and appearances. Both passages point to something which Paul received and handed on. It is a matter of tradition and deliberate transmission.

On other occasions Paul and his associates use similar and additional transmission terminology for what they had learned and delivered to the communities. This is clear from several passages:

- 1 Cor 11:2 (καθὼς παρέδωκα ὑμῖν τὰς παραδόσεις κατέχετε)  
 Phil 4:9 (ἂ καὶ ἐμάθετε καὶ παρελάβετε καὶ ἠκούσατε καὶ εἶδετε ἐν ἐμοί, ταῦτα πράσσετε)  
 Col 2:6 (ὡς οὖν παρελάβετε τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν κύριον, ἐν αὐτῷ περιπατεῖτε)  
 1 Thess 4:1 (παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν)  
 2 Thess 2:15 (κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε)  
 2 Thess 3:6 (περιπατοῦντος... μὴ κατὰ τὴν παράδοσιν ἣν παρελάβοσαν παρ' ἡμῶν).

The transmission terminology occurs here in contexts of admonition. In addition to these passages, there are others where Paul attributes a tradition to the Lord (1 Cor 7:10–11; 9:14) and alludes to the Jesus tradition in his exhortations.<sup>63</sup> As it seems, the instruction of believers was the primary setting for communicating the Jesus tradition. This was the occasion when it was handed on, mostly orally but sometimes in epistolary form (2 Thess 2:15).

## 5.2. *Transmission and Paraenesis*

Thus we have indication that from early on the paraenesis in particular called for a more systematic account of the Jesus tradition.<sup>64</sup> The

<sup>63</sup> Cf. e.g. Rom 12:14 and Matt 5:44/Luke 6:27–28; Rom 12:17 and Matt 5:39–42/Luke 6:29–30; Rom 14:14 and Mark 7:15; 1 Thess 5:2, 4 and Matt 24:43/Luke 12:39–40; 1 Thess 5:13 and Mark 9:50; 1 Thess 5:15 and Matt 5:39–48/Luke 6:27–38.

<sup>64</sup> Paraenesis can be many things. See Wiard Popkes, *Paränese und Neues Testament*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 168 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996), 13–29; idem, “Paraenesis in the New Testament: An Exercise in Conceptuality,” in

teaching to believers probably fostered a disciplined act of transmission. To this end Paul must have employed teachers.<sup>65</sup> Their primary duty was to instruct others in matters of conduct. This duty related intrinsically to teaching the Jesus tradition, because the tradition was the essential point of reference concerning how to think and behave.

Paul's use of transmission terminology and references and allusions to tradition in these contexts concern primarily words of Jesus. Probably it was in this setting of instruction that an awareness of the special significance of the *logia* arose. This is not to say that there was no interest in what Jesus did and what was done to him, as we have noted. We have indications that Christ was presented as a pattern of ethical instruction (Rom 6:17) and that believers were encouraged with the use of various metaphors to act like him, as Paul did.<sup>66</sup> Although we have no direct evidence, it is also likely that recollections of a more narrative kind were handed down and served as important points of reference in matters of Christian conduct and were celebrated at important moments in the communities. It is however self-evident that those items of the tradition which could be ascribed directly to Jesus himself carried a different kind of authority in the paraenetic context than those episodes which by necessity must have been formulated by other persons.

It would be easy, with Dibelius, to equate paraenesis and transmission. But the matter is more complex. The paraenesis stimulates deliberate work with tradition; it uses and communicates tradition, as we have noted, but it is distinct from transmission in a more technical sense. The reason for this is that we never find the tradition explicitly quoted as Jesus tradition in paraenetic contexts. It is always only alluded to. The letter of James is instructive. It contains numerous intertextual links to Jesus sayings known from the gospels,<sup>67</sup> but the author never refers to them as Jesus tradition. He would surely, like

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*Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr and Troels Engberg-Pedersen, BZNW 125 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 13–46. Here I am thinking of its function to enforce the common norms by authoritatively admonishing one or several persons concerning the proper way of life.

<sup>65</sup> So Alfred F. Zimmermann, *Die urchristlichen Lehrer: Studien zum Tradentenkreis der διδάσκαλοι im frühen Urchristentum*, 2nd ed., WUNT 2.12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Rom 13:14; 15:1–5, 7; 1 Cor 11:1; Gal 6:2; Col 3:13.

<sup>67</sup> For a minimalist account, cf. Wesley Hiram Wachob and Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 433–450.



the rabbis, have identified the sayings by reference to their originator, had he been concerned with transmission as such in the letter. Moreover, the parallels to the Jesus tradition concern not individual sayings merely, but are usually found in blocks of material—mostly Q material.<sup>68</sup> This suggests that the teachers employed tradition that had already been formally structured into a manageable body of tradition. The author could allude to this material in his paraenesis, and in this way use the Jesus tradition, but this was an act of communication which was distinct from the deliberate work with the tradition.

### 5.3. *Transmission as Memorization*

The core element of transmission in antiquity was the faculty of memory. It was a goddess to the Greeks. They cherished it and sought means to enhance and cultivate it.<sup>69</sup> In Judaism it became the outstanding mode of transmission of Torah. The rabbis developed advanced techniques to foster its accuracy.<sup>70</sup> Recent work on the Jesus tradition pays attention to the social or collective memory of early Christian groups. That memory, it is argued, was decisive for moulding and censoring the vision of the past in a way that conformed to the values of the group. While adding an important aspect to the formative role of the social environment, it is at odds with the criterion that a piece of information about Jesus has a claim to authenticity if it is dissimilar to the tendencies of early Christianity.

As we noted above, it is essential to keep in balance the individual and the communal components in the transmission of the Jesus tradition. On an individual level, memory has to do with memorization and recall. The rabbis were extreme, but we do not have to adopt the

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<sup>68</sup> For discussion, see Patrick J. Hartin, *James and the Q Sayings of Jesus*, JSNTSup 47 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

<sup>69</sup> I have indicated the most significant aspects in *Story as History*, 160–165. In addition to the literature referred to there, cf. also Jocelyn Penny Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997). I have compared this picture with Crossan's (modernized) notion of memory in "Talet, minnet och skriften: Evangelietraditionen och den antika informationsteknologi," *SEÅ* 66 (2001): 139–150, at 144–147.

<sup>70</sup> The standard work on this subject is still Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*. The critique against Gerhardsson's work has focused mainly on its second part, which deals with early Christianity, while the first part dealing with rabbinic Judaism has been widely appreciated. Cf. also Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For an extensive recent discussion of Gerhardsson's approach, see now Kelber and Byrskog, eds., *Jesus in Memory*.

very technical mnemonic system of rabbinic Judaism in order to appreciate the importance of individual memory in the Jesus tradition. The ideal of recalling something with uttermost accuracy was spread far beyond the rabbinic circles. Already Aristotle reflected systematically on memory and recall in a separate treatise, and insisted on the past reality of that which is being recalled (*De Memoria et Reminiscentia*). Pliny the Elder, in the first century CE, is a good example of how an experienced person thought of it at the time of the emerging Jesus tradition. He brings together an amusing anthology of memory stories about Cyrus, Lucius Scipio, Cineas, Mithridates, and Charmadas (*Hist. Nat.* 7.24.88–89). Their memory was truly exceptional and caused amazement and esteem. For Pliny, who had traveled and seen much, memory was the most necessary boon of life. He realized indeed that it was fragile, but he also knew of many people who had gained glory from it. Several of these stories are exaggerated and aimed mainly to glorify the person in question. Nevertheless, they show that a good and accurate memory was something precious and greatly admired and indicate the ability of named individuals to recall with a certain amount of precision. It comes as no surprise that the Greeks and the Romans had techniques for the memorization of significant words (*memoria verborum*) and deeds (*memoria rerum*), developing and practicing in different and sometimes tiresome ways the visual mnemonics of mental places and images initiated several centuries earlier by Simonides of Ceos, according to the legend,<sup>71</sup> and elaborated by Hippias and Theodectes the Tragedian.

We have no direct evidence that the Jesus tradition was memorized. The cumulative impression is however that at least some parts of it were memorized. (a) Paul's terminology suggests deliberate transmission of Jesus tradition. (b) The letter of James indicates that the Jesus tradition was transmitted in a technical sense and independently of its use in paraenetic and other situations. (c) Memory and memorization were cherished and practiced broadly in Jewish and Greco-Roman antiquity. (d) Those in antiquity who came to know most concerning deliberate transmission of teaching favored and developed its use further. The view of orality which recognizes memorization harmonizes with that part of the criterion of dissimilarity which is still recognized.

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<sup>71</sup> For a possible scenario of its origin and development, cf. Stefan Goldmann, "Statt Totenklage Gedächtnis: Zur Erfindung der Mnemotechnik durch Simonides von Keos," *Poetica* 21 (1989): 43–66.

Things which did not fit the present concern of the group were not always censored and eliminated from tradition, but remembered and preserved as traditional archaisms dissimilar to the tendencies of early Christianity.

This is not to say that everything which the gospels tell us about Jesus has been memorized or that traditional units always were memorized exactly in the same way. One may choose to memorize an item in a slightly different form from the one which was received. It is memorization, but within a frame of variation. The difference between the gospels is no argument against the practice of memorization, as is often assumed, but shows that different people could choose to memorize the same thing in different ways and that memorization, while maintaining its distinctive preservative character, was never an entirely passive enterprise isolated from the social environment and activities of the larger group.

### 6. *Tradition Being Performed*

There is a tendency among biblical scholars to stress either that the Jesus tradition was faithfully handed on in separate acts of transmission or that it was regularly used and shaped in oral performance. This is an unfortunate polarization. Several studies of oral performance tend to equate transmission and performance, arguing that in orality one cannot differentiate strictly between diachronic and synchronic means of communication.<sup>72</sup> This way of arguing is as one-sided as the argument that transmission was always passive and entirely independent of oral performance. It is true in some purely oral cultures, but groups which communicate orally might indeed show a keen sense of pastness and do not always exhibit a functional, homeostatic attitude to tradition. More to the point, it hardly applies to the Jesus tradition. This tradition was surely handed on mainly orally, as was recognized long ago, but work remains to be done on investigating the various kinds of oralities and rhetorics that flourished in early Christianity and interacted with the rather sophisticated forms of textuality.<sup>73</sup> Is there a kind of oral performance which integrates the diachronic dimension

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<sup>72</sup> So for instance Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 43 n. 224.

<sup>73</sup> This is one of the desiderata emerging from Dunn's emphasis on the oral character of the Jesus tradition. See Byrskog, "A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition," 470-471.

into the present time of the narrative without demolishing the pastness of tradition? To put it differently, what kind of relationship existed between tradition and performance in the narrative proclamation of early Christianity?

### 6.1. *Preaching the Gospel as Tradition*

In 1 Cor 15:3 the two technical terms of transmission are used in a clause which explains Paul's preaching (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) of the gospel—the verse is introduced with “for” (γάρ). Preaching the gospel to the Corinthians was a kerygmatic performance of tradition, according to this text, and in this sense a kind of instruction. The performance, moreover, contains narrative elements. The tradition to which Paul refers did not include a mere accumulation of what Jesus had said, but a story of what happened to him and of his appearances. Perhaps he received it, in some form, from Peter in Jerusalem (Gal 1:18).<sup>74</sup>

The narrative substructure and dimension of Paul's kerygmatic activity concern more than what is recounted in 1 Cor 15:3–7.<sup>75</sup> His double use of transmission terminology in 1 Cor 11:23–25 places the words of Jesus within a narrative context and indicates a tradition in the form of a story concerning what happened on the night when he was betrayed. The opening of Romans shows that this narrative dimension was intrinsic to his mission to evangelize the Gentiles. When he defines the gospel he relies on material which perhaps comes from tradition and contains an implicit christological narrative

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<sup>74</sup> Stuhlmacher detects significant correspondences between 1 Cor 15:3–5 and Peter's sermon in Acts 10:34–43. Peter's titular use of “Christ” (10:36) and his reference to the resurrection on the “third day” (10:40) and to scripture (the prophets) instead of the usual call to repentance (10:43) correspond to the tradition mentioned by Paul. See Peter Stuhlmacher, *Das paulinische Evangelium 1: Vorgeschichte*, FRLANT 95 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 279 n. 1; idem, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992, 1999), 1:169–70. For Gal 1:18, see James D. G. Dunn, “The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1 and 2,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 461–78; idem, “Once More—Gal 1:18: ἱστορήσαι Κηφῶν. In Reply to Otfried Hofius,” *ZNW* 76 (1985): 138–139.

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of the narrative dimension in Paul's letters, cf. Bruce W. Longenecker, ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002); Richard B. Hays, “Is Paul's Gospel Narratable?,” *JSNT* 27 (2004): 217–239.

(Rom 1:1–5). He presents in brief the narrative substructure of his entire epistolary argument.<sup>76</sup>

In the heat of debate he elsewhere refuses to acknowledge that he received (παράλαμβάνειν) the gospel from any man and that he was taught it, insisting that it came to him as revelation of (from) Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11–12). Here he seems to contradict his reliance on tradition and sees the dependence on other humans and on revelation as mutually exclusive. What is at stake, however, is not the preaching of the core elements of the gospel, but the preaching of the gospel as Paul understood it. He acknowledges, after all, that he laid before the leaders in Jerusalem the gospel which he proclaimed among the Gentiles (2:2). Presumably he wished to secure that his gospel was not foreign to the one cherished in Jerusalem, seeking to confirm from tradition the convictions about Jesus which had been revealed to him at his conversion and commissioning on the Damascus road.

For Paul the preaching of the gospel was, first, bound to tradition and, secondly, a narrative kind of performance about Jesus Christ.<sup>77</sup> This is how he looked at it, regardless of how he in fact employed tradition in his epistolary correspondence. Preaching the gospel was a tradition-bound and narrative activity. His use of transmission terminology in relation to his preaching and his definition of the gospel caution us against equating the kerygmatic and narrative dimension of the Jesus tradition with entirely flexible and innovative performances in the Christian communities, and calls for a balanced and carefully nuanced consideration of transmission as a cornerstone and prerequisite of early Christian performance.

## 6.2. *Preaching and Teaching the Life of Jesus*

Another indication of how tradition related to narrative performance comes from the book of Acts. It reports two things of importance for the understanding of the Jesus tradition: first, the Twelve devoted

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Samuel Byrskog, “Epistolography, Rhetoric and Letter Prescript: Romans 1.1–7 as a Test Case,” *JSNT* 65 (1997): 27–46.

<sup>77</sup> There are good reasons to suspect that the genitives in Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16, 20; 3:22; and Phil 3:9 are subjective in nature, serving as signals for an implicit story about Jesus’ faithfulness towards God. See Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1–4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd ed., 2002). I have presented my view in *Romarbrevet 1–8, Kommentar till Nya testamentet 6a* (Stockholm: EFS-förlaget, 2006), 98–99.

themselves to the service of the word (6:4) and began to preach;<sup>78</sup> secondly, they provided teaching for the converts (2:42). The word is the word of God (6:2) and to serve it means to speak it with boldness (4:29, 31). Moreover, this preaching involves, as the angel says, the telling of all the words “about this life” (5:20). Being a servant of the word is intimately bound with being a(n) (eye)witness of Jesus (Luke 1:2),<sup>79</sup> not only of his resurrection, but of his resurrection as the climax of his entire life (Acts 1:21–22; 10:39, 41). To preach about his life has to do with recalling what he said and did and what happened to him.

This kind of preaching relates to their activity of teaching. Preaching Jesus’ life means, for Luke, to teach it (5:21). The apostles’ teaching to the converts is separate from the outward preaching and includes the up-building of the community, but both relate to an activity of recalling what they had experienced during the time with Jesus. Preaching and teaching are not strictly separable. Being eyewitnesses of Jesus as well as servants of the word means recalling, teaching, and proclaiming the same decisive event in two related but separate apostolic activities.

This is a Lukan perspective. Recent scholarship has shown that the history of the early church conveyed throughout the book of Acts is colored by the rhetorical agenda of ancient history writing.<sup>80</sup> These studies neglect the diachronic dimension of rhetoric, failing to appreciate that the most persuasive performance of history was the one that relied on thorough familiarity with what went before.<sup>81</sup> Although several of the items mentioned above are strongly Lukan in character and

<sup>78</sup> Acts 2:14–36; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32; 10:34–43.

<sup>79</sup> Dibelius was correct to point out the curious juxtaposing of eyewitnesses and unknown ministers of the word (*Formgeschichte*, 10–12, 59). The two are described with expressions that relate to one and the same definite article.

<sup>80</sup> So Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography*, Emory Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Clark, 2004); Clare K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History: An Investigation of Early Christian Historiography*, WUNT 2.175 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

<sup>81</sup> This is my argument in “History or Story in Acts—A Middle Way? The ‘We’ Passages, Historical Intertexture, and Oral History,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline vander Stichele, SBL Symposium Series 20 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 257–283. Similarly also in “Performing the Past: Gospel Genre and Identity Formation in the Context of Ancient History Writing,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of E. Earle Ellis for His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Sang-Won Son (London and New York: Clark, 2006), 28–44.

included in the author's own summaries of how he interpreted the past, it is likely that at some point the disciples had begun to tell others of what they had experienced and that their observations and memories had been given special notice among those who converted to the new way of life.

Dibelius, as we noted, concluded that preaching was the all-important activity and setting of tradition. It plays indeed a crucial role in the Lukan account. But preaching to the converts was a kind of teaching that in a different way recalled the life of Jesus.<sup>82</sup> When addressing outsiders the preachers probably, as the Lukan Peter tells us (11:16),<sup>83</sup> recalled things and quoted sayings as they went along, while teaching Jesus' life to converts must have relied on a more deliberate process of remembering in the context of discussion and mutual attempts to apply the essential elements of the tradition. This is in line with Paul's use of transmission terminology in paraenetic contexts indicated above.

### 6.3. *Preaching as Gospel Tradition*

The preaching as recorded in Acts gives perhaps an indication of how the transmission of the Jesus tradition was narratively embedded and subsequently elaborated into the narrative performances of the written gospels. A persistent object of scholarly disagreement is how the transmission and performance of the Jesus tradition finally ended up in the gospels. Granted there was a body of traditions concerning Jesus, we may envision the gospels either as mosaic collections of tradition, or as entirely independent of tradition, or as textualized performances of previous narrative currencies.

The available data suggest that the activity of preaching was crucial as a means of bringing the Jesus tradition to the gospel authors. Just as the preaching of the disciples might have been in need of what Schürmann—in passing—called “Jesus-*Geschichten*,”<sup>84</sup> the preaching

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<sup>82</sup> Dibelius calls it “katechetische Predigt” in distinction to “Missionspredigt” and “kultische Predigt” (*Formgeschichte*, 18). His translator writes “Unterweisung der Katechumenen” (“Evangelienkritik und Christologie” [originally in English 1935], in *Botschaft und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze*, ed. Günther Bornkamm and Heinz Kraft, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1953, 1956), 1:292–358, at 307.

<sup>83</sup> The Lukan Peter recalls the important saying in Acts 1:5.

<sup>84</sup> “Der ‘Sitz im Leben’ eines Teils auch der Jesus-*Geschichten* wird schon hier im vorösterlichen Jüngerkreis zu suchen sein” (“Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logien-tradition,” 60 n. 88). Schürmann refers to Harald Riesenfeld. Riesenfeld's notion that

in Acts reveals the skeleton outline of a story. Already Dibelius detected a pre-Lukan scheme in the sermons in Acts.<sup>85</sup> Noticing allusions to Paul's preaching and to tradition in the Pauline letters, C. H. Dodd extended Dibelius' scheme into a primitive kerygmatic narrative which helped structure the first gospel.<sup>86</sup> Peter's speech in Acts 10:34–43 is crucial in this reconstruction. Although the speech, like all the speeches in Acts, is steeped in Lukan theology, it is also quite unlike the author's own writing elsewhere in not mentioning at all Jesus' infancy and in employing four Old Testament passages (Ps 107:20; Isa 52:7; 61:1; Deut 21:22) and expressions such as "preaching peace through Jesus Christ," "hanging him on a tree," "raised on the third day," and "the living and the dead." It is also a speech of Peter, being placed within a sequence of episodes concerning Peter,<sup>87</sup> and Papias thought that the author of Mark was the interpreter of Peter's *chreiai* (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15). If we add to this the striking similarities between Peter's speech and the Markan story,<sup>88</sup> the old hypothesis that the author of the first gospel based his story on a (Petrine) tradition which contained episodes concerning Jesus is as likely as the ones arguing that he created it from scattered collections of miracle stories, a synoptic apocalypse, disputations, didactic sayings, and parables, or that he composed an entirely new kind of textuality distinct from all that went before. Although there are several points of uncertainties in this reconstruction, it presents a plausible way of how the separately transmitted Jesus tradition became gospel tradition as it was used kerygmatically among the first Christians.

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the disciples memorized and recited certain episodes as holy words ("The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings," *SE* 1 [TU 73] [1959]: 43–65) goes far beyond Schürmann's cautious discussion and leaves little room for evident elaborative tendencies in the tradition.

<sup>85</sup> *Formgeschichte*, 15. Cf. idem, "Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte und die antike Geschichtsschreibung" (1949), in *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, ed. Heinrich Greeven, FRLANT 60 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), 120–162, at 142; idem, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, ed. Ferdinand Hahn, TBü 58 (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1975), 131.

<sup>86</sup> "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," *ExpT* 43 (1932): 396–400; idem, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments: Three Lectures with an Appendix on Eschatology and History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936), 17–35, 46–52.

<sup>87</sup> Thus it is not an interpolation into a legend of the conversion of a centurion, as Dibelius thought ("Die Bekehrung des Cornelius" [1947], in *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, ed. Greeven, 96–107, at 97).

<sup>88</sup> I have listed the most significant ones in *Story as History*, 286–288.



Acts 10:39b–41 immediately moves on to the passion of Jesus. In Mark, as is well known, the passion occupies a disproportionately large section. While the idea that the Markan narrative as a whole builds on a narrative outline has been met with skepticism, there is more acceptance for the likewise hypothetical notion that he employed an early coherent narrative about Jesus' passion. The evidence is somewhat less compelling, however, the strongest one being Paul's quotation of and allusions to traditional formulations related to the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:23–25) and the handing over of Jesus (Rom 4:25; 8:32; 1 Cor 11:23; Gal 2:20).<sup>89</sup> Probably we have to decide the matter in more general terms. The death of Jesus must have been such a shocking experience to his followers that they soon began to formulate to themselves what had happened in an attempt to comprehend and interpret it in light of the Easter experiences. In that case Peter and the other preachers in Jerusalem must have known about it.

The kerygmatic dimension of the gospel tradition has sometimes been seen to conflict with the biographical character of the gospels. Such is certainly the case if we conceive of the evangelists as popular story-tellers with no individuality and literary ambition. But this is an outdated conception. It has little relevance once it is realized that the preaching was a narrative kind of performance which easily could be elaborated into a historicizing biographical story.<sup>90</sup>

In order to avoid the false impression that the Jesus tradition was transmitted only passively and with no concern to use and proclaim it, it is essential to remember this kind of narrative dynamic in the gospels. The lively kerygmatic activity makes it difficult, for instance, to separate in the present gospels the traditions of what Jesus said and did publicly in the synagogue and elsewhere from the traditions of what was specifically told and shown to the disciples. This distinction

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. the discussion and literature in my article "The Historicity of Jesus" in this Handbook.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Guelich advocates the "kerygmatic hypothesis" concerning the emergence of the gospel genre and distances this from the biographical writings of the Greco-Roman antiquity ("The Gospel Genre," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien: Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher, WUNT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 183–219). Burrige rightly criticizes Guelich on this point, but notes that Guelich later expressed himself in favor of linking the gospel to the biographical genre (*What are the Gospels?*, 87–88). I fail to see that the two positions are mutually exclusive (Byrskog, "Performing the Past," 28–44).

played a role during the initial stages of transmission, as we noted, but in preaching and in narrative composition it was irrelevant. It is a paradoxical fact that while we have indication that Jesus taught regularly in the synagogues, we have little concrete evidence of how he actually taught there.<sup>91</sup> He probably taught from the scriptures,<sup>92</sup> and he evidently also did mighty acts there, as we have seen, but the gospels only rarely indicate a synagogal form of instruction.

Evidently the early Jesus tradition was never void of narrative elements which could be kerygmatically performed and elaborated. From early on, the preaching was not merely a matter of conveying separate words and deeds of Jesus, but of speaking about history as story. The narrativization of the past started immediately, as soon as the disciples heard and observed Jesus. It captured the sustained impact of Jesus as a grand narrative event. Perhaps the vibrations of this impact were felt by the first gospel author as he heard the story being summarily performed by one of the followers of Jesus. This is more likely than the idea that he somehow managed to collect both scattered pieces of sayings from traveling charismatics and local sympathizers as well as episodes from different story-tellers among the ordinary folk, or that he created his story from his own imagination. The first gospel is neither the collection of diverse pieces of information nor the abrupt disruption of all previous performances, but the biographical synthesis of oral performances making use of the transmitted Jesus tradition, on the one hand, and the author's narrative and literary ambition, on the other.

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<sup>91</sup> Luke 4:18–27 is a rather stylized entity.

<sup>92</sup> For the *yelammedenu*-midrash, cf. E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays*, WUNT 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1978), 247–253; idem, “Biblical Interpretation in the New Testament Church,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder, CRINT 2.1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 691–725, at 706–709. It is unclear how this exegetical pattern relates to Ellis's emphasis on the written character of the pre-Easter Jesus tradition.

## PHARISEES, SADDUCEES, ESSENES, HERODIANS

ÉTIENNE NODET

The principal organized Jewish groups who are mentioned in the New Testament are the Pharisees and the Sadducees; we also hear of the Herodians, who however are not defined in any way. The nature of these groups is debated, since it is often difficult to form a coherent picture on the basis of the information that we have, and the interpretation of the sources depends largely on considerations external to the texts. As is so often the case, the works of Flavius Josephus are very useful here, and we shall begin with them; we shall also draw on the New Testament and the rabbinic sources. We shall endeavor to bear in mind the specific perspective of these sources, since they are never simple documents from an archive.

Four names which will not be examined here should nevertheless be mentioned, since their identification is not obvious. First, we have the Jews: here, it is often a delicate matter to determine where there is a clearly general sense and where the reference is more specific (Judeans, or the Jewish authorities). Then we have the Christians, since it is not certain that this term was originally coined to designate the disciples of Jesus. Thirdly, we have the Nazoreans, attached to the family of Jesus. And finally, we have the Samaritans, whose origin is complex.

### 1. *The Traditional Syntheses and their Difficulties*

The Pharisees are the best known, since the rabbinic sources are largely the work of this group, and Josephus declares himself their adherent.<sup>1</sup> They were very meticulous in their observance of the written law, but they had added supplements, known as the “oral law,” which they had imposed on the people (*Ant.* 13.297). John Hyrcanus attempted to get rid of these “ancestral customs” because of their influence on

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<sup>1</sup> For a summary and synthesis, cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People's The Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. G. Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87), 2:381–403, 404–414, 555–590.

the nation as a whole, but after the disturbances during the reign of Alexander Jannaeus, they were reestablished by Alexandra (*Ant.* 13.408). The New Testament too bears witness to their importance (Matt 15:2 par.). A rabbinic aphorism sums up the point: “It is more serious to teach contrary to the precepts of the scribes than contrary to the written law” (*m. Sanh.* 11.3). The Pharisees, whom Josephus compares to the Stoics, profess a doctrine of retribution and resurrection which is already attested in Dan 12:2; they accept the existence of angels and spirits (cf. Acts 23:8); they believe that providence (or destiny, cf. *War* 2.163) cooperates in every act. They tended to be neutral on political issues; all they sought was obedience to the commandments. However, obedience to a foreign power posed a problem. For example, they refused to take an oath to Herod (*Ant.* 15.370), and the Zealot movements, which actively resisted every earthly power, were thought to have a Pharisaic origin (*Ant.* 18.4). Their name, which means “separated,” corresponds well to the picture we get from the New Testament and Josephus, i.e. a clearly defined sub-group within Judaism.

On the other hand, if we look at two very different literary blocks—Josephus and the rabbinic tradition—they also give the impression that the Pharisees represent ordinary Judaism, separated from the nations by the covenant in general and more specifically by dietary customs. Their name has very negative connotations in the church fathers, who knew only the New Testament. It is however possible that these negative associations existed earlier, since it is possible that the name comes from the Pharisees’ opponents, and it is a fact that the rabbinic sources give other names to the persons of whom they speak. We hear of brotherhoods of *haverim* who observe a scrupulous purity and are distinct from “the people of the land” who, though observant, are less strict; and we hear of the *hassidim*, who were revered in ancient times for their piety and often for their gifts as miracle workers or prophets. We first hear of the Pharisees as a party distinct from the people as a whole during the Maccabean crisis, when the assembly of the *hassidim* gives its support to Mattathias (1 Macc 2:42) or Judas Maccabeus (2 Macc 14:6). They supported the new Hasmonaeen regime until the breach under John Hyrcanus which I have mentioned above.

The Sadducees are less well known. Josephus writes that they were an aristocratic party (*Ant.* 13.298) who were close to the priests who had governed the people from the Persian period onwards. After

the Hasmonaeans, the families of the chief priests belonged to this party (cf. Acts 5:17; *Ant.* 20.199). Their name comes from Zadok, the high priest in the days of Solomon. His descendants retained the high priesthood, especially after the Deuteronomist reform of Josiah, who centralized the cult in Jerusalem: cf. Ezek 40:46 and Sir 51:12 (Hebrew): "Praise him who chose as priests the sons of Zadok." In terms of doctrine, they were the opponents of the Pharisees, rejecting providence, resurrection, the unwritten traditions, and even respect for the teaching of the masters (*Ant.* 18.16); the church fathers mistakenly believed that the Sadducees, like the Samaritans, accepted only the Pentateuch as scripture. The Mishnah mentions their teachings several times; these often take a stricter line. In any case, the Sadducees are the oldest party, because they stuck close to the literal text of the Bible. At the time of the Maccabean crisis, Hellenism had already affected the priestly milieu, and hence also the Sadducees. They rejected both the revolt and the Hasmonaean regime (which was inspired by Pharisaism) until they were promoted by John Hyrcanus in order to counter the influence of the Pharisees. They lost their influence after the Pharisees returned to favor under Alexandra, and Josephus writes that even in their official functions, they were obliged to submit to the popular Pharisaic opinions (*Ant.* 18.17). They disappear from sight after the disaster of 70.

Since Josephus is our primary source of information about the Pharisees and Sadducees, we must mention briefly the Essenes, the third school which is always associated with the two others. They are related to the Qumran documents, but their name is not found there. Rather, they are the "sons of Zadok." Although their name is never mentioned in the New Testament, there are remarkable similarities to the Essene institutions: the imminence of the kingdom, a new foundation in the desert, a pedagogy centered on baptism, and the emphasis on Pentecost. Their history remains vague. Josephus says that their group came into existence under Jonathan, ca. 150 CE (*Ant.* 13.171), and one possible interpretation of their name in Aramaic has suggested their identification with the *hassidim* of 1 Maccabees 2. According to the allusions in the *Damascus Document*, the Teacher of Righteousness, their founder, seems to have been a legitimate heir of the Oniad family, the Zadokite high priests who held office before the Maccabean crisis. He may even have been the high priest who held office between the death of Alcimus in 159 and the promotion of Jonathan in 152.

Josephus and 1 Maccabees have a gap of seven years, but this may be due to a *damnatio memoriae*, since our sources reflect the Hasmonaean point of view. 4QPesherHabbakuk speaks of a “wicked priest” and rejoices at his fall; this is usually taken as a reference to Jonathan, who was killed by Tryphon in 143, but some scholars see it as speaking of his successor Simon, who was assassinated in 135.

This interpretative synthesis poses many difficulties. If the Sadducees formed a legitimist party who refused allegiance to the Hasmonaean regime (at least at the outset), they are analogous to the other “sons of Zadok,” i.e. to the Essenes. But while one group became the entourage of the high priest, the other group formed conventicles which despised the sanctuary in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 18.19 and 1QM II, 5–6). Another problem is that we do not know to which of these groups the “Sadducees” of the rabbinical sources belong. Besides this, if the *hassidim* are the common ancestors of the Pharisees and the Essenes, the confusion between the various parties becomes complete. We should note here that Josephus avoids mentioning the *hassidim* (*Ant.* 12.275); he does not link them to any of the schools. He sees them only as refugees in the desert who choose Mattathias as their leader. Further, rabbinic Judaism inherits something from all three parties. The essential point is the Pharisaic line, thanks to the federative policy of Gamaliel II, but the *haverim* have Essene traits;<sup>2</sup> and the spirit of the Sadducees can be seen in the firm desire—seen most typically in Aqiba—to attach the oral traditions to scripture in order to preclude the existence of “two Torahs” (cf. *b. Zebah.* 13a). This is the origin of the various systematic rules of exegesis and of the discussions of their authoritative character.

We must look afresh at our sources, taking our starting point with the party about which we know least, viz. the Sadducees. The sources are not numerous, but the literary difficulties which they present make a preliminary examination necessary.

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<sup>2</sup> S. Lieberman, “The Discipline in the So-Called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline,” *JBL* 71 (1952): 199–206.

## 2. *The Sadducees: Historical and Literary Problems*

Let us begin by refuting two common affirmations: that the Sadducees were a legitimist Zadokite party, and that they constituted the milieu of the chief priests, which therefore disappeared after 70.

An examination of the lists of the priestly succession (cf. Appendix I) shows very clearly that the notion of a Zadokite dynasty in succession to Zadok is a fiction. First of all, in the Books of Samuel and the Kings, the high priests Zadok and Abiathar do not have any identifiable Aaronic genealogy; it is Josephus who identifies the two branches which descend from the sons of Aaron, although he does not explain the interruptions. According to 1 Chron 24:3, Zadok descends from Eleazar and Ahimelech from Ithamar, but both are on the periphery of the priestly classes. Finally, in the period of the kings, the lists are artificial; the most remarkable list is that which ends with Ezra. And it is strange that the high priest Jehoiada is not mentioned—for it was he who saved the Davidic dynasty from Athaliah and lived for one hundred and thirty years (according to 2 Chron 24:15).

Our information about the Persian period is scarcely better. We have a rather brief list in Neh 12:10–11, which can be coordinated (with some difficulty) with Josephus's list of succession of high priests in the Hellenistic period (*Ant.* 11.347). Then we have the Oniad family, who have links to Egypt. One of them, Simon the Just, is recognized by the rabbinic tradition as one of its ancestors (*m. Abot* 1.2, which does not mention his priestly rank).

There is no reason to suppose that the priestly families in the Roman period belonged to the Sadducees. Josephus explicitly mentions one exception. Ananus, the high priest who tried James and had him stoned in 62, was a Sadducee. His excessive rigor led to his deposition on the arrival of Albinus, the new governor (*Ant.* 20.197–203), but Josephus admits that, had he not been assassinated in 69, Ananus was a man of such standing that he could have averted the war (*War* 4.319–321).

The assertion that the entourage of the high priest was the Sadducee party (Acts 5:17) cannot be taken as a general statement of fact: the “western” textual variant calls him Annas, and the same Annas is mentioned as high priest alongside Caiaphas at Acts 4:6. Besides this, there are a number of anachronisms in the neighboring passages, especially the mention of the Sanhedrin, which had ceased to exist after the arrival of the Roman prefects in 6, and was not reestablished

until 41 at the earliest, when Claudius bestowed Judea and Samaria on King Herod Agrippa. The account of the stoning of Stephen involves the Sanhedrin, but a literary analysis reveals the presence of doublets here.<sup>3</sup> The essential elements are the double accusation and the double stoning, both spontaneous (i.e., a lynching) and legal (in the presence of witnesses). The second stoning is linked to a formal trial for blasphemy, involving the high priest and the Sanhedrin, but Stephen's name is not mentioned here. This trial, with the vision of the Son of Man and the intercession for the people, is strikingly similar to that of James, some details of which are reported by Hegesippus (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23.3–4)—where the high priest in office is precisely Ananus the Sadducee, at a period when there is no Roman governor (since Festus has died, and his successor has not yet arrived). The execution of James by the very persons for whom he was interceding is a perfect illustration of the figure of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, and this may explain the migration of the literary motif.<sup>4</sup>

But let us return to the Sadducees. They are neither the heirs of unidentifiable Zadokites nor the milieu surrounding the chief priests, with the possible exception of Ananus in 62. There is therefore no reason to think that they suddenly disappeared after 70—especially since we find traces of the Sadducees in the rabbinic literature. We must now consider their promotion on the occasion of the celebrated banquet of Hyrcanus. We shall also look at its context.

Scholars have long observed that the brief note about the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes at *Ant.* 13.171–173 is very strange, for at least three reasons. First of all, the schools are described only by means of one philosophical aspect, viz. their differing views about destiny; for further details, the author refers to the second Book of his *Jewish History*, i.e. the somewhat lengthy exposé in *War* 2.119–166, in the reigns of Herod and Archelaus. Secondly, this note is inserted immediately after the paraphrase of the letter of Jonathan to the Spartans (1 Macc 12:6–18), and has no visible link to the context. Thirdly, it comes in place of the letter of Areus, king of Sparta, which immedi-

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the analyses by M.-É. Boismard and A. Lamouille, *Les Actes des deux Apôtres*, EB NS 12–14, 3 vols. (Paris: Gabalda 1990).

<sup>4</sup> See a fuller statement in É. Nodet, *Le Fils de Dieu: Procès de Jésus et évangiles* (Paris: Éd. du Cerf 2002), 330–341.



ately follows that of Jonathan in 1 Macc 12:19–23, and which Josephus has reported in what he believes to be its correct chronological context, under Seleucus IV (187–175, cf. *Ant.* 12.225–227).

This note is certainly the work of Josephus himself, who refers explicitly to it shortly afterwards in his account of the banquet of Hyrcanus (*Ant.* 13.288–298). At the close of this episode, Hyrcanus, who is suspected by the Pharisees of being the son of a slave woman, parts company with them and associates henceforward with the Sadducees. Josephus completes the notes to which he has referred, by explaining the controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees about the oral tradition, and concludes by referring once again to the second Book of his *Jewish War*.

There is nevertheless one strange point. In *Ant.* 15.371, when he mentions the exemptions from taxation which Herod had granted to the Pharisees and the Essenes, Josephus says that he will speak later about these schools, without referring to his note under Jonathan. He presents the schools in *Ant.* 18.11–22, in the time of Judas the Galilean, and he refers in this context to the parallel exposé in “the second Book of the *War of the Jews*.” He says that the schools have existed “from very remote times,” but he does not take the opportunity to refer his reader to the notes from the times of Jonathan and John Hyrcanus. In this new exposé, he briefly distinguishes the Pharisees from the Sadducees on the basis of their views about destiny, the immortality of the soul, and the observance of the laws. He then speaks of their societal impact. He summarizes what he has said in the *War* about these two schools and about the Essenes, without adding any new doctrinal element. The only place where he speaks clearly of the fundamental difference between Pharisees and Sadducees with regard to scripture and the oral tradition is the appendix to the banquet of Hyrcanus, which I have mentioned above.

All this is readily explained if we suppose a redaction of the *Antiquities* in various stages. Initially, Josephus will have simply followed the *War* step by step, elaborating or condensing as he does elsewhere, depending on the documentation that is available to him. This would account for the note in *Ant.* 18, which comes at the appropriate place. Later, Josephus will have inserted the two notes in *Ant.* 13, in close proximity to Hyrcanus’s banquet.—Let us compare the two texts.

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*War* 1

(67) These successes of John [Hyrcanus] and of his sons made them be envied, and occasioned a sedition in the country. And there were many who got together, and would not be at rest until they broke out into open war,

in which they were beaten. (68) So John lived the rest of his life very happily... He it was who alone had three of the most desirable things in the world—the government of his nation, and the high priesthood, and the gift of prophecy.

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*Antiquities* 13

(288) This prosperous state of affairs moved the Jews to envy Hyrcanus;

but they that were the worst disposed to him were the Pharisees, who were one of the sects of the Jews, as we have informed you already (§ 172). They have so great a power over the multitude, that when they say anything against the king, or against the high priest, etc.

[289–298: the story of the banquet, at the close of which he is alienated from the Pharisees and comes closer to the Sadducees. This leads the people to hate him and his sons. A note about the customs of the schools.]

(299) When Hyrcanus had put an end to this sedition, he after that lived happily... He was esteemed by God worthy of three of the greatest privileges—the government of his nation, the dignity of the high priesthood, and prophecy.

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The banquet is inappropriate to the context, which speaks of seditions and then of Hyrcanus's success on every level. With regard to the literary composition, a comparison of the two texts (see above) shows that this is the reprise of a passage from the *War*, into which the episode is inserted clumsily. The account in the *War*, although poorly documented, is coherent, but we cannot say the same of the parallel in the *Antiquities*. Something is missing between the envy of the Jews and the crushing of the sedition (299): the hatred of the people, which ensues upon the banquet, is not the same thing as a sedition that is crushed.

This means that the insertion of the banquet has disturbed the context somewhat, and this suggests a redactional revision.—The Talmud gives a very similar account of a banquet (*b. Qid.* 66a), but this is dated to the reign of Alexander Jannaeus. This corresponds better to the hatred of the people, who did not accept Alexander as high priest and also suspected him of having been born in unworthy circumstances. On his deathbed, Alexander recommends to his wife Alexandra that she restore power to the Pharisees, and this suggests that it was he who had removed them from the government (*Ant.* 13.401).—One final point: there is reason to believe that Josephus is mistaken, or else that one of his sources has led him into errors.<sup>5</sup>

J. Sievers has offered a good defense of the thesis that a large-scale redactional revision was made, extending as far as the note about the schools in the time of Jonathan.<sup>6</sup> First of all, the two passages (both of which are inserted in a bizarre manner) are linked by a cross-reference, although the *Antiquities* never subsequently refers to them. Secondly, the note about the schools is roughly as long as Josephus's version of the letter of Areus. The hypothesis is that the note replaced the letter of Areus in a text which was already "formatted" in columns, either because the letter had already been paraphrased twice (both in its chronological place and in its literary place), or because Josephus had decided to move it to another place. It was necessary to present the Pharisees and Sadducees *before* Hyrcanus's banquet, but an appropriate place had to be found. Another factor is Josephus's wish to emphasize that the schools were ancient institutions, as he had already affirmed at *Ant.* 18.11.

Why did Josephus undertake revisions of this kind? It may be that he had discovered new documents, but inserted these clumsily. It is also possible that the impression of clumsiness is mistaken: Josephus is attempting to eliminate a discontinuity in the Hasmonaean line, since there is no good explanation of the transition between John Hyrcanus, the exceptional high priest, and Alexander Jannaeus, a king whose provenance was suspect. At any rate, the fact that the note about the schools is inserted under Jonathan does not entitle us to conclude that

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<sup>5</sup> This is demonstrated by E. Main, "Les Sadducéens selon Josephé," *RB* 97 (1990): 161–206. The same view is taken by G. Stemberger, *Pharisäer, Sadduzäer, Essener*, SBS 144 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 1991), 100–102.

<sup>6</sup> J. Sievers, "Josephus, First Maccabees, Sparta, The Three *Haireseis*—and Cicero," *JSJ* 32 (2001): 241–251.

the names “Pharisees” and “Sadducees” are attested at such an early date. The corrections proposed here mean that these names do not appear before Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BCE).

### 3. *The Schools According to Josephus*

After mentioning his own priestly origins, Josephus writes that he attended the schools of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes in his youth, before choosing to follow the Pharisees (*Life* 10). The order here is the same as in the note at *War* 2.119 which is reproduced at *Ant.* 13.171. At *Ant.* 18.11, although he refers the reader explicitly to the *War*, he gives the list in the reverse order, but this is easily explained. Josephus has just spoken of a fourth and most recent philosophical school, which has unfortunately been founded by Judas the Galilean and the Pharisee Zadok. It is therefore natural that he should move backwards in time to the earlier foundations. This seems to be confirmed by the next passage in the text, in which he describes the four schools and presents them in the customary order.

He also states clearly that the Essenes are more recent than the two others, and adds that the Pharisees constitute the “first” school and the Sadducees the “second” (*War* 2.162–164). When Josephus defines the Sadducees as an opposing school, this is always in relation to the Pharisees.

With the exception of the Essenes, he does not describe the functioning of the schools. He employs a varied terminology; the most typical designations are *hairesis* (*War* 2 and *Ant.* 13) and *philosophia* (*Ant.* 18). The latter term, which Josephus also employs about Philo and about his own philosophical intentions, comes from his apologetic concern to relate these schools to Greek models with which his readers will be familiar: the Pharisees are analogous to the Stoics (*Life* 12), the Essenes to the Pythagoreans (*Ant.* 15.371), and the Sadducees to the Epicureans. This third analogy is not expressed directly, but it can be inferred from the similarity of his descriptions. According to Josephus, the Epicureans “eliminate providence from life and do not believe that God is concerned with human affairs” (*Ant.* 10.278); later, he declares that the Sadducees “reject destiny, believing that it does not exist and that it plays no role in human affairs” (*Ant.* 13.173). Josephus does not push this comparison too far, since the Epicureans reject the idea of a creator God and *a fortiori* of a natural law, and this has very concrete consequences: those who held such views would no longer belong to

Judaism. He writes polemically that the Epicureans “do not believe that everything is governed by the blessed and immortal Being in view of the permanence of the universe. They claim that the world moves on its own, without a conductor or guide” (*Ant.* 10.279). The ancient character and the permanence of a nation mean nothing to an Epicurean. Josephus’s argument against the Epicureans, which he elaborates on the basis of the visions of Daniel, is the success of prophecy.

The other term which Josephus employs, *hairesis*, refers more to the way in which the law is observed. He writes that the Sadducees are concerned to observe the law, but that they must submit to the opinions of the Pharisees, if they wish to be accepted by the people (*Ant.* 18.17). This is not a question of philosophy, but of practices and of legal decisions, since the usages of the Pharisees include non-biblical customs which have been received from “the tradition of the elders.” The same is true of the Essenes. Josephus writes that their way of life is very attractive, but their system of purity forbids them to have any contact with anyone, whether Jew or not, who does not belong to their group (*War* 2.150–158). Some of the Qumran texts show that the declared intention of the group was nothing less than a renewal of the covenant.

Josephus defines the relationship between the Pharisees and Sadducees as follows (*Ant.* 13.297): “The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what is derived from the tradition of our forefathers.” Contrary to what is often asserted, Josephus does not say that the Pharisees have suddenly added something to Moses, but only that they have disseminated their non-scriptural traditions among the people, apparently for a very long time. Nor does he say that the Sadducees are opposed to a *new* attempt at dissemination or to a new kind of proselytism, but that they are reacting to an established situation in which the people have in fact accepted the customs to which they object. Josephus clearly depicts the Sadducees as more recent than the Pharisees. Although Josephus formulates in the Greek manner<sup>7</sup> the debate with the masters about wisdom, he indicates where the origins of this

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. D. Daube, “Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric,” *HUCA* 22 (1949): 239–264.

Sadducee school lie, viz. in the rejection of everything in the teaching of the masters that was not based on scripture. It is clear that the law of Moses does not say everything, either about customs or about penalties; besides this, it contains contradictions or at least incoherencies. It is therefore necessary to interpret it. The Sadducees' attitude is therefore one of criticizing the tradition of the masters (whether these were Sadducees or not) in order to select those things that can be linked to scripture and reject the rest. Josephus tells us that this led to vehement controversies (*War* 2.166). He also adds that the Sadducees were very strict in their verdicts, as we have seen in the case of Ananus (*Ant.* 20.199), while the Pharisees were more indulgent in meting out penalties (13.294). This somewhat sectarian attitude, governed by a considerable intolerance vis-à-vis differences in customs, offers a very good parallel to the attitude of the Essenes, although the style is different. In both cases, the breach is the result of a position taken with regard to the written law of Moses. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were "very devoted to one another and seek to remain in communion with the entire nation" (*War* 2.166). This statement seems at first sight hard to accept, for Josephus speaks in other passages of the religious extremism of the Pharisees, and the name itself means "separated." But this problem is resolved when we bear in mind that the Pharisees, as the oldest non-priestly school, served as a point of reference on many matters.

We must therefore conclude that the Sadducees emerged at a later date than the Pharisees. As for the Essenes, we have two indications of a certain age. First, Philo knows and appreciates them, although he has nothing at all to say about the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Given the extreme importance which he attaches to scripture—properly interpreted—we must admit that he saw the same priority in the Essenes. Secondly, *War* 1.78–80 mentions an aged Essene named Judas, who made a prediction that came true in the reign of King Aristobulus, i.e. before Alexander Jannaeus and the affair of the Sadducees. This supposes that the movement had already reached a measure of maturity by that date. Nevertheless, we must distinguish between the chronology of the appearance of the *names* (which were bestowed by outsiders) and the origin of the schools themselves.

One question remains unclear. Both the Essenes and the Sadducees claimed the authority of Zadok, although these two schools were very different. Since the data in Josephus shed no light on this question, we must look at the other sources, as well as at the status enjoyed by scripture.

#### 4. *Scripture and the Pharisees*

The Sadducees insisted on tracing everything back to scripture. But how was the authority of scripture to be determined? This was certainly not a matter of course, as the classical example of Neh 13:1–3 shows. Here we are told that the book of Moses was read aloud in the presence of the people, “and it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God . . . When the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.” However, if we read the passage quoted here, Deut 23:3–6, in context, the most obvious meaning is on the contrary that strangers should be welcomed—with the notable exception of the Ammonites and Moabites. This sudden discovery of the law of Moses recalls the novel character of the law of Moses which was proclaimed earlier by the Babylonian Ezra and then interpreted in his presence (Neh 8:13). The conclusion that is drawn from the law seems arbitrary, for there is no apparent principle of interpretation; this however can be discerned in the following passage. On his second journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, Nehemiah sees Jewish men who are married to women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. He deplores the fact that “half of their children speak the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah.” After severely reprimanding them, Nehemiah “cleanses” the people “of everything foreign” (13:30). Nehemiah does not put forward any argument from scripture in support of this reform or of the others that he undertakes. A principle of interpretation can be discerned: the reformers Ezra and Nehemiah impose their traditional customs without reference to scripture, and then place their work under the authority of a verse to which an *ad hoc* meaning is attributed.

It is not difficult to see the Nehemiah of this second mission as an ancestor of the Pharisees with their unwritten (i.e., non-scriptural) Babylonian traditions. It was only at a subsequent stage that he himself or his successors were confronted with the growing authority of scripture—which might be called the preoccupation of the Sadducees in embryonic form.

The Books of the Maccabees provide other indications of the emergence of the authority of scripture. According to 2 Macc 2:13–14, Nehemiah “founded a library and collected the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings. In the same way Judas also collected all the books.” The first thing we notice is the absence of the name of Moses. Secondly,

the person of Nehemiah, whether or not he is a “front man” here, expresses the link between non-scriptural Babylonian traditions and important writings which were circulating in Judea. Finally, we may wonder whether Judas Maccabeus, who is portrayed here as Nehemiah’s successor, was not himself a man of Babylonian culture, at least in 2 Maccabees, since he is not attached in any way to the priest Mattathias of Modein, and we hear of the very oriental feast of Purim (2 Macc 15:36).

When the crisis broke out, 2 Macc 5:23–6:2 explains that the nation had two temples, which were profaned symmetrically by the Seleucid armies. Josephus adds to these narratives the information that Onias, the high priest who was in office in Jerusalem before the crisis (or his son),<sup>8</sup> left for Egypt and founded at Heliopolis a temple similar to that in Jerusalem. The most remarkable fact is this multiplicity of sanctuaries, which is contrary to the express stipulations of Deuteronomy, which insists on one single sanctuary where the name of Yahweh will dwell,<sup>9</sup> but does not say where this is to be built. This means that the Book of Deuteronomy did not enjoy any great authority in the period of the crisis, but it seems to have acquired greater authority at the time of the redaction of 1 Maccabees, which contains no references either to Onias or to Garizim.

This problem of the uniqueness of the sanctuary reappears a little later under a different form. Josephus reports, immediately after the foundation by Onias, a quarrel between Jews and Samaritans at Alexandria (*Ant.* 13.74–79). The former maintained that the temple built according to the laws of Moses was that in Jerusalem, while the latter held that Garizim was this temple. They brought their disputes before

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *War* 1.33 and 7.423–425. According to *Ant.* 13.61–64, it is his son, since the high priest died before the crisis (12.237), as 2 Macc 4:30–35 also indicates; according to *Ant.* 20.236, it is his nephew. There is in fact a considerable amount of confusion in Josephus’s sources, and he attempts to unify the lists of disparate names (cf. 12.237–240).

<sup>9</sup> Elie Bickerman, “Un document relatif à la persécution d’Antiochus IV Épiphane,” *RHR* 115 (1937): 188–223 (E. J. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, trans. B. McNeil, 2nd ed. [Leiden: Brill, 2007] 376–407), seeks to explain the difference in the Seleucid persecutions of the Jews and of the Samaritans. He holds that the two groups considered the rededication of the two temples to Zeus (2 Macc 6:1–2)—an equal treatment, strictly speaking—as only a minor point; and this is presupposed by the context. Once again, however, this implies that the constant precept of Deuteronomy that Yahweh “makes his name to dwell there,” and not any other name, was not authoritative.



Ptolemy VI Philometer himself (180–145), demanding that he put the adherents of the false temple to death. The representatives of the two camps, whose names are given in the narrative, swear that the only evidence they will put forward is taken from the law. Josephus writes that the Jews were made uneasy by this menace to their temple, and then reports the allegedly decisive argumentation of their spokesman, viz. the precise succession of the high priests and their good reputation with the kings of Asia, whereas no one knows the temple of Garizim. These, however, are not scriptural proofs. At this time, then, there is no longer room for two temples—but this seems to be something new, or else repristinated.

Another passage indicates that the Hasmonaeans had a new relationship to scripture, taken as a whole. According to 1 Macc 12:6–22, the high priest Jonathan (152–142) addresses to the Spartans the letter mentioned above, in which he proposes the renewal of an ancient treaty of friendship between the high priest Onias and their King, Areus. Jonathan writes that the Jews are willing to renew this alliance, “though we have no need of these things, since we have as encouragement the holy books which are in our hands.” An appendix to this letter quotes the ancient letter of Areus, in which he declares that he possesses a document which shows the Spartans and the Jews to be “brethren and of the family of Abraham.” The alliance which the text then proposes consists of making peace on the question of cattle. The ancient letter of Areus to Onias is an example of the well known genre called *hieros logos*, which was common in Ptolemaic Egypt, viz. an account of a foundation which appeals to a more or less mythical relationship from ancient times. In any case, this is far removed from what we read in the Bible. The important point here is that in the days of Jonathan, ca. 150, the high priest in Jerusalem, the first of the Hasmonaeon line, declares that he possesses the sacred books and ascribes to these a considerable authority.

Taken as a whole, then, these facts reveal a growing authority of scripture among the Jews in the second century, in the face of a system of Jewish customs which originated in Babylon and is represented by Nehemiah and Judas Maccabeus. Originally, there is no doubt that this ensemble, which we may call “proto-Pharisaic,” interested only limited groups such as those repatriated Jews who put their signature to the inaugural agreement according to Neh 10:1–40. The development of the Hasmonaeon state, with the official recognition of Simon by Rome in 142 (1 Macc 15:16–21) and the policy of expansion conducted by his

son John Hyrcanus (134–104), made this the point of reference for an entire people, especially within the context of the Roman world, and this permits us to combine the two aspects of the Pharisees which Josephus relates: on the one hand, there is a widespread popular dimension, while at the same time these masters were the guardians of the spirit of Nehemiah and scrupulously preserved their separation. This is indeed the meaning of the term “Pharisee,” but it is not attested prior to Alexander Jannaeus, i.e. at the period when he resolved to establish the Hasmonaean state on other foundations.

If scripture did indeed assume a growing authority in the aftermath of Nehemiah, Judas Maccabeus, and the Hasmonaeans, we would expect the emergence of “reformers” who sought to go back to the strict letter of scripture, like the Qaraites at a later period. The Sadducees were one such group. But we must still explain their name.

### 5. *The Sadducees in the New Testament*

There are few references to the Sadducees in the New Testament: only 14, as opposed to 98 mentions of the Pharisees. All that we have is a narrative in the synoptic gospels of a discussion with Jesus about the resurrection and a few mentions in Matthew and Acts. Unlike the Pharisees, they are mentioned neither in John nor in the epistles. Instead of imagining that other names (the chief priests, the Herodians, or the scribes) conceal the Sadducees, let us simply look at the explicit references.

It is after the passage about the taxes owed to Caesar that the synoptic gospels present the discussion between the Sadducees<sup>10</sup> and Jesus about the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–38). The only definition we are given is that they deny the resurrection of the dead. The argument they put forward is the law of levirate marriages, which prescribes that when a man dies and leaves a widow but no children, the posterity of the dead man is to be ensured by his brother, who must therefore marry the widow, his sister-in-law (Deut 25:5–6). The Sadducees set out a scholastic question involving seven brothers: the first marries and dies childless, then the second brother marries the widow but likewise dies childless. The same happens to

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. E. Main, “Les sadducéens et la résurrection des morts: comparaison entre Mc 12,18–27 et Lc 20,27–38,” *RB* 103 (1996): 411–432, with an extensive bibliography.

the rest of the brothers. Finally, the woman too dies, without having remarried. This leads to the question: In the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since all seven had her?

The thesis of the Sadducees is clear, and it has a perfect scriptural basis: the very idea of resurrection contradicts an explicit commandment of Moses. The point at issue is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body, which appears to presuppose the continuation of the conjugal bond. The Sadducees play on the word “resurrection.” Deut 25:6 says: “The first son whom she bears [to the levirate husband] shall rise up<sup>11</sup> in the name of his brother who is dead”: “rise up” is the word used later for “to rise from the dead.” The verse is quoted by the Sadducees in a slightly different form: “He will raise up the posterity of his brother,” with the verb “raise up” which is at the center of the ensuing discussion. For the Sadducees, therefore, the survival of a human being, or his “resurrection,” is his posterity, and the idea of a final resurrection of bodies is meaningless—quite apart from the fact that it is not mentioned explicitly in scripture.

Jesus’ reply is given in two slightly different forms. In Matthew and Mark, we read: “You are mistaken, because you know neither the scripture nor the power of God.” Jesus goes on to explain that at the resurrection, people do not marry, and that they are like the angels in heaven: such is the power of God. As for scripture, Jesus suspects that they have not read Exod 3:6 very carefully—“I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”—and he concludes: “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” This implies that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive today,<sup>12</sup> since their God is the God of the living. The Sadducees are reduced to silence, and the Pharisees (Matt 22:34) or the scribes (Mark 12:28) do not fail to notice this fact. This reconstruction of the reasoning does not in the least mean that Jesus affirms the immortality of the soul. If God is the God of the living, we must ask what a “living” person is when one is speaking of the dead. The answer is that this refers to those whose name has survived and is written in the “Book of Life” for which the law of Moses (the

<sup>11</sup> MT מִקְוִי; the LXX has κατασταθήσεται, “he will be established” (probably from מִקְוִי), without any visible link to the ἀνίστημι, ἀνάστασις of the synoptic gospels, which work directly from the Hebrew text.

<sup>12</sup> I.e., by the intermediary of their name. Similarly, at Acts 3:6, Peter restores health to the paralytic “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.” Baptism “in the name of Jesus” has a similar nature.

Pentateuch) may serve as an excellent metaphor: it is a “Book of Life” and the names of the patriarchs are written in it, together with their history.

Luke’s version has somewhat different nuances and prolongs the reflection. Jesus begins as follows: “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.” The pivotal point of these words is the intervention of another authority who “judges worthy.” We are not told whether this is a judgment or an act of election, but the result is that those who are judged worthy are “sons of God.” Here too, therefore, it is not a question of the immortality of the soul as such; these are the “sons of God” who escape from death. When will this take place? Two indications are given: “that age” (“the other world”) and “the resurrection of the dead.” Let us look at the context: at the beginning of this pericope, the Sadducees put a difficult question about the final resurrection, but at the close, Jesus demonstrates by means of a verse from scripture that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living today. By analogy, the “other world” is not located in some indeterminate future: it exists today. Luke emphasizes that Yahweh is the God of the living, who thus include Abraham and the others. The sphere of those sons of God who do not die is therefore the union of two elements which in principle are distinct, viz. the other world which is present now and the final resurrection.<sup>13</sup>

These observations are illustrated by another debate, this time between Pharisees and Sadducees, which is provoked by Paul (Acts 23:1–9). The tribune Lysias, wishing to know the nature of the accusations brought against Paul, has him brought before the Sanhedrin, where he causes a storm by declaring that he stands accused because of his Pharisaic positions, viz. “the hope and the resurrection of the dead.” Some Pharisees take Paul’s side, saying: “We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?” This means that they understand “resurrection” not as a return to life by the dead at the end of time, but as the immediate manifestation of another life after death under the form of a spirit or an angel. At Acts 12:15, when

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. M.-É. Boismard, *Faut-il encore parler de “résurrection”?* *Les données scripturaires*, Coll. “Théologies” (Paris: Éd. du Cerf 1995).

Peter (who was thought to be dead) comes and knocks at the door of Mary's house, some of the disciples refuse to admit that it is indeed the apostle, and declare: "It is his angel." They mean that it is the one who bears his name, since Peter has died the death of a just man. In the same way, when he speaks before the Sanhedrin, Paul takes care not to speak of Jesus, but only of "resurrection" in some form or other, so that he can win over the Pharisees and divide the assembly.

In this debate, the Sadducees have a simple and strictly rational position, almost a positivist stance. The Pharisees, who declare their belief in the resurrection, use various expressions to affirm that the just have another life after death. Here, they allude to angels and spirits; we have seen above that Jesus plays on a verse from scripture to conclude that the patriarchs are still alive. The formulations in Josephus are more or less happy: the Pharisees do not lose sight of the body, either in the present day or at the end of time. But he does not succeed in expressing this in the dualistic language, of Greek origin, which makes a distinction between the soul and the body. It is characteristic that the Athenians, when Paul speaks to them, refuse to listen to him once he speaks of the resurrection,<sup>14</sup> i.e. of an accidental disturbance of the immutable laws of nature (Acts 17:30–32). In view of these genuine difficulties, it is easy for the Sadducees to declare that neither the resurrection nor dualism is proved by scripture.

Let us sum up: in the two debates about the resurrection, one involving Jesus and the other before the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees and the Sadducees appear very close to the definitions which Josephus gives of them, but with some nuances which serve to cover the case of Jesus himself.

There are few other references to the Sadducees in the New Testament: four times in Matthew (but always together with the Pharisees) and twice in Acts (without the Pharisees, in the circumstances seen above). Let us look at the instances in Matthew.

In order to describe the redaction of Matthew, we must begin by noting that he is at least partly unaware of the opposition between Pharisees and Sadducees. After the discussion about the resurrection which we have examined above, Matt 22:34–35 says: "But when the Pharisees

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<sup>14</sup> These debates of Paul at Athens, in which Epicureans and Stoics take part (Acts 17:18), are analogous to the debate which Paul stirs up in the Sanhedrin: it suffices to follow Josephus, and compare the Pharisees to the Stoics and the Sadducees to the Epicureans. But scripture is replaced by the philosophical tradition.

heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together,”<sup>15</sup> and one of them<sup>16</sup> “asked him a question, to test him.” We could infer from this that the Pharisees and the Sadducees constitute two opposing schools, but this is not stated clearly. The only point which is stated unambiguously is their opposition to Jesus, which is thus not limited to the Sadducees alone. The parallel accounts present a different story. According to Mark 12:28, a scribe is delighted by Jesus’ reply to the Sadducees, and puts a question to him without polemic; it follows that this scribe agrees with Jesus against the Sadducees. At Luke 10:25, it is a lawyer who interrogates Jesus, and here too the aim is to put him to the test. But the context is different, without any definite link to the Sadducees, and the polemical note is rather restrained.

Like the Sadducees, the Pharisees as an organized body are adversaries of Jesus. The synoptic gospels tell us that when John preached baptism, many people went to him: “Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan” (Matt 3:5); “all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem” (Mark 1:5); “the multitudes” (Luke 3:7). John meets them with invective: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Matthew introduces these words as follows: “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them...” In Matthew, the invective is directed specifically against the Pharisees and the Sadducees together.

In Matt 16:1–4, the Pharisees and the Sadducees ask Jesus for a sign from heaven, in order to put him to the test. This passage forms a doublet with 12:38–39, where it is the scribes and the Pharisees who ask for a sign. In both cases, Jesus replies that the only sign they will receive is that of Jonah. If we bring in the definitions by Josephus at this point (even if only in a summary fashion), we may judge the request by the Pharisees for a sign from heaven to be plausible, but the same request on the lips of Sadducees is highly abnormal, since it accords very badly with their refusal to accept any kind of providence.

At Matt 16:6, Jesus warns his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees; the same phrase recurs in v. 11. In the explanation given in v. 12, this “leaven” is defined as “*the teaching of*

<sup>15</sup> This is a rather clear allusion to Ps 2:2 LXX, συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό, where the kings and leaders *assembled in one and the same place* against the Lord and against his Anointed.

<sup>16</sup> The Ecumenical French translation of the Bible specifies: “a lawyer,” which is a *lectio difficilior*.

the Pharisees and Sadducees.” This doctrinal agreement is otherwise unheard-of. At Mark 8:15, Jesus warns against “the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod,” making a better distinction between two different spheres. Luke 12:1 speaks of “the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.” This confirms what we have said above. The Pharisees and the Sadducees are known primarily from their controversies, at least according to the other sources. Their common doctrine, to the extent that this was distinct from average Judaism, is nowhere defined as such. The only identifiable point they share is their opposition to Jesus.

We may sum up the results of our examination of Matthew’s Gospel: to begin with, there is no clear doctrinal opposition between Pharisees and Sadducees. Secondly, the two schools constitute a joint opposition either to Jesus himself or to his later disciples. And finally, these two schools are inseparable; or more precisely, whenever Jesus debates with the Sadducees, the Pharisees too are present. But there is no reciprocity here. In many scenes, the Pharisees appear without any allusion to the Sadducees.

We have thus two very separate situations. Most frequently, we find the opposition between Jesus and the Pharisees alone; more rarely, the opposition is between Jesus and the block of “Pharisees and Sadducees.” This block appears especially in the admonitions which Jesus addresses to his disciples. We must therefore ask whether the name “Pharisees” is used in two very distinct contexts: they are the adversaries of Jesus when they are alone, and the adversaries of his later disciples when they are coupled with the Sadducees. This would be a reference to tensions in Judea, since one form of this gospel was handed on by the Nazoraeans and the Ebionites.<sup>17</sup> And Josephus himself relates that when he was in Galilee, Simon b. Gamaliel went to the chief priests Ananus and Jesus to convince them that he was going to attack Jerusalem (*Life* 189–195); Ananus initially hesitated because of the popularity of Josephus, but then let himself be bribed and dispatched troops to Galilee. This was the high priest Ananus whose virtues are praised by Josephus at *War* 4.319–321; this praise becomes very vague when Josephus shows that the execution of James was a serious error (*Ant.* 20.197–203), and now, more than twenty-five years later, he depicts

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<sup>17</sup> This is the “Gospel according to the Hebrews” of which Eusebius speaks (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.27.4).

a hostile collusion between two of the principal leaders, a Pharisee and a Sadducee, something that he does not mention explicitly in his first redaction (*War* 2.627). Since Josephus's autobiography sets out his claims to be recognized as the guide of his nation, we must conclude that this collusion still had a significance at the time of writing; the doctrinal divergences between the two men play no part in this matter. It is possible—since the Sadducees had not disappeared—that Josephus envisaged here the groups associated with Jabne-Jamnia at the period of their foundation by Gamaliel II, the son of this Simon.

#### 6. *Sadducees, Zadukim, bene Zadok*

We must now see what the Hebrew sources have to tell us about the *zadukim* or *bene Zadok*, the “sons of Zadok” or “Zadokites.”

The rabbinic *zadukim* have long been identified with the Sadducees of Josephus and the New Testament, but this identification has never supplied a clear synthesis, thanks to the difficulty of reconciling the Sadducee milieu—seen as Hellenized, Epicurean, and close to the chief priests—with the rabbinic *zadukim* who engage in controversies about the fine points of the law. The discovery in the Cairo Geniza of the *Damascus Document* (CD) at the end of the nineteenth century generated some discussion, but without firm conclusions, since this text is both very strict with regard to the law and clearly “Zadokite” in the sense that it seeks to promote a community of “sons of Zadok.” Some scholars judged it to be a Sadducee document, because of this name, but others could not accept this rapprochement of marginal persons with the allegedly Hellenized milieu of the chief priests, and appealed to a number of rabbinic parallels to support their claim that the text came from Pharisaic circles. Others envisaged “Sadducee Christians.”<sup>18</sup>

The discoveries at Qumran, which include fragments of CD, have shed a new light on this question, because some major documents tend to show that the group in Qumran considered themselves *bene Zadok*, and hence “Sadducees.” However, the rapprochements between these new documents and the Essenes of Josephus and Philo are incontestable, and this led to the specter of a strange identification between “Sadducees” and “Essenes.”

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. the prudent introduction by R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon 1913), 2:785–797. Charles tends towards the position that the text comes from a party of reformed Sadducees.



The rabbinic sources speak of the *zadukim* and the *beithusin*. These are two kinds of apostates, since they are placed in the same category as the Epicureans and Boethus, who was appointed to the high priesthood by Herod the Great ca. 20 BCE and who married his own daughter. Boethus came from Alexandria and may be considered close to Philo. However, these interpretations conceal the ancient debates. Let us look here only at a few significant texts.

According to *m. Abot* 1.8, the maxim which guided Antigonus of Soko, the successor of Simon the Just at the beginning of the second century, was: "Do not be like slaves who serve their master on condition that they receive their fixed ration,<sup>19</sup> but be like slaves who serve their master unconditionally. May the fear of Heaven be upon you, and your salary will be doubled in the world to come."<sup>20</sup> The first part of this aphorism can be interpreted in two ways: either as an invitation to an uncalculating confidence in providence, so that the second part announces benefits to be bestowed at an undefined date; or else as a denial of the resurrection, so that the second part is a later addition. The commentary elaborates the latter meaning: some disciples declared that the ancient doctrine was better, and this led to the formation of two dissident groups, the *zadukim* and the *beithusin*.

A different view was held by the Qaraite Qirqisani in the tenth century. He took over this tradition and reported the opinions of Zadok and Boethus on a number of points of the law; he also related that Zadok had written a book. This means that he regarded the Sadducees and Boethusians as dissidents, but not in the least as apostates. Obviously, he was defending his own position, because the Qaraites, who emerged in Egypt in the eighth century, advocated a return to *sola scriptura*. They were greatly encouraged by the discovery at this period of biblical manuscripts in the caves of Qumran (including Sirach and the *Damascus Document*). In one sense, they were neo-Sadducees. The Book of Zadok which Qirqisani cites has been identified beyond any doubt with the *Damascus Document*.<sup>21</sup>

Qirqisani's testimony allows us to get behind the rabbinic sources and see that the origin of the Sadducees and the Boethusians involved

<sup>19</sup> Cf. E. J. Bickerman, "The Maxim of Antigonus of Soko," *HTR* 45 (1951): 153–155.

<sup>20</sup> The last clause is attested only in *'Abot. R. Natan* A.5; the scholion makes Zadok and Boethus disciples of Antigonus.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. Paul, *Écrits de Qoumran et sectes juives au premiers siècles de l'Islam. Recherches sur les origines du Qaraïsme* (Paris: Letouzey 1969), 71.

more than the dissidences of apostate groups. Let me mention some examples.

The Boethusians disagreed with the Pharisees about the date of Pentecost. After the regulations about the Passover and the seven days of unleavened bread, Lev 23:11 says that the offering of the first sheaf of the harvest must be made “on the morrow after the sabbath.” The date of Pentecost is then fixed at the end of “seven full weeks” from the day of this offering. But there are several ways of understanding this computation, since the term “sabbath,” which also had the meaning “full moon,” can also be applied to the Passover of 15th Nisan; besides this, the seven full weeks can either begin on any day in the week, or else be intact, i.e. begin on a Sunday. The rabbinic tradition, Philo, Josephus, and some targums hold that in this text, “the sabbath” means the Passover. This means that the harvest and the offering of the sheaf took place on the 16th. The Boethusians, however, declared that the rite of the sheaf could be carried out only on the day after the “feast day” (*m. Menah.* 10.3). Since the “feast day” in question was the Passover, they carried out the offering of the sheaf on the day after the sabbath which followed the Passover (*b. Menah.* 65b). However, this simple interpretation did not fit the lunar calendar, since on average, the Passover falls on a sabbath one year in seven, and this means that the day after the sabbath is also the day after the feast. There is one obvious solution: if the Boethusians followed the calendar of the *Book of Jubilees*, where 1st Nisan (the first month) is always a Wednesday,<sup>22</sup> the same is necessarily true of the Passover feast on the 15th, and there is thus no difficulty about offering the sheaf on the day after the sabbath which follows the 15th, i.e. on the 19th of the month; we could even go as far as the sabbath which falls on the 26th, if we assume that the seven days of unleavened bread are all “feast days.” This gives us precisely the date envisaged by the calendar of Jubilees, as has long been noted.<sup>23</sup>

The rabbinic sources present numerous controversies involving the *zadukim*, especially about questions of purity. The case of the sacrifice of the red heifer is particularly significant. According to Num 19:9, Eleazar the son of Aaron burnt a red heifer and then prepared

<sup>22</sup> The details of this calendar are set out by A. Jaubert, *La Date de la Cène: Calendrier biblique et liturgie chrétienne*, EB (Paris: Gabalda 1957), 23ff.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. H. Albeck, *The Book of Jubilees and the Halakha* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1930), 16.

a lustral waster with its ashes, in order to treat impurities caused by corpses. At a much later period, *m. Parah.* 3.7 tells us that when the high priest went to sacrifice this heifer on the Mount of Olives, beyond the brook Kidron, the “elders of Israel” went before him and ensured that he incurred ritual impurity. He was then obliged to make an ablution to purify himself, before he could begin the rite at daybreak. This maneuver was meant to be seen, in order to prevent the *zadukim* from claiming that he could not be pure before sundown (as scripture prescribes)—for this would have obliged him to postpone the rite until the following day. According to *t. Parah* 3.6, the high priest Ishmael b. Phiabi (who was a hostage at Rome in 61), sacrificed two red heifers, in accordance with both doctrinal opinions. But a Qumran document (4QMMT),<sup>24</sup> which deals with a number of legal questions, especially the calendar of *Jubilees*, defends several opinions attributed to the *zadukim*, including this instance of the red heifer.

The documents from the Judean desert are culturally close to the ancient rabbinic sources.<sup>25</sup> We find the *zadukim* there. There is an explicit reference to Zadok in CD III, 18–IV, 4:

As God ordained for them by the hand of the prophet Ezekiel, saying, *The priests, the Levites, and the sons of Zadok*<sup>26</sup> *who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel strayed from me, they shall offer me fat and blood* [Ezek 44:15]. The *priests* are the converts of Israel who departed from the land of Judah, and (the *Levites* are) those who joined them. The *sons of Zadok* are the elect of Israel, the men called by name who shall stand at the end of days.

The expression “sons of Zadok” designates a quality, not membership in a family. Another text, Ezek 48:11, says that only those consecrated priests who are sons of Zadok are entitled to exercise the priesthood, because of their proven fidelity; once again, this is a personal quality. The reference here is to the final temple; it is possible that there may be a recollection here of the Zadok who was high priest when Solomon’s temple was inaugurated. Nevertheless, the societal form of the

<sup>24</sup> E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4. V—Miqqat ma’aseh ha-torah*, DJD 10 (Oxford: Clarendon 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. S. Lieberman, “The Discipline”; Y. Sussman, “The History of the Halakha and the Dead Sea Scroll,” *Tarbiz* 59 (1989): 11–76, with numerous references. S. Schechter, *Documents of Jewish Sectaries, 1: Fragments of a Zadocite Work* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), had already drawn this conclusion after the discovery of the Damascus Document. [English trans.: G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 100.]

<sup>26</sup> The MT and the LXX read: “the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok.”

Essenes is very special and owes nothing to the biblical precedents, which always center on a people. At the same time, there are interesting parallels in the Greek world. Following Pythagoras, Plato sketches the model of the life to be led by those who are charged with the defense of the city (*Rep.* 406d): they will co-opt new members; they will have no private property, and will have no private living quarters inaccessible to others; and they will be united by the same sentiments.<sup>27</sup> It is difficult to deny the similarity to the Essenes, especially when we add that they considered themselves the guardians of the covenant in the name of the entire people (of the city). However, it is clear that the Essenes are not Neo-Platonists: they follow the law of Moses with an integral system of purity, and the agriculture which they practice gives them a special bond to the earth. The channel of this Greek influence is probably Egypt in the second century BCE, but (in keeping with Josephus's account) their arrival in Judea may have been later.

As for the Sadducees properly so-called, they too may lie concealed behind the rabbinic *zadukim*, but their reference to the high priest Zadok is clearer, at least under Alexander Jannaeus. We should note that, according to *Ant.* 13.373, Alexander Jannaeus was attacked by the people when he wished to officiate as high priest. He then surrounded the altar and the sanctuary with a barrier of wood which only the priests could cross. However, Josephus had already written (at 8.95) that this non-biblical arrangement existed in the temple of Solomon. The model of the priest Zadok is not far off.

### 7. *The Herodians*

The gospels inform us of a collusion between Pharisees and Herodians when Jesus is asked about the tax due to Caesar (Matt 22:16; Mark 12:13). This scene is set in Jerusalem. In his commentary on Matthew *ad loc.*, Jerome mocks "some of the Latins" who declare that these Herodians believed Herod to be the Messiah. These "Latins" are none other than the treatise *Against all the Heresies* of Ps.-Tertullian, which

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. W. Tylloch, "Les thèses et la communauté de Qoumrân," in *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem 1967), 1: 225–228; J. J. Taylor, *Pythagoreans and Essenes: Structural Parallels* (Leuven: Peeters 2004).

Jerome explicitly quotes elsewhere (*qui Herodem Christum esse credebant*). In any case, Jerome believes that the Herodians were simply partisans of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, who (as Origen had observed in his own commentary on Matthew *ad loc.*) could not be suspected of refusing the payment of taxes to Caesar.

This opinion continues to be held,<sup>28</sup> but it is not without its difficulties. To begin with, Herod Antipas was an insignificant figure (much to the displeasure of Herodias), and he could scarcely have created a party of his own, on which the Romans would have bestowed a Latin name. Besides this, the presence of such Herodians in Jerusalem is not a matter of course, especially alongside the Pharisees; and indeed, the same collusion of Pharisees and Herodians in the synagogue at Capernaum, according to Mark 3:6, is even stranger, because there was an absolute opposition in Galilee between the Pharisaic countryside (Capernaum) and the capital cities of Herod Antipas (Sepphoris, Tiberias) where we may assume that the pro-Roman Herodians lived.

Nevertheless, Epiphanius of Salamis, who was not a Latin, declares that the Jews obstinately persist in regarding Herod as the Messiah (*Panarion* 20.2).<sup>29</sup> This idea is absolutely foreign to rabbinic Judaism, and it is hard to extract it from Matt 2:3–5, when Herod, the king of Jews, is profoundly disturbed to learn that the Magi are looking for the “king of the Jews”—for we see that he needs to seek information about the coming of the Messiah. There is no indication that he himself was regarded as the Messiah; at most, one might wonder why the star which the Magi follows should stop first at Jerusalem before going on to Bethlehem.—However, the Slavonic version of Josephus’s *Jewish War* evokes this belief in various ways (cf. Appendix II). First of all, we have one passage where the Greek equivalent is unintelligible (*War* 6.312–313). After the defeat in 70, Josephus comments as follows on the blindness of the Jews, which drove them to war:

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. E. J. Bickerman, “Les Hérodiens,” in idem, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 3:22–33 (Eng. trans. in 2nd ed., [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 656–669). In view of the rarity of Greek transcriptions of Latin adjectives ending in *-ianus* (such as *christianus*), Bickerman judges (with some hesitation) that this term applies not to partisans or soldiers of Herod Antipas, but to his servants. The only real reason he has for rejecting the “messianization” of Herod is that this is “difficult to imagine.”

<sup>29</sup> Eusebius mentions the same belief (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.6.1), which is also recorded by Byzantine writers.

Slavonic version	Greek textus receptus
They were driven to war by an ambiguous prediction found in the sacred books, which said that in those days one from the land of Judea would reign over the whole universe. <sup>30</sup>	(312) <i>But the main cause that had incited them to the war was an ambiguous prophecy which was also found in the sacred scriptures which announced that in those days a man from their land would become master of the universe.</i>
With regard to this, there are several interpretations:	(313) <i>The Jews believed that this referred to one of their own, and many of their wise men interpreted it erroneously,</i>
some believed that it was Herod, others believed that it was this crucified worker of miracles, still others believed that it was Vespasian.	<i>since in reality the oracle was announcing the principate of Vespasian, which was proclaimed while he was in Judea.</i>

The “worker of miracles” is an allusion to a preceding narrative, inserted after *War* 2.174; it is clear that this refers to Jesus, although he is not named explicitly. The Slavonic text presents two further narratives dated to the reign of Herod (see Appendix II). One concerns a star which Persian astronomers follow, and the other is a discussion, in terms that recall rabbinic debates, about whether Herod is the Messiah.

It is not easy to determine exactly what a Herodian party would have looked like immediately after the death of Herod. His kingdom was divided by Augustus among his three surviving sons, Philip, Herod Antipas, and Archelaus, and we do not know which of these three could have enjoyed the support of a Herodian party. On the other hand, when Archelaus was deposed by the Romans and replaced by a prefect (*Ant.* 17.342), it is possible that a Herodian party emerged

<sup>30</sup> This prophecy is also reported by Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13, and Suetonius, *Vespasian* 4. They write that the Jews failed to understand that the prophecy concerned Vespasian, the conqueror in Judea: it was there that his soldiers began to proclaim him emperor (as Josephus also writes: *War* 4.601–604). The prophecy in question, which is unintelligible if it is narrowed down to Vespasian, is given in Gen 49:10 (Targum Onqelos): “The scepter will not depart from Judah until the coming of the Messiah to whom the kingdom belongs, and the nations will hearken to him.”

anew, aiming at the restoration of a Jewish kingdom—as happened with Agrippa in 41. His desire to appear as a god (which proved fatal: *Ant.* 19.345) may have been linked to a tendency to see himself in messianic terms. In any case, Jesus’ warning to his disciples to steer clear of the “leaven of Herod” (Mark 8:15) is very meaningful, since it is clear that they all hoped for the restoration of a kingdom in Israel.

*Appendix I*  
*Genealogies of the High Priests from Aaron until the Return*  
*from Exile*

NB. Josephus gives the most complete list. Ezra 7 is very short, but the supplement which 1 Chronicles 5 offers between Azariah and Shallum contains imported elements (indicated by an asterisk on the left) or elements repeated by papponomy (indicated by an asterisk on the right).

<i>1 Chron 5:30-41</i> <i>(cf. 6:35-36)</i>	<i>Josephus, Antiquities</i>	<i>Ezra 7:1-5</i>
Aaron	Aaron (5.361; 20.228)	Aaron
Eleazar	Eleazar *Ithamar	Eleazar
Phinehas	Phinehas	Phinehas
<i>Abishua</i>	<i>Abiezer (Joseph, cf. 8.12)</i>	<i>Abishua</i>
Bukki	Bukki	Bukki
Uzzi	Uzzi	Uzzi
Zerahiah	*Eli (5.318)	Zerahiah
Meraioth	*Ahijah (6.107)	Meraioth
* <i>Amariah</i>		<i>Azariah</i>
*Ahitub	*Ahitub (6.122)	Ahitub
	*Ahimelek (6.242)	
*Zadok	Zadok *Abiathar (7.110)	Zadok
Ahimaaz	Ahimaaz (10.152-153)	
Azariah*	Azariah	
<i>Johanan*</i>	Joram	
	Isos (?)	
<i>Azariah*</i>	Axioram (Ahioram ?)	
<i>Johanan*</i>	Phideas (?)	
<i>Azariah*</i>	Sudeas (?)	
	Joel	
* <i>Amariah</i>	Jotham	
* <i>Ahitub</i>	Uriah	
* <i>Zadok</i>	Neriah	
	Udeah (Hodaiah ?)	
Shallum	Shallum	Shallum
Hilkiah	Hilkiah	Hilkiah
Azariah	(Azariah ?)	Azariah
Seraiah	Seraiah	Seraiah
Jehozadak	Jehozadak	Ezra

*Joshua, under Cyrus: cf. Neh 12:10-11*



*Appendix II*  
*The Slavonic Version of the Jewish War*

A Slavonic (Old Russian) version of Josephus's *Jewish War* was discovered in 1866. It is roughly 15% shorter than the Greek *textus receptus*, but it also includes some supplements, running in length from a few words to several pages. It has given rise to vigorous debates, since the most important additions concern New Testament personages—Herod, John the Baptist, Jesus—but they have a strange quality.

The intention of this Appendix is to argue in favor of the authenticity of this version, which goes back to an initial version of the *Jewish War* in Greek, written by Josephus himself.

1. *Recent Scholarship*

Thanks to characteristic errors, scholars have established that the translation was made from a Greek original in the eleventh or twelfth century, a period at which other Greek works were translated into Slavonic. The first critical edition was published in the 1930's, accompanied by a French translation.<sup>31</sup> In 1958, under difficult circumstances, N. Meščerskij published a critical edition in Russia which took account of Istrin's work.<sup>32</sup> A new tool for work has recently been published:<sup>33</sup> a synopsis which presents the classic translation from the Loeb series with an English translation of Meščerskij's edition. E. Hansack<sup>34</sup> has pointed to a paradox. On the one hand, he notes the meticulous,

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<sup>31</sup> V. M. Istrin, A. Vaillant, and P. Pascal, *La "Prise de Jérusalem" de Josèphe le Juif*, 2 vols. (Paris: Institut d'Études slaves, 1934–1938). The introduction and commentaries by Istrin, who died in 1937, were never published. An incomplete translation had earlier been made: A. Berendts and K. Grass, *Flavius Josephus, Vom Jüdischen Kriege Buch I–IV, nach der slavischen Übersetzung deutsch herausgegeben und mit dem griechischen Text verglichen*, 2 vols. (Dorpat, 1924–1927). A few extracts, translated into English and French, have been published as an appendix to modern translations of the *Jewish War* (in the Loeb and Reinach series respectively).

<sup>32</sup> N. A. Meščerskij, *Istorija Iujeskoj Vojny Iosifa Flavija v drevnerusskom perevode* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1958). Cf. S. Szyszman, RQ 1 (1959): 451–458; A. Vaillant, *Semitica* 9 (1959): 89–93.

<sup>33</sup> H. Leeming and K. Leeming, *Josephus' Jewish War and Its Slavonic Version: A Synoptic Comparison*, AGJU 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

<sup>34</sup> E. Hansack, *Die altrussische Version des "Jüdischen Krieges": Untersuchung zur Integration der Namen*, Slavica 1 (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999). As a philologist, he has great reservations about Meščerskij's edition.

indeed servile character of the translation: the translator employs circumlocutions which simply transpose the Greek into Slavonic, a phenomenon analogous to what might be called the "Septuagintal style," where the original is very transparent. On the other hand, however, he observes the extreme freedom of the translator, who excises or moves around entire passages, adds others, and occasionally slips in brief glosses. The contrast is so plain that he feels obliged to envisage two separate phases, first a faithful translation of the Greek *textus receptus*, then a major reworking by a reviser who does not have the original text in his possession and who adapts the text in view of a specific readership. It is a remarkable fact that this reviser nevertheless adapts completely to the work of the translator, whose style and phraseology he employs.

We may therefore surmise that the translation, which was made at one single period, is faithful to its Greek source.

## 2. *The Authenticity of the Source of the Slavonic Version*

In the prologue to the *Jewish War*, Josephus relates that he first wrote "in the language of his fathers" for eastern barbarians, but then translated his work into Greek for the Roman world. Later, he writes that assistants had helped him improve his style; and it is in fact the case that this work, in its Greek *textus receptus*, has a literary quality which far surpasses that of his other works, which were written without assistants. Besides this, we find some small errors which suggest that the author was not well acquainted with Judaism, the geography of Judea, and even the Aramaic language. Nevertheless, he boasts of having been an exceptionally gifted adolescent: at the age of fourteen, he received teachers of the law who came to consult him. We must admit that in his latest works (the *Antiquities* and the *Against Apion*) he knows his religion very well. He was born in 37, and was about forty years old when the *Jewish War* was published; it is unlikely that he started from zero at that age and arrived sixteen years later at the mastery which he displays in the *Antiquities*, all the more so, since he declares that his compatriots recognized his superiority in doctrinal matters. This declaration is not made by chance: a number of pointers suggest that after he came to Rome, he wished to propose to Judaism a future under Roman protection; he acted like a priest, although he wanted to be recognized as a Pharisee.

These considerations permit us to draw a very precise conclusion. Josephus must have given his literary assistants in Rome a first draft of his work *in Greek*, which he himself had taken the pains to write. Accordingly, between the original Aramaic and the Greek *textus receptus*, there was an initial Greek translation made by the author. We may even imagine that he introduced new documents at each stage of this process, for that is what we see him doing later on: when he takes up anew in the *Antiquities* matters about which he has already written in the *Jewish War* (i.e., the entire narrative which runs from the Maccabean crisis to the events leading up to the War in 66), he introduces numerous data drawn from archives. This sometimes leads to redactional difficulties, where these documents contradict the earlier, more legendary accounts. In any case, these circumstances suffice to explain both the qualities and the defects of the version of the *War* which was produced by his collaborators.

### 3. *Omissions and Additions in the Slavonic Version*

Let us look at some examples of the divergences between what we will now call the Greek and the Slavonic texts. These fall into three categories.

*First*, omissions. For the sake of simplicity, we mention only the omission of entire passages.

The Slavonic text omits the prologue which I have already cited (*War* 1.1–30), in which Josephus attacks the inaccurate accounts of the war which have been given by earlier authors. He explains that, as an eyewitness of the facts, he is their best historian, and then gives a summary of the contents of the seven Books. The ensuing narrative begins with the Maccabean crisis (167–164 BCE) and opens with a characteristic sentence: “While Antiochus surnamed Epiphanes was fighting against Ptolemy VI for domination over Syria, a quarrel broke out among leading Jews.” Josephus was certainly not a direct eyewitness of this crisis; he is simply beginning his narrative with the leitmotiv that the troubles of the Jews were always due to internal divisions. By standing back from the latest crisis and using as his frontispiece a crisis which found a solution, he is suggesting a kind of model for the contemporary war and the outcome for which he hopes. In doing so, he follows the Jewish tradition, for which the prophet is an historian

and the historian a prophet; but this contradicts what he says in the prologue, where he follows Thucydides and Greco-Roman historiography, who acknowledge only direct testimony, not the re-writing of ancient sources. We may suspect that this prologue was not found in the Aramaic version.

Some historical points are treated differently. For example, after the death of Herod, Archelaus endeavors in Rome to get Augustus to confer the kingship on him. This would be the confirmation of his father's last testament (*War* 2.37–38). But the situation is confused, and Augustus hesitates.

Slavonic	Greek
While he reflected thus,  a letter was brought from Varus, the governor of Syria, saying: "The Jews are revolting, since they do not wish to be under the power of the Romans. Take measures!"	(39) <i>Before Caesar took a decision on this matter, the mother of Archelaus, Maltake, died, and Varus sent from Syria letters about the defection of the Jews.</i>
And when Caesar entrusted this charge to Varus,	(40) <i>Varus had foreseen this event. After the departure of Archelaus (for Rome), he had gone up to Jerusalem... and had left a legion in the city... then had returned to Antioch.</i> [[41–54: Sabinus, the procurator of Syria, is in Jerusalem [§16–19]; he wishes to seize the temple treasure, and this provokes a revolt; Sabinus hopes for aid from Varus.]] [[55–65: Varus puts down the insurrections.]] [[66–74: Varus finally arrives in Jerusalem.]]
Varus took a regiment and marched against those who were guilty of rebellion. He fought with many (troops). Many of the Romans and of the Jews died. Later, the Jews submitted	<i>All he had to do was to display his forces, in order to disperse the camp of the Jews. As for Sabinus, since he was unable to face thought of appearing before Varus, he had earlier left the city and reached the coastal district.</i>

Table (*cont.*)

Slavonic	<i>Greek</i>
and promised to hand over the leaders. Varus sent to have them seized and brought before him. He threw into prison those who were older; he crucified two thousand of those who were younger.	(75) <i>Varus spread out a part of the army in the countryside to seize the authors of the uprising, many of whom were brought before him. He kept in prison those who seemed less zealous; he crucified around two thousand of those who were guiltier.</i>

The narrative in the Slavonic text amounts to less than one-tenth of the length of the Greek text. It is simple and clear: Varus, the governor of Syria, crushes a rebellion against Rome and punishes the guilty. In the Greek, the origin of the rebellion is Sabinus, who—according to *two* earlier passages (*War* 2.16–18 and 23)—is in league with Antipas against Archelaus with a view to seizing the treasure, although Varus has explicitly forbidden him to do so. This leads to a rebellion by the Jews which Sabinus is unable to quell until the arrival of Varus, whose presence suffices to reestablish order. However, Sabinus disappears. In fact, the Jews did not in the least rebel against Rome on this occasion: for shortly afterwards, they requested the eviction of Archelaus and the direct Roman administration. The narrative in the Greek text is long and complex, but the Slavonic is not a résumé of it, since the fact that it does not mention Sabinus means that it has a very different logic. This can be explained *either* on the hypothesis that the Slavonic has systematically suppressed the mention of Sabinus in a series of unconnected passages, without leaving the story incoherent in any way; *or* on the hypothesis that the Greek text has introduced in three distinct places new documentation about Sabinus's plot, adding this to the story of Varus's repression (the two thousand crucified men in the Slavonic text). When we examine these two hypotheses, we see that the second possibility is more natural, because we would otherwise be compelled to assume that the Slavonic translator had a systematic aim of shortening and transforming this particular account in a drastic manner that he nowhere else displays. The political and military narratives are usually intact in the Slavonic, and indeed are sometimes decorated with highly picturesque small details.

*Secondly*, we find small additions. Prescinding from stylistic effects which are difficult to evaluate, we can classify these under two headings.

*First*, in some instances the Slavonic gives information unknown to the Greek text. For example, *War* 1.340 states that Herod, after a battle, wanted to take a bath and was alone; the Slavonic specifies that he “spent the evening in a village named Aulon, where there was a hot spring.” According to *War* 2.503, Cestius the governor left Antioch with an army and arrived in Galilee at a place named Zebulon; the Slavonic adds: “named Andron.” However, we cannot exclude the possibility that such supplements are due to accidents by copyists or translators, if the text on which they were working contained illegible glosses or words.

*Secondly*, in other instances we can diagnose the presence of glosses attributable either to the translator or to later copyists. For example, Hansack notes a number of double translations of one and the same word. This phenomenon may be due to the meticulous quality of the translator’s work, which we have mentioned above; or, where a gloss had explained in the margin the meaning of an obscure or obsolete word, a copyist subsequently inserted it into the text itself. An example of a different type is *War* 5.567, which speaks of Mannaëus son of Eleazar, who seeks refuge with Titus. The Slavonic reads: “Mannaëus the nephew of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the tomb while he was already decomposing.” The mention of the name of Jesus indicates the presence of a gloss (see below), but we do not know whether this was already present in the text which the translator had before him. In same way, we find the title “John the forerunner” before a passage about an unnamed “savage”; this title varies in the manuscripts, but we can always recognize (often deformed) the Russian transcription of πρόδρομος, “forerunner.”

*Thirdly*, there are lengthy additions. The most extensive of these concern Herod and the principal personages of the New Testament; the most curious are those concerning Abraham.

a. Antipater, the son of Herod, plotted to murder his father, but he was unmasked and condemned (*War* 1.640). The Slavonic adds a digression about divine providence:

We must admire the divine dispensation which renders evil for evil and good for good. And no one, whether just or unjust, can escape His all-powerful right hand. However, His marvelous eye reposes principally on the just. Abraham, the ancestor of our race, was removed from his own

country because he had behaved unjustly towards his brother when their domains were divided between them. And he was punished by the very matter in which he had sinned. But later, thanks to his obedience, God gave him the promised land.

This interpretation of Abraham's departure from his native land as punishment for defrauding his brother has little in common with the biblical story, and it is hard to see why a Christian interpolator should have thought it up. However, we find it elsewhere in Josephus: at *Ant.* 1.281, he explains that Abraham was chased away by his family and that God led him to Canaan. When Josephus paraphrases Genesis, he follows the biblical narrative more closely: he says that Abraham was forced to leave Ur because he had criticized the idolatry of the Chaldaeans. Another passage proves that Josephus knew other non-biblical traditions about Abraham. In his discourse to his besieged compatriots in 70, Josephus takes Abraham as his example when he wishes to demonstrate the inefficacy of the armed struggle (*War* 5.379–381):

Nekao king of Egypt, who was also called Pharaoh, went out with a great army and snatched Sarah, the queen and ancestress of our race, from her husband. On that occasion, did Abraham—her husband and our ancestor—take up weapons in order to avenge himself upon the one who had insulted him? You know that he had one hundred and eighteen generals, each of whom commanded innumerable troops. Despising all these, he invoked the assistance of God and, raising his pure hands towards the very place which you have just besmirched, he moved the invisible Helper to fight. And at the beginning of the first night, the queen was sent back untouched to her husband, and the Egyptian adored this place which you have besmirched with the blood of your compatriots. He fled, trembling before the nocturnal visions and dreams, and honoring with silver and gold the Hebrews who were beloved by God.

b. The Slavonic adds two lengthy texts of a legendary character about Herod the Great. The first (after *War* 1.369), situated shortly after Herod's arrival in Jerusalem at the close of two years of civil war in Galilee and Judea (39–37 BCE), reports a secret debate among the teachers of the law, with the aim of discovering whether or not Herod is the Messiah. The subject is the fulfillment of some prophecies concerning the messianic signs (Gen 49:10; Deut 17:5; Isa 35:5–6; Dan 9:24–27; Zech 9:9), and the doctors of the law conclude that Herod does not fulfill these in any way. A certain Levi, who is faithful to Herod, seeks in vain to counter these arguments. He then denounces them to the king, who has them slaughtered. This episode presupposes that the question was in fact raised, and it is true that Herod had the

messianic star (from Balaam's prophecy, Num 24:17) depicted on some of his coins; the Herodians who are mentioned in the gospels were still his partisans one generation later (see above). The origin of this claim on Herod's part must be sought in Rome. When he acquired the kingship in Rome in 40 BCE, the situation was one of great urgency, since the Parthians had conquered Judea; but this was also the year that saw the reconciliation between Octavian and Antony which put an end to the interminable civil wars, and Virgil had composed a poem with a strongly messianic character about an heir who was to be born (the fourth *Eclogue*).

The second narrative concerns an analogous theme. Persian astronomers have seen a star ascending above Jerusalem, indicating the birth of one who is to be a master of the world. They arrive after a year and a half of observation, but they do not find anything, and the star disappears. Then it reappears, and they show it to Herod, who gives them an escort to follow the star. However, it vanishes once again, and they obtain permission to follow it on their own, after promising to return. After one year, they have still not returned, and the teachers of the law explain that according to the prophecies of Balaam and Daniel, a master will appear, born without a father. Herod makes enquiries in Judea in order to find such a child who is aged less than three years, and promises to adopt him—but in vain. The same Levi suggests that all the children be massacred, but the teachers argue successfully that according to Mic 5:1, the Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem, and that it therefore suffices to kill all the children there. Herod does so. This story, with the intermittent appearances of the star, follows the career of Herod: the star, followed by infallible astronomers, approaches him, then goes elsewhere after two eclipses. The master born without a father may be an allusion to the legends which Suetonius reports about the virginal birth of Augustus, the son of a god (i.e. Apollo) and master of the world. The origin of this passage is uncertain. Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.8.5) and Photius (*Bibliotheca* 238) both affirm that Josephus wrote about the massacre of the Holy Innocents in Bethlehem.

c. Finally, we have the information about John the Baptist and Jesus; or more exactly, we can identify the protagonists in these passages by a comparison with the gospels, since neither of them is named. The principal passages are the following.

Immediately after Augustus's nomination of Archelaus as ethnarch of Judea (*War* 2.110), the Slavonic gives a description of a sav-



age dressed in animal skins who wandered through Judea inviting the Jews to liberty. He baptized in the Jordan and said: "God has sent me to show the path of the law, by means of which you will be saved from having many masters. You will no longer have any mortal master over you, but only the Most High who has sent me." This could well sound like a Zealot sedition, and the man is brought before Archelaus; but he does not succeed in convincing the teachers of the law, and he declares to them: "I shall not reveal to you the mystery which is among you, because you have not wished this. And thus an invincible perdition has come upon you, by your own fault." Then he flees to the far shore of the Jordan.

After the deposition of Archelaus, Herod's two other sons, Antipas and Philip, retain and consolidate their respective tetrarchies (*War* 2.168); at this point, the Slavonic inserts another passage about the same savage, who explains a dream to Philip and predicts that because of his greed, he will lose both his province and his wife. Philip dies at once, and Antipas marries his wife, Herodias. This was contrary to the law, since he could not appeal to the institution of the levirate: Philip had four children. The teachers of the law are scandalized but do not dare to speak of this. The savage accuses Antipas unceasingly in public until the tetrarch loses patience and has him imprisoned (or cuts off his head, according to some manuscripts).

Later, under Pilate (*War* 2.174), the Slavonic speaks of "a man, if it is allowed to call him a man. His nature and his exterior were those of a man, but his appearance was more than human, and his works were divine." He worked mostly on the Mount of Olives and performed miracles by his word, even on the sabbath. This led to controversies, since he obtained results (and thereby broke the sabbath), but without any physical action (and thereby respected the sabbath). His hundred and fifty servants urged him in vain to massacre the Romans and to reign over them. When they heard of this, the leaders of the Jews thought it best to denounce him to Pilate, since they were afraid that terrible reprisals would follow if the governor were to hear of a movement of this kind. Pilate captured the worker of miracles, but when he saw that he did not aspire to the kingship, he released him, "for he had healed his wife, who was dying." Some time after this, the teachers of the law, who were jealous, purchased from Pilate the right to put to death the worker of miracles, "and they crucified him, in contradiction of the law of the ancestors." Let us note in passing,

for what it may be worth, that some tendencies in the Judaism of that period accepted the idea that an exceptional human being could be of divine rank; it was the rabbinic tradition which later proscribed every opinion of this kind.

When King Agrippa I died in 44, leaving no child old enough to reign, Claudius appointed Roman procurators in Judea while maintaining the judicial authority of the Jewish institutions such as the Sanhedrin; under Augustus, after the deposition of Archelaus, and then again under Tiberius, this judicial authority had been transferred in its entirety to the prefects. After mentioning the procurators Fadus and Tiberius Alexander (*War* 2.220), the Slavonic text inserts a passage about the disciples of the worker of miracles, which is so short that it can be quoted here in full:

If anyone deviated from the letter of the law, this was made known to the teachers of the law. He was tortured and expelled, or else he was sent to Caesar. And under these procurators, there appeared numerous servants of the worker of miracles whom we have described above, and they told the people that their master was living, although he had died: "And he will free you from slavery." And many among the people listened to their words. They lent their ears to their commandments. This was not because of their renown, for they were simple people, some of them sail-cutters [or: tent-makers], others shoemakers or artisans; but they wrought truly marvelous signs, as many as they wished.

When these noble procurators saw that the people were being led astray, they plotted together with some scribes to seize them and kill them: for a small matter ceases to be small when it leads to a great matter. But they felt shame and fear in the presence of the signs. They said that magic did not work so many miracles; if these people had not been sent by the providence of God, they would soon be put to confusion. And they were given permission to move around freely. Later, at the urgent request of those persons [i.e., the scribes], they dispersed them, sending some to Caesar and others to Antioch to stand trial, and dispatching others again to distant regions.

#### 4. *A Discussion of Authenticity*

Hansack calls all these supplements "christological," including even the visit of the Persians who follow the star, although the texts are in fact not particularly Christian. The most obvious anomalies are as follows: the star of the Persians does not arrive over Jesus; the clean separation between the worker of miracles and the savage, who is not in

any sense a forerunner; the complete absence of any biblical title or scriptural allusion in the case of the worker of miracles. Finally, the narrative of the disciples certainly represents a Jewish movement of workers of miracles in Judea, largely parallel to what we read in the Acts of the Apostles, but it stops just before the fundamental episode of Peter's visit to the enemy officer Cornelius, where new—and specifically Christian—horizons open up. We must not confuse Christianity with a "Jesus movement."<sup>35</sup>

This means *either* that a reviser of Josephus's text (a Byzantine scholar, or the Slavonic translator, or a later redactor), on the basis of the information supplied by the New Testament, has succeeded in imagining the kind of narratives that a Jew like Josephus could have written; *or* that everything must be ascribed to the first Greek draft which Josephus gave his assistants. In the former case, we must attempt to understand the forger's intention, for far from confirming the narratives in the gospels, he casts a number of doubts on their substantial accuracy. In the latter case, we must obviously explain how a testimony as important as that of Josephus could disappear for a thousand years, although so many authors sought confirmation in impartial witnesses for the affirmations of the evangelists—and Josephus was considered the most important of these impartial witnesses.

R. Eisler, who published the most thorough study of the Slavonic text in 1929,<sup>36</sup> realized that the supplements cited above are not particularly Christian. He ascribes them to a Greek translation of the first Aramaic version of the *War*, which he dates to 71. He describes the Slavonic translator as a Judaizer, perhaps an heir to the Jewish kingdom of the Khazars, who wished to produce anti-Christian propaganda. H. Thackeray, the leading specialist in Josephus at that period, was initially astonished, then genuinely interested in this hypothesis;<sup>37</sup> but he died in 1930 before he could offer a definitive opinion. It cannot be denied that Eisler's work contains exaggerations, and it received a generally cool welcome, though for two distinct reasons. Catholic scholars

<sup>35</sup> Nodet, *Le Fils de Dieu*.

<sup>36</sup> R. Eisler, *'ИНСОУС ВАСІАЕУС 'ОУ ВАСІАЕУСАС. Die messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jakobus des Gerechten usw.*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1929).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josèphe, l'homme et l'historien*, adapted from the English (1929) by É. Nodet, with an appendix on the Slavonic version of the *Jewish War* (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 2000).

disliked it because it called into question the accuracy of the gospels just as the church was emerging with difficulty from the Modernist crisis; and Protestant scholars held that the Slavonic supplements were necessarily Christian interpolations by virtue of the simple fact that they spoke of Jesus (even if only under a veiled form). These Protestant scholars, whose contemporary heir is Hansack, found valuable support in an article by E. Bickerman, who shared the same presupposition.<sup>38</sup>

In general terms, the passages which we have cited have a distinctly Jewish coloring, and this accords with the acknowledged competence of Josephus. We can make this point more specific by means of three different examples.

*First*, there is oriental evidence that the Aramaic version circulated. Shortly after the sack of Seleucia by the Romans in 165, a certain Mara Bar Serapion wrote in Aramaic a letter of encouragement to his son, inviting him to study philosophy. In the extract quoted here, he draws a parallel between what happened after the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and a wise king of the Jews. This is Jesus, but Mara knows him through a non-Christian source, which can scarcely be any other author than Josephus—especially since the Slavonic text (*War* 5.195) mentions a trilingual inscription which speaks of “Jesus the king who did not reign, crucified by the Jews because he announced the ruin of the city and the desolation of the temple”:

But what else can we say, when the wise men are systematically eliminated by tyrants, when their wisdom meets only insults, and their thoughts are attacked with no possibility of defense? What advantage did the Athenians draw from having put Socrates to death? This brought upon them famine and plague. Or the people of Samos, from burning Pythagoras at the stake? Their land was covered with sand in one single hour. Or the Jews, from having [killed] their wise king? Their kingdom was taken away from them at precisely that epoch. God has made recompense for the wisdom of these three men. The Athenians died of famine; the Samians were submerged by the sea; the Jews, deposed and driven out of their own kingdom, are scattered among all the nations. But Socrates is not dead, thanks to Plato; nor is Pythagoras dead, thanks

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<sup>38</sup> E. J. Bickerman, “Sur la version vieux-russe de Flavius Josèphe,” *Annuaire de l’Institut de philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves de Bruxelles* 4 (1936): 53–84; republished almost unchanged in idem, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (AGJU 9), Leiden: Brill 1985, 3:172–195 (Eng. trans. in 2nd ed. of this work [Leiden: Brill, 2007], 832–589).

to the statue of Juno; nor is the wise king dead, thanks to the new laws which he instituted.

*Secondly*, in the passage about the Essenes in the Slavonic text, we find at least two specific details which agree with documents found at Qumran. First, the nocturnal prayers (*War* 2.128) are also found in the *Community Rule* (1QS VI, 6–8): “And the Congregation shall watch in community for a third of every night of the year, to read the Book [i.e., Torah] and to study Law and to pray together.”<sup>39</sup> The Greek goes on to speak of the “repose of the periods of seven days”—a very vague term, since it simply means series of seven days—but the Slavonic gives details of all the rhythms which are framed by the sabbath and the sabbath year and are perpetual, or at least multiple. Some of the Qumran documents (4QMMT, 11QT) speak explicitly of series each of fifty days after Pentecost, corresponding to the first fruits of bread, of wine, and of oil.

Slavonic	Greek
In relation to the deity, they are above all pious. They scarcely ever rest, and they rise at night to sing the praises of God and to pray.	(128) <i>Their piety towards the deity takes particular forms.</i>
They observe in a particularly emphatic manner the seventh day, the seventh week, the seventh month, and the seventh year. On the sabbath, they prepare no food, kindle no fire, move no utensils, do not relieve themselves.	(147) <i>They observe the repose of the periods of seven days, since it is not enough for them to prepare their food on the previous evening, so that they need not kindle a fire on that day: they do not dare to move any utensil nor even to satisfy their natural needs.</i>

<sup>39</sup> Eng. trans.: Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 81.

*Thirdly*, at the moment of ruin, Josephus relates a number of oracles which had predicted it. In the Greek text, they are difficult to understand (*War* 6.311–312), but the Slavonic shows us where we can find help in scriptural passages. The “prophecy of the quadrangle” fits both the crucifixion and the temple, when we bear in mind that the suppression of a vertical element (either the condemned man, or the Antonia Tower) leaves us with a quadrangular structure (though not a square: the cross with the *titulus*, or *crux parvis*) and that this permits a more effective resistance to an invasion. Let us now look at Dan 8:22: “As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation (מַגֵּן), but not with his power.” In context, the thing broken and replaced is a “horn” (קֶרֶן), which may be the designation of a king: Alexander was replaced by the Diadochoi. But the same word can also designate an angle (cf. “the horns of the altar”). If we forget the context, we can make sense of the interpretations in the Slavonic text, which plays on these two meanings of the noun “horn,” viz. “king” or “angle.” In the case of the worker of miracles, a king was broken and then replaced by four angles; in the case of the temple, the Antonia formed an excrescence (a horn), or even a fifth angle. We should note that this interpretation can be made only on the basis of the Hebrew text.

Slavonic	Greek
(see below)	(311) <i>Thus the Jews after the destruction of the Antonia fortress, reduced the temple to the form of a quadrangle,</i>
Although there existed among the Jews this prophecy that the city and the temple would be laid waste by the quadrangular form, they themselves set to work to make crosses for the crucifixion, which entails the quadrangular form of which we have spoken, and after the ruin of the Antonia they made the temple quadrangular.	<i>although they could see written in their book that the city and the temple would be taken once the sacred precincts had the form of a quadrangle.</i>
	[no parallel]
	(see above)

Table (*cont.*)

Slavonic	Greek
They were driven to war by an ambiguous prediction found in the sacred books, which said that in those days one from the land of Judea would reign over the whole universe.	(312) <i>But the main cause that had incited them to the war was an ambiguous prophecy which was also found in the sacred scriptures which announced that in those days a man from their land would become master of the universe.</i>
With regard to this, there are several interpretations: some believed that it was Herod, others believed that it was this crucified worker of miracles, still others believed that it was Vespasian.	(313) <i>The Jews believed that this referred to one of their own, and many of their wise men interpreted it erroneously, since in reality the oracle was announcing the principate of Vespasian, which was proclaimed while he was in Judea.</i>

The biblical prophecy about the master of the world who is to come forth from Judea is virtually unintelligible in the Greek (we find it also in Tacitus and Suetonius); but the mention of Herod by the Slavonic text points us to the discussion of his messianic status which we have cited above. And this brings us to the blessing of Judah by Jacob (Gen 49:10), provided that we take it in one of the forms attested by the targum and by Justin, *Dial.* 120.3–4: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until there comes the Messiah to whom the kingdom belongs [Justin reads: “until the one comes for whom it is reserved”], and the nations will hearken to him.” This text thus refers to the appearance in Judah (Judea) of an exceptional personage, who may be either the last king of Judea or another man who takes the place of the kingdom that has fallen. Vespasian was in Judea when he became emperor; as for Herod, who was appointed king after the collapse of the Hasmonaean dynasty, he was not a Jew, and according to this prophecy he would possess legitimacy only if he was in fact the Messiah.

5. *Attempt at an Interpretation*

With regard to Herod, Jesus, and John the Baptist, we must begin by interpreting a strange progression. The Slavonic has the passages mentioned above, with only a faint Christian coloring. The Greek contains no additional information about these personages, and more generally, it has no passage from which one might infer a messianic doctrine or hope. Finally, the *Antiquities*, which set out the Jewish doctrines at length, have nothing to say about an eschatological perspective (the posterity of David is lost to sight after Zerubbabel), but this work does have one passage about Jesus and another about John the Baptist, both of whom are named clearly. Let us look at these briefly. The passage about John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18.116–119) comes not before Pilate (as in the Slavonic text), but towards the end of the reign of Tiberius, well after Jesus. There are two obvious reasons for this major displacement: first of all, Josephus knew a dossier about Vitellius, the governor of Syria, which shows that Philip died in 34, and this entails that the affair of Herodias and Antipas occurred later; and secondly, Josephus maintains a link between this affair and the death of John the Baptist. However, he does not offer any real information about John's life. He gives an extremely precise description of his baptism, but without linking it to the Jordan.<sup>40</sup> Under these conditions, we may wonder whether he actually wished to efface the prophetic profile of John and every allusion to his role as Jesus' forerunner.

The passage about Jesus (*Ant.* 18.63–64) is the famous *testimonium de Iesu*. This is in fact testimony to a confession of the Christian faith in Rome, which mentions the passion and resurrection in accordance with the prophets, somewhat in the manner of the "word of salvation" at Acts 13:27–31. This passage, which begins like the Slavonic text, describes Jesus' activity very briefly: "Around the same time, there appeared Jesus, an able man—if indeed one should call him a 'man.' For he was a worker of miracles and the master of those who delight in welcoming strange things. He won over many Jews and also many from the hellenistic world." This text admits that Jesus worked miracles, but he is evaluated negatively, since his bizarre teaching created

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<sup>40</sup> On any hypothesis, Josephus has struggled to combine sources which were not very coherent: cf. É. Nodet, *Flavius Josèphe: Baptême et résurrection* (Paris: Éd. du Cerf, 1999), 83–98.



a school in which Jews and Greeks mingled in the name of scripture; and this means that the denunciation to Pilate was justified. This is an anachronism, as far as Jesus is concerned, but it shows us what was unacceptable to Josephus, who concludes as follows: "And the wretched group of the Christians, named after him, has not disappeared up to the present day." The criticism is clear, but the language remains prudent.

This passage is rather brief, and it does not give the impression that it relates important events in Judea. Nevertheless, at *Ant.* 20.197–203, Josephus reports that the only notable action taken by the high priest Ananus was the legal stoning of "James, the brother of Jesus called the Christ." This was a political error which led to his deposition, since the execution served only to increase the renown of James. This Ananus was not just anybody: in the *Jewish War*, he is presented as a model, and Josephus writes that if he had not been assassinated in 69, he would have been capable of averting the catastrophe thanks to his outstanding political ability (*War* 4.316–321). Ananus, the only known Sadducean high priest, thought that he could get away with eliminating James, who was important enough to be a threat to his position—for according to Hegesippus (quoted by Eusebius), some milieus actually regarded James as high priest. This means that both Ananus and James were very prominent men; but James is defined by means of his relationship to Jesus in this passage of undisputed authenticity. This suggests that Jesus himself must have been even more important than James—and this means that Josephus is not saying all that he knows.

The next step in our argumentation is the observation that Josephus calls the Christians "disciples" of Jesus, who is defined in a sentence that has disturbed the commentators, who judge it to be an interpolation: "It was he who was the Christ." Since the verb is in the past tense, this can only be a Christian profession of faith. Besides this, the term *christianos*, which is a Latin formation (not Greek), has an origin that owes nothing to Jesus: initially, this was the criminological name for a Jewish messianic agitation which began under Caligula, when he planned to have his statue erected in the temple at Jerusalem. These protests are attested at Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. Suetonius (*Claudius* 25) writes that when Claudius took power, he expelled the Jews from Rome, since they were continually provoking unrest "at the instigation of 'Chrestus' (*impulsore chresto*)." These were not disciples of Jesus, but groups who expected the imminent coming of

the Messiah. At Antioch, we read that Barnabas and Paul were caught up in a similar tumult and were described as “Christians” (Acts 11:26). Subsequently, this term was retained in the communities associated with Paul, where both Jews and Gentiles mingled with one another. This led to a complete identification between “Christ” and “the risen Jesus,” despite a considerable distance from the Messiah whom the Jews expected: and this brings us to the words of Josephus. This identification can also be seen in Tacitus’s account of the execution of the “Christians” under Nero: these were not necessarily exceptionally angelic persons, since they denounced each other.

These remarks permit us to formulate a simple hypothesis about the evolution of Josephus. On his arrival at Rome in 67, he may have heard of *christiani*, but they were certainly far removed from his own social circle, and he had no immediate reason to associate them with the worker of miracles in Judea and his movement, of which he could not have been ignorant. We can therefore envisage three phases.

First, there is a retrospective enthusiasm for the worker of miracles and a severe view of the consequences of his clumsy execution; this stage would be represented by the Aramaic *Jewish War*, which Mara bar Sarapion knew, and the Greek draft.

Later, around 75, when he discovered that the active posterity of Jesus was nothing other than the Christian rabble which posed a danger to the Jewish identity, he realized that he had said too much. This may have led him to withdraw quickly the copies of his work which were already in circulation and to “cleanse” the dossier which he entrusted to his assistants. This “dossier” contains nothing evocative of messianism. He received the formal approval of Titus for the final version of the *Jewish War*, and this presupposes that it was read by censors.

Finally, when he compiled the *Antiquities* under Domitian (ca. 93), the Christian movement had expanded in Rome to such an extent that Josephus was obliged to mention it. However, he did this prudently, isolating the movement from every specifically Jewish school.

This hypothesis of an urgent recall of the first Greek version permits us to explain a number of phenomena, while avoiding the hypothesis of an unusual creativity on the part of the Byzantine scholars or the Slavonic translators. First of all, we can grasp why Judaism inflicted the *damnatio memoriae* on Josephus for having spoken rashly, although his surrender to the Romans was scarcely different from that of his

contemporary Johanan ben Zakkai, the ancestor of the rabbinic tradition. At a later period, there remained a kind of rumor in the Christian church that he had said important things: for example, Eusebius claims that he is following Josephus when he links the beginning of the troubles in Judea to the death of Jesus, although he does not give an exact quotation.

How is the presence in Byzantium of a copy of the Greek draft to be explained? This must be attributed either to chance or to an error. We have seen that Photius, the initiator of the Slavonic mission of Cyril and Methodius, seems to have known an echo of this text, with regard to the children in Bethlehem. In any case, the copy later translated into Slavonic certainly came from Byzantium.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Eng. trans.: Brian McNeil.



## THE SON OF MAN IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

JOHN J. COLLINS

### 1. *Introduction*

The expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, literally, the son of the man, occurs more than 70 times in the gospels with reference to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The expression is clearly a Semitism, corresponding to Hebrew בן אדם or Aramaic בר אנשא, either of which means, normally, “human being” or “someone.” The plural, בני אדם, is commonly used to refer to humanity at large. In the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet is addressed 93 times as בן אדם. The determinate form of the singular, בן האדם, is not attested in the Hebrew Bible. In Aramaic, the expressions בר (א)נשא and בר (א)נשא refer to human beings in a generic sense. In the gospels, however, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου evidently refers to a specific individual, at least in most cases. Several of these references envision the “Son of Man” coming on the clouds of heaven, a clear allusion to the vision in chapter 7 of the Book of Daniel.

For much of the twentieth century, scholars sought to explain this usage of “Son of Man” with reference to an individual, supernatural, figure, by appeal to a supposedly widespread myth of a Primal Man, of Iranian origin. Speculation about this Primal Man, or *Urmensch*, is associated especially with the “History of Religions School” (*die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) in the early part of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> This approach to scholarship was prompted by the discovery of ancient religious texts, from Egypt to Iran, in the nineteenth century. Much of the discussion focused on late Hellenistic and even later Mandaean and Gnostic materials that date from the third to the sixth centuries CE, but it also drew on studies of kingship ideology in

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<sup>1</sup> A. Yarbro Collins, “The Origin of the Designation of Jesus as ‘Son of Man,’” *HTR* 80 (1987): 391–408, at 396, reprinted in eadem, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 139–158, at 145.

<sup>2</sup> Important works in this school include R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904); Reitzenstein and H. H. Schaeder, *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus, aus Iran und Griechenland* (Berlin: Teubner, 1926).

the ancient Near East. In the words of Sigmund Mowinckel, "Conceptions of a more or less divine Primordial Man were widespread in the ancient east. Apparently there is a historical connexion between the varying figures of this type, which seem to be derived, directly, or indirectly, from Iranian or Indo-Iranian myths."<sup>3</sup> The Jewish conception of "the Son of Man" was "a Jewish variant of this oriental, cosmological, eschatological myth of Anthropos."<sup>4</sup> Little attention was paid to the distinctive aspects and historical circumstances of the different bodies of literature. The most recent exponent of this approach to the "Son of Man" problem, F. H. Borsch, summed up his thesis as follows:

it is our contention that we have good cause for suspecting that there was a mythical conception of relative antiquity concerning a primal hero, conceived of as Man who was once on earth, whose story contains some reference to defeat or death. Yet somehow he was also regarded as one who was or who was very closely allied with a glorious, cosmic Man figure of the heavens. While such legendary beliefs are never found in exactly the same guise and often appear only in fragmentary forms, and while we do not necessarily postulate some one original myth, there is reason to believe that the variant descriptions are related.<sup>5</sup>

Even at the time when Borsch wrote, however, this approach had begun to seem dated. There was a growing realization that composite myths cannot be constructed from fragmentary sources in different religious traditions, and then retrojected to a time centuries earlier than the extant sources. The problems with the *religionsgeschichtlich* approach were pointed out decisively in a monograph by Carsten Colpe in 1961.<sup>6</sup> Colpe concluded "not that traditions of a cosmic heavenly macroanthropos, a protoplast put in the end-time, or an archetypal primal man were adopted, but rather that Jewish apocalyptic itself had been fruitful in developing the figure of the Son of Man."<sup>7</sup> So while Colpe was much more careful than the scholars of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* in avoiding anachronism and focus-

<sup>3</sup> S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in Israel and Later Judaism* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 422.

<sup>4</sup> Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 425.

<sup>5</sup> F. H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* (London: SCM, 1967), 87.

<sup>6</sup> C. Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961). See also his article "ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου," *TDNT* 8 (1972): 400–477, esp. 408–415.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 419–420.

ing the discussion within specific historical and cultural limits, he affirmed the existence of a “Son of Man concept” in Judaism around the turn of the era.

Other scholars went farther. In 1968, Ragnar Leivestadt had declared the apocalyptic Son of Man to be a phantom.<sup>8</sup> A few years later he reformulated his thesis in English: “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man.”<sup>9</sup> Geza Vermes argued that “no titular use of the phrase ‘the son of man’ can be substantiated” from the Jewish sources, and that “the association between ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου and Dan 7:13 constitutes a secondary midrashic stage of development, more understandable in Greek than in Aramaic.”<sup>10</sup> Norman Perrin argued that “there is no ‘Son of Man’ concept, but rather a variety of uses of Son of Man imagery.”<sup>11</sup> Barnabas Lindars is typical of much recent scholarship when he declares the “Son of Man” concept to be “a modern myth.”<sup>12</sup>

Insofar as the “Son of Man” concept is understood in terms of a syncretistic Anthropos myth, pieced together from late Hellenistic and Gnostic sources, the critical reaction is certainly justified. Moreover, it is unwarranted to suppose that all Jewish witnesses to the “Son of Man” draw on a composite myth that encompasses them all. It is now readily granted that “the Son of Man” was not a fixed title in Judaism in the first century CE. The significance of this point should not be exaggerated, however. The text of Daniel’s vision was well known, and it inspired further reflections and imaginative elaborations. It is not necessary to posit the existence of any “Son of Man” myth beyond what we find in the texts. Later authors adapt Daniel’s vision in ways that are quite creative, and are by no means simple reproductions of the original vision. There were, however, some widely held assumptions about the nature of the figure in Daniel’s vision, and these go beyond what is explicit in the biblical text. Whether or not these assumptions are thought to amount to a “Son of Man concept,” they are important for the context of the early Jesus tradition and for the designation of Jesus as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

<sup>8</sup> R. Leivestadt, “Der apokalyptische Menschensohn ein theologisches Phantom,” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 6 (1967–68): 49–109.

<sup>9</sup> Leivestadt, “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” *NTS* 18 (1971–72): 243–267.

<sup>10</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 96–98.

<sup>11</sup> N. Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 26.

<sup>12</sup> B. Lindars, *Jesus, Son of Man* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 3.

2. *Daniel 7*

Fundamental to any expectation of a heavenly “Son of Man” figure is the vision reported in Aramaic in Daniel 7. Daniel, we are told, had a dream, in which “the four winds of heaven stirred up the great sea.” Then four great beasts came up out of the sea. All were terrible, but the fourth was most terrible of all. Then, while Daniel watched: “thrones were set, and an Ancient of Days took his seat.” This figure is evidently divine, and is attended by an entourage of “ten thousand times ten thousand.” He presides over a judgment scene. The fourth beast is slain before him. Then, the vision continues, “I watched in the visions of the night, and behold, one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and he approached the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.” He is given an indestructible kingdom and everlasting dominion over all the nations.<sup>13</sup>

The expression “one like a son of man” in this passage is more properly translated as “one like a human being.” His human form contrasts with that of the beasts from the sea. But he is not said to be human. The imagery of a figure riding on the clouds strongly suggests that the figure in question is divine. In the words of John Emerton: “The act of coming with clouds suggests a theophany of Yahwe himself. If Dan vii.13 does not refer to a divine being, then it is the only exception out of about seventy passages in the O. T.”<sup>14</sup> The anomaly of this passage in a Jewish context is that there is already a divine figure seated on the throne, who clearly has priority over the figure associated with the clouds.

While this imagery is anomalous in a Jewish context, however, it is quite intelligible against the background of Canaanite mythology, known to us from texts from the second millennium BCE, found at Ugarit.<sup>15</sup> There El is the white-headed “father of years,” while Baal is the fertility god and rider of the clouds. Moreover, one of Baal’s great adversaries is the Sea (Yamm), while in Daniel the figure on the clouds is contrasted with the beasts that rise from the sea. (The Sea is

<sup>13</sup> For commentary on this passage see J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 274–324.

<sup>14</sup> J. A. Emerton, “The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery,” *JTS* 9 (1958): 225–242, at 231–232. Yahweh is the rider of the clouds in such passages as Deut 33:26; Ps 68:5; Ps 104:3.

<sup>15</sup> Colpe, “ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου,” 415–419; Collins, *Daniel*, 286–294.



also associated with monsters in the Canaanite tradition, notably Lotan, the biblical Leviathan, and Shilyat of the seven heads.) The imagery is adapted in a novel way in Daniel's vision. Four beasts are said to rise from the sea, to allow for a correlation with four world kingdoms. Most significantly, the rider of the clouds does not engage the beasts in battle. Rather, they are condemned by a heavenly court, and everything is decided by divine decree. Nonetheless, the configuration of imagery strongly suggests that Daniel's vision is indebted to Canaanite mythology. What is important is the pattern of relationships: the opposition between the sea and the rider of the clouds, the presence of two godlike figures, and the fact that one who comes with clouds receives everlasting dominion.<sup>16</sup>

The suggestion that Daniel was indebted to Canaanite mythology has met with a certain amount of scholarly resistance.<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, some scholars are reluctant to believe that a pious Jewish author would use symbolism derived from a Canaanite source. We are increasingly aware, however, that Canaanite traditions were indigenous in Israel,<sup>18</sup> and so the visionary may not have thought of this imagery as foreign at all. Alternatively, the vision may have been intended to subvert the worship of Baal Shamem, which was introduced into the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, sparking the crisis that forms the context of Daniel's visions. A more difficult problem is presented by the fact that we do not know how Canaanite traditions were transmitted in the Hellenistic period. There can be little doubt, however, that many more traditions were current in Second Temple Judaism than are now extant. Glimpses of such traditions can be seen in the so-called Apocalypse of Isaiah (Isaiah 24–27), which alludes to Leviathan (27:1), the destruction of Mot or Death (25:8) and an enigmatic punishment of the host of heaven (24:21–23). Other mythological traditions come to light in extrabiblical writings

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<sup>16</sup> See J. J. Collins, "Stirring Up the Great Sea: The Religio-Historical Background of Daniel 7," in idem, *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 139–155.

<sup>17</sup> See e.g. L. F. Hartman and A. A. DiLella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 212; M. P. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 35–38; A. J. Ferch, *The Son of Man in Daniel 7* (Berrien Springs MI: Andrews University Press, 1979), 40–107.

<sup>18</sup> See especially the ground-breaking work of F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

such as *1 Enoch*, and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is not implausible, then, that Daniel could have drawn on traditions that are not attested in the Hebrew Bible and that are ultimately of Canaanite origin.

To say that the imagery of Daniel 7 is ultimately derived from Canaanite imagery is not, however, to say that the author or original readers understood the “one like a son of man” as Baal, or that Baal was the proto-type of the “Son of Man.” The identification and meaning of the figure must be assessed within the context of Daniel’s vision. The vision is interpreted for Daniel by an angel: “As for these great beasts which are four: four kings will arise from the earth. The holy ones of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess the kingdom forever and forever and ever” (Dan 7:17–18). Later, in 7:27, we are told that the kingdom will be given to “the people of the holy ones of the Most High.”

Many scholars have inferred from this interpretation that “the holy ones of the Most High” are the Jewish people, and that the “one like a son of man” is a collective symbol for them.<sup>19</sup> This inference is not well founded. The adjective “holy ones,” when used substantively, nearly always refers to angels, in the Hebrew Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is only one clear exception in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 34:10). Moreover, the Aramaic קד׳יִשׁ׳ן is used of heavenly beings in Dan 4:14, and the singular is found in 4:10, 20. In the Hebrew part of the book, Daniel hears one “holy one” speaking to another in 8:13, and these are clearly members of the heavenly court. So, while “the people of the holy ones” in Dan 7:27 are plausibly identified as the Jewish people, the holy ones who initially receive the kingdom are their heavenly counterparts. There is, of course, correspondence between the earthly and heavenly realms. In Daniel 10:13, 20–21 we are told of struggles between Michael, “prince” or patron angel of Israel, aided by Gabriel, on the one hand, and the “princes” of Persia and Greece on the other. The Similitudes of Enoch, a book heavily indebted to Daniel, distinguishes between “the holy ones who dwell in the heavens” and the righteous and holy on earth. After death, the human righteous have “their dwelling with the angels and their resting places with the holy ones” (*1 En.* 39:5). A similar correspondence of earthly and heavenly holy ones is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. To identify the “holy ones of the Most High” simply as the Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> See e.g. Hartman and DiLella, *The Book of Daniel*, 218–219.

people is to miss the more complex metaphysical understanding of the situation implied in the ancient texts.

The holy ones in Daniel 7 correspond to the Jewish people in some way, but they are not simply identical with them. Neither is the “one like a son of man” adequately understood as a collective symbol for the holy ones, either angelic or human. While the interpreting angel in Daniel 7 says explicitly that the four beasts are four kings (or kingdoms), he does not say that the “one like a son of man” is equivalent to the holy ones. There are several other instances where Daniel sees in his visions figures that have the appearance of a man. In 8:15, he sees one standing before him “in the likeness of a man” (כַּמְרֵאָה גִבֹּר). The figure is identified as the angel Gabriel. This figure reappears in 9:21, where he is introduced as “the man Gabriel” (הָאִישׁ גַּבְרִיאֵל). In ch. 10 he sees “a certain man dressed in linen” who is also evidently an angel. Finally, two angelic figures, one of whom is a man dressed in line, appear in 12:5–7. There were plenty of precedents for the depiction of angels in human form in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>20</sup> The closest parallels to Daniel are found in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 1, the deity appears “in the likeness, as it were, of a human form” (1:26). In Ezek 8:2 a similar figure appears, who is probably an angel. In Ezekiel 9–10 a “man clothed in linen” appears, who is evidently the prototype for the similar figures in Daniel. Angels also appear as men in the visions of Zechariah (1:8; 2:5), and, closer to the time of Daniel, in the Animal Apocalypse in 1 Enoch.

In light of this usage, the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 is most plausibly interpreted, not as a collective symbol for the holy ones, but as their leader and representative, most probably Michael, who appears in Daniel 10–12 as the “prince” of Israel. The exaltation of Michael in heaven bespeaks the exaltation of Israel on earth, but it is not equivalent to it without remainder. A clear parallel to the scenario envisioned in Daniel can be found in the *War Scroll* from Qumran, which says that God “will exalt the authority of Michael above all the gods and the dominion of Israel over all flesh” (1QM XVII, 7–8).

It should be noted that all the earliest interpretations and adaptations of the “one like a human being,” Jewish and Christian alike, assume that the phrase refers to an individual and is not a symbol or

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Gen 18:2; Josh 5:13; Judg 13:6, 8, 16.

a collective entity.<sup>21</sup> We shall see that this is the case in the Similitudes of Enoch and in 4 *Ezra* 13, the major adaptations of Daniel 7 in the pseudepigrapha. There is no hint of a collective interpretation in the New Testament. In Rev 14:14 the visionary sees “seated on the cloud was one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.” In this case, however, the “one like a son of man” is one of several angelic figures in a vision of destruction, and not identified with Christ (in contrast to Rev 1:13).<sup>22</sup> This passage, then, is an interesting witness to an angelic interpretation of “one like a son of man.” While the “Son of Man” figure in the Similitudes of Enoch and 4 *Ezra* is heavenly, he is also identified as “messiah.” The messianic interpretation prevails in rabbinic literature, and is still the majority interpretation among the medieval Jewish commentators.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. *The Similitudes of Enoch*

The most important and extensive portrayal of a figure called “Son of Man” in a Jewish text, apart from Daniel 7, is found in the Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71). This section of *1 Enoch* is not attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and some doubts exist about its date and its Jewish origin.<sup>24</sup> It is hardly conceivable, however, that a Christian author would have written about a figure called “Son of Man” without identifying him explicitly as Jesus. Neither is it likely that a Jewish author would have used this imagery after the Christian identification of Jesus as Son of Man became current. Moreover, the “Son of Man” passages in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 19:28 and 25:31), which refer to a “glorious throne,” are plausibly thought to depend on the Similitudes.<sup>25</sup> These considerations suggest a date prior to 70 CE. The allusion to the Parthians in *1 En.* 56.5–7 is usually assumed to imply a date after the Parthian invasion in 40 BCE, while the reference to hot springs that serve the kings and the mighty in 67.5–13

<sup>21</sup> See Collins, *Daniel*, 72–105.

<sup>22</sup> See A. Yarbro Collins, “The ‘Son of Man’ Tradition and the Book of Revelation,” in eadem, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 159–197.

<sup>23</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 307.

<sup>24</sup> See the reviews of scholarship by D. W. Suter, “Weighed in the Balance: The Similitudes of Enoch in Recent Discussion,” *Religious Studies Review* 7 (1981): 217–221, and Sabino Chiala, *Libro delle parabole di Enoc*, *Studi Biblici* 117 (Brescia: Paideia, 1997), 39–51.

<sup>25</sup> J. Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 149–182.

may be prompted by Herod's attempt to cure himself in the waters of Callirhoe.<sup>26</sup> So, while the evidence is less than conclusive, a date in the early or middle first century CE seems likely.<sup>27</sup>

The Similitudes consist of three "parables" (chs. 38–44; 45–57; and 58–69).<sup>28</sup> Chapter 37 introduces the entire composition as a "vision of wisdom." Chapter 38 introduces the first parable by asking where the dwelling of sinners will be when "the Righteous One appears in the presence of the righteous." This is followed in ch. 39 by recollection of the ascent of Enoch on a whirlwind (cf. *1 Enoch* 14). The wisdom, then, is based on what he saw when he ascended to heaven: the dwellings of the righteous (39.5–6) and the dwelling of the Chosen One. He also sees the archangels and the judgment that is to come. Finally, he is shown various cosmological secrets, such as the storehouses of the sun and moon, and is told that he has been shown a parable about the holy ones that live on earth and believe in the name of the Lord of Spirits.

The second parable is "about those who deny the name of the dwelling of the holy ones and the Lord of Spirits." These, we are told, will neither ascend to heaven nor come on earth. The main focus of the parable, however, concerns the judgment day when the Chosen One will sit on his throne of glory. This scene is clearly modelled on Daniel's vision, although the older scene is adapted freely. Enoch sees "one who had a head of days, and his head was like white wool. And with him was another, whose face was like the appearance of a man; and his face was full of graciousness like one of the holy angels" (46.1). Enoch proceeds to inquire about "that Son of Man." Again, he is shown the destiny of the righteous and wicked and various cosmological secrets.

The third parable is said in ch. 58 to be about the righteous and the chosen and their destiny. Again, Enoch is shown cosmological secrets, but again a significant segment of the parable is devoted to the "Son of Man" figure and the judgment (chs. 61–64).

<sup>26</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 17.171–173; *War* 1.657–658.

<sup>27</sup> So also D. W. Suter, *Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch*, SBLDS 47 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 32.

<sup>28</sup> G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Discerning the Structure(s) of the Enochic Book of Parables," and M. A. Knibb, "The Structure and Composition of the Book of Parables," in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, ed. G. Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 23–47 and 48–64, respectively. Citations from the Similitudes follow G. W. E. Nickelsburg and J. C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

It is apparent, then, that the “Son of Man” plays a central role in the Similitudes, and this is all the more apparent if we recognize that he is one and the same as the figure referred to as the Righteous, or the Chosen.<sup>29</sup> The clearest allusion to Daniel’s vision is in 46.1, cited above. Again in 47.3, the books are opened before the Head of Days, who is surrounded by his court in the manner of Daniel 7. The Son of Man is initially introduced as one “whose face was like the appearance of a man.” This formulation does not suggest that Son of Man was a well-known title. The figure in question is subsequently referred to as “that son of man”—that is, the figure with human appearance who appeared with the “Head of Days.” Despite his human appearance, he is not a man, at least in the usual sense of the word. He is “like one of the holy angels” (46.1). While he is distinguished from other angels (Michael in 60.4–5; 69.14; 71.3; the four archangels in 71.8, 9, 13), his rank is higher than theirs.

The exalted nature of the Son of Man is especially in evidence in 48.2–3: “And in that hour that son of man was named in the presence of the Lord of Spirits, and his name before the Head of Days. Even before the sun and the constellations were created, before the stars of heaven were made, his name was named before the Lord of Spirits.” The passage continues in 48.6: “For this (reason) he was chosen and hidden in his presence before the world was created and forever.” While the context of *1 En.* 48.2 is either eschatological or the time of Enoch’s ascent, 48.6 seems to state unequivocally that the Son of Man existed before the world was created. Similarly, in *1 En.* 62.7 we read:

For from the beginning the son of man was hidden,  
and the Most High preserved him in the presence of his might,  
and he revealed him to the chosen.

It is sometimes suggested that pre-existence here only means “a project in the mind of God,”<sup>30</sup> or that what was hidden was merely his identity.<sup>31</sup> But it is difficult to see why his identity would need to be hidden if he did not yet exist. The clearest parallel for a pre-existent

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<sup>29</sup> J. C. VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37–71,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 169–191.

<sup>30</sup> T. W. Manson, “The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels,” *BJRL* 32 (1949–50): 183–185.

<sup>31</sup> VanderKam, “Righteous One,” 180.

figure in pre-Christian Judaism is the portrayal of wisdom in Prov 8:22–31.<sup>32</sup> It would seem that the Similitudes here have developed the identity of the Son of Man well beyond anything that we found in Daniel, by applying to him language that is elsewhere used of wisdom.

The Similitudes also develop the role of the Son of Man beyond what was found in Daniel in other significant ways. Besides the association with wisdom, he is said to be “the light of the nations” like the servant in Second Isaiah.<sup>33</sup> The spirit of wisdom and insight that dwells in him (49.1–4) recalls the messianic oracle in Isaiah 11.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the kings of the earth are condemned in 48.10 for having denied “the Lord of Spirits and his Anointed One,” in language reminiscent of Psalm 2. Again in 52.4, Enoch is told that all that he has seen “will serve the authority of his Anointed One.” It is not suggested that the Son of Man is a human descendent of David, but he is the Anointed, or Messiah, of the Lord, who takes over the functions of the Davidic king vis-à-vis the nations. He is also installed on a glorious throne, and takes over the function of eschatological judge (61.8; 62.2). Here again he functions in a manner reminiscent of the traditional messiah: “and the spirit of righteousness was poured out upon him, and the word of his mouth will slay all the sinners” (62.2).

Up to the end of the third parable there is no hint that the “Son of Man” might actually be identical with the visionary Enoch. Not only is there no suggestion that Enoch is seeing himself, but the fact that the Son of Man was hidden before creation would seem to preclude an identification. Nonetheless, the question of an identification is raised in the epilogues to the Similitudes. In 71.14, when Enoch ascends to heaven, he is greeted by an angel: “You are that son of man who was born for righteousness, and righteousness dwells on you, and the righteousness of the Head of Days will not forsake you.” It is generally held that this passage identifies Enoch with the Son of Man whom he has seen in his visions. There is sharp disagreement,

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<sup>32</sup> Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter*, 126–139. The affinity with wisdom is also emphasized by H. S. Kvanvig, “The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, ed. Boccaccini, 179–215. He notes that wisdom is also associated with the Son of Man in *1 En.* 49.1–4 and 51.3.

<sup>33</sup> For other allusions to the servant passages in 2 Isaiah, see Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter*, 114–126; VanderKam, “Righteous One,” 189.

<sup>34</sup> Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter*, 138.

however, as to whether this identification was intended throughout the Similitudes.

A major factor in this debate concerns the interpretation of 70.1–2. There are in fact two epilogues to the Similitudes.<sup>35</sup> 70.1–2 constitutes a brief statement in the third person. 70.3–71.17 is narrated in the first person. It is possible to view 70.3–4 as distinct from 71.1–17, and, in effect, as a third epilogue.<sup>36</sup> *1 Enoch* 70.1–2 is translated as follows by George Nickelsburg:

And after this, while he was living, his name was raised into the presence of that son of man and into the presence of the Lord of Spirits from among those who dwell on the earth. He was raised on the chariots of the wind, and his name departed from among them.

This translation, based on the majority reading in the manuscripts, makes a clear distinction between Enoch and the Son of Man. In 1976, Maurice Casey proposed a different understanding of the passage based on one important manuscript, Abbadianus 55 (U), and two late MSS, which lack the word *baxaba* (or *baxabehu* in some MSS), “into the presence,” before “that son of man.”<sup>37</sup> The text could then be rendered: “the name of that son of man was raised into the presence of the Lord of Spirits,” thus permitting an identification of Enoch with the Son of Man.<sup>38</sup> (The translation “to the son of man” is also possible). Since this proposal relied primarily on one manuscript, which was known for capricious omissions, there was little reason to regard it as anything but a scribal mistake. In the meantime, however, four, and possibly five, other manuscripts have come to light that support the minority reading.<sup>39</sup> Whether this reading is to be preferred, however, remains uncertain. *Prima facie*, the majority reading should still be preferred as the *lectio difficilior*;<sup>40</sup> the minority

<sup>35</sup> See Nickelsburg, “Discerning the Structure(s);” Knibb, “The Structure and Composition.”

<sup>36</sup> So Nickelsburg, “Discerning the Structure(s).”

<sup>37</sup> P. M. Casey, “The Use of the Term ‘Son of Man’ in the Similitudes of Enoch,” *JSJ* 7 (1976): 11–29.

<sup>38</sup> Compare M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch*, SVTP 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 67, who translates: “the name of a son of man (i.e. Enoch) was raised up to the Lord of Spirits.”

<sup>39</sup> Daniel C. Olson, “Enoch and the Son of Man in the Epilogue of the Parables,” *JSP* 18 (1998): 27–38, at 30–31.

<sup>40</sup> Pace A. Caquot, “Remarques sur les chapitres 70 et 71 du livre éthiopien d’Hénoch,” in *Apocalypses et théologie de l’espérance*, ed. L. Monloubou, LD 95 (Paris: Cerf, 1977), 111–122, and L. W. Walck, “The Son of Man in the Similitudes of Enoch



reading can be explained as an attempt to remove the contradiction between this passage and 71.14. Daniel Olson has made a complex argument based on the different Ethiopic expressions for “Son of Man” in the two passages. The expression in 70.1, *walda egwāla emmaḥeyāw*, is the usual phrase for Son of Man in the Ethiopic New Testament. In 71.14, the phrase is *walda beesi*, an expression that is not used for Christ in Ethiopic literature, and is used only three other times in the Similitudes. Olson suggests that Ethiopic scribes found it unacceptable to identify Enoch as *walda egwāla emmaḥeyāw*, and changed the text. But in that case, we must wonder why an Ethiopic translator would have chosen this phrase for this passage in the first case.<sup>41</sup> It is simpler to assume that the majority reading was correct and that the omission of the word *baxaba* or *baxabehu* was merely a scribal mistake.

Olson notes that the reading *walda beesi* in 71.14 has traditionally been understood in the Ezekielian sense in the Ethiopian Church—that is, Enoch is not told that he is the Son of Man, but that he is a son of man who has righteousness. This is indeed a possible way of reading the Ethiopic.<sup>42</sup> This is one of only two passages in the Similitudes where “son of man” is used in direct address. The other passage is 60.10, where the Ethiopic is *walda sabe*, and the passage is universally understood as being in the manner of Ezekiel. There is then some reason to entertain the idea that Enoch is not being identified with the Son of Man in 71.14, but only being told that he is a righteous man. The fact that the language here echoes 46.3 (“this is the son of man [*walda sabe*] who has righteousness”) does not exclude this interpretation, as the Similitudes emphasize throughout the correspondence between the heavenly and earthly righteous (compare 38:2: “and when the Righteous One appears in the presence

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and the Gospels,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, ed. Boccaccini, 299–337, based on his dissertation, *The Son of Man in Matthew and the “Similitudes of Enoch”* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services, 1999), who suggest that Abb 55 has the *lectio difficilior* because it contradicts the presentation of the Son of Man as heavenly in the preceding parables.

<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Michael Knibb, “The Translation of 1 Enoch 70:1. Some Methodological Issues,” in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts. Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert and G. Greenberg, JSOTSup 333 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 340–354, at 352–353 points out that 1 En. 71.14 in fact was given a christological interpretation in the Ethiopian writing *Mashafa Milad*.

<sup>42</sup> See my discussion in my essay, “The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 448–466, at 456–457.

of the righteous”). A more weighty objection arises from the fact that Enoch was later identified with Metatron in Jewish tradition.<sup>43</sup> Identification with the Son of Man would seem to be a step in that development. It is probably simplest to accept that this identification was intended in *1 En.* 71.14.

This passage, however, is part of a second epilogue, and stands in contradiction to the more probable reading of the first epilogue in *1 En.* 70.1–2. This second epilogue is most readily explained as a secondary addition,<sup>44</sup> which may well have been added specifically to identify Enoch as the Son of Man. This identification, in turn, may have been suggested by the Christian appropriation of this title for Jesus. In the body of the Similitudes, however, there is no suggestion at all that the Son of Man ever had an earthly career. He is the heavenly representative and vindicator of the righteous on earth, but he is a heavenly figure, whose power and glory compensates for the lack of power of the righteous on earth.

#### 4. *4 Ezra* 13

Another major witness to the interpretation, or adaptation, of the Danielic “Son of Man” in ancient Judaism is found in *4 Ezra*, an apocalypse written at the end of the first century CE. The apocalypse contains three dialogues and four visions.<sup>45</sup> In the third vision (ch. 13) Ezra reports:

Then after seven days I had a dream in the night. I saw a wind rising from the sea that stirred up all its waves. As I kept looking, that wind brought up out of the depths of the sea something resembling a man and that man was flying with the clouds of heaven...

The original language was certainly Semitic, but the composition survives only in translations, of which the Latin and Syriac are most important. The statement “that wind brought up out of the sea something resembling a man” is missing from the Latin, apparently

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<sup>43</sup> See now A. A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, TSAJ 107 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

<sup>44</sup> So also Nickelsburg, “Discerning the Structure(s)”, Knibb, “The Structure and Composition”; Chiala, *Libro delle parabole*, 287.

<sup>45</sup> For introductory matters see M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 1–35; J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 195–210.

because of homoioteleuton. Most scholars assume that the missing passage read *homo* for “man” since this is what the Latin uses elsewhere in the chapter. The Syriac, however, reads *’ēk dmwt’ dbrnš’*, and this suggests that the original may have read “son of man.” It can be argued that the author used the longer phrase initially and the shorter phrase subsequently. Even if *4 Ezra* does not use the expression “Son of Man,” however, or use it as a title, it is clearly adapting and reworking Daniel’s vision.

There is a further textual problem regarding the relation of the wind and the man. The Ethiopic version reads “this wind came out of the sea in the resemblance of a man.” It has been argued that this is the *lectio difficilior* and that “wind” is a misreading of “spirit.”<sup>46</sup> This proposal is doubtful, however. Most scholars restore the Latin on the basis of the Syriac, so that the wind is said to bring the man up.

The image of the man flying with the clouds of heaven is a clear allusion to Daniel 7. There is also an explicit reference to Daniel 7 in the preceding chapter, *4 Ezra* 12, where the interpreting angel tells Ezra explicitly: “The eagle you observed coming up out of the sea is the fourth kingdom that appeared in a vision to Daniel your brother. But it was not interpreted to him in the same way that I now interpret it to you” (*4 Ezra* 12.11). Moreover, the interpretation in chapter 13 provides a clear allusion to Daniel 2, when it says that the mountain on which the man takes his stand was “carved out without hands.” This detail was not mentioned in the vision.

The allusions to Daniel in *4 Ezra* 13 are woven together with echoes of other sources. Anyone who hears the voice of the man from the sea melts like wax before a fire (compare the effect of theophany in Mic 1:4). Most importantly, a great host comes to make war on the man. He carves out a mountain for himself and takes his stand upon it. Then he destroys the onrushing multitude with the breath of his lips. The onslaught of the multitude recalls Psalm 2. The mountain is Zion, the holy mountain (Ps 2:6). The breath of his lips is the weapon of the messianic king in Isa 11:4. Taken together, these allusions suggest that the man from the sea has taken on the role traditionally ascribed to the messianic king. This impression is

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<sup>46</sup> H. S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 517–520.

strengthened in the interpretation that follows, where the man is identified as “my son” (13.32, 37).<sup>47</sup>

Like the Similitudes of Enoch, *4 Ezra* 13 is quite free in its adaptation of Daniel’s vision. Whereas in Daniel, the sea was the source of hostile monsters, here it is the man who rises from the sea. Apparently the sea has become an area of mystery rather than a well of chaos.<sup>48</sup> Nonetheless, the fact that the vision juxtaposes the sea with the man riding on the clouds shows the literary influence of Daniel 7.

The most important departure from Daniel 7, however, is the assimilation of the “Son of Man” to the traditional, Davidic messiah. Unlike the Similitudes of Enoch, *4 Ezra* has a developed notion of a Davidic messiah. In 7.28–29 he is called “my son (or servant) the messiah.”<sup>49</sup> He is “revealed with those who are with him,” a formulation that seems to imply pre-existence. After a four hundred year reign, however, the messiah dies, and the world reverts to seven days of primeval silence, followed by the resurrection. The messiah, then, is human, despite his pre-existence. The heavenly character of the “Son of Man” as we have seen it in Daniel and the Similitudes, is significantly qualified here. Nonetheless, the understanding of the messiah is also modified by the correlation with the “Son of Man.” While the messiah is said to come from the line of David in 12.32, this is “a traditional element and not at all central to the concepts of the book.”<sup>50</sup> Despite his eventual death, the messiah is a preexistent, transcendent figure, whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages.

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<sup>47</sup> See further J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 184–185; M. E. Stone, “The Question of the Messiah in *4 Ezra*,” in *Judaisms and their Messiahs*, ed. J. Neusner, W. S. Green and E. Frerichs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 209–224.

<sup>48</sup> Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic*, 531, argues that the sea must have the same meaning in both Daniel and *4 Ezra*, and identifies it with Apsu, the subterranean water, in both cases. For a critique of Kvanvig’s learned and complex proposal see my essay, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth, *JSPSup* 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 25–32 (“Appendix: A New Proposal on Apocalyptic Origins”).

<sup>49</sup> The Latin *filius* probably translates the Greek παῖς which could mean either “son” or “servant.” See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 207–213 (“Excursus on the Redeemer Figure”).

<sup>50</sup> M. E. Stone, *Features of the Eschatology of Fourth Ezra* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 131–132.

### 5. *Common Assumptions*

The relationship between *4 Ezra* 13 and the Similitudes of Enoch is complex. The “man from the sea” is very different from the Enochic Son of Man. The one is a warrior, concerned with the restoration of Israel. The other is a judge enthroned in heaven, who does not appear on earth at all. Nonetheless, the two texts share some common assumptions about the interpretation of the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7. Both assume that the figure in Daniel is an individual, not a collective symbol. Both identify him with the messiah, and describe his role in terms usually applied to the Davidic messiah, although they understand his role in different ways. Both the Enochic Son of Man and the man from the sea are pre-existent beings of heavenly origin. Both appropriate imagery that was traditionally reserved for God: the Enochic Son of Man sits on the throne of glory and the figure in *4 Ezra* is portrayed in terms of the theophany of the divine warrior. This figure takes a more active role in the destruction of the wicked than was the case in the Book of Daniel. If “servant” rather than “son” is the original designation of the messiah in *4 Ezra*, the possibility arises that both texts associate this figure with the servant of the Lord. The man from the sea, however, has little in common with the Isaianic servant. Neither he nor the Enochic Son of Man undergoes any suffering (apart from the death of the messiah in *4 Ezra* 7). It would be quite misleading to speak of a suffering servant in this connection.

There is no allusion to the Similitudes in *4 Ezra*, and no reason to posit literary influence between them. Precisely for that reason, they are independent witnesses to common assumptions about the meaning of Daniel 7 in first-century Judaism. Very similar assumptions underlie the use of Son of Man imagery derived from Daniel in the gospels.<sup>51</sup>

### 6. *Other Possible Witnesses*

While the Similitudes of Enoch and *4 Ezra* are the primary witnesses to the interpretation and adaptation of Daniel 7 in first-century Judaism, a few other texts must also be taken into consideration.

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<sup>51</sup> Compare T. B. Slater, “One like a Son of Man in First-Century CE Judaism,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 183–198.

The most intriguing of these is the so-called “Son of God” text from Qumran (4Q246).<sup>52</sup> This is a fragmentary Aramaic text of which part of two columns survives. In the first column, only the second half of the lines survives. Much of the second column is intact. It speaks of a figure who will be called “Son of God” or “Son of the Most High.” There will be a period of strife, when people will trample on people and city on city, until the people of God arises and all rest from the sword. The text goes on to say that “his (or its) kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,” God will be his strength, and his (or its) sovereignty will be an everlasting sovereignty.

Scholarly opinion has been sharply divided as to whether the figure who is called “Son of God” should be viewed as positive or negative. The negative interpretation attaches much weight to the fact that some space is left blank before the reference to the people of God, which is then interpreted as a turning point in the text.<sup>53</sup> Against this, it is observed that “Son of God” and “Son of the Most High” are explicit messianic titles in the Gospel of Luke, and the extant text gives no hint that the title “Son of God” is inappropriate.<sup>54</sup> The general situation of an interpreter before a king is reminiscent of Daniel, so much so that the text was initially regarded as a pseudo-Daniel text. The clearest echoes of Daniel are at 2:5, “his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” (compare Dan 3:33; 7:27) and 2:9, “his sovereignty will be an everlasting sovereignty” (compare Dan 4:31; 7:14). The conflict between nations is reminiscent in a general way of Daniel 11, but such conflict is commonplace in apocalyptic literature, notably also in 4 *Ezra* 13. Another possible allusion to Daniel lies in the use

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<sup>52</sup> E. Puech, “246. 4Qapocryphe de Daniel ar,” in G. Brooke et al., *Qumran Cave 4. XVII. Parabiblical Texts, Part 3*, DJD 22 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 165–184.

<sup>53</sup> E.g. E. Puech, “Some Remarks on 4Q246 and 4Q251 and Qumran Messianism,” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. D. W. Parry and E. Ulrich, STDJ 30 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 548–549, and E. Cook, “4Q246,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 43–66, both of whom identify the “Son of God” figure as Antiochus Epiphanes. The negative interpretation was initially proposed by J. T. Milik in a lecture at Harvard in December 1972. Puech now accepts the messianic interpretation of the text.

<sup>54</sup> See my discussion in *The Scepter and the Star*, 154–172, and my response to Cook, “The Background of the ‘Son of God’ Text,” *BBR* 7 (1997): 51–62. See also F. M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, 3rd ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 189–191. J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Aramaic ‘Son of God’ Text from Qumran Cave 4,” in idem, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 41–62, holds the peculiar position that the “Son of God” is an eschatological heir to the Davidic throne, but not a messiah.

of the word “to trample” at 2:3. The same word is used with reference to the fourth beast in Daniel 7.

The analogies with Daniel may shed some light on the relation between the one who is called “Son of God” and the people of God. In Daniel 7, the eternal kingdom is explicitly given both to the “one like a son of man” and to the people of the holy ones. In the same way, the tensions in 4Q246 can be resolved if the “Son of God” is understood as a messianic king, so that the kingdom is given simultaneously both to him and to the people. If the text is read in this way, the figure of the Son of God fits well within the spectrum of messianic expectations around the turn of the era. He will exercise judgment and subdue the nations by the power of God.

In light of this situation, it is tempting to suggest that the “Son of God” represents an early interpretation of the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7. If this were so, this would be the earliest instance of the messianic interpretation of the “one like a son of man,” which is attested in the Similitudes, well established in *4 Ezra*, and dominant in rabbinic Judaism. It would also mitigate the strange absence of interpretations of Daniel 7 in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This interpretation of 4Q246, however, is uncertain. The “Son of God” text is certainly not an exposition of Daniel 7. While some words and phrases are drawn from that source, most elements of the biblical vision are ignored. The vision that is being interpreted is not preserved, but it seems to be the vision of a king rather than of a visionary like Daniel. There are no explicit allusions to the interpretation of Daniel here, such as we find in *4 Ezra* 12. Accordingly, the possibility that this text is an interpretation, or adaptation, of Daniel 7 is no more than that.<sup>55</sup> The possibility should not be discounted, but it must await confirming evidence.

Another possible witness to early Jewish interpretation of Daniel 7 is found in the fifth *Sibylline Oracle*. This book is a collection of oracles from the early second century CE, which predicts the coming of a savior figure at various points.<sup>56</sup> The most important passage for

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<sup>55</sup> Pace J. D. G. Dunn, “‘Son of God’ as ‘Son of Man’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls? A Response to John Collins on 4Q246,” in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. S. E. Porter and C. A. Evans, JSPSup 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 198–210, I have never claimed that this was more than a possibility. Dunn holds to the “negative” view of the “Son of God.”

<sup>56</sup> J. J. Collins, “The Sibylline Oracles, Book 5,” in *The Old Testament Pseude-*

our purposes is found in Sib Or 5.414–43, which speaks of “a blessed man from the expanses of heaven with a scepter in his hands which God gave him” in “the last time of holy ones.” The reference to holy ones brings Daniel to mind,<sup>57</sup> but the passage lacks the specific motifs (such as riding on the clouds, or association with an ancient figure) that might enable us to confirm the allusion. The notion of a king from heaven is not necessarily derived from Jewish sources at all. The Oracle of Hystaspes, a Hellenistic-Persian composition of the last century BCE, says that when the righteous are under duress, God “will send from heaven a great king to rescue and free them, and destroy all the wicked with fire and sword.”<sup>58</sup> It is difficult to have confidence that the Sibyl’s concept of a king from heaven is derived from Daniel.

Finally, the Testament of Abraham is sometimes adduced in this context.<sup>59</sup> Abraham is given a tour before his death by the archangel Michael, and is shown a judgment scene, in which “a wondrous man, bright as the sun, like unto a son of God” sits in judgment on a fiery throne. He is told that this is “the son of Adam, the first-formed, who is called Abel, whom Cain the wicked killed.” This figure recalls the Son of Man in the Similitudes of Enoch (rather than the “one like a son of man” in Daniel), by the fact that he sits on a glorious throne and has a transcendent, divine appearance. The identification of this figure with Abel may arise from the fact that the latter is “son of Adam,” which is to say בן אדם or “Son of Man.” If this passage is indeed indebted to the Similitudes, it represents a relatively late stage in the tradition, similar to what we found in 1 Enoch 71, when people were searching for figures with whom the “Son of Man” might be identified. The Testament of Abraham is usually assigned to Egypt

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*pigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985), 1:390–392; *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 234–238.

<sup>57</sup> So W. Horbury, “The Messianic Associations of ‘The Son of Man,’” in idem, *Messianism among Jews and Christians* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 140.

<sup>58</sup> Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 7.17. See John R. Hinnells, “The Zoroastrian Doctrine of Salvation in the Roman World: A Study of the Oracle of Hystaspes,” in *Man and His Salvation. Studies in Memory of S. G. F. Brandon*, ed. E.J. Sharpe and J. R. Hinnells (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 125–148.

<sup>59</sup> See Chiaie, *Libro delle parabole*, 333–336, and especially P. B. Munoa, *Four Powers in Heaven: The Interpretation of Daniel 7 in the Testament of Abraham*, JSPSup 28 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).



around the late first or early second century CE,<sup>60</sup> but the evidence for date and provenance is quite slight.

### 7. *Jesus and the Son of Man*

In the New Testament, it is clear that the evangelists identified Jesus as the Son of Man. Some of the passages in question refer to the Second Coming of Jesus, in language that is directly indebted to Daniel. So, for example, Mark 13:26 speaks of “the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.” Other passages, however, refer to the betrayal and suffering of the Son of Man, in a way that has no precedent in the Jewish texts and clearly refers to the experience of Jesus. For example, Mark 8:31 says that “the Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.” A third category of sayings is more general, and refers to present realities, e.g. “the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth” (Mark 2:10 par.).<sup>61</sup>

It is widely believed that many statements found in the gospels originated in the early Christian movement, in light of belief in the resurrection, and were retrojected into the lifetime of Jesus. The Danielic “Son of Man” sayings, such as the one quoted from Mark 13, presuppose that the Son of Man will come from heaven. It is difficult to suppose that anyone would have thought of Jesus as the Son of Man coming from heaven while he was present on earth. Moreover, the sayings about the suffering of the Son of Man are most easily explained as being formulated with hindsight, after Jesus had in fact suffered and died. Consequently, many scholars doubt that any of the “Son of Man” sayings can be attributed to the historical Jesus.<sup>62</sup> And yet the idiom occurs primarily in the synoptic gospels, in

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<sup>60</sup> E. P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 1.874–876. D. Allison, *The Testament of Abraham* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003) prefers a date in the early second century CE.

<sup>61</sup> This division of the sayings was proposed by R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel (New York: Scribners, 1951), 1:30.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. P. Vielhauer, “Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu,” in idem, *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (Munich: Kaiser, 1965), 55–91, and “Jesus und der Menschensohn: Zur Diskussion mit Heinz Eduard Tödt und Eduard Schweizer,” *Aufsätze*, 92–140; N. Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage: Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 154–206.

sayings attributed to Jesus, and is conspicuously absent in the writings of Paul.<sup>63</sup>

A new and influential approach to the problem was proposed by Geza Vermes in 1967.<sup>64</sup> Vermes argued that the Son of Man sayings originated in Jesus' use of a Semitic idiom, "a son of man" or "the son of man," in a generic sense, or specifically as a circumlocution for "I." It is generally recognized that this idiom can be used in an indefinite sense, to mean "a man" or "someone." The novelty of Vermes's proposal lay in the alleged circumlocutional use, to refer to the speaker when a direct statement about himself would have seemed immodest. This thesis was of immediate relevance to a number of Son of Man sayings that have no apparent link to Daniel 7. These include such sayings as "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" (Mark 2:10 par.), "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matt 8:20; Luke 9:58), or "the Son of Man is lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28 par.). In Vermes's view, these non-Danielic sayings were authentic. The use of "son of man" to refer to a heavenly figure was a secondary development.

Vermes's proposal has been widely criticized. Not only is his comparative material late, being drawn from rabbinic and targumic writings,<sup>65</sup> but none of his examples necessarily supports his thesis. Rather, the Aramaic idiom refers to "a human being" in general, and to the speaker only as a particular example of the general rule.<sup>66</sup> The

<sup>63</sup> G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Son of Man," *ABD* 6.137–150 claims that Paul reflects knowledge of the Son of Man tradition found in the synoptics, in 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians 15.

<sup>64</sup> G. Vermes, "The Use of *בֶּר אִנְשׁ (א) נֶשׂ* / *בֶּר אִנְשׁ (א) נֶשׂ* in Jewish Aramaic," Appendix E in M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 310–330; idem, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 160–191.

<sup>65</sup> This point has been emphasized especially by J. A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "The New Testament Title 'Son of Man,' Philologically Considered," in idem, *A Wandering Aramean* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1979), 143–160 (reprinted in *The Semitic Background of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997]); "Another View of the Son of Man Debate," *JSNT* 4 (1979): 58–65. For a review of the debate, see J. Donahue, "Recent Studies on the Origin of 'Son of Man' in the Gospels," *CBQ* 48 (1986): 486–490.

<sup>66</sup> See A. Yarbro Collins, "Daniel 7 and the Historical Jesus," in *Of Scribes and Scrolls. Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins*, ed. H. W. Attridge et al. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 187–193, esp. 189.

thesis has continued to be influential, however, in modified form. Maurice Casey claims that a statement like Mark 2:10 (“the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth”) has two levels of meaning: one a general statement that healers could forgive sins and the second that Jesus, specifically, could do so.<sup>67</sup> Barnabas Lindars, who also recognized the problem with Vermes’s formulation, took the idiom to mean “a man in my position,” which is, however, a dubious restriction of the reference.<sup>68</sup> In fact, it is doubtful whether any of the gospel sayings can be construed as a statement about humanity in general, with Jesus as a specific instance. There is no parallel for the suggestion that humanity in general has the authority to forgive sins on earth, or that humanity in general is lord of the Sabbath. It may be more satisfactory, then, to explain the use of the expression “Son of Man” in these cases as a specific title for Jesus which is derived secondarily from the Danielic usage.

In view of the strong association of the expression “son of man” with Jesus in the tradition, however, the suspicion that he used the expression remains. Bultmann argued that a few Son of Man sayings that seem to distinguish between Jesus and the Son of Man may be authentic.<sup>69</sup> These included Luke 12:8–9 (“everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God”), and Mark 8:38 (“those who are ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels”). Against this, it has been argued that these sayings presuppose the setting after the death of Jesus, when his followers were called on to confess or deny their faith in him.<sup>70</sup> There are, however, other sayings that do not explicitly identify Jesus with the Son of Man, and which allow for a distinction. These include Matt 24:27 par. (“for as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man”), Matt

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<sup>67</sup> Casey, *Son of Man*, 228–229. See also his essay, “Idiom and Translation: Some Aspects of the Son of Man Problem,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 164–182, which concludes by affirming that Jesus used the idiom as “a normal Aramaic term for ‘man’, in general statements which referred particularly to himself” (182).

<sup>68</sup> Lindars, *Jesus, Son of Man*, 22–24.

<sup>69</sup> R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 112, 122, 128, 151–152.

<sup>70</sup> So Vielhauer, “Gottesreich und Menschensohn,” 76–79; “Jesus und der Menschensohn,” 102–107.

24:37–39 (“for as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man”) and Matt 24:44 par. (“for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour”).<sup>71</sup> Of course, these sayings could also be understood as sayings of the early church, with reference to the coming of Jesus as the Son of Man. Whether in fact Jesus spoke of a coming Son of Man (with whom he might or might not be identified) depends on broader judgments about the nature and purpose of his mission. The prominence of apocalyptic expectation, and specifically of speculation about the Danielic Son of Man, among his earliest followers, is more easily explained if Jesus himself had shared such views. But an overall assessment of the character of Jesus’ message lies far beyond the scope of this essay.

We can, however, draw some conclusions about the availability of ideas about the “Son of Man” in Judaism around the turn of the era. While the old syncretistic “Son of Man” concept has been rightly laid to rest, we have seen that there is good evidence for ongoing speculation about the “one like a son of man” in Daniel’s vision. This speculation went well beyond what was explicit in the biblical text, and the different witnesses to it share some common assumptions. Noteworthy embellishments include the identification of this figure as “messiah,” and his role as judge, especially in the *Similitudes of Enoch*. The depiction of the Son of Man in the gospels shares with contemporary Jewish texts the expectation of a heavenly savior figure, and also casts him in the role of judge.<sup>72</sup> There is no reason in principle why Jesus should not have shared such expectations, based on the ongoing speculation about Daniel’s vision. Whether or in what sense he did share them is something of which we may never be certain.

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<sup>71</sup> See Yarbro Collins, “The Origin of the Designation,” 402–403 (= *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 152). Compare Nickelsburg, “Son of Man,” 149.

<sup>72</sup> The latter point is emphasized by Nickelsburg, “Son of Man,” 149.

# JEWISH APOCALYPTIC AND APOCALYPTICISM

CRISPIN FLETCHER-LOUIS

## 1. *Introduction*

During the last century most followed A. Schweitzer (and J. Weiss) in thinking that Jesus expected a dramatic divine intervention—the essence of apocalypticism, through the agency of the glorious and heavenly Son of Man, that would bring in the utterly otherworldly Kingdom of God known also from Jewish apocalypses.<sup>1</sup> However, there have always been dissenters and now there are many, especially in North America, who reject the notion that Jesus was an apocalyptic visionary. The dispute depends to a great degree on the understanding of Jewish apocalyptic literature and thought with which individual scholars operate. A survey of the history of study of the Jewish material illuminates the disagreements among Jesus historians and an appreciation of recent advances points towards resolutions of contested issues.

## 2. *The History of the Study of Apocalyptic*

The last book in the New Testament canon is called an “apocalypse (ἀποκάλυψις).” This is usually taken not just as a reference to a particular literary genre, but as a statement about the specific *content* of the book. Whilst the book contains “words of prophecy” (1:3, cf. 22:7, 10, 18–19), rather than ordinary prophecies of events *within* history, the book reveals the very end of history. Accordingly, most have thought that the word “apocalypse” means a piece of literature with a particular kind of eschatology, an “*apocalyptic* eschatology,” and that this eschatology is attested in contemporaneous ancient Jewish texts

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<sup>1</sup> J. Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971 [1892]); A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM, 2000 [1906]).

with a visionary form (in particular: *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, Daniel, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*).

After the initial impetus set by Weiss and Schweitzer it is possible to discern two distinct phases of apocalyptic scholarship. The first phase continues up until the 1970's and is coterminous with the New Quest of the historical Jesus. It is marked by synthetic treatment of the literature, some debate over interpretive issues, but broad consensus on the nature of apocalyptic. During this period there are some differences between the approaches taken in Germany and in the English-speaking world. In Germany, where the Bultmann school is prevalent, there is a tendency towards systematization of apocalypticism as a distinct religious worldview. English scholarship tends to be more descriptive, more sympathetic to the theology of the individual texts and less keen to see in them a sharply distinct religious system.

During this phase an "apocalypse" is seen as a piece of literature that has at its core a particular kind of eschatology—"apocalyptic eschatology"—around which there is a distinctive theology—sometimes called "apocalypticism."<sup>2</sup> In turn, such texts and their theology are thought to emanate from a particular social context: one of crisis. An "apocalyptic eschatology" is set against the prophetic hopes of the Old Testament. "The prophets foretold the future that should arise out of the present, while the apocalypticists foretold the future that should break into the present... The apocalypticists had little faith in the present to beget the future."<sup>3</sup> Israel's prophets have a largely parochial vision: they expect God to act for Israel and against the surrounding nations. Apocalyptic texts, by contrast, reveal a cosmic vision in which all humanity and all of creation is climactically brought under God's hand of judgement. Inspiration for these theological novelties is widely reckoned to come from sources outside the immediate Israelite context, in particular from Persian Zoroastrianism.

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<sup>2</sup> For the picture that follows see, for example, G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 2.301–306; M. Rist, "Apocalypticism," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 157–161; P. Vielhauer, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects: Introduction," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1965), 581–600, esp. 587–600; James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), 309–316.

<sup>3</sup> H. H. Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic: A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1947), 38.

In this first phase there is also general agreement (even if only implicit) that these immediate characteristics reflect a more fundamental worldview trait, viz. dualism.<sup>4</sup> At the one extreme, in the account, for example, of Bultmann's pupil Philip Vielhauer, the role of dualism is effectively thoroughgoing in the description of apocalypticism's conceptual structure.<sup>5</sup> First, there is what might be called an *ontological dualism*: a sharp divide between God and man; between creation and the being and action of God. This divide tends to be antagonistic, with human nature being viewed more pessimistically than the biblical writers envisage; so much so that human society and politics are no longer the arena for God's action. This pessimism reflects the experience of crisis, in which the righteous find themselves persecuted by a far stronger political and religious power; in these circumstances there is a loss of confidence in the human ability to bring about the prophetic future. Then there is a *temporal (or "eschatological") dualism*: the present age is radically different from the future one when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, in which space and time are transformed. The normal, historical experience of temporality and spatial limitation—of social institutions and politics—will be utterly transcended: a new Jerusalem from heaven will appear, the enemies of God's people will suddenly be annihilated, and the dead in their graves will rise to new life (or eternal damnation). The transition from the present to the new age will be marked by upheavals and trials, but God will intervene decisively and imminently. The difference between this age and the age to come is a consequence of a *cosmic dualism*: whilst the age to come will be ruled by the good and loving God, there are opposing forces almost equal in power (the devil, Satan, Belial, Mastema, and their minions) who rule the present irredeemably evil age. These demonic forces exacerbate the sense of *ontological dualism* according to which the righteous are trapped in a world of corruption, unable to live in the freedom that God would have for them. Lastly, the ideational map of apocalypticism is complicated by one more dualism: a *soteriological dualism*

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<sup>4</sup> The literature of this period does not use the word "dualism" in so systematic a fashion as I do here. I have adopted this approach bearing in mind several recent discussions (N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* [London: SPCK, 1992], 252–256, 297–299; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1–36, 81–108* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001], 40–41).

<sup>5</sup> Vielhauer, "Apocalypses."

between the “elect” who, though currently oppressed, will be vindicated in the age to come, and “the damned” who at the judgement will be set aside for destruction.<sup>6</sup> An apocalypse is intended to encourage this righteous group; to give them comfort in the sure knowledge that God will intervene and to exhort them to remain faithful to their God-given ethic.

For the dualistically thoroughgoing account of apocalyptic, the peculiar character of apocalypticism is appreciated when it is compared to biblical religion: it is something quite different. So much so that it may be right to think of the apocalypticist’s “god” as quite different to the one of biblical Israel. Whereas the Pentateuch envisages “salvation” through Torah and Temple piety, apocalypticism is either disinterested in Torah and Temple piety or, more strongly, it opposes it. The prophets promise God’s action within history, where he, not Satan, is in control: the prophets’ fulfilment of the divine promise comes *through* historical events. Apocalypticism expects imminent salvation through the in-breaking of an otherworldly Kingdom of God that bypasses existing institutions. Where the spokesperson for Torah is Moses, instead the apocalyptic seers—Daniel and Enoch, for example—supersede Moses and the prophets through visionary authority. In the Bible—especially the theology of the Deuteronomist—history is determined as much by human responsibility as it is by divine action. By contrast, for apocalyptic everything is pre-determined by God: history has a well-defined timetable (four, seven, ten or twelve parts; weeks of years or jubilees). For prophecy the perspective is *national*: even where oracles are directed against the wider nations, Israel’s fate stands centre stage. For apocalypticism, on the other hand, there is a movement away from a narrowly national perspective. The vision of the future is universal and cosmic in scope: all of creation is to be wound up and if there is a future life it is one that has left the earthly Jerusalem and its geographical environs far behind. At the same time, “just as the fate of all mankind is drawn into the apocalyptic drama, so man no longer stands as a member of the sacred Jewish race, or of the heathen nations, but as an individual before God.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> O. Plöger, *Theocracy and Eschatology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968 [1959]) is particularly influential in this regard.

<sup>7</sup> Vielhauer, “Apocalypses,” 590. For this distinction see R. K. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1952 [1948]), 4–5.



Within this dualistic conceptual framework apocalyptic is thought to have a distinctive “messianism.” Whilst the royal messiah of older, prophetic texts is the saviour of Israel (the nation), the apocalypses give their redeemer a universal mission. Whereas the non-apocalyptic messiah is an earthly, thoroughly human figure—a warrior perhaps—the apocalyptic redeemer is transcendent: he is pre-existent, descends from heaven in angelic glory and brings salvation through purely supernatural means. Over against Israel’s king there stands the transcendent Son of Man of Dan 7:13, of the Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71), and of *4 Ezra* (ch. 13).

By setting their theology so firmly against that of biblical religion the apocalypticists found themselves at the margins of Jewish society. Indeed, their crisis mentality, along with their hope for an imminent divine judgement, has been seen as the product of an oppressed and sectarian sociology. Because the authors of the apocalypses are unable to cope with the real world, they imagine a future bliss described through (to us) bizarre and fantastical imagery. They see hidden forces—angels and demons—controlling the drama of history from another stage—the heavenly world above, parallel to, but clearly distinct from, the earthly world below.

According to this view apocalypticism is essentially an intellectual reality, a *system of thought*, the pre-eminent feature of which is a world-ending eschatology as a consequence of dramatic divine intervention. If this apocalyptic theology is the product of a particular *experience*, it is a social psychology; the crisis (real or imagined) of the sect or the oppressed movement.<sup>8</sup> This movement produces particular texts—apocalypses—whose features are generically inseparable from their *Sitz im Leben*.<sup>9</sup> More precisely, that life setting has sometimes been viewed as the world of eschatologically enthusiastic circles opposed to, and oppressed by, the cultic and legal theology of the Jerusalem priesthood.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Plöger, *Theocracy*; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1974 [1969]), 1:194–196.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 200 BC–AD 100*, OTL (London: SCM, 1964), 104–139; K. Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London: SCM, 1972), 28–33.

<sup>10</sup> See especially Plöger, *Theocracy*; Vielhauer, “Apocalypses,” 598 and P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979 [1975]). On this reading, apocalyptic literature anticipates a Protestant critique of Catholic institutionalism.

Apocalypses, of course, purport to be genuine visionary experiences. But if the centre of apocalypticism is an *intellectual* belief in a particular kind of eschatology, then a text that lacks the visionary *form* but which contains that eschatology should be judged a principal witness to the phenomenon. This means, for example, that Isaiah 24–27, *Testament of Moses* (esp. ch. 10), parts of the Jewish *Sibylline Oracles* and the Qumran *War Scroll* are often covered by the definition, and various post-exilic prophetic texts are mined in the search for “proto-apocalyptic” (Isa 56–66, Joel, Malachi, Zech 9–14). By the same token, New Testament scholars spoke of Mark 13 as “the little apocalypse” even though its prophecy is not mediated through a vision or its content explained by an angel, as in the canonical Apocalypse. There is little real interest in what role actual religious experiences might have in the creation of an “apocalypse” or in the formation of apocalyptic thought.<sup>11</sup> Of course, it is hard to know whether in any given instance an apocalypse is actually a record of some individual’s “genuine” religious experience. The fact that so many of the apocalypses are pseudonymous counts against that possibility and pseudonymity can be explained as an artifice to gain authority for what is, in fact, a mixture of traditional literary material and the author’s own new ideas.<sup>12</sup>

During the first phase much British scholarship differs in several respects from that in Germany.<sup>13</sup> British scholars incline to think that apocalyptic is a child of biblical prophecy, whilst minimizing its debt to foreign religious influence. They play down the extent to which apocalyptic thought is dualistic and pessimistic: although God is expected to act decisively from without history, human agency within history remains important. Apocalyptic is committed to political activity, and, if necessary, to violent protest and, invariably, to the thoroughly this-worldly hope for national Israel and Jerusalem.<sup>14</sup> Apocalyptic theology is, furthermore, entirely compatible with Torah piety.<sup>15</sup> In

<sup>11</sup> D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM, 1992) is an exception here.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. Rist, “Apocalypticism,” 158.

<sup>13</sup> See further T. F. Glasson, “Schweitzer’s Influence: Blessing or Bane?” *JTS* 28 (1977): 289–302.

<sup>14</sup> This point emerges particularly strongly in the work of G. B. Caird (e.g. his *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [London: Duckworth, 1980], 260–266).

<sup>15</sup> See esp. W. D. Davies, “Apocalyptic and Pharisaism,” in *Christian Origins and Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1962 [1948]), 19–30.

this scholarly tradition then, there is no thoroughgoing systematization of apocalyptic thought around a “dualistic” core. And there is a reluctance to see apocalyptic arising from a particular movement and social context.

One consequence of the British reluctance to see thoroughgoing dualism in apocalyptic literature is a particular stance on the Son of Man problem. The man figure in Dan 7:13 is not an individual heavenly being—an angel.<sup>16</sup> Since the work of H. Gunkel an angelic “one like a son of man” thesis has been nurtured by the belief that in Daniel 7 there is the influence of an ancient Near East mythological complex surrounding a divine warrior and his battle with chaos.<sup>17</sup> In older British scholarship there is an instinctive aversion—partly for theological reasons—to the claim that this mythology has influenced a text such as Daniel, which appears in all other respects ardently orthodox in its defence of the Jewish faith.

In this British tradition the Danielic man figure is simply a symbol of the people of God: just as the beasts from the sea symbolize kings (7:17) or kingdoms (7:23), the man figure symbolizes the saints of the Most High (7:18, 25, 27) and his coming to God means their vindication over their bestial persecutors. This symbolic interpretation makes sense where the existence of another, transcendent world above the earthly one is played down. For a thoroughgoing dualistic view of apocalypticism, on the other hand, it is natural to think there really is an angelic “one like a son of man” who receives divine sovereignty in the heavenly realm above; on behalf of the righteous on the earth below.

### 2.1. *The Second Phase in the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic*

In the 1970's a new chapter opened in the study of Jewish apocalyptic.<sup>18</sup> At this time, primary texts from among the Dead Sea Scrolls provide fresh material and new editions and tools for the study of the pseudepigrapha are produced, which facilitate a vigorous new study of

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Russell, *Method*, 324–352; T. W. Manson, “The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels,” *BJRL* 32 (1950): 171–93.

<sup>17</sup> H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895), 323–335.

<sup>18</sup> The provocative book by Klaus Koch, *Ratlos vor der Apokalypik* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1970) (Eng. trans.: *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*), was a significant catalyst for change.

the subject. It is now realized that there are fundamental unresolved problems and these are addressed with new vigour.<sup>19</sup> This new chapter coincides with the beginnings of the Third Quest of the historical Jesus and it shares its concern for a more accurate and dispassionate understanding of the ancient Jewish world.

The problems that surface in the 1970's are principally three. First, the subject is, until this time, beset by terminological confusion. On the one hand, "apocalypse" is being used to define a literary work of a particular type. On the other hand, the word "apocalyptic" is being used as both an adjective and a noun and, along with the word "apocalypticism," it is being simultaneously used to describe something more than a literary genre: a theology, worldview or sociology.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, it is realized that there is a mismatch between the texts—"apocalypses"—and the theology they are supposed to represent—a transcendent eschatology and its associated dualisms.<sup>21</sup> Those texts which exhibit the long-accepted generic features of an apocalypse (vision, angelic mediation and so forth) have other interests besides a transcendent eschatology: astronomy, calendrical measurement, meteorology, cosmic geography, the periodization of history, the throne of God and its angelic entourage; matters of a mystical and speculative kind. Such concerns were ignored or dismissed in older scholarship.<sup>22</sup> Also, the expectation of a transcendent climax to history—the "apocalyptic eschatology" regularly treated as the heart of "apocalypticism"—is by no means confined to those texts which share the generic features of an "apocalypse": it may be identified in parts of the *Sibylline Oracles*, the *Testament of Moses* and, perhaps, some Qumran texts. But none of these are generically apocalypses.

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<sup>19</sup> For conferences and working parties see J. J. Collins, ed., *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979) D. Hellholm, ed., *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12–17, 1979* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983) and J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth, eds., *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, JSPSup (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

<sup>20</sup> The problem is identified by Koch, *Rediscovery*, 18–35, see also J. Barr, "Jewish Apocalyptic in Recent Scholarly Study," *BJRL* 58 (1975–76): 9–35, at 15–19.

<sup>21</sup> See M. E. Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in Apocalyptic Literature," in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God. Essays on the Bible and Archeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. F. M. Cross, W. Lemke and P. D. Miller (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 414–452, esp. 439–441, and C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 23–48.

<sup>22</sup> For dismissal see, e.g., Vielhauer, "Apocalypses," 587.

The third problem arises out of the first two. Whilst the “apocalypses” contain much else besides the transcendent eschatology that is supposed to define apocalypticism, some appear to be practically devoid of a transcendent eschatology. This, Michael E. Stone pointed out, is the case for the first and third parts of *1 Enoch*—the Book of Watchers (chs. 1–36) and the Astronomical Book (chs. 72–82), most of 2 and 3 *Baruch* and the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. The problems posed by this Enochic material are felt acutely at this time because, by now, Enochic material has gained a more prominent position in the study of pre-Christian apocalyptic than once it had had. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls Daniel was regularly reckoned to be the earliest apocalyptic text and as such the benchmark for the form and content of a Jewish apocalypse. With J. T. Milik’s publication of fragments of Aramaic copies of *1 Enoch* it became clear that the earliest portions of that apocalyptic text antedated Daniel.<sup>23</sup> Whilst it had, until this time, been assumed that the apocalyptic thought world was well represented by the eschatological concerns of Daniel and Revelation, it now emerges that an “apocalypse” is as often as not preoccupied with the revelation of secrets that need have nothing to do with the end of history. In short, ancient Jewish apocalypses are as concerned with the vertical axis—revelation of that which is above (and below)—as they are with the horizontal axis—the revelation of the future (and the past).

How have these problems been addressed? There have been, broadly speaking, two responses: one under the auspices of the (North American based) *Society of Biblical Literature* has been proposed by a group with John J. Collins at their head, and the other in Britain has been the work of Christopher Rowland. The former can be seen, *to some extent*, as a continuation of the German tradition that finds a distinct conceptual system in ancient pre-Christian Judaism. The latter takes seriously the history of religions material in the apocalypses that English scholarship had tended to marginalize, but nevertheless resists the inclination to find in them a thoroughly dualistic theology.

The group led by John Collins worked throughout the 1970’s for a clear definition of matters apocalyptic. They took several decisive methodological steps. First, they made a three-fold division between

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<sup>23</sup> J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 6–7, cf. 26–31.

a literary genre—"apocalypse," "apocalyptic eschatology"—the particular, *transcendent* eschatology of the apocalypses, and "apocalypticism"—the worldview born of the particular social context of the apocalypses "in which supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts."<sup>24</sup> And the *Semeia* volume provided a working definition of the *genre* apocalypse which has been widely accepted in subsequent study: an "apocalypse" is

a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.<sup>25</sup>

This definition attempts to identify the generic features that are "constitutive of all apocalypses," that "indicates the common core of the genre."<sup>26</sup> As such, it is now widely adopted, particularly in North America. It has obvious strengths. It is flexible: in its inclusion of both a *vertical* axis of revelation—"spatial in so far as it involves another, supernatural world"—alongside the traditional horizontal axis—"disclosing a transcendent reality which is... temporal, in so far as it envisages eschatological salvation"—it tries to embrace the cosmological and speculative (or "mystical") material to which Stone drew attention. It also drops any insistence on an *imminent* eschatological end, which is lacking in some of the primary texts. The implementation of this definition has also advanced the study of Jewish apocalyptic in several respects. There is now greater attention to the specific character of individual texts that tended to be lacking in earlier synthetic or thematically descriptive treatments.

However, there are features of the Collins-*Semeia* paradigm that remain highly problematic. In the first place, it can be objected that it does not satisfactorily address the problems of the mismatch between apocalyptic form and content. The definition demands that an apocalypse be concerned with a transcendent eschatology. However, there remain swathes of revelatory material in the apocalypses which have

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<sup>24</sup> Collins' gloss (*The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd rev. ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 13) on the original *Semeia* segmentation (Collins, ed., *Morphology*, 3-4).

<sup>25</sup> J. J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. Collins, 1-20, at 9.

<sup>26</sup> Collins, "Introduction," 5.

nothing to do with eschatology, nor an obviously “transcendent” kind of eschatology. This suggests that a “transcendent eschatology” is really only incidental to the genre and need not be present in every case.<sup>27</sup> The problem is acute in the case of *Jubilees* which is presented as a revelation to Moses by an Angel of the Presence. In *Jubilees*’ fifty chapters there are only two eschatological passages and only one of these—chapter 23—is labelled an apocalypse on the Collins definition.<sup>28</sup> Only a fraction of the material in the Book of Watchers and the Astronomical Book is eschatological (1.3–9 and parts of chs. 22, 25–26) and nothing points beyond the completion, blessing and perfection of this present world.<sup>29</sup>

This lack of correspondence between apocalyptic form and content is also a problem in the *Testament of Levi*. *Testament of Levi* 2–8 contains a succession of visionary passages which are *formally* apocalypses bound together by a narrative context. However, Collins only allows chs. 2–5 a place in the list of Jewish apocalypses. Although Levi sees in ch. 8 “another vision” like the one he had in chs. 2–5, since it contains nothing overtly eschatological it cannot be an apocalypse.<sup>30</sup> But, on close examination, the material in chs. 2–5 does not obviously contain a transcendent eschatology either. Of the two passages where Collins finds such thinking one is certainly Christian

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<sup>27</sup> The definition excludes an appreciation of characteristically apocalyptic material in Zechariah 1–8 (for which see H. Gese, “Anfang und Ende der Apokalyptik dargestellt am Sacharjabuch,” *ZThK* [1973]: 20–49).

<sup>28</sup> J. J. Collins, “The Jewish Apocalypses,” in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. Collins, 21–59, at 32–33. Collins has since changed his mind and allows *Jubilees* to be categorized as an example of a mixed genre (J. J. Collins, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements in Jewish Apocalypticism,” in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. J. J. Collins and J. H. Charlesworth [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991]: 1–32, esp. 14; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 79–84). It is not entirely certain that *Jub*, 23:31 looks forward to life after death (see Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 167).

<sup>29</sup> It is not clear whether 10:17–11:2 looks forward to the time after the flood or another, future, eschatological state (see Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 161). There is a final judgement for the dead in ch. 22, but only the faintest hint of resurrection (in v. 13). Here and in other texts, the definition maintains the line that the apocalypses are essentially eschatological in character by allowing a looser definition of “transcendent eschatology” than would have been expected in earlier studies. For Collins it is not, in fact, the expectation of a new cosmos which need define the eschatology of the apocalypses; the belief, exemplified by Dan 12:1–3, that there is to be judgement at death and an afterlife can also indicate the presence of a transcendent eschatology. See J. J. Collins, “Apocalyptic Eschatology as the Transcendence of Death,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 21–43; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> Collins, “Jewish Apocalypses,” 40–41.

(4.1), and the other is missing in some manuscripts, does not have a particularly “transcendent” eschatology, and may well be Christian anyway (3.3).<sup>31</sup>

One more text—*Joseph and Aseneth*—deserves consideration since it reinforces the point that the Collins-*Semeia* definition does not deal adequately with the mismatch between the genre “apocalypse” and so-called “apocalypticism.” Whilst it has recently been argued that this is a Christian text,<sup>32</sup> the traditional view that it is a pre-Christian Jewish work remains the more likely.<sup>33</sup> And although this work, especially its first part (chs. 1–22), is rightly compared with Hellenistic Romances, it has all the defining features of an apocalypse; except, that is, a futurist transcendent eschatology. It presents a revelation to Aseneth in a narrative framework—the account of her encounter with Joseph, her conversion, courtship and marriage to the Jewish paragon. The revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being—the angel who appears to her, guides her through her conversion and interprets for her the allegory of the honeycomb (chs. 14–17). And the angel reveals to Aseneth a transcendent reality; the world of Jewish piety, “mystically” conceived, in which the life of paradise, an angelomorphic existence and immortality belong to all the faithful.<sup>34</sup>

There is a pointed irony in the failure to categorize this text as an apocalypse. The search for the genre apocalypse takes its starting point from the use of ἀποκάλυψις in Rev 1:1. No one would disagree

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<sup>31</sup> 4.1 refers to Jesus’ Harrowing of Hell (cf. Matt 27:51–53; 1 Pet 3:19 and for later Christian references see H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, SVTP 8 [Leiden: Brill, 1985], 139–140) and echoes Matt 27:45–54; Rev 9:20 and 16:8. In some mss—but not all—3.3 refers to “hosts of armies ordained for the day of judgement against the spirits of error and of Belial” in the second heaven. The problems here are not recognized by Collins and they contradict his claim (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 138) that “there is little evidence of Christian influence in these chapters.”

<sup>32</sup> By R. Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph: A Late Antique Tale of the Biblical Patriarch and His Egyptian Wife, Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> See now G. J. Brooke, “Men and Women as Angels in *Joseph and Aseneth* Tradition,” *JSP* 14 (2005): 159–177.

<sup>34</sup> For apocalyptic material in *Joseph and Aseneth* see H. C. Kee, “The Socio-Cultural Setting of *Joseph and Aseneth*,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 394–413, at 406–408; E. M. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in *Joseph and Aseneth*, 4Ezra, and the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas*, *JSPSup* 17 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 35–56; G. Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis*, *Early Judaism and Its Literature* 10 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 17; E. M. Humphrey, *Joseph and Aseneth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 41.



that the author of Rev 1:1 must be thinking his book is to be shelved along with others such as *1 Enoch*, *Daniel*, *Jubilees* (or an excerpt thereof), *2 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*. But, apart perhaps from one Greek translation of *Daniel*,<sup>35</sup> the words ἀποκάλυψις, ἀποκαλύπτω or foreign cognates, are not used to designate the peculiar revelatory content of such works before the word appears in Rev 1:1 itself. But this language is used in *Joseph and Aseneth*. In 16.14 the angel interprets Aseneth's experience with the words: "the unspeakable mysteries of the Most High have been revealed to you (ἀπεκαλύφθη σοι τὰ ἀπόρητα μυστήρια τοῦ ὑψίστου)", a statement couched in terms used elsewhere of apocalyptic disclosure.<sup>36</sup>

So, generically, there is a good case for thinking that *Joseph and Aseneth* is the kind of text with which the author of Revelation wants his work to be compared. The fact that the Collins-*Semeia* genre definition restrains the possibility of such a comparison takes us to one of its most problematic aspects. At first it might seem that the definition treats genre—apocalypse—and apocalyptic eschatology, along with apocalypticism, as quite discrete entities. But this is not so. The typology is explicitly designed to identify texts that have *both* the *form* of an apocalypse *and* the *content* that is indicative of a transcendent eschatology.<sup>37</sup> Collins agrees that a strictly generic study could include "apocalypses" (revelations of heavenly mysteries) that do not attest an apocalyptic eschatology, but he rejects the value of such an exercise.<sup>38</sup> Why? He does not explain this judgement in detail, but some indications are given at various points in his writings.<sup>39</sup> First, he starts with an unquestioned interpretative judgement that in Rev 1:1 the

<sup>35</sup> Theodotion uses the verb ἀποκαλύπτω at Dan 2:19, 22, 28, 29, 30, 47; 10:1; 11:35.

<sup>36</sup> For the "unspeakable mysteries of the Most High" cf. *T. Levi* 2.10; *3 Apoc. Bar.* 1.6, 8; 2.6 and compare Mark 4.11; 2 Cor 12:4. In 22.13 it is the priestly Levi who, we are told, "used to see letters written in the heavens, and he would read them and he would reveal (ἀποκαλύπτειν) them to Aseneth privately."

<sup>37</sup> As Collins explains in "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements," 15.

<sup>38</sup> Collins, "Jewish Apocalypses," 27: "The common features of these writings in both manner of revelation *and content* [sic] justify their classification in the one genre 'apocalypse.'" See especially his comments in Collins, "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements," 15: "The analysis of the genre in *Semeia* 14, which was based on content as well as form, argued that there is indeed a common content, which is broadly constitutive of a worldview, which was both distinctive and significant in late antiquity."

<sup>39</sup> In "Genre, Ideology and Social Movements," 15, Collins implies that such an openness would necessarily mean calling all the visions in the Hebrew Bible "apocalypses." It need not. On grounds other than eschatological content it might be

author uses the word ἀποκάλυψις to define both form and content: “the term ‘apocalypse’ is...commonly used in a...restricted sense, derived from the opening verse of the book of Revelation...to refer to ‘literary compositions which resemble the book of Revelation, i.e., secret divine disclosures about the end of the world and the heavenly state’.”<sup>40</sup> If that is what Rev 1:1 means then the search for similar such texts is entirely reasonable. However, it is far from certain that this is how the author of Rev 1:1 intends the word ἀποκάλυψις. The use of this word might simply mean that the author wants his work to be classified as the record of a particular kind of revelatory *experience* (a visionary or angelophanic experience, for example). The fact that the book pertains, in part, to “eschatological” matters might be incidental to its generic classification. And, indeed, that Revelation has to do with future history and its climax might well be the reason why its author felt the need to add in 1:3 the further identification of its contents as a “prophecy.”

Secondly, the expression “commonly used” in the sentence just cited points to a flaw in the method. Later on in his introductory essay to *Semeia* 14, Collins says “the strategy employed in this volume has been to begin by examining all the writings which are either called apocalypses or are referred to as apocalyptic *by modern authors* [sic].”<sup>41</sup> Again, in a recent defence of the method, Collins says “the procedure was simply to line up all the texts that *were commonly regarded* [sic] as apocalyptic, and see what they had in common and where they differed.”<sup>42</sup> This means the method falls short of historiographic objectivity and it is unhelpfully circular. The starting point for a robustly historical search for an ancient genre should be the conventions, expectations and intentions of ancient authors, not the twentieth-century judgements of modern scholars who may, in fact, inhabit an entirely different worldview and be guilty of their own back-projections onto the ancient texts. The properly historical questions are, then, “What did Rev 1:1 mean by the word ἀποκάλυψις?” and “Which other texts would his (intended) readers have thought of

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decided that the visions of Joseph, Isaiah, Ezekiel and others are generically different from those in later “apocalypses.”

<sup>40</sup> Collins, “Introduction,” 2. Collins is citing Koch, *Rediscovery*, 18.

<sup>41</sup> Collins, “Introduction,” 4–5.

<sup>42</sup> Collins, “Proposals of Lester Grabbe,” 45.

when categorizing the book as a distinct type of literature?" The *Semeia* method is unhelpfully circular because by starting with a working definition of "apocalypse" which is essentially eschatological, material that is not eschatological is excluded from the survey and so inevitably the result is no more than a *refined* definition that is essentially eschatological.<sup>43</sup> *Semeia* 14 does not provide a definition of a genre, but a putative sub-type of a genre, a sub-type with a particular eschatological content. But was anyone in the ancient world really conscious of such a subtype? Or, by analyzing the generic features of texts that are "commonly regarded" as apocalyptic, is the exercise anything more than a study of a modern construct, refracted through the artificial lens of arbitrarily chosen ancient texts?

Unlike older presentations of matters apocalyptic, in the *Semeia* volume and in his subsequent full-length treatments of the "Apocalyptic Imagination" Collins does not lay out a fully developed, synthetic or systematic view of apocalypticism. His studies are focused on individual texts and their discrete character. Discussions of "apocalyptic eschatology" and "apocalypticism" are terse; the discussion of the genre far fuller. As in the Third Quest, *theological* concerns—that were so prominent in the pre-1970's phase of the study of Jewish apocalypticism and in the New Quest—have receded into the background. But this does not mean they are not there.

Collins and others who work with his definition in the field of Jewish studies remain attached to the view that apocalypticism is a dualistic worldview, distinct from Israel's older (prophetic) religion.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Lester Grabbe ("Introduction and Overview," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, ed. L. L. Grabbe and R. D. Haak [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 2–43, esp. 22) also points to the circularity of the Collins method.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. J. J. Collins, "The Place of Apocalypticism in the Religion of Israel," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson and D. S. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 539–558; J. J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2000), 129–161, at 147; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Apocalyptic Construction of Reality in *1 Enoch*," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. Collins and Charlesworth, 51–64. And see the recent criticisms of Nickelsburg's view of *1 Enoch* in K. Koch, "Response to 'The Apocalyptic Construction of Reality in *1 Enoch*,'" in *George W. E. Nickelsburg in Perspective: An Ongoing Dialogue of Learning*, ed. J. Neusner and A. J. Avery-Peck (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 44–59.

The picture is nuanced, sometimes softened, with recognition of the variety of perspectives within the primary sources, but the contours are the same. The apocalypses have an *interventionist* eschatology: they expect “the world to be changed by divine action rather than by human action.”<sup>45</sup> This, of course, means that typically their political stance is quietist: Daniel for example has a clearly different stance on political action to that of the Maccabees and the literature that celebrates them.<sup>46</sup> The apocalypses look not for the national, political and this-worldly future of earlier prophecy, but for a thoroughly transcendent and universal reality.<sup>47</sup> Between the present time and the time to come there will be a sharp division: the apocalypses entail a *temporal dualism*.<sup>48</sup> The mythological language of an otherworldly realm is taken at dualistic face value: heaven and earth are immiscible realms, and there is the *ontological dualism* of an “absolute distinction between divine beings and humans.”<sup>49</sup> Before the eschaton, the earth is beset by a *cosmic dualism* in which the earth is overwhelmed and corrupted by malevolent demons.<sup>50</sup> The social context of the apocalypses tends to be sectarian, even where the group in question cannot be securely identified.

Even though the extant Jewish apocalypses written after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE are enthusiastic proponents of Torah piety, in *4 Ezra* “the wisdom of the wise consists not in their knowledge of the Mosaic law but in the apocalyptic wisdom that comes from additional revelation.”<sup>51</sup> The early Enochic tradition is rather disinterested in Torah and Temple. To the extent that Temple language is used in

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<sup>45</sup> J. J. Collins, “Temporality and Politics in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, ed. C. Rowland and J. Barton (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 26–43, at 37–38.

<sup>46</sup> E.g. J. J. Collins, “Daniel and His Social World,” in *Interpreting the Prophets*, ed. J. L. Mays and P. J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 249–260. Collins recognizes a partial exception here in parts of the early Enochic tradition (“Temporality,” 38).

<sup>47</sup> J. J. Collins, “The Eschatology of Zechariah,” in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, ed. Grabbe and Haak, 74–84; Collins, “Proposals of Lester Grabbe,” 47–50.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 40 on the apocalypticism of *1 Enoch*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 40; G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Partings of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 12–13.

<sup>51</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 210.

Enoch's heavenly ascent (*1 Enoch* 14) and in the account of the fallen watchers the point is to criticize the existing Jerusalem Temple and to offer alternative access to the divine throne by means of mystical ascent.<sup>52</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg and David W. Sutter go further: the Book of Watchers is as a sectarian polemic against the Jerusalem priesthood, whose dissolute and irresponsible behaviour is reflected in the portrayal of the fallen watchers.<sup>53</sup> The Enochic tradition offers an alternative form of piety and salvation to that provided through the laws of Moses.<sup>54</sup> Although Daniel espouses a certain Torah piety (see 1:8–16), “Daniel and his friends are not primarily teachers who study the Torah.”<sup>55</sup> Daniel's view that the Temple of the sixth-century restoration did not fulfil exilic prophecies of restoration (ch. 9) means he is unlikely to have been close to the contemporary Jerusalem establishment.<sup>56</sup>

The weight given to the conceptual realities that Collins calls a “transcendent eschatology” and “apocalypticism” is evident in the way he sets out his studies. The scope of discussion embraces texts which though *not formally* apocalypses (lacking as they are in a visionary mode and an otherworldly mediator) do have a transcendent eschatology. This is the way the older textbooks proceeded before there was an attempt to carefully demarcate a genre “apocalypse.” These “related” texts belong in the discussion because it is really a theology that defines the subject.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, already in discussion of the genre in *Semeia* 14, Collins found an integral conceptual connection between the *genre*—with its disclosure of a “transcendent reality”—and content—“transcendent eschatology.” There he postulates an inner coherence between the “manner” of revelation of a

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<sup>52</sup> Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 54.

<sup>53</sup> G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 575–600; D. Suter, “Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch,” *HUCA* 50 (1979): 115–135.

<sup>54</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 50–56; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 48–49; J. J. Collins, “Theology and Identity in the Early Enoch Literature,” *Henoch* 24 (2002): 57–62. Collins and Nickelsburg agree in rejecting E. P. Sanders' view that *1 Enoch* is a representative of “covenantal nomism.”

<sup>55</sup> Collins, “Daniel,” 252.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 252–253. Here Collins rejects the arguments of others for a close proximity to the Temple.

<sup>57</sup> See Collins, “Jewish Apocalypses,” 44–49; Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 93–114, and cf. Collins' recent study of *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997).

transcendent reality that requires “mediation of an otherworldly being” and the hope for salvation in a “transcendent eschatology.”<sup>58</sup> This is a telling judgement.<sup>59</sup> It reinforces the sense that it is a *dualistic* worldview that is at the heart of it all. Although the *Semeia* volume speaks of “transcendence” rather than “dualism,” since the transcendence is not balanced by any essential immanence and since the transcendence of the genre bespeaks the utter transcendence of the eschaton that “lies beyond...the present world and stands in sharp discontinuity with it,”<sup>60</sup> it is really the transcendence of an ontological and temporal dualism that the definition has in mind. So, when the genre definition speaks of “a transcendent reality” that is “spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world,” is this not just another way of describing the putative ontological dualism of the apocalyptic worldview? *Semeia* 14 set out to define the genre “apocalypse” in separation from apocalyptic eschatology and apocalypticism. But, on close inspection, it seems, the formula is inherently a definition of the apocalyptic worldview itself.<sup>61</sup> It may be, of course, that it is simply impossible to separate form and content. But the point here is that *anyone using the Semeia definition of the genre is inevitably buying into a particular view of its content, a view that on other grounds is problematic.*

That the work of Collins and his colleagues is a continuation of the older view that the phenomenon is essentially a matter of a dualistic way of thinking can also be seen in its relative disinterest in religious experience. There is some recognition of the continuities with later

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<sup>58</sup> See Collins, “Introduction,” 10–12, 27. If I understand him correctly, presumably this would be a fundamental reason to reject the value of identifying a “corpus of texts which are ‘revelations of heavenly mysteries’ that are not exclusively eschatological in content (Collins, “Genre, Ideology and Social Movements,” 15). See also Nickelsburg, “Apocalyptic Construction of Reality,” 2.

<sup>59</sup> Contrast the brief comments of M. E. Stone, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. E. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 383–441, at 393–394 on the separation of “apocalypse” and “apocalypticism,” which conclude: “‘apocalypticism’ should be regarded as a pattern of thought, primarily eschatological in character... *It does not supply a key to the understanding of the particular literary forms of the apocalypses...*” (394, italics added).

<sup>60</sup> Collins, “Jewish Apocalypses,” 27.

<sup>61</sup> In recent debate Collins has vociferously rejected the use of the word “apocalyptic” as a noun (Collins, “Proposals of Lester Grabbe,” 44–46). In British scholarship this continues, in part, precisely because there is a reluctance to accept the ideological construct that “apocalypticism” entails.

Jewish mysticism.<sup>62</sup> But still it is the texts' *ideas* that form the core of their message.<sup>63</sup> Persian religion has influenced some apocalyptic texts.<sup>64</sup> And there is sympathy for a sociological explanation of apocalyptic thought. This, too, requires some comment.

The *Semeia* definition adopts a theoretical detachment of literary genre from social context.<sup>65</sup> In subsequent discussion Collins has been careful to point to the variety of social contexts from which apocalypses emerge. However, he is insistent that there are no ancient Jewish apocalypses that are written from a central group in a position of power.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the apocalypses are "typically written under foreign dominion or in some cases produced in circles that were marginal within Jewish society."<sup>67</sup> There is never a realized and triumphalist eschatology in the Jewish apocalypses.<sup>68</sup> Around Collins there is widespread confidence that the apocalypses must be explained as the consequence of an experience of social deprivation.<sup>69</sup> And in maintaining this position there continues considerable sympathy for the social theory of Max Weber and his followers as an explanation of apocalyptic literature and thought.<sup>70</sup>

However, if we allow *Joseph and Aseneth* its proper place as a witness to the genre we find there an apocalypse with an essentially *realized* eschatology. And if G. Bohak is right in his recent argument that this text is an apology for the Leontopolis temple in Egypt at the

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<sup>62</sup> For example Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 57 says of *1 Enoch* 1–36 that although "the possibility that the author had a mystical experience cannot be discounted," Collins prefers to treat the text as a piece of literature with a particular social function and setting (57).

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Collins' recent encyclopaedia article: Collins, "Prophecy to Apocalypticism."

<sup>64</sup> See e.g. Collins, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 41–43, 101–103.

<sup>65</sup> Collins, "Introduction," 4.

<sup>66</sup> See Collins, "Temporality," 28–33 in response to the arguments of S. L. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995).

<sup>67</sup> Collins, "Temporality," 33.

<sup>68</sup> Collins, "Introduction," 11; idem, "Temporality," 29–33.

<sup>69</sup> E.g. G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Social Aspects of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypticism," *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World*, ed., Hellholm, 641–654; D. E. Aune, "Transformations of Apocalypticism in Early Christianity," in *Knowing the end from the beginning: The Prophetic, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, ed. Grabbe and Haak, 54.

<sup>70</sup> See the recent review of this approach in Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 1–54.

hands of Oniad Jews who held privileged positions in the Ptolemaic state of the second century BCE, that realized eschatology carries a degree of political triumphalism.<sup>71</sup>

Collins' contribution to the study of the apocalypses at the end of the twentieth century is rivalled only by R. H. Charles at its beginning. His magisterial command of the texts—coupled to an integrative understanding of “apocalypticism”—has, of course, influenced the study of the subject as it relates to the search for the historical Jesus. But his understanding belongs within a particular conceptual—or “theological”—tradition.

## 2.2. Christopher C. Rowland: An Alternative Approach

In the late 1970's a number of European scholars voiced an alternative approach to the understanding of apocalyptic literature to that adopted in the past and by the emerging North American community. Pre-eminent among these contributions is Christopher Rowland's *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Christianity* (1982), which proposes a number of new and distinctive theses.<sup>72</sup>

For Rowland, an apocalypse is simply a “revelation of the divine mysteries through visions or some other form of immediate disclosure of the heavenly mysteries, whether as the result of vision, heavenly ascent or verbal revelations.”<sup>73</sup> *This is how the word is used, not just in Rev 1:1, but in other New Testament texts.*<sup>74</sup> *No distinctively eschatological content is therefore required by the word* (see esp. 1 Cor 14:26; 2 Cor 2:10; 12:1; Gal 1:12, 16; 2:2, cf. Rom 1:18; Phil 3:15; Eph 1:17). As far as Jewish texts are concerned this means that *Jubilees* is

<sup>71</sup> Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth*.

<sup>72</sup> See also J. Carmignac, “Qu'est-ce que l'Apocalyptique? Son emploi à Qumrân,” *RevQ* 10 (1979): 3–33 and H. Stegemann, “Die Bedeutung der Qumranfunde für die Erforschung der Apokalypstik,” in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*, ed. Hellhom, 495–530, and cf. C. Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the Most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985), 56–64; C. C. Rowland, “Apocalyptic: the Disclosure of Heavenly Knowledge,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume Three: The Early Roman Period*, ed. W. Horbury, W. D. Davies and J. Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 776–797.

<sup>73</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 70–71, cf. generally 9–22, 68–71.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 377–380; idem, “Apocalypse, Prophecy and the New Testament,” in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophet, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, ed. Grabbe and Haak, 149–166, at 151–152.



an unproblematic example; its relative disinterest in matters eschatological in no way bars its inclusion in the generic category.<sup>75</sup> There is no intrinsic connection between an apocalypse and so-called “apocalyptic eschatology.” Eschatology is just one of the interests of the apocalypses, but hardly a dominant one,<sup>76</sup> and there is far less evidence of a distinctively “transcendent eschatology” than is sometimes thought.<sup>77</sup> The usual expectation is for a restored, transformed or glorified present world order centred on Jerusalem, and considerable attention is directed to history for its own sake, in order that it might be understood in relation to the past and the future.<sup>78</sup>

Like his British predecessors, Rowland plays down the notion that there is a sharp break between older prophetic literature and the apocalypses: the latter do not represent a radically new theological stance, a new dualistic worldview. The apocalypses contain no essential *temporal* or *eschatological dualism*. There remains considerable continuity between the ages and, insofar as there is a disjuncture between them in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, these works belong to a particular situation of crisis after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE.<sup>79</sup> The “scientific” interest in creation and its origins in some apocalypses tells against a negative attitude towards this present age and order.<sup>80</sup> Rowland discusses the possibility of human transformation in the apocalypses: both particular individuals and, in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls, whole communities, can attain a heavenly, glorious or angelic identity.<sup>81</sup> This phenomenon hardly supports the view that there is a rigid *ontological dualism* between God and humanity: it points to the fact that heavenly and earthly realms are permeable and miscible. As for the commonly alleged *cosmic dualism* of the apocalypses, Rowland goes so far as to say that the language of the apocalypses can appear extremely dualistic, but it is sometimes

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<sup>75</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 51–52.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 23–48, 71.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 37–48, 160–189.

<sup>78</sup> See esp. *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 134–135, cf. 455 n. 15. And, in any case, in these texts the presence of a *messianic* age demonstrates the importance of traditional, this-worldly hope (47).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 146–155.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 106–120.

“monistic” since the power of darkness can be located *within* the heavenly world.<sup>82</sup>

Whilst the apocalypses do not contain the dualism that the term “apocalypticism” has traditionally ascribed to them, they contain, or presuppose, a number of key theological concepts. The apocalypses take it for granted that the heavenly world is one in which past, present and future is available. “Heaven is a kind of repository of the whole spectrum of human history which can be glimpsed by the elect.”<sup>83</sup> The heavens contain all of time present before God. So, access to heaven makes possible access to the (eschatological) future. But, equally, it allows a revelation of the past. In fact, “whatever pertains to the heavens and the earth, its past or its future could be and was included in the apocalypses.”<sup>84</sup> This means that the study of the apocalypses and their contents is appropriately organized according to the taxonomy of mystical speculation given in the Mishnah, tractate *Hagigah* 2:1: “what is above, what is beneath, what was before-time, and what will be hereafter.”<sup>85</sup> The whole of reality is present and laid bare before God and this gives us a clue to *one* of their principal functions: the unveiling of God’s perspective—an eternal perspective—for a situation of present distress.<sup>86</sup>

What, for Rowland, is the formative life setting or impulse of the apocalypses? It is not Persian religion—a theory of which he has no need since he does not think the apocalypses dualistic.<sup>87</sup> Neither is he enamoured of the thesis that the apocalypses are the product of a sociology of crisis and marginalization.<sup>88</sup> This erroneously assumes eschatology is the definitive heart of the genre and there is too much else which seems not to emanate from a situation of distress: “The interest in the world as it is speaks more of reflection and the quest for knowledge than urgent expectation of the end of the world, where such interests would be superfluous.”<sup>89</sup> Instead of these two—highly

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<sup>82</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 92 with reference to 2 *Enoch* 18, 42; *T. Levi* 3.2 and *Asc. Isa.* 7.9. See further Rowland’s discussion of *Apoc. Abr.* 23.13 where Azazel’s power in the world is entirely contingent upon human sin and “those who will to do evil” (127).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, introducing the arrangement of material in 73–189.

<sup>86</sup> E.g. *ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>87</sup> The suggestion receives one passing mention (*ibid.*, 203).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 194–203.

<sup>89</sup> Rowland, “Disclosure of Heavenly Knowledge,” 126.

influential—hypotheses, Rowland proposes the apocalypses can be explained above all by two phenomena: genuine religious experiences of the kind they purport to record and the cosmology of Israel's Temple.

The former proposal is expounded at length.<sup>90</sup> Briefly, Rowland shows that the roots of the genre apocalypse are to be found in visionary texts such as Isaiah 6; 1 Kings 22:19; Ezekiel 1, 40–48 and Zechariah 1–8. Just as those passages are to be taken seriously as records of genuine experiences, so too are the apocalypses. The principal impediment to this view is their pseudonymous character. However, a strong case can be made that the apocalypses are the product of meditation on scriptural texts in which a visionary “sees again” what their Old Testament hero saw. In any case, there is indisputable evidence that: (a) the apocalypses report the kind of ascetic experiences (such as fasting) that comparative study shows accompany ecstasy; (b) these “techniques of ecstasy” are joined by accounts of experiences which suggest the altered states of consciousness familiar to students of later western mysticism; and (c) there are important continuities of literary form and setting between the apocalypses and later Jewish mystical texts. Since the latter should be treated seriously for their accurate witness to mystical praxis (*Merkabah Mysticism* and *Hekhalot Mysticism*), so should the former. In any given instance, it is hard to tell whether a particular text is, as it purports to be, a genuine religious experience, or whether, in fact it is a stereotypical *literary* account of what such an experience was believed to entail. But Rowland suggests some criteria by which the matter might be judged.<sup>91</sup>

The second proposal is undeveloped, but is of considerable significance for subsequent apocalyptic studies. There are two instances where Rowland thinks Temple cosmology and Israel's cultic experience have made a direct impact on an apocalypse. The first is Enoch's heavenly ascent in *1 Enoch* 14 where the description of the tripartite heavenly sanctuary that Enoch enters is modelled on the three-fold division of the Solomonic Temple (*devir*, *hekhhal* and *ulam*).<sup>92</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 214–247, 271–357. The thesis finds confirmation in the study of Christian origins (358–411).

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>92</sup> See *ibid.*, 463 n. 16 and n. 18. Rowland is indebted to J. Maier (*Vom Kultus zur Gnosis: Studien zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der “jüdischen Gnosis”* [Salzburg:

Secondly, Rowland suggests that apocalyptic traditions of human transformation, exemplified by material in the Dead Sea Scrolls, have their formative context in the priestly and cultic context where heaven and earth meet and God manifests his presence.<sup>93</sup>

As we shall see, Rowland's approach has been supported in subsequent research. However, there is perhaps a weakness that undercuts a thoroughgoing development of his own insights: he works with a particular but limited understanding of the religious experiences that the apocalypses describe. In his view apocalyptic visions are essentially "direct" and unmediated.<sup>94</sup> Whilst there is no necessary intrinsic difference between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic attitudes towards the law,<sup>95</sup> there is a contrast between indirect modes of discernment, such as the interpretation of scripture, and a direct Spirit-inspired revelation that can be found in the apocalypses.<sup>96</sup> This judgement appears to constrain Rowland from a full appreciation of the function of Temple cosmology in the apocalypses. For example, the role of Temple and priestly symbolism in the formation of Enoch's ascent suggests, in fact, that the revelation is by no means "direct" and unmediated: it takes place at a particular time and place and Enoch's role anticipates that of the priest in mediating divine instruction. In short, Rowland's "immediate disclosure of heavenly mysteries" sounds a little too like a back projection of modern (particularly Protestant) accounts of pure "charismatic" revelation that are defined in contradistinction to institutional (or "Catholic") structures.

It should also be noted that Rowland does not apply his inclination for a non-dualistic apocalyptic conceptual framework systematically. In his reading of Daniel 7 he agrees with the older history of religions approach: along with John Collins, Rowland thinks the "one like a son of man" is a reference to a future angelic redeemer, not a human messiah.

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O. Müller, 1964], esp. 125–128), and J. Maier ("Das Gefährdungsmotiv bei der Himmelfahrt in der jüdischen Apokalyptik und "Gnosis", *Kairos* 5 [1963]: 18–40).

<sup>93</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 18–119.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 9–11, 17; *idem*, "Disclosure of Heavenly Knowledge," 780.

<sup>95</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 29–37; *idem*, "Disclosure of Heavenly Knowledge," 783–84.

<sup>96</sup> Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 9–10, 68–69; *idem*, "Disclosure of Heavenly Knowledge," 780.

### 3. *A New Perspective on Jewish Apocalyptic*

In the wake of the *Semeia* 14 attempt to detach genre from worldview and filling out, in particular, some of the lines drawn in Rowland's approach in the light of subsequent work, it is possible to offer a "new perspective" on Jewish apocalyptic. As the use of the root (ἀποκαλυπτ-) in other early Christian texts shows, "apocalyptic" literature is not a matter of eschatology but a particular revelatory genre, with a variety of concerns. Apocalyptic and Jewish eschatology overlap but are really two separate subjects, and apocalypses contain no one kind of eschatology: in some, eschatology is future and "transcendent," in others not so transcendent (*Jubilees*, *Apocalypse of Abraham*, cf. *T. Levi* 2–8), elsewhere it can be "realized" (e.g. *Joseph and Aseneth*) or "inaugurated" (*Book of Watchers*, *2 Enoch*).

Rowland's argument for genuine religious experience behind the apocalypses has received support from the subsequent study of *4 Ezra* by Michael Stone, who has shown that that text is best understood as the product of an individual's own transformative experience in the world without the Temple and its related institutions that followed the disaster of 70 CE.<sup>97</sup> However, the new perspective stresses the degree to which the apocalypses are otherwise a product of a priestly and cultic milieu.<sup>98</sup> This is obvious in the case of *Jubilees*, the *Testament of Levi* 2–8, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and *2 Enoch*, and accords with anticipations of the genre in older visionary material in the Hebrew Bible (Ezekiel

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<sup>97</sup> See M. E. Stone, "On Reading an Apocalypse," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. Collins and Charlesworth 65–78 and Collins' comments thereon (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 199–200).

<sup>98</sup> For the priestly character of Jewish apocalyptic see Gese, "Anfang und Ende"; I. Gruenwald, "Priests, Prophets, Apocalyptic Visionaries, and Mystics," in *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 125–144; L. L. Grabbe, "The Social Setting of Early Jewish Apocalypticism," *JSP* 4 (1989): 27–47, at 32–35; M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); M. Barker, "Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypses," *SJT* 51 (1998): 1–21; D. Frankfurter, "Jüdische Apokalyptik," *RGK* 4th ed., 1 (1998): 592–594. For the priestly character of the earlier, biblical material see Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, and M. A. Sweeney, "The Priesthood and the Proto-Apocalyptic Reading of Prophetic and Pentateuchal Texts," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophet, the Apocalyptic and their Relationships*, ed. Grabbe and Haak, 167–178.

and Zechariah).<sup>99</sup> Once the reader enters the imaginative world of the Jewish priesthood and Temple it is also clear in Daniel, *1 Enoch*, *Joseph and Aseneth* and in Revelation itself. In the Enochic tradition this is evident in the interest in the correct calendar, the Day of Atonement as the means of removing sin and its effects (*1 Enoch* 10–14), cultic halakhah and lore (*1 Enoch* 3; 26–32; *2 Enoch* 2; 9.1; 45–46; 51.4; 59; 61.4–62.3; 64; 66.1–5; 68.3, 5–6; 69–72), the hero's character as a prototypical high priest and the competition between Jerusalem and rival sanctuaries, particularly those in the north (at Hermon and Shechem).<sup>100</sup> *4 Ezra* is exceptional in this and several respects: it represents a move away from the priesthood in the wake of the cataclysm of 70 CE.<sup>101</sup> We will discuss Daniel further below.<sup>102</sup> And, of course, the presence of several apocalyptic texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls is entirely consistent with the Qumran community's priestly character. The particular religious experiences attested in the apocalypses are, then, not so much a reflection of individual para-institutional mysticism, but an expression of the divine encounter believed to take place in and through priestly offices, worship and the Temple. In all this, Temple cosmology—the belief that cultic space and time is a sacramental model of the universe—facilitates the experiences of transcendence, especially ascent to heaven, that so define apocalyptic literature. Enoch, the “second Adam,” ascends to heaven at the cosmic mountain: the high priest

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<sup>99</sup> The *Apocalypse of Abraham* is indebted to the following cultic and priestly texts: Gen 15; Exod 7–8; 28:36–9; Lev 16 and Josh 3 (see Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 62–66; L. L. Grabbe, “The Scapegoat Ritual: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation,” *JSJ* 18 (1987): 152–167, at 156–158, and R. Rubinkiewicz, *Die Eschatologie von Henoch 9–11 und das Neue Testament*, Österreichisches Biblische Studien 6 (Klosterneuburg: Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984), 101–102 and 110–113.

<sup>100</sup> Grabbe, “Scapegoat Ritual”; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 29–46; D. C. Olson, “1 Enoch,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 904–941, at 906–907, 910, 912, 914–915; D. C. Olson, *Enoch: A New Translation* (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2004), 7, 9, 14. For the rivalry between Enochic Jerusalem and the Samaritans see E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of Watchers and Apocalyptic*, OS 35. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 198–203; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 24–27.

<sup>101</sup> *2 Baruch* still reflects older traditions of Temple cosmology (see esp. chs. 2–10).

<sup>102</sup> For *Joseph and Aseneth's* priestly context see Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and for Revelation see M. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

enters heaven to meet with God in the holy of holies. All the revelation and wisdom that are available to one who goes to heaven are also available to the priest who enters the inner sanctuary.

Since the apocalypses reflect the particular religious experience that Israel's cult provides, it is not surprising that their theology is essentially biblical. They are not dualistic. Again, *4 Ezra's* negative anthropology and its sharp disjuncture between the present and future ages reflects its particular historical context as a reaction to the Temple's destruction and the failure of the war of independence.<sup>103</sup>

The lack of dualism in pre-Christian apocalypses is seen most starkly in the prominence given to the experience of human transformation.<sup>104</sup> The purpose of ascent to heaven is not simply the gaining of knowledge; it is also *transformation* and the recovery of humanity's originally intended heavenly and divine identity. Enoch both recapitulates the Adamic identity (as his seventh descendent) and transcends human mortality; he is exalted to divine Glory (*1 Enoch* 37–71, cf. Gen 5:22–24) and is dressed as true high priest (*2 Enoch* 22, cf. Ben Sira 49:16).<sup>105</sup> Enoch's own exaltation anticipates that of his people (see especially *1 Enoch* 37–71). Daniel is the true image of God, worthy of human veneration (Dan 2:48–49),<sup>106</sup> who has direct access to heavenly mysteries (Dan 2–6) and who sees the eschatological restoration of God's image in Israel and her representative (Dan 7). In *Jubilees* Israel is the true Adam whose life is written into the fabric of

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<sup>103</sup> For the lack of dualism in *2 Baruch* see J. F. Hobbins, "The Summing Up of History in *2 Baruch*," *JQR* 89 (1998): 45–80.

<sup>104</sup> See M. Himmelfarb, "Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. Collins and Charlesworth, 79–90; C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," *JJS* 43 (1992): 1–31; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, WUNT 2.94 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 109–215; idem, *All the Glory of Adam*, 1–55; M. Barker, "The High Priest and the Worship of Jesus," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, ed. C. C. Newman, J. R. Davila and G. S. Lewis, *JSJSup* 63 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 93–111.

<sup>105</sup> For the centrality of this particular theological anthropology within *1 Enoch* see Olson, "1 Enoch," 905–906; Olson, *Enoch*, 5–6.

<sup>106</sup> Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 102–103, cf. idem, "The Worship of the Jewish High Priest by Alexander the Great," in *Early Christian and Jewish Monotheism*, ed. L. T. Stuckenbruck and W. S. North, *JSNTSup* 63 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 71–102, at 79.

the cosmos, to whom God speaks clearly through his angels and in dreams (32.1, 16–26). In *Joseph and Aseneth* Israel is a divine and heavenly race, enjoying the life of Eden, by virtue of her peculiar cultic constitution. Arguably, the anthropology of these texts is mainstream and biblical. In any case, there is here an inextricable connection between the *form* of the apocalypses and their theological *content*. The apocalypses are distinctive in their proclamation that *as the image of God, it is the true humanity—Israel and her representatives—that rightfully receives divine revelation. In contrast to the idolatrous (mantic) alternatives adopted by her neighbours, Israel alone (as the true humanity) has genuine access to the ecstatic experiences by which the creator god communicates his reality, wisdom and perspective on history.*<sup>107</sup> Daniel, not the Chaldean diviners, is privy to the secrets of a man's dream-life and the future course of history. Through his dreams and entry into the heavenly sanctuary Enoch demonstrates the theologically correct form of revealed wisdom over against its Mesopotamian mantic rivals.<sup>108</sup> Aseneth rejects the cultic apparatus of her pagan past and joins the Jewish community and the fellowship of those to whom and through whom the mysteries of heaven are revealed (*Joseph and Aseneth* especially 5.5–6; 16.14; 22.13; 23.8).<sup>109</sup>

The non-dualistic theology of the apocalypses is evident in their profound ecological concern. As in the Hebrew Bible, creation is prone to manifestations of pre-creation chaos. God brings about a return to order and fertility as he has done in the past; and in this the Temple as the sacramental centre and bulwark against chaos plays a vital role. The story of the fallen watchers in *1 Enoch* (chs. 6–14) anticipates the Day of Atonement as the day of cosmic purgation and repristination. Daniel laments the manifestation of pre-creation chaos in Israel's enemies (7.1–8), the attack on sacred time (7.25), and the

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<sup>107</sup> For the sharp differences between the revelatory experiences in the apocalypses and the techniques of mantic wisdom employed in non-Israelite societies see A. Bedenbender, "Jewish Apocalypticism: A Child of Mantic Wisdom?" *Henoch* 24 (2002): 189–196.

<sup>108</sup> For the relationship between *1 Enoch* and Mesopotamian mantic wisdom see J. C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, CBQMS 16 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984).

<sup>109</sup> This theme finds expression in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* in the contrast between Abraham the true worshipper of God who is taken up into the liturgy of heaven (chs. 12–18) and his idolatrous family from whose house he is rescued (chs. 1–8).



desolation of the Temple that otherwise binds together heavenly (angelic) and human (priestly) hosts (8.9–14). Indeed, a proper appreciation of the Jewish Temple's role in the provision of cosmic cohesion now provides a resolution to the vexed problems in the interpretation of Daniel 7.

### 3.1. *Daniel 7*

The ill-effects of the modern dualistic paradigm are nowhere more painfully felt than in the the struggle to agree an identification of the “one like a son of man” of Dan 7:13 who stands behind so many gospel passages that speak of Jesus as the Son of Man.<sup>110</sup> Broadly speaking, commentators take one of two positions: either the “one like a son of man” is an angel (e.g. J. J. Collins) or he is a human figure, a mere symbol for God's people, Israel (the older English view now perpetuated by N. T. Wright and others).<sup>111</sup> For a minority of conservative scholars, he is an individual royal messiah, but there is so little evidence in the text that Daniel is interested in royalty that this third option can be discounted at the outset.

As for the two principal positions, both sides marshal an impressive list of exegetical observations in their favour. Each also has to dispense with the exegetical observations of the other. On the one hand, those who adopt a symbol-for-Israel interpretation fail to recognize the importance of the old ancient Near Eastern and biblical *Chaoskampf* motif that puts the man figure in the position of divine warrior. They ignore or explain away: the significance of the use of a divine and heavenly mode of transport (clouds); the fact that in v. 14 the man figure receives that which is elsewhere the preserve of God alone (cf. 3:33; 6:27); the indications that the human figure is an

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<sup>110</sup> For what follows see C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test Case,” *SBLSP* (1997): 161–193 and idem, “The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context and the Meaning of the Transfiguration,” in *Auferstehung—Resurrection: The Fourth Durham-Tübingen-Symposium: Resurrection, Exaltation, and Transformation in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism, and Early Christianity*, ed. F. Avemarie and H. Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001), 247–298, esp. 257–261.

<sup>111</sup> Wright, *People of God*, 291–297, cf. M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979); J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 729.

angelic individual, not a corporate symbol,<sup>112</sup> and the earliest evidence in the text's *Rezeptionsgeschichte* that he is meant to be a divine individual.<sup>113</sup> On the other hand, those who think he is an angel cannot fully accommodate the fact that the echoes of creation in the rest of the chapter put the man figure in the position of the true Adam (vv. 2–8, cf. Gen 1:2; v. 14 cf. Gen 1:26–30) and the stage directions separate him from the surrounding angelic throng. They also play down the degree to which the angelic interpretation (vv. 16–28) orients the decoding of the dream to the human, Israel, level of reality: the man figure's reception of dominion and authority (v. 14) betokens *Israel's* reception of authority (vv. 18, 22, 27). There is no parallel in contemporary texts for an angel riding on clouds, let alone entering God's presence by such means, nor for an angel fulfilling the role of a divine warrior. And none of the text's earliest interpreters thought the "one like a son of man" was an angel: they are unanimous in thinking he is a human being and a messiah (Similitudes of Enoch, synoptic gospels, Acts, Revelation and *4 Ezra*).<sup>114</sup>

Scholarly positions have become entrenched. But a strict decision between an angelic or human identification of the "one like a son of man" of 7:13 is unnecessary. The existence of evidence for both positions is entirely explicable in the non-dualistic worldview of Second Temple Judaism where various individuals (Adam, Noah, Enoch, Melchizedek, Jacob-Israel et al.) are thought of as divine and/or angelic and, simultaneously, thoroughly human. On numerous counts the best candidate for the heavenly-human part that the "one like a son of man" plays is the high priest. In Daniel's second-century Jewish world it is the high priest who dominates the political and religious landscape.<sup>115</sup> Daniel as a whole is barely interested in kingship, but is consumed by the crisis facing the defiled Temple and the broken line of legitimate high priests (see esp. 8:9–14; 9:24–27). The

<sup>112</sup> The expression "one like a son of man" anticipates that used for angels in Dan 8:15; 10:16.

<sup>113</sup> The Old Greek (OG) translation says that the man figure comes "as (ὡς)" the Ancient of Days and both the Similitudes of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 37–71) and *4 Ezra* (ch. 13) take him to be a pre-existent and divine messiah.

<sup>114</sup> The hypothesis that the historical Jesus or pre-synoptic tradition thought "the Son of Man" was an angel is entirely hypothetical.

<sup>115</sup> See discussion of this point in C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 1," *JSHJ* 4 (2006): 155–175; "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," *JSHJ* 5 (2007): 57–79.

mythological landscape of Daniel 7 centres on Zion and the Temple. The usual pattern in the biblical, as in the wider ancient Near East world, is for the conflict with chaos to come to a head at a Temple, the place where divine presence and cosmic stability are guaranteed (cf. Pss 46; 48; Ezek 38–39; Joel 3 and Zech 14). The chaos monsters arise from the Mediterranean (“the great sea,” 7:2) and the *Chaoskampf* comes to a climax at Israel’s holy mountain, where God’s throne is set in her Temple (vv. 9–11). This is roughly the same staging as that used in the salvation-historical drama of ch. 2, with which ch. 7 stands in literary parallelism.

The crisis faced by Israel’s Temple state under Antiochus IV’s persecution is cosmic because the cult is the bond of heaven and earth (cf. 8:9–14). The monsters Daniel sees embodying the nations are impure *Mischwesen* (cf. Lev 11) whose pollution comes from the watery abyss that makes desolate God’s sanctuary. Yet God’s sanctuary is also the point at which that cosmic chaos is defeated and its impurity removed when the true high priest is brought before God on the Day of Atonement; the day of purgation on which creation is reconstituted. Just as the high priest comes to God on that day surrounded by clouds of incense (Lev 16) that represent the clouds of heaven in Israel’s cultic symbolic alphabet (cf. Exod 40), so too the man figure of Daniel 7 goes to the Ancient of Days with the clouds of heaven.<sup>116</sup> That the arrival of the “one like a son of man”—the true human set over against the bestial nations—recalls the creation of Adam in Genesis 1 is fitting because the high priest is the true Adam, the image of God.<sup>117</sup> There is now mounting evidence that the high

<sup>116</sup> On this point see too Barker, “The High Priest,” 95–96.

<sup>117</sup> For the Adamic contours of the high priestly office: compare Exod 28 and Ezek 28:12–16, see the priestly characterization of Adam in Gen 2–3 (discussed by, e.g. G. J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *I Studied Inscriptions from before the Flood: ANE Literary and Linguistic Approaches to Gen 1–11*, ed. R. Hess and D. T. Tsumura [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 399–404), and consider the identification of the high priest in Ben Sira 50 with Adam through the parallelism between 50:1 and 49:16 (discussed, with parallels, in C. T. R. Hayward, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* [London: Routledge, 1996], 45–46, at 45). For the high priest as the image of God see also Fletcher-Louis, “Alexander the Great”; idem, “The Temple Cosmology of P and Theological Anthropology in the Wisdom of Jesus ben Sira,” in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. C. A. Evans, LSTS 50, SSEJC 9 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 69–113 and idem, “The Image of God and the Biblical roots of Christian Sacramentality,” in *The Gestures of God: Explorations in Sacramentality*, ed. C. Hall and G. Rowell (London: Continuum, 2004), 73–89.

priest, like Israel's king before him, was required to play the role of divine warrior on the cultic stage.<sup>118</sup> And, of course, by virtue of his wearing the names of the tribes upon his breastpiece and shoulders the high priest represents Israel, the people to whom the kingdom is given in the rest of Daniel 7.<sup>119</sup>

Parallels between Daniel 7 and, for example, *1 Enoch* 14 and 11QMelchizedek (to which interpreters frequently turn for help) confirm this priestly/cultic reading. In *1 Enoch* 14 Enoch is the prototypical high priest who comes to the Great Glory in his sanctuary to deal with the fallen watchers (led by Asael/Azazel) in the same way that the high priest comes before God on the Day of Atonement to rid the world of pollution through the scapegoat לְעִזָּאזָל. In 11QMelchizedek, again, the hero is a divine, but human, (king-)priest who appears on the Yom Kippur of the eschatological Jubilee (11QMelch II, 6–8). The earliest interpretation of Dan 7:13, outside of the (very Jewish) New Testament, is the Similitudes of Enoch. There the identification of the “one like a son of man” with Enoch is intended throughout and is natural, given that both are priests. Features of the Similitudes, such as the description in the second parable of the punishment of Azazel (ch. 55) which alludes to Yom Kippur and the dating of the third parable to the eve of Tabernacles (60.1), also corroborate the New Year festival reading of Daniel 7.

### 3.2. *The Politics and Sociology of Apocalyptic Literature*

A proper understanding of the role of Temple cosmology and the particular theological anthropology that is evident in the apocalypses has broader implications for questions of Torah piety, social location, political perspective, messianic hope and eschatological expectation.

The passion for Torah in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* is self-evident. From their earliest exemplars onwards apocalyptic texts are neither a rival

<sup>118</sup> See Barker, “The High Priest”; Fletcher-Louis, “High Priest as Divine Mediator,” 186–192; idem, *All the Glory of Adam*, 81–83, 222–251; idem, “Temple Cosmology of P,” 102–103; idem, “Alexander the Great,” 86–87.

<sup>119</sup> The slippage between the individual “one like a son of man” and corporate righteous Israel in the movement from vision to interpretation is simply a function of the sacramental worldview of the text's cultic life-setting: “one like a son of man” is to “the people of the saints of the Most High” what the high priest is to Israel. In each case identities overlap within the grammar of the Temple's sacramental theology. But the “one like a son of man” is no more equated with Israel *tout court* than the high priest is simply Israel without remainder.

nor an alternative to Torah. Only if Torah is construed in narrowly Deuteronomistic terms and the interconnections between Torah-Temple and cosmos are ignored does this seem otherwise. Once the priestly and cultic material in the Pentateuch is considered, along with its complex coordination with God-ordained cosmology, the apocalypses emerge as utterly faithful to Israel's covenantal piety.<sup>120</sup> Nor is there any concrete evidence for a distinctive sectarian consciousness in apocalyptic texts. Though at times apocalypses might be written or cherished by particular communities there is nothing in the genre's defining form or theological content that requires such a social location. We know of no Jewish groups whose eschatological views conform to or have been usefully explained by the sociologists' "millenarian prophet." Rather, the imposition of social theory onto the primary sources has distracted a generation of commentators from their priestly, Temple-centred content and life-setting in the mainstream of Jewish society. They also tend to reflect a scribal milieu. Though the illiterate may well have composed oral apocalypses, none are extant and there are indications that, in any case, the apocalypses that do exist satisfied the aspirations of the poor, not just the rich and powerful in Jewish society.<sup>121</sup>

There is no clear evidence for a pacifist political stance in the apocalypses and much else points to the belief that human activity, whether on the battlefield or in the Temple, will be necessary to appropriate, if not also to *activate*, God's action in the world. In *1 Enoch* both the Animal Apocalypse (90.9–19) and the Epistle of Enoch (91.12, cf. v. 11) endorse the Maccabean revolt. This is consistent with the role of visions and the angelic realm in Maccabean historiography (see 2 Macc 2:21; 3; 5:1–4; 10:29; 11:8; 3 Macc 6:18–19). The necessity of military force is clearly endorsed in *Jubilees* (e.g. ch. 30; 31.18–20), in the midst of the apocalyptic portions of *T. Levi* (5.3; 6.1–11), in *Joseph and Aseneth* (ch. 27), in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (29.19) and in *2 Baruch* (72.6).

If at times it appears that God (or his angels, or suprahuman divine mediators), *not* human beings, are responsible for the action it

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, D. Bryan, *Cosmos, Chaos and the Kosher Mentality*, JSPSup 12 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) for a study of the role of purity regulations in Dan 7 and *1 Enoch* 85–90.

<sup>121</sup> See, for example, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Riches, the Rich, and God's Judgement in *1 Enoch* 92–105 and the Gospel according to Luke," *NTS* 25 (1978–79): 324–344.

must be remembered that there is a synergy between the heavenly and earthly horizons and an identity overlap between divine and human characters. For the divine and angelic Israel, human violence *is transcendental violence*.<sup>122</sup> In the case of Daniel, in ch. 7 the turning of the ages depends upon the coming of a true priest and the effecting of a proper cult.<sup>123</sup> The evidence from Josephus is that some revolutionaries in the first revolt were fired by Daniel, in particular.<sup>124</sup> Sadly, we know little about the “messianic” and prophetic movements described in Josephus and it is hard to gauge who among them had an apocalyptic spirituality and beliefs.<sup>125</sup> But that apocalyptic visions *accompanied* fighting on the ground is clear (see e.g. Josephus, *War* 6.288–300; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13). The view that “apocalypticists” were reluctant to fight because they waited patiently for God himself to act is an unnecessary presumption arising from a dualistic construal of apocalyptic thought.<sup>126</sup> From a multiplicity of sources (archaeological, rabbinic and patristic texts) we know a good deal more about the leader of the third Jewish revolt, Simeon bar Kosiba, and recent study has highlighted the continuity between his own ideology and that of the revolutionary movements in the pre-70 CE situation.<sup>127</sup> Simeon was both a military leader of notable physical strength and, as his nickname Bar Kochba (“son of a star”) reveals,<sup>128</sup> he was believed to be the incarnation of a heavenly power, in fulfilment of Num 24:17: “a star shall arise from Jacob and a scepter... from Israel” (*y. Ta’an*

<sup>122</sup> For a detailed exposition of this ideology in an eschatological, but not strictly apocalyptic, text see Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 395–474 on the *War Scroll*.

<sup>123</sup> There is no need to see in 11:34 a derogatory comment on the Maccabean use of violence (so rightly J. E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 303, *pace* J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 386, and D. Smith-Christopher, “The Book of Daniel,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 17–152, at 144–146.

<sup>124</sup> See Wright, *People of God*, 312–320.

<sup>125</sup> Note the possible reference to angelic help in the military vision of the Fourth Philosophy in Josephus, *Ant.* 18.4.

<sup>126</sup> For this presumption see, for example, J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 108–109, 116, 158–159, 161, 168 who consistently denies the veracity of Josephus’s own statements about the use of arms.

<sup>127</sup> See, for example, P. Schäfer, “Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis,” in *The Bar Kochba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, ed. P. Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003), 1–22, at 15–22.

<sup>128</sup> For this name, which is consistent with the use of the star on the coins minted by the revolutionaries, see Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1.31.6.

4:8 68a). In the words of Eusebius, Simeon “claimed to be a luminary who had come down to them from heaven” (*Eccl. Hist.* 4.6.1–4). This picture of a military leader operating with transcendent, heavenly consciousness is entirely in accord with the non-dualistic thinking of the Similitudes of Enoch, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, all of which combine heavenly and earthly features in their messianic expectations.<sup>129</sup>

#### 4. *Jewish Eschatology*

Eschatological expectation in and outside the apocalypses is variegated. In the Hebrew Bible there is an expectation that creation will come to an end,<sup>130</sup> but this is hardly related to God’s purposes for humanity, which are worked out *within* history. Where, in later literature, creation is transformed or undone and remade, invariably the socio-political character of the new order remains present: Israel’s national, land, Jerusalem and Temple-focused aspirations remain to the fore. There is also a hope for a transcendence of *mundane* history: corruptibility is replaced by paradisaical plenty,<sup>131</sup> the dead are brought back to life, the wicked are judged, the righteous vindicated and given a transformed, angelic identity, all evil—its causes and manifestations—are removed,<sup>132</sup> ordinary time is no more,<sup>133</sup> darkness disappears and is replaced by eternal light, and so forth. On the one hand, these manifestations of a transcendental reality coexist and are in continuity with Israel’s socio-political ideals. On the other hand, they are certainly not speaking about the mere continuity of history as we know it. It is hard to see how, to the extent that the primary sources describe a transcendence of mundane time and space, their language is merely metaphorical, not literal: the abolition of Satan and his works can only mean just that, even if various metaphors are used to express such an idea. In the older biblical material historical events are invested with cosmological significance and there is limited

<sup>129</sup> The latter two are generally reckoned to be close in time and social location to the Bar Kochba revolt and perhaps to have informed its combatants.

<sup>130</sup> E.g. Ps 102:25–26; Isa 51:6.

<sup>131</sup> *Sib. Or.* 3.744–755, 787–795; *2 Bar* 73.1–74:1, cf. *1 Enoch* 25.

<sup>132</sup> *Jub.* 5.6; 10.7–11; 23.29; *1 En.* 91.14; *2 En.* 65.9; *T. Mos.* 10.1; *4 Ezra* 6.27; 8.53; *2 Bar.* 73.1–5; 73.6–7; *Sib. Or.* 3.751–55.

<sup>133</sup> *2 Bar.* 51.9; 74.1–2; *2 En.* 65.7–8, cf. *Zech* 14.7.

evidence that, on occasion, such language could be used metaphorically in the post-biblical period.<sup>134</sup>

*It is hard to find any evidence in the apocalypses themselves of an expectation of literal cosmic destruction that is wholly negative.*<sup>135</sup>

Whilst all types of literature envisage cosmic disturbances (whether metaphorical or literal),<sup>136</sup> it is only *outside* the apocalypses that literal cosmic destruction is intimated.<sup>137</sup> This is not surprising since, at its core, apocalyptic literature is world affirming with a high view of human life and culture.

Not just in the apocalypses, but in other texts containing eschatological material, it is hard to find unequivocal evidence for the belief that the righteous must sit back and wait since God will intervene without human assistance.<sup>138</sup> Certainly, there is the presupposition that the arrival of the eschaton is dependent upon Israel's faithfulness to Torah,<sup>139</sup> and divine judgement is usually worked out through a messiah who is both human and sometimes clearly divine.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> With Isa 13:9-10, 13; Ezek 32:5-8; Zeph 1:8; 3:8; Hag 2:6 compare *Sib. Or.* 5.152, where, after Nero allegedly "seized the divinely built Temple (of Jerusalem) and burned the citizens" (150), "on his appearance the whole creation was shaken."

<sup>135</sup> Collins cites the Ethiopic of *1 En.* 91.14, "the world is written down for destruction" in the ninth week of the ten weeks of history (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 65; Collins, "Temporality," 40). But this is the reading of only some Ethiopic manuscripts. Others and the Qumran Aramaic text show that the original had "all the deeds (or 'doers') of wickedness will vanish from the whole earth and descend to the eternal pit" (see Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 266-267; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 434, 437).

<sup>136</sup> E.g. *1 En.* 80.4; *T. Mos.* 10.46; *Sib. Or.* 3.675-684.

<sup>137</sup> The strongest expressions of expected cosmic destruction are to be found in: *Sib. Or.* 2.196-213; 3.75-92; 4.171-192; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.70; Latin *Life of Adam and Eve* 49.3-50:1. Cf. *Apocalypse of Adam* 5.8-14. However, *Sib. Or.* 2.196-213 is surrounded by obviously Christian material (2.179-191 and 2.241-251), so we cannot be certain that it is not in fact Christian too (pace D. C. Allison, "Jesus & the Victory of Apocalyptic," in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. C. C. Newman [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999], 126-141, esp. 139). A good case has been made that *Sibylline Oracles* Book 4 originates from the end of the second century CE, not, as is usually thought, the end of the first century (S. A. Redmond, "The Date of the Fourth Sibylline Oracle," *Second Century* 7 [1989-90]: 129-149).

<sup>138</sup> *T. Mos.* 9-10 expresses this view only if the text is assumed to espouse a dualistic worldview. Collins, for example, thinks that in 10.2 the Kingdom is implemented through an angel (*nuntius*) (Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 131). But the text more likely refers to a heavenly-but-human priest, since specifically priestly language is used for his ordination ("then will be filled the hands") and elsewhere in *T. Mos.* the Latin *nuntius* is used of the angelic Moses (11.16). See further Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 31-32.

<sup>139</sup> E.g. *Jub.* 19.25; 23.24-31; *T. Mos.* 9.1-7; 2 *Bar.* 44.7; 77.6; 78.7; 84.2; 85.4.

<sup>140</sup> See A. Chester, "Jewish Messianic Expectations and Mediatorial Figures and



In both biblical and later literature the disruption of the cult is a matter of cosmology and, by the same token, the fulfilment of God's purposes for creation will depend on the existence and proper functioning of a Temple.<sup>141</sup> The destruction of the Temple (along with the capital city) entails a return to pre-creation chaos.<sup>142</sup> The completion of a (new or renewed) Temple means the completion, recreation or renewal of heaven and earth. This is already the case in the Priestly material in the Pentateuch and is reiterated in prophetic literature (see esp. Isa 65:17–25; Hag 1). The relationship between cosmos and Temple can be viewed in one of two ways. Because the Temple is a microcosm of the universe, its destruction or building metaphorically equates to the destruction or recreation of the cosmos.<sup>143</sup> Alternatively, because the Temple is thought to have a sacramental power, its existence is efficacious for cosmic stability and ecological order. So, for example, in *Jub.* 23.16–31 disobedience to Torah and Temple brings about ecological collapse and a shortening of human life. Torah and Temple faithfulness brings about longevity and the complete destruction of evil. Those in Israel who properly keep to Israel's cosmologically attuned laws and festivals "serve to establish heaven and to strengthen the earth and to renew all of the lights which are above the firmament" (19.25, cf. 1.29 and 11QTS XXIX, 8–10). The first two chapters of Joel are perhaps best read in a similar fashion: a plague of locusts threatens the supply of sacrifices in the Temple which in turn threatens cosmic meltdown; the sun and moon darkening and the stars withdrawing their shining (2:10). Intensification of cultic activity in sympathy with the mourning land

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Pauline Christology," in *Paulus und das antike Judentum*, ed. M. Hengel and U. Heckel, WUNT 58 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991), 17–89; W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 36–108; Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 9–13, 412–449. The absence of messianism has been exaggerated, not least because a dualistic framework has removed much of the evidence from discussion.

<sup>141</sup> For what follows see J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), esp. 78–127; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus, the Temple, and the Dissolution of Heaven and Earth," in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, ed. Rowland and Barton, 116–141, and idem, *All the Glory of Adam*, 61–68.

<sup>142</sup> See Jer 4:23 and D. G. Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24–27*, JSOTS 61 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 20–47 on Isa 24:1–13.

<sup>143</sup> For this see Isa 24, perhaps Jer 4:23 and Isa 65:17–25. In Daniel 7 the disruption to the proper Temple worship is viewed as a manifestation of pre-creation chaos.

solicits a divine response, ecological restoration and the aversion of complete cosmic collapse.<sup>144</sup>

Given this sacramental understanding of Israel's Temple it is quite reasonable that the seer in *2 Baruch* should ask whether the Temple's destruction does not mean that "the universe will return to its original state and the world go back to its primeval silence" (3.7). The answer God gives is telling: the world will not be consigned to oblivion (4.1) because, although the city will be delivered up for a time, there is another city (and Temple) that is hidden with God in heaven (4.2–6, cf. 59.4). Eventually, after the destruction of the Second Temple, there will be a renewed, glorious and eternal Temple which will also mean the renewal of creation (32.4, 6).<sup>145</sup> The First and Second Temples were not illegitimate per se.<sup>146</sup> Whilst the seer seems to accept that total cosmic catastrophe will not follow the Temple's destruction he nevertheless believes it requires an appropriate response from the ecosystem and heavenly bodies: the earth and vine should withhold fruit, the heavens their waters;

And you, sun, withhold the brightness of your rays, and you, moon, conceal the brilliance of your light; for why should any light again be seen where the light of Zion is darkened? (10.11–12)

All of creation feels the pain of the Temple's fate.<sup>147</sup>

In view of the interconnection between cosmology and Temple it is not surprising that three of the clearest references in contemporary Jewish literature to a "Kingdom of God" have a cultic orientation (*The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Wis 10:10 and *2 En.* 1.3).<sup>148</sup>

<sup>144</sup> For this reading see Fletcher-Louis, "Dissolution of Heaven and Earth," 130–139.

<sup>145</sup> Hobbins, "Summing Up of History," 62: "Expectations about Zion and the cosmos co-inhere in *2 Baruch* because they co-inhere already in biblical revelation: the renewal of Zion will usher in the renewal of the cosmos."

<sup>146</sup> The angelic removal of the First Temple's cultic apparatus (ch. 6) affirms its sacramental power.

<sup>147</sup> Note also the eclipse at the death of the priest Matthias in Josephus, *Ant.* 17.167 and the sense of cosmic revulsion at the Temple's defilement in Josephus, *War* 5.562–566.

<sup>148</sup> *Sabbath Songs* = 4Q400–407; 11Q17 and Mas1k (on which see A.M. Schwemer, "Gott als König und seine Königsherrschaft in den Sabbatliedern aus Qumran," in *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt*, ed. M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, WUNT 55 [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991], 45–118, and Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 252–393). When Wis 10:10 says that Jacob was shown the "Kingdom of God" it has in mind his experience of the angels at Bethel, the gate of heaven (Gen 28). The *particularity* of the context and the similarity to the *Sabbath Songs* is missed by Crossan, *Mediterranean Peasant*, 290: Wis 10:10 is certainly not thinking of "the kingdom of Wisdom eternally present, available... to anyone who heeds her call."

Jewish apocalyptic literature cannot be understood apart from the peculiar cosmology of Israel's Temple theology and the religious experiences it offers. The same is true of the developed eschatology of late Second Temple Judaism, though that is a distinct and separate phenomenon to the one that creates texts which can be labelled apocalypses.



## ANTI-JUDAISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

The language of the New Testament has proven to be powerful in both positive and negative ways. Positively, it has generated and supported lives and communities transformed by the mind of Christ. Negatively, it has equally generated and supported hostile attitudes and oppressive actions with regard to women, homosexuals, and most of all, Jews. Christianity's long history of anti-Jewish behavior cannot be separated from the portrayal of Jews in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> And no discussion of the New Testament with respect to Judaism can be isolated from the ways in which the Christian canon can continue to foster attitudes and actions dangerous to Jews.<sup>2</sup> Any treatment of the subject must pay attention both to the complexity of the issues and to the enormity of the stakes in dealing with the issues precisely and honestly.

### 1. *The Nature of the Issues*

It is important from the first to distinguish three levels of concern, which might be called the historical, the exegetical, and the hermeneutical. The historical concerns the actual Jews of the first century as the New Testament compositions report on their attitudes and actions. The question here concerns the accuracy of the New Testament's report. Did Jews of the first century have the concerns the New

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<sup>1</sup> For a rapid survey, see S. Grayzel, *A History of the Jews*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 303–473, and T. M. Parker, *Christianity and the State in the Light of History* (London: A&C Black, 1955); for the roots of Christian anti-semitism, see J. G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3–34, and C. A. Evans and D. A. Hagner, eds., *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); for the period after the New Testament, see M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of Relations between Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire*, trans. H. McKeating (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. 135–236; for documentary evidence of the medieval period, see J. R. Marcus, *The Jews in the Medieval World: A Source-Book: 315–1791* (New York: 1969), 3–181.

<sup>2</sup> C. Klein, *Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology*, trans. E. Quinn (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978).

Testament claims? Can it be relied on as one of our earliest sources for formative Judaism? More critically, did Jews of the first century oppose Jesus, have a role in putting him to death, and persecute early Christians?

The exegetical issue concerns the meaning of the New Testament's statements with regard to Jews. Whether or not such statements are historically accurate (much less verifiable), what is their significance within the compositions of the nascent Christian movement? How should they be understood within the rhetoric of community formation in antiquity? At this level, the goal is not determining the facts of history but interpreting the meaning of literature.

The hermeneutical issue is concerned not so much with what happened, or with the language used to describe Jews, as with what contemporary readers—both Jews and Christians—are to think about such language and how to act in light of such language.<sup>3</sup> This issue is more complicated for Christians than for Jews. For Christians, the compositions of the New Testament are not simply artifacts from antiquity. They are Sacred Scripture, bearing with them a burden of authority and claims of inerrancy that contemporary readers are required to negotiate.

While there is an obvious connection between these levels of concern, it is of the first importance that they not be confused. The New Testament compositions might be mined for historical statements without any appreciation for their rhetoric, and the rhetoric might be studied without serious attention given to the historical facts. Even more important, even if one determined that the New Testament's statements concerning Jews were historically indefensible, such a determination would not by itself solve the hermeneutical issue, for that is connected, not to the facts, but to the language of the New Testament texts. Historical determinations, to be sure, can well have an effect on those engaged in the hermeneutical enterprise, urging them to assess their canonical texts in one way rather than another.

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<sup>3</sup> For consideration of the hermeneutical dimension generally, see L. T. Johnson, *Scripture and Discernment: Decision Making in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), and for the hermeneutical challenge posed by the language about Jews, see R. B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, and New Creation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 407–433.

## 2. *The Complexity of the Issues*

Before considering those aspects of the New Testament that can, in one fashion or another, be called “Anti-Jewish,” it is important to assert the overwhelmingly Jewish character of the New Testament compositions themselves. Whatever the New Testament has to say about “the Jews,” it does so not from a detached position, but from a place within the complex conversation that was first-century “Judaism.” The writers of these compositions proclaimed as “Messiah and Lord” a first-century Palestinian Jew, Jesus of Nazareth, who preached and worked wonders for a short period of time in Galilee and then in Judea, was crucified under the authority of the Roman Prefect Pontius Pilate, and then, according to his followers, was exalted to the “right hand” of God (Ps 110:1) as “life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45). To make their extraordinary claims convincing—not only to those Jews who found the crucifixion a “stumbling block” to recognizing Jesus as Messiah, and his proclamation as “Lord” offensive to monotheistic sensibilities, but also to themselves—the Christian writers engaged in a rereading and reinterpretation of Torah in light of their experience and conviction so systemic and pervasive that the New Testament can fairly be called a form of first-century Jewish literature.<sup>4</sup>

The “Jewish” character of the New Testament is not simply a matter of its compositions’ thoroughgoing engagement with scripture through citation, allusion, echo, and literary mimesis, or even that its major characters are identified as Jews both by birth and by commitment. It is also a matter of first-hand knowledge of Jews and their practices both in Palestine and in the Diaspora. Paul the Apostle is our earliest datable member of the Pharisaic party. The gospels (and Acts) remain, after Josephus, our most important source of knowledge of Jewish sects in the first century. The net effect of the astonishing archaeological discoveries of the last century, not least that at Qumran, is not the discrediting of the New Testament’s knowledge of first-century Jews, but instead the confirmation of many things that older generations of critical scholars had dismissed. Apart from the extraordinary claims made for Jesus and the earliest churches—and even these claims can be seen as less outrageous in light of the Qumran literature—the

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<sup>4</sup> See L. T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 1–151.

writings of the New Testament fit comfortably within the framework of Jewish life and literature of the first century.

A final preliminary comment is necessary if we are to properly assess the meaning of “Anti-Judaism” in the New Testament, namely the ambiguity of the term “Judaism” itself with reference to the period when the bulk of New Testament writings was written. I have already suggested that, whatever we mean by “Jewish,” the New Testament fits within it. But even the designation *Ioudaios* is polyvalent. It can designate a “Judean” in the narrow, geographical sense (as opposed, say, to a “Galilean”). But it can also—and at the same time—denote a “Jew” in the social/political/religious sense (as someone who claims the heritage of Abraham and is committed to the symbolic world of Torah).<sup>5</sup>

The term “Judaism,” in contrast, suggests a stable, clearly defined ethnic/social/religious reality that the writers of the New Testament could stand apart from (as in, “Christianity” did not equal “Judaism”), and stand over against (as in, “Christianity” was against “Judaism”). The difficulty of this way of speaking is that neither Christianity nor Judaism was such a well-defined entity in the first century. It was, rather, precisely the conflict and competition among rival Jewish claimants to the heritage of Israel through the first century, as well as the consequences of the catastrophic events associated with the Jewish war against Rome, that led to the eventual emergence of two discrete traditions claiming to represent the authentic Israel, that called Christianity—based on the experience of the crucified and raised Messiah Jesus—and that called (now non-anachronistically) Judaism—based on the observance of Torah according to the traditions of the Pharisees.

That point leads to the most complicating factor of all, namely the state of our sources. First, as sources for first-century Jewish life and practice, the New Testament compositions are contemporary to the writings of Philo and those produced by the sectarians at Qumran, but they predate by a small margin the writings of Josephus and some of the important apocalyptic writings (with the substantial exception of

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<sup>5</sup> The suggestion of a purely geographical meaning in the Fourth Gospel was suggested by M. Lowe, “Who Were the IOUDAOI?” *NovT* 18 (1976): 101–130, and is discussed by J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991); see also W. Gutbrod, “*Ioudaios*, etc.,” in *TDNT* 3:369–91.



*I Enoch*), and by a large margin the compositions out of which we can construct the earliest stages of the “formative Judaism” based on Pharisaic conviction and Scribal expertise. What makes this situation embarrassing for historical reconstruction is that the New Testament and the Jewish writings contemporary to it do not speak directly to the same realities, whereas Josephus and the rabbinic writings cover much the same material as the New Testament writings, but from the perspective of a period slightly or considerably later than that of the New Testament.

The consequences of this situation are real. The gospel portrayal of the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin is sometimes declared unhistorical, for example, on the basis of the legislation found in the Mishnah’s tractate *Sanhedrin*.<sup>6</sup> Despite the oral tradition lying behind the composition of the Mishnah in 200 by Rabbi Judah the Prince, however, the Mishnah cannot serve that function, for two reasons: first, legislation written in 200 CE cannot be assumed to be in force in 30 CE; second, written legislation expresses a legal ideal, and cannot be used to preclude actual human behavior.

The second aspect of dating that complicates the discussion of “Anti-Judaism and the New Testament” is that involving the composition and subsequent canonization of the New Testament writings themselves. Let us stipulate that Jesus interacted with other Jews within Palestine between 28–30, that early communities such as those described in the Acts of the Apostles interacted with Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora between ca. 30–ca. 60, that Paul and his communities had dealings with Jews in the Diaspora between ca. 45–64, and that after the Jewish War in 70, tensions among Messianist and non-Messianist Jews intensified considerably. No New Testament writing is composed from the period of Jesus. Only the letters of Paul, the Letter to the Hebrews, and the Letter of James can reasonably be dated between 45–64, and, as epistolary literature, can be read as reporting on contemporary experiences. Similarly, the letters found in chs. 1–3 of the Book of Revelation speak of contemporary situations in Asia Minor ca. 96. The material in these compositions would be more

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1961); E. Bammel, ed., *The Trial of Jesus* (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1970); G. Sloyan, *Jesus on Trial* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973). On the critical issue of Sanhedrin competence, see especially A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 24–47.

valuable, if we could be sure that in all cases they are actually speaking about Jews or Judaism, but in at least some of Paul's letters, the rhetoric concerns "Judaizers," or Gentile believers who seek to be circumcised and live as Torah-observant Jews.

The situation with the gospels is more complicated. Although oral tradition and the composition of written sources like the hypothetical Q establish a genuine material link between Jesus and the gospels, it is now universally acknowledged that the selection and shaping of those materials in the gospels (composed between 70–90) are profoundly affected by the on-going experiences of communities. With respect to what the gospels report concerning Jews, this means that the struggles of nascent Christian communities with "the Synagogue down the street" between 50–90 affect the selection and shaping of traditions concerning Jesus' interaction with Jews in 28–30.<sup>7</sup> Understanding this helps in the interpretation of the rhetoric concerning Jews in the gospels, for it emerges from a context of contemporary conflict and competition. But it makes historical determinations concerning the period of Jesus more difficult. Can the importance given to the Pharisees as leaders of the people and as opponents of Jesus be taken as reliable, or should it be modified in light of the fact that the story of Jesus is being told in the context (and light) of the church's conflict with the "Synagogue down the street"?

The consequences of canonization are even more profound and potentially distorting. By the time the informal collections of Christian writings began to become standard—by the late second century CE—the separation between "Christianity" and "Judaism" is definitive, as Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* makes clear. And by the fourth century, when official canonical lists ratified the collection that had become standard, Judaism was widely regarded by Christians as a religion of the past, superseded by the "New Covenant," whose claim to represent the true people of God was validated by the events of history (the conversion of the Gentiles, the destruction of the temple and the city). Christian "supersessionist" theology found its support in the compositions of the New Testament.<sup>8</sup> But now, those compositions were read,

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<sup>7</sup> This is especially the case with the Gospel of Matthew: see Johnson, *Writings of the New Testament*, 187–211, and J. A. Overmann, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel according to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Classic early expressions of supersessionist theology are found in Origen's *Against Celsus* and Tertullian's *Against the Jews*.

not as documentation of a struggle between rival claimants to Israel's heritage, but as the inspired and inerrant word of God. Now, for the first time, the New Testament's statements about Jews were taken as proclamations on "Judaism" as a religion, and were taken as divinely-sanctioned truth. More than that, the narrative roles and attitudes ascribed to Jews by the gospels were thenceforth taken as historically true.

Because such ways of reading the New Testament supported the hostile and often enough murderous behavior of Christians toward Jews over the centuries, it is natural, particularly after the horrific events of the Holocaust, that Christian scholars and theologians in particular, moved by moral revulsion at such results, should seek to correct the causes.<sup>9</sup> Some suggest the deconstruction of the canon and the consequent demotion of the New Testament from Sacred Scripture to classic texts.<sup>10</sup> Some advocate the abandonment of "Christology," since making claims about Jesus as Messiah and Lord are inevitably anti-Jewish.<sup>11</sup> Some recommend censorship, either through altering translations so that they appear less anti-Jewish, or through refusing authority to any text that seems to be anti-Jewish in character.<sup>12</sup> Such censorship, in fact, is practiced by many Christian churches through such translations and through the shaping of lectionaries used for liturgical proclamation of scripture. Still other scholars seek a remedy through historical correction of textual misattribution: texts that sound anti-Jewish are not directed to real Jews but to Gentile Judaizers;<sup>13</sup> Jesus was not opposed by good Pharisees from the School of Hillel, but by bad Pharisees from the School of Shammai;<sup>14</sup> no Jews were involved in the death of Jesus, but only Romans.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the collection of essays in T. Linafelt, ed., *A Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> For example, A. R. Eckhardt, *Jews and Christians: The Contemporary Meeting* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> For example, R. R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), esp. 246–251.

<sup>12</sup> See N. A. Beck, *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament* (London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> Gager, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism*, esp. 112–117.

<sup>14</sup> H. Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), esp. 148–161. The lack of human frailty among Jewish leaders is the theme of a number of statements collected by S. Van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 25–26.

<sup>15</sup> See G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress,

While such expedients are understandable, none of them adequately addresses the full complexity of the issues, above all because they do not deal sufficiently with the literary and rhetorical character of the New Testament compositions themselves. The present essay, therefore, does not offer a solution, but instead proposes a way of thinking through the complex tangle presented by the innocent-sounding title, "Anti-Judaism and the New Testament." I propose to approach the subject in three stages, considering first the question of historical and narrative roles ascribed to Jews; second, the rhetoric of vilification applied to Jews; and third, statements in the New Testament concerning the law or first covenant that could be taken as supporting supersessionism.

### 3. *Historical and Narrative Roles*

The distinction between the possible historical role Jews may have played with respect to Jesus and the early Christian movement, and the narrative depiction of that activity is a critical one, for the power of narrative goes considerably beyond the possible importance of the historical fact.

According to the gospels and Acts, some Jews (especially Pharisees and Scribes) opposed Jesus during his ministry, the Jewish leadership of Jerusalem was implicated in Jesus' execution, the Jewish leadership actively persecuted the first Christian community in Jerusalem and later sought Paul's death, and, according to Acts and Paul's letters, Jews of the Diaspora persecuted Paul. The impression given by these narratives that dominate the New Testament canon is that Jewish opposition to Jesus and his followers was total, consistent, and violent. Christians traditionally have taken these accounts as fully historical. To what extent do they have a historical basis, and to what extent do they represent an exaggeration?

Although it is certain that the final and formal responsibility for Jesus' execution by crucifixion lies with the Roman Prefect, a strong historical case can be made for the involvement of some Jewish leaders

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1983), and J. D. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995).

in the death of Jesus.<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that the narrative accounts concerning that involvement are in every respect accurate—there is no reason, for example, to claim a formal hearing before the Sanhedrin, when a “night court” session would have served as well—but only to say that there is high probability that elements of the Sanhedrin were involved in Jesus’ arrest and handing over to Pilate. The basis for regarding some such participation as basically historical is not simply the four canonical gospels, but three other converging lines of explicit evidence.

The first support is Paul’s statement in 1 Thess 2:13–16. He tells the Thessalonians, “you suffered the same things from your countrymen that they [the churches in Judea] did from the Jews (*Ioudaioi*), who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out...” While some scholars regard this passage as an interpolation,<sup>17</sup> the arguments are not convincing. Even if not from Paul, furthermore, the statement is surely very early evidence for a view of Jesus’ death outside the gospel narratives. The second bit of evidence is Josephus’s statement in *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.64, which, stripped of its obvious Christian interpolations, provides a brief sketch of Jesus that includes these words, “And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross...”<sup>18</sup> The final statement is the strange passage in the *Babylonian Talmud*, Tractate *Sanhedrin* 43a, which states that Jesus was “hanged” on Passover after a (more than fair) Jewish trial determining that he should be stoned for “leading the people astray” into apostasy, and for “sorcery.”<sup>19</sup> These accounts differ dramatically in detail, to be sure, but precisely such differences (like those in the gospels themselves) tend to support the fact on which they converge.

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<sup>16</sup> In the recent debate on this point, I find more plausible the position held by R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narrative of the Four Gospels*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1998), than that held by Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*

<sup>17</sup> See B. A. Pearson, “1 Thess 2:13–16: A Deutero-Pauline Interpolation,” *HTR* 64 (1971): 79–94; D. Schmidt, “1 Thess 2:13–16: Linguistic Evidence for an Interpolation,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 269–279.

<sup>18</sup> For the argument concerning the basic trustworthiness of the expurgated version, see J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), 1:56–88.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the passage, see F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 55–57.

The persecution of early Christian communities reported in Acts, in turn, is supported by Paul's statements about his own past activity (Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6; 1 Cor 15:8; 1 Tim 1:12–13), his report of his own series of whippings and stoning “at the hands of the Jews (*Ioudaioi*)” (2 Cor 11:23–27), and his suggestion that he is “still being persecuted” for allowing Gentiles admittance without circumcision, and that those who advocate circumcision are seeking to avoid persecution for the cross of Christ (Gal 5:11; 6:12).<sup>20</sup>

Josephus shows how the Jewish leadership could be involved in violence toward a prophet in Jerusalem (*War* 6.300–309), and he provides a vivid account of a delegation of Pharisees associated with the Sanhedrin sent to Galilee to arrest or kill Josephus there (*Life* 107–203). That Jews of first-century Palestine and Diaspora were in fact often fanatical and violent is clear, if even a portion of what Josephus reports in *The Jewish War* is accurate (see 1.89; 1.150; 1.571; 2.8–13; 2.42; 2.65; 2.169–70; 2.223; 2.229–230; 2.264–265; 2.408–409; 2.417; 2.466; 4.135; 4.197–207; 4.310–318; 4.378; 4.509; 7.367; 7.409; 7.437–441). Such violence and persecution is reported as well by the sectarians at Qumran (see 1QpHab VIII–XII).

For the New Testament to report the involvement of some Jews in the death of Jesus or the persecution of the earliest church does not by itself constitute “Anti-Judaism.” Nor is it a form of Anti-Judaism for present-day scholars to regard these statements as part of the historical record. Indeed, to suppress such facts is itself a form of disservice to historical truth. Even when that is said, however, it also remains true that determining the specific ways in which Jews were so involved remains an extraordinarily difficult aspect of studying the historical Jesus as well as nascent Christianity.

In the gospels and Acts, however, these historical realities are expressed through realistic narratives, and it is in the narrative role assigned the Jews that we begin to approach what might be called “Anti-Judaism”—bearing in mind the cautions concerning the use of the term mentioned above.

Realistic (“history-like”) narratives are authorial constructions that contain both fact and fiction. The story may be based on a historical fact. But in order to construct narrative, fictional techniques are

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<sup>20</sup> Despite his many minimizing qualifications, D. R. A. Hare acknowledges the *fact* of such persecution, in *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, SNTSMS 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 19–79.

required. Authors choose which materials to include, and how they are put together. Most of all, authors supply transitions, authorial commentary, and the motives behind actions. In a word, the author is in charge of plot, but to an even greater extent—because it is less publicly known and therefore more malleable—characterization. With regard to the portrayal of the Jews in the gospels and Acts, the narrative role they are assigned, and the characterization they are given, inevitably moved far beyond what could reasonably be called “historical.” Precisely the many small differences among the gospel accounts help us recognize the degree of creativity they employed in their portrayals.

In terms of narrative role, we see that the highly probable involvement of some Jewish leaders in Jesus’ arrest and death becomes, in the gospel story, a consistent and united Jewish opposition to Jesus from the beginning—in Matthew, extending all the way back to Jesus’ birth (Matt 2:1–12)—and culminating in a formal trial before the Sanhedrin. It is certainly possible that some Scribes (in Luke, “Lawyers”) and Pharisees debated with Jesus during his ministry.<sup>21</sup> But their unified and consistent presence in the gospel narratives surely owes much to the experience of the evangelists and the “Synagogue down the street,” especially since the matters debated by Jesus and the Pharisees so much correspond to the sort of issues dividing church and synagogue in the period before the final separation. And it is surely authorial creativity that has these Jewish leaders plot to kill him from the start of his ministry (Mark 3:6)!

The tendency to standardize “Jewish Opposition” reaches its fullest expression in the Fourth Gospel. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus confronts various groups (Herodians, Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees), whose specific objections to him correspond to what we know historically about the sects (see Mark 12:13–37). These groups, in turn, tend to disappear in the passion account, replaced by the members of the Sanhedrin (chief priests, elders, and Scribes). In John’s Gospel, the differentiation between Jewish groups is minimal: mostly there are “the Jews,” who, together with Pilate, serve to represent within the narrative the unbelieving world that prefers the darkness to the light

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<sup>21</sup> It even becomes probable, if Jesus’ did in fact associate with “tax-collectors and sinners” (see Luke 15:1–2), and challenged the very probable Pharisaic preoccupation—before the destruction of the Temple—with purity in fellowship (see J. Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973], and A. J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988]).

offered through the coming of God's son (John 9:18–22; 12:35–50). It is perhaps worth noting that Matthew and Luke each use the term *Ioudaios* five times, and Mark uses it six times. But in John, *Ioudaios* occurs some seventy-one times. In the same way, when Luke's narrative turns to the story of the early church, the use of *Ioudaios* accelerates, and reaches a total of some seventy-nine occurrences (contrast the twenty-six uses in all of Paul's letters). Such word-choice represents a form of identity-construction.

It is similarly an authorial decision on the part of Matthew to have all the people cry out in response to Pilate's protestation of innocence, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt 27:25). And when John attributes the Jewish Council's decision to put Jesus to death to the fear of Rome's coming to destroy the holy place and nation (John 11:48), or when Luke attributes the persecution of the apostles to jealousy (*zelos*) on the part of Jews (Acts 5:17; 13:45; 17:5), we are far from sober historiography and into straightforward, if negative, character-construction.

The power of narrative is such that Christians through the ages who have found the positive character of Jesus disclosed through the gospels and have accepted that characterization as true, have also accepted as true the construction of the character of those who have been portrayed as a unified and consistent opposition to Jesus and his message. And if Jesus represents all that is good, it follows that those who oppose him must also represent the rejection of all that is good. When such perceptions are embedded in narratives that are regarded as inspired and infallible—without any critical engagement with those convictions—the conclusion can all too easily be drawn that the character of ancient Jews, thus portrayed, applies also to present-day Jews. The topic of characterization within New Testament narratives brings us to the wider issue of the negative language employed about Jews throughout the New Testament.

#### 4. *Anti-Jewish Slander and Ancient Rhetoric*

The New Testament contains a considerable amount of slander directed against Jewish opponents, sometimes in the mouth of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> A classic

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<sup>22</sup> A fuller treatment of this topic can be found in L. T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *JBL* 108 (1989): 419–441.



example is Matt 23:1–39. Jesus attacks scribes and Pharisees, calling them hypocrites (23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29), blind guides (23:16), white-washed tombs (23:27), serpents and brood of vipers (23:33), and children of hell (23:15). They are denounced as vainglorious (23:5–7), posturing in public (23:27–28), preoccupied with trivia rather than real religion (23:23–24), concerned for outer not inner righteousness (23:25–26), and as the murderers of the prophets and of Jesus' own emissaries (23:32–36). In addition to a passage parallel to Matthew's, addressed to lawyers and Pharisees (Luke 11:37–52), Luke adds that the Pharisees had "rejected God's plan for them" (7:30), and in an apparently gratuitous aside, calls the Pharisees "lovers of money" (16:14).

John's Gospel contains a number of passages containing such characterizations. In dispute with those called simply "the Jews," for example, Jesus says, "You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth... He who is of God hears the words of God; the reason you do not hear them is that you are not of God" (John 8:44–47). John offers this explanation for Jesus' rejection: "...many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42–43). The Book of Revelation—also from Johannine Christianity—contributes this statement, placed in the mouth of the risen Jesus: "Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, those who say they are Jews, but are not and lie—behold I will make them come and bow before your feet and learn that I have loved you" (Rev 3:9).

Paul, despite the positive things he says about his "kinsmen by race" (see Rom 2:17–20; 3:1–2; 9:1–5; 11:28), can refer to those who read Moses without reference to Christ, this way: "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God" (2 Cor 4:3). In Romans, he says that a part of Israel (that has not converted to faith in Jesus) is, "as regards the gospel, the enemies of God, for your sake" (Rom 11:28). In the same letter, he says of Jews who know but do not keep the law, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom 3:24). In Philippians, Paul refers to "the dogs, the evil-doers, who mutilate the flesh," and later to "the enemies of the cross of Christ, their end is destruction,

their god is the belly, they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (Phil 3:1–2, 18–19). Concerning the Jews who killed Jesus and the prophets and drove him out, Paul tells the Thessalonians, they “displease God and oppose all men by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they might be saved—so as always to fill up the measure of their sin. But God’s wrath has come upon them at last” (1 Thess 2:15–16). Finally, the Letter of Titus refers to those “from the circumcision party” as teaching “for base gain what they have no right to teach,” as “giving heed to Jewish myths or commands of men who reject the truth,” and says: “to the corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their deeds. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good deed” (Tit 1:11–16).

Here we have “characterization” on a large scale, even apart from the playing of narrative roles. Since the power of such language to shape hostile and destructive attitudes and actions toward Jews is well documented, it is all the more important that we understand the origins and function of such language, in order better to assess how to think about it in contemporary circumstances. In the following section I will first sketch the historical and social context that generated such language. Then, I will place the polemical language of the New Testament against Jews (and, we remember, Judaizers) in the context of the conventional rhetoric of slander in the Hellenistic world. The question is, why did Messianists utter such slander, and how would their slander be heard back then?

#### 4.1 *Historical Circumstances*

We must start by deconstructing the image of an imperially privileged, powerful, and Jew-persecuting Christianity of the fourth and subsequent centuries, and transport ourselves imaginatively to the years 35–100 of the Common Era. In that period, Judaism had every advantage in terms of age, presence, and authority, especially in comparison to a fledgling messianic sect. There were some seven million Jews in the empire, and only thousands of Messianists. In an age that honored antiquity, Jews traced a history of two thousand years, while the Christ cult was born yesterday. Jews had interacted with and influenced Hellenistic culture for hundreds of years; Christians would not even be noticed by a Roman writer until the early second century. Before its destruction, the Temple in Jerusalem was a wonder of the world; so

were synagogues like that at Sardis. Messianists met in houses and lecture halls. If archaeological evidence alone counted, Christianity did not exist until the late second century.<sup>23</sup>

The first thing we might anticipate in New Testament rhetoric, therefore, would be a compensatory leap across this very real gap in power and prestige. Abuse tends to increase in power when it is powerless. A second predictable and unexceptional feature of the New Testament's rhetoric is its defensive quality, since the symbols of Torah so much more obviously belonged to and so much more evidently were in the control of the dominant group, rather than to the messianist upstarts. We might expect the New Testament's rhetoric also to reflect the hostility of the persecuted toward those who seek them harm; "affliction and persecution" entered early into the Christian psyche and remained there powerfully.

But even to make such "Judaism vs. Christianity" comparisons—however useful they are for adjusting our perspective and avoiding anachronism—is itself distorting and anachronistic, for in the period when the New Testament compositions were written there was not yet a stable "Christianity" nor for that matter a stable "Judaism."

#### 4.2 *A Diverse Messianic Movement*

The messianic sect was diverse from the beginning.<sup>24</sup> Jews from all over the Diaspora were converted on Pentecost (Acts 2:1–41), and groups called "Hellenists" and "Hebrews" quickly emerged and fell into dispute (Acts 6:1–3). The sect's rapid spread across the empire was a stunning success story, but the consequences of such rapid expansion, without strong internal or external controls, was that Christianity was a new invention wherever it appeared. The few attempts at structural or ideological control were not notably successful (see

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<sup>23</sup> On the social status of first-generation Christians, see the standard treatment by W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983). If the revisionist view of J. J. Meggitt is accepted, the social status must be lowered even further; see *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> "It is now as much a dogma of scholarship as its opposite used to be: orthodoxy is not the presupposition of the church but the result of growth and development," G. W. MacRae, "Why the Church Rejected Gnosticism," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, 1: The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*, ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 127.

Acts 15:6–29). There was no long period of stability during which self-definition could be consolidated, and for the first fifty years, there was no one realization that could be called “Christianity” as a standard by which to measure deviance. There was, rather, a loose network of assemblies on the fringe of synagogues and in lecture halls and households, whose boundaries of self-definition were vigorously debated.

The first concern of such communities was survival. Only energy left over from upkeep and maintenance could go into the reinterpretation of symbols shared with others calling themselves Jews. Rejection of the messianic claim from within the synagogue was an important stimulus for such reinterpretation of Torah. By the time the first Christian writings appear, however, even that stage is already passed. Only the residue of such apologetic remains, in the literary forms of testimonia and messianic midrash. A larger concern for such communities was the threat to stability caused by disagreements and disputes from within, disputes concerning eschatology, diet, sex, authority, status, work, and the use of possessions. Were they to be, for example, an egalitarian assembly? Or, were they to be like other cults, many-tiered, with multiple initiations and stages of perfection? Elitists such as “the strong” in Corinth, the ascetical mystics of Colossae, the legalists at Ephesus, and the Judaizers in Galatia and Crete, advanced such perfectionistic options, and threatened to split communities.

In response to these pressures, the greatest amount of New Testament polemic is turned inward against fellow members of the movement.<sup>25</sup> Outsiders are addressed only indirectly. Paul’s polemic in Galatians, for example, does not concern Judaism as such, but the specific claims of Gentile Messianists who seek to impose circumcision and Torah-observance on other Gentile believers. In plain fact, no New Testament writer was in a position to adjudicate “Judaism” as such. The main reason is that “Judaism as such” did not yet exist, but a second reason is that “Christianity as such” did not yet exist, either.

#### 4.3 *Diversity among First-Century Jews*

The myth of normative Judaism is even harder to deconstruct.<sup>26</sup> Despite the overwhelming evidence that first-century Jews were diverse and

<sup>25</sup> So, correctly, Gager, *Origins of Anti-Semitism*, 112–117.

<sup>26</sup> The standard scholarly construction of “normative Judaism” is G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken,

even deeply divided, there remains a tendency to accept as historical the founding myth of the Pharisaic tradition—the myth that says things were before the fall of the Temple as they were after, that the formation of Mishnah and Talmud made nothing fundamentally new but only consolidated what had been there all along.<sup>27</sup>

In such a mythic understanding, the some five million Jews of the Diaspora were not quite “really Jewish,” although they outnumbered Jews in Palestine by two to one; the Essenes were a “deviant sect” and the Messianists were “not Jewish”—even though each of these groups claimed allegiance to the symbols of Torah. But such judgments defy the best historical evidence, which makes clear that the question, “Who is a real Jew?” was an open one, fiercely and even violently disputed by rival claimants throughout the first century. Even if Judaism is defined as an adherence to the symbols of Temple and Torah, the extant literature from the period shows that these symbols in particular were a matter of debate: Which Torah? Consisting in which books? In which language? Interpreted from what standpoint? Which Temple, and run by which priesthood?

A properly historical perspective recognizes that Jews in Alexandria were no less Jews because they used allegory rather than Midrash, nor that those who called themselves “the keepers” and observed Torah and awaited a prophet like Moses, were no less part of Jewish tradition because they worshipped in a rival temple at Mount Gerizim—and were not considered to be Jews by their Judean rivals. Similarly, the Essenes were no less Jews because they challenged the priesthood in Jerusalem and declared themselves to represent a “new covenant.” In such perspective, the Christian claims about the way to read Torah and the proper understanding of God’s Temple represent only one more voice in an already contentious conversation.<sup>28</sup>

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1927). He states, “Much of what we otherwise know only in the rabbinic sources of the first and second centuries after our era was custom and law in the preceding centuries” (1:71).

<sup>27</sup> Even so sophisticated a scholar as G. Vermes, who is capable of refined methodological statements, can in practice operate according to the narrowed norm in *Jesus and the World of Judaism*, 74–77.

<sup>28</sup> For a survey of the practices and beliefs of all the Palestinian groups, including the “people of the land,” see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992). For some of the complexity involving Jewish self-definition in the first and second centuries, see the essays in E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten, and A. Mendelson, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, 2: Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

Some of our best evidence for diversity and debate among Jews of the first century is found in the New Testament itself. The gospels and Acts sort out Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Samaritans, together with some notion of the disputations and mutual recriminations.<sup>29</sup> A still more diverse mixture is found in the earliest Christian letters, written decades before the war with Rome. Did Colossian ascetics get their inspiration from Essenes, or *Merkabah* mystics?<sup>30</sup> Were Paul's rivals in Corinth connected to a Hellenistic Jewish mission?<sup>31</sup> Were those influencing the Gentile "Judaizers" in Galatia Pharisees, and were they the same as those "from the circumcision party" in Crete?<sup>32</sup> Was the intended audience for "The Letter to the Hebrews" made up of Gentiles with only a literary interest in Torah, or Alexandrian Jews, or ex-priests, or former members of the Qumran sect, or Diaspora Jews on pilgrimage in Jerusalem?<sup>33</sup> We do not, and perhaps cannot, know the answers to these questions. But how odd it would be, if all the Jews encountered by the first Christians were not "real Jews" by the mythic reckoning. But they were real Jews, with all the complex coloration of genuine historical persons, rather than the monochromatic consistency of myth. And in addition there were those Jews whose opinions never reached literary expression, but nevertheless shared in a variety of ways in the complex cultural mix.<sup>34</sup>

In short, when the New Testament writings were composed, neither Christianity nor Judaism had reached the point of uniformity and separation that would characterize them in subsequent centuries. The Messianists were part of a much larger debate within Judaism, a debate

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<sup>29</sup> Passages such as Mark 7:1–23, in fact, are essential for discerning a line of continuity within the Pharisaic tradition, since it shows the same concerns shown in *m. Demai* 2:3; see J. Neusner, "The Fellowship (*chaburah*) in the Second Jewish Commonwealth," *HTR* 53 (1960): 125–142.

<sup>30</sup> See the essays in W. A. Meeks and F. O. Francis, eds., *Conflict at Colossae*, SBS 4, rev. ed. (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975).

<sup>31</sup> As in D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians: A Study of Religious Propaganda in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> See B. H. Brinsmead, *Galatians—Dialogical Response to Opponents*, SBLDS 65 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> See C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2 vols., EB (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1952), and G. W. Buchanan, *To The Hebrews*, AB 36 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972), 255–267.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, R. A. Horsley (with J. S. Hanson), *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Religious Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985).

with many parties, concerning the right way to read Torah, the text that shaped this people.

With respect to the quest for the historical Jesus, this diversity within first-century Judaism is a fundamental problem in trying to “place” Jesus within first-century Palestine, and it must be said that researchers tend to give notional assent to the diversity while in practice isolating one strand that can be made sufficiently stable to enable something to be said about “Jesus the Jew.”<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.4 *The Social Setting of Rival Schools*

The polemic of the New Testament becomes more intelligible if it is placed in the social context in which such slander was at home, and if the conventions of such slander are understood. The slander in the New Testament is typical of that found among rival claimants to a philosophical tradition, and it is found as widely among Jews as among other Hellenists. The way the New Testament talks about Jews is the way all opponents talked about each other in antiquity. The language appears more shocking to contemporary readers precisely because they do not understand the context or the conventions.

The basic adjustment here is to think of first-century Judaism as a philosophy. But this is, in fact, the way it was perceived, both by outsiders and Jews themselves. Josephus describes the sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as philosophies not only because *he* was hellenized, but because *they* were (*War* 2.119–66; *Ant.* 18.11–25). According to Artapanus (*Frag.* 3.4) and Eupolemus (*Frag.* 1), Judaism was the oldest and best philosophy. Philo’s entire literary production

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<sup>35</sup> A classic example is found in the work of N. T. Wright. In *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), he carefully nodded toward diversity within Judaism, but quickly reduced his focus to Palestine and the prophetic/Pharisaic stream; then in *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), he develops his portrait of Jesus completely against this static—and deeply non-historical—Jewish backdrop. See L. T. Johnson, “A Historiographical Response to Wright’s Jesus,” in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. C. C. Newman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 206–224, 315–316. The same tendency is found in a milder form in E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) and in a more acute form in G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973) and M. Borg, *Jesus a New Vision: Spirit, Culture and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987). It is less present in J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), and is missing entirely in Meier’s *A Marginal Jew*.

was based on the same premise. The social arrangements of teachers and students, the activities of reading and interpreting and memorizing, the patterns of fellowship, are all uniform across the Hellenistic world. When we speak of the House of Hillel, then, we speak of a philosophical party. When we speak of the School of Saint Matthew, or the Pauline School, we mean, or ought to mean, the same thing.

The nature of philosophy in the Hellenistic period perfectly matched the character of Judaism. Philosophy had become less a matter of metaphysics than of morals. One converted to the philosophical life by leaving vice and seeking virtue. Philosophy was a way of life embraced by many with religious fervor; salvation was at stake. But while the general character and goals of philosophy were universally acknowledged, the best way to realize that character and reach those goals was a matter of fierce disputation.<sup>36</sup> The ancient schools of the classical period continued to win adherents and debate their respective doctrines and practices. And since philosophers appeared in a variety of social roles (court advisors, school masters, wandering preachers), both theory and life-style were matters of frequent debate. School teachers tended to see street preachers as charlatans, while Cynics saw school-teachers as armchair critics. Over the centuries, a stereotyped polemic developed in which such disputes found conventional expression. This is the context, and these are the conventions, that best explain the language about Jews in the New Testament.

#### 4.5 *The Rhetoric of Vilification*

In the space available, only a taste of the actual rhetoric can be provided. We can begin with the rivalry between public speakers. Dio of Prusa had been a rhetorician before his conversion to philosophy (*Oration* 13), but castigates his former colleagues as “ignorant, boastful, self-deceived” (*Or.* 4.33)...“evil-spirited” (4.38)...“liars and deceivers” (12.12). They preach for the sake of gain and glory and only their own benefit (32.30), are flatterers, charlatans, and sophists (23.11), boastful and shameless (55.7), and demagogues (77/78. 27). He can say all these things even though he admits that some rhetoricians act for good (35.9–10). His polemic has to do not with specific actions but with

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<sup>36</sup> A classic, and highly readable, treatment of philosophy in its various social contexts is S. Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (1907; reprint, New York: Meridian, 1956), 289–440.



typical ones. Any teacher of whom you disapprove can be a sophist or charlatan. Rhetoricians were more than able to answer. In the second of his *Platonic Discourses*, for example, Aelius Aristides defends the public-spiritedness of sophists, attacking in turn those calling themselves philosophers: “they despise others while being themselves worthy of scorn. They criticize others without examining themselves. They make a great show of virtue and never practice it” (307.6). He says they have the outward form of virtue but are inwardly corrupt (307.10), they are only after pleasure and wealth (307.15). Like Dio, he issues a disclaimer: he is not against philosophy, only those who abuse it (310.8).

The disputes between philosophical schools concerning the merits of their respective doctrines often descended to attacks on character. Plutarch, priest of Apollo at Delphi, was the most urbane and learned of ancient philosophers, wide in his sympathies. Although he considers Jews to exemplify superstition, for example (*Superstition* 8), he shows only mild curiosity about their customs and shows no real hostility toward them (*Table-Talk* 4.4–6.2). What this shows is simply that Jews did not matter to him. When it came to rival schools that he took seriously, the tolerant Plutarch could turn ugly. Colotes, a disciple of Epicurus, had high-handedly attacked some of Plutarch’s philosophical heroes, calling them “buffoons, charlatans, assassins, prostitutes, nincompoops” (*Reply to Colotes*, *Mor.* 1086E). In his angry retort, Plutarch repeats the gossip that Epicureans had prostitutes in their community (*Mor.* 1129B), and the standard charge that the essence of Epicureanism is its “lack of friends, absence of activity, irreligion, and indifference” (*Mor.* 1100C). They are “sophists and charlatans” (*Mor.* 1124C). We find such language everywhere. Epictetus declares to Epicureans, “your doctrines are bad, subversive of the state, destructive of the family, not fit even for women” (*Discourse* 3.7.21).

Such charges became standard, so that certain things were said about all opponents. Their teaching was self-contradictory, or trivial, or led to bad morals. Their behavior could be criticized in two different ways. Either they preached but did not practice (showing they were hypocrites), or they lived as they taught, and their manner of life showed the falsity of their doctrines (like the Epicureans). Certain vices were indiscriminately applied to opponents on every side: they were all lovers of pleasure, lovers of money, lovers of glory.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For love of pleasure (*philedonia*), see Epictetus, *Discourse* 1.9.19–21; 2.4.1–11; Lucian, *Timon* 84; for the love of money (*philargyria*), see Philostratus, *Life of*

The purpose of such polemic is not so much the effective rebuttal of opponents as their discrediting in the eyes of one's own party. Polemic was primarily for internal consumption. This makes more intelligible the secondary, literary use of such polemic within protreptic discourses that encouraged someone to follow a certain philosophy. In these discourses, polemic is used to provide a negative counter-image to the positive ideal of the true philosopher (as in Lucian, *Demonax*; Dio, *Oration 77/78*). This is the way Paul uses such polemic in Philippians 2–3 and 2 Timothy 2–3.<sup>38</sup>

And the same protreptic purpose is clear in Matthew 23, the classic text containing abuse against Jewish teachers. Its literary and rhetorical function is turned inward to Matthew's messianic readers.<sup>39</sup> Matthew's attack on Scribes and Pharisees is an attack on rival *teachers*, and serves to frame the positive instructions of messianic disciples (*mathetai* = students) in 23:8–11. They are to be the "Scribes of the kingdom" (Matt 13:51; 23:34) in the "School of Saint Matthew," who do not call their teacher "Rabbi" but have as their one instructor (*kathēgetes*) the Messiah (23:10). Familiarity with the debates among Hellenistic philosophers makes instantly recognizable the reference to the "chair of Moses" (23:2) occupied by these rival Jewish teachers, who "preach but do not practice" (23:3), who love the place of honor at feasts (23:6), and who are "hypocrites" (23:13), outwardly righteous but inwardly full of iniquity (23:28).

#### 4.6 *Jewish Rhetoric of Vilification*

Since Judaism considered itself to be and was perceived as a philosophy, it is not surprising to find the same polemical conventions in Jewish literature, most obviously in Hellenistic Jewish writings. Josephus responds to the scurrilous attacks of Apion, for example, by using such standard slander. Apion has "the mind of an ass and the impu-

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*Apollonius* 1.34; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.9; 35.1; for love of glory (*philodoxia*), see Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 32.10–11; Lucian, *Peregrinus* 20, 42.

<sup>38</sup> On 2 Timothy, see L. T. Johnson, "II Timothy and the Polemic against False Teachers: A Re-Examination," *JRS* 6/7 (1978–79): 1–26.

<sup>39</sup> See S. Freyne, "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, Scholars Press Studies in the Humanities (Chico, CA: Scholars Press), 117–143.

dence of a dog, which his countrymen are wont to worship" (*Apion* 2.86), he is a liar (2.12; 2.86), engages in "malicious slander" (2.89), and has a "mendacious character" (2.12). He is a low charlatan (2.3; 2.136), ignorant (2.26), a fool (2.37), and stupid (2.142). His mind is "blinded" (1.142). He and his fellow attackers of Jews are "reprobate sophists and deceivers of youth," and "crazy fools" (2.236; 2.254). Philo also can use such language about Gentile opponents. He calls Alexandrians "promiscuous and unstable rabble" (*Lejat.* 18.120), "more brutal and savage than fierce wild beasts" (19.131), they are "adepts at flattery and imposture and hypocrisy" (25.162), a "seed bed of evil" (26.166).

Jews in Alexandria also knew how to strike first. Philo disparages the idol worship of the Egyptians, calling it incurable folly, and those who practice it, blind (*Contempl.* 1.8–9; 2.10). And the Wisdom of Solomon provides a virtual catalogue of slander against pagan Egyptians in its attack on "those who do not know God" because they are "foolish by nature" (Wis 13:1): they "live in great strife due to ignorance...they kill children in their initiations...they no longer keep themselves or their marriages pure, but they either treacherously kill each other or grieve one another by adultery...theft and deceit, corruption, faithlessness, tumult, perjury...sex perversion, disorder in marriage, adultery and debauchery...their worshipers either rave in exaltation, or prophesy lies, or readily commit perjury" (Wis 14:22–28). Both Jewish and Christians are so inured to such "attacks on idolatry" that they do not hear the inflammatory character of such language directed to one's neighbors. In the Diaspora, the language was rough both ways, and thoroughly within the conventions of Hellenistic slander.

We must also ask how Jews spoke about each other when they disagreed. Josephus again gives us the fullest evidence. He castigates Justus of Tiberius as "a charlatan and a demagogue and a deceiver" (*Life* 9). His most sustained attacks are against the Zealots and Sicarii, whom he blames for the war with Rome and the profanation of the Temple: "What have you done that is blessed by the lawgiver, what deed that he has cursed have you left undone...in rapine and murder you vie with one another...the Temple has become the sink of all, and native hands have polluted those divine precincts" (*War* 5.400–402). The Sicarii are "imposters and brigands" (2.264), "slaves, the dregs of society, and the bastard scum of the nation" (5.433–444).

They are more wicked than Sodom (5.566), for their “cruelty... avarice... atrocities,” and their “lying... oppression... evil” (7.255–258). Among them were “charlatans and false prophets” (6.288). Josephus says that the Zealots have profaned the Temple so that it is no longer God’s dwelling place (5.419), so that the destruction of the Temple is a punishment from God (6.110), a vengeance from heaven for the guilt of the Zealots (2.455).

When we turn to Jews in Palestine, we encounter the familiar problem of sources. Apart from some apocalyptic writings, the Qumran Scrolls, and the New Testament itself, direct evidence from the first century is fragmentary, especially for the Pharisaic movement. The pieces that remain, however, are sufficient to suggest the same sort of many-voiced and contentious polemic we have seen in the Hellenistic Jewish writings, particularly when placed in the context of Josephus’s vivid portrayal of divided and fratricidal population. We have hints of Judean polemic against Samaritans (Josephus, *War* 3.308; Sir 50:28; John 4:9; 8:48; *m. Ned.* 3:10; *m. Qidd.* 4:3; *m. Git.* 1:5; *m. Nid.* 7:4, 4:1–2; *m. Ber.* 8:8; *m. Demai* 3:4, 5:9; *m. Seb.* 8:10). There are a few passages regarding *am-ha-aretz* that suggest a history of polemic now turned to protreptic use (see *m. Hor.* 3:9; *Abot R. Nat.* 2:6; 5:10). And there is the (often quite bitter) Jewish polemic from the side of “the pious” against those called “sinners” or “unrighteous” found in texts such as 4 *Ezra* 7.17–25; 1 *En.* 12.5; 15.9–10; 94.6–11; 95.4–7; 96.4–8; 104.7–13; and *Pss Sol.* 2.3–18; 4.1–20; 8.10–18; 14.6–10; 15.8–14.

The relative paucity of such materials from other groups is more than compensated by the sectarians at Qumran, who expressed an extreme hostility toward all outsiders, not excepting those Jews who did not agree with their interpretation of themselves as God’s new covenant. The group’s ideology divided the world between the “sons of light,” who belong to the sect, and “sons of darkness” who do not (1 QS I, 10; III, 13; 1 QM I, 7). At Qumran, it was impossible to say enough bad things about outsiders. They are “sons of the pit” (1 QS IX, 16; CD VI, 15; XIII, 14), who come from the spirit of falsehood and are ruled by an angel of darkness (1 QS III, 9–21; V, 2, 10). God hates them and has a vengeance planned for them. The *Community Rule* regards outsiders as having “greed and slackness in the search for righteousness, wickedness and lies, haughtiness and pride, falseness and deceit, cruelty and abundant evil, ill-temper and much folly and brazen insolence, abominable deeds committed in a spirit of lust, and ways of lewdness in the service of uncleanness, a blaspheming tongue,

blindness of eye and dullness of ear, stiffness of neck and heaviness of heart, so that a man walks in all the ways of darkness and guile" (1QS IV, 9–14).

One of the rituals of the sect involved shouting curses against such "men of the lot of Satan" in this manner: "Be cursed of all your guilty wickedness! May he deliver you up to torture at the hands of all the wreakers of revenge! Be cursed without mercy because of the darkness of your deeds! May God not hear when you call upon him, nor pardon you by blotting out your sin! May he raise his angry face toward you for vengeance! May there be no peace for you in the mouths of those who hold fast to the fathers!" (1QS II, 4–10). All of this, it should be emphasized, is directed not against the Kittim, the Gentiles, but against other Jews who do not match the sectarians' ideas of purity, those whom the *War Scroll* calls "the ungodly of the covenant" (1QM I, 2).

The New Testament polemic against Jews appears in a new light when placed in the context of the conventional rhetoric used in disputes between ancient schools, and enables several conclusions. First, the New Testament's polemic appears more intelligible. The great problem with the "historical vindication" approach is that it leaves the New Testament polemic unmotivated: if Jews were so blameless, why were the Christians so nasty? But this survey shows such language used everywhere in the diverse and disputatious tradition called Judaism in the first century. Readers today hear the New Testament's polemic as inappropriate because the other voices are silent. Historical imagination can restore them.

Second, by the measure of Hellenistic conventions, and certainly by the measure of contemporary intra-Jewish polemic, the New Testament's slander against fellow Jews is remarkably mild. Indeed, the New Testament's rhetoric against Gentiles—where, in fact, it makes use of standard Jewish polemic against Gentiles—is far harsher (see Matt 6:7, 32; Rom 1:18–32; 1 Cor 6:9–11; Eph 2:11–12; 1 Thess 4:5, 13; Tit 1:12; 1 Pet 1:14, 18; 4:3–4), as is the polemic used against those regarded as deviant within the messianic movement (see 2 Cor 11:1–6, 14–21; 2 Tim 2:14–3:9; 2 Pet 2:1–22; Jude 5–19; 1 John 2:18–25; 2 John 7; Rev 2:13–29).

Third, the conventional nature of the rhetoric means that its chief import is connotative rather than denotative: the polemic simply signifies that these are opponents and such things can and should be said

about them. The attempt either to convict first-century Jews of hypocrisy or vindicate them from it is irrelevant as well as futile.

Fourth, grasping the historical situation and social setting within which such language was shaped helps us understand it as a function of community-identification among disputants to a shared tradition. Once that context is lost, and the New Testament is taken as speaking inerrantly about the nature of Jews (or Gentiles) with such language, then real mischief can arise.

### *5. Declarations on Law, Covenant, and People*

The final aspect of “Anti-Judaism and the New Testament” has to do with the various statements made by the New Testament that would seem to support a supersessionist theology. Some of these are narrative statements that speak of the rejection of Jews because of their rejection of Jesus or the gospel. Others take the form of propositions concerning law and covenant within epistolary arguments.

An example of the first is the application of Isa 6:9–10 (which speaks of the blindness of the people preventing their conversion) to Jewish characters. In Mark 4:12, it is made part of Jesus’ speech in regard to his speaking in parables; in Matt 13:14–15, Jesus cites the passage in full as being “fulfilled” in those who do not understand his teaching, in contrast to those insiders who do understand (13:16–17). In John 12:38–43, the passage is cited by the evangelist at the end of Jesus’ public ministry in support of the position that “the Jews” loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. Luke does not cite the passage in his gospel narrative, but saves it for the end of Acts, where Paul applies the full citation to the Jewish brethren whom he was trying to persuade, and where, again, it stands in contrast to a positive statement, “Let it be known to you, then, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen” (Acts 28:25–28).

Another example is Jesus’ parable of the wicked husbandmen in the synoptic gospels. In Mark 12:1–11, the story of the tenants who reject the owner’s emissaries and then kill his son concludes with the statement, “What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others” (12:9). This statement is followed by the citation of Ps 118:22–23 (understood in terms of the rejection of Jesus), and the authorial comment that “They perceived that he had told the parable against them” (12:12). Luke’s ver-

sion (Luke 20:1–18) mitigates the harsh application of the parable: the people take it as a warning and say “God forbid,” but the Scribes and chief priests sought an opportunity to arrest him “for they perceived that he had told this parable against them.” Matthew, in contrast, exacerbates the implication of the parable’s conclusion by having Jesus state, “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it” (Matt 21:33–44).

Such harsh passages do not stand alone, and can be countered by other passages that express a more positive view of Jews within God’s plan. In the narrative logic of Acts, for example, the restored Israel includes thousands of Jews, so that the mission of the Gentiles is seen as an extension rather than a replacement of the historical Israel (see Acts 15:15–19). And Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11 hopes for this culmination of God’s work in history, “Thus all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26). But although Paul answered his own question, “Has God rejected his people?” (Rom 11:1) in the negative, it must be acknowledged that the statements with the opposite point predominate and their effect must seriously be considered.

In assessing such narrative statements, everything that was said in this essay earlier about historical context and narrative roles needs to be kept in mind. The gospels are written out of a context of intense conflict and competition with rival forms of Jewish conviction. Their statements about God rejecting those who reject them have exactly the same historical motivation as the assignment of all non-sectarians to the everlasting pit by the devout at Qumran. It must be clearly recognized, however, that all such materials formed the “scriptural” basis for the powerful supersessionist theology that did come to dominate Christianity virtually up to our own day. The statements attributed to Jesus (above all those which spoke of the destruction of the Temple) were taken as divine prophecies that were fulfilled in the Jew’s loss of their Temple, city, and land under the Romans, the mass conversion of the Gentiles, and finally, the imperial recognition of Christianity as the authentic representation of “biblical religion.”

The statements made by Paul and the author of Hebrews concerning law and covenant should be regarded in the same way. When “Christianity” and “Judaism” not only emerged as distinct religious systems, but also as religions with their power relationship reversed, it was easy to see statements that had been made in the midst of controversy over community self-definition as divinely revealed declarations

concerning “the religion of Law.” And when Christian systematic theologians subsequently used such statements, not as situational responses, but as universal truths, it was perhaps inevitable that Christianity tended to be defined in large measure by the ways in which it was “not Jewish.” Thus Paul’s defensive opposing of “gift” and “faith” on the side of the experience of Jesus Christ, and of “works” and “law” on the side of those seeking circumcision and Torah-observance in Galatians, becomes in the hands of systematic theologians, a definition of Christianity that is all “grace” and “faith” standing against law. The procedure not only distorts the import of the statements that are thus used, but also leads to the neglect of Paul’s language that is positive concerning both works and law. Understood in its historical context, Paul’s language cannot be taken as “anti-Jewish,” but Paul’s language as taken up into certain forms of Christian theology certainly can be read as “anti-Jewish.”

Perhaps the most difficult case—because of the relatively dispassionate and detached character of its rhetoric—is presented by the Letter to the Hebrews. Not only does it develop a consistent “lesser to greater” argument that establishes the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus to that of the levitical cult, but argues as well that Christ is the “mediator of a new and better covenant” than that of Moses, a covenant promised by the prophet Jeremiah (31:31–34) and realized in Christ (Heb 8:6–12; 9:15; 12:24). And in the process, Hebrews makes statements with an apparently absolute character concerning the law and first covenant. “If the first covenant had been faultless,” the author declares, “there would have been no occasion for another” (8:7); and, after quoting Jeremiah to the effect that God did find fault with the people under the first covenant in his promise of a new one written in human hearts, states, “In speaking of a new covenant, he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (8:13). Later, speaking of the cult under the law, he states, “He abolishes the first in order to establish the second” (10:9).

These statements are startling, to be sure, but they should be read within the context of competing claims within a Jewish conversation, rather than as a “Christian” claim to replace “Judaism.” Once more, it is important to remember that a contemporary Jewish sect at Qumran was also claiming to be a “new covenant” as well as a living temple offering spiritual sacrifices to God that were superior to those carried out by the illegitimate priesthood of the Temple in Jerusalem. And in



both Paul and Hebrews, the challenge to the adequacy of the law of Moses is placed within a deep commitment to the more fundamental commitment to the covenant God made with Abraham (Gal 3:6–29; Rom 4:1–25; Heb 6:13–20; 11:1–12:3). In neither author does God choose another people to replace the Jews. For Paul, the inclusion of the Gentiles is part of God’s plan to draw all of Israel to salvation, “for the gifts and call of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). For Hebrews, there is not even a suggestion that it is anyone but the “descendants of Abraham” with whom God is concerned, or for whom the promises are intended (Heb 2:16; 6:15).

### 6. Conclusion

The language about Jews in the New Testament is difficult, above all in light of changed historical circumstances. History can no longer be regarded as testimony to the truth of Christian claims and the cancellation of Jewish rights. Indeed, if anything, history has had the opposite lesson in recent years. The Holocaust has shown the tragic results of supersessionism carried to a demonic extreme. And in the post-Enlightenment rejection of religion, Christianity has been the pre-eminent target for attack. In a very real sense, Christian readers in particular are in a new position. They must re-evaluate their own practice and their way of reading their sacred texts, now no longer as having a right to define other people’s place in history, but as themselves trying to define an identity that does not depend on a false supersessionism.<sup>40</sup>

This essay, then, leads to the following simple conclusions:

1. It is inappropriate and anachronistic to call the New Testament compositions “Anti-Jewish.”
2. It is the case that the language of the New Testament can and has been used in an anti-Jewish fashion within Christian apologetics and theology that can virtually be defined in some cases as “Anti-Judaism.”

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<sup>40</sup> See L. T. Johnson, “Christians and Jews: Starting Over,” *Commonweal* (130:2): 15–19, and “Reading after the Holocaust: A New Testament Scholar Responds to Emil Fackenheim,” in *A Shadow of Glory*, ed. Linafelt, 216–231.

3. The best way of liberating the New Testament from an inappropriate hermeneutics with regard to its language about Jews is through historical, social, and rhetorical analysis.
4. The task of an appropriate hermeneutics with regard to the New Testament's language concerning Jews remains a difficult challenge for Christian readers.

THE WRITINGS OF JOSEPHUS:  
THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR NEW TESTAMENT STUDY

STEVE MASON

It can no longer be necessary to make the case *that* Josephus is relevant for the study of the New Testament. Even lay readers of the Christian canon know that when specialists look outside it for illumination—concerning Herod the Great and his descendants, the Roman governors of Judea, the temple in Jerusalem, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the geography of Judea-Galilee, and much else—they rely heavily on Josephus’ *Judean War*, *Antiquities-Life*, and *Against Apion*. Readers are accustomed to seeing “Josephus reports that...” before statements in New Testament Introductions and reference works. That scholars often turn to Josephus not so much from choice as from bitter necessity, as he might have put it (*Life* 27), in view of his presumed moral deficiencies,<sup>1</sup> does not weaken the dependence itself.

To be sure, a substantial library of other Jewish writings from the same period (say, 200 BCE to 200 CE) has survived, including the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, apocalyptic and wisdom literature, and the earliest rabbinic texts. But that material was composed almost entirely for Jews,<sup>2</sup> who did not need to be educated about the conditions in which they lived. Because Josephus, by contrast, undertook to write self-consciously historical narratives for non-Jews, his work is plainly of the first importance for historians as for New Testament readers. The archaeology of first-century Judea and Galilee constitutes an increasingly valuable resource for understanding the general environment.<sup>3</sup> But for specific human actions and intentions, which are the

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. G. A. Williamson, *The World of Josephus* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), 307: “Josephus the writer deserves our warmest thanks; Josephus the man—not lovable, not estimable, barely tolerable—remains an enigma, but a fascinating one.”

<sup>2</sup> V. Tcherikover, “Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered,” *Eos* 48 (1956): 169–193.

<sup>3</sup> Accessible archaeological surveys include E. Meyers, *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), A. Berlin & A. Overman, *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2002), and M. Aviam, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in the Galilee. 25 Years of Archaeological Excavations and Surveys: Hellenistic to Byzantine Periods* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004). Galilean archaeology in particular has recently been

stuff of history, Josephus remains indispensable to New Testament readers. Chronology reinforces the bond, for he composed his thirty volumes in the very period to which the canonical gospels and Acts are usually dated (70–100 CE).

Since another appeal concerning Josephus' importance would be superfluous, my purpose here lies elsewhere. Namely, *given* that the works of Josephus are important, how should the New Testament student regard and use them? The shorter of his histories, the seven-volume *War*, is nearly as long as the entire New Testament, and wading through his twenty-volume *Antiquities* (about the length of the Old Testament) is a formidable task. Curious readers often purchase Josephus' collected works—for Anglophones, often the 1737 translation by W. Whiston—only to find them impenetrable. Arcane details prove impossible to remember; Eleazars, Menachems, Aristobuluses, and Agrippas appear with disconcerting frequency in unrelated places; long speeches and details of geography, even botany, can be as boring as the moralizing is tedious. How does one find what one needs in this mass? And once one finds it, how should one understand it? Perhaps most important: What may the New Testament reader fairly expect from Josephus?

In what follows I describe three approaches to exploiting Josephus' works for New Testament study. The first is the route most commonly taken: using Josephus as a historical reference manual. In this model, to which I devote about half of the essay, reading Josephus and doing history are assumed to be parts of a single operation. Even if one does not believe everything he reports, he is expected to transmit recoverable facts. Recently, however, some scholars have been working to separate the interpretation of Josephus' compositions from reconstruction of the historical phenomena they describe. These critics draw attention to the artistry of the narratives and insist that historical deductions reckon fully with the nature of the evidence they seek to explain, which is a richly woven tapestry. While generally supporting that second approach against the first, I propose here a further step.

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applied to the study of the historical Jesus by M. A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), S. Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), M. Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000) and J. D. Crossan and J. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

Namely: the greatest benefit for New Testament readers in studying Josephus may come not from areas of overlap in what the two corpora *refer to*, but from the access Josephus affords to values and assumptions that shaped the conceptual world of the New Testament writers.

### 1. *Josephus as Historical Manual for New Testament Readers*

The use of Josephus as a reference work on matters Judean has ancient roots, among his immediate audiences in Rome and later in the church fathers. In some respects this use fulfills the author's dream that "the whole Greek-speaking world" would learn about his culture from him (*Ant.* 1.5; cf. *War* 1.6). Yet the Christian readers who preserved Josephus into modern times were not interested in his expositions of Judean culture as such: they were concerned only with the background of the early Christian story.<sup>4</sup> (Jewish scholars of the ancient and medieval periods preferred to forego his portraits of Judaism for other reasons.) Because the use of Josephus for New Testament interpretation is not a new issue, but has been with us for nearly two millennia, we ought to ponder the changing methodological bases for such use. That survey will tell us something about Josephus' historiographical assumptions and about those of his ancient and modern users.

#### 1.1. *Authority and Truth in Ancient Historiography*

In the Roman world, knowledge of most things, including the past, was mediated by trusted authorities. Notwithstanding occasional impulses toward empirical investigation (e.g., with Thucydides and Aristotle centuries earlier), the deeply ingrained Roman social system, in which members of the elite dominated all discourse, affected every branch of knowledge. Although Roman authors had potential sources of reliable information about foreign peoples and lands, for example, their geographical and ethnographical traditions display a tenacious resistance to change, precisely because they instinctively preferred

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. H. Schreckenberg, *Die Flavius-Josephus-Tradition in Antike und Mittelalter* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), and the essays on Christian use of Josephus in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. G. Hata and L. H. Feldman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987).

established and trusted authorities.<sup>5</sup> The physician Galen in the second century was still deploring the fideism of his peers, as he called for empirically grounded reasoning. Tellingly, he compared this widespread trust in authorities to the “undemonstrated laws” of the Jews and Christians—i.e., “the school of Moses and Christ” (*Puls. diff.* 2.4).

In history, above all, it mattered a great deal *who* was telling the story, and who the historian’s friends and patrons were. Historians were not professionals. They were rhetorically trained members of the elite or their retainers. These men, who had typically held military, political, civic, and religious posts, felt able to write and speak in any genre they pleased: political treatise, philosophical dialogue, tragedy, poetry, oratory, literary correspondence, ethnography, geography, biography, or history.<sup>6</sup> The same friends would gather to hear each other recite in any of these modes. And when they chose one genre, they typically laced their compositions with elements of the others: so their histories contain philosophical, geographical, oratorical, and moralizing asides. In such an elite literary environment, acceptance and trustworthiness flowed in large measure from the writer’s evident stature, influence, and circle of friends—his *auctoritas*.<sup>7</sup>

Ancient techniques for getting books into the public sphere (“publication”) reinforced the importance of the author’s status. New compositions normally found their intended audiences locally, in the author’s immediate environs.<sup>8</sup> For modern writers, our audiences must

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<sup>5</sup> J. S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 41–44, 93–109; S. P. Mattern, *Rome and the Enemy: Imperial Strategy in the Principate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 24–80.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19. Aelius Theon, in the first century, points out that graduates of his rhetorical programme will be expected to write in a variety of genres (*Prog.* 60, 70). Tacitus’ *Dialogue on Oratory*, set in the reign of Vespasian, shows the result: groups of friends who freely compose across different fields. The deliberations by Pliny the Younger, famous senator, orator, and letter-writer, as to whether he should embark on writing history, are revealing (*Ep.* 3.5): the issue of qualification does not arise. So too Cicero, *Leg.* 1.9.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., C. Salles, *Lire à Rome* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992), 43–89; E. Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture: From Cicero to Apuleius* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 183–185.

<sup>8</sup> P. White, “The Friends of Martial, Statius, and Pliny, and the Dispersal of Patronage,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79 (1975): 265–300; idem, “Amicitia and the Profession of Poetry in Early Imperial Rome,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978): 74–92; T. P. Wiseman, *Roman Studies: Literary and Historical* (Liverpool: F. Cairns, 1987), 252–56; R. J. Starr, “The Circulation of Texts in the Ancient World,” *Mnemosyne*

be abstractly envisaged in our minds. Whether a few associates read or hear preliminary drafts is an entirely discretionary matter, and in any case not part of our main effort to reach the audience. Our books begin to reach their audiences and elicit responses (e.g., through reviews) only when they are printed, bound, and marketed by the publisher. In the first century, conditions were more or less reversed, since neither printing nor publishing houses existed. Composition was a much more social affair, conducted among elite groups who knew what their peers were writing.<sup>9</sup> Authors met their audiences—auditors in the proper sense—at dinner parties or readings. They recited their work in progress or shared drafts with friends, who would have their slaves read them aloud.<sup>10</sup> Catherine Salles observes: “The success of a literary work depended equally on the activity of the coterie, the public readings, and the representations of the author to his associates; but in all this, dissemination remained in a ‘closed circuit’.”<sup>11</sup> This process of presentation and review, in ever widening circles, was the crucial part of “publication,” a process so different from ours that we should perhaps avoid the word when speaking of ancient conditions.<sup>12</sup>

Because each new copy required a human hand, the concept of *finishing* a work could not be as definitive then as it is for us. Every new copy was in principle a new version, even if the changes were only scribal accidents.<sup>13</sup> When an author stopped making deliberate changes and presented copies of his work to a few friends, this “handing over” (ἔκδοσις) marked the beginning of *the end* of his ability to interact with a clearly envisaged audience.<sup>14</sup> Even if they aspired to create a literary monument for posterity, ancient authors thus wrote necessarily for real local groups, whose knowledge, values, and prejudices they knew and could manipulate. They also wrote with a view to oral

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4.40 (1987): 213–223; W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); C. Salles, *Lire à Rome* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992); Marincola, *Authority*, 19–33; D. S. Potter, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian* (London: Routledge, 1999), 23–44.

<sup>9</sup> Tcherikover, “Jewish Apologetic,” 173.

<sup>10</sup> C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 31; E. Fantham, *Roman Literary Culture: from Cicero to Apuleius* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 202–203, 214–216; Potter, *Literary Texts*, 106–110.

<sup>11</sup> Salles, *Lire à Rome*, 156, my translation.

<sup>12</sup> Starr, “Circulation of Texts,” 215 n. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Potter, *Literary Texts*, 29–37.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

performance, whether in their own recital of the work or in the subsequent reading aloud by someone's slave, and therefore with attention to the sound of phrases. Like every other genre, historiography was governed by the general rules of rhetoric (see section 3 below).

In the status-conscious city of Rome, therefore, factual accuracy (which could not usually be checked) was not among the main criteria for literary acceptance, unless such accuracy happened to coincide with the interests of the audience. In the absence of universities or research funded for its own sake, this was not an atmosphere in which anonymous researchers could survive. There was no culture of disseminating new discoveries; the scope for true novelty, especially in history, was severely constrained.<sup>15</sup> New facts came to light incidentally, as they were assembled and interpreted in conventional ways by trusted authorities.

Early Christians may not have recognized the same status criteria as the larger society, for spiritual authority was not a strict correlative of social standing,<sup>16</sup> but they shared the general assumption that truth was validated by its source rather than by a free enquiry scientifically tested: "good trees produce good fruit." Only outsiders, such as Celsus and Porphyry, marginal pedants, Jews, or those deemed "heretics" undertook something approaching historical investigations into Christian origins. The bulk of surviving Christian literature reveals instead a preoccupation with identifying trustworthy authorities and their texts, and a parallel urgency to exclude those perceived as threatening. This long march toward an approved "canon" was well on the way by Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch, if not already by Paul's time (1 Cor 4:15–21; 2 Cor 10–13; Gal 4:11–19).

It is true that ancient historians use the language of "truth" (ἀλήθεια), "accuracy" (ἀκρίβεια), and "reliability" (ἀσφάλεια) in ways that sound as though they imply rigorous research and testing. Yet the contexts of such language indicate a different meaning. What historians are really speaking about in these cases is not objectivity or neutrality of perception, recording, and analysis, but *impartiality of reporting*. The opposite of truth here is not falsity—bare facts have no determinative

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<sup>15</sup> Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 14: the goal of composition was "to be incrementally innovative within a tradition."

<sup>16</sup> Note, however, that the wealthier members among Paul's followers, those who owned houses (for meeting) and slaves (as emissaries) tended to assume prominent roles: Philemon, Chloe, Stephanas, Phoebe.



value in the rhetoricized mentality of antiquity—but *bias*.<sup>17</sup> This claim to impartiality, ubiquitous in Roman historiography, made perfect sense in a world in which scholarship came to light through the exercise of personal patronage and social networks. It was assumed that historians would seek to flatter their powerful friends and further belittle the friends' enemies, especially if they had been conquered.<sup>18</sup> Since contemporary values put a premium on the virtue of fearless freedom in speech (*παρρησία*), however, historians constantly reassured their audiences that they were writing without fear of, or favour toward, those who might help or hurt them. To do this—to avoid mere encomium or invective—was to speak the truth.

There was a potential overlap here with factual truth, on the underlying logic that the historian was motivated not by audience gratification but by compelling events that cried out for a reporter (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 1.1–4). Yet ancient historians did not put their facts to a public test by disclosing the basis of their knowledge (i.e., who observed, at what proximity, and with what interests?). The standard proof of impartiality was simply that any praise and blame, which remained the heart and soul of history-writing, was *justified* by reported behaviour and not gratuitously inserted. Thus *balance*, *non-partisanship*, and *even-handedness* were deemed necessary qualities by the better historians, but a positivist concept of facts that impose their meaning on neutral observers or classifiers, that “speak for themselves,” was entirely different—and a long way off.

As he composed his histories in Rome, Josephus was very much part of this world of social status, rhetoric, and moral lessons (see also the language of Luke 1:1–4). When he speaks about writing the truth (*ἀλήθεια*) with precision or accuracy (*ἀκρίβεια*) (*War* 1.6, 9, 17, 30; 7.454; *Ant.* 1.4; *Life* 360–361, 364–367; *Apion* 1.6, 50), his meaning becomes clear from the context. Whereas other writers have taken the predictable course of flattering those now in power (the Flavians) in their fawning accounts of the Judean war (*War* 1.2, 6–8), he will set the record straight—*that is*: he will not overcompensate by exorbitantly

<sup>17</sup> See A.J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (London: Croom Helm, 1988), ch. 2 on Cicero, and Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 158–174.

<sup>18</sup> Lucian's mid-second-century essay on writing history is largely occupied with ridiculing such partiality (in recent accounts of the recent Parthian war), both the flattery and the invective.

praising his own compatriots, but will give due credit and blame to both sides (1.9). He is in a unique position to write this way because he, a Jerusalem priest who knew the Judean side intimately, was after his capture compelled to observe from the Roman side (*War* 1.3).

Admittedly, eyewitness knowledge is a crucial component of Josephus' proffered credentials in the *War*. But his claim is vaguely conceived and undocumented in that work; it relies more upon the audience's willingness to trust this captured foreign nobleman (1.2–3; cf. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.6) than upon rigorous demonstration. He does not certify his detailed knowledge of X because he has meticulously investigated sources A through J according to method Z. He must in fact have used many sources, for he could not personally have known events before he reached maturity or those that occurred where he was not present (thus, at least half of the *War*). Yet he does not name even one source, much less describe his method in using them. Instead, he declares his aim to provide a comprehensive theory of the war supported by appropriate moral evaluations (1.8–10). A uniquely cultivated Judean, he asserts his prerogative to render an authoritative interpretation of the catastrophe that befell his great city, with unassailable verdicts (1.3, 9). His language precludes any modern notion of detachment. He will not (cannot?), for example, sympathetically explore the minds of the "tyrants" or "bandit-chiefs" who brought catastrophe on Jerusalem. "Accuracy" means for him refraining from unjustified praise or blame, and especially from joining the chorus of Rome's flatterers.

### 1.2. *Josephus' Prestige as Basis of his Later Authority*

Josephus' assumptions about the relationship between authority and status were shared by readers of the following generations. For a variety of reasons, his work became part of the Christian canon in its broader sense: the approved guide to first-century Judea. Since he was not a Christian, this acceptance could not issue from spiritual authority; it had other bases.

Initially, Josephus' work found its audiences through the agency of his powerful friends in Rome. Various descendants of Herod the Great who were residing in the capital, especially King Agrippa II (d. 92–93 CE?), facilitated dissemination of the work; Josephus adduces a flurry of correspondence with the king concerning his *War* (*Life* 364–367). We see vividly here the assumption that the status of one's friends is

a guarantee of truth. Once Josephus had completed his work, sponsorship by the imperial family of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian (*Life* 361–363; *Apion* 1.50) ensured its availability for generations in Rome’s libraries and perhaps a few private collections or the occasional bookseller.

After that initial boost, a curious thing happened, though it is also understandable in light of the values described above. On the one hand, Josephus’ own Jewish-Judean community declined utterly to show an interest in their famous son. This neglect apparently resulted from his lack of standing in that community after the war. No matter how good his information might have been, he was perceived as a coward, traitor, quisling, or worse, and therefore as an untrustworthy guide (see already *War* 3.438–442; *Life* 416, 425). Christian authors, by contrast, took up his work with enthusiasm. They found him as morally congenial as his compatriots found him objectionable: here was a Jerusalemite of impeccable qualifications who had severely castigated the Judean rebels, describing in lurid detail the horrifying consequences of their actions—thereby demonstrating the fulfillment of Jesus’ predictions (e.g., Origen, *C. Cels.* 2.13.68–85).

Josephus, of course, made no connection between the fall of Jerusalem and Christian claims, but it seemed easy enough for Christians to find in him a kindred spirit, to insinuate that he shared their view of 70 CE as divine punishment for the Jews’ rejection of Jesus and their execution of James. His stomach-churning account of a mother’s cannibalism during the siege of Jerusalem (*War* 6.201–213) received great play in Christian literature and theatre, and he won high praise for his truthful witness.<sup>19</sup>

Josephus’ ongoing defence and celebration of Judean culture presented a paradox for his Christian users. On the one hand, it was plainly beneficial that an outsider, a notable Judean free of Christian bias, should (allegedly) testify to Christian truth.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it was a potential problem that this clarity of vision did not actually

<sup>19</sup> Schreckenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 186–203.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., Ps-Hegesippus, *De excidio* 2.12: “If the Jews do not believe us, let them at least believe their own writers. Josephus, whom they esteem a very great man, said this [the testimony to Jesus, *Ant.* 18.63–64]... However, it was no detriment to the truth that he was not a believer; but this adds more weight to his testimony, that while he was an unbeliever, and unwilling that this should be true, he has not denied it to be so.”

extend to recognizing the truth of Christianity.<sup>21</sup> Origen lamented the latter; still, he credited Josephus with recognizing the righteousness of James and with being “not far from the truth” (*C. Cels.* 1.47; *Comm. Matt.* 10.17). In the late fourth century, an unknown Christian felt strongly enough about the authority of Josephus’ witness (“an outstanding historian”) yet also about his being too Jewish (if only “he had been as attentive to religion and *truth* as to tracking down *events*”; he shared in “the treachery of the Jews”), that he recast the *War* in a proper Christian version.<sup>22</sup> It would take another 1,350 years for the Cambridge mathematician and heterodox theologian William Whiston to make room for Josephus within the Christian fold—as an Ebionite bishop.<sup>23</sup>

It was no doubt important to Christian commentators that Josephus was a Judaeon with putative inside knowledge. But just as he had made no effort to justify his claims, they were not concerned to critically assess or verify them. At least a dozen Christian authors of the second and third centuries, from Theophilus of Antioch to Tertullian and Origen, cite Josephus as a self-evident authority,<sup>24</sup> but they do not explain *why* they credit his works above others. Eusebius (early fourth century CE) is important because he not only makes extensive use of Josephus,<sup>25</sup> but also deals explicitly with the question of his credentials.

Eusebius first mentions Josephus as “the most distinguished of historians (ἐπισημώτατος ἱστορικῶν) among the Hebrews”<sup>26</sup> (*Hist. Eccl.*

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<sup>21</sup> In the same passage from Ps-Hegesippus as in the previous note: “he was no believer because of the hardness of his heart and his perfidious intention.”

<sup>22</sup> Passages cited here are from the opening paragraph of the work. A concise introduction to “Pseudo-Hegesippus” is A. J. Bell, “Josephus and Pseudo-Hegesippus,” in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. G. Hata and L. H. Feldman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 349–61.

<sup>23</sup> So Dissertation 1 attached to Whiston’s translation of Josephus.

<sup>24</sup> M. E. Hardwick, *Josephus as an Historical Source in Patristic Literature through Eusebius* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 10, 31, 34, 49, 60.

<sup>25</sup> H. W. Attridge and G. Hata, eds., *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); S. Inowlocki, “The Citations of Jewish Greek Authors in Eusebius of Caesarea’s *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Demonstratio Evangelica*” (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, 2001); G. Hata, “Eusebius and Josephus: The Way Eusebius Misused and Abused Josephus,” *Patristica: Proceedings of the Colloquia of the Japanese Society for Patristic Studies*, supp. 1 (2001), 49–66. Eusebius’ extensive use of Josephus does not appear to be only the result of the small number of extant texts. The tenth-century *Suda Lexicon* (entry, “Jesus [Ἰησοῦς], Christ and our God,” item 229, line 164) identifies Josephus as the historian to whom Eusebius often referred.

<sup>26</sup> For the positive valuation of “Hebrew” in Eusebius, see Inowlocki, “Citations of Jewish Greek Authors,” 52–64, 112–121.

1.5.3; cf. 1.6.9). Later, after uncritically endorsing Josephus' claims to comprehensive eyewitness knowledge (*War* 1.3), he explains that the historian was:

the most renowned (ἐπιδοξότατος) man of the Judeans at that time, not only with his compatriots but also among the Romans, such that he himself was honoured by the erection of a statue in the city of the Romans, and the works composed by him were thought worthy of [deposit in] the library. (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.9.1–2)

Eusebius reinforces Josephus' credibility (πιστεύεσθαι) by endorsing Josephus' claims against his rival Justus of Tiberias (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.9.3), accepting his source's assurance that King Agrippa and his family as well as the *imperator* Titus all vouched for the *War's* accuracy (3.9.10–11; cf. *Life* 361–363). This is obviously not a disinterested investigation of Josephus' accuracy, but a wholly circular process of certification by fame resulting from prior endorsement. Josephus' authority sprang ultimately from the high esteem in which powerful Romans had first held him.<sup>27</sup>

Justus of Tiberias presents a telling contrast. Although Justus wrote an account of the war that challenged Josephus in various ways (*Life* 336), making it extremely valuable for historical investigation, and even Josephus credits him with literary talent (*Life* 40–41, 340), Justus found no real uptake among Christian authors. Why? He had lost the competition for status. Josephus commanded an initial prestige that carried over until the Christian apologists could establish his worth on theological grounds, and once he was established as the source for Judea, Justus had no future. Eusebius's adoption of Josephus' moral critique of Justus without quibble (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.10.8) shows that the contest had long since been settled. The ninth-century Patriarch Photius claims to have read Justus' work, but he similarly repeats with enthusiasm Josephus' dismissal of the contender:

But Josephus, even though he had taken this enemy in hand many times, impassively—and with words only—reproached him, [insisting that he] leave off *his crimes*. And *they say* that the history which that man [Justus] wrote happens to be mostly fabricated, especially in what concerned the Roman war against the Jews and the capture of Jerusalem. (*Bibl.* 33; italics added)

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<sup>27</sup> Hardwick, *Josephus as an Historical Source*, 74.

The “they” who say are Josephus, and this highly partisan verdict from Photius may have sealed the fate of Justus’s legacy (if his work had survived intact until then).<sup>28</sup> By the time of the *Suda Lexicon* in the following century, the compiler’s entry on Justus appears to depend entirely on Josephus: “[Justus] took it upon himself to compile [NB: this is Josephus’ language: *Life* 40, 338] a Judean history and write up certain commentaries, but Josephus exposes this fellow as a fraud—he was writing history in the same period as Josephus.” In winning the fathers’ confidence, Josephus’ works rendered superfluous all other evidence.

### 1.3. *The Modern Preference for Anonymous, Objective Facts*

Modern manuals of the New Testament world continue to use Josephus as their *Companion to the New Testament*, but their rationale is markedly different from that of the church fathers. As the basis for esteem, Josephus’ personal prestige has given way to a conception of raw *facts* presumed to be embedded in his accounts. Here is an index of the shift from ancient and medieval assumptions, for if Justus’ work had survived to the modern period we may be sure that it too would have been welcomed for its facts, employed as a critical counterweight to Josephus. Because Justus’ work did not survive, however, Josephus’ position as sole source created a methodological short-circuit.

Anticipated by intellectual currents in the Renaissance, Reformation, and the Age of Reason, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment represented in principle the repudiation of knowledge derived from authorities. Common reasoning applied to repeatable observation became the only acceptable way of knowing in this newly grown-up world.<sup>29</sup> Philosophical and scientific inquiry burgeoned as recent discoveries in astronomy, world exploration, biology, physics, and engineering were assimilated into brave new conceptions of the cosmos and of human

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<sup>28</sup> For Photius as gatekeeper of book preservation in Byzantium, see N. G. Wilson, *Photius, The Bibliotheca: a selection* (London: Duckworth, 1994), 6–7. Although Wilson’s point is the positive one that Photius’s recognition of a book may have ensured its preservation, the negative corollary seems to follow: his disapproval (in relation to a more trustworthy account) would encourage disdain and neglect.

<sup>29</sup> Immanuel Kant’s *Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784) is a classic statement. The opening paragraph declares: “‘Have the courage to use your own understanding’ is therefore the motto of the Enlightenment.”

life. History was also being rethought, as another discipline that needed to be rescued from accrued, sacred tradition.

Josephus' historic role as companion to the New Testament meant that his fate in this rethinking of history was married with the urgent reinvestigation of Christian origins. The charter story that had been handed down by church authorities (both Catholic and Protestant) for at least a millennium and a half was being uprooted. Voltaire's reflections on ancient history<sup>30</sup> and Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* are representative products of eighteenth-century Deism. They both rejected all historical propositions about Jesus and his first followers that were based on tradition but contrary to common reasoning derived from experience of the world. Enlightenment scholarship and its heirs would be no "respecters of persons" or authorities. Once the clear-sighted critic had burned away the fog of tradition and clerical orthodoxy, it was hoped, the plain facts of astronomy, biology, physics, geography, and history—for Deists, facts were the word of God—would impose themselves on honest thinkers and demand a new view of the world.

Ancient history did not, however, immediately take up the positive "scientific" logic of the Enlightenment agenda. The *philosophes* of the eighteenth century (e.g., Hume, Voltaire, Robertson), in a curious parallel to their ancient elite counterparts, saw history as but one of their many encyclopaedic pursuits, and they shunned pedantic specialization in the field. (The difference was that Pliny and Tacitus were part of an aristocratic elite who wrote under the general method of rhetoric, whereas the *philosophes* were an anti-aristocratic, intellectual elite writing under the banner of philosophy.) Though often diligent in examining sources, they tended to write sweeping interpretative histories that, assuming the commonality of all human experience, lent themselves to clear moral assessment. In their animus against Christianity and tradition they were hardly objective, though they believed their harsh assessments justifiable in the service of obvious truth.<sup>31</sup> Some were also duly cautious about the application of scientific models to ancient history, as Voltaire:

But to attempt to paint the ancients; to elaborate in this way the development of their minds; to regard events as characters in which we may

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<sup>30</sup> E.g., in the entry on "History" in his *Philosophical Dictionary*.

<sup>31</sup> An excellent analysis, with vastly more nuance, is in P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Science of Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1969), 368–396.

accurately read the most sacred feelings and intents of their hearts—this is an undertaking of no ordinary difficulty and discrimination, although as frequently conducted, both childish and trifling. (*Philos. Dict.*, “History” pt. III)

The full accommodation of history to science came chiefly in the nineteenth century. Historians such as B. G. Niebuhr and Leopold von Ranke insisted, against the generalist synthesizers and moralizers, on studying the details of particular places and times without assuming common standards or universal moral criteria—and on withholding moral assessment. The prime directive was to get the particular facts correct and only with great care, where possible, to move up from the particular to the general. Ranke drove a particularly a sharp wedge between historical facts and their evaluation. He made extensive use of non-literary documents from newly accessed archives, which seemed to offer facts without the sort of interpretative overlay found in historical narratives. The momentum in historical study was moving decisively towards the atoms thought to constitute the surviving evidence, whether these were found in material remains and non-literary documents or in sources distilled from the literary texts (a specialty of Niebuhr).

The scientific turn in history was greatly enhanced in the later nineteenth century as thousands of material remains from antiquity were found, catalogued, and interpreted: coins, papyrus documents of ordinary life, funerary and civic inscriptions, and remains of monuments. This gathering of new evidence under rigorously scientific principles of stratification and classification was highly productive: it generated dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and other reference works of hitherto unimaginable quality, considerably refining our understanding of social, cultural, legal, and linguistic variation.

A problem, however, was that the new enthusiasm for “raw data” implied that all such data could be treated alike no matter where they originated, and this conditioned the interpretation of ancient literary texts, including Josephus’. The scholar’s aim was to get past the subjective, moralizing interpretation to the facts beneath or, if not the facts, to the earliest sources behind the extant writings. Although the presence of two or more overlapping literary sources for a given period appeared to make the task of extracting facts eminently reasonable, for one text could be weighed against the other, the problem of what to do when only one narrative survived—most often the case with Josephus—would take decades to be recognized as a problem. In the meantime,



Josephus or his sources tended to be accepted by default, if there was no specific reason to reject them, as if they also *inscribed* or *mirrored* the realities of life in some sort of neutral, value-free language. Scholars were confident that Josephus could be compelled by a sufficiently scientific method to yield up his facts.

This distinctively modern adoption of Josephus as preserver of facts is embodied in the greatest background manual for New Testament readers ever produced: Emil Schürer's *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (1886–90), which had first appeared in the previous decade as a *Manual of New Testament Backgrounds*. Schürer's *History* remains a standard reference work, following extensive revision in the 1970's by an Oxford-based team. As the title and Introduction make clear, his purpose was to assist the New Testament scholar in relating "Jesus and the Gospel" to "the Jewish world of his time."<sup>32</sup> Strikingly absent from the Introduction, however, was any mention of Josephus, his credentials or fame—or statue. Rather, the German historian implied that he was dealing with *facts in themselves*, not with the messy problems of human perspective.

So, for example, his second paragraph begins with a confident historical pronouncement: "The chief characteristic of this period was the growing importance of Pharisaism." But how does he know that? Though Schürer does not disclose it, this ostensible fact comes mainly from the stories of Josephus.<sup>33</sup> Because it was not a rigorously argued historical conclusion, but only a borrowing from literary portraits, it could easily be doubted in later scholarship.<sup>34</sup> Josephus had become for Schürer an anonymous quarry or fund, a "source" he would say, of neutral data.

Before beginning his historical account, Schürer surveys all the sources on which it will be based—archaeology, coins, inscriptions, and writers other than Josephus—and finally comes to describe Josephus. After allowing that our author is "*the main source* for the

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<sup>32</sup> E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC.–AD 135)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987), 1:1.

<sup>33</sup> *War* 1.110; *Ant.* 13.297–298; 17.41–45; 18.15, 17. Cf. S. Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

<sup>34</sup> E.g., M. Smith, "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century," in *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, ed. M. Davis (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), 67–81; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism, Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: Trinity Press International, 1992), 7, 386; L. L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992), 470–471, 616.

history studied here,”<sup>35</sup> he describes the “facts” of Josephus’ life, briefly reviews the chronological and material coverage of each work by Josephus, and finally considers Josephus’ own *sources*. The striking omission here, from more recent perspectives, is any concern about *why* Josephus wrote, what his interests were, the artistic arrangement or structure of each account, the sort of language he employed, how freely he retold stories—in short, what his evidence for the past might *mean* in its narrative context. This is the short-circuit mentioned above: an attempt to link story to fact directly, a procedure that succeeds only in putting out the light.

Schürer’s method was to tackle each new historical period or problem by first identifying the “sources” as if they were a palette of coloured paints (i.e. facts), which he could then harmoniously combine in a single picture. Problems of contradiction, error, and omission among the sources were relegated to the notes (much enhanced by the Oxford team), as incidental to the main project of certifying the factual history. For most of the post-Hasmonean history, his sources turned out to be chiefly or exclusively the relevant passages in Josephus, which Schürer simply took over as neutral fact.

A few sentences (emphasis added) will illustrate the point. “Antipater was now all-powerful at court and enjoyed his father’s absolute confidence. But he was *not satisfied*. *He wanted total power and could hardly wait* for his father to die.”<sup>36</sup> “But Sabinus, *whose conscience was uneasy* because of the Temple robberies and *other misdeeds*, made off as quickly as possible.”<sup>37</sup> “His [Philip’s] reign was *mild, just, and peaceful*.”<sup>38</sup> How can we know about such motives and moral qualities, which we would hesitate to attribute even to our contemporaries, about whom we have considerable independent information? Schürer’s famous model made it acceptable to treat Josephus’ gripping stories as facts. He did not explain how he made this transition, or whether he recognized that a transition was involved.

Such handling of Josephus, now regarded as an information portal (often called “the ancient *sources*”), drove the New Testament-backgrounds industry of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, the scholarly biographies of King Herod before Peter Richardson’s

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<sup>35</sup> Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1:43; italics added.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:324.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:332.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:339.

1996 study were to a large degree paraphrases of Josephus: thoughts attributed to the king by Josephus for the sake of a compelling story were assumed to reflect the monarch's actual motives and views. Two textbooks deserve special attention in this essay because they frame themselves as guides to *Josephus* for the New Testament reader.

The scholar who translated Josephus' *War* and Eusebius' *Church History* as Penguin paperbacks addressed his *The World of Josephus* (1964) itself to the typical British school graduate who knew the New Testament stories from religion class, but assumed that the sacred history told therein was quite distinct from any secular context.<sup>39</sup> Josephus was worth this reader's attention, G. A. Williamson proposed, because his remarkable life had bonded the Judean world of the New Testament to its larger Roman canvas.<sup>40</sup>

Although the conception of this book as *Josephus' world*, rather than as the *history* of New Testament times, might seem to promise a departure from Schürer, Williamson betrays the same positivistic method when in the Introduction, before mentioning Josephus, he describes the Judean-Roman war in ostensibly factual terms: "On the other [Judean] side was a motley host, torn by dissension and bloody strife, and led by rival self-appointed chieftains lusting for power..."<sup>41</sup> Yet this merely translates Josephus' distinctive, thematic lexicon of στάσις, λησταί, and τύραννοι. Williamson is not about to accept everything Josephus says, but his opening critical questions reflect the limits of his scepticism. Are Josephus' narratives "as objectively true as we would wish them to be?... Is it within our power to separate the true from the false, to distinguish the sober statement from the gross exaggeration?"<sup>42</sup> This already implies that a "sober statement" may be taken as factual; at least, that facts are present among whatever else is there.

As his account unfolds, Williamson occasionally introduces doubt about Josephus' veracity: in those rare cases where competing versions of the same events survive from other authors<sup>43</sup> and where Josephus himself provides contradictory stories.<sup>44</sup> Where there is no such reason to doubt, however, Williamson accepts Josephus in whole and part—events, motives, and moral assessments: the priests' devoted observance

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<sup>39</sup> Williamson, *World of Josephus*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 166–176.

of the Sabbath in Pompey's time (72); Herod's putative relationship to Augustus and M. V. Agrippa (80); the character of the various governors of Judea (130)—Gessius Florus was "heartless, dishonest, disgusting; he filled Judaea with misery, accepting bribes from bandits" (145); the minutes of a secret meeting among the Zealots reported by Josephus (207); the speeches of various actors (204–6); and in general their motives, deeds, and ends. Yet these are all ingredients of Josephus' story, not simply "what happened." In some cases, Williamson accepts Josephus on the curious ground that his is the only story we have.<sup>45</sup>

A nicely illustrated and well researched study entitled *The Topical Josephus: Historical Accounts that Shed Light on the Bible* (1992) employs a similar method. Under the headings "People," "Institutions," and "Events," Cleon Rogers quotes and paraphrases Josephus' account, supplementing it now and again with notes on archaeology or contemporary literature, to create an ostensibly historical record. For example, he cites Josephus' assessment of Herod's military virtue (*War* 1.230) and proceeds to "demonstrate the validity" of this assessment by citing examples of Herod's valour—from Josephus!<sup>46</sup> Yet this demonstrates only that Josephus' narrative holds together, not that it reflects reality. The paraphrase of Josephus as fact continues: "When Nero heard the news of Roman losses in Judea, he was inwardly very much upset, even though he outwardly tried to conceal these concerns (*War* 3.1–3)."<sup>47</sup> Again, "When Titus entered the city, he was amazed at the strength of the fortifications... 'God indeed,' he exclaimed, 'has been with us in the war. God it was who brought down the Jews from these strongholds.'"<sup>48</sup> But how could Josephus have had access to Nero's or Titus's inner thoughts? As for speeches, ancient historians normally composed them for their characters.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> "But as we have no other sources of information, we must take his account as it stands" (Williamson, *World of Josephus*, 121; this, in reference to Josephus' early life).

<sup>46</sup> C. L. Rogers, *The Topical Josephus: Historical Accounts That Shed Light on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 18–20.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>49</sup> Already Voltaire ("History" part III, *Dictionary*): "Many of the ancients adopted the method in question [composing speeches for their characters], which merely proves that many of the ancients were fond of parading their eloquence at the expense of truth."

While narrating, Rogers inserts explanatory Greek words in parentheses,<sup>50</sup> as if this historical “record” is drawn from a master text. It is, and the text is Josephus! Such statements have no standing as independently verified history; they are excerpts from Josephus, silently transmogrified into what objectively happened.

Although most scholars nowadays are more cautious than Williamson and Rogers, this is a quantitative rather than qualitative difference: they doubt more.<sup>51</sup> Few hesitate to reproduce as facts those passages they consider unproblematic reflections of reality, overlooking problems of structure and language (below). The *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* series is a partial exception, for it includes expert essays by H. W. Attridge<sup>52</sup> and Louis H. Feldman<sup>53</sup> on the artistry of Josephus’ works. But those essays have no discernible effect on the use of Josephus for facts in the rest of the collection.

I have said that the new factual mindset did not accept everything in Josephus. In fact, its mandate of painstaking comparative research led some attentive German critics to identify for the first time many perceived contradictions and other shortcomings in our author. But they assumed that these too could be neutralized, by proper scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) means, which could recover sources and facts. Indeed, the greater Josephus’ incompetence and the more ineffectual he was imagined to be as a compiler, the more useful he became for historians. How so?

It is beyond dispute that Josephus depended heavily on written sources and oral traditions, as we have seen. Even for the *War*, he was not present in the besieged Galilean/Gaulanite towns after Jotapata fell, or in Jerusalem or Masada; much less did he have direct knowledge of Judean politics before about 50 CE, when he turned 14. German scholars of the late nineteenth century became acutely sensitive to his

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<sup>50</sup> E.g., Rogers, *Topical Josephus*, 91, 129.

<sup>51</sup> An example is the influential Sanders, *Judaism*, where apparent confusions between Josephus’ story and history are frequent: pp. 92, 140–41, 380–85.

<sup>52</sup> H. W. Attridge, “Josephus and his Works,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. E. Stone (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 185–232.

<sup>53</sup> L. H. Feldman, “Use, Authority and Exegesis of Mikra in the Writings of Josephus,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder and H. Sysling (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 455–518.

changes in diction, seeming redundancies or doublets, awkward editorial remarks, or apparent contradictions, and cited these as proof of editorial seams: places where Josephus had tried to bond his disparate sources together.<sup>54</sup> They contended that he took over his sources with such a lack of comprehension, skill, and editorial intervention that we can still recover them, to a large degree, by peeling off his meager additions. Identifying the clumsy joins would allow specialists to undo them, recreating Josephus' own desktop,<sup>55</sup> as it were. Therefore, irrespective of Josephus' own competencies, not to mention his morals, one could use him with great profit as transmitter of facts.

This approach was widely paralleled at the time in the criticism of classical authors such as Polybius, Diodorus, and Livy, and in the source and form criticism of Old Testament and New Testament texts. It seemed particularly promising in the case of Josephus, a parochial Judean priest and Pharisee (as it was thought), whose native language was Aramaic, and who was surely incapable of writing most of what has been transmitted under his name. By the time of Gustav Hölscher's 1916 essay for the Pauly-Wissowa *Realencyclopädie*,<sup>56</sup> it seemed reasonable to explain almost all of Josephus' writings on the basis of his sources, which he had retouched only lightly with editorial bridges. That most of these putative sources were "anonymous" only abetted the illusion of dealing in impersonal facts.

An expression of this approach commonly still found is the proposition that Josephus' editorial summary statements (e.g., about the influence of the Pharisees, which had so impressed Schürer) should be discounted for historical purposes because it was easy for him to skew those editorial remarks, whereas his more reliable source material comes through in the narrative itself, which he often took over bodily.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> So H. Bloch, *Die Quellen des Flavius Josephus in seiner Archäologie* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1968 [1879]); J. von Destinon, *Die Quellen des Flavius Josephus in der Jüd. Arch. Buch XII–XVII—Jüd. Krieg. Buch I* (Kiel: Lipsius, 1882), G. Hölscher, "Josephus," *PWRE* 18 (1916): 1934–2000. More recent examples of the method are D. R. Schwartz, "Josephus and Nicolaus on the Pharisees," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 14 (1983): 157–171; idem, *Agrippa 1: The Last King of Judea* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990), and R. Bergmeier, *Die Essener-Berichte des Flavius Josephus: Quellenstudien zu den Essentertexten im Werk des jüdischen Historiographen* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1993).

<sup>55</sup> The image is used by D. R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 2.

<sup>56</sup> Hölscher, "Josephus."

<sup>57</sup> Sanders, *Judaism*, 7; Grabbe, *Judaism*, 470–471.

A related principle for distinguishing gold from dross in Josephus holds that wherever he talks about his own life (especially in *War* 2–3 and *Life*) he should not be trusted, whereas in the narrative devoted to other matters he was usually a conscientious historian—i.e., preserving sources intact.<sup>58</sup> This is in effect another way of accepting Josephus' sources while setting aside his own contributions.

#### 1.4. *Composition, Language, and Fact*

Any simple programme for isolating facts in Josephus or disambiguating sources from the existing narrative faces problems related to the nature of the texts and also the problem of language. On the texts: it is an antecedent theoretical possibility that he used his sources as an anthologist would, binding them together with editorial seams and summaries but not otherwise touching them much. Anthologies existed in the Roman world, from Alexander Polyhistor's *On the Judeans* in the first century BCE to Eusebius' various compendia. In a few places Josephus has cross-references to an earlier writing that we do not possess, and some scholars took these as proof that he had carelessly taken over even such references from his sources.<sup>59</sup> Yet Josephus does not claim (as did Polyhistor and Eusebius) to be anthologizing, and several developments make it impossible to view him as an anything other than a writer-composer in the fullest sense.

First, in 1920 Richard Laqueur showed that the main disparities in Josephus' narratives are not well explained by recourse to different sources because those disparities are most evident in the two accounts of his own life story (in *War* 2–3 and the *Life*). In autobiography as in describing the Hasmoneans, Herods, and governors, Josephus plainly felt free to retell the same stories in dramatically different ways. Although Laqueur's explanation, that Josephus rewrote stories because of systematic changes in his loyalties later in life, is also impossible to maintain from the evidence, his essential point endures: Josephus (and not new sources) was chiefly responsible for these changes.

Second, since Laqueur's time many new resources have appeared to facilitate the study of Josephus' language. Among these are the *Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus* (1983) edited by K. H. Rengstorf,

<sup>58</sup> Williamson, *World of Josephus*, 302–3.

<sup>59</sup> These did not bother Eusebius, who matter-of-factly assumed that Josephus had written other books that did not survive: *Hist. Eccl.* 3.9.8.

studies of the manuscript tradition by Heinz Schreckenberg,<sup>60</sup> and the electronic databanks of the *Perseus Project* and *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*. Analysis of Josephus' language with the aid of these tools disallows at least the more extreme source-critical images of Josephus as mere copyist. For it emerges that across the range of his works, in spite of his experimentation with different styles, he writes with care and even artistry, consistent in his main preoccupations, key terminology, preferred phrases, literary devices, and historiography. In his magnificent paraphrase of the Bible (*Ant.* 1–11), where we know his ultimate source, Josephus has refashioned his material at macro- and micro-levels to reflect themes that pervade the whole work.<sup>61</sup> It is therefore not possible to recover his sources from his narratives, even if we know *that* he used sources, any more than it is possible to reconstitute the eggs from a cake.

If the nature of Josephus' narratives precludes the old supposition that we could recover sections of other writers in Josephus, a more general reflection on human language and historical method should caution us against hoping that we might find simple historical facts anywhere in literary texts. When we speak or write, we spin out an elaborate web of language, a world of discourse that is uniquely our own. In what I have written above, though I aspire to tell the truth, I have inevitably used my own conscious and unconscious forms of expression: a structure, diction, and syntax that have meaning for me. I may even have chosen a few expressions playfully, because of their significance for me, without expecting my envisaged readers to know that personal significance. At any rate, my language is no one else's; it is not objective, and it cannot merely reflect historical reality. The past furnishes no neutral language of its own, and every writer must interpret it in his or her own words.<sup>62</sup> Josephus is no different. The research tools mentioned above invite us to marvel at the depth and subtlety of

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<sup>60</sup> Schreckenberg, *Flavius-Josephus-Tradition*, 173.

<sup>61</sup> See C.T. Begg, *Josephus' Account of the Early Divided Monarchy* (*AJ* 8,212–420): *Rewriting the Bible* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993); idem, *Josephus' Story of the Later Monarchy* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000); L. H. Feldman, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); idem, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

<sup>62</sup> On the impossibility of neutral, unbiased language in contemporary newspaper reporting, see D. Okrent, "The War of the Words: A Dispatch from the Front Lines," *New York Times* ("Week in Review"), Sunday March 6, 2005.



his discourse. But this helps us not at all with the problem of recovering facts.<sup>63</sup>

An example will help to make these abstract considerations concrete. Pontius Pilate is an important figure for New Testament readers, who understandably wish to know what Josephus says about him. From a variety of independent sources (gospels and pastorals, Philo, Josephus, archaeology) we may be confident that Pilate had been the governor of Judea for a significant period—at least ten and perhaps eighteen years<sup>64</sup>—preceding Josephus' birth in 37 CE. (If he came in 19 CE, he was governor of Judea through Jesus' entire adult life.) Such a long tenure would have decisively shaped the atmosphere of Judean-Roman relations in which Josephus grew up. Yet in the *War* Josephus relates only two episodes from Pilate's long Judean career: one concerning the governor's introduction into Jerusalem of military standards bearing images of Caesar, the other involving his appropriation of temple funds to build an aqueduct for the city (2.169–177). Since these events occurred before Josephus' birth, he must have known them through traditions or sources from his parents' generation.

Careful examination of the *War*'s two episodes on Pilate, however, should give the historian pause. First, Josephus has thoroughly assimilated this figure to his larger narrative tendencies, which include the celebration of such Judean virtues as courage and endurance<sup>65</sup> and the portrayal of all Roman governors as low-level and unworthy “procurators”<sup>66</sup> (though they were “prefects,” reporting to the legates of Syria). Second, Josephus' diction throughout the two episodes is neither neutral nor self-evident, imposed by the events on a neutral observer, but is typical of his distinctive writing style: “huge disturbance” (ταραχή μεγίστη), “set [a disturbance] in motion” (κινέω), an event as spectacle or “sight” (ὄψις), “trampling on the laws” (πατέω... τοὺς νόμους), “representation [of an image]” (δείκηλον), “[the masses move] in close order” (ἀθρόος), “fall down prone” (καταπίπτω πρηνής), “hold out” (διακαρτερέω), “bare their swords” (γυμνῶ τὰ ξίφη), “incline [their necks]” (παρακλίνω), “transgress the law” (παραβαίνω τὸν νόμον),

<sup>63</sup> Helpful observations in a similar vein are made by J. S. McLaren, *Turbulent Times? Josephus and Scholarship on Judaea in the First Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 18, 67, 76–7, 179–218, though I find his solution difficult to pursue (264–288).

<sup>64</sup> See Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background*, 182–217.

<sup>65</sup> *War* 2.171; cf. 1.138.

<sup>66</sup> *War* 2.169; cf. 2.118.

and “calamity” (συμφορά). Most of these terms are unattested or rarely found before Josephus, and yet he uses them to shape his narrative in the desired directions: they are part of his meaning-charged lexicon.

Third, and most problematic, although the underlying substance of the two Pilate episodes appears quite different in kind—the first describing a provocative measure that occurred during a single night, the second a response to a public benefaction that must have required months at least—in the retelling Josephus has assimilated each story to the other. He achieves this partly by parallel structures: they both involve life-threatening protests by aggravated masses before Pilate and his soldiers, secret plans and signals, encirclements involving weapons, a hearing before the governor’s tribunal-platform (βῆμα), and fatal consequences. Josephus drives home this assimilation by repetitive diction in the two accounts: “disturbance,” “aggravation,” “rabble,” “prone,” “tribunal-platform,” “surrounding,” “concealed,” “sword,” “agreed signal,” “trampled.” This repetition is partly for the sake of dramatic irony: the concealed standards anticipate concealed weapons; the trampling of the laws leads to the physical trampling of Judeans; and whereas the Roman forces must train hard to remain in close order, the indignant Judean masses move in close order spontaneously; they also instinctively act “as if by an agreed signal,” whereas the soldiers need secret signals to be carefully planned. Our narrator has plainly fashioned the two episodes to convey a certain atmosphere.

Now, are these accounts reliable or unreliable? How may we extract from them a historical kernel? Where do the plain facts reside? If we ask what constitutes these accounts, what they are made of, there can be only one answer: Josephus’ creative language. It is not possible to remove his language—even “and” and “but” are carefully chosen and manipulated—to expose any neutral, historical core. When Josephus is removed from his narrative, no residue remains.

It seems obvious, if these examples may stand for the whole, that we can have little confidence in any supposition about the historical realities underlying Josephus’ artful accounts. In the Pilate stories of *War* he bends whatever material was at his disposal (it is no longer at ours!) to make his points. We may well have our suspicions: that the masses could lie motionless for five days and nights (2.171); that the long project of aqueduct-building—*Ant.* 18.60 blithely halves *War*’s 80 km. length—really sparked a single massive demonstration (on completion? at an initial public announcement?); or that this public work was

seen by everyone as misuse of temple funds. We may harbour *suspicions*, but we have no means of refining this story to produce what actually or probably happened: what exactly Pilate did and why, how he went about planning it, the local political conditions, and the reaction of leading figures in the Jerusalem establishment. We can neither embrace Josephus' story as fact nor excise his language, since we have no other language to substitute.

None of this deterred Schürer. He had the historical Pilate beginning his career with the standards episode (because it is the first of the two stories in Josephus), the masses besieging Pilate for five days and nights at his residence, Pilate's clever plan and signal, the Jews' defiance with bared necks, the shrieking mob protesting against the aqueduct, the concealed clubs, and the merciless beating of the people.<sup>67</sup> Although he related all this material from Josephus as if it were simple fact, Schürer became curiously guarded when he came to the New Testament episodes concerning Pilate, recognizing *their* limitations and biases.<sup>68</sup>

Now, we can confirm from contemporary literature (the gospels and Philo) and from a rare piece of material evidence—the *tiberieum* inscription from Caesarea—that there was a Pontius Pilatus in Judea under the principate of Tiberius. We can even confirm from the inscription and other indications that Pilate's title was "prefect," and not Josephus' "procurator." But what Pilate did during his long stay in Judea, and why he did it, the nature of his tenure as governor, are impossible to recover—even *here* where we have such independent evidence. For the vast majority of episodes in Josephus, where he is our sole source, there is *a fortiori* little or nothing we can know with confidence. People really did things in the first century, of course, and for various reasons, but for us today those facts exist only as refracted, sampled, interpreted, and structured within Josephus' world of discourse. Our situation is much like that of an audience for a historical film "inspired" by real events. We know *that* events lie behind the film but, in the absence of other information, we do not know where. Just as we would not walk up to a cinema screen and expect to draw out real objects and people, realizing that the film is a composition with its own integrity and criteria and different from the underlying reality,

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<sup>67</sup> Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 1:384–385.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:385.

so in Josephus' narratives we meet an artful production that is opaque in relation to underlying historical *realia*. Where other evidence of the back-story exists, we might have a chance to get behind Josephus, though the example of Pilate does not encourage great optimism even there.

The fundamental problem of Josephus' compositional art has usually been ignored by scholars eager to use his works for information about first-century Judea and New Testament backgrounds. In spite of occasional cautionary remarks about his biases, they still leave the impression that those biases might somehow be bypassed or evaporated off to leave a residue of fact. Josephus' narrative is assumed to present facts with the same neutrality of language as might be conveyed by "the colour blue"—something that all observers could agree on having seen if they had been present. If Josephus had been interested in describing the physical features of his characters, which could be indicated by relatively neutral terms, then we might indeed debate his accuracy. Did he accurately give the height of Titus or John of Gischala? Was he correct about their hair or eye colour? Did they carry the scars that he claimed? Like most other authors of his time, however, Josephus says not a word about such things. His history is mainly about interpreting the actions of his characters in terms of their motives, describing the outcomes, and offering explicit or implicit evaluation. Objective language for such portraiture does not exist. Therefore, there is no possibility of refining his narratives to produce neutral facts. Historians must proceed differently.

#### 1.5. "*Historical Accuracy, Reliability*"

To clarify the problem, it may be useful to unpack the category of Josephus' "historical reliability" into several discrete components. Others could be adduced, but these will suffice.

- a. Scenic elements that can be measured and described in the neutral language of size, shape, colour, and technical nomenclature. Did the places that Josephus mentions actually exist? The landscape features, buildings, and landmarks? Were the groups and institutions he mentions operative at the time to which he dates them? Can we confirm the existence of the persons he names along with the roles and titles he gives them?

- b. Events in general. Did a roughly parallel event happen where and when he claims? E.g., Did Pilate authorize an aqueduct for Jerusalem, or introduce offensive images into the city on military standards? Did Eleazar son of Ananias halt the temple sacrifice for foreigners (*War* 2.409–410)?
- c. Event details. Exactly who did what, when, and in relation to what other actions? (If Eleazar did halt the sacrifice for foreigners, how did he do it exactly—in consultation with whom, and by what process? What happened to the animals? Were there specific stimuli not mentioned by Josephus? What role did Eleazar’s opinion play in the decision: was it his initiative or a compromise with others? Was it planned as a permanent measure or a temporary protest?) Did Josephus know and/or divulge all or most of the relevant information that we would have known if we had been there? How can we know whether he did? Through Josephus or not, can we have any confidence that we have enough contextual information to assess what was done in relation to what else?
- d. Motives, values, and interests. If we could travel back in time and interview the actors whose names appear in the narrative, would they explain their intentions and values much as Josephus does? (If Eleazar halted the sacrifice, what was his aim in doing so? What were the aims of his associates and advisers? Were these all the same?) No matter what they said, should we believe either them or Josephus? (Do we believe our own politicians and business leaders when they explain their motives?) How can we know their actual motives, or extract these from Josephus?

If we separate out even these elements of the stories, we see immediately a problem with incommensurate categories. Whereas (d) constitutes the heart of Josephus’ history, and (c) provides a narrative basis for his moral evaluations, modern historians tend to speak almost exclusively about (a), with a dash of (b), when they declare him “credible” or “reliable.”<sup>69</sup> That is because only material in (a) and to some

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<sup>69</sup> E.g., M. Broshi, “The Credibility of Josephus,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33 (1982): 379–384; M. Aviam, “Yodefāt/Jotapata: The Archaeology of the first Battle,” in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology*, ed. A. M. Berlin and J. A. Overman (New York: Routledge, 2002), 121–133; D. Dyon, “Gamla: City of Refuge,” in *First Jewish Revolt*, ed. Berlin and Overman, 134–153.

extent (b) can easily be verified by archaeology, which has become since the 1960's the primary basis for confirming Josephus' "trustworthiness."

But if Josephus can be proven largely correct about the physical realities of his homeland—distances between familiar places, landscape features, major Herodian structures—that only puts him on the level of a good historical novelist. Even the fairly spectacular finds at Gamala and Jotapata, which confirm that the inhabitants tried to reinforce the walls before being overrun by the Romans,<sup>70</sup> cannot prove his accounts of who did what, when, and *why*—the stuff of his history. We may not say: he was right about the scenic elements and *therefore* he was probably right about the history itself. Given that his narratives are woven from his own linguistic and conceptual threads, what could it mean to declare them either "reliable" or "inaccurate"? We are not able to assume Josephus' world-view, perspective, prejudices, and language, even if we wished to do so. It is therefore meaningless to say that we either affirm or reject these accounts. We can only try to understand them.

Since critics do not often explain how they find reliable material in Josephus, it seems that most often they trust their instincts, accepting a story against the criterion: "Why would he make up something like this?" But instinct is of little use in historical scholarship, which requires us to describe our reasoning so that our steps may be traced by others examining the same evidence. Instinct cannot be reproduced, and it is also contra-indicated by the evidence of Josephus. Almost any given story in *War*, about the Hasmoneans or Herods or Josephus in Galilee, may seem plausible enough within that narrative. Josephus wrote in order to be plausible. Yet of the hundreds of episodes in *Antiquities-Life* that represent retellings of stories from the *War*, almost all have been significantly changed—with respect to date, immediate context, numbers and amounts, *dramatis personae*, and motives.<sup>71</sup> When read on their own, the later stories too seem plausible. But two contradictory narratives cannot accurately reflect the

<sup>70</sup> See the essays by Aviam and Syon in previous note.

<sup>71</sup> A quick impression of the problems may be gained from Appendix C in S. Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary*. Vol. 9 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. S. Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2001).—S. J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), explores the problems in great detail. See further section 3 below.

same events. Josephus' freedom in *retelling* suggests a comparable freedom in the *first* telling, which should make us doubt *any and all* accounts.

In some important recent studies, intuition has been brought to bear upon apparent *contradictions* in the narrative: where Josephus contradicts his narrative interests, it is proposed, he must be preserving a reliable fact, for although he would have a satisfactory motive (in his historian's conscience) for including factual material that stood in some tension with his literary aims, he would have no motive for introducing false information to undermine his agenda.<sup>72</sup> The problem here is that identifying what contradicts Josephus' biases assumes an adequate account of those biases, whereas the contradictions proposed by these studies often turn out to be minor or contrapuntal themes within Josephus' highly textured narratives.<sup>73</sup>

Alas, the widely shared hope of transforming one kind of material (Josephus' artful narrative) into something quite different (real human actions and their motives) has more to do with alchemy than with history. Whether we are interested in the events themselves or content ourselves with Josephus' sources, the urgency of our *need to know* does nothing to remove the problem that we have no reasonable way of recovering these things from Josephus.

## 2. *Josephus and the New Testament Narratives as Parallel, Crafted Stories*

Although the traditional Christian use of Josephus and the modern humanist sequel had very different philosophical underpinnings, they shared two important features. First, they depended upon, and trusted, Josephus to transmit reliable, more or less ready-made facts. Reading Josephus and doing history were parts of the same operation, even if one conceded that not everything in Josephus was factual. Second, paradoxically, in spite of their eager and comprehensive embrace of

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<sup>72</sup> Especially M. D. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome AD 66–70* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 20–21 and J. J. Price, *Jerusalem under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State, 66–70 CE* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 33, 186.

<sup>73</sup> See S. Mason, "Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome: Reading on and Between the Lines," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 559–589.

Josephus, neither model had the slightest interest in what Josephus actually wrote about: stories with beginnings, middles, ends, plots, and characters. As recently as 1988, in a thoroughly researched conspectus of Josephus studies Per Bilde was unable to cite much if any scholarship concerning the aims, structures, and dominant themes of Josephus' two major works.<sup>74</sup> So much *use*; so little reading! This shocking state of affairs highlighted the prepossessions of both traditional and modern scholarship.

Bilde himself was a significant catalyst in bringing about a new view of Josephus—as a competent and even sophisticated author.<sup>75</sup> This view has inescapable consequences for the project of doing history with Josephus, for if his narratives are wholly crafted artistic compositions, requiring interpretation, then historical reconstruction must be fully decoupled from *reading*, and become an entirely distinct intellectual exercise. This is not to say that the interpreter does not already have historical questions in mind—while reading. As in reading any text, we always maintain a dialectic between the words and the things to which the words refer, as a stimulus to interpretation. But attending to one story about the past, such as Josephus', is a different enterprise from reconstructing that past in itself; the latter task is driven not by any narrator's interests but by the investigator's questions, and hypotheses, and systematic interpretation. A new view of Josephus and history has necessarily reframed the subset problem of using Josephus for New Testament study.

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<sup>74</sup> P. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus Between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, His Works and Their Importance* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988), 71, 92, 102, 118.

<sup>75</sup> An early work respecting Josephus' literary talents, which unfortunately had little impact on English-language scholarship at least, was B. Brüne, *Flavius Josephus und seine Schriften in ihrem Verhältnis zum Judentume, zur griechisch-römischen Welt und zum Christentume, mit griechischer Wortkonkordanz zum Neuen Testamente und I. Clemensbriefe nebst Sach- und Namenverzeichnis* (Wiesbaden: M. Sändig, 1969 [1913]). Henry St. John Thackeray also stood back from source-critical ambitions in his famous published lectures, H. St. John Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian* (New York: Ktav, 1967 [1929]). He still removed the narratives from Josephus' authorial control, however, with his theory that industrious literary assistants were responsible for the *War* and the last quarter of the *Antiquities*. Other crucial works before Bilde, which in various ways portended the shift of scholarly interest, included H. Lindner, *Die Geschichtsauffassung des Flavius Josephus im Bellum Judaicum* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), H. W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), and T. Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 1983).



The scholar who arguably did the most to force the question of doing history with Josephus was Horst Moehring of Brown University. Already in his 1957 Chicago dissertation he showed that the novelistic-erotic elements that had already been found in Josephus' biblical paraphrase,<sup>76</sup> which could have come only from the author and not from his sources because they matched larger tendencies throughout the *Antiquities*, persevered also in the narratives of the Herodian period and first century CE (*War* 1–2; *Ant.* 14–18). Josephus was, therefore, truly the author of the works that bear his name.

Moehring reflected that since Josephus fashioned these later narratives, which had usually been considered "historical," with as much art as he had applied to the biblical paraphrase, we must accept that his narratives are literary creations with no necessary connections to what actually happened.<sup>77</sup> In a review discussing the work of a scholar who had attempted to wring historical facts from Josephus, albeit in a fairly sophisticated way, Moehring declared: "every single sentence of Josephus is determined and coloured by his aims and tendencies... To assume that what Josephus added to the facts is fiction merely indicates a complete misunderstanding of Hellenistic historiography."<sup>78</sup> And in his own major essay on Josephus' exploration of Judean-Roman relations, for *Aufstieg und Niedergang* (1984), Moehring would similarly caution: "It is entirely useless to make any attempts to separate in Josephus any supposedly 'objective' passages from any supposedly 'subjective' interpretations."<sup>79</sup> His position was a forthright repudiation of the fact/value distinction that had been the defining characteristic of modern historiography since Ranke.

Welcoming Josephus into the ranks of real authors, and the resulting radical separation between the task of his interpreters and that of historians finally catches up with some basic insights of many related disciplines: philosophy of language, hermeneutics, literary criticism, and philosophy of history. We lack the space to explore these here, but the question of historical method is crucial. As R. G. Collingwood (among others) observed, anyone who systematically ponders history

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<sup>76</sup> M. Braun, *Griechischer Roman und hellenistische Geschichtschreibung* (Frankfurt a.M.: V. Klostermann, 1934).

<sup>77</sup> H. R. Moehring, *Novelistic Elements in the Writings of Flavius Josephus* (Ph.D. thesis, Faculty of the Division of the Humanities, University of Chicago, 1957), 64, 87, 144.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 241.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 868.

soon realizes that the historian cannot be in the business of taking some existing tailored account and declaring it accurate or inaccurate as it stands—or even in part. That would amount to another form of knowledge via authority. Even were the authoritative text treated critically, it would remain the source for—and therefore circumscribe the boundaries of—all possible knowledge about the events in question. Its concerns would become our concerns.

Collingwood argued rather that the historian, like an investigating detective, begins with a carefully formulated problem of his (or her) own. The historian's task is to assemble all relevant evidence, literary or material, and first understand that evidence in its own context. What were this author's aims and interests? Why does he/she include any information about the problem I am investigating? What sort of access did this person have to the people and events in which I am interested? What language does he/she use for these events, and why? Only when all the evidence is thus understood *in situ* is the detective-historian in a position to test hypotheses that might explain how the range of evidence came into being: what actually happened. History is therefore a fully autonomous exercise, in keeping with the spirit of the Enlightenment, *not* a mere christening of some traditional accounts as (more or less) "accurate."<sup>80</sup>

With the 1990's, after the Josephus *Concordance* and the first forms of electronic textual-analysis tools had appeared, came a number of efforts to work out the principle that Josephus and the New Testament are parallel corpora, which should be read first and foremost for their literary and rhetorical structures. Gregory Sterling's revised dissertation on historiography and self-definition in Josephus and Luke-Acts (1992) explored the parallels of genre—"apologetic historiography"—between these two important Jewish and Christian authors. Sterling was interested much more in the forms and functions of the compositions than in the external referents or underlying events. His was a truly historical study all the same, but with history now including the contexts and conditions of literary production.

Also in 1992 came Lester Grabbe's two-volume reference work, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. Although he did not write for New Testament scholars in particular, Grabbe was responding directly to the positivist reference-work tradition embodied by Schürer. Rejecting

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<sup>80</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976 [1946]), 256–257.

any naïve quest for historical facts in the sources, his work distinguishes itself by its method. Whereas Schürer's procedure had been to list the primary sources and bibliography, and then move quickly to an ostensibly reliable historical narrative, Grabbe's configuration reflected his keen sensitivity to problems of method. For each period he touched upon (through seven centuries), he first presented a bibliographical guide and then a description of each kind of primary evidence in context: its aims, themes, and character. With this preliminary understanding of the evidence in hand, he specified the historical issues relevant to the period in question that seemed to demand resolution. One can follow here all the stages of historical inquiry: circumscribing the investigation, gathering evidence, understanding it *in situ*, and posing specific problems. Only with these steps completed did Grabbe attempt to work out historical hypotheses that would solve the problems and explain the evidence.

The methodological chasm separating Grabbe's method from Schürer's is evident in his willingness to concede, at the end of several attempts at synthesis, that the evidence does not permit us to state with any confidence what happened.<sup>81</sup> The message is clear: historical work is not merely or even primarily about determining facts. Even where we cannot reach that ultimate goal, the process itself becomes a goal. Interpreting texts and material evidence responsibly is a fundamental historical exercise, though it is conceptually different from trying to verify events mentioned in the ancient texts.

Like Schürer, Grabbe realized the unique importance of Josephus for Judean history and devoted special space to him in the Introduction. But his method was different in principle. With an eye on Schürer he remarked that, "the Jewish historian's works have often been misused and cited without actually being read."<sup>82</sup> Unfortunately, Grabbe's important study fell short in exploring the character of Josephus' narratives in the depth suggested by his Introduction, especially in one significant chapter.<sup>83</sup> Still, his work marked a conceptual shift in dealing with the nature of the evidence and the problem of history.

Still another product of 1992 was the first edition of my *Josephus and the New Testament*. I aimed to introduce the New Testament reader to Josephus in keeping with the sort of methodological considerations

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<sup>81</sup> E.g., Grabbe, *Judaism*, 93, 98, 111, 268, 281.

<sup>82</sup> Grabbe, *Judaism*, 10.

<sup>83</sup> The admirable method is abandoned in ch. 8 (e.g., Grabbe, *Judaism*, 468–482).

indicated above. Of the six chapters, accordingly, the first three were devoted to Josephus alone, on his own terms and for his own sake: his use in western tradition, his life story, and an overview of each composition. My point was that it is impossible to use any part of Josephus for other purposes, including New Testament interpretation, if one does not first have some idea of what the part means in light of the whole. Each element of Josephus' narratives was there to serve some larger interests, which must be understood before the item can be "used."

The latter three chapters took up, within that framework, issues prompted by New Testament study: figures important in the New Testament world, early Christian figures mentioned by Josephus, and the relationship between Josephus and Luke-Acts. Also in this latter half I wanted to present Josephus' works not as a source of historical data that could be plucked out by New Testament readers, but as contemporary, parallel narratives of extraordinary interest, that (taken as a whole) opened up new possibilities for understanding the New Testament and its world. The historical realities underlying the texts I mainly left untouched, though in a couple of cases (e.g., with John the Baptist) I undertook a preliminary historical probe as an illustration of how such an inquiry might look—if one first paid attention to all relevant narratives. My overriding argument was that reading Josephus and the New Testament contextually, irrespective of the facts referred to in the stories, is already enlightening historical work.

The method employed in *Josephus and the New Testament* was continuous with my earlier, more technical study of Josephus' Pharisees (1991). That book argued that historical claims about the Pharisees, which had proliferated for more than a century and which were often contradictory, should await a reasonable grasp of *Josephus'* portraits of the group. Rather than drawing out his statement that Pharisees were "reputed to be the most precise interpreters of the laws" and taking it as Josephus' obvious endorsement, for example, I tried to show that in context this Josephan language had other connotations. Sayings of Josephus were not independent data to be used at will, but components of a story. Others had already examined the Pharisees in rabbinic literature and in each of the gospels and Acts, but characteristically Josephus had not yet been thought worthy of *interpretation*. Scholars were still using his narratives as if they were immune from standard principles of language and historiography.

Jacob Neusner had much earlier paved the way for such a treatment of the Pharisees with a small textbook (1973) that first surveyed each

text's portrait on its own terms; he was followed by Anthony Saldarini (1988) and Günter Stemberger (1991 [ET 1995]).<sup>84</sup> Such an approach is rapidly becoming *de rigueur* in studying figures and events from the New Testament period. The scholar first interprets each of the relevant narratives (or pieces of material evidence if available), only then proceeding to historical problems and hypotheses that might explain the whole range of evidence.

A promising field for such comparison between Josephus and the earliest Christian texts that I did not include in my book is his elaborate biblical interpretation. About a third of Josephus' corpus (*Ant.* 1–11 and several sections of *Against Apion*) is given over to biblical interpretation: the laws or “constitution” given by Moses and events in ancient Israel/Judah. This material has been the subject of intense and highly illuminating analysis over several decades, chiefly by Louis H. Feldman and Christopher Begg.<sup>85</sup> Although the use of scripture is of course a basic issue for the study of Christian origins, Josephus' biblical paraphrase has rarely been brought to bear on New Testament interpretation. It is odd that the enigmatic Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as Philo's abstruse allegories, should seem more relevant for New Testament scholars than Josephus' compelling and systematic reinterpretation.

Another large arena for comparative-narrative analysis includes the social, economic, and political history of first-century Judea and Galilee: the social structures of Jerusalem and the Galilean towns and villages, pre-war conditions in these places, the identity of the Galileans, *sicarii*, and countless others. Although these questions have of course been taken up in many reference works since Schürer, as also in recent studies of Galilean and Judean society, the use of Josephus still tends toward the positivistic. Instead of using his narrative as background, or passing critical judgement on the truth or falsity of his claims, I am proposing something different: trying to enter his narrative world in order to understand how the players, places, and events function

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<sup>84</sup> E. Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution* (Nashville: Abington, 1978) should also be mentioned as a formal model of the procedure, though in execution he tended strongly toward assimilation of all the texts to his theory of the Pharisees.

<sup>85</sup> Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation*; idem, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible*; idem, *Judean Antiquities 1–4*. Vol. 3 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. S. Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Begg, *Josephus' Account*; idem, “Solomon's Apostasy (1 Kgs. 11,1–13) According to Josephus,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 28 (1997): 294–313; idem, *Judean Antiquities 5–7*. Vol. 4 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. S. Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

within his stories, and how they would have been understood by his first readers. His perspectives<sup>86</sup> on the phenomena described above are, again, not facts but ingredients of a world-view that merits close consideration before one asks about the historical phenomena themselves.

### 3. *Rhetoric and Historiography in Josephus and the New Testament*

The ways in which scholars have sought to illuminate the study of the New Testament with the help of Josephus, described thus far, may be schematized as follows. In antiquity and the Middle Ages, he was regarded as a prestigious and approved guide:

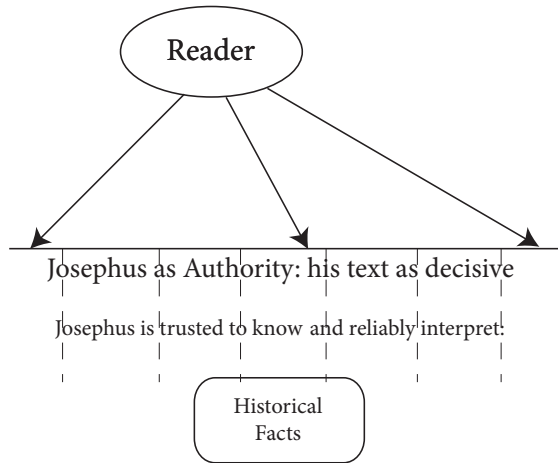


Figure 1

In the post-Enlightenment period, it was not Josephus' prestige but the facts and sources he was thought to transmit that established his value. Scholars imagined they could read *through* Josephus to realities beyond the text—events and sources:

<sup>86</sup> A preliminary effort for some of these issues is S. Mason, "Chief Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees and Sanhedrin in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. Bauckham, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 115–77.

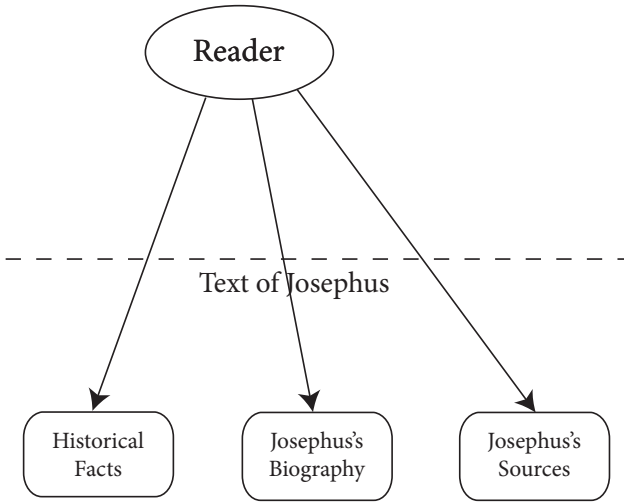


Figure 2

More recently, careful study of Josephus' narratives has rendered them largely opaque (in the absence of other evidence) to underlying realities, generating the increasingly accepted principle that interpreting Josephus and reconstructing history are distinct operations, the former being a necessary condition of the latter:

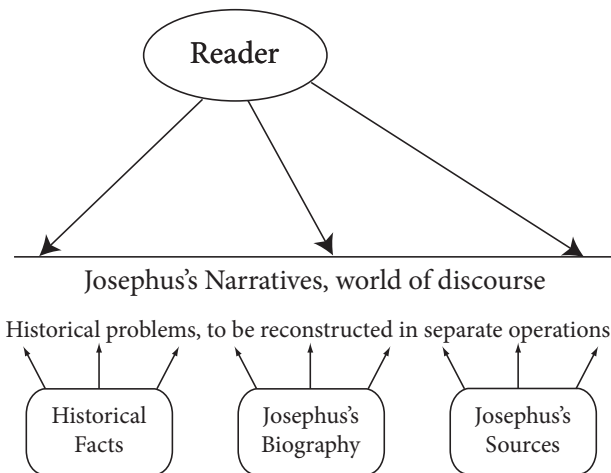


Figure 3

In this final section I would like to propose yet another model, which (following the same visual logic) might look like this:

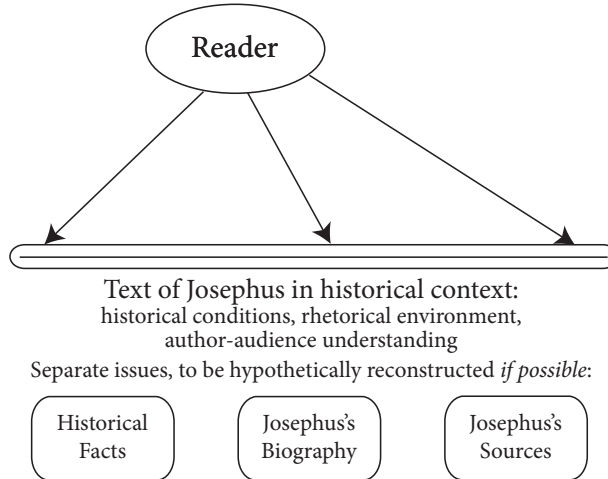


Figure 4

This is a significant refinement of the approach described in the previous section. There, the investigator was still focused ultimately on the events recounted in Josephus' narratives, but the problem of interpreting Josephus was recognized as a major obstacle. The New Testament reader interested in Pontius Pilate, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the temple leadership, or Herod's descendants had first to understand the functions of these groups and individuals in Josephus (as in each relevant text) before proceeding to a hypothetical reconstruction. But a further realignment of scholarly interests may turn out to be more productive for New Testament and Josephus scholars alike.

Three questions prompt this kind of refinement, namely: What is a text? What is historical? And what (from Josephus) will be most useful for New Testament study?

Just as facts do not speak for themselves, neither do texts. A text is a *medium*, a set of codes created by an author to communicate with specific envisaged audiences. Neutral, self-interpreting texts are inconceivable. Most obviously, the author must choose a language (Greek, Aramaic, English, Chinese) and a dialect of it that the envisaged audience will know. And that is only the beginning of the decisions: the



author must then choose the pitch or register (e.g., high-literary, middle-brow, vernacular), the attitude or tone (e.g., dispassionate, passionate), the voice (omniscient observer, participant), the vocabulary (challenging, varied, neologistic; fashionably contemporary, evocative of classics; plain, emotive, highly symbolic; repetitive, formulaic), and the syntax—for example—that will reach particular audiences in desired ways if communication is to succeed. An important consideration is the audience's prior knowledge and value systems: What will need to be explained? At what point might explanation become condescending? What will make them laugh or shock them? What can be evoked (and with how much effort, or by what techniques?), possibly by way of satire or irony? All texts are media of communication, and Josephus is no exception.

We have seen (section 1) that Josephus composed in the first instance for audiences where he lived, in Flavian Rome.<sup>87</sup> Given the function of the text as medium between author and audience, we need a new kind of investigation of his narratives as themselves historical events: as transactions between author and audience (signaled in the diagram above by the penumbra around the text line). We are in a fairly promising position to learn about the political, social, and literary environment in Flavian Rome during the Flavian period (70 to 96 CE), through material and literary remains.<sup>88</sup> Once we abandon a textual fundamentalism that would expect a text to be all-sufficient and self-interpreting, once we take seriously its function as medium of communication with a real audience, the text may come alive again for us. Such dynamic analysis opens our imagination to literary devices understood by author and audience, unspoken cues and allusions that may have been more effective than a static reading of the text would suggest. Whereas a static reading of Josephus, as if his works were intended to be all-sufficient statements for all possible readers, predisposes us to lament his obscurities and contradictions, reading his works as transactions with Flavian audiences puts things in a different light. We

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<sup>87</sup> For Josephus' audience: S. Mason, "Of Audience and Meaning: Reading Josephus' *Bellum Iudaicum* in the Context of Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus Between Jerusalem and Rome*, ed. J. Sievers and G. Lembi (Leiden: Brill, 2005): 71–100.

<sup>88</sup> A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik, eds., *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), and J. S. Edmondson, S. Mason and J. B. Rives, eds., *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) begin to gather this evidence.

need, in brief, to recover and re-enter the rhetoricized mentality of first-century Rome.

Admittedly, such a reorientation of our historical interests from underlying facts to the world of the text makes a virtue of necessity. Even in our own time we find it difficult or impossible to assess the motives of politicians, entertainers, and other celebrities. Investigations of recent crimes, even where copious evidence appears to exist, often seem unable to determine what really happened, and carefully mounted prosecutions fail. How, then, shall we claim to know with probability who did what and why *two millennia ago*, on the basis of a single artful interpretation of sources unknown? Although we ought certainly to try where it is feasible to reconstruct specific phenomena from the past, a reorientation from the events behind the texts to the historical world of the text will pay dividends for the New Testament reader as for other students of antiquity.

Let me offer four examples of the ways in which the study of Josephus' historical world might be beneficial for the New Testament reader: architectonic literary structure, paraphrastic freedom, serious playfulness, and loyalty to patrons. Although countless other ancient texts also afford access to the ancient assumptions and values involved here, Josephus' proximity in time and interest makes his narratives particularly helpful for the New Testament reader.

### 3.1. *Architectonic Literary Structure*

Rhetoric, which was the pinnacle of the ancient educational system and which provided the orientation also for lower-level study, was grounded in a combination of memory, imitation, and mental versatility.<sup>89</sup> In a literary culture that was still to a large extent oral and aural, techniques for memorization of large bodies of material had wide currency. A basic principle was to organize one's mental material as the rooms of a large house, with resources of a similar kind kept in a given

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<sup>89</sup> Excellent recent studies are J. P. Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997), R. Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), and N. T. Habinek, *Ancient Rhetoric and Oratory*, Blackwell Introductions to the Classical World (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005).

room or place (*locus* or *topos*), to which one could then resort as needed to draw them out for the purpose of persuasive argument.<sup>90</sup>

This architectural visualization of literature, coupled with the Greek and Roman taste for symmetry, suggested a technique for patterning literary-rhetorical creations, especially narratives and plays. The text would develop gradually towards a central pivot or fulcrum and then move away from it, so that the end balanced the beginning. A writer might structure the progression more or less densely, the degree of “concentricity” depending upon the number of parallel stops along the way. Josephus displays an awareness of the principle when he recalls in the prologue to the *Antiquities* (1.6–7) that he opted not to include the ancient history of the Judeans in the *War* because he wished to balance off (συμμετρέω) the *beginnings and end* of that work proportionately.

Each of his compositions, it turns out, is constructed around a pivotal episode, with matching beginning and end as well as parallel interim stops. In the *War* the central panel is the murder of the chief priests Ananus and Jesus in Jerusalem (4.314–333), which Josephus makes the decisive turn toward tyranny and banditry in the city. In the *Antiquities* the centre is the destruction of the first temple at the end of book 10, which anticipates the eve of the second destruction in book 20. In the *Life*, the central panel is that book’s only dream revelation to Josephus (208–209), which persuades him to stay and care for the Galileans. In the *Apion*, the end of book 1 and beginning of book 2 comprise his defence against Egyptian-Alexandrian writers, bounded on either side by the positive celebration of Judean culture. Although I lack the space to show it here, each work reveals also a fuller pattern of concentricity, with the two extremities and various points in between matched symmetrically in the two halves.<sup>91</sup>

As is well known, each of the gospels reveals comparable structural concerns. This is perhaps most easily noticeable in John, where the raising of Lazarus in chapter 11 is pivotal to the work in many respects, and in the two-volume Luke-Acts, in which the steady movement toward Jerusalem throughout the gospel (since Luke 9:51), the scene of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension (Luke 24/Acts 1), is

<sup>90</sup> Small, *Wax Tablets*, 81–116; Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 166–167.

<sup>91</sup> See the third chapter of S. Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992; rev. ed. 2003).

matched by the deliberate move away from that centre in Acts (e.g., 1:8). Peter's confession in Mark 8:27–30, after which the mood of the narrative sharply changes in anticipation of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, more or less bisects that story. And Matthew 13 hosts the third of that gospel's five concentrically patterned speeches. In none of these cases does the concentric structure necessarily dictate the work's primary *meaning*, for other structures, including the dramatic development to a climax nearer the end, are intertwined with it. Josephus' works illustrate, nonetheless, the ways in which a Greek-speaking author contemporary with the evangelists could overlay multiple structural patterns.

In addition to such macro-structures in his compositions, Josephus frequently uses micro-structures within units, such as the A-B-A pattern. This can have several functions, for example: to introduce or seed a character, group, or theme, that will become more important later, or to build suspense. A striking example of the latter comes in *War* 2, where Josephus begins the story of King Herod's succession hearings before Augustus in Rome, but then abruptly breaks off the narrative to describe in detail the revolt of 4 BCE in Judea, before returning to conclude the succession hearings (*War* 2.1–100). Such patterns are well known in both Paul (e.g., 1 Cor 8–9–10) and the gospels—especially in the famous Marcan “sandwich” technique.

### 3.2. *Paraphrastic Freedom*

An axiom of rhetorical training was that one should never tell the same story twice in the same way. The prime directive in the art of persuasion was not to bore audiences, and the chief prophylactic against boredom was variety: of voice pitch and volume in speeches; of content, person, location, perspective, diction, and style in writing. The standard preparatory exercises in rhetoric included many forms of manipulating an episode or saying (*chreia*): rewriting it in each grammatical case-set; rebuttal and confirmation of its moral position; the application of encomium and invective to various behaviours; and—what interests us most—rewriting (παράφρασις).

The rhetorical handbooks (e.g., Theon, *Prog.* 62–64, 107–110; Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.9.2; 10.5.4–11) explain paraphrase as “changing the form of expression while keeping the thoughts.” According to Theon of Alexandria, one might do this in four ways: change of syntax, addition of words and phrases, subtraction and substitution of the same.

Although this may appear to be a fairly conservative undertaking (“keeping the thoughts”), we have numerous examples of the ways in which sayings, incidents, and stories were actually retold, and these reveal substantial differences of location, date, persons involved, and forms of sayings. Plainly, maxims and *chreiai* were heavily worked over for manifold uses, attributed to different individuals and contexts.<sup>92</sup> Among historically sensitive writers, Plutarch provides much material for us to track different versions—sometimes *very* different—of the same material as he reused it in his biographies and moral essays.<sup>93</sup>

Josephus is perhaps more directly relevant to the New Testament reader because he rewrote entire narratives from the *War* in the *Antiquities-Life*. Hardly any of the rewriting is verbatim, and much of it matches Theon’s four techniques for changing a story while keeping to the same thoughts. Yet there are also major differences between *War* and *Antiquities-Life*, as I have mentioned above. It may be helpful to consider one example, because it intersects with the concern for concentric structure just discussed.

In *War* 2.614–625, Josephus relates how the people of Tiberias revolted from his leadership at the instigation of his arch-rival John of Gischala. At the end of that story, Josephus (the character in the story) gathers the names of John’s followers and threatens their families and property if they do not yield to him (*War* 2.624–625); this produces thousands of defections and leads directly to John’s appeal to Jerusalem for help against Josephus (*War* 2.626), which produces a delegation from Jerusalem to oust him. When Josephus retells this episode in his *Life*, however, he clones it so that *two* very similar Tiberias-revolt stories now appear: at the one-quarter and three-quarter points of the narrative, respectively (*Life* 85–103, 271–308), thus enhancing the volume’s symmetry. The first part of *War*’s story (2.614–619) finds a close match to the first Tiberian revolt in the *Life* (85–103). Between the two *Life* stories, the *dramatis personae*, dramatic details, diction, and denouement are conspicuously similar. But the rounding up of John’s followers described in the single *War* story cannot occur at story of the

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<sup>92</sup> V. K. Robbins, *Ancient Quotes and Anecdotes: From Crib to Crypt* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1978); Criore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 238; C. Pelling, *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* (London: Routledge, 2000), 49–52.

<sup>93</sup> See Pelling (previous note).

first revolt in the *Life*, for John still has a large role to play there. It occurs instead near the end of the *Life* (369–372), *after* the delegation from Jerusalem has come and failed, and long after the first Tiberian revolt (85–103), appearing now as a delayed consequence of the *second* revolt (271–308).

Thus, what the *War* describes in a single episode would cause problems for the story line in the *Life*, and *Life*'s two revolts could not fit in the *War*. Evidently Josephus has, for literary reasons, split one conflict into two for the later work. This bifurcation illustrates the lengths to which even a conscientious historian could go to sustain literary patterns.

This is not the place to rehearse the many differences among the synoptic gospels' accounts of parallel events: famously, Jesus' birth, trial, and resurrection, but also hundreds of smaller details. I wish only to suggest that the rhetorical mindset of ancient authors, illustrated by Josephus' sometimes radical reworking of stories, might provide fruitful ways of thinking about the literary assumptions and values of the New Testament writers.

### 3.3. *Serious Playfulness*

The study of Josephus as narrative is only now at a point that was reached by scholarship on many other classical and biblical texts decades ago, namely: taking his compositions seriously enough to look for their structures, ongoing themes, characteristic phrasing, and literary devices. The mere recognition that Josephus should be read in earnest has been a long time coming. But almost immediately after gaining that summit, we begin to realize that writing in ancient Rome was *not* entirely earnest, that rhetorical training inculcated—even for the most serious discussions—a sort of playfulness with words. Ancient speakers and their educated audiences were much more attuned than we normally are to the possibilities of language for figures of speech and particularly for double meaning, irony, and sarcasm.<sup>94</sup> In the case

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<sup>94</sup> E.g., F. Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," *American Journal of Philology* 105 (1984): 174–208; S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); V. Rudich, *Political Dissidence under Nero: The Price of Dissimulation* (London: Routledge, 1993); idem, *Dissidence and Literature under Nero: The Price of Rhetoricization* (London: Routledge, 1997); W. J. Dominik and J. Garthwaite, *Writing Politics in Imperial Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); S. Mason, "Figured Speech and Irony in the

of the New Testament, although scholars have explored linguistic play and irony in some texts (notably in John), the great burden of the scholarly and theological traditions still predisposes readers to look always for earnest ideas and propositions. Perhaps the coming of age in Josephus studies can have a beneficial effect also here for New Testament study.

Space permits only a few examples of the sort of thing that Josephus can do with language. In the *Life* as a whole, as in parts of his other works, he establishes an ironic context from the start: the Jerusalem leaders know that Rome cannot be defeated, but they also know that it is futile or dangerous to oppose the masses when they desire war, and so they embark on a deliberate programme of doublespeak: thinking one thing but saying another (*Life* 17–22). Some of the ways in which this plays out are humorous for the knowing reader, for example in the interplay between Josephus and the Jerusalem delegation as they exchange diplomatic letters with each other that try to mask their true intentions (*Life* 216–31). More abstractly, throughout his works Josephus deploys to great effect the Platonic contrast between what merely seems or appears to be the case (one kind of appearances in the petty grasping after *titles* by tyrants and pretenders) and what *really is* the case (e.g., the lack of authority exercised by titled rulers) (*War* 1.110–112, 209, 561, 648; 2.2, 208; *Ant.* 17.41; 19.332; *Apion* 1.18, 67).

On a different level, Josephus enjoys playing with various meanings of the same word, sometimes picking up a term, reusing it in different ways, and then dropping it.<sup>95</sup> Again, he has fun—even in serious contexts—with people’s names. So, the two most disreputable and faithless leaders of Tiberias (*Life* 35–36) are *Justus* and his father *Pistus* (“righteous” and “faithful”). A crooked viceroy is named *Varus* (“twisted, crooked”), who is replaced by a sort of white knight, *Aequus Modius* (“fair measure”) (*Life* 61).

New Testament scholars are familiar with similar devices in gospels, from Matthew’s plays on *genesis* in the birth narratives (Matt 1:1, 18) to the ironic situation established by the authoritative prologue to John (1:1–18), which exposes many subsequent speakers as foolish or

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Works of T. Flavius Josephus,” forthcoming in Edmondson, Mason and Rives, *Flavius Josephus*.

<sup>95</sup> Just one example: δημοσιόω appears only twice in all of Josephus, once meaning publication of a book (*Life* 363) and a few sentences later (*Life* 370) meaning the confiscation of property—two very different kinds of “making public.”

mendacious. The seeming/being contrast comes to the fore in numerous places, not least in Paul's disparaging description of the Jerusalem leaders as "those who (merely?) appear to be something" (Gal 2:6) and throughout Hebrews. As for names: it seems that Paul is having some serious fun at Apollos' expense when he finds a biblical passage in which God threatens (in Greek translation), "I will destroy (*ἀπολω*) the wisdom of the wise" (1 Cor 1:19).<sup>96</sup>

### 3.4. *Patronage and Loyalty*

The last area I shall mention in which Josephus' works may throw light on the New Testament texts has to do with questions of patronage and loyalty. Nowadays most New Testament readers know something of how important social networks were in the Roman world, and of the mainly unwritten system of benefactions flowing from the more to the less powerful, in exchange for unswerving loyalty.<sup>97</sup> It is one thing to describe the system in theory, another to see it in practice. Roman literature abounds with examples, but the Judean aristocrat Josephus also provides vivid instances of many aspects of patron-client relationships in actual life—that is, in the life-like situations related by his narratives.

On the one hand, he is the appropriately grateful, indeed boastful recipient of honours from his undisputed social betters: Nero's consort Poppaea Sabina, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian, and Domitian's wife Domitilla (*Life* 16, 414–430). Tokens of recognition from the most powerful, along with his putative illustrious ancestry and sterling character (*Life* 1–6), are understood to enhance his status immeasurably by ancient standards. On the other hand, he is an exemplary patron himself, the powerful man who freely exercises his authority to rescue and assist his less fortunate friends in time of need, especially after the Roman conquest of Jerusalem, when prisoners were being processed (*Life* 418–421). It is a telling sign of our different social assumptions that this story, no doubt related by Josephus to illustrate his reliable role as patron, has been read by modern readers in the opposite way: as an indictment of his character for failing to care about those he could not help.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> For Apollos as interloper in Corinth, cf. 1 Cor 1:11; 3:10–15; 4:15; 16:12.

<sup>97</sup> E.g., R. P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

<sup>98</sup> Williamson, *World of Josephus*, 303.



Perhaps most interesting for New Testament readers is Josephus' palpable sense of grievance when those who he thinks should be his grateful clients turn on him to follow other patrons. We see this throughout his *Life*. Even though he has treated the Galileans kindly and with restraint, managing their problem with bandits, facilitating travel for family contacts, and providing for their every need (as he presents it), time and again he encounters defection to a rival who seems temporarily more persuasive (87–103, 104–111, 122–125). Many of the tactics that Josephus employs to win his people back, as a military commander (e.g., *Life* 170–178), were not available to Paul, though the traveling preacher does threaten a group in Corinth—now favouring another leader who has interfered in Paul's territory—that he might come “with a rod” (1 Cor 4:21). Paul seems to be keenly aware of a principle that groups established by him belong to him: he will not interlope on others' turf (Rom 15:20), and he becomes furious when others impose themselves on his groups (1 Cor 4:15–21; 2 Cor 10:13–11:23; Gal 1:6–9; 4:10–20). He also seems to be trying to trick the Corinthians into contributing to his collection for Jerusalem in 2 Cor 9:1–5, by citing his earlier assurances to the Macedonians concerning their willingness to give, in a manner that the wily Josephus, who used many feints to subdue the Tiberians (*Life* 128–144), might well have admired. At any rate, in both cases one can see similar emotions of offence and outrage at the defection of groups that should belong to the founding patron.

#### 4. *Conclusions*

The main point of this essay may be succinctly stated. Traditional use of Josephus for illumination of the New Testament began with a trust in his work because of his prestige. In modern times his authority remained undiminished, but for the very different reason that he was thought to preserve excellent sources or even raw data. Notwithstanding the many refinements in the contemporary study of other ancient texts, including the New Testament, it seemed marvelously possible still to gain from Josephus at least snippets of fact—even if these needed to be cautiously removed from their tainted packaging. Recent approaches to Josephus, by contrast, are preoccupied with his writings as sophisticated artistic productions. This shift of perspective has created new possibilities for using Josephus in relation to the New Testament: both corpora are seen as highly wrought collections that must

be studied patiently if the parts are to make sense in terms of the whole. Historical reconstruction of the underlying events and personalities in both or either set of texts depends upon such careful interpretation of the evidence.

This paper has argued, however, that possibly the greatest value for New Testament readers in studying Josephus lies in less obvious places. We may never, without future discoveries, reach much certainty about many of the persons, groups, institutions, and events to which Josephus and the New Testament both refer, *a fortiori* those that figure only in Josephus. Yet we do have the very rich texts themselves, and in the case of Josephus we know a good deal about the general environment in which he wrote. If we stop looking for a “quick fix” from these compositions, for bits of reliable information, and undertake the more ambitious project of understanding his works in light of their audiences and social situations, we shall begin to rediscover a large corpus of texts produced in one of history’s most portentous moments: Rome’s Flavian era. Seeing how another prolific writer with connections to Judea’s history and scriptures expressed himself in Flavian Rome can only enhance our reading of the New Testament.

## RABBINIC WRITINGS IN NEW TESTAMENT RESEARCH

DAVID INSTONE-BREWER

### 1. *The Use of Rabbinic Literature*

The use of rabbinic literature for the study of the gospels has been hugely influenced, for good and ill, by John Lightfoot's *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae*.<sup>1</sup> He used the model of a commentary to collate passages from rabbinic literature which contained parallels and background material. This was successful at adding colour and context to the gospels with regard to the Temple cult and, to some extent, the manner of Jewish teaching, but fell short on theological background. This deficiency was partly due to Lightfoot's self-conscious rejection and reaction against Jewish theology, but it was also due to the nature of the available texts which were largely concerned with rules for life rather than the meaning of life.

New Testament scholars have largely inherited Lightfoot's program, his attitude to rabbinic theology and the limitations of the literature which is available. A. Edersheim's works<sup>2</sup> can be regarded as a useful popular reformulation of Lightfoot's findings. During the last century the amount of available information has increased monumentally, with the massive projects by Emil Schurer revised by Vermes,<sup>3</sup> Paul Billerbeck,<sup>4</sup> George Foot Moore,<sup>5</sup> and Safrai's *CRINT*

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<sup>1</sup> Easily accessible in English as John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, Matthew—I Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Principally Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (London: Longmans, 1900). Also useful for New Testament studies: *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994) and *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Hermann Leberecht Strack, von Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: Beck, 1922–1961).

<sup>5</sup> George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: the Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–1930).

project.<sup>6</sup> Schurer succeeded in putting rabbinic literature into an historical context, while Billerbeck pulled together the strands in a first attempt to show historical development within Jewish traditions and Moore highlighted the variety of Judaisms in the first century. The recent *CRINT* project attempts to use rabbinic materials in a more historico-critical way, though in practice it falls short of this aim. It does, nevertheless, represent a tremendous compendium of the information which has been amassed so far. Ongoing studies include revisions of Billerbeck (by the Orion centre and by Neusner, Chilton et al.) and the *TRENT* project.<sup>7</sup> The revisions of Billerbeck aim to complete the task of Lightfoot and to address the problem of dating, as well as applying historico-critical criteria to the choice of texts and to the method of applying 'parallels' for illustrating the New Testament. The *TRENT* project does the reverse, by systematically dating the early rabbinic material and presenting it in its own context, whether or not a 'parallel' can be demonstrated with the New Testament.

The pursuit for a theology of Judaism has proved much more difficult than working out the laws and practices of Judaism, because classical rabbinic literature contains so little theology. This task was helped vastly by the rediscovery of apocalyptic Jewish texts, Qumran documents, Nag Hammadi texts and others which were much more concerned with theology than the classical rabbinic literature was. These discoveries have been somewhat distracting because they presented scholars with a bewildering variety of Judaisms, mostly from the fringes of mainstream society. It was tempting to extrapolate a theology of normative Judaism from the vast treasures preserved by the Qumran community, by apocalyptic sects or by second and third century Jewish Gnostic groups. The theologies of these fringe groups have therefore exerted an undue influence on New Testament scholarship simply because, by an accident of history, their documents were preserved. While these documents undoubtedly provide invaluable insights into the theology of the New Testament, it has been too easy to ignore the beliefs of those against whom these minority groups were campaigning so loudly.

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<sup>6</sup> S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., *Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974–76).

<sup>7</sup> D. Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis in the Era of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005–).

Some scholars have attempted to present the theology of those Jews who did not go off into the desert to keep pure, or into secret circles to await the imminent end. This task is much more difficult because the documents preserving the theology of the majority were edited much later than the first century and the earlier documents are largely concerned with how to interpret the legal codes of the Old Testament. Montefiore and Lowe<sup>8</sup> collected rabbinic texts which give indications concerning rabbinic theology and categorised them into subjects for easy use. Their aim was more apologetic than historical, to counter the crass caricatures of rabbinic theology which were too often perpetrated by New Testament scholars, so they largely ignored the problems of dating other than stating the time when named authors were living. This work has been repeated in a more dispassionate way by Neusner.<sup>9</sup> Urbach in his *Sages*<sup>10</sup> attempted to isolate the theology of the sages living before 70 CE (i.e. the “rabbis” before they were called “Rabbi,” which is roughly equivalent to the “Pharisees”). He succeeded in giving a believable presentation of their theology largely because he approached them with sympathy and understanding, which enabled him to stand beside them and view the world through their eyes. In a task like this one, which involved reading between the lines as much as interpreting actual texts, and where imagination is more important than analysis, Urbach’s sensitive and sometimes uncritical approach is perhaps necessary. However, it is often difficult to know when the influence of later orthodoxy helps him project future theological tidiness into the variety of first-century schools and sects.

Most of these studies, of both Jewish practice and theology, have failed to present Judaism within its own context, either because they were written from the perspective of the New Testament, or because they have consisted of a list of texts rather than a study of the literature as a whole. Also, they often fail to distinguish between sources originating after 70 CE and the minority of traditions which originated before 70 CE. The destruction of the Temple and near

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<sup>8</sup> C. J. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (London: Macmillan, 1938).

<sup>9</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Theology of the Oral Torah: Revealing the Justice of God*, McGill-Queen’s Studies in the History of Religion (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979).

extinction of all Jewish leadership marked a cataclysm which not only forced Judaism to change its view of the cult (now that sacrifices and many other rites were impossible) but encouraged a consolidation of theology and practice. Virtually all of the few Jewish leaders who survived this tragedy were Hillelite Pharisees. This meant not only that all of Judaism came to resemble that of the Hillelites, but also that the history of Judaism was recorded in terms of agreement or disagreement with what now became orthodoxy.

There was also a new effort after 70 CE to rein in the diversity of opinions, and work towards a unified consensus. There is little indication that non-Hillelites were coerced into uniformity, though it is difficult to be certain because history is written by the victors. It seems that unity was literally voted for by the majority. Although a majority can tyrannise minorities through democratic processes, the process of voting was not simply to oppress the few Shammaites or Sadducees who remained, because even a venerable scholar like Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was punished with temporary excommunication for failing to follow a majority vote. This emphasis on unity was probably a popular effort to overcome the disunity which they perceived to be one cause of their downfall, so that it was in everyone's interest to have a common theology and practice.

One consequence of all this was an unconscious rewriting of history. No-one set out to write a history of the majority viewpoint, but it was inevitable that all the records of the past (which were written for the first time only after the end of the second century), were interpreted through the eyes of the new orthodoxy. This makes it very difficult to know which beliefs and particularly what variety of beliefs existed before 70 CE.

Clearly, the only traditions which might be said to have influenced the writers of the gospels or their readers were those which originated before 70 CE. Later traditions can still be useful if they represent beliefs or practices which continued unchanged before and after 70 CE, but in order to use later traditions we need to know how ideas and practical situations changed over time. The task of unravelling this history is very different for the four major forms of rabbinic literature: halakhah, aggadah, parables and targums, which will now be addressed in turn.

## 2. *Sources of Rabbinic Traditions*

### 2.1. *Halakhic Traditions*

Halakhic literature is concerned with the interpretation and application of the laws of the Torah. The separation of this from aggadic literature (which is concerned with stories and exegesis of non-legal portions of Scripture) is often untidy and apparently arbitrary, because the two forms of tradition were usually transmitted together and by the same people, but the distinction is useful because of the different ways in which these traditions were treated. When there was a dispute about the accuracy of a halakhic tradition, it was common for another scholar to interrupt and state his version, and the ensuing debate was often recorded. Before 70 CE each school could have a different interpretation of legal scripture texts, though no individual or school could live with indecision about their own interpretation, but after 70 CE a single interpretation had to be accepted by all of Israel.

The exact wording of aggadic traditions, by contrast, was a matter of indifference, and a different version was merely regarded as an interesting variation, without any concern about which one was correct. A non-legal scripture could have a large number of interpretations, and they were often collected together in a list where each is introduced as simply “Another interpretation...”

These differences between halakhah and aggadah were due mainly to their different purposes and partly due to the different realms in which they were discussed. Halakhah belonged in the realm of the schoolhouse or courthouse, where debate was encouraged as a learning method, while aggadah belonged in the realm of the synagogue where one listened politely to sermon illustrations without interrupting. Aggadah was often used to spice up halakhic teaching, and halakhot were included in sermons, so they were usually mixed together, but they remained distinctive because they had different purposes. Halakhah determined the specific way in which Scripture should be obeyed, and even accidental disobedience necessitated a sin offering (while the Temple stood) plus repentance on the Day of Atonement. Aggadah determined ethics and theology which, according to some, determined one’s standing in eternity, but there was no immediate consequence for disobedience.

### 2.1.1. *Dating Halakhic traditions*

The earliest written collections of halakhic traditions are the Mishnah and Tosephta which were edited about 200 and 400 CE respectively.<sup>11</sup> These works contain many traditions which are attributed to people who lived before 70 CE. The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds are later commentaries on these works, edited about 400 and 500 CE respectively,<sup>12</sup> though they occasionally contain early traditions which were not included in Mishnah or Tosephta. The so-called halakhic midrashim (the earliest are Mekhilta, Sifra and Sifré,<sup>13</sup> edited about 250 CE) are less reliable for dating because their realm is closer to the synagogue than the courthouse or schoolroom.

Mishnah is a collection of legal traditions which appear to be summaries of debates ending in conclusions decided by a majority vote or by consensus. A single topic may be as short as one unchallenged ruling or as long as a debate extending for several generations. The final decision or summary might be stated by a respected rabbi, or as an anonymous consensus or, if it is contrary to a ruling by a named rabbi, it is stated as a decision made by “the Sages”—i.e. a majority vote.

The traditions in Tosephta are similar to those in Mishnah, though the debates are not so structured and often do not end with a clear conclusion. This has led to the conjectures that it is a commentary on

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<sup>11</sup> Mishnah has been translated into good flowing English by Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933); in conformity with Jewish traditions by Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, 7 vols., 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Judaica Press, 1963–64); and into literal American by Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: a new translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Tosephta has only been translated into English by Jacob Neusner, *The Tosefta*, 6 vols. (New York: Ktav, 1977–1986).

<sup>12</sup> English translations of the whole are by Isidore Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud*, 18 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1948–1952), often known as the “Soncino Talmud,” and by Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia*, 16 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984). The Jerusalem Talmud is only fully available in English by Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel, a Preliminary Translation and Explanation*, 35 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), though another good flowing translation is becoming available by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer: Edition, translation and commentary by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *The Jerusalem Talmud* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003–).

<sup>13</sup> These and almost all other non-Talmudic rabbinic collections edited up to the end of the third century are translated in the series by Jacob Neusner, *The Components of the Rabbinic Documents: From the Whole to the Parts*, 32 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997). *Midrash Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* is missing from this series—this is translated by Gerald Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer: (The chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna* (London: Bloch, Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1916).



Mishnah, or (more likely) a Mishnah-like project put together by a school which disagreed with the Mishnah's conclusions, or (most likely) a collection of 'left-over' traditions which have been set within a structure identical to that of Mishnah so that the reader can identify their original context.

The stages in these debates are difficult to date because a large proportion of the opinions are anonymous and the attributions to named individuals cannot be accepted uncritically. Jacob Neusner, who has been the most vocal critic of pre-critical methodology,<sup>14</sup> has also done much of the groundwork which eventually provided some validation for these attributions. Through voluminous and detailed work on the structure of arguments and progression of debates in Mishnah, he showed that the relative chronology represented by the attributions were essentially accurate. By analysing the form and progression of individual units he showed that traditions which were attributed to earlier authorities were virtually always antecedent to traditions which were attributed to later ones.

A relatively secure conclusion from studies by Neusner and others is that traditions attributed to a particular scholar in Mishnah can normally be assumed to originate from that scholar or possibly another scholar from the same time. This conclusion has two major caveats: it only holds true for halakhic traditions, and it becomes less reliable with time. Long periods of time make it less likely that rulings have been transmitted faithfully, and this problem was exacerbated by the practice of attributing important anonymous ruling to a highly revered individual from the distant past—such as handwashing before meals which is attributed to Solomon (*b. Sabb.* 14b). Therefore it is unsafe to accept an honorific story concerning a famous rabbi (though a story which is the sole basis for a halakhah may perhaps be safe, with supplementary evidence), or a ruling by someone before the first century CE, or a ruling by someone in the first century CE which is recorded in Talmud but not in Mishnah or Tosephta.

Many anonymous halakhic traditions can also now be dated by fitting them into the logical progression of other rulings which can be

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<sup>14</sup> A seminal statement of this criticism was his on "The Use of the Later Rabbinic Evidence for the Study of First-Century Pharisaism" in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William Scott Green, Brown Judaic Studies 1 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press for Brown University, 1978), 215–225.

dated on the basis of attributions and Neusner has even stated the expectation that the majority of anonymous material can one day be dated.<sup>15</sup> The *TRENT* project is making a first attempt at systematically identifying all the halakhic material which can be dated before 70 CE, and it is likely that, on the basis of these findings, a more detailed chronological development of legal traditions will be built up by means of which many more anonymous traditions can be dated. Occasionally even lost rulings can be dated, such as the suspension of Sabbath prohibitions in situations of mortal danger, which is found nowhere in rabbinic literature though it is referred to by R. Mathia b. Heresh (*m. Yom.* 8:6, early second century) and Eliezer b. Hyrcanus (*t. Sabb.* 15:16, just after 70 CE). They both refer to it as a principle which everyone accepts, so it must be older than both of them, and this is confirmed by the Qumran ruling that one can rescue “a living man who has fallen into water” though not a corpse (4Q265 VI, 6).<sup>16</sup>

However, one must always be aware that editing can take place at several stages before the final written form, so even a tradition which appears to be datable may contain layers from more than one time period. These layers have to be examined by form critical and tradition history methods which can help to identify a core from which the rest of the tradition developed. Fortunately the legal editors worked with the motive of preservation not emendation, because rabbinic law was built up in the manner of case law, where more recent rulings rest and rely on the foundation of former rulings. Therefore, although editors might shorten a tradition by removing redundant elements, they were keen to keep former opinions intact because even if they disagreed with them, these opinions were necessary for the understanding and framework of later rulings.

The first example illustrates some of the problems of edited layers within a tradition, while the second shows the impact which an understanding of the development of halakhic traditions can have on our understanding of the gospels.

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<sup>15</sup> Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities*, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1974–97), 4: 244.

<sup>16</sup> Details in *TRENT* II chapter on Shabbat.

### 2.1.2. *Example of Halakhah: Stone Jars*

The ruling about stone jars at Mishnah Kelim 10.1 is an interesting test case for these dating techniques, because although the dating of this ruling is extremely difficult and tenuous, the result of this dating finds remarkable confirmation in archaeology. It is also an interesting test case for the pervasiveness of rabbinic rulings, because although it is expensive and difficult to apply this ruling the archaeological findings suggest that first-century Palestinians generally obeyed it.

The following shows the likely history of this tradition by separating out different stages of editing.

<sup>1</sup> | <sup>2</sup> | <sup>3</sup> - stages of editing

These utensils protect [from impurity if they are closed] with a tight lid:

*Utensils of dung, utensils of stone, utensils of soil*

utensils of earthenware,

utensils of alum crystal,

or of fish bones or skin {this line is absent from some eds.}

or of sea mammal bones or skin

or utensils of wood which are clean.

*They protect whether [the lid] is at their [top] opening or at the side;*

whether [the utensil] is standing on its base or leaning on its side.

[If] they are inverted on their opening, they protect everything under them as far as the deep.

R. Eliezer [b. Hyrcanus] [rules in this case that] they are impure.

And [so] they protect everything, except for earthenware utensils which protect nothing except the foods and liquids [inside them] and the earthenware utensils [themselves].

The whole of this tradition is anonymous, except for the disagreement by Eliezer, whose comments normally date from soon after 70 CE. The tradition appears to have been enlarged by editing in at least two stages (and probably more) from a core ruling which is marked in bold.

The first three types of utensil can be identified as a unit of tradition by themselves because they occur in other traditions, including later ones, without any of the rest of the list (*m. Ohal.* 5:5; 6:1; *m. Parah.* 5:5; *m. Miqw.* 4:1; *m. Yad.* 1:2). At Qumran there is also evidence of a three-fold list, but it is slightly different: wood, stone and dust (CD XII, 15–17). This may indicate that there was a point of contention on this matter between Qumran and rabbinic Judaism, or (more likely) that the rabbinic three-fold list developed after the Qumran sectarians had separated from the rest of Judaism. The rest of

the list probably grew gradually when scholars debated this passage. It is noteworthy that glass and metal vessels are not listed, because by the first century these were already declared unable to protect against impurity (though this is not recorded in any work earlier than the Talmuds—*b. Sabb.* 14b; *y. Sabb.* 1:4 = *y. Pesah.* 1:6 = *y. Ketub.* 8:11).

The second half is a discussion about closing the vessel, and the whole of it can be seen as a discussion of the words, “They protect whether [the lid] is at their opening or at the side.” The wording is curious because one would expect it to say “at the top or the side,” but instead of “top” it says “mouth” or “opening.” Presumably it originally referred to a vessel with its main opening at the top but also one at the side, such as a vessel with a side spout which was commonly used in the first century (see illustrations in Magen). Later generations interpreted this ruling in two different ways: first, it did not matter whether the container was standing upright (with the opening at the top) or leaning (with the opening at the side); second, it did not matter at all where the opening was, so the vessel could even be upside down. This last point is the one which Eliezer disagreed with, so it was probably being debated shortly after 70 CE.

We might expect the summary at the end to be the latest element of this tradition, but it is actually taken from the Shammaite position in a debate with the School of Hillelites (see *m. Ed.* 1:14). Although this school debate does not appear to have been preserved in its original form, there is no reason to doubt that it represents an actual debate, because if it had been invented (i.e. mis-remembered) at a later date we would expect the Hillelite position to conform to the accepted view here. It is therefore likely that this summary was already well-accepted by 70 CE, so that it was impossible to change it. Therefore it is likely that this summary comes from the mid-first century at the earliest. The summary contains a reference to earthenware utensils, so it presumably originated from a time after this type of utensil was added to the original list of three. This helps to confirm that the original list of three date from the early first century.

This detailed and somewhat tenuous reasoning which is needed to substantiate the dating of this tradition is not typical, because most datable traditions can be identified with far less complexity and guesswork. At the end of this process we have a ruling which is likely to come from the early first century:

Utensils of dung, utensils of stone, [and] utensils of soil protect [from impurity] whether [the lid] is at their [top] opening or at the side.

This ruling is very significant because it enables a householder to draw water before a Sabbath or a Holyday (a *Yom Tov*) and then keep it safe from impurity. If the water was in an earthenware vessel and someone with impurity (such as someone who had had sexual relations in the previous night) walked past and overshadowed it, they could render the whole day's water supply unfit for use. If this happened on a Sabbath, it was impossible to fetch replacement water. This rabbinic ruling says that a tightly stoppered utensil could keep the water safe from such impurity if it was made of these specific materials. Also, when these vessels came into contact with impurity, they could be cleansed by immersion, whereas earthenware ones had to be smashed.

This concern for purity was only necessary if the meal included holy food, such as a Passover lamb, a peace offering, fellowship offering or food bought with second tithe (i.e. the one tenth of one's income which was spent on food during festivals at Jerusalem). Although such purity was not strictly necessary at other times, many households tried to live up to these standards of purity for all special meals (such as Sabbath meals or when guests were present, cf. the stone jars at the Cana wedding, John 2:6), and some households tried to maintain these standards at all times (cf. *m. Demai*. 2:1-3).

These concerns about purity at meals were only important during the time of the Temple, because after its destruction there were no meals which included holy things. Some people would still have continued to try and eat every meal in purity, but this started to become meaningless when the ashes of the red heifer ran out, which were needed to purify from death—the prime source of impurity, and one which could be passed from person to person. Very soon all of Israel would have shared the same impurity as the Gentiles, so there was little point in using expensive vessels to guard from this ceremonial and now largely theoretical impurity.

Stone utensils were very expensive, so this rabbinic ruling was probably an attempt to enable poorer people to keep these standards of purity by allowing the use of utensils which were made from dry moulded dung (as still used in some Arab villages) or unfired clay. These were probably allowed because neither of them were specifically named in Torah as being susceptible to impurity, and later

scholars found other exceptions which were added to the list. The list at Qumran includes “stone utensils” but the other two categories are different (though perhaps the Qumran “dust” means the same as the rabbinic “earth”).<sup>17</sup> Stone vessels were therefore undisputedly the best way to guard from impurity because they were acceptable to all Jews.

The use of stone vessels has been confirmed by archaeological finds of limestone or chalk vessels throughout Palestine in the first century and (to a lesser extent) in the second century up to the Bar Kokhba revolt, but not before or after this period. Extensive excavations have also been carried out at quarries and workshops for manufacturing limestone vessels near Jerusalem. Magan, who has carried out and written up much of this work<sup>18</sup> pointed out the significance of it:

Unlike other elements of the Jewish material culture during the Second Temple period, such as pottery, wooden, metal and glass vessels and other implements that were conceived in previous periods and that remained a part of the material culture after the destruction of the Temple, chalk vessels are the only components of the material culture that appear suddenly in the late first century BCE and vanish after the destruction of the Second Temple and the Bar Kokhba Revolt, without remaining in use and without returning to the material culture of the Land of Israel in succeeding periods...all the industrial areas engaged in chalk vessel production are connected with Jewish regions and settlements, both in Judea and in Galilee...[and] chalk vessels were found in every Jewish settlement in Galilee that was excavated.<sup>19</sup>

These archaeological findings demonstrate the importance of rabbinic rulings for ordinary people in first-century Palestine. Even in Galilee, where it might have been easy to ignore the stringent demands of rabbinic Judaism, every Jewish domicile which has been excavated employed stone vessels, even though it would have been far cheaper to use earthenware. The use of stone was not a matter of using mate-

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<sup>17</sup> See Hanan Eshel, “CD 12:15–17 and the Stone Vessels Found at Qumran,” <http://orion.msc.huji.ac.il/symposiums/3rd/papers/Eshel98.html#fnref2>. Eshel points out that although Qumran documents indicate that oil can make a stone vessel impure, they still believed that they otherwise guarded from impurity.

<sup>18</sup> Yitzhak Magan, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period: Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002), based on the Hebrew version, *The Stone Vessel Industry in Jerusalem during the Second Temple Period* (Jerusalem: Society for the Preservation of Nature, 1988). The significance of this for biblical studies was first pointed out by Roland Deines in *Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Magan, Eng. ed., 1–2.

rials which were more hardy or better looking because these chalk vessels were thicker, heavier, more fragile, and less easy to decorate than their earthenware equivalents. The only advantage of using stone vessels was to enable the keeping of halakhah.

We cannot conclude that the Mishnah represents precisely the halakhah which was kept by these householders, because Qumran and presumably other Jewish groups also agreed that stone vessels provided protection from impurity, but it does mean that the general population was concerned with such issues. And the fact that stone vessels were used during this narrow timeframe confirms the dating of the rabbinic rulings which gave rise to this use, and thereby help to confirm the methods by which those rulings were dated.

### 2.1.3. *Example of Halakhah: Healing on the Sabbath*

Sabbath rulings developed greatly during the first century. It is significant that the Sabbath controversies in the gospels mirror the same concerns which were developing during the first century before 70 CE, i.e. harvesting (Mark 2:23//Matt 12:1), carrying (John 5:10—see the discussion in *TRENT* 2), bringing up from a pit (Matt 12:11; Luke 14:5), whether God works on a Sabbath (John 5:17), Temple cult on a Sabbath (Matt 12:5), and (overwhelmingly) the matter of healing on the Sabbath.<sup>20</sup>

The prohibition of healing on a Sabbath presumably developed from the prohibition of any labour which was involved in healing, such as straightening a limb or any washing which was more than normal (*m. Sabb.* 22:6), but it gradually included anointing or taking medicine (*m. Sabb.* 14:3–4), and later even included taking normal food or drink which had a curative property (*m. Sabb.* 14:3–4). The Shammaites were strict about this from the start, and forbade even praying for the sick on the Sabbath (*t. Sabb.* 16:22a), which suggests that it was part of the debate about whether God should be made to work on the Sabbath (cf. Philo, *Cher.* 86–90).

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<sup>20</sup> See details in Lutz Doering, *Schabbat: Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), and in *TRENT* vol. 2, forthcoming. On whether or not God works on the Sabbath, see also Doering, “The concept of the Sabbath in the book of Jubilees,” in *Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, ed. Matthias Albani, Jörg Frey, and Armin Lange (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 179–205.

The fact that “healing” is not listed among the 39 categories of forbidden “labour” (*m. Sabb.* 7:2), and the presence of mildly contradictory rulings and even counter-arguments in rabbinic literature about healing on a Sabbath, all suggest that this prohibition was in the process of development and consolidation in the early first century. New doctrines often become a touch-stone of orthodoxy, so it is not surprising to find that Pharisees express severe anger at Jesus’ rejection of this teaching (Mark 3:6//Matt 12:12//Luke 6:11; John 5:16; 7:23).

However, it is likely that Jesus was not the only one to criticise these new regulations, because some rabbis after 70 CE tried to find ways to relax these rulings. One early second-century rabbi even allowed treatment of a sore throat by applying the principle that mortal danger overrides the Sabbath (*m. Yom.* 8:6). Eliezer b. Hyrcanus (just after 70 CE) reasoned that if circumcision overrides the Sabbath then surely healing did too (*t. Sabb.* 15:16). He argued that: “Circumcision overrides the Sabbath because neglect of it is liable to extirpation. If one may override the Sabbath for a single part of a person, is it not logical that one may override the Sabbath for the whole of him?”

Eliezer’s logic is the same as that attributed to Jesus at John 7:23: “if on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me that on the Sabbath I made a whole man healthy?” Jesus’ phrase “whole man” (ὅλον ἄνθρωπον) and Eliezer’s “the whole of him” (*kulo*, כּוּלוֹ) are both used in exactly the same context to argue the same point of view, so this is very unlikely to be coincidental. Also, they both reasoned by means of *a minore ad maius* and based this on the principle that if circumcision does not take place on the eighth day, the law has been broken and punishment is due. These exact parallels make it likely that this was a common argument which was “around” at the time, though it was not the majority view.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Barrett mistakenly thought that Eliezer was expressing the majority view that healing of a critically ill “whole man” was allowed; see C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel of John and Judaism*, Franz Delitzsch Lectures, 1967 (London: SPCK, 1975), 264–265. However, the context of the rabbinic debate shows the other rabbis thought that Eliezer (who was famous for his unorthodox rulings) was trying to find a loophole for people who were not critically ill. According to a later tradition, Eleazar b. Azariah made Eliezer’s argument orthodox by adding the stipulation that the man must be critically ill (*b. Yoma.* 85b), so perhaps Barrett thought that this accurately represented Eliezer’s view.



There has been much debate about Jesus' central teaching on the Sabbath—did he deliberately heal on the Sabbath in order to put aside the law of the Sabbath, or did he merely disagree about the exceptions and definitions within Sabbath law?<sup>22</sup> The history of the development of rabbinic rulings suggests that the discussions of the Sabbath in the gospels can be regarded as criticisms of the developing Oral Law, not a rejection of the Sabbath law in the written Torah. This has profound implications for the question of Jesus' central message and the core of his conflict with the various bodies of the Jewish establishment.

## 2.2. *Aggadic Traditions*

Aggadic literature is probably best defined in the negative sense of not being halakhah. It consists of the biographical stories, moral guidelines, Scripture expositions and any other elements which are not directly concerned with the obedience of commandments in Scripture. These elements occur sparsely in Mishnah and Tosephta, more frequently in the Talmuds and Halakhic midrashim, and throughout the aggadic midrashim.

As stated above, the distinction between halakhah and aggadah is important because of the different way in which they were regarded and treated. It would be too simple to say that aggadah was not regarded as a vehicle of truth, though no-one expressed any concern when one aggadic tradition contradicted another. Perhaps the best modern equivalent would be the sermon illustration, which might not be true (because it contains a fictitious anecdote or a misquoted aphorism), but is still expected to convey a truth. This makes it almost impossible to decide when an honorific story about someone is hagiography or biography, and when a moral teaching is based on generally accepted theology or on deliberately provocative ideas.

### 2.2.1. *Dating Aggadic traditions*

Transmission of aggadic traditions was not carried out with the same care afforded to halakhic traditions, mainly (as suggested above) because of the different realm in which they were passed on, and also

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<sup>22</sup> The various viewpoints of different scholars are summarised well in Sven-Olav Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 1995), 3–13.

because they were not perceived to have the same importance. Nevertheless, the fact that they were preserved and passed on from generation to generation indicates that they were considered to be worth preserving and we may assume that many of them have survived relatively intact from the early first century. One difficulty is knowing whether to trust the attributions because, unlike halakhic traditions which can often be placed in a relative chronological order, there is usually no way to test the relative age of an aggadic saying. Another difficulty is that aggadic traditions are largely found in written works which were edited much later than Mishnah, so there was much more time for changes to occur.

Biographical stories about the rabbis are especially problematic, because almost none of them exists in the Mishnah, so the earliest written versions are normally found in works which were edited at the end of the third century or later. Much more frustrating for the New Testament scholar is the fact that the same problem exists for almost all theological discussions and statements. When, in the near future, we will have a collection of traditions which can be safely dated before 70 CE (like that being compiled in the *TRENT* project), it may be possible to identify some early characteristics of vocabulary or style which could be used to help identify early traditions. However, this method will always be relatively unsafe because there is always the possibility of editing, and because they are liable to be written in deliberately archaic forms.

Nevertheless, it is possible to find valuable indications of both theology and history in aggadic traditions, especially when they convey events which are unflattering to those who have preserved them. The following example shows that even seemingly apologetic propaganda can convey historical information.

### 2.2.2. *Example of Aggadah: Jesus hanged on Passover Eve*

A few passages in the Babylonian Talmud concerning Jesus and Christians were censored out of Blomberg's printed edition of 1520. This became the basis of all subsequent editions, so the only source of these censored traditions are the few surviving manuscripts, the most complete of which are found at Munich, Florence and the Vatican.<sup>23</sup> One of these censored passages contains what appears to be a

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<sup>23</sup> These censored passages are collected in Hebrew/Aramaic by R. T. Herford in *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (Williams & Norgate: London, 1903). He has

very old historic tradition, mixed with later editing. It is normally cited as occurring at *b. Sanh.* 43a, which is where it would be in Blomberg's folio pages if it had not been omitted.

<sup>1</sup> | <sup>2</sup> | <sup>3</sup> - stages of editing

*On the Eve of Passover they hung Yesu the Notzeri.*

And the herald will go out before him for forty days:

"Yesu the Notzeri will go out to be stoned  
for sorcery and deception and enticing Israel [to idolatry].

Any who know [anything] in his defence  
must come and declare concerning him."

But none was found in his defence  
and they hung him on the Eve of Passover.

Ulla said: Would it be expected that  
the revolutionary [had] a defence?

He was a "deceiver," and the Merciful said:

"You shall not spare and shall not hide him" [Deut 13:8(9)].

But it was not [so for] Yesu the Notzeri  
for he was close to the kingdom.

Most of this tradition is late, but the words in bold probably originate from before 70 CE or soon after. The rest appears have been added in at least two stages. Stage "3" is attributed to the time of Ulla bar Ishmael at the start of the fourth century. There is no clue about the age of the second stage, but it appears to be added in order to deal with the difficulties posed by the oldest tradition (as detailed below).

The early origin of the first stage is suggested by the difficulties it caused, and also by the fact that it contains the same two charges recorded by Justin Martyr, who said that the Jews "dared to call him a magician and a deceiver of the people" (μάγρον. . και λαοπλάνον—*Dial.* 69). The order of the charges is the same in both accounts, and this is significant because it is opposite to the order found in both Deuteronomy and in Mishnah (Deut 13:6–11; 18:10; *m. Sanh.* 7:10, 11).<sup>24</sup> The wording of this earliest layer is also confirmed by two quotations of it in other censored Talmudic passages: "they hung him on the Eve of the Passover" (*b. Sanh.* 67a) and "sorcery and enticing Israel" (*b. Sanh.* 107b). It is therefore possible that the official Jewish

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translated them into English (or occasionally Latin, when sexually explicit language is involved) and commented on them. The translations here are my own.

<sup>24</sup> This was first pointed out by William Horbury, "The Benediction of the Minim and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 33 (1982): 19–61, at 55.

charge which was publicly proclaimed against Jesus has been preserved by Justin and by this censored tradition.

The rest of the passage can be seen as an attempt to solve various problems which this early tradition raised, especially where it contradicted the rulings of Mishnah. Mishnah said that a herald had to call for defence witnesses for at least thirty days (*m. Sanh.* 3:8; 6:1). The herald was given forty days in this tradition, which inspired a later debate about the reason for this leniency (at stage 3). They concluded that Jesus had friends among the Romans—"he was close to the kingdom"—a phrase which is used elsewhere to explain why Gamaliel's family were allowed to converse in Greek, because they had to speak with Roman officials (*b. B Qam.* 83a).

The Eve of Passover was a very unlikely day for Jews to choose to carry out capital punishment, so the editors would want to explain why Jesus was killed on this day, without admitting (or remembering) that the death penalty was totally outside their control. Perhaps the claim that Jesus had forty days to find a defence was an early explanation—i.e. they allowed him extra time and waited till the very last moment before the start of the Passover week, in order to emphasise that he was given every opportunity to find mitigating evidence.

This early tradition says that he was "hung," but stoning was the punishment for both enticement to idolatry (*m. Sanh.* 7:10) and sorcery (*m. Sanh.* 7:4). Mishnah already helped to solve that problem because Eliezer said that those who are stoned, are hung (*m. Sanh.* 6:4). Eliezer either meant that those who are stoned are also hung afterwards, or he meant that they accepted Roman crucifixion as an equivalent to stoning because they did not have sufficient jurisdiction to carry out the death penalty. In later Talmudic times they assumed that he meant the former—they were stoned and then their corpse should be hung on a pole to indicate God's curse (*b. Sanh.* 45b). However, until at least the second century they assumed that "hung" meant "crucified" (cf. *t. Sanh.* 9:7 where Meir identifies crucifixion with the curse of "hanging" in Deut 21:23). Whichever view prevailed at second stage of editing this tradition, they wanted to emphasise that Jesus deserved the biblical punishment of stoning, so the herald proclaims that this is his sentence.

Another major problem with this early tradition is that it attributed real power to Jesus, because according to Mishnah the death penalty is only warranted if the sorcerer performed genuine wonders and not just illusions (*m. Sanh.* 7:11). The distinction between illusions

and reality is not discussed in Mishnah, but even in the early third century, when belief in magic was rampant among Jews, they exhibited a healthy scepticism, as illustrated in *b. Sanh.* 67b: “Rab said to R. Hiyya: ‘I myself saw an Arabian traveller take a sword and cut up a camel; then he rang a bell, at which the camel arose.’ He replied, ‘After that, was there any blood or dung? But that was merely an illusion’.”

Early Jewish apologists may have been content to accuse Jesus of sorcery, i.e. getting power from the Devil (cf. Mark 3:22//Matt 12:24//Luke 11:15), but this later introduced two problems. First, Jesus might be venerated by Jews in order to obtain healing or other miracles, and they might include his name among all the angels and other powers whom they called upon in magical papyri, incantation bowls and amulets.<sup>25</sup> Second, if this power was attributed to the Devil it implied that not all power resided with the Creator. In answer to this second problem, post-Talmudic traditions (as encapsulated in the medieval *Toledoth Jesu*, “Generations of Jesus”), said that Jesus used the power of God illegally by stealing the secret of the Name.<sup>26</sup> Already in the third century they appear to counter the claim of Jesus’ resurrection by saying that it was done by stealing the name of God: “Woe to him who makes himself live by the Name of God” (Simeon b. Lakish, late 3rd century, *b. Sanh.* 106a).<sup>27</sup>

In this tradition of *b. Sanh.* 43a, the editors at stage 2 attempted to downplay the power of Jesus by implying that he was “deceiving” people. They imported this word from Deut 13:6(7) which is where the charge of “enticing” comes from (“If he deceive you...saying ‘Let us serve other gods’...you shall stone him...for he sought to entice you from the LORD”—Deut 13:6–8[7–9]), and in that context it

<sup>25</sup> One magical papyrus includes “I conjure you by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus” (PGM IV 3019–20). This suggests that “Jesus” was one of the names which Gentiles had learned from Jews—see W.L. Knox, “Jewish Liturgical Exorcism,” *HTR* 31 (1938) 193–194.

<sup>26</sup> This was based perhaps on *t. Sabb.* 11:15 “Eliezer: Did not Ben Stada learn only in this way [by cutting marks in his flesh]?” I.e. he tattooed the secret Name which he would otherwise be forced to forget. “Ben Stada” is also used elsewhere as a cipher for Jesus at *t. Sanh.* 10:11; *b. Sanh.* 67a, 104b.

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion in Herford, *Christianity in Talmud*, 47–48. Jews of the third century were well aware of Christian claims, e.g. “If a man says to you: ‘I am God’, he is a liar; if ‘I am the son of man’, in the end people will laugh at him; if ‘I will go up to heaven’, he says it but will not perform it”—Abahu, late third century, *y. Ta’an.* 65b.

carries the connotation of “lead you into idolatry.” However, it is likely that they used the ambiguity of this word to imply that the miracles were part of a deception. This supposition gains extra weight from Justin’s translation of the Jewish charge by the word “deceiver” (from *πλανάω*). This word does not come from the LXX of Deuteronomy 13, so he presumably chose it because it was the closest to the meaning of the charge as the Jews of his day interpreted it.

Therefore it is possible that the official Jewish charge against Jesus has been preserved in this tradition, along with later glosses which were intended to address all the problems associated with it. Although this cannot be verified with any certainty, the parallel in Justin and the many problems which rabbinic authorities had with this tradition help to confirm that it is very old indeed.

### 2.3. *Parables*

Parables are very common in rabbinic literature and although they are usually categorised as *aggadah*, strictly speaking they are a third category. Meir (mid second century, *b. Sanh.* 38b) used to divide his lectures into three parts: *halakhah* (also called *shema’etta*), *aggadah* and parables (*mashal*). A *mashal* can include anything from a simile or analogy to a long story with many points of reference, but it normally consists of a story with a single “twist” (a point of surprise which is humorous or alarming) which is where the didactic point of the story lies. The most common subjects for parables are stories about kings, fables about animals, similes concerning plants, and illustrations from everyday life. The introduction to the following parable refers to all three types of teaching:

When R. Ammi and R. Assi were sitting before R. Isaac the Smith, one of them said to him: “Will the Master please tell us some legal points [*shema’etta*]?” while the other said: “Will the Master please give us some homiletical instruction [*aggadah*]?” When he commenced a homiletical discourse he was prevented by the one, and when he commenced a legal discourse he was prevented by the other. He therefore said to them: I will tell you a parable [*mashal*]: To what is this like? A man had two wives, one young and one old. The young one used to pluck out his white hair, and the old one used to pluck out his black hair. He thus finally remained bald on both sides. (*b. B. Qam.* 60b, based on Soncino)

#### 2.3.1. *Dating parables*

Like almost all parables in rabbinic literature, the example told by R. Isaac has been preserved in Hebrew, the language of the older Mish-

nah and Tosephta, despite the fact that most of the Talmud is written in Aramaic (including the story which introduces this parable). The use of Hebrew does not imply that every parable dates from pre-Talmudic times, but it does indicate a wish to pass on parables in a traditional form.

Unlike halakhic rulings, parables are not transmitted as the property or creation of individual rabbis, but they are regarded as community property. Scholars were not known for writing parables but for collecting them, like Yohanan b. Zakkai who was well known for collecting fox fables and other parables (*b. Sukkah*. 28a//*b. B. Bat* 134a). This parable, for example, was not created by R. Isaac, but was adapted by him (or someone else) from Aesop's story of the man with two mistresses.<sup>28</sup> However, parables can be retold with subtle differences which mirror changes in theology or society. For example, R. Isaac changed Aesop's two mistresses into two wives, so it would be false to infer that the original parable came from a society where polygamy was permitted. We must therefore take great care when making theological inferences from undatable parables.

Unfortunately, only a handful of rabbinic parables can be dated before 70 CE. This has not prevented scholars like Jeremias, Stern and Young<sup>29</sup> from doing useful work with them because, as indicated above, the origin of a parable may long predate the telling of it. There are probably no parables which can be dated before 70 CE with certainty, though there is some evidence for the following:

### 2.3.2. *Early parables*

#### Parable of the wholesale market traders

Bar Hé Hé [said] to Hillel: What [means] the text, "And you will return and distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between him who serves God and him who serves him not" [Mal 3:18]? The "righteous" [appears to be] the same as "he who serves God" and the "wicked" the same as "he who serves him not."

Hillel said to him: "He who serves" and "he who serves not" are both [included in the category of] those who are perfectly "righteous". But

<sup>28</sup> See Brad H. Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 17.

<sup>29</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM, 1963); D. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1994); Young, *Parables*.

one should not equate him who repeats his chapter a hundred times with him who repeats his chapter a hundred and one times [to memorise it better].

[Bar Hé Hé] said to him: And because of a single [extra] time he is called “he who serves him not”?

[Hillel] said to him: Yes, go and learn from the market of the ass drivers—Ten portions for a single *zuz*; Eleven portions for two *zuz*. (*b. Hag.* 9b)

Ben Hé Hé and Hillel (first century BCE) both denied the concept of parallelism in Scripture, believing that God would not include redundant words or phrases.<sup>30</sup> Hillel explained this apparent parallelism by saying that the second line describes two different degrees of being “righteous,” though they are both “righteous.” The person “who serves not” is like a scholar who puts slightly less effort into memorising his lesson, though they have both memorised it. Even a small difference can make a large difference, like when you go to the wholesale market (where the ass drivers go) and try to buy eleven portions of something which is sold in bundles of ten.

The whole debate is recorded late, but the concern about parallelism faded after 70 CE, so it is likely that this originated before 70 CE, though it is uncertain whether it goes back to Hillel himself. The first parable (of the two scholars) is almost certainly part of the original tradition, though the second (of the ass-driver’s market) may have been added later.

#### Parable of earth as God’s footstool

The School of Shammai say: The heavens were created first and after that the earth was created, as it is said: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” [Gen.1.1].

And the School of Hillel say: The earth was created first and then the heavens, as it is said: “In the day the LORD God made earth and heavens”.

The School of Hillel said to the School of Shammai: According to your words a man builds the upper-chamber and after that he builds the house, as it is said, “He who builds in the heavens his steps and founded his firmament over the earth” [Amos 9:6].

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<sup>30</sup> See David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, *Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum*, 30 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 56–57.



The School of Shammai said to the School of Hillel: According to your words, a man makes a footstool and after that makes a throne, as it is said: "Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and earth the stool of my feet" [Isa 66.1]. (*b. Hag.* 12a)

The parables at the end of this dispute may be later additions, and the proof texts were almost certainly added later. Nevertheless, it is possible that these examples of *mashal* originated with these first century Schools.

Yohanan's parable of the wise and foolish invited to a feast

R. Johanan b. Zakkai said: This may be compared to a king who summoned his servants to a banquet without appointing a time. The wise ones adorned themselves and sat at the door of the palace. ["Ffor,"] said they, "is anything lacking in a royal palace?" The fools went about their work, saying, "can there be a banquet without preparations?" Suddenly the king desired [the presence of] his servants: the wise entered adorned, while the fools entered soiled. The king rejoiced at the wise but was angry with the fools. "Those who adorned themselves for the banquet," ordered he, "let them sit, eat and drink. But those who did not adorn themselves for the banquet, let them stand and watch." (*b. Sabb.* 153a, Soncino)

It is difficult to date this before 70 CE with any certainty because although Yohanan's ministry started before this, his main influence came after the destruction of the Temple. It is included because it is one of the few "typical" parables which can dated this early, and because of the very clear gospel parallels. Before Yohanan went to Jerusalem he spent some decades in Galilee (traditionally, forty years) which meant he may have met Jesus and certainly knew the same synagogue traditions and probably the same synagogue congregations as Jesus.

Parable of the Forgotten Sheaf

A certain pious man [*hasid*] forgot a sheaf in the middle of his field. He said to his son, "Go and offer two bullocks on my behalf, for a burnt offering and a peace offering." His son said to him, "Father, why are you more joyful at fulfilling this one commandment than all the other commandments in Torah?" He said to him, "The Lord gave us all the commands in Torah to obey intentionally, but he only gave us this one to obey accidentally."

For if we obeyed this deliberately before the Lord, we would not be fulfilling the command. He said to him: It says, "When you reap the har-

vest of your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back and get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless and the widow” [Deut 24:19]. Scripture thereby sets out a blessing. (*t. Pe’ah*. 3:8).

The law of the forgotten sheaf (Deut 24:19) was the only law which could not be fulfilled intentionally or deliberately, so this pious man is overjoyed to find that he has accidentally forgotten a sheaf which enables him to fulfil this law. His joy is so great that he offers a hugely costly sacrifice—one bullock for total consumption on the altar (the burnt offering) and one to share with his family and friends in a celebration meal (the peace offering).

The exceptional value of these sacrifices which he offered for this seemingly minor occurrence puts this incident in the realm of storytelling. If an individual had really done this, it is unlikely that his name would have gone unmentioned. The original parable probably consisted of only the first paragraph, because this is complete in itself and it ends on the crux or the twist, like a short story or parable should. The second paragraph adds the explanation and gives the scripture, just like a preacher would do. But this addition spoils the structure and force of the parable, like preachers often do when they explain the moral too clearly at the end of a story.

This parable cannot be dated reliably, but it is likely that it originated from Palestine in Temple times because the man gave thanks by offering sacrifices rather than by donating something to the synagogue. A sermonic or moral story is much more powerful if it concerns normal contemporary events, because this makes it more relevant and less easy to dismiss by the hearer. Therefore it is unlikely that the person who invented this parable would have deliberately added archaic practices from Temple times. However, if the story was originally told in this form, it is unlikely to be updated—just as we still talk about the parable of the sower and not the parable of the tractor.

This parable has a very similar form to many gospel parables. It concerns “a certain man,” without any details to tie it to an individual, and it unfolds a puzzling scenario about the man’s strange behaviour which would have the listeners leaning forward to hear the explanation. The story builds up emotional tension by the huge size of the man’s offering (comparable to the value of two tractors today), by the joyful celebration which is implied by the peace offering (which would have been large enough to make a feast for most of the

village to share) and by the extreme joy which he exhibits. The reason for his joy is given in the very last line, as in any good short story. The editorial addition, which has spoiled the ending somewhat, is similar to the comments and explanations which have been appended to many of Jesus' parables.

The explicit message is that God has allowed us to experience the joy of obeying commandments and we should thank him for that privilege. However, the implicit theology and attitude behind this parable are much more interesting for gospel research, because they tell us what beliefs the parable's author can assume that all of his hearers will already have. The implicit theology is that it is good to try and obey as many commandments as possible; and the implicit attitude is that it is fun to try and complete a full set, almost like collecting baseball cards. The man does not give thanks that God saved him from accidental disobedience, but gives thanks that God allowed him to accidentally experience the joy of obedience. The author of this parable assumed that his hearers were legalistic, in the sense that obeying the law was at the heart of their religion, but their legalism was based on the joy of living out the Law rather than a fear of breaking it.

#### 2.4. *Targumic Literature*

Targums are Aramaic paraphrases which followed the reading of the Hebrew Bible in Aramaic-speaking synagogues. They mostly adhere to the Hebrew text but also contain glosses, additional phrases and even extra sentences in order to add explanations or avoid potential misunderstandings.<sup>31</sup>

The "official" rabbinic targums are Targum Onkelos on the Pentateuch (sometimes known as "The Targum") and Targum Jonathan on the rest of the Hebrew Bible. The Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch, which was hardly known outside Palestine before the eleventh century, was published in two versions in the sixteenth century, the Fragmentary Targums (previously called the "Fragment Targum") and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (so called because it had been falsely called Targum Jonathan due to an early misunderstanding

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<sup>31</sup> The best English translations of the Targums is now the series edited by Martin McNamara, *The Aramaic Bible* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992-).

of the abbreviation T.J.—“Targum of Jerusalem”). More versions of the Palestinian Targum were found in the twentieth century in the Vatican Library (Targum Neofiti, covering the whole Pentateuch), in the Cairo Geniza (fragments of TgPsJon and fragments from a variant of the Fragmentary Targums) and Qumran (fragments from targums of Job and Leviticus).

Targum Onkelos adheres most closely to the Hebrew text, while Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has much more additional material and deviations from the Hebrew. Targum Neofiti is similar to Pseudo-Jonathan but it lacks much of the additional material, though some of it has been added in the margins.

#### 2.4.1. *Dating targumic traditions*

Like other rabbinic literature, there was initially a reluctance to record targums in a written form, lest it became confused with “Written Torah”—cf. the story of Gamaliel II (beginning of second century), who was happy to read a written targum of Job but then buried it to destroy it, unlike his grandfather in the mid first century who buried it without reading it (*b. Sabb.* 115a). However, the transmission of targums was remarkably conservative and Targum Neofiti, which was copied in 1504, is often identical to quotations from targums in *Genesis Rabba*, including some by R. Nathan (late second century, *Gen. Rab.* 31:8) and R. Jonhanan (mid-third century, *Gen. Rab.* 70:16)—though these may have been edited to conform to a well-known targum tradition. The Aramaic of the targums (which is still being studied) may give a clue to their dating. However, it is likely that the language would be updated at the time of copying because one of the aims of targum was to make the text accessible to unlearned congregations.

It is difficult to know whether the large number of interpretive additions in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan indicate that this version is late, or whether Targum Onkelos was a later revision which was corrected back towards the Hebrew text. Comparisons of these additions with rabbinic halakha have proved inconclusive.<sup>32</sup> The only datable yardstick we can apply is the Qumran fragment 4QtgLev (4Q156) which follows Targum Onkelos very closely, but does not have any of the additions found in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. This suggests that

<sup>32</sup> McNamara briefly lists the work in this area and warns against making firm conclusions from this uncertain data (*Aramaic Bible*, IA, 41–42).

the additions are later, but they do not necessarily incorporate only later ideas. Therefore traditions in targums should only be identified as early if they mirror interpretations found elsewhere, such as in the LXX or early extra-biblical literature. But if these interpretations are only found in later rabbinic literature, the targums are likely to have been influenced by this, so an early date becomes less likely.

#### 2.4.2. *Example of targum: Polygamy or monogamy*

The Palestinian Targums of Genesis 2:24 read “and they two shall become one flesh” (i.e. Targum Pseudo Jonathan and Targum Neofiti), though the Masoretic text and Targum Onqelos read “and they shall become one flesh”. The reading of the Palestinian Targums is reflected in the LXX translations, Syriac translation, Samaritan Pentateuch, Vulgate and New Testament (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor 6:16). Unfortunately there are no Qumran fragments covering this passage. Ancient rabbinic traditions follow the Masoretic text on the two occasions when this text is cited (by R. Akiba, early second century, *b. Sanh.* 58a and by R. Issi, early third century, *Gen. Rab.* 18:5).

Therefore there is a strong tradition among the versions for inserting the word “two” into this verse, perhaps as an inference from the word “one.” The reason for doing this is not made clear in any of the versions, but it is likely to be part of a movement against polygamy which is seen at Qumran (CD IV, 20–V, 6) and in Jesus’ preaching (Mark 10:6–8//Matt 19:4–6).<sup>33</sup> The Damascus Document argues from the phrase “male and female” which occurs both in the creation narrative (Gen 1:27) and with regard to the animals which went in to the Ark “two by two” (Gen 7:9). They conclude from this, by the rabbinic method of *gezera shavah*, that “the foundation of creation” was also based on two. Jesus uses semantically identical terminology (ἀρχῆς κτίσεως, “the beginning of creation”) and cites one of these two proof texts (Gen 1:27). The similarities are too striking to be accidental, though there is no reason to believe that there is any dependency. In both cases the argument is stated in such an abbreviated form that it is unlikely to convince anyone who was not already familiar with it,

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<sup>33</sup> D. Instone-Brewer, “Jesus’ Old Testament Basis for Monogamy,” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North*, ed. Steve Moyise, JNTSSup 189 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 75–105.

so it is likely that this exegesis was already widespread and they were both referring to it.

Polygamy was allowed in Mosaic Law<sup>34</sup> and was still practised in Palestine in the first century (Exod 21:10–11; Deut 21:15–17). The practice continued to be part of rabbinic law for several centuries, though only in special circumstances,<sup>35</sup> and was finally ended in the eleventh century.<sup>36</sup> Rabbinic teaching recognised that polygamy was sometimes necessary in order to fulfil the law of the levirate wife, though they tried to limit the burden of this law by finding circumstances which made it unnecessary.

The conservative reading in Targum Onqelos may reflect a distancing from the new campaign against polygamy, though it is more likely to reflect the relatively literal translation of the Hebrew text which generally characterises this Targum. Citations of Hebrew Bible in rabbinic literature almost always reflect the text preserved by the Masoretes, so it would be surprising if they included the word “two”. What is surprising is the fact that the Damascus Document, unlike Jesus, fails to cite Genesis 2:24 with the word “two” when it is presenting arguments against polygamy. Perhaps they thought that the argument based on “male and female” was sufficient, while Jesus did not. More likely they were constrained by the fact that they were writing in Hebrew, so adding the word “two” might be perceived as an alteration to the divine text, whereas Jesus was speaking in Aramaic or Greek so the addition of a word would be perceived as a targumic interpretation. Qumran was not averse to quoting variant forms of the Hebrew text, and they seem to have made a habit of collecting variants, but perhaps they were reluctant to construct variants which did not already exist.

We may therefore come to the tentative conclusions that this reading in the Palestinian Targum reflected a growing rejection of polygamy which had already started at the time of the Damascus Document and was gaining momentum among some streams of

<sup>34</sup> Exod 21:10–11; Deut 21:15–17.

<sup>35</sup> Justin Martyr says that Jews practised polygamy (*Dial.* 141). A few rabbis had more than one wife: Tarphon (early second century, *t. Ketub.* 5:1), Rab, and R. Nahman (early third and start of fourth century respectively, *b. Yoma.* 18b//*b. Yebam.* 37b). Tarphon (from a priestly family) betrothed three hundred girls so that they could eat priestly food in a time of famine. Rab and Nahman had a second wife in another city which they visited regularly, probably so that they could provide hospitality for visitors.

<sup>36</sup> The Herem of R. Gershom of Mayence (960–1040) finally prohibited it (*Responsa “Asheri”* 42.1), probably in 1030 at Worms (the document has not survived).

Judaism before 70 CE. After 70 CE, the orthodox position of Torah reasserted itself for a few centuries, albeit with some unease.

#### 2.4.3. Example: Rachel weeping for children killed by Herod

Sometimes traditions which are impossible to date help us with texts which are difficult to understand, like the three Old Testament citations in Matthew 2. Modern readers find little connection between these citations and the story, other than isolated words or ideas, so they are generally dismissed as “proof texts.” But for readers who were familiar with the stories told in Aramaic-speaking synagogues, these three texts concerned an ancient story about Laban and highlighted its links with the star, the infanticide, the dream, and coming out of Egypt.

Laban was a supernatural enemy of Jacob and his children in a popular intertestamental story which we can piece together from allusions to it in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.<sup>37</sup> He became his enemy probably because his daughter Rachel stole his idols when she fled from Laban with her husband Jacob (Gen 31:30–35). In Genesis, Laban and Jacob eventually part peacefully, but in the stories alluded to by Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Laban still had murderous intentions towards Jacob’s family (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 32:3). When Rachel died at Bethlehem of Ephrath, Jacob’s family encamped nearby at the Tower of the Sheep (Gen 35:16–21), which is where the Messiah will be revealed (Mic 4:8; Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 35:18). To preserve the future Messiah, God told Jacob in a dream to take his family to Egypt for safety from Laban (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 45:27–46:4). When they left Egypt, Laban (who was now called Balaam—Tg. Ps.-J. Num 22:5)<sup>38</sup> attacked them and killed many of them, and Rachel wept over them (Jer 31:15[14]). She was, of course, long dead, so either she was resurrected (as suggested by some later rabbis)<sup>39</sup> or she foresaw it when weeping on her deathbed.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> This story was first pieced together by Daube who also used sources outside the Targum. See David Daube, “The Earliest Structure of the Gospels,” in *New Testament Judaism: Collected Works of David Daube*, ed. Calum Varmichael, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 329–341.

<sup>38</sup> Later rabbis suggested that Balaam was Laban’s son (*b. Sanh.* 105a), perhaps in a vain attempt to overcome the chronological impossibilities of this story.

<sup>39</sup> See *Gen. Rab.* 84:11. Rachael was dead even before they went into Egypt, but Joseph had dreamed that his mother and father would bow down to him, so she must have been resurrected by that time in order to fulfil the dream.

<sup>40</sup> Gen 35:17–18 says the midwife tried to comfort her, but she called her boy

The following translations are based on Michael Maher's in McNamara's *Aramaic Bible* series in which italics indicate variation from the Hebrew text.

Gen 35:18: As [Rachel's] soul departed—for death came upon her—she called his name “Son of my Agony”; but his father called him Benjamin. 19. And Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath, that is Bethlehem... 21. *Jacob* journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the Tower of the Flock, *the place from which the King Messiah will reveal himself at the end of days.*

Gen 45:27—46:4: When [Jacob's sons] recounted to him all the words that Joseph had spoken with them, and when he saw the carriages that Joseph had sent to take him, the *spirit of prophecy which had departed from him when they sold Joseph, returned and rested upon their father Jacob.* 28. And Israel said, “*The Lord has done many good things for me; he delivered me from the hands of Esau and from the hands of Laban, and from the hands of the Canaanites who pursued me; and I have seen and expected to see many consolations. But this I did not expect: that my son Joseph was still alive. I will go then, and see him before I die.*” 46.1. Israel set out with all that was his, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2. *The Lord* spoke to Israel in a *prophecy* of the night and said, “Jacob! Jacob!” He said, “Here I am.” 3. And he said, “I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt *because of the slavery which I decreed with Abraham*; for there I will make of you a great nation. 4. *It is I who in my Memra will go down with you to Egypt. I will look upon the misery of your sons, but my Memra will exalt you there; I will also bring your sons up from there.*

Num 22:5. [Balak] send messengers to *Laban the Aramaean, that is, Balaam (for he sought to swallow the people of the house of Israel), the son of Beor, who acted foolishly from the greatness of his wisdom. He did not spare Israel, the descendants of the sons of his daughters.*

When God told Jacob in the dream to take his son to Egypt, he said “I will also bring *your sons up from there*” (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 46:4). One particular son is in mind because at Exodus 1:15 the targumist has the Egyptian magician tell Pharaoh: “*A son is to be born in the assembly of Israel, through whom all the land of Egypt is destined to be destroyed.*” The messianic interpretation was prompted perhaps by the use of singular “seed” in 46:7,<sup>41</sup> in the light of the collective sin-

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“Son of my Agony” (אֹנִי). Jeremiah appears to create a midrash from this when he says she “refused (בָּאִנָּה) to be comforted for her children who are not (אִנָּה).”

<sup>41</sup> Other uses of singular “seed” with a messianic interpretation are found in 2 Sam 7:12 and 4QFlor = 4Q 174, X-XI; cf. Gal 3:16.



gular “seed” (זרע) which God promised to Abraham (e.g. Gen 12:7; 15:5, 18; 17:7, 9; 22:17; 26:24; 28:14).<sup>42</sup>

Matthew provides all the links for this story without having to tell it, because his readers would already be familiar with it, and he uses Old Testament quotations to remind them of the various scriptures which contribute to this story. The Laban story is linked to Matthew’s narrative by the star (which was prophesied by Balaam, Num 24:17), the prophecy about Bethlehem of Ephrath, the dream telling them to escape to Egypt till God calls his son out of Egypt, and Rachel bewailing the children killed by Herod who is like Laban. This last comparison is perhaps the whole point of the links with the story of Laban, because it suggests that the act of Herod himself has been prophesied.<sup>43</sup>

Although dating these targumic traditions is impossible, their antiquity can be verified in a circular way. The fact that these traditions reveal a unified structure and message for a chapter which otherwise appears to contain disparate and unrelated citations, suggests that it is close to what was in the mind of the author. He presumably assumed that his readers would be familiar with these stories, so the allusions he made were sufficient for them to follow his line of thought. We do not know when Targum Pseudo-Jonathan was finally edited, but much of the editing was probably done soon after 70 CE. These traditions must be older than the editing of the Targum because the story is never told but only alluded to, so the readers of the Targum must have been already familiar with it. These traditions are also linked to the messianic expectations which had been identified in the collective singular “seed” in the promises to Abraham, which was already known by the time of Paul (Gal 3:16). Therefore it is likely that these traditions in Targum refer to a story which was already well known in the first century.

<sup>42</sup> Arguments based on the singular and plural of “seed” are also found in *m. Sabb.* 9:2, 7 in traditions which date from late first century and second century, as well as Gal 3:16.

<sup>43</sup> Daube points out that Laban is often called “the Aramean” (as in Tg. Ps.-J. Num 22:5) while Herod was often called the Idumean (to remind everyone that he was only a Jew by annexation of a neighbouring country) and these two are very similar (ארמי and אדמי respectively).

### 3. *Results So Far, and the Way Ahead*

It is too glib to complain, as Crossan does, that the use of Jewish background has merely resulted in a multitude of different versions of Jesus. He lists “Jesus as a political revolutionary by S. G. F. Brandon (1967), as a magician by Morton Smith (1978), as a Galilean charismatic by Geza Vermes (1981, 1984), as a Galilean rabbi by Bruce Chilton (1984), as a Hillelite or proto-Pharisee by Harvey Falk (1985), as an Essene by Harvey Falk (1985), and as an eschatological prophet by E.P. Sanders (1985).”<sup>44</sup> To this could be added presentations of Jesus as a peasant by Meier, as a sage by Ben Witherington, as a torah-observant rabbi by Crossley, and of course as an itinerant philosopher by Crossan himself!<sup>45</sup>

It is not surprising that aspects of Jesus’ teaching and lifestyle should be mirrored in a multitude of ways in the multi-faceted textures of Judaism which existed in early first-century Palestine. If, instead, we found that Jesus was a straight-forward character with a single simple message and a lifestyle which clearly illustrated it, then we might suspect that his life story been invented as a vehicle for that message. But if Jesus was indeed an historical person, and not just a fictional construct by a sect, then we would expect to see him interacting with the various different subcultures and religious mindsets of this complex society. If he was a sensitive teacher, he would modify his language and actions to communicate to the audience he was addressing. And if he was a truly original thinker we would find him melding one concept from here with another from there in a unique and self-coherent way. In other words, the more we find out about

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<sup>44</sup> John Dominic Crossan *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), xxvii–xxviii, referring to S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967); Morton Smith, *Jesus the magician* (London: Gollancz, 1978); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: a Historian’s Reading of the Gospels*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), and *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Bruce D. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and his Bible: Jesus’ Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1984); Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee: a New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

<sup>45</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols., (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009); James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark’s Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSup 266 (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999).

the society he lived in, the more facets of his teaching and actions we are likely to recognise as interactions with and reflections of the thoughts and actions of others.

Rabbinic traditions have been previously neglected, mainly due to the problem of dating, but progress is now being made in this area, so the situation looks hopeful. Careful dating is especially important for studying rabbinic theology, as illustrated by the work of Young on the parables.<sup>46</sup> The theology which he found in rabbinic parables is so similar to that of Jesus in almost every respect that one is left wondering why Jesus experienced any conflict with his contemporaries. But most of these parables come from after 70 CE, when Yohanan b. Zakkai had started the process of restating Jewish theology on the basis of “God requires mercy, not sacrifice” (Hos 6:6 cited at *Abot R. Nat.* 4),<sup>47</sup> exactly as Jesus had done forty years previously (Matt 9:13; 12:7). Comparing the theology of post-70 CE Judaism with that of Jesus is therefore like looking at the writings of the Catholic Counter Reformation and wondering why the Church had problems with Luther’s teaching.

The pervasiveness of rabbinic law in Palestinian society has also been doubted in the past, because it was felt that peasants and traders would not be concerned with the minor disputes of insular and fanatical religious scholars. A greater awareness of the Islamic world has enabled us to see societies where religious topics are part of normal conversation and where scholars play a central role in guiding everyday decisions. Archaeology has demonstrated the presence of expensive stone vessels throughout Palestine, and immersion pools carved out of the limestone in the basement of almost every excavated dwelling, which suggest that the whole nation was concerned to keep purity laws, even in private.

<sup>46</sup> Young, *Parables*.

<sup>47</sup> *Abot R. Nat.* 4: “Once as Rn. Johanan b. Zakkai was coming forth from Jerusalem, R. Joshua followed after him and beheld the Temple in ruins. ‘Woe unto us!’ R. Joshua cried, ‘That this, the place where the iniquities of Israel were atoned for, is laid waste!’ Rn. Johanan b. Zakkai said to him, ‘My son, be not grieved; we have another atonement as effective as this. And what is it? It is acts of loving-kindness, as it is said, *For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice* (Hos 6:6).” The saying is attributed to R. Johanan b. Zakkai [T1] by R. Joshua [T2]. The attribution is probably for polemic reasons and is unlikely to be accurate, and so it should be dated to R. Joshua who wished to discourage the coming war by those who wanted to rebuild the Temple; see Jacob Neusner, *Development of a Legend: Studies on the Traditions concerning Yohanan Ben Zakkai*, *Studia post-biblica* 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 113–114.

The Mishnah, too, demonstrates the assumption that even non-pious individuals carry out the stipulations of the Written Torah, though not necessarily the Pharisaic Oral Torah. The tractate of *Demai* (“doubtful” tithing) is concerned to make sure that people set aside the 1% minor heave offering (i.e. a tithe of the first tithe), and helps the pious to cope with food where this may not have been done. However, the tractate assumes that the major heave offering (which is clearly demanded in Torah, unlike the minor heave offering) has been removed from all foodstuff grown in Palestine, even by the so-called “people of the Land” (*am ha-eretz*), and not even those who practise extreme purity needed to worry about it.

It would be wrong to assume that the scholarly rabbinic disputes were of general interest to the population, except where they had public practical consequences, but these disputes tell us a great deal about what the general population *did* practice and believe. The fact that the Hillelites and Shammaites disputed about the latest date when one was allowed to work a field before the Sabbath Year (*m. Seb.* 1:1, 2:1; *t. Seb.* 1:5), suggests that only the details were disputed and the Sabbath Year itself was generally observed in Palestine (as confirmed by Josephus, *Ant.* 14.475). This may explain why Paul made a collection for a famine which would have been over by the time he delivered the money—if the famine occurred world-wide in a year before the Sabbath year, he would know that Palestine would be desperately needy during the next year. The fact that Hillel and Shammai disputed whether a dough offering was required from a small batch of loaves (*m. Ed.* 1:2) suggests the general belief that large batches *were* liable. This general observance of putting aside a dough-offering may explain the “fragments” which were carefully collected after feeding the thousands, because significant quantities of dough offering could not be destroyed or left for the birds but had to be taken to the Temple for distribution to the priests.<sup>48</sup>

Some scholarly disputes were of great importance to the general population, such as whether or not one may rescue or heal people on a Sabbath (as discussed above). Many people would also be affected by the Shammaite criticism of the new ground for divorce called “Any Cause” which started to be used almost universally during the

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<sup>48</sup> These issues are discussed in detail in *TRENT* 1, 221–258.

early first century.<sup>49</sup> It is not surprising that Jesus was specifically asked about this, nor that he sided with the Shammaite plain reading of the Torah against the atomistic exegesis of the Hillelites.<sup>50</sup> Other rulings of Oral Torah caused severe practical problems for poorer people, such as the rules about tithing herbs (*m. Ma'as.* 4:5), which required separate tithing vessels to be kept pure for each tiny portion (*t. Ter.* 2:5). This ruling was being introduced during the early first century, so it is not surprising that Jesus commented on it (Matt 23:23; cf. Luke 11:42), and on this occasion his view was closer to that of the Hillelites who looked for ways to limit the number of herbs which required tithing (*m. Ma'as.* S. 2:3–4).

In some matters, rabbinic traditions merely add colour to the gospel accounts, and in others they are essential for understanding them. If we did not know that collecting boxes had a trumpet-shaped inlet on which you can bounce your coin into the hole (*m. Seqal.* 2:1; 6:5), we might miss the significance of Jesus warning about “trumpeting” your offering (Matt 6:2). If we did not know about the general belief that the reward for good deeds was “treasure in heaven” plus an “interest payment” of good things in this life (*m. Pe'ah* 1:1; *t. Pe'ah* 4:18), we would not notice the pointed absence of this “interest payment” in Jesus’ teaching (Matt 6:19–21//Luke 12:33–34; Matt 19:21//Mark 10:21//Luke 18:22).

These examples illustrate both the potential for rabbinic literature to flesh out a historical Jesus of the gospels, but also the danger of glibly using sources which originate after the writing of the gospels. Although such dating of rabbinic traditions is often difficult, the attempt is necessary if we are to understand the historical Jesus in relation to the large sections of Jewish society which are revealed in this literature.

<sup>49</sup> Philo, *Spec.* 3.30 (II 304), “Another commandment is that if a woman after parting from her husband for any cause whatever...” (καθ’ ἣν ἂν τύχη πρόφασιν); Josephus, *Ant.* 4.253, “He who desires to be divorced from the wife who is living with him, for whatsoever ground...” (καθ’ ἁσθηποτοῦν αἰτίας); first century rabbinic dispute, “The School of Shammai says: A man should not divorce his wife except if he found indecency in her, since it says: For he found in her an indecent matter [Deut 24:1]. And the School of Hillel said: Even if she spoiled his dish, since it says: [Any] matter.” (*Sifré Deut.* 269. See also *m Git.* 9:10; *y. Sotah.* 1:2, 16b).

<sup>50</sup> David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and remarriage in the Bible: The social and literary context* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 110–117.



## SYNAGOGUE AND SANHEDRIN IN THE FIRST CENTURY

LESTER L. GRABBE

The synagogue and the Sanhedrin are two Jewish institutions that the gospel tradition associates in one way or another with Jesus. Yet each had its own origin, history, and place in first-century Jewish society. Each will, therefore, be treated in a separate section in this article. Yet it should be kept in mind that each has been controversial in recent scholarship, with a variety of interpretations.

### 1. *Synagogue*

It was once common to believe that the synagogue was a central institution in the Jewish community already at an early time, perhaps as early as the exilic period or even during the time of the Judahite monarchy. Many standard references continue to perpetuate such views as if they were axiomatic, yet already a quarter of a century and more ago, voices began to be raised questioning this view.<sup>1</sup> Although one still sees more than one substantial reconstruction, recent studies<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> My own objections to this interpretation were presented publicly in the mid-1980's (though when the paper was first read, it received a good deal of oral criticism): "Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Re-assessment," *JTS* 39 (1988): 401–410. A collection bringing together some of these early studies is Dan Urman and Paul V. M. Flesher, eds., *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, *Studia Post-Biblica* 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Donald D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period*, SBLDS 169 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999); Stephen Fine, ed., *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; New York: Yeshiva University Museum, 1996); idem, ed., *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, *Baltimore Studies in the History of Judaism* (London/New York: Routledge, 1999); idem, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period*, *Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity* 11 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1997); Heather A. McKay, "Ancient Synagogues: The Continuing Dialectic Between Two Major Views", *CR:BS* 6 (1998) 103–142; C. Perrot and A. Contessa, "Synagogue," in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, ed. Jacques Briand and Michel Quesnel (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 2003) 13:653ff.

have had a common framework of understanding which is also argued for here.

The importance that the synagogue acquired for Jewish communities in the early centuries of the Common Era is not in question. The synagogue is attested both literarily and archaeologically from the second or third centuries CE as playing a central role in most Jewish communities, functioning not only as a center of worship but also of community life, whether in Palestine, Egypt, the Greco-Roman world, or Babylonia. There are two questions: when and where did the synagogue originate and, if that was not in Palestine, when did it become a major institution in the Jewish homeland? The following relevant points have become recognized: (1) for many centuries the temple seems to have been the center of public worship, and the substitute of some other form of public worship is not likely to have come about very suddenly; (2) when worship outside the temple is mentioned in early sources, the references are to prayer and the like in the context of the home; (3) no source refers to the synagogue or anything like it until the third century BCE; that is, there is no archaeological, epigraphical, or literary attestation to the existence of the synagogue before that time. Let us look at these points in more detail:

1. For many centuries the temple seems to have been the center of public worship, and the substitute of some other form of public worship is not likely to have come about very suddenly.

The biblical literature gives a consistent picture that the proper place of worship was a temple, usually the Jerusalem temple.<sup>3</sup> Even after the temple had been destroyed and left in ruins for many decades, the paramount concern was presented as rebuilding it (Hag 1:1–8; Zech 4; Ezra 1–6), not in establishing other meeting places or places of worship. The Greek writer Hecateus of Abdera, in a treatise on the Jews (or at least including the Jews) in about 300 BCE, makes the society of the Jews in Palestine revolve around the temple and its priesthood.<sup>4</sup> In the time of the Maccabees, what caused the Jews to rise up in revolt in an unprecedented way was the desecration of the temple. The restoration of the temple to its former status was demanded at a painful price, but the Palestinian community was willing to pay it. In none of these

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<sup>3</sup> Here and there are passages that admit—often tacitly—that other places of worship or altars existed (e.g., 1 Kings 12:26–31; 18:30; 2 Kings 12:4; 15:4).

<sup>4</sup> See further n. 26 below.



passages is there any suggestion of another means or place of worship or public assembly apart from the temple.<sup>5</sup>

2. When worship outside the temple is mentioned in early sources, the references are to prayer and the like in the context of the home.

The early literary sources that mention Jews worshipping outside Jerusalem always picture them as doing so in the privacy of their homes. In Tobit prayer is conducted and the festivals celebrated in the home (2:1–3); there is no hint of a community institution. Similarly, both Daniel (6:11) and Judith (8:36–10:2) picture their protagonists as praying in their homes (cf. also Acts 1:13–14). Ben Sira, 1–3 Maccabees, and the *Letter of Aristeas* are silent about worship outside the temple, but they are also silent on the existence of the synagogue. The first references to anything like synagogues *in literature* come in fact from the first century CE. The first of these is Philo of Alexandria (*proseuchē: Flaccus* 47–49, 53; *Legat.* 132–134, etc.). Josephus mentions synagogues in Caesarea (*sunagogē: War* 2.285), Dora (*sunagogē: Ant.* 19.300–5), as well as in Tiberias (*proseuchē: Life* 54 277), though not elsewhere in Palestine. (The New Testament also contains a number of relevant references that can be dated to the first century CE, as will be discussed below.)

3. No source refers to the synagogue or anything like it until the third century BCE. There is no archaeological, epigraphical, or literary attestation to the existence of the synagogue before that time.

Important as literary sources are, they are sometimes secondary; that is, they are removed in time from the situation that they claim to describe, or they might even be picturing a hypothetical scenario. This is why archaeological and epigraphical sources are generally more trustworthy. We are fortunate that a good deal of study has been made of synagogue remains in recent years. The earliest physical evidence for the synagogue comes in the mid-third century BCE in Egypt.<sup>6</sup> At that time we start to find buildings with inscriptions that speak of a

<sup>5</sup> There may also have been occasional assemblies, such as is hinted at in 1 Macc 3:46, but this has no evident connection with the synagogue. On this passage, cf. Philip R. Davies, “A Note on 1 Macc. III. 46,” *JTS* 23 (1972): 117–121.

<sup>6</sup> J. Gwyn Griffiths, “Egypt and the Rise of the Synagogue,” *JTS* 38 (1987): 1–15; reprinted in *Ancient Synagogues: Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, ed. Urman and Flesher 1:3–16; Rachel Hachlili, “The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-assessment,” *JSJ* 28 (1997): 34–47.

“prayer house” (*proseuchē*) of the Jews.<sup>7</sup> This is hardly surprising because Jewish communities in the areas far away from Palestine had no easy access to the Jerusalem temple. Pilgrims came each year in great numbers to worship at Jerusalem during the annual festivals (Philo, *Spec.* 1.69–70; Josephus, *War* 6.420–427), yet this was still only a small minority of Jews the world over. A wealthy Jew such as Philo of Alexandria mentions only once traveling to Jerusalem (*De Providentia* 2.64). Perhaps he went more than once in his lifetime, but the impression left is that it was not very frequent. Thus, the diaspora communities would have felt a need for some means of expressing their religion in a community fashion.

Archaeologically, the remains of synagogues have been found in a variety of sites in the Palestinian area and from other places like Dura Europa and Stobi, but most of these are from the second to seventh centuries CE. Surprisingly few actual remains of synagogue buildings have been identified for the pre-70 period. In the diaspora, the only two sites so far known are from Ostia and Delos.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, one of the main reasons for identifying some buildings as synagogues is the presence of inscriptions that state this or at least suggest it, and a number of these exist. In Egypt several official documents make reference to the site of a *proseuchē* (e.g., in Arsinoë-Crocodilopolis and Alexandrou-Nesos).<sup>9</sup> There is also a variety of actual synagogue inscriptions dedicating the institution to God on behalf of the current rulers of Egypt, the earliest of these dating to the mid-third century BCE.<sup>10</sup> Inscriptions in Cyrenaica refer to a *sunagogē*, and two others mention that members of the local Jewish community (*politeuma*) met in an amphitheatre, which might possibly be a reference to the same building.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to Palestine, where many remains of later synagogues are well documented, it has been difficult to find pre-70 remains of synagogue buildings. Ruins of synagogues are thought to have been found in Gamla to the northeast of the Sea of Galilee, in Herodium, and Masada. Not everyone is willing to concede that the archaeology

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<sup>7</sup> Some of these inscriptions are collected in *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, ed. William Horbury and David Noy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), nr. 9; 13; 22; 24; 25; 27; 28; 105(?); 117; 125; 126.

<sup>8</sup> Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 228–229.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 236–240.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 240–249; see also the inscriptions cited in n. 7 above.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 256–263.

is certain, however.<sup>12</sup> There are no inscriptions identifying them as synagogues, for example. As for Magdala and Capernaum, not enough concrete data are available to affirm the existence of pre-70 synagogues.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, most scholars are willing to accept that the synagogue is attested as an institution in Palestine by the first century CE. This is consistent with the literary sources which suggest that the synagogue was imported into Palestine after the Maccabean revolt.

A further indication for synagogues in Palestine, however, is the Theodotus inscription, found in Jerusalem in 1913. This inscription states that the synagogue in question goes back to the time of the author's grandfather and served as a place for reading the law and giving hospitality to travelers:

Theodotos, (son) of Vettenos, priest and *archisynagōgos*, son of an *archisynagōgos*, grandson of an *archisynagōgos*, built the *synagōgē* for the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments, and the guest-chamber and the rooms and the water installations for lodging for those needing them from abroad, which his fathers, the elders and Simonides founded.<sup>14</sup>

Most scholars accept that the Theodotus inscription is pre-70. H. Kee is almost alone in arguing that it is post-70, but a number of scholars who would otherwise be sympathetic with the idea of the synagogue in Palestine being late have still criticized Kee on this point.<sup>15</sup> The question seems to have been given a definitive answer by J.S. Kloppenborg Verbin's thorough study: the inscription is most likely pre-70 and provides evidence for a synagogue in Jerusalem about the turn of the era.<sup>16</sup>

The New Testament is the earliest set of writings that specifically locates synagogues in the central regions of Palestine, including Jerusalem. Many passages in the gospels and Acts describe Jesus or the early Christians attending and even speaking in the synagogues.

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<sup>12</sup> M. J. S. Chiat, *Handbook of Synagogue Architecture*, BJS 29 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1982), 116–118, 204–207, 248–251, 282–284.

<sup>13</sup> Perrot, "Synagogue," cols. 676–677.

<sup>14</sup> The inscription is found in a variety of collections that discuss the synagogue. The translation given here is taken from Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 104.

<sup>15</sup> Pieter W. van der Horst, "Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship before 70 CE?" in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine, 18–23; Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 104–109.

<sup>16</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, "Dating Theodotus (CIJ II 1404)," *JJS* 51 (2002): 243–80.

Perhaps one of the most detailed descriptions is found in Luke 4:16–29. Here Jesus is pictured as reading a passage from the book of Isaiah and then expounding it. Some have tried to extract a detailed description of a synagogue service from it. There are two problems with such an interpretation. First, the passage actually gives little that is specific: no connection with a specific time of year; no suggestion that a lectionary of readings is being followed; no statement that the format in this passage was one regularly followed, whether in Nazareth or elsewhere. Secondly, Luke is writing well after 70 CE. We do not know whether he had any knowledge of pre-70 synagogues or even whether Nazareth had a synagogue during Jesus' lifetime.

We have some indication of what sorts of activities went on in synagogues, but we know rather less than some have suggested: the data are insufficient to give a full picture. The sources vary from primary inscriptions to alleged official decrees and letters in literary sources to statements in literary sources. These are not all on the same level of credibility. For example, Josephus's apologetic concerns make some of his data suspect, and the New Testament statements have some problems associated with them. But the same broad picture tends to emerge from the various sources; the consistent synagogue activities were:

- Reading scripture.
- Prayer.
- Teaching and homiletic activity.

These seem to have been the main sort of activities in synagogues, but it is difficult to go beyond that with any certainty.

The synagogue as a place of prayer and worship has been generally accepted, but it was recently challenged.<sup>17</sup> The difficulties of determining precisely what the synagogues did from the available sources have already been commented on. Yet there are several arguments that point to one function being that of prayer and worship:<sup>18</sup> (1) the earliest name in inscriptions is *proseuchē*, "(place of) prayer, prayer (house)," which seems an odd name to give a building which had nothing to do with prayer; (2) Agatharchides of Cnidus states that the

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<sup>17</sup> Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 122 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> van der Horst, "Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship before 70 CE?" 23–37; Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 404–415.

Jews “pray with outstretched hands in the temples (*hiera*) until the evening.”<sup>19</sup> Although his focus is on the Jews of Jerusalem, he is likely drawing on his experience of synagogues in Alexandria (where he lived most of his life) and elsewhere in the Diaspora.

Another synagogue activity was evidently the reading of Scripture. The Theodotus inscription speaks only of reading and study of scriptures (as well as hospitality). The reading of the Torah and Prophets seems to have been carried out in many synagogues, if not in all. This is implied by several New Testament passages (Luke 4:16–19; Acts 13:15; 15:21). We have no information to go beyond this basic statement that biblical reading took place. Despite the occasional argument that a biblical reading was done according to a fixed lectionary cycle, this seems unlikely; even rabbinic literature does not attest a fixed cycle until quite late.<sup>20</sup> The same applies to the translation of the biblical readings into Aramaic. Although targumizing apparently took place in synagogue services during the rabbinic period, no evidence has so far been produced that targums or translating into Aramaic had a place in the pre-70 synagogues.

### *Summary*

What can we say about the synagogue in the first century CE? It appears to have developed first in the Diaspora because of the remoteness of the temple and its cult from many Jews outside Palestine, but this was rather later than many assume: about the mid-third century BCE. It eventually reached Palestine, though this was even later: the first century BCE or possibly even only in the first century CE. The Jews of Palestine had rather easier access to the temple and thus did not feel the need for another institution in which to practice the communal aspects of their religion. But apparently even those in the holy land itself saw some value in having a place for reading the law and public prayer on a regular basis. Once Jerusalem was destroyed, the synagogue became much more important because there was nothing else: it no longer had a rival in the form of the temple. The synagogue became a central religious institution in most Jewish communities in the post-70 period.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 1.209.

<sup>20</sup> Grabbe, “Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine,” 408–409.

## 2. *Sanhedrin*

The gospels and Acts speak of “the” Sanhedrin (e.g., Matt 5:22; Mark 14:55; Acts 23:20), as if there was only one. Several recent discussions have argued, however, that there was more than one institution. The reason is that the data from the different sources are so diverse that it seems difficult to reconcile them to one judicial body. For example, both A. Edersheim and G. F. Moore spoke of one body,<sup>21</sup> while an early study by A. Büchler, as well as more recently H. Mantel argued for two: a “religious” Sanhedrin and a “secular” one.<sup>22</sup> The most recent study, by David Goodblatt, argues that no regular body known as the Sanhedrin existed.<sup>23</sup> It was a creation of the rabbis long after the temple was destroyed and the high priest no longer had a function. Although various councils met on an ad hoc basis at different points in the Second Temple period, these did not constitute a permanent body. Rather, the high priest was the central religious authority.

Goodblatt quite rightly put his finger on the essential problem: trying to reconcile the description of the Sanhedrin in the Mishnah tractate *Sanhedrin* with the passages found in actual Second Temple sources. A number of studies drew on rabbinic literature as if it was a Second Temple source, when in fact it is centuries after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE and often represents a quite different social and political situation. More on this later. The significance of this is that the Mishnaic “Sanhedrin” should be taken out of the equation in the initial study. The question of the existence—or non-existence—of the Sanhedrin needs to be determined from Second Temple sources and only then should the rabbinic picture be examined.

We begin our investigation with the Persian period. There are large gaps in our knowledge of the Persian period, but we have some hints

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<sup>21</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), 2:553–558; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Three Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–30), 1:82, 85; 3:32–34.

<sup>22</sup> On Büchler, see Eduard Lohse, “συνέδριον”, *TDNT* 7:863 n. 17. See also H. Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); “Sanhedrin,” *IDBSup* (1976): 784–86.

<sup>23</sup> David Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity*, *Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum* 38 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1994), 130. See also his earlier article, “Sanhedrin,” *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York and London: Macmillan, 1987), 13:60–63.

about the structure of authority in the religious community.<sup>24</sup> No such institution as the Sanhedrin is described, but several interesting points emerge when the situation is studied. Where the high priest is mentioned in the Old Testament, he is often presented as acting in conjunction with other priests—a natural situation if he was seen as the head of the priests (2 Kings 23:4; 2 Chron 26:16–20). Yet the high priest also often brought in others under his leadership to help carry out necessary tasks or worked with others outside the priesthood (2 Kings 11; 12:8–11; 22:8–14; 2 Chron 23; 24:4–11; 34:14–22). One of the Elephantine papyri suggests that the leadership of the community in Judah includes not only the governor and the high priest but also the other priests and the nobility: “We sent a letter to our lord [Bagohi the governor of Judah] and to Yehohanan the high priest and his companions the priests who are in Jerusalem and to Ostan the brother of Anan and the nobles of the Jews.”<sup>25</sup> In sum, it is likely that any ruler would have had his advisers, whether they were “official” or not. Although the Elephantine letter suggests that the high priest involved others in his work, we have too little information to be certain that a formal body already existed in the Persian period. It does seem, though, that the roots of “the Sanhedrin” might be found here.

In the first century and a half of the Hellenistic period, between Alexander and the Maccabees, we have several references to the administrative structure of the Jews in Judah. It is abundantly clear that the high priest is not only the religious leader but also represents the Jewish community in its relationship to the Greek overlords and in the context of other political activities. The Greek historian Hecataeus of Abdera, writing about 300 BCE, had one of the few descriptions of the Jewish people in Palestine and one of the earliest in Greek.<sup>26</sup> He

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<sup>24</sup> For a recent treatment of the whole period, see Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period, 1: Yehud: A History of the Persian Province of Judah*, LSTS 47 (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2004). A discussion of the question of the high priest and the Sanhedrin is found at 230–235.

<sup>25</sup> Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt: 1–4*, Hebrew University, Department of the History of the Jewish People, Texts and Studies for Students (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1986–99), A4.7:18–19//A4.8:17–18 = A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (1923; reprinted Osnabruck: Otto Zeller, 1967), 30:18–19//31:17–18.

<sup>26</sup> *Apud* Diodorus Siculus, 40.3.1–8. For text, translation, and commentary, see Menahem Stern, *Jews and Judaism in Greek and Latin Literature*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1974–84), 1:26–35. For a survey of the most

describes a Jewish ethnic and national community centering on Jerusalem in which the priests provide leadership and act as judges, as well as running the cult and teaching the law. Chief authority is invested in the high priest. A little later, about the middle of the third century BCE, the high priest Onias II refused to pay a tribute of twenty talents of silver to the Ptolemaic court. A relative by marriage, a man from a powerful family named Joseph Tobiad, intervened to pay the sum owed.<sup>27</sup> The precise significance of this story is disputed, but it serves to illustrate that the high priest's power was not necessarily a constant over the centuries.

After conquering Palestine in 200 BCE, the Seleucid ruler Antiochus III rewarded the Jews who had helped him to defeat the soldiers of Ptolemy by opening the gates of Jerusalem to him. Antiochus issued a decree which listed the temple personnel and relieved some of their taxes temporarily so the temple could be repaired of war damage. The decree is as follows:<sup>28</sup>

King Antiochus to Ptolemy [a Seleucid official, not the king of Egypt], greeting. Inasmuch as the Jews, from the very moment when we entered their country, showed their eagerness to serve us and, when we came to their city, gave us a splendid reception and met us with their senate [*meta tēs gerousias*] and furnished an abundance of provisions to our soldiers and elephants, and also helped us to expel the Egyptian garrison in the citadel, we have seen fit on our part to requite them for these acts and to restore their city which has been destroyed by the hazards of war, and to repeople it by bringing back to it those who have been dispersed abroad... And all the members of the nation shall have a form of government in accordance with the laws of their country, and the senate [*gerousia*], the priests, the scribes of the temple and the temple-singers

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recent scholarship on the work, see Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *Pseudo-Hecataeus*, On the Jews: *Legitimizing the Jewish Diaspora*, Hellenistic Culture and Society 21 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 7–43. Unfortunately, the quotations in Josephus are not likely to be authentic, as Bar-Kochva has now demonstrated.

<sup>27</sup> *Ant.* 12.160–166; on doubts about this and also the details of the Joseph Story, see Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics, 219 to 161 B.C.E.*, Brill's Series in Jewish Studies 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), ch. 2; idem, "On the Credibility of the History of the Tobiads", in *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel: Collected Essays*, ed. A. Kasher, U. Rappaport, and G. Fuks (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1990), 21–38. Without entering into a debate on this issue, I would note that even fictional accounts can reflect the general functioning of institutions in society.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Josephus, *Ant.* 12.138–46 (translation from H. St. J. Thackeray, et al., eds., *Josephus*, LCL [London: Heineman; Cambridge: Harvard, 1926–65], 7:71–75).



shall be relieved from the poll-tax and the crown-tax and the salt-tax which they pay.

Unfortunately, this document is known only from its quotation in Josephus. This immediately raises the question of whether it is authentic or is only perhaps a Jewish invention. It has been widely accepted as basically authentic overall, though perhaps it contains a couple of later additions.<sup>29</sup> A problem still remains in its failure to mention the high priest (who is usually thought to be Simon II at that time). There are several possible explanations for this: Antiochus may have wanted to concentrate on the institutions (the “senate”) rather than individuals; or Simon may have opposed Antiochus (but then why was he allowed to continue in office?); or there was no high priest at the time of the invasion, perhaps because the high priest was killed in the fighting over Jerusalem; and Simon came to the office only after Antiochus had entered the city. These are only suggestions, but the lack of mention of Simon, while a puzzle, is not fatal to the decree’s authenticity.

The books of Maccabees are a major source for information about Judea and its people in the middle of the second century BCE. Not only can they be dated and to some extent cross checked with Greco-Roman sources, but they also give some of the most detailed information available to us. They provide a number of references to a “council of elders” or “senate,” known in the Greek sources as the *gerousia* (unfortunately, we have no Semitic language sources for this time). Such an institution definitely existed as part of the Hellenistic city established by Jason, and was likely to have been an official body of the Greek *polis* of Jerusalem. This is clear from 2 Macc 4:43–50, which states:

Charges were brought against Menelaus about this incident. When the king came to Tyre, three men sent by the senate [*gerousia*] presented the case before him . . . Menelaus, the cause of all the trouble, he [Antiochus] acquitted of the charges against him, while he sentenced to death those unfortunate men, who would have been freed uncondemned if they had pleaded even before Scythians.

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<sup>29</sup> On the question of authenticity, see the discussion and bibliography in Lester L. Grabbe, “Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period,” in *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period*, ed. L. L. Grabbe, JSOTSup 317 = European Seminar in Historical Methodology 3 (Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 129–155, esp. 139–142.

A *gerousia* was not the traditional governing body for Greek cities which more often had officials known as *archons* and an assembly of citizens known as the *ekklēsia*. Thus, Jason seems to have continued a pre-existing Jewish body, even if he reconstituted it.<sup>30</sup>

Also of significance are the series of letters quoted in both 1 and 2 Maccabees. Probably not all of them are authentic, but some of them are likely to be. In any case, even literary creations would have attempted to imitate actual models of letters at the time. First, we look at the alleged letter of Jonathan to the Spartans (1 Macc 12:5–6):

This is the copy of the letter that Jonathan wrote to the Spartans: “The high priest Jonathan, the senate [*gerousia*] of the nation, the priests, and the rest of the Jewish people to their brothers the Spartans, greetings.”

Josephus, who is drawing on a version of 1 Maccabees for his account in the *Antiquities*, gives a slightly different wording but with much the same picture (*Ant.* 13.166):

Jonathan, high priest of the Jewish nation, and the senate [*gerousia*] and council of priests [variant: “council of the Jews”] to their brothers, the ephors and senate and people of Lacedaemon, greeting.

At the beginning of 2 Maccabees are letters ostensibly from Judas Maccabeus. The first is sent in the name of Judas and the *gerousia* (1:10):

The people of Jerusalem and of Judea and the senate [*gerousia*] and Judas,  
To Aristobulus, who is of the family of the anointed priests, teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the Jews in Egypt,  
Greetings and good health.

Even if this letter is fictitious, as is generally agreed, the question is whether the writer has simply invented the council alongside Judas or whether he is reflecting the situation in his own time. Another letter, this time from Antiochus IV during the Maccabean conflict and thought to be authentic, is addressed to the “senate” (*gerousia*) of the Jews (2 Macc 11:27):

To the nation the king’s letter was as follows:

“King Antiochus to the senate [*tē gerousia*] of the Jews and to the other Jews, greetings. If you are well, it is as we desire. We also are in

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Emil Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, revised G. Vermes, et al.; 3 vols. in 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–87), 2:202.

good health. Menelaus has informed us that you wish to return home and look after your own affairs.”

3 Maccabees was probably written later than 1 and 2 Maccabees, though its precise dating is debated. 3 Maccabees is a curious mixture. On the whole, it describes a situation that is likely to be unhistorical, whether the attempt by Ptolemy IV Philopater (221–204 BCE) to enter the temple when he visited Jerusalem or his persecution of the Jews subsequently. Nevertheless, the author is knowledgeable about the battle of Raphia in 218 BCE (3 Macc 1). In 1:6–8 is described the invitation given to Ptolemy by the Jews:

With the plot against him thwarted, Ptolemy now decided to visit the neighboring cities and offer them encouragement. When he had done this and distributed gifts to their shrines, he made his subjects feel secure. When the Jews sent a delegation of the council [*apo tēs gerousias*] and the elders to greet him and offer him friendly gifts and congratulate him on his achievements, he was all the more eager to visit them as soon as possible.

Where he got his information about the “council of the Jews” is unknown, but it may reflect an actual source or some sort of personal knowledge relating to the writer’s own time.

The book of Judith ostensibly describes an invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. The book is a work of fiction with many errors about the historical situation during the Neo-Babylonian period. However, this would not prevent the author from knowing about Jewish society in his own time (second century BCE?). In several passages the book mentions a decision-making body associated with the high priest. Judith 4:6–8 (NRSV) gives the reaction of the Jews to the invasion of Holophernes:

The high priest, Joakim, who was in Jerusalem at the time, wrote to the people of Bethulia... So the Israelites did as they had been ordered by the high priest Joakim and the senate [*gerousia*] of the whole people of Israel, in session at Jerusalem.

The book of Judith also assumes that the Jerusalem “senate” would make decisions on cultic matters. The following is taken from an alleged speech of Judith to Holophernes (11:14 NRSV):

Since their food supply is exhausted and their water has almost given out, they have planned to kill their livestock and have determined to use all that God by his laws has forbidden them to eat. They have decided to consume the first fruits of the grain and the tithes of the wine and oil, which they had consecrated and set aside for the priests who minister

in the presence of our God in Jerusalem—things it is not lawful for any of the people even to touch with their hands. Since even the people in Jerusalem have been doing this, they have sent messengers there in order to bring back permission from the council of elders [*gerousia*]. When the response reaches them and they act upon it, on that very day they will be handed over to you to be destroyed.

Another passage notes that “Joakim the high priest and the *gerousia* of the Israelites” who lived in Jerusalem came to see the wonderful things done by the Lord on Israel’s behalf (15:8).

To sum up the passages looked at so far, they suggest that a “council” operated alongside the high priest. The high priest appears to work with or lead the council, and none clearly states that the council made decisions independently of the high priest or could overrule him. The passages do suggest that the “council” was a continuing institution of the Judah’s administration and not just an ad hoc assembly called on occasion by the high priest.

We now come to the important source of the Jewish historian Josephus. He gives a number of references to what seems to be an institution in the government or administration of Judah at various points in its history. He uses a number of terms: *gerousia* (“council of elders,” “senate”), *sunedrion* (“assembly,” “meeting,” “council”), and *boulē* (“council”). Whether these all refer to the same thing or to separate entities should emerge after considering the passages in which the various terms are used.

The early part of the *Antiquities* is based on the biblical text, but some of the interpretations there are likely to have been reflections of Josephus’s own experience. For example, *Ant.* 4.218 states that hard cases which cannot be decided by the local judges are to go to the holy city for the high priest, the prophet, and *gerousia* to judge. This is based on Deut. 17:8–9 which mentions only the “Levitical priests” and the judge, so Josephus’ statement represents a re-interpretation of the passage. *Ant.* 4.224 adds that the king is to do nothing without the high priest and “the council of his senators” (*tōn gerousiastōn*). *Ant.* 5.23 has the *gerousia* among those that make a circuit of the walls of Jericho. These passages seem to put a collective body or council alongside the high priest.

The next term used by Josephus is *sunedrion* (which was borrowed into Hebrew to become *sanhedrin*). An important passage is *Ant.* 14.163–184. In this particular episode, some complained of Herod’s actions as governor of Galilee, because he had executed cer-

tain “brigands.” The issue focused on the fact that he had done this without permission of “the council” (*tou sunedriou* [*Ant.* 14.167]). He himself was called to answer before this council under the chairmanship of Hyrcanus II, the high priest (*Ant.* 14.168–80). Later on Herod is alleged to have executed many members of that body (*Ant.* 14.175).<sup>31</sup> This passage gives the definite impression that “the council” (*to sunedrion*) is a pre-existing body, with a variety of prominent Jews as members (both priestly and lay) and chaired by the high priest.

There are two problems, however: first, there are a number of differences between the two accounts in the *War* and the *Antiquities*. In the previous paragraph, all references are from the *Antiquities*; however, the earlier account in the *War* is somewhat different: the term *sunedrion* is not mentioned in the version in the *War*, the story of Samaias the Pharisee is absent from the *War*, and the details regarding the outcome of Herod’s trial are somewhat different in the two. However, these differences are not unusual, since the *War* and the *Antiquities* often differ in details where they are parallel. One of the consistent differences is that of length, with the *War*’s account usually being rather shorter, but there are also tendencies in the *Antiquities* based on Josephus’s own proclivities or prejudices.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, some passages have been thought to be secondary, especially the story of Samaias the Pharisee.<sup>33</sup> Granted the difference between the two accounts, is the one in the *Antiquities* “a story whose historical value is highly suspect”?<sup>34</sup> As suggested, the story of Samaias

<sup>31</sup> Goodblatt (*The Monarchic Principle*, 111) states that this assertion is mistaken because Josephus later says that Herod killed forty-five of Antigonus’s men (*Ant.* 15.6). However, there is no evidence that either episode has anything to do with the other. It is Goodblatt who asserts that they are two versions of the same episode; the text nowhere suggests that.

<sup>32</sup> For example, I noted the tendency for Josephus to include the Pharisees as actants at various points in the *Antiquities* where the *War* was silent about them (*Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 304, 470–472). Cf. also Lester L. Grabbe, “The Sadducees and Pharisees”, in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 3: *Where We Stand: Issues and Debates in Ancient Judaism* 1, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, HdO: Erste Abteilung, der Nahe und Mittlere Osten 40 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3.35–62.

<sup>33</sup> This second point is argued by Goodblatt (*The Monarchic Principle*, 112–113) who refers to it as “a fictionalized account of the events, created in Pharisaic circles and preserved by Josephus at JA 14.” Similar views are expressed by Ralph Marcus (*Josephus*, LCL, 7:540) and E. P. Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985] 313).

<sup>34</sup> Quotation from Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle*, 113.

may indeed be a Pharisaic tradition that Josephus has gained from somewhere. However, anyone who reads the two accounts will see that they are essentially the same in the main features: Herod is accused by the families of the victims, he is tried before Hyrcanus, he escapes being condemned, and many other elements of the story are more or less the same. We must also keep in mind that Josephus does sometimes have genuine additional information in the later account (perhaps because the earlier one extensively compressed the sources in some cases). Most significantly, although *sunedrion* does not occur in relevant passage in the *War*, there are several references to a trial. Before whom was this trial conducted? There is nothing to rule out the *sunedrion* of the *Antiquities*, and the presence or absence of the Samaias story does not change this.<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, the existence of “the *sunedrion*” does not depend on the Samaias story but is referred to throughout the account in the *Antiquities* and is compatible with the *War*. If there was no such institution, why would Josephus have put it in? Where did he get the idea, if he invented it, and what was his motive?

King Agrippa II (who was not king over Judah but had considerable influence with regard to the Roman province of Judaea) was asked for a ruling on a priestly matter about the year 64 CE (*Ant.* 20.216–217):

Those of the Levites—this is one of our tribes—who were singers of hymns urged the king to convene the Sanhedrin [*sunedrion*] and get them permission to wear linen robes on equal terms with the priests, maintaining that it was fitting that he should introduce, to mark his reign, some innovation by which he would be remembered. Nor did they fail to obtain their request; for the king, with the consent of those who attended the Sanhedrin [*to sunedrion*], allowed the singers of hymns to discard their former robes and to wear linen ones such as they wished.

The question is whether Agrippa was being asked to convene a pre-existing body or to appoint an ad hoc group to advise on the question. What sort of ad hoc council would Agrippa have called? Who would be on it? After all, this was a priestly matter; on the other hand, the priests might have seen the request as a threat. It seems most likely that Agrippa would have used an official body if one already existed. However, the first occurrence of the word *sunedrion* is without the

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<sup>35</sup> *The Monarchic Principle*, 113. There is no basis for Goodblatt’s assertion, “Thus the reference to an ongoing institution of nation-wide jurisdiction called ‘the *sunedrion*’ may be no more historical than the account of Samaias’ rebuke.”

definite article. Should the phrase be translated, “to convene an (ad hoc) council”? This might indeed be the case, and one should recognize it, but the absence of the definite article does not automatically lead to a meaning which would take the indefinite article in English.<sup>36</sup> The convening of an already existing group is grammatically possible, is implied by the context, and would certainly fit without any problem.

A number of passages use another term: *boulē*. It was widely used for one of the main ruling bodies within a semi-independent Greek city (alongside the *ekkēsia* or “assembly of citizens”). The question is, what is its precise connotation in these passages? V.A. Tcherikover argued that it was not the city council, as one might think, but was a Jewish body that had responsibility for the nation rather than just the city of Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> We also read of a building in which the *boulē* met (*War* 5.144; 6.354) and of the “secretary of the *boulē*” (*War* 5.532).

According to Josephus (*Ant.* 20.10–14) the emperor Claudius wrote to the Jews. The specific issue was allowing them control of the high priestly garments at Agrippa I’s request (up until then the Romans kept the garments in custody until just before they were needed during festivals in the temple, as a means of controlling the Jews), but this is not of major relevance:

Claudius Caesar Germanicus, in the fifth year of tribunician power, designated consul for the fourth time, Imperator for the tenth time, Father of his country, to the rulers [*archoi*], council [*boulē*], and people [*dēmos*] of Jerusalem and to the whole nation of the Jews, greeting.

During Florus’s term of office (about 66 CE), when there was trouble the Roman governor assembled “the chief priests, the nobles, and the most eminent citizens” to have certain individuals handed over who had insulted him (*War* 2.301). He later sent for the “chief priests and leading citizens” (*War* 2.318). Later, he called “the chief priests and the

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<sup>36</sup> The significance of the presence or absence of the article in Greek is not always easy to define; cf. Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, revised Gordon M. Messing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 288–292; Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, revised Friedrich Rehkopf; 14th fully revised ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 201–227; F. Blass and A. Debrunner, revision of 9th–10th German ed. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 131–145; Nigel Turner, *Vol. III: Syntax in A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, ed. James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1963), 172–184.

<sup>37</sup> V. A. Tcherikover, “Was Jerusalem a ‘Polis?’” *IEJ* 14 (1964): 61–78.

*boulē*” to tell them he was leaving the city, “since it was they who were clearly responsible for civic order in Jerusalem’ (*War* 2.15.6 §331; cf. 2.16.2 §336). Shortly afterward the Jewish king Agrippa II attempted to avert the friction between the Romans and Jews by having “the rulers and members of the council [*bouleutai*]” go out and collect taxes to pay the arrears to the Romans (*War* 2.17.1 §§405, 407).

In some of these passages, the *boulē* might be a city body, but the last passage seems to have to do with collecting taxes over a much wider area. Also, the association of the “chief priests” with the *boulē* seems strange if it was only a city council. On the other hand, the chief priests are associated in other passages with the *gerousia* and *sunedrion*. This suggests that the *boulē* is another name for the same body rather than a separate body.

We now come to the references in the New Testament. A number of the passages in the gospels suggest an existing body with the powers of judgment and under the control of the high priest or the chief priests. The Sermon on the Mount asserts, “Whoever says to his brother, ‘Raka,’ will be liable to ‘the council’ [*to sunedrion*]” (Matt 5:22). John 11:47 states that “the chief priests and the Pharisees” called together “the council” (*sunedrion*) to plot against Jesus. Later, the trial of Jesus included a trial before the “the council” (*to sunedrion*: Mark 14:55; 15:1//Matt 26:59//Luke 22:66). Joseph of Arimathea was alleged to have been a member of the council (*bouleutēs*: Mark 15:42–43//Luke 23:50–51). The book of Acts is the source giving what seems to be the most direct information on how the council was supposed to have functioned. In Acts 4 and 5 the apostles Peter and John are pictured as being called before the council to account for their actions:

[4:1] While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them...[4:5–6] The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family...[4:8] Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders...” ...[4:15] So they ordered them to leave the council [*exō tou sunedriou*] while they discussed the matter with one another.

[5:21] When the high priest and those with him arrived, they called together the council [*to sunedrion*] and the whole body of the elders of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

A somewhat similar picture emerges in Acts 22–23. In this case, the apostle Paul is brought before the council:



[22:30] But on the morrow, desiring to know the real reason why the Jews accused him, he unbound him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council [*to sunedrion*] to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them. And Paul, looking intently at the council [*tō sunedriō*], said... [23:6] But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council [*en tō sunedriō*]... [23:12] When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. And they went to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. You therefore, along with the council [*sun tō sunedriō*], give notice now to the tribune to bring him down to you..."

Despite the diverse traditions, the New Testament presents a remarkably consistent picture of the Sanhedrin. The gospels all seem to be post-70, even if many of the traditions are earlier. As for Acts, its authorship is almost universally assigned to Luke who is writing probably toward the end of the first century CE. We do not know what his sources of information were, but his picture broadly fits with the other sources surveyed. In spite of the fact that the temple was now in ruins and the high priest probably now had little or no power within the country, the New Testament writings seem to know of a body headed by the high priest that had some judicial function within Judah at the time.

It is important to take note of this consistency, at least in the broad outlines, of the sources considered so far. Some of the passages have only mentioned information in passing, and several different terms have been used. In spite of this, source after source makes reference to some sort of council led by or associated with or existing alongside the high priest that makes decisions and seems to have some sort of administrative function in Judah. These data cannot be simply dismissed.

We now to come to considering the final source—a source with which some treatments begin—the Mishnah. The Mishnaic tractate *Sanhedrin* gives a description that clearly presupposes a "large Sanhedrin" of 71 members which met in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, and local institutions of 23 members each. There were also allegedly other courts in Jerusalem, though their precise relationship to one another is not completely clear. On the surface, it might seem plausible

to accept the picture, but there are reasons to be cautious.<sup>38</sup> One of the main reasons is that the Mishnah was written well after the Second Temple period and clearly presupposes the destruction of the temple in 70 CE; the compilation of the Mishnah is commonly accepted to have been completed about 200 CE.<sup>39</sup> It also talks about the place of the king in legal judgment, which suggests not a reality but a theoretical position. Although some of the Mishnah traditions are much earlier than the final form of the Mishnah, the situation is complicated. J. Neusner argues that the contents of tractate *Sanhedrin* began to develop in the Ushan period.<sup>40</sup>

The question is, then, whether rabbinic literature describes anything other than the fertile imagination of later rabbinic figures who present an idealized picture rather than the historical reality. That this is an idealized picture is indicated by the following quotation from *m. Sanh.* 11:4:

He was not condemned to death either by the court that was in his own city or by the court that was in Jabneh, but he was brought up to the Great Court that was in Jerusalem.<sup>41</sup>

The reference to the “court in Jabneh” alludes to the post-70 situation when the center of Judaism had shifted from Jerusalem to Yavneh, a town near the coast.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, all the descriptions of the *Sanhedrin* seem to be theoretical. As J. Efron notes,

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<sup>38</sup> The intensive study of rabbinic literature in recent years, including the question of its value for historical and sociological data, cannot be dealt with here. I have tried to summarize some of the issues and give some of the main bibliography in *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (13–16) and *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period* (116–117). The work of Jacob Neusner is, of course, central to the new perspectives. What it means is that older secondary studies are generally quite unreliable in their use of rabbinic sources for historical purposes.

<sup>39</sup> E.g., Jacob Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 97.

<sup>40</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishnah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 62, 95–97, 143–150.

<sup>41</sup> The translation is from Herbert Danby, ed. *The Mishnah, translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933). See also Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

<sup>42</sup> See especially Jacob Neusner, “The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from AD 70 to 100,” *ANRW II* 19.2 (1979), 3–42; also Grabbe, *Judaic Religion of the Second Temple Period*, 116–126.

Throughout all those generations, from the *Zugot* (“Pairs”) to the end of the Second Temple, there is not one mention of a specific act of the Great Sanhedrin meeting in the Chamber of Hewn Stones. Its actual appearance is not interwoven in the variegated memories stored in the Eretz Israel talmudic tradition. . . Its existence is not recognized or implied in the duties or activities of the Pharisee leaders, in the conduct or dicta of Rabban Gamaliel, the elder, and his son, nor in the company of Rabban Yoh\*anan b. Zakkai and his disciples. Such a total void cannot be filled by contrived excuses, nor can its significance be ignored.<sup>43</sup>

The Sanhedrin of rabbinic literature appears to be an idealized creation of the rabbis. There may be some genuine memories of Second Temple times, but as a whole it does not fit the society of Judea or Judaism before 70. The rabbinic picture should thus be omitted from the reconstruction of the historical body.

### *Summary*

Because of the nature of the sources and the apparent difficulty in reconciling them, some recent studies have proposed several different Sanhedrins, while one major study has rejected the existence of such a body. A chronological study of the sources, however, yields a fairly consistent picture in outline (not necessarily in the details) up to the first century CE. When we come to rabbinic sources, beginning with the Mishnah about 200 CE, though, the picture changes. Because of this and because of the nature of rabbinic literature, we should accept that such late sources cannot be used to reconstruct the institution.

What our earlier sources show is a body, whether formal or informal, headed by the high priest that advises the latter and assists in making decisions for the wider community. This body is attested for the third century, second century, and first centuries BCE (Josephus, books of Maccabees, Judith) and the first century CE (Josephus, NT). There are also hints that it might be earlier, even as early as the fifth century BCE (Elephantine papyri; Hecateus of Abdera). The exact relationship between the power of the high priest and that of the Sanhedrin is not always clear, though one would expect it to have varied for an institution that operated through a number of centuries. Sometimes the high priest is pictured as acting alone, in which case the Sanhedrin

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<sup>43</sup> Joshua Efron, “The Great Sanhedrin in Vision and Reality”, in idem, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period*, SJLA 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 287–339, at 298–299.

would have had no more than an advisory role; at other times, it seems to have made collective decisions, though whether this would ever go against a firmly held opinion of the high priest is not known. For example, Herod is called to answer a charge before (and in essence to be tried by) the Sanhedrin, but according to one account the high priest cleared him out of fear of Herod's power.

Herod took away most of the power and authority of the high priest and the Sanhedrin, but with the return of Judah to Roman rule in 6 CE the place of the high priest and apparently also the Sanhedrin became important once again. They represented the Jewish community to the Roman authorities. The references to the Sanhedrin in the New Testament seem to reflect the situation in which the high priest and Sanhedrin had a certain power to make decisions, even if the specific situations described might be of doubtful historicity (the New Testament passages being probably written after 70 CE). With the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the power of the high priest quickly evaporated and the Sanhedrin as a body ceased to exist. With the rise of rabbinic Judaism, a symbolic but fictional body was created as an expression of the new form of Judaic religion.

### 3. *Conclusions*

The synagogue and the Sanhedrin were both religious institutions associated with pre-70 Judaism, but they were quite different from each other in nature, function, and operation. What our investigation also showed was that many popular views about them—still to be found in literature about early Christianity—have no historical basis or at least are problematic. It is important to keep the context of Judaism always in mind. Many argue that “Judaism,” meaning or including Jewish religion, began in the post-exilic period (i.e., the Persian period, ca. 539–331 BCE). If we accept this assumption for convenience, the core of Judaic religion was originally the temple and the sacrificial cult, operated by the priesthood with the high priest acting as the overall leader. Furthermore, this high priest was also the accepted leader of the Jewish community from at least the time of Alexander, if not before, and the representative of the Jews to the Greek rulers.

This means that neither the synagogue nor the Sanhedrin was a central institution until the late Second Temple period at least. The synagogue first arose in the diaspora, evidently in the third century BCE,

as a means of community worship for those who were far removed from the temple. It apparently did not spread to Palestine itself until probably the first century BCE at the earliest and may not have become an important institution until this time or perhaps even until after the fall of the temple in 70 CE. In the light of what we know, the references to synagogues in the gospels and Acts seem to be possible in general outline, though the details may be anachronistic in some cases (e.g., Luke 4).

The Sanhedrin may have its roots in the Persian period. Its function seems to have been basically an advisory body to the high priest, though its place and power would—not surprisingly—have varied over the space of the several centuries that it existed. Although headed by the high priest, it does appear to have made collective decisions in a number of episodes reported in the books of Maccabees, Josephus, and the New Testament. The institution ceased with the destruction of the temple, and the *Tractate Sanhedrin* in the Mishnah seems to describe a hypothetical body with few of the details going back to the pre-70 institution.



ECHOES FROM THE WILDERNESS:  
THE HISTORICAL JOHN THE BAPTIST\*

KNUT BACKHAUS

The prime mover of the Jesus movement was the baptizer John. Jesus himself ascribed the initiative in the drama to him and contemporary observers shared this view.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the Baptist is, in the strict sense of the word, ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. The cultural memory of the early Christians is surprisingly convergent at this point: Q, the synoptics, and the Fourth Gospel place the Baptist at the narrative pole position; Acts raises John's baptism to the state of an official starting point of the apostolic era (1:22, cf. 10:37), and in Christian self-understanding John becomes a principal character on all the stages between birth (Luke 1; *Prot. Jas.* 22–24) and death (Mark 6:17–29), pre-existence (*Pistis Sophia* 1:7) and descent (*Gos. Nic.* 18:2) of Christ.

Looking for the historical John the Baptist, therefore, we engage in the archaeology of Christianity. Archaeological facts lie on firm ground and many a Jesus researcher hears the spade crunching when it strikes historical stone. But however hard archaeological facts may be, without documentary evidence they are less than clear-cut. The documentary evidence we have on John the Baptist is to a great extent part of the Christian drama script. In order to understand the first layer we have to set aside this drama without giving up those fragmentary structures that may guide our excavation.

Archaeology does not uncover characters, but problematic finds. Starting from an outline of modes and methods of Baptist research I shall inspect the site with its most intriguing problems, trying to trace who he was that moved on the first layer.

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\* I would like to thank two colleagues with whom I am privileged to share my exegetical work in Munich: Professor A. J. M. Wedderburn has indefatigably corrected my English and Professor G. Häfner has given useful comments on the draft. Twenty years ago I was introduced into Baptist research by Professor Josef Ernst, Paderborn. I warmly dedicate this article to him on occasion of his 80th birthday.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Q 7:31–35; 16:16; Mark 6:14–16; 11:27–33.

## 1. *Baptist Research: Modes and Methods*

### 1.1. *A Short History of Research*

What Reimarus says on the relationship between the “cousins” John and Jesus may be applied to the respective fields of research: Consanguineous as they were, they knew and supported each other, they began just at the same time and showed the same language and purpose.<sup>2</sup> As a matter of fact, Baptist research often served as a forerunner of the Jesus quest and prepared its tortuous paths.<sup>3</sup>

In the very beginning of *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768) considered John the *proton pseudos* of Christianity for it was in seditious machinations that he prepared the public way for the Messiah Jesus, who, in due return, introduced him as (his!) prophet to the people. The early novel-like *Lives of Jesus* (C. F. Bahrdt, K. H. Venturini)—books so weirdly undead because their reanimated corpses reappear again and again in the guise of bestsellers—saw John under the influence and instruction of the mysterious order of the Essenes, which explained whatever had appeared unexplainable before. David Friedrich Strauß’s (1808–1874) recourse to the category of myth was an important step forward in historical insight. Excluding the Fourth Gospel from his reconstruction and making use of Josephus’s account, he saw John in his own right, not coloured in “mythical light.” As far as Jesus’ relationship to John is concerned, Strauß laid the foundation of what still dominates exegetical minds: Jesus was baptized by John, lived perhaps as his disciple in his narrower circle for some time, and

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<sup>2</sup> Hermann Samuel Reimarus, “Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger: Noch ein Fragment des Wolfenbüttelschen Ungenannten (1778),” in G. E. Lessing, *Werke*, vol. 2, ed. H. Göbel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1996), 492–604, at II §§ 3–4; cf. I § 16–17.

<sup>3</sup> Surveys on the history of Baptist research are given in John Reumann, “The Quest for the Historical Baptist,” in *Understanding the Sacred Text: Festschrift M. S. Enslin*, ed. J. Reumann (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1972), 181–199; Stephanie von Dobbeler, *Das Gericht und das Erbarmen Gottes: Die Botschaft Johannes des Täufers und ihre Rezeption bei den Johannesjüngern im Rahmen der Theologiegeschichte des Frühjudentums*, BBB 70 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Athenäum, 1988), 16–31; Robert L. Webb, “John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTs 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 179–229, at 179–185; Gary Yamasaki, *John the Baptist in Life and Death: Audience-Oriented Criticism of Matthew’s Narrative*, JSNTSup 167 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 12–32, but also Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 9th ed. ([1906/1913] Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), is still helpful.



did not stop appreciating his mentor when he had found his own way. More than researchers today, Strauß was prepared to deny the historical character of the critical spot in the relations between John and Jesus, i.e. the Baptist's delegated inquiry from prison, which he preferred to interpret as a Christian fiction securing that the Baptist would not leave this world without having given at least a token of his nascent acknowledgment of Jesus' messianic status.<sup>4</sup> The liberal and philanthropic Life-of-Jesus research discovered a Baptist who was not too philanthropic and liberal, but formed the austere background against which Jesus' liberalism and philanthropy would shine the lighter and brighter.<sup>5</sup> If Jesus was the friendly figurehead of Cultural Protestantism, John was in some way its Jewish shadow man. With Wilhelm Bousset (1892) this dualistic view attained higher honours in the history-of-religions school.<sup>6</sup> Biblical scholarship has never really abandoned this typological contrast, even when its roots in christology were overgrown with the seed of a more critical phase.

A reason for this may be that this critical phase did not strike Baptist research in the same measure as its "cousin branch." It was ushered in with Albert Schweitzer's study on the "Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung" in 1906, and it is here that the paths of Jesus and Baptist research diverge for a while. Schweitzer's study, to be sure, did not finish off the Jesus quest (Schweitzer himself developed a historical theory, according to which John and Jesus attributed to one another the role of the eschatological Elijah);<sup>7</sup> it did not even do away with Jesus monographs (after all Bultmann himself wrote one), but it marked the end of any serious attempt, or theological desire, to draw the historical Jesus into our times. There had certainly never been any interest to draw the historical *John* into our times, and that is why Baptist research maintained its continuity whereas the "Jesus quest"

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. David Friedrich Strauß, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch betrachtet*, 2 vols. (1835/36; Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 4th ed., 1840), 1:339–398.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. e.g. (with different accents) Daniel Schenkel, *Das Charakterbild Jesu: Ein biblischer Versuch* (1864, Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel, 3rd ed. n.d.), 29–36; Karl Hase, *Geschichte Jesu: Nach akademischen Vorlesungen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1876), 294–315; Leopold von Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, vol. 3 (1863; München: Duncker & Humblot, 4th ed. 1921), 86–87.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Wilhelm Bousset, *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum: Ein religionswissenschaftlicher Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892), esp. 48–56.

<sup>7</sup> Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 32–36, 402–450, 605–609.

seemed to have been interrupted until Käsemann's famous address in 1953 was to introduce the "New Quest."

Meanwhile, studies on John prepared the methodological ways for subsequent Jesus research: Martin Dibelius, one of the forerunners of form criticism, based his pioneer monograph (1911) on the fragmentarised *logia* tradition.<sup>8</sup> The "master and disciple"-model, which until today dominates "Lives of Jesus," was elaborated by Maurice Goguel (1928).<sup>9</sup> An early variant of John as "prophet of eschatological restoration" was put forward by Ernst Lohmeyer (1932).<sup>10</sup> The focus shifted to history-of-religions issues not later than in the early 1950's: in particular, Qumran research tested its applicability to the New Testament with the case of John.<sup>11</sup> Especially Jewish scholars anticipated the reintegration of John into first-century Judaism. The protagonists of redaction criticism (e.g. W. Marxsen, W. Trilling, H. Conzelmann) centred their interest on gospel material concerning the Baptist, and it was Walter Wink (1968) who presented the first monograph on John that was on the whole indebted to this new method.<sup>12</sup>

The "Third Quest"—a term even less suitable for the in some way "questless" Baptist inquiry than for the different ways of recent Jesus research—sees John once again overtaken by his gifted disciple.<sup>13</sup> John

<sup>8</sup> Martin Dibelius, *Die urchristliche Überlieferung von Johannes dem Täufer*, FRLANT 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911).

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Goguel, *Au seuil de l'Évangile: Jean-Baptiste* (Paris: Payot, 1928).

<sup>10</sup> Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Urchristentum, 1: Johannes der Täufer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1932).

<sup>11</sup> A first thorough analysis of the Qumran milieu as background of John's activity was contributed by William H. Brownlee, "John the Baptist in the New Light of Ancient Scrolls," in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 33–53. A comprehensive study of John within the Syro-Palestinian Baptist movement was presented by Joseph Thomas, *Le mouvement baptiste en Palestine et Syrie (150 av. J.-C.-300 ap. J.-C.)* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1935). Charles H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (London: SCM, 1964), esp. 33–40, 163–177, accentuated the Samaritan and broader Baptist background.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition*, SNTSMS 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> In Californian air even John, "in light of the secondary character of apocalyptic imagination," sets out (in Q) to the marginal paths of Jewish cynicism, forgetting both his eschatological message and his purifying rite to smile at us in "a wisdom way of viewing the world" (62), cf. Ron Cameron, "What Have You Come out to See?: Characterizations of John and Jesus in the Gospels," *Semeia* 49 (1990): 35–69. The "Jesus Seminar" in general takes a more sophisticated view: that John spoke the words in Luke 3:16b, for instance, is "pink," Luke 3:16a.c, however, are only "grey," whereas 3:17 is "pink" again; that John "taught repentance apart from baptism" is even "black";

is less often understood as lonesome antithesis to Jesus. Instead, he shares his interest in restoring Israel now and follows him into their common cultural and social environment. I regard this approach as promising, though there are good reasons for loosening as far as our sources allow the ties that bind Baptist research to Jesus research. Thus, the state of art suggests a methodologically reflected reconsideration of the historical John that takes advantage of both the closer grasp of critical source evaluation and the broader view on late Second Temple Judaism.<sup>14</sup>

## 1.2. Sources

The material on John the Baptist is limited in volume, but broad in the range of relevant texts and text types. We have sayings of John or concerning John and/or narratives in Q,<sup>15</sup> all the synoptics with Acts,<sup>16</sup> the Fourth Gospel,<sup>17</sup> a surprisingly wide spectrum of early Apocrypha,<sup>18</sup>

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see the report by W. Barnes Tatum, *John the Baptist and Jesus: A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> Representative of the mainstream of current research are the balanced works by Josef Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer: Interpretation—Geschichte—Wirkungsgeschichte*, BZNW 53 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), with emphasis on redaction criticism, and Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study*, JSNTSup 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), focusing on the socio-historical horizon, as well as the multivolume Jesus monograph by John P. Meier, which seems to be the late crowning of the methodological circumspection that was one of the inspiring factors of the “New Quest”-period: *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991); 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994). Other approaches tend to stress John’s role as purifier and to qualify the conventional notion of the “eschatological prophet”: Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Bruce Chilton, “John the Baptist: His Immersion and His Death,” in *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. S. E. Porter and A. R. Cross, JSNTSup 234 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 25–44.

<sup>15</sup> Q 3:7–9, 16–17; 7:18–23, 24–28, (29–30), 31–35; 16:16 (I follow the mode of reference in the IQP edition).

<sup>16</sup> Mark 1:2–6 / Matt 3:1–6 / Luke 3:1–6; Mark 1:7–8 / Matt 3:11–12 / Luke 3:15–18; Mark 1:9–11 / Matt 3:13–17 / Luke 3:21–22; Mark 1:14 / Matt 4:12; Mark 2:18–22 / Matt 9:14–17 / Luke 5:33–39; Mark 6:14–16 / Matt 14:1–2 / Luke 9:7–9; Mark 6:17–29 / Matt 14:3–12 (cf. Luke 3:19–20); Mark 8:27–29 / Matt 16:13–16 / Luke 9:18–20; Mark 9:11–13 / Matt 17:10–13; Mark 11:27–33 / Matt 21:23–27 / Luke 20:1–8; Matt (3:14–15); (11:14–15); (21:28–32); Luke 1:5–25, 36, 39–56, 7–80; 3:10–14; (7:29–30); 11:1; Acts 1:5; 1:21–22; 10:37; 11:16; 13:24–25; 18:24–28; 19:1–7.

<sup>17</sup> 1:6–8, 15, 19–28, 29–34, 35–51; (2:1–11); 3:22–4:3; 5:33–36; 10:40–42.

<sup>18</sup> *Gos. Naz.* 2 (Jerome, *Pelag.* 3.2); *Gos. Eb.* 1 (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.6), 2 (*Pan.* 30.13.4–5), 3 (*Pan.* 30.13.7–8); *Gos. Heb.* 2 (Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 4 in *Isa* 11:2);

and at least some traditions in ancient Christian literature that may be traced back to the first century;<sup>19</sup> indirectly even Paul's Corinthian correspondence may (by way of Apollos) be connected to the Baptist movement.<sup>20</sup> What is more, we have, in Josephus's *Antiquities* (*Ant.* 18.116–119; cf. Origen, *C. Cels.* 1.47; Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.11.1–6), an authentic account for which Jesus researchers may envy us.<sup>21</sup> The origins of the Mandaean religion probably go back to the Syro-Palestinian Baptist milieu of the New Testament era, but after the "Mandaean fever" has receded in (German) scholarship, there is little enthusiasm for exploiting the comprehensive literature on John from "his own religion" with an historical intention.<sup>22</sup>

While this overview may seem encouraging at first sight, optimism is somewhat dampened when we take into account the selective character, the vested interests, and the suspicious bearers of this tradition. Forty years are regarded as a crucial threshold after which the communicative memory of the immediate witnesses of the recent past gradually fades away so that cultural memory-work may be perceived as a challenge and need.<sup>23</sup> Mark, in fact, wrote about 70 CE the first *bios* in order to document and interpret the fading memory of Jesus, but comparable documentary work has not been done in (postulated) Baptist circles, or, at least, the documents have never reached us. There has been, of course, an almost inflationary coinage of hypotheses con-

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*Gos. Thom.* 46, 78, 104; cf. 52; *Prot. Jas.* 8.2–3; 10; 12; 22–24; cf. Genna of Mary (*Pan.* 26.12:1–4); P. Cair. 10735 verso (ed. W. Schneemelcher; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 5th ed. 1987). An infancy narrative collecting the legendary motifs so far was written in Garshuni probably towards the end of the fourth century and is ascribed to the Bishop Serapion of Thumis: *Vita et miracula Ioannis Baptistae*, ed. A. Mingana: "A New Life of John the Baptist," *BJRL* 11 (1927): 438–489.

<sup>19</sup> Justin, *Dial.* 49; 88; *Ps.-Clem. Recog.* 1.53.5–1.54.9; 1.60.1–4; *Hom.* 2.17 // *Recog.* 3.61; *Hom.* 2.23–24 // *Recog.* 2.8; *Hom.* 3.22.

<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6, 21–22; 4:6; 16:12; cf. Acts 18:24–28; Titus 3:13.

<sup>21</sup> The authenticity of our passage is secured by Goguel, *Au seuil de l'Évangile*, 17–19; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 39–41; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 19; for discussion, see Edmondo Lupieri, *Giovanni Battista fra storia e leggenda*, BCR 53 (Brescia: Paideia, 1988), 119–131; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 253–257; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 31–39, 165–168; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 56–62. The Old Slavonic version of Josephus's *Jewish War* presenting John as a pre-cultural ascetic liberation preacher, which once impressed Robert Eisler, has lost its credibility as historical source; see Goguel, *Au seuil de l'Évangile*, 20–33; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 258–63; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 43–44.

<sup>22</sup> For a survey, see Lupieri, *Giovanni Battista*, 193–395; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 372–383.

<sup>23</sup> Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* 1992; (München: Beck, 4th ed., 2002), 11, 50–51.

cerning original Baptist sources, traditions, and Christian (mirror-read) reactions,<sup>24</sup> but their purchasing power is low. Provided that the first Christian generation was to a considerable extent a continuation of the Baptist movement and rooted deeply in its milieu, there was from the very beginning a genuine interest in forming its own Baptist story. Even if we allow it to be plausible that the early Christians would have integrated sources from another group, which is often considered an antagonistic sect in notorious competition with Christians, it is methodologically inadmissible to draw any conclusion from the material in its present form as far as its historical provenance is concerned.<sup>25</sup> Thus, what has survived may be compared to the Baptist on the Isenheim altarpiece: He is standing under a cross he never saw, in Christian company he never met, with a lamb he never spoke of, and what the Christian painter is mostly interested in is his oversized finger pointing to Christ whereas his figure clothed in exotic garments steps back into the shadows of history. The dilemma is inescapable: As we try to form our judgement on John independently of early Christian interpretation, we are almost totally dependent on Christian tradition, save for Josephus, whose account, partial in itself, does not suffice for a critical control.

So if we are tempted to feel like one who is expected to recover the historical Jesus by exploring the Koran,<sup>26</sup> there is one circumstance that may reassure us: Not all the hazards and tendentiousness of the Jesus quest will vex Baptist research. While the early Christians could not deal with Jesus apart from christological premises, in the case of John they could and sometimes did. There are certainly massive christological premises as well as pragmatic tendencies in the early Christian material on John, but some texts—incidentally, even in the Fourth Gospel in spite of its endeavour to Christianize John<sup>27</sup>—are not associated with Jesus at all and may imply unbroken continuity with what

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<sup>24</sup> E.g. Mark 6:17–29; Luke 1, esp. 1:46–55, 68–79; John 1:1–18; *Sib. Or.* 4.159–170; Matt 11:2–6 / Luke 7:18–23; Mark 2:18–22 parr.; Acts 19:1–7.

<sup>25</sup> For methodological criticism, see Wink, *John the Baptist*, 107–113; Knut Backhaus, *Die "Jüngerkreise" des Täufers Johannes: Eine Studie zu den religionsgeschichtlichen Ursprüngen des Christentums*, Paderborner Theologische Studien 19 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1991), 11–19.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Reumann, "Quest," 187.

<sup>27</sup> The Baptist tradition of the Fourth Gospel is certainly theologically (and polemically) styled, but it also shows peculiarly concrete and archaic-looking traces of what might be the social remembrance of the Johannine community competing with a community of Baptist adherents (John 1:35–51; 3:22–30; 4:1–3; 10:40–41).

once had been the eve of the Jesus movement. Sometimes they offer comparatively favourable conditions for applying the “criterion of dissimilarity” (against the background of early Christian tradition). It is the embarrassment of the Baptist memory within Christian contexts that may guide our way through the problematic material.

Before discussing the methods, however, a caution may be in place: The state of sources justifies Reumann’s scepticism, when he insists that “in the case of the Baptist we have only an echo (or echoes) of his whisper.”<sup>28</sup> Wherever John sings louder than Jesus in *Godspell*,<sup>29</sup> where scholars claim to know the religious profile of John, the history of his sect, the Baptist period in Jesus’ life (sometimes the only period in this non-biography taken at face value) so that they even share the vision he saw when he departed from his mentor (Luke 10:18), it may be the visions of the scholars themselves that fill out the gaps in so fragmentary a lore. Instead, Baptist research is an exercise in hearing the grass grow in the wilderness. The conceptual configuration “Historical Baptist” is not a man of flesh and blood and will never be: it is a knot of problems, a few of which perhaps may be solved.

### 1.3. *Methods*

There are, on the whole, two Johns pictured in the New Testament: one who stands by himself and one who stands beside Jesus. It is with relief that we notice that the two do *not* resemble each other.<sup>30</sup> It may easily be understood that the second one is part of early Christian self-definition; but it should not escape our notice that the first one has survived in a Christian interpretative framework from a pre-Christian era. As a general rule we may state: the closer a Baptist text is connected with Jesus tradition, the more probable is its having undergone an *interpretatio Christiana et christologica*; on the other hand, the more a Baptist tradition is devoid of christological tendencies, the

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<sup>28</sup> Reumann, “Quest,” 187.

<sup>29</sup> See the grudging irony in Chilton, “John the Baptist,” 26–27, whose own reconstruction (26–39), to be sure, turns out to be sharper in tone than in argument since it is some general comparisons and speculation, guided by an altogether simplistic dichotomy between Josephus the historian and the synoptics as a “catechetical instrument” (cf. 43), that replaces the piecemeal source-oriented criticism so characteristic of Webb.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Strauß, *Leben Jesu*, 398; Ernst Bammel, “The Baptist in Early Christian Tradition,” *NTS* 18 (1971/72): 95–128, at 95–96.

stronger is its historical reliability. In this regard both the *prudendum* character of the Baptist tradition and the social, religious and biographical continuity of the tradition bearers to John's movement encourage us to be optimistic.

We may profit and take our starting point from the ongoing discussion on the criteria in Jesus research<sup>31</sup> and adjust our tools to the special features of traditions concerning John. The following markers of historical reliability control our reconstruction of the historical Baptist:

- *the criterion of cross-section*: a tradition or motif (however worded) is attested in a multiplicity of texts and/or text types that are independent from each other (e.g. the motif “John was a popular baptizer”)
- *the criterion of counter-tendency*: a tradition or motif does not conform to, or even conflicts with, dominant early Christian tradition interests (e.g. the motif “John baptized Jesus”)<sup>32</sup>
- *the criterion of contextual plausibility*: a tradition or motif both contextualizes John in late Second Temple Judaism and explains his

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<sup>31</sup> For comprehensive discussion, see Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Freiburg [CH] and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), esp. 175–194, 206–217; a précis is given in Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* 1996; (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996; 3rd ed. 2001), 116–120. For a critical summary of the usual criteria, see also Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 167–195. For the further development of the separate debate on (literacy-orientated) criteria onwards to a theory of cultural memory, see Jens Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), esp. 459–486; idem, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie: Methodologische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens*, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 47 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 6–61, and in general the helpful volume by Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, eds., *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> I feel no difficulty in regarding this criterion as parallel to the criterion of dissimilarity and embarrassment, if correctly handled, not as a determinative or self-sufficient factor, but as an introductory and minimum description of counter-tendency to be complemented by factors of contextuality. I have argued elsewhere that in Jesus research the Baptist movement may allow a control of the criteria of dissimilarity and “rejection and execution” (Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 177), since it locates Jesus in the most “similar” Jewish context he had (Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 47–52). In this sense, the Baptist tradition offers an excellent basis for Jesus research (both in dissimilarity and contextuality), just as Jesus traditions make a poor basis for Baptist research.

individual (not “unique”!) impact on that context, including the possibility conditions of his reception into the conceptual framework of the Jesus movement (e.g. his eschatological preaching of judgment).

These criteria should—allowing for oral history trajectories<sup>33</sup>—be applied in the earliest reachable stage of tradition-history, they should be used complementarily, and they should guide us (within the bounds of what is historically possible) to a coherent comprehension of the Baptist and his milieu. We will start from the relatively securable data and then grope our way forward into more densely tangled thickets.

## 2. *The Baptist John*

### 2.1. *Impact*

The surest information we have about John is that he set a movement in motion. His attraction is attested in the broadest scope imaginable, it is related to both his baptism and his death, and it does not belong to the stuff christological imagination would create.

The synoptics report that John’s preaching of baptism drew large crowds from Judea and Jerusalem to the Jordan (Mark 1:5/Matt 3:5; cf. Matt 3:7/Luke 3:7; Matt 21:32; Luke 3:10; 7:29–30)—an impression the Fourth Gospel is concerned to modify (cf. John 3:23, 26–27, 30; 4:1–3; 5:35–36; 10:40–42). Although there is certainly some narrative dramatization as well as restoration eschatology in their accounts, the range of John’s impact must not be underestimated. Luke even mentions that interest “concerning John” grew among the people, “whether perhaps he were the Christ” (Luke 3:15; cf. Acts 13:24–25).<sup>34</sup> Granted, the redactor aims at the “answer” the narrated John gives (3:16) in

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<sup>33</sup> For a critical reappraisal of oral history in Jesus research, see Samuel Byrskog, *Story as history—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). It is in fact quite obvious that a figure as popular as John had his sustained remembrance (non-fictional, but, of course, conditioned by the needs and circumstances of those who remembered) beyond Christian literacy (cf. e.g. *Ant.* 18.116, 119; Acts 19:1–7) and that this remembrance may in any stage have influenced, for instance, the narratives of John’s death or details of the infancy story. The methodological crux, however, is the lack of any possibility of counterchecking.

<sup>34</sup> As a rule, I translate with RSV or with IQP.



order to fill up the gap between John's expectation and the church's messianic proclamation. Nevertheless, advanced expectations, in whatever form, are quite conceivable in the Baptist's environment, and we observe that they are not ascribed to sectarian circles of disciples but to broad sections of the population. Jesus in his controversy with the Jerusalem authorities refers—apparently in retrospect—to the Baptist or, strictly speaking, to John's baptism to substantiate his own heavenly ἐξουσία (Mark 11:27–33).<sup>35</sup> The counter-question he raises presupposes that John's rite was of heavenly origin. The authorities, champions of the central cult, are at a loss for an answer because of this marginal immerser's enduring fame. He still is, as the narrator (not without one of his hyperboles) states, a popular prophet in the strictest sense: “they were afraid of the people, for all held that John was a real prophet.” Twenty-five years or so after the Baptist had died there were still contemporaries in the Jewish-Christian milieu of Asia whose religious profile was marked by John's baptism (cf. Acts 18:24–28; 19:1–7);<sup>36</sup> via Apollos baptismal concepts of this kind may have even influenced the controversies in the Corinthian community (cf. 1 Cor 1:10–17).

John's death obviously sparked widespread discussions. In the *inclusio* of his Baptist account Josephus, some 65 years later, refers to opinions among the Jewish population which assigned the defeat Herod Antipas suffered in his border war against the Nabatean king Aretas IV in about 36 CE to the fact that God had taken vengeance

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<sup>35</sup> The arguments in favour of the historical authenticity of the kernel of this passage (Mark 11:28–30) are counter-tendency (the authority of Jesus is connected with the baptism of John: it is hard to imagine that this motif was created in an atmosphere of high christology or developing baptism theology) and contextual plausibility (Jesus proves to be embedded in the Baptist milieu, and this is coherent with his positive judgement on this movement in general); for more detailed argumentation, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 83–89.

<sup>36</sup> For historical analysis and interpretation, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 190–229; Friedrich Avemarie, *Die Taufenzählungen der Apostelgeschichte: Theologie und Geschichte*, WUNT 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 68–81, 413–440. It is disputed whether τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου (Acts 18:25) or τὸ Ἰωάννου βάπτισμα (19:3) relates to the historical context of the Baptist or to some baptism practised beyond this context. The unequivocal usage in Acts (1:5, 22; 10:37; 11:15–16; 13:24) as well as in early Christianity refers back to the immediate social and symbolic context of John as well as to his exclusive charism (Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, “Gerichtsverzögerung und Heilsverkündigung bei Johannes dem Täufer und Jesus,” in Gerd Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, FRLANT 202, ed. by A. Merz [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003], 229–253, at 234–235), so I prefer the first solution (pace Avemarie, *Taufenzählungen*, 73–74).

now for the unjust execution of the influential Baptist John (*Ant.* 18.116–119). Herod, Josephus explains, had feared John’s “eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind” and might have led to “some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did” (*Ant.* 18.118).<sup>37</sup> In his only passage whose central figure is not Jesus, Mark seems to present some folkloric legend—a sort of “bazaar rumour”<sup>38</sup>—on the Baptist’s death (Mark 6:17–29). There also circulated opinions (ἔλεγον) in public—again not in a distinct “sect”—on the wonder-worker Jesus as the resurrected John, which possibly even reached the tetrarch’s court (Mark 6:14–16; 8:28).<sup>39</sup>

To summarize, John was popular in public life and lonesome death. The main reason for this mobilizing effect was, according to all strands of sources—with the eloquent exception of the Fourth Gospel—the baptism so closely connected with his character and gaining him—as far as we know, only him—the surname βαπτιστής.

## 2.2. *Baptism*

Baptism contextualises John within the first-century purification milieu, illuminates his impact on the nascent church, and reveals his own unmistakable style.

It is not seldom emphasized that we should not allow the later Christian ritual to shape our conception of John’s baptism.<sup>40</sup> I wonder, however, where the risk of anachronism really lies. The early Christians did not transfer the Baptist’s rite after years without baptism into their own system. Rather, they *continued* it after a short period—perhaps only months—of interruption, in fact in close social, individual, and, as we may suppose, ritual continuity. The post-Easter situation with its

<sup>37</sup> δείσας Ἡηράδης τὸ ἐπὶ τοσόνδε πιθανὸν αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μὴ ἐπὶ στάσει τινὶ φέροι, πάντα γὰρ ἐφίκεσαν συμβουλή τῇ ἐκείνου πράζοντες... The translation is taken from the LCL-edition by L. H. Feldman.

<sup>38</sup> Wink, *John the Baptist*, 10–11 n. 3; for diachronic analysis, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 162–171.

<sup>39</sup> Mark 8:28 seems to be an abridged version of 6:14–16, whose kernel—popular rumours—mirrors historical tradition: the confusion of John with Jesus in the public eye and the motif of Jesus as the resurrected John are hardly likely to have been invented, whereas the connection of the rumours with Antipas may perhaps be due to the redactor’s hand. For more detailed analysis of tradition and historicity, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 89–95.

<sup>40</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 181; Colin Brown, “What Was John the Baptist Doing?,” *BBR* 7 (1997): 37–49, at 37–38.

intense expectations was, after all, not too different from the pre-judgment situation which the Baptist's preaching presupposed. The problem is not how the Christians introduced baptism, but why Jesus had interrupted it.<sup>41</sup> The conceptual framework of baptism, which was to develop into the Christian sacrament of initiation, certainly changed, but the ritual practice probably remained similar: The Christians' Spirit baptism was of meta-ritual quality. The Ephesian disciples apparently failed to see any difference between John's and Christian baptism at all (Acts 19:1–4), and in the case of Apollos (and, if we may draw conclusions from the silence of the sources, in the case of Jesus' first followers as well) John's baptism obviously was considered sufficient (18:24–28). Christian baptism was nothing else but John's baptism in light of the message, fate, and impact of Jesus. From this unity in origin we may, without risk of anachronism, conclude similarity in rite.

This preliminary reflection is supported by the hard data we are given.<sup>42</sup> First of all, the "baptism of John" and "John the Baptist" explain one another: What this specific ritual purification means is understandable only in view of John's particular character and message; on the other hand, what John stands for becomes clear only in light of the rite he "preached" (Mark 1:4: κηρύσσω βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν; cf. *Ant.* 18.117). John, the only "Baptist" among so many purifiers, is the active part in this rite: Not only has he instituted it (by divine call, as he certainly claimed), he is also in some way its minister: the lustration is not self-administered, it is *he* who baptizes (cf. Q 3:16; Mark 1:5, 8–9)—in an actually not too humble analogy to the heavenly baptizer to come.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 332–334.

<sup>42</sup> For more comprehensive discussion of John's baptism, see Hartwig Thyen, *Studien zur Sündenvergebung im Neuen Testament und seinen alttestamentlichen und jüdischen Voraussetzungen*, FRLANT 96 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 131–145; Gerhard Barth, *Die Taufe in frühchristlicher Zeit*, Biblisch-Theologische Studien 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 23–36; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 320–340; George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962 repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 31–44; Simon Légasse, *Naissance du baptême*, LD 153 (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 27–55; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 49–56; Webb, "John the Baptist," 187–197; Klaus Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1994; Tübingen: Francke, 2nd ed., 1995), 117–123; Taylor, *Immerser*, 49–100, and especially Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 93–216.

<sup>43</sup> We have no evidence what such an active role of the Baptist may have looked like, but the early Christian practice is probably again an instructive analogy. The baptismal conception in general may be understood as a combination of self-immersion and aspersion (by Levitical priests), see Friedrich Avemarie, "Ist die Johannestaufe ein Ausdruck von Tempelkritik? Skizze eines methodischen Problems," in *Gemeinde*

So two elements are fused: a *bath*, which integrates John into the context of the Jewish purification milieu, and *God's dealing with those who are bathed* (and those who are not), which gives John's "preached rite" its peculiar shape in this context and foreshadows his reception in early Christianity. The symbol of a religious bath speaks for itself: John acted as a purifier and the first function of his rite was a cleansing one. The Torah provided manifold forms of lustrations to (re-)establish the different states of Levitical purity. The bath that removed the cultic impurity of proselytes developed, probably not sooner than in early Christian times, to a *rite de passage* of its own, thereby paralleling circumcision. In the Syro-Palestinian milieu, particularly in the Jordan area, between 200 BCE and 300 CE, this symbolic system was radicalized by (only fragmentarily documented) Jewish (or Jewish-Christian) groups,<sup>44</sup> among which the Qumran people are the best known. As is often mentioned, Bannus, the lustrating eremite, with whom Josephus claims to have spent three years as a disciple (Josephus, *Life* 11–12), may be the figure who can most readily be compared with John—if we had only enough evidence to compare.<sup>45</sup> At any rate, from the cultic periphery the purgative act moves into the centre, thereby, conceptually or effectually, relativizing or replacing the soteriological relevance of animal sacrifice. Those groups, ascetically withdrawn from urban milieus and entertaining dualistic ideas of holiness, practised a religious life that was alternative to the dominant styles of religion in the urban and temple milieus.

The remarkable innovation was that John's bath stands for the cleansing from sin in a most comprehensive way. This fact is emphasized by the synoptics as well as by Josephus. Although their cultural horizons, their language, and points of view are evidently different, it becomes clear that the baptismal act stands between repentance and forgiveness (Mark 1:4/Luke 3:3; cf. Luke 1:16–17, 77; *Gos. Naz.* 2) or turning to ethical conduct and acceptability to God (*Ant.* 18.117). The

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*ohne Tempel—Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. B. Ego A. Lange, and P. Pilhofer, WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 395–410, at 405.

<sup>44</sup> For an evaluation of the sometimes enigmatic (and on the whole not very reliable) accounts, see Thomas, *Mouvement*, esp. 2–60, 140–267; Kurt Rudolph, "The Baptist Sects," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, ed. W. Horbury, W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 471–500.

<sup>45</sup> See Thomas, *Mouvement*, 33–34; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 112.

Jewish-Roman historiographer is, as usual, anxious to avoid any eschatological, magical, or political association and inserts here a hellenistic body-soul dichotomy, but it is not difficult to retranslate his account into the understanding of contemporary Palestinian Judaism. It was sin, violation (whether “moral” or “cultic” is an anachronistic question) of the Most Holy One’s covenant that made an unholy people unclean. John’s baptism was a “baptismally-expressed repentance,”<sup>46</sup> the embodiment of *metanoia* (*genitivus qualitatis*: βάπτισμα μετανοίας), the symbol-reality of throwing one’s life totally into the realm of God’s sanctity and his will as manifested in the Torah. That the baptism is “for (εἰς *finale*) the forgiveness of sins,” confessed by those who accept it (Mark 1:5/Matt 3:6), is certainly no Christian projection. It matches the milieu and embarrassed the Christians not only because Jesus himself was baptized by John, but also because the remission of sins was not easy to accept as a pre-Christian act.<sup>47</sup> How remission “functioned” we do not know. Probably John neither forgave sins by means of his baptism nor did he symbolize spiritual rebirth; rather, he mediated the eschatological status of the penitent. The term “eschatological sacrament” is misleading; the idea of a performative act of sealing which spares the penitent in the final fire judgment and makes him/her a candidate for the gift of God’s spirit is the most natural explanation.<sup>48</sup> It goes without saying that this act mediated a profound status of (moral/cultic) purity, too.<sup>49</sup>

A close analogy to what John’s preaching would sound like is probably to be found in the fourth book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, which was completed in the first century CE and may originate from the Syro-Palestine region: It warns the “wretched mortals” of God’s wrath and calls for repentance, sinless life, and bathing the whole body “in perennial rivers” so that God may forgive and refrain from destroying the world (*Sib. Or.* 4.159–178). This apocalyptic fire consuming the world seems in fact to be a variant of God’s more sophisticated (but not unfiery) procedure announced by John.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 189.

<sup>47</sup> Matthew transfers the motif from John’s baptism to the Last Supper (cf. Matt 3:1–2 diff. Mark 1:4; Matt 26:28).

<sup>48</sup> See Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 334–336; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 190–194; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 54–55.

<sup>49</sup> For this aspect, see Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 194–196.

<sup>50</sup> For interpretation, see Thomas, *Mouvement*, 46–59; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 120–121.

Thus, as in the standard apocalyptic view, the situation is perceived as an inescapable crisis, the initiative is expected from God. The sinners—the *baptizandi* are sinners by definition—have to avail themselves of what is their final chance, going out into the wilderness (Q 7:24) for a baptismal act of conversion that is in itself the “fruit worthy of repentance” (Q 3:8 = Matt 3:8),<sup>51</sup> and so naturally bear “fruits worthy of repentance” in social and pious conduct, as both “Hellenizers,” Josephus as well as Luke (cf. 3:8, 10–14), hasten to underline. The way the early Christians continued the baptismal rite, the account of Jesus’ baptism, and the eschatological framework lead us to the conclusion that John’s baptism was a once-and-for-all act. The Baptist and his adherents may have practised other lustrations as well (as later the Jewish-Christian “baptists”) but even Josephus, who emphasizes the day-and-night lustrations of his mentor Bannus (*Life* 11–12), gives no hint in that direction, nor can the enigmatic verse John 3:25 bear the heavy weight of speculations.<sup>52</sup> The vocabulary (especially βαπτίζω as *verbum intensivum* of βάπτω) and the circumstances (especially the river) suggest that the rite was performed as an immersion administered by John (or an assistant).<sup>53</sup> Often the river Jordan plays its part in interpreting the symbolic dimension of John’s baptism.<sup>54</sup> With regard to the desert motif in John’s career in general it is not impossible that the Joshua tradition<sup>55</sup> or the Elijah

<sup>51</sup> Helmut Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, SBS 111 1983, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 31; Ludger Schenke, “Jesus und Johannes der Täufer,” in idem et al., *Jesus von Nazaret: Spuren und Konturen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 84–105, at 91–92; differently, Marius Reiser, *Die Gerichtspredigt Jesu: Eine Untersuchung zur eschatologischen Verkündigung Jesu und ihrem frühjüdischen Hintergrund*, NTAbh 23 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1990), 239–240.

<sup>52</sup> As for instance Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 196, mentions, John may have practised repeated ablutory rites, as many of his contemporaries did. Thus, this hypothesis does not really provide an innovative idea of a “recent interpretation” by Chilton or Taylor, as Evans presupposes: Craig A. Evans, “The Baptism of John in a Typological Context,” in *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Porter and Cross, 45–71, at 45. What is different in Webb’s proposal is his restraint in conjecturing beyond the available texts. Chilton (“John the Baptist,” 26–39) profiles the Baptist within what he takes to be the purity interest in early Judaism, thereby separating him inadequately from his prophetic and eschatological milieu; Evans steers a middle course, more consistently in general, but in his collection of several typologies, interpretations, and milieus too compromising.

<sup>53</sup> See Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 331–332; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 179–181.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 182–183, 360–366; Brown, “John the Baptist.”

<sup>55</sup> See e.g. Evans, “Baptism,” 50–52.

cycle (see below 2.4.) had some significance, but the Jordan was not the only place of John's activity, nor were there too many alternatives in that area, and the Jordan quite naturally drew both people and meanings to its banks.

Provided that the term "initiation" is reserved for those *rites de passage* that serve the (second) socialization into a clearly defined coherent group, John's baptism was no act of initiation. John addressed the people of Israel, and those who were baptized would anticipate the renewed Israel, but did not enter a new social body or any "remnant of Israel" as a socially discernible in-group. On the contrary, in some way baptism was an act of individualization.<sup>56</sup> The individuals, however, became what they were: Israelites placing their hope in Israel's God of old, and it is in this way that we may speak of John's activity as "generic purification."<sup>57</sup> This process of ritual gathering served its function, as we shall see, within the framework of eschatological restoration.

There is another nuance of "collectivism" in John's activity, which is not always wholly appreciated: John is both the offensive populariser and the resolute radicalizer of religious concepts and practices that would in Second Temple Judaism regularly be reserved for elitist circles. As the Qumranites amplified and radicalized Levitical ideas of purity, so John radicalized and amplified—in fact "preached" (Mark 1:4) and disseminated—the purity ideas of purification groups, as they were entertained for instance by Bannus or in Qumran, and gave them their soteriological dimension. It seems as if he concentrated these elitist ideas and the cultic practices of his day, lustrative as well as sacrificial ones, in a theocentric tour de force to form the single focus of his baptism. Thus, it is not unfair to suggest that he is what one could call the "great communicator" or *grand simplificateur* of the purification idea. At any rate, the mobilizing effects of so attractively simple a concept reached Jesus and those who were to be his disciples. The "forerunner's" movement eventually proved to be the broader

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<sup>56</sup> For the "ecclesiological pretentiousness" of John's baptism, see Jürgen Becker, *Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth*, BibS [N] 63 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 38–40; Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 321–322; differently (with many others), Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 197–202. For Josephus's phrase βαπτισμῶ συνιέναι (*Ant.* 18.117), which is the only textual evidence Webb can hint at, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 268–272.

<sup>57</sup> Chilton, "John the Baptist," 38.

highway without which there would have been no turning into the (narrower) way followed by the Jesus movement.

This leaves us with a last question: If John's baptism is a final (possibly even exclusive) chance of salvation, then John, introducing, preaching, and administering this chance, is in some way a mediator of salvation (and it was perhaps just this self-concept that would leave its marks on Jesus). His baptismal activity as a whole works as a theocratic redefinition of the means of salvation and thus functions as an alternative to, or the replacement of, the sacrificial system of the Jerusalem temple.<sup>58</sup> What we observe here is that a peripheral symbolic system enters into competition with the central cult so that the Jerusalem atonement machinery was—by programme or in practice—abandoned.<sup>59</sup> John, as well as the Jews he baptized, may have participated in the everyday cultic life further on, but he was, as far as we can see, not engaged in what has been called “covenantal path searching”<sup>60</sup> (Jesus' determined ambiguity at this point may be part of his Baptist heritage).<sup>61</sup> The path John tried to make straight runs beyond the boundaries of the temple system.

John's centring upon the baptismal act thus initiates two trajectories: his own religious role as harbinger of judgment and captain of salvation and a theocentric counter-definition of the symbolic system of Second Temple Judaism. John's baptism reduced the cultic—that means: the whole religious—system of his people to the basic point of God's judgment and grace.

### 2.3. *Preaching*

This zero point—impressively symbolized by the rocks out of which God can produce children for Abraham (Q 3:8)—was the essential

<sup>58</sup> This is the (somewhat exaggerated) overall idea in Lohmeyer's monograph; at any rate, Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 55, is right: “this humble insignificant slave implicitly makes himself a pivotal, indispensable figure in the eschatological drama.”

<sup>59</sup> For a balanced view, see Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 203–205; Michael Tilly, *Johannes der Täufer und die Biographie der Propheten: Die synoptische Täuferüberlieferung und das jüdische Prophetenbild zur Zeit des Täufers*, BWANT 137 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 209–224; Avemarie, “Johannestaufer,” esp. 404–407.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Tom Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, B15.55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), esp. 37–87, 275–329.

<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the most direct affirmation of Jesus' continuity with John and his baptism (Mark 11:28–30) is placed, not without reason, within the Jerusalem temple in a discussion with the hierarchy (11:27). It was possibly Jesus' temple action that occasioned his utterance.



message into which John integrated his preaching. Before the last purifier was to clear what he had planted, his forerunner was prepared to lay bare in an enormous act of theocentric relativization the state of Abraham's descendants. It is the subject of impending divine wrath that organizes John's activity. And it is only the fruit worthy of repentance (Q 3:8a.9b) that makes the difference.

The Baptist's eschatological message is attested in Q 3:7b–9, 16b–17 only (cf. Mark 1:7–8),<sup>62</sup> but the least we can say is that it is obviously no *vaticinium ex eventu*. The best argument for the historical authenticity of John's proclamation of imminent "judgment" (i.e. God's final action in punishment of the sinners and reward of the just)<sup>63</sup> is that it never was fulfilled. God's wrath, which, to be sure, John and his adherents viewed as salvific, is impending like an ax laid to the root of the

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<sup>62</sup> I cannot see that Risto Uro, "John the Baptist and the Jesus Movement: What Does Q Tell Us?," in *The Gospel behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q*, ed. R. A. Piper, NovTSup 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 231–257, has shaken the scholarly confidence the Q account enjoys. Admittedly, Q does not deep-freeze historical Baptist tradition without kerygmatic interest. It is precisely in Q 7:18–23 that the kerygmatic interest grapples with the Baptist's preaching by building a bridge to what John had preached. But just because this passage presents Q's interpretive handling of John's ministry, the accounts of the preaching itself in Q 3 seem reliable. The silence of Josephus as far as the eschatological aspect of John's preaching is concerned is part of his hellenization of the Jewish prophet and is easily understood in view of his politically motivated reserve towards any apocalyptic element. It has often been observed that the harmless doctrine of virtue, which Josephus ascribes to John, explains neither the people's enthusiasm nor the ruler's harsh reaction. On the other hand, there are attempts to ascribe the Baptist passage to a Markan version (e.g. Nikolaus Walter, "Wer machte Johannes den Täufer zum 'Vorläufer Jesu'?", in *Text und Geschichte: Festschrift D. Lührmann*, ed. S. Maser and E. Schlarb, Marburger Theologische Studien 50 [Marburg: N. G., Elwert, 1999], 280–293), but too many subsidiary hypotheses weaken the methodological consistency of these suggestions; for detailed discussion, see Frans Neirynck, "The First Synoptic Pericope: The Appearance of John the Baptist in Q?," *ETL* 72 (1996): 41–74. The relationship between the overlapping Baptist texts of Q and Mark is still under discussion; cf. Christopher M. Tuckett, "Mark and Q," in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism*, ed. C. Focant, BETL 110; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 149–175, at 162–172; Harry T. Fleddermann, *Mark and Q: A Study of the Overlap Texts*, BETL 122 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 25–39.

<sup>63</sup> For a closer analysis of the different types and motifs of what we call "judgment," see Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, esp. 3–5, 133–152; Michael Wolter, "'Gericht' und 'Heil' bei Jesus von Nazareth und Johannes dem Täufer: Semantische und pragmatische Beobachtungen," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 355–392, esp. 366–369. We should resist the temptation to presuppose the Christian understanding of "salvation" and "condemnation" within the framework of a forensic act with a twofold outcome. Nor should we presuppose a cosmic catastrophe: it is the end of the wicked, not of the world, that John announces; see Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 304. For the wide-spread motif of "fire" (e.g. Isa 30:27–28), see Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 158–160.

trees (Q 3:9). Although caution should be exercised in arguing from silence,<sup>64</sup> the period given to Israel seems to be reduced to such a minimum that there is no longer any space for ethnic or religious privileges (Q 3:8b),<sup>65</sup> cultic provisions, venerable traditions, or comforting glances at salvation history. The situation may be compared to a tower block about to be blown up: little explosive clouds are to be seen at the base of the building but it will stay for a few moments: it is in these moments that we live (as Otto Kuss put it).

Such moments need instruction. John's warnings aimed at clearing the building site and saving the people (or more exactly: his friends). Otherwise his baptism would be but a useless waste of time; after all, fiery destruction is not what post-conversional rhetoric would insist on. The *destructive* message thus aims at *constructing* Israel—or at least Israel as far as it puts itself at God's mercy symbolized by John's baptism. There is the explicit account by Josephus (*Ant.* 18.117) and there are traces in different synoptic strata (Q 3:8; 7:35; Mark 6:20; Matt 21:32; Luke 3:10–14) which let us conclude that John was not only the harbinger of final doom but also, under the circumstances of these final days, a teacher of Jewish ethics as well as a post-conversional instructor, even though nothing incontestable has survived (but yet may perhaps have survived incognito in the form of Jesus' and early Christian teachings).<sup>66</sup> Due to the typological contrast to Christ, John is often seen exclusively as the fierce judgment preacher, a New Testament Amos, a dark foil to the figure of Jesus, the New Testament Hosea.<sup>67</sup> To be sure, nothing is more suitable to build up movements than the expectation that those who do not take part will be cut down, and according to what Q has (fragmentarily) preserved,

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<sup>64</sup> This seems to be the Achilles' heel in Becker's impressive reconstruction (*Johannes der Täufer*, esp. 16–37)—similarly Merklein, *Botschaft*, 28–33; von Döbeler, *Gericht*, 41–150—which tends to confuse the skeletal knowledge we have with the one-sidedness of John's preaching itself.

<sup>65</sup> We can only speculate whether such criticism of ethnic pride led the Baptist to address even people beyond the scope of Israel. Perea was a border region frequented by many and the accounts of John's Samaritan activity are plausible; see Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 36 (but cf. 201); Theißen and Merz, "Gerichtsverzögerung," 244–246.

<sup>66</sup> See Taylor, *Immerser*, 149–154; Gerd Theissen, "Das Doppelgebot der Liebe: Jüdische Ethik bei Jesus," in idem, *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, 57–72, at 70–72, who even tries to trace Jesus' double commandment back to John's teaching of piety and justice documented by Josephus.

<sup>67</sup> For a careful reconsideration of the aspects of "condemnation" and "salvation" in John's and Jesus' preaching, see Wolter, "Gericht"; Theissen and Merz, "Gerichtsverzögerung," 230–233.

John's preaching was actually marked by straightforward accusation and aggressive threat. But we do not really know whom these fierce warnings were aimed at, and the question of John's addressees and the pragmatic function of the relevant accounts is surprisingly seldom asked.<sup>68</sup> Both Luke and Matthew adapt the audience to their redactional purpose and the rhetoric of accusation ("brood of vipers") may have many directions (cf. Matt 23:33).<sup>69</sup> On the historical stage, it was most probably the temple elite and the Sadducean circles with whom John came into dramatic conflict (cf. Mark 11:27–33; Matt 21:32), whereas he was broadly accepted in the marginalized strata of Jewish society (cf. Matt 21:31–32; Luke 3:10–14; 7:29). On the other hand, there may have been more common (Torah-)ground between Baptist and Pharisaic circles (cf. Mark 2:18–22; *Gos. Eb.* 2) than the gospels suggest, since they are preoccupied with the conflicts of their own times.<sup>70</sup>

In any case, the judgment John announced was a conditional one (comparable to the Sibylline text quoted above; cf. also e.g. *1 En.* 91:18–19) and may be seen in the Deuteronomistic tradition of Israel's repentance.<sup>71</sup> The threshing floor—the land and people of Israel may be associated<sup>72</sup>—will be cleansed but not destroyed. The metaphorical framework of John's preaching clearly indicates both the dominant position of the judgment motif and the hopeful prospect that those who repent—i.e. who submit to John's baptism and adjust their lives to its conditions—would be spared. The imagery is taken from peasant

<sup>68</sup> See Wolter, "Gericht," esp. 364, 373–375, 381–385.

<sup>69</sup> See Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 175–178, who argues plausibly for the Sadduceans being the original addressees, although Q, to be sure, may have omitted any hint of particular groups (Neiryneck, "Pericope," 74).

<sup>70</sup> See Taylor, *Immerser*, 155–211; cf. Edmondo Lupieri, "The Law and the Prophets were until John: John the Baptist between Jewish Halakhot and Christian History of Salvation," *Neot* 35 (2001): 49–56; for historical and exegetical evaluation of Mark 2:18–22, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 138–161.

<sup>71</sup> Merklein, *Botschaft*, 28–29, and von Dobbeler, *Gericht*, 83–101, stress John's almost apodictic re-interpretation of the Deuteronomistic view, but see also Ulrich B. Müller, *Johannes der Täufer: Jüdischer Prophet und Wegbereiter Jesu*, *Biblische Gestalten* 6 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 25–28, who quotes Jesus, son of Ananias, as an example of how an *apodictic* announcement of destruction really sounds—differing significantly from John's preaching (cf. Josephus, *War* 6.300–309).

<sup>72</sup> Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 295–300.

experience and refers to Israel as God's very own plantation:<sup>73</sup> Rotten trees will be chopped down to be burned (Q 3:9), and at the end of the harvest the chaff will be burned and the wheat gathered into the granary (Q 3:17).<sup>74</sup> So what John envisages is the fiery destruction of the evil as well as the gathering of the just, in other words the eschatological restoration of Israel. It was this kind of fissile energy that gave John's activity its impact and risk.

John's baptism is a preparatory rite, his preaching is a preparatory instruction, in times to come he is seen as the great preparer, and in his own way he considers himself as such. So what did he prepare?

The textual evidence is relatively clear. It is the Q version<sup>75</sup> that shows the least marks of Christian interpretation and mirrors probably the historical Baptist's expectation:

I baptize you [[in]] water, but the one to come after me is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to [[take off]]. He will baptize you in holy spirit and fire. His pitchfork is in his hand, and he will clear (the grain on) his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn on a fire that can never be put out. (Q 3:16b–17)

Recently some exegetes plead in favour of the Markan wording: "he will baptize you with the holy spirit" (Mark 1:8),<sup>76</sup> but their case is altogether less than convincing. As far as the *ipsissima intentio* is concerned, we saw above that John, along with Jewish expectations of the day, threatened God's rage and (fiery) punishment to unrepentant Israel, and I see no reason why the Q tradition should have inserted the fire motif into an alien, "pneumatological" context.<sup>77</sup> The Markan

<sup>73</sup> For the imagery of God's plantation (e.g. Isa 21:10; 60:21; 61:3; *Pss. Sol.* 14.3–5), see Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 161–164; for a depiction of the imagined procedure of threshing, see 165–169.

<sup>74</sup> It is this type of imagery that would develop its career in the symbolic universe of early Christianity; cf. e.g. Matt 7:15–20; Hermas, *Sim.* 2; 3; 4. A certain continuity between Baptist and Christian notions of ethics and eschatology cannot be overlooked.

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of the textual evidence, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 48–55; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 262–278; Uro, "John the Baptist," 234–239.

<sup>76</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 35–39; Uro, "John the Baptist," 248–252 (who holds the Markan version to be the original idea of the saying without, however, considering it historical; instead he finds its roots in the early Christians' inclination to identify their charismatic champion with the "stronger one").

<sup>77</sup> Meier's speculation that the reference to fire in Q serves to frame an originally plain opposition of water and spirit baptism (Meier, 36–37) is merely aesthetic; to base the historical reconstruction on Uro's decomposed layers of the Baptist sayings in Q with their manifold pragmatic tendencies means building a house on quicksand.

wording (as well as the other references to the spirit only: Acts 1:5; 11:16; cf. John 1:31–34) is formed with the aorist tense (ἐβάπτισα) so that it offers a retrospect on the Baptist's ministry as a whole,<sup>78</sup> thereby contrasting two sorts of baptism (the first cultic, the second metaphorical!), which turned out to be necessary when the Christians began to resume what once had been the preparatory water baptism. Thus one might even entertain the idea that the spirit motif—or at least the epithet “holy”—has intruded into the Baptist tradition from Christian pneumatology and/or the Markan version,<sup>79</sup> but the criterion of multiple attestation (Mark 1:8/Matt 3:11/Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16; John 1:33) is a persuasive counter-argument so far. In some respects, the first Christians later continued their Baptist heritage, and possibly their pentecostal experience may be seen against the background of John's expectations. In the Baptist's imagination, to be sure, the spirit probably was a tremendous and transforming power different from any friendly Paraclete and “baptizing,” i.e. purifying (cf. 1QS IV, 21), in a manner that was anything but metaphorical (cf. Acts 2:17–21 = Joel 3:1–5; 1QS III, 6–8; IV, 20–22; 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII, 6–7; XIV, 12–13; XVI, 2–3, 6–7; CD V, 11; VII, 3–4).<sup>80</sup>

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We are, pace Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 37–38; Uro, “John the Baptist,” 250–251 not allowed to press the address “you” so that the present audience is confronted with both reward and punishment. The Baptist, like other prophets, appeals to Israel as a whole (cf. Acts 13:25), and the words “cited” in Q represent his overall preaching.

<sup>78</sup> This observation refers to the symbolic world the Markan narrator shares with his readers; in the narrated world of the text we may imagine John's audience that has just been baptized, so that it is appropriate to address them as those who have found salvation; cf. Wolter, “Gericht,” 373–374.

<sup>79</sup> Ernest Best, “Spirit-Baptism,” *NovT* 4 (1960): 236–243; Merklein, *Botschaft*, 32; Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 156, 173–174; Steve Mason, “Fire, Water and Spirit: John the Baptist and the Tyranny of Canon,” *SR* 21 (1992): 163–180, at 170–173; Fleddermann, *Mark and Q*, 35; Markus Öhler, *Elia im Neuen Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bedeutung des alttestamentlichen Propheten im frühen Christentum*, BZNW 88 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 52–53; Müller, *Johannes der Täufer*, 33; Schenke, “Jesus,” 89–90. For critical discussion, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 52–55; Simon Légasse, “L'autre ‘baptême’ (Mc 1,8; Mt 3,11; Lc 3,16; Jn 1,26.31–33),” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift F. Neirynck*, vol. 1, ed. F. van Segbroeck et al., BETL 100.1 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 257–273, esp. 266–8; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 272–5, 289–95; James D. G. Dunn, “Spirit-and-Fire-Baptism (1972),” in idem, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 93–102; idem, “The Birth of a Metaphor: Baptized in Spirit (1977/78),” 103–117, at 104–107.

<sup>80</sup> Contemporary expectations, however, do not suggest that we should translate πνεῦμα with “(fiery) wind/storm” (e.g. Best, “Spirit-Baptism,” 240–243; cf. Schenke, “Jesus,” 89–90); see Webb in idem, *The Christ and the Spirit, John the Baptizer*, 275–276.

The most intriguing question is now as before open to discussion: Who is the imminent figure proclaimed by John? The impression the Q wording leaves is ambivalent. Does the logion proclaim God or another actor in the drama of the last days? There has been much debate on the Messiah and the eschatological prophet, but the imagery clearly hints at a heavenly figure.<sup>81</sup> Melchizedek or the angel Michael seems too farfetched, and although the Son of Man<sup>82</sup> is a judicial agent, he shows little affinity to the numinous baptizer. Current research, therefore, tends to postulate some mediator of God's judgment—unknown to us and perhaps even to the Baptist.<sup>83</sup>

I have some doubts about this proposal. An unknown mediator violates the methodological rule of economy according to which any additional sub-thesis weakens the point. So a balanced reconsideration of the pros and cons of the simple thesis "God is John's one to come" is required.

1. The first argument in favour of God as the imminent figure bases itself on the priority of *literal context*: ὁ θεός is the subject of the preceding saying Q 3:8b, and it is apparently Yahweh who is illustrated as a peasant farmer cutting and burning down rotten trees in the *passivum divinum* of Q 3:9. It is hard to imagine that such an important figure as the eschatological agent would be introduced in a veiled comparison with the Baptist and in a context so clearly marked by

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<sup>81</sup> A helpful catalogue of judgment/restoration figures under discussion (Yahweh, the expected Davidic King/Messiah, the Aaronic Messiah, the Angelic Prince Michael/Melchizedek, the Son of Man, Elijah *redivivus*) is provided by Webb, *John the Baptist*, 219–260. In the relevant literature it is Yahweh who clearly meets all the demands (judging, purifying, and restoring Israel; coming; mighty; sends spirit and fire; imagery of water and threshing-floor), but Webb remains reluctant to identify the expected figure with Yahweh for reasons discussed below.

<sup>82</sup> Becker, *Johannes der Täufer*, 34–36; cf. Légasse, "L' autre 'baptême,'" 270–272.

<sup>83</sup> Webb, *John the Baptist*, esp. 282–278; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 33–35, 40; Webb, "John the Baptist," 200–202; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 188–190. Exegetes who identify the imminent figure with Yahweh include Thyen, *Sündenvergebung*, 137; John H. Hughes, "John the Baptist: The Forerunner of God himself," *NovT* 14 (1972): 191–218; von Dobbeler, *Gericht*, 76–77, 144–147; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, esp. 305–308; Merklein, *Botschaft*, 29; Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 170–175; Hartmut Stegemann, "Erwägungen zur Bedeutung des Täufers Johannes im Markusevangelium," in *Das Ende der Tage und die Gegenwart des Heils: Festschrift H.-W. Kuhn*, ed. M. Becker and W. Fenske, AGJU 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 101–116, at 105; Müller, *Johannes der Täufer*, 33–37; Nikolaus Walter, "Johannes und Jesus—zwei eschatologische Propheten: Das Selbstbild Jesu im Spiegel seines Bildes vom Täufer nach Q/Lk 7,24–35," in *Jesus im 21. Jahrhundert: Bultmanns Jesusbuch und die heutige Jesusforschung*, U. H. J. Körtner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 135–151, at 139–140.

the imminent intervention of God. And it is still harder to see the whole eschatological stage in the possession of this unknown agent (note the possessive pronoun in “his pitchfork”—“his threshing floor”—“his granary”).

2. The second argument relates to the *contemporary horizon*, namely the theophanic scenario as it was developed in Jewish expectations of the day: Already in the prophetic literature the “Day of wrath” is in a specific sense God’s very own day (e.g. Isa 13:9–13; Zeph 1:14–18; cf. Isa 27:12–13), and so in the early Jewish adaptation: It is God who comes to carry out his fiery wrath (e.g. *Jub.* 9.15; 36.10; *Pss. Sol.* 15.3–6; *Sib. Or.* 3.71–73, 760–761; 4.167–177; *1 En.* 102.1; 1QH<sup>a</sup> III, 25–36; 1QpHab X, 3–13) or to pour out his holy spirit (e.g. *Jub.* 1.23; 1QS IV, 20–22; 1QH<sup>a</sup> VII, 6–7) directly and, as a rule, without any mediating agent announced.<sup>84</sup> In this context the verb *to come* (for judgment!) serves more likely to describe God’s eschatological activity (cf. Isa 66:15–16; Mal 3:1–2; *1 En.* 1.3b–9; *As. Mos.* 10.1–7; *4 Ezra* 6.18–20) than to attribute some quasi-title or unknown function to a mediator.<sup>85</sup>
3. The *self-conceptualization of John* is the third argument: If he, as I will argue below, understood his ministry in the light of the prophecy of Isa 40:3 (cf. 1QS VIII, 12–14) as preparing “the way of the Lord” as well as in the light of the prophet Malachi announcing the “great and terrible Day of the Lord” (Mal 3:23 [4:5]), it may also be taken for granted that God is the one who comes “on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts” (Mal 3:21 [4:3]; cf. Mal 3:1–3, 17; Sir 48:10; Luke 1:16–17, 76–77). In the Elijah-forerunner-model, embedded in the prophecy of Malachi, Elijah is not the forerunner of any other agent, but of God himself. After this last messenger, there is in John’s “realizing eschatology” no space for a very last agent.
4. The fourth argument refers to the *lack of reception*: It is hard to understand why the eschatological agent, who is said to dominate John’s proclamation, should vanish unwept and unsung. Instead,

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<sup>84</sup> See the thorough examination in Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 9–152. Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 254–258, 284–288, works out that Yahweh may be the prime figure *behind* the eschatological events whereas his agent only *executes* his judgment. However, such a secondary figure, e.g. the Davidic Messiah, is normally clear-cut, and in the train of John’s preaching the expectation of such an (actually decisive!) agent was evidently never a subject of interest.

<sup>85</sup> See Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 146, 171.

the adherents were either content with John as the final messenger, or it was Jesus who became God's eschatological agent; but his "Galilean style" did quite obviously not resemble the heavenly agency described in Q 3:16–17.

Few exegetes, however, feel easy with this solution. The objections are, at first sight, impressive: (1) Will Yahweh wear sandals? (2) Will John compare himself to Yahweh? (3) How could the Baptist in Q 7:18–19 regard it as possible that Jesus is "the coming one" when he expected Yahweh?

- (ad 1) Eschatological footwear is embarrassing in any case, not only for Yahweh, but also for any heavenly agent. Two considerations may set the imagery at the right place. (a) While the reference to God's sandals in the Old Testament literature (cf. Pss 60:10; 108:10)<sup>86</sup> may seem strained, it is certain that in the genuine milieu of the Baptist's movement nobody used more daring religious anthropomorphisms than Jesus (and/or his early followers), and the little we know about John's preaching itself is equally marked by very simple metaphors from peasant life. (b) An analogy refers to a particular common feature shared by phenomena otherwise completely dissimilar. It is regularly overlooked that Q 3:16 does not present a description of God, but an analogy concerning the self-consciousness of the Baptist, who is in the presence of this master not even worthy to fulfil slavish work.
- (ad 2) So the point in John's analogy is that although there is a relation between John's baptism and the baptism of the imminent figure, the baptizers themselves are *not* comparable. The relative clause Q 3:16b qualifies the comparative form ἰσχυρότερός (μου) in Q 3:16a, which is open to more than one interpretation: The positive ἰσχυρός commonly refers to God's power in early Jewish literature (e.g. 2 Sam 22:31–33 LXX; *L.A.B.* 11.8; 4 *Ezra* 13.23),<sup>87</sup> and instead of a difference in degree between

<sup>86</sup> Hughes, "Forerunner," 196.

<sup>87</sup> See Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 171–172. Therefore one might contemplate attributing the *genitivus comparationis* of the first person singular to early Christian reinterpretation (Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 50–51; Müller, *Johannes der Täufer*, 33) but, for methodological reasons, it is safer to put aside this somewhat speculative idea.



“persons,” the comparative may simply mark the *Deus semper maior*, who will in spirit and fire exercise that power of his which is only weakly foreshadowed by John’s activity.

- (ad 3) The “coming one” in Q 7:18–19 shows so little similarity to the heavenly baptizer “coming” in Q 3:16–17 that the impression cannot be avoided that this pericope is an artificial link construed by the Q tradition to harmonize John’s expectation with Christian fulfilment. Well may it be that Q 7:18–19 is the first, still diffident attempt to Christianise John and to bend his apocalyptic expectations down to earth (see below 3).

To summarize, if John as a Baptist popularised and radicalized contemporary purification rites, as a preacher he radicalised and simplified the eschatological scenario of his day: Yahweh was to come immediately in order to destroy the wicked and to restore Israel, and this imminent revolution must involve the totality of life and qualify any human safeguard. In a religious landscape which he perceived as dried up and petrified, John announced the volcanic eruption. This eruption never did occur. But once preached it turned out to be the initiative of a most vivid rearrangement of theology.

#### 2.4. *Self-Enactment*

According to the earliest documented perception of the Baptist’s personality and style he was generally classified as a “real prophet” (Mark 11:32; Q 7:24–28;<sup>88</sup> cf. Q 16:16; Mark 6:14–16; Luke 1:76). The data we have indicate that this classification corresponded to his self-assessment. He was in some way (not only in the eyes of Jesus, who related John’s activity to the *basileia*) “more than a prophet,” in that he was God’s last messenger as well as a mediator of salvation. This specific role found expression—as in the case of another influential prophetic figure, the “Teacher of Righteousness”—in a surname: “the

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<sup>88</sup> Arguments for the historical basis of the Jesus logion Q 7:24b–26, 28 are: The classification shows no mark of christological reflection, it coheres with the overall impression of Jesus as an (independent) adherent of the Baptist movement, and the colouring of both language and cultural background points to the historical context of Jesus; for details, see Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 56–62. For the “reed shaken by the wind,” an emblem that is to be found on Herod Antipas’s coins (replacing his effigy), see Gerd Theissen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, NTOA 8 (Freiburg [CH] and Göttingen: Universitätsverlag and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989; 2nd ed., 1992), 26–44.

baptizer.”<sup>89</sup> It is, however, not so much the particular message he brought but the pattern and style of his ministry that justifies seeing him in the line of those who seem to have in one way or other revived prophetic traditions of old in the peasant scene of first-century Judaism and whom biblical scholarship describes as oracular prophets.<sup>90</sup> John, intentionally and distinctively, behaved in a way that met the role expectation of a “prophet” developed in his cultural milieu and inspired by a stereotyped biographical tradition in biblical and contemporary Jewish literature: the desert as place of his activity, his individual nearness to Yahweh, his public and severe call for repentance in view of God’s mighty, just, and wrathful intervention, his distance to the Jerusalem cult, his specific life-style amid an apparently loosely organized group of disciples, his deadly conflict with the ruler. He led, *cum grano salis*, a typological sort of life. It was in such typologies that the biographical tradition was formed—from first rumours of the divine legitimization of a man of God who had met so violent an end through the biblically inspired Markan martyrdom story to the Lukan birth narrative in its full Old Testament colours.<sup>91</sup>

Three features in John’s habit may figure in this prophetic self-stylization although the (non-suspicious) tradition is somewhat ambiguous: the wilderness John chose as his stage (Mark 1:2–4 parr.; Q 7:24; cf. John 1:23; Luke 1:80), the garment he wore (Mark 1:6/Matt 3:4; cf. Q 7:25), and the frugal food he consumed (Mark 1:6/Matt 3:4; cf. Q 7:33; Luke 1:15; Mark 2:18–22 parr.; *Gos. Eb.* 2; Justin, *Dial.* 88.7). What we may say with certainty is that these features, in some way forming a whole, were explicitly remembered not because they were characteristic of a personal peculiarity or Bedouin pragmatics but because they were factors of John’s symbolism and therefore markers of religious attention (cf. *Mart. Isa.* 2.8–11). What “felt value” did they embody? First of all, place, garment, and diet were a vital expression of distance from both urban civilization and dominant religious cul-

<sup>89</sup> See Becker, *Johannes der Täufer*, 56–60.

<sup>90</sup> See Richard A. Horsley, “Like One of the Prophets of Old’: Two Types of Popular Prophets at the Time of Jesus,” *CBQ* 47 (1985): 435–463, at 450–454. Any listing of prophetic types, of course, only bundles together historical observations with regard to possible standardized expectations in specific social strata. For other classifications, see Becker, *Johannes der Täufer*, 41–62; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 307–348.

<sup>91</sup> For a comprehensive examination of the relevant tradition with careful consideration of the history-of-religions context, see Tilly, *Johannes der Täufer*. For John’s prophetic role in general, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 290–300; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, esp. 349–378; Webb, “John the Baptist,” 204–206.

ture, including its tithing system. Possibly they also expressed some concern for purity (cf. 2 Macc 5:27). Along with that, they served as an acted parable of John's mere living in Yahweh's holy nearness as part of his attitude of repentance. His life-style depended totally on what nature—that means Yahweh—provided for him and thus embodied his “zero point” piety. In this regard John is comparable to the Qumranites and Bannus, who is said to have taken his clothing from the trees and his food from what grew of its own accord (Josephus, *Life* 11). Nevertheless, John's anxiety about impurity of food and dress seems to be considerably reduced and the evidence in general falls short of suggesting that John observed specific rules of some withdrawn religious group.<sup>92</sup>

The desert as well as the Jordan play their part in Israel's “first love” with Yahweh, and the Exodus and conquest traditions as well as the Elijah cycle are full of possible associations—which, to be sure, prevents us from connecting any particular meaning or rite to the setting.<sup>93</sup> John's dress from camel's hair probably functioned as a prophetic status symbol (Zech 13:4: אֲדָרְתַּי שֶׁעַר), which might more precisely, by way of combinations (1 Kgs 19:13, 19; 2 Kgs 2:8, 13–14: אֲדָרְתַּי; LXX: μηλωτή), form a bridge to the cloth of the “hairy man” Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8: בְּעֵל שֶׁעַר; cf. Heb 11:37; *1 Clem.* 17:1), particularly since the leather girdle may be found in the Elijah tradition as well (2 Kgs 1:8 MT: אֲזוּר עוֹר אֲזוּר בַּמַּתְנִי; LXX: ζώνην δερματίνην περιεζωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὸν αὐτοῦ—“with a girdle of leather about his loins”).<sup>94</sup> Thus, while isolated motifs do not support interpreting John's garment as a reviving of the Elijah tradition, the symbolic horizon in general certainly may.

Abstaining from food and beverages sometimes served as an “acted parable” of God-given social independence and vicarious repentance in prophetic preaching and was regularly dramatized in legendary

<sup>92</sup> For discussion, see Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 43–49; J. Ian H. McDonald, “What Did You Go out to See?: John the Baptist, the Scrolls and Late Second Temple Judaism,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Their Historical Context*, ed. T. H. Lim (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 53–64, at 55–58; Lupieri, “Law,” 50–53.

<sup>93</sup> See Tilly, *Johannes der Täufer*, 185–192. Scholarly literature is packed with imaginative suggestions concerning baptism as a second passage through the Jordan, the region as place of Elijah's ascension (and return) etc. See, *pars pro toto*, the “rite de passage” (in a most literal sense) suggested by Brown, “John the Baptist.” Speculations of such kind are doubtless stimulating but, lacking any documentary basis, far from verifiable.

<sup>94</sup> For discussion, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 284–286; Tilly, *Johannes der Täufer*, 167–175.

biographization (cf. Luke 1:15).<sup>95</sup> John's diet in particular leads us into the midst of halakic discussions of the day. Locusts or grasshoppers (cf. Lev 11:20–23; 11QT<sup>a</sup> XLVIII, 3–5; CD XII, 11–15; Philo, *Leg.* 2.105; *m. Ter.* 10:9) as well as honey (cf. Lev 2:11; CD XII, 12; Philo, *Spec.* 1:291–292; *Congr.* 169; *b. Bek.* 7b) did not violate *kashrut* but could easily be contaminated, so that human processing had its risks and observant groups were on the alert.<sup>96</sup> Notwithstanding its inspiring potential in Christian asceticism, cultural comparison dissuades us from investing John's diet with too much ascetic importance. It was simply a part of desert sustenance,<sup>97</sup> and it is in this way that it should be seen as a factor of John's prophetic presentation.

I think we finally can endeavour to describe an overall pattern of John's self-presentation. It is reasonable to presume that John defined his activity, pivotal as it was, within an interpretative framework that was structured by scriptural tradition, and after all we have seen, a special affinity to prophetic books would hardly be surprising. That does not imply that John was engaged in scribal work or even that he was literate. There were many ways of familiarizing, memorizing, interpreting, performing, and reviving biblical matter in an oral or scribal culture.

Isa 40:3 LXX is a firm constituent of the earliest Christian definition of John (Mark 1:3/Matt 3:3 and, quoting Isa 40:3–5 in full, Luke 3:4–6; in a shorter, presumably independent version John 1:23; cf. Justin, *Dial.* 50:2–5), but since the wilderness is an essential element of John's activity and the title κύριος originally refers not to Christ, but to Yahweh, it is possible that the Christians have only Christianized what may originally have been the Baptist's self-definition. The same passage played its role in the scriptural self-localization of the Qumran covenant, its withdrawal from "the habitation of ungodly men" and its ministry in preparing the way of Yahweh (1QS VIII, 12–14; 4Q176 frg. 1; cf. 1QS IX, 19–20). It is entirely conceivable that John conceptualised his eschatological preparation in a way that was similar to that

<sup>95</sup> For discussion, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 286–289; Tilly, *Johannes der Täufer*, 176–185.

<sup>96</sup> See Lupieri, "Law," 50–51.

<sup>97</sup> For a careful and comprehensive examination of the whole range of material on locusts/grasshoppers and uncultivated honey in Jewish and pagan literature, see James A. Kelhoffer, *The Diet of John the Baptist: "Locusts and Wild Honey" in Synoptic and Patristic Interpretation*, WUNT 176 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

of the covenanters and in some way, as the popularized alternative (the baptized were not expected to stay secluded in their withdrawal “from ungodly men”), competing with it.<sup>98</sup>

Whilst Isa 40:3 may have been used as an appealing catchword, there is one biblical book that in all probability was formative for John’s prophetic programme: Malachi.<sup>99</sup> Both Mark (1:2) and Q (7:27) quote Mal 3:1 (combined with Exod 23:20) in order to give, in the light of scripture, an overall description, prospective (Mark) or retrospective (Jesus in Q), of John’s figure (“Who was he?”) and ministry (“What did his activity mean?”).<sup>100</sup> Although the synoptic tradition refers the second person singular (“your face... your way”) clearly to Christ, the combination of Mal with Exod is also part of Jewish exegesis (*Exod. Rab.* 32 [93d])<sup>101</sup> and the synoptic wording is influenced by the Hebrew text more than by the Septuagint.<sup>102</sup>

So the divine announcement of Mal 3:1 seems to be connected with the Baptist in a very early stratum of tradition and is echoed in the archaic-sounding phrases of Luke 1:16–17, 76.<sup>103</sup> With different weight and in different contexts, all the synoptics develop the identification of John with *Elias redivivus* (Mark 9:11–13; more explicitly Matt 11:14; 17:10–13; Luke 1:17, 76; cf. Justin, *Dial.* 49), and some expectation of the prophet’s return was obviously in the air (cf. Mark 6:14–16; 8:28 parr.). Moreover, the Fourth Gospel with its in some way clearer,

<sup>98</sup> For discussion of the influence of Isa 40, see Taylor, *Immerser*, 25–29; James D. G. Dunn, “John the Baptist’s Use of Scripture (1994),” in idem, *The Christ and the Spirit: Collected Essays*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 118–129, at 119–122; McDonald, “John the Baptist,” 56–57; Evans, “Baptism,” 56–58.

<sup>99</sup> For this book, and the Elijah expectation derived from it, as background of John’s self-enactment, see Hartmut Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus: Ein Sachbuch*, 2nd ed. (1993; Freiburg: Herder, 1993), 298–301; Jeffrey A. Trumbower, “The Role of Malachi in the Career of John the Baptist,” in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, JSNTSup 104 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 28–41, esp. 33–41; Öhler, *Elia*, esp. 62–65, 103–110; Evans, “Baptism,” 48–50, 53–56. A more sceptical view is taken by Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, esp. 295–297.

<sup>100</sup> For synoptic discussion, see Schröter, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie*, 71–82.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Str-B I, 597.

<sup>102</sup> Κατασκευάσει coincides with the Piel form of the verb פנה in the Masoretic text, ἐπιβλέγεται with the Qal form; see Öhler, *Elia*, 33–34.

<sup>103</sup> See Öhler, *Elia*, 34–35, 77–85, who ascribes (with many others) the enigmatic tradition to the even more enigmatic Baptist circles—a hypothesis, which in respect of the Jesus movement being an offshoot of the Baptist movement may (and should) fall a prey to Occam’s razor.

though polemical affinity to the Baptist movement explicitly denies that he is Elijah (John 1:21), so this identification (in its non-christological shape) had to be combated.<sup>104</sup>

As far as we know, in pre-Christian times Elijah was not expected to return as the forerunner of the Messiah.<sup>105</sup> We observe the gospels struggling hard to make the Elijah tradition congruent with Christian eschatology, so that in Mark and Matthew the fulfilment eventually precedes what the scribes are said to expect. Instead, Elijah was expected as the forerunner of the Lord of Hosts and the “coming great and terrible Day of Yahweh” (cf. Mal 3:1–5; 3:19, 23–24 [4:1, 5–6]; Sir 48:10). It is in this respect that the pertinent parallels between John the Baptist and the book of Malachi as well as the motif of *Elias redivivus* are distinct, manifold, and coherent. First of all, Malachi in general and its appendix (Mal 3:23–24 [4:5–6]) on *Elias redivivus*—or, more exactly, *Elias reveniens*—in particular<sup>106</sup> is marked by the Day of God coming for fiery and purifying judgment: “For behold, the day comes, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal 3:19 [4:1]). This judgment will let those who belong to Yahweh “once more distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him” (Mal 3:18). Even the peasant imagery reminds us of John’s preaching.<sup>107</sup> Judgment of the wicked is inescapable (Mal 3:15; cf. Q 3:7), but there is also a prospect of being spared for those who return, so that God may open “the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing” (Mal 3:10). Malachi’s main concern, in a general tone of reproach, is repentance (Mal 3:7: “Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts”). Elijah’s task will be to lead Israel to both return and restoration (Mal 3:24 MT: הָשִׁיב). The harsh words against cultic abuse and priestly attitude, which form the bulk of the book

<sup>104</sup> For an intense examination of the early Christian material on Elijah, see Gerd Häfner, *Der verheißene Vorläufer: Redaktionskritische Untersuchung zur Darstellung Johannes des Täuflers im Matthäus-Evangelium*, SBB 27 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1994), 343–382; Öhler, *Elia*, esp. 31–97, 111–288.

<sup>105</sup> See Horsley, “Prophets,” 439–441. An examination of the Elijah expectation in early Jewish literature is provided by Häfner, *Vorläufer*, 321–343, and Öhler, *Elia*, 1–30.

<sup>106</sup> This addition was made no later than in the early Hasmonean period when it was documented in 4QXII<sup>a</sup> (4Q 76); see Trumbower, “Role of Malachi,” 34.

<sup>107</sup> Reiser, *Gerichtspredigt*, 159–160, 168.

(Mal 1:6–2:9), may find an echo in John’s indifference to the Jerusalem cult, and the strikingly sensitive criticism of divorce (cf. Mal 2:14–16) finds its counterpart in the scanty material we have concerning John’s public activity (cf. Mark 6:17–18/Matt 14:3–4; cf. Luke 3:19–20). A sense of piety and social justice (e.g. Mal 3:5–10) is ascribed to the Baptist, too (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.117; Luke 3:10–14). Whether the “hairy” and leathern dress or the Jordan, as the place where Elijah had ascended and which commended itself for a return, were part of John’s Elijah revival<sup>108</sup> is hard to decide, but in light of the material concurrence the suggestion seems to make sense. It is, of course, chiefly the character of Elijah as forerunner of God’s judgment and mediator of restoration that will have influenced John. God’s announcement of his coming and of his sending his messenger “to prepare the way *before* me” (Mal 3:1) or the prophet Elijah *before* the Day of the Lord will come (Mal 3:23 [4:5]) seems to be the one side of the medal whose reverse shows the legend: “the one to come *after* me...” In this light, John’s baptismal activity—a baptism marked by the *genitivus qualitatis* “return” (שוב)—may be taken as a means of restoration. And it is indeed (ethical, social, and political) restoration of Israel which the other announcement assigns to Elijah: “designated in the prophecies of doom to allay God’s wrath before the fury breaks, to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children, and to restore the tribes of Jacob” (Sir 48:10 NJB).

To sum up, it seems plausible to assume that John the Baptist himself saw his baptismal activity in the scriptural tradition of (Isaiah and) Malachi, thereby re-enacting the role of the prophet Elijah as the forerunner of the “great and terrible day” when God was “to come.”<sup>109</sup> The *interpretatio Christiana* was able to link up with this self-definition, but it had to “re-arrange” it in order to integrate it into the eschatological sequence that had developed after Jesus had entered the stage. The original concept, however, survived in the milieu the Fourth Gospel had to deal with and which may very well have mirrored the macarism of old: “Blessed, those who will see you” (Sir 48:11 NJB).

<sup>108</sup> Thus Stegemann, *Essener*, 298–301; Trumbower, “Role of Malachi,” 36–37; Evans, “Baptism,” 48–50.

<sup>109</sup> It is difficult to figure out whether John saw himself or was seen as a personal re-incorporation of Elijah or as a functional (“in the spirit and power of Elijah”) fulfilment of a more loosely defined scriptural role (cf. Luke 1:16–17). The second possibility is the more probable one; for discussion, see Öhler, *Elia*, 108–110.

### 2.5. *Biographical Fragments*

Though a biography of John the Baptist will never be written, some features may be traced back. The most prominent feature of John's life is his death. Josephus and the Markan tradition (Mark 6:17–29/ Matt 14:3–12; cf. Luke 3:19–20; 9:9; Justin, *Dial.* 49.4–5) give accounts that seem rather different at first sight, but turn out to be complementary at a closer look. Josephus takes a more political view, while the folkloric Markan tradition reduces complex courses of events to individual relationships between fascinating persons. Factually, individuals and events are interwoven. When Herod Antipas (who ruled 4 BCE–39 CE) entered into domestic partnership with his relative Herodias, his then wife fled to her father, the Nabataean king Aretas IV (who ruled 9 BCE–40 CE). This scandal had its part in occasioning the border war between Herod Antipas and Aretas, in which the tetrarch's army took a heavy beating (around 36 CE) (*Ant.* 18.109–115). It is just at this point that Josephus inserts his account of the Baptist's activity and death, for which Herod's defeat was said to be God's vengeance. The fortress of Machaerus, in which John was eventually executed (*Ant.* 18.119), is located in Perea at the frontier to the Arab kingdom, where John preached. It was thus a most sensitive affair in which the influential prophet happened to intervene by criticizing Herod's marriage politics. The "oriental" colours of this affair occupy the Markan tradition. So what we can say is that the Baptist John was executed in Machaerus, probably by beheading, as a result of his public preaching, which was feared to be incendiary.<sup>110</sup>

The *terminus ad quem* of this execution is obviously 36 CE, but the relation between battle and religious rumours does not depend on chronology, but of social remembrance tending to give a long afterlife to popular prophets. If we, therefore, realize that public opinion perceived Jesus as successor of John (cf. e.g. Mark 6:14–16) and date Jesus' death to 30 CE, it was at the latest in about 29 CE that John died. Provided that the Lukan "synchronism" (cf. Luke 3:1–2) is correct (and there is, at least, no *cogent* reason for doubting this), "the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness" when

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<sup>110</sup> For detailed discussion, see Lupieri, *Giovanni Battista*, 173–178; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 340–346; Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 373–377; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 171–176; Josef Ernst, "Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth in historischer Sicht," *NTS* 43 (1997); 161–183, at 176–182.



Tiberius was emperor (14–37 CE), Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea (26–36/37 CE), Antipas (4 BCE–39 CE) and Philip (4 BCE–33/34 CE) were tetrarchs, and Caiaphas was high priest (18–36 CE). It was—more exactly, but open to some interpretation—“in the fifteenth year” of Tiberius’s rule that John appeared in public, which leaves us with a time frame between 26 and 29 CE. The year 28 is the best guess, and so we may cautiously conclude that John’s activity had a short, but most effective life.<sup>111</sup>

The place of John’s activity was the lower Jordan valley (Mark 1:4 parr.), which indeed was regarded as wilderness, and people would have found him at both river banks, in the Judean territory as well as in Perea (John 1:28; 10:40), where he eventually was captured by the territorial ruler. He was probably used to roaming between the fords (cf. Luke 3:3) and may have expanded his sphere of activity even to Samaria (cf. John 3:23; 4:38).<sup>112</sup>

As for John’s descent and his formative years, we find ourselves at the mercy of both ancient and modern legends. Provided that oral tradition may have conserved reliable details,<sup>113</sup> we may consider it possible that John was born to the family of a Judean rural priest (in the reign of Herod the Elder: 37–4 BCE), that his parents were named Zechariah and Elizabeth, and that he was kin to Jesus. At any rate, the only *literary* evidence we have is the colourfully drawn and christologically styled picture in the Lukan infancy narrative (cf. Luke 1:5–80), and there is no possibility of a critical countercheck. So any presumption seems precarious. It is rather the meaning than the memory which is dramatized in Luke 1.<sup>114</sup> Modern legends, confusing

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<sup>111</sup> For chronological discussion, see Meier, *Marginal Jew I*, 374–375, 383–386; Taylor, *Immerser*, 255–259, and (with an unconvincing alternative) Chilton, “John the Baptist,” 39–43.

<sup>112</sup> For detailed topographic discussion, see Lupieri, *Giovanni Battista*, 164–172; Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 280–284; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 43–46; Ernst, “Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth,” 167–172; Taylor, *Immerser*, 42–48. A case for the desert of Samaria is made by Joshua Schwartz, “John the Baptist, the Wilderness and the Samaritan Mission,” in *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography: Festschrift Z. Kallai*, ed. G. Galil and M. Weinfeld, VTSup 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 104–117. An excessively conjectural reconstruction of the places of John’s and Jesus’ baptismal activity is presented by Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 359–374.

<sup>113</sup> The “Baptist circles” are not fitted to be witnesses to the reliability of the tradition for they themselves are not reliably attested.

<sup>114</sup> It is often alleged that John’s soteriological interests (and self-assessment) as well as his striking attitude towards the Jerusalem cult would correspond to a demand of a priestly biography, but this impression cannot bear the weight of proving the data.

similarity with genealogy, fill up the compositional link at Luke 1:80 with Qumran fiction, but what we really can say is that John and the Qumranites, as we have seen, shared common ground in the eschatologically inspired purification milieu of Second Temple Judaism.<sup>115</sup>

### 3. *John and Jesus*

It is beyond the scope of this article to describe the relationship between Jesus and John in detail. Doubtless John belongs to the “historical Jesus,” but Jesus hardly belongs to the “historical John.” There are seven points that should be fixed:<sup>116</sup> (a) Since the baptism for the forgiveness of sins was a form of embodied christological embarrassment, the tradition that Jesus has been baptized by John is most reliable. (b) Jesus was therefore religiously inspired by the Baptist in his formative time and was an adherent of the Baptist movement,<sup>117</sup> never withdrawing his loyalty from the one who was “more than a prophet.”<sup>118</sup> (c) This

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As to the kinship between John and Jesus, we have to take into account that in the course of legendary development family bonds between the heroes of different narrative strata (Abraham—Isaac—Jacob) are often spun. On the other hand, the successive functions of John—Jesus—James might find a quite natural explanation in actual familial bonds (Webb, “John the Baptist,” 214 n. 125). For descent, birth, and youth in the typical Old Testament and early Jewish pattern of “prophetic life,” see Tilly, *Johannes der Täufer*, 146–158. For discussion of John’s descent and the Lukan infancy narrative, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 268–277; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 23–27.

<sup>115</sup> For a balanced comparative examination, see recently McDonald, “John the Baptist.”

<sup>116</sup> I have developed my view in Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, esp. 21–112; for other, partially different reconstructions, see Becker, *Johannes der Täufer*, 66–106; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 100–233; Ernst, “Johannes der Täufer und Jesus von Nazareth,” 162–167, 172–176; Webb, “John the Baptist,” 211–229; Müller, *Johannes der Täufer*, 52–75; Walter, “Johannes und Jesus”; Schenke, “Jesus”; Daniel S. Dapaah, *The Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth: A Critical Study* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005); a useful survey is given in Theißen and Merz, *Jesus*, 191–198.

<sup>117</sup> Baptist research usually differentiates sociologically between the wider circles of adherents, who return to their (renewed) everyday life, and the inner circle of disciples who shared the prophetic lifestyle and baptismal practice of their master; cf. e.g. Wink, *John the Baptist*, 107; Meier, *Marginal Jew II*, 25–26; Webb, “John the Baptist,” 218–219.

<sup>118</sup> Jesus’ appreciation of the Baptist’s person and ministry is coherently attested: Q 7:24–28, 31–35; Mark 11:27–33 parr.; Matt 21:32/Luke 7:29–30; perhaps Jesus saw in John the “sign of Jonah” (cf. Q 11:16, 29–30), see Theissen and Merz, “Gerichtsverzögerung,” 237–251. The most instructive explanation of Jesus’ *Neuheitserfahrung* and his way to his very own message is given by Ulrich B. Müller, “Vision und Botschaft: Erwägungen zur prophetischen Struktur der Verkündigung Jesu (1977),” in

movement proves to be the social and religious background of Jesus' own activity, and its eschatology provided him with particular anthropological premises, theocentric perspectives, and ethical practice.<sup>119</sup> The first generation of Christians actually picked up the thread of this initial experience. (d) Jesus' own approach, the *basileia to come*, is apparently not rooted in the Baptist's preaching, but Jesus considered his message *to be* the Baptist's message as far as it was led to its destination in the light of his very own Abba-experience and in the presence of grace. The crucial (perhaps only) point of discontinuity is therefore the claim of (dramatic) fulfilment in Jesus as the "very last messenger" after God's last messenger John: "The difference between John and Jesus is Jesus."<sup>120</sup> (e) Although the emerging reality of the *basileia* caused Jesus not to continue John's severe and "preparatory" lifestyle, he was seen as John's successor in public opinion; his activity included a comparable segment of society and he probably recruited his disciples in the Baptist milieu, though hypotheses about his time as a disciple or lieutenant of John are methodologically less than secured.<sup>121</sup> (f) The only point of personal contact beside the baptism is the Baptist's inquiry in Q 7:18–23. Neither John's question nor Jesus' answer corresponds to John's eschatological framework and one may wonder why John should have regarded it as conceivable that the Galilean preacher was his announced master and the One to Come with heavenly power. The sending of messengers (Matt 11:2: from prison)

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idem, *Christologie und Apokalyptik: Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 12 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 11–41, although I doubt if Luke 10:18 may be biographized.

<sup>119</sup> See Merklein, *Botschaft*, 27–36; Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 96–109; Webb, "John the Baptist," 226–229; Evans, "Baptism," 61–70; Wolter, "Gericht," 364–388; Theissen and Merz, "Gerichtsverzögerung"; Schenke, "Jesus," 96–101.

<sup>120</sup> Wolter, "Gericht," 386.

<sup>121</sup> With respect to chronology we have a period of months or weeks, with respect to evidence we have nothing at all: The Johannine tradition does not refer to Jesus as John's disciple or lieutenant, but to Jesus as an independent baptizer along with the evangelist's notorious tendency of comparing "light" and "lamp" (for historical discussion, see Barth, *Taufe*, 42–43; Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 263–264). The *argumentum e silentio* that the early Christian tradition has "obviously" removed the non-christological remembrance is not convincing, for there is multiple attestation in this tradition that John had baptized Jesus with a baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus' own religious profile may be explained sufficiently against the background of the Baptist movement in general. It is (it should be needless to add) not the sword of "apologetics" but again Occam's razor which I would like to use in this over-hypothesized context.

looks suspiciously like a fictional motif meant to establish at least an indirect face-to-face relation between both prophets; allowing the raising of dead (instead of exorcisms) within Jesus' life time and self-description means paying a high price for so apocryphal a tradition, and after all I am—contrary to a widespread scholarly opinion—very much inclined to explain the scene not as the last question of the historical Baptist but as the first (and hesitant) step to his *interpretatio Christiana*, serving in Q as a christological safeguard on the threshold of Jesus' appraisal of the Baptist.<sup>122</sup> (g) The Jesus movement defined itself to a large extent by reference to, and comparison with, John as God's very own initiative. From the point of view of Jesus and the early Christians, it is not unfair to suggest that John the Baptist had been "the beginning of the gospel" in a conceptual, social, and personal sense, although it is not impossible that he, on earth, himself had commented on this development by the question: "Jesus... who?"<sup>123</sup>

The rest is reception. The more the historical distance grows, the closer John and Jesus are connected and the less important is John's identity marker: his baptism. In the historical beginning Jesus is baptized and inspired by John—Mark profiles John as Jesus' forerunner—in Q John wonders if Jesus is the Coming One, and in Matthew he knows that he is—in Luke baptism (without Baptist) serves as a background of Jesus' praying and disclosure—in the Fourth Gospel John is no longer the Baptist but the witness of Christ. Eventually, the Baptist finds his early request "I need to be baptized by you" (Matt 3:14) granted: Jesus baptizes *him* (cf. *Opus imperfectum in Matthaëum* 4:15, PG 56:658).<sup>124</sup> So John keeps standing at the "beginning of the gospel"—not as a mighty figure in its historical dawning but as a humble usher in its portal inviting people to find their seats with the best view of Jesus.

Scepticism proved right: We only know "echoes of John's whisper." It is the manifold sound-waves that give the "voice in the desert" its impressive resonance over the centuries and may give him ecumenical overtones today: There were contemporaries who considered him the prophetic forerunner of God, a martyr, perhaps the Messiah; Antipas regarded him as an insurgent. According to Jesus, John is the greatest

<sup>122</sup> For more detailed discussion, see Ernst, *Johannes der Täufer*, 315–319; Backhaus, *Jüngerkreise*, 116–137.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Reumann, "Quest," 183–184 (referring to Morton S. Enslin).

<sup>124</sup> See Bammel, "Baptist," 119–120.

man ever born, but smaller than the least significant in the kingdom of God (Q 7:28). He was a pious teacher of virtue in the view of Josephus. He is, as *Elias redivivus*, the forerunner of Christ in the synoptic tradition and the fading witness of the Light in the Johannine theology. He is the pioneer of monastic holiness in early Christian hagiography and a symbol of carnal inferiority in Gnosticism (cf. *Testim. Truth* 30.18–31.5; *Ps.-Clem. Hom.* 2.17). He is one of the forerunners of Muhammad in Islam (Qur'an, sura 3:38–41; 6:85; 19:1–15; 21:89–90) and both Jesus' crucified partner and his disciple in the Toledoth.<sup>125</sup> He is the messenger of the divine Light against the dark teacher Jesus in "his own religion," the Mandaeans, and the standard-bearer (for good or bad) of ascetic movements from the Middle Ages to Oscar Wilde and Richard Strauss. Nobody knows how many heads of John the Baptist have been found by venerators of relics, but probably scholars have found even more. The prophet has become a symbol.

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<sup>125</sup> See Ernst Bammel, "Johannes der Täufer in den Toledoth Jeschu," in idem, *Judaica et Paulina: Kleine Schriften*, vol. 2, WUNT 91 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 15–22, at 16–21.



## HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT PERIOD (1ST AND 2ND CENTURIES CE)<sup>1</sup>

EVE-MARIE BECKER

The intention of the present essay is to present the themes and forms of historiographical literature in the New Testament period. I approach this as a *literary-historical task*,<sup>2</sup> i.e. as a thematical and form-specific contextualization of New Testament literature in the frame of ancient historiographical *genres*. So I shall describe the literary-historical framework in which the New Testament texts have their genesis, and against this background, I shall assess precisely this genesis of the New

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<sup>1</sup> For fundamental bibliographical information with an overview of the literary history of Hellenistic historiography, cf. H. Lühken, "Synopsis der griechischen Literatur," in *Einleitung in die griechische Philologie*, H.-G. Nesselrath (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997); H. Lühken, "Synopsis der römischen Literatur," in *Einleitung in die lateinische Philologie*, F. Graf (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997); O. Lendle, *Einführung in die griechische Geschichtsschreibung: Von Hekataios bis Zosimos* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992); K. Meister, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung: Von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des Hellenismus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1990); D. Flach, *Römische Geschichtsschreibung*, 3rd ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998); A. Mehl, *Römische Geschichtsschreibung: Grundlagen und Entwicklungen. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001); C. R. Holladay, ed., *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 1: *Historians*, SBL.TT (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983); M. Landfester, ed., *Geschichte der antiken Texte: Ein Werklexikon*, DNPS 2 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2007); R. Nickel, *Lexikon der antiken Literatur* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1999); M. von Albrecht, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur von Andronicus bis Boethius*, 2 vols., 2nd ed.: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, (München 1997); D. Gall, *Die Literatur in der Zeit des Augustus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); C. Reitz, *Die Literatur im Zeitalter Neros* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); E.-M. Becker, *Das Markus-Evangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie*, WUNT 194 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); C. Moreschini and E. Norelli, *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A Literary History*, 1: *From Paul to the Age of Constantine* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005); W. Schneemelcher, ed., *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, 1: *Evangelien*; 2: *Apostolisches, Apokalyphen und Verwandtes* (Tübingen: Mohr, Siebeck, 1990; 6th ed. 1997); A. Feldherr, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); J. Frey et al., eds., *Die Apostelgeschichte im Kontext antiker und Frühkristlicher Historiographie*, BZNW 162 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).—Concerning intercultural studies in the literary development of historiography cf. recently, K.-P. Adam, ed., *Historiographie in der Antike*, BZAW 373 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> On literary-historical studies in the field of early Christian literature in recent years, cf. G. Theissen, *Die Entstehung des Neuen Testaments als literaturgeschichtliches Problem*, Schriften der Philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften 40 (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007); Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*.

Testament texts and writings as a *literary-historical phenomenon*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. as a process of a thematical and formal adaptation and transformation of certain types of ancient historiographical literary possibilities. The comparative criterion consists of stories which tell a story, i.e. historiographical texts in the narrower and broader senses of this term.<sup>4</sup> The *New Testament period* is understood as the space of time in which those early Christian texts and writings came into being which were later collected in the canon of the so-called New Testament, i.e. the first century and the first third of the second century of the Common Era.

In the first section of this essay (1), I shall describe the literary-historical presuppositions of the composition of historiographical literature in this period. These are determined by the Hellenistic period, culture, and literature.<sup>5</sup> In the second section (2), I present significant literary-historical developments and literary representatives of the historiographical literature in the so-called early Imperial period (ca. 30 BCE–ca. 120 CE) in the Greek-Hellenistic, Roman, and early Jewish spheres. In the third section (3), I shall discuss where early Christian texts, especially the gospel literature, belong in the framework of the literary history of Hellenistic historiography.

## 1. *Themes, Types, and Forms of Hellenistic Historiography*

### 1.1. *Basic Questions*

Historiographical literature in the Hellenistic age<sup>6</sup> produces a variety of themes, types, and forms. On the one hand, these display culturally specific features in the Greek, Roman, and early Jewish spheres, e.g. the literary elaboration of the period of Alexander and his successor

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<sup>3</sup> K. Backhaus and G. Häfner, *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen: Zur Konstruktivität in Geschichtstheorie und Exegese*, BThSt 86 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), choose a philological rather than a literary-historical approach.

<sup>4</sup> On the definition of historiographical texts, see below.

<sup>5</sup> For an introduction to the history of research into historiography, cf. Flach, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 1–3.

<sup>6</sup> The definition of “Hellenism” which is relevant to cultural and literary history follows the classic definitions in the study of the classical period since J. G. Droysen. Cf. e.g. D. Timpe, “Hellenismus I,” *RGK* 4th ed., 3 (2000): 1609–1610. Cf. most recently also B. Meißner, *Hellenismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftlichen Buchgesellschaft, 2007).



kings in Greek historiography,<sup>7</sup> the culture of remembrance of the early Roman historians, influenced by annals (e.g. *Q. Fabius Pictor*),<sup>8</sup> and the narrative-legendary elaboration of biblical-historical narrative material in Jewish Hellenistic historiography (e.g. *Eupolemus*, *Artapanus*).<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, there is a linguistic and literary cultural transfer and cultural exchange precisely in Hellenism, and this can be seen both in the shaping of individual themes and forms and in the creation of mixed forms. The definition of the so-called *Hellenistic age* usually envisages a space of time which is defined by political events (ca. 330–30 BCE).<sup>10</sup> The following presentation aims to describe the cultural, intellectual, and literary panorama in which the Greek, Roman, and Early Jewish historiographers were working until the beginning of the Imperial period (from ca. 30 BCE).

The early Hellenistic period is marked by the hegemony of the Hellenes in the eastern Mediterranean region and neighboring lands in the aftermath of Alexander the Great, and by a considerable growth in literary production in the Greek language. At the end of the fourth and beginning of the third centuries, a social-historical transformation occurs in *Greek* historiography, which is also significant for the history of culture and literature: it is now that the figure of the so-called court historian emerges.<sup>11</sup> This transformation is the beginning of a close link between politics and historiography. Historiography had always been employed as a political instrument; but this new link now also generated a number of literary forms and genres.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. e.g. Lendle, *Einführung*, 180–181.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Mehl, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 42–44.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Holladay, *Fragments*.

<sup>10</sup> On this, cf. J. Bleicken, *Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte des Römischen Kaiserreiches*, 2 vols., UTB 838/839 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 4th ed., 1995 in 3rd ed., 1994), who dates the beginning of the Roman Imperial period to 31/27 BCE (1:9).

<sup>11</sup> “In the city state of the classical epoch of Greece, the historians were prosperous citizens, members of the leading classes of the Greek *poleis*. At the end of the classical epoch, when monarchies came into existence in the Greek world—and with the monarchies, courts—and with the courts” a new ruling society, “the figure of the historian who lived at court and was at the service of a ruler also came into existence”: B. Meißner, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Königshof: Studien zur Stellung der Geschichtsschreiber in der griechischen Gesellschaft in spätklassischer und frühhellenistischer Zeit*, Hyp. 99 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 4–5.

The themes of *Hellenistic historiography* in its Greek and later Roman forms lie initially in the field of Persian, Macedonian, and Greek history; subsequently, they concentrate on the protagonists of this history, i.e. *Alexander the Great* and his successor kings. This means that Hellenistic historiography increasingly takes on biographical or person-centered traits, which we also find in Jewish Hellenistic historiography (e.g. the Moses fragment in *Artapanus*).<sup>12</sup> At the same time, a large number of historiographical methods and presentations developed in Hellenism; of these, only “tiny splinters have come down to us.”<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, every presentation of the literary history of the classical age is conditioned in advance by presuppositions which belong to textual history, i.e. by the transmission of the texts and writings available to us.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.2. *Demarcations: Antiquarian Forms, or Literature and Historiography Orientated to Tradition*<sup>15</sup>

We must draw a distinction between the so-called antiquarian literature of the classical period and historiography in the broader and narrower senses. The term *antiquarian literature* has been applied since the Renaissance (with an allusion to *Varro's* “Antiquities”) to all those historical forms which do not correspond “to the Herodotean-Thucydidean concept of the historiography which is based on the study of politics and war.”<sup>16</sup> It is in this way that antiquarian historical literature has been distinguished from historiography, at least from the beginning of the modern period onwards. This demarcation vis-à-vis antiquarian literature shows us one essential characteristic of historiographical literature: the latter is not limited to the mere collection of

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Holladay, *Fragments*, 208–210.

<sup>13</sup> Lendle, *Einführung*, 205. The following differentiations follow above all H.-G. Nesselrath, “Geschichte der griechischen Literatur. Die Kaiserzeit,” in idem, *Einleitung in die griechische Philologie* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997), 269–293, at 279–281.

<sup>14</sup> On the criteria on which the collection of the fragments of Greek historians by F. Jacoby (FGrHist) is based, cf. idem, “Ueber die Entwicklung der griechischen Historiographie und den Plan einer neuen Sammlung der griechischen Historikerfragmente,” *Klio* 9 (1909): 80–123.

<sup>15</sup> On this concept, cf. K. Sallmann, ed., *Die Literatur des Umbruchs: Von der römischen zur christlichen Literatur 117 bis 284 n.Chr.*, Handbuch der Lateinischen Literatur der Antike 4 (München: C. H. Beck, 1997).

<sup>16</sup> A. Momigliano, *Die Geschichtsschreibung: Griechische Literatur*, ed. E. Vogt, NHL 2 (Wiesbaden: Akad. Vent.-Ges. Athenaian, 1981), 305–336, at 310.

historical information, but aims to present this in such a way that it is both systematized and interpreted. This applies already to the beginnings of Greek and Roman historiography, and to the Christian history of the church. *Greek historiography* is essentially a child of epic forms (myths) and of geographical forms (descriptions of the earth and travel narratives);<sup>17</sup> *Roman historiography* has its precursors in the *annales maximi* and the so-called *fasti*;<sup>18</sup> and ecclesiastical historiography has its starting point in the chronographical form of the lists of bishops.<sup>19</sup> This means that history by definition involves the systematization and interpretation of historical events and information.

### 1.3. *The Definition of "Historiography" in the Broader and Narrower Senses*

Against this background, how can we define the genre of historiographical literature? Let us first mention two traits which are significant for the definition of the theme or contents and the literary form of historiography. *Thematically speaking*, historiography is engaged in the narrative of historically relevant facts and events. *From a literary-formal aspect*, historiographical literature employs the form of prose from *Herodotus* onwards.<sup>20</sup> The presentation of history in the form of lists, myths, epics, or poetry can at best be called precursor forms of historiography; these do not genuinely belong to the *macro-genre* of "historiography."

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<sup>17</sup> In general, cf. Meister, *Geschichtsschreibung*. Cf. also B. Meissner, "Anfänge und frühe Entwicklungen der griechischen Historiographie," in *Die antike Historiographie und die Anfänge der christlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. E.-M. Becker, BZNW 129 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 83–109.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mehl, *Geschichtsschreibung*. For a critical evaluation of the *annales maximi*, however, cf. H. Beck and U. Walter, "Die frühen Römischen Historiker 1: Selbstbewusstsein—Traditionsbildung—Experiment," in *Die frühen Römischen Historiker 1: Von Fabius Pictor bis Cn. Gellius*, trans. with commentary by H. Beck and U. Walter, TzF 76 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001), 17–53. Cf. J. Rüpke, "Fasti. Quellen oder Produkte römischer Geschichtsschreibung?," *Klio* 77 (1995): 184–202.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. W. Wischmeyer, "Wahrnehmungen von Geschichte in der christlichen Literatur zwischen Lukas und Eusebius. Die chronographische Form der Bischofslisten," in *Die antike Historiographie und die Anfänge der christlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Becker, 263–276.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. W. Schadewaldt, *Die Anfänge der Geschichtsschreibung bei den Griechen: Herodot—Thukydides*, 4th ed. stw 389 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995), 19–21.

A second differentiation is necessary at this point. The macro-genre of historiography—i.e. historiography in the broader sense—encompasses a variety of individual forms and genres, including historiography in the narrower sense. How can we define historiography in the broader sense and historiography in the narrower sense? Where does the line of demarcation run? One possible differentiating definition affirms that *historiography in the broader sense* includes those prose texts which are concerned in various individual genres and forms with the presentation of historical themes and events (e.g. as biography, autobiography, monograph, ethnography), while *historiography in the narrower sense* (following Hubert Cancik) designates an “especially highly developed form of historiography”<sup>21</sup> which must be distinguished specifically from biographical and autobiographical forms, etc.<sup>22</sup>

#### 1.4. *Defining the Distinctions between Historiography, Biography, and Autobiography*

We shall now look in greater detail at the differentiation between *historiography in the narrower sense* and *biography*.<sup>23</sup> We must first of all locate the phenomenon of biographical literature in the context of history in general, and specifically of cultural history, since the growing importance of biographical literature has historical and political reasons: “With the decline of the city states and the rise of the monarchies... the reign of a ruler became the natural unit of time of political history: historiography became increasingly biographical.”<sup>24</sup> It is thus scarcely possible to use the self-understanding of the authors as a criterion for distinguishing between historiographical and biographical literature. For example, those who told the story of Alexander certainly understood themselves as historians, since the object of their work was the personality and the activity of Alexander as a theme

<sup>21</sup> H. Cancik, “Geschichtsschreibung,” *NBL* 1 (1991): 813–882, at 813–814.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. also Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*, 62–63.

<sup>23</sup> On this, cf. those definitions which are seldom the object of further reflection, e.g. in D. Dormeyer, review of E.-M. Becker, *Das Markus-Evangelium im Rahmen antiker Historiographie*, *BZ* 52 (2008): 132–135.

<sup>24</sup> Momigliano, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 317.

belonging to the history of events and to history in general (e.g. *Cleitarchus of Alexandria*, FG<sub>GrHist</sub> 137).<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, however, steps were taken already in antiquity to distinguish between historiography and biography.<sup>26</sup> For example, *Polybius* calls the *bios* as ἐγκωμιαστικός (cf. 2.56.11; 10.21.8). His intention is αὐξήσις, whereas history seeks the truth. *Plutarch* (*Alex.* 1, and frequently) explicitly wishes to write “history” in the form of βίος, since his intention is to portray the character of the human person (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα), i.e. ἀρετή and κακία. Even in the so-called apodictic historiography, which makes use of the biographical excursus, the distinction between historiography and biography is preserved.<sup>27</sup> In Roman literature too, the distinction between historiographical writings in the narrower sense and biographical writings (which included the literature of the *exitus illustrium virorum*) was maintained at least until the third or fourth century (cf. e.g. *Pliny*, *Ep.* 8.12.4; 5.5.3).<sup>28</sup>

Finally, autobiographical forms (*hupomnēmata* and *commentarii*) are related to *biographical* literature.<sup>29</sup> *Aratus of Sicyon* (ca. 271–213 BCE) is known as one of the earliest authors of *hupomnēmata* in the

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Lendle, *Einführung*, 168–170.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. A. Dihle, *Die Entstehung der historischen Biographie*, SHAWPH 1986.3 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987); A. Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

<sup>27</sup> “The apodictic historiography employed the biographical excursus to make historical causality clear, but it distinguished historiography from biography”: F. Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” *RAC* 15 (1991): 724–765, at 730. New Testament exegetes often fail to reflect consistently on the differentiation between historiography and biography and to offer an evaluation of this. Cf. e.g. D. Dormeyer, *Plutarchs Cäsar und die erste Evangeliumsbiographie des Markus: Rom und das himmlische Jerusalem. Die frühen Christen zwischen Anpassung und Ablehnung*, ed. R. von Haehling (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 29–52; idem, *Das Markusevangelium als Idealbiographie von Jesus Christus, dem Nazarener*, 3rd ed. SBB 43 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> “It is only the imperial biography—with Suetonius as its ancestor—that... is made a vehicle of historiography in the third century CE.... But until the fourth century, its status as an historiographical form was disputed”; Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” 738.

<sup>29</sup> For an overview, cf. K. Meister, “Autobiographische Literatur und Memoiren (*Hypomnemata*),” in *Purposes of History: Studies in Greek Historiography from the 4th to the 2nd Centuries B.C.*, ed. H. Verdin et al., *StHell* 30 (Leiden: Brill 1990), 83–89. Cf. also in general H. Sonnabend, *Geschichte der antiken Biographie: Von Sokrates bis zur Historia Augusta* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2002).

Hellenistic period (cf. FGrHist 231).<sup>30</sup> Autobiographical forms received a tremendous impetus in the sphere of Roman literature above all in the transition from the Roman Republic to the principate, thanks to the prominent works by *Julius Caesar (Commentarii)*<sup>31</sup> and *Augustus (res gestae/Monumentum Ancyranum)*.<sup>32</sup> From the Hellenistic period onwards, experts in rhetoric “studied the form of the older historiography... in order to determine the canon and to distinguish... between history, biography, and antiquarian studies.”<sup>33</sup>

### 1.5. *Types and Modes of Hellenistic Historiography*

Hellenistic historiography displays a variety of literary types and modes which allow us to see something of the intellectual world and the rhetorical-literary schooling of the historiographers. We shall therefore give a brief description of some of these, e.g. the rhetorical-rhetoricizing, the mimetic, the apodictic, and the pragmatic historiography.

In the *rhetorical historiography*, the historical discourse takes the form of narration and argumentation, and the tradition possesses authority. The aim of historiography is to facilitate correct evaluations and decisions in the contemporary conflicts. In the first century BCE, Roman historiography is influenced by the Hellenistic-Peripatetic rhetorical historiography in the way in which it copes with the contemporary political crises. An important factor in the increase in the rhetorical tendencies of Roman historiography was the rhetoricization of historical narration which was demanded especially by *Cicero (Orat. 2.54–56)*.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> To a large extent, his writings can be regarded as unfalsified and devoid of literary artifice, although they have a subjective coloring. Cf. Lendle, *Einführung*, 192–194.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Mehl, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 68–70.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. F. Blumenthal, “Die Autobiographie des Augustus,” *Wiener Studien* 35 (1913): 113–130 and 267–288, 36 (1914): 84–103. Most recently, cf. also K. Bringmann, ed., *Augustus: Schriften, Reden und Aussprüche*, WdF 91 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche 2008 Beckgesellschaft).

<sup>33</sup> D. Harth, “Geschichtsschreibung,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 3 (1996): 832–870, at 837.

<sup>34</sup> The narrative form has a forensic component, since it takes place in an inductive form. This link is already found in Aristotle: cf. *Ret.* 2.1393a20. On *Isocrates* and *Cicero*, cf. also A. Demandt, *Geschichte als Argument: Drei Formen politischen Zukunftsdenkens im Altertum* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1972), 18–20 and 30–32. Cf. in general Harth, “Geschichtsschreibung”, 839–840.

In his debate with the so-called *mimetic* historiography of a *Duris of Samos* (born 330 BCE)<sup>35</sup> and the related *pathetic* historiography (e.g. *Phylarchus*),<sup>36</sup> as well as with the *apodictic* historiography of a *Hieronimus of Cardia* (third/second century),<sup>37</sup> *Polybius* propagates a presentation which concentrates on the relevant historical questions. He attacks rhetorical and dramatizing elements in historiography, and coins the concept of *pragmatic* historiography. Its methodological approach (the examination of written sources, “autopsy,” political action: cf. 12.25e1) is already found in *Herodotus* and *Thucydides*.<sup>38</sup> Unlike tragedy, history is interested in “truth and usefulness to the reader.”<sup>39</sup> Through this apodictic interest, *Polybius* establishes a demarcation line vis-à-vis the pathetic historiography of *Phylarchus* (cf. 2.56.11–12). Historiography has practical and moral goals (1.1.2):<sup>40</sup> *Polybius* sees its purpose as “contributing to the ability to act” in the political and military spheres (3.59.3–5; 12.8.1; 16.14.3–10; etc.).<sup>41</sup> In general, therefore, we find a basic moralizing and pragmatizing trait in the various types of Hellenistic historiography.

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<sup>35</sup> We find reflections on the Hellenistic historiography at the beginning of the *Makedonika* (FGrHist 76 F1). Cf. also Aristotle, *Poet.* 14.1453b11/12, and Lendle, *Einführung*, 186–187. *Duris of Samos* “applied” the Aristotelian principles of the mimetic composition of fables “to history, in order to intensify the character of the narrative as an aesthetically effective and moral-didactic appeal”: Harth, “Geschichtsschreibung,” 836.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. also Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” 729, and Lendle, *Einführung*, 202. On pathos and emotionality in historiography in general, cf. most recently J. Marincola, “Beyond Pity and Fear: The Emotions of History,” *Ancient Society* 33 (2003): 285–315.

<sup>37</sup> FGrHist 154.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” 729. *Polybius*’s manner of writing follows the rhetorical pattern *narratio—probatio—applicatio* (cf. Harth, “Geschichtsschreibung,” 836). On the historical method of *Thucydides*, cf. also most recently H. Sonnabend, *Thukydides*, Studienbücher Antike 13 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2004), esp. 55–57.

<sup>39</sup> Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” 729.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. H. Tränkle, *Livius und Polybios* (Basel and Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1977); A. M. Eckstein, *Moral Vision in The Histories of Polybius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), esp. 272–274.

<sup>41</sup> B. Meißner, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Königshof: Studien zur Stellung der Geschichtsschreiber in der griechischen Gesellschaft in spätklassischer und frühhellenistischer Zeit*, Hyp. 99 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 557.

### 1.6. *Reflections in Classical Antiquity on the Theory and Method of Historiography*

Scattered “methodological observations” are found in the works of the ancient historians,<sup>42</sup> especially when they discuss the *exordium*.<sup>43</sup> For example, *Livy* speaks critically of the relationship between historiography and poetry.<sup>44</sup> A number of theoretical discussions of the essence, significance, and function of historiography had a decisive influence on the form of historiographical works. In his conception of literary composition, *Aristotle* defines history as a chance narrative of events (*Poet.* 9.1451b). Since poetry communicates what could happen according to the rules of probability and necessity (καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον), it is “more philosophical” and more significant than historiography (διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν, 1451a and b). Historiography inquires into what is specific, whereas poetry inquires into what is general (καθόλου).

*Cicero*’s discussion reflects the historiographical theories of the late Roman Republic. He understands history as *magistra vitae*, *vita memoriae*, and *lux veritatis* (*Orat.* 2.36), and as *munus oratoris maximum* (*Orat.* 2.62).<sup>45</sup> Contrary to the Roman tradition of the *annales maximi*, which was meant only to preserve the memory of places, times, human persons, and deeds, *Cicero* favors a rhetorically shaped form of historiography which is comparable to the Greek tradition (*Orat.* 2.51–53; *Leg.* 1.6–8). In the Flavian period, which brings a “classicistic reaction,”<sup>46</sup> *Quintilian* gives us glimpses of the historiographical theories of the Imperial period (*Orat. Inst.* 10.1.31).<sup>47</sup> He posits a close relation-

<sup>42</sup> Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” 732.

<sup>43</sup> Flach, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 9–11, refers to the following reflections on the theory of history in classical antiquity: Thucydides, 1.22.2–3; Cassius Dio, 53.19.4–5; Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.1.2f.; *Hist.* 1.1.2; Polybius, e.g. 12.25–27; 2.56.7–9.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Livy*, *Praef.* 1.13. Cf. also T. P. Wiseman, “History, Poetry, and *Annales*,” in *Clio & the Poets: Augustan Poetry & the Traditions of Ancient Historiography*, ed. D. S. Levine and D. P. Nelis, MnS 224 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 331–362, at 331–333.

<sup>45</sup> K.-E. Petzold, “Cicero und Historie,” in idem, *Geschichtsdenken und Geschichtsschreibung: Kleine Schriften zur griechischen und römischen Geschichte*, Historia 126 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1999), 86–109; M. Fleck, *Cicero als Historiker*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 39 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1993), esp. 15–17.

<sup>46</sup> von Albrecht, *Geschichte*, 717.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. in general also A. D. Leeman, “Die römische Geschichtsschreibung,” in *Römische Literatur*, ed. M. Fuhrmann, NHL 3 (Frankfurt: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1974), 115–146, at 134–135.



ship between historiography and poetry: historiography does not prove, but narrates in a literary form not bound by the rules of metre (... *quodam modo carmen solutum est et scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum*). “This makes it clear that Quintilian wishes to see an even stronger link between historiography and poetry than did Cicero.”<sup>48</sup> *Quintilian* is not the only one who takes this approach; he reflects the increased blurring of the distinction between historiography and poetry that we find in the Roman literature of the early Imperial period.<sup>49</sup> *Tacitus* emphasizes the moral and ethical character of historiography. He sets out his understanding of the *praecipuum munus annalium* of history at *Ann.* 3.65: “The passage... states first what history’s role should be in respect to good behaviour... and second what the purpose is in recording instances of bad behaviour.”<sup>50</sup>

Reflection on history in the sense of the elaboration of a technical *ars historica* is found only in *Lucian*,<sup>51</sup> who composed the only “systematic monograph on historiography”<sup>52</sup> that has survived from the classical period. He addresses his methodological, linguistic, and substantial demands to the historian—demands that are directed against the customary historiography of contemporary imperial military campaigns, which were nothing other than exaggerated panegyrics. *Lucian* defines the distinction between poetry and history by saying that a poet is driven by a deity and by the Muses, and is therefore permitted to relate incredible things (*H.c.* 8). The following aspects must also be borne in mind when one writes historical works: the historian is writing for the instruction of posterity (*H.c.* 40f.), and this means that the purpose of history is to be of service by presenting the truth (*H.c.* 8). The historian’s task is to present factual matters (*H.c.* 38–39). A good historian needs political acumen and skill in presentation (*H.c.* 34). The facts must be well chosen and critically evaluated; they should be based primarily on things one has personally witnessed, or on the

<sup>48</sup> Leeman, “Geschichtsschreibung,” 135.

<sup>49</sup> On this, cf. most recently Wiseman, “History,” esp. 353–354.

<sup>50</sup> T. J. Luce, “Tacitus on ‘History’s Highest Function.’: *Praecipuum munus annalium* (*Ann.* 3.65),” *ANRW II* 33.4 (1991): 2904–2927, at 2906–2907, emphasizing the difference from Livy, who offers instruction by means of examples. In Tacitus, we find the idea “that history can act as a deterrent” (2914).

<sup>51</sup> Cf. E. Keßler, “Ars historica,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* 1 (1992): 1046–1048, at 1046. Cf. in general G. Avenarius, *Lukians Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung* (Meisenheim: Hain, 1956).

<sup>52</sup> Winkelmann, “Historiographie,” 732.

testimony of credible witnesses (*H.c.* 47). The historian must begin by drawing up an outline of his presentation, which he then fills in with details (*H.c.* 48). The style should be generally comprehensible and simple (*H.c.* 43–45). The course of the narrative should be related briefly and precisely (*H.c.* 50, 56–57). An historical work needs no preface; a short summary of its contents is sufficient (*H.c.* 52). In these reflections, Lucian gives an interesting insight into the ancient theory about the production and reception of historiography and into the evaluation of the literary genre of “history” in classical antiquity.

### 1.7. *Themes and Forms of Early Jewish Historiography*

*Jewish Hellenistic historiography*<sup>53</sup> aims both at assimilation and at the preservation of the identity of the historiographical themes and forms of an Old Testament and Jewish character in the context of the mixed Hellenistic cultures. Early Jewish historiography thus lives in the tension between assimilation and the preservation of identity.<sup>54</sup> The diaspora Jews, who had largely lost their knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, established a historiography in Greek. Jewish Hellenistic historiography displays not only linguistic, but also formal influence on the part of Greek historiography. For example, *1 Maccabees* contains some elements, such as the ethnographical chapter about Rome, which are related to Greek historiography. This book is based on various written sources, including letters and documents which the author may have consulted in an archive in Jerusalem. His presentation also relies on legendary and oral traditions.<sup>55</sup> *2 Maccabees* “resembles much more strongly the popular Greek historiography with its pronounced love of miracles and remarkable events.”<sup>56</sup> *2 Maccabees*, “as a work of

<sup>53</sup> Cf. also the introduction in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135). A New English Version*, revised and ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar 1 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1973), 19–122.

<sup>54</sup> On this, cf. the overview by O. Wischmeyer, “Orte der Geschichte und der Geschichtsschreibung in der frühjüdischen Literatur,” in *Die antike Historiographie und die Anfänge der christlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Becker, 157–179. Cf. also G. E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*, *NovTSup* 64 (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. e.g. K.-D. Schunck, *1. Makkabäerbuch*, *JSHRZ* I/4 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1980), 291.

<sup>56</sup> Momigliano, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 326. “The fragments of Greco-Jewish histories from the first two centuries of the Hellenistic period offer a tantalizing glimpse into the process of assimilation and cultural polemics which were at work among Jews

the pathetic and rhetorical historiography which aimed at great dramatic effects and was dominant in Hellenism,” conforms completely to “contemporary Greek historiography. Indeed, 2 Maccabees is the only work of this genre which has survived in its entirety.”<sup>57</sup> The historiographer *Flavius Josephus*, writing in the early Imperial period, follows even more directly the forms and elements of Greek historiography.

Despite linguistic and cultural processes of adaptation, i.e. the use of the Greek language and the consequences this had for early Jewish literature and historiography,<sup>58</sup> the literary products of Jewish Hellenistic historiography nevertheless largely preserve their own specific character. Religious aspects play a central role here,<sup>59</sup> as does the fact that there was little interest in individual historical themes and in history in general in Israel, and especially in Diaspora Judaism, in the second century BCE, with the exception of the Maccabean conflicts.<sup>60</sup> Instead of writing a continuous history of contemporary events, biblical traditions are elaborated into contemporary narratives<sup>61</sup> (cf.

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during the period, but they make little or no contribution to the understanding of contemporary political developments. Such is the concern of the two major Jewish histories of the period, 1 and 2 Maccabees”: H. W. Attridge, “Historiography,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M. E. Stone, CRINT 2 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 157–184, at 171. On the significance of the Books of Maccabees for early Jewish historiography, cf. most recently also H. Lichtenberger, “Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtserzählung im 1. und 2. Makkabäerbuch,” in *Die antike Historiographie und die Anfänge der christlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Becker, 197–212.

<sup>57</sup> C. Habicht, *2. Makkabäerbuch*, JSHRZ I.3 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1976), 189.

<sup>58</sup> “All the nations that came into contact with the Greeks in the Hellenistic age... produced books in Greek about their national history”: A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 24.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. also M. Pohlenz and P. Wendland, “Die griechische Prosa,” in *Einleitung in die Altertumswissenschaft* 1, Part 3, ed. A. Gercke and E. Norden, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1927), 64–166, at 161–162.

<sup>60</sup> “On the one hand the postbiblical Jews really thought they had in the Bible all the history that mattered: superevaluation of a certain type of history implied undervaluation of all other events. On the other hand the whole development of Judaism led to something unhistorical, eternal, the Law, the Torah. The significance which the Jews came to attach to the Torah killed their interest in general historiography”: Momigliano, *Foundations*, 23. On the historical sources for early Jewish history, cf. Schürer, *History*, 19–43.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. also R. Doran, “The Jewish Hellenistic Historians Before Josephus,” *ANRW* II, 20.1 (1987): 246–297, at 295.

*Artapanus*).<sup>62</sup> This is why it is difficult to define the specific genre of the early Jewish historiographical writings and thus to demarcate them vis-à-vis the rest of early Jewish literature.<sup>63</sup> Historical themes are given an arbitrary literary form in other areas of early Jewish literature which are not counted among the “historical writings” in the broader sense (prophecy, apocalyptic, sapiential literature). These historical themes can be understood only against the background of the prophetic-apocalyptic coding (e.g. Dan 12) or of sapiential instruction (*Sirach*),<sup>64</sup> and are thus accessible only to specific groups.

Among the surviving Jewish Hellenistic historical works, we must distinguish between (a) those that have survived intact (1 Esdras, 1–3 Maccabees) and were included in the Septuagint and in the Vulgate canon, and (b) the mostly brief fragments of historical works which survive only in compilations by later writers. *Eusebius* (especially in *Praeparatio evangelica* 9), *Clement of Alexandria*, and *Josephus* were not the first to transmit fragments of the Jewish Hellenistic historiographers; this had been done earlier by the Hellenistic historiographer *L. Cornelius Alexander Polyhistor* (born 105 BCE) in his work *On the Jews*.<sup>65</sup> The fragments refer to writers who are orthonymous, but about whom scarcely any historical information survives; references to autonomous authors (*Ps.-Eupolemus*) or pseudepigraphical writers (*Ps.-Hecataeus*) are less frequent. Nevertheless, there is a tendency in

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<sup>62</sup> On this, cf. Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*, 178–180; idem, “Artapanos: ‘Judaica’. A Contribution to early Jewish Historiography,” in *History and Identity: How Israel’s Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*, ed. N. Calduch-Benages et al. DCLY 2005 (New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 297–320. Concerning a poetic author like Ezekiel the Tragedian who in his *Exagoge* also uses the Exodus-traditions cf. C. R. Holladay, ed., *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors 2: Poets*, SBLTT (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 301–529. Cf. latest also: P. Lanfranchi, *L’Exagoge d’Ezéchiel le Tragique: Introduction, texte, traduction et commentaire*, *Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigrapha* 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. U. Mittmann-Richert, *Einführung zu den historischen und legendarischen Erzählungen*, JSHRZ VI.1 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000), 1: “The only works that can be called historical writings in the narrower sense of the term are 1 and 2 Maccabees...”

<sup>64</sup> Cf. the reflections on the historiographical character of some Qumran texts (e.g. the Damascus Document) and *Sirach* by B. Z. Wacholder, “Historiography of Qumran: The Sons of Zadok and Their Enemies,” in *Qumran between the Old and New Testament*, ed. F. H. Cryer and T. L. Thompson, JSOTSup 280 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 347–377.

<sup>65</sup> The fundamental study of this work is J. Freudenthal, *Alexander Polyhistor und die von ihm erhaltenen Reste jüdischer und samaritanischer Geschichtswerke*, *Hellenistische Studien*, vol. 1 and 2 (Breslau: H. Skutsch, 1875), esp. 16–18.

Jewish literature for authors to remain anonymous. We find the phenomenon of orthonymous authorship first in *Sirach*, and Martin Hengel has emphasized that this is connected with the “discovery of the individuality of the author” in the “Hellenistic period.”<sup>66</sup> (c) *Josephus* represents an independent type of historiographical literature, which must be evaluated in the context of Hellenistic Roman historiography.

## 2. *Tendencies and Representatives of the Historiography of the Early Imperial Period*

### 2.1. *Basic Questions*

As we have seen, Greek historiography in the Hellenistic Roman period displays a large number of historiographical conceptions and “an immense volume of production.” This makes it difficult to achieve an overview.<sup>67</sup> In terms of literary history, this leads to a mingling of the historiographical genres. A strict classification of the various types of historiography according to genre-specific elements is virtually impossible. At most, historiography in the Hellenistic-Roman period can be classified according to “trends” and “themes.”<sup>68</sup> In the *second century BCE*, a political upheaval replaced the hegemony of the Hellenes by the hegemony of the Romans; modern European scholars who thought in classicistic terms once wrote that “The standstill and decline of the productive intellectual powers of the Greek East meant that in this period, Rome overtook the leading role and set the tone in the field of literature too.”<sup>69</sup>

Roman historiography became more important than Greek historiography from the *first century BCE* onwards. In the *Augustan period*, the literature related to the *Imperium Romanum*—especially poetry, but also historiography—was produced in an affirmative or critical

<sup>66</sup> M. Hengel, *Die Evangelienüberschriften*, SHWPH 1984.3 (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1984), 25.

<sup>67</sup> K. Meister, “Geschichtsschreibung II. Griechenland,” *DNP* 4 (1998): 992–996, at 993; idem, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 80: “There is an immense volume of production, a great diversity of themes, and considerable differences in the manner of presentation.”

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Meister, *Geschichtsschreibung*, 994.

<sup>69</sup> Pohlenz and Wendland, “Prosa,” 109.

proximity to the *princeps* (cf., e.g. *Livy* and *Nicholas of Damascus*);<sup>70</sup> *Augustus* promoted it and exercised an ideological influence on it.<sup>71</sup> The autobiographical activity of Augustus himself (the *Res Gestae*), which was imitated by the subsequent *principes*,<sup>72</sup> shows clearly that historiographical works were understood to have a programmatic function as mediators of the Augustan ideology, and that they were in fact employed in this way (cf. once again *Nicholas*). This tie was then loosened temporarily under the Julio-Claudian *principes*,<sup>73</sup> but it took on renewed intensity anew under the *Flavians* (69–96 CE), with a conscious reference back to the Augustan age (cf. *Quintilian*). It is against this background that the historiographical works of *Flavius Josephus* and *Tacitus* must be understood. This also explains the increasing significance of biographical literature (cf. *Suetonius* and *C. Nepos*), which generated the genre of imperial biographies (*Historia Augusta*).

A factor of *social history* also left its mark on the literature of the early Imperial period. At the beginning of this period, the cultural influence of the “Italic dynasties” declined. The “provincialization” of Latin literature meant that literary traditions were “often preserved in a purer form in peripheral regions than in the center, which was very much exposed to innovations.”<sup>74</sup> The *literary tendencies* of the historiography of the early Imperial period are mentioned by the Roman historians themselves in the transition from the republic to the principate. A high didactic and moral function is attributed to historiography (cf. *Livy*, *Praef.* 10), so that history is not only “the remembering of past deeds and charismatic... values which renders these present, but also a ‘lamp of truth’” (cf. *Cicero*, above).<sup>75</sup> Awareness

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<sup>70</sup> “The Augustan regime, it seems, did not attempt to dominate historical writing as it did poetry”: G. B. Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 369.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Conte, *Literature*, 251–253. On Augustan literature in general, cf. most recently the essays in Levine and Nelis, *Clio & The Poets*.

<sup>72</sup> On the *commentarii* literature of the early Imperial period, cf. J. Wilkes, “Julio-Claudian Historians,” *CW* 65 (1972): 177–203, at 181–183; R. G. Lewis, “Imperial Autobiography: Augustus to Hadrian,” *ANRW* II.34.1 (1993): 629–706. On the *Hypomnemata/Commentarii* of *Vespasian* and *Titus*, cf. HRR 2.108 and the references by Josephus, *Apion* 1.56; *Life* 342, 358; cf. also Schürer, *History*, 32–33. On the *Hypomnemata* of *Herod the Great*, cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 15.174, and Schürer, *History*, 26–27.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. in general Wilkes, “Historians.”

<sup>74</sup> Quotation from von Albrecht, *Geschichte*, 709.

<sup>75</sup> Harth, “Geschichtsschreibung,” 839.

of the *auctoritas* of the traditions permitted the historians to achieve the literary and stylistic synthesis of various forms of presentation.<sup>76</sup>

Thematically, the historiographical literature of the early Imperial period is concerned with Roman history; in literary-historical terms, it belongs to the tradition of Hellenistic historiography.<sup>77</sup> A good example of this position in the history of culture and of literature is *Nicholas of Damascus*.<sup>78</sup> He belongs in linguistic and literary terms to the Greek Hellenistic culture, and the circumstances of his life<sup>79</sup> and the subjects of his historiographical works belong firmly to the beginnings of the Roman Imperial period.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.2. *Historiographical Authors in the Early Imperial Period* (*first/second century of the Common Era*)

Tables (1)–(3) list historiographical authors who worked in the period relevant to the New Testament age, i.e. the early Imperial period, in the Greek Hellenistic, Roman, and early Jewish linguistic and cultural spheres. Those authors are listed who *present historical themes in prose form*.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “The normative view of the exemplary knowledge of tradition, indeed of a value untouched by change (*auctoritas*), gave the historians (Livy, Sallust, Tacitus) the freedom to combine and make a stylistic synthesis of various forms of presentation, in order to write persuasively: forms drawn from oratory, literature, and dialectics such as narrative, description, argumentation, dramatization, fictitious speech, the narrative of events, commentaries, aphorisms”: Harth, “Geschichtsschreibung,” 839.

<sup>77</sup> With regard to Tacitus, cf. the presentation by D. Flach, *Tacitus in der Tradition der antiken Geschichtsschreibung*, Hyp. 39 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973), 14–16.

<sup>78</sup> In general, cf. R. Laqueur, “Nikolaos,” *RE* 17 (1937): 362–424.

<sup>79</sup> He is one of the Greek-speaking historians who “themselves worked in Rome” in increasing numbers from the late Republican period onward, “or at any rate were closely connected to the great men of Rome”: A. Dihle, *Die griechische und lateinische Literatur der Kaiserzeit: Von Augustus bis Justinian* (München: C. H. Beck, 1989), 153.

<sup>80</sup> On this, cf. also M. Kober, *Die politischen Anfänge Octavians in der Darstellung des Velleius und dessen Verhältnis zur historiographischen Tradition: Ein philologischer Quellenvergleich. Nikolaus von Damaskus, Appianus von Alexandria, Velleius Paternulus*, Epistemata 286 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000); M. Toher, “The ‘Bios Kaisaros’ of Nicolaus of Damascus: An Historiographical Analysis: (unpublished Ph.O. dissertation. Brown University, 1985).

<sup>81</sup> For secondary literature, cf. n. 1 above.

## (1) Historiographical Authors Who Wrote in Greek

1804

EVE-MARIE BECKER

Author	Dates	Historiographical works	Editions	Secondary literature
<i>Strabo of Amaseia</i> <sup>82</sup>	ca. 62 BCE–24 CE	Γεωγραφικά – <i>Historika hypomnemata</i>	– A. Meineke, 1852–1853; S. Radt, 2002–2005. – FGrHist 91	– W. Aly, <i>Strabonis Geographica</i> . Vol. 4, 1957. – Lendle, <i>Einführung</i> , 237–238.
<i>Hypsistrates</i> <sup>83</sup>	1st cent. BCE (?)	Fragments of an historical work	FGrHist 190	K. Meister, DNP 5 (1998), 821.
<i>Teucros of Cyzigus</i> <sup>84</sup>	1st cent. BCE	<i>Inter alia Jewish History</i>	FGrHist 274	K. Meister, DNP 12.1 (2002), 205.
<i>Timagenes of Alexandria</i> <sup>85</sup>	1st cent. BCE (?)	<i>Περὶ βασιλείων</i>	FGrHist 88	K. Meister, DNP 12.1 (2002), 573.
<i>Gaius Iulius Iuba</i> <sup>86</sup>	25 BCE–23 CE	– <i>Homoioietes</i> – <i>Rhomaïke archaiologia</i>	– FGrHist 275 – FGrHist 275	F. Jacoby, RE 9.2 (1916), 2384–2395.
<i>Nicholas of Damascus</i> <sup>87</sup>	* ca. 64 BCE	<i>Ἱστορίαι</i> – <i>Vita des Augustus</i>	– FGrHist 90 – FGrHist 90	– Lendle, <i>Einführung</i> , 244–246. – M. Toher, <i>The 'Bios Kaisaros'</i>
<i>Plutarch</i> <sup>88</sup>	ca. 45–120 CE	<i>Βίοι</i>	K. Ziegler et al., 1914–1932/ 1993–2005 (new ed.)	A. Dihle, <i>Studien zur griechischen Biographie</i> , 2nd ed. 1970.
<i>Arrian of Nicomedia</i> <sup>89</sup>	85/90–after 145/ 146 CE	– <i>Ἀλεξάνδρου ἀνάβασις</i> – <i>Ἰνδική</i> – <i>Περὶ πλοῦς Εὐξείνου πόντου</i>	A.G. Roos and G. Wirth, 1907–1928/ 2nd ed. 1967–1968.	– A. B. Bosworth, <i>From Arrian to Alexander</i> , 1988. – E. Schwartz, RE 2.1 (1896), 1230–1247. – P. A. Stadler, <i>Arrian of Nicomedia</i> , 1980.
<i>Appian of Alexandria</i> <sup>90</sup>	before 100–after 160 CE	<i>Ρωμαϊκή</i>	e.g. B. P. Viereck et al., 1962.	K. Brodersen, ANRW II.34.1 (1993), 339–363.
<i>Pausanias</i> <sup>91</sup>	ca. 130–180 CE	<i>Περὶ ἡγήσις τῆς Ἑλλάδος</i>	M. H. Rocha-Pereira, 1973–1981/ 2nd ed. 1989–1990.	C. Habicht, <i>Pausanias und seine Beschreibung Griechenlands</i> , 1985.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. M. Landfester, ed., *Geschichte*, 566f.; Nickel, *Lexikon*, 439.<sup>83</sup> Cf. Schürer, *History*, 24.<sup>84</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 40.<sup>85</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 22–23. It is however virtually impossible today to identify another historian mentioned by Schürer, *History*, 27–28—Ptolemy—cf. A. Dihle, art. “Ptolemaios von Askalon,” RE 23.2 (1959): 1863; S. Matthaos, “Ptolemaios aus Askalon,” DNP 10 (2001): 558.<sup>86</sup> Cf. Nickel, *Lexikon*, 442; 787.<sup>87</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 431–432; 858.<sup>88</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 489–493.<sup>89</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 80–83.<sup>90</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 56–58.<sup>91</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 444–445.



(2) Historiographical Authors Who Wrote in Latin

Author	Dates	Historiographical works	Editions	Secondary literature
<i>Livy</i> <sup>92</sup>	59 BCE–17 CE	<i>Ab urbe condita libri</i>	R. S. Conway and W. F. Walters (Books 1–30); A. H. MacDonald (Books 31–35); P. G. Walsh (Books 36–40), 2nd ed. 1967; 1965; 1999.	<i>von Albrecht, Geschichte</i> , 659–686; <i>E. Burck, Das Geschichtswerk des T. Livius</i> , 1992.
Q. <i>Dellius</i> <sup>93</sup>	1st cent. BCE (?)	<i>History of the Parthian Campaign</i>	HRR 2.53	<i>M. Strothmann, DNP</i> 3 (1997), 393.
<i>Augustus</i> <sup>94</sup>	31 BCE–14 CE	<i>Res gestae Divi Augusti</i>	H. Volkman, 1969.	<i>von Albrecht, Geschichte</i> , 511–524.
<i>Pompeius Trogus</i> <sup>95</sup>	1st cent. BCE (?)	<i>Historiarum Philippicarum libri XLIV</i>	O. Seel, 2nd ed. 1972.	<i>von Albrecht, Geschichte</i> , 686–689; <i>O. Seel, ANRW II</i> 30.2 (1982), 1363–1423.
<i>Asinius Pollio</i> <sup>96</sup>	1st cent. BCE (?)	<i>Historiae</i>	HRR 2.67–70 (H. Peter)	<i>von Albrecht, Geschichte</i> , 655–658; <i>G. Zecchini, ANRW II</i> 30.2 (1982), 1265–1296.
<i>Cremutius Cordus</i> <sup>97</sup>	† 25 CE	<i>Annales</i>	HRR 2.87–90 (H. Peter)	<i>M. Fuhrmann, DkP</i> 1, 1333–1334.
<i>Gaius (?) Velleius Paterculus</i> <sup>98</sup>	20/19 BCE–after 30 CE	<i>Historia Romana</i>	W. S. Watt, 2nd ed. 1998.	<i>von Albrecht, Geschichte</i> , 841–845.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 362–365.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Schürer, *History*, 24–25. It is virtually impossible today to identify another historian mentioned by Schürer, *History*, 27–28—*Antonius Julianus*—cf. also HRR 2.108–109.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Nickel, *Lexikon*, 566. On the *Hypomnemata/commentarii* des *Vespasian* und *Titus*, cf. HRR 2:108 and n. 72 above.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Nickel, *Lexikon*, 437.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 424.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 632–634.

Table (2) (cont.)

Author	Dates	Historiographical works	Editions	Secondary literature
<i>Valerius Maximus</i> <sup>99</sup>	1st cent. CE	<i>Facta et dicta memorabilia</i>	J. Briscoe, 1998.	von Albrecht, <i>Geschichte</i> , 852–859; G. Maslakov, <i>ANRW II 32.1</i> (1984), 437–496.
<i>Curtius Rufus</i> <sup>100</sup>	1st cent. CE	<i>Historiae Alexandri Magni regis Macedonum</i>	E. Hedicke, <sup>2</sup> 1931.	von Albrecht, <i>Geschichte</i> , 859–869; W. Rutz, <i>ANRW II 32.4</i> (1986), 2329–2357.
<i>Pomponius Mela</i> <sup>101</sup>	Mid-1st cent. CE	<i>De chorographia libri III</i>	A. Silberman, 1988.	von Albrecht, <i>Geschichte</i> , 984; F. Lasserre, <i>DkP 4</i> , 1039–1040.
<i>Pliny the Elder</i> <sup>102</sup>	23/24 CE–79 CE	<i>Bellorum Germaniae libri XX</i>	Lost	von Albrecht, <i>Geschichte</i> , 1003–1011.
<i>P. Cornelius Tacitus</i> <sup>103</sup>	55–120 CE	– <i>de vita et moribus Iulii Agricolae</i> – <i>de origine et situ Germanorum</i> – <i>Historiae</i> – <i>Annales</i>	– J. Delz, 1983 – A. Ötnerfors, 1983 – K. Wellesley, 1986 – H. Heubner, 1978; 2nd ed. 1994.	von Albrecht, <i>Geschichte</i> , 869–908.
<i>Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus</i> <sup>104</sup>	ca. 70–140 CE	– <i>de viris illustribus</i> – <i>de vita Caesarum</i>	– R. A. Kaster, 1995 – M. Ihm, 1908, 1993 (reprint).	von Albrecht, <i>Geschichte</i> , 1104–1119; K. R. Bradley, <i>ANRW II 33.5</i> (1991), 3701–3732.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 625–626.<sup>100</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 190–191.<sup>101</sup> Cf. Nickel, *Lexikon*, 197.<sup>102</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 480–483.<sup>103</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 573–577.<sup>104</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 568–570.<sup>105</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 247–248.

(3) Historiographical Writers in So-Called Early Judaism (Greek-Speaking)

Author	Dates	Historiographical works	Editions	Secondary Literature
<i>Philo of Alexandria</i> <sup>106</sup>	ca. 15 BCE–50 CE	– <i>In Flaccum</i> – <i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>	L. Cohn et al., 1896–1915, 1962 (reprint).	W. Haase (ed.), <i>ANRW II</i> 21.1. (1984).
<i>Justus of Tiberias</i> <sup>107</sup>	1st cent. CE	– <i>Ἰουδαίων βασίλεις οἱ ἐν τοῖς στέμμασιν</i> – <i>Ἰουδαϊκὸς πόλεμος</i>	C. R. Holladay, <i>Fragments</i> , 382–387.	Schiirer, <i>History</i> , 34–37; T. Rajak, “ <i>Josephus and Justus of Tiberias</i> ” in <i>idem</i> , <i>The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome</i> , 2001, 177–193.
<i>Flavius Iosephus</i> <sup>108</sup>	37/38–ca. 100 CE	– <i>antiquitates Judaicae</i> – <i>de bello Iudaico</i>	B. Niese, 1885–1895, 1955 (reprint).	P. Bilde, <i>Flavius Iosephus Between Jerusalem and Rome</i> , 1988.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 456–459.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Holladay, *Fragments*, 371–381.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 328–330.

This means that this overview has the following boundaries. Authors such as *Diodorus Siculus* (Βιβλιοθήκη ἱστορική)<sup>109</sup> or *Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (e.g., Ῥωμαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία)<sup>110</sup> are not mentioned in the following tables, because the dates of their lives do not belong clearly to the transition to the first century of the Common Era (*Diodorus*: first century CE; *Dionysius*: ca. 60 BCE–after 7 CE). Authors such as *Ovid* (43 BCE–17 CE)<sup>111</sup> or the Alexandrian *Dionysius Periegetes* (first half of the second century CE)<sup>112</sup> are not included, because the works they wrote on historical themes are not composed in prose: the *Fasti* of Ovid is in elegiac distiches, and the *Periegesis* of Dionysius is in hexameters.

### 3. Early Christian Literature in the Framework of Ancient Historiography

#### 3.1. Basic Questions

The Greek Hellenistic, Jewish Hellenistic, and Roman historiographies of the Hellenistic Roman period display *distinctive characteristics* not only in their language, but also in their ideas and choice of subjects. In its very origins, historiography is closely linked to culture and context. This also applies to the social status of the historian.<sup>113</sup> In the Hellenistic-Roman period, however, processes of *assimilation* begin.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 201; Lendle, *Einführung*, 242–244.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 215–216; Lendle, *Einführung*, 239–241.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 424–425; Gall, *Literatur*, 151–153.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Cf. Landfester, *Geschichte*, 213.

<sup>113</sup> For an exemplary study of the question of the social status of *Josephus*, cf. G. W. Bowersock, “Foreign Elites at Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. J. Edmondson et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 53–62. A wide field for sociological research opens up here, as H. Schneider has shown: “At present, the modern social history of classical antiquity displays a rich variety of themes... the level of education, e.g. the ability to write and read, and status symbols... are the object of a research which moves between the disciplines and is able to draw on the questions and methodologies of the modern social sciences”: “Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte,” *DNP* 15.3 (2003): 83–92, at 90.

<sup>114</sup> For the early Jewish area, following on the studies by V. Tcherikover (e.g. *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959]), cf. the standard works, e.g. M. Hengel, “The Interpenetration of Judaism and Hellenism in the pre-Maccabean Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* 2, ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 167–228; E. S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

The three cultural spheres—Greek, Roman, and Jewish—which were initially rather independent of each other came into contact and mingled. This cultural exchange and transfer took place in specific *political constellations*, first in the Hellenistic Macedonian hegemony, then in the period of the successor kings, and then in the imperial expansion of the Romans. This can be illustrated by some well-known examples:

- Diaspora Judaism speaks and writes Greek;
- the development of Roman literature finds its orientation in earlier Greek Hellenistic works;
- the Hellenistic historian *Polybius* discovers the significance of Roman history for the eastern Mediterranean region;
- the Greek Hellenistic compiler *Alexander Polyhistor* devotes his energies to the collection of Jewish historiographical works.

These processes of assimilation reach their peak thanks to the geographical expansion of the Roman empire under *Augustus* and to the consolidation of the political, military, and institutional structures in the early Imperial period. In this period, the *shared elements* of culture become important, and one can say that a new type of culture emerges, as can be seen (to a limited extent) in the Jewish Hellenistic literature of the first century CE. Here, we think first of all of *Josephus*,<sup>115</sup> but also of some writings by *Philo of Alexandria* which have at least a partly historiographical character (e.g. the *Legatio ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum*).<sup>116</sup> It is interesting to see that the Jewish Hellenistic literature shares the common Hellenistic syntheses especially in the field of historiography.

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<sup>115</sup> For a structural comparison between historiographical elements in *Josephus* and in the Gospel of Mark, cf. Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*, 301–303. Only a few structural comparisons with regard to the literary-historical aspects in the historiographical writings of *Josephus* will be found in C. Böttrich and J. Herzer, eds., *Josephus und das Neue Testament: Wechselseitige Wahrnehmungen*, WUNT 209 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); cf. the essay by M. Vogel, “Geschichtsschreibung nach den Regeln von Lob und Tadel. Sterbeszenen bei Josephus und im Neuen Testament,” in *Josephus*, ed. Böttrich and Herzer, 535–546. On the essence and function of historiography in general, cf. D. E. Aune, “Historiography,” in idem, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament & Early Christian Literature & Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 215–218.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Table (3). On this, cf. also P. W. van der Horst, “Philo’s *In Flaccum* and the Book of Acts,” in idem, *Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context: Selected Essays on Early Judaism, Samaritanism, Hellenism, and Christianity*, WUNT 196, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 98–107; and in general, cf. also Schürer, *History*, 859–864.

The genesis of the earliest Christian texts coincides with this situation, which is determined politically by the conditions of the early Imperial period and in terms of cultural and literary history by the assimilation processes of the Hellenistic-Roman period. In what follows, I concentrate on the texts in the New Testament, and then refer only briefly (see section e) to extra-canonical texts (the so-called *Apostolic Fathers*, *apocrypha*, etc.) which are related to historiography and were written at roughly the same time as the New Testament texts.

### 3.2. *The Gospels as Historiographical Literature—Example: The Gospel of Mark*

From *Gotthold E. Lessing* onwards, the gospel literature, especially the synoptic gospels, have been read as history-oriented accounts of the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>117</sup> Modern gospel research<sup>118</sup> also sees close links between the gospels and biographical literature: the gospels take up elements which are known from the official prophetic biography of the Old Testament (cf. *Helmut Koester*),<sup>119</sup> and their genre is comparable to that of the pagan biographies of classical antiquity (cf. *Detlev Dormeyer*).<sup>120</sup> The identification of a structural closeness between the gospels and biographical literature means that they belong to the genre of *historiography in the broader sense* (cf. also *Richard A. Burridge*).<sup>121</sup> *Adela Yarbro Collins* agrees in this basic classification of the gospels as historiographical literature, and has recently

<sup>117</sup> Cf. G. E. Lessing, "Theses aus der Kirchengeschichte," in idem, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, 8: *Werke 1774–1778*, ed. A. Schilson (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), 619–627; idem, *Neue Hypothese über die Evangelisten als bloß menschliche Geschichtsschreiber betrachtet*, Wolfenbüttel 1778, in *Werke und Briefe*, 8:629–654.

<sup>118</sup> For an overview of research, cf. D. Dormeyer, *Das Markus-Evangelium* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), esp. 112–137; Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*, 37–29.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. H. Koester, "Überlieferung und Geschichte der frühchristlichen Evangelienliteratur," *ANRW* II 52.2 (1984): 1463–1542; idem, "Evangelium II. Gattung," *RGG* 4th ed., 2 (1999): 1735–1741.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. D. Dormeyer and H. Frankemölle, "Evangelium als literarische Gattung und als theologischer Begriff: Tendenzen und Aufgaben der Evangelienforschung im 20. Jahrhundert, mit einer Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums in seinem Verhältnis zur antiken Biographie," *ANRW* II 25.2 (1984): 1543–1704; Dormeyer, *Markusevangelium*, 1666–1668.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. e.g. H. Cancik, "Die Gattung Evangelium: Markus im Rahmen der antiken Historiographie," in idem, *Markus-Philologie: Historische, literargeschichtliche und stilistische Untersuchungen zum zweiten Evangelium*, WUNT 33 (Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1984), 85–113; R. A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with*

described the Gospel of Mark more precisely as an historical monograph with eschatological tendencies.<sup>122</sup> The literary-historical perspective which reads the gospel writings in the context of ancient historiography concentrates especially on the Gospel of Luke (see below); recently, the Gospel of John too has been read in this light (*Richard Bauckham*).<sup>123</sup>

The discussion of the historiographical character of the Gospel of Mark can be illustrated by a recent approach (2006): I agree that Mark should be classified under *historiographical literature in the broader sense*.<sup>124</sup> Unlike the approaches mentioned above, my approach demarcates the Gospel of Mark vis-à-vis biographical literature by highlighting its (sub-)historiographical character, which I describe as follows. *First*, on the basis of Mark 1:1, the theme of the Gospel of Mark is seen as an event-historical monographic narrative of the beginning of the gospel.<sup>125</sup> *Secondly*, the focus on the figure of Jesus is not primarily evaluated against the background of ancient biographies; it is seen as a person-centered presentational element which is known from Jewish Hellenistic historiography (*Artapanus*).<sup>126</sup> *Thirdly*, the way in which the Gospel of Mark employs its sources and the interpretation of the historical narrative makes it comparable to works of ancient historiography (e.g. *Polybius* and *Sallust*).<sup>127</sup> In particular, the integration of the passion narrative (Mark 14–16), which to begin with has clear biographical traits when compared to the ancient *exitus* literature,<sup>128</sup> into the total structure of the gospel presentation should be understood as a tendency to emphasize historiographical structures and to reduce

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*Graeco-Roman Biography*, SNTSMS 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>122</sup> Cf. A. Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 42: "Mark as an Eschatological Historical Monograph"; idem, "Markusevangelium," *RGG* 4th ed., 5 (2002): 842–846.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. R. Bauckham, "Historiographical Characteristics of the Gospel of John," *NTS* 53 (2007): 17–36.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*; idem, "The Gospel of Mark in the Context of Ancient Historiography," in *The Function of Ancient Historiography in Biblical and Cognate Studies*, ed. P. G. Kirkpatrick and T. Goltz (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 124–134.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*, 102–104.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 178–180.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 149–151; 213–215.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. e.g. U. Eigler, "Exitus illustrium virorum," *DNP* 4 (1998): 344–345; F. A. Marx, "Tacitus und die Literatur der exitus illustrium virorum," *Phil* 92 (1937): 83–103; A. Ronconi, "Exitus illustrium virorum," *RAC* 6 (1966): 1258–1268.

biographical narrative traits (cf. also *Tacitus, Ann.* 15.60–62).<sup>129</sup> This means that the Gospel of Mark is a sub-historiographical writing and forms a genre *sui generis* in the field of Hellenistic historiography in the broader sense.

### 3.3. *The Lukan Writings as Historiographical Literature*

The so-called Lukan double work has a special position in historiographical research. Here, *Martin Dibelius*<sup>130</sup> and *Ernst Haenchen*,<sup>131</sup> and most recently the studies by *Eckhard Plümacher*,<sup>132</sup> have interpreted the author Luke, especially in the *Acts of the Apostles*, as an historian.<sup>133</sup> In this context, the comparison with Hellenistic-Roman historiography has led scholars to make a detailed identification of historiographical narrative and stylistic elements (e.g. the motifs of miracles<sup>134</sup> and the *topos* of the *praefationes*).<sup>135</sup> Besides this, the following formal elements are “decisive” for the classification of the Acts

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Becker, *Markus-Evangelium*, 362–364.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. e.g. M. Dibelius, “Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte und die antike Geschichtsschreibung” (1949), in idem, *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte*, ed. H. Greeven, 5th ed. FRLANT 42 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 120–162.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 6th ed. KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 81–83.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. E. Plümacher, “Lukas als griechischer Historiker,” *RE.S* 14 (1974): 235–264; idem, “Geschichtsschreibung IV. Biblisch 2. Neues Testament,” *RGG* 3rd ed. (2000): 808. Cf. also various essays in idem, *Geschichte und Geschichten: Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte und zu den Johannesakten*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, WUNT 170 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). Cf. most recently also idem, “Hellenistische Geschichtsschreibung im Neuen Testament. Die Apostelgeschichte,” in *Geschichte und Vergangenheit. Rekonstruktion, Deutung, Fiktion*, ed. U. H. J. Körtner (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2007), 115–127.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. also D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: Westminster Press, 1987), 77–79; D. Dormeyer, *Das Neue Testament im Rahmen der antiken Literaturgeschichte. Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), 228–230; J. Schröter, “Lukas als Historiograph. Das lukanische Doppelwerk und die Entdeckung der christlichen Heilsgeschichte,” in *Die antike Historiographie und die Anfänge der frühchristlichen Geschichtsschreibung*, ed. Becker, 237–262.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. e.g. E. Plümacher, “Τερατεία: Fiktion und Wunder in der hellenistisch-römischen Geschichtsschreibung und in der Apostelgeschichte,” in idem, *Geschichte und Geschichten*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 33–83.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. L. C. A. Alexander, “The Preface to Acts and the Historians,” in *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. B. Witherington (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 73–103; D. E. Aune, “Preface,” in idem, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament & Early Christian Literature & Rhetoric*, 367–372, esp. at 369–371.



of the Apostles under historiographical literature: “a foreword, synchronization, speeches, and letters.”<sup>136</sup> In the case of the *Gospel of Luke*, the closeness of the author and his work to Hellenistic-Roman historiography is much discussed,<sup>137</sup> especially by Anglo-American exegetes.<sup>138</sup> In this context, the *praefatio* or prooemium at Luke 1:1–4 is significant, since it recalls the *topos* of ancient historiographers (cf. also Josephus, *War* 1.1–30).<sup>139</sup> We also find other individual narrative and compositional historiographical elements in the Gospel of Luke, e.g. the synchronisms in Luke 2:1 and 3:1, the speeches (Luke 6:20–22; 21:7–9), or the itinerary/περίπλους (Luke 9:51–53).<sup>140</sup>

### 3.4. *Texts and Forms in the New Testament Literature Related to the Historiographical Genre*

We now present texts and forms which display two characteristics that were described above as typical of *historiography in the broader sense*: these are texts written in *prose*, which are concerned with the *interpretation of history*. Unlike the gospel literature and the Acts of the Apostles, however, these are mostly shorter individual texts which are a part of a larger writing that *cannot* be classified under the macro-genre of historiography, because of its own specific characteristics. Such texts belong rather to the genre of letter or apocalypse.

<sup>136</sup> J. Jervell, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 77. Jervell classifies Acts more precisely as “tragic historiography” (78).

<sup>137</sup> However, this question is not raised in the two most recent German commentaries on the Gospel of Luke, when they discuss the genre of the Gospel: cf. H. Klein, *Das Lukasevangelium*, KEK I.3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); M. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

<sup>138</sup> Cf. e.g. J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, AB 28 (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 171–173; F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas. 1. Teilband (Lk 1,1–9,50)*, EKK III.1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989), 18–19; J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1–6. Cf. also Aune, *New Testament*, 80–82.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Gospel*, 287–289; Green, *Gospel*, 33–35; and most recently Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 57–61. On research into the Lukan prologue, cf. in general L. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke’s Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>140</sup> Cf. most recently Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*, 364–366.

### 1. *Autobiographical passages in Paul*

To the extent that autobiographical *narrationes* have an historiographical tendency (cf. my remarks above on the *hupomnēmata/commentarii*), some passages in the Pauline letters come close in their intention to historiography.<sup>141</sup> Here, Galatians 1–2 and 2 Corinthians 11–12 are particularly relevant. The themes which Paul treats autobiographically vary between an account of his previous missionary activity (1 Thess 1; 3; 1 Cor 2–3) and a reflection on his own person in the light of his vocation (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3–5) and his apostolate or apostolic mode of life (e.g. 1 Cor 9).<sup>142</sup>

### 2. *Prophecy, apocalyptic, and the interpretation of history*

Prophetic and apocalyptic texts also come under the heading of historiographical literature, where they formulate a look back on history and/or eschatological scenarios which are the outcome of the perception and interpretation of historical events and experiences. This has prompted *Georges Minois* to see an historical and historiographical dimension in oracles and prophecies.<sup>143</sup> In the New Testament literature,<sup>144</sup> the most prominent apocalyptic texts are *Mark 13 parr.* and the *Apocalypse of John*.<sup>145</sup> These have the function of interpreting and coping with history. In the literature of the so-called Apostolic Fathers, the concluding chapter of the *Didache* (16) can be called an apocalyptic text.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>141</sup> On this, cf. E.-M. Becker, "Autobiographisches bei Paulus: Aspekte und Aufgaben," in *Biographie und Persönlichkeit des Paulus*, ed. E. M. Becker and P. Pilhofer, WUNT 187 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 67–87, esp. 73–75; O. Wischmeyer, "Paulus als Ich-Erzähler: Ein Beitrag zu seiner Person, seiner Biographie und seiner Theologie," in *Biographie*, ed. Becker and Pilhofer, 88–105.

<sup>142</sup> On this overview, cf. Becker, "Autobiographisches," 82–83.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. G. Minois, *Geschichte der Zukunft: Orakel, Prophezeiungen, Utopien, Prognosen* (Düsseldorf and Zurich: Artemis and Winkler, 1998).

<sup>144</sup> On this, cf. P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, "Einleitung," in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 2, 491–515, esp. at 495–497.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, "Einleitung," 525–527. On the special question of the historical/temporal dimensions of the Apocalypse of John, cf. D. E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52A (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), lxxxiv–lxxxv.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Vielhauer and Strecker, "Einleitung," 535–537.

### 3.5. *Texts and Forms in the New Testament Apocrypha Related to the Historiographical Genre*

In conclusion, I mention the texts and writings from the field of the so-called New Testament apocrypha which are related to the historiographical genre and may have been composed in the *New Testament period* as this was defined above, i.e. no later than the mid-second century. Once again, these are *prose* texts which are concerned with the *interpretation of history*. These texts must be distinguished from others such as the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*<sup>147</sup> and the *Gospel of Philip*,<sup>148</sup> which belong to the literary genre of the collection of logia or florilegium, from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, which is a parenetic text,<sup>149</sup> and from so-called revelation dialogues such as the *Book of Thomas*.<sup>150</sup> The overview in Table (4) attempts to classify the relevant texts and writings under the three literary forms and genres (gospel, Acts-literature, related forms/apocalypses) which we already find in the New Testament literature. This also brings to light literary-historical continuities and developments between New Testament literature and Christian literature outside the New Testament, and shows their closeness to the historiographical macro-genre.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. B. Blatz, "Das koptische Thomasevangelium," in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, esp. 93–97.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. H.-M. Schenke, "Das Evangelium nach Philippus," in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, esp. 148–154.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Vielhauer and Strecker, "Einleitung", 537–547; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 160–165.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. H.-M. Schenke, "Das Buch des Thomas," in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, esp. 192–198.

<sup>151</sup> This article is dedicated to Wolfgang Wischmeyer, Vienna, on the occasion of his 65th birthday (5 October 2009).

(4.a) Historiographical Texts in Extra-Canonical Early Christian Literature  
(up to ca. mid-2nd century)<sup>151</sup>

Gospel literature	Acts literature <sup>152</sup>	Related forms: Apocalypses
<i>Jewish Christian Gospels</i> : <sup>153</sup>		
- <i>Gospels of the Nazaraeas</i>	<i>Acts of Andrew</i> <sup>154</sup>	<i>Ascensio Jesaiae</i> <sup>155</sup>
- <i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i>		
- <i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i>		
<i>Gospel of the Egyptians</i> <sup>156</sup>	<i>Acts of Thomas</i> <sup>157</sup>	<i>Apocalypse of Peter</i> <sup>158</sup>
<i>Gospel of Peter</i> <sup>159</sup>	<i>Pseudo-Clementines</i> <sup>160</sup>	
<i>So-called Infancy Gospels</i> , <sup>161</sup> e.g.:		
<i>Protevangelium of James</i> <sup>162</sup>		
<i>Gospel of Bartholomew</i> <sup>163</sup>		
<i>Acts of Pilate/Gospel of Nicodemus</i> <sup>164</sup>		
<i>Gospel of Gamaliel</i> <sup>165</sup>		

<sup>151</sup> On this, cf. in general, where no other works are mentioned: Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1 and 2; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*. For further secondary literature, cf. the individual articles in S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, eds., *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 2002). The great difficulties in dating this literature are well known; most of these texts are “flowing texts.” Since scholars often propose dates earlier than the mid-second century, however, they are included in this table.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. the general introduction in Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 153–157.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. P. Vielhauer and G. Strecker, “Judenchristliche Evangelien,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, 114–147; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 56–63.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. J.-M. Prieur and W. Schneemelcher, “Andreasakten,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 2, 93–137.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. C. D. G. Müller, “Die Himmelfahrt des Jesaja,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 2, 547–562; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 93–97.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. W. Schneemelcher, “Ägypterevangelium,” in idem, *Apokryphen* 1, 174–179; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 63–64.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. K. Schäferdiek and R. ó h Uiginn, “Johannesakten,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 2, 138–193.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. C. D. G. Müller, “Die Himmelfahrt des Jesaja,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 2, 562–578; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 97–100.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. C. Maurer and W. Schneemelcher, in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, 180–188; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 71–74.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. J. Irmscher and G. Strecker, “Die Pseudoklementinen,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 2, 439–488; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 148–153.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. O. Cullmann, “Kindheitsevangelien,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, 330–372; Moreschini and Norelli, *Literature*, 148–153.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. O. Cullmann, “Kindheitsevangelien,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, 330–372, esp. 334–338.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. F. Scheidweiler and W. Schneemelcher, “Bartholomäusevangelium,” Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, 424–440.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. F. Scheidweiler, “Nikodemusevangelium. Pilatusakten und Höllenfahrt Christi,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen* 1, 395–424.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. M.-A. van den Oudenrijn, “Das Evangelium des Gamaliel,” in Schneemelcher, *Apokryphen*, 441–442.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. M. Dürst, “Hegesipp,” in S. Döpp and W. Geerlings, eds., *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur* 1, 315.

(4.b) Others

Author	Dates	Historiographical works	Editions	Secondary Literature
<i>Hegesipp</i> <sup>166</sup>	2nd century CE	<i>Hypomnemata</i>	T. Zahn, <i>Forschungen zur Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons</i> 6, 1900, 70–113. 228–249; E. Preuschen, <i>Antilegomena</i> , <sup>2</sup> 1905, 107–113; 210–216.	<i>N. Hyldahl, StTh</i> 14 (1960), 70–113.

Handbook for the Study of the  
Historical Jesus



# Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus

Volume 3

## The Historical Jesus

*Edited by*

Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2011



This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Handbook for the study of the historical Jesus / edited by Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-90-04-16372-0 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Jesus Christ—Historicity—  
Study and teaching. I. Holmén, Tom. II. Porter, Stanley E., 1956–  
BT303.2.H364 2010  
232.9'08071—dc22

2010038765

ISBN *Vol.* 1: 978 90 04 17091 9

*Vol.* 2: 978 90 04 17092 6

*Vol.* 3: 978 90 04 17093 3

*Vol.* 4: 978 90 04 17094 0

*Set:* 978 90 04 16372 0

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

# THE HANDBOOK FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN PERSPECTIVE

TOM HOLMÉN AND STANLEY E. PORTER

A hundred years ago, Albert Schweitzer gathered the bulk of the most important (mostly German) Jesus research done during the preceding two centuries (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) within one cover and made an assessment of it. Today, to write a *summa historica* of Jesus studies is not an undertaking that one person could embark on and realistically hope to accomplish (not even two people), but requires a collaboration of a *legio* of the best minds from across many countries and cultures. Albert Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*<sup>1</sup> marked a significant milestone in historical Jesus scholarship, a movement that has continued in various forms and in diverse ways, but in all events unabated, until today. As a result, in a 1994 article, James Charlesworth, who himself has been actively involved in the recent expansion of historical Jesus study, asserted that historical Jesus study was expanding with "chaotic creativity."<sup>2</sup> While an apt and appropriate description of the condition of the times, this characterization is all the more accurate today, fifteen years later. Since its latest renaissance in the 1980s,<sup>3</sup> historical Jesus study has continued to expand, drawing into its broadening scope more and more scholars of the New Testament and cognate areas. There is an abundance of Jesus studies today that displays an almost overwhelming diversity of methods, approaches, hypotheses, assumptions, and results. While creativity and fecundity are theoretically

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906). The second edition was simply entitled: *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1913). The English translation was entitled: *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, with a preface by F. C. Burkitt (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity," in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–41.

<sup>3</sup> See M. J. Borg, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," *TheoIT* 45 (1988): 280–292.

to be welcomed, chaotic creativity works against the scholarly pursuit of orderly understanding, and the sheer mass of material threatens to overwhelm even the heartiest of participants in the quest. However, in some instances such creativity can spur on and nourish various forms of enquiry that result in unpredictable and unplanned results. The future of historical Jesus study rests with the community of scholars being able to harness this chaotic creativity to its service, and to create order out of a morass of growing detail.

What are the purposes of Jesus research? The first one is clearly an abiding academic purpose. This has always been regarded as important and has, together with the latest renaissance of Jesus study, only grown in importance. In fact, if “academic” and “historical” can be seen to correlate, many scholars would claim that this is what the study of Jesus today is all about. According to many representative Jesus questers, a main characteristic of current Jesus research is that it is being spurred and guided by an outspoken historical interest. Indeed, Jesus lies at the juncture of many interests and phenomena that are crucial to understanding great lines of historical development and that form the basis of understanding the world today. There is therefore no doubt about the great historical and academic value of Jesus research. However, several other purposes, motivations, and aspirations obviously feed into the historical pursuit of Jesus. Among these are religious, political, cultural, artistic, fictional, romantic, psychological, financial, apologetic, and simply personal reasons to engage in conversing about Jesus of Nazareth. We merely state this as an observable fact: such purposes for Jesus research exist and are being pursued in practice. Unfortunately, sometimes scholars too easily classify such purposes as either well- or ill-founded. In the post-colonial, post-Einsteinian, post-modern, post-structural (some say even post-human) etc. world of ours, who can be so clear as to be able to tell the difference between relevant and irrelevant motivations, not to speak of labeling them as either good or bad? Nevertheless, in all this it is vital to genuinely retain the concepts of historical Jesus and historical Jesus research around which the variegated conversation centers and revolves. How this happens and is realized may not be an easy or altogether straightforward thing to do.

The Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus (HSHJ) was designed to be one, important means of handling both the growing abundance and the increasing diversity of Jesus scholarship. Such is not an easy task, as we the editors have grown to appreciate in the course of creating this set of volumes. Putting the diversity on display in a

controlled, manageable, and understandable fashion, while acknowledging the numerous and diverse major issues, and ensuring that as many as possible of the important adjacent themes are recognized, has been a significant task. The HSHJ seeks to offer a convenient, even if still circuitous, route through the maze of current historical Jesus research, so that scholars and other interested parties can appreciate the broad and diverse spectrum of current opinion.

There have been a number of recent efforts to survey the history of historical Jesus scholarship, which we have taken into account in planning these volumes. Some of these publications have included individual essays that try to cover the range of major topics, although no effort to date has included as many as this set of volumes.<sup>4</sup> Several of these studies are retrospective accounts that anthologize past statements of significance in the study of the historical Jesus, but they lack the contemporary coordinating force of the HSHJ.<sup>5</sup> Even those publications that attempt to address the contemporary issues in historical Jesus research in a coordinated fashion, because of their encyclopedic nature, are unable to provide the kind of depth and even breadth of exposure that these volumes contain.<sup>6</sup> Whatever merits such previous volumes may have, and they have many, none of them is designed to accomplish the same goals as the Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus.

There are many distinguishable features of the HSHJ. This collection of four volumes of essays first of all seeks to be thorough and inclusive. We realize that there are always other opinions that could be included in volumes such as these, but we have tried to solicit and elicit as much of that diverse opinion as was available for publication. We want this collection to serve, not only as a historical encapsulation of the topics of their day, but as a worthy expression of the range of viable thought currently available in historical Jesus studies.

Besides the inclusive nature of these volumes, we have sought for HSHJ to be international in scope, not simply for the sake of diversity,

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., H. K. McArthur, ed., *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Scribners, 1969); G. W. Dawes, ed., *The Historical Jesus Quest: A Foundational Anthology* (Leiden: Deo, 1999); C. A. Evans, ed., *The Historical Jesus: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004); J. D. G. Dunn and S. McKnight, eds., *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. C. A. Evans, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (London: Routledge, 2007).

but so that multiple voices can be ably represented in the discussion. The approximately one-hundred contributors to this project come from around twenty different countries. Some countries no doubt are represented more heavily than others, and some other important nationalities may be under-represented or not represented at all. This was not by design, as our purpose from the start has been to try to free the discussion of Jesus from regional or local agendas and schools of thought.

Besides the multiplicity of voices from a wide range of places and people, in the HSHJ we have sought to free study of the historical Jesus from the trammels of a variety of other restraints. We have been conscious that study of Jesus in the past has been directly linked to particular forms and contents of higher education, and even specific methodologies, and that such study has often gone hand-in-hand with particular religious, cultural or even political traditions and histories. This set of volumes has been created to move beyond, or perhaps even rise above, such artificially imposed constraints. As a result, though ideologies will no doubt be present in the individual contributions, the volumes as a whole are not reacting or responding to any particular local or even nationally determined situation with regard to historical Jesus study. Our primary criterion in selecting and welcoming the contributors has been their expertise and their addressing a topic of relevance. Despite our best efforts, there is no doubt that most of the contributors are still “white male western Europeans and European-Americans” (as Richard Horsley states).<sup>7</sup> We accept this comment, while acknowledging also that our best efforts were put into attempts not to fall victim to this as an inevitable conclusion. Nevertheless, it is probably a realistic observation of the situation that prevails in historical Jesus studies to this day. Whether it will be different in the future, we must wait and see.

The efforts above have been undertaken so that we could focus these volumes on what we consider the most important elements in current study of the historical Jesus. In order to do this, we have divided the essays into four structured volumes.

As a result of this process of assessment, what became evident was that one of the most important sources of continued diversity in historical Jesus study is the element of methodological divergence. Methodological diversity entails the formulation of varied and disparate conscious approaches to the study of Jesus. Questions of method are inevitably confronted at the outset of any scientific or historical investi-

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<sup>7</sup> See his article in volume one.

gation, and usually indicate the significant parting of the ways between differing approaches to the same body of data. Consequently, volume one of the HSHJ is dedicated to questions of method. Realizing and being knowledgeable of the different methodological starting points in historical Jesus study not only facilitates one's determination and understanding of the results, but also gives important and necessary insight into the reasons for the results and their implications. In other words, attention to method forces us to ask the question of why it is that a particular scholar comes to a specific set of conclusions, as opposed to a different set of conclusions. In this regard, the first volume of HSHJ itself speaks volumes about historical Jesus research. In this volume, we have attempted to assemble many of the world's leading experts on methodological questions regarding the study of Jesus. They present their approaches to study of the historical Jesus as a means of introducing us to the fundamental issues at stake. This is not to deny that there is some challenging reading to be had in this volume, but within this one volume the reader has easier access than before to the range of methods currently at play in historical Jesus studies. By using this volume, scholars and students alike will be able learn about methods with which they are less familiar, compare the major features of these methods, and determine how the varied hypotheses about the historical figure of Jesus are rooted in methodological choices made at the early stages of thinking and research.

The first volume is, therefore, divided into two parts. The first part includes a wide range of distinct methodological statements by advocates of those methods. This part encompasses the methods that are distinct to historical Jesus study as it has been practiced over the last twenty to thirty years. It is here that we gain further insight into the approaches that have been adopted by a wide range of scholars who have had influence within historical Jesus study, as they have tried to define the nature and characteristics of the study and its results. Part two of this volume extends the range of methodologies to the interaction between historical Jesus study and methods that have proven themselves in other areas of New Testament and cognates studies. Some of these are the traditional methods of biblical study, while others are recent innovations influenced by the rise of various types of social-science criticism. The interface of Jesus study and these methods has provided a range of results that help to ensure that the study of Jesus will not soon grow quiescent.

The second volume of HSHJ focuses on the history and future of historical Jesus research, by identifying many if not most of the specific



issues of contention that have been raised in the broad and long history of Jesus study. This volume is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the notion of quests for the historical Jesus. One of the points of continued contention in study of Jesus is not only whether there are periods in such study, but how current study relates to previous study, in terms of both its methods and its results. Here various authors address the relation of Jesus study to the various quests that have been proposed. The second part of the volume brings to the fore questions that are being asked in the contemporary climate of historical Jesus studies. These include the questions that are currently and recurrently at the forefront of discussion, often suggesting in their questions an alternative to the course that previous research has taken. Part three of this volume addresses some of the perennial topics in Jesus research. In some ways, these are issues that are either assumed or regularly taken into account in formulating various hypotheses about Jesus. They form the convenient and necessary intellectual background for pursuing historical Jesus studies.

The third volume of HSHJ brings Jesus himself as a historical figure directly into the discussion. There are three parts in this volume as well. The first part treats Jesus in regard to primary documents of the ancient world, such as the canonical gospels, other portions of the New Testament, and non-canonical works. The second part of this volume takes the elements of the life of Jesus and exposes them to rigorous critical and scholarly scrutiny. Rather than examine Jesus in terms of how he is depicted in one of the biblical books (as in the previous section of this volume) or in terms of a particular issue, this section dissects the life of Jesus in terms of its logical and necessary components, from issues of historicity to his teaching and message, and many if not most places in between. It is in studies such as these that one realizes the importance of the previous studies and approaches for the explication of these subject areas. These topics bring to bear the variety of issues previously discussed. The third part of this volume relates Jesus to the legacy of Israel. Jesus' Jewish roots and relations have long been an essential item of discussion and contention in historical Jesus studies. In this part, various key elements of his relationship to Israel are scrutinized. The result of this set of studies is to place Jesus firmly within his Jewish context, a desideratum of much recent historical Jesus scholarship.

The fourth and final volume of HSHJ is a collection of individual studies by a range of scholars. It is a positive comment on the state of current historical Jesus study that, even with the best planning and

intention, it is difficult, if not impossible, to plan and anticipate all of the necessary topics for such a comprehensive study. Therefore, we have designed this fourth volume to include important studies that we have solicited and have had submitted for which there was no other place in the volume, but that warranted a position in a compendium of scholarship such as this handbook attempts to be. There is a wide range of valuable research to be found in this fourth volume. Some of the studies explore areas for which there has been very little previous Jesus research but in which the author shows there is a lamentable lacking and oversight in the discipline. Others of the studies take topics on the fringe of either Jesus studies or contemporary culture and try to bridge the two in creative and insightful ways. Finally, some of the studies are designed to focus on particular and specific issues that would otherwise have been overlooked in the course of this study, but that a perceptive scholar realized would make a contribution to the final product.

The results of a project such as this are many and varied. We do not doubt that many of the significant contributions to scholarship found in these volumes will establish themselves as standards in the field and continue to have warranted influence on the study of the historical Jesus. Such studies may well be found in any or all of the volumes. We further believe that there are a number of essays that will have uncovered or discovered or even re-discovered insights that have been lost or lost sight of or not yet sighted, and that will bring these into consideration on the broader canvas of historical Jesus studies. There are other essays within these volumes that have broken some boundaries and will establish themselves as new and innovative ways forward in the discussion. The problem is that it is not easy to tell which essays are which, and what the significance of each individual contribution will be. We are confident, however, that these volumes contain, as much as is possible within the parameters of such a project, a responsible and representative, and in some cases even forthright or contrarian, presentation of the current state of historical Jesus scholarship. Such scholarship is the backbone of a project such as this, and is a mainstay of how one approaches contemporary New Testament scholarship. There are essays within this collection that will prove to be seminal for study of the historical Jesus, as they force both sympathetic and unsympathetic readers to contemplate issues and perspectives in ways that were unanticipated. Such scholarship helps to pave the way forward for further research. Its place of final repose cannot be predicted or estimated.



PART ONE

JESUS TRADITION IN INDIVIDUAL DOCUMENTS



## THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK

JOANNA DEWEY

For the last hundred and fifty years, the Gospel of Mark has been a major resource for scholars' reconstructions of the historical Jesus. The Gospel contains much information about Jesus from the baptism by John, through the public ministry, to the passion narrative and the empty tomb. The episodes of Jesus' public ministry are organized geographically: Galilee (1:14–8:21), a journey from north of Galilee south to Jerusalem (8:22–10:52), and Jerusalem (11:1–13:37), with a promise of return to Galilee (14:28; 16:7). Within this overall geographical framework, the episodes are grouped according to general content. The Galilee section stresses Jesus' proclamation and enactment of the kingdom of God, portraying Jesus calling disciples, healing and exorcising, teaching, and eating, including controversies over his healing, eating and feedings of thousands in the desert. This section also shows the two reactions to Jesus: the favorable response of the disciples and crowds who enthusiastically follow and the negative reaction of the religious and political authorities who reject him from the start. The middle journey section concentrates on Jesus' prophecies of his coming death and resurrection and his teachings on discipleship and the new community. The Jerusalem ministry presents Jesus' provocative action in the temple, controversies between Jesus and Jewish groups about Jewish understandings, and finally Jesus' prediction of future events after his passion.

The Gospel itself, like all the gospels, is anonymous. For convenience, I call the composer "Mark." Mark's content provides a huge portion of the traditions we have about Jesus' ministry. Furthermore, it furnishes the basic chronology and much of the specific content for Matthew and Luke. These gospels include considerable additional teaching, both from Q, the hypothetical source containing material common to Matthew and Luke but absent from Mark, and also from special M and special L, teaching peculiar to Matthew or Luke. The basic framework and portrait of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, however, follow Mark's.

A fundamental question, then, for reconstructing Jesus is: “How accurate is Mark’s portrait?” or: “Can we trust Mark’s picture?” In the nineteenth century, the Gospel recovered from its long obscurity and emerged as a delightfully naïve, colorful, and quite reliable historical account. Since then, however, scholars have seen the steady erosion of faith in Mark’s historical reliability. The historical critical tools of source, form, and redaction criticism whittled away at the account’s reliability. The new literary criticism, in particular narrative and reader response criticisms, offered different and equally serious challenges. Last, orality studies have awakened us to the highly oral/aural media environment of the first century and the accompanying instability of texts. A recent attempt to rescue the general historicity of the oral tradition fails in its aim.<sup>1</sup> Is there anything solid left? Is there any wonder that Bultmann fifty years ago, or Luke Timothy Johnson recently, have rejected the historical Jesus as relevant for faith?

Furthermore, while there certainly have been some assured results of the various critical approaches, it has become increasingly clear that scholars are not in agreement about the Gospel of Mark, its authorship, provenance, date, or purpose, let alone its proper interpretation. Not only is the historical Jesus elusive, but so also is the Gospel of Mark.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the Gospel remains today a major resource for Jesus’ earthly life. In order to reconstruct Jesus at all, we need to use Mark’s Gospel, and to use it with all the critical tools at our disposal.

In this article, in section 1, I give an overview of the understandings of the Gospel of Mark and of “Mark,” the evangelist, throughout the centuries. Then, I survey the various methodologies for studying the Gospel that have emerged over the last one hundred and fifty years and evaluate their implications for using Mark to reconstruct the historical Jesus. In section 2, I turn to contemporary scholarship’s views and uses of Mark to construct Jesus, summarizing present views on Mark’s authorship and provenance, addressing how current Markan commentaries treat the historical Jesus, and viewing how representative Jesus scholars use Mark. In section 3, I conclude with a few brief suggestions regarding the use of Mark in historical Jesus studies. I

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<sup>1</sup> See below, section 1.9 Informal controlled oral tradition.

<sup>2</sup> For general overviews of the Gospel of Mark, see W. R. Telford, *Mark*, T&T Clark Study Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995; repr. London: T&T Clark International, 2003) and Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., *What Are They Saving About Mark?* (New York: Paulist, 2005).

focus on the overall (un)reliability of Mark, rather than on evaluation of the historicity of particular episodes or themes.

### 1. *The Gospel of Mark through the Centuries*

The name “Mark” has been associated with the Gospel since the second century. It seems probable that the composer was some otherwise unknown Mark, a common name in antiquity.<sup>3</sup> This Mark has had a checkered career in the church and in scholarship, “from Peter’s scribe, to a writing instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit, to a reliable chronicler, to a front for an anonymous Christian community, to an editor, to a full-fledged author of a unified narrative, to a provoker of reader response,” to an oral storyteller.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.1. *The Patristic Period: Peter’s Scribe*

Papias, a second-century bishop in Asia Minor, provides our first reference to Mark. According to Eusebius, the fourth-century historian, Papias “used to say:”

Mark was the interpreter of Peter. He wrote down accurately, but without form [*ou mentoi taxeí*] what he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow him, but later on, as I said, Peter—who fashioned the teachings according to the needs of the moment, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord’s sayings. Thus Mark made no mistake in so recording some things as he remembered them. For he had one thing in mind, namely to omit nothing of the things he had heard and to falsify nothing among them.<sup>5</sup>

The tradition connecting Mark with the apostle Peter was quite widespread in antiquity: it is referred to in one form or another by Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and

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<sup>3</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *Mark*, 2nd ed., Proclamation Commentaries (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 125, has suggested that the author could be a woman. I believe this is unlikely: a female composer is likely to have mentioned the women followers earlier than sixteen verses before the end of the narrative.

<sup>4</sup> Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 19–20.

<sup>5</sup> Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.1–7, 14–17. The translation is by Donald H. Juel, *The Gospel of Mark*, IBT (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 18. I believe Juel is correct that *ou mentoi taxeí* refers not to chronological order but to the proper rhetorical form for literature.



Jerome, and the *Anti-Marcionite Prologue*.<sup>6</sup> The specifics of the tradition vary: before or after Peter's death; connected or not connected to some Mark mentioned in the New Testament, connected or not connected to Egypt.<sup>7</sup> The aim of these references seems to be to establish the apostolic authority of Mark's Gospel, since Mark was known not to have been a follower of Jesus.

The use of the Gospel of Mark dwindled drastically after the second century. In the second century there were some fourteen hundred patristic citations of Mark, in the third, only about two hundred and fifty.<sup>8</sup> The fact that some ninety-five per cent of Mark is found in Matthew and much also in Luke suggests that Mark could easily have ceased to be copied and to have been lost, as scholars suppose Q to have been lost. Yet, the Gospel was well enough known and had sufficient authority during the second century to be included as one of the four authoritative gospels or four-fold gospel first referred to by Irenaeus,<sup>9</sup> thus providing for its survival and inclusion in the New Testament.

## 1.2. *From Augustine until the Nineteenth Century*

Augustine of Hippo reflected the general disinterest in Mark's Gospel. Augustine wrote *The Harmony of the Evangelists* (*De consensu evangelistarum*), arguing that the four gospels are basically in agreement with each other and can be trusted. In this (and his other writings), he makes no reference whatsoever to the tradition that Mark was dependent on Peter. Rather, he wrote: "Mark followed him [Matthew] like a slave and seems his summarizer."<sup>10</sup> Clifton Black suggests that by

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<sup>6</sup> For details, see Sean P. Kealy, *Mark's Gospel: A History of Its Interpretation: From the Beginning Until 1979* (New York: Paulist, 1982), 11–25 and C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 77–127.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed discussion on New Testament references to a person named Mark, see Black, *Mark*, 25–73.

<sup>8</sup> The second-century figures include Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. The third-century figures exclude Origen. Brenda Deen Schildgen calculated these numbers from the lists in *Biblia Patristica* (*Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark*, [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999], 40–41). Schildgen notes that Mark was also ignored in the lectionaries (*Power*, 41).

<sup>9</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.8.

<sup>10</sup> *De con. evang.* 1.2.4. The translation is Sean P. Kealy's (*Mark's Gospel*, 27). Later in the same work, Augustine suggests that Mark may also have some dependence on Luke (*De con. evang.* 4.10.11).

400 CE, Augustine can assume the apostolic authority of Mark, and is struggling instead with the literary relationships of the gospels.<sup>11</sup> As the work of Peter's scribe, Mark's Gospel mattered; as the epitome of Matthew, it was of no interest. It languished, little used until the rise of higher criticism in the late eighteenth century.

### 1.3. *Source Criticism: Reliable Chronicler*

The rise of the Enlightenment with its emphasis on reason and scientific investigation brought a radical change to the view of Mark's Gospel. Through the efforts of German scholarship, Mark emerged not as an abbreviation of Matthew but as the earliest gospel, a major source for both Matthew and Luke. In the 1770's, J. J. Griesbach published a synopsis of the three synoptic gospels and suggested, contrary to all earlier tradition, that "little real profit can be gained from a harmonizing of the gospels."<sup>12</sup> Griesbach himself concluded that Mark was dependent on both Matthew and Luke, a view that has not been sustained.<sup>13</sup> In 1835, K. Lachmann demonstrated that Matthew and Luke agreed with each other in the order of material *only* when they also agreed with Mark's order. Further work in Germany and England solidified the belief in the priority of Mark and the two-source hypothesis of Mark and Q.<sup>14</sup> Various written sources were also posited for Mark, such as Mark 2:1–28 or –3:6 and the passion narrative. The classic statement of source criticism in English is that of B. H. Streeter in 1925.<sup>15</sup> Thus Mark became established as the earliest gospel, with Matthew and Luke not as independent witnesses to Jesus' life but dependent upon Mark. The

<sup>11</sup> Black, *Mark*, 130. He is following David Peabody, "Augustine and the Augustinian Hypothesis: A Reexamination of Augustine's Thought in *De Consensu Evangelistarum*," in *New Synoptic Studies: The Cambridge Gospel Conference and Beyond*, ed. William R. Farmer (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 37–64, at 41–42.

<sup>12</sup> Kealy, *Mark's Gospel*, 60. For Griesbach's work, see Bernard Orchard and Thomas R. W. Longstaff, eds., *J. Griesbach, Synoptic and Text Critical Studies, 1776–1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

<sup>13</sup> A few scholars continue to argue for Griesbach's Matthean priority but with little effect on the general consensus of Markan priority. See David B. Peabody with Lamar Cope and Allan J. McNicol, eds., *One Gospel from Two: Mark's use of Matthew and Luke: A demonstration by the Research Team of the International Institute for Renewal of Gospel Studies* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> For an overview of developments, see Kealy, *Mark's Gospel*, 72–74, 80–84.

<sup>15</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (New York: Macmillan, 1925). For a recent careful study comparing the various source theories with Greco-Roman writing practices, see R. A. Derrenbacker, Jr., *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005). His conclusions support Markan priority.

priority of Mark is a solid accomplishment of source criticism, standing the test of time.

The recognition of the priority of Mark moved the Gospel to center stage for the investigation of the historical Jesus. Indeed, what excited many nineteenth-century biblical scholars was their belief that they had gained access in Mark's Gospel to a trustworthy historical portrait of Jesus. The Gospel's naïve lively style, its inelegant Greek, and its apparent realism were all seen as indicators of the Gospel's historical reliability. For example, B. F. Westcott considered Mark "conspicuous for its vivid simplicity" and "essentially a transcript from life;" H. S. Holtzmann saw in Mark a reliable guide to Jesus' development of messianic consciousness; Paul Wernle thought it gave direct access to Peter's theology, giving the impression of an eyewitness report.<sup>16</sup> For a few decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars thought Mark was neither the abridger of Matthew nor an original theologian, but rather a simple chronicler recording historical events. Thus was born the "Markan hypothesis," the belief that Mark was a generally reliable guide to the events, teachings, and chronological development of Jesus' ministry.

Those heady days were not to last. The first decade of the twentieth century brought two major challenges. First, William Wrede's *The Messianic Secret* called into question the theological naïveté of Mark and thus Mark's historical reliability.<sup>17</sup> Noticing the various commands to secrecy, Wrede argued Mark reconciled the fact that Jesus' life was known not to be messianic with the post-Easter understanding of Jesus as Messiah by presenting an earthly Jesus who kept his messiahship secret. Wrede noted an aspect of the Gospel which is important for the ongoing discussion of the historical Jesus in Mark: what Jesus says and does and what the other characters and the narrator say about Jesus do not fully cohere. The picture the Markan Jesus presents may be more historically accurate than what others in Mark say about Jesus. This discrepancy continues to give hope to historical Jesus critics that through Mark's portrayal of Jesus we may be able to get behind early Christianity to some knowledge of the historical Jesus. Yet, fundamentally, Wrede's work demonstrated that

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Kealy, *Mark's Gospel*, 80–83.

<sup>17</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*. ET: *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig, Library of Theological Translations (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971).

Mark was a theologian, not a chronicler; however, it was another sixty years before Mark as author-theologian fully emerged.

The second challenge to reconstructing the historical Jesus came from Albert Schweitzer in *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.<sup>18</sup> Schweitzer attacked not the historical reliability of Mark but the objectivity of scholars writing lives of Jesus; they produced portraits of Jesus that fitted their own diverse beliefs. Schweitzer insisted we needed to interpret Jesus against his own time, and he did so, reconstructing Jesus as a failed apocalyptic prophet. The immediate result of Schweitzer's work was to bring a temporary halt to Jesus scholarship. In the more long term, Schweitzer's insistence on studying Jesus as a first-century person has become foundational for Jesus' scholarship today. Unfortunately, however, Schweitzer's charge that scholarship on Jesus reflects the scholar as much as Jesus remains equally true today.

In summary, the work of source critics has resulted in general agreement on the priority of Mark. At first, this seemed to establish Mark as a direct window onto the Jesus of history. Recognition, however, of the subjectivity of Mark and the subjectivity of scholars reconstructing the historical Jesus has shown that the discovery of the priority of Mark does not provide direct access to the historical Jesus.

#### 1.4. *Form Criticism*

After the First World War, the German scholars Martin Dibelius and Rudolf Bultmann studied the oral transmission of the synoptic material between the time of Jesus and the time of the writing of Mark and Q.<sup>19</sup> They identified typical forms of gospel pericopes, argued that the individual episodes traveled independently until compiled in Q and Mark, and speculated on their *Sitz im Leben* in early Christian communities, that is, for what purposes churches used particular forms. The results of form criticism challenged Mark's historical accuracy in three important ways. First of all, form critics noted the watershed of Easter. All traditions were inevitably interpreted in light of the Easter experience. We have in effect no pristine pre-passion, pre-Easter memories of

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

<sup>19</sup> Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Scribner's Sons, n.d.); Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). For other scholars involved in the development and debate over form criticism, see Kealy, *Mark's Gospel*, 115–158.

Jesus. Second, form critics stressed the creativity of the early church in developing traditions. For Bultmann in particular, Christian communities were responsible for creating whole sayings and stories.<sup>20</sup> Third, form critics argued that there was no connected narrative of Jesus' life and ministry until it was patched together by Mark. The literary analysis of Mark by K. L. Schmidt showing that Mark was constructed like pearls on a string was particularly influential on this point.<sup>21</sup>

Form criticism thus destroyed confidence in the order of Mark's narrative as revealing the development of Jesus' ministry. If indeed the traditions traveled independently in churches uninterested in chronology and were later compiled by Mark, then we have *no* information on the chronological development of Jesus' ministry. In 1932, C. H. Dodd tried to rescue the general sequence of Mark using the speeches of Acts, a catena of K. L. Schmidt's summaries, and the historical likelihood that Jesus would concentrate on his coming passion and on instructing the disciples as he turned toward Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> Dodd's thesis did not receive general acceptance and was effectively demolished by D. E. Nineham in 1957.<sup>23</sup>

The conclusion that Mark's chronology is not historically reliable has made the task of historical reconstruction substantially more problematic. Luke Timothy Johnson writes:

It is necessary to fit these pieces [traditions about Jesus] into an alternative framework than the one provided by the Gospels. At this point, the subjective character of the entire enterprise becomes evident: the framework chosen often reveals as much about the investigator as it does about Jesus. . . one may well wonder whether anything more than a sophisticated and elaborate form of projection has taken place.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For a more conservative development of form criticism, see the work of the British scholar, Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1964).

<sup>21</sup> Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919).

<sup>22</sup> C. H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," in *New Testament Studies*, ed. idem (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 1–11. Clearly, Dodd accepted the Markan rather than the Johannine chronology as more historical. It is precisely the Gospel of John with its three-year multiple Jerusalem trip chronology that renders Mark's chronology more problematic.

<sup>23</sup> D. E. Nineham, "The Order of Events in St. Mark's Gospel—an Examination of Dr. Dodd's Hypothesis," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. idem (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 223–239.

<sup>24</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 628–629.

For historians of Jesus, the loss of Mark's chronology has certainly complicated their task.

One cannot speak of the assured results of form criticism in the way one can of source criticism. Most scholars would agree that the classic form critics overstated the creativity of the early church at the expense of the creativity of Jesus on the one hand, and of Mark on the other. Further, developments in the study of orality call into question some major assumptions of form criticism, and aspects of it need to be rethought.<sup>25</sup> Yet form criticism fundamentally changed the way scholars view the gospel materials. If source criticism had brought Mark to center stage as the earliest of the written gospels and raised it in the eyes of many to a reliable account of Jesus' ministry, form criticism, while accepting Mark as the first gospel, seriously called into question its value as a historical source for the life and ministry of Jesus, demonstrating the creative roles of Christian communities and destroying the notion that we know the chronological development of Jesus' ministry.

### 1.5. *Redaction Criticism: Mark as Editor*

The third and last of the historically-oriented criticisms emerged following World War II, also in Germany. Scholars turned from studying the individual units of tradition to studying Mark's editing, how he put the units together and with what purposes in mind. The first major work was that of Willi Marxsen in 1956.<sup>26</sup> Form criticism had dismissed the evangelists as mere mechanical compilers: in Bultmann's words, Mark was "not sufficiently master of his material to venture on a systematic construction himself."<sup>27</sup> Marxsen, on the other hand, focused on Mark's accomplishment in working the disparate pieces of tradition into a unified whole. Since the narrative chronology of

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<sup>25</sup> See Erhardt Güttgemanns, *Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism: A Methodological Sketch of the Fundamental Problematics of Form and Redaction Criticism*, trans. William G. Doty, PTMS 26 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979); Werner H. Kelber, "Jesus and Tradition: Words in Time, Words in Space," in *Orality and Textuality in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Joanna Dewey, *Semeia* 65 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 151–163; idem, "Jesus—Tradition—Gospels: Orality, Scribality, and Oral-Scribal Interfaces: Review and Present State of Research" (paper presented at SNTS, Halle, Germany, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction-History of the Gospel*, trans. James Boyce et al. (New York: Abingdon, 1969).

<sup>27</sup> Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 350.

Mark's Gospel could no longer be attributed to historical memory, it could now be attributed to Mark's creative work. Thus began in earnest the investigation of the theology of Mark.<sup>28</sup>

Redaction criticism in the narrow sense consisted of the separation of tradition from Mark's redaction and then the evaluation of Mark's redaction alone for the meaning of the Gospel and for the construction of the historical situation of Mark's community.<sup>29</sup> This narrow focus gave way in face of two challenges. First, scholars could not agree sufficiently on what was tradition and what was redaction in Mark, since we have no source for comparison. Second, as scholars studied Mark with this new approach, their respect for Mark as an author grew. Scholars became increasingly aware that traditional material was selected and arranged by Mark and often shaped by him to particular ends. So redaction criticism became a broader enterprise, encompassing both tradition and redaction. Redaction criticism remains historically oriented: it views Mark as an author in control of his material, but studies the narrative not so much for understanding the Gospel, as for what the Gospel can tell us about the Christianity of its time and its own particular historical context. In the broad sense, this methodological approach is alive and well, represented in major recent commentaries from a variety of theological perspectives.<sup>30</sup> It is indeed probably the predominant approach to be found in contemporary commentaries on Mark.

Redaction criticism has presented further challenges to the reliability of Mark's account of Jesus. In the first place, scholars using the same methodology do not reach the same conclusions. In 1989, Clifton Black demonstrated that redaction critics using basically the

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<sup>28</sup> There were earlier forays: In addition to Wrede noted above, see Ernst Lohmeyer in Germany (*Galiläa und Jerusalem*, FRLANT [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936] and R. H. Lightfoot in England (*Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels* [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938]). Both drew attention to the theological significance of Galilee in Mark.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) and Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, WBC 34A (Waco: Word Books, 1989); Craig Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville: Nelson Reference and Electronic, 2001); Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991); Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1999). See also Kealy, *Mark's Gospel*, 159–234.

same methodology still could not agree on Mark's view of the disciples, a major issue in Markan interpretation.<sup>31</sup> Schweitzer concluded about nineteenth-century lives of Jesus that they reflected the values of the author; so too redaction critics' interpretations of Mark are affected by their own views. Second, redactional studies have shown that Mark's editorial work was substantial in the traditional material; it is not easy to establish what was pre-Markan. In 1972, Frans Neirynck published *Duality in Mark*, a detailed study of the repetition or two-step progression to be found throughout the Markan narrative.<sup>32</sup> Neirynck concluded that Mark's hand was to be found everywhere. The pervasiveness of Mark's editorial hand included even the passion narrative, where a written source was often presupposed. Either there was no pre-Markan written source, or Mark has so modified the source that reconstruction of its contents is not possible.<sup>33</sup>

The pervasiveness of redaction in the Gospel inevitably raised a third issue: how much has Mark changed, adapted, or created traditions as he edited them? Form criticism once appeared to be a useful tool to study the development of tradition between Jesus and the gospels; now, at least as far as the Gospel of Mark is concerned, form-critical development appears to have been swallowed up in the evangelist's redaction. The Gospel of Mark seems an ever less reliable guide to the historical Jesus.

#### 1.6. *Literary Criticism: Narrative and Reader Response Approaches*<sup>34</sup>

About thirty years ago, primarily in America, redaction criticism led naturally into literary criticism. If Mark's editorial hand was so pervasive throughout the Gospel, then it made sense to study Mark as a narrative whole, as one might study a short story or a novel. Critics turned to literary tools for analysis, using methods from secular literary criticism to study Mark. Norman Petersen and Robert Tannehill

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<sup>31</sup> C. Clifton Black, *The Disciples according to Mark: Markan Redaction in Current Debate*, JSNTSup 27 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989).

<sup>32</sup> Frans Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the Study of the Markan Redaction* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1972).

<sup>33</sup> See also John R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS 10 (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1973); Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

<sup>34</sup> It should perhaps be called "new literary criticism," since source criticism was initially called literary criticism.



presented ground-breaking work in the late 1970's.<sup>35</sup> Other works rapidly followed.<sup>36</sup> Literary readings of Mark took various approaches: reading Mark in the light of first-century literary conventions of biographies or romances;<sup>37</sup> reading Mark in terms of plot, character and surface structure, that is, with a focus on the text, now called narrative criticism in biblical studies;<sup>38</sup> reading Mark in terms of reader or audience response, that is, with a focus on the reader or hearer's role in creating meaning.<sup>39</sup> Other literary approaches evolved, such as feminist readings and deconstructive criticism.<sup>40</sup> All these readings have shown Mark to be a sophisticated coherent narrative. Form criticism called into question the historical reliability of the chronology of Mark; literary criticism assigned that chronology—narrative plotting—to Mark, not to history at all. Like redaction criticism, literary criticism of Mark is alive and well in contemporary biblical scholarship.<sup>41</sup>

Literary criticism of Mark does not ask historical questions; nonetheless, it is relevant to the use of the Gospel of Mark for reconstructing

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<sup>35</sup> Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, GBS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57 (1977): 386–405.

<sup>36</sup> For an overview of literary readings of Mark, see Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). Feminist criticism also raises questions of historical reliability: historically, women were probably more prominent than our written texts suggest. See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

<sup>37</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, (Philadelphia: Fortress 1984); Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

<sup>38</sup> David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

<sup>39</sup> Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> On feminist or gender-oriented readings, see Joanna Dewey, "The Gospel of Mark," in *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 470–509; Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *A Feminist Companion to Mark*, *Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings* 2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); for deconstruction, see Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives: Jesus Begins to Write* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>41</sup> Bas M. F. van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response Commentary*, trans. W. H. Bisscheroux (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009).

the historical Jesus. First, it suggests non-historical and non-theological reasons for the shape of material found in Mark. An episode may be narrated simply to enhance the plot or to hold audience interest. Second, the significance of an episode is found in its function in the larger narrative. Both narrative and reader response readings have shown that Mark does not consist of individual episodes haphazardly strung on a string, but of episodes placed in particular contexts and sequence in order to convey a larger meaning. Episodes do not have significance primarily in themselves, but find their full meaning within the narrative as a whole. Thus we need to understand Mark's literary construction as a preliminary to investigating earlier tradition history or the historical Jesus. Werner Kelber writes:

If we take the final literary gospel form seriously, we will be compelled to take yet another, crucial hermeneutical step. Not only will our interpretive focus rest on the text in its present form, but the plotted nature of this final text demands that we abstain—at least for the time being—from assumptions regarding antecedent sources, stages or layers *before and until* we have comprehended the present text's narrative construction.<sup>42</sup>

It is important methodologically to start with the final Gospel. We actually have a reasonably certain text of the Gospel, while—at best—we can only infer the history of tradition and the historical Jesus: let us begin our task with as much solid data as possible.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, while the role of a pericope in the Markan narrative may or may not coincide with its uses in tradition or in the ministry of Jesus, it is nonetheless a starting point, and a demonstrable use of the pericope in early Christianity. Literary criticism does not provide direct historical information; it nevertheless can function as something of a control or check on historical imagination.

Third, like the historical methodologies before it, literary criticism does not provide unanimity of interpretation. Scholars continue to disagree. An understanding of the nature of narrative makes it clear that differences are not due only to individual biases. Rather, narratives

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<sup>42</sup> Werner H. Kelber, "The Verbal Art in Q and Thomas: A Question of Epistemology," in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, & Hidden Transcript in Q*, ed. Richard A. Horsley, SemeiaSt 60 (Atlanta: SBL, 2006, 25–42).

<sup>43</sup> Actually, even the text is not all that certain. See D. C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Elden Jay Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism," *HTR* 92 (1999): 245–281.

are inherently polyvalent. While certainly not all interpretations are supported by a text, more than one interpretation generally can be. This is true of narrative criticism, and is explicit in reader-response criticism. Different readers/audiences—the implied reader, the ideal reader, different first-century hearers, different modern readers—will all interpret a text somewhat differently.<sup>44</sup> Lack of unanimity in interpretation is due not only to human bias or failure; it is due to the very nature of narrative, thus of the Gospel of Mark itself.

Finally, literary criticism raises questions about Mark. Since the beginning of historical critical work on Mark in the eighteenth century, scholars have viewed the Gospel as clumsy, unliterary, and in decidedly poor Greek. Yet, the results of literary analyses of Mark, widely accepted in general among biblical scholars, have shown it to be a sophisticated coherent narrative. Can these both be true? This leads to the last methodological approach.

### 1.7. *Orality Studies: First-century Media World*

Critical biblical scholarship was born in the age of print. The methodologies described above have generally worked on the assumption of a fixed text read silently by solitary individuals. While antiquity was a world that had known writing for centuries, it was a world in which few were literate and even the literate relied heavily on memory and oral performance. The best estimates rate overall literacy at just three to five percent of the total population,<sup>45</sup> perhaps up to fifteen percent for urban males.<sup>46</sup> Most Christians were not literate; oral performance was central and manuscripts much less important in the spread of Christianity than those of us accustomed to print tend to assume.

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<sup>44</sup> The importance of the reader's location, even that of a modern reader, can be seen in contemporary studies of Mark from perspectives other than the standard Western white academic approach. See, for example, Brian K. Blount, *Go Preach! Mark's Kingdom Message and the Black Church Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998); Hisako Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994); Tai-siong Benny Liew, *Politics of Parousia: Reading Mark Inter(textually)* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). Some of these readings may be closer to assumptions of the first-century world than our Euro-American academic assumptions.

<sup>45</sup> William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

<sup>46</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 267.

In the last twenty-five years, sparked by Werner Kelber's seminal work, scholars have begun to recognize and incorporate in their thinking the very different first-century communication system.<sup>47</sup> For investigating the historical Jesus in Mark, two issues are important: first, understanding Mark as an oral narrative and the difference that makes; and second, a revisiting of the form-critical question of the reliability of oral transmission of Jesus traditions, raised by Kenneth Bailey.

### 1.8. *Mark as Oral Narrative*

Mark is not merely a good story, as narrative criticism has shown; it is an oral story in composition.<sup>48</sup> Studies of Mark in the light of oral literature show that it is composed in an oral style.<sup>49</sup> The story consists of happenings that can be easily visualized and thus readily remembered. These happenings are connected paratactically; the narrative is additive and aggregative. Teaching is not gathered into discourses according to topic, but rather embedded in short happenings (e.g., fasting in Mark 2:18–20). The plot is typical of oral composition.<sup>50</sup> It does not build toward a linear climax—the plot to kill Jesus is first introduced at Mark 3:6. Rather, it consists of repetitive patterns, series of parallel episodes, and concentric and chiasmic structures. Such patterns aid

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<sup>47</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>48</sup> On storytellers in antiquity, see Alex Scobie, "Storytellers, Storytelling, and the Novel in Graeco-Roman Society," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 122 (1979): 229–259. For a recent collection and analysis of the literary remains of storytelling in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian texts, see Holly E. Hearon, *The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities* (Collegeville, MI: Michael Glazier, 2004), 37–73, 320–336. For oral performance style in antiquity, see Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> For an overview of oral composition techniques, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), 36–49. For analyses of the oral style of Mark, see Joanna Dewey, "Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark" *Int* 53 (1989): 32–44; idem, "The Gospel of Mark as Oral/Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation," in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1994), 145–163; Pieter J. J. Botha, "Mark's Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus," *HvTSt* 47 (1991): 304–331; idem, "The Historical Setting of Mark's Gospel: Problems and Possibilities," *JSNT* 51 (1993): 27–55.

<sup>50</sup> Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 141, 142–143; Dewey, "Oral Methods," 37–38.

performers and audiences in remembering and transmitting the material. It is recognition of Mark's oral style that makes sense of the combination of Mark's narrative sophistication and his inelegant Greek.<sup>51</sup>

Based on our knowledge of oral literature, there is no reason why Mark could not have been composed and transmitted in oral form and only later been committed to writing.<sup>52</sup> It could of course have been composed in writing, most likely by dictation. Oral style can be determined, but there is no foolproof way of deciding if a particular text was composed orally or in writing using an oral register.<sup>53</sup> Most likely, our text of Mark reflects repeated interaction of oral and scribal transmission, repeated new editions if you will, as is typical in a highly aural manuscript culture.

Recognition of the oral/aural nature of Mark's Gospel complicates further our attempts to use Mark to reconstruct the history of Jesus. First, we do not even know what we have in our text of Mark. How many different oral performances and written editions, all with variations, make up our text of Mark? How close is our Gospel to the original? Can we even speak of an original manuscript or performance? The British text critic David C. Parker writes, "the concept of a Gospel that is fixed in shape, authoritative, and final as piece of literature has to be abandoned."<sup>54</sup> Our Gospel itself appears ever more unstable. Second, even when a manuscript was in existence, performances were most likely "composed in performance," not read from a manuscript or recited from a memorized text. Oral performance is never verbatim performance. Further, a live audience immediately affects the performance. The first task of a performer is to keep the audience listening; he or she will shorten or lengthen a performance depending on audience interest and will adapt its praise or critique of

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<sup>51</sup> The notion of Mark as oral in style is hardly new. B. H. Streeter (*The Four Gospels*, 163) wrote early in the last century, "But the difference between the style of Mark and of the other two is not merely that they both write better Greek. It is the difference which always exists between the spoken and the written language. Mark reads like a shorthand account of a story by an impromptu speaker—with all the repetitions, redundancies, and digressions which are characteristic of living speech."

<sup>52</sup> Joanna Dewey, "The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?" *JBL* 123 (2004): 495–507.

<sup>53</sup> See John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); idem, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

<sup>54</sup> See Parker, *Living Text*, 93.

leaders and groups depending on who is in the audience.<sup>55</sup> Form criticism earlier recognized the needs of the community in shaping individual traditions; recognition of the oral nature of the gospel tradition as a whole makes even more central the current and changing needs of the community in shaping tradition.<sup>56</sup>

Last, the awareness of Mark as oral performance shifts the emphasis from content to experience, from information to emotion. Walter Ong writes that communication is “an invitation to participation, not simply a transfer of knowledge from a place where it was to a place where it was not.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, scholars’ readings of the gospel for the information it gives us about history read against the gospel’s genre of inviting emotional response. Further, it suggests that reasons for changes and adaptations of the story may have more to do with how to arouse the desired emotional response in a particular audience than with history or theology. In summary, recognition of the oral/aural nature of the Markan story renders the text ever more flexible according to the intellectual and emotional needs of performer and audience.

### 1.9. *Informal Controlled Oral Tradition: An Attempt to Rescue Historicity*

I argued above that orality studies add to the amount and shape of community influence and thus increase the uncertainty of the historicity of Mark’s Jesus. In the last fifteen years, however, a serious attempt has been made to argue for the general historical reliability of the transmission of the Jesus tradition prior to its incorporation in Mark (and Q). Kenneth E. Bailey, a New Testament scholar and long-time resident in the Middle East, has argued for the general accuracy of the synoptic tradition on the basis of his experiences in modern village story-telling situations.<sup>58</sup> He has presented a model of transmission which he calls “informal controlled oral tradition.” N. T. Wright and

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<sup>55</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 69.

<sup>56</sup> The field of social memory studies can be helpful. See Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, *SemeiaSt* 52 (Atlanta: SBL, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> Ong, *Interfaces*, 118.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, “Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *AJT* 5 (1991): 34–54 (available at [www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article\\_tradition\\_bailey.html](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_tradition_bailey.html)); for a briefer overview, see idem, “Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels,” *The Expository Times* 106 (1994–95): 363–367.

James D. G. Dunn, major Jesus scholars, have both adopted Bailey's model, and his trust in the accuracy of the tradition.<sup>59</sup>

It is important to evaluate Bailey's model, for if Bailey should be correct, then Mark would be a far more reliable guide to the historical Jesus than scholars have argued for the last one hundred years. His model, however, does not hold up to critical scrutiny. On the positive side, Bailey does provide Western scholarship with a vivid picture of village storytelling, almost nightly gatherings in villages "for the telling of stories and the recitation of poetry," during which "the community is *preserving* its store of tradition."<sup>60</sup> Some such storytelling gatherings likely existed in the villages of Galilee and Jesus traditions were likely to have been retold. Bailey helps us to understand the important role of storytelling in peasant village cultures. The constant retelling of stories does indeed help preserve tradition. The question remains: is that tradition historically accurate?

Bailey, I would argue, drastically underestimates the degree of change that generally occurs between an historical event and a more-or-less stable story. Most change in tradition occurs in the first forty or fewer years of transmission.<sup>61</sup> Bailey's own examples call into question his conclusions about historical accuracy.<sup>62</sup> In one example, Bailey cites a village wedding at which a friend of the groom accidentally shot and killed the groom.<sup>63</sup> After about three days, the village decided this was an act of God ("The gun fired"), and told the police that a camel stepped on the groom. Bailey states that no deception was intended, that the police knew exactly what happened. Bailey

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<sup>59</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 1:210; idem, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 42–46, 92–93.

<sup>60</sup> Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition," 40; italics his.

<sup>61</sup> Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 17. Social memory theory also posits a solidification of memory after a few decades (Alan Kirk, "Social and Cultural Memory," in Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory*, 1–24).

<sup>62</sup> For a careful—and damning—analysis of all of Bailey's evidence in terms of Bailey's own criteria for flexibility and for control, see Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., "Theories of Tradition: A Critique of Kenneth Bailey" (paper presented at Westar Meeting, Santa Rosa, CA, 2004). I am indebted to Weeden for his paper and for providing me with a copy of Rena Hogg's book. I wish to be clear that I believe Bailey was *not* deliberately intending to mislead, although he was careless in his use of the Hogg material.

<sup>63</sup> Bailey, "Informed Controlled Oral Tradition," 48–49.

adds, “Middle Eastern peoples communicate *magnificently* using a very sophisticated double-talk.”<sup>64</sup> True perhaps, but this makes discerning historical accuracy more difficult! This village story illustrates, in a very condensed period of time, the transformation of an historical event to a story that served the ongoing needs of the community. The needs of the community in its present overrode the facts of the historical event. This is the norm for and typical of oral transmission.<sup>65</sup>

A second example is what appears actually to have happened in the transmission of the stories about John Hogg, a nineteenth century missionary to southern Egypt. Bailey asserts that the stories told to Rena Hogg in her 1914 biography of her father<sup>66</sup> were essentially similar to the stories he heard in Egypt some fifty years later. And indeed the two stories found both in his article and Hogg’s biography (Hogg being urinated on from above, Hogg spending a night with robbers) read like oral variants with differences in setting, narrative, and function, but recognizably the same tradition. It would be as difficult to reconstruct accurate history from these twentieth-century variants as it is from gospel variants. They provide no direct road to historical event.

The more serious challenge to Bailey’s thesis, however, is the basic perspective in which Rena Hogg places her biography—that is, her understanding of what happened between the historical events and the traditions later heard by her. In her prologue, she writes, “The days of legend have not wholly fled;” “tales have been preserved which gain in glamour with the years;” “though love and legend have kept his memory as green as the Nile valley in December, there is a danger that the message of his life may be lost under a tangled mass of fact and fiction.”<sup>67</sup> In regard to the particular story about robbers (actually melon growers protecting their crop), she describes the story she heard as “a romantic tale” that existed in multiple versions.<sup>68</sup> Hogg’s biography provides evidence not of the historical accuracy of the oral traditions but of their development and change from the

<sup>64</sup> Bailey, “Informed Controlled Oral Tradition,” 49, italics his.

<sup>65</sup> See Vansina, *Oral Tradition*; Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory.”

<sup>66</sup> Rena L. Hogg, *A Master-BUILDER on the Nile: being a Record of the Life and Aims of John Hogg, D.D.* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914).

<sup>67</sup> Rena Hogg, *Master-BUILDER*, 13–14.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 214–217.



historical facts. The stories that Rena Hogg heard from a patriarch in the early twentieth century and that Bailey heard in mid-century bear more resemblance to each other than either does to the actual historical event as described by Rena Hogg on the basis of written accounts by Hogg and his companion. The story was transformed (and enhanced) to be of use to the community, and it is that changed story that became semi-fixed and retold. The actual history is lost in the oral retellings. Unfortunately, Bailey's theory of informed controlled oral tradition does not hold up: oral tradition is not concerned to preserve historical accuracy.<sup>69</sup> Those scholars who build upon Bailey's model are building on very shaky ground. The methodological challenges described above to the historicity of the Jesus tradition in Mark remain in force.

#### 1.10. *Summary of Methods*

From the glory days of source criticism and the "Markan hypothesis," when it seemed that the Gospel of Mark was a reliable guide to the life and ministry of Jesus, the succeeding methodologies, form and redaction criticism, literary criticisms, and orality studies have consistently and ever more drastically undercut the historical reliability of the gospel. I turn now to the contemporary use of Mark for reconstructing Jesus. How do scholars cope with the challenges?

### 2. *The Historical Jesus and Mark in Contemporary Scholarship*

#### 2.1. *Contemporary Scholarship on the Author, Date, Provenance, and Social Context of the Gospel of Mark*

As noted, the gospel was first considered to be Mark's recounting of what he had heard from Peter about Jesus and was then demoted to an abbreviation of Matthew. In modern scholarship, the Gospel emerged again as a vital work in its own right. If scholars could determine and agree upon the origin and setting of Mark, this would provide a more secure starting point for the use of the Gospel. This, however, has not proved possible.

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<sup>69</sup> Weeden stresses, correctly, that there is evidence for informal controlled oral tradition, but it is concerned *not* to preserve history but rather to serve the present needs of the community ("Theories of Tradition").

## 2.2. *Author*

Scholarship is sharply divided today on whether or not to accept the connection of Mark to Peter posited by Papias. The somewhat defensive nature of Papias' tone in the relevant passage cited earlier and the unreliability of much of his other evidence make Papias' views questionable. The very possibility of connecting the "Mark" associated with the Gospel with the "my son, Mark" of 1 Peter 5:13 may have suggested the Petrine tradition. In order to accept the Gospel as authoritative, since "Mark" was not listed among the disciples, the early church needed to connect it to apostolic tradition, and 1 Peter, almost universally agreed to be late and pseudonymous, provided a way. The evidence overall for a Petrine connection is weak. Black's comment on scholarly opinion on Markan authorship is acerbic:

In general, critics have usually settled into one of two camps. More conservative researchers have perceived some correspondence between patristic claims about Mark the Evangelist and the Gospel according to Mark, sometimes interpreting such coherence as historical authentication of that Gospel's portrayal of Jesus. More liberal investigators have often discerned little or no such coherence and, not infrequently, have regarded patristic comment about Mark and the Second Gospel as historically worthless figments of early Christians' pious imaginations. Some caricature may lurk in this characterization, but I think not much.<sup>70</sup>

As always, scholars' biases play a role in our interpretations. In any case, a connection to Peter cannot serve as a guarantor of the historicity of Mark's Gospel.

## 2.3. *Date*

There is greater agreement among scholars as to the dating of Mark—sometime between the mid-sixties and the early seventies CE and in some connection to the Roman-Jewish War of 66–70 CE. But there is debate whether the persecution discussed in Mark reflects the Neronian persecution of Christians in Rome<sup>71</sup> or tensions from the Roman-Jewish war.<sup>72</sup> Recently, even earlier dates have been proposed.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Black, *Mark*, 195. For his discussion of the issues, see 195–214.

<sup>71</sup> So, van Iersel, *Mark*.

<sup>72</sup> So, Marcus, *Mark 1–8*.

<sup>73</sup> James G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTS 266 (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Hugh M. Humphrey, *From Q to*

Although the internal evidence in Mark is not extensive enough to determine any exact connection, I would argue that the importance of the temple material and the little apocalypse of Mark 13 suggest that the Roman-Jewish war is either in progress or is a vital living memory, so that a date around 70 CE is more probable.

#### 2.4. *Provenance*

The tradition of the Roman provenance of the Gospel has fared somewhat better than the tradition of Mark as Peter's scribe, even though the connection to Rome in antiquity seems dependent on the connection to Peter. Scholars who give some credence to the Petrine connection naturally tend to locate the Gospel in Rome. Some other scholars continue to see Rome as a probable provenance independently of the Petrine connection.<sup>74</sup> Increasingly, however, scholars have rejected Roman provenance and located the Gospel in the Near East, on the basis of internal evidence. Ernst Lohmeyer first suggested Galilee in 1936. With the rise of redaction criticism from Marxsen on, many others have followed suit, locating Mark in Galilee or Syria—most recently, Joel Marcus and Richard A. Horsley.<sup>75</sup> Basically, there is no certain external evidence and the internal evidence is not sufficiently explicit for a firm conclusion. Morna Hooker's summary seems appropriate: "All we can say with certainty, therefore, is that the gospel was composed somewhere in the Roman Empire—a conclusion that scarcely narrows the field at all!"<sup>76</sup> Yet I favor a Galilean or Syrian provenance. The theological importance of Galilee—a pretty minor

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"Secret" Mark: *A Composition History of the Earliest Narrative Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

<sup>74</sup> For arguments for a Roman provenance, see van Iersel, *Mark*, 30–57; Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 1–30, 117–138; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 1026–1045. For an argument against Rome and for a Syrian provenance in dialog with Hengel, see Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 236–249. For an excellent overview up to 1992, see John R. Donahue, "The Quest for the Community of Mark's Gospel," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirymck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 817–838.

<sup>75</sup> Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark," *JBL* 111 (1992): 441–462; idem, *Mark 1–8*, 25–39; Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 38–51.

<sup>76</sup> Hooker, *St. Mark*, 8.

outpost of the Empire—in the Gospel and its rural orientation do not seem to fit well with metropolitan Rome.<sup>77</sup>

Redaction critics in particular attempt not only to determine provenance but also to construct the Markan community that the Gospel addresses. Some readings have interpreted Mark as a direct window onto the Christianity of Mark's time. In the 1970's, Theodore Weeden and Werner Kelber interpreted Mark's negative portrayal of the disciples as Mark's attack on church leaders who claimed authority from Peter.<sup>78</sup> Narrative criticism, providing internal explanations, however, has seriously undermined these readings. Is there any point, then, in positing a provenance? Some would say no: Richard Bauckham has recently argued forcefully that the gospels were not written for specific communities but for all Christians.<sup>79</sup> Dwight N. Peterson has argued that the process for determining provenance is so circular—one uses the text to posit a situation and then the situation to interpret the text—as to make the entire enterprise futile.<sup>80</sup> While Peterson is surely correct about the circularity of argument, I would suggest that the method has its uses, if only heuristically. In his recent redactional commentary, Marcus posits that the Gospel was composed in Syria after the flight to Pella but in close connection, immediately before or after, to the destruction of the temple. He uses this provenance “as the basis for inferences about how the Gospel's audience would have heard particular passages.”<sup>81</sup> Marcus argues, “[h]istorical reconstructions are important in trying to interpret a writing such as Mark, because he and other NT authors did not think they were writing timeless philosophical treatises or works of art but messages on target.”<sup>82</sup> As noted above, van Iersel posits an original audience of Christian readers in Rome as his base for interpretation.<sup>83</sup> To the extent that their interpretations based

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<sup>77</sup> It could be argued, of course, that the rural orientation represents Mark's faithfulness to Jesus' historical situation. Given Mark's theological and literary sophistication and the less rural atmosphere of both Matthew and Luke, this seems unlikely.

<sup>78</sup> Weeden, *Mark*; Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

<sup>79</sup> Richard Bauckham, “For Whom Were the Gospels Written?” in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. idem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 9–48.

<sup>80</sup> Dwight N. Peterson, *The Origins of Mark: The Markan Community in Current Debate* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 3–4 and passim.

<sup>81</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 36.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–37, see also 25–28.

<sup>83</sup> van Iersel, *Mark*.

on different provenances shed new light on particular passages of the Gospel, and on the Gospel as a whole, we have learned more about it, about what is possible and, equally importantly, about what is not. Understanding Mark's use of the material is an important preliminary to the proper use of the material to reconstruct Jesus. Nonetheless, Peterson is correct: we cannot determine provenance with any certainty. The Gospel of Mark cannot be securely grounded in any historical person, specific time or place, or particular community.

### 2.5. *Social Context*

In addition to the standard issues of author, date, and provenance, it is worthwhile to ask the question of social context: what class or social level is the composer and the Gospel's intended audience? Are they rural peasants or poor urban workers who tell and hear the Gospel performed? Or are they somewhat higher on the social scale, people who are accustomed to having the Gospel performed for them from a manuscript? As usual, opinion is divided. Burton Mack pictured Mark as "a scholar," "at a desk in a scholar's study lined with texts."<sup>84</sup> Such a scenario, if it existed in antiquity at all, would be that of an educated member of the elite, such as a Philo or Plutarch. It is incompatible with Mark's inelegant Greek. On the other side, in analyzing the social location of Mark's audience, Richard L. Rohrbaugh concludes that the story would appeal primarily to peasants and to those even more marginalized: the degraded, the unclean, and beggars and day laborers.<sup>85</sup> Horsley also locates Mark in an oral peasant village setting.<sup>86</sup> Given the limited literacy in antiquity and the clumsy Greek and highly oral nature of Mark's Gospel, I would argue that the social location posited by Rohrbaugh and Horsley is far more probable.

### 2.6. *Contemporary Commentaries on the Gospel of Mark*

Through much of the twentieth century, Markan commentaries extensively addressed the historical Jesus. A half century ago, in his classic

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<sup>84</sup> Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 321–322. See also Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11–12* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), for an interpretation that stresses oral reading from manuscripts.

<sup>85</sup> Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "The Social Location of the Marcan Audience," *BTB* 23 (1993): 114–127.

<sup>86</sup> Horsley, *Mark*, 49–51.

and influential commentary, Vincent Taylor could still basically assume the general historicity of the Markan material.<sup>87</sup> While Taylor made extensive use of form-critical categories for his analysis, and even suggested that in some instances where the pericopes lack vividness, the construction—not the tradition—is due to Mark, he thought Mark used his traditional materials virtually unchanged.<sup>88</sup> The commentary on Mark by William L. Lane in 1974 in the evangelical New International Commentary on the New Testament is the last critical commentary able to assume the general historicity of the events and sayings contained in Mark and to interpret Mark on that basis.<sup>89</sup> Even so, Lane had to argue for it: “The assertion that Mark made historical events subservient to his theological purpose demands the affirmation that there were *historical events* . . .”<sup>90</sup>

Since then, approaches have changed. The response of current Markan scholars to the methodological developments of the twentieth century has been to ignore or at least to subordinate any interest in the historical Jesus while writing about Mark. Two Bible dictionary articles on Mark in the early 1990’s, one liberal and one conservative, both make almost no reference to the historical Jesus.<sup>91</sup> The days of viewing Mark as a window onto Jesus are past.

There has been an absolute explosion of commentaries on Mark in recent years.<sup>92</sup> These commentaries all use redactional, narrative, or

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<sup>87</sup> Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indexes*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966 [1st ed. 1952]).

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *St. Mark*, 78–89, 112–113.

<sup>89</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

<sup>90</sup> Lane, *Mark*, 7. Italics his.

<sup>91</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, “Mark, Gospel of,” *ABD* IV: 541–557, stresses Mark’s lack of historical interest; R. A. Guelich, “Mark, Gospel of,” *DJG* 512–525, only mentions the historical Jesus as a possible explanation of why Mark has Jesus call himself “Son of man.”

<sup>92</sup> In addition to the commentaries discussed below, critical commentaries published in 2000 or later include Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel*, Reading the New Testament (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2000); Etienne Trocmé, *L’évangile selon saint Marc*, CNT (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000); Edwin K. Broadhead, *Mark, Readings, A New Biblical Commentary* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:10*; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Elian Cuvillier, *L’évangile de Marc* (Paris: Bayard, 2002); John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, SP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002); James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, Pillar New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*

reader response approaches, or some combination thereof. None of these commentaries makes questions of the historical Jesus central, but some do deal with historical issues, often in their notes or footnotes.<sup>93</sup> I shall briefly compare three major recent commentaries, one mainline, one conservative, and one (French) Roman Catholic. The first is Joel Marcus' mainline first volume of the new Anchor Bible commentary on Mark.<sup>94</sup> He considers Mark "a creative shaper of inherited traditions" addressing an audience in Syria sometime between 69 and 74 CE.<sup>95</sup> The second is R. T. France's in the evangelical New International Greek Testament Commentary series.<sup>96</sup> France accepts the patristic connection to Peter and Rome, and generally assumes historicity. Yet his explicit aim is to write a commentary on the narrative of Mark based on the final Greek text. The third is Camille Focant's in the Roman Catholic French language series, *Commentaire biblique: Nouveau Testament*.<sup>97</sup> Focant intentionally focuses on the story world and not on history; he therefore seeks to explain any passage in terms of the entire text of Mark, rather than seeking explanations external to the text.<sup>98</sup> All three commentaries provide much the same information on the Palestinian background which is necessary for modern readers to understand Mark, such as descriptions of Palestinian roofing techniques for understanding Mark 2:1–12. France's commentary perhaps provides the most, and it often reads as if Mark is pretty transparent onto history. None of them, however, investigates what is or is not likely to be historically accurate about Jesus. This was *not* their aim. If we want information on what about Jesus is historical in Mark, we need to look elsewhere than Markan commentaries.

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(Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002); Ludger Schenke, *Das Markusevangelium: Literarische Eigenart-Text und Kommentierung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005).

<sup>93</sup> Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, might perhaps be considered an exception. It provides extensive and helpful bibliography and analysis. But rather than investigating what is likely to be historical and what not, it seems to assume historicity as the default position.

<sup>94</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*.

<sup>95</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 59. See also 59–62.

<sup>96</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

<sup>97</sup> Camille Focant, *L'évangile selon Marc*, *Commentaire biblique: Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Cerf, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> Focant suggests that John Mark of Jerusalem is the likely author; he sees no Petrine influence, but thinks the Gospel is probably from Rome. More importantly, he thinks Mark is writing for a wide audience, not a specific community. Therefore, his interpretation does not make use of his understanding of provenance.

### 2.7. *The Use of Mark in Contemporary Scholarship on Jesus*

If works on Mark do not shed light on what in the Gospel is historical, we need to turn to scholars of the historical Jesus to see if they provide any more assistance. What follows is an overview of the ways Mark is used in contemporary Jesus scholarship. Scholars tend to reconstruct Jesus with one of two approaches, *either* evaluating each pericope piecemeal and building a picture from the pieces, *or* by a more holistic approach, establishing an overview of events/type of person they consider historically solid and building from there. Examples, by no means exhaustive, of the fragmentary approach are the Jesus Seminar, John Dominic Crossan, and John P. Meier.<sup>99</sup> Examples of the holistic approach include E. P. Sanders, Ben Witherington, N. T. Wright, Dale Allison, Richard Horsley, and James G. D. Dunn.<sup>100</sup>

Those treating the material in fragments vary in their reliance on Mark. The Jesus Seminar found a smaller percentage of Mark's sayings to be historical, only 10.7% for Mark compared to 17% or higher for Matthew and Luke (and Thomas).<sup>101</sup> Crossan, in making his inventory of Jesus material, gave priority to material from his first stratum, up to 60 CE.<sup>102</sup> In effect, he privileged the sayings source, since Q is part of the first stratum while Mark is not. Crossan's method, based on literary

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<sup>99</sup> Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for The Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994, 2001, 2009).

<sup>100</sup> E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Penguin, 1995); Ben Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); idem, *Jesus the Seer: The Progress of Prophecy* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999); N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); idem, *Jesus and the Victory of God*; Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth, Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered. Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); idem, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

<sup>101</sup> That is, coded pink or red. The statistics are taken from Powell, *Jesus*, 67. They are based on the official voting records of the Seminar, published in *Forum* 6 (1990): 3–55. No summary data are available for their ranking of the acts of Jesus, since each act was often divided into multiple parts for balloting.

<sup>102</sup> Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, xxxi–xxxiv; 427–430. Crossan also includes in the first stratum a hypothetical miracles collection based on John and Mark.



sources, has no way of taking into account that narrative materials, such as miracle stories and parables, are much easier to remember orally and thus are less likely to be put in writing early. It should be noted, however, that apart from or in spite of his method of analyzing Jesus traditions, Crossan's portrayal of Jesus as a peasant in a highly stratified society corresponds most closely to Mark's portrayal: Matthew and especially Luke tend to upgrade Jesus' social status.

The multivolume work of Meier, however, shows that the piecemeal approach to gospel material need not subordinate Mark. Meier formulates explicit criteria for evaluation, many of which support various Markan passages as historical.<sup>103</sup> Much in Mark meets his criterion of embarrassment (Jesus' baptism by John, Jesus not knowing the time of the end), and the criterion of rejection and execution (Matthew and Luke soften Mark's portrayal of Roman involvement in Jesus' death). Much in Mark also meets Meier's "secondary or dubious" criteria: "the criterion of traces of Aramaic," "the criterion of Palestinian environment," and the "criterion of vividness of narration." Of the three—the Jesus Seminar, Crossan, and Meier—Meier's portrait of Jesus is the most conventional. My point here is that the piecemeal approach does not necessarily marginalize Mark, and as I note elsewhere, it does not provide agreement on results.

An equally diverse picture emerges among scholars who begin with a more holistic approach. Since Mark (among the synoptics) provides the basic picture of Jesus, it is perhaps inevitable that Mark's portrait of Jesus generally serves as more foundational for such scholars, and that these scholars generally but not always produce a more traditional or Markan portrait of Jesus than the "piecemeal" scholars. I shall first contrast Wright and Witherington, then contrast Dunn and Horsley. Wright explicitly argues for a methodology of hypothesis and verification, verification depending on how much data it includes and how much light it sheds.<sup>104</sup> His starting hypothesis is that Jesus was an eschatological prophet. His aim seems to be to include a maximum amount of data. So Wright's portrait of Jesus comes out looking very much like Mark's (or the synoptics') portrait of Jesus.

Similarly, Witherington proceeds with an image of Jesus and then investigates to see how much explanatory power it offers. In his *Jesus*

<sup>103</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:168–183.

<sup>104</sup> Wright, *People of God*, 98–109; idem, *Victory of God*, 133.

*the Sage* (1994), he argues in detail that a sapiential view of Jesus has great explanatory power. While *Jesus the Sage* certainly included a great deal of Markan material, given its emphasis on wisdom, it was more dependent on Q sayings and resulted in a less Markan portrait of Jesus. Witherington's more recent work, *Jesus the Seer* (1999), explicitly relies on Mark's chronology to assert that Jesus acted as a Northern Israel prophet doing miracles in Galilee, and like a Southern Israel prophet speaking oracles of woe in Jerusalem. This naturally results in a more Markan Jesus, but it is subject to the serious criticism that Mark's organization most likely reflects his own theology of Galilee as the place of the in-breaking of the kingdom of God, and not necessarily the actual progress of Jesus' ministry. Once again, views differ. The hypothesis or image of Jesus selected by a scholar tends to determine how central Mark is to that scholar's reconstruction.

In their methodology, both Dunn and Horsley explicitly reject reliance on the criterion of dissimilarity, and both stress the importance of oral tradition and performance (over dissection of literary remains) as a major clue to understanding Jesus. Here, I argue they are making solid advances over other Jesus scholars in understanding the nature of the Jesus tradition. Furthermore, both have a relatively high respect for the general historical reliability of Mark. Yet they produce radically different portraits of Jesus. Dunn's view is generally traditional, affirming Jesus' eschatological mission, his call of disciples, etc. Horsley's view is not: he sets Jesus in the context of the empire; he does not view Jesus as eschatological. Rather, he understands Jesus as calling for social and economic village renewal through revival of the popular covenant tradition. Horsley ignores (or rather rejects) the Markan discipleship theme and thus the material on Jesus' and the disciples' and others' views of Jesus' status with God.<sup>105</sup> Dunn sees the Jesus tradition beginning during Jesus' ministry and Christian post-Easter tradition in continuity with Jesus' ministry; Horsley sees the authentic Jesus tradition in sharp contrast with post-Easter developments. Even starting from similar methodological principles, Dunn and Horsley, once again, produce quite different portraits of Jesus and different understandings of how the Gospel of Mark should be used in historical reconstruction.

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<sup>105</sup> Horsley, *Whole Story*, 79–120.

Dunn writes, "it is my contention that the earlier quests have failed because they started from the wrong place, from the wrong assumptions, and viewed the relevant data from the wrong perspective."<sup>106</sup> Dunn believes that starting from different presuppositions—(1) the use of an oral rather than solely literary methodology, (2) the transmission of the Jesus tradition begins pre-Easter with disciple-faith, and (3) the stress on the characteristic Jesus, the Jesus of consistent emphases—will result in more agreement. This, I fear, is wishful fantasy. As I argued above, Dunn's faith in the core stability of oral tradition, which is dependent on Bailey's work, cannot be sustained. Further, Horsley would agree with Dunn's first two presuppositions, but he has a very different characteristic Jesus. I suspect many in addition to Horsley will continue to disagree with Dunn's view that "[t]here is no credible 'historical Jesus' behind the Gospel portrayal different from the characteristic Jesus of the Synoptic tradition."<sup>107</sup> Dunn's approach is no high road to agreement on the historical Jesus or to agreement on Mark as a source for the historical Jesus. Horsley's and Dunn's methodological advances, in moving away from reliance on the criterion of dissimilarity and in insisting on the importance of the oral transmission, may in fact make historical investigation even more problematic.

### 3. *The Future of Mark in Historical Jesus Research*

Perhaps the task of using Mark to reconstruct history is simply impossible. Writing about redaction criticism twenty-five years ago, Kelber said, "The fact is that the very project of redaction criticism methodologically precludes the quest for the historical Jesus... The historical Jesus forms the basis and presupposition of theology. Interestingly, what the gospels give us is not the presupposition but the theologues."<sup>108</sup> Literary criticism, both narrative and reader-response, has only increased the methodological difficulties of using Mark as a source for reconstructing Jesus, showing Mark to be a very creative

<sup>106</sup> Dunn, *A New Perspective*, 15. See also idem, *Jesus Remembered*, 327–336.

<sup>107</sup> Dunn, *A New Perspective*, 78.

<sup>108</sup> Werner H. Kelber, "Redaction Criticism: On the Nature and Exposition of the Gospels," *PRSt* 6 (1979): 4–16, at 13–14.

storyteller and theologian, not an historian. Oral (and textual) studies have shown us how unstable even our text of the Gospel is.

In consequence, we need to accept that there is no way of achieving historical certainty or even general agreement. Our data do not permit it. The more sophisticated our methods become, the more distant Mark's Jesus is from accurate history. The Gospel of Mark cannot provide a sure guide to the historical Jesus. Furthermore, human diversity and subjectivity will continue to influence all our interpretations: scholars' conclusions vary even when using the same methodologies as objectively as possible. Varied interpretations are the rule even in reconstructing modern biographies, be it of a Ronald Reagan or a Princess Diana, where we have an abundance of data and much chronological information. It is even truer for Jesus where we have a paucity of data and virtually no certain chronology. We must be content with limited certainty and the inevitability of human bias.

Yet Mark remains (along with Q) our major source for information about Jesus; if we want to know anything about the historical Jesus, we must continue to use Mark. As long as Christianity remains an important world religion, our reconstructions of Jesus matter; they are not just of antiquarian interest. If Christians are to value human life on earth, they need to value Jesus' human life. So in spite of all the historical uncertainty and our inevitable human biases, investigating Jesus is a worthwhile pursuit. I would like to conclude with three observations about using Mark in reconstructing Jesus.

First, scholars have learned from Schweitzer to ground Jesus in his own time and place, a first-century Jew from Galilee, occupied territory within the Roman Empire. In fact, I would suggest that the greatest advances in our understanding of Jesus' historical ministry in the last century are the result of our greater knowledge of first-century Judaism, of Galilee in the first century, of the dynamics of empire, and of peasant cultures in general.<sup>109</sup> Of all our canonical and non-canonical sources for Jesus, the social context of the Gospel of Mark is closest to the social context of Jesus. We need to exploit Mark in this regard.

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<sup>109</sup> There are of course very diverse reconstructions of first-century Galilee as well as of Jesus.

Second, in using Mark as a possible guide to Jesus' public ministry, we need to pay attention to *all* three plot lines of Mark's narrative.<sup>110</sup> The first level is the cosmic conflict, the conflict between God and Satan, along with Satan's representatives, the demons and unclean spirits. The second or middle level is the authorities' conflict, the conflict between Jesus and the political, social, and religious establishments. The third level is the followers' conflict, conflict between Jesus on the one hand, and the disciples and the broader group of those who welcome Jesus and the kingdom of God, on the other. Scholars studying Mark or reconstructing Jesus tend to focus on only one or two of these plot levels; they generally favor either the followers' conflict or the authorities' conflict.<sup>111</sup> A more balanced, and perhaps thus more historical, portrait of Jesus needs to pay attention to both of these conflicts as well as the cosmic conflict. Understanding Mark's narrative in its fullness can assist our reconstruction endeavors.

Finally, it is time again for a commentary on Mark that focuses on what is possible or not possible to be historically accurate about Jesus, one that brings together all our current knowledge about first-century Palestine, peasant cultures, and the effects of empire as they pertain to Mark's Gospel. For example, in evaluating the pericope about paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13–17), we must ask: would Roman denarii even be found in Jerusalem? We have gained much knowledge about the first century and about peasant cultures in general; it would be helpful to relate this knowledge directly to Mark.<sup>112</sup>

The Gospel of Mark can provide no sure guide to the historical Jesus. Given the nature of our data and the nature of human biases we must be content with multiple reconstructions of Jesus. Yet Mark remains an exciting Gospel and a valuable source for the historical Jesus. Careful use of Mark's Gospel will enrich our historical reconstructions.

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<sup>110</sup> Joanna Dewey and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Mark," *Westminster Theological Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2009): 311–324.

<sup>111</sup> Horsley and Crossan emphasize the authorities' conflict, most other scholars the followers' conflict.

<sup>112</sup> The publication of Adela Yarbro Collins' *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), should address much of this need. It was not yet available at the time of writing.

# JESUS TRADITION IN NON-MARKAN MATERIAL COMMON TO MATTHEW AND LUKE

CHRISTOPHER TUCKETT

## 1. *Introduction*

The title of this essay (provided by the editors) cries out for some clarification and/or abbreviation. The body of material in the gospels comprising the “non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke” might, for some, be more succinctly referred to as “Q”! Such a description would however beg a number of questions which are debated today in relation to the study of the relationship between the three synoptic gospels (the so-called Synoptic Problem). And this is presumably the reason why the present form of the title has been chosen. On the other hand, any study of material in the synoptic gospels will have to engage with issues concerning the Synoptic Problem at some stage of the discussion and will probably have to make some important assumptions (which, if nothing else, should be clarified for the reader). The present essay is no exception, and so at the start I lay out my own working assumptions (most of which will have to remain simply stated, since an essay about the historical Jesus is not the forum in which to argue in detail about the Synoptic Problem).

In fact, the title chosen for this essay by the editors has already made some implicit assumptions: by choosing (and asking a contributor) to focus on the “*non-Markan* material common to Matthew and Luke,” there is presumably an assumption that it is meaningful and sensible to distinguish between Markan and non-Markan materials in these two gospels. And behind this is presumably the presupposition of the theory of Markan priority, viz. that the agreements between Matthew and Luke in their Markan material are due to their common use of Mark. Such a theory is very widely (though not universally) held

today;<sup>1</sup> it is one to which I myself would subscribe and will be presupposed here.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of Markan priority is often (but again not universally) taken as part of a broader theory, viz. the so-called Two Source Theory (2ST). This argues that the agreements between Matthew and Luke in the non-Markan material they share in common are to be explained by their common dependence on a shared source, or body of source material, usually known as “Q.” However, even amongst those who hold to a theory of Markan priority, such a Q theory is not held by all. Some would argue that any Q theory is unnecessary, and that the Matthew-Luke agreements are to be explained by the direct dependence of one gospel on the other (usually Luke dependent on Matthew).<sup>3</sup> Others might hold to a Q theory in very general terms, but thinking of “Q” as a fairly broadly defined “body of traditions” and without making any assumptions about whether this tradition existed in a unified form, let alone as a written “text,” prior to its use by Matthew and Luke. Others in turn would wish to argue that Q was indeed a unified body of tradition, perhaps written, and that it is indeed appropriate to think of it as a (single) “source.”

For myself, I have argued elsewhere that the evidence is perhaps best explained by the last of these three possibilities mentioned above, viz. that the nature of the Matthew-Luke agreements seems to demand the existence of a common source “Q,” and that this source probably existed in written form (probably in Greek).<sup>4</sup> In part such a theory arises from a common order discernible in the “Q” material,<sup>5</sup> as well

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. proponents of the Griesbach hypothesis, arguing that Mark is the third gospel to be written, not the first, and that Mark used both Matthew and Luke as sources. The general theory of Markan priority would also be questioned by those who hold to more complex solutions to the Synoptic Problem, e.g., recently D. Burkett, *Rethinking the Gospel Sources. From Proto-Mark to Mark* (London: Continuum, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> For arguments against the Griesbach Hypothesis, see my *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> In the modern debate, see e.g., M. D. Goulder, *Luke—A New Paradigm* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989); M. Goodacre, *The Case against Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002); and the essays in *Questioning Q*, ed. M. Goodacre and N. Perrin (London: SPCK, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> See my *Q and the History of Early Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), ch. 1. Also J. S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q. The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), ch. 2.

<sup>5</sup> “Common” in the sense of an order common to both Matthew and Luke. However, one has to make allowances for Matthew’s evident policy of collecting material of Jesus’ teaching into the five major teaching “blocks” in his Gospel.

as the at times verbatim agreement in Greek between Matthew and Luke (cf. e.g., Q 3:7–9),<sup>6</sup> a number of common features which appear to be both characteristic and distinctive of this body of material within the synoptic tradition as a whole. In turn, this has led some to discern a possible “theology of Q” in this material, with the likelihood that those who assembled this material may have had their own distinctive ideas which affected their choice of what to include as well as possibly adapting and changing the tradition themselves as “redactors” (in the same way as Matthew and Luke redacted Mark).

One further refinement of the Q theory may also be mentioned here since it is argued by some to bear directly on the main topic of this essay. Many have argued that the body of Q material had already undergone a process of growth and development by the time it reached its “final” stage of being used by Matthew and Luke. Thus behind Q, some claim that we can detect earlier stages, or strata, of the Q document: hence behind Q there might be a Q<sup>1</sup>, a Q<sup>2</sup>, a Q<sup>3</sup> etc. This is above all the theory proposed by John Kloppenborg who suggests that three main strata are discernible within Q;<sup>7</sup> and others have endorsed his proposals enthusiastically whilst also modifying them at times (e.g., to vary the number of stages proposed).<sup>8</sup>

I have considered the general issue elsewhere and have argued that such theories are perhaps too optimistic and more precise than the evidence will legitimately allow. There can be little doubt that some/many of the individual Q traditions represent the end-point of what has been quite a complex development in the tradition (e.g., Q 7:18–35, or Q 10:1–16). But it is quite another matter to argue that the Q tradition as a unified whole underwent an identifiable development in the way suggested by Kloppenborg and others. Thus my own view would be that, in discussing “Q,” one should confine attention to the body of material as it appears to have been used by Matthew and Luke. Theories

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<sup>6</sup> I follow what has become the standard practice of referring to Q traditions by “Q” + the chapter and verse numbers of the Lukan version: hence “Q 3:7–9” means the Q tradition found in Luke 3:7–9 and its Matthean parallel (here Matt 3:7–10).

<sup>7</sup> See J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); the theory is repeated again, engaging fully with other critiques, in his *Excavating Q*, esp. ch. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. e.g., below on the work of Mack.



about possible earlier editions of Q, or layers within Q, must remain somewhat hypothetical.<sup>9</sup>

However, whatever the merits or otherwise of Kloppenborg's theories about strata within Q, the relevance of such theories to the study of Jesus are probably severely limited. Kloppenborg's theories relate very strictly to the possible growth of the document Q: he argues that an early form of Q (a "Q<sup>1</sup>") containing primarily "sapiential" material was subsequently expanded by more polemical material, dominated by threats of prophetic judgement against "this generation," to form a "Q<sup>2</sup>" (with a further subsequent smaller expansion to form a "Q<sup>3</sup>"). But this is a theory about the growth of the literary text Q. It says—and should imply—nothing about the relative authenticity of different parts of Q in its "present" form. The theory presupposes that a Q<sup>2</sup> editor added in a body of material to an earlier collection (Q<sup>1</sup>) to create an expanded version of this earlier collection. But this makes no assumptions one way or the other about the authenticity of the material added by the putative Q<sup>2</sup> collector/editor, nor about the authenticity of the material assembled by the compiler(s) of Q<sup>1</sup>. It *might* be that the Q<sup>2</sup> material is inauthentic in large part, added to a basically authentic Q<sup>1</sup> collection. But equally, it could be that the Q<sup>2</sup> material is just as authentic as that in the proposed Q<sup>1</sup>. So too it could be that the Q<sup>1</sup> material is in large measure inauthentic and that the addition of the Q<sup>2</sup> material provides an expansion of this by essentially authentic material. Kloppenborg himself has made the point forcefully on more than one occasion.<sup>10</sup> However, this has not stopped others attempting to exploit

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<sup>9</sup> See my "On the Stratification of Q," *Semeia* 55 (1991): 213–233; also my *Q and the History*, esp. 70–75. There is perhaps something of a growing reaction among Q scholars today against Kloppenborg's stratification model: whilst fully endorsing a Q theory (in the sense of advocating a view that Q was a single unified source), they would argue that Q should be treated as a single whole and not divided into strata too readily: so e.g., J. Schröter, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie: Methodische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001); P. Hoffmann, "Mutmassungen über Q. Zum Problem der literarischen Genese von Q," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 255–238; A. Kirk, *The Composition of the Sayings Source: Genre, Synchrony and Wisdom Redaction in Q*, NovTSup 91 (Leiden: Brill, 1998). See J. D. G. Dunn, "'All that glisters is not gold.' In Quest of the Right Key to unlock the way to the historical Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus. Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 131–161, at 136.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g., his *Formation*, 244–245: "To say that the wisdom components were formative for Q and that the prophetic judgment oracles and apophthegms describing Jesus'

his theories about the stratification of Q by applying them to study of the historical Jesus in the way suggested above, as we shall see.

This essay is of course meant to be about the historical Jesus and the contribution the Q material makes to studying Jesus. It is not intended to be an essay about Q for Q's own sake. However, the two areas of study—study of the historical Jesus and study of Q—were not always regarded as separate at all. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, interest in Q and its possible existence arose as an aspect of the Synoptic Problem, and that problem was thought to be directly relevant to the quest for the historical Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Certainly within the early debates about the Synoptic Problem, the issue about gospel sources was believed to impinge directly and almost without remainder on study of Jesus. Thus the earliest sources, almost by virtue of being the earliest, could be taken as reliable in absolute terms in the sense of giving us immediate and direct access to the historical figure of the pre-Easter Jesus. For example, Holtzmann's postulated earliest source in Mark's Gospel was taken as *ipso facto* a reliable account of the life and ministry of the historical Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Q source as used and developed by scholars such as Harnack was taken as a reliable account of the teaching of the historical Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Equally too theories about a proto-Luke source, or a special source lying behind the Lukan passion narrative, were developed by scholars such as

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conflict with 'this generation' are secondary is *not* to imply anything about the ultimate tradition-historical provenance of any of these sayings. It is indeed possible, indeed probable, that some of the materials from the secondary compositional phase [= "Q<sup>2</sup>"] are dominical or at least very old, and that some of the formative elements [= "Q<sup>1</sup>"] are, from the standpoint of authenticity or tradition-history, relatively young. Tradition history is not convertible with literary history and it is the latter we are treating here." See also his *Excavating Q*, 351.

<sup>11</sup> See D. Lührmann, "Die Logienquelle und die Leben-Jesu-Forschung," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 191–206.

<sup>12</sup> H. J. Holtzmann, *Die synoptischen Evangelien. Ihr Ursprung und geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1863); cf. his "Lebensbild Jesu nach der Quelle A," 468–96 (for Holtzmann, his 'Quelle A' was very close to the Gospel of Mark).

<sup>13</sup> A. von Harnack, *The Sayings of Jesus* (ET: London: Williams & Norgate, 1908); cf. his claim: "Q is a compilation of discourses and sayings of our Lord, the arrangement of which has no reference to the Passion, with an horizon which is as good as absolutely bound by Galilee, without any clearly discernible bias, whether apologetic, didactic, ecclesiastical, national, or anti-notional" (171). Q thus gives us a presentation of the teaching of Jesus himself, almost totally uncontaminated by any later influences or people.

Streeter and Taylor to argue for the potential historicity of such (a) source(s).<sup>14</sup>

Today we are fully aware of the methodological difficulties involved in such a naïve equation between relative literary priority and absolute historical reliability. Programmatic here was undoubtedly Wrede's work on the "messianic secret" in Mark,<sup>15</sup> where Wrede showed that our earliest gospel account (Mark) is shot through with *post*-Easter ideas and influences (in the secrecy elements) and hence we cannot make a neat simple equation between the Jesus of Mark's Gospel and the historical Jesus. And as the source criticism of the nineteenth-twentieth centuries gave way in turn to form criticism and redaction criticism (and all the later "criticisms"!), the contribution of the evangelists and other early Christians in shaping, adapting and possibly at times creating the Jesus tradition has been widely recognised. And of course, in turn, this has led to the all-but-universal acknowledgement of the fact that recovering information about the historical Jesus is inherently problematic and not straightforward.<sup>16</sup>

Today it is taken as axiomatic that we cannot equate the Jesus of Mark with the historical Jesus without remainder. Yet what applies to Mark (and derivatively to Matthew and Luke) applies to the Q material as well. The studies on Q of the last 40 years or so have convinced many that Q, no less than Mark (or Matthew and Luke), is—at least potentially—influenced by the perspectives and situations of later (post-Easter) followers of Jesus. Hence we can no longer simply equate the Jesus of Q with the historical Jesus. As Kloppenborg has said, "The 'Jesus' of Q has the same status as the 'Jesus' of Mark."<sup>17</sup> The kind of move made by scholars such as Harnack and others in the past (effec-

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<sup>14</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924); V. Taylor, *Behind the Third Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926).

<sup>15</sup> W. Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1901); ET: *The Messianic Secret* (London & Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971). Wrede's work comes at the end of the so-called "old/first quest" for the historical Jesus; and although Albert Schweitzer is often credited with having brought this Quest to an end, Wrede's work was probably far more significant in this respect in showing that the methods and approaches of the "old quest" could no longer be sustained.

<sup>16</sup> Whatever one's beliefs about the relative reliability of different parts of the gospel traditions, no one today would seriously deny that the "problem" of the historical Jesus is a genuine problem!

<sup>17</sup> J. S. Kloppenborg, "Discursive Practices in the Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 149–190, at 161–162.

tively equating Q's Jesus with the historical Jesus) is not really a live option for most studying the historical Jesus today. The fact that those responsible for producing the Q document, like Mark, may have been actively involved in shaping, selecting and possibly adapting the Jesus tradition means also that we have to take seriously the possibility that some parts of Q are due to the later redactional activity of (a) Q editor(s). And just as no one today would ascribe elements of Matthew's or Luke's redaction of Mark to the historical Jesus, so too we cannot ascribe elements which are (or might be) QR<sup>18</sup> to the historical Jesus either.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, we should bear in mind that, while the general principle (that QR elements cannot be ascribed to Jesus) may be theoretically unassailable, it may be less easy to apply in practice. First, it is by no means easy to identify QR elements. In the case of Matthew and Luke, identifying MattR/LukeR elements is relatively straightforward, at least in Markan material, in that we have direct access to Matthew's/Luke's source, viz. Mark; we can then make a direct comparison and see where Matthew/Luke has changed Mark.<sup>20</sup> In the case of Q, life is not so simple since we do not have Q's source materials to hand. We do not even have the text of Q itself extant in any manuscript but have to deduce it from the (indirect) evidence of its use by Matthew and Luke.<sup>21</sup> Thus we may not be able to identify QR elements

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<sup>18</sup> I use the shorthand "QR" to refer to such "Q redactional" material.

<sup>19</sup> See J. S. Kloppenborg, "The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus," *HTR* 89 (1996): 307–344, at 326: Q is "a document whose editorial features must be noted and weighed before blithely ascribing its contents to Jesus. Clearly, elements of Q redaction cannot be employed in a reconstruction of Jesus."

<sup>20</sup> I say "relatively straightforward," though one should also bear in mind such complications as the fact that Markan priority is not universally accepted and secure; also, even assuming Markan priority, we cannot assume necessarily that the text of Mark used by Matthew or Luke was precisely the same as that of our Nestle-Aland text. Further some might wish to argue that, in individual pericopae, Matthew and/or Luke may have had access to independent versions of the same tradition: see e.g., J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), raising the possibility that many of the parallels between Matthew, Mark and Luke might be explained by common dependence on oral tradition, rather than via direct literary dependence. For further arguments in relation to Q tradition, see his "Q<sup>1</sup> as oral tradition," in *The Written Gospel: Festschrift G. Stanton*, ed. M. Bockmuehl and D. Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45–69.

<sup>21</sup> If one is being precise, one should maybe also remind oneself that we do not have the "original" text of *any* of the gospels: all we have is later scribal copies, perhaps several stages removed from the original.

with anything like the same degree of certainty as in the cases of Matthew and Luke.

Given this situation, it has probably been more profitable within study of Q to focus more on what Kloppenborg has called the “invention” or “arrangement” of the Q material. By “invention,” Kloppenborg explicitly rejects any notion necessarily of “fabrication,” but means rather

the strictly rhetorical sense, denoting the intellectual process of finding and arranging material germane to the conduct of an argument and the rendering plausible of a certain conclusion.<sup>22</sup>

The jargon we use may vary. For others, such an approach might be termed “composition criticism” rather than “redaction criticism,” paying attention to the way in which the total material is now presented, almost irrespective of its ultimate origin.<sup>23</sup>

In relation to study of the historical Jesus, this means however that QR elements, in the sense of elements actually created *de novo* by a Q editor, may only be identified as such relatively rarely in the search for a “Q theology” or in a “redaction-critical” approach to Q, using the term “redaction” very broadly.<sup>24</sup> And even if we can plausibly identify elements of Q’s particular theological concerns (“redaction” in a very broad sense), that may not tell us very much either way about the authenticity of the material and/or ideas in Q: for if the particular concerns of the Q editor emerge from a process of “finding and arranging,” quite as much as from any creating or adapting, there might well be considerable continuity between Q and Jesus rather than any radical discontinuity.

In assessing the authenticity of Q, or of individual parts of Q, we must of course also bear in mind that the Q material provides us with only a part of the total evidence of the Jesus tradition. Any judgements about the authenticity or otherwise of the Q materials, or of parts of Q, will have to mesh in with a broader judgement about the authenticity of otherwise of other parts of the tradition. I have already noted the dangers of equating (absolute) historical reliability with (relative) liter-

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<sup>22</sup> “Sayings Gospel Q,” 326.

<sup>23</sup> See my *Q and the History*, 76–80.

<sup>24</sup> I.e., to refer to the particular interests and concerns that may have guided the Q editor(s), rather than to specific positive changes which any Q editor might have made to the tradition.

ary priority: the fact that Mark and Q are prior to Matthew and Luke does not make Mark or Q necessarily historically reliable in absolute terms. In the case of texts which are in a literary relationship with each other (Matthew/Luke with Mark/Q), it might well be appropriate to say that the earlier form of a tradition is more likely (relatively!) to be authentic than a later form which used the earlier one as a source. However, in the case of traditions which are not in a direct literary relationship with each other, such a judgement is potentially dangerous. We cannot necessarily privilege one source over against another which is independent of it, without further justification.

## 2. *Some Recent Studies of Jesus and Q*

In order to see how these general comments relate to study of Jesus, I consider briefly here some recent discussions which have made significant use of Q. Although few if any today would follow the example of someone like Harnack, simply equating Q with Jesus *tout court*,<sup>25</sup> some have tried to exploit more recent Q studies in a more sophisticated way, some in particular applying Kloppenborg's theories about strata within Q in writing about the historical Jesus. The most notable examples in recent years are probably James Robinson, Burton Mack and Dominic Crossan.

### 2.1. *James M. Robinson*

The work of James Robinson in recent years has been focused very much on Q, in particular his efforts to establish a "critical edition" of the Q text.<sup>26</sup> However, in a recent essay on "The Critical Edition of Q and the Study of Jesus,"<sup>27</sup> Robinson has sought to go further and develop what he sees as the implications of theories about Q for study of the

<sup>25</sup> Though perhaps the approach of J. P. Meier is not far removed: see his *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:177–181, and his reference to Q as a "grab-bag," as well as his negative views about attempts to discern a distinctive "theology" of Q or "community" behind Q. On Meier, cf. Kloppenborg, "Sayings Gospel Q," 326; "Discursive Practices," 155, 163f.

<sup>26</sup> See J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, J. S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q* (Minneapolis: Fortress and Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> J. M. Robinson, "The Critical Edition of Q and the Study of Jesus," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 27–52.

historical Jesus. Robinson accepts wholeheartedly Kloppenborg's theories about strata within Q, distinguishing the older "sapiential" material in the oldest stratum from the later, "prophetic" or "judgemental" elements in the material possibly added later in the development of Q. However, in this essay, Robinson makes a further, methodologically significant, step, virtually equating what he calls "the archaic collections of Q" (by which he means the material broadly speaking in Kloppenborg's "Q<sup>1</sup>") with the historical Jesus without remainder; and conversely, material identified as coming from the later strata of Q (Kloppenborg's "Q<sup>2</sup>" material) is taken, virtually *ipso facto*, as inauthentic material which does not go back to the historical Jesus and is indeed quite foreign to the genuine picture of Jesus as derived from the "Q<sup>1</sup>" material. Thus in relation to the material deemed to be the oldest within Q, he writes:

It is in the archaic collections embedded in Q that one can with the most assurance speak of material that goes back to sayings of Jesus himself.<sup>28</sup>

Any presentation of Jesus that lacks at its core these collections that comprise the oldest core of Q is to that extent deficient.<sup>29</sup>

He then drives at times a sharp wedge between the ideas of these collections and the (later) Q redaction (i.e. "Q<sup>2</sup>"), e.g., in relation to the latter's stress on the threat of judgement. Thus the Q redaction

has in fact glossed over central dimensions in the archaic collections, as to how, in *Jesus'* view, one should think of God...<sup>30</sup>

One must take seriously the substantive—theological and ethical—tension between the two main layers of Q, that of the archaic clusters, and that of the final redaction. *Jesus'* vision of a caring Father who is infinitely forgiving... may have been lost from sight a generation later.<sup>31</sup>

In all this, then, a tension is seen between the outlook of Q<sup>1</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup>, and Q<sup>1</sup> is equated with the historical Jesus almost *tout court*. Thus for Robinson, the model of Kloppenborg can be exploited not only to reconstruct the earlier history of the Q tradition, but also to make important deductions about the nature and shape of the authentic Jesus tradition. In terms of substance, the focus of the historical Jesus on God as the infinitely forgiving, caring Father has been significantly

<sup>28</sup> "Critical Edition of Q," 44.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 45. His stress.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 39. My stress.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 42–43. My stress.

affected and changed by the inauthentic Q<sup>2</sup> material with its polemical and judgemental slant.

Related too is perhaps the move that Robinson also makes to focus attention almost exclusively on the Q material alone and to exclude other gospel materials (e.g., in Mark) from consideration as possible sources of information about the historical Jesus. Thus he appeals to K. L. Schmidt's work on the Markan narrative sequence as being secondarily added to the tradition, and hence not historical,<sup>32</sup> as the basis for the judgement that the prime evidence for Jesus should be "Sayings Gospels" and *not* "Narrative Gospels."<sup>33</sup>

Both these moves are highly questionable and open to potential criticism. For example, in relation to the last point, the fact that some (even all) of the framing elements in the Markan narrative may well be unhistorical does not mean that all the material in Mark as a "Narrative Gospel" is rendered worthless for recovering information about Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Schmidt's analysis relates primarily to (and only to) the outline as provided by Mark. It does not relate in the same way to the individual elements of the tradition as recorded in Mark; indeed in many ways, Schmidt's work can be taken as opening up the possibility that the prime evidence for information about Jesus should be sought precisely in the individual traditions and pericopes which are framed within the Markan outline. Certainly an appeal to Schmidt in no way justifies a move which excludes all the Markan material as effectively inauthentic, just because it appears in the context of a "Narrative Gospel." Such a move is open to the charge of privileging one source within the tradition over another without adequate justification.

Equally, within his use of the Q material, Robinson's approach is in danger of applying Kloppenborg's theories about the literary growth of Q to a quite different area of concern, viz. the study of the historical Jesus, and failing to heed Kloppenborg's own warnings (cf. above) that tradition history is not to be identified with literary history and that it is only the latter to which Kloppenborg's theories can really legitimately be applied as they stand. Thus the neat equation made between

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<sup>32</sup> K. L. Schmidt, *Die Rahmen der Geschichte Jesus* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919).

<sup>33</sup> Robinson, "Critical Edition," 30–31.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. too J. Schröter, "Von der Historizität der Evangelien. Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um der historischen Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus. Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. idem, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 163–212, at 180–181, 185.



the earliest stage/stratum in Q with authentic Jesus material, and conversely later additions in Q with inauthentic material, is too simplistic and simply not justified by the theories which allegedly buttress it.

## 2.2. *Burton Mack*

Methodologically, an approach very similar to Robinson's is adopted by Mack—and exactly the same criticisms can be brought to bear. In a number of recent studies, Mack has sought to develop the picture of Jesus as a Cynic-type aphorist,<sup>35</sup> and to a significant extent, his theories are based on theories about the nature of Q, in particular about stages within Q and the growth of Q.<sup>36</sup> Mack ostensibly builds his case on the work of Kloppenborg in claiming that the Q material can be divided into different strata and that these strata can be put into a chronological sequence.<sup>37</sup> He then effectively makes a fairly simple equation of the historical Jesus with the earliest layer in Q, and couples this with the negative converse that later strata in Q are deemed to be alien to the historical Jesus. Thus he writes about the material in the earliest stratum of Q which he identifies:

If we ask about the character of the speaker of this kind of material, it has its nearest analogy in contemporary profiles of the Cynic-sage. This is as close to the historical Jesus as Q allows us to get, but it is close enough for us to reconstruct a beginning of the movement that is both plausible and understandable.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Most clearly in *The Lost Gospel. The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, B. Mack, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> See Kloppenborg, "Discursive Practices," 160, for a defence of Mack, claiming that Mack's theories also depend on his theories about Mark, about kingdom sayings, and about Galilee. Nevertheless, it remains the case that theories about Q seem to be crucial in Mack's approach.

<sup>37</sup> In fact Mack's own stratigraphical analysis is different from Kloppenborg's (postulating ca. five, rather than three, stages) and the basis for such a division is by no means clear: certainly the ascription of some elements to one stratum rather than another is at times somewhat arbitrary and contradicts the very reasons for postulating a stratigraphy (e.g., by Kloppenborg) in the first place. For a detailed critique, see J. M. Robinson, "The History of Religions Taxonomy of Q: the Cynic Hypothesis," in *Gnosisforschung und Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift K. Rudolph*, ed. T. Schweer and S. Rink, (Marburg: Elwert, 1994), 247–65. Robinson's criticisms are perhaps slightly ironic, given that he makes a methodological move which is very similar to Mack's, identifying "early Q" as authentic, even though the detailed application is different.

<sup>38</sup> Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 203. It seems clear that the "plausible and understandable" picture is being equated with the historical Jesus without too many qualms or exceptions.

The strata he [= Kloppenborg] identified in the compositional history of Q as a document I have taken as a written record of *the social history* of the first followers of Jesus.<sup>39</sup>

Conversely, the division of material between “Q<sup>1</sup>” and “Q<sup>2</sup>,” with the former containing “aphoristic wisdom” and the latter “apocalyptic prediction and pronouncement of doom” suggests that

aphoristic wisdom is characteristic of the earliest layer. This turns the table on older views of Jesus as an apocalyptic preacher and brings the message of Jesus around to another style of speech altogether.<sup>40</sup>

As with Robinson, an important methodological step is taken in seeing the earliest stratum within Q as determinative in any reconstruction of the historical Jesus. Kloppenborg’s own warnings here, about the dangers of confusing tradition history and literary history, are apparently being ignored, as are also all the dangers of focusing too closely on one and only one strand of the gospel tradition and ignoring others (such as Mark, M or L).

### 2.3. *J. Dominic Crossan*

Dominic Crossan’s work on the historical Jesus is one of the landmark studies in the recent spate of publications about Jesus which have appeared in recent years.<sup>41</sup> His theories about Jesus as a “Mediterranean Jewish peasant” are well known and have been much discussed. In terms of method, it is clear too that Crossan bases much of his work on the Q material in the gospels. Crossan is unusual in devoting an extensive amount of his discussion specifically to methodological issues and seeking to clarify and to justify the approaches he adopts in his study.

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<sup>39</sup> Mack, “Q and a Cynic-like Jesus,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?*, ed. W. E. Arnal and M. Desjardins (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press: 1997), 25–36, at 31; my stress. The equation seems quite explicit here between the (alleged) early/late *literary* stages of Q and the early/late stages of the (social) history of the community responsible for Q. Cf. too J.W. Marshall, “The *Gospel of Thomas* and the Cynic Jesus,” *ibid.*, 37–60 (40): “Mack uses Kloppenborg’s stratigraphy and treats what Kloppenborg designates as primary in a literary sense as also historically primary. He makes no allowance for authentic Jesus sayings employed in the framing redaction.”

<sup>40</sup> B. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence. Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 59.

<sup>41</sup> Probably the most influential study has been his *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991). For a restatement and further defence of many of his views (with further elaboration in relation to other matters), see his *The Birth of Christianity* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1999).

In particular, his work in producing a “database,” or “inventory,” of materials in the gospels, and seeking to assess their historicity on the basis of some clearly defined criteria, is well known. Clearly too the Q material plays a highly significant role within Crossan’s overall reconstruction of Jesus, and Crossan also explicitly adopts Kloppenborg’s theories about strata within Q.

Whether in fact these stratification theories as such play a significant role in Crossan’s overall theories is however doubtful. In setting up the different sources which are to be placed within his “database,” Crossan does explicitly distinguish between “Q<sup>1</sup>” and “Q<sup>2</sup>,” and assigns material accordingly to these two, allegedly different, “sources.” On the other hand, an important aspect of Crossan’s overall methodology is to privilege (a) material that appears in the earliest sources, and (b) material which appears in more than one source. In this respect, the difference between “Q<sup>1</sup>” and “Q” becomes less important, since Crossan assigns both Q<sup>1</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup> to his earliest time period:<sup>42</sup> hence the two strata have equal status in terms of Crossan’s methodology. Further, given the importance for Crossan of the criterion of multiple attestation, Q attestation for an individual tradition counts as only one “vote.”<sup>43</sup> Hence, just as important for Crossan are his theories about the *Gospel of Thomas*, which as often as not provides possible independent attestation for material in the synoptics and again, as often as not, parallels material which appears in Q<sup>1</sup> (rather than Q<sup>2</sup> or Mark). Hence the fact that Q<sup>1</sup> material figures prominently in the material taken as authentic in Crossan’s overall depiction of Jesus is due as much to his other theories about the importance of a criterion of multiple attestation and about *Thomas* as it is about theories of Q’s possible stratification.

This is not the place to discuss issues about *Thomas*. Crossan’s theories about the independence of *Thomas* are at least questionable and others might wish to (and do!) argue that parallels between *Thomas* and the synoptics are not necessarily due to independent attestation of material thereby perhaps shown to be authentic, but rather due to *Thomas*’s dependence (at however many stages removed) on the synoptic gospels themselves.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Crossan assigns each of his sources to one of four time periods: 30–60, 60–80, 80–120 and 120–150 CE. See *The Historical Jesus*, 427–434.

<sup>43</sup> See Kloppenborg, “Discursive Practices,” 160.

<sup>44</sup> I have argued for this in my “Thomas and the Synoptics,” *NovT* 30 (1988): 132–157; also see my “The Gospel of Thomas: Evidence for Jesus?,” *NTT* 52 (1998): 17–32.

More important however here may be issues about dating. As is well known, Crossan assigns the various sources in his overall “inventory” to four different time spans, and then privileges material to be found in the earliest period. In this schema, Q (including both Q<sup>1</sup> and Q<sup>2</sup>), together with *Thomas*, are assigned to the earliest stage of the tradition (30–60 CE). Gospels such as Matthew, Mark or Luke are assigned to later time periods. All this is however somewhat arbitrary, as I have tried to show elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> The dating of Q and of *Thomas* are both highly controversial. Some would date Q rather later than 60 CE (the cut-off date for the end of Crossan’s earliest stratum).<sup>46</sup> So too many would date *Thomas* considerably later than 60 (especially those who would see this text as dependent on the finished versions of the synoptics: cf. above). Further, it is not at all clear why a date of 60 CE should be regarded as critical in this context: why not 70, or 75 CE (in which case a text like Mark might well come into the frame as a possible candidate for belonging to the earliest stratum)?

In addition to issues about chronology, Crossan’s appeal to source theories is highly selective: he accepts that behind Matthew and Luke lies a source Q (which he is confident enough to divide into earlier and later strata) and Q traditions are dated on the basis of the proposed date of Q; but other materials in the gospels are assigned simply to the gospels in which they now appear and their attestation is dated by the (presumed) date of that gospel. Hence e.g., material appearing only in Luke is dated on the basis of its attestation in Luke, even though some of this material may well go back behind Luke to earlier source(s). If one were being consistent and assigning material on the basis of the extant texts in which such materials now appear, then all the Q material would/should also be dated on the basis of the dates of the gospels of Matthew and/or Luke, not of a (non-extant postulated) source Q!<sup>47</sup> Thus built into Crossan’s methodology, in allowing Q as a separate, datable source but denying that possibility for other possible sources

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<sup>45</sup> See my “The Historical Jesus, Crossan and Methodology,” in *Text und Geschichte: Festschrift D. Lührmann*, ed. S. Maser and E. Schlarb (Marburg: Elwert, 1999), 255–279.

<sup>46</sup> See e.g., P. Hoffmann, “QR und der Menschensohn: eine vorläufige Skizze,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift F. Neirynck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck et al., BETL 100 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 421–456.

<sup>47</sup> This is in no way intended to question the Q hypothesis, but simply to argue that, when discussing all the material in the synoptic tradition, one perhaps ought to work with as level a playing field as one can!

behind the synoptic gospels, there is a privileging of Q which is hard to justify, and an implicit rejection of the value of other materials which may potentially have as much right to be considered as authentic Jesus material as Q does.<sup>48</sup> Crossan's work thus has the effect of privileging Q material (in relation to other material elsewhere in the synoptic tradition) in a way that is not necessarily justifiable.

### 3. *Q and Eschatology*

In the second part of this essay I consider one particular issue which has become very significant in relation to study of the historical Jesus, and where the evidence of Q (or perhaps Q<sup>1</sup> or QR) has been taken as having a significant effect on our understanding of Jesus and the Jesus tradition. This concerns the presence or absence of eschatology, especially an imminent futurist eschatology, in the teaching of the historical Jesus. The question is of course a very important one in modern Jesus study with, at one end of the spectrum, scholars like Crossan, Mack and others arguing that none of the authentic Jesus tradition implies an imminent end of the world, and others such as Dale Allison arguing for a thoroughgoing apocalyptic interpretation of Jesus.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, as we have seen, some of these arguments for a "non-eschatological Jesus" are based closely on the evidence of Q, with appeals being made to a Q<sup>1</sup> stratum as giving a more authentic picture of Jesus.<sup>50</sup> I have already tried to draw out some of the methodological weaknesses of some of these approaches earlier in this essay, especially in relation to the work of Crossan and Mack. However, the case for the possibility that the material implying an imminent eschatology might not be authentic has been developed recently with considerable sophistication in two recent essays by John Kloppenborg,<sup>51</sup> who is cer-

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<sup>48</sup> Crossan's theories about Jesus also depend at critical points on the ways in which he describes and isolates the individual units of the tradition (what Crossan calls "complexes"). At various points, the identification (or non-identification) of what are taken as witnesses to such complexes has a profoundly significant effect on the overall picture of Jesus that results. See my "Historical Jesus, Crossan and Methodology," 266–268.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998). For Mack's and Crossan's major works on Jesus, see above.

<sup>50</sup> Though for Crossan, this is coupled with issues about the relative dates of other sources, as well as theories about *Thomas*, as we have seen.

<sup>51</sup> See Kloppenborg, "Sayings Gospel Q" and "Discursive Practices."

tainly fully aware of all the methodological problems of appealing to a possible Q<sup>1</sup> too quickly as giving us immediate access to the historical Jesus. It is therefore with Kloppenborg's two writings that I am engaging with primarily in the final section of this essay here.

Kloppenborg argues that the evidence of Q may have an important contribution to make to the debate about eschatology in the teaching of Jesus. In particular he argues that "it is impossible to deduce from Q a coherent temporal scenario of imminent cosmic transformation, as can be done in the case of Mark 13."<sup>52</sup> There are announcements of judgement,<sup>53</sup> some of which may be authentic, but "most, however, give no indication of how near such a judgment might be." Thus there is "no temporal horizon for Q 6:37–38 and 6:47–49. The first only indicates that judgment will occur, and the second, that non-adherence to Jesus' words will lead to disaster." Similarly, judgment sayings occur in 11:19 and 12:9, "indicating that it is certain; but there is no indication of its imminence."<sup>54</sup> Sayings such as 12:39–40; 17:26–27, 34–35 imply that judgment is "quite unpredictable... Such sayings seem, if anything, to be formulated *against* the expectations conjured up by Mark 13."<sup>55</sup>

In fact, Kloppenborg argues, "it is only the literary and redactional juxtaposition of these oracles with the *Baptist* oracle (Q 3:7–9, 16–17) that confers the impression of imminence at the level of Q redaction."<sup>56</sup> In addition the imminence of the judgement motif is enhanced in 10:9–15 by 10:12 which links the announcements of the kingdom with the judgement oracles of 10:13–15, but Q 10:12 is widely accepted as a QR creation. Similarly the doom oracle of 11:49–51 gains its note of imminence with the threat of judgement against "this generation" in v. 51b, but 11:51b is also widely regarded as a QR addition to the oracle. "The impression of imminent catastrophic judgment that it conveys is a function of Q's framing."<sup>57</sup> Sayings such as 12:49 may be a QR creation; the parable in Q 12:42–46 may be a secondary creation.<sup>58</sup> And

<sup>52</sup> "Discursive Practices," 165; "Sayings Gospel Q," 341.

<sup>53</sup> In "Sayings Gospel Q," Kloppenborg mentions Q 10:13–15; 11:19, 24–26, 31–32; in "Discursive Practices," he adds Q 6:37–38, 47–49; 10:12, 50, 51; 12:8, 9, 39–40, 42–46, 49, 58–59.

<sup>54</sup> "Discursive Practices," 165.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> "Sayings Gospel Q," 341; cf. "Discursive Practices," 166.

<sup>57</sup> "Discursive Practices," 168.

<sup>58</sup> "Sayings Gospel Q," 341; "Discursive Practices," 168.

the saying 13:28–29 may imply an element of imminence with its second person plural address, “but the centre of gravity of this saying is not with the temporal aspect but rather with the inversion of social roles,”<sup>59</sup> contrasting those claiming privilege on the basis of kinship with outsiders, a theme which is prominent elsewhere in Q’s rhetoric.

Kloppenborg concludes that Q indeed implies an imminent judgement and an imminent intervention by God. But those features are conveyed by *redactional* elements. “It would be most unwise to base a conclusion that Jesus embraced an imminent catastrophic judgment on elements in Q that are either non-dominical or redactional.”<sup>60</sup> In his earlier essay, Kloppenborg is a little more positive. He says that in general terms one must assume an element of continuity between Jesus and Q and hence “the gap between Jesus and Q is probably not too great.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, “Q’s willingness to use the symbol of God’s kingship to undergird its social practice and its invocation of scenarios of judgment (to create ‘room’ for that practice) no doubt suggests that both aspects had roots in Jesus’ discourse.”<sup>62</sup> He cites Koester to the effect that a non-eschatological Jesus would make early Christianity, which is so eschatologically oriented, a “complete conundrum”; nevertheless, he claims that “a Schweitzerian Jesus reconstructed in the image of John makes the restraint of Q (to say nothing of the *Gospel of Thomas*) a yet more serious conundrum.”<sup>63</sup>

There is much here with which I have little quarrel. I would not dispute Kloppenborg’s claim that e.g., Q 12:49 and 12:42–46 may not be dominical.<sup>64</sup> So too I agree with Kloppenborg (and several others) that verses like Q 10:12 and 11:51b may well be QR creations. On the other hand, we should be clear what we are discussing or might be arguing or disagreeing about. That the eschatology of Q is rather different in tone from the eschatology of Mark, and especially of Mark 13, is undisputed and undeniable. (How far Q’s eschatology or “apocalyptic” is unusual in relation to a broader spectrum of Jewish “eschatological” or “apocalyptic” texts is more debatable and may depend on

<sup>59</sup> “Discursive Practices,” 169, cf. “Sayings Gospel Q,” 342.

<sup>60</sup> “Discursive Practices,” 169.

<sup>61</sup> “Sayings Gospel Q,” 343.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. H. Koester, “The Historical Jesus and the Cult of the *Kyrios Christos*,” *HDB* 24 (1995): 13–18 (14).

<sup>64</sup> Whether Luke 12:49 is relevant to the study of Q is another matter: there is no parallel in Matthew and hence its presence in Q is uncertain.

just what one allows as legitimate “apocalyptic” material.) Yet very few today would argue that the detailed apocalyptic timetable of e.g., Mark 13 is something that can confidently be traced back to the historical Jesus. That chapter is more likely to reflect the views and concerns of Mark, rather than of Jesus, and in turn may be concerned as much to dampen down any apocalyptic enthusiasm and expectation as it is to encourage such hopes.<sup>65</sup>

Equally we have to be aware of the limited nature of the evidence we have. Kloppenborg is right to refer to the fact that a number of sayings in the tradition refer to a future judgement but do not explicitly mention its imminence. On the other hand, we must ask whether one would expect to see such explicit references every time! No speaker, teacher or preacher spells out all the assumptions, presuppositions and a full statement of their views on each and every occasion: at times some things can be—and have to be—taken as read. In any case there is a sense in which the threats of judgement only have a sense of relevance and urgency if it is assumed that such judgement is imminent.

We also have to remember that no discourse—by Jesus, Q’s Jesus, or Mark’s Jesus—takes place in a vacuum. It is certainly the case that the threats of judgement in Q gain an (increased) note of imminence by being set in a (literary) context of the Baptist’s oracles. Yet any discourse of the historical Jesus requires a social context to give it meaning. Now it is widely accepted that part of the “social” or “religious” background of Jesus’ ministry is precisely the activity of John the Baptist. The baptism of Jesus by John is one of the best attested events in Jesus’ life;<sup>66</sup> and whatever the event may have meant for Jesus’ inner thought processes, it seems to imply at the very least an agreement by Jesus with John’s message and a willingness to align himself positively with John’s cause.<sup>67</sup> Further, it is (fairly) widely agreed that, of all the elements in the gospel tradition about John’s preaching, it is his eschatological preaching that is most likely to be authentic. This then suggests that placing Jesus within a context of John’s eschatological preaching is not *only* a result of Q’s editorial activity; it is something we can, with a certain amount of confidence,

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<sup>65</sup> The interpretation of the chapter is much debated; for the above, see M. D. Hooker, “Trial and Tribulation in Mark XIII,” *BJRL* 65 (1982): 78–99.

<sup>66</sup> Few have disputed the historicity of the baptism of Jesus, especially in the light of the evident embarrassment it caused for early Christians.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 91–95, 152–156.



trace back to the historical Jesus himself.<sup>68</sup> Q's literary activity in placing the teaching of Jesus in the context of John's preaching may thus be a *reliable* reflection of the context in which the teaching of Jesus should be placed.<sup>69</sup>

Thus any note of imminence in the Jesus tradition is not necessarily just a reflection of Q's redactional and literary activity. Whether we land up with a "Schweitzerian" Jesus is another issue which there is no space to discuss here. The *nature* and the *role* of eschatology, and of an imminent futurist eschatology, within the teaching of the historical Jesus, is obviously a topic which needs considerably more discussion and precision. Its *presence* in some shape or form is however certainly attested by Q; and even after making full allowance for the redactional and editorial activity by Q in reworking the Jesus tradition it received, there seems little to suggest that, in this respect, Q and Jesus were radically different from each other.

One may also consider here a slightly broader issue. The threats of catastrophic judgement are all part of the "Q" material (for those who accept the stratigraphical analysis of Q on which the terminology is based). I have earlier referred to the dangers of separating off the "Q<sup>1</sup>" material from "Q<sup>2</sup>" and assigning only the former to the historical Jesus, primarily in terms of methodology: such a procedure may be pressing literary-critical judgements into a tradition-critical area where they are in danger of being inappropriate if not irrelevant.

However, in relation to the material itself, other factors may also be relevant in this discussion. The "Q<sup>2</sup>" material contains much of the "apocalyptic" and/or "prophetic" material in the tradition, where Jesus is seen as being more polemical, attacking opponents etc. By contrast the Jesus of "Q<sup>1</sup>" is more irenic, perhaps the almost playful Cynic-sage of Mack, the Jewish Cynic peasant of Crossan, or the teacher of infinite forgiveness of Robinson.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Unless one postulates a change of mind on the part of Jesus and distinguishes between an "early Jesus" and a "later Jesus": cf. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 237–238, arguing that Jesus initially aligned himself with John but later changed his mind. Such a theory is of course possible, though it opens the floodgates to all kinds of possibilities and it is then hard to know what kind of controls one could have in assessing the evidence.

<sup>69</sup> For a generally positive view of the authenticity of the sayings about judgement in the synoptic tradition, see too M. Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment. The Eschatological Proclamation in its Jewish Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

<sup>70</sup> Indeed it was precisely this distinction between the more overtly polemical material and the more irenic appeals to the sensibilities of the audience that functioned as

Yet, as I have sought to argue elsewhere, any attempt to reconstruct a picture of the historical Jesus has to pass a number of critical tests. Of course any sifting of the individual elements of the tradition has to go through the process of considering the “criteria for authenticity” such as dissimilarity, coherence, multiple attestation etc. in some shape or form. But any final result, any picture which claims to re-present the historical Jesus with any degree of accuracy, has to pass a further acid test in that it must “cohere” or “fit” with the unquestioned fact that Jesus was *crucified*.<sup>71</sup> No one has ever seriously doubted the fact of the cross. Explaining it in any detail is of course notoriously problematic. But at the very least, this brute fact has to be placed alongside any reconstruction of the historical Jesus and some attempt made to explain how the latter could end up crucified. And it may be a difficulty for some “Q<sup>1</sup>-based” historical Jesuses that the resulting picture is so *unpolemical*, and *inoffensive*, that it becomes all the harder to envisage why such a Jesus aroused such intense passion and hatred on the part of at least some sections of the population that he was executed in this way. Unless one goes down the route of saying that the cross was a complete accident of history, and that it bore no relationship at all to Jesus’ life and activity,<sup>72</sup> then it seems one needs an element of real polemic and offensiveness in Jesus’ teaching to explain his death (at least in very general terms). A reconstruction of Jesus who is too “Q<sup>1</sup>”-like is thus perhaps historically unpersuasive if only because alongside any such Jesus one has to put the brute fact of the cross.

#### 4. *Concluding Words*

This essay has made no attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage of the Jesus tradition preserved in “Q,” nor to provide an analysis of how a Q editor might have imposed his/her own particular ideas on the tradition preserved. All I have tried to do is to highlight some of the problems in using Q to make deductions (positive or negative) about the historical Jesus. My final section has argued that, in broad terms,

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the criterion for distinguishing strata in Q at all: cf. Kloppenborg, *Formation*, 167, 238, and the appeals there to “projected/implied audience(s)” as distinguishing the strata.

<sup>71</sup> See my “Sources and Methods,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. M. Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 121–137, at 136.

<sup>72</sup> Such a move is a theoretical possibility—Jesus was executed almost by accident—but few if any have felt comfortable with such a view.

there may be as much continuity between the historical Jesus and Q as there is discontinuity. However, one cannot simply identify Jesus and Q without remainder. The studies of Q in recent years have made it very clear that, as with Mark and the other gospels, the Q tradition must be treated with care and sensitivity and with due attention paid to the fact that those who assembled, preserved and transmitted the Q material were probably Jesus followers themselves: as such they may have influenced and affected the tradition in ways we have become accustomed to accept, at least in principle, in the case of the synoptic evangelists and their predecessors and/or communities. No doubt, between Q and Jesus there are elements of continuity and discontinuity. Sorting out where these are to be identified remains the task of all those engaged with the so-called quest for the historical Jesus.

## THE SPECIAL MATERIAL IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

DONALD SENIOR, C.P.

The precise question addressed by this chapter is: To what extent does the "special material" in Matthew's Gospel provide historically reliable information about Jesus of Nazareth? The goal, therefore, is not to explain or interpret all of the special material found in Matthew's Gospel, but to survey special material that could potentially yield historical information about Jesus. In a most basic way, "special material" in Matthew would refer to any elements of the Gospel without parallel in Mark or Luke. However, this definition needs further refinement, because modern scholarship has assigned much of this so-called special material to the redactional activity of the evangelist rather than to pre-existing tradition, written or oral. Streeter's hypothesis, shared by other prominent English exegetes of the time, that the Matthean special material could be traced to a unified special source, originating in Jerusalem in the early 60's of the first century and strongly Palestinian in character, has few if any adherents today.<sup>1</sup>

A significant related question is one's working hypothesis about the interrelationship of Mark, Matthew and Luke. The dominance of the two-source theory continues to hold, despite some flurry of interest in the Griesbach or other theories.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Mark and Q are considered as the primary sources for Matthew's Gospel. In the strictest sense, "special material" with a potential to yield historical information about Jesus of Nazareth would be only that material in the Gospel, whether sayings, narrative or other types of literary material, that cannot be assigned either to Mark or Q or to the literary creation of the evangelist.<sup>3</sup> The presence of Matthean vocabulary or style in special material does not necessarily rule out the presence of traditional

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<sup>1</sup> B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1924).

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion in Frans Neirynck, "Synoptic Problem," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, and R. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), 595.

<sup>3</sup> See the complete list of special material passage in *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ed. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The International Critical Commentary*, vol. 1, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 122-124.

elements. However, passages which show strong evidence of Matthean literary style, reflect the Gospel's characteristic theological interest, and whose presence may be prompted by editorial prompts or leads found in either Mark or Q, may have only a tenuous claim to be pre-Matthean traditional material.

Even special material that may be judged to have originated in pre-Matthean tradition may ultimately yield little or no historically reliable information about Jesus of Nazareth. Some of this material focuses on other characters in the Gospel (e.g., Matthew's account of the death of Judas in 27:3–10) or is more likely assigned to the level of post-resurrection ecclesial concerns rather than to the time of Jesus himself (e.g., the story about the temple tax in 17:24–27).

With these limitations in mind, this chapter will rapidly survey examples of special material in Matthew that at least have a potential for providing information about the historical Jesus, using some of the recent commentaries on Matthew's Gospel as a sampling of scholarly opinions.

### 1. *A Catalogue of the Special Material in Matthew*

Prior to assessing the historical value of specific material, it is useful to identify the most significant special material found in Matthew's Gospel. There are various ways the material can be sorted, e.g., by form, i.e., as discourse, narrative, isolated sayings, etc., or by content, e.g., infancy narratives, Petrine stories, passion narratives, etc. For example, Davies and Allison provide the following grouping in their commentary on the Gospel, once they have eliminated from the list what they consider purely redactional material:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) *The infancy narratives*: 1:18–2:23. The title of the Gospel is obviously Matthean redaction and the genealogy itself is drawn from I Chronicles and Ruth, although significantly edited by the evangelist. The remaining narratives dealing with the birth and naming of Jesus, as well as the visit of the magi, the threat of Herod, and the flight into Egypt, are without parallel in Matthew's main sources.

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<sup>4</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:124–127.

- (2) *Parables*: 13:24–30, 44–46, 47–50; 18:23–35; 20:1–16; 21:28–32; 22:1–14; 25:1–13, 14–30, 31–46. Virtually all of these parables coincide with the characteristic language and theological interests of Matthew's Gospel, yet they differ in style and function. Some may contain traditional materials.
- (3) *Isolated sayings*: 5:5, 7, 8, 9; 5:41; 7:6; 10:23; 11:28–30; 16:17–19. While grouped under a single heading, these sayings are quite diverse in form and content. Matt 5:5, 7, 8, 9 represent additions to the list of the beatitudes found in Luke (Q) as well as sayings added to the Sermon on the Mount (5:41; 7:6). The material in 11:28–30 appears to draw on wisdom traditions and is representative of Matthew's high christology, while 16:17–19 is linked to the Gospel's Petrine material (and could be included with other special narrative material about Peter such as 14:28–31 or 17:24–27).
- (4) *Groups of Sayings*: Davies and Allison identify three groups of sayings that may have been linked in tradition prior to their incorporation in the Gospel: the so-called antitheses in 5:21–24, 27–28, 33–37; the material on authentic piety in 6:1–18, and the strong critique of the scribes and Pharisees in 23:1–3, 5, 7b–10, 15–22. Davies and Allison contend that these three groups of sayings may all be drawn from a single, "anti-Pharisaic source which instructed Jewish Christians on the differences between themselves and the unbelieving members of the synagogues. It told the followers of Jesus to accept the words of the Jewish leaders (23:2–3) but to beware of imitating their hypocritical actions (6:5, 7, 16, 17; 23:3). It called for humility and purity of intention; it stressed that religious consciousness should be focused not on one's fellows but on the Father in heaven (6:1, 3–4, 6, 17–18; 23:8–12)."<sup>5</sup>
- (5) *Narrative traditions about the passion and resurrection of Jesus*: Davies and Allison group a number of special narrative materials found in the passion story (the death of Judas in 27:3–10, Pilate's wife in 27:19, the exchange between Pilate and the crowds in 27:24–25, the phenomena at the death of Jesus 27:51b–53, the guards at the tomb 27:62–66; 28:2–4, 11–15), and the appearance of the Risen Christ to the women (28:9–10).

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<sup>5</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:127.

David Hill arranges the special material in another way that highlights the content as well as the form of Matthew's additions, while emphasizing the major division between discourse and narrative.<sup>6</sup> His list, however, includes blocks of material that could be judged to be Matthean redaction rather than traditional material:

- a) *Discourse material* found in the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 23, and in special parables.
- b) *Narrative materials* found in a) the birth stories (chs. 1–2); b) Petrine stories (14:28–31; 16:17–19; 17:24–27; 18:15–22); c) Passion and Resurrection stories (26:52–54; 27:3–10, 19, 24–25, 51, 53, 62–66; 28:2–4, 9–20).
- c) *Miscellaneous*: 3:14–15 (exchange between Jesus and John the Baptist); 4:23 and 9:35 (summary of Jesus' mission); 15:22–24 (exchange with the Canaanite woman); 17:6–7 (addition to the story of the transfiguration); 21:10–11, 14–16 (additions to the entrance into Jerusalem).

Ulrich Luz observes that texts which should be assigned to Matthew's own composition show evidence of "greater intensity" in the use of characteristic Matthean language. He concludes that "almost all" the individual stories that Matthew adds to Markan parallels have been formulated in writing for the first time by the evangelist (he cites as examples Matt 17:24–27; 27:3–10). Likewise, the infancy narratives of Matt 1:18–2:23 were composed for the first time by the evangelist on the basis of oral traditions. On the other hand Matthew may have found some of his "larger unique" parables in a pre-existing written source as is also the case for some sections of the Sermon on the Mount (e.g., 5:21–14, 27–28, 33–37; 6:1–6, 16–18).<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the most vigorous proponent of Matthew's own composition of the vast majority of the special material is Robert H. Gundry.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of a close examination of Matthean style, including vocabulary and typical grammatical expressions, as well as the recur-

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<sup>6</sup> David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New Century Bible (London: Oliphants, 1972), 31–34.

<sup>7</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 48–49.

<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

rence of characteristic Matthean motifs and appeals to Old Testament passages and motifs, Gundry concludes that, particularly in passages parallel to Mark or Q, the evangelist employed his redactional skill to amplify the material in his two sources. However, it should also be noted that Gundry believes that the scope of Q was far more extensive than usually recognized. Some of the passages that appear as special Matthean material are actually due to Matthew's more radical editing of Q. He believes this includes the nativity story and such material as the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32), which is a Matthean version of the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, these lists exclude passages that may be unique to Matthew, but which a majority of commentators do not believe are traditional materials. Such, for example, is the great commission scene at the end of the Gospel 28:16–20, which most interpreters view as an editorial summary on the part of the evangelist (with the possible inclusion of a traditional baptismal formula) and, as already noted, the genealogy of chapter 1, which is edited from Old Testament texts. There is a great deal of debate about the text type of the formula quotations and whether they were drawn from a pre-Matthean collection or, most likely, represent the redactional work of the evangelist himself.<sup>10</sup> In any case, these Old Testament quotations and their application by the evangelist yield no particular historical information about Jesus of Nazareth, but rather serve the theological perspective of Matthew's Gospel. Many other briefer additions and alterations throughout the Gospel are better assigned to the editorial activity of the evangelist in relation to his source material, and will not be considered in this survey.

## 2. *Assessing the Special Material*

To comprehensively evaluate even this more narrow range of material would require a study of every individual saying and narrative in Matthew that is without parallel in Mark or Luke, a task that exceeds

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<sup>9</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 4–5.

<sup>10</sup> See the discussion in Donald Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament With the Passion Narrative as Test Case," in *The Scriptures in The Gospels*, ed. C. M. Tuckett (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 89–115.



the scope of an individual chapter. However, samplings of the various categories, especially in texts that might provide information about the historical Jesus, can give the reader a good indication of what is at stake.

As noted above, the hypothesis championed by Streeter and others that Matthew drew on a single traditional source for all of the special material has not found much support in subsequent scholarship. There are two reasons for this: (1) ongoing analysis of the language and characteristic interests of Matthew's Gospel has assigned significant amounts of special material to the evangelist rather than to tradition; and (2) special material found throughout the Gospel that may have a claim to some traditional source is not uniform in language and perspective. In fact, most commentators who do uphold some degree of traditional origin for Matthew's special material tend to judge that in most instances prior to Matthew's Gospel, the special material existed in oral form and was first put into written form by the evangelist and thoroughly adapted to his theological perspective and the contours of the Gospel.

## 2.1. *Narrative Material*

### 2.1.1. *Infancy Narrative*

Virtually all of chapters 1 and 2 of the Gospel are unique to Matthew. Except for the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the affirmation of the virginal conception, the location of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, and the ultimate location of the family in Nazareth (with different explanations of how the family came to be there), there are no parallels between the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

Most of the basic content of the Matthean infancy story can be traced to three potential sources:

#### (a) *Reflection on Old Testament stories and popular Jewish traditions derived from the Old Testament*

For example, the role of Joseph and his dreams and his protective role for the messiah and his family are evocative of the Genesis stories about Joseph the patriarch; the cruelty of Herod and his determination to eliminate a claimant to the throne evoke the story of Pharaoh and Moses; the identification of Bethlehem as the city of David echoes traditions in 1 Samuel 16 and Ruth; the appearance of the star recalls the blessing of Balaam in Numbers 24:7; the flight into Egypt and the

return of the family evoke the Jacob and Exodus traditions. Likewise, the presence of the biblical genealogy and the presence of five formula quotations in these chapters (1:22–23; 2:5–6, 15, 17–18, 23) emphasize the major role that reflection on the Hebrew scriptures has played in the formulation of this material.

(b) *Reflection on the public ministry of Jesus*

The events of the infancy narrative foreshadow the public ministry of Jesus as presented in the body of the Gospel: e.g., the christological significance of the names of Jesus, which emphasizes the soteriological perspective of the Gospel (26:26), and Emmanuel, which reflects Matthew's emphasis on the presence of the Risen Christ in the community (see 18:20; 28:20); the identification of Jesus with Nazareth in Galilee (see 4:12–13); the hostility of the religious leaders and the threats of Herod, which foreshadow the polemical aspects of the Gospel and the passion narrative; the homage of the magi in contrast to the threats of the Jerusalem leaders, which foreshadows the reactions of benevolent Gentiles such as the Centurion of 8:5–13 and the Canaanite Woman (15:21–28) and the final endorsement of a Gentile mission (28:16–20; see also 21:43).

(c) *Popular traditions available in Matthew's Jewish Christian community*

This latter category is harder to pin down but may include such materials as the negative images of Herod and Archelaus; popular variations on biblical stories about the child Moses (such as those found in Josephus) applied to Jesus' own nativity and childhood; the unusual circumstances surrounding the conception of Jesus (with Joseph's erroneous surmise about Mary's pregnancy reflecting similar situations in the case of the women in the genealogy, particularly that of Tamar).<sup>11</sup>

In other words, Matthew's infancy narrative would appear to be a product of the evangelist's own literary activity, weaving together various inspirations from the Hebrew scriptures and popular interpretations of these applied to the origin of Jesus, reflections on the ultimate destiny of the adult Jesus available in traditions drawn from Mark and

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<sup>11</sup> See the comments of Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 32–28.

Q, and the evangelist's own characteristic interpretation of Jesus' life and mission. This does not preclude the possibility of pre-Matthean Christian traditions about the nativity of Jesus to which the evangelist would have had access in his community. But it is probable that Matthew is the first to put these traditions into a coherent written narrative. In any case, little "reliable historical information" about Jesus of Nazareth can be drawn from this category of special material other than the rudimentary information already present in Matthew's two main sources.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1.2. *The Petrine Stories*

Virtually all of the special Petrine narrative material found in Matthew should also be assigned to the redactional activity of the evangelist. In each instance, with the possible exception of 17:24–27, Matthew's material takes its cue from leads within the Markan parallel. In these materials too, there is little evidence of any firm historical tradition behind Matthew's additions, although some strongly assert the traditional character of 16:17–19.

The embellishment of the story of Jesus' walking on the water by the addition of material on Peter in 14:28–30 is a clear example of Matthew's redactional work, as was pointed out many years ago by Bornkamm in his pioneering work of redaction criticism which used this narrative as an illustration.<sup>13</sup> The language of this passage is characteristically Matthean and the function of the passage is clearly homiletic in tone, illustrating Peter's role as a representative disciple in the midst of crisis. The character of Peter amplifies in Matthean terms the fearful reactions of the disciples and Jesus' reassurance, which are

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<sup>12</sup> While conceding major redactional elements, Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:190–195, also detect the presence of pre-Matthean tradition in addition to the fundamental historical elements noted above. They project a three-stage development of traditional material, beginning with a portrayal of Jesus' nativity on the pattern of popular stories about Moses, a second stage which expanded by means of elements of Davidic christology (e.g., the annunciation to Joseph and the legend of the magi and the star) and a third redactional stage where Matthew put these traditions in writing, blending in the formula quotations. Luz is less certain about the tradition history of the infancy narrative but emphasizes a major role for Matthean redaction. Oral traditions inspired by Moses stories and other traditions shared with the Lukan narrative were shaped by Matthew in writing for the first time (*Matthew 1–7*, 115–118).

<sup>13</sup> See G. Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. idem, G. Barth, and H. Held (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 52–57.

already part of the Markan story (Mark 6:49–50). Whereas Mark's version ends by emphasizing the continuing obtuseness of the disciples, Matthew characteristically softens their response by labeling Peter's response as "little faith" (14:31; see also, 6:30; 8:26; 16:8; 17:20) and by having the story conclude with the acclamation of the disciples (contrast Mark 6:51).

In part because of the passage's role in later ecclesial controversies, there is extensive debate about the traditional character of Matthew's special material concerning the confession and subsequent blessing of Peter in Matt 16:16–19, where the evangelist, although taking his cue from the parallel in Mark 8:27–30, gives Peter a more significant role.<sup>14</sup> Following the disciples' acclamation of Jesus in the conclusion to the story of walking on the water (Matt 14:33), Peter's confession of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" is in accord with Matthew's christology and contrasts with the briefer confession in Mark of Jesus as "Christ" (Mark 8:29). Matthew's embellishments of the scene extend to the blessing of Peter in verses 16–19. While the sayings in 16:17–19 may be pre-Matthean, they echo Old Testament motifs and are in accord with Matthew's characteristic ecclesial interest (see the saying on binding and loosing extended to the community in 18:18). It should be noted that just as Matthew takes a Markan cue and intensifies the blessing of Peter, he will also intensify the condemnation of Peter following on Mark's trajectory (see 16:23 where Matthew adds the notion of "stumbling block" to the rebuke of Peter as "Satan" in Mark 8:33).

The assessment of the traditional character of this special material is mixed. Gundry judges that Matthew's material in 16:16–19 is completely redactional.<sup>15</sup> Luz, on the other hand, surmises that these sayings are traditional but do not go back to the historical Jesus. The key is the fact that in Matt 16:18 Jesus speaks of his "church"—an anachronistic statement traceable to post-Easter tradition.<sup>16</sup> Davies and

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<sup>14</sup> On Matthew's development of the Petrine tradition, see R. Brown, K. Donfried, J. Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 75–107; Pheme Perkins, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1994), 66–74.

<sup>15</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 330–331: "As in earlier passages peculiar to this gospel (e.g., 13:24–30, 36–43; 14:28–31), parallelistic structure, Matthew's favorite diction and theological motifs, OT phraseology, and echoes of other Matthean passages point to expansive composition by the evangelist himself and away from a special tradition known only to him."

<sup>16</sup> See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 357.

Allison, however, are convinced that this material is not only traditional but might be rooted in an event during the lifetime of Jesus. They suggest that in that case, Matthew's version of the entire Petrine story in 16:13–20 reflects an earlier version than that of Mark 8:27–30. Mark may have truncated the original story because of his hesitation about the extent of the blessing of Peter found in the traditional material, whereas Matthew—who is more interested in Petrine material—would have included the omitted passage.<sup>17</sup>

The unique story about the temple tax (17:24–27) coincides with the representational and spokesperson role that Peter plays in Matthew, but its connection to any lead in the Markan source is less obvious. Thompson and others have suggested that it serves as a lead into the community discourse of chapter 18 by introducing the topic of the privileges of those who are “sons” of the kingdom.<sup>18</sup> The topic of the story in its present form most likely concerns the payment of the half-shekel temple tax, and represents a post-resurrection ecclesial concern. The nucleus of the story at its origin could have been a parable (reflected now in v. 25 about the children of the kingdom being exempt from toll or tribute) which originally was not connected to the issue of the temple tax. Matthew may have built the story into its present form by fusing to the basic saying a popular story about Jesus and Peter that represented a practical solution to the dilemma posed by the tax.<sup>19</sup> The remarkable find of the coin in the mouth of the fish strikes most commentators as the kind of legendary element developed in popular story telling. In any case, most commentators agree that Matthew is responsible for putting the story into its present form and inserting it into the Gospel narrative.<sup>20</sup>

The role of Peter in the discussion about the limits of forgiveness in 18:21–22 is clearly redactional in nature. The question of Peter provides an introduction to the saying of Jesus and the special Matthean parable about the merciless servant in 18:23–35. As we will see below, the content and style of this morally didactic parable are characteristic of Matthew.

<sup>17</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:602–615.

<sup>18</sup> W. G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community*. Mt. 17, 22–18,35, *Analecta Biblica* 44 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970).

<sup>19</sup> So Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:741–742.

<sup>20</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 355; Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 413–420, believes there is good reason to say that the entire story is a creation of the post-70 Jewish Christian community put into written form by Matthew.

Within the passion story, the additional materials about Peter are clearly redactional embellishments which take their cue from leads within the Markan narrative, are cast in characteristic Matthean language, and fit Matthew's overall portrayal of Peter (see 26:72b, 74b, 75b).<sup>21</sup>

Thus the Petrine narrative material, with the possible exception of 16:16–19, is substantially redactional and reflects Matthew's ecclesial interests. While the interaction with Peter in Matthew could suggest that during his lifetime Jesus gave Peter a significant leadership role, this can already be surmised by the prominent place of Peter in the rest of the Gospel materials. There seems to be little question that Jesus formed a band of disciples and projected them as a sign of the eschatologically renewed community of Israel.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.1.3. *The Passion Narrative*

The special material of the passion narrative has been the focus of considerable study.<sup>23</sup> In this section of the Gospel, Matthew follows the narrative of Mark closely with few exceptions other than typical stylistic changes. Some minor changes or additions are clearly the editorial work of the evangelist (e.g., the formal introduction to the passion story in 26:1–2; direct address by Judas and the addition of the number thirty in 26:15, the exchange between Jesus and Judas in 26:25, the addition of the reference to forgiveness of sins in 26:28, etc.). Other insertions, however, raise the question of source material.

The sayings of Jesus at the moment of the arrest in 26:52–54 may have some claim to be traditional, but it should also be pointed out that they coincide with other sayings material in Matthew such as the prohibition against retaliation in 5:38–42, 43–48 and the acclamation

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<sup>21</sup> See Donald Senior, "Matthew's Special Material in the Passion Story: Implications for the Evangelist's Redactional Technique and Theological Perspective," *ETL* 63 (1987): 272–294 and a later follow-up in dialogue with Raymond Brown's work on the passion, "Revisiting Matthew's Special Material in the Passion Narrative: A Dialogue with Raymond Brown," *ETL* 70 (1994): 417–424.

<sup>22</sup> See John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3: *Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), esp. 148–163. "The basic intention of Jesus in creating the Twelve seems to have been more wide-ranging than simply providing a permanent example of discipleship. His intention apparently corresponded to the core of his proclamation to Israel: the coming of the kingdom of God, who would establish his rule definitively over Israel" (148).

<sup>23</sup> See above, n. 21.

about the son's unique relationship to the father in 11:25–27.<sup>24</sup> The addition of the sayings at this point in the narrative are surely prompted by the Markan account where one of those “who stood by” draws a sword and strikes the slave of the high priest (Mark 14:47). In fact, each of the evangelists chooses in slightly differing fashions to use this moment of sudden violence as an opportunity for teaching about reconciliation and non-retaliation (in addition to Matt 26:52–54, see Luke 22:51; John 18:11).

One of the most significant narrative additions to the Markan passion story is Matthew's special material about the death of Judas in 27:3–10.<sup>25</sup> The story shares one significant feature (other than the assertion that the betrayer committed suicide) with the account in Acts 1:16–20—in both instances a field called “blood field” figures in the story, although with different explanations of the name's origin. Matthew's story is clearly prompted by leads in Mark's account. First of all, Mark includes Jesus' prediction of Judas' condemnation because of his betrayal, but does not follow through with a description of its fulfillment (Matt 26:24–25; Mark 14:21). Secondly, the temporal break in the story between the Jewish “trial” and the appearance before Pilate (see 26:75 and 27:1) provides the opening for Matthew to insert this incident. The language of the story is thoroughly Matthean, and the content itself reflects characteristic Matthean themes: e.g., the complicity of the high priests, the betrayal by thirty pieces of silver, and the motif of “innocent blood.” The use of a fulfillment formula in 27:9–10, evoking a quotation from Jeremiah 19, and the story of the potter's field also coincide with Matthew's characteristic interest in scriptural fulfillment.

Thus while one cannot rule out the presence of some traditional elements, such as the aetiological legend concerning the naming of the field as “blood field” and the tradition that Judas committed suicide in reaction to his betrayal, the story is heavily redactional and yields little specific historical information about Jesus or the circumstances of his death.

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<sup>24</sup> While conceding the Matthean form of the current saying, Davies and Allison suggest it was drawn from “oral tradition”: Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 505–506.

<sup>25</sup> On the probable Matthean composition of this text, see Donald Senior, *The Passion Narrative According to Matthew: A Redactional Study*, BETL 39 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 343–397.

A similar pattern of characteristic Matthean language and theological interests is found in the other narrative additions to the text. For example, the intervention of Pilate's wife on behalf of Jesus in 27:19 helps set a contrast to the persistent efforts of the religious leaders to have Jesus condemned (see the following verse 20, where the leaders persuade the crowds to have Barabbas released and to have Jesus killed). The revelation of his innocence to her in a "dream" and the designation of Jesus as *dikaios* are also characteristic Matthean motifs. Similarly, the famous text of 27:24–25 in which Pilate washes his hands and declares his innocence of the blood of Jesus echoes Deuteronomy 21:6–8, while the response of the people also echoes biblical formulae. The incident as a whole reflects Matthew's characteristic concern with Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus and its implications for salvation history.<sup>26</sup>

The special material in 27:51b–53 concerning the phenomena following upon the death of Jesus has provoked much debate.<sup>27</sup> Some find here traces of a pre-Matthean tradition which also has echoes in the Gospel of Peter or other early Christian traditions.<sup>28</sup> The text with its stock apocalyptic signs has certainly been influenced by the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 and probably also by Daniel 12:2. Even if the presence of traditional elements is conceded, the text as it stands has strong evidence of Matthean redactional language and his tendency to highlight the eschatological significance of Jesus' death and resurrection (see also 28:2). Clearly, its insertion is linked to elements of the Markan account such as the tearing of the temple veil and the acclamation of the centurion. As most commentators concede, the purpose of the special material here is strongly theological in nature, asserting the eschatological and soteriological significance of the death

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<sup>26</sup> See the thorough discussion in Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives of the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:831–839.

<sup>27</sup> See D. Senior, "Revisiting Matthew's Special Material," 419–423.

<sup>28</sup> See the thorough discussion in R. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2:1118–1133, 1137–1140. He concludes that Matthew had access to a poetic reflection on the events following Jesus' death which the evangelist put into written form and attached to the passion narrative, both to emphasize the eschatological character of Jesus' death and resurrection and to emphasize scriptural fulfillment, particularly the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1–14. While concurring with Brown's interpretation of Matthew's theology implicit in this passage, I am not convinced by the evidence for a pre-existing poetic source; see D. Senior, "Revisiting Special Material in the Passion Narrative."



(and resurrection) of Jesus and the fulfillment of the scriptures in relationship to Jesus' death.<sup>29</sup>

Matthew's special material about the setting of a guard at the tomb (27:62–66) and the impact of the “angel of the lord” on the same guards at the moment of the resurrection (28:4) and their subsequent report to the chief priests and the bribe for their silence (28:11–15) also coincides strongly with the redactional interests of the evangelist, who consistently emphasizes the bad faith of the religious leaders, with their offer of money echoing the Markan account of Judas' betrayal of Jesus in Mark 14:10–11 (see Matt 26:14–15). The reference to the false explanation of the empty tomb being spread “among the Jews to this day” (28:15) demonstrates the clearly polemical and apologetic intent of this material. While these stories may have circulated in oral form in the Matthean community, it is the evangelist who has put them into written form and inserted them at the proper places in the sequence of the Markan passion and resurrection accounts.<sup>30</sup>

#### 2.1.4. Conclusion

A rapid assessment of Matthew's special material in the passion and resurrection stories yields little or no additional information that contributes to reliable historical knowledge about Jesus of Nazareth. In all instances the additions have been heavily redacted by the evangelist and woven into the sequence of the narrative found in his major source, Mark. In all instances, the material amplifies motifs characteristic of the Gospel as a whole, reflecting its christological and ecclesial perspectives. While the existence of some rudimentary pre-existing oral traditions at the basis of some of these incidents cannot be ruled out, there is no evidence that these traditions are rooted on the level of the historical Jesus.

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<sup>29</sup> “By now the meaning of Jesus' death for the Matthean community should be clear: It took place according to the Scriptures and (along with his own resurrection) anticipated the general resurrection of the righteous (Dan 12:1–3). These Matthean emphases served to counter the charges from Jews and Gentiles alike that Jesus died a criminal's death in shame and that the movement initiated by him should have ended then and there. Matthew's answer to these charges is that what to some eyes was the execution of a rebel was in fact willed by God in accord with the Scriptures and that his death holds a central place in God's plan of salvation.” D. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 403.

<sup>30</sup> See Donald Senior, “Matthew's Account of the Burial of Jesus Mt 27,57–61,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. van Belle, and J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1433–1448.

## 2.2. *Discourse Material*

As was the case with the narrative material, this category embraces a diverse ensemble of literary forms and theological content.

### (1) *The Sermon on the Mount*

The Sermon on the Mount is a major portion of Matthew's Gospel, providing the interpretive foundation for all of the discourse and narrative materials that follow. Matthew draws a substantial amount of material for the Sermon from Q (see the parallel to Luke's Sermon on the Plain, 6:17–7:1, and other Q passages found in Luke) and in the view of most interpreters, the sayings in the Sermon, although obviously subject to the formation of tradition and the redactional style of the evangelist, ultimately epitomize the teaching of the historical Jesus, or at least the impact of the teaching of Jesus on the earliest generations of the Jesus movement.<sup>31</sup> However, the precise point of our inquiry in this essay is solely to determine to what extent the special material of Matthew found in the Sermon provides historically reliable information about Jesus.

Matthew's special material in the Sermon on the Mount includes the following: (1) The additional beatitudes of 5:5, 7, 8, 9, 10; (2) The sayings on the fulfillment of the law in 5:17–20; (3) The formulation and content of most of the "antitheses" in 5:21–48, especially the material on anger (5:21–22), on lust (5:27–28), and on oaths (5:33–37); and (4) the section on authentic piety in 6:1–18 (except for the Lord's prayer, which has a parallel version in Luke 11:1–4).

### (2) *The Beatitudes*

Matthew's Sermon contains eight beatitudes (compared to four in Luke 6:20b–22). Matthew's special beatitudes include a blessing for the meek (5:5), the merciful (5:7), the pure in heart (5:8), the peacemakers (5:9), and those persecuted for righteousness' sake (5:10). There is vigorous debate about the source of these beatitudes, or how to explain their

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<sup>31</sup> This is position taken by H. D. Betz, who sees the Sermon on the Mount as not fitting easily into the theological perspective of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole. While many interpreters would agree with Betz's overall assessment of the archaic nature of much of the sayings material in the Sermon, most believe that Matthew has, in fact, thoroughly integrated the content of the Sermon into his overall theological perspective and into the literary fabric of his Gospel. See Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

relationship to Luke's version. Davies and Allison, for example, believe that only 5:10 is purely redactional, because it provides an inclusion for the other seven and because it cites a characteristic Matthean theme of righteousness. They further hold that only the first ("Blessed are the poor..."), second ("Blessed are those who mourn..."), and fourth ("Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...") are likely to have originated with Jesus (see the Lukan parallels in Luke 6:20.21, which are likely to be closer to the original wording ["Blessed are you who hunger now..."], 22 [Blessed are you that weep now...]) and may have been influenced by Isaiah 61. The Matthean beatitudes in 5:5, 7, 8, 9 derive from a version of Q accessible to Matthew and are thus not purely redactional.<sup>32</sup> Gundry would contend that the last four beatitudes are all Matthean redaction, with only the Lukan parallels deriving from Q.<sup>33</sup> Hagner, on the other hand, sees no reason to consider 5:10 as Matthean redaction, since it forms an inclusion with the first in 5:3 (with the same reward, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"), and all eight were likely to be a traditional list in Matthew's special source. He contends that the possibility that all of the beatitudes could be traced to the historical Jesus cannot be ruled out.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, here again the historical gleanings from the special material in Matthew are tentative. While most interpreters would see the traditional form of the beatitude and the fundamental content of at least those dealing with those in desperate need as fully compatible with the preaching of the historical Jesus, the special Matthean beatitudes are mostly assigned to a post-Easter Christian tradition or to the level of Matthew's own redaction.

### (3) *Matthew 5:17–20*

The sayings about the fulfillment of the law represent a keynote of Matthew's theology and, at the same time, pose a significant challenge with regard to determining the historical origin of this material, particularly the keynote statement of 5:17. The saying about not one jot or tittle of the law passing away (5:18) finds a distant parallel in Luke 16:17, suggesting some connection to Q. The saying in 5:19 about

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<sup>32</sup> See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 431–442; similarly Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 228.

<sup>33</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 67–73.

<sup>34</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, Word Biblical Commentary 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 90.

entering the kingdom of heaven is strongly redactional in nature. The saying in 5:20 about the "greater righteousness," which provides a link to 5:21–48, is cast in characteristic Matthean language and is surely redactional.

One could make a case for the origin of 5:17 at all levels of the tradition. There is little doubt that an emphasis on continuity between the teaching of Jesus and the Torah fits into the perspective of Matthew's Gospel and would have significant pastoral significance for his embattled Jewish Christian community. Additionally, most of the language in the verse is compatible with Matthean style. The same is true for the post-Easter early community, where the debate about the ongoing validity of the Jewish law is evident in the Pauline writings. The saying in 5:17 could have represented an attempt to ensure that Jesus and his teaching were seen in continuity with Jewish tradition, particularly on the part of the Jewish Christian community. At the same time, the perspective of this verse could also be compatible with the teaching of the historical Jesus, who may have asserted his fidelity to the law against the accusations of his opponents; accordingly, its origin in this original layer of the tradition cannot be ruled out.<sup>35</sup> At each level, this key saying and its context affirm the profoundly Jewish roots of Jesus and early Christianity and the continuing interaction between Jewish Christianity and other groups within the dominant Jewish majority.

#### (4) *The sayings in 5:21–48*

The six so-called "antitheses" in this section illustrate how the teaching of Jesus interprets the law and leads to the "greater righteousness" required of the disciple. With the possible exception of 5:31–32 (forbidding divorce) and 5:33–37 (against oaths), these sayings do not pit Jesus' teaching against the law, but represent an intensification of obedience to the requirements and spirit of the law. Hence, the traditional term "antithesis" is not apt; the term "contrast statement" might be preferred.<sup>36</sup>

Three of the Matthean "antitheses" have a parallel in Luke and therefore are probably drawn from Q, viz. 5:31–32 (Luke 16:18), 5:38–42 (Luke 6:29–30), and 5:43–48 (Luke 6:27–28, 32–36). Matthew has

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<sup>35</sup> On this, see the judicious discussion in Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:482–502.

<sup>36</sup> See Donald Senior, *Matthew*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 73–74.

incorporated an introductory formula to each, providing a contrast between traditional interpretation (“you have heard it said...”) and the authoritative interpretation of Jesus (“but I say to you...”). Whether this contrast formula is a creation of the evangelist or was found in the tradition (see Luke 6:27, “But I say to you...”) is debated. Whether or not the remaining material (i.e., 5:21–26, 27–30, 33–37) is traditional or redactional is also vigorously debated. Bultmann and others contend that the material, including the introductory formula, is traditional. Luz suggests that Matthew drew the first, second, and fourth contrast statements from a special source and then supplemented them with the material from Q (parallel to Luke). The third contrast (on divorce, which is Q material) was inserted into the midst of his special material because of its similarity in content with the second contrast statement (on lust).<sup>37</sup> Gundry, on the other hand, argues that all these non-Q contrast statements are composed by Matthew.<sup>38</sup>

(5) *Teaching on Authentic Piety, 6:1–18*

The other part of the Sermon on the Mount where special Matthean material comes into play is 6:1–18. There is a clear distinction between 6:1–6, 16–18, which deals with the traditional triad of almsgiving, prayer and fasting, and 6:7–15 which incorporates the instruction on the Lord’s prayer. The latter section is parallel to Luke 11:1–14 and most probably derives from Q. Most commentators assume that Luke 11:2–4 represents the more original form of the prayer, while Matthew’s version in 6:9–13 and the additional saying in 6:14–15 represent embellishments rooted in liturgical or community usage, added by Matthew to the Q version or to pre-Matthean tradition available to the evangelist.

The introduction to this section in 6:1, referring to acts of “righteousness,” links it to the saying in 5:20 which led into the antitheses and is probably Matthean in character. However, there is debate about the traditional character of the teachings on the triad of almsgiving, prayer and fasting in the remaining verses 6:1–6, 16–18, which are unique to Matthew. While many commentators suggest that the material is redactional, others have argued strenuously for the traditional character of this special material. H. D. Betz, for example, suggests this

<sup>37</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 274–275.

<sup>38</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 78–100.

entire segment was a pre-existing "cult didache" originating in oral tradition, but taking on written form in the tradition prior to Matthew. The original segment would have been the triadic teaching on piety in 6:1-6, 16-8. This could have derived from the historical Jesus, but more probably comes from a disciple in the early Jesus movement who was influenced by the teaching of Jesus and by wisdom tradition (as was Jesus himself). At a later stage, the section on the Lord's prayer (6:7-15) was incorporated, prompted by the original text's section on prayer. While the Lord's prayer itself would certainly originate with Jesus himself, this material in its present form derives from a Jewish Christian author who is aware of pagan prayer customs and has observed them. The whole unit was introduced by Matthew into the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>39</sup>

Thus 6:1-18, and in particular 6:1-6, 16-18, is an example of Matthean special material which may in fact provide a degree of historically reliable information on Jesus of Nazareth. While it is likely that the material as incorporated in the Gospel has undergone considerable literary formation subsequent to Jesus, the vivid and direct teaching on authentic piety could have traced its origin and spirit to the teaching of Jesus himself, and reveals his characteristic and authentically Jewish piety.

#### (6) *Parables*

Matthew's Gospel includes a number of parables that fall under the category of "special material." In the parallel to Mark's parable "discourse" of chapter 4, Matthew's special material includes the parable of the tares (13:24-30) and its explanation (13:36-43), the parable of the hidden treasure (13:44), the parable of the pearl (13:45-46), and the parable of the net (13:47-50). In the community discourse of chapter 18, there is the unique Matthean parable of the merciless servant (18:23-35). Matthew adds the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in 20:1-16. In the conflict section of chapter 21-22 (parallel to Mark 11-12), Matthew adds the parable of the two sons (21:28-32). In the apocalyptic discourse, Matthean special material includes the parables of the ten virgins (25:1-13) and the parable of the sheep and the goats (25:31-46).

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<sup>39</sup> H. D. Betz. *The Sermon on the Mount*, 330-338; similarly, Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:573-575.

Assessing whether these parables are pre-Matthean or are purely redactional on Matthew's part is a challenge. In virtually all these cases, the language is strongly Matthean and the theological perspective fits into the overall theology of the Gospel. Many of the parables begin with a formula such as "such is the kingdom of heaven" or "the kingdom of heaven is like..." (see 13:24, 44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1). While conceding that the formula itself may be redactional, Davies and Allison contend that this introductory formula indicates that Matthew saw a thematic unity to these various parables and therefore may have drawn them from a pre-existing collection of kingdom parables.<sup>40</sup> Gundry, on the other hand, argues that the parables, while drawing on traditional theological motifs, should be assigned to Matthean redaction, either as compositions of the evangelist or in some instances, such as the parable of the two sons in 21:28–32, representing a different strand of Q tradition (Gundry compares Matt 21:28–32 to the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11–32).<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the fundamental motif of the "kingdom of God," other characteristic Matthean motifs can be noted in the parables. Several parables reflect Matthew's concern for eschatological judgment and have a characteristic didactic or moralizing quality: e.g., the parable of the tares (13:24–30), along with its probably redactional explanation in 13:36–43, the parable of the net (13:47–50), the parable of the merciless servant (18:23–35), the additional material about the man without the wedding garment in 22:11–14 (the preceding parable about the marriage feast has parallels in Luke 14:15–24), the parable of the ten virgins, 25:1–13, and that of the sheep and the goats in 25:31–46. Additionally, the parable of the merciless servant amplifies in narrative fashion the emphasis on forgiveness found in the Sermon on the Mount (see 5:23–24 and especially 6:14–15), just as 25:31–46 uses the criteria of the Sermon for eschatological judgment. The Matthean parable of the two sons (21:28–32) and the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (20:1–16) reflect the motif of reversal that also harmonizes with Matthew's concern about the rejection of Jesus and the turning to the nations (see the Matthean addition to the parable of the vineyard in 21:43).<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:125–126.

<sup>41</sup> See Gundry, *Matthew*, 4–5, 261–280.

<sup>42</sup> Many commentators view the parable of the laborers in 20:1–16 as particularly reflective of the style and message of the historical Jesus; see the comments in Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3:66–78.

Most commentators hesitate to assign the unique Matthean parables to pure redaction; they find there evidence of traditional material. At the same time, there is recognition that in virtually all instances the language of the parables is heavily redactional, and the content of the parables supports characteristic Matthean motifs. The question remains to what extent the detection of traditional material in these unique Matthean parables adds to our fund of historically reliable information about Jesus of Nazareth. Although the Matthean parables would add to the repertoire of parables and imagery found in Mark and Q, there are no truly new motifs or information added. Motifs about eschatological judgment, the mysterious and compelling nature of the reign of God, God's favor vis-à-vis the poor and marginalized, the motif of reversal, and the call for forgiveness and compassion for those in need—are all traditional motifs about the ministry and message of Jesus already found in Matthew's sources, which receive emphasis and amplification in the special material of the Gospel.

(7) 11:28–30

The saying of Jesus in Matt 11:28–30, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens...,” is also special material. It is appended to the material in 11:25–27, which is from Q (see Luke 10:21–22), about Jesus' unique relationship to his Father. Here again, opinion is divided, but most scholars see 11:28–30 as a Matthean redaction. Gundry notes the Matthean tendency to parallelism in the verses, the profusion of Matthean vocabulary, and the drawing on Old Testament material (see 11:28a = Jeremiah 31:25; 28b = Exodus 33:14; 29 = Jeremiah 6:16).<sup>43</sup> Harrington emphasizes the influence of Sirach 51:26–27.<sup>44</sup> Luz too believes the verse is redactional, representing Matthew's typical ethical tendency, moving from the christological affirmation of 11:25–27 to the invitation to respond by accepting Jesus' “yoke” in 11:28–30.<sup>45</sup>

Davies and Allison, however, suggest that the material may be traditional, although not traceable to a saying of Jesus himself.<sup>46</sup> Because v. 28–30 seem to be a natural extension of v. 27, they speculate that

<sup>43</sup> Gundry, *Matthew*, 218–219.

<sup>44</sup> Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 170.

<sup>45</sup> Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 157.

<sup>46</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 2:235–238.



the version of Q available to Matthew included v. 28–30, while Luke's version did not.

In any case, most recent commentators agree that the material is either a Matthean composition based on the influence of the Q passage in 11:25–30 and the use of wisdom traditions to amplify the christology of the passage, or perhaps a version of Q accessible to Matthew which coincides with his christological perspective about Jesus' authoritative interpretation of the law.

(8) *Chapter 23*

The polemical discourse of chapter 23 also provides a challenging source question, since it is a blend of Q, Markan material, and special Matthean passages.

Most interpreters divide the discourse into three distinctive parts: (1) 23:1–12, containing a number of warnings about the scribes and Pharisees; (2) 23:13–33, a series of woes against the same religious leaders; (3) and 23:34–39, a concluding lament over Jerusalem that leads into the eschatological discourse of chapters 24–25.<sup>47</sup> In general, there is agreement that the tone and purpose of this polemical discourse fit into Matthew's overall context. The discourse represents an admonition and warning to Matthew's Jewish Christian audience, using the "scribes and the Pharisees" as examples of false discipleship and as condemned opponents of Jesus. As such, it is not a direct attack on the leaders themselves but takes the form of warning to the Christian readers of the Gospel about the example of the Jewish leaders. Triggered by the controversy about David's son (see 22:41–46; parallel Mark 12:35–37), it also prepares for the climactic apocalyptic discourse of chapters 24–25 and the passion narrative itself, in which the religious leaders will play a prominent and negative role in Matthew's account (chapters 26–27). The issues at stake in chapter 23 echo the community concerns of the Matthean church and also reflect the same contrasts about authentic piety that have already been presented in the Sermon on the Mount (6:1–8, 16–18) and in other parts of the Gospel (see, for example, 15:1–20).

In the first segment, 23:1–12, parallels to the warning about the hypocrisy of the "scribes" can be found in Mark 12:37b–40 (see also Luke 20:45–47). The reference to the imposition of heavy burdens

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<sup>47</sup> So Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3:257–258.

(23:4) is similar to the Q saying in Luke 11:46. Other elements also reflect earlier material in the Gospel, e.g., the criticism of words without deeds (see 5:19, etc.) and the indictment of the leaders for "doing their deeds to be seen by men," echoing Matt 6:1. Unique to Matthew is the comment about the authority of the scribes and Pharisees who "sit on Moses' seat" (23:2-3) and the egalitarian material in 23:8-12. This material seems to reflect the post-70 circumstances of Matthew's Jewish-Christian community, still locked in conflict with the dominant Jewish majority.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the emphasis on humility and the overall egalitarian emphasis harmonize with the picture in the community discourse of chapter 18, especially 18:1-5, 10-14.

The second section of the discourse, 23:13-33, is dominated by a series of seven "woes." While similar to the series of six woes in Luke 11:42-54 directed against the Pharisees and lawyers, there are significant differences in the number, order, and target of the woes. This leads some to question whether this material can be assigned to the same Q version common to Luke and Matthew.<sup>49</sup> In Luke's version of the Sermon on the Plain (6:17-7:1), Jesus' series of blessings is followed by a series of woes. Many interpreters conclude that the version of Q available to Matthew had a similar pattern. Matthew, however, immediately following the beatitudes, introduced his thematic about fulfillment of the law (5:17-20), the antitheses (5:21-48), and the exhortations about authentic piety in 6:1-18. The woes were moved to the polemical discourse in chapter 23 and blended with the Q material which is similar to Luke 11:42-54.

The final segment of the discourse contains a number of sayings which return the focus to Jerusalem and the temple (23:34-39) and are drawn from Q material (Matt 23:34-36 and Luke 11:49-51; Matt 23:37-39 and Luke 13:34-35).

Once again, therefore, the strong redactional hand of Matthew is found in the overall composition of this material. Matthew draws on

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<sup>48</sup> For a strong advocacy of this view, see Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994); also J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). Surveys of recent scholarship on the issue can be found in Graham N. Stanton, *The Interpretation of Matthew*, *Studies in New Testament Interpretation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 16-20, and an expansion of Stanton's views in G. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 113-68; and Donald Senior, *What Are They Saying About Matthew?*, rev. ed. (New York: Paulist, 1996), 7-20.

<sup>49</sup> So Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3:283.

Mark and Q while shaping the various elements into a coherent discourse. The special material seems to reflect the post-70 situation of Matthew's community and its mounting tension with rabbinic Judaism. In any case, there is no special Matthean material in the discourses that can confidently be assigned to the level of the historical Jesus.

### 3. *Conclusion*

This survey of Matthean special material has had a very narrow purpose—to assess to what extent such special material found in Matthew's Gospel provides any “historically reliable information about Jesus of Nazareth.” A primary conclusion of the survey is that the special material in Matthew yields relatively little historical information about Jesus that is not already derived from analysis of Matthew's primary sources, the Gospel of Mark and Q.

There is no compelling evidence to conclude that Matthew derived his special material from a single source that would in any way rival the two major sources that helped shape his Gospel. The special material found in Matthew varies in form and content, and can hardly be consigned to a single source.

Our analysis suggests that most of the special material is redactional in nature. This does not necessarily mean that the evangelist created narratives and sayings all on his own. Various incidents in the life of Jesus found in Mark or Q could already have received some amplification or particular interpretation in the preaching, catechesis, and liturgical life of Matthew's community and were then put into written form and incorporated in the Gospel by the evangelist. Similarly, sayings of Jesus derived from early Christian prophets and teachers and treasured in the Matthean church could also be formulated by the evangelist and included in the Gospel. The evangelist, in other words, did not live in a vacuum, but in a stream of living tradition and community life. The context of his community, which apparently included both tension with the synagogue and concerns about the scope of the Gentile mission, also prompted Matthew to shape his Gospel in a particular way. In fact, the historical information provided by the special material in Matthew sheds light primarily on the circumstances of the Matthean community in its post-70 context.

While little evidence of reliable historical material can be found in the narrative special material in Matthew, there are more possibilities

in the discourse material. Particularly in the special Matthean parables (e.g., 20:1–16) and in the content of the Sermon on the Mount (particularly 6:1–6, 16–18), there may be material that has its origin in the teaching and impact of the historical Jesus on the earliest Christian movement—traditions ultimately shaped by the evangelist and introduced into his Gospel. These materials do not reveal novel historical information about Jesus of Nazareth not already present in Matthew's primary sources. But they do underscore the characteristic use of the Kingdom of God motif, confirm the eschatological character of Jesus' teaching and the fact that he formed a community of disciples, and illustrate the thoroughly Jewish flavor of his teaching and piety. These results—while not dramatic or new—are of significance for our knowledge of the historical Jesus.



## LUKE<sup>s</sup> AND ACTS

JOHN NOLLAND

Our task here is to deal with the historical reliability of the Special Lukan material about Jesus in the Gospel and of the Jesus material in Acts. As a starting point we may, with R. Brown,<sup>1</sup> estimate the extent of Luke<sup>s</sup> as between thirty-three and forty percent of the Gospel—something like 380 to 460 verses. This is a very significant part of what Luke has to say about Jesus, which makes of considerable significance the question of how one should relate to the materials as historical sources. Is it appropriate with Meier to treat Luke<sup>s</sup> as a minor source, and more or less leave these materials out of consideration in our attempts to reconstruct the historical Jesus?<sup>2</sup> Or do the materials justify a more generous assessment? Acts offers us much less about the historical Jesus; nonetheless there are summary outlines and individual details in relation to which questions of historical reliability may be put. Initially the two bodies of material, Luke<sup>s</sup> and Acts, will be discussed separately, but the two streams will be drawn together at the end of the chapter.

### 1. *Luke<sup>s</sup>*

The present treatment of Luke<sup>s</sup> will be concerned primarily with the question of whether its general historical reliability should be viewed any differently to, say, that of the Markan traditions. The question will primarily be that of whether there are any special considerations to be brought to bear on the evaluation of these materials. Nobody starts with Luke<sup>s</sup> if they want to develop a critical portrait of the historical

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<sup>1</sup> R. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 265.

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York/London: Doubleday, 1991), 1:44–45. Meier chooses to discuss only 3:10–14; 5:1–11; 7:11–17, 29–30; 8:2; 13:10–17; 14:1–6; 17:11–19, 20–21; 22:49–51 (see Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* Anchor Bible Reference Library [New York/London: Doubleday, 1994], *passim*).

Jesus, if for no other reason than the fact that Luke<sup>s</sup>, as normally understood, consists in essence of those parts of the Lukan portrayal that are not also attested in other parts of the gospel tradition. Multiple attestation is foundational for historical reconstruction and we do not, at least in the normal view, have this for Luke<sup>s</sup> materials (though it will emerge below that much more of Luke<sup>s</sup> than is normally recognized is paralleled at some level in other gospel materials). It would be possible in a study of the historicity of Luke<sup>s</sup> to bring to bear on the particular Luke<sup>s</sup> materials a set of criteria developed for the evaluation of any gospel materials. But such an approach has not been adopted here. From time to time there will be some attention to the evaluation of the historicity of specific parts of the tradition, but that will not be the main place of investment. Some of the points made will have implications for assessing the historicity of other gospel materials as well, but are offered here in relation to Luke<sup>s</sup>.

### 1.1. *Luke<sup>s</sup> and the Synoptic Problem*

It is all very well to define Luke<sup>s</sup> by reference to what is not found in Mark and Matthew, but a negative definition of this kind throws no light on the question of what we are actually dealing with in Luke<sup>s</sup>. So a first question here could be whether the issue of synoptic sources throws any light on the nature of Luke<sup>s</sup> and therefore, potentially, on the question of the historical reliability of its materials. In a chapter of limited scope, however, this is not possible, and I must content myself with reporting that my attempts to look at Luke<sup>s</sup> in relation to each of the main theories of synoptic relations indicates that although preferred solutions to the synoptic problem have some bearing on how we approach the evaluation of the historicity of Luke<sup>s</sup>, all the solutions leave the question basically open.

I unapologetically belong to what is still the consensus view.<sup>3</sup> That is the view that i) Mark is our earliest Gospel; ii) it, or something very like it, was used by both Matthew and Luke to provide the backbone for their own Gospels; and iii) Matthew and Luke also had available to them a second (most likely written and most likely a single document) source (labeled “Q” for convenience), possibly in different editions,

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<sup>3</sup> For my own examination of gospel sources for Luke and Matthew, see J. Nolland, *Luke*, WBC 35A–C, 3 vols. (Dallas: Word, 1989–93), passim; *Matthew*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), passim.

consisting primarily of sayings material. Both Matthew and Luke drew on other material, whether written or oral. I hold the consensus view with rather more confidence than some of my colleagues. So the discussion of this chapter will continue, where necessary—and this will be much of the time—on this basis, though significant parts of what is said could be reframed without great difficulty in relation to other approaches to the synoptic problem.

Before we look more closely at the question of the scope of Luke<sup>S</sup> and its relationship to other gospel sources, I would like to offer one rough and ready index for the likely historical accuracy of the Luke<sup>S</sup> materials. For this we will work from the body of materials generally identified as Luke<sup>S</sup> (for our purposes here, the more expansive view of Luke<sup>S</sup> that will be defended below would only make the argument stronger).

### 1.2. *Miracle Density as a First Index of Likely Historical Accuracy*

It is unlikely that Luke<sup>S</sup>, or even any major part of Luke<sup>S</sup> is a source for Luke in the way that Mark and Q are likely to have been sources. Nonetheless the material may for certain purposes be treated all together as “the kind of material that Luke picked up when he was not relying on his written sources Mark and Q.” Of course any assessment made by treating the Luke<sup>S</sup> material “in bulk” will not necessarily be applicable to any particular piece of the material, but it can contribute to a general overall presumption about the historical quality of Luke’s distinctive materials.

My concern here will be with the place of the miraculous in Luke<sup>S</sup>. The multiplication of the miraculous is often said to be a sign of late secondary materials. How does Luke<sup>S</sup> fare on this measure?

There are five new miracles attributed to Jesus in Luke<sup>S</sup>: a miraculous catch of fish (5:1–11); a raising from the dead (7:11–17); the healing of a bent-over crippled woman and of a man with dropsy (13:10–17; 14:1–6; both on the Sabbath); and a healing of ten lepers (17:11–19). Working with R. Brown’s estimate of the extent of Luke<sup>S</sup>, these miracle accounts, occupying forty-one verses, represent about ten percent of the material.<sup>4</sup> This compares with ten miracle narratives

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<sup>4</sup> Several extra verses might be added in connection with Zechariah being struck dumb in Luke 1:20, 22 and the restoration of his speech in v. 64, but not enough to affect the overall picture. Materials connected with the virginal conception of Jesus,



that come into Luke from Mark.<sup>5</sup> These miracle narratives are reported in 113 verses in Mark out of about 430 verses that are represented in Luke. The “miracle density” in Luke<sup>S</sup> is about half of that in Luke’s use of Mark. What about Q? With its evident focus on teaching, the Q material is characterized by minimal narrative framework, and we might expect this to be reflected in the miracle density. There are just two miracle accounts in the Q material. But given that the quantity of Q material is only just over half that of Luke<sup>S</sup> (estimated at 220 to 235 verses), the miracle density by count of miracles is only slightly less than that in Luke<sup>S</sup>. And, if we include the discussion of Jesus’ exorcism which is precipitated by the exorcism in 11:14 as part of the miracle material, then there are twenty verses of miracle material, or nearly ten percent, to which we may want to add the focus on miracles in the woes in 10:13–16 and the interest in what John’s disciples have seen in 7:18–23. So the miracle density of Luke<sup>S</sup> is much less than that of the Markan material reproduced by Luke and about the same as that of the Q material reproduced by Luke.<sup>6</sup>

Measured in terms of “miracle density,” we might expect the Luke<sup>S</sup> material to have a likelihood of historical accuracy that matches Luke’s Markan and Q source material.

We turn our attention now to the actual scope of Luke<sup>S</sup> and the overlap of Luke<sup>S</sup> with other Gospel sources.

### 1.3. *The Scope of Luke<sup>S</sup> and Its Overlap with Other Gospel Sources*

At the most pragmatic level, Luke<sup>S</sup> consists of the material in the Gospel of Luke that has been included in neither the chapter on Mark in this volume nor the chapter on non-Markan material common to Matthew and Luke. But to move forward quite so quickly involves a

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and his resurrection and ascension, are likewise not included in the count. The ascension is reported in a single verse, and perhaps should have been counted (again, the total picture is not affected), but for neither the virginal conception and the resurrection is there actually an account: these are out-of-sight miracles, implied and claimed, but not narrated as events. Including all of these in a maximal way would still leave the “miracle-density” of Luke<sup>S</sup> lower than for the Markan material included by Luke, but it would raise the “miracle-density” significantly above that for Q.

<sup>5</sup> On the Markan side, the descent of the Spirit and the transfiguration have not been counted among the miracles; on the Luke<sup>S</sup> side, Jesus’ safe passage through the crowd in Luke 4:30 and Jesus’ (sudden?) standing among the disciples in 24:36 are not included.

<sup>6</sup> There is an evident supernaturalism in Luke 1–2 that is distinctive: the angel Gabriel makes two appearances, both Elizabeth and Zechariah are filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophetic inspiration is evident for Simeon and Anna.

failure to face some definitional questions. Addressing these will at the very least clarify some of the assumptions that might be lurking below the surface of scholarly discussion in this area, and may lead us to decide that the label Luke<sup>s</sup> should be applied to rather more gospel material than has been customary. As we seek to define the range of material to be considered as Luke<sup>s</sup>, we will also be concerned to identify any likely overlap between Luke<sup>s</sup> and other gospel materials.<sup>7</sup>

A rigid definition of the special Lukan material might include every tiny detail in which Luke differed from each of the other canonical gospels. But such a definition would be unhelpful, given that many of the differences in detail are in connection with episodes or items of teaching that are clearly common property between Luke and one or more of the other gospels. However one sees the synoptic source relationships, small differences are hardly to be labeled as special Lukan material and interrogated with regard to issues of historicity.

But there is a very genuine problem here: Where is the boundary line between what should be identified as editorial differences between the gospels and what should be seen as incorporation of a second source? There is not just one issue here. Writing elsewhere in relation to Matthew I have said, "oral parallels are likely to have existed in many more cases than we are in a position to demonstrate" and have even suggested that "at times the extent of the Matthean editing may be no more than the exercise of preference among available options."<sup>8</sup> The situation will not be different for Luke. There is a very real possibility, even with differences that allow for explanation in a perfectly credible way as Lukan editing fully in line with Luke's interests and thematic concerns, that in particular cases we are actually dealing with the influence of a second, probably oral, source. The point is that there may well be more sources playing a role than we can identify or even guess at.

In scholarship we properly work with what we can demonstrate, but the not-inappropriate demand for stringent levels of proof can inadvertently distort aspects of the overall picture. What we cannot prove,

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<sup>7</sup> K. Paffenroth, *The Story of Jesus according to L*, JSNTSup 147 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), restricts interest to a single pre-Lukan source and tends to a minimizing approach. Similarly, the focus of R. Riesner, "Prägung und Herkunft der lukanischen Sonderüberlieferung," *TBei* 24 (1993): 228–248, is restricted: he is looking for a Hebrew gospel source that can be traced back to the primitive community in Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup> Nolland, *Matthew*, 6.

we cannot prove; but we should not imagine that what we are exploring is limited in its actuality by what we are able to demonstrate about it. Scholars, quite properly, do not dispute the existence of an extensive oral phase of transmission of the gospel materials, samples of which reach us as incorporated into the canonical gospels and to some degree into other sources. But what we have in the gospels needs to be thought of as providing us with only samples of what was a much wider phenomenon. The evangelists write as they do against the backdrop of this larger reality of oral awareness of the Jesus materials, not against the backdrop of what it is possible for us now to know about sources available to them.<sup>9</sup>

And if they write against this background they are likely to have been to some degree constrained by it, but also in a significant manner resourced by it. Luke is most unlikely to be the single conduit of the gospel material to his readership; this is what his prologue indicates in the case of Theophilus, and these verses suggest that quite a range of written and oral sources of information were at play (Luke 1:1–4). I do not in the least wish to insist that we claim oral sources where only Lukan editing is demonstrable; we cannot, for the most part, know this in particular cases. But I want to suggest that beyond the reach of our proof, it is very likely that Lukan versions of material shared in common with another gospel or gospels are likely at times to have been influenced by Luke's awareness of another telling or even other tellings of the story. That is, I want to alert us to the likely existence of quite a body of extra Luke<sup>s</sup> to which we can have no access, but which has impacted on Luke's telling of the story of Jesus, and whose existence provides, not in particular cases but in an overall manner, multiple source support in relation to assessing the general historical reliability of material that Luke shares with other gospels. There are particular cases where a good argument can be mounted for the availability to Luke of a second source, but even where there is not, I suggest that we should think in terms of the existence of such a source in a significant number of cases.

But if we are to imagine Luke having access to more than one form of materials that he shares with another gospel, why not of materials for which he is our only source? Once more, it is not a matter of mak-

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<sup>9</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 161, suggests that "we need to be conscious of the likely breadth and dispersal of the Jesus tradition."

ing such a claim in relation to any particular item, but of reckoning with a general likelihood that such is the case a significant proportion of the time.

My concern is that we make a proper distinction between what we can demonstrate and what is in general terms most likely to be the case. We should envisage as very likely a range of multiple attestation that is considerably greater than we can now reconstruct. Luke as a producer of a gospel will have had much greater access to multiple attestation than we at our remove are able to any degree to recover. We need to think of Luke<sup>S</sup> as actually embracing a much larger body of material than we normally envisage, but with the additional materials consisting mostly of material that we cannot be in a position to identify, except to say that the parts of the extra material that can have had any impact on Luke's telling of his story consist of material that is paralleled in either Mark or Q or Luke<sup>S</sup> material.

A second kind of issue over the boundary line between what should be identified as editorial differences between the gospels and what should be seen as incorporation of a second source concerns the possibility of overlapping sources. We may think of this discussion as a specialist subset of the more general discussion above of multiple sources. Above, we dealt with the need to think in terms of likely multiple sources, whether or not any evidence can be adduced in specific cases; here, we will deal with cases where evidence is available.

We will look first at the question of overlap with Q, then with that of overlap with Markan material, and finally with overlap with Matthew<sup>S</sup> (where this has not been bundled into earlier discussion, on the basis of uncertainty as to how to label a source). It will not be possible to attend to every possible instance of overlap, but it will be important to indicate with some clarity the scale of the matter.

Two kinds of interests will occupy us here: the first is to attend to the possibility that Luke<sup>S</sup> is to be thought of as more extensive than might at first be allowed, because features found in both Luke and either Mark or Q might be found linked with Luke<sup>S</sup> material because they were also present in the Luke<sup>S</sup> material; the second is to note the degree to which Luke<sup>S</sup> offers second source forms in relation to material found in Mark or Q or even Matthew<sup>S</sup>.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In discussion below I have drawn on Nolland, *Luke*, sometimes borrowing language without specific acknowledgement.

### 1.3.1. *Overlap with Q*

If the material in Luke 3:10–14 (the Baptist’s advice to the crowds, and to tax collectors and soldiers) is not Lukan creation (however much he may have put his own mark on it),<sup>11</sup> then it can hardly have reached Luke unconnected with other John the Baptist material. That Luke has inserted this material into a Q context might suggest that its context in Luke’s source matched to some extent this Q material (note particularly “fruit worthy of repentance” in v 8).<sup>12</sup>

Luke 11:9–13 is paralleled in Matt 7:7–11. For the most part there is close agreement between the Matthean and Lukan wording, but less so in Luke 11:11–13. It is likely that Luke used a chiastically arranged parables source in the formation of his Journey to Jerusalem section, in which vv. 11–13 was matched with 17:7–10.<sup>13</sup> Luke had available both the Q form and that which came to him from his parables source, and he is likely to have been influenced by both.

Though Matthew has no equivalent to Luke 12:35–38, Weiser has shown that it is quite likely that a version of this material was present in Q.<sup>14</sup> In Luke’s chiastically arranged parables source, introduced above, this parable was matched by 16:1–13. Conceptual links between the two are evident, but verbal links are almost totally absent. Other matched parables in the postulated source have clear verbal links, but not this one. It seems likely that Luke has displaced the version that

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<sup>11</sup> See J. Sahlin’s case for the material representing an authentically Jewish ethic (“Die Früchte der Umkehr: Die ethische Verkündigung Johannes des Täufer nach Luke 3:10–14,” *ST* 1 [1948]: 55–68, at 55–59) and H. Schürmann’s identification of a set of non-Lukan word usages in the verses (*Das Lukasevangelium: Erster Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–9,50*, HTKNT 3.1 [Freiburg: Herder, 1969], 169 and n. 53).

<sup>12</sup> In Luke 9:57–62 Luke has three instances of would-be disciples, compared to the two found in Matt 8:18–22. Does this mean that Luke had a source with all three? Probably not: the material of Luke 9:61–2 could well have existed as an independent unit; and there are no particular reasons for suspecting a second source behind v. 57–60.

<sup>13</sup> See Nolland, *Luke*, 2:530–531, 699; cf. C. L. Blomberg, “Midrash, Chiasmus and the Outline of Luke’s Central Section,” in *Gospel Perspectives, Vol. 3. Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 217–261.

<sup>14</sup> A. Weiser, *Die Knechtsgleichnisse der synoptischen Evangelien*, SANT 29 (München: Kösel, 1971), 164–166; cf. Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas 11–24*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1984), 32; B. Kollmann, “Luke 12.35–38—ein Gleichnis der Logienquelle,” *ZNW* 81 (1990): 254–261. This is disputed e.g., by R. von Bendemann, *Zwischen ΔΟΧΑ und ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ. Eine exegetische Untersuchung der Texte des sogenannten Reiseberichts im Lukasevangelium*, BZNT 101 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 442.

stood in his parables source with that which he had from his Q source, but which Matthew did not directly use. So a Luke<sup>S</sup> parable has been displaced by a Q version, but Luke had access to both.

The healing on the Sabbath of a man with dropsy in Luke 14:1–6 is not paralleled in the other gospels, but v. 5 has a parallel in Matt 12:11, which Matthew has introduced (along with associated material in v. 12) into his version of Mark 3:1–6. Matt 12:11–12 must have come from a sabbath healing account. It is likely that Matthew had a version of Luke 14:1–6 at his disposal, and economized by introducing its main distinctive element (apart from the specific illness) into a related Markan account, rather than reproducing his source. We have no way of telling what other elements were common to Matthew's source form and the present Lukan form. So we cannot tell whether Luke 14:1–6 should be identified as Q material or whether it is a place of overlap between Q (or Matthew<sup>S</sup>) and Luke<sup>S</sup>.

Luke 14:16–21 is paralleled in Matt 22:1–10, but there is considerable dispute over whether Matthew and Luke received the parable in the same form. In the end we cannot be sure, but I have elsewhere made the following points.

(i) Most of the Matthean differences can be seen to accord with Matthean theological interests and redactional tendencies and so *could* be attributed to Matthean redaction. (ii) ...it is difficult to see how the Lukan form could come from anything like the Matthean form, and much easier to see how something like the Lukan form can have developed into the Matthean form (that the *Gospel of Thomas* form [64] is quite close to the Lukan form in most of its features, and [unusually] does not appear to be secondary to the Synoptic forms, adds support to this view). (iii) The very small amount of verbal agreement, combined with the very high level of Matthean intervention required for any assumption that Matthew began from a parable form close to Luke's, stands in favor of some pre-Matthean development. (iv) In the excursus "Journey to Jerusalem" it has been suggested that the present parable was part of a parables source available to Luke (however, since in the chiasmic structure, this parable is in the central position, the structure would in fact survive its omission).<sup>15</sup>

It is likely, then, that Luke had this parable in a different form from that found in Q, with the Luke<sup>S</sup> form closer to a more original form.

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<sup>15</sup> Nolland, *Luke*, 2:754 (for further support see 530–531, 755–758).

Luke has in Luke 15:3–7 a form of the parable of the lost sheep, as does Matthew in Matt 18:12–14. More original features seem to be shared between the two forms.<sup>16</sup> However, the three parables in Luke 15 in their present sequence seem to have been part of Luke’s (already mentioned) chiasmically arranged parables source, in which as a set they correspond to Luke 13:1–9. This functioning as a set suggests in turn that the three linked parables were already linked prior to incorporation into the parables source.<sup>17</sup> Matt 18:12–14 may be Q or Matthew<sup>s</sup>, but in either case Luke has the parable from a separate source.

It has been argued that Luke 17:3–4 is a truncated version of the Q form preserved in Matt 18:15–16a, 17,<sup>18</sup> but the more common view is that Matthew and Luke drew on different forms of this traditional piece. But since the additional material of the Matthean form is to be seen ultimately as an expansion of something closer to the Lukan form, Matthean redaction of a common form is also possible.<sup>19</sup>

The comparison with the days of Lot in Luke 17:28–9 sits in the midst of Q material concerned with the day of the coming of the Son of Humanity. Indeed, the verses form the second half of a diptych with the comparison in v. 26–7 to the days of Noah. V. 28–9 will not have existed apart from v. 26–7. But is it a Lukan formulation? Lack of any discernible Matthean motivation for deletion is regularly appealed to

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<sup>16</sup> Luke will be responsible for Luke 15:3 in connection with the framing he provides in v. 1–3 for the three linked parables. V. 6–7 represent an addition at the point of linkage with the parable of the lost coin, but v. 7 also reflects traditional material related to Matt 18:13 and probably even to v. 14. Matthew has dropped an equivalent to Luke 15:5, which, with an earlier form of Matt 18:13, would have involved a mini-chiasm marked by the verb sequence εὑρη (“he finds”)...εὐρὼν (“finding”)...χαίρων (“rejoicing”)...χαίρει (“he rejoices”). The main Matthean touches are likely to be τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; (“what do you think”)—see at 17:24; πλανηθῆ (“is led astray”) and subsequent uses of this verb—this fits with the “causing to stumble” language (the influence of Luke’s verb is evident in its use in Matt 18:14); the language expressing an open-ended outcome—this prepares for 18:15–21; ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν (“amen, I say to you”)—Matthew fond of the phrase (see at 5:18).

<sup>17</sup> There may be some tension between the Lukan setting, with its concern with the justification of Jesus’ behavior, and the note of shared joy which suits better an ecclesiastical setting. Cf. J. M. Nützel, *Jesus als Offenbarer Gottes nach den lukanischen Schriften*, FB 39 (Würzburg: Echter, 1980), 248–251.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., D. Catchpole, “Reproof and Reconciliation in the Q Community: A Study of the Tradition-History of Matt 18,15–17.21–22/Luke 17,3–4,” *SNTU* 8 (1983): 79–90.

<sup>19</sup> With U. Luz, *Matthew 8–20. A Commentary*, trans. J. E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 448–449, and F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas 3. Teilband: Lukas 15,1–19,27*, EKKNT 3.3 (Düsseldorf, Zürich, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger, Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 134.

as a basis for treating v. 28–9 as Lukan, but Matthew is often simply concerned to abbreviate; so there is no need to find any problem for Matthew in the materials. It is much more likely that Luke has reproduced his source than that, sensitive to the Jewish use together of these traditions of judgment, he has himself composed this fine companion piece for the Noachic flood material.<sup>20</sup> Though preserved only in Luke, these verses are best seen as part of the Q material, or they could indicate that there was a parallel Luke<sup>S</sup> form for the materials to which v. 28–9 are linked.

The parable in Luke 19:11–28 of the man who goes abroad to receive kingly power has an evident relationship to the parable of the talents in Matt 25:14–30. But royal rule is a feature only of the Lukan parable. A good case can be made that the Lukan parable has been produced, not by secondary development, but by merging together a parable like the one in Matthew with another that deals with the acquisition of royal rule: if we extract and fit together those parts of the parable that deal with royal rule, a more or less complete and coherent narrative emerges; and the allusions to Archelaus which are characteristic of these additions<sup>21</sup> and give quite a negative tone to the royal figure seem more likely to point to the boldness of Jesus than to Luke or the church tradition before him.<sup>22</sup> Who has done the merging? There is no definite parallel for such a role for Luke, though his role in the formation of Luke 12:35–38, and especially in the introduction of v. 37 there, may be suggestive.<sup>23</sup> The usefulness of the Luke 19:11–28 version for Luke argues in favor of attributing the merging of the parables to him. It is probably Luke who has merged a Q parable with another to produce what we find in Luke 19:11–28. But because there has been

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<sup>20</sup> Bovon, *Lukas 15,1–19,27*, 173, thinks that Luke 17:28–29 is pre-Lukan and already linked before Luke with v. 26–27.

<sup>21</sup> While the departure for a distant land to acquire kingship in Luke 19:12 could reflect a more general phenomenon (Herod the Great had gone to Rome to gain his title [Josephus, *War* 1.282–285; *Ant.* 14.374–389], as had Archelaus [*War* 2.14–100; *Ant.* 17.224–340]), there is a clear allusion in v. 14 to the delegation that sought to oppose the confirmation by Augustus of Archelaus as ruler of Judea (Josephus, *Ant.* 17.299–314).

<sup>22</sup> See M. Zerwick, “Die Parabel vom Thronanwärter,” *Bib* 40 (1959): 654–674; F. D. Wienert, “The Parable of the Throne Claimant (Luke 19:12, 14–15a, 27),” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 505–514; W. Resenhöfft, “Jesu Gleichnis von den Talenten, ergänzt durch die Lukas-Fassung,” *NTS* 26 (1979–80): 318–331; J. D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 103.

<sup>23</sup> See Nolland, *Luke*, 2:699, 701.



so much Lukan editing, it is not possible to distinguish between Luke's use of a Q parable and Matthew's and Luke's use of a parable preserved in both Matthew<sup>S</sup> and Luke<sup>S</sup>.<sup>24</sup> In any case, there is no need here to think of overlapping sources.

### 1.3.2. *Overlap with Mark*

We turn now to overlaps with Markan material. Luke has brought the Nazareth scene forward in his Gospel in order for it to serve as a front piece, encapsulating major features of the ministry of Jesus. But he has clearly had more material available to him than his Markan source offered: the mention of miracles in Capernaum in 4:23 must have a source explanation; the difficulties in the thought sequence (esp. v. 22 to 23, 23 to 24 and 24 to 25–27) suggest the welding together of various sources. Not all of the source material has a necessary connection with a visit of Jesus to Nazareth, but v. 23b certainly does, and it can have been transmitted only in the context of a report of a visit of Jesus to Nazareth. Since virtually nothing of the Markan wording survives in the Lukan text, there was not necessarily any significant verbal overlap between the Markan material and Luke's sources, but Luke certainly had at least one other account beyond Mark's of a visit of Jesus to Nazareth.

The Markan material has had a greater impact on Luke's account of the call of the fishermen in 5:1–11 than was the case with the Nazareth visit. Luke seems to have integrated features of Mark 1:16–20 and drawn on Mark 3:7, 9; 4:1 in producing his account. But with all likely Markan influence removed,<sup>25</sup> Luke's source account here will have had in common with Mark 1:16–20 a setting by the sea of Galilee, Peter and others who were fishermen, and a fresh destiny for Peter, in connection with Jesus, of fishing for people. As with the Nazareth account, there is no demonstrable verbal overlap, but there is a substantial material overlap.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Bovon, *Lukas 15,1–19,27*, 285–290, thinks that Matthew reproduces Q and Luke reproduces Luke<sup>S</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> See discussion in Nolland, *Luke 1:220*. The evident connection of Luke 5:8 with the theophany and call experienced by Isaiah (Isa 6) demands a resolution in terms of a call to serving God. F. Bovon, *L'évangile selon Saint Luc 1, 1–9, 50*, CNT 3a (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991), 223, thinks that the material could be Luke<sup>S</sup> or a floating tradition.

<sup>26</sup> Luke 5:39 is added by Luke to his rendering of Mark 2:21–22, but the catchword link and quite different point make it difficult to argue that Luke's source for the verse was already linked in his source to a version of Mark 2:21–22.

There is probably also quite a lot of Markan and Lukan influence on the wording of Luke 8:1–3. There is influence from Luke 4:43–44 (and behind that Mark 1:38–39), Mark 3:14 and possibly 15:41–42. But Luke 8:1–3 is kept from being primarily a rewrite of Mark 15:41–42 by the evident presence of additional tradition from which Luke has drawn, esp. Luke 9:2b–3a. The extent of overlap of Luke’s source with what is in Mark 15:41–42 is uncertain, but significant material overlap is possible and even reasonably likely: information about Mary Magdalene’s demons and about Joanna as the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, will have been transmitted in the context of awareness of the link between Jesus and these women.

Reid has argued the case for the Transfiguration account in Luke 9:28–36 reflecting a uniquely Lukan source.<sup>27</sup> His case has been heavily criticized by Miller, who prefers the view that Luke composed the distinctive material in Luke here.<sup>28</sup> But Miller concedes that his own view does not produce an entirely satisfactory explanation of the data. Reid’s case falls short of demonstration. But if in our wider framework of understanding we recognize the presence of considerably more oral and possibly even written material than can be concretely identified, we should be seeing the burden of proof rather differently: whenever we cannot produce an entirely satisfactory explanation of the data in terms of redaction by the evangelist, a source explanation should be considered possible and even likely, even when there is no basis for determining the scope or integrity of the putative source.<sup>29</sup>

It is widely recognized that there was a mission charge in Q and that this has had a major impact on the material in Luke 10:1–16 and Matt 9:37–10:42, and that there was a measure of overlap between this source and Mark 6:7–13. Since both Matthew and Luke are likely to have been influenced by the text of Mark 6:7–13, precise delineation of the degree of overlap is not possible. But in common will be at least a mission charge as such; restrictions on what is to be taken

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<sup>27</sup> B. E. Reid, *The Transfiguration: A Source and Redaction-Critical Study of Luke 9:28–36*, Cahiers de RB 32 (Paris: Gabalda, 1993). Reid mentions ten previous scholars who considered that Luke had access to a distinctive source for the Transfiguration.

<sup>28</sup> R. J. Miller, “Source Criticism and the Limits of Certainty: The Lukan Transfiguration as a Test Case,” *ETL* 74 (1998): 127–144. See also M. Mach, “Christus Mutans: Zur Bedeutung der Verklärung Jesu,” in *Messiah and Christos. Studies in the Jewish Origin of Christianity*, ed. I. Gruenwalds, S. Shaked, G. G. Stroumsa (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992), 177–198, who finds a Hebrew substratum.

<sup>29</sup> I fully recognize the discomfort for scholars in such an approach: the scholar’s natural desire to be in control is painfully undercut.

along; being received or not in houses, and the proper responses thereto.<sup>30</sup> A greater level of verbal commonality is quite possible, but not demonstrable.<sup>31</sup>

The version of the Lord's Prayer preserved in Luke 11:2–4 is generally treated as Q material. But this is one of the places where there is also wide recognition that the forms of this prayer as received respectively by Matthew (see Matt 6:9–13) and Luke were significantly different. Were the different versions embedded in an otherwise largely common form of Q, or are we to think in terms of transmission apart from Q? We cannot really tell, but the company the Lukan version keeps is Luke<sup>s</sup> and not Q material. Perhaps there was a Q version, but Luke also had another version. In any case, we are dealing with two source versions.<sup>32</sup>

Detailed argumentation is not possible here, but we need to free our consideration of the Lord's Prayer from being controlled by the idea that the gospel forms cannot owe anything to the intervention of the evangelists. This widespread judgment cuts right across the complex mix of conservative preservation of wording *and* adaptation and freedom of rendering that we actually observe in early Christian practice. The whole discussion of liturgical fragments in the NT epistles—no longer so active as it once was—is almost uniformly based on the assumption that when incorporated into the epistles these fragments were edited in various ways. Similarly, the canonical forms of Jesus' words at the Last Supper suggest quite a fluid liturgical use, probably combined with some intervention on the part of the evangelists themselves.

The extra elements in the Matthean form of the prayer are most likely to represent elaboration of the shorter and more original prayer form (Matt 6:10bc: "let your will come into effect—as in heaven, [so] also on earth"; v 13b: "instead, rescue us from [that which is] evil"). It is unclear whether the elaboration reflects liturgical use or is Matthean

<sup>30</sup> See discussion of sources in Nolland, *Luke*, 2:547–8.

<sup>31</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, AB 28–29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981–85), 1:83, is one of the scholars who identify Luke 10:25–28 as Luke<sup>s</sup>, but apart from Mark 10:17–22; 12:28–34 and the second source evident in the commonalities between Matt 22:34–40, Luke is likely to have only had a minimal original frame that already linked the following parable to the idea of "neighbor." See Nolland, *Luke* 2:580.

<sup>32</sup> Liturgical use is another possible source. See F. Bovon, *Évangile selon Saint Luc* 9,51–14,35, CNT 3b (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1996), 115–116.

or pre-Matthean editing in the context of a more elaborate document. But Luke will not be responsible for eliminating them from his form of the prayer. Matthew's longer opening ("Our Father in heaven") may, however, be more original than Luke's simple "Father," which is likely to be a secondary conforming of the mode of address to Jesus' own normal manner of addressing God. In the case of smaller differences, the Matthean wording seems more original.<sup>33</sup>

This piece of Luke<sup>s</sup>—if that is what it is—is paralleled by a Q or Matthew<sup>s</sup> form which is, overall, very similar.

Luke 12:35–38 has been treated above in relation to Q, but it also has an evident relationship with Mark 13:33–37. And the differences are very unlikely to be primarily Luke's work. Bauckham has identified a process of "deparabolization" that has broken down the original narrative (parable) structure.<sup>34</sup> There is a good measure of agreement that the Lukan form has developed in stages from a form closer to that of Mark 13:34–36, but which had a number of distinctive features: no mention of the journey or the role of any other servants beyond the doorkeeper; reference to the need to watch in the third person; numbered watches of the night (as in Luke).<sup>35</sup> What we seem to have here is material overlap, but very little verbal overlap of language. In the light of the earlier discussion of the relationship between Luke 12:35–38 and Q, we may now say that Luke actually had access to three distinct versions of this material.

The materials of Luke 19:41–44 are mostly quite distinctive, but in v. 44 the reference to no stone upon another is reminiscent of the same in Mark 13:2. But in which direction does the dependence run? Dupont's arguments retain their cogency for considering that the material in Mark 13:2 is drawn ultimately from a version of the tradition preserved in Luke 19:43b–44ab, rather than the other way around.<sup>36</sup> There is an overlap here between Luke<sup>s</sup> and Mark.

Luke's eschatological discourse in chapter 21 is clearly a version of Mark 13. Where the Lukan form is different, is Luke editing freely, or is he at times following an alternative source? The matter is disputed.

<sup>33</sup> For more details see Nolland, *Luke*, 2:610–611, 612–617.

<sup>34</sup> R. Bauckham, "Synoptic Parousia Parables and the Apocalyptic," *NTS* 23 (1977): 162–176, at 167–169.

<sup>35</sup> Well argued in Weiser, *Knechtsgleichnisse*, 161–174.

<sup>36</sup> J. Dupont, "Il n'en sera pas laissé pierre sur pierre (Marc 13,2; Luc 19,44)," *Bib* 52 (1971): 301–320.

If there is a second source, what is its scope? The maximal view finds traces of a second source covering the material of Luke 21:5–7, 10–15, 18–20, 21b–26a, 28–31, 34–6, but this maximal view is linked with a Proto-Luke hypothesis, and requires a Proto-Luke version of the eschatological chapter which is not dependent on Mark 13. If we start instead from a concern to identify material that goes beyond Mark 13 material and where the content is not significantly Lukan, a generous list might include v. 11, 18, 21b–22, 23b, 24–26a, 28, 34–6. A less generous list might exclude v. 11, 21b, 25a, and a less generous list again might exclude v. 22, 28, 34–6. But if such a source existed, it must have been a self-sufficient eschatological discourse in its own right. It is perhaps best to think in terms of an additional eschatological discourse of limited scope and embracing something like v. (9a).<sup>37</sup> 11b (from “there will be terrors”), 18, 20 (included as a necessary center of coherence) 21b, 22, 23b, (24), (25a), (25b), 26a, 28.<sup>38</sup> (I have bracketed those elements which are less secure in the postulated source.) Of course, once we have this much, it is possible that there was rather more in the source of material common with Mark 13. But what we have in any case is a discourse that has the same overall shape as its Markan parallel. The Luke<sup>s</sup> version of the Eschatological Discourse has not undergone what one might suspect to have been the secondary rewriting in Danielic idiom of the Mark 13 form (perhaps inspired by an original Danielic link for only Mark 13:26), but it covers much of the same ground.

The Luke<sup>s</sup> source identified here, with its partial overlap and general parallel with Mark 13, also has some commonality with the Q source behind Luke 17:22–37. Luke has recognized the parallel with Mark 13 by drawing into Luke 17:31 the material of Mark 13:15 (subsequently dropping it from the material he uses in Luke 21). And, as argued by Kloppenborg,<sup>39</sup> Matthew is likely to have had yet another eschatological source represented in 24:10, 12, 30, 31, since *Did.* 16.3–6 has materials that parallel these verses and the *Didache* materials are striking in their lack of correspondence with any of the Markan clauses. There

<sup>37</sup> The possible inclusion of Luke 21:9 is based on what is likely to be a set of allusions to Jer 51: an allusion to v. 46 in Luke 21:9 (better preserved in Mark 13:7 than in Luke’s text); to v. 45 in Luke 21:21b; to v. 55 in Luke 21:25b; and possibly to v. 48 in Luke 21:25–26.

<sup>38</sup> See further Nolland, *Luke*, 3:984, as well as the points at which each of the listed verses here is discussed.

<sup>39</sup> J. S. Kloppenborg, “Didache 16.6–8 and Special Matthean Tradition,” *ZNW* 70 (1979): 54–56.

is also a likelihood that Matt 10:23 is the outcropping of another form of the Eschatological Discourse (of uncertain but perhaps limited scope) known to Matthew (v. 23 concludes a section of material paralleled in Mark 13:9–13). Matt 10:23 may well be part of the same source as that identified by Kloppenborg. It is notable that the verse comes immediately after what is clearly a version of Mark 13:9–13. Once again there is a measure of overlap, recognizable similarity, and comparable overall shape.

The Luke<sup>S</sup> eschatological source exhibits patterns of similarity and overlap with no less than three other eschatological discourses.

For the passion narrative, Luke clearly makes use of his Markan source, but there has been considerable debate about whether he has available a second continuous passion narrative (as distinct from access to isolated additional items of tradition). I have elsewhere offered a case for the definite existence of such a source.<sup>40</sup> A second Lukan source first becomes visible in 22:15–20, is uncertain for v. 21–23, is clear for v. 24–30, 31–34, 35–8, likely for v. 39–46, 47–54a, 54b–62, clear for v. 63–64, likely for v. 66–71; 23:1–5, quite possible for v. 6–12, uncertain for v. 13–16, likely for v. 18–25, very likely for v. 26–32, likely for v. 33–34,<sup>41</sup> unlikely for v. 35–38, very likely for v. 39–43, quite possible for v. 46–47 in the unit v. 44–49, and possible for v. 50–56. There is of course no guarantee that all of this came to Luke from a single source, but the sheer quantity involved makes a second continuous passion source for Luke almost certain.<sup>42</sup> As was the case with the multiple version of the eschatological discourse, there is recognizable similarity and a comparable overall shape.<sup>43</sup>

In 24:12, Luke has Peter running to the tomb. The authenticity of the verse has been disputed because of its absence in D and its similarity to elements in John 20:3–10. But Luke 24:12 is found in every other textual witness including p<sup>75</sup>, and it is clear that in Luke 24 the Western

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<sup>40</sup> Summarised in Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1023, and detailed in the later discussion there of the various passages.

<sup>41</sup> Despite R. W. Hoover, "Selected Special Lukan Material in the Passion Narrative: Luke 23.33–34, 47b–49," *Forum* 1.1 (1998): 119–127, who considers the verses he discusses as Lukan editing of Mark.

<sup>42</sup> In many cases the second source seems to have some link with Johannine tradition, but not in a manner that provides support for literary dependence in either direction.

<sup>43</sup> Even those who are not persuaded by the case for a second Passion Narrative available to Luke must recognize that Luke is drawing on tradition at key points where his account differs from Mark, e.g., Luke 22:15–20, 24–30.

text has been concerned to be as short as possible and has abbreviated quite a bit out of the text. As for the link with John, there are many points at which the text of Luke has distinctive links with Johannine material, so in a text-critical discussion too much should not be made of the link here. The reading in p<sup>75</sup> has led to a reevaluation of the authenticity of Luke 24:12 and there seems now to be a broad consensus that the verse is original.<sup>44</sup>

If the verse is original, is it free Lukan composition or does Luke draw upon a source? If John had access to Luke, the similarities here with John have no source significance for Luke 24:12. I think they do have such a significance, but I cannot defend here the view that John did not make use of Luke, but that both drew on a shared body of tradition. It is F. Neiryck who has argued the case in greatest detail for free Lukan composition of Luke 24:12, with Johannine use of Luke.<sup>45</sup> Neiryck is likely to be right that Luke sets the experience of the women in parallel with that of Peter, but if this is so, it is hard to believe that in free Lukan composition Luke would not have provided a more obvious vocabulary overlap between his paralleled episodes. Neiryck struggles to account for the historic present βλέπει (“he sees”), which is surprising in Luke and is best seen as a source relic. Since nothing that is Lukan in Luke 24:12 is carried over to John’s rendering, it is altogether more likely that they have drawn on a common tradition (closer to Luke’s form, but possibly with company for Peter [cf. the plural of v. 24]).

But if Luke has a tradition for 24:12, what will its scope have been? G. Claudel has offered significant arguments for believing that the tradition of the Petrine visit always existed in connection with that of the women’s visit to the tomb.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, Luke 24:12 cannot have been transmitted without a linkage to something that would provide motivation for Peter’s visit to the tomb (even his hurried visit to the tomb). The only obvious candidate is an account of the women’s experience at the tomb. So it is likely that, although there is no clear trace of a

<sup>44</sup> See esp. the considerations adduced by J. Muddiman, “A Note on Reading Luke xxiv.12,” *ETL* 48 (1972): 542–548.

<sup>45</sup> See esp. F. Neiryck, “The Uncorrected Historic Present in Lk. xxiv. 12,” *ETL* 48 (1972): 548–553; idem, “παρακύψας βλέπει,” *ETL* 53 (1977): 113–152; idem, “ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς ἑαυτὸν: Lc 24,12 et Jn 20,10,” *ETL* 54 (1978): 104–118; idem, “John and the Synoptics: the Empty Tomb Stories,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 161–187.

<sup>46</sup> G. Claudel, *La confession de Pierre: Trajectoire d'une péripécie évangélique*, *Études bibliques NS* 10 (Paris: Gabalda, 1988), 80–81.

second non-Markan source in Luke 24:1–9, Luke's tradition for Luke 24:12 was already linked to just such a source. Some of the features which can fairly readily be accounted for as Lukan redaction in v. 1–11 may actually point to influence from this second source. Here, Luke<sup>s</sup> is likely to have had a significant material overlap with the Markan source.

### 1.3.3. *Overlap with Matthew<sup>s</sup>*

It is a matter of definition whether one should include here the Q material that seems to have reached Matthew in rather different form than it reached Luke. The two forms of the Lord's Prayer have already been discussed above, but the issue becomes acute in relation to quite a bit of the material in the Sermon on the Mount. Both Matthew and Luke have been quite active editors in relation to these materials, and it is difficult to find the line between differences based on editorial intervention on the part of the evangelists and differences that pre-date the evangelists' work. Materials incorporated into Luke's Sermon on the Plain which also appear in Matt 5–7 can with some confidence be attributed to a document shared between Matthew and Luke, no matter how great the differences were between the forms of the document of which each made use. But outside this frame it is frequently not really possible to distinguish between material coming from Matthew<sup>s</sup> in one form and Luke<sup>s</sup> in another, and material coming from different recensions of a Q document (or even Q documents?).

The beatitudes in Matthew (5:3–12) and the beatitudes in Luke (6:20–26) count as Q material, but the source forms for Matthew and Luke seem to have been radically different.

It is likely that the Matthean beatitudes have a complex prehistory. Luke knows only four beatitudes, balanced by four woes (Luke 6:20–26). Matthew has nine, the first, second, fourth and ninth of which match the Lukan beatitudes (with the order inverted for the second and fourth). There is a reasonable scholarly consensus that Luke's first three are the core beatitudes and also that the divergences between the present forms are not all to be attributed to the respective evangelists.

I think it most likely that Luke's fourth beatitude formed an original unity with the fourth woe (poetic antithetical parallelism), and that it was the linking of this fourth beatitude to the original three which caused the separation of the woe and inspired the formation of the other three woes. Matthew's eighth beatitude, probably inspired by the



ninth, would make best sense if it was created to complete a set (note the repetition in the eighth of the second clause of the first beatitude and the clear formal difference of the ninth beatitude), but a set of seven seems more likely than a set of eight. This in turn suggests that the formation of the eighth predates the inclusion of one (most likely the third) of the present set, and is therefore pre-Matthean.

So Matthew and Luke are likely to have access to very different forms of these materials in the context of their Q documents. But the situation is likely to be one step more complex yet: Matthew's sermon may, in turn, have been influenced by the Lukan woes. There is some evidence that either the composition of the woes reflects knowledge of material in the Sermon on the Mount not found in the present Lukan text, or that the Matthean text shows acquaintance with the woes. Jas 5:1 seems to reflect an awareness of the woes; given other elements of a shared world between James and Matthew, this might support a Matthean acquaintance with the woes. Luke 6:21b uses *κλαίω* ("weep") in a rather different manner from Luke's other uses of this verb: it is used here in connection with the afflictions of the poor in a manner reminiscent of Pss 125 [126]:6; 136 [137]:1. This suggests a source usage. And this in turn suggests that Matthew's use of *πενθέω* ("mourn") in the corresponding beatitude in Matt 5:4 may well draw its verb from the corresponding Lukan woe.<sup>47</sup>

It looks as if Matthew had at his disposal two forms of the beatitudes, and that while he has primarily used and edited the longer form, he was also attentive to the other form and was specifically influenced by it in at least one place. Each of these forms had its own complex history of development, which suggests a significant period of development. Perhaps there was a common source origin later than the historical Jesus, but a set of three fits well into a natural oral rhetoric, and poverty, hunger and weeping make a striking and a natural set. It is notable that despite the complex history of development, each of the developed sources remains solidly rooted in the common core and preserves its essential thrust.

Though both Luke and Matthew begin their Gospels with an infancy account, there is no common episode between the two accounts. Given the difficulties of harmonization, it seems quite unlikely that either

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<sup>47</sup> See Nolland, *Luke*, 1:280–281, 284. Bovon, *Luc 1*, 1–9, 50, 290–291, is content with a shared Q form.

account has been produced with an awareness of the other. It seems reasonable, therefore, that special weight should be given to the basic agreement that exists between the two accounts. I give the agreements in the words of Fitzmyer.<sup>48</sup>

- (i) Jesus' birth is related to the reign of Herod (Luke 1:5; Matt 2:1);
- (ii) Mary, his mother to be, is a virgin engaged to Joseph, but they have not yet come to live together (Luke 1:27, 34; 2:5; Matt 1:18);
- (iii) Joseph is of the house of David (Luke 1:27; 2:4; Matt 1:16, 20);
- (iv) An angel from heaven announces the coming birth of Jesus (Luke 1:28–30; Matt 1:20–21);
- (v) Jesus is recognized himself to be a son of David (Luke 1:32; Matt 1:1);
- (vi) His conception is to take place through the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; Matt 1:18, 20);
- (vii) Joseph is not involved in the conception (Luke 1:34; Matt 1:18–25);
- (viii) The name "Jesus" is imposed by heaven prior to his birth (Luke 1:31; Matt 1:21);
- (ix) The angel identifies Jesus as "Savior" (Luke 2:11; Matt 1:21);
- (x) Jesus is born after Mary and Joseph come to live together (Luke 2:4–7; Matt 1:24–25);
- (xi) Jesus is born at Bethlehem (Luke 2:4–7; Matt 2:1);
- (xii) Jesus settles, with Mary and Joseph, in Nazareth in Galilee (Luke 2:39, 51; Matt 2:22–23).

There is a remarkable material overlap here between Luke<sup>S</sup> and Matthew<sup>S</sup>, which is the more significant because there is no trace of any commonality of source material standing behind any of the agreements.

#### 1.3.4. Summary

So what may we conclude about the scope of Luke<sup>S</sup> and its overlap with other gospel sources? I have suggested that we need to reimagine the likely scope of Luke<sup>S</sup>. What we can recover of the scope of Luke<sup>S</sup> with any reasonable confidence is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg. I have wanted to suggest the likely existence of quite a body of

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<sup>48</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:307. And cf. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: a commentary on the infancy narratives in the gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 158–163. In connection with identifying the Infancy material legend-of-heroes material, Bovon, *Luc 1, 1–9, 50*, 48–49, considers the infancy material late and legendary. W. Radl, *Der Ursprung Jesu. Traditionsgechichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas 1–2* (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), identifies extensive source material, but is less confident about historicity.

extra Luke<sup>s</sup> to which we can have no access, but which has impacted on Luke's telling of the story of Jesus (both in cases where Luke has material in common with another gospel, and where he does not), and whose existence provides, not in particular cases but in an overall manner, multiple source support in relation to assessing the general historical reliability of Lukan reporting.

Moving beyond these general considerations it has been possible to identify multiple attestation in connection with overlap of sources with Q material, Markan material and Matthew<sup>s</sup> material for considerable quantities of Luke<sup>s</sup> material, or if not multiple attestation, evidence that elements of Luke<sup>s</sup> came to Luke already linked with material that is paralleled in another gospel. Quite a proportion of Luke<sup>s</sup> turns out either to belong to the multiply attested material of the gospels, or at least to have come to Luke in close connection with material that is multiply attested. Multiple attestation is no guarantee of historicity, and keeping close company with multiply attested material is even less so. But multiple attestation and close linkage in a source with multiply attested material both make historicity more likely.<sup>49</sup> And both encourage the consideration of Luke<sup>s</sup> as mainstream source material and not as marginal material of secondary significance.

We turn our attention now to that visible part of Luke<sup>s</sup> which has not been caught up in the present section as involving overlap with other gospel sources.

#### 1.4. *The Remainder of Visible Luke<sup>s</sup>*

Reminding ourselves that we can do little with the likely Luke<sup>s</sup> material that has left no certain mark on the gospel text, we deal now with the Luke<sup>s</sup> materials that have not been caught in the web of overlapping sources discussed above. The three big categories of remaining material are materials connected with the risen Jesus (41 verses)<sup>50</sup> and the infancy of John the Baptist (54 verses),<sup>51</sup> and parables material

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<sup>49</sup> In the case of extended sources, e.g., for the Eschatological Discourse and the Passion Narrative, there is no way to be sure about whether some of the individual items which are distinctive to Luke came from the connected source or were added into it by Luke, but the very existence of these parallel sources makes it more likely that particular distinctive features of the Lukan versions are from his sources.

<sup>50</sup> Luke 24:13–35, 36–43, 44–9, 50–53.

<sup>51</sup> Luke 1:1–25, 39–44, 57–80.

(between about 143 and 166 verses).<sup>52</sup> The remaining material (73 to 85 verses) is predominantly narrative. Three of the five new miracles attributed to Jesus in Luke<sup>S</sup> are found here.<sup>53</sup> There is very little teaching, though admittedly much of the narrative contains or implies some small teaching content. In only a few cases (amounting to nine verses in all) is the teaching content at all detachable from its narrative frame.<sup>54</sup>

Inevitably, discussion of the resurrection appearances is heavily influenced by conscious and unconscious presuppositions on the part of scholars. Building on the work of Meynet,<sup>55</sup> I have argued elsewhere that the Emmaus account is presented in Luke as part of a more elaborate chiasmic structure running from 24:4–46 (48).<sup>56</sup> I have argued, further, that Luke is responsible for the reach of the chiasm beyond the Emmaus account and that he has also altered the Emmaus chiasm to include within the structure materials he has added to this account.<sup>57</sup> The implication is that Luke has drawn on a single source for most of the Emmaus account; he has not been engaged in some flight of fancy. The appearance scene in v. 36–43, 44–49 has various links to other gospel traditions. V. 36–41 have a strong link with Jn 20:19–20, and for Luke 24:47–49 the links with Jn 20:21–23 are notable. This has source significance only if, as I think, John is not drawing on Luke (or *vice versa*).<sup>58</sup> Matt 28:16–20 has significant links with Luke 24:41, 47, (49), 52, which—barring dependence of either Luke and Matthew on the other evangelist—provides some assurance that Luke

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<sup>52</sup> Should the account of Simon, Jesus and the woman of the city (Luke 7:36–50) be included in part or in whole? How do we count in the parable of the man who went away to receive kingly power (19:11–27), given the likelihood that Luke has merged two parables here, one a Q parable? Otherwise, the materials are 10:29–37; 11:5–8; 12:16–21; 13:6–9; 14:7–14, 28–33; 15:8–10, 11–32; 16:1–13, 19–31; 17:7–10; 18:1–8, 9–14.

<sup>53</sup> Luke 7:11–17; 13:10–17; 17:11–17.

<sup>54</sup> The most readily detachable are Luke 10:17–20 (Satan's fall); 12:32 ("Fear not, little flock"), 47–48 (graduated beatings); 17:20–21 (how the kingdom comes).

<sup>55</sup> R. Meynet, "Comment établir un chiasme: À propos des 'pèlerins d'Emmaüs,'" *NRT* 100 (1978): 233–249. Meynet builds in turn on J. D'Arc, *Les pèlerins d'Emmaüs* Lire la Bible 47 (Paris: Cerf, 1977); idem, "Un grand jeu d'inclusions dans 'les pèlerins d'Emmaüs,'" *NRT* 99 (1977): 62–76.

<sup>56</sup> Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1177–1178.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1198–1199. Notably, Luke 24:28–30 is likely to be a Lukan addition, balanced in the chiasm by expansion at v. 17–19a.

<sup>58</sup> See further on the source independence of John 20:19–20 and Luke 24:36–41 at Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1210–11.

is drawing on traditional material. In the resurrection appearance material, the Lukan hand is well visible, but so is an extensive tradition base: distinctive tradition; Johannine tradition; Matthew<sup>s</sup> tradition.

The materials connected with the infancy of John the Baptist pose their own distinctive problems for historical evaluation. But it is worth saying that there is considerable similarity to the manner in which Luke reports John's infancy and that of Jesus, and that in the case of Jesus' infancy the main outlines are supported by the independent account in Matthew (despite there being no common episode between the two—see above).

Though questions have been raised in relation to particular parables and there is a broad recognition of development within some of the parables, parables material is generally considered by scholarship to be among the materials that can with greatest confidence be attributed to the historical Jesus. Goulder<sup>59</sup> mounted a brief but powerful attack on this consensus, arguing that only the Markan parables are likely to be parables of the historical Jesus. Goulder demonstrated that the parables in Luke and Matthew shared certain family characteristics that separated them from the parables of the other gospels. He also underlined the fact that the parables in the respective gospels stress the same doctrinal content that can be found elsewhere in each gospel. But does this make Matthew and Luke the parable makers of their respective Gospels? It remains more likely—and on this there is a strong scholarly consensus—that in the vast majority of cases, the parables originated with the historical Jesus, developed through use in the church's life, were selected by the respective evangelists in line with their own overall gospel intentions, and were edited by the evangelists to maximize their effectiveness within those overall gospel intentions. The Lukan parables source discussed earlier would seem to have contained nearly all of the distinctive Lukan parables.

The historicity of all three distinctive miracle accounts found in Luke<sup>s</sup> has come under serious attack, though all relate to kinds of miracles that are attested elsewhere in the gospel materials (raising the dead; cleansing from leprosy; healing on the Sabbath).<sup>60</sup> The restoration of the widow of Nain's son is curiously similar to an account of Apollonius' restoration of a young woman who had died soon after

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<sup>59</sup> M. D. Goulder, "Characteristics of the Parables in the Several Gospels," *JTS* 19 (1968): 51–69.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Mark 5:21–43; 1:40–45; 3:1–6.

her wedding.<sup>61</sup> In both cases, the wonder-worker stops the bier, speaks about the cessation of tears, and addresses the dead person. This correspondence, and the evident links with the account of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8–24), have caused some to question the historicity of the Lukan account. But a common subject matter, a common milieu in the storyteller's art, and a shared desire to exalt a great figure are enough to account for the similarities to the Apollonius account, and while echoes of 1 Kgs 17 are certainly evident, they are only echoes, and could not have generated the story. There are difficulties with the form of the healing account in 13:10–17, but none that the identification of likely Lukan editing cannot deal with.<sup>62</sup> The situation is similar for the account of the cleansing of the lepers in 17:11–19. The echo of the healing of Naaman in 2 Kgs 5:9–19 is evident; for Luke 17:16, there has probably been borrowing from 5:12; and there are other elements that might represent development of the story.<sup>63</sup>

Within the scope of the present chapter, the remaining items must be left largely uncommented on. There is the genealogy, so different to that in Matthew; several distinctive judgment-related pieces;<sup>64</sup> one "anti"-judgment item;<sup>65</sup> one distinctive anticipation of the Passion;<sup>66</sup> three brief accounts involving a pronouncement by Jesus;<sup>67</sup> one detached pronouncement;<sup>68</sup> and finally two or three unique episodes with named participants.<sup>69</sup> There is nothing here, perhaps with the exception of the genealogy, that is particularly troubling in relation to historical likelihood, though in some cases Christian reflection or expansion might well be suspected.

Though ultimately historical evaluation must still take place item by item, there is nothing in the remainder of visible Luke<sup>S</sup> that we have now scrutinized that should trouble us about the quality of the Luke<sup>S</sup> source material.

We turn our attention now to the Jesus material in Acts.

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<sup>61</sup> Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, 4.45.

<sup>62</sup> See Nolland, *Luke*, 2:722–3.

<sup>63</sup> See further Nolland, *Luke*, 2:844–5.

<sup>64</sup> Luke 10:17–20 (Satan's fall); 12:47–48 (graduated beatings); 12:13–15 ("Who made me judge or arbitrator?"); 13:1–5 ("Were they worse sinners?").

<sup>65</sup> Luke 9:51–56 (no fire from heaven).

<sup>66</sup> Luke 13:31–33 ("today, tomorrow and the third day").

<sup>67</sup> Luke 9:61–62 (saying goodbye first); 16:14–15 (those who justify themselves); 17:20–21 (how the kingdom comes).

<sup>68</sup> Luke 12:32 ("Fear not, little flock").

<sup>69</sup> Luke 10:38–42 (Mary and Martha); 19:1–10 (Zacchaeus); and possibly 7:36–50 (Simon and the woman who anoints Jesus).

2. *Acts*

In relation to the study of the historical Jesus, the resources in Acts are quite slender. Not that there is not considerable reference to the historical Jesus in Acts.<sup>70</sup> But there are limitations. The first limitation is the restricted scope of the material: in relation to Jesus' ministry prior to the Passion period there is only 1:1, 21–22a; 2:22; 10:37–39a; (19:4); 20:35. The last is a saying of Jesus, unreported in the Gospel; otherwise, we learn only that Jesus taught, was active from the time of John's baptizing activity, started his ministry in Galilee, was known as Jesus of Nazareth, was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, and attested by God with deeds of power, wonders and signs (articulated from another angle as doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil).

This takes us to the second limitation: the summary nature of the material. Most of the material referring back to Jesus focuses on the Passion period and beyond. Rather more information is provided than was the case with the ministry materials, but we are basically told the "that" and not much of the "how." All that is reported in any detail is the last teaching of the risen Jesus and his ascension (1:4–11). Otherwise we learn that Judas, one of the Twelve, was a guide for those who arrested Jesus; Jesus was given up according to God's plan; the Jerusalem Jews with their leaders, though they found no cause for a sentence of death, asked Pilate to have Jesus killed; they asked for a murderer rather than Jesus, when Pilate would have released him; Herod also was implicated in Jesus' death; Jesus was crucified by the hands of "lawless men"; he was laid in a tomb; God raised him from death on the third day; he appeared for many days to his disciples; he was taken up and exalted to the right hand of God as Lord, Christ, leader, savior.

The third limitation has to do with the fact that almost all of this material is embedded by Luke in speeches. The debate continues about the degree to which the speeches are Lukan compositions. But there is

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<sup>70</sup> So far as I can discover, W. A. Strange, "The Jesus-Tradition in Acts," *NTS* 46 (2000): 75–91, is the only recent study of the material. There is relevant narrative material, mostly in quite summary form, in Acts 1:1–3, 4–11 (not included by Strange), 16, 21–2; 2:22–40; 3:12–26; 4:10–12, 27; 5:29–32; 7:52; 10:36–43; 12:23–41; 17:30–31; 19:4; 26:22–3; and there is probably an allusion to a saying of Jesus in 6:14, a report of words of the exalted Jesus in 9:5–6 (cf. 22:8, 16), and a reported saying of the historical Jesus in 20:35.

enough commonality between speeches of different characters and a sufficient degree of good fit with the flow and thrust of Luke's story to make any claim that these are verbatim reports highly questionable.<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, it is intrinsically likely that Luke was familiar with the use by Christians of overall outlines of the life of Jesus. Indeed, such outlines would have been in use from the earliest period. And there is every likelihood that these have influenced Luke as he has formulated the various summaries to be found in Acts. Also, the summaries are linked to interpretations of the significance of the events, often in connection with Old Testament texts. And these will not be fresh creations on the part of Luke. The curious syntax in Acts 10:36–37 still troubles scholars; a source might be implicated. Perhaps the way Herod's role is handled in Acts 4:27 is sufficiently different from how it is handled in Luke 23:6–12 to suggest a different track of transmission.

The consideration adduced in the previous paragraph can take us a certain distance, but in relation to the Jesus material it is hard to see how, for the most part, it could ever be possible to distinguish in specific cases between Lukan use of traditional material for the speeches in Acts and Lukan summary of what has already been provided in the Gospel. However, though the value of yet another source or set of sources is not to be understated, we learn virtually nothing that is new from the Acts material. Since Luke is most distinctive in relation to the ascension (and his two accounts are themselves strikingly different), it would be particularly good to have an independent track of transmission here, but we cannot be certain about this.<sup>72</sup> There is also the distinctive material on the role of Herod in the Passion. Otherwise, the Acts materials reflect the basic synoptic outline.

The saying in Acts 20:35 belongs in a category apart. The Greek and Roman parallels to which Foakes Jackson and Lake have drawn attention<sup>73</sup> hardly justify the judgment by Haenchen and Horrell that Luke

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<sup>71</sup> A balanced summary and evaluation, and a useful bibliography may be found in J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 103–108, 111–113.

<sup>72</sup> It is very difficult to decide what Luke may have had in the way of sources for the formation of his ascension accounts, but Luke has certainly not invented the idea of Jesus' ascension to heaven (John 20:17; Eph 4:10; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:22; Heb 4:14; 6:19; 9:24). See further Nolland, *Luke*, 3:1225–6.

<sup>73</sup> F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part 1, The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Macmillan, 1933), 5:264.



is the creator.<sup>74</sup> As Strange points out, the saying does not fit its use in Acts particularly well. The saying is best considered traditional; but that does not necessarily make it dominical. It accords well enough with other gospel sayings to make it reasonably likely to be traceable to the historical Jesus, but with the existence of Greek and Roman parallels, confidence in a track back to the historical Jesus will be only as great or small as is the wider confidence of the individual scholar in the commitment to and capability of the early church for faithful preservation of dominical sayings.

There is little in Acts concerning Jesus for which we may demonstrate separate sources. Influence from early Christian usage of outlines of the career of Jesus cannot be demonstrated as certain, but it is very likely. Apart from Acts 20:35, there is virtually nothing new about Jesus in Acts, and thus nothing that could change our overall picture of the historical Jesus. But there is also little that could be confidently appealed to as independent testimony.

We turn finally to a consideration of the likely reliability of the evangelist as historian.

### 3. *Luke as Historian*

It has become clear above that Luke does not take us in wild and aberrant directions in his portrayal of Jesus: his Jesus, and more specifically the Jesus of Luke<sup>s</sup> and Acts, is identifiably the same figure that can be discerned from other early Christian sources;<sup>75</sup> and the general quality of his Luke<sup>s</sup> material is supported from the fact that so much of Luke<sup>s</sup> has a partial parallel elsewhere, or came to Luke already linked with material paralleled elsewhere. Luke wrote in a context within which we should imagine a plethora of Jesus material, which both resourced and constrained his writing.

There is no scholarly consensus about the date(s) of Luke's writing; scholarly estimates range from before 70 CE to well into the second

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<sup>74</sup> E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1971), 545 n. 5; D. Horrell, "The Lord Commanded...but I have Not Used. Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on 1 Cor 9.14–15," *NTS* 43 (1997): 587–603, at 598–599.

<sup>75</sup> It can be said, further, that when Luke reproduces source material, he does quite a bit of verbal rewriting, but he is to be identified overall as a conservative editor. See Nolland, *Luke*, *passim*.

century. But if the “we” sections of Acts<sup>76</sup> are an indication that the author was a sometime companion of Paul, then we can link his acquaintance with the early Christian traditions back to early in the 50’s CE. Scholars offer various alternative explanations, but it must be said that none of them would carry much weight, if it were not the case that these scholars have already ruled out on other grounds what remains the most natural explanation for the uses of “we”: the author was there. The “other grounds” focus centrally on differences between the Paul of the letters and the Paul of Acts.<sup>77</sup> There are differences; but only for an exaggeratedly Lutheran Paul is it impossible to put the two Pauls together.<sup>78</sup> The best explanation for the “we” passages is that Luke was there,<sup>79</sup> and this suggests an early acquaintance with the Jesus tradition, including an acquaintance with eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus.

In Acts, Luke exhibits detailed and accurate knowledge of the state of affairs in the Roman Empire in the period in which his work is set. There is debate about his accuracy on some particular points, but if there are errors, they are the kinds of errors that we might readily find in someone like Josephus, whose work is a mainstay for our historical reconstruction of the period.<sup>80</sup> Luke, where he can be checked, exhibits a high level of general verisimilitude. His presentation of the Christian story may be somewhat schematized to fit the overall pattern of development that structures his account (the same is true for the Gospel account), but he is dealing with events he knows about, and he reports

<sup>76</sup> See Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16 (and some texts of 11:28).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), xlv, “Against this conclusion the only substantial argument consists in the errors found in the Acts account of Paul.”

<sup>78</sup> The sharp point of difficulty comes in Acts 15, and in particular Paul’s agreement to its decree.

<sup>79</sup> See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 109–111, for bibliography. He also (98–103) summarizes the argument for “we” as indicating personal presence. See further D.-A. Koch, “Kollektenbericht, ‘Wir’-Bericht und Itinerar: Neue (?) Überlegungen zu einem alten Problem,” *NTS* 45 (1999): 367–390; A. J. M. Wedderburn, “The ‘We’-Passages in Acts: On the Horns of a Dilemma,” *ZNW* 93 (2002): 78–98; S. Byrskog, “History or Story in Acts—A Middle Way? The *We* Passages, Historical Intertexture and Oral History,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse in the Argumentation of the New Testament*, SBLSymS 20 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2003), 257–283.

<sup>80</sup> Notably, there is debate about whether Luke has the sequence right with Theudas and Judas the Galilean in Acts 5:36–37, but an equally good case can be made for querying Josephus’ sequencing in this case.

them with considerable care. Nearly all New Testament scholars continue to depend heavily upon Acts to provide the backbone for their reconstruction of Paul's ministry. Luke's general reliability offers confidence that he is reliable also in those cases where no independent check is possible.

While it is highly rhetorical, Luke's own claim in Luke 1:1–4 should not be dismissed as *only* rhetorical. He points to a widespread practice in his day of creating written accounts of the gospel events (not just the surviving Mark and the postulated Q!); he links these and his own material, at least indirectly, to eyewitness informants; he claims to have undertaken extensive investigation; he offers his work as a true account. The last of this set is the language of intention, but we should honor it as a mark of honest intention.<sup>81</sup> On the other points, he is providing information that should frame our own attempts to evaluate the historicity of his Jesus material.

#### 4. Conclusion

Our work here has been concerned primarily with the question whether the general historical reliability of the Luke<sup>s</sup> and Acts material should be compared favorably or unfavorably with that of other potential sources for reconstructing the historical Jesus. At the end, we are in a position to suggest a favorable comparison, and even more: the fact that Luke has used Mark and Q so extensively should increase our confidence in them as historical sources.

We have seen that the scope of Luke<sup>s</sup> is likely to have been much greater than is normally appreciated; that much of it is likely to have consisted of parallels to Mark which are no longer definitely identifiable, Q or other Luke<sup>s</sup> materials (multiple attestation which is no longer visible!); that for considerable quantities of the readily identifiable Luke<sup>s</sup> material there is multiple attestation in connection with overlap of sources with Q material, Markan material and Matthew<sup>s</sup> material, or if not multiple attestation, evidence that elements of Luke<sup>s</sup> came to Luke already linked with material paralleled in another gospel. Even the material not swept up into this pattern of overlapping sources has,

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. L. Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and Genre in Acts," *NTS* 44 (1998): 380–399, at 399: "Within the epistemological space created by Luke's preface... there is no real room for doubt as to the broadly factual status of his narrative."

for the most part, good general claims to reliability. Luke<sup>s</sup> is thoroughly mainstream gospel source material.

I have suggested that Acts is likely to reflect the use of further source materials, for the most part of a summary kind, but for the historical Jesus, Acts scarcely takes us beyond what is already found in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke's general accuracy finds support in the high level of verisimilitude evident in Acts. There is good reason to think that Luke was in touch with Jesus traditions from at least the early 50's CE, that he was in contact with eyewitnesses, and that he wrote on the basis of considerable investigation.



THE NON-SYNOPTIC JESUS: AN INTRODUCTION TO  
JOHN, PAUL, THOMAS, AND OTHER OUTSIDERS  
OF THE JESUS QUEST\*

MICHAEL LABAHN

1. *Preliminary Remarks*

Jesus' public activity, with the meaning he offered through his message that the kingdom of God is coming, consisted of words and deeds that made a lasting impression on those whom he addressed. In other words, whether they agreed with him or contradicted him, he entered the memory of his contemporaries and (so to speak) left his imprint there.<sup>1</sup> Just as the imprint must always be distinguished from the original,<sup>2</sup> so the reception of the event is transformed in the memory of the witnesses and those talking about and interpreting the event, and this is why the Markan Jesus receives a variety of answers when he asks: "Who do people say that I am?"—John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets (Mark 8:27–28; cf. the question by Herod earlier in the Gospel, 6:14–15).

Why did the non-synoptic texts play such a marginal role in the investigation of the "historical Jesus" for such a long time? This is due to their remoteness from the image of Jesus contained in the synoptics, both in terms of content and in their (assumed) chronological distance. Since the synoptic texts are often considered to represent an historically plausible picture of the activity of Jesus, they count as the

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\* Meanwhile there has been a vivid discussion particularly on extra-canonical sources. Due to time I was only able to update some bibliographical references until early 2008 and to add some smaller passages.

<sup>1</sup> On the metaphor of memory as a seal leaving its imprint on wax (Plato, *Theaetetus* 191 c-e), cf. D. Draaisma, *Die Metaphernmaschine: Eine Geschichte des Gedächtnisses* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1999), 33–36.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. e.g., J. Schröter, "Zur Historizität der Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den historischen Jesus," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 163–212, at 166–168; reprinted in: idem, *Von Jesus zum Neuen Testament. Studien zur urchristlichen Theologiegeschichte und zur Entstehung des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, WUNT 204 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2007), 105–146, at 108–110.

criterion against which other texts are measured. This is why Charles W. Hedrick speaks of the “tyranny of the synoptic Gospels.”<sup>3</sup> However, the central point of this phrase does not do justice to the fact that the synoptic gospels themselves offer us *three* individual pictures of Jesus. This is why the critical Jesus research which finds its orientation in the synoptic texts about him is generally aware that its results are a “concentrate” from the texts, which lays claim to academic plausibility.<sup>4</sup>

The distance between synoptic and non-synoptic texts about Jesus cannot simply be translated into the antithesis “historical”—“non-historical.” This point was well made as long ago as 1927/29 by Erik Peterson in his lectures on John:

Es hat deshalb auch keinen Sinn zu sagen, die Synoptiker seien ‘historischer’ als das Johannesevangelium. Weder die Synoptiker noch Johannes sind überhaupt historische Darstellungen. Wir können überhaupt nur sagen, dass es einerseits eine mannigfach geartete Tradition um Jesus gegeben hat und dass sodann das Johannesevangelium im Unterschied zu den Synoptikern ein literarisches Werk darstellt. . . . Wir können im allgemeinen, wie mir scheint, fast stets nur ebenso den Pluralismus der Traditionen konstatieren wie etwa den Pluralismus der vier Evangelien überhaupt.<sup>5</sup>

*Each text is the attempt at a new construction of meaning, which takes over traditional material because its qualities are acknowledged, i.e. the ability to provide structures and orientation in the present day.*<sup>6</sup> Each text is a fiction, in that it creates a narrative world of its

<sup>3</sup> C. W. Hedrick, “Tyranny of the Synoptic Gospels,” *Semeia* 44 (1988): 1–8. He argues that the canon controls “how the past is reconstructed, as well as the very substance of the reconstruction itself” (2). With regard to the historical Jesus, this leads to an “historical synoptic Jesus” (ibid.), in keeping with the influence of the *prae* of the synoptic gospels on the criteria employed (2–3.).

<sup>4</sup> On the methodological problems linked to “plausibility” in Jesus research, cf. now G. Theissen and D. Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitäts-Verlag, 1997), 206–208.

<sup>5</sup> E. Peterson, *Johannesevangelium und Kanonstudien*, ed. by B. Nichtweiß with K. Anglet and K. Scholtissek; *Ausgewählte Schriften* 3 (Würzburg: Echter, 2003), 19. ET: “This is why it is meaningless to say that the synoptics are more ‘historical’ than the Gospel of John. Neither the synoptics nor John are historical accounts at all! All that we can say is that a very varied tradition about Jesus existed and that, unlike the synoptics, the Gospel of John is a literary work. . . . In general, it seems to me that all we can do is to note the pluralism of traditions, just as we note the pluralism of the four gospels as a whole.”

<sup>6</sup> On the concept of the “construction of meaning” (*Sinnbildung*) from the perspective of exegesis, cf. U. Schnelle, *Paulus: Leben und Denken*, GLB (Berlin: de Gruyter 2003), 11–18.

own.<sup>7</sup> This means that every early Christian draft of an interpretation of the Jesus event—whether literary or oral—is an interpretative model with a significant distance from the historical event itself; the alternative “historical”/“non-historical” cannot assist us in the task of adequately describing the relationship between the remembered object and the event which lies in the past.<sup>8</sup>

Measured against the potential of Jesus’ activity to create meaning, the preservation of the recollection of him will have taken many forms—as is shown in an exemplary manner in the very fact that the canon contains four different gospels. *Historical research into Jesus must therefore confront a memory of him which took many forms, and must reflect methodologically on this memory in relation to the event in which it had its starting point.*

In the context of the plurality of forms which such memories took, we must inquire into the historical reasonability of all the modulations of meaning. This is not a plea for the methodological exclusion of particular constructions of meaning or of texts; on the other hand, we should not refuse to formulate a judgment on how such models are related to the core. Accordingly, the judgment cannot generally be based on the methodology of Jesus research. *Rather, it is the result of the analyses of the various texts which represent the different constructions of meaning.* The criteria to be applied in the judgment about the closeness or distance vis-à-vis this “core” is the critically used classic canon of criteria, which has been modified by recent research,<sup>9</sup> though

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. e.g., B. A. Assmann, *Die Legitimität der Fiktion: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der literarischen Kommunikation, Theorie und Geschichte der Literatur und der schönen Künste, Texte und Abhandlungen* 55 (München: Fink 1980), 14.

<sup>8</sup> On this question, cf. also J. Schröter, “Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und der Charakter historischer Erkenntnis,” in idem, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie: Methodologische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens*, BThSt 47 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 6–36.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the clear catalogue in *Wege der Schriftauslegung: Methodenbuch zum Neuen Testament*, T. Söding, with C. Münch (Freiburg i. Br: Herder, 1998), 289–294; on this subject, cf. also I. Broer, “Die Bedeutung der historischen Rückfrage nach Jesus und die Frage nach deren Methodik,” in *Jesus von Nazareth—Spuren und Konturen*, L. Schenke et al. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2004), 19–41, at 30–38; J. P. Meier, “Criteria: How do we decide what comes from Jesus?,” in *The historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. J. D. G. Dunn and S. McKnight, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 123–144; S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical Jesus Research*, JSNT Supp 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Recent discussion, which refers to the plausibility of context and impact, has received a decisive impetus from Gerd Theissen (cf. Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*; on this, cf. also the critical appreciation of the English translation by T. Holmén: *JTS* 55 (2004): 216–228 and further G. Häfner, “Das



naturally without reducing the various constructions of meaning to an historically objectifiable portrait.

There are many differences in the literary character of the texts discussed in the present essay. They employ various genres, each with its own argumentative structure, and they address their readers in a variety of ways. Each contribution represents an independent form of communication, which activates the recollection of Jesus in a specific manner. This reduces the possibility of drawing far-reaching inferences about the knowledge of Jesus tradition *external* to the text, e.g., in the Pauline communities or in the apostle himself.<sup>10</sup>

In this essay, we cannot present a substantial discussion of every text that might be relevant. On the basis of these preliminary methodological remarks with reference to the presentation of fundamental data, we shall concentrate on recent scholarly discussions and on new departures in exegesis.

## 2. New Testament "Outsiders"

In the New Testament, we find a number of texts which must be counted among the "outsiders" of research into the historical Jesus. In addition to 1 Peter and the Letter of James, we must look in particular at the Gospel of John and at Paul. Other New Testament texts, which have not been studied so intensively by scholars, cannot be discussed here.

### 2.1. Paul

#### 2.1.1. *Jesus and Paul—the Problem of Defining their Historical and Theological Relationship*<sup>11</sup>

In relation to the total extent of his writings, and leaving out of account the fundamental core data of Jesus' passion and cross, there are rather

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Ende der Kriterien? Jesusforschung angesichts der geschichtstheoretischen Diskussion," in *Historiographie und fiktionales Erzählen. Zur Konstruktivität in Geschichtstheorie und Exegese*, K. Backhaus, G. Häfner, BThSt 86 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag 2007), 97–130, at 117–119).

<sup>10</sup> See also P. Stuhlmacher, "Jesu-tradition im Römerbrief? Eine Skizze," *ThBeitr* 14 (1983): 240–252, at 242.

<sup>11</sup> For overviews of scholarship, cf. V. P. Furnish, "The Jesus-Paul Debate: From Baur to Bultmann," in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn, JSNT Supp 37 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 17–50; F. Holzbrecher, *Paulus und der historische Jesus. Darstellung und Analyse der bisherigen Forschungsgeschichte*, TANZ 48 (Tübingen: Francke, 2007); S. G. Wilson, "From Jesus to Paul. The Contours and Conse-

few explicit references in Paul to the earthly Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the relationship between Paul and Jesus is a theme with many aspects. The *relationship between the theological thought-models of Jesus and Paul* has been defined on the model of a theologically dubious or possible, an illegitimate or a legitimate connection which Paul makes to Jesus.<sup>13</sup> The theological problems involved in this question have a significant influence on the definition of the *historical* relationship between Jesus and Paul. Two antithetical positions are maintained: that of a theological lack of interest, and that of theological congruence.

On the basis of the much-discussed<sup>14</sup> affirmation at 2 Cor 5:16,<sup>15</sup> which is often interpreted as a categorical denial on the apostle's part of any interest (or, in the view of some scholars, even any knowledge) of the earthly Jesus—since his interest is the exalted Christ—Rudolf Bultmann arrived at his celebrated verdict: “Jede ‘Würdigung’ der ‘Persönlichkeit’ Jesu fehlt und muß fehlen, da sie nur ein γινώσκειν κατὰ σάρκα wäre, in dem Doppelsinn, daß solches γινώσκειν den Christus nur als einen Christus κατὰ σάρκα, d.h. ein vorfindliches Weltphänomen sehen würde, und daß es eben deshalb ein γινώσκειν κατὰ σάρκα, ein fleischliches Verstehen, ein bloßes Rechnen mit Weltlich-Vorfindlichen wäre”.<sup>16</sup>

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quences of a Debate,” in *From Jesus to Paul. Studies in Honor of F.W. Beare*, ed. P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd, (Waterloo: Laurier University Press, 1984), 1–21.

<sup>12</sup> D. Wenham exaggerates greatly when he writes: “there is good cause for saying (1) that Paul knew *much* of the teaching of Jesus and (2) that he saw it as of great importance, echoing it *frequently*” (my italics): “The Story of Jesus Known to Paul,” in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 297–311, at 297.

<sup>13</sup> On this, cf. e.g., J. Blank, *Jesus und Paulus. Eine theologische Grundlegung*, StANT 18 (München: Kösel, 1968); J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 182–206; E. Jünger, *Paulus und Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zur Präzisierung der Frage nach dem Ursprung der Christologie*, 6th ed., HUTh 2 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1986), 5–16; H. Weder, *Das Kreuz Jesu bei Paulus: Ein Versuch, über den Geschichtsbezug des christlichen Glaubens nachzudenken*, FRLANT 125 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981). For the history of earlier research into this problem, cf. F. Regner, “Paulus und Jesus” im 19. Jahrhundert. *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Themas “Jesus und Paulus” in der neuzeitlichen Theologie*, STGNJ 30 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the overview in C. Wolff, “True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ: Exegetical Reflections on 2 Corinthians 5:14ff.,” in *Paul*, ed. Wedderburn, 81–98, at 82–85; idem, *Der zweite Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, ThHK 8 (Berlin, 1989), 123–127.

<sup>15</sup> “From now on, therefore, we know no one from a human point of view (κατὰ σάρκα); even if we had once known Christ from a human point of view, we know him thus no longer (εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν).”

<sup>16</sup> R. Bultmann, “Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus,” in idem, *Glauben und Verstehen. Gesammelte Aufsätze* 1, 5th ed. (Tübingen:

2 Cor 5 is marked by the debate which the apostle conducts with his adversaries. Paul highlights here the fact that the message of reconciliation brings about a transformation of values (v. 16). Since *κατὰ σάρκα* is to be understood here grammatically as an adverbial phrase,<sup>17</sup> the verb does not imply the mere acquisition of knowledge about historical events, but rather an acknowledgment of these events and acceptance of their relevance for an individual. The particle *ὥστε* refers back to the soteriological affirmation in 2 Cor 5:14–15.<sup>18</sup> In view of what Christ's love has done, Paul rejects the possibility of an understanding in accordance with human criteria, in favor of an understanding born of the recognition that we have been liberated by the event of the cross.<sup>19</sup> The polemic that can be clearly sensed in v. 16a is an attack on the adversaries who see the apostle's suffering as an expression of his weakness, thereby applying an earthly criterion which fails to recognize that the apostle's suffering has its model in the suffering of Jesus, which is the location of his deed of love. The criterion of the Pauline hermeneutics is the orientation to the eschatologically *new* element (v. 17) which leads through the death and resurrection of the one man to life for all persons (vv. 13f.). *This means in contrast to Bultmann's (and others') view that it is impossible to understand 2 Cor 5:16 as expressing a fundamental and theologically justified lack of interest by Paul in the Jesus of history.*<sup>20</sup>

The other position is represented by Stuhlmacher, who emphatically affirms that the Pauline theology "took up the essential intentions of the work and the teaching of Jesus, and elaborated these in conceptual

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Mohr—Siebeck, 1964), 188–213, at 206–207; ET: "There is no 'appreciation' whatever of the 'personality' of Jesus. Such an appreciation must necessarily be lacking, since that would be merely a *γινώσκειν κατὰ σάρκα*, in the double sense (a) that such a *γινώσκειν* would regard Christ only as a Christ *κατὰ σάρκα*, i.e. as a phenomenon existing in the world, and (b) that precisely for this reason, it would only be a *γινώσκειν κατὰ σάρκα*, a fleshly understanding, a mere reckoning with that which exists in the world."

<sup>17</sup> Cf. D. Catchpole, "Q's Thesis and Paul's Antithesis: A Study of 2 Corinthians 5:16," in *Forschungen zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt: Festschrift für Albert Fuchs*, ed. C. Niemand, Linzer philosophisch-theologische Beiträge 7 (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2002), 347–366, at 360–361; Schnelle, *Paulus*, 275.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g., J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, Sacra Pagina 8 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1999), 95.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. also G. Strecker, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, revised, expanded and ed. by F.W. Horn, GLB (Berlin: de Gruyter 1996), 108.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. also A. Lindemann, "Jesus als Christus bei Paulus und bei Lukas: Erwägungen zum Verhältnis von Bekenntnis und historischer Erkenntnis in der neutestamentlichen Christologie," in Schröter and Brucker, eds., *Jesus*, 429–461, at 437–438.

terms on the basis of Easter.”<sup>21</sup> In Stuhlmacher’s view, this presupposes a broad knowledge of the tradition about Jesus. When we ask about the provenance of this knowledge, we find a clear reply in Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, who point to the period he spent in Jerusalem with the earliest apostles (Gal 1:18).<sup>22</sup>

If material about Jesus, or reflection on the role of the historical Jesus, is a factor that must be taken seriously in our evaluation of Paul’s thinking—in the sense of an explicit or implicit reception—then Paul cannot simply be understood as the “re-founder” of Christianity;<sup>23</sup> nor can we say that he lacks interest in the historical Jesus. If Paul does indeed know and make use of Jesus traditions, then (a) he takes them up in view of the communicative situation and the problems discussed in his letters; at the same time, (b) he understands these traditions on the basis of his own fundamental theological thinking. *Paul must therefore be understood as a recipient of Jesus tradition, rather than as a direct witness to individual logia, still less to specific historical traditions.* Such a perception points to the further tasks to be done in our investigation of the relationship between Jesus and Paul.

### 2.1.2. *Jesus-texts in the Letters of Paul*

When scholars seek to define the potential value of Paul for historical research into Jesus, they usually begin by studying texts with the character of explicit Jesus tradition. In keeping with the rhetorical argumentative framework of Paul’s letters, the relevant texts refer rarely to narrative traditions, but above all to traditions of the logia of Jesus. Accordingly, we encounter here one specific problem of research into the historical Jesus, viz. *the identification and verification of logia of Jesus in their assumed original form.*

The number of possible quotations from, or allusions to, known logia of Jesus is a matter of scholarly dispute,<sup>24</sup> and an immense zeal

<sup>21</sup> P. Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments 1: Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 222: “...die wesentlichen Intentionen des Werkes und der Lehre Jesu aufgegriffen und von Ostern her begrifflich durchdacht.”

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus and Antiochien: Die unbekanntten Jahre des Apostels*, WUNT 108 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1998), 232–233.

<sup>23</sup> This position has recently been put forward once more by G. Lüdemann, *Paulus, der Gründer des Christentums* (Lüneburg: zu Klampen, 2001) repristinating the celebrated thesis of W. Wrede, *Paulus*, RV I.5/6, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1907), 104: Paul as the “second founder of Christianity.”

<sup>24</sup> For a skeptical view, cf. especially W. Schmithals, *Einleitung in die drei ersten*

has been displayed in identifying or rejecting individual passages in Paul as Jesus-texts.<sup>25</sup> Thus, we can speak with James Dunn of an “impasse in the debate.”<sup>26</sup>

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*Evangelien*, GLB (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1985); idem, “Vom Ursprung der synoptischen Tradition,” *ZThK* 94 (1997): 288–316. He does not believe that genuine traditions about Jesus existed at an early date and outside the written gospels and their sources (or strata within these sources).

<sup>25</sup> E.g., D. C. Allison, “The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 1–32; C. Breytenbach, “Vormarkinische Logientradition. Parallelen in der urchristlichen Briefliteratur,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. van Belle, and J. Verheyden, 3 vols., BETL 100 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 725–749, at 731–739; D. B. Capes, “Paul, Jesus Tradition in,” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. C. A. Evans, (New York, London: Routledge, 2008), 446–449; D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul: The Use of the Synoptic Tradition in the Regulation of Early Church Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); J. D. G. Dunn, “Jesus Tradition in Paul,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 155–178; idem, “Paul’s Knowledge of the Jesus Tradition: The Evidence of Romans,” in *Christus bezeugen: Festschrift W. Trilling*, ed. K. Kertelge, T. Holtz, and C.-P. März, *Erfurter theologische Studien* (Freiburg: Herder, 1990), 193–207; E. E. Ellis, “Traditions in 1 Corinthians,” *NTS* 32 (1986): 481–502; B. Fjærstedt, *Synoptic Tradition in 1 Corinthians: Themes and Clusters of Theme Words in 1 Corinthians 1–4 and 9* (Uppsala: Teologiska Institutionen, 1974); H. W. Hollander, “The Words of Jesus: From Oral Traditions to Written Record in Paul and Q,” *NT* 42 (2000): 340–357; T. Holtz, “Paul and the Oral Gospel Tradition,” in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. H. Wansbrough, JSNT Supp 64 Sheffield; JSOT Press, 1991, 380–393; S. Kim, “The Jesus Tradition in Paul,” in idem, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origins of Paul’s Gospel*, WUNT 140 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 2002), 259–292; H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press/Cambridge: TPI, 1990), 52–62; A. Lindemann, “Die Funktion der Herrenworte in der ethischen Argumentation des Paulus im ersten Korintherbrief,” in *Four Gospels*, ed. van Segbroeck et al., 677–688; H. von Lips, “Paulus und die Tradition. Die Zitierung von Schriftworten, Herrenworten und urchristlichen Traditionen,” *VF* 36.2 (1991), 27–49; F. Neirynck, “Paul and the Sayings of Jesus,” in idem, *Evangelica II: 1982–1991. Collected Essays*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, BETL 99 (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 511–568; idem, “The Sayings of Jesus in 1 Corinthians,” in *The Corinthian Correspondence*, ed. R. Bieringer, BETL 125 (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 141–176; R. Riesner, “Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung,” in *Evangelium—Schriftauslegung—Kirche: Festschrift P. Stuhlmacher*, ed. J. Ädna, S. J. Hafemann, and O. Hofius, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 347–365; Schnelle, *Paulus*, 95–100; Stuhlmacher, “Jesu-tradition”; C. M. Tuckett, “Synoptic Tradition in 1 Thessalonians,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. R. F. Collins, BETL 87 (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), 160–182; N. Walter, “Paulus und die urchristliche Tradition,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 498–522; D. Wenham, “Paul and the Synoptic Apocalypse,” in *Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels 2*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham, *Gospel Perspectives 2* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 345–375; idem, “Paul’s Use of the Jesus Tradition: Three Samples,” in idem, ed., *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, *Gospel Perspectives 5* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 7–37; idem, *Paulus: Jünger Jesu oder Begründer des Christentums?* (Paderborn and Vienna: Schöningh, 1999), passim, esp. 342–352.

<sup>26</sup> Dunn, “Jesus Tradition,” 160.

We must distinguish between texts in which Paul explicitly refers to the Kyrios as the origin of what he writes, and texts where the reference can be inferred indirectly, by comparison with other traditions about Jesus.

First, Paul gives some passages a special character by means of an explicit reference to the Kyrios. When he appeals to a “word of the Lord” in 1 Thess 4:15 (ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου), it is highly unlikely that he is referring only to the “commission and authority” of the Lord.<sup>27</sup> Rather, as at 1 Cor 7:10.25 and 1 Cor 9:14, this should be seen as a kind of quotation formula,<sup>28</sup> which has an analogy in the later tradition of the gospel (e.g., *Didache* 8.2, ὡς ἐκέλευσεν ὁ κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, and 9.5, εἶρηκεν ὁ κύριος). This means that the Jesus-text or the gospel material stands under the authority of the Kyrios—as Wolf-Dietrich Köhler has demonstrated in the case of the early Christian reception of the Gospel of Matthew<sup>29</sup>—without an explicit and exclusive reference to the exalted Kyrios.<sup>30</sup> In the following texts, Paul characterizes his arguments or ideas in this way as a directive, a tradition, or a word of the Lord:

1 Thess 4:15–17	cf. Matt 24:30–32
1 Cor 7:10f.	cf. Mark 10:11–13 parr.; cf. also Matt 5:32 par. Luke 16:18
1 Cor 9:14	cf. Matt 10:10 par. Luke 10:7 (Q) <sup>31</sup>
1 Cor 11:23–25	<i>paradosis</i> about the Lord’s Supper: Mark 14:22–25 parr. <sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> O. Hofius, “Agrapha,” *TRE* 2 (1978): 103–110; idem, “Unbekannte Jesusworte,” in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher, WUNT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1983), 355–382, at 358–360.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. T. Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher*, EKK 13 (Zürich: Benzinger Verlag/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 183–184.

<sup>29</sup> W. D. Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus* WUNT 2.24 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck 1987), 526–527.

<sup>30</sup> The *paradosis* about the Lord’s Supper, which clearly does not derive from the exalted Kyrios (cf. Mark 14:22–25 par.), is likewise said to be “received from the Kyrios.”

<sup>31</sup> D. C. Allison goes too far (*The Jesus Tradition in Q* [Harrisburg: TPI, 1997], 104–119) when he assumes that Paul knew the entire missionary instruction that is transmitted in the document Q (cf. also Stuhlmacher, “Jesu-tradition,” 244). The parallel tradition in *Didache* 13.1–2 and 1 Tim 5:18 argues in favor of the possibility of an individual logion; and besides this, the other allusions to the instruction in Q which Allison notes are too vague.

<sup>32</sup> 2 Cor 12:9 is an example of a word addressed by the exalted Jesus to Paul; according to 1 Cor 14:37, 1 Cor 14:26–28 is a commandment of the Lord (κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή), and here it is more probable that Paul is claiming the authority of the exalted Lord.

The individual texts vary in the extent to which they agree with the synoptic Jesus tradition.<sup>33</sup> However, even although there is as yet no consensus about the individual pieces of “evidence,” there is general agreement that *Paul undoubtedly had access to Jesus tradition*.

Secondly, a comparison with Jesus traditions can reinforce the likelihood that other texts in the Pauline epistles are *Jesus-texts*. Probably the least disputed of these passages is *Rom 12:14*,<sup>34</sup>

Bless those who persecute you (εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας [ύμᾱς]! Bless them and do not curse them (εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρῶσθε)!

Cf. Q 6:27–28 (Matt 5:44 par. Luke 6:27–28):

(27) Love your enemies, (28) [[and]] pray for those [[persecuting]] you ([[καὶ]]) προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν [[διωκ]]όντων ὑμᾶς).<sup>35</sup>

Although we find points of contact between these two texts, both linguistically and above all in terms of their content—and that on a topic which we may reasonably claim goes back to the preaching of Jesus himself—noticeable divergences remain, and Paul does not refer explicitly to the Jesus tradition. Ultimately, all that we can affirm is that there is a clear substantial congruence between the Pauline text and a Jesus-text. The initial command to love one’s enemies is not found in Paul, but its substance is present in the exhortation to bless one’s persecutors.

*Rom 14:14* shows clearly the hermeneutic problem which lies behind the discussion about the reception of texts by Paul:

I know and I am certain in the Lord Jesus that nothing is impure in itself, but only for the one who thinks that it is impure: for him it is impure (οὐδὲν κοινὸν δι’ ἑαυτοῦ, εἰ μὴ τῷ λογιζομένῳ τι κοινὸν εἶναι, ἐκεῖνῳ κοινόν).

While *Rom 14:4b* is firmly integrated into the course of Paul’s argumentation, it can be demonstrated that it contains a number of un-

<sup>33</sup> One must bear in mind that the reception of tradition must be understood as a process of actualization, so that one can expect a “free textual paraphrase”: cf. Stuhlmacher, “Jesu-tradition,” 243.

<sup>34</sup> On this, cf. e.g., J. Sauer, “Traditionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu den synoptischen und paulinischen Aussagen über Feindesliebe und Wiedervergeltungsverzicht,” *ZNW* 76 (1985): 1–28, at 17–22.

<sup>35</sup> On the reconstruction of the Q-text cf. *The Critical Edition of Q. Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*. General Editors: J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, J. S. Kloppenborg. Managing Editor: M. C. Moreland, *Hermeneia Supplement Series* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

Pauline linguistic elements.<sup>36</sup> This means that there are good arguments for saying that Paul is alluding here to a tradition which had already reached a relatively stable form before it came to Paul. When scholars seek to locate this historically in the preaching of Jesus, the text with which it is most commonly compared is Mark 7:15:

There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him (οὐδέν ἐστιν ἔξωθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰσπορευόμενον εἰς αὐτόν ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔκπορευόμενά ἐστιν τὰ κοινούντα τὸν ἄνθρωπον).

In its present form, Mark 7:15–17 is a reflection of the Markan author's understanding of purity. There is no doubt that the narrator acquires this understanding in a process of reception of the Jesus tradition, since the present textual block bears transparent signs of a rather lengthy process of transmission, which will have begun with an utterance by Jesus. Through his integration of this tradition into his total concept, the Markan narrator attempts to provide ethical orientation for his Gentile Christian community. He no longer sees the problem of cultic purity as virulent; rather, his problem is how a Gentile Christian community is to put its Christianity into practice (cf. 7:23).

The tradition of Jesus' logion about purity is also found in Matt 15:11 and *Gos. Thom.* 14. The best explanation of this situation is James Dunn's suggestion that an older core underlies these variants. He sees Mark and Paul as representing different developments of Jesus' logion about purity.<sup>37</sup> The same should be said of Matt 15:11 and *Gos. Thom.* 14. The variants show that Jesus' radical preaching, which often challenged the religious traditions of his own world, made a varied impact and inspired various processes of the construction of

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<sup>36</sup> In the authentic letters of Paul, the word κοινός is found only at Rom 14:14b; likewise, the emphatic ἐκείνος can be considered un-Pauline; cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, WBC 38B (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 820. However, there is good attestation in Paul of λογίζομαι for judgments about theological questions; cf. K. Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer*, ThHK 6 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 286. Rom 14:14a has a clearly Pauline character and emphasizes the affirmation about purity; cf. E. Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer*, KEK 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 377.

<sup>37</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus and Ritual Purity: A Study of the Tradition-History of Mark 7.15," in *A cause de l'Évangile. Études sur les Synoptiques et les Actes: Festschrift J. Dupont*, Lectio divina 123 (Paris: Cerf 1985), 251–276. A scholar who argues against a reference to the Jesus tradition is Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer*, 377.



meaning. The classical catalogue of criteria used in the quest for the historical Jesus (especially the criterion of multiple attestation) allows us to see that the various meaningful images go back to a common core; but we are denied access to this core itself by our insight into the event of reception which lies behind the variants.

Accordingly, Paul offers a *reflection of the preaching of Jesus, a construction of meaning which goes back to the preaching of Jesus and shows how Paul expresses himself and supplies orientation to his community in keeping with this preaching—and not independently of it.*

Scholars have discussed the possibility that other Jesus-texts can be recognized in the Pauline writings; some are clearer than others.<sup>38</sup>

Rom 12:17 (cf. also 1 Thess 5:15)	cf. Matt 5:39.41 par.
Rom 13:7	cf. Mark 12:13–22 par.
Rom 13:8–10 <sup>39</sup>	cf. Mark 12:28–34 parr.
Rom 14:13	Mark 9:42 parr.; Matt 18.7 par. Luke 17:1
1 Cor 13:2	cf. Matt 17:20; 21:21 par.
1 Thess 5:2, 4	cf. Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39; cf. also Mark 13:33, 37–39 par.; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15
1 Thess 5:13, 15	cf. Mark 9:50; cf. also Matt 5:9 and in Paul: Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 13:11 <sup>40</sup>

A similar process of comparison should be used in the discussion of these and other possible examples.<sup>41</sup>

#### Excursus: Does Paul Know a Collection of Jesus-texts?

Dale C. Allison has drawn far-reaching inferences on the basis of the texts which may lie behind the Pauline references: he believes that Paul has received three large collections of logia which were also used by

<sup>38</sup> For a list of other possible references, cf. the overview by Neiryck, "Paul," passim.

<sup>39</sup> On Jesus tradition in the concluding paraenetic section of the Letter to the Romans (chs. 12–15), cf. M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13*, JSNT Supp 59 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dunn, "Jesus Tradition," 164. He understands these words as a widely diffused rule, and adduces as evidence Sir 6:6 and Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.5.24.

<sup>41</sup> It is not possible here to give a complete list of possible references; on this point, one may consult Neiryck, "Paul and the Sayings of Jesus," passim, and the bibliography in n. 25 above. Possible allusions and references give a wider scope to a scholarly discussion which remains open; it is only in the core examples mentioned above that we find a relative consensus.

the synoptics: Mark 9:33–50; Luke 6:27–28; and Mark 6:6b–13.<sup>42</sup> Such attempts to argue from the evidence of individual traditions to the existence of larger collections go beyond what can actually be demonstrated. One would have to show, not only that Paul employs a number of texts which form a potential block of tradition in the synoptics, but that there is a conscious and deliberate sequence in the presentation of these texts in Paul.

*Thirdly*, a further category is the “allusion to Jesus as an example for Paul” (cf. Rom 6:17; 8:15–16; 15:1–5; 2 Cor 8:9; 10:1; Gal 1:18; Phil 2:5).<sup>43</sup> Behind these texts, we can glimpse a knowledge of the historical Jesus to which our literary and historical investigations have no access. These texts show how the one who was remembered acquired significance, as one who imparted meaning and life. As a recipient, Paul gives information about Jesus—not, however, in the form of traditions which we could extract from his letters and identify, but as *one who offers an interpretation and is a witness of the still vivid memory of Jesus*. The memorized portrait of Jesus depicts one who loves his neighbor, lays down his life, and has fellowship with sinners.

*Fourthly*, James M. Robinson has pointed out the methodological narrowing-down which is entailed when the only Pauline parallels adduced in the discussion are the synoptic gospels.<sup>44</sup> We must also consider those so-called apocryphal texts which at least some contemporary scholars date early. Christopher Tuckett agrees with this methodological premise<sup>45</sup> and demands a close examination of the possible relationships. He undertakes one such examination, concentrating on the parallel between 1 Cor 2:9:

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<sup>42</sup> Allison, “Pauline Epistles.” Similarly, B. A. Pearson, “A Q Community in Galilee?,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 476–494, at 484 and 486, assumes that Paul makes use of a collection of logia of Jesus. However, the fact that various logia in Paul derive from the Q material is not sufficient proof that Paul knew these from an example of Q to which he had access. Besides this, these logia do not permit a certain judgment on the question whether they come from *one* collection of the words of Jesus (cf. e.g., Koester, *Gospels*, 54: “a collection of church order materials”).

<sup>43</sup> Dunn, “Jesus tradition,” 168–173.

<sup>44</sup> J. M. Robinson, “The Study of the Historical Jesus after Nag Hammadi,” *Semeia* 44 (1985), 45–56, at 48; cf. also S. J. Patterson, “Paul and the Jesus Tradition: It is Time for Another Look,” *HTR* 84 (1991), 23–41, at 30–31.

<sup>45</sup> C. M. Tuckett, “Paul and Jesus Tradition: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Gospel of Thomas 17,” in *Paul and the Corinthians. Studies on a Community in Conflict: Festschrift M. Thrall*, ed. T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott, *NTS* 109 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 55–73, at 56 and 57.

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love him<sup>46</sup>

and *Gos. Thom.* 17:<sup>47</sup>

Jesus said, 'I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind.'<sup>48</sup>

Tuckett's conclusion is negative: "the saying in 1 Cor 2:9 *may* have been known and used by the Corinthians. But there is nothing to suggest that it was known as a saying of Jesus."<sup>49</sup> It cannot be shown that a version of these words circulated at an early date in the form of a logion of Jesus; nor can it be demonstrated as certain that either Paul or the Corinthians knew it under this ascription. Nor can the quotation be plausibly explained as a Pauline revision of *Gos. Thom.* 17. We must also reckon with the possibility that a text from Paul was transformed at a secondary stage into a logion of Jesus.<sup>50</sup>

The results of analyses of other possible references (1 Cor 4:8 [*Gos. Thom.* 2]; 2 Cor 2:7 [*Gos. Thom.* 6 and 7]; Rom 2:29 [*Gos. Thom.* 53]) are comparable. When we bear in mind that the early dating of the

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<sup>46</sup> This text is introduced by Paul as a quotation from scripture (καθὼς γέγραπται), but it cannot be identified in this form in the Old Testament (W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, Volume 1: *1Kor 1,1–6,11*, EKK 7.1 (Zürich and Braunschweig: Benzinger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1991), 245. Possible references are mentioned by H. Hübner, *Vetus Testamentum in Novo 2: Corpus Paulinum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), ad loc.: Is 64:4 LXX; 65:1–2; Sir 1:10. The thesis of a scriptural conglomeration, which Schrage adopts (op. cit., 245), is a serviceable explanation, as is the thesis that Paul refers to an independent sapiential statement with a provenance that remains to be clarified. For further parallels, cf. the commentaries and K. Berger, "Zur Diskussion über die Herkunft von I Kor. II. 9," *NTS* 24 (1977/78): 270–283. Berger defines the text as "a tradition of the apocalyptic school."

<sup>47</sup> Eng. trans.: Thomas O. Lambdin, in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson, (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 118–120.

<sup>48</sup> Paterson too ("Paul," 36–37) considers the influence of various logia of Jesus from the Gospel of Thomas on 1 Cor 2:9 as probable; cf. also H. Koester, "Ein Jesus und vier ursprüngliche Evangeliengattungen," in H. Koester and J. M. Robinson, *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1971), 147–190; cf. also idem, "Grundtypen und Kriterien frühchristlicher Glaubensbekenntnisse," *ibid.*, 191–215, at 211 n. 47; idem, *Gospels*, 61; C. L. Mearns, "Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians," *JSNT* 22 (1984): 19–35, at 31, n. 7.

<sup>49</sup> Tuckett, "Paul," 72.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002), 154.

Gospel of Thomas, of its potential sources, or of comparable texts is scarcely tenable, we must warn against too great confidence here. Nevertheless, the decisive point is that *in our examination of the Pauline contribution to the question of the historical Jesus, an exclusive concentration on the synoptic tradition is not methodologically justified.* But the above example shows that there is *no cause for far-reaching expectations and speculations about the historical Jesus on the basis of a comparison between the letters of Paul and non-canonical literature.*

To summarize, three points must be borne in mind in this complex situation.

- (a) Paul has *access to Jesus tradition and employs this in the framework of rhetorical praxis in classical antiquity, above all in his ethical argumentation.*
- (b) *The evidence is not strong enough to allow us to infer the existence of fixed collections of logia which we could reconstruct.*
- (c) With regard to our initial question about the historical Jesus, we must also note *that not everything in Paul that can be identified as the transmission of words of the Lord is a demonstrable testimony to "authentic" Jesus tradition.* We must bear in mind the creation and shaping of the Jesus tradition in the early Christian process of transmission and understanding.

Besides this, to focus our questions on a more or less clearly identifiable transmission of logia would be a fatal restriction of our inquiry (cf. the next chapter).

### 2.1.3. *The Concentrated Reception of Jesus in Paul's Composition of his Letters*

We must also study Paul as recipient of Jesus tradition, and thus as a contributor to the historical study of Jesus, under the aspect of the creative "abbreviation" of Jesus tradition. This is why exegesis must also take into consideration the *narrative concentrate of the historical Jesus in Paul*,<sup>51</sup> which could be called 'nominalized narrative contents'

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<sup>51</sup> A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and the Story of Jesus," in idem, ed., *Paul*, 161–189, points out that Paul is referring to a story about Jesus, and he describes the apostle's interpretative perspective as follows: "The story of Jesus which Paul knows is clearly a narrative of events, a 'story,' but it differs from being a story of the earthly Jesus in that it tells of a 'prehistory' in Jesus' existence before his human life on earth, and it

(“nominalisierte Erzählinhalte”)<sup>52</sup> or ‘narrative abbreviations’:<sup>53</sup> “wir sehen bei dieser Verschränkung von Erzählen und Erörtern etwas von der ursprünglichen gegenseitigen Angewiesenheit theologischen Argumentierens und Erzählens”.<sup>54</sup>

Eckart Reinmuth offers 1 Corinthians as an example:<sup>55</sup> “Paulus expliziert nicht eine abstrakte Christologie, sondern er interpretiert die Jesus-Christus-Geschichte in argumentierender Anwendung auf konkrete Problemlagen”.<sup>56</sup>

The reference in Gal 2:6 to the “law of Christ” can also be read in this light. It would then be an “ethical interpretation of the entire activity of Jesus.”<sup>57</sup> This is also how we should understand the role of the Kyrios as model for his community—a model which Paul mentions in 1 Thess 1:6 only *after* citing his own example. The activity of the apostle is analogous to the activity of the earthly Jesus, and he takes it for granted that the community knows both of these, thanks to their own immediate experience and thanks to the tradition.

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also tells of what happened to him subsequently, after Jesus’ this-worldly life came to an end. It is also highly interpretative in character: not only does it repeatedly speak of God’s involvement in the experiences of Jesus... but it also gives Christ a role in creation comparable to that of the divine wisdom (1 Cor 8:6), and speaks of his experiences being redemptive (1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 4:5) and according to the scriptures (1 Cor 15:3–4)” (p. 163). In this way, the earthly life of Jesus is inserted into a larger hermeneutical framework (p. 188) in which the cross exercises the controlling function (p. 189). We should also note the idea that Paul writes both himself and his own fate into this story: p. 180.

<sup>52</sup> E. Reinmuth, “Erzählen und Begreifen: Ein Beitrag zum neutestamentlichen Verständnis eines theologischen Mißverständnisses,” in *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu 1899–1999: Beiträge zum Dialog mit Adolf Jülicher*, ed. U. Meil, BZNW 103 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 237–256, at 242–243.

<sup>53</sup> On the term “narrative Abbraviatur”, cf. J. Straub, “Temporale Orientierung und narrative Kompetenz. Zeit- und erzähltheoretische Grundlagen einer Psychologie biographischer und historischer Sinnbildung,” in *Geschichtsbewußtsein. Psychologische Grundlagen, Entwicklungskonzepte, empirische Befunde*, ed. J. Rüsen, Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur 21 (Köln: Böhlau, 2001), 15–44, at 23.

<sup>54</sup> Reinmuth, “Erzählen,” 242. ET: “in this interweaving of narrative and discussion, we see something of the original mutual dependence of theological argumentation and narration.”

<sup>55</sup> E. Reinmuth, “Narratio und argumentatio—zur Auslegung der Jesus Christus-Geschichte im Ersten Korintherbrief: Ein Beitrag zur mimetischen Kompetenz des Paulus,” *ZThK* 92 (1995): 13–27, at 20–27.

<sup>56</sup> Reinmuth, “Narratio,” 26. ET: “Paul is not making explicit an abstract Christology. Rather, he is interpreting the history of Jesus Christ in an argumentative application to concrete problematic situations.”

<sup>57</sup> Schnelle, *Paulus*, 96–97.

On an even more fundamental level, Klaus Scholtissek asks whether Paul sees the earthly Jesus as belonging “konstitutiv in das von ihm verkündigte und weithin wirksam gewordene Christusbild” (constitutively to the picture of Christ which he has proclaimed and which has become effective to a large extent).<sup>58</sup> On the basis of his investigation of the double name “Jesus Christ” and of the passages which reflect aspects of the earthly Jesus, and of his observations about how Paul’s affirmations about the cross and resurrection and Pauline ethics are linked back to the earthly Jesus, Scholtissek concludes:<sup>59</sup>

Indem Paulus dezidiert den Gekreuzigten als den Auferstandenen verkündigt, hält er aufgrund seiner Christusapokalypsis mit der Urkirche an der Einheit des Auferstandenen mit dem Irdischen fest. So rückt der Irdische gerade aufgrund seiner Auferstehung neu und um so gewichtiger in den Blickpunkt.

Thanks to his previous work on the theory of history,<sup>60</sup> Udo Schnelle emphasizes new aspects. He sees the Pauline letters as permeated by narrative elements and references, so that the earthly Jesus plays a more central role for Paul.<sup>61</sup> These passages include the references to the cross, where Paul’s words about the humbling of Jesus allude to the narrative context of the passion: Phil 2:7–8 (cf. also 2 Cor 8:9 [although the idea of “poverty”—τῆ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ—may be oriented more strongly to manner of Jesus’ life and preaching]; 13:4; Gal 3:1; Rom 15:3; burial: 1 Cor 15:4; Rom 6:4).

Other texts allude to biographical and cultural aspects of the story of Jesus’ life: e.g., Gal 4:4–5 (born of a woman, a Jewish existence marked by the presence of the law; cf. also Rom 8:3; 9:5; 15:8), Rom 1:3 (birth, a human being, against the background of the ideas about

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<sup>58</sup> K. Scholtissek, “Geboren aus einer Frau, geboren unter das Gesetz’ (Gal 4,4): Die christologisch-soteriologische Bedeutung des irdischen Jesus bei Paulus,” in *Paulinische Christologie: Exegetische Beiträge: Festschrift for H. Hübner*, ed. U. Schnelle, T. Söding, and M. Labahn, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 194–219, at 197.

<sup>59</sup> Scholtissek, “Frau,” 217. ET: “When Paul resolutely proclaims the one who was crucified as the one who is risen, his revelation of Christ leads him to agree with the early church in maintaining firmly the unity of the risen Jesus with the crucified Jesus. This means that precisely because of his resurrection, the earthly Jesus becomes the focus of attention—*anew*, and in an even more weighty manner.”

<sup>60</sup> Schnelle, *Paulus*, 2–4.

<sup>61</sup> Schnelle, *Paulus*, 98.

David), and the brothers of Jesus (1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19).<sup>62</sup> In these texts, Paul is not whetting his readers' thirst for biographical information about Jesus. The abbreviated references *sum up Paul's knowledge, and the knowledge he assumes in his addressees, in such a way that this is integrated by him into a Christological or theological set of coordinates.* The condensation makes it possible to allude in such a way to the basic data (which are not set out in detail) that they can be integrated into the Pauline system of meaning. For example, Klaus Scholtissek has shown that Gal 4:4–5 takes up the ideas of the pre-existence, the incarnation, and the Jewish existence of Jesus in such a manner that the argumentation already paves the way “zur soteriologischen Aussage der Befreiung der ‘unter dem Gesetz’...Stehenden” (for the soteriological affirmation that those who stand ‘under the law’...are now set free).<sup>63</sup>

There can be no question that windows are opened here,<sup>64</sup> permitting us to glimpse the probable familiars of the Pauline communities with narrative Jesus tradition.<sup>65</sup>

These observations lead Schnelle to conclude as follows:<sup>66</sup>

Jesu Bedeutsamkeit erschließt sich nicht als Summe einzelner bedeutender Worte oder Handlungen, sondern allein von der durch Gott in Jesus Christus vollzogenen Geschichte, die Jesus Christus als den endzeitlichen und endgültigen Heilsbringer qualifiziert. Innerhalb dieser Jesus-Christus-Geschichte bilden der Irdische und der Auferweckte und damit die Person Jesu Christi eine Einheit, die sich nicht in die eine oder andere Richtung auflösen lässt.

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<sup>62</sup> Further references, of varying value, are mentioned by Reinmuth, “Narratio,” 22–23.

<sup>63</sup> Scholtissek, “Frau,” 201.

<sup>64</sup> Dunn too (“Jesus Tradition in Paul,” 156–158) argues that we must assume that the Pauline missionary communities asked questions and possessed information about the hero of their faith. This knowledge went beyond the kerygmatic formulae. This aspect is also suggested by analogies from classical antiquity.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Reinmuth, “Narratio,” 23.

<sup>66</sup> Schnelle, *Paulus*, 100. ET: “The significance of Jesus is disclosed, not as the sum total of individual significant words or actions, but only on the basis of the history which God carried out in Jesus Christ. It is this history that identifies Jesus Christ as the eschatological and definitive bringer of salvation. Within this history of Jesus Christ, the earthly Jesus and the risen Jesus—and hence the person of Jesus Christ—form a unity which cannot be dissolved in one or other direction.”

These reflections on the narrative abbreviation of the Jesus-story provide a broader basis, with a new hermeneutical justification, for the discussion of the topic "Jesus and Paul." *On this basis, there is no justification for a rigorous denial (with the exception of the paradosis about the Lord's Supper) of traces of the narrative Jesus tradition in the Pauline letters.* It must however be granted that Paul is not so much a witness to ancient Jesus traditions as a *productive recipient who derives fundamental inspiration for the shaping of his theological thought from these traditions.*

#### 2.1.4. Results

One important aspect of these new evaluations is the *reinforcement of the criterion of the plausible effect of Jesus.* The *self-understanding of the early Christian movement was rooted very deeply in the message and activity of the earthly Jesus,* although the impulses given by the Easter experience to the transmission of the tradition must not be underestimated. In addition to a prominent reception of Jesus, Paul also offers genuine *insights into the development of the Jesus tradition before the gospels were written down.* Paul must have possessed *basic information about the Kyrios Jesus, against whom he initially fought in the disciples of Jesus (Gal 1:13, 23; 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6), but who ultimately overwhelmed Paul when he appeared to him (Gal 1:12).*<sup>67</sup> As the evidence of individual transmission of elements from the Jesus tradition in the Pauline writings (with and without an explicit reference) shows, his theological thinking finds its orientation, not in a lack of interest in the earthly Jesus allegedly generated by Paul's theology of the cross, but *in an explicit reflection on the earthly Jesus, a reflection appropriate to the needs of his community at that period.* The evidence displays parallels both to canonical and (to a lesser degree) to non-canonical Jesus-texts. The *integration of the reception of Jesus in the concentrated form of narrative abbreviations* is impressive and tells us a great deal about Paul's thinking. This integration bears witness both to his reception of the tradition and to his profound understanding of it.

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<sup>67</sup> On this basic assumption, cf. also Dunn, *Theology*, 185–189.



## 2.2. *The Gospel of John*

The evaluation of the Gospel of John for the question of the historical Jesus<sup>68</sup> is strongly influenced by the difference between the “fleshly” synoptic gospels and the “spiritual” Fourth Gospel which readers have noticed since ancient times.<sup>69</sup>

The birth of critical investigation of the life of Jesus made the differences in contents and subject matter a problem to be investigated by historians. The impulse for the critical study of this question came above all from the radical and provocative verdict of the Hamburg orientalist Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) that it is ‘impossible to harmonize’ (“unmöglich zu harmonieren”) the differences among the canonical gospels.<sup>70</sup> As is well known, he drew the summary inference that *all* the gospels were historically unreliable.<sup>71</sup>

Although such unconditional judgments on the historical level were rare in the following period, the basic antithesis which had been detected between the synoptics and John was broadly accepted on a new level. With the prominent exception of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834),<sup>72</sup> the verdict about the historically probable picture of

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<sup>68</sup> A history of research that leads into a very special thesis is provided by P. N. Anderson, *Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered*, LNTS 321 (London: T&T Clarke, 2006), 1–3.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. the classic formulation by Clement of Alexandria *apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.14.7: “Finally, knowing that the human nature had already been dealt with in the gospels, John wrote a spiritual Gospel—at the request of his pupils, and under the inspiration of the Spirit.”

<sup>70</sup> H. S. Reimarus, *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* 2, ed. G. Alexander (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, 1972), 582.

<sup>71</sup> On this, cf. the instructive essay by H. J. de Jonge, “The Loss of Faith in the Historicity of the Gospels: H. S. Reimarus (ca 1750) on John and the Synoptics,” in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. A. Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 409–421, at 414.

<sup>72</sup> D. F. Schleiermacher, *Einleitung ins neue Testament*, with a preface by F. Lücke, ed. G. Wolde; Friedrich Schleiermacher’s literarischer Nachlaß 3 = Friedrich Schleiermacher’s sämtliche Werke; Abt. 1: *Zur Theologie*, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Reimer, 1845), 315–316, 340. Schleiermacher pleads for the priority of the Fourth Gospel vis-à-vis the synoptics (op. cit., 219–221) and essentially bases his account of the life of Jesus on John (*Das Leben Jesu* [ed. K. A. Rügenik; Friedrich Schleiermacher’s literarischer Nachlaß 1 = Friedrich Schleiermacher’s sämtliche Werke; Abt. 1: *Zur Theologie*; Vol. 6] [Berlin: Reimer, 1864]), provoking A. Schweitzer’s draconic criticism in his *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, 9th ed., UTB 1302 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1984), 101. However, Schleiermacher was in fact aware that the situation of our sources does not permit a connected presentation of the life of Jesus: op. cit., 44. To Schleiermacher’s contribution to New Testament exegesis and to Jesus research

Jesus has usually looked askance at the Johannine Jesus, arguing that it is from the synoptics (or their antecedent sources) that we can obtain information about the earthly Jesus—not from the Gospel of John, which was written at a later date and itself received the synoptic gospels. This is why Jesus research mostly did not draw on John as independent testimony.<sup>73</sup>

The autonomous character of the Johannine Jesus does not consist in a renunciation of the earthly reality of the Son of God who came to earth; nor does the idea of the incarnation make the Johannine Jesus some kind of mythical figure. In keeping with the basic decision taken by the prologue (John 1:1–18), which is intended to guide the reader of the work as a whole,<sup>74</sup> the pre-existence *and* the incarnation of Jesus mean that in his *parresia*<sup>75</sup> it is God, his Father, who himself becomes audible and visible to human beings.<sup>76</sup> Besides this, tendencies towards docetism in the Johannine circle are countered by an anti-docetic *cantus firmus* which emphasizes that an inalienable presupposition of the post-Easter perspective of the Gospel is the fact that the Jesus of history has come.<sup>77</sup> If we may exaggerate somewhat, we may say that the difference vis-à-vis the synoptics is that they portray the authority of the preacher as oriented to the proclamation of the *basileia* of God, thus offering an historically plausible picture of the activity of Jesus, whereas in the Fourth Gospel the authority is itself an independent

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cf. M. Labahn, "Schleiermacher, Friedrich", in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. C. A. Evans, 547–549.

<sup>73</sup> On this problem, see below, section 2.2.3.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. M. Labahn, "Jesus und die Autorität der Schrift im Johannesevangelium. Überlegungen zu einem spannungsreichen Verhältnis," in *Israel und seine Heilstraditionen im Johannesevangelium: Festschrift for J. Beutler*, ed. M. Labahn, K. Scholtissek, and A. Strotmann, (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2004), 185–206, at 191–193.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. M. Labahn, "Die *παρρησία* des Gottessohnes im Johannesevangelium. Theologische Hermeneutik und philosophisches Selbstverständnis," in *Kontexte des Johannesevangeliums. Das vierte Evangelium in religions- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Perspektive*, ed. J. Frey and U. Schnelle (with the cooperation of J. Schlegel), WUNT 175 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 2004), 321–363; on the question of the divinity of Jesus in the Gospel of John, cf. U. Schnelle, "Trinitarisches Denken im Johannesevangelium," in Labahn, Scholtissek, and Strotmann, eds., *Israel*, 367–386.

<sup>76</sup> On this, cf. H. Hübner, "EN APXH ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ," in *Israel*, ed. Labahn et al., 107–122.

<sup>77</sup> Here it suffices to refer to C. Hoegen-Rohls, *Der nachösterliche Johannes. Die Abschiedsreden als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zum vierten Evangelium*, WUNT 2.84 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1996).

theme. However, the distance between the Fourth Gospel and the earthly Jesus lies, not in the *fact* of reflection, but in the advanced stage of this reflection, behind which the sources, traditions, or theological “predecessors” can sometimes be discerned only as if through veils of mist.

### 2.2.1. *Literary-diachronic Models*

The application of source-criticism to the Gospel of John altered the verdict on the potential value of this Gospel for the quest of the historical Jesus. For example, Hans Hinrich Wendt attempted to uncover a more original picture of Jesus behind the Gospel of John. His construction, which is based on the discourses as mediated by the apostle and eyewitness John, claims to offer insight into the utterances of Jesus on the road to Jerusalem and in the city itself.<sup>78</sup>

The critical investigation of John did not follow this model, although it was certainly willing to admit the possibility of autonomous paths of transmission of the traditions lying behind the Johannine miracles,<sup>79</sup> the discourse material, or the passion narrative.<sup>80</sup> Recent Jesus research has taken a greater interest in these sources when it inquires into the figure and the teaching of the earthly Jesus.

Rudolf Bultmann argued that a source containing revelatory discourses lay behind the Gospel of John,<sup>81</sup> and modern variants of this hypothesis have taken on a considerable importance in the scholarly debate. In particular, Helmut Koester proposes that the Johannine discourses are composed on the basis of core logia. Comparison with gnostic dialogue gospels or the Gospel of Thomas can indicate autonomous paths of transmission and hence a relatively early date for these

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<sup>78</sup> H. H. Wendt, *Das Johannesevangelium. Eine Untersuchung seiner Entstehung und seines geschichtlichen Wertes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900); idem, *Die Lehre Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd ed. 1901), 33–44; idem, *Die Schichten im vierten Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1911).

<sup>79</sup> On the *sêmeia* source, cf. G. van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel: Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation of the Semeia Hypothesis*, BETL 116 (Leuven: Peeters, 1994).

<sup>80</sup> On the passion narrative, cf. M. Lang, *Johannes und die Synoptiker. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Analyse von Joh 18–20 vor dem markinischen und lukanischen Hintergrund*, FRLANT 182 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1999), 21–23.

<sup>81</sup> On this, cf. J. Frey, *Die Johanneische Eschatologie 1: Ihre Probleme im Spiegel der Forschung seit Reimarus*, WUNT 96 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1997), 125–127.

logia, which however were corrected by the fourth evangelist when he took them over.<sup>82</sup>

We need not deny that the fourth evangelist has recourse to tradition, but the Johannine traditions are not to be explained by looking for extensive written sources. Rather, we must assume that an autonomous history of transmission and of the construction of tradition and of meaning, with the reception and the new creation of material, took place in the group where the Johannine writings have their origin.<sup>83</sup> Our judgment about the provenance of the traditional material depends on how we evaluate the place of the Fourth Gospel in the history of early Christian literature, and its relationship to the synoptics. Besides this, the evangelist is an interpreter rather than a critic, a narrator rather than a collector, and a creator rather than a simple reporter of his tradition. *The evangelist integrates into his construction of meaning both these materials and earlier theological tendencies and models with which he is familiar.*<sup>84</sup>

Even where scholars succeed in plausibly demonstrating the existence of older traditions, the question remains: how far back do these *constructions* go in the direction of the historical events surrounding Jesus? Such traditions are themselves shaped through the meaning which is formed by the memory that receives them, and it is precisely this task that makes it possible to transmit them to others. Indeed, we may affirm that they acquire a value of their own only if it is possible to integrate them into the total movement of the academic task of constructing the portrait of the historical Jesus. *Accordingly, the Johannine tradition represents one voice of the reception of Jesus to which we must pay attention.*

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<sup>82</sup> Koester, *Gospels*, 256–267; cf. especially idem, “Dialog- und Spruchüberlieferung in den gnostischen Texten von Nag Hammadi,” *EvTh* 39 (1979), 532–536 (ET: idem, “Dialogue and the Tradition of Sayings in the Gnostic Texts of Nag Hammadi,” in idem, *From Jesus to the Gospels. Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context* [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress press, 2007], 148–173); idem, “Gnostic Sayings and Controversy Traditions in John 8:12–59,” in *Nag Hammadi Gnosticism and Early Christianity*, ed. C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson Jr., (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1986), 97–110 (reprinted in idem, *From Jesus to the Gospels*, 184–195).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. e.g., M. Labahn, *Jesus als Lebensspender. Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der johanneischen Tradition anhand ihrer Wundergeschichten*, BZNW 98 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1999), 21–30.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. U. Schnelle, “Theologie als kreative Sinnbildung: Johannes als Weiterbildung von Paulus und Markus,” in *Johannesevangelium—Mitte oder Rand des Kanons. Neue Standortbestimmungen*, ed. T. Söding, QD 203 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2003), 119–145.

### 2.2.2. *Models of the “Chronological” or “Substantial” Priority of the Gospel of John*

Contemporary research into John is attempting to break new ground with regard to the contribution of this Gospel to the investigation and reconstruction of the activity and message of the earthly Jesus.

This was definitely the intention of John A. T. Robinson when he emphasized the priority of the Gospel of John. In keeping with his thesis about the dating of the New Testament writings,<sup>85</sup> his plea for the priority of the Fourth Gospel is primarily a plea that the historian should read John in the same way as Mark, since John’s account is substantially independent.<sup>86</sup> Klaus Berger has further elaborated this approach to the priority of John; where other scholars see a developed Christology and theology in the Fourth Gospel, Berger sees original traits.<sup>87</sup> Parallels between John and Q lead him to assume a direct contact between the two texts.<sup>88</sup> Another example of an attempt to ascribe priority to the Fourth Gospel and to its portrait of Jesus, and thus to give a new accentuation in Jesus research, is Paul Anderson’s thesis. He regards the Gospels of Mark and John as “bi-optic Gospels” and justifies this by literary-critical analyses. He postulates a first edition of the Gospel of John which was constructed around the Gospel of

<sup>85</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976).

<sup>86</sup> J. A. T. Robinson, *Johannes—das Evangelium der Ursprünge*, revised ed. by H.-J. Schulz, *Bibelwissenschaftliche Monographie 4* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1999).

<sup>87</sup> K. Berger, *Im Anfang war Johannes. Datierung und Theologie des vierten Evangeliums* (Stuttgart: Quell Verlag, 1997), 12: “Die Konsequenz ist, daß der johanneische Jesus weitaus ernster zu nehmen ist, als es bisher geschah. ‘Ernster’, das heißt: Was Jesus nach dem JohEv sagt und tut, ist nicht belanglos für das offene Mosaik, das allein wir noch zusammensetzen uns bemühen können... Was man bisher als johanneisch und spät zu mißachten gewöhnt ist, könnte sich weithin als historisch ernstzunehmende Variante früher christlicher Überlieferungen entpuppen. Im Klartext: Im JohEv haben wir viel, sehr viel zu lesen, das durchaus zu Jesus von Nazareth passen könnte.” (ET: “The consequence is that we must take the Johannine Jesus much more seriously than was usual in the past. All that we can do is to endeavor to assemble an open-ended mosaic; and the words ‘more seriously’ in the last sentence mean that what Jesus says and does in the Gospel of John is not irrelevant for this open mosaic... Many things that scholars have hitherto tended to look down on as Johannine and chronologically later may in fact turn out to be variants of early Christian traditions which the historian must take seriously. Let me make my point perfectly clear: in the Gospel of John, we find a great deal that could certainly ‘fit’ Jesus of Nazareth”). Cf. also idem, *Jesus* (Munich: Pattloch, 2004), 54 and passim; idem, “Das Evangelium nach Johannes und die Jesustradition,” in *Das Johannevangelium*, ed. T. Söding, 38–59.

<sup>88</sup> Berger, *Anfang*, 84–85.

Mark;<sup>89</sup> this edition offers an independent access to the Jesus tradition.<sup>90</sup> Albert Fuchs presents another variant of the early dating of John: he postulates that the Deutero-Mark who revised the Gospel of Mark made use of the Gospel of John.<sup>91</sup>

Different parallels between Luke and John lead Barbara Shellard<sup>92</sup> and Mark A. Matson to draw analogous conclusions. Matson claims that Luke read the Gospel of John under the influence of his reading of the Gospel of Mark.<sup>93</sup>

This critical questioning of the scholarly consensus deserves our consideration, but none of these examples offers convincing evidence, either methodologically or substantially, for this re-evaluation. With regard to these literary-critical analyses, it must be pointed out that the plausibility of any literary-historical reconstruction must be demonstrated convincingly by means of the text itself; but scholars become more and more skeptical about such hypothetical "basic texts" behind the Gospel of John.<sup>94</sup> One must also ask whether, and to what extent, these hypothetically reconstructed sources have any greater importance for research into the activity of Jesus; and it must be possible to

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<sup>89</sup> P. N. Anderson, "John and Mark: The Bi-Optic Gospels," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. R. T. Fortna and T. Thatcher, (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2001), 175–188, at 182, 186. On Anderson's theory cf. also idem, "Aspects of Interfluentiality Between John and the Synoptics. John 18–19 as a Case Study," in *The Death of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. van Belle, BETL 200 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 711–728; idem, *Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, 101–103.

<sup>90</sup> Anderson, "John and Mark," 185.

<sup>91</sup> A. Fuchs, "Das Verhältnis der synoptischen agreements zur johanneischen Tradition, untersucht anhand der messianischen Perikopen Mark 6,32–44 par Matt 14,13–21 par Luke 9,10–17; John 6,1–15," in *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums. Symposium in Salzburg am 10. März 2000*, ed. P. L. Hofrichter, Theologische Texte und Studien 9 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2002), 115–138, at 125–126.

<sup>92</sup> B. Shellard, "The Relationship of Luke and John: A Fresh Look at an Old Problem," *JTS* 46 (1995): 71–98; reprinted in *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums*, ed. Hofrichter, 255–280. Shellard has set out her theses in a monograph: *New Light on Luke. Its Purpose, Sources and Literary Context*, JSNT Supp 215 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

<sup>93</sup> M. A. Matson, "The Influence of John on Luke's Passion: Toward a Theory of Intergospel Dialogue," in *Priorität*, ed. Hofrichter, 183–194; idem, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel? The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke*, SBL DS 178 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001). See also his reflections on the independence of the Johannine cleansing of the temple and on its literary placing in the Fourth Gospel: "The Temple Incident. An Integral Element in the Fourth Gospel's Narrative," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Fortna and Thatcher, 145–153.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. e.g., U. Schnelle, "Recent Views of John's Gospel," *Word & World* 21 (2001): 352–359, at 353.

offer convincing proof of their early dating. If John is to be regarded as an historical alternative to the synoptics, one must explain why the latter invent Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. If John is thought of as a complement or a parallel to the synoptics, we must take up anew the discussion of the historical reliability of the texts. Finally, the hypothesis that Luke made use of the Fourth Gospel is open to many questions, since the relevant textual basis is very slender, and the idea of a reception based on memory is less plausible than other models as a definition of the relationship between these two writings. *Thus, both in terms of literary history and of its contents, the Gospel of John remains a late phenomenon in the early Christian production of literature.*<sup>95</sup> This limits its importance as a textual source, though not as a phenomenon in the history of reception.

### 2.2.3. *John and the Synoptics*<sup>96</sup>

Another factor in the assessment of the material value of the Gospel of John for the quest of the historical Jesus is our evaluation of its relationship to the synoptics. Since he supports the thesis that the Fourth Gospel has a history of tradition which is independent of the synoptics, John P. Meier includes this text among the "major sources" of his investigation into Jesus.<sup>97</sup> In his reflections, however, Meier does not adequately treat this question of the relationship of John to the synoptics—a methodologically demanding question which remains open.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See T. Söding's discussion and explicit rejection of the scholarly proposals of substantial and chronological Johannine priority: "Johanneische Fragen. Einleitungswissenschaft—Traditionsgeschichte—Theologie," in *Für und wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums*, ed. Hofrichter, 213–219.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. M. Labahn and M. Lang, "Johannes und die Synoptiker. Positionen und Impulse seit 1990," in *Kontexte*, ed. Frey and Schnelle, 443–515; cf. also Smith, *John Among the Gospels. The Relationship in Twentieth Century Research* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2nd ed. 2001), and J. Frey, "Das Vierte Evangelium auf dem Hintergrund der älteren Evangelientradition. Zum Problem: Johannes und die Synoptiker," in *Johannesevangelium*, ed. Söding, 60–118, at 61–63.

<sup>97</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 44. Meier discusses this question on half a page, without any methodological reflection on how the singular Johannine hermeneutic of Jesus might serve an historical construction.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. the conclusion in the review of scholarship in Labahn and Lang, "Johannes," 498 (presentation: 495–498).

For a long time, critical exegesis assumed dependence on the synoptics.<sup>99</sup> It was above all Percival Gardner-Smith<sup>100</sup> and Charles Harold Dodd<sup>101</sup> who gave scholarship a new direction; independence became the dominant paradigm in Johannine scholarship. This re-evaluation meant that John potentially contained old and historically valuable Jesus tradition, but many scholars who accepted the independence of John from the synoptics failed to note this point.

Contemporary scholarship displays an openness and a methodological breadth. While some maintain dependence and others independence, a number of arguments indicate both a direct and an indirect reception of the synoptics in the Fourth Gospel and in its tradition, although one may not apply the literary-critical methodology used to study the synoptic question, when one investigates this recourse in John to pre-texts. The fact that, despite serious criticism,<sup>102</sup> the Gospel of John belongs to the genre of "gospel" is a significant indicator that its author knew one or more gospels.

In addition to the literary relationship, we must also investigate the question of the provenance of the Johannine tradition itself: does this offer independent traditions which may perhaps be early?

In the case of the Johannine miracle narratives, I myself have indicated that their provenance is varied. Here, besides older traditions (John 5:1–9a; 9:1–7) and later special traditions (John 2:1–11), we also find the phenomenon of *secondary orality*, i.e. the renewed oral narration of written synoptic materials.<sup>103</sup> This means that where we find in John's traditional material a closeness to the synoptic traditions which could either confirm or correct the image of Jesus which the first three gospels present, we must investigate whether these passages contain genuinely early elements of the Jesus tradition, or else should be evaluated as a secondary interpretation which shows us

<sup>99</sup> Cf. the account in Smith, *John*, 1–37.

<sup>100</sup> P. Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

<sup>101</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. especially J. Becker, "Das vierte Evangelium und die Frage nach seiner externen und internen Quellen," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Festschrift for H. Räisänen*, ed. I. Dunderberg, C. Tuckett, and K. Syreeni, NTS 103 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 203–241, at 207.

<sup>103</sup> Labahn, *Lebensspender*, 195–197 (John 4:46–54 presupposes Luke 7:1–10); idem, *Offenbarung*, 272–275 (John 6:1–21 presupposes Mark 6:30–52). Cf. the remarks in Becker, "Frage," 207.



something of the history of interpretation of synoptic texts. One such passage is the account of Jesus' baptizing activity (cf. 2.2.4).

To assume a reference by the Fourth Gospel and its tradition to the synoptics does not mean that no room remains for individual early historical traditions—for it is certainly not the case that the entire text (or its tradition) can be explained on the mere basis of its assumed relation to the synoptics. However, the affirmation in principle that a relationship exists *limits the immediate value of the Johannine text for the work of historical construction.*

#### 2.2.4. *The Preservation of Historically Plausible Individual Pieces of Information*

With the definition of the Fourth Gospel as a late phenomenon in the history of the development of early Christian literature, and with the insight that both its tradition and the author himself probably already presuppose the synoptic gospels, we have described the methodological and substantial presuppositions which make it possible to inquire into the existence of old Jesus tradition, as well as the framework within which such an inquiry can hope to produce results. Dwight Moody Smith has formulated three criteria relevant to the methodological task, which complement the well known canon of criteria appropriate to the demands made by the Fourth Gospel on scholars:<sup>104</sup>

- (1) Affirmations in potentially historical texts in the Gospel of John must fit the picture of Jesus that can be deduced from the synoptic Gospels.<sup>105</sup>—This criterion needs interpretation. It must not be permitted to reduce the relevance of any new aspects that the Johannine tradition may have preserved. Rather, such aspects must prove their worth in a confrontation with the reconstruction that can be made on the basis of the synoptic gospels.
- (2) These affirmations must not support the Johannine Christology.
- (3) They must be plausible in the context of what we know about the historical Jesus.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> D. M. Smith, "Historical Issues and the Problem of John and the Synoptics," in *From Jesus to John. Essays on Jesus and New Testament Christology: Festschrift for M. de Jonge*, ed. M. C. de Boer, JSNT Supp 84 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 252–267.

<sup>105</sup> See also J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered. Christianity in the Making. Volume I* (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 167: "...the synoptic tradition provides something of a norm for the recognition of the oldest tradition".

<sup>106</sup> Smith, "Issues," 256.

The following examples show that the Fourth Gospel can certainly alter the picture of Jesus which is reconstructed on the basis of the synoptics. At the same time, they show that the Johannine permeation of the material in the Fourth Gospel makes it very difficult in practice to apply the second criterion (although it is methodologically correct).

The main significance of the Gospel of John for the construction of the earthly Jesus lies in questions of the *chronology of Jesus' activity*, the length of this activity and the dating of his death on the cross in the Passover chronology.

The structure of Jesus' journeys to the festivals in John is an expression of the author's desire to give his account a clear narrative shape.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, this structure poses a question mark against any portrait of short *length of Jesus' activity* which can be deduced uncritically from the structure which Mark's theology of the passion gives to his narrative. In the Johannine *passion narrative*, the reader notes not only parallels to the synoptics, but also a number of striking special traditions; the individual details of these traditions must be examined very precisely, to see whether they reflect specific historical knowledge.<sup>108</sup> The question of the Johannine *dating of Jesus' crucifixion* is particularly important.

According to the synoptic gospels, Jesus dies on Nisan 15 (Mark 15:34), after the meal which belongs to the Passover feast has been eaten. The Fourth Gospel offers a different reckoning: Jesus dies on Nisan 14 (John 19:14) at the same time as the slaughter of the Passover lambs. John 18:28 explicitly refers to the eating of these lambs, which has not yet occurred: no bone in Jesus' body is broken (this too differs from the synoptic accounts), since John interprets the failure to break Jesus' bones as the fulfillment of Old Testament passages concerning the Passover lamb (John 19:36; the quotation conflates Ps 33:21 LXX, Exod 12:10, and Num 9:12).<sup>109</sup> Since Jesus has

<sup>107</sup> On this, cf. e.g., M. J. J. Menken, "Die jüdischen Feste im Johannesevangelium," in *Israel*, ed. Labahn et al., 269–286.

<sup>108</sup> F. Millar, "Reflections on the Trial of Jesus," in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes*, ed. P. R. Davies, JSOT Supp 100 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 355–381, esp. 364, ascribes a high level of detailed historical knowledge to the passion narrative of the Fourth Gospel, but both his approach and the extent of the historical knowledge which he identifies are questionable.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Lang, *Johannes*, 248–249; M. J. J. Menken, "'Not a Bone of Him Shall be Broken' (John 19.36)," in idem, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel. Studies in Textual Form*, CBET 15 (Kampen: Pharos, 1996), 147–166.

already been given the title “lamb of God” at the beginning of the Gospel of John (1:29, 36), it is plausible to suggest that the chronology of the passion is due here to a theological structure imposed by the fourth evangelist.<sup>110</sup>

When however we bear in mind that the reference to the Passover which is expressed in the chronology of the passion narrative cannot be combined unambiguously with the motif of the lamb, it is not surprising that some exegetes decide the question of historical plausibility in favor of the Johannine Christology.<sup>111</sup>

Several individual traditions prompt the question whether we encounter here the historical recollection of Jesus. This applies above all to the texts about John the Baptist, where the attempt has repeatedly been made to discern historical recollections in the divergences from the synoptics.

One such scholar is Francis J. Moloney, who investigates John 1:19–21 and 2:13–15 for traces of historical Jesus tradition and discovers information about the activity of the Baptist and about Jesus’ period as a disciple of John, about Jesus’ own baptist praxis, about the calling of his first disciples, and about the dating of the logion about the temple.<sup>112</sup> Stephen Hultgren, who freely combines the literary texts of all four gospels, argues differently: John 3:25–30 is a direct reference to Jesus’ activity during the lifetime of John the Baptist, and thereby expands the information given at Matt 11:2–11 par. Luke 7:18–28.<sup>113</sup> Jesus’ baptizing activity is explicitly mentioned in John 3:22.26 and 4:1, and Hultgren interprets this too as an historical recollection.<sup>114</sup> Whether one chooses to see tradition here depends on the evaluation of the correction in John 4:2. Even if one answers positively, however, this does not mean that Jesus’ baptizing activity must be considered as historical, since it is implausible not only with

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. e.g., J. Herzer, “Synoptische oder johanneische Passionschronologie? Bemerkungen zu einer Tendenz der neueren Forschung,” in *De Jérusalem à Rome: Festschrift J. Riaud*, ed. L.-J. Bord and D. Hamidovic (Paris: Geuthner, 2000), 93–113.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. e.g., R. Riesner, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus. Studien zur Chronologie, Missionsstrategie und Theologie*, WUNT 71 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1994), 43–44.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. F. J. Moloney, “The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 42–58.

<sup>113</sup> S. Hultgren, *Narrative Elements in the Double Tradition. A Study of their Place within the Framework of the Gospel Narrative*, BZNW 113 (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2002), 79–81.

<sup>114</sup> Hultgren, *Elements*, 84, 85.

regard to the picture of Jesus in the synoptics (criterion 1), but *a fortiori* in the total picture of Jesus' preaching (criterion 3).

In view of the strong Johannine imprint on the texts which speak of the Baptist, I see little potential for historical reconstructions.

In my study of the Johannine miracle stories, I have indicated the early date of the traditions concerning the miracle narratives in Jerusalem (John 5:1–9; 9:1–3).<sup>115</sup> These reflections suggest that John or his source knew about miracles that Jesus may have performed in Jerusalem—although the synoptics have nothing to say about this (in contradiction of criterion 1).

No matter how one may judge these examples, it is clear that while *the total picture of the earthly Jesus need not be corrected by the inclusion of Johannine material about Jesus*, it could be changed by means of interesting and not insignificant individual aspects drawn from John. *Although one cannot overlook the special value of the Fourth Gospel as a recipient and interpreter of the Jesus event, it should be allowed to make its own contribution of the historical quest for Jesus.*

#### 2.2.5. *Memorizing Jesus by Re-narrating the Past*

The Gospel of John is, as Zumstein notes, “ein Paradebeispiel für diese Wiederaufnahme und Interpretationsarbeit” (special example for repetition and interpretation)<sup>116</sup> of the public memory of Jesus that, going beyond Zumstein, is an effect of Jesus' activity and preaching and therefore represents historical memories. Searching in early Christian texts for an understanding of Jesus' preaching and deeds is an expedition into re-narrated memories and re-told sayings. Embedded in memories, facts may have survived, and we can find these “facts” in new stories that no critical scholar may find historically reliable. However, scholarship dealing with the historical quest for Jesus must be open to different portraits and different kinds of re-narration of Jesus, who was memorialized by a Johannine community for whom Christ was the center of belief and who dealt with their current situation by recalling relevant tradition.

<sup>115</sup> Labahn, *Lebensspender*, 240–242, 340–341.

<sup>116</sup> J. Zumstein “Sünde in der Verkündigung des historischen Jesus und im Johannevangelium,” in idem, *Kreative Erinnerung. Relecture und Auslegung im Johannevangelium*, AThANT 84, 2nd. ed. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004), 83–103 at 100.

Such insight may open the scholar's mind to reflections about Jesus' proclamation and deeds in John's Gospel. One might refer, for example, to Jesus' relationship to women, as reflected and re-narrated in John 4:4–42,<sup>117</sup> and to the love commandment (John 5:42; 8:41–42; 14:15), which not only refers to Deuteronomy 6:4–6<sup>118</sup> but also re-tells the story of God's love proclaimed by Jesus in his message of the Kingdom of God (cf. Matt 5:44; Mark 12:28–34).<sup>119</sup> Especially the new commandment of Jesus in John 13:34–35 and the footwashing episode in John 13:1–3 may be read as re-telling or re-narration of Jesus' ethical teaching.<sup>120</sup>

Overall, the search for an historical Jesus in *the Fourth Gospel may, from time to time, give support to the synoptic picture while showing how the memory of Jesus remained alive and was re-narrated in later communities*, who built up meaning for their present life based on their reliable experience with the memory of Jesus.

#### 2.2.6. Summary

As D. Moody Smith correctly emphasizes, the fourth evangelist is a representative of the “quest for Jesus.” Like the historical Jesus research in every period, he is not “uninterested” in the earthly Jesus.<sup>121</sup> He undertakes a *conscious hermeneutical reflection on the Jesus event*, which looks back from the post-Easter perspective on the Jesus who was sent by the Father and then returned to him. The Fourth Gospel

<sup>117</sup> See H. Ritt, “Die Frau als Glaubensbotin. Zum Verständnis der Samaritanerin von Joh 4,1–42,” in *Vom Urchristentum zu Jesus: Festschrift J. Gnllka*, ed. H. Frankemölle, K. Kertelge, (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 287–306.

<sup>118</sup> M. Labahn “Deuteronomy in John,” in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament*, ed. S. Moyise, M. J. J. Menken, LNTS 358 (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2007), 82–98, at 95–96.

<sup>119</sup> See U. Schnelle, “Johanneische Ethik,” in *Eschatologie und Ethik im frühen Christentum: Festschrift Günther Haufe*, ed. C. Böttrich, (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 2006), 309–327, at 316–322.

<sup>120</sup> For more treatment and John 21:15–19 as evidence that the adoption of sinners was an important part of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom of God, a historical theme that remained alive in public Christian memory and was ready to be re-narrated in the Johannine circle as well, cf. M. Labahn, “Peter's Rehabilitation (John 21:15–19) and the Adoption of Sinners: Remembering Jesus and Relecturing John,” in *John, Jesus, and History, 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John*, ed. P. N. Anderson, F. Just, S. J. and T. Thatcher, SBL Symposium Series (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 335–348.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. D. M. Smith, “John's Quest for Jesus,” in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Festschrift for P. Borgen*, ed. D. E. Aune, T. Seland, and J. H. Ulrichsen, NTS 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 233–253, at 233.

contains “die am stärksten aufgrund theologischer Prämissen stilisierte Jesusfigur” (“the figure of Jesus which is most highly stylized on the basis of theological premises”).<sup>122</sup> This means that we must take the Johannine construction very seriously, since it also supplies an important criterion for disproving alleged instances of historical authenticity in the Gospel of John, viz. the integration and anchoring of the words and deeds of Jesus in the perspective of the Johannine interpretation of Christ.

Nevertheless, the Johannine portrait too has its foundations in the earthly Jesus, and this fact has two consequences. First, the Gospel of John must be read as a story of the reception of Jesus; secondly, however, as such it is also an impact made by the earthly Jesus, and this impact opens a window for questions about the historical Jesus.<sup>123</sup> But a clear methodological orientation for which Smith has laid a helpful and thorough foundation is required, if such questions are to be pursued.

Despite *individual pieces of historical information which must be taken seriously*, and are located primarily outside the tradition of logia, the Fourth Gospel is *not a major witness for the quest of the historical Jesus*.<sup>124</sup> Rather, it is a noteworthy example of how meaning can be derived from the Jesus event in a new period where the external circumstances have changed. Thus, it is *an exceptional representative of the narrative construction of meaning, which employs simple language and existential images to narrate a complex Christology which has remained controversial up to the present day*.

### 2.3. Other New Testament Writings

#### 2.3.1. *The Acts of the Apostles*<sup>125</sup>

There is no dispute in principle about the role which Jesus plays as the risen Kyrios in the second part of the Lukan double work. In the first part, the author gives evidence of his access to the Jesus tradition, presenting a large quantity of impressive special material of his own; and

<sup>122</sup> G. Theissen and A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus. Ein Lehrbuch*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 51.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 167.

<sup>124</sup> See again Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 167, who calls the Fourth Gospel “a secondary source”.

<sup>125</sup> Bibliography: Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 63.

despite the different concept which governs his second part, it seems highly unlikely that he would completely refrain there from recourse to material concerning Jesus. Accordingly, it is unsurprising that scholars investigate the potential contribution which Acts too can make to the quest of the historical Jesus.<sup>126</sup>

*Acts 20:35* (cf. 1 Clement 2.1) is well known in this context, and the problems connected with this text repay a close analysis:

μνημονεύειν τε τῶν λόγων τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ ὅτι αὐτὸς εἶπεν· μακάριόν ἐστιν μᾶλλον διδόναι ἢ λαμβάνειν.

“Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’.”

The Lukan Paul alludes here to the patrimony of the shared remembrance of the Kyrios (μνημονεύειν τῶν λόγων).

The Jesus tradition functions as a paradigm in Paul’s farewell discourse to the elders of Miletus. Paul employs the example of the blessing of those who give, in order to justify his exhortation to take care of the weak. The case for the authenticity of this beatitude is weakened by its substantial and verbal closeness to a Greek proverb:<sup>127</sup> Sir 4:31; Thucydides 2.97.4;<sup>128</sup> Plutarch, *Caes.* 16; *Mor.* 173D; Seneca, *Ep.* 81.17. Although literary dependence on the passage in Thucydides is a matter of dispute, the wide diffusion of this adage outside Christianity remains so striking that we can safely assume that it has been transferred in Acts to Jesus. Clearly, this proverbial expression was considered appropriate as a good summary of themes and material already found in the tradition about Jesus: and this is how the adage itself entered the Jesus tradition.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. e.g., C. K. Barrett, “Sayings of Jesus in the Acts of the Apostles,” in *A cause de l’Évangile* (Dupont Festschrift), 681–708; W. A. Strange, “The Jesus-Tradition in Acts,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 59–74; cf. also J. A. Trumbower, “The Historical Jesus and the Speech of Gamaliel (Acts 5.35–9),” *NTS* 39 (1993): 500–517.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. the evidence in J. J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum graecum editionis receptae cum lectionibus variantibus codicum mss., editionum aliarum, versionum et patrum necnon commentario pleniore ex scriptoribus veteribus hebraeis, graecis et latinis historiam et vim verborum illustrante*, Amsterdam: ex officina Dommeriania 1751/1752 ad loc.; cf. also E. Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 7th ed., KEK 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 569–570 n. 5 and now M. Lang, *Die Kunst des christlichen Lebens. Rezeptionsästhetische Studien zum lukanischen Paulusbild*, ABG 29 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2008), 331.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. E. Plümacher, “Eine Thukydidesreminiszenz in der Apostelgeschichte (Acts 20,33–35—Thuk. II 97,3f.),” *ZNW* 83 (1992): 270–275; see also the reply by J. J. Kilgallen, “Acts 20:35 and Thucydides 2.97.4,” *JBL* 112 (1993): 312–314.

We may therefore draw the same conclusion for Acts that we have already drawn for John and for Paul. The identification of Jesus tradition—where this can successfully be done—does not give us a direct access to the historical Jesus, either in the sense of hermeneutical *prolegomena* or by enriching our knowledge of the history of traditions about Jesus. Acts does however tell us something about the way in which Jesus' preaching was understood and about its power to create meaning—a power which, as in this specific case, can take hold of a non-Christian tradition and integrate this into the message of Jesus.

### 2.3.2. *1 Peter*<sup>129</sup>

1 Peter likewise plays a role as witness to the Jesus tradition. There are several notable parallels between this Letter and the Gospel of Matthew, although these are not explicitly introduced as words of the Lord:

1 Pet 3:4	Matt 5:10
1 Pet 4:13–14	Matt 5:11–12
1 Pet 2:12	Matt 5:16
1 Pet 3:9; cf. also 1:15–16	Matt 5:38–48

On the basis of possible parallel texts, and of thematic recourses which he postulates, Rainer Metzner concludes that a direct literary dependence exists between the two works.<sup>130</sup> In that case, 1 Peter would be a witness to a very early reception of the Gospel of Matthew, at the close of the first century.

Questions of the dating<sup>131</sup> and the place of composition of 1 Peter make it difficult to accept the hypothesis of literary dependence, and this is why the claim that the Letter draws on a Jesus tradition derived directly from the apostle Peter remains unconvincing. 1 Peter bears the traces of a social and historical situation which presupposes the Pauline mission and which we would expect to find only after the

<sup>129</sup> Bibliography: E. Best, "1 Peter and the Gospel Tradition," *NTS* 16 (1969/1970): 95–113; G. Maier, "Jesus Tradition im 1. Petrusbrief," in *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, Gospel Perspectives 5 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), 85–128; R. Metzner, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums im 1. Petrusbrief. Studien zum traditionsgeschichtlichen und theologischen Einfluß des 1. Evangeliums auf den 1. Petrusbrief*, WUNT 2.74 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1995).

<sup>130</sup> Metzner, *Rezeption*, passim.

<sup>131</sup> Dates proposed for 1 Peter vary from 65 to 100 CE. On the discussion, cf. the summary by U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 439–441. Schnelle himself argues for a date ca. 90 CE.



death of Peter himself.<sup>132</sup> Besides this, it breathes the spirit of late Pauline theology.<sup>133</sup>

This means that in those passages where we find Jesus tradition, *1 Peter is a witness to the transmission and the presence of Jesus tradition, probably in communities in Asia Minor*. We cannot however draw far-reaching conclusions about the addressees' knowledge of this tradition, although there is a striking concentration on material in the Matthean Sermon on the Mount. The texts make an interesting contribution to the history of tradition: it is highly significant that the reception of the Jesus tradition allows the logia to become affirmations by the author of the Letter himself, but without any explicit claim to the authority of Jesus (or of the Kyrios) such as we find in Paul.

### 2.3.3. *The Letter of James*<sup>134</sup>

The Letter of James is an important dialogue partner in our search for early traditions about Jesus.

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. 1 Pet 4:16, which speaks of persecution for the sake of the *nomen ipsum*. We also have glimpses of a comprehensive threat to the communities which is caused by denunciations by the non-Christian populace: e.g., 1 Pet 2:12; 3:14; 4:4–6.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. e.g., A. Lindemann, *Paulus im ältesten Christentum. Das Bild des Apostels und die Rezeption der paulinischen Theologie in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Marcion*, BHT 58 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1979), 252–261; cf. also J. Herzer, *Petrus oder Paulus? Studien über das Verhältnis des ersten Petrusbriefes zur paulinischen Tradition*, WUNT 103 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1998).

<sup>134</sup> Bibliography: R. Bauckham, *James. Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999); D. B. Deppe, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Epistle of James* (Chelsea: Bookcrafters, 1989); F. Hahn and P. Müller, "Der Jakobusbrief," *ThR* 63 (1998): 1–73, at 54–57; P. J. Hartin, *James and the Q-Sayings of Jesus*, JSNT Supp 47 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); J. S. Kloppenborg, "The Reception of the Jesustradition in James," in *The Catholic Epistles and the Tradition*, ed. J. Schlosser, BETL 176 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 93–141; M. Konrad, "Der Jakobusbrief im frühchristlichen Kontext. Überlegungen zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Verhältnis des Jakobusbriefes zur Jesusüberlieferung, zur paulinischen Tradition und zum 1. Petrusbrief," in *Catholic Epistles*, ed. Schlosser, 171–212; W. Popkes, *Adressaten, Situation und Form des Jakobusbriefes*, SBS 125/126 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986), 156–176; idem, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, ThHK 14 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 32–35; idem, "Traditionen und Traditionsbrüche im Jakobusbrief," in *Catholic Epistles*, ed. Schlosser, 143–170, at 155–159; M. H. Shepherd, "The Epistle of James and the Gospel of Matthew," *JBL* 75 (1956): 40–51; W. H. Wachob, *The Voice of Jesus in the Social Rhetoric of James*, SNTS MS 106 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); idem and L. T. Johnson, "The Sayings of Jesus in the Letter of James," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTs 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 431–450; cf. also R. Hoppe, *Der theologische Hintergrund des Jakobusbriefes*, FzB 26 (Würzburg: Echter, 1985), 119–145.

The evaluation of this Letter is made difficult by the question of its authenticity, which recent scholarship has once again affirmed.<sup>135</sup> This is significant for our verdict on the presence of Jesus tradition in the Letter of James and on its place in the history of early Christian theology and literature. If it was the work of the Brother of the Lord, this Letter would point to a relatively early phase of the Jesus tradition; it would show us a reflection of the work and the words of Jesus in an eyewitness—though here too, we would find reception, interpretation, and adaptation to a changed situation. It is however more probable that the Letter is pseudepigraphic. In this case, “der historisch-biographische Aspekt, d.h. die Relation des Verfassers zum irdischen Jesus... [kann] ausgeklammert werden” (the historical-biographical aspect, i.e. the relationship of the author to the earthly Jesus... can be dismissed),<sup>136</sup> and we would have here a later form of the Jesus tradition and of its reception.

Scholars disagree about the precise extent and the specific form of the Jesus traditions. The following overview by Wiard Popkes is therefore open to objections, but it is at any rate a serious presentation which can serve as a basis for further discussions:<sup>137</sup>

Jas 1:2	Matt 5:11–12a par. Luke 6:22–23a Q
Jas 1:4	Matt 5:48
Jas 1:5	Matt 7:7 par. Luke 11:9
Jas 1:6	Matt 21:21
Jas 1:17	Matt 7:11 par. Luke 11:13
Jas 1:19b–20	Matt 5:22a
Jas 1:22–25	Matt 7:24–26 par. Luke 6:47–49
Jas 2:5	Matt 5:3 par. Luke 6:20
Jas 2:8	Matt 12:31 par. Matt 22:39 par. Luke 10:27
Jas 2:13	Matt 5:7 par. Luke 6:36
Jas 3:12	Matt 7:16 par. Luke 6:44
Jas 3:18	Matt 5:9 par. Luke 6:43
Jas 4:2–3	Matt 7:7 par. Luke 11:9
Jas 4:4a	Matt 12:39a; 16:4a par. Mark 8:38
Jas 4:4	Matt 6:24 par. Luke 16:13
Jas 4:9	Luke 6:21.25b

<sup>135</sup> K. W. Niebuhr, “‘A New Perspective on James?’ Neuere Forschungen zum Jakobusbrief,” *TLZ* 129 (2004): 1019–1044. On the contemporary discussion, cf. also Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 422–426.

<sup>136</sup> Popkes, “Traditionen,” 155; on the problem of authorship, cf. now e.g., idem, *Jakobus*, 64–68.

<sup>137</sup> Popkes, *Jakobus*, 33, with reference to Deppe, *Sayings*, 237–238.

Jas 4:10	Matt 23:12 par. Luke 14:11; 18:14b
Jas 4:11–12	Matt 7:1–2a par. Luke 6:37
Jas 4:13–14	Matt 6:34 par. Luke 11: 16–21
Jas 5:1	Luke 6:24.25b
Jas 5:2	Matt 6:19–20 par. Luke 12:33b
Jas 5:9b	Mark 13:29b par. Matt 24:33b
Jas 5:10–11a	Matt 5:11.12b par. Luke 6:22.23b
Jas 5:12	Matt 5:33–37
Jas 5:17	Luke 4:25

The identification and the evaluation of distinct passages are problematic, because the traditions are not specifically marked as traditions of the logia of the Lord.<sup>138</sup> Besides this, the linguistic differences are often considerable, despite the agreement in contents.<sup>139</sup> Accordingly, even those exegetes who emphasize the close relationship to the tradition of the dominical logia also underline the receptive character. The reception “should not be understood in terms of allusion, but in terms of creative appropriation and re-expression.”<sup>140</sup>

*The Letter of James should be considered a testimony to the transmission of the logia of Jesus at the end of the first century.* A direct literary dependence on the Gospel of Matthew cannot be demonstrated. Its striking focus on traditions found in the Sermon on the Mount or on texts from Q<sup>141</sup> corresponds to the substantial interests of James, and *tells us nothing about what kind of knowledge the author and his addressees possessed.*<sup>142</sup> All three, James, the Sermon on the Mount and Q<sup>143</sup> are interested in a faith in Christ that leads to action, and in the

<sup>138</sup> On this, cf. Popkes, *Jakobus*, 35. It is possible that the author of the Letter of James knows nothing of their provenance. The relative concentration of the material in this Letter is an argument against a general derivation from the “Vorrat des frühchristlichen Unterweisungsgutes” (treasury of early Christian catechetical material). It is possible that the author avoids attributing these words explicitly to Jesus because he intends to create a closeness to the tradition of the words of the Lord that will support the pseudepigraphical character of the text: after all, it would be perfectly natural for the Brother of the Lord to use the words and ideas of Jesus.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. e.g., Jas 1:19b–20, “Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God” (βραδὺς εἰς ὀργὴν ὀργὴ γὰρ ἀνδρὸς δικαιοσύνην θεοῦ οὐκ ἐργάζεται), and Matt 5:22a, “Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment” (πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει).

<sup>140</sup> Bauckham, *James*, 31.

<sup>141</sup> Hartim particularly emphasizes the closeness, in terms of the history of tradition, to the supposed oldest layer of Q: *James*, passim.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. also Popkes, “Traditionen,” 156.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. M. Labahn, “Das Reich Gottes und seine performativen Abbildungen. Gleichnisse, Parabeln und Bilder als Handlungsmodelle im Dokument Q,” in *Hermeneutik*

question of the appropriate interpretation of the law. The traditions are adapted to the view of the Letter. The author does not place himself under the authority of the tradition of the logia of Jesus, but *integrates this into his own rhetoric as a language of his own*.

Accordingly, the Letter of James is of interest for the history of the tradition of the logia of Jesus. As a productive transmitter and recipient, it provides information about the way in which the earthly Jesus was understood in the period at which it was written.

#### 2.3.4. *The Revelation of John*<sup>144</sup>

The Revelation of John is another text with a role to play in the search for authentic words of Jesus; but the logia under discussion involve allusions rather than quotations, so that the material contribution is slight. Besides this, important questions are unresolved; the dating and the discussion of the literary unity of Revelation<sup>145</sup> suggest a variety of models with regard to the possibility that the synoptics are one source of the words which the exalted Kyrios speaks in Revelation.

The following texts deserve consideration:<sup>146</sup>

Rev 1:3; cf. also 22:7 (summons to wake up: Rev 2:7.11.17.29; 3:6.13.22; 13:9 <sup>147</sup>	Luke 11:28 Mark 4:9 parr. and frequently)
Rev 3:3; 16:15 Rev 3:5	Matt 24:43–44 Matt 10:32 par. Luke 12:28; Mark 9:28 par. Luke 9:26

Each piece of evidence requires a detailed discussion. Once a verdict has been reached, a further question remains: even if Revelation contains independent tradition, is this authentic material which goes back to Jesus, or a secondary formation of early Christian prophecy? At any

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*der Gleichnisse Jesu. Methodische Neuansätze zum Verstehen urchristlicher Parabeltexte*, ed. R. Zimmermann, WUNT 231 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 2008): 259–282.

<sup>144</sup> Bibliography: D. E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC 52 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 264–265 (excursus: “The Sayings of Jesus in Revelation”); R. Bauckham, “Synoptic Parousia Parables and the Apocalypse,” *NTS* 23 (1977): 162–176; L. A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen: Kok, 1965).

<sup>145</sup> Cf. the summary in Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 551–552, 559–561.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. the list in Aune, *Revelation*, 265; for a detailed presentation and discussion, cf. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse*, passim. He takes a different view of the number of texts which need to be considered.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Breytenbach, “Vormarkinische Logientradition,” 739–740.

rate, it is clear that the author places on the lips of the exalted Lord words which scholars ascribe to the stream of tradition concerning the earthly Jesus. A new perspective of meaning is generated in the reception of material about the earthly Jesus, and this *must be read as an example of the reception and acceptance of the earthly Jesus and of the history of the impact he made.*

### 3. "Outsiders" Outside the New Testament<sup>148</sup>

It is indubitable that the transmission of the words and deeds of Jesus did not cease simply because they had taken on a literary form in the canonical gospel texts.<sup>149</sup> We may recall here the well known (and often quoted) testimony of Papias, bishop of Hierapolis:<sup>150</sup>

And if anyone chanced to come who had actually been a follower of the elders, I would enquire as to the discourses of the elders, what Andrew or Peter said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples; and the things which Aristion and John the elder, disciples of the Lord, say. For I supposed that things out of books did not profit me so much as the utterances of a voice which liveth and abideth (ὄσον τὰ παρὰ ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης).

Papias assembled traditions of this kind in a five-volume work.<sup>151</sup> However, the surviving extracts from this lost *opus* are scarcely of such a character that we can have any great confidence in the quality and substance of the traditions about Jesus which he collected.

<sup>148</sup> On what follows, cf. also the bibliography with comments by C. A. Evans, *Life of Jesus Research. An Annotated Bibliography*, rev. ed., NTTTS 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 256–300.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. e.g., H. Köster, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957).

<sup>150</sup> Papias, frag. 5.4 (*apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39,4 = U. H. J. Körner, "Papiasfragmente," in *Papiasfragmente, Hirt des Hermas*, idem and M. Leutzsch, SUC 3 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998], 55; ET: Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine* 1, trans. H. J. Lawlor and J. E. L. Oulton [London: SPCK, 1927], 99).

<sup>151</sup> On the *Exegeses* of Papias, cf. e.g., U. H. J. Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, FRLANT 133 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 25–27; W. R. Schoedel, "Papias," ANRW II 27.1 (1993): 235–270; P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, GLB (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975), 757–765.

When we consider the phenomenon of oral transmission at the end of the first and the beginning of the second century, we must assume not only the phenomenon of a switch from the medium of written texts to the renewed productive oral transmission (secondary orality),<sup>152</sup> but also the handing on of traditions which had not taken a written form; and such traditions may preserve very ancient impulses and recollections of the historical Jesus. It is certainly possible that such recollections may have found their literary expression in the non-canonical texts of early Christianity.

Since the analysis of the individual texts is difficult, there exists a profound disagreement about the precise value of extra-canonical sources for research into the historical Jesus. The dispute is generated by *questions of dating*, the evaluation of *the possibility of identifying older sources by means of literary-critical examination*, and the *judgment about whether or not a particular text is independent of the canonical texts about Jesus*—and this is often the truly decisive question. The hypothesis of literary dependence does not exclude altogether the possibility of discovering here ancient material that preserves a recollection of Jesus, but it does relativize the likelihood of doing so. Besides this, the increasing *chronological distance from the activity of the earthly Jesus* means that we must assume a more productive role on the part of the memory of those who hand on the traditions about him (although we certainly cannot simply equate chronological proximity with “historical objectivity”).

These observations are reinforced by the insight that distance in time is not the only factor which transforms tradition. The same is true of memory and orality, which have a fundamental responsibility for the preservation of what is remembered: selective and productive forces are at work in both of these. The cultural memory, like the individual’s memory, preserves that which concerns it directly and helps it in the construction of meaning. At the same time, however, there can exist a tradition which is so authoritative that it continues to be effective precisely in its awkwardness—though this too is often the object of interpretation and exegesis.

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<sup>152</sup> On this phenomenon, cf. e.g., R. Uro, “Thomas and Oral Gospel Tradition,” in idem, *Thomas at the Crossroads. Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 8–32. S. Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story. The Gospel Traditions in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 2000), speaks of “re-oralisation”; cf. idem, 138–144.

*No serious historical approach to the historical Jesus can dispense with the investigation of the non-canonical texts—the dismissal of their value must be justified, just as much as the special emphasis on the value of these texts for a reconstructed picture of Jesus.*

### 3.1. “Extra-canonical Sayings”—*Agrapha*<sup>153</sup>

According to the definition by Otfried Hofius, an “unwritten” word (plural: *agrapha*) of Jesus is “an affirmation ascribed to the earthly Jesus which is *not* transmitted in the oldest version of the four canonical gospels.”<sup>154</sup>

The Greek word ἄγραφον refers here not to the condition in which the logion has reached us—since this naturally takes place in the medium of writing—but to its relationship to the New Testament gospels, in which the logion is not found. This is why the English term “extra-canonical” seems more appropriate,<sup>155</sup> although it bypasses the specific question of logia of Jesus found in the New Testament but outside the gospels.

*Agrapha* may have their origin in the New Testament writings (including their textual tradition), the extra-canonical early Christian

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<sup>153</sup> Collections of texts: A. Resch, *Agrapha. Ausserkanonische Schriftfragmente*, 2nd ed., TU.NF 15.3/4. Bd. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1906); O. Hofius, “Versprengte Jesusworte,” in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 1, ed. W. Schneemelcher, 76–79; E. Klostermann, ed., *Apocrypha 3: Agrapha, Slavische Josephusstücke, Oxyrhynchos-Fragment* 1911, KIT 11 (Bonn: A. Marcus and E. Weber, 2nd ed. 1911). Secondary literature: J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans, “Jesus in the *Agrapha* and the Apocryphal Gospels,” in *Historical Jesus*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 483–491; K. Elliott, “Non-canonical Sayings of Jesus in Patristic Works and in the New Testament Manuscript Tradition,” in *Philologia Sacra. Biblische und patristische Studien für Hermann J. Frede und Walter Thiele zu ihrem siebzigsten Geburtstag*. 2: *Apokryphen, Kirchenväter, Verschiedenes*, ed. R. Gryson, Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 24.2 (Freiburg i. Breisgau: Herder, 1993), 343–354; Hofius, “‘Unbekannte Herrenworte,’” passim; Klauck, *Evangelien*, 16–34; W. G. Morrice, *Hidden Sayings of Jesus: Words Attributed to Jesus Outside the Four Gospels* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997); T. Nicklas, “Zur Problematik der so genannten ‘*Agrapha*’: eine Thesenreihe,” *Revue Biblique* 113 (2006): 78–93; W. D. Stroker, *Extracanonial Sayings of Jesus*, SBL RBS 18 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989); idem, “*Agrapha*,” *ABD* 1 (1992): 92–95; P. Vielhauer, *Geschichte der urchristlichen Literatur*, GLB (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1975), 615–618; R. Zimmermann, “Parabeln unter den *Agrapha*. Einleitung,” in *Compendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. R. Zimmermann in collaboration with D. Dormeyer, G. Kern, A. Merz, C. Münch and E. E. Popkes (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 935–939.

<sup>154</sup> Hofius, “Unbekannte Jesusworte,” 355.

<sup>155</sup> Thus Klauck, *Evangelien*, 16.

writings about Jesus (including the papyrus fragments), the church fathers, and non-Christian writings (including the Jewish traditional writings or the Quran). Agrapha do not include any logia which are explicitly ascribed to the risen or exalted Kyrios, although one must always bear in mind that the title κύριος does not provide on its own a sufficient criterion for differentiation. The criterion of harmony with the synoptics should not be applied on a secondary level to the process of identification of these texts,<sup>156</sup> since this is to take one particular picture of Jesus and make this—without any historical discussion—the leading criterion of a collection which found its original orientation in a *formal criterion*. The question of historical plausibility has to be raised after collecting the texts in question, and hence after their definition. The unclarity of the definition is reduced when only *isolated* logia of Jesus are included among the agrapha; this means that we need not discuss here the transmission of logia from the extra-canonical texts about Jesus (including the fragments).<sup>157</sup>

In his monograph, originally published in 1889 and revised in 1906, Alfred Resch endeavored to present comprehensive proof,<sup>158</sup> but his work met with criticism.<sup>159</sup> On the basis of the principle that one should “diejenigen Agrapha zu ermitteln..., die inhaltlich und überlieferungsgeschichtlich den Jesusworten der synoptischen Texte an die Seite gestellt werden können” (discover those agrapha... which in terms of their content and of the history of tradition can be set alongside the words of Jesus in the synoptic texts).<sup>160</sup> Hofius produces a minimum list which is no less problematic:<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> This point is made clearly by Hofius, “Unbekannte Herrenworte,” 362–363. The exclusion from this list of the logia of Jesus which are embedded in a narrative corresponds to the definition which Vielhauer prefers (*Geschichte*, 616).

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Klauck, *Evangelien*, 17.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. the list in Resch, *Agrapha*, 23–25. Similarly, J. Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*, 3rd ed., revised with the collaboration of O. Hofius (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1963), 47–49, attempts to discern a broader stock of material, in the hope that he will be able to extend the collection of “authentic” logia of Jesus.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. e.g., W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967), 377–415.

<sup>160</sup> Hofius, “Versprengte Herrenworte,” 77. The criterion of the history of tradition aims to exclude dependence on canonical logia of Jesus, as well as erroneous transpositions to Jesus of texts from the Old Testament or of words of the apostles.

<sup>161</sup> Hofius, “Versprengte Herrenworte,” 78–79; for a detailed justification, cf. “Unbekannte Herrenworte,” 357–359.



Syriac Liber Graduum, *Serm.* 3.3; 15.4;  
 Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 1.24.158;  
 Ps.-Clementine Homilies 2.51.1; 3.50; 18.20.4;  
 Luke 6:5 D;  
*Gos. Thom.* 82; Origen, *In Jerem. Hom. lat.* 3.3; Didymus, *In Psalm.* 88.8;  
 P. Oxy. 1224;  
*Gospel of the Hebrews, apud Jerome, In Ephes.* 5.4.

The principal gain for the quest of the historical Jesus in the identification of *agrapha* is the recovery of a *logion* of Jesus, which thus widens our knowledge about his proclamation; thus, Luke 6:5 D tells us something very significant about Jesus' interpretation of the law.<sup>162</sup>

Where the context of the *logia* is secondary, we usually learn nothing about the paths of transmission. The identification is itself an object of constructive historical research, which makes use of the criteria of authenticity to assert the plausibility of the texts it studies in the light of the relevant picture of Jesus.<sup>163</sup> *This however means that the agrapha will basically confirm or complement the already-existing construction*—the methodology means that they cannot call this construction into question. It must be emphasized that this verdict assesses some kinds of text, e.g., the ascetic *logia* of Jesus, as implausible for the picture of the earthly Jesus.

### 3.2. *Extra-canonical Gospels and Writings about Jesus*

#### 3.2.1. *The Gospel of Thomas*

Since its (re)discovery ca. 1945 in the Coptic library found at Nag Hammadi, the Gospel of Thomas has fascinated scholars. The relatedness and the autonomy of its portrait of Jesus, and its designation as "Gospel according to Thomas" (although this is found only in the postscript), have led many to draw on it in their analyses of the history of early Christian literature.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>162</sup> "On the same day, he [i.e., Jesus] saw a man working on the sabbath. Then he said to him: 'Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed; but if you do not know this, you are accursed and a transgressor of the law.'"

<sup>163</sup> Klauck rightly deplores the lack of a convincing methodology: *Apokryphe Evangelien*, 34.

<sup>164</sup> On the history of research, cf. F. T. Fallon and R. Cameron, "The Gospel of Thomas. A Forschungsbericht and Analysis," *ANRW II* 25.6 (1988): 4195–4251; cf. also C. M. Tuckett, "Das Thomasevangelium und die synoptischen Evangelien," *BThZ* 12 (1995): 186–200, at 188.

The discovery of this text allows us to understand the Greek fragments P. Oxy 1.654 and 655<sup>165</sup> (which do not come from one single document) as testimony to a Greek predecessor of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, which is however not a direct translation made from the Greek manuscripts: the sequence of its text bears the traces of a far-reaching autonomous structuring.<sup>166</sup>

The literary character of the Gospel of Thomas represents an autonomous type of the Jesus tradition. Without a framework of narrative passages, it offers a sequence of logia of Jesus with a variety of forms. Scholars find the closest parallel to the Gospel of Thomas in the document Q. The comparison with Q has led to the conclusion that the literary character of *Gos. Thom.* points to a very ancient, unbiographical, and hence original form of the Jesus tradition.<sup>167</sup> However, unlike *Gos. Thom.*, the document Q which is reconstructed from Matthew and Luke is not a "pure" logia source (cf. above all Q 4.1–13), and it has a basic rhetorical-argumentative structure.<sup>168</sup>

Helmut Köster suggests that the two texts go back to an older Wisdom Gospel, so that one could also draw on *Gos. Thom.* to help reconstruct the original wording of Q.<sup>169</sup> One must however pose the critical question whether the supposition of a priority of the logia tradition is so directly tenable, and whether the narrative recollection of Jesus represents only a secondary development in early Christianity,<sup>170</sup> since precisely the comparison with other texts from the Nag Hammadi library with textual forms orientated to *words* would suggest that the

<sup>165</sup> On this, cf. H. Attridge, "The Greek Fragments," in B. Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II,7: together with XIII,2\**, *Brit. Lib. Or. 4926(1) and P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655, 1: Gospel according to Thomas, Gospel according to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons*, NHS 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 96–128.

<sup>166</sup> In addition to Fallon and Cameron, "The Gospel of Thomas," cf. the introductions to the Gospel of Thomas e.g., in Klauck, *Evangelien*, 144; M. Fieger, *Das Thomasevangelium. Einleitung, Kommentar und Systematik*, NTA NF 22 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), 5.

<sup>167</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 53.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Tuckett, "Thomasevangelium," 193; R. A. Horsley in *Whoever Hears You, Hears Me. Prophets, Performance and Tradition in Q*, R. A. Horsley and J. A. Draper (Harrisburg: TPI, 1999), 85; Schröter, "Historizität," 181 with n. 48 (repr.: 122 with n. 48).

<sup>169</sup> Koester, *Gospels*, 95; idem, "Q and its Relatives," in *Gospel Origins & Christian Beginnings: Festschrift J. M. Robinson*, ed. J. E. Goehring and C. W. Hedrick, Forum Fascicles 1 (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1990), 49–63, at 55–63.

<sup>170</sup> Thus e.g., B. H. McLean, "On the Gospel of Thomas and Q," in *The Gospels Behind the Gospels. Current Studies on Q*, ed. R. A. Piper, NT Supp 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 321–345, at 343.

opposite is true.<sup>171</sup> It is however most probable that the transmission of words and the narrative construction of meaning existed alongside each other and were mutually permeable. Accordingly, we cannot pronounce any judgments about the literary and historical priority of one or other form of tradition.

The contents of *Gos. Thom.* sketch an autonomous picture of Jesus which bears esoteric traces, with Thomas as the guarantor of the tradition (in contradistinction to other representative figures in early Christian tradition; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 13), and it displays a lack of interest in eschatology.

According to the Gospel of Thomas, the kingdom of God is a *present* (*Gos. Thom.* 113) phenomenon linked to the human self, in which the “seeking” (*Gos. Thom.* 76; 92.1; 94; cf. also 107) and “finding” (*Gos. Thom.* 8; cf. also 76 and 109) which have become a specific goal, achieve their fulfillment. In the act of knowledge, which is born of prudence (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 28), the individual is united to all those who share knowledge (*Gos. Thom.* 3; cf. 20; 22; 27; 46). One must practice abstinence vis-à-vis the world (*Gos. Thom.* 21.6; 27; 63; on the understanding of the world, cf. *Gos. Thom.* 56).

These characteristics lead the reader to expect not only that the Gospel of Thomas may provide potential glimpses of the development of the Jesus tradition, but that—where the picture of Jesus which it offers is plausible—we may need to expand or even correct our whole picture of the earthly Jesus.

### 3.2.1.1. The Question of the Autonomy and the Chronological Priority of the Gospel of Thomas

One decisive problem in the evaluation of the Gospel of Thomas is *the question of literary dependence on the synoptics*.<sup>172</sup> Passages where we may perhaps have older textual forms in terms of the history of tradition<sup>173</sup> stand alongside other passages which compel us to assume a

<sup>171</sup> This aspect is underlined by J. Schröter, “Jesus, der Menschensohn. Zum Ansatz der Christologie in Markus und Q,” in idem, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie*, 140–179, at 151–152.

<sup>172</sup> An overview of scholarship is presented by S. J. Patterson, “Thomas and the Synoptic Tradition,” *Foundations & Facets Forum* 8.1–2 (1995): 45–98.

<sup>173</sup> These passages are adduced by those scholars who emphasize the independence of the Gospel of Thomas vis-à-vis the New Testament gospels: cf. e.g., Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 84–86; S. J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, Foundations and Facets. Reference Series (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993); J. D. Crossan, *Four*

literary dependence.<sup>174</sup> Neither position has succeeded in marshalling a consensus. The following detailed points make global judgments difficult:

- (1) the productivity of a recipient, which must also be assumed in the case of the compilation of the logia by the Gospel of Thomas;<sup>175</sup>
- (2) the differentiated verdicts of scholars on the priority and authenticity of the divergent sequences of the logia of Jesus;<sup>176</sup>
- (3) the phenomenon of *secondary orality*, which must be borne in mind as an element of transmission which could be responsible for coherence of as well as difference between written texts which might be sources for later texts as might be the case in the relation of, at least, some texts common to the synoptics and the Gospel of Thomas;<sup>177</sup> and
- (4) the Coptic language, which leaves the traces in a translated text that finally gets its own textual tradition.<sup>178</sup>

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*Other Gospels. Shadows on the Contours of Canon* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985); T. Zöckler, *Jesu Lehren im Thomasevangelium*, NHMS 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 30–32, 253.

<sup>174</sup> The following scholars are among those who adduce these examples and infer the dependence of *Gos. Thom.*: W. Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen zugleich ein Beitrag zur gnostischen Synoptikerdeutung*, BZNW 29 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964) (for critical observations on Schrage's methodology, cf. e.g., C. M. Tuckett, "Thomas and the Synoptics," *NT* 30 [1988]: 132–157, at 134–136); also Charlesworth and Evans, "Agrapha," 499–502; Fieger, *Thomasevangelium*, 6f. and passim; A. Lindemann, "Zur Gleichnis-Interpretation im Thomas-Evangelium," *ZNW* 71 (1980): 214–243; Tuckett, "Thomas," 156; idem, "Thomasevangelium," 197–198.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. e.g., the compilation of texts by series of "tag" words or by means of formal and thematic groups (e.g., *Gos. Thom.* 7–9; 63–64, etc.).

<sup>176</sup> Tuckett, "Thomasevangelium," 194–196, gives one example of this problem. His analysis of the beatitudes in the Gospel of Thomas shows the presence of secondary developments. The synoptic comparison and the analysis of Q allow us to discern three original beatitudes with a social core, which have been expanded in a secondary phase, perhaps on the redactional level, by means of the beatitude pronounced on those who are persecuted. The Gospel of Thomas presupposes these four beatitudes (*Gos. Thom.* 54; 68–69) and is not independent of the trajectory of the synoptic tradition in this textual area. When the three original beatitudes are placed at different places in the Gospel of Thomas, and that of the hungry is combined with the secondary logion about the persecuted (*Gos. Thom.* 68–69), this argues in favor of a secondary sequence.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Uro, "Thomas," passim; Klauck, *Evangelien*, 161.

<sup>178</sup> Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 92–93, sees this as the key to explaining the parallels to the New Testament gospels as a text-historical assimilation to the canonical texts; Tuckett expresses his justified criticism in "Thomasevangelium," 199.

On the basis of these observations, we cannot accept the dating of the Gospel of Thomas (or of its postulated strata) in the first century of the Common Era,<sup>179</sup> as envisaged by Helmut Köster,<sup>180</sup> Stephen L. Davies,<sup>181</sup> and John D. Crossan.<sup>182</sup>

In view of the complex state of the text, *the evaluation in the context of the history of tradition does not justify global judgments, but requires us to justify our verdicts especially our historical re-constructions in the case of each individual text.*<sup>183</sup>

### 3.2.1.2. The Gospel of Thomas—Older Forms of the Jesus Tradition, or a Distinct Picture of the Jesus Tradition?<sup>184</sup>

Some scholars have attempted by means of a form-historical deconstruction of the logia of the Gospel of Thomas to discern older material, or indeed the earliest (and therefore authentic) material.<sup>185</sup> Others

<sup>179</sup> For a detailed justification of this position, cf. J. Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte. Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas WMANT 76* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 137–138; C. M. Tuckett, “The Historical Jesus, Crossan, and Methodology,” in *Text und Geschichte. Facetten theologischen Arbeitens aus dem Freundes- und Schülerkreis: Festschrift D. Lüthmann*, ed. S. Maser and E. Schlarb, MTS 50 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1999), 257–279, at 265; H.-M. Schenke, *On the Compositional History of the Gospel of Thomas*, Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, Occasional Papers 40 (Claremont: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 1998), 5: 140 CE.

<sup>180</sup> Koester, *Gospels*, 83–84.

<sup>181</sup> S. L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983).

<sup>182</sup> Crossan, *Four Other Gospels*; idem, *Der historische Jesus* (Munich: Beck, 1994), 563 n. 5.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Tuckett, “Thomasevangelium,” 190; Klauck, *Evangelien*, 145. N. Perrin, “Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991–2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels,” in *CBR 5* (2007): 183–206, makes that methodological insight as characteristic for recent investigations into the question as whether Thomas depends on the synoptic gospels or not. In his critical discussion of the work of John P. Meier and John Dominic Crossan, D.E. Aune (“Assessing the Historical Value of the Apocryphal Jesus Tradition. A Critique of Conflicting Methodologies,” in *Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 243–272) demonstrates that both approaches are based on *a priori* judgments. On the basis of his critical presentation, Aune rightly demands that we approach the Gospel of Thomas with as little prejudice as possible. The individual texts and their relationships require a nuanced evaluation. However, neither the Gospel of Thomas nor the apocryphal gospels should be completely excluded from the reconstruction of the message and the activity of the earthly Jesus.

<sup>184</sup> On current research: N. Perrin, “Recent Trends in Gospel of Thomas Research (1991–2006): Part I, The Historical Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels,” *CURBS 5*: 186–212.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. e.g., J. B. Bauer, “Echte Jesusworte?,” in *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand*, ed. W. C. van Unnik, (Frankfurt a.M.: H. Scheffler, 1960), 108–150, at 122–124; C. H. Hunzinger, “Unbekannte Gleichnisse Jesu aus dem Thomas-Evangelium,” in *Judentum. Urchristentum. Kirche: Festschrift J. Jeremias*, ed. W. Eltester, BZNW 26 (Berlin:

see the Gospel of Thomas primarily as an ancient and autonomous strand of the Jesus tradition, which as such may offer a valuable complement, and even corrections, to the synoptic portrait of Jesus.<sup>186</sup> Once again, we may take Crossan as our example. Denying the existence of apocalyptic elements,<sup>187</sup> he characterizes the original Jesus tradition as an “ethical eschatology” which was then altered in Q and in Thomas, each in its own way.<sup>188</sup> Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God preached “the non violent resistance to structural evil.” Thomas Zöckler sees the aspect of “spirituality” (*Innerlichkeit*) as an element in the tradition of the Gospel of Thomas that could correct the picture of Jesus which has been elaborated on the basis of the synoptics;<sup>189</sup> this too is an attempt to set a question mark over against the fundamental eschatological or apocalyptic tone of Jesus’ preaching.

Stephen J. Patterson attempts to identify more precisely our access to primary Jesus tradition in the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>190</sup> It has also been claimed that the contribution of the Gospel of Thomas to the historical picture lies in its non-use of the messianic title and in its anchoring of Jesus in an original itinerant charismatic milieu.<sup>191</sup> This, however, means only that the document would provide new support to our knowledge of the earthly Jesus. It would not expand our knowledge by means of new, hitherto unknown information; it would merely confirm the fruits of the critical investigation of the synoptic gospels.

On the other hand, we also find material that does indeed fit the conception of the Gospel of Thomas, but is also in harmony with the didactic and the rhetoric of the Jesus texts which we know from

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Töpelmann, 1960), 209–220; idem, “Außersynoptisches Traditions-gut im Thomasevangelium,” *ThLZ* 85 (1960): 843–846.

<sup>186</sup> McLean, “Thomas and Q,” 345.

<sup>187</sup> For a presentation and critique, cf. Tuckett, “Crossan and Methodology,” 268–270. On the problem see also A. L. A. Hogeterp, “The Gospel of Thomas and the Historical Jesus: The Case of Eschatology,” in *The Wisdom of Egypt. Jewish, Early Christian, and Gnostic Essays in Honour of Gerard P. Luttikhuisen*, ed. A. Hilhorst and G. H. van Kooten, *AJEC* 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 381–396.

<sup>188</sup> J. D. Crossan, *Birth of Christianity. Discovering what Happened in the Years immediately after the Execution of Jesus*, 1st HarperCollins paperback ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 273–274, 279–285 (quotation: 279). On the form taken by this “ethical eschatology,” cf. part vii: “Healers and itinerants.”

<sup>189</sup> Zöckler, *Thomasevangelium*, 255–256.

<sup>190</sup> Patterson, *Thomas and Jesus*; idem, “The Gospel of Thomas and the Historical Jesus. Retrospectus and Prospectus,” *SBL SP* 29 (1990): 614–636; for other comparable positions, cf. Fallon and Cameron, “Gospel of Thomas,” 4216.

<sup>191</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 55.

the synoptics. For example, the parables in *Gos. Thom.* 97<sup>192</sup> and 98<sup>193</sup> could complement the synoptic texts, and the idea that these texts represent original material going back to Jesus is certainly attractive.<sup>194</sup>

Recently, considerations drawn from the theory of history have led Jens Schröter to limit the value of the Gospel of Thomas. His reflections take their starting point in the realization of the narrative character of the historical construction of meaning:<sup>195</sup> “Darstellungen, die anderen Gattungen angehören, wie etwa das *Gos. Thom.* oder die Dialoge des Auferstandenen mit seinen Jünger/inne/n setzen dagegen die Bindung der Bedeutung Jesu an sein früheres irdisches Wirken dezidiert außer Kraft. . . Für eine historische Jesusdarstellung ist eine Schrift wie das *Gos. Thom.* somit deshalb als sekundär zu betrachten, weil es zum einen zeitlich nach den synoptischen Evangelien und dem JohEv anzusetzen ist, zum anderen nicht an einer Einzeichnung Jesu in seinen historischen, kulturellen und geographischen Kontext interessiert ist.”

There is surely no reason to reject out of hand the claim that the texts about Jesus discovered in Nag Hammadi preserve a creatively preserved memory of Jesus—and that this is true in a particular man-

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<sup>192</sup> “Jesus said, ‘The Kingdom of the [Father] is like a certain woman who was carrying a jar full of meal. While she was walking [on] a road, still some distance from home, the handle of the jar broke and the meal emptied out behind her on the road. She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident. When she reached her house, she set the jar down and found it empty.’” Eng. trans. of *Gos. Thom.* 97 and 98 (n. 182 below) by Thomas O. Lambdin in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 128.

<sup>193</sup> “Jesus said, ‘The Kingdom of the Father is like a certain man who wanted to kill a powerful man. In his own house he drew his sword and stuck it into the wall in order to find out whether his hand could carry through. Then he slew the powerful man’.”

<sup>194</sup> Cf. e.g., W. D. Stroker, “Extracanonical Parables and the Historical Jesus,” *Semeia* 44 (1985): 95–120, at 100–102; C. W. Hedrick, *Parable as Poetic Fictions. The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1994), 239, 252–253. For a different view, cf. e.g., Lindemann, “Gleichnis-Interpretation,” 221–222, 232.

<sup>195</sup> J. Schröter, “Jesusdarstellungen als ‘Fiktion des Faktischen’. Bedingungen und Grenzen der historischen Jesuserzählung,” in idem, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie*, 37–61, at 39–40. ET: “Accounts which belong to other genres, such as the Gospel of Thomas or the dialogues of the risen Jesus with his disciples, completely detach the significance of Jesus from the link to his earlier activity on earth. . . This means that a writing such as the Gospel of Thomas must be considered secondary with regard to an historical account of Jesus, both because it must be located chronologically after the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John and because it is not interested in painting a portrait of Jesus which inserts him into his historical, cultural, and geographical context.”

ner of the Gospel of Thomas. Nevertheless, we must agree with Schröter that the literary orientation of these texts displays the mark of theological reflection more strongly than the synoptics, while they show fewer signs of *preservation* in the midst of its *interpretation*. One aspect of this is the failure of Thomas to locate Jesus in his historical context, and even those scholars who believe that Thomas is highly relevant to the historical construction of Jesus regard this as a lack of interest in the historical Jesus.<sup>196</sup>

### 3.2.1.3. Conclusion

The Gospel of Thomas offers no more direct and “unfalsified” access to the words and the thinking of the earthly Jesus than other sources.<sup>197</sup> *The Gospel of Thomas too (like those who transmitted it) is an interpreter of the Jesus tradition and does not offer an impartial account of the earthly Jesus—as we can see from the clearly perceptible theological and anthropological tendencies of this writing.*<sup>198</sup> A chronological proximity to the preaching and activity of Jesus can be plausibly argued only in the case of part of the material.

The strong orientation to logia displays *little interest in the earthly Jesus*—an interest which would find expression in the narrative character of what a text has to say about him. We do not find in Thomas the kind of brief summaries of Jesus’ activity that we find in Paul.

The evaluation of the theological character of Thomas in the context of the task of reconstructing the picture of Jesus is closely connected to this picture itself. For example, one who holds that the orientation in the preaching of the earthly Jesus was *not eschatological* will see the texts of the Gospel of Thomas as a significant corrective to layers of tradition in the synoptics, but one who finds the synoptic picture more plausible will apply the standard network of criteria of plausibility to draw a different conclusion.

It is best to *prescind from global judgments about the authenticity of the contents of the Gospel of Thomas or about the early dating of the document as a whole* and to follow the much more modest verdict of

<sup>196</sup> Köster, “Evangeliegattungen,” 172.

<sup>197</sup> The American “Jesus Seminar” very clearly takes the opposite position: cf. R.W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels. The Search for Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

<sup>198</sup> A different view is taken by J. H. Sieber, “The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament,” in *Gospel Origins*, ed. Goehring and Hedrick, 64–73, at 65.



Hans-Josef Klauck: “Man überfordert das EvThom, wenn man es zu einem den Synoptikern ebenbürtigen oder gar überlegeneren Zeugen für die Jesusüberlieferung emporstilisiert. Erst von dieser Bürde, die es nicht tragen kann, befreit, gibt es den Reichtum an Inhalten und Einsichten preis, den es für uns durchaus bereithält.”<sup>199</sup>

This limitation is appropriate and allows us to hear more clearly the voice of the Gospel of Thomas and of its tradition.

### 3.2.2. “Others”<sup>200</sup>

In varying ways, the New Testament apocrypha have attracted the interest of scholars who investigate the historical Jesus. In addition to the Gospel of Thomas,<sup>201</sup> we should mention the *Apocryphon of James* (also known as the *Letter of James*, NHC I, 2), the *Dialogue of the Savior* (NHC III, 5),<sup>202</sup> the Gospel of Judas Iscariot, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of the Nazareans*, and the *Gospel of Peter*. We should also mention the *Protevangelium of James* as a representative of the infancy Gospels, although their legendary character suggests skepticism about

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<sup>199</sup> Klauck, *Evangelien*, 162; Eng. trans. by Brian McNeil: *Apocryphal Gospels* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 122. ET: “More is expected of *Gos. Thom.* than the text can in fact provide, when it is claimed that its testimony to the tradition about Jesus is equal or even superior to that of the synoptics. If we free it from this intolerable burden, we ourselves are free to discover the wealth of insights which its logia offer us.”

<sup>200</sup> On the texts from Nag Hammadi, cf. M. Franzmann, *Jesus in the Nag Hammadi Writings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996). She concludes that they have little to offer in the quest for the historical Jesus; on this point, cf. the detailed and critical review by J. Schröter, *OLZ* 93 (1998): 666–674. He judges the basic perspective from which Franzmann sees the historical Jesus to be “ultimately alien to these writings”, 673.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. the list in Evans, *Jesus Research*, 256; idem, “Gospels, Extra-New Testament,” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Evans, 261–265, at 261, and Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, section 3.2–6.

<sup>202</sup> H. Koester and E. Pagels, “Introduction,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior*, ed. S. Emmel, *NHS* 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 1–17, and Koester, *Gospels*, 173–176, propose that the Dialogue has an older antecedent source which goes back to the period before the redaction of the synoptic gospels. This hypothesis has been gravely criticized by C. M. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition*, *Studies of the New Testament and its World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 129–135. He demonstrates a relationship between the Dialogue of the Savior and redactional formulations of the synoptics (cf. the verdict in Klauck, *Evangelien*, 239). Accordingly, we shall not consider the Dialogue of the Savior in the present section; cf. also the verdict by Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 168.

the hope of discovering significant early recollection of Jesus. We should also mention the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, P. Oxy 840, P. Oxy 1224, P. Oxy 1228, P. Egerton 2, the Fayyum fragment, and the Freer logion.<sup>203</sup> These texts come from different times and places, and their literary character is diverse. Here too, the relevance of these texts to the quest of the historical Jesus depends on the surviving sources or on problems of dating and dependence vis-à-vis the canonical gospels (especially the synoptics). Some scholars presuppose the existence of divergent streams of tradition in the extra-canonical and the canonical texts, and this means that various models have been proposed with regard to the value of the extra-canonical Jesus-texts for the historical study of Jesus. While some detect the influence of the synoptic gospels in the process of the composition of these literary texts, others assume the existence of an independent tradition, which is usually taken to be equally reliable—or even more credible.

The various models are dependent on the methodological presuppositions with regard to the identification of older or very ancient traditions which were initially passed on by word of mouth and later took on a written form. Those who evaluate the contingency of oral traditions differently, who make other literary-critical verdicts, or have different methodological presuppositions, will not be convinced by the hypothetical analysis of sources. The models also depend on the plausibility of the thesis of independence. We must also evaluate critically the presuppositions supplied by the theory of history for the positive assumption of the existence of better or more credible traditions. At the same time, we must examine critically a view which these approaches criticize, viz. the position that the synoptics offer an immediate picture of historical reality.

We shall now discuss briefly some selected extra-canonical writings from a variety of genres. We may expect these texts to expand our horizon in the quest of the historical Jesus, and we shall assess their value with regard to this question.

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<sup>203</sup> On the last mentioned text, cf. e.g., J. Frey, "Zu Text und Sinn des Freer-Logion," *ZNW* 93 (2002): 13–34 (with bibliography).

– One much-discussed text is *P. Egerton 2* (P. London. Christ. 1).<sup>204</sup> Its dating is a matter of dispute. It is very difficult to determine the relationships of dependence, and this question is important for the evaluation of the independence and the value of the tradition of *P. Egerton 2*, which has survived only in a fragmentary form. It is probable that the papyrus presupposes Johannine and synoptic texts, and combines these.<sup>205</sup> We should assume a reconversion of material which had already received a fixed written form into the oral medium, which in turn took on a written form in *P. Egerton 2*.

The sequence of “tag” words is a phenomenon which probably indicates that this text was received from memory.<sup>206</sup> We can recognize in those passages which are close to the synoptic text an advanced stage in the history of tradition, so that we may suppose that “die schon schriftlich fixierte, aber aus dem Gedächtnis reproduzierte Überlieferung in der mündlichen Weitergabe verändert” [wurde] (the tradition, which already had a fixed written form but was reproduced from memory, was altered in its oral transmission).<sup>207</sup> This means that

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<sup>204</sup> *Editio princeps*: H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat, *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 8–15; the text, with the addition of a fragment discovered in Cologne: M. Gronewald, “Unbekanntes Evangelium oder Evangelienharmonie (Fragment aus Evangelium Egerton 2),” in idem et al., *Kölner Papyri (P. Köln)* 6, ARWAW. Sonderreihe Papyrologica Coloniensia 7 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987), 136–145, at 139–141; cf. also D. Lührmann, “Das neue Fragment des P Egerton 2 (P Köln 255),” in *Four Gospels*, ed. van Segbroeck et al., 2239–2255, at 2242–2244. On the dating ca. 200, cf. Gronewald, “Unbekanntes Evangelium,” 137. On the *status quaestionis*, cf. now Lührmann, op. cit., passim; Klauck, *Evangelien*, 36–40 (both with further bibliography); T. Nicklas, “Papyrus Egerton 2—the ‘unknown gospel’ ” in *Expository Times* 118 (2007): 261–266. Eng. trans. J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 39–40.

<sup>205</sup> For details, cf. Jeremias and Schneemelcher, “Papyrus Egerton 2,” 83 and 84–85 (nn. 5–21); cf. also F. Neiryneck, “Papyrus Egerton 2 and the Healing of the Leper,” in idem, *Evangelica II*, 773–783 (for older scholarship, cf. *ibid.*, 774 n. 5); Lührmann, “P Egerton 2 (P Köln 255),” 2246. Recent scholars attempt to do justice to the differences vis-à-vis the synoptic texts by interpreting these as a “more original” side branch of that tradition which is attested in the synoptics: H. Koester, “Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 105–130, at 119–123 (reprinted in idem, *From Jesus to the Gospels*, 3–23, at 14–17); K. Erlemann, “Papyrus Egerton 2: ‘Missing Link’ zwischen synoptischer und johanneischer Tradition,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 12–34, at 22 and 26. Cf. also the review of scholarship by Erlemann, op. cit., 12–14.

<sup>206</sup> Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*, pp. 44; idem and Schneemelcher, “Papyrus Egerton 2,” 83.

<sup>207</sup> Vielhauer, *Geschichte*, 638.

it contains no independent information relevant to the quest for the historical Jesus.

– If one could accept the independence of the traditions contained in the *Apocryphon of James*, which was translated into Coptic from Greek and is transmitted only in a fragmentary form (NHC I, 2),<sup>208</sup> it might be considered as an important witness for the reconstruction of original logia of Jesus in the context of historical research.<sup>209</sup> However, the text as a whole, a gnostic dialogue gospel with a slender epistolary framework, clearly indicates a late period, since it presupposes the existence of written Gospels: cf. NHC I, 2, 7–9.<sup>210</sup>

Its value for historical research into Jesus and for the analysis of the development of early Christian literature depends on whether the Apocryphon of James contains older variants of the Jesus tradition. Here, our verdict must be cautious; each potentially relevant passage needs to be investigated on its own.

– In 1958, Morton Smith discovered in the Greek Orthodox monastery of Mar Saba a fragment of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* in a letter apparently written by Clement of Alexandria, and made this text a primary witness for his interpretation of Jesus.<sup>211</sup> When we look more closely at the material, we see that it contains no new information about the earthly Jesus; and this is the conclusion which must be

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<sup>208</sup> R. Cameron, *Sayings Tradition in the Apocryphon of James*, 2nd ed., HTS 34 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Koester, *Gospels*, 200.

<sup>209</sup> Crossan, *Jesus*, 569.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. U.-K. Pliesch, *Verborgene Worte Jesu—verworfenen Evangelien*, Brennpunkt: Die Bibel (Berlin: Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft, 2000), 63.

<sup>211</sup> M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), passim; idem, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel According to Mark*, foreword by E. Pagels, 3rd ed. (Middletown, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 2005). On the discussion of the authenticity and the character of the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, cf. H. Merkel, “Das ‘geheime Evangelium’ nach Markus,” in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1*, ed. Schneemelcher, 89–92, at 90–91; S. Levin, “The Early History of Christianity, in Light of the ‘Secret Gospel’ of Mark,” *ANRW II* 25.6 (1988): 4272–4277; E. Rau, *Das geheime Markusevangelium. Ein Schriftfund voller Rätsel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003); S. G. Brown, *Mark’s Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton Smith’s Controversial Discovery*, Studies in Christianity and Judaism (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005). On the circumstances of its discovery and the present state of research, cf. P. Foster, “Secret Mark: Its Discovery and the State of Research,” in *Expository Times* 117 (2005): 46–52; Klauck, *Evangelien*, 49–50. S. C. Carlson has recently declared it to be a modern forgery: *The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith’s Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005).

maintained, despite the occasional affirmation of the authentic<sup>212</sup> and early<sup>213</sup> character of the Gospel text quoted there.

The Secret Gospel, in a passage (frag. 1) inserted between 10:34 and 10:35 of the canonical Gospel of Mark, tells us that Jesus raises a young man from the dead.<sup>214</sup> The contents of this story recall the account of the raising of Lazarus in John 11. A comparative analysis of the two resurrection stories suggests that they presuppose a shared older tradition,<sup>215</sup> the core of which consisted of a resurrection narrative; but it is no longer possible to determine exactly the form of this tradition.<sup>216</sup>

The raising is followed by a somewhat puzzling little scene which can be interpreted as a catechesis leading to baptism.<sup>217</sup> Smith infers—though he does not spell this out in detail—that Jesus engaged in homoerotic practices and conferred a magical baptism; this corresponds to his picture of Jesus as a magician and libertine.<sup>218</sup> However,

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<sup>212</sup> Koester, *Gospels*, 293–294, 295. It has been claimed that the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, which also displays the literary techniques of the canonical Mark, was intended for educated Alexandrian readers: S. G. Brown, *Mark's Other Gospel*.

<sup>213</sup> There is no consensus about the dating of the document. Merkel, “Das ‘geheime Evangelium’,” 92, dates it to “not before the middle of the second century,” while Koester, *Gospels*, 295, writes: “the date of composition of *Secret Mark* should not be too far removed from the date for the writing of the Gospel of Mark.”

<sup>214</sup> Cf. e.g., H.-M. Schenke, “Er muß wachsen, ich aber muß abnehmen’. Der Konflikt zwischen Jesusjüngern und Taufgemeinde im Spiegel des Johannesevangeliums,” in *Loyalitätskonflikte in der Religionsgeschichte: Festschrift for C. Colpe*, ed. C. Elsas and H. G. Kippenberg, in collaboration with H. Cancik, B. Gladigow, and K. Rudolph (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990), 301–313, at 302–303; M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel*; Crossan, *Four Other Gospels*, 111–121; idem, *Jesus*, 434–439 (behind the Gospels of Mark and John lies the same miracle source, which ends with the raising of the young man; the original Gospel of Mark [= the Secret Gospel] expanded this with the initiation of the young man, while John expanded it with the dialogue about the resurrection).

<sup>215</sup> It is improbable—pace Crossan, *Four Other Gospels*; Koester, *Gospels*, 295–303; and M. W. Meyer, “The Youth in the *Secret Gospel of Mark*,” *Semeia* 49 (1990): 129–153—that the *Secret Gospel of Mark* offers an older version than the canonical Gospel of Mark, since it is exceedingly difficult to see why the canonical Mark should have omitted the story of the raising of the young man. For criticism, cf. e.g., F. Neiryck, “The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark,” in idem, *Evangelica II*, 715–772, at 762.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. the detailed discussion in Labahn, *Lebensspender*, 442–449.

<sup>217</sup> “And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God” (Eng. trans. Morton Smith).

<sup>218</sup> M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, New York 1978. On this, cf. J.-A. Bühner, “Jesus und die antike Magie. Bemerkungen zu M. Smith, *Jesus der Magier*,” *EvTh* 43 (1983): 156–175; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 276–277.

since the text is lost, it cannot be properly analyzed; and even so, Smith's conclusions are highly questionable.

The circumstances of discovery and the question of authenticity, as well as the problem of dating, make it very doubtful in principle whether this text has anything to contribute to the quest of the historical Jesus; the contents too suggest that no historical information will be found here.

– The *Gospel of Peter*, which may have been written in Syria, survives in a fifth- or sixth-century parchment codex, P. Cairo 10759 (so-called Akhmin Codex). It relates the events of the passion of Jesus from the perspective of Peter, who is the first-person narrator. A number of traits have led scholars to see this Gospel as a docetic interpretation of the passion.<sup>219</sup> The fragments P. Oxy LX 4009, which was identified as a part of the Gospel of Peter in 1993,<sup>220</sup> and is related to Mark 10:16, and P. Oxy XLI 2949<sup>221</sup> should be considered part of the text.<sup>222</sup>

Scholars disagree about the time of its composition and about the age and the character of its traditions. Crossan distinguishes three separate strata in the text and identifies the core of its tradition with the source of the New Testament passion narratives;<sup>223</sup> less radically, other scholars postulate the existence of independent tradition going back to an early date,<sup>224</sup> while others speak of a possible dependence on the New Testament passion narratives.<sup>225</sup> The points of contact are

<sup>219</sup> For a cautious judgment, cf. now Klauck, *Evangelien*, p. 118.

<sup>220</sup> D. Lührmann, "POx 4009: Ein neues Fragment des Petrus-evangeliums?," *NT* 35 (1993): 390–410.

<sup>221</sup> D. Lührmann, "POx 2929: EvPt 3–5 in einer Handschrift des 2./3. Jahrhunderts," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 216–226.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. D. Lührmann and E. Scharlb, eds., *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien. In griechischer und lateinischer Sprache*, MTS 59 (Marburg: Elwert, 2000). The basic edition is T. J. Kraus/T. Nicklas, eds., *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrus-apokalypse. Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung*, GCS NS 11: Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 3–5. On the Gospel of Peter and its problems cf. now T. J. Kraus/T. Nicklas, eds., *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertexte*, TU 158 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007).

<sup>223</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke. The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

<sup>224</sup> For the basic tradition: H. Köster, *Einführung in das Neue Testament*, GLB (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 599: "older... than the canonical Gospels."

<sup>225</sup> E.g., A. Kirk, "Examining Priorities: Another Look at the Gospel of Peter's Relationship to the New Testament Gospels," *NTS* 40 (1994): 572–595; R. E. Brown, "The Gospel of Peter and Canonical Gospel Priority," *NTS* 33 (1987): 321–343; idem, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion*

best explained as a conflation of the canonical passion narratives which are present in the memory of the author, since this hypothesis can explain both the differences and the parallels to the canonical accounts, as well as the advanced character of the reflection which lies behind the author's presentation.<sup>226</sup>

This means that the value of the Gospel of Peter for the quest of the historical Jesus is at best marginal; but it gives us important information about how the last days of the earthly Jesus were understood and portrayed in the mid-second century in some Christian circle.

– The *Gospel of Judas Iscariot* is part of codex of Papyri, now known as Codex Tchacos, was published and translated under the guidance of Rodolphe Kasser in 2006<sup>227</sup> after being available on the antique market more than 25 years ago. *Gospel of Judas Iscariot*, introduced as a text that may provide new and uncommon insights on Jesus, is part of four different writings of Codex Tchacos. The text seems to be mentioned as early as Irenaeus wrote his *Against Haeresis* (*Haer* I.31.1). If he refers the text that we now know under the name the Gospel of Jude it must have been written in the second century. The four writings in Codex Tchacos however present a Coptic text that stems from the fourth century as the other manuscripts of Nag Hammadi and is a translation from original Greek.<sup>228</sup>

The Gospel of Judas Iscariot focusses on Jude and the revelation that he receives by Jesus. The early publication attempts to show that that Gospel text understands the traitor as a true friend of Jesus and the 'handing over'/'betrayal' as intentional supported by Jesus.<sup>229</sup>

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*Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1317–1349, at 1325–1327.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Klauck, *Evangelien*, 117–118; cf. also Brown, *Death*, 1334–1335; Charlesworth and Evans, "Agrapha," 505–514.

<sup>227</sup> R. Kasser, M. Meyer, G. Wurst, und B. D. Ehrman, *The Gospel of Judas. The Manuscript with Interpretative Commentary* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Books, 2006); followed by a critical edition: R. Kasser and G. Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas. Critical Edition: Together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos* (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2007).

<sup>228</sup> Cf. K.-U. Plisch, "Das Evangelium des Judas," *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 10 (2006): 5–14. The maior edition of Codex Tchacos including the Gospel of Judas is J. Brankaer/H.-G. Bethge, eds., *Codex Tchacos. Texte und Analysen*, TU 161 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 255–257.

<sup>229</sup> See B. D. Ehrman, *The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: A New Look at Betrayer and Betrayed* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

The enthusiasm on the role that the newly edited text might find for the re-construction of Jesus of history's life by the early editor found quick and severe critique by other scholars.<sup>230</sup> It is not the place in this article to comment that part of the discussion nor do we have room to go into detail. If it is possible to draw any conclusion from the still ongoing debate right now that it is to read that text that maybe drawn on synoptic Gospel text (Matthew) as a witness of Gnostic movement<sup>231</sup> and its polemic against the main church, especially their conception of sacraments and offering. That means it is a witness of the early Christian history of conflicts<sup>232</sup> which helps to clarify their own theological thinking. We receive insights into the cosmological conception of the group responsible for that writing and we can see that Jude belongs to that cosmological model and is therefore not a mere positive figure although he received a special knowledge by Jesus.<sup>233</sup>

With regard to Jesus research it does not provide new insight into the events that lead to Jesus' death but it opens another windows how the memory of Jesus could be developed in different religious and Christological debates into new directions challenging other models of understanding.

– Let us conclude with a brief mention of the fragments of Jewish Christian Gospels: the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, and the *Gospel of the Nazaraeans*.<sup>234</sup> These texts are important because they present the Jewish Christian types of interpretation

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<sup>230</sup> Cf., e.g., J. M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas. The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006); S. E. Porter and Gordon L. Heath, *The Lost Gospel of Judas: Separating Fact from Fiction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); A. D. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (London: Continuum, 2007).

<sup>231</sup> Cf. the clear statement by J. M. Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas*, 183: „Once it becomes available, one will find that it does not shed light on what happened during Jesus's trip to Jerusalem (...), but rather will shed light on a second-century Gnostic sect.”

<sup>232</sup> Cf. S. Gathercole, “The Gospel of Judas,” *Expository Times* 118 (2007): 209–215; see idem, *The Gospel of Judas Rewriting Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>233</sup> Although one may agree with W. Pratscher, “Judas, der wahre Freund Jesu: Das Judasevangelium,” *Protokolle zur Bibel* 16 (2007): 119–135, that our historical picture of Jude taken from the New Testament gospels deserves revision, we should be careful to take the Gospel of Judas as a starting point.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Klauck, *Evangelien*, 53–76, with references to the current debate among scholars about the existence of a separate Gospel of the Nazaraeans. Cf. also the introductions and translations in Schneemelcher, ed., *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 1, 114–147; Lührmann and Schlarb, eds., *Fragmente*; Eng. trans. Elliott, *Apocryphal New*



of the earthly Jesus, with independent pictures of Jesus which must be distinguished above all from the developing *Großkirche* and its texts. Although there is no reason to dispute the ancient character of some individual texts, their fragmentary condition in the form of quotations by patristic authors poses a serious methodological problem. This is why these texts seldom offer real help for individual questions of the history of the Jesus tradition, let alone for a reconstruction of this history as a whole.

### 3.2.3. Conclusion

It is a step into right direction, that in recent times, scholars have attempted to draw on the extra-canonical texts even in cases where one can hope only for a slight gain in knowledge. These texts are analyzed intensively in order to find answers to a whole spectrum of questions, ranging from the identification of individual traditions, via general affirmations about the earthly Jesus, to the entire orientation of his earthly life. I believe that Tuckett's verdict sums up most accurately the nuanced picture which I have presented in this survey of the *status quaestionis*: "der Wert der apokryphen Evangelien (besteht; Vf.) nicht nur darin..., daß sie Quellen möglicher echter Sprüche Jesu sind, sondern daß sie uns auch einen sehr wertvollen Einblick in Aspekte der Geschichte des Frühchristentums geben. Dieser Einblick ist meiner Meinung nach genauso bedeutend wie die Isolierung echter Jesustraditionen. Aber die Frage bleibt: Wie früh ist das Frühchristentum, das diese Texte beschreiben?... Oder gehören sie der Entwicklung nach zu den kanonischen Evangelien?... Aber sie bedeutet vielleicht, daß sie ein späteres Stadium der Kirchengeschichte beleuchten können und sollen." (The apocryphal gospels are valuable not only... because they are sources of potential logia of Jesus, but also because they give us a very valuable insight into aspects of the history of early Christianity. In my opinion, this insight is just as important as the identification of genuine traditions about Jesus. But the question remains: How early is the early Christianity that these texts describe?... Or do they belong in terms of their development to the canonical gospels?... But this may mean that they both can and should shed light on a later stage of church history.)<sup>235</sup>

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*Testament*, 3–5. Cf. also A. F. J. Klijn, "Das Hebräer- und das Nazoräerevangelium, ANRW II 25.5 (1988): 3997–4033.

<sup>235</sup> Tuckett, "Thomasevangelium," 190.

We cannot exclude the possibility that memory of Jesus' teaching was preserved until the relatively late period of the second century, and that the different recollections can expand our knowledge of his words. But it is not easy to see how these materials, which derive from an autonomous interpretation of the teaching of Jesus, can fundamentally alter the picture which we derive from the synoptics. Some authors paint a picture of Jesus which is based on their broad reception of apocryphal texts, however, more doubt is at hand here.

The contribution of the apocryphal Jesus texts lies first of all *in the insights which these texts give into the development and transmission of the Jesus tradition*. This contribution is limited by the fact that we are as yet far from a consensus about literary dependence, developments in the history of Christian literature, and the dating of these texts. Decisive progress comes, not from the identification of individual Jesus traditions, but from the picture of Jesus which these texts (or their sources) offer. Here, we can observe how the texts influence the endeavors of the various scholars to reconstruct the history of Jesus—from the societal description of the proclamation of Jesus on the model of the wandering preacher akin to the Cynics, via the dismissal of futurist eschatology, to the new emphasis on the political dimension in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God.

#### 4. *Methodological Questions*

According to the thesis of Hedrick, the "tyranny of the synoptic Gospels" flourishes unabated in the classical methods and the list of criteria which are employed in historical research into Jesus. This tyranny assigns only a secondary role to the extra-canonical texts in the recovery of the historical picture of Jesus; their primary function is to expand the image of Jesus which is distilled from the synoptics, or to refine the details of this image.<sup>236</sup> Since Hedrick published his essay in 1988, we can point to a progress in the discussion of methodology, which is exemplified above all in the criteria of plausibility which Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter have proposed both for the historical Jewish

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<sup>236</sup> Cf. e.g., K. Berger, "Zur Frage des traditionsgeschichtlichen Wertes apokrypher Gleichnisse," in *Gleichnisse Jesu: Positionen der Auslegung von Adolf Jülicher bis zur Formgeschichte*, ed. W. Harnisch, WdF 366 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 414–435, at 414.

background and for the early Christian reception of Jesus:<sup>237</sup> these criteria take account (in varying degrees) also of the texts discussed in this essay, and of their sources.

The discussion of methodology is also conducted in a debate with the "outsider texts." Once again, John D. Crossan can serve as an example:<sup>238</sup> he attempts to provide support for his reconstruction of Jesus (which is largely based on extra-canonical texts) by means of preliminary methodological reflections<sup>239</sup> which allow him to identify a "database" of authentic logia of Jesus.<sup>240</sup> He attaches great weight to the combination of two criteria: the *age of the text* and its *multiple attestation*, giving the greatest authority to that information from the oldest layer which is attested by the largest number of independent witnesses.<sup>241</sup> He thus ascribes a decisive significance to the texts which he classifies as independent sources, e.g., the postulated layers of the Gospel of Thomas. Crossan then *constructs*, as his own conclusion, a Jesus who is an itinerant preacher on the model of the itinerant Cynic philosophers.

This example reminds us once again of the dispute about *questions of dating*, the evaluation of *the literary-critical identification of older sources*, and the *assessment of dependence on the canonical Jesus-texts*, which turns out again and again to be the sixty-four-thousand dollar question.

The supposition of literary dependence relativizes the possibility of discovering older forms of the tradition; but it is not a methodological instrument which would entitle us to eliminate entire documents from the historical-critical investigation of Jesus. *Rather, relevant evidence in support of such a verdict must be demonstrated in the case of the individual passages.* All literary criticism is necessarily subjective, and is usually guided by the endeavor of the exegetes to discover older material. This means that the outcome of their work (an older source) lies dangerously close to the very goal of their work (ancient material

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<sup>237</sup> Cf. however the critical remarks by T. Holmén, "Doubts about Double Dissimilarity. Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Chilton and Evans, 47–80.

<sup>238</sup> On Crossan's methodology, cf. the remarks in Aune, "Assessing the Historical Value of the Apocryphal Jesus Tradition," 258–269; Theissen and Winter, *Kriterienfrage*, 154; and Tuckett, "Historical Jesus."

<sup>239</sup> Crossan, *Jesus*, 27–35.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 569–584.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 32–33.

about Jesus). This makes it necessary to give a meticulous justification of every detail of a literary-critical verdict. On the other hand, one should not exaggerate the significance of such verdicts, *since the fact that a text is dated early does not automatically mean that its material is authentic*. The equation of “early” with “authentic” would be a methodological fallacy—as on the other side, the equation of “late” with “inauthentic”. At the same time, however, as the chronological distance from the activity of the earthly Jesus increases, we must assume that the memory of those who hand it on takes on a more productive character. This development is sometimes accompanied by an increasing lack of interest in the historical setting; or else a Christological, post-Easter reflection plays an ever more dominant role.

This is why we must work hard to clarify the introductory questions with regard above all to the apocryphal Jesus-texts. These are the subject of vigorous controversy, and they are rightly considered to be important. It is also necessary to explain the methodological criteria used to elaborate the picture of Jesus which each scholar presents, setting out these criteria exactly and indicating the role they play in academic research. Naturally, *new interpretations, or those which diverge from the scholarly consensus, have a higher burden of proof*. This is not to be disqualified as “tyranny”; it is in keeping with the normal praxis of academic discourse.

Methodologically speaking, we should be guided by the insight that all Jesus traditions are receptions, and hence individual interpretations, of an event that lies in the past (cf. Section 1 above). Although there is a consensus that chronological proximity does not guarantee that the subject of a text will be close to Jesus (and still less that it is authentic), the historical investigation of Jesus remains obliged to analyze the extent to which the sources have a primary significance in chronological terms, and whether they are substantially, theologically, and hermeneutically interested in transmitting an account of Jesus’ preaching and activity.

##### 5. *Final Conclusion*

Every conclusion is a construction of history; this is not the same thing as an historical objectivism. Accordingly, the sources are to be regarded as constructions of meaning in the face of the extraordinary activity of the earthly Jesus. These constructions of meaning are antecedent to the

historical questions of the exegete, and thus form the basis of his endeavor to construct meaning in the face of today's methodological, theological, philosophical, and cultural conditions.

I would like to draw two boundaries as core points for the role of the so-called "outsiders" in the quest of the historical Jesus.

*First*, the contribution of the classical outsiders of Jesus research, from Paul via John to the extra-canonical gospel texts (and above all the Gospel of Thomas), must be taken seriously, both on the level of the theory of history and methodologically, in the quest of the historical Jesus. These writings may not be dismissed *en bloc*. Rather, *this question must be decided by an analysis of the individual writings and a fortiori of the individual passages*. They offer a challenge to existing pictures of Jesus in scholarship, and present impulses for new theoretical constructions and for expansions and potential revisions in the sphere of methodology. At the same time, they also contribute *substantial material aspects to the re-construction of the existing picture of Jesus*.

*Secondly*, however, one must ask whether recent scholarship does not overestimate the role of these outsiders. The appropriate alternative to the postulated "tyranny of the synoptic Gospels" is surely not the tyranny of the former "outsiders" which have now become insiders.<sup>242</sup>

The threefold character of the synoptic pictures of Jesus itself demands the acknowledgment of plurality as the theologically appropriate form of the memory of Jesus. At the same time, however, this plurality lays down the boundary conditions for the elaboration of historically plausible and substantially appropriate affirmations about the historical Jesus. This must not be misunderstood to mean that the synoptics with their pictures of Jesus possess greater plausibility because of their canonical status. Their plausibility is due to the fact that they "die frühesten narrativen Verarbeitungen des Wirkens und Geschicks Jesu darstellen und zugleich einen historisch bewahrenden Charakter besitzen" (possess the earliest narrative elaborations of the working and the story of Jesus, and at the same time preserve history).<sup>243</sup> In this process, it is obvious that we must listen to John, the narrator of the story of Jesus, as well as to the extra-canonical stories of Jesus—just as it is obvious that we must listen to the voices of Paul and of the other canonical and extra-canonical receptions of Jesus.

<sup>242</sup> This is correctly emphasized by Broer, "Bedeutung," 27.

<sup>243</sup> Schröter, "Historizität," 164 n. 5 (repr.: 106 n. 4).

# JESUS TRADITION IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

D. MOODY SMITH

## 1. *Introduction*

For the purposes of this article, *Jesus tradition* refers to material or data that may stem from Jesus of Nazareth or from the period and places of his activity and death. Without claiming comprehensiveness, we intend to give an indication of its maximal extent in John. At the outset, two matters related to the existence and character of such tradition should be noted: first, the Gospel's apparent claim to be written by or based upon the testimony of an eyewitness (21:24; cf. 19:35); second, its relation to, and differences from, the synoptic gospels.

Both the eyewitness claim and the authorship claim demand further scrutiny. What is said at the conclusion of the Gospel (21:24) is only that the one who is testifying and his testimony are true. But this statement in the narrative context (21:20) clearly implies an eyewitness claim (cf. 19:35). At best, the claim of 21:24 does not necessarily mean that the Gospel was itself written by the disciple whom Jesus loved (21:20). He is designated as the one who "testifies to these things and has written them," or "caused them to be written" (cf. 19:1 NRSV for an analogous translation: *emastigōsen* is properly translated "had [him] flogged"). With either translation the truth claim should be taken seriously, although not at face value.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Beloved Disciple as Eyewitness and the Fourth Gospel as Witness," *JSNT* 35 (2002): 3–26. Lincoln has been a colleague in the SBL Consultation, "John, Jesus, and History," presided over by Tom Thatcher, who with Robert T. Fortna has edited a volume of seminal essays, *Jesus in Johannine Tradition* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001). To these and other participants I am indebted for their stimulation and criticism. My thanks also to Professors Ed P. Sanders and J. Louis Martyn, who read and commented helpfully on an earlier version of this essay, as well as to Dr. Kavin Rowe, who read it meticulously at several stages. They have saved me from embarrassing errors. Needless to say, I am responsible for its final form, as well as for the translation of most of the New Testament quotations.

John's differences from the synoptic gospels are far-reaching, but like them John purports to narrate the career of Jesus in early first-century Palestine. In fact, the name *Iesous* occurs much more frequently in John (237 times) than in any of the others (Matthew 150; Mark 81; Luke 89). The issue and its implications for the historical value of John can be put simply. If John is totally dependent on the synoptics for its knowledge of Jesus, then the question of Jesus tradition in John is already answered. Presumably there would be none, for wherever John departs from the synoptics, it would depart from history. This resolution of the matter is not basically different from the position that dominated criticism until Percival Gardner-Smith proposed that John was written independently of the synoptics.<sup>2</sup> In that case, every difference from the synoptics becomes a case to be decided on its own merits. Independence opens a range of possibilities, but no individual case proves historicity in general. Our procedure will be to give precedence to the question of Jesus tradition in John, without deciding in advance the question of John and other gospels. Yet the question of Jesus tradition in John will often hinge upon cases in which the Fourth Gospel differs from the synoptics.

Where John differs widely from the synoptics gospels, such differences have tended to speak against John's historical reliability and value:

1. John's narrative of Jesus' ministry differs widely in sheer content. Simply put, most of what is found in John does not appear in the synoptic gospels, and vice versa. Only John's Passion Narrative offers an extended parallel to the synoptics.
2. John differs in chronology and topography. Whereas in the synoptics Jesus' ministry appears to span a year or less, and he is in Jerusalem only once, to attend the final Passover feast, in John it lasts between two and three years, as three different Passovers are mentioned. In John he is frequently in Jerusalem (or Judea), attending Tabernacles (7:2) and Hanukkah (10:22), as well as more than one Passover. Thus Jesus' ministry is of significantly longer duration and seems centered in Jerusalem and Judea rather than in Galilee as in the synoptics.

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<sup>2</sup> Percival Gardner-Smith, *Saint John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

3. John's account of Jesus' miracles is also significantly different from that of the synoptics. Matthew and Luke for the most part take up the miracle stories of Mark and also categorize Jesus' deeds as *dynamis*, "mighty works" or "deeds of power." On the other hand, John calls them *semeia*, "signs." They signify who Jesus is, and are often discussed at some length. Moreover, John's miracle stories are to all appearances not about the same events as Mark's or the synoptics', except for the Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:1–15), the only miracle recounted in all four gospels. At the same time, there are many fewer miracles in John than in the synoptics, and no demon exorcisms or leper cleansings. How are such differences to be accounted for?
4. Finally, the Gospel of John's presentation of Jesus' own message is radically different from what is found in the synoptics. He speaks and argues with opponents about himself, his status, and role. The "I am" sayings (e.g., John 6:35, "I am the bread of life") are typical of the Fourth Gospel. There is little that is comparable in the others, where Jesus proclaims not himself, but God's kingdom or rule. He teaches about many specific subjects (for example, purity, giving alms, prayer, and the expression of piety), often using parables, of which the Fourth Gospel is virtually bereft.

Probably Jesus' self-proclamation is the chief factor in John's having been largely set aside in modern Jesus research, the quest of the historical Jesus. Albert Schweitzer credits Strauss with the demonstration that John's Gospel is not a historical source to be placed on the same level as the synoptics.<sup>3</sup> John's presentation, he had argued, is dominated by later church Christology, as is most clearly evident in the discourses of Jesus. Strauss's view was to prevail, against liberal as well as conservative theologians.<sup>4</sup> The Johannine portrait of Jesus as God striding about the earth is not the product of Jesus' own

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: First Complete Edition*. Translated by W. Montgomery, J. R. Coates, Susan Cupett, and John Bowden from the 2nd ed. of the German, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1913] (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 80–83.

<sup>4</sup> Schweitzer, *Quest*, 59–64, on Friedrich Schleiermacher; also Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Macintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 85, 474, where John 10:30 is taken to be an authentic statement of Jesus.



self-consciousness but of the evangelist's theology.<sup>5</sup> Strauss's devaluation of John as a historical source has had a lasting effect, and is reflected in books as diverse as those of Crossan and Sanders,<sup>6</sup> as well as in works by authors with a more explicitly theological interest in the study of the historical Jesus.<sup>7</sup> N. T. Wright's statement is representative of the latter. He says of his own work that it is "largely based on the synoptic gospels" and that "the debate to which I wish to contribute in this book has been conducted almost entirely in terms of the synoptic tradition."<sup>8</sup>

Yet at least two recent investigations of the historical Jesus diverge significantly from this consensus: Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*, and John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, John played a prominent role in Raymond E. Brown's *The Death of the Messiah* (1994), which deals only with the Passion Narratives.<sup>10</sup> There have also been efforts to address historical Jesus questions from the Johannine side. The most noteworthy of these is C. H. Dodd's *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (1963), a work not likely soon to be superseded.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the view that the Johannine Jesus is the Christ of the church's faith, while the Jesus of the several synoptic

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<sup>5</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17*, trans. Gerhard Krodel (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 9 n. 6, in which he attributes the imagery to F. C. Baur.

<sup>6</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); idem, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, vol. 1 of *Christianity in the Making*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, xvi.

<sup>9</sup> Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 2000); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vols. 1–4 (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009).

<sup>10</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> C. H. Dodd's work *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) appeared more than forty years ago. It was followed by John A. T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM, 1985), and Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). Blomberg begins by citing Maurice Casey's rejection of the historical value of John in *Is John's Gospel True?* (London: Routledge, 1996) and continues with the Jesus Seminar's similar negative position (17–18). He disputes

gospels and their strands of tradition represents much more accurately the historical Jesus, continued to prevail.

The Johannine Christological terms and concepts, which likely arose in bitter sectarian conflict, in time became common coinage among Christians who did not understand their origin, and played a fundamental role in the development of the great creedal formulations of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>12</sup> But the controversies as represented in the Gospel are also those of a later, post-resurrection, time. Certainly Jesus engaged in controversy. Yet Jesus' own controversies with opponents did not center on Christology as that set of doctrines developed in the post-resurrection church. That the two levels of controversy were integrally related is, however, a premise upon which the Gospel is based, as has been eloquently argued by J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*.<sup>13</sup> Martyn is, however, concerned with the controversies and conflict of a Johannine community that looks to a Jesus present to his disciples through the Spirit (Paraclete) rather than the *einmalig* level of the historical figure of Jesus.

What then may be historical Jesus tradition in John, and how may one make a determination? Elements or items in John deserve consideration as possibly historical that: (1) without reproducing the synoptics accord with the picture of Jesus found in them; (2) do not advance the distinctively Johannine Christology; and (3) are historically plausible in the time, place, and setting of Jesus' ministry.<sup>14</sup> Not all these general criteria need come into play at any one point. Any treatment of the subject divides itself naturally into four parts: the Johannine narrative versus the Markan; the Passion Narrative; sayings tradition in John; and John's purportedly factual information. Perhaps not surprisingly, the narrative and related issues loom largest.

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such negative findings in almost every case. There have been, of course, other studies dealing with historical issues in John.

<sup>12</sup> See D. Moody Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of John*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 173–182, esp. 174–176.

<sup>13</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 203. Cf. on criteria Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:167–195.

## 2. *The Johannine Narrative Versus the Markan*

### 2.1. *Itinerary and Chronology*

Justified skepticism about the historicity of the Johannine portrait of Jesus has affected historical judgments about other aspects of the Gospel. The acceptance of the priority of Mark was at first accompanied by the widespread assumption that the Markan narrative is basically historical. But the view that the priority of Mark warranted the acceptance of the historicity of the Markan narrative framework began to dissipate with William Wrede, against whose “thoroughgoing skepticism” Schweitzer struggled, presenting his own “thoroughgoing eschatology” as the only viable alternative.<sup>15</sup> Schweitzer had seen the historical inadequacies of the Markan narrative structure, and Jesus’ itinerary, as had Wrede. Yet, as in the case of the theories he so effectively criticized, it was Schweitzer’s own imagination that actually supplied the glue (knowledge of Jesus’ eschatological intention) to hold the narrative together. With the rise of form and redaction criticism, Wrede’s view of Mark and the synoptics generally has prevailed. Thus Mark’s narrative framework is now taken to be a theological and literary construct, not a historical, in the sense of chronological, account of Jesus’ ministry and itinerary.

Moreover, Paula Fredriksen makes the simple but significant observation that in contrasting John and the synoptics, it is not a case of one against three, but one against one, since in their narrative frameworks Matthew and Luke generally follow Mark.<sup>16</sup> Thus she proposes that John’s longer ministry, with periodic journeys to Jerusalem, is inherently more plausible. The gospel narratives, which portray Caiaphas and Pilate as having a sense of the character of Jesus and his intentions, require some explanation of why this might be so. It becomes readily understandable if Jesus had been something of a public figure, whose words and deeds were known not only in Galilee,

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<sup>15</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien: Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Markusevangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963; unaltered from the 1st ed. of 1901), 101, where, typically, Wrede emphasizes how the purpose and work of the evangelist Mark should take precedence over historical questions about Jesus. The English translation, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Greig (Cambridge: Clarke, 1971), came seventy years after the work’s original publication, a tribute to its enduring importance.

<sup>16</sup> Fredriksen, *Jesus*, 34. The Markan narrative sequence is basic to both Matthew and Luke, although other narratives may have already existed (see n. 53 below).

but also from his not infrequent pilgrimages to the Holy City, which John reports. Thus, Fredriksen maintains, he was not unknown to the principal Roman and high priestly authorities. Pilate did not hunt down his followers because he already knew they were not political revolutionaries. He put Jesus to death because his crucifixion would be an example to those who might be. At the same time, Caiaphas and the chief priests viewed Jesus as a potential rabble-rouser, a threat to the concordat they had worked out with the governing Roman authorities, someone they would gladly dispense with.<sup>17</sup>

A longer ministry not limited to Galilee would also help explain or accommodate other aspects of John's narrative, which are arguably historical, such as John's account of Jesus' continuing relationship to John the Baptist. The Baptist material is a structural feature of the gospel narrative of Jesus' ministry. John, like the synoptics and a couple of the missionary speeches in the Book of Acts (10:37; 13:24), makes it clear that the ministry is to be reckoned as following upon his encounter with John the Baptist.

## 2.2. *Jesus' Relationship to John the Baptist*

In his comprehensive study, *A Marginal Jew*, John P. Meier portrays John as Jesus' mentor. Was Jesus at one time a disciple of John? Meier's answer is that he was, but that apart from John chapters 1 and 3, no one would suggest this, that is, not on the basis of Q and Markan tradition.<sup>18</sup> In John, Jesus makes his debut, not in Galilee (cf. Mark 1:9) but in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing (1:28), that is, in John's territory. Moreover, "the Fourth Gospel's indication that Peter and other disciples first met Jesus in the circle of the Baptist's disciples may well be true..."<sup>19</sup> Decades ago, Rudolf Bultmann suggested that John's sending his disciples to Jesus (1:35–42) implied

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<sup>17</sup> Fredriksen stresses that the Johannine pattern of Jesus' alternation between Galilee and Jerusalem is historically plausible. It would have been normal for a Jewish male to attend the great festivals, and necessary given Jesus' own mission. See *Jesus*, esp. 238–241; cf. 219–220, 244, 251–259.

<sup>18</sup> *Marginal Jew*, 2: *Mentor, Message and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 116–117.

<sup>19</sup> *Marginal Jew*, 3: *Companions and Competitors* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 222.

that Jesus drew disciples from the Baptist, and that perhaps the evangelist himself had once belonged to Baptist circles.<sup>20</sup>

Jesus' relation to John (never called "the Baptist" in the Fourth Gospel) does not end with the call stories. In Q (Luke 7:18–36, esp. vv. 18–23; Matt 11:2–19) the Baptist is in touch with Jesus through his own disciples from prison. In John, however, Jesus and the Baptist are portrayed as working contemporaneously, for (contrary to the synoptics) "John had not yet been thrown into prison" (3:24). What is more, not only John, but Jesus also, is engaged in baptizing (3:22, 26; 4:1). Then as if someone has caught a slipup, not Jesus but only his disciples are said to be baptizing (4:2). Yet in the synoptics there is also no record of his disciples' baptizing. (Many commentators understandably take 4:2 to be a later editorial note.) Moreover, in the Markan story line there is a sharp demarcation between the time of the Baptist and that of Jesus (1:14–15), which allows for no interval in which Jesus might have been a member of the Baptist's following or working alongside him. John's account gives support to those who, with Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.24.7–13), thought that John wrote about events that took place before the imprisonment of John the Baptist, while the other gospels dealt only with matters coming after his imprisonment. For this reason alone John allows a greater time-span for Jesus' ministry.

The basic historicity of the scene(s) in which Jesus and John appear as baptizing rivals is supported by the criterion of embarrassment.<sup>21</sup> Even Jesus' baptism by John was an embarrassment to early Christians. Therefore, John does not explicitly mention it, and Matthew has the Baptist offer a solution that relieves the embarrassment (Matt 3:14). The Gospel of the Nazareans (Fragment 2) and the Gospel of the Ebionites (Fragment 3) reflect a similar embarrassment.<sup>22</sup> It is unlikely that John the evangelist would have created a scene that actually works against his effort to keep the Baptist in his proper place (cf. 1:6–8, 15,

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<sup>20</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 108. For an intriguing proposal about the interrelationship of John and Jesus, see Francis J. Moloney, "The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History," *NTS* (2000): 42–58.

<sup>21</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:168–171.

<sup>22</sup> Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *The Gospels and Related Writings*, 1: *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 160, 169.

19–23, 31; 3:30). Their relationship is much more complex than in the synoptics, and the character of that complexity suggests we are learning something about its historicity not conveyed in the synoptics.

### 2.3. *The Feeding of the Five Thousand*

While most of John's miracle stories are basically similar to the synoptic type, only one affords a clear parallel, the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1–15). The Feeding of the Four Thousand is omitted by Luke, as well as by John, apparently reflecting the fact that it is a doublet. As such it seems to be a secondary addition to an earlier tradition that contained only one feeding story. If so, then John (with Luke) embodies that earlier tradition.

As in the synoptics, and Mark particularly, the feeding story (or stories) constitutes a pivotal point in the narrative. In Mark, of course, the Confession of Peter (8:27–30) follows hard upon the second feeding and introduces the crucial central portion of the narrative, in which Jesus' opponents' hostility and his own death are increasingly foreshadowed. Something similar happens in John. Although the sharp hostility of "the Jews" has already emerged in chapter 5, it becomes unremitting after chapter 6. John chapters 5 and 6 constitutes a turning point in the Fourth Gospel, just as Mark 8 (or Mark chapters 6 and 8) constitutes a turning point in that Gospel. In John also a version of Peter's confession (6:67–71) follows upon the feeding story, as well as the departure of many of Jesus' disciples (6:60–66). Such a withdrawal at this turning point of Jesus' ministry might well have happened, although no other gospel reports it. Their departure actually suggests that this is a turning point of the ministry. In any event, we see here either John's rather remote imitation of Mark or a parallel pattern of Jesus' ministry.

At the conclusion of the feeding narrative, there are a couple of remarkable statements not found in the synoptics. First, Jesus is said by the people to be the "the prophet who is coming into the world" (v. 14; cf. 4:19), probably the prophet of Deuteronomistic expectation (Deut 18:15–22). Then, "When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself" (v. 15 NRSV). Jesus is also king (i.e., messiah). The fact that this statement leads nowhere in John's narrative already suggests that it is older tradition, and possibly stems from a situation in Jesus' ministry. That Jesus has conducted a messianic

banquet suggests that he is the messiah, or king. As the king of the Jews, Jesus was executed by the Romans. The people's desire to acclaim him as king, which John so vividly portrays, may then have some historical basis, and suggests the possibility that this feeding episode is not only a turning point in the narrative, but also in Jesus' ministry.<sup>23</sup> In other words, if John 6:14–15 is for the author a given, and not his redaction (as seems probable), this bespeaks the existence of a traditional narrative pattern, one common to John and Mark, in which the feeding played a pivotal role.

In addition, John's divergent placement of the feeding on the other (Transjordanian) side of the Sea of Galilee is odd (6:1; *peran tēs thalassēs*...). But while Mark seems to presume it takes place on the western side (where the traditional site of Tabgha is situated), Luke has it at Bethsaida, half-way between, so to speak (Luke 9:10). Commentators struggle to understand why John has moved the feeding, since he must then somewhat awkwardly describe how everyone got back to the Capernaum side (John 6:17, 24, 59). Without claiming too much for history, the exegete should note the possibility that John is here dealing with a traditional given. Moreover, Mark's account of Jesus' sea voyages also presents problems. In John at least the disciples' departure in a boat (John 6:17) is explained: they are going to the other side for what must happen in Capernaum, Jesus' bread discourse (6:59). According to Mark (6:45) they are going "to the other side" (NRSV; Gr. *eis to peran*) to Bethsaida, which is not exactly across the sea from Tabgha on the western wide. (Thus P<sup>45</sup> with some reason deletes the phrase.) The point is not that John must be historically correct, but that precisely the Gospel's awkwardness suggests we are dealing with something other than the evangelist's own composition or redaction of Mark.

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<sup>23</sup> See, John Painter, *The Quest for The Messiah: The History, Literature and Theology of the Johannine Community*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 259–267, for a good discussion of John 6:1–21, and particularly of the meaning of the titles prophet and king in 6:14–15, which Painter regards as "pre-crucifixion" (262). He adds that such an overtly political motif would not have been added by John or his (Christian) tradition (216). Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 216–217, had made a similar same case for its antiquity.

#### 2.4. *The Portrayal of the Disciples*

Perhaps related to this narrative pattern, in which there is a kind of revelatory point and turning point in Jesus' public ministry, is the portrayal of the disciples in both John and Mark. It is noteworthy that only after the feedings does Mark have Jesus predict his coming death openly and explicitly (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33), although the disciples nevertheless cannot grasp his meaning. In John, allusions to his death in this context, while real, are more subtle (e.g., John 6:51, 71: cf. 5:18; 7:19). The disciples' failure to understand in Mark is an aspect of Mark's messianic secret. There is no specifically messianic secret in John, for Jesus' identity is revealed from the beginning of the narrative. Yet there is also in John a pervasive inability on the part of the disciples to understand Jesus and what is transpiring, even at the end of their final conversation with him (16:29–33). They will know only in retrospect (2:17, 22; 12:16; 13:7). Wrede himself was aware of this Johannine version of the messianic secret and observed that John is in this respect closer to Mark than are Matthew and Luke.<sup>24</sup> We are confronted with a similar or analogous motif in these quite different gospel narratives, namely, the ignorance of the disciples despite Jesus' self-revelation. Does John adapt what he has read in Mark, or does the kinship lie more deeply embedded in the early Christian tradition? In other words, is the messianic secret earlier than any of the gospels (as Wrede himself thought)?

Among the disciples, Peter plays a leading role, as in the synoptics, but figures in different narratives. (For example, John 13:1–20, esp. vv. 6–9; 20:2–6, and the whole of chap. 21 are without clear parallel in the synoptics.) The disciples are twelve in number (6:67, 70–71; 20:24); they were chosen by Jesus (6:70); but there is no list of the Twelve in John and no account of their appointment (cf. Mark 3:13–19 *parr.*). Those who are named as Jesus' disciples are for the most part known from the lists in the synoptics and Acts.

Yet some disciples (other than Peter) who are named play a larger role in John than in the synoptics. This is particularly true of Thomas (11:16; 14:5; 20:24–28; 21:2), but also of Philip (1:43–48; 6:5, 7; 12:21–22; 14:8–9) and Andrew, Simon Peter's brother (1:40, 41; 6:8; 12:22), as well as Nathanael (1:45–49; 21:2), who is not named in the synoptics.

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<sup>24</sup> Wrede, *Messiasgeheimnis*, 179–206.



(In John 1:44 Simon Peter and Andrew, as well as Philip, are said to be from Bethsaida, apparently contradicting Mark for no obvious reason.) The role of such disciples is all the more striking since James and John, the sons of Zebedee, frequently mentioned in the synoptics, are never called by name in the Fourth Gospel (not even in 21:2)—and yet this Gospel is later ascribed by tradition to a John, presumably the son of Zebedee.

To what extent does this naming of disciples and assigning them different or distinctive roles represent ancient, possibly historical, tradition? We may instance two positive examples worth consideration. First, the risen Jesus' meeting with Peter (21:1–14) and the subsequent conversation with him (21:15–22) is probably historical with respect to two elements: it may be the surviving narrative of Jesus' first resurrection appearance (cf. 1 Cor 15:5; Mark 14:28; 16:7); and it also portrays Peter's recovery and restoration after his denial and desertion of Jesus. While it is scarcely the protocol of a conversation, it portrays a historical reality in narrative and conversational form. Second, the prominence of Thomas is not insignificant. We now possess a gospel attributed to him, which in itself bespeaks the existence of a Thomas tradition. Although it is composed mainly of synoptic-like tradition, its gnosticizing character is reminiscent of John. Moreover, the role played by Thomas in the Gospel of John is not purely negative. At one point he expresses the kind of loyalty to Jesus that Peter eventually lacked (11:16); he raises a crucial question with Jesus at the beginning of the Farewell Discourses (14:5); he demands to see as others have before he will believe (20:24–29). This demand is routinely disparaged by exegetes, probably because of Jesus' concluding blessing of those who have not seen (v. 29), which refers to the Gospel's audience (cf. 17:20). Thomas is, however, present with those who see the Risen Jesus by the Sea, where he is named immediately after Simon Peter (21:2). Does the Thomas tradition of John also bespeak his historical role? This may be too much to claim, but some anterior, historical connection between Thomas traditions and Johannine traditions remains a factor to be reckoned with.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Possible links between the Gospels of Thomas and John are discussed by Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 113–124; cf. idem, *History and Literature of Early Christianity*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 184–185. Koester is careful to point out that the Gospels of Thomas and John share a common genre and

### 2.5. *Miracle Traditions*

The gospel genre and structure was in its inception and development closely related to the narration of Jesus' miracles, his deeds of power (NRSV) according to the synoptics or signs (*semeia*) according to John. The Johannine miracle traditions differ from those of the synoptics in that they are for the most part simply different stories. These *semeia*, while markedly fewer, are usually followed by extensive discussions and discourses in which their significance is brought out, even as skeptical opponents call them into question. The issues that emerge here are of a piece with the refutation of Jesus' explicit Christological teaching by "the Jews" elsewhere in John. Not surprisingly in this Gospel, three of the miracles occur in Jerusalem or nearby Bethany (chapters 5, 9, and 11), whereas in the synoptics no Jerusalem miracles are narrated (although they are mentioned in Matt 21:14–15). In most cases in John, however, a narrative nucleus can be isolated that is similar in form to synoptic-type miracle stories. Arguably, these narratives are more likely to be historical, in the sense of going back to the historical figure of Jesus, than the Johannine Jesus' discourses.<sup>26</sup>

Accordingly, in his detailed examination of the Johannine miracle stories, Meier concludes that most have a traditional, and therefore possibly a historical, basis. In his view only two do not clearly represent historical events: the wine miracle at Cana (2:1–11) and Jesus' coming to the disciples walking on the sea (6:16–21). The latter, of course, has a traditional basis. John did not simply depend on Mark for this story, but John may have composed the wine miracle himself.<sup>27</sup> Meier also notes, in connection with the Man Born Blind (chapter 9), "the tendency of the Gospel of John to heighten the miraculous element

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tradition, without claiming a literary relationship. James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Fourth Gospel?* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), contends that the beloved disciple is Thomas, but also holds that the antecedents and milieus of the Gospels of John and Thomas are closely related (360–389).

<sup>26</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:45; also 53 n. 22. In general, Meier is more optimistic about identifying a historical basis of the Johannine miracle stories or traditions than is Michael Labahn, the author of the most thorough study of the Johannine miracle narratives, *Jesus als Lebensspender: Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der johanneischen Tradition anhand ihrer Wundergeschichten*, BZNW 98 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 466: "In my opinion, such an historical core in the life of the historical Jesus cannot be identified in the case of any of the miracle narratives related in the Fourth Gospel".

<sup>27</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:908–924 (on 6:16–21), 934–949 (on 2:1–11).

in miracle stories.”<sup>28</sup> The Raising of Lazarus may have grown on the basis of a story about Jesus’ healing a mortally ill Lazarus. Meier sees difficulties in deriving it from the Lazarus parable of Luke 16:19–31.<sup>29</sup> Nor does he derive it from the so-called Secret Mark. That Jesus was thought to have raised the dead is reflected in the double-tradition saying in which “the dead are raised” (cf. Luke 7:22; Matt 11:5). The Isaiah quotations to which this saying is related (29:18; 35:5–6; 42:18–20; 61:1) routinely mention healing of the deaf, the blind, and the lame, but not the resurrection of the dead (but see 26:19). Perhaps “the dead are raised” actually originated with Jesus himself.<sup>30</sup>

Doubtless Jesus was a miracle worker, and the differences between the synoptic and Johannine miracle stories should not obscure this fact. In Mark and John particularly, healings and other wonders seem to be the principal public activities of Jesus. They drew attention, and possibly also followers, to him. This is already evident from the synoptic gospels, particularly Mark, but it is clearly stated in John (2:11; 2:23–25). Thus there is a line of continuity from Jesus through the synoptics to John. That later Jesus’ followers are said to have joined in such activity (14:12; 1 Cor 12:9–10; 2 Cor 12:12) probably underscores this fact.

Whether there were pre-gospel collections of miracle stories will probably remain a disputed issue, but some evidence in John suggests that there were: the perplexing numbering of the first two signs only (2:11; 4:54); the seemingly inappropriate characterization of Jesus’ entire activity as signs, even after the resurrection (12:37; 20:30); the tension within the Gospel itself between the importance of seeing and believing signs (2:11; 4:48; 12:37) and the recognition that sign faith alone is inadequate (2:23–25; 3:1–10).

We have examined structural and thematic elements in John which are evidently traditional and arguably historical. There are two other themes or motifs that are not insignificant historically, or theologically, but are less central to the development of the gospel genre: Jesus’ relation to his natural family and his relationship to women.

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<sup>28</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:698.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 822–831.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 832–837.

## 2.6. *Jesus' Relation to his Natural Family*

The portrayal of Jesus' relationship to his natural family in John is congruent with the synoptics, but differs in ways that are historically plausible.<sup>31</sup> First of all, Joseph is twice specifically named as Jesus' father (1:45; 6:42), in the latter case as a means of explaining his human existence in contrast to his immediately preceding claim of having come down from heaven (6:41). Otherwise Joseph is mentioned only in the infancy stories of Matthew and Luke, but not at all in Mark. John, of course, has no infancy stories, nor does the Gospel seem to contemplate Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. From John we would infer he was born in Nazareth (7:40–44), and this is historically more probable.<sup>32</sup> Also, on the basis of what John writes, there is no reason to doubt that he understands Joseph to be Jesus' natural, biological father.

Mark clearly suggests that Jesus' family had severe reservations about his conduct (3:21) and may have thought he was beside himself.<sup>33</sup> Their attitude then explains Jesus' own statement about his true mother, brothers, and sisters (3:31–35), as well as his enemies' charge that he was in league with Beelzebul, the ruler of demons (3:22; cf. John 10:20). John does not pick up these statements, if he knew them, but clearly describes his brothers as unbelievers, whose advice Jesus will not take, even though he ends up doing what they suggest (7:1–9, 10).

With Jesus' mother (never called Mary in John) matters are put differently than in Mark. She seems to know what he will do (2:1–5), even though he rebuffs her. Then she, with three other women, presumably followers, stands at the foot of the cross (19:25–27). Few critical exegetes regard this episode as historical, but the chief reason seems to be its absence from the synoptics. That family should appear at the foot of the cross is not historically implausible, nor is a dying son's effort to provide for his mother. (There is also the presence of

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<sup>31</sup> On Jesus' family relations in John, whether stated or implied, see Sief van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John*, Biblical Interpretation Series 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

<sup>32</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:215–16. Meier points out (237 n. 40) that Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday 1977), 516 n. 6, remains more tentative in his approach.

<sup>33</sup> Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 269–271.

the Beloved Disciple, whose identity and historical reality remain the subject of debate.)

The role of Jesus' mother is much more important in John than in Mark, or the other synoptics apart from the infancy narratives. She appears at the beginning and end of his ministry. Theologically, her prominence may have something to do with the humanity of Jesus (cf. also 6:42). Perhaps John assigns her a more positive role than she actually played during Jesus' ministry (but see Acts 1:14). Yet there are reasons for not too quickly dismissing the possible historical basis of the Johannine presentation of the mother of Jesus. Her role is prominent, but just the fact that its theological significance is not entirely clear suggests that John may be dealing with a given rather than composing *de novo*. Obviously, Jesus' relation to his own family is a historical datum in the tradition.

### 2.7. *Jesus' Relationship to Women*

Other women also play significant roles. Jesus' encounter and conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well (John 4) is, of course, unique to the Fourth Gospel and brings out Johannine themes. But here the Johannine Jesus also manifests typically human characteristics such as tiredness and thirst. That Jesus should initiate a conversation with a woman, much less a Samaritan woman, is out of keeping with contemporary Jewish custom, as the story eventually indicates (4:9, 27), but this state of affairs does not necessarily speak against the historicity of the incident. Indeed, Jesus' approach to the Samaritan woman, his apparent openness to her, is congruent with and complements the synoptic, especially the Lukan, picture of Jesus (cf. Luke 8:1–3; 10:38–42). Of course, given the Johannine language and themes, one would be hard pressed to argue that John presents an account of an actual conversation between Jesus and this woman.

The sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany appear in John and Luke (10:38–42), but only in John are they said to be sisters of Lazarus also and to reside in Bethany. In John as in Luke they play host to Jesus and thus appear as his friends (11:5, 11). In John only this Mary anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes them with her hair (12:1–8; cf. Luke 7:36–50, where the woman is not named). In John the apparent personal relationship between Jesus and this family in Bethany is the basis of a theologically important narrative: Jesus raises their brother Lazarus from the dead. But whatever one makes of this episode, it scarcely calls into question the reality of the relationship. It is, of course, possible

that John has here taken up the sisters from Luke (10:38–42), made the Lazarus of the Lukan parable (16:19–31) their brother, and constructed the narratives we now read in his Gospel. But such a proposal involves the larger question of the relationship of Luke to John, which presents its own difficulties, inasmuch as the distinctive Lukan material is not found in John.

Mary Magdalene, in John as in the other gospels, appears at the cross and at the empty tomb. In John she becomes the first witness of an appearance of the risen Christ (20:11–18). (This is also the case in Matthew 28:9–10, although there she is one of two women, and her role is not stressed.) Certainly John has ascribed a larger role to Mary Magdalene, who now stands out along with the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, and the sisters Mary and Martha as a prominent figure in the Fourth Gospel. It is unlikely that John, in his social and theological setting, enhanced their roles because of nascent feminist interests. Rather, in ways different from the synoptics, he portrays Jesus' actual relationships with women, who were among his friends and followers. Here John nicely complements Mark or the synoptics, but does not require any or all of them in order to be understood.

### 3. *The Passion Narrative*

In the Passion Narrative the parallels between John and Mark (or the synoptics) become pervasive. With the entry into Gethsemane (called only "a garden" in John 18:1) and the arrest of Jesus the Johannine and Markan narratives begin to run quite closely parallel. But even from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–10; John 12:12–19) or the Johannine narrative of the priests' (and Pharisees') plotting (11:45–53; cf. Mark 14:1–2), there is a remarkable series of parallel accounts, mostly in the same order.

#### 3.1. *Prelude to the Passion*

John's Prelude to the Passion<sup>34</sup> beginning with the Plotting of the Priests, is relatively much longer than the comparable part of the synoptics because of the Farewell Discourses (chapters 14–16) and Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (chapter 17). Clearly this segment is the

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<sup>34</sup> Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*, 152–173.

composition of the evangelist, who at points obviously drew on earlier traditions or sources.

The priests' plotting in John (11:45–53) finds a parallel in Mark 14:1–2, whether or not John drew directly on Mark. Jesus then withdraws (11:54) so that the multitudes may gather in Jerusalem to await his advent (11:55–56), even as his enemies, the Pharisees, make ready to seize him (v. 57). Then comes the traditional story of the Anointing of Jesus (12:1–8; cf. Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:36–50), followed in John by Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem (12:12–19), found in all the synoptics (Mark 11:1–10 parr). The note about Lazarus and the plot against his life (vv. 9–11) is by all odds a Johannine composition, inasmuch as in John the Raising of Lazarus leads to Jesus' condemnation, rather than the Cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15–19), which in John has long since occurred (2:13–22).

Now anticipating his destiny, at the approach of the Greeks (12:20), Jesus responds that the hour of his glorification has come (v. 23).<sup>35</sup> From this point to the end of the chapter Jesus is speaking and enunciating Johannine theology, although his speech contains traditional elements. After the soliloquy of 12:44–50 Jesus withdraws from any further contact with this world, whose representatives he will henceforth encounter only as he goes to his death.

With full knowledge that he is taking leave of this world to go to the Father (13:1–3), Jesus begins to wash his disciples' feet (13:1–20) as his first act at the Last Supper. This humble deed replaces the institution of the Lord's Supper in the Johannine account (cf. Mark 14:22–25 parr.), and, as an expression of Jesus' love for his disciples, forms an *inclusio* with the love commandment (13:34). Jesus also foretells Judas' betrayal (13:21–30) and Peter's denial (13:36–38) as he does in all the gospels. If John is following Mark, his omission of the Words of Institution is deliberate and startling. It may be relevant to observe that the oldest eucharistic text outside the New Testament likewise does not place the institution of the Eucharist on the night Jesus was betrayed (*Didache* 9–10). Yet the *Didache* may reflect knowledge of the synoptics, particularly Matthew, but not John. Possibly John and the *Didache* represent the earliest form of the Last Supper and eucha-

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<sup>35</sup> See Painter, *Quest for the Messiah*, 376–377. As Painter observes, the quest of the Greeks remains unfulfilled. Yet the quest motif appears, quite significantly, at this turning point, where the hour of Jesus' glorification is announced as having arrived.

ristic traditions, but such a view is nevertheless precarious, since Paul already knows the traditional words of institution and sets them on the night Jesus was betrayed (1 Cor 11:23–26, esp. v. 23). John clearly knows eucharistic language<sup>36</sup> (6:52–58) and presumably practice; possibly also the Pauline-synoptic version of the Words of Institution. He also knows the tradition of a Last Supper.

John's account of Jesus' revelation of Judas' betrayal (13:21–30) is more highly developed and detailed than the others and serves also to introduce the disciple whom Jesus loved, who, of course, appears only in John (cf. 19:25–27; 20:2–10; 21:7.20–24; perhaps also 18:15–16; 19:35). As to its historical basis, any judgment will be negative that rejects the Gospel's claim to reflect the eyewitness testimony of an individual. However that may be, the scene is apparently a literary development based either on the synoptic tradition or something similar. Interestingly, the synoptics have Judas betray Jesus to the chief priests before the Last Supper, while John presumes he will do so afterward. John's version is historically credible also, although there is little basis on which to decide between them. Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial is much briefer, and quite similar to Mark and Luke, although it is introduced with the distinctly Johannine theme of "afterward" (13:36; cf. 2:22; 13:7), meaning after Jesus' glorification.

John's Farewell Discourses, which begin as the disciples are still at table with Jesus (cf. 14:31), play a role similar to Jesus' Apocalyptic Discourse in the synoptics (Mark 13 parr), which takes place shortly before the Supper. In John, however, apocalyptic eschatological language is reinterpreted (14:22–24; cf. 11:24–25). Jesus' final, "high-priestly" prayer (chapter 17) follows the discourses immediately and precedes his departure into "a garden" for his arrest. In Gethsemane, not mentioned by name in John, Jesus also prays (Mark 14:32–42 parr), but quite a different prayer. In John he prays for his disciples (but cf. John 12:27), in the synoptics for his own deliverance. Obviously, the synoptic version is more primitive. (Yet John 12:27 seems to reflect knowledge of the Gethsemane episode, as does Hebrews 5:7–8).

Although John 11:45 through chapter 17 is the composition of the evangelist, the narrative episodes are mostly, although not entirely, in

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<sup>36</sup> Helmut Koester, "Geschichte und Kultus im Johannesevangelium und bei Ignatius von Antiochen," *ZTK* 54 (1957): 56–69, esp. 62–64, recognizes this, although he agrees with Bultmann in assigning 6:51c–58 to later redaction.



the same order as in Mark. The Cleansing of the Temple has, of course, occurred a couple of years earlier in John (2:13–22), but the Plotting of the Priests comes just before the Anointing of Jesus, as in Mark. In John only the Triumphal Entry (12:12–19) comes immediately after the Anointing, but the Entry marked the beginning of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem and its environs in Mark (11:1–10). John's biggest differences by far, however, occur in the discourse portions: what Jesus has to say when approached by the questing Greeks (12:20–50); at the Last Supper (chapter 13); during the Farewell Discourses (14–16); and in the final prayer (17).

With John 18:1 the Passion Narrative proper begins. The narratives of all four gospels contain the same episodes, with few exceptions, such as the death of Judas (Matt 27:3–10), Jesus before Herod (Luke 23:6–12), or the piercing of Jesus' side (found in John 19:31–37, but not in the other gospels).

John could be following Mark, perhaps influenced by Luke, and less so by Matthew. Sometimes John's differences from Mark can be understood as deliberate alterations due to John's exalted Christology. Thus at his own arrest (18:1–11) Jesus is in control; he is not even kissed by Judas. Jesus carries his own cross to Golgotha (19:17), needing no help from Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21), who is not mentioned. There is no cry of dereliction ("My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?") and no loud cry at his death (Mark 15:34, 37). Jesus is equal to the occasion and in complete control, at the end saying only, "It is finished" (19:30).

Yet in the same context John would have omitted details given by Mark that seem to accord with his purposes. There is no darkness at noon (Mark 15:33), no rending of the curtain of the temple (Mark 15:38), and no Roman centurion to declare him truly a son of God (Mark 15:39). The darkness fits the Johannine light-darkness dualism; Jesus as new temple is an important Johannine theme (2:21; cf. 1:14); Son of God is the most characteristic title of Jesus in John. These dramatic, even supernatural, interventions in Mark are less likely to be historical—to have actually happened—than the Johannine version that does not contain them.

This specific state of affairs is typical of the Passion Narrative as a whole. In some cases the absence of a Markan (or synoptic) item from John's account is understandable as a deliberate omission, but in others not. Such instances of John's variations from Mark are particularly noteworthy when, as in the cases just noted, they actually fail to

support John's portrayal of Jesus or his distinct point of view. The most striking of such instances are related to John's alleged anti-Judaism and his obvious tendency to place the responsibility for Jesus' death on those he calls "the Jews."

### 3.2. *A Jewish Trial?*

The Johannine account of Jesus' appearance before the Jewish authorities after his arrest (18:19–24) is remarkably spare and inconclusive in comparison with the Markan (14:55–65). In John Jesus is taken to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who is said to have been high priest "in that year" (18:13). Yet in the narrative that follows immediately, it is the "high priest" who questions Jesus, and that in context this must be Annas, who is then said to send Jesus to Caiaphas the high priest (18:24). There is in John no account of a hearing, much less a trial, before Caiaphas. Indeed, the reader is left to imagine—or supply—what happened.

The Markan account of the arraignment of Jesus before the high priest (presumably Caiaphas) and the council or Sanhedrin amounts to a full-scale trial concluding with a guilty verdict (14:55–65). Witnesses appear who claim that Jesus threatened the destruction of the temple (14:58). Nevertheless, their testimony is said not to agree (v. 59). Under further questioning Jesus admits his claims to be the Messiah (14:61–62). Moreover, in his direct question to Jesus the high priest has described the Messiah (RSV Christ = Gr. *Christos*) as "the Son of the Blessed" (cf. Matt. 26:63: "Son of God"), and Jesus responds to the question, "I am" (ἐγώ εἰμι). After Jesus has continued with the Daniel 7:13 quotation, the high priest declares that he has uttered blasphemy and asks the Sanhedrin to decide his fate, whereupon they all condemn him to death (14:62–64). Thus the condemnation seems to be unanimous. This account presents serious historical and related problems, as we shall see below. Yet, amazingly, it fits exactly John's view that the Jews or Jewish authorities found Jesus' claims for himself blasphemous (10:33–36)—not to mention the fact that he was viewed as a threat to the temple (11:48). Conceivably, this final condemnation would be redundant in John (after chap. 10, etc.); and John after all reports that Jesus was taken to and from Caiaphas (18:24, 28). Yet the difficulty is not easily dispensed with. Why, if John had Mark before him, did he omit the trial and leave his own narrative in such an incomplete and disordered state? The character of the whole Johannine

narrative (18:12–27, esp. vv. 19–23) is itself problematic. Its awkwardness—Who is the high priest?—and relatively inconsequential results do not suggest that John composed it as a substitute for the trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. Rather, the Annas scene seems to be a given with which he was dealing.

Moreover, Luke also lacks the nocturnal Sanhedrin trial found in Mark and Matthew. Although he retains elements from Mark in an early morning scene (Luke 22:66–71), there are no witnesses and no formal verdict. Luke thus omits the specifically juridical elements of Mark. Is Luke influenced by John? Alternatively, do they share a common, more primitive, source or tradition?<sup>37</sup>

The historical difficulties, or improbabilities, presented by Mark's version of a Sanhedrin trial are well-known. First of all, what source of information would have been available to Mark or his tradition? The problems for the Markan and Matthean narrative posed by the later Mishnaic tractate *Sanhedrin* (albeit a later and perhaps idealized formulation) are numerous: capital cases were not to be tried on a feast day or at night; a verdict of condemnation should not be rendered on the day the trial began; two or more witnesses had to agree, but Mark observes that they did not (14:55, 59); all the judges might not argue for conviction (cf. Mark 14:64: "they all condemned him as deserving death"). Moreover, the sheer prospect of assembling the Sanhedrin on a Passover Eve would have been mind-boggling.<sup>38</sup> The apparent condemnation of Jesus for having claimed messiahship and divine sonship, as if the two went together (14:61–64), sounds suspiciously Christian. It would not have been blasphemy to claim messiahship, even if the claim were proved wrong, and messiahship did not entail divine sonship. Precisely those aspects of the account that fit

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<sup>37</sup> In an important study of the Lukan version of the Sanhedrin episode (22:66–71), David R. Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus: A Study in the Gospels and Jewish Historiography*, StPB 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 183–220, decides in favor of a common tradition or source; so also Hans Klein, "Die Lukanisch-johanneische Passionstradition," *ZNW* 67 (1976): 155–186. For a persuasive case that Luke is somehow influenced by the Johannine narrative, see Mark A. Matson, *In Dialogue with Another Gospel: The Influence of the Fourth Gospel on the Passion Narrative of the Gospel of Luke*, SBLDS 178 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical literature, 2001). The starting point of Matson's research was the observation of F. Lamar Cribbs, "St. Luke and the Johannine Tradition," *JBL* 90 (1971): 422–450, that Luke's departures from Mark coincide with instances where John either contradicts Mark or is clearly different.

<sup>38</sup> As Fredriksen acutely observes, *Jesus*, 223.

John's understanding of the conflict between Jesus and the Jews render it suspect historically. Yet it is not found in John, but in Mark.

So it is difficult to understand John's omission of this episode, or his radical reduction of it to the confusing Annas scene, had the evangelist been using Mark. Probably the trial scene is itself a Markan composition.<sup>39</sup> But if it is a Markan composition, and if John agrees with Mark in framing the account of Jesus' appearance before Jewish authorities with the account of Peter's denial (John 18:13–18, 25–27; cf. Mark 14:53–54, 66–72), is it not still likely that John was writing with Mark in view?<sup>40</sup> If so, John seems to have adopted the narrative framing of Mark, but not the theologically pregnant trial account itself. Such a redactional procedure is hard to fathom.

On the other hand, John's account of a brief hearing before Annas, and no Sanhedrin trial at all—also no witnesses, no verdict, no condemnation for (Christological) blasphemy—has a much better claim to historicity than Mark's elaborate scene with its theologically loaded concluding verdict. Whether or not John knew Mark, John's disagreement with Mark on this point is striking. John differs from Mark in ways that are likely to be more accurate historically.

### 3.3. *The Priests' Plotting*

John has a Sanhedrin scene, if not a trial, in 11:45–53. Such an informal meeting before the Passover feast would be more likely to have occurred than a formal trial on the very eve of the feast. Moreover, there is here another parallel with Mark, namely Mark's brief account of the priests' (and scribes') plotting that inaugurates the Passion Narrative proper (Mark 14:1–2). In a noteworthy variation from Mark's order, the priests' plotting in John occurs before Jesus has entered Jerusalem (John 12:12–19), in Mark well after the entry (11:1–10). Mark's version would seem more likely historically, unless as in John Jesus had previously visited Jerusalem.

Although John scarcely presents the people called the Pharisees and chief priests in a positive light, he does make their actions intelligible,

<sup>39</sup> See John Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark*, SBLDS 10 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1973).

<sup>40</sup> Contra Norman Perrin and John Donahue, who take this position, Robert T. Fortna, "Jesus and Peter at the High Priest's House: A Test Case for the Question of the Relation Between Mark's and John's Gospels," *NTS* 24 (1977–78): 371–383, shows that this is not necessarily the case.

for he gives a much more extensive account and explanation of their plotting. If John 11:47–53 is to be understood as an expansion upon Mark 14:1–2, there remain features of the briefer Markan account that are strangely absent. Mark is in several respects actually more specific than John, describing the chief priests and scribes as seeking to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him (14:1). Moreover, in Mark the authorities plot to carry out the deed “not during the feast, lest there be a tumult of the people,” and therefore presumably before it (14:2). Although this chronology actually agrees with John’s, where Jesus is executed before Passover, nothing is said of that aspect of their planning in the Fourth Gospel. Of course, no scribes are mentioned, which is typical of John, but rather the Pharisees, along with the chief priests (11:47). In any event, John’s account is scarcely an expansion of Mark’s.

In John the council (συνέδριον) is genuinely perplexed and apprehensive that Jesus’ popularity will bring the Romans down on the place, presumably the temple, and the nation (11:47–48). (“Signs” may be mentioned because of the immediately preceding Lazarus episode, which is scarcely the actual cause of Jesus’ death.) Perhaps this fear is to be seen in the context of the popular move to make Jesus king after the feeding of the multitude (6:15). Apparently Jesus is seen as a threat to the priestly, temple authorities and to their concordat with the Romans. Caiaphas’ prophecy (11:49–50) can then be read either as expressing cynical self-interest or as reflecting a genuine concern for the welfare of the people: “You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.” In any event, a cynical reading is not the only one possible. Here John probably comes closer than any other evangelist to identifying accurately a motivation of Jewish (priestly) authorities to get Jesus out of the way. In any event, the grounds for Caiaphas’ recommendation and the Sanhedrin’s condemnation are prudential rather than theological. In this fundamental way John differs from Mark’s rendering, and in a surprising direction.

### 3.4. *The Trial before Pilate*

Obviously John has elaborated the trial scene (18:28–19:16a) to bring out his theological interests and to underscore the guilt of the Jewish, particularly high priestly, authorities. Probably John had at his disposal a simpler, briefer account, like Mark, if not Mark itself. Perhaps John’s theological and related interests in blaming “the Jews” pre-

vented his seeing the tension between the Roman attitude as suggested before Caiaphas (11:47–48) and that manifested by Pilate in the trial scene he created. In the one case, Roman power itself is perceived as the danger; in the other, Pilate the Roman governor seems reluctant to exercise his power over Jesus (19:10) and must be persuaded by “the Jews.”

The Johannine variations from the Markan account of Jesus’ trial before Pilate move for the most part along the lines of John’s recognizable theological interests. Initially “the Jews” seek a death sentence against Jesus from Pilate because they themselves do not have authority to put anyone to death (18:31). When Pilate questions Jesus about his kingship, Jesus’ answer is thoroughly Johannine (18:36–37). Pilate’s question, “What is truth?” (v. 38), betrays his cynicism, but then the first of his three proclamations of Jesus’ innocence occurs (18:38; cf. 19:4, 6). In the face of Pilate’s anticipated clemency, “the Jews” seek Jesus’ death all the more and even question Pilate’s loyalty to Caesar (19:12). Although they eventually get their way (19:16), Pilate has the last word (19:19–22).

Yet in John’s account there is a rather curious anomaly. Early on Pilate says to Jesus (18:35), “Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me,” which suggests that “the Jews” in this scene are the people generally or the crowds (*ochloi*) that figure in the synoptic accounts. Yet in the Johannine narrative itself “crowds” as such do not appear, and “the Jews” alternates with the “chief priests” in such a way as to suggest they are identical (19:6–7). Thus Jesus responds to the chief priests and police (NRSV), but “the Jews” answer. When read alongside the synoptics, with John’s knowledge and use of them assumed, the entire Jewish people’s participation in the condemnation of Jesus is implied. (By inference from the synoptics they constitute the crowds.) When John is read alone, without reference to the synoptics, this is not as obvious. “The Jews” seem to be the chief priests rather than the crowds or the Jewish people.<sup>41</sup> This does not mean that John exonerates the Jewish people, but his position becomes more

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<sup>41</sup> On this issue see the fuller discussion in D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 222–224. Also, see Martin Hasitschka, “Beobachtungen zu Chronologie und Topographie der Passionsgeschichte nach Johannes,” in *Für und Wider die Priorität des Johannesevangeliums*, ed. Peter Leander Hofrichter, *Theologische Texte und Studien* 9 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002), 151–159, esp. 154.

ambivalent than is usually thought, and may reflect the historical fact that it was the high priestly authorities who pursued the case against Jesus. After Jesus' death, when, according to Acts, Jesus' disciples reassembled in Jerusalem, their opponents and harassers were the chief priests and Sadducees (Acts 4:1, 5, 23; 5:17, 21, 24), not the Pharisees with whom Jesus had debated. John here creates a fictional or fiction-alized scene, but the chief historical protagonists (Jesus, Pilate, the chief priests) appear in it.

### 3.5. *The Date of the Crucifixion According to the Jewish Calendar*

John has already presented a two-to-three year ministry, in contrast to the synoptics' ministry of one year or less. Another striking chronological contradiction appears in the Passion Narrative. In the synoptics, the Last Supper is the annual Passover supper, but in John Jesus dies the afternoon before the Passover. In fact, John seems to go out of his way to emphasize that Jesus died before Passover eve, not on the first day of the feast (13:1; 18:28; 19:14, 31).

John P. Meier, in his treatment of the chronology of Jesus' career, argues that a stronger case can be made for the Johannine chronology than for the synoptic.<sup>42</sup> The lynchpin of his argument is that it is inconceivable that the events of Jesus' arrest, trial, and death should have occurred on the evening when the Passover meal was eaten. It is highly improbable, he writes, that "at the time of Jesus, the supreme Jewish authorities in Jerusalem would arrest a person suspected of a capital crime, immediately convene a meeting of the Sanhedrin to hear the case (a case involving the death penalty), hold a formal trial with witnesses, reach a verdict that the criminal deserved to die, and hand over the criminal with a request for execution on the same day—all within the night and early hours of Passover day, the fifteenth of Nisan!" "Yet," he continues, "this is what the synoptic passion chronology and presentation of the Jewish 'process' basically demand."<sup>43</sup>

Meier goes on to observe that the Johannine account is far more plausible historically. In fact, the synoptic, the Markan account does not demand a Passover eve setting if two notices are removed, namely 14:1, and especially 14:12–16, which specifically indicates the Last

<sup>42</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:390–401.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

Supper will be a Passover meal.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the caution of Mark 14:2 (“Not during the feast lest there be a tumult of the people”) actually agrees with the Johannine chronology that places the arrest, trial, and execution before the eating of the Passover. Interestingly, in Paul’s references to the Last Supper there is no indication that he knew it to be a Passover meal.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, Paul’s statement (1 Cor 5:7) that “Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed,” seems on the face of it to assume, and support, the Johannine chronology.<sup>46</sup> In his commentary Brown argued in favor of the Johannine chronology, as he would continue to do in *The Death of the Messiah*.<sup>47</sup>

Two relatively early extra-canonical sources, one Christian, the other Jewish, also agree with John’s dating of Jesus’ crucifixion. In the apocryphal Gospel of Peter Jesus is delivered “to the people on the day before the unleavened bread, their feast.” A brief trial scene (3:6–8) and the crucifixion (4:10–5:20) then follow, obviously on the same day. Also, in Baraita Sanhedrin 43a it is reiterated that “on the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu.”<sup>48</sup>

Possibly John has shaped the narrative so that Jesus will die when the Passover lambs are slain (cf. John 1:29 and the scripture quotation of 19:36, which refers to the Passover lamb). Yet the fact that John describes Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and applies paschal biblical texts to him (Exod 12:10 LXX, 46; Ps 34:20; Num 9:12) does not in itself prove that John has changed the chronology. It is equally possible that John is assuming such a chronology as factual and interpreting it. As we have seen, the acceptance of the Markan chronology poses serious historical problems. (Mark may reflect an early interpretation of the Last Supper as the first Christian Passover.) Jesus’ death in the Gospel of John is indeed a vicarious death (John 10:11, 17), but it is not otherwise presented as analogous with the death of sacrificial animals. Such cultic terminology

<sup>44</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:396–97.

<sup>45</sup> Pointed out by Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Irene and Fraser McLuskey with James M. Robinson (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960), 161–162.

<sup>46</sup> See Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:428–429 n. 108.

<sup>47</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., Anchor Bible (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1966, 1972), 555–556, as well as idem, *The Death of The Messiah*, 1350–78, esp. 1373.

<sup>48</sup> Cited from Morris Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 22.



and conceptuality is more characteristic of Paul, Hebrews, Revelation, and even 1 John (1:7, 9; 2:2), than of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>49</sup>

Another chronological discrepancy in the passion account concerns only the time of day, not the date. According to John, at the sixth hour, noon according to Jewish reckoning, Jesus was still before Pilate (19:14). But according to Mark, who tolls off the times and the hours (Mark 15:1, 25, 33, 42), Jesus has already been crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25), nine in the morning. It seems more reasonable to think that Jesus stood before Pilate at noon than that the entire procedure described in Mark 15:1–24 took place so early. Moreover, Mark's tolling of the hours could represent the disciples' earliest commemoration of the events of Good Friday. Who would have been keeping time on the actual day? The point is not that John is more accurate, but that John's vagueness may more accurately represent what was known, or not known.

While not every item or detail of the Johannine Passion Narrative is historically preferable to the synoptic, some are, and the several we have singled out are quite significant. Probably John knows a passion tradition different from Mark's (or the synoptics'), which at points is historically preferable. Whether this tradition existed already in written form is less certain, but quite possible. Paul, writing to the Corinthian Christians about the conduct of the Lord's Supper, sets its institution by Jesus "on the night he was betrayed" (1 Cor 11:23). This bare statement assumes knowledge of Jesus' betrayal (his "being handed over"), perhaps the identity of Judas (although he is never mentioned outside the gospels and Acts), certainly Jesus' death, probably the fact that those in authority had put him to death (1 Cor 2:8).<sup>50</sup> Paul's reference to this special night assumes his own knowledge of these events in a narrative context, and probably that of his hearers.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> In her March 17, 2004, Kenneth W. Clark Lecture at Duke Divinity School, entitled "Jesus as Passover Lamb: A Case of Mistaken Identity," Marianne Meye Thompson argued that the Gospel of John does not actually identify Jesus with the Passover Lamb, but that this is an interpretive misconstrual of John's references to a lamb.

<sup>50</sup> See Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 103–104, who cites Gene Miller, "ARCHONTON TOU AIONOS TOUTOU—A New Look at 1 Corinthians 2:6–8," *JBL* 91 (1972): 522–528. Also see Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1997), 44, who notes the importance of 2:6–8 as well.

<sup>51</sup> Hays, *First Corinthians*, 197.

### 3.6. *The Demonstration of Jesus' Death*

Only in the Gospel of John is there an episode between the death of Jesus and his burial: the *crurifragium*, not of Jesus but of the two others crucified with him, and the piercing of Jesus' side. Breaking the legs of the crucified victim was a merciful act, causing him to die quickly of asphyxia (cf. *Gospel of Peter* 4:14). According to John, Jesus' legs were not broken, because he had already died. But perhaps to make sure, his side was pierced instead, resulting in an efflux of water and blood. The question of who might have seen this transpire is answered in 19:35: presumably, the Beloved Disciple (cf. 21:24), who had been standing at the foot of the cross (19:25–27).<sup>52</sup> The identification of the eyewitness is not gratuitous, however, but links this event to the attestation of the Gospel's validity at the end (21:24). Did the *crurifragium* and the piercing of Jesus' side take place? If there were no attestation by the witness and no scriptures quotations (Exod 12:46; Zech 12:10), exegetes might be more inclined to accept this scene as something that likely happened. It would not be unprecedented. Moreover, the discovery that Jesus had already died, sooner than expected, fits what is said in Mark by Pilate (15:44–45), who seems surprised that Jesus was "already dead." Apparently John confirms Mark, and vice versa. In fact, John 19:30, although highly stylized, with Jesus remaining in control until the end, also implies that Jesus died quite suddenly.

The final demonstration of the reality of Jesus' death was his burial ("...crucified, dead, and buried..."). The Johannine account of the burial is distinctive in that Nicodemus reappears (cf. 3:1–10; 7:50–52) to participate along with Joseph of Arimathea. John seems to have added Nicodemus to the story, which he received either from Mark or a parallel tradition. Interestingly, John's unique description of Joseph fits Nicodemus ("a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews"). The detailed description of Jesus' burial (19:39–40), "as is the burial custom of the Jews," and the explicit indication of the reason for haste (v. 42) are unique to John. It has been customary to attribute John's differences in detail to his literary and theological purpose, because of the character of the Fourth Gospel, but where traditional data end

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<sup>52</sup> Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, argues that Thomas (John 20:25) wants to see Jesus' side, the lance wound, as well as his hands, because he and he alone knows of the lance wound, since he observed it (422–424). He was standing by the cross with Jesus' mother; he is the disciple whom Jesus loved (19:26).

and theological interpretation begins is often a question difficult to decide.

### 3.7. *Resurrection Appearance Narratives*

Each canonical gospel narrates the discovery of an empty tomb by women who believe they are going to visit Jesus' tomb. Beyond that point, the agreement that has extended through the Passion Narrative ends. There are variations among the accounts of the discovery of the empty tomb, John's being the most extensive and significant in that he has Peter and the Beloved Disciple run to the tomb to check it out at the behest of Mary Magdalene (20:2–10). The judgment that this is a Johannine addition to a traditional narrative looks probable, and the exegete would scarcely think otherwise were it not for the testimony of Luke (24:12, 24), which somewhat complicates matters. Luke 24:12 has Peter alone go to the tomb, and although missing in some ancient mss (D) is found in most (P<sup>75</sup>, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, etc.). Also, Luke 24:24 seems to agree with, and to summarize, John 20:2–10. This instance involves the broader issue of the relation of John and Luke. What dependence, or which way does it run? It is often and understandably assumed that Peter, having denied Jesus, fled immediately to Galilee (cf. John 21:1–3). This is a reasonable surmise, but not a certainty. Yet it remains likely that only the women found the tomb empty. It would have then been entirely natural to include the male disciples as the tradition developed.

Mark, in its oldest extant form, has no appearance narrative. Both John and Matthew report an appearance to Mary (John 20:11–18) or the two Marys (Matt 28:9–10) just outside the tomb. Otherwise, the appearance stories of the gospels differ as to locale: Galilee (Matthew and John 21; cf. Mark 14:28; 16:7) or Jerusalem and its environs (Luke and John 20, with noteworthy parallels between Luke 24:36–43 and John 20:19–23, as well as 20:24–29). Yet John 21, usually taken to be a later editorial supplement although it is contained in all known Greek mss., is based on a Galilean resurrection appearance narrative that has clear affinities with the unique Lukan call story of 5:1–11. This appearance to Peter, the Beloved Disciple, and five other disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee) seems to be a first resurrection appearance (despite 21:14). The disciples were returning to fishing, i.e., to work. Moreover, the extant fragment of the *Gospel of Peter* breaks off just at the point where Peter declares that he, his brother Andrew, and Levi the son of Alphaeus took their nets and went to the sea, after they,

with the rest of the twelve disciples, had gone home in grief. Clearly *Peter's* narrative (14:59–60) anticipates a first appearance by the Sea of Galilee, as does the putative original form of John 21:1–14. Surprisingly, John 21:1–14 is the appearance story that Mark 14:28 and 16:7 lead the reader to expect. What might have been expected in Mark is found in John, if not also in the *Gospel of Peter*.

A survey of the narrative elements of Jesus' public ministry in the Gospel of John does not reveal a complete narrative structure that is an alternative superior to the Markan. Yet the Markan narrative is clearly not governed by purely historical, in the sense of chronological, considerations or data. John presents chronological and topographical divergences from Mark that are worth taking seriously as possible alternatives. At the same time, the Johannine narrative lacks the driving literary unity that characterizes Mark. It gives the impression of a broken, perhaps at points truncated, and at others emended narrative. John's narrative of Jesus' public ministry may be an unfinished symphony which defies narrative clarification or reconstruction. This is not true of the Johannine Passion Narrative and the prelude to it (chaps. 13–17), where the narratives run parallel to Mark or the synoptics, but do not seem to be derived from them, and sometimes suggest more likely historical scenarios. There one finds a narrative continuity missing in John's account of Jesus' public ministry. Classical form criticism arrived at the conclusion that the Passion Narrative(s) came into being before narratives of Jesus' ministry were composed (Dibelius, Bultmann, Jeremias). After nearly a century, this still seems probable.

Does John then simply construct a narrative of Jesus' ministry to precede the Passion, as Mark apparently did, proceeding *de novo*? Or were there narrative elements and a narrative framework prior to the passion, that is, before John wrote and known to him?<sup>53</sup> John and

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<sup>53</sup> On evidence for a continuous narrative in the double tradition (Q) of Matthew and Luke, see Stephen Hultgren, *Narrative Elements in the Double Tradition: A Study of their Place within the Framework of the Gospel Narrative*, BZNTW 113 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), esp. 350–354. That the Gospel of John developed on the basis of an earlier narrative has been argued or presumed by many, notably Robert Tomson Fortna, who discerns a more primitive Gospel of Signs underlying the present, canonical text. See *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), in which he maintains and refines the position set forth in his earlier monograph, *The Gospel of Signs: A Reconstruction of the Narrative Source Underlying the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). Yet Gilbert van Belle, *The Signs Source in the Fourth Gospel*, BETL 116 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994), remains unconvinced.

Mark have several important narrative items in common before the Passion Narrative. Jesus' ministry begins with his encounter with John the Baptist. Jesus comes on the scene as a miracle worker, as well as a teacher, and immediately gains followers, some of whom were women. (Both Mark and John leave the distinct impression that his miracle working activity set Jesus apart.) Not surprisingly, he met with a mixed reaction from his home folks and family. At some point during this public activity there was a turning point, centering on his feeding of a multitude, after which opposition mounted. Eventually he decided to go up to Jerusalem for Passover and (whether or not by his intention) his death.

#### 4. *Sayings Traditions in John*

The discourses attributed to Jesus in John are quite different from the sayings tradition in the synoptics, in that he speaks at length, carries on conversations with opponents and disciples, most of which concern his own dignity and role, and tells few if any true parables.

Some sayings of Jesus with obvious synoptic parallels appear in parallel narrative episodes, where they might be expected to occur. Many of these are therefore in the Passion Narrative (chapters 18–19) and in the Prelude to the Passion (especially chapters 12–13). For example, in the Anointing in Bethany, Jesus says, “For the poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me” (12:8), which is closely paralleled in the same context by Mark 14:7 (cf. Matt 26:11), except that Mark adds “and whenever you wish you can do them good” (which Matt 26:11, like John 12:8, lacks).<sup>54</sup> At the Last Supper, in the betrayal scene, Jesus says (John 13:21): “Truly, truly I say to you, one of you will betray me.” Except for the typical double ἀμὴν in John this saying is exactly paralleled in Mark 14:18 and Matthew 26:21. In John 18:33, as in all the synoptics (Mark 15:2; Matt 27:11; Luke 23:3), Pilate's question to Jesus is the same: “Are you the king of the Jews?”

In the significantly similar Johannine version of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (6:1–15) there are many similarities of detail (e.g., five thousand men; five loaves and two fish; the insufficiency of two hundred denarii of bread, the twelve baskets full of left-over fragments).

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<sup>54</sup> See J. F. Coakley, “The Anointing at Bethany and the Priority of John,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 241–256, who argues for the priority of John's version.

The naming of the disciples Philip and Andrew, however, as well as the presence of the small boy who has the five barley loaves and two fish, are distinctive of John.<sup>55</sup> Also in the immediately following story of Jesus walking on the sea, there are similarities of detail. Here the apophthegm is a word of Jesus: "It is I; fear not" (John 6:20; Mark 6:50; Matt 14:27; no parallel in Luke). With this notable exception, the two similar synoptic and Johannine stories lack extensive or significant instances of verbatim agreement in words of Jesus. The same may be said of the Cleansing of the Temple (John 2:14–22; cf. Mark 11:15–17; Matt 21:12–13; Luke 19:45–46). Precisely the climactic word of the Johannine Jesus (2:16; alluding to Zech 14:21) differs from the synoptic (Mark 11:17 parr, in which Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11). The disciples then (or later) remember Psalm 69:9 in John 2:17 only.

The most extensive verbatim agreements in sayings that are significantly implicated in a narrative occur in John 1:23–34. These are not sayings of Jesus, however, but of John the Baptist, and they closely parallel parts of Mark 1:2–11. While in Mark the evangelist is the narrator throughout, in the Gospel of John the Baptist becomes the narrator, testifying, as he is looking back, in retrospect (1:30–34). He testifies to Jesus' superiority to himself (vv. 26–27, 30), and to seeing the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus (v. 32), who will baptize with the Spirit (v. 33); and finally he summarizes his own witness to Jesus as Son of God (v. 34). He knows better than anyone in the narrative who Jesus is. In the Gospel of John nothing is said of the Baptist's clothing or diet (Mark 1:6), or of the relation of his preaching to repentance and forgiveness (Mark 1:4–5). John is predominantly a witness (1:31, 32, 34). Not surprisingly, his role as an apocalyptic prophet (cf. Matt 3:7–10; Luke 3:7–9) is also missing. Nothing is said in John about Jesus' having been baptized, but the Baptist's statement about the

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<sup>55</sup> E. P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition*, SNTSMS 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 188–189, examines "Increasing Detail as a Possible Tendency of the Tradition" and sees no clear direction among the synoptic gospels. Sometimes details such as proper names are added, but sometimes they are dropped. He does, however, find that in patristic and apocryphal writings there is a tendency to assign proper names to figures who in the synoptics are anonymous (145, 189). The question of where John would belong cannot be treated here. See D. Moody Smith, "The Problem of John and the Synoptics in Light of the Relation between Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 147–162.

purpose of his baptizing ministry, “that he might be revealed to Israel” (1:31), implies knowledge of this fact.

John’s similarities to the synoptics are so striking that Bultmann assigned this material (i.e., John 1:19–34) in its present form to a later redactor, who attempted here, and at some other points, to bring John into line with the synoptics.<sup>56</sup> Certainly the Johannine version, and particularly the words of John the Baptist, can readily be understood as an adaptation based on the Markan narrative. John’s words, and the description of him, have been shaped so that he becomes a witness only, rather than a prophet in his own right.

There is also a striking verbatim agreement between John and Mark that is ingredient to a healing narrative of each, and functions comparably within it; but the narratives themselves are different. In John 5:8 (cf. Mark 2:9, 11 parr) Jesus says to the healed man, “Rise, take up your pallet, and walk,” which is the same as his command in Mark 2:9. But while the Johannine narrative is set at the pool of Bethesda (or Bethzatha) in Jerusalem, the Markan is set in Capernaum. Aside from this word of Jesus and the common motif of the relationship of sin and sickness (Mark 2:5–8; John 5:14) or misfortune, which appears elsewhere in the gospels (e.g., Luke 13:1–5; John 9:2–3), the narratives have little in common. One might suppose that if, as a broad spectrum of gospel tradition has it, Jesus healed sick persons, he said something like this more than once.

There are other less exact instances of such agreements. Jesus’ saying in John 12:27 reflects knowledge of his anguish in the synoptic Gethsemane story, although it comes before the Last Supper rather than after as in the synoptics. There is no Johannine narrative, no reference to Gethsemane, and no extensive verbatim agreement, but in both John and Mark (followed by Matthew) Jesus speaks of the condition of his soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) as “troubled” (John 12:27; cf. Psalm 6:3) or “very sorrowful, even to death” (Mark 14:34) and of the anticipated time of his coming death as “the hour” ( $\acute{\omega}\rho\alpha$ ). John may be reflecting Mark’s narrative, but Hebrews 5:7–8 seems to know of such an episode of Jesus’ anguish, also without any reference to Gethsemane or trace of the Gospel of Mark. Perhaps John independently attests Jesus tradition.

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<sup>56</sup> See Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 84–97, esp. 85–86.

John also contains a number of other sayings with clear synoptic counterparts, which occur in contexts different from those in the synoptics.

For example, John 4:44: "For Jesus himself bore witness that a prophet has no honor in his own country." This saying finds a parallel in each of the synoptics (Mark 6:4; Matt 13:57; Luke 4:24), as well as the *Gospel of Thomas* (31) and the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus (lines 31–33). The Markan context is somewhat different, although there Jesus has gone to his "hometown" and the reaction of his compatriots is ultimately negative (Mark 6:3). In John, his compatriots, the Galileans, welcome him, but his own country (as the context requires, not "hometown") is not Galilee (or Nazareth) but Jerusalem. In the extra-canonical sources, there is no narrative context. In Luke it is specifically the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16, 24). Conceivably, John has taken the saying from its Markan context and used it for his own distinctive purposes. In any event, in John it has a different geographical point of reference. The narrative contexts are different, but the meaning—rejection of Jesus by his compatriots—is the same.

Again, John 12:25: "The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The saying sounds entirely Johannine. One might never suspect that it was not composed by the evangelist, if there were not significant Markan and Q parallels. What is recognizably the same saying is found in Mark 8:35 (cf. Matt 16:25 and Luke 9:24). Moreover, there is another version in Q, the double tradition (Matt 10:39 and Luke 17:33). So this saying about the meaning of discipleship is found in Mark, Q, and John. In Mark 8:35 parr it follows the saying about taking up one's cross and following Jesus. On the other hand, John 12:25 is followed by what could be a veiled version of the cross-bearing saying (12:26): "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if anyone serves me, the Father will honor him." This pair of sayings occurs in Mark (parr) immediately after Peter's confession, Jesus' first passion prediction, Peter's rebuke, and Jesus' remonstrance. In John the context is different. Jesus is already in Jerusalem, but as in Mark, he is looking toward his death, which is even closer than in Mark.

In John's Last Supper scene there are several sayings with synoptic parallels in different contexts. (Jesus' prediction of his betrayal has been noted above.) There is, most notably, the distinctive version of Jesus' love commandment in 13:34 ("...love one another..."; cf. John



15:12, 17; 1 John 3:23; 2 John 5). Yet the synoptic (Mark 12:33 parr; Matt 5:43 and Luke 6:27) and Pauline versions are characteristically different, with Paul not referring the commandment to Jesus, but only quoting Leviticus 19:18 (Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14; cf. Jas 2:8). John 13:20 (“whoever receives one whom I send receives me”) is closely paralleled in Matt 10:40, although the Greek verbs are different, perhaps suggesting an underlying Aramaic (cf. also more remote parallels in Mark 9:37 parr and Luke 10:16). Jesus’ saying about a servant’s not being greater than his master (13:16) is paralleled in Q (Matt 10:24; Luke 6:40), although in John Jesus is called Lord (κύριος), while in Q he is teacher (διδάσκαλος). At the meal episode’s apparent conclusion in John, Jesus says (14:31), “Rise, let us go hence.” After they have already departed the supper room, at the conclusion of the Gethsemane scene (Mark 14:42), Jesus says, “Rise, let us be going.”

The binding and loosing saying of Jesus in Matt 16:19 and 18:18 is found in a different form in John 20:23, where it is the risen Jesus who says to the disciples: “Of whomever you forgive the sins they are forgiven them, of whomever you retain the sins they are retained.” The Johannine version, in a quite different context, gives the meaning of the more enigmatic Matthean version for church discipline (obviously its meaning in the context of Matt 18:18). This is more likely a saying of the risen Christ (John) than of the earthly Jesus (Matthew).

There are other similar sayings in different contexts. At the temple cleansing itself the Johannine Jesus alludes to the destruction of the temple (2:19; cf. Mark 14:58 par; Mark 15:29 par; also perhaps Mark 13:2 parr). In John 3:3, 5 Jesus speaks of the necessity of being born again, or from above, in order to see or enter the Kingdom of God. In the comparable Matthean saying (18:3) it is only a matter of turning and becoming like children in order to enter the kingdom. In his Farewell Discourses, Jesus several times promises the fulfillment of prayer in his name (14:13–14; cf. 15:7, 16; 16:23–24), a promise which seems to echo several synoptic sayings (Mark 11:22–24 parr; Matt 7:7–11; 18:19; 21:22) although these are not identical. Likewise, the fate of the recalcitrant branches (John 15:6) in the Parable of the Vine recalls John the Baptist’s threat (Matt 3:10; Luke 3:9), as well as Jesus’ own word in the Sermon on the Mount or Plain (Matt 7:16–20; Luke 6:43–44).

In most such cases it is arguable that the Johannine version is based on, or a midrash upon, the synoptic. Yet the Johannine context is almost always different. That John relied upon the synoptics is not

impossible, although this reliance would be minimal. Alternatively, John drew upon parallel Jesus tradition, even if he was acquainted with other canonical gospels. The existence of such tradition is suggested also by the *Gospel of Thomas*.

### 5. *Distinctive Factual Information*

There are a number of instances in which John seems to possess factual information different from, or going beyond, what is found in Mark or the synoptics. Specifically, John conveys purportedly factual knowledge about Judaism, whether in Jesus' day or his own, about the land of Israel, and about Jesus himself.

John emphasizes that Jesus was from Nazareth, a humble village, about which no great expectations could be entertained: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (1:46).

Jesus himself had just been introduced by Philip to Nathanael as "Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth" (1:45; NRSV). Moreover, Jesus' origin in Nazareth, not Bethlehem (cf. 7:42), is emphasized. There is, of course, no physical description of Jesus in any gospel, but several clearly human traits appear in John alone. Jesus gets tired and thirsty (4:6–7). He has friends other than his disciples: Lazarus, and presumably Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha as well (11:5, 11). When Lazarus is reported to have died, Jesus weeps out of love for him (11:36–37), a normal human reaction. Jesus has learning, is literate, although he has never studied formally (7:15). Obviously, he is able to carry on a discussion about the meaning of scripture. Luke gives Jesus' age as about thirty at the beginning of his ministry (3:23). One adds the three or so years of his ministry according to John's account, and reaches the traditional thirty-three years. Yet in John Jesus is said to be not yet fifty (8:57), which agrees with the forty-six years that the temple, which turns out to be the temple of his body (2:21), has been under construction. John hardly intends to inform the reader of Jesus' age, but he may be playing on presumed factual data, i.e., that Jesus was in his late forties.

John mentions a number of places not found in the synoptics: Bethany beyond Jordan, where John baptized (1:28; cf. 10:40); Aenon near Salim, another place where John baptized (3:23); the city of Sychar (4:5–6); a mountain of Samaria, presumably Gerizim (4:20); the city of Ephraim (11:54). That many such places can no longer be located with

certainty does not necessarily mean that they did not exist. In Jerusalem John knows the Sheep Gate Pool (5:2) and the Pool of Siloam (9:7), which can still be identified. He says that Pilate sat in judgment “at a place called the Stone Pavement” (19:13; NRSV). He knows that Jesus was crucified near the city (19:20; Cf. also Heb 13:12: “outside the city gate”). The other gospels show no explicit knowledge of this. The traditional site of Golgotha, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, is outside the city wall of Jesus’ day. John also indicates he has specific knowledge of the temple. For example, in Jesus’ day it had been under (re-)construction for forty-six years (2:20). (It is impossible to say whether the forty-six years apply to Jesus only, to the temple, or to both.) John anticipates the destruction of the temple by the Romans (11:48), which had probably already occurred when he wrote. There seems to be some knowledge of the plan of the temple: the treasury (8:20); Solomon’s Porch (10:23). Also he asserts that Jesus frequently taught there (chaps. 7, 8, 10; 18:20; cf. Mark 14:49).<sup>57</sup>

John tells us that “rabbi” meant “teacher,” as it probably would have in Jesus’ day (1:38; cf. 3:26). He knows that the Pharisees were the leading teachers (3:1.10), in his own day, if not in Jesus’. John knows Jewish feasts other than Passover (5:1; 7:2; 10:22), and he knows that Jesus went up to Jerusalem for other feasts. He knows Exodus traditions (6:31–51). He knows that jars made of stone were used in Jewish rites of purification (2:6). Perhaps most important, John knows about the God of Israel, whom no one has seen (1:18; cf. Exod 33:20; Deut 4:12, 15), although Jesus, who can be seen, is also called *theos* (1:18; 20:28). Thus John understands that Jesus, and the claims made for him, can be seen as a threat to Jewish, and biblical, monotheism (5:18; 10:33). Yet Jesus is called a Jew by someone other than Pilate (“King of the Jews”), viz. by the Samaritan woman in 4:9, and he can say that “salvation is of [or “from”] the Jews” (4:22).

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<sup>57</sup> See W. F. Albright, “Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John,” in *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: In Honour of Charles Harold Dodd*, ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 153–171; also Martin Hengel, “Das Johannesevangelium als Quelle für die Geschichte des antiken Judentums,” in idem, *Judaica, Hellenistica et Christiana: Kleine Schriften II*, ed., Jörg Frey, Dorothea Betz et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 292–334. Both Albright and Hengel note John’s apparent knowledge of ancient sites and the Gospel’s Jewish context. One should now consult the most recent canvassing of archaeological evidence, James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), in which the Gospel of John plays a notable role.

Judas (not an uncommon name) is denigrated more in John than in any other gospel (cf. 6:70), as he is mentioned more frequently. His name is given more fully than elsewhere in 6:71 as “Judas son of Simon Iscariot” (RSV, NRSV), although Iscariot may indicate the village of Judas’ origin (e.g., Keriath-hezron in Josh 15:25). Just as Judas is named as the one objecting to the woman’s (in John, Mary’s) using expensive ointment to anoint Jesus’ feet (12:5), so too he is said to be the (thieving) keeper of the money box (12:6). But again, Judas is called the keeper of the money box in 13:29, with no negative insinuation. Perhaps the accusation of his thievery is inserted in order to deal with an awkward fact, that he was known to have been the treasurer of the group. Although it has sometimes been suggested, because of his name, that Judas (Greek, *Ioudas*; Hebrew, *Yehudah*) personified “the Jew,” this is nowhere stated or implied in this or any gospel. He is never numbered among the *Ioudaioi*.

Finally, John’s knowledge of Judaism is not an artificial construct to serve as a foil to his own theology. There is a difference between traditional Judaism and the beliefs of Jesus’ disciples and followers, but John does not caricature the one in presenting the other.<sup>58</sup> One cannot say that John presents the beliefs of “the Jews,” who oppose Jesus and his disciples’ belief in him, in a favorable light. On the other hand, he does not basically misrepresent them. Even in John 8, where the polemic is fiercest, what “the Jews” say to Jesus is understandable on the basis of their premises, and not more derogatory than what Jesus is made to say to them, in fact less so. It is not clear that Jesus has the better of the arguments, unless one accepts his claim to bring a new and determinative revelation. And that is precisely his claim. Moreover, it is a claim, and not proof, exegetical or otherwise. This is the offense of any claim to revelation. It can only be explained, or defended, after the presumed fact.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion it may be useful to rank on a scale from almost certain to inconceivable aspects or items of John’s portrayal of Jesus and his ministry, particularly with respect to points at which the Fourth

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<sup>58</sup> See D. Moody Smith, “John,” in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 96–111.

Gospel differs from the synoptics, especially Mark, or presents or omits items found in the latter.<sup>59</sup> By *historically preferable* (below) is meant that an item or instance in John is more likely than the synoptics to represent accurately the historical figure of Jesus or events or circumstances related to him.

- I. John is almost certainly historically preferable:
  1. In presenting no formal trial of Jesus before Jewish authorities, i.e., the Sanhedrin.
  2. In its explanation of the reasons for opposition to Jesus on the part of the chief priests (11:47–53).
  3. In implying that Jesus was at first a disciple of John (the Baptist) and therefore conducted a concurrent baptizing ministry.
- II. John is probably historically preferable:
  1. In spreading Jesus' ministry or a period of public activity over a period of more than one year rather than less.
  2. In maintaining that he made more Jerusalem visits (for Passover or other festivals) than the one Passover visit reported in the synoptics.
  3. In placing Jesus' crucifixion and death during the day immediately prior to the evening Passover meal rather than the day after.
- III. John is conceivably historically preferable:
  1. In placing the occurrence of the temple cleansing at an early (or earlier) point in Jesus' ministry.
  2. In suggesting Pilate's suspicion, if not contempt, of the motives and goals of the chief priests.
- IV. John's presentation is inconceivable historically in its description of:
  1. Jesus' proclamation of himself as Son of God and his use of the "I am..." phrase to introduce himself and his role.
  2. Jesus' disputes with his opponents over his own dignity and role (but not necessarily disputes over other teaching and miracle-working activity).

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<sup>59</sup> A precedent for this sort of ranking may be found in E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 326–327. Sanders is, of course, focussing upon the historical Jesus, as presented principally by the synoptic gospels.

3. Jesus' opponents as "the Jews," in apparent distinction from himself and his disciples, and the tendency to equate them with Pharisees.
4. Jesus' proclamation absent the imminent (or future) advent of the kingdom of God.
5. Jesus' teaching absent his characteristic parables.
6. Jesus' distinctively Johannine language and conversational style.
7. Jesus' death as resulting from his raising Lazarus from the dead.

The last category above recalls major aspects of the synoptic portrayal of Jesus. The consensus of modern criticism that the synoptics and the synoptic tradition are in important respects closer to the historical figure of Jesus is not wrong. Our qualification of that view is not a denial of it. Rather, we maintain that in a number of specific instances John, while differing from the synoptics, affords access to historically significant Jesus tradition. The Jesus research of John P. Meier and Paula Fredriksen, cited frequently above, strikingly illustrates this fact.

Finally, we return to the issues noted at the beginning: What is the source of the authority of John's witness? What is the relation of John to the synoptic gospels?

The Gospel claims to be based on the testimony of a truthful witness (21:24), apparently one who has seen what he has testified to (cf. 21:20; 19:35). (Also 1 John 1:1–4, while probably not written by the Evangelist, indicates how the Johannine witness was first understood.) The sharp debate over the historicity of this Gospel a century ago, which has not yet died out, presumes the seriousness of this claim, either to affirm or to deny it. The debate is, of course, integrally related to the question of whether the Beloved Disciple is a historical figure or the personification of the true witness. Traditionally, this disciple has been assumed to be a historical figure, ultimately identified with John. Our assessment of Jesus tradition in the Gospel of John must, however, leave the issue of the identity of the Beloved Disciple unresolved.

There is, finally, a certain antinomy or tension in our assessment. On the one hand, the distinctive Johannine portrayal of Jesus, his opponents, and controversies does not accurately represent the historical figure of Jesus or his milieu. Its several aspects are virtually unique to John; they do not match with the criterion of dissimilarity; they do not cohere with what is said about the earthly Jesus elsewhere

in the New Testament, not only in the gospels, but also by Paul.<sup>60</sup> While Paul shares with John the belief that God sent his Son, and that he therefore descended to earth and ascended to heaven, he does not understand his ministry as the manifestation of his glory (contrast John 1:14; 2:11), but of his humiliation (Phil 2:7–8). The earthly Jesus was for Paul a Jewish man (but cf. John 4:9), a human being, “born of woman, born under the law” (Gal 4:4). Paul did not think explicitly in terms of incarnation. On the other hand, John’s narrative, as distinct from the portrayal of Jesus, often appears quite plausible historically just at those points at which it differs from Mark or the synoptics. Arguably, John presents factual data that are irrelevant to his theological purposes or even contravene them.

The tension between the portrayal of Jesus and the possibly factual data in the narrative of his ministry is understandable if one discerns the two levels of John’s Gospel: the historical past, what happened in the time of Jesus, and the historical present, what was going on with Jesus in the community in which the Gospel was written. This Jesus of the historical present is the exalted Christ, who continues to address and guide his followers through the Spirit, the Paraclete. The Spirit-Paraclete holds the two levels together.<sup>61</sup> Is it not reasonable to suppose that the guidance of the Spirit began quite early in the history of the Johannine community of Jesus’ disciples? Thus they were emboldened to make astounding Christological claims and to defend them when they came under attack. Yet John 21:24 and 1 John 1:1–4 imply that the Spirit does not overrule the testimony of the eyewitness generation.<sup>62</sup>

As to the question of John’s relation to the synoptics, the peculiar sense of spiritual authority that produced this Gospel already suggests a basis for its apparent independence from the others. John represents a unique gospel development based on the same person and events, and on related tradition, but reflecting a different life setting and

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<sup>60</sup> On Jesus tradition in Paul, see Dale C. Allison, “The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 1–32.

<sup>61</sup> As J. Louis Martyn pointed out, *History and Theology*, 140.

<sup>62</sup> On this point see the important article of Theo K. Heckel, “Die Historisierung der johanneischen Theologie im Ersten Johannesbrief,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 425–443, esp. 440–443. On the relationship between history and spirit inspiration in the Gospel of John, see Robert G. Hall, *Revealed History: Techniques for Ancient Jewish and Christian Historiography*, *JSPSup* 6 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), esp. 209–236.

experience of the work of the Spirit. It is then unnecessary to suppose that John had no knowledge of the existence or content of the other gospels; but they were at most at the periphery of his vision. John is an independent Gospel, and its claim to be based on an independent witness is worth taking seriously.





# JESUS TRADITION IN THE LETTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

DAVID WENHAM

## 1. *The Data*

### 1.1. *Very Probable Traditions*

In all of the New Testament letters there are only six instances where stories or sayings of Jesus are clearly and explicitly referred to, four of them (interestingly) in 1 Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is responding to the view of some in the Corinthian church that Christians should not indulge in sexual intercourse and indeed that married Christians should separate from their partners. Paul has no time for this view, and refers to the teaching of Jesus against divorce and remarriage: “to the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife” (7:10, 11).

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul is speaking about his apostleship and about his own decision to work with his own hands and not to live off what he might earn from his teaching; in the course of that discussion he comments that “the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel” (v. 14). He is probably referring back to the teaching that Jesus gives to his disciples when he sends them out in mission, according to the gospels, since he tells them that “the labourer is worthy of his hire/food” (Matt 10:10; Luke 10:7). That saying of Jesus is also echoed in 1 Tim 5:18, though there it is found alongside a quotation from the Old Testament and both are introduced, interestingly, by the words “For the Scripture says.”

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul is commenting on the disgraceful and selfish behaviour of some in the context of the eucharist, and he reminds them that “I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed took

bread...” Paul goes on to describe the institution of the Last Supper in a way that is closely parallel to the account of the Supper in the synoptic gospels, and particularly to Luke’s account. (1 Cor 11:23–26, Luke 22:19, 20).

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul addresses the doubts of some of the Corinthians about the resurrection of the dead by reminding them of the gospel which he preached to them: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day...” (vv. 3–8). Paul goes on to list people to whom the risen Jesus appeared, including himself as the last and extraordinary witness (15:1–8). Paul’s list does not correspond exactly to the resurrection appearances in the gospels, but it corresponds partly to the Lukan account (with its reference to Jesus appearing to Peter and to the twelve, Luke 24:34–36).

In the non-Pauline letters the one unambiguous reference to Jesus’ life is 2 Pet 1:16–18 on the transfiguration of Jesus: “We had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honour and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying ‘This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased’.”

Most scholars (though not quite all) agree that in the four passages from 1 Corinthians and in the verses from 1 Timothy and 2 Peter we have conscious use of traditions of Jesus that were passed down in the early church.

### 1.2. *Relatively Probable Traditions*

Many recognize other traditions of Jesus in the letters, whether deliberately alluded to or unconsciously echoed. In the Pauline corpus some of the strongest cases include *1 Cor 13:2* on mountain-moving faith, compare Jesus’ words in Matthew 17:20, also *1 Thess 5:2*, where Paul refers to the day of the Lord coming like a thief in the night, compare the parable of Jesus found in Matt 24:43, 44/Luke 12:39, 40 (also 2 Pet 3:10). In *Gal 4:6* Paul speaks of God having “sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’”; the use of the Aramaic word *Abba* in this Greek letter, as also in Rom 8:15, suggests that we have here an echo of Jesus’ own distinctive usage (Mark 14:36). *Romans 12* is another strong case, with Paul’s teaching on blessing persecutors and repaying no one evil for evil being strikingly similar

to Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount/Plain (Rom 12:14, 17 Matt 5:38–47, Luke 6:27–35; compare 1 Pet 3:9).<sup>1</sup>

In the letter of James, the Sermon on the Mount may be echoed in *Jas* 2:5 on the poor inheriting the kingdom, and in 5:12 on not swearing (compare Matthew 5:34 and possibly 2 Cor 1:17–20). In *1 Peter* too there are parallels to the Sermon on the Mount, including 2:12 on good deeds bringing glory to God (compare Matt 5:16), 3:9 on not returning evil for evil, 3:14; 4:13–14 on the blessedness of faithful suffering (compare Matt 5:10–12). In *2 Pet* 3:10 there is the reference to the Lord coming like a thief. The letter to the *Hebrews* 5:5–7 may be referring to the story of Jesus in Gethsemane, when it records that “in the days of his flesh Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death...”

### 1.3. *Other Possible Traditions*

Even if all of these passages are included in the tally of Jesus traditions found in the letters, they do not add up to a very large number. However, some scholars have detected very many more Jesus traditions in the letters; it has been argued, for example, that Paul draws extensively on Jesus' eschatological teaching in 1 Thess 4:13–5:11 and 2 Thess 2:1–10,<sup>2</sup> that he echoes several parts of Jesus' mission discourses of Matthew 10/Luke 9 and 10 in 1 Corinthians 9,<sup>3</sup> that his argument in Galatians 1 and 2 reflects knowledge of Peter's commissioning by Jesus in Matt 16:16–20, with Paul explaining that like Peter he has had a

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of the Jesus-Paul question see S. G. Wilson, “From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate,” in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, ed. P. Richardson and J. C. Hurd (Waterloo, ON: Laurier, 1984), 1–21. Also V. P. Furnish, “The Jesus-Paul Debate: From Baur to Bultmann,” in *Paul and Jesus. Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 17–50; originally in *BJRL* 47 (1964–65): 342–381. Also R. Riesner, “Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung,” in *Evangelium—Schriftauslegung—Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Ådna, S. J. Hafemann and O. Hofius (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 347–365.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., compare the trumpet and the clouds in 1 Thess 4:16, 17 with Matt 24:30–31; also the man of lawlessness and his signs in 2 Thess 2:8 with the abomination of desolation in Mark 13:14–22, both the man and the abomination being reminiscent of the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., note the discussion of “authority” (*exousia*) and of food and drink in 1 Cor 9:1, 4 and Luke 9:1; 10:7.

revelation of Jesus and has been commissioned by him.<sup>4</sup> Paul has been thought to know the traditions of Jesus' virginal conception,<sup>5</sup> and the famous servant sayings of Mark 10:42–45 (1 Cor 9:19).<sup>6</sup> Both Paul and 1 Peter have been thought to show knowledge of Jesus "new commandment" about loving one another (Gal 6:2, "the law of Christ," 1 Pet 3:8), and 1 Peter has been linked to the Johannine story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (1 Pet 5:5, compare John 13:1–17, Phil 2:5–11).

Many more parallels between the sayings of Jesus and teaching in the letters have been noted and considered significant by scholars.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. *Questions of Method*

Scholars differ hugely in their evaluation of this evidence. Some are minimalists and argue that few of the parallels, apart from the first category, are probable and conscious uses of the Jesus tradition. Others are maximalists and identify most or all of the parallels as Jesus traditions. Many other scholars take a mediating position.

This divergence of opinion among scholars raises acutely the question of method. How are we to assess whether a verse or passage in the letters is an echo or allusion to a verse or a passage in the gospels? Parallel ideas and even parallel phrases do not prove a direct relationship at all: great minds think alike, and similar ideas are found in all sorts of ancient and modern literature; in the case of the gospels and the letters, they were written in the same first-century Greco-Roman world, and similarity between, say, Jesus traditions and Pauline teaching may be due to the fact that both Jesus and Paul came out of the same first-century Jewish circles and were influenced by the same Hellenistic-Jewish ideas and traditions (including the Old Testament).

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., J. Chapman, "St Paul and the Revelation to St Peter, Matt XVI,17," *Revue Bénédictine* 29 (1912): 133–147; see also J. Dupont, "La Révélation du Fils de Dieu en faveur de Pierre (Mt 16,17) et de Paul (Ga 1,16)," *RSR* 52 (1964): 411–420.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Gal 4:4 with the Lukan infancy narrative in Luke 1 and 2. On this and others of the examples from Paul and for relevant bibliography see D. Wenham, *Paul Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Also Tit 2:14, compare 1 Peter 1:18.

<sup>7</sup> Famously, A. Resch identified 1,158 Jesus traditions in Paul's letters in his *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905).

If, however, it does seem that there is a definite relationship between a Jesus tradition and something in the letters, this still leaves important questions unanswered. One question is about the direction of the relationship: it cannot be assumed that it must be a case of Jesus influencing Paul or Peter or whoever. It could be that the gospel writers in describing Jesus and his teaching have in fact been influenced by Paul: his letters are usually seen as the earliest New Testament writings, and the evangelists (e.g., Mark and Luke, who in early Christian tradition were involved with Paul and his ministry) may have put Pauline ideas into Jesus' mouth.<sup>8</sup>

The gospels are often seen by scholars as highly coloured accounts of Jesus' life and teaching, in which traditions of the historical Jesus have been overlaid with later church teaching; so the critic examining parallels between gospel traditions and things found in the letters has to consider whether the gospel tradition in question does in fact go back to Jesus, and in what form, before he or she can make a judgment about the relationship between that tradition and one found in the epistles.

If the conclusion is that the relationship is one of dependence on a Jesus tradition, there is yet another question about the nature of the dependence. It may be plausible to link something in the letters to a Jesus tradition, but that does not mean that the writer of the letter is consciously quoting from Jesus. It may be that the Jesus tradition became part of the regular teaching and preaching of the early church, and that it came to Paul or James or Peter in that way (without their necessarily being aware of its origins).

Given the complexity of the issues, it is not surprising that scholars have reached differing conclusions. The danger is that scholars will reach conclusions more on the basis of their prejudices or hunches than on any more objective grounds. What is desirable is to come up with some objective criteria for identifying a significant parallel.

The scholar who has most recently suggested such criteria is Michael Thompson in his book *Clothed with Christ*.<sup>9</sup> He argues, among other

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<sup>8</sup> This is argued among others by M. Goulder for Matthew in his *Midrash and Lektion in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974), 153–170, and for Luke in his *Luke: A New Paradigm* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 129–146.

<sup>9</sup> *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991). Also on method see B. Fjärstedt, *Synoptic Tradition in 1 Corinthians: Themes and Clusters of Theme Words in 1 Corinthians 1–4 and 9* (Uppsala: Teologiska fakultetet, 1974).

things, that the critic should look for distinctive verbal, formal and conceptual agreements between the texts being compared, for evidence that the writer of the letter may be using tradition (“tradition indicators”), and for evidence that the tradition or traditions supposedly being used have a high claim to being authentic teachings of Jesus (pp. 30–36).

### 3. *Different Approaches and Conclusions*

#### 3.1. *Minimalist Approaches*

Those scholars who tend towards what may be called a “minimalist” approach make some or all of the following points:

1. It is recognized that there are Jesus traditions in the letters in places where there are unmistakable “tradition indicators.” Thus, in the case of the Last Supper and Resurrection traditions in 1 Corinthians chapters 11 and 15 Paul quite specifically refers to having “received” and “passed on” the relevant stories and sayings of Jesus. Similarly, in 1 Cor 7:10, 11 Paul says that the teaching on divorce comes from the Lord: it is as though he has open inverted commas, when he says “not I but the Lord,” and then closed inverted commas when he proceeds in v. 12 to say “But to the rest I say—I and not the Lord...”
2. But even in the few cases where a Jesus tradition is probably being cited, this does not prove that the saying in question actually goes back to Jesus. For example, the Last Supper was presumably part of the liturgical tradition which was passed on in Paul’s churches and by Paul himself, but whether Jesus himself instituted the Supper in the way suggested by Paul and the synoptic gospels and with the words found in 1 Corinthians 11 is debated by scholars. The Jesus Seminar of scholars found neither the eucharistic words in the Last Supper narrative nor Jesus’ teaching on divorce to be probably authentic teaching of the historical Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1993).

3. There are very few other instances where use of a Jesus tradition can be confidently identified.<sup>11</sup> Even where some have seen a tradition indicator, the case is unproven. So in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 Paul introduces his teaching about the lot of the Christian dead with the words “this we declare to you by a word from the Lord.” Although this could be Paul appealing to a tradition of Jesus, there is no known saying of Jesus about the resurrection of Christians who have died, and so, unless Paul has in mind a saying of Jesus that has been lost to us, he may well be referring to a Christian prophecy or indeed to his own insight that he has gained “from the Lord.”
4. Even where there does seem to be a connection between a gospel tradition and something in the letters, the direction of dependence does not have to be from Jesus to the letter writer. Thus the comparison of Jesus’ coming to the unexpected arrival of a thief is found in Matthew, Luke, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 2 Peter, and, although Jesus could be the originator of the tradition, it could equally well be that the direction of dependence is from Paul to the other later texts. Even if this is not the case, it could still be a case of different authors drawing on early Christian teaching which does not in fact go back to Jesus.
5. The failure of the letter writers to attribute supposed dominical sayings and traditions to Jesus is odd, if their dominical origin was known. So is their failure to cite Jesus’ teaching in contexts where it could have added decisive weight to their argument. For example, the gospels suggest that Jesus had a lot to say about the Christian use of and attitude to money, but it is not quoted either by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, where Paul argues at length for cheerful Christian giving, nor by the author of James, when he speaks about rich and poor (4:13–5:6).<sup>12</sup> Similarly odd is their failure to make much of themes and ideas that seem to have been important in

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<sup>11</sup> Those tending to a minimalist reading of the evidence include N. Walter, “Paul and the Early Christian Jesus tradition,” in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 51–80, also F. Neiryck, “Paul and the Sayings of Jesus,” in *L’Apôtre Paul*, ed. A. Vanhoye (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1986), 265–321, and C. M. Tuckett, “1 Corinthians and Q,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 607–618, also “Paul and the Synoptic Mission Discourse?,” *ETL* 60 (1984): 376–381, also “Synoptic Tradition in 1 Thessalonians,” in *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, ed. R. F. Collins (Leuven: Leuven UP, 1990), 160–182.

<sup>12</sup> But there is some similar language used about laying up treasure in Matt 6:19, 20, Luke 12:33, 34 and in Jas 5:3 and 1 Tim 6:19.



Jesus' teaching; for example, it is surprising that Paul's references to the "kingdom of God" are so few, if Paul was seriously interested in or dependent on Jesus traditions. In short, the silence of the letters with regard to Jesus traditions is deafening!

What do these "minimalist" observations suggest about the early church? Some have argued that the earliest Christians were uninterested in the Jesus of history, and that this is reflected in the absence of Jesus tradition in the letters. William Wrede famously argued that Paul's religion was different from Jesus and that Paul should be seen as the real founder of Christianity as we know it.<sup>13</sup> Paul's own religious experience led him to portray Jesus as the superhuman Son of God who came to redeem humankind; he took the idea of Jesus dying and rising from the Christian tradition, and used it in his theological synthesis. But he ended up with a Jesus quite different from the Galilean prophet, and he was not very interested in him. Wrede's view has been challenged; but the view that Paul's religion was quite different from that of Jesus has had its supporters up until the present day, with one contemporary scholar, Maurice Casey, giving his book on Jesus the title *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God*.<sup>14</sup> Paul in particular is thought to have been influenced by his own mystical experience on the Damascus Road, and probably also by Hellenistic religion, including the mystery religions with their rituals that have some parallels to Christian baptism and eucharist.<sup>15</sup>

Nor is Paul seen to be in a category on his own: it is argued that the first Christians generally were interested in the risen Christ of their experience and in the future coming of Christ, for which they were looking, rather than in the Palestinian traditions of Jesus. Historical interest in Jesus developed relatively slowly, as time passed and the Lord failed to return and his immediate followers started to die.

This view explains the paucity of references to the historical Jesus in the letters, and in particular the paucity of references to his ministry before his passion. Traditions of Jesus' death and resurrection had a place in the liturgical life of the church, but the interest in these traditions was liturgical rather than historical, and there was very little interest in pre-passion traditions.

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<sup>13</sup> William Wrede, *Paul* (London: Green, 1907).

<sup>14</sup> Cambridge: Clarke, 1991.

<sup>15</sup> The title of H. Maccoby's book makes the point: *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1986).

Rudolf Bultmann saw this lack of interest in Jesus' history as articulated explicitly by Paul in 2 Cor 5:16, where he says: "even if we knew Christ according to the flesh, now however we no longer know him."

Paul saw the preaching of Christ as the saving good news and the grounds for faith, not the historical story of Jesus.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.2. *Moderate Views*

The radical views of Wrede or Bultmann represent one end of a scholarly spectrum. Many who do not accept their views about the unimportance of the historical Jesus for the earliest Christians still believe that Paul was relatively uninterested in the ministry of Jesus: there may be more genuine echoes than the minimalists allow, but even if some or all of the "probable" category (above) are accepted, they do not add up to a lot.

Various explanations of this have been offered. It could partly be a reflection of Paul's own experience. He does not seem to have heard or met Jesus during his lifetime, and so he could not speak about Jesus' ministry and teaching from personal experience. There is evidence that this was held against him by his critics in the early church (e.g., in Galatians 1 and 2, where he defends his gospel and argues that he is as valid an apostle as Peter). But Paul sees his Damascus Road experience as more than making up for his supposed deficiencies: in his view (a) it gave him first-hand experience of Jesus risen from the dead; it is not surprising that he therefore focussed his teaching on the death and resurrection of Jesus; (b) it was a revelatory experience in a wider sense; Paul claims in Gal 1:12 that his "gospel" came to him through this divine revelation; traditions of Jesus passed on by flesh and blood, i.e., human agents, do not seem to come into the picture; (c) it made him an apostle commissioned by Jesus, with authority. In this context it is not hard to see how Paul may have seen the traditions of the historical Jesus as relatively unimportant: he focused his teaching on the gospel he received personally, and he taught with confident apostolic authority, not often referring back to sayings or stories of Jesus.

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<sup>16</sup> In his essay "The Significance of the Historical Jesus for the Theology of Paul," in *Faith and Understanding: Collected Essays* (London: SCM, 1969), Bultmann argued that "Jesus' teaching is—to all intents and purposes—irrelevant for Paul" (23). On 2 Corinthians 5:21, see his *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1985), 155–156; against this view see among others C. Wolff, "True Apostolic Knowledge of Christ: Exegetical Reflections on 2 Corinthians 5.14ff.," in *Paul and Jesus: Collected Essays*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 81–98.

It has been suggested that Paul's non-use of Jesus traditions may also have to do with the opposition that he faced in the early church:<sup>17</sup> his opponents accused him of being a second-hand apostle, who had not been taught by Jesus, and they claimed the Jesus tradition for themselves; so Paul deliberately and strategically refrained from making a lot of such tradition.

One of the difficulties with this last view is that it is not just Paul who refrains from using the Jesus tradition. All of the New Testament letters exhibit the same sort of reticence, and the special circumstances that could explain Paul's diffidence would not obviously apply to the authors of Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, or 1–3 John.<sup>18</sup> What is particularly intriguing about these non-Pauline letters is that three of them purport to come from people who had first-hand eyewitness knowledge of Jesus, and yet they hardly refer at all to his life and teaching. This could be seen as evidence that they do not in fact come from eyewitnesses; but it is almost as odd, if not more so, if letters written pseudonymously in the name of eyewitnesses fail to exploit that idea with supposed eyewitness testimony (with the honourable exception of 2 Pet 1:16, 17.).

In the case of 1 John the letter has a lot in common with the Gospel of John (stylistically and thematically), and it is held by many that the letter is clearing up theological misunderstandings coming out of the Gospel. If this theory is right, it is all the more notable that the author of the letter does not quote any saying from the Gospel at all. In his case it cannot be that he is uninterested in or uninformed about the traditions.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3. *Maximalist Approaches and Conclusions*

D. Alfred Resch was probably the most famous (or notorious) “maximalist.”<sup>20</sup> He saw very widespread use of Jesus traditions all over the

<sup>17</sup> See for example H. W. Kuhn, “Der irdische Jesus bei Paulus als traditionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem,” *ZTK* 67 (1970): 295–320.

<sup>18</sup> A similar paucity of quotation is evidenced in most Christian literature until the mid second century; so Riesner, “Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung,” 356, n. 7. G. N. Stanton notes that Luke's second volume Acts similarly contains very little Jesus tradition, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (Cambridge: CUP, 1974), 113.

<sup>19</sup> On 1 John see R. E. Brown, *The Epistles of John: Anchor Bible* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1982), 157–159.

<sup>20</sup> *Der Paulinismus*.

Pauline epistles, but he arguably brought that view into some disrepute by a lack of critical rigour in his approach. In recent times there have been scholars who have argued for a similarly generous view, while trying to offer critically sustainable arguments for that view.<sup>21</sup>

They make various points:

- (1) Some of the evidence for the use of Jesus traditions is almost indisputable (see above). The Last Supper account in 1 Corinthians 11 is an example of this, with several of Thompson's criteria being operative: there is agreement of wording and content, there is a tradition indicator, and the tradition of the supper is well attested in the gospels (despite the conclusion of the Jesus Seminar). The teaching on divorce in 1 Cor 7:10, 11 scores highly in a similar way, with Paul arguably echoing the tradition of Mark 10:11, 12/ Matt 19:9.
- (2) Given this evidence and the explicit admission by Paul that he received and passed on traditions, others of the "probable" sayings are indeed very probable! Thus the comparison of the day of the Lord coming like a thief in 1 Thess 5:2 might not be derived from the Jesus tradition in the gospels, and yet (a) there is a possible, albeit oblique, tradition indicator in Paul's introduction: "*you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night,*" (b) the idea of Jesus coming like a thief is one that is unlikely to have come from the church who saw Jesus as Lord; it is likely to have come from Jesus himself, who often used striking parabolic imagery,<sup>22</sup> (c) the gospel saying in question is attested both by Matthew and Luke, which according to conventional source criticism indicates that it is Q material and so early Jesus tradition. Similarly, Paul's use of "Abba" need not have come from Jesus, and yet (a) the use of the Aramaic in a Greek text, (b) the distinctiveness of the usage, and (c) the fact that Paul specifically says in Gal 4:6 that it is the Spirit of Jesus that inspires the Christian to cry "Abba" all make it likely that the usage came from Jesus and that Paul knew this.

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<sup>21</sup> See the writings of Kim, Riesner, Thompson and Wenham among others.

<sup>22</sup> So C. H. Dodd, "The Primitive Catechesis and the Sayings of Jesus," in *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: UP, 1968), 69–83.

- (3) If such evidence is accepted, then other “possible” Jesus traditions gain in plausibility; the argument is cumulative. For example, if Paul’s reference to the thief in 1 Thess 5:2 is seen as echoing Jesus’ parable, then we may be more inclined to recognize Paul’s preceding words “this we declare to you by a word from the Lord” (4:15) as a reference to teaching of Jesus. The difficulty is in identifying teaching of Jesus in the gospels that speaks about what will happen to the faithful departed; however, one serious possibility is that it is alluding to the parable of the ten virgins, five of whom are wise and who “rise up” after sleep to go to “meet” and to “be with” the bridegroom (Matt 25:1–13); there are intriguing verbal and conceptual parallels between the parable and Paul’s teaching. Other possible tradition indicators include Rom 14:14, where Paul speaks of being “persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean,” and where he may be referring to Jesus’ teaching about clean and uncleanness, interpreting it in a similar way to Mark (Mark 7:1, 23), and Gal 6:2, where Paul urges the Galatians to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ”; the phrase “the law of Christ” could allude to Jesus’ strong endorsement of the Old Testament law “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (e.g., Mark 12:31), or to his instruction to his disciples about mutual service and his new commandment referred to in John’s Gospel, viz. “love one another as I have loved you” (e.g., John 13:34).
- (4) The cumulative nature of the argument is reinforced if we find a lot of probable echoes and possible echoes in one particular letter or part of a letter; the likelihood that they are real echoes, not coincidental parallels, increases. For example, 1 Corinthians and James have a particular preponderance of parallels to gospel traditions. As for particular passages, in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 there are not only the two probable echoes of parables of Jesus that we noted, but many other parallels to Jesus’ eschatological teaching. In 1 Corinthians 9 there is one indisputable echo of Jesus’ teaching, but there are a number of other possible echoes of Jesus’ mission discourse; it is arguable that Paul is reflecting on the whole discourse, not just on isolated sayings.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> On the mission discourse see D. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 3–80; on 1 Corinthians 1–4 see the argument of Fjärstedt, *Synoptic Tradition in 1 Corinthians*.

- (5) The opposite side to that coin is that, if we find a large number of probable or possible echoes of a particular section of gospel tradition in the letters, then this may add to the likelihood that this is not a coincidence. We have observed how Jesus' eschatological teaching and parables are echoed a lot in 1 Thess 4 and 5, but also elsewhere (1 Cor 4:1–2, 2 Peter 3:10). But perhaps most important of all under this heading is the very wide range of parallels between the Sermon on the Mount and Paul's letters (e.g., in Romans 12), the first epistle of Peter and especially the letter of James.<sup>24</sup>

What conclusions can be drawn on the basis of these points? It is argued, first, that the supposed silence of the letters about Jesus' ministry and teaching is nothing of the sort. The explicit quotations are few, but the probable and possible echoes are extensive, almost as extensive as the gospels themselves!

It is argued, secondly, that there is good evidence that traditions of Jesus were systematically passed down and taught by Paul and others when they took the gospel to churches. This is most explicit in the Last Supper and resurrection traditions of 1 Corinthians 11 and 15, but it will not do to argue that these are liturgical rather than historical traditions: a phrase like "on the night that he was betrayed" points to the story of Jesus being narrated. When the good news of Jesus was preached, people will have wanted to know, and will have been told, the story of Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

It is argued, thirdly, that the failure of the letters to refer explicitly to Jesus traditions, which could seem the Achilles heel of the maximalist approach, is precisely because the traditions were well-known and could be taken for granted. What we find therefore in the letters are occasional reminders of the Jesus tradition, in specific contexts, but the frequent allusions and echoes point to Jesus traditions having been

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<sup>24</sup> D. C. Allison argues that Paul draws particularly on (a) the Sermon on the Plain, (b) the Mission Discourse, (c) the sayings of Mark 9:35–50, (d) the Passion narrative; see his "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of Parallels," *NTS* 28 (1982): 1–32.

<sup>25</sup> Indeed it is arguable that the good news was essentially the story of Jesus (compare the shape of Rom 1:3,4 with the shape of a gospel like Matthew). It is not possible to prove what form the story will have taken, but it is likely to have been the big story (from Jesus' birth to his resurrection), not just selected highlights (cf. Rom 1:3, 4, Gal 4:4, 5).

incorporated into the thinking and teaching of the church in a way that reflects their importance.

The word occasional is important in this connection. The letters of the New Testament are mostly letters addressing specific issues, and the context determines the contents, including the use of Jesus traditions. Thus 1 Corinthians is the only one of Paul's letters that ever refers to the Eucharist, and the only reason Paul discusses the Eucharist and quotes the relevant Jesus tradition is because of the problems that there were in the Corinthian church. Had it not been for these problems, Paul would not have used the Jesus tradition, and indeed we would have no indication that Paul or his churches knew of or celebrated the Lord's Supper. There is silence on this matter in the other letters, but we would be foolish to conclude that the Eucharist was unknown in other Pauline churches. We would be foolish to conclude too much from other silences in the letters.

It may seem curious to argue from the lack of explicit Jesus tradition in the letters to the conclusion that the tradition was very well known indeed. Paul quotes the Old Testament frequently and explicitly in support of his arguments, but not the Jesus traditions; does this not suggest something about their relative importance for him? It could certainly reflect the fact that Paul the ex-Pharisee is still influenced much more by Jewish tradition than by Jesus tradition. On the other hand, the explanation could be almost the opposite, namely that the story and sayings of Jesus were the living gospel which Christians were taught by Paul and others, so Paul and other New Testament letter-writers can and do presuppose knowledge of that oral tradition, whereas the written Scriptures of the Old Testament were the backdrop but not the focus of the Christian teaching and so could not be taken for granted in the same way.

It sometimes seems as though there is a gulf fixed between the gospels and the letters of the New Testament, with the gospels full of traditions of Jesus and the letters apparently silent. But that apparent gulf may testify to the obvious fact that in the gospels and the letters we have two quite different genres of writing.<sup>26</sup> The writing of the let-

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<sup>26</sup> The letters at least of Paul are usually seen as having been written before the gospels. But where, then, were the gospel traditions during the early period when the letters were being written? If Paul and others were not interested or even well informed about Jesus, who was interested enough to preserve the traditions in such a way that they would be available to the gospel writers? Were there some Christians who were

ters was a quite different exercise from the process of handing down traditions of Jesus (which in due course produced the gospels); the largely allusive references to the Jesus traditions that we find in the letters are only to be expected.

Whether the echoes of Jesus in the letters are conscious echoes, or whether the teaching and stories of Jesus have become so much part of the theological and ethical thinking of the early church that the dominical origin of certain phrases or ideas has been forgotten, is impossible to prove. On the maximalist view, it is entirely likely that Jesus' teaching will have become part of the theological and ethical currency of the early church, given Jesus' unquestioned impact as a teacher. But for the same reason, it is also likely that the early Christians will have been aware that many of their ideas came from Jesus. In support of this is the evidence in the letters, e.g., the "tradition indicators," which points to traditions of Jesus being deliberately passed on in the church, and also the evidence of the gospels, which in themselves show that Jesus traditions were preserved and remembered as coming from Jesus. So although there is no need to assume that there is a deliberate allusion to the Jesus tradition every time a letter has a parallel phrase or idea to something found in the gospels, still it is intrinsically likely that it is often a direct or indirect echo. And given that gospels attribute the phrase or idea to Jesus, it is simpler to explain the parallel in that way than to appeal to unspecified Christian tradition, which the gospels then attributed to Jesus. The maximalist approach claims in its favour that it takes seriously Jesus as an influential teacher and the probability, confirmed by the existence of the gospels, that traditions about Jesus were important in the early church.

#### 4. *Some Implications*

The question of Jesus traditions in the letters is of considerable importance. Should it be right that the earliest Christians were not very interested in the historical Jesus, then this is something that must be

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interested, and others who were not? B. Gerhardsson argues, on the contrary, that the gulf between gospels and letters is because the letters are dealing with particular issues in the church and were never intended to be passing down traditions of Jesus. See his "The Path of the Gospel Tradition," in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. P. Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 75–96.



weighed in understanding and expressing Christian faith today. S. G. Wilson, for example, comes to the quite dramatic conclusion that “we are forced to fall back on a mythological figure (the Christ of faith, Pauline or otherwise) and adopt a position which verges on the docetic.”<sup>27</sup>

Should it be right that the earliest Christians were very interested in the historical Jesus and that the letters are full of echoes of Jesus’ teaching and allusions to his ministry, then this too is important. It is important theologically, indicating the importance of history and in particular the history and teaching of Jesus to Christian faith. It is important ethically, if Jesus’ life was seen as an example to follow and his teaching as instruction to be obeyed.<sup>28</sup>

It is also important historically, since the letters may be key evidence in discussions of the historical Jesus and of gospel origins—we do not just have a synoptic problem focussing on the first three canonical gospels, but something much broader, and maybe much more promising.<sup>29</sup>

It is also important hermeneutically, not only because, on this view, the letters were written presupposing gospel traditions and so need to be read in that light, but also because they give us a glimpse into how the earliest Christians used the traditions of Jesus. It has been argued that the letters presuppose arguments going on in the church over the interpretation of different sayings of Jesus (e.g., over Paul’s claim to apostleship in Galatians 1 and 2, Jesus’ teaching about clean and unclean food, Rom 14:14, and about his instruction on the payment of gospel teachers, 1 Cor 9:14). This says something about the impor-

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<sup>27</sup> Wilson, “From Jesus to Paul,” 21.

<sup>28</sup> See on this L. Hurtado, “Jesus as Lordly Example in Philippians 2:5–11,” in *From Jesus to Paul*, ed. Richardson and Hurd, 113–126.

<sup>29</sup> For example, R. Bauckham argues that the account of the transfiguration in 2 Peter is primitive and independent of the gospel accounts, *Word Biblical Commentary 50: Jude and 2 Peter* (Waco: Word, 1983), 148. Bauckham notes other allusions to gospel traditions in 2 Pet 1:14; 2:20; 3:10). It is arguable that various scholars have been hampered in their engagement with the question of Jesus traditions because of their prior commitments to particular views of the synoptic problem. Hartin, for example, works with the assumption that Luke’s version of the Sermon on the Plain is the Q version, which he finds very widely echoed in James; he therefore concludes that the prohibition of oaths, which is in Matthew’s version of the Sermon, was not in Q (Hartin, *Jesus and the Q*, 171, 190). But it may be that James points to a different view of the Q sermon, if Q indeed existed. Wenham, in his books *Paul Follower* and *Paul and Jesus: The True Story* (London: SPCK, 2002), argues that Paul’s evidence also raises many questions for traditional source critical views.

tance of Jesus' teaching, but it is also instructive since Paul is seen to apply Jesus' teaching in creative ways and sometimes much more flexibly than his opponents; thus, for example, Paul recognizes Jesus' teaching about the support of apostles, but he does not take it woodenly as a command for every situation, but as a privilege which he can forgo for the sake of the gospel and in the service of Jesus whom he wished to follow.<sup>30</sup>

If the question is important, is it unanswerable? We have seen how scholars hold widely differing opinions. It would be wrong, however, to despair of making any progress in addressing what is a genuinely open issue, and there have been constructive new approaches and insights in recent years. The question is not going to be simply solved by short articles such as this, but there is no reason why patient, open-minded study of particular passages and themes as well as of the issue as a whole may not move the argument forward constructively.

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<sup>30</sup> Paul quite probably echoes Jesus' teaching on Mark 10:42–45 in 1 Cor 9:19. Compare R. Riesner, "Back to the Historical Jesus through Paul and His School (the Ransom Logion—Mark 10.45; Matthew 20.28)," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1.2 (2003): 171–199.



## THE THOMAS-JESUS CONNECTION

EDWIN K. BROADHEAD

Does the *Gospel of Thomas* have anything to contribute to the attempt to describe Jesus as a historical figure? The complexity of this question has been underestimated, and sweeping generalizations often dominate the discussion. Before conclusions about the Thomas-Jesus connection can be reached, it is necessary to sketch various dimensions of this question and to seek a critical process through which to negotiate a way forward.

### 1. *The Gospel of Thomas: Characteristics and History*

The *Gospel of Thomas* was known in various parts of early Christianity.<sup>1</sup> It is mentioned by Origen in his homilies on the Gospel of Luke (*In Luc. Hom.* 1), by Jerome in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (*Comm. in evang. Matth.*, Prologue), and by Eusebius in his history of the church (*Hist. eccl.* 3.25.6).<sup>2</sup> While there are numerous mentions of the title alone,<sup>3</sup> Hippolytus, in a discussion of the heresy of the Naassenes written somewhere between 222–235 CE, cites a version of *Thomas* 4:

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<sup>1</sup> For discussion of these witnesses see Stephen J. Patterson, "The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction," in *Q-Thomas Reader*, ed. J. Kloppenborg, M. Meyer, S. Patterson, M. Steinhauser, (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1990), 77–78; idem, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1993), 113–120; Ron Cameron, "Gospel of Thomas," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI, 535–540.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek and Latin witnesses to the Gospel of Thomas have been collected in H. Attridge, "Appendix: The Greek Fragments," in *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7, together with XII, 2*, *Brit. Lib. Or. 4926 (1), and POxy 1*, 654, 655; vol. 1: *Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*, ed. B. Layton, *Nag Hammadi Studies XX* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 103–109.

<sup>3</sup> Cameron, "Gospel of Thomas," 535, correctly warns that mention of the title alone may have reference to the Infancy Gospel of Thomas rather than to the sayings collected as the Gospel of Thomas.

They transmit a tradition concerning this in the Gospel entitled *According to Thomas*, which states expressly, "The one who seeks me will find me in the children from seven years age and onwards. For there, hiding in the fourteenth aeon, I am revealed."<sup>4</sup>

There are numerous parallels to individual sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*. Clement of Alexandria, for example, says some Thomas sayings are found in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and in the *Gospel of the Egyptians*.<sup>5</sup> In each of these ancient witnesses, the material from the *Gospel of Thomas* is considered heresy.

The *Gospel of Thomas* was among the Nag Hammadi texts found in Egypt in 1945. Some three years later the subscript "gospel according to Thomas" was recognized at the end of the second codex. This Coptic text was thus recognized as a translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* known from antiquity. A few years later, the connection between the Coptic text of Thomas and some Greek fragments found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt was established: P. Oxy 1, P. Oxy 654, and P. Oxy 655, which had been unearthed in the 1890's, were recognized as fragments of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Small portions of the text were made public in 1957, a German translation appeared in 1958, and a critical edition was published in 1959.<sup>6</sup>

What had been unearthed at Oxyrhynchus and at Nag Hammadi was a primitive collection of the sayings of Jesus. This collection includes various forms: aphorisms, proverbs, parables, prophetic sayings, and community rules, all preserved as a series of sayings from Jesus. The collection is designed to support the thought and practice of a community of Jesus' followers with a worldview influenced, at least in part, by gnosticism. While the Oxyrhynchus papyri are fragments, the Coptic text is complete, containing both the incipit and a concluding identification that is followed by the first lines of the *Gospel of Philip*. The division of this collection into 114 sayings is a modern practice.

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<sup>4</sup> Hippolytus, *Refutatio* 5.7.20, from Attridge, "Appendix: The Greek Fragments," 103.

<sup>5</sup> Cameron, "Gospel of Thomas," 535.

<sup>6</sup> Patterson, "Gospel of Thomas: Introduction," 82.

## 2. *Thomas in Critical Scholarship*

Scholars quickly recognized that the *Gospel of Thomas* is connected in some way to the sayings of Jesus in the synoptic tradition of the canonical gospels.<sup>7</sup> Three approaches to Thomas emerged: 1) the *Gospel of Thomas* is a secondary collection largely dependent on the canonical gospels; 2) the *Gospel of Thomas* is a primary witness to the Jesus tradition; 3) the *Gospel of Thomas* is irrelevant to the development of New Testament traditions and has no impact on theological concerns.

Scholarship quickly assessed the *Gospel of Thomas* as a late, gnostic reconfiguration of canonical materials. In 1964, Wolfgang Schrage argued that Thomas was wholly dependent upon the canonical gospels, in particular upon Coptic translations of the synoptics.<sup>8</sup> Schrage's translation theory is unlikely, but his major thesis—dependence on the synoptics—has been assumed by most of subsequent scholarship. Stephen Patterson accurately defines the presumption behind this line of scholarship:

If the text of Thomas can be found to reproduce elements from the synoptic gospels which can be identified as redactional changes unique to one or another of the individual synoptic evangelists, then one must conclude that the author of Thomas has taken the text directly from these canonical sources.<sup>9</sup>

Others would assert that the *Gospel of Thomas* is a primary witness to the Jesus tradition.<sup>10</sup> This line of thinking received its impetus from Gilles Quispel, who argued in 1957 that Thomas had received sayings from the primitive Jerusalem community by means of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*.<sup>11</sup> While most scholars were unconvinced by Quispel's

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<sup>7</sup> For an extensive discussion of this debate, see S. Patterson, "The Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptic Tradition: *Prospectus* and *Retrospectus*," in *SBL 1990 Seminar Papers*, ed. D. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 614–636.

<sup>8</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur Synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur gnostischen Synoptikerdeutung*, BZNW 29 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> Patterson, "The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction," 86.

<sup>10</sup> These developments are sketched by Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 220–225.

<sup>11</sup> G. Quispel, "The Gospel of Thomas and the New Testament," *VC* 11 (1957): 189–207.

source theory, some pursued the idea that the *Gospel of Thomas* has within it a few authentic sayings of Jesus not dependent upon the canonical gospels.

Joachim Jeremias argued in 1957 that eighteen sayings from outside the canon—some of which are found in Thomas—belong to the historical Jesus.<sup>12</sup> In his 1962 revision of his work on the parables, *Die Gleichnisse Jesus*, Jeremias employed the *Gospel of Thomas* in his form-critical evaluation of Jesus tradition and in his consideration of the related questions of the history of transmission and of the historical Jesus.

Others pursued independent pieces of Jesus tradition outside the canonical gospels. While Jeremias accepted eighteen sayings from outside the canon as authentic, Otfried Hofius reduced this number to nine, with special interest in four sayings, including Thomas material.<sup>13</sup> Johannes Bauer,<sup>14</sup> Robert Wilson,<sup>15</sup> Oscar Cullmann,<sup>16</sup> and Hugh Montefiore<sup>17</sup> also searched for independent materials from *Thomas*. It must be noted, however, that this interest in *Thomas* was tangential to larger concerns about the historical Jesus and the canonical gospels and that, as Patterson notes, “none of these early attempts to evaluate Thomas’ sayings was marked by a carefully defined method and consistently applied criteria.”<sup>18</sup>

Recent scholarship has witnessed the emergence of strong claims that the *Gospel of Thomas* as a whole represents an ancient version of Christianity to be taken seriously alongside other primitive traditions. This position is grounded in the work of Helmut Koester, but it has a particular link to the Jesus Seminar. Koester, on the basis of form critical analysis, concludes that “the tradition of sayings of Jesus preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas* pre-dates the canonical Gospels and rules out

<sup>12</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, trans. Reginald Fuller (London: SPCK, 1957).

<sup>13</sup> Otfried Hofius, “Unknown Sayings of Jesus,” in *The Gospel and the Gospels*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991 (1983)), 336–360.

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Bauer, “Echte Jesusworte,” in *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand*, W. C. van Unnik (Frankfurt: Heinrich Scheffer, 1960), 122–124. Bauer accepts Thomas 51, 52, 58, 81, 82 as authentic.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1960).

<sup>16</sup> Oscar Cullman, “Das Thomasevangelium und die Frage nach dem Alter der in ihm enthaltenen Tradition,” *ThLZ* 85 (1960): 321–334.

<sup>17</sup> Hugh Montefiore, “A Comparison of the Parables of the Gospel According to Thomas and the Synoptic Gospels,” *NTS* 7 (1960/61): 220–248.

<sup>18</sup> Patterson, “The Gospel of Thomas: Introduction,” 118.

the possibility of dependence upon any of these Gospels.”<sup>19</sup> Among the recent advocates of this position are John Dominic Crossan and Elaine Pagels. Crossan refers to the whole of Thomas when he declares “The collection is independent of the intracanonial Gospels.”<sup>20</sup> Crossan argues for two crudely defined layers of Thomas tradition: sayings with independent attestation elsewhere belong to a James collection from the 50’s CE, perhaps from Jerusalem, while a Thomas layer of unique traditions dates from the 60’s in Syrian Edessa.<sup>21</sup> In his treatment of Jesus as the Mediterranean Peasant, Crossan makes reference to the *Gospel of Thomas* 88 times.

In her recent work, Elaine Pagels argues for the place of gnostic Christianity as a definable, authentic expression of primitive Christianity, an argument to which the *Gospel of Thomas* is central.<sup>22</sup> This recent line of approach is not content with finding authentic Jesus materials within the *Gospel of Thomas*, but invests deeply in the assumption that the *Gospel of Thomas* is itself a definitive part of the Jesus tradition.<sup>23</sup>

The third strategy taken by scholars is to ignore or dismiss the *Gospel of Thomas* as irrelevant in the search for the historical Jesus. Luke Timothy Johnson illustrates this approach, along with the tendentious argumentation that sometimes accompanies it:

What about the Nag Hammadi library with its *Gospel of Thomas*, so beloved by Crossan and the Jesus Seminar? Is not the situation now fundamentally changed? Is it not the case that the canonical writings of the New Testament are no longer the exclusive or even the most important sources for the history of the Christian movement? The short answer, alas, is no. The situation has not fundamentally changed.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 85–86.

<sup>20</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 427. The tendentious nature of this work is evident on the cover: “The first comprehensive determination of who Jesus was, what he did, what he said.”

<sup>21</sup> Crossan, *Mediterranean Peasant*, 427–428.

<sup>22</sup> Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (New York: Random House, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> So Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 220–225.

<sup>24</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), 88–89. Dunn’s evaluation in the frontispiece of this work is noteworthy: “The Jesus of cheap scholarship, the Jesus-as-I-personally-like-to-imagine-him, has been zealously



Johnson's hermeneutic for Thomas is clear. He concludes that:

these discoveries are of interest for the patristic period more than for the period of Christianity's birth and first expansion. Despite all the excitement and expectation, it turns out that the canonical writings of the New Testament remain our best historical witnesses to the earliest period of the Christian movement.<sup>25</sup>

In *The Real Jesus*, Johnson deals with only one Thomas text (the negative view of women in Saying 97).

Stephen Patterson notes the paucity of Thomas materials throughout the recent wave of historical Jesus studies sometimes referred to as the "Third Quest." While some of this silence may reflect doubt over the tradition history of *Thomas*, recent works tend to avoid the question of what Jesus said in favor of discussion of who he was and what he did, thus bypassing the Thomas materials.<sup>26</sup>

A more sophisticated dismissal of Thomas is found in the work of James Dunn, who seeks to reformulate the question of *Traditionsgeschichte* by highlighting the flexibility of oral traditions. Dunn roots many differences between synoptic sayings not in a linear progression of traditions, but in performance variations within the oral transmission and preservation of the Jesus material.<sup>27</sup> While this approach could easily assume Thomas as a further witness to the variability of authentic tradition, Dunn offers little hope of finding Jesus through the Thomas sayings. Dunn believes the search for Jesus in *Thomas* has been caught up in the effort to isolate a gnostic Christianity that is an early and equally viable expression of Christian faith.<sup>28</sup> Rather than a witness to early gnostic Christianity, Dunn believes that *Thomas* reflects a later, developed form of the gnostic redeemer myth and that "we should not be surprised if we find that any earlier traditions have been redacted in a Gnostic direction."<sup>29</sup> Dunn also emphasizes that independent does not mean more original: "In our present case, the different version of the Jesus tradition attested by the *Gospel of Thomas*

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promoted through the past decade like a fizzy new drink. Thank goodness, then, for a cool, clear glass of sober scholarship from Luke Johnson."

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 219–220.

<sup>27</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 161–165.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 164. It is not clear to me whether "any earlier traditions" means "some early traditions" or "all early traditions."

is often assumed to be the more original. But all that analysis demonstrates is that the versions are different.”<sup>30</sup> From this perspective Dunn previews the role Thomas will play into his reconstruction of Jesus: “In what follows, then, we shall expect to find that the *Gospel of Thomas* attests different forms which the Jesus tradition took.”<sup>31</sup> Indeed, Dunn’s 900–page work makes reference to the *Gospel of Thomas* some 161 times. Since Dunn’s primary goal is not to describe the developmental history of Christian tradition, but rather to find the Jesus remembered in that tradition, he seems to leave room here for a Jesus remembered differently, but with validity, in the *Gospel of Thomas*. This is not the case, for Dunn approaches the Thomas sayings through the following hermeneutic:

For while the question must always remain open that a particular *Thomas* saying has preserved an early/earlier version of the saying than the Synoptic tradition or that an unparalleled *Thomas* saying is as early as the earliest Synoptic tradition, it will always be the undoubtedly early Synoptic tradition which provides the measure by which judgment is made on the point.<sup>32</sup>

### 3. *The Thomas-Jesus Connection: Methodology*

The *Gospel of Thomas* found at Nag Hammadi is a fourth-century manuscript of a second-century collection that contains sayings attributed to Jesus under the authority of James and Thomas. Our only complete text was found in a much larger library of ancient literature (which also included a Plato fragment). I wish to argue that this essential identity of the *Gospel of Thomas* must be determinative for the question of methodology. The question “What are you looking for?” is likewise central to the methodological debate.

#### 3.1. *Text*

First, the *Gospel of Thomas* has a textual history. We stand near the end of that history, with access to one late (Coptic) translation and three earlier (Greek) fragments. The few attestations from early Christianity are likewise limited in their knowledge of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

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<sup>30</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 164.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Thus, we must speak of a stream of tradition to which we have only partial and limited access. This is true not only of the textual tradition of Thomas, but also of its developing worldview.

### 3.2. *Genre*

Secondly, the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection. It is a fluid, developing tradition that is not fixed in time or in form. The text from Nag Hammadi is one stage of that tradition, but perhaps not the definitive stage. More significantly, the *Gospel of Thomas* presents no guiding framework, no unifying motif, no overarching design, no theological center, no narrative backbone. Thus, it is possible that its primary identity is not to be found in the whole, but in the parts. If so, any monolithic, comprehensive description of what the *Gospel of Thomas* is or what it does is risky. There is a hermeneutical tendency to compress the identity of Thomas into a coherent package.<sup>33</sup> A related tendency is to see a process only by its end stages—or only by the stage available to the reader. A further tendency is to find or to force thematic unity under a framework such as gnosticism.<sup>34</sup> None of these hermeneutical tendencies fits well with collections.

Both sides of the *Thomas* debate fall prey to the monolithic fallacy—the tendency to subsume the parts into a view of a meaningful whole, the tendency to view the process solely from its result, and the tendency to create thematic unity.

Those who argue that the *Gospel of Thomas* is dependent upon the canonical gospels often employ this generalizing rhetoric. The treatment by John Meier is representative:

Since I think that the Synoptic-like sayings of the *Gospel of Thomas* are in fact dependent on the Synoptic Gospels and that the other sayings stem from 2nd-century Christian gnosticism, the *Gospel of Thomas* will not be used in our quest as an independent source for the historical Jesus.

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<sup>33</sup> This is in line with the phenomenon, identified by *Gestalt* psychology, of seeking to make sense and to create meaning—whether it exists or not—out of the pieces we observe.

<sup>34</sup> Scholars often speak in a similar generalization of “the Nag Hammadi material,” which actually contains a variety of texts, including a fragment from Plato.

Contrary to some scholars, I do not think that the rabbinical material, the *agrapha*, the apocryphal gospels, and the Nag Hammadi codices (in particular the *Gospel of Thomas*) offer us reliable new information or authentic sayings that are independent of the NT. What we see in these later documents is rather the reaction to or reworking of NT writings by Jewish rabbis engaged in polemics, imaginative Christians reflecting popular piety and legend, and gnostic Christians developing a mystic speculative system. Their versions of Jesus' words and deeds can be included in a "corpus of Jesus material" if that corpus is understood to contain simply everything and anything that any ancient source ever identified as material coming from Jesus. But such a corpus is the Matthean dragnet (Matt 13.47–48) from which the good fish of early tradition must be selected for the containers of serious historical research, while the bad fish of later conflation and invention are tossed back into the murky sea of the uncritical mind. In Part One of this book, we have been sitting on the beach, sorting the dragnet and throwing the *agrapha*, apocryphal gospels, and the *Gospel of Thomas* back into the sea.<sup>35</sup>

Among those who argue that the *Gospel of Thomas* is an independent source of Jesus tradition, one finds statements no less sweeping or tendentious. Patterson, for example, concludes that:

no new quest of the historical Jesus can proceed now without giving due attention to the Thomas tradition. As an independent reading of the Jesus tradition, it provides us with a crucial and indispensable tool for gaining critical distance on the synoptic tradition, which for so long dominated the Jesus discussion.<sup>36</sup>

Statements from both sides of the debate illustrate the tendency to treat the *Gospel of Thomas* as a monolithic piece with a clear image of Jesus. The same generalization is imposed upon the synoptic tradition, which in reality is a collection of traditions with a variety of images of Jesus. Recent scholarship is dominated by a tendency to speak of two titans of tradition—the synoptic gospels and the sayings gospels—that are locked either in conflict or cooperation.

Framing the argument in this way has produced more heat than light. Because the *Gospel of Thomas* is a collection found within a library, renewed attention must be given to the variegated parts that have been gathered into this collection. Each saying must be analyzed

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<sup>35</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 139–140.

<sup>36</sup> Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus*, 241.

within its own stream of development, and individual sayings must be located, through critical evaluation, in terms of their proximity to Jesus.

### 3.3. *Tradition History*

Thirdly, the distinction between tradition history and literary history must be clarified and maintained. Tradition history has to do with the stages and forms through which a piece of material develops. Literary history has to do with the texts and layers of text in which a piece of material is found.<sup>37</sup> John Kloppenborg, for example, argues that the literary history of the Sayings Tradition (Q) involves three strata of material: a formative group of six wisdom speeches, an expansion that added a group of sayings, many in the form of *chriae*, with a critical and polemical stance toward Israel, and a final addition of the temptation story.<sup>38</sup> Kloppenborg insists, however, on the distinction between this literary layering and the question of tradition history:

To say that the wisdom components were formative for Q and that the prophetic judgment oracles and apophthegms describing Jesus' conflict with "this generation" are secondary is *not* to imply anything about the ultimate tradition-historical provenance of any of the sayings. It is indeed possible, indeed probable, that some of the materials from the secondary compositional phase are dominical or at least very old, and that some of the formative elements are, from the standpoint of authenticity or tradition-history, relatively young. Tradition-history is not convertible with *literary history*, and it is the latter which we are treating here.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the debate over whether the *Gospel of Thomas* is late or early, dependent or independent, gnostic or not gnostic does not settle the tradition history of individual sayings and does not accurately evaluate their degree of connection to Jesus.

In a similar way, multiple attestation of a saying or story—that is, a wide-ranging literary history—does not authenticate its value in terms

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<sup>37</sup> This distinction is clearer in textual criticism, which operates under the guideline that texts are not to be counted but weighed. This means that the value of a reading is not determined by the number of texts in which it appears, but by the quality of those texts. Similarly, a later manuscript may contain a primitive reading.

<sup>38</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

<sup>39</sup> Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q*, 244–245.

of tradition history. James Dunn pursues a related distinction: independent traditions do not mean more original traditions. Dunn insists that:

the different version of the Jesus tradition attested by the Gospel of Thomas is often assumed to be the more original. But all that analysis demonstrates is that the versions are different. The possibility remains open that that is all there is to it... as well as the possibility of redaction either or both ways.<sup>40</sup>

The connection of a tradition to Jesus is not guaranteed by its literary history: early and independent traditions are not necessarily more connected to Jesus. But the other side of this equation is just as important, particularly in view of the *Gospel of Thomas*: a tradition embedded in a late, rather gnostic text that exhibits lines of dependence on the synoptics cannot be judged *a priori* to be unconnected to Jesus. A more nuanced evaluation that takes into consideration the complexity of tradition history and the development of pieces of tradition is required.

### 3.4. *Criteria*

Fourthly, the question of criteria must be revisited. Building on the work of the form critics of the early twentieth century, Rudolf Bultmann undertook a careful analysis of individual pieces of the synoptic tradition in order to determine the history of its development and use.<sup>41</sup> Bultmann's students turned the focus back to the historical Jesus and developed criteria for evaluating the authenticity of individual sayings. While such criteria have limited use and have been extended through other approaches, this line of inquiry cannot be circumvented.<sup>42</sup> The sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* must be analyzed with the same rigor and detail that has been applied to the synoptic sayings of Jesus. The *Gospel of Thomas* can, in fact, provide a non-canonical laboratory through which to challenge previous assumptions and refine methodologies for investigating the sayings of Jesus.

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<sup>40</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 164.

<sup>41</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963 [1921]).

<sup>42</sup> As many New Testament literary critics attempt to do.

### 3.5. *Goals*

Fifthly, the question of goals must be clarified. How one approaches a text depends, in part, on what one is looking for. It is abundantly clear that many scholars are looking for the “Real Jesus”<sup>43</sup> of Christian orthodoxy—the “Jesus as presented in the Four Gospels.”<sup>44</sup> It is equally clear that many are looking for “a revolutionary biography”<sup>45</sup> that provides historical refutation of that orthodox image. Neither concern is relative to the questions or the methodologies of historicity. It is also clear that most scholars investigate *Thomas* not for its own literary and tradition history, but as the staging ground for larger questions such as the development of early Christianity or the historical Jesus. There is the ever-present danger that the question asked already contains the answer sought—that the methodology and the quest are skewed by the underlying question.

### 3.6. *Summary*

Proper attention to the Thomas-Jesus connection requires renewed, more careful focus on the question of methodology.<sup>46</sup> The textual history of the *Gospel of Thomas* and its composite nature must inform the approach to these sayings. The distinction between literary history and tradition history must be maintained, and rigid criteria must be applied to individual sayings. Finally, the search for historical connections to Jesus—rather than an argument with gnosticism or orthodoxy

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<sup>43</sup> The term used by Luke T. Johnson.

<sup>44</sup> The term used by John P. Meier.

<sup>45</sup> John D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994). The cover also describes the book as “a startling account of what we can know about the life of Jesus” and calls it “a national bestseller.”

<sup>46</sup> A helpful analogy would be a hymn book located in a modern library. The book is actually a collection dominated by one literary form (hymns). While its composition may be guided by general standards (denominational, thematic), its parts are drawn from various periods, styles, and theologies. Some hymns have been altered in their wording, and some have been assigned alternate tunes. Many have been translated from another language. For most persons, the history of the hymn is less significant than its performance value. Besides this, the written version is often a secondary writing down of a spiritual or folk hymn. The hymn book has been found in an artificial setting that is foreign to its function (worship). Further, many who use the hymn see the written text as simply a prompt through which to recall and to perform the “true” version, which is known only in the act of singing in the context of worship in a community of loved ones.

or literary history—must be allowed to shape the investigation of the Thomas sayings.

#### 4. *The Question of Form*

Critical inquiry into the Thomas-Jesus connection is often dominated by the question “Does the *Gospel of Thomas* represent an independent witness to the historical Jesus?” Methodological considerations require a reframing of the question: “Does the *Gospel of Thomas* contain sayings of the historical Jesus not drawn from or controlled by canonical gospels?” Attention to the form of the *Gospel of Thomas* requires further refinement: the question of connection must be divided so that critical attention may be given to the method or vehicle through which this content is transmitted. In addition to the question “Does the *Gospel of Thomas* transmit authentic Jesus material?”, we must also ask “Does the *Gospel of Thomas* replicate the rhetorical form used by Jesus?”

In narrative criticism, this question is framed as the distinction between *story* (what is told) and *discourse* (how the story is told). While many studies have emphasized the inherent connection between medium and message, the distinction is still noteworthy.<sup>47</sup> As Werner Kelber has demonstrated, how one tells the story of Jesus is of great hermeneutical import.<sup>48</sup> In Kelber’s analysis, orality is not only a mode of transmission, but also a rhetorical strategy. Oral hermeneutics involve prophetic speech in which the living Lord continues to speak through his prophets. Because the living Lord still speaks, the connection to past history—and thus to his suffering and death—is pushed into the background. Hearers are confronted anew with the charisma of the living Lord. Kelber views the written gospel as a “counterform to, rather than extension of, oral hermeneutics.”<sup>49</sup> More specifically, Kelber views the Gospel of Mark as a hermeneutical revolt against the

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<sup>47</sup> Here modern analogies may help. Mohandas Gandhi and M. L. King, Jr. both incorporate content from the teachings of Jesus, but they do so through different rhetorical strategies (teaching versus preaching). Stokely Carmichael and M. L. King, Jr. employed the same rhetorical strategy, but not the same message.

<sup>48</sup> Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

<sup>49</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 184–185.



spontaneity of the oral tradition and its avoidance of the story of Jesus' death:

What must be emphasized is that the principle of the presence of the living Lord is an intrinsic feature of *oral* hermeneutic. Insofar as *logoi* constitute the primary unit of oral tradition, the presence of the living Lord is inseparable from the linguistic ontology of the genre itself. One may suspect that what was objectionable to the writers of the gospels and the compilers of the written canon was this very oral hermeneutic of the sayings genre.<sup>50</sup>

If the Gospel of Mark represents a written historicizing of the story of Jesus as a counterform to oral pronouncements, then the *Gospel of Thomas* represents, in its rhetorical strategy, the recovery of orality—and oral hermeneutics—in written form.<sup>51</sup>

Whatever the connection in terms of content, the *Gospel of Thomas* has appropriated, in written form, the rhetorical strategy employed by Jesus. This approach *may* represent a conscious reaction to the narrative hermeneutic imbedded in the canonical gospels. Such a reaction would be not only rhetorical, but also ideological: the *Gospel of Thomas may* invoke the living voice of Jesus in order to counter the kerygmatic orthodoxy framed around the death and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>52</sup> Could this be the concern voiced in Saying 52?

His disciples said to him, "Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel, and all of them spoke in you." He said to them, "You have omitted the one living in your presence and have spoken (only) of the dead."

Whatever the purpose behind this oral strategy, the product is clear: the *Gospel of Thomas* attempts to speak as Jesus speaks.

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<sup>50</sup> Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 200–201. The idea of Mark's gospel as an alternative to oral, prophetic speech was first developed by Eugene Boring in 1977 in "The Paucity of Sayings in Mark: A Hypothesis," *SBL Seminar Papers* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 371–377. His theory is further developed in *Sayings of the Risen Jesus: Christian Prophecy in the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 195–203.

<sup>51</sup> This is different from the strategy at work in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospel of Luke, where the orality of the Sayings Tradition has been embedded in the written narrative structure of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

<sup>52</sup> In various contemporary liturgical traditions, orality holds privileged status. In these traditions, sermons that are read from a manuscript, prayers that are written, and the use of a hymnbook are considered inferior forms of worship and are taken as signs of a dying church.

### 5. *The Question of Content*

Still the fundamental question remains: Does the *Gospel of Thomas* contain authentic sayings of Jesus? Here I can only begin the investigation. I will point to four passages that demonstrate the issues involved in the Thomas-Jesus connection and have potential as authentic sayings. Finally, attention will be given to the value of such a search.

#### 5.1. *Saying 9: The Parable of the Sower*

The parable of the sower in Mark 4:3–9 is framed by an introductory setting (4:1–2) and by an explanation of the parable (4:10–20). The introduction in 4:1–2 wraps the story in familiar Markan language, images, and motifs:<sup>53</sup> teaching, the seashore, the crowd, for example. A Markan parable theory is developed in 4:2 and in 4:10–12: they are mysteries that unveil the Kingdom to Jesus' followers but hide it from outsiders. An allegorization of the parable is completed in 4:13–20. The entire Markan unit (4:1–34) is filled out by parables on the lamp (4:21–23), the measure (4:24–25), the growing seed (4:26–29), the mustard seed (4:30–32), and a Markan conclusion (4:33–34). The Markan construction of introduction (4:1–2), sower parable (4:3–9), parable theory (4:10–12), and explanation (4:13–20) has been taken over in Matthew 13:1–23 and Luke 8:4–15.

Form criticism seeks the life setting of a literary unit on three levels: in the editorial strategy of the gospel writer, in the life of early Christian communities, in the teachings of the historical Jesus. Form critics have long recognized the shaping of the story of the sower, both in its literary and theological dimensions, to fit the purposes of the Gospel of Mark. Behind this text would lie the community story and the Jesus tradition. Following basic rules of transmission history, we would expect the parable that Jesus spoke to be an unadorned, unexplained story that points to the mystery of the Kingdom.

Form criticism was quick to separate the parable of the sower in Mark 4:3–9 from the Markan introduction (4:1–2), the parable theory (4:10–12), and the allegorical explanation (4:13–20). From the time of Adolf Jülicher (1886), C. H. Dodd (1935), and Joachim Jeremias (1947),

<sup>53</sup> Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, EKK 1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1978), 156–158.

the allegorical explanation found in Mark 4:13–20 has been seen as a secondary development. A closer look shows that the allegorical explanation (4:13–20) is likely built upon cues within the parable itself (4:3–9) and that these cues are Markan insertions.<sup>54</sup> The judgment has prevailed, from Jülicher forward, that Jesus spoke an unadorned parable about the difficulties of Palestinian agriculture in order to address the eschatological situation of his first hearers. Evidence for this position continues to build.<sup>55</sup>

What was presumed and reconstructed on form-critical grounds—an unadorned, unexplained, free-floating parable of Palestinian farming—was *subsequently* found in Saying 9 of the *Gospel of Thomas*. Missing from *Gos. Thom.* 9 are both the allegorical explanation and the Markan cues within the parable. Commitment to the standards of historical-critical investigation allows only one conclusion: the parable in *Gos. Thom.* 9 stands closer to the historical Jesus than any synoptic version. This would be true even if *Gos. Thom.* 9 is a revision based on Mark 4:1–20, and it would be true of both literary and oral transmission. While it would seem hypocritical to abandon the basic canons of form criticism in order to devalue this parable from the *Gospel of Thomas*, it should be noted that many who do this were never comfortable with form-critical conclusions.

## 5.2. Saying 65: *The Parable of the Vineyard*

The same form-critical standards are at work in the parable of the vineyard, found in Mark 12:1–12 and *Gos. Thom.* 65. The parable in Mark 12:1b–9 is framed by a Markan introduction (12:1a), an exegetical connection to Psalm 118:22 (Mark 12:10–11), and a description of the response to the parable (12:12). In its Markan form, the parable of the vineyard is an extended allegory against the leadership of Israel, and it is read thus by the temple authorities (11:27; 12:1, 12). Internally, the parable allegorizes various stages of Israel's (Deuteronomist) history: various messengers are sent to the vineyard, but these are met with increasing violence. The story invites the reader to see here the rejected prophets of Israel and the beheaded Baptist. The death of

<sup>54</sup> Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 39–44; Ron Cameron, *Parable and Interpretation in the Gospel of Thomas* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1986), 20–21.

<sup>55</sup> Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1: 228–236.

Jesus is imaged in the final messenger, the beloved son and heir, who is murdered. The casting out of the workers and the handing over of the vineyard to others is understood as a scriptural prophecy against the leaders of Israel.

This extended allegory is presented as a straightforward, unexplained account, standing on its own, in *Gos. Thom.* 65. Again, the canons of form criticism define the Thomas version of the parable as the form closest to the historical Jesus, whatever its literary history. The canons of oral transmission would also favor this conclusion.

Saying 65 illuminates the complexity of the literary history. While the form of this saying suggests it is earlier than Mark 11, the question of order arises. Mark 11:10 invokes Psalm 118:22, but has linked it to the larger scene. The parable in *Gos. Thom.* 65 is followed by Saying 66, which is based on Psalm 118:22. What is the literary-critical line of development here? Has the *Gospel of Thomas* copied Mark 11 but turned it into two unadorned sayings of Jesus that stand on their own? Do Mark 11 and *Thomas* 65–66 draw upon a common tradition in which the parable and the citation are linked? The question remains open, but the process of analysis should not be governed by special pleading in support of one particular tradition history.

### 5.3. *Saying 31: The Rejected Prophet*

Mark 6:1–6 tells of Jesus' teaching in his home town on the Sabbath. As elsewhere (Mark 1:22), the people are amazed at his teaching and his wonders. They ask "Is this not the carpenter (or mason), the son of Mary and the brother of James and Justus and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" In the next line, the people are scandalized by Jesus (6:3). As a result, Jesus is not able to do any miracles—well, just a few (6:5). At the heart of this story is a pronouncement from Jesus: "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and among his relatives and in his house" (6:4). The connection between the scene and the pronouncement is awkward. The reaction of the crowd is similar to the amazement expressed elsewhere, and it is not clear that the mention of his trade and his family indicate rejection. Only the narrator's comment that the people are scandalized makes this a scene of controversy. It is not clear why this should prevent further miracles, and the inconsistency of 6:5 is apparent. Thus, the pronouncement of 6:4 fits rather uncomfortably in the larger story.

Rudolf Bultmann examined this story by means of form criticism in 1921, and he concluded: “This seems to me to be a typical example of how an imaginary situation is built up out of an independent saying.”<sup>56</sup> Bultmann accepted the conclusion of E. Wendling (1908)<sup>57</sup> that the double proverb found in P. Oxy 1.5 represents a more original form of the saying:

A prophet is not welcome in his home town,  
Nor does a physician bring healing to those who know him.

Bultmann then discussed the process through which this saying was incorporated into Mark 6:1–6 and Luke 4:16–30.<sup>58</sup> What is significant here is that these conclusions were reached solely on form-critical grounds, since neither scholar knew that P. Oxy 1 was a fragment of the *Gospel of Thomas*. If one replaces form-critical canons with the patterns of orality, the priority of the Thomas saying is still plausible. If you isolate (through form-critical and redactional standards) the saying in Mark 6:5 in order to consider its oral history, you are left with a tripartite pronouncement with a paratactic framing—a rhetoric usually identified as Markan. While nothing can be proven, critical analysis leads to the conclusion that *Gos. Thom.* 31 is more plausible as a saying of Jesus than is Mark 6:5.

#### 5.4. Saying 82: *The Fire and the Kingdom*

*Jesus said, “He who is near me is near the fire,  
And he who is far from me is far from the kingdom.”*

I have argued that Saying 82 of the *Gospel of Thomas*, which has no New Testament parallel, is best explained as an authentic saying of Jesus.<sup>59</sup> The analysis of Saying 82 may be summarized as follows:

1. Saying 82 exhibits a structure of contrasting parallelism in which both lines open with some form of “whoever” and establish a contrast between the status of individuals or groups. This pattern is found in diverse regions of the synoptic tradition: in the triple tradition,

<sup>56</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 31.

<sup>57</sup> E. Wendling, *Die Entstehung des Marcus-Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1908), 54.

<sup>58</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 31–32.

<sup>59</sup> Edwin Broadhead, “An Authentic Saying of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas?” *NTS* 46 (2000): 132–149.

in Matthew's version of the Sayings Tradition (QMatt), in Matthean special materials (M), and in the Lukan special materials (L). The form is always on the lips of Jesus, with the exception of Luke 3:11, where John the Baptist uses the form without the contrast. This structural pattern occurs most frequently in the Sayings Tradition (Q) and is used to compare or contrast two different groups.

2. The image of fire in *Gos. Thom.* 82 is part of a wider tradition. Within the canonical gospels, fire is employed in three ways: 1) as a general metaphor for judgment; 2) as a specific reference to judgment in the preaching of John the Baptist; 3) in the teaching of Jesus as an extension of John's message; 4) a few sayings use fire to characterize the judgment of the Son of Man.

Most notable among the fire sayings of Jesus are the enigmatic pronouncements of Luke 12:49 ("Fire I came to cast upon the earth, and how I wish it already burned") and Mark 9:49 ("For all in fire shall be salted"). These two sayings show key traits of authenticity. Neither is taken up elsewhere in synoptic tradition, but there is a close kinship with *Gos. Thom.* 82.

3. Saying 82 contributes little to the gnostic outlook of the *Gospel of Thomas*.
4. Saying 82 fares rather well when judged by the criteria for authentic sayings of Jesus. In terms of dissimilarity, the saying is not a clear embarrassment, but it does not fit well into the prevailing ethos of Judaism and it is difficult to imagine it as a construction of the early church. In terms of linguistic and stylistic texture, the short, pithy, enigmatic style of Saying 82 suggests its nearness to Jesus, the use of the "Whoever" parallelism suggests a kinship to the early synoptic tradition, and Joachim Jeremias argues that a reconstructed Aramaic form indicates a saying typical of Jesus.<sup>60</sup> In terms of coherence, Saying 82 fits well with the synoptic sayings judged to be closest to Jesus' own words. In terms of multiple attestation, the saying is found across a wide span of literature and in multiple translations: Coptic, Greek, Latin, Armenian.

On the basis of the analysis summarized above, I locate the saying somewhere along a continuum running between the preaching of John, who announces the imminent fire of God's judgment, and the transmitters of the Sayings Tradition (Q), who proclaim the decisive role of Jesus for the irruption of God's Kingdom. At the center of this spectrum stands the historical figure of Jesus, who was influenced by the Baptist and whose message undergirded the proclamation of his earliest followers. The transition from John's preaching of judgment

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<sup>60</sup> Jeremias, *Unknown Sayings of Jesus*, 55.

to the disciples' preaching of Jesus' role in the Kingdom presumes a middle stage in which the judgment of fire is accompanied by the decisive moment of God's Kingdom. This is the message of Jesus, articulated in enigmatic sayings, unadorned metaphors and similes, and unexplained parables.

In substance, *Gos. Thom.* 82a reflects the preaching of John, while 82b reflects the preaching of Jesus; its form and christology parallel the preaching of Q. It is most unlikely that the *Gospel of Thomas* first merges these components, but then fails to link them to its own worldview. The synoptic evangelists made no direct use of this tradition, and they transformed similar traditions. Unlike Q, Saying 82 does not explicitly proclaim the futuristic Kingdom of the Son of Man, and this logion is absent from our text of the Sayings Tradition (Q). It is unlikely that the Baptist proclaimed Jesus as the key to the Kingdom. The most likely site for the uniting of these components—the preaching of John, the nearness of the Kingdom, and the decisive role of its messenger—is in the historical ministry of Jesus. If so, the history of tradition would look like this:

1. John spoke of the fire: he announced a crisis of impending judgment.
2. Jesus spoke of the Kingdom: while influenced by John's thought and language, his ministry centered upon the nearness of God's Reign. He possibly saw his own ministry as the decisive moment for the Kingdom.
3. The transmitters of Q spoke of Jesus: they saw him as the coming Son of Man whose message was definitive for participation in the future Kingdom.
4. The evangelists found traditions like Mark 9:49; Luke 12:49; *Gos. Thom.* 82 enigmatic, and they largely avoided or transformed them: this type of unpolished pronouncement, with its focus on judgment and the imminent Kingdom, was difficult to relate to the needs of their communities.
5. The *Gospel of Thomas*, through unknown means, had access to an authentic saying of Jesus: its enigmatic nature provided the clue for its inclusion in the esoteric world of Thomas.
6. While known to a few early writers, this tradition was lost to wider knowledge for some 1,400 years; it was ignored for another fifty, since it was thought tangential.

Though decisive proof is unattainable, there is a strong possibility and a significant probability that Saying 82 of the *Gospel of Thomas* presents an authentic saying of Jesus.

## 6. Conclusion

If I am correct, particularly about Saying 82, what difference does it make? First, it provides a reminder that we must beware of a monolithic approach to the *Gospel of Thomas*. For decades it was dismissed *in toto* as dependent upon the synoptics. Recently it has become popular to assume Thomas represents an independent account of Jesus' sayings. Jesus' sapiential sayings have been gleaned from *Thomas* in support of a non-eschatological Jesus, with insufficient attention given to redactional layers. *Thomas* has also been used to locate Christian gnosticism at an early stage and to give it a central role in the Christian tradition. Such monolithic treatments of *Thomas* are inadequate.

Secondly, we must be cautious in ascribing simple layers or a simple literary history to a variegated collection like the *Gospel of Thomas*. Scholars who see here an independent witness tend to superimpose upon *Thomas* the reconstruction of Q by Kloppenborg: a foundational layer of sapiential material is followed by a later layer (apocalyptic in Q, gnostic in *Thomas*). This maneuver causes all sorts of incongruencies in *Thomas*.<sup>61</sup> A better explanation is required.

Finally, the presence of authentic sayings in *Thomas* would matter for our picture of Jesus. While Saying 82 is only one piece of evidence, its traits are noteworthy. The image of fire suggests a broader dependence upon the Baptist. In Saying 82 Jesus speaks simply and abruptly in the first person, with no clarification, no claim to any title, and no mention of his death. At the same time, he places himself squarely at the junction where the Kingdom becomes reality: one's nearness or distance to Jesus is decisive. Thus, the most authentic-looking piece of the *Gospel of Thomas* does not support the image of Jesus as a non-eschatological sage. The parable of the sower in Saying 9, the parable of the vineyard in Saying 65, and the rejected prophet pronouncement of Saying 31 also cohere with the image of Jesus as one whose announcement of the Kingdom brings a moment of crisis marked by difficulty, rejection, suffering, and judgment.

If Saying 82 is authentic, we have further reason to be cynical about the Cynic Jesus, agnostic about the gnostic Jesus. This saying,

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<sup>61</sup> Crossan, for example, relegates Saying 82 to a secondary layer because it has only one attestation.



embedded within the esoteric world of the *Gospel of Thomas*, presents another small piece of evidence for one particular strand of primitive Christology: Jesus' ministry—his presence and his call—represents a moment of crisis in which the decision for or against God's Reign hangs in the balance.

Saying 82 may further represent an unapologetic appropriation of John the Baptist and his message as the central framework for Jesus' ministry. This stands in contrast to the narrative appropriation of John in the synoptics and to the absence of John the Baptist in the Pauline world.

Consequently, the *Gospel of Thomas* has an important role to play in the description of the historical Jesus. In order to fully exploit the potential of the Thomas-Jesus connection, renewed attention must be given to the question of methodology. Central to the methodological question are the textual history of *Thomas*, its genre, its tradition history, and proper criteria and goals. Renewed attention must also be given to the question of form. The *Gospel of Thomas* must be investigated as a collection of individual sayings that replicates the rhetoric of Jesus. Finally, the question of content remains open. Each of the 114 sayings in *Thomas* must be investigated on critical grounds to establish its proximity to Jesus. Only in this way can we fully explore the Jesus-Thomas connection and establish the place of *Thomas* in the landscape of early Christianity.

TRADITIONS ABOUT JESUS IN APOCRYPHAL GOSPELS  
(with the Exception of the Gospel of Thomas)

TOBIAS NICKLAS

Christian apocrypha play only a marginal role in the consciousness of many exegetes and church historians, who regard the significance of these texts as secondary in every sense: such marginal literature does not deserve any great attention. For example, W. Michaelis speaks in his collection of apocryphal texts—the second edition of which was published in 1958—in a wholesale manner of “mere imitative continuations,” of a “branch on the side of the tree which once was vigorous and produced many leaves, but later gradually dried up and declined.”<sup>1</sup> Such extreme judgments would scarcely be formulated today, but they seem to linger on, especially where the apocrypha are read more or less explicitly as poor imitations of the canonical texts<sup>2</sup>—or, better, of those texts that became canonical.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. Michaelis, *Die apokryphen Schriften zum Neuen Testament*, 2nd ed., Sammlung Dietrich 129 (Bremen: Schönemann, 1958), xv and xx. Among German scholars, a prominent example is J. B. Bauer, *Die neutestamentlichen Apokryphen*, WB (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968), 12–13, who writes: “Nothing reveals more vividly and convincingly the sureness of touch on the part of the church in the delimitation of the canon—or, to put it more clearly, the fact that the church was guided by the Spirit in this work—than a reading of those texts which it rejected as apocryphal.” On the *status quo* of the investigation of the apocryphal gospels today, cf. also T. J. Kraus and S. E. Porter, “Fragmente unbekannter Evangelien,” in *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung*, ed. C. Marksches and J. Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> This idea can be glimpsed e.g., in H. von Lips, *Der neutestamentliche Kanon. Seine Geschichte und Bedeutung*, Züricher Grundrisse zur Bibel (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2004), 106, who calls the apocrypha “texts dependent on New Testament genres.” For a critique of this way of looking at things, cf. also D. Marguerat, “Pourquoi lire les apocryphes,” in *Le mystère apocryphe. Introduction à une littérature méconnue*, ed. J.-D. Kaestli and D. Marguerat, EssBib 26 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995), 141–145, esp. 142–143. For a similar evaluation of the *status quo* of research into the apocrypha, cf. also J. H. Charlesworth, *Authentic Apocrypha: False and Genuine Christian Apocrypha*, Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins Library (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 1998), ix.

<sup>3</sup> This phrase is inspired by D. Lührmann, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien in griechischer und lateinischer Sprache*, MThSt 59 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 2000); idem, *Die apokryph gewordene Evangelien. Studien zu neuen Texten und*

In recent years, however, we note that the study of Christian apocryphal literature has acquired a fresh impetus. This is attested not only by the publication of numerous collections and editions of texts,<sup>4</sup> but also by the foundation of the *Association pour l'étude de la littérature apocryphe chrétienne* (AELAC) which has complemented its vast project of editions and commentaries in the series *Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum* with the series *Apocryphes. Collection de Poche de l'AELAC*, and edits the periodical *Apocrypha*.

In parallel to this movement (and certainly not independently of it), we note that a number of important scholars of the so-called “Third Quest” for the historical Jesus evaluate the apocryphal gospels anew as sources worth investigation. Here, however, no consensus is in sight. Some authors attribute a high measure of historical reliability to apocryphal texts—e.g., J. D. Crossan, R. W. Funk, or C. W. Hedrick<sup>5</sup>—but

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*neuen Fragen*, NTS 112 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 4: we should speak of texts which have “become apocryphal,” thereby making clear our perspective.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. e.g., F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain, eds., *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens 1* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); P. Geoltrain and J.-D. Kaestli, eds., *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens 2* (Paris 2005); K. Ceming and J. Werlitz, *Die verborgenen Evangelien. Apokryphe Schriften* (Augsburg: Weltbild, 1999 [reprint Wiesbaden: Marix, 2004]); B. D. Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings. A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 2004); D. Lührmann, *Fragmente*; U.-K. Plisch, *Verborgene Worte Jesu. Verworfenen Evangelien. Apokryphe Schriften des frühen Christentums*, Brennpunkt: Die Bibel (Erfurt, Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft, 2000); H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2002; Eng. tr. by Brian McNeil: *Apocryphal Gospels* [London: T&T Clark International, 2003]); idem, *Apokryphe Apostelgeschichten. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 2005); T. Nicklas and J.-M. Roessli, eds., *Apocrypha*, NTP-Sb (Göttingen, 2011 and the project of a fundamentally new edition of the classical collection by Hennecke and Schneemelcher initiated by C. Marksches: “‘Neutestamentliche Apokryphen’. Bemerkungen zu Geschichte und Zukunft einer von Edgar Hennecke im Jahr 1904 begründeten Quellensammlung,” *Apocrypha* 9 (1998): 97–132.

<sup>5</sup> On this question, cf. J. D. Crossan, *Four Other Gospels. Shadows on the Contours of the Canon* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985); idem, *The Cross That Spoke. The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) (on the Gospel of Peter); idem, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); R. W. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels. The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2nd ed. 1996); R. W. Funk, *Honest to Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); idem et al., *The Acts of Jesus. The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998); C. W. Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions. The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994); idem, “The Tyranny of the Synoptic Jesus,” *Semeia* 44 (1988): 1–8. Criticism of the *Jesus Seminar* founded by R. W. Funk can be found e.g., in M. A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History. How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 75–81. A particularly clear line is taken by L. T. Johnson, *The Real Jesus. The Misguided Quest for the*

others such as J. P. Meier or N. T. Wright reject them more or less explicitly as potential sources for the investigation of the historical Jesus.<sup>6</sup> One scholar who takes an intermediate position is D. E. Aune.<sup>7</sup>

The center of interest is without doubt the *Gospel of Thomas*, to which a separate essay in this book is dedicated; but in this context, many other texts too are often mentioned, and their value as sources is a matter of scholarly debate.<sup>8</sup>

## 1. Some Important Texts

### 1.1. *The Gospel of Peter*

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the existence of a “Gospel according to Peter” was known only from the testimonies of some early Christian writers (e.g., Serapion of Antioch in Eusebius of Caesarea, *Hist. eccl.* 6.12.1–6; Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 10.17).<sup>9</sup> It is only since the discovery of the so-called Akhmîm Codex (P. Cair. 10759) in

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*Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1996), 1–27; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 29–35.

<sup>6</sup> This is especially clear in J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, 1: The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991). See however also N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London and Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. D. E. Aune, “Assessing the Historical Value of the Apocryphal Jesus Traditions. A Critique of Conflicting Methodologies,” in *Der historische Jesus. Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 243–272, who also discusses in detail the methodologies employed by Meier and Crossan.

<sup>8</sup> The disputed concept of “gospel” is intentionally understood here in a broad sense to include every form of traditions about Jesus in a narrative form, as well as collections of logia (including logia of the risen Jesus), in order that questions of genre may not lead *a priori* to the rejection of the potential historicity of a text. Similarly, the concept of “apocryphal” is understood so broadly that e.g., writings from Nag Hammadi can be categorized as “apocryphal.” On this problem, cf. e.g., J. van der Vliet, “The Coptic Gnostic Texts as Christian Apocryphal Literature,” in *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses, Münster, 20.–26. Juli 1996 2: Schrifttum, Sprache und Gedankenwelt*, ed. S. Emmel et al., Sprachen und Kulturen des christlichen Orients 6.2 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999), 553–562.

<sup>9</sup> For detailed information, cf. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, eds., *Das Petrus-evangelium und die Petrusapokalypse. Die griechischen Fragmente mit deutscher und englischer Übersetzung*, GCS NF 11: Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 11–23. See also T. Nicklas and M. Vinzent, “Petrusevangelium,” in C. Markschies and J. Schröter, ed., *Antike christliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* (Tübingen 2011).

1886/87, a manuscript from the late sixth or possibly early seventh century which was used as a burial object, that scholars have possessed at least a fragment of the *Gospel of Peter*.<sup>10</sup> However, even this simple affirmation is not unproblematic:

*First*, the identification of the text, which begins in the middle of a sentence and ends in the middle of another sentence, is not based on a title or a *subscriptio* containing the words: “Gospel according to Peter.”<sup>11</sup> It is inferred from the final surviving sentence, in which Peter speaks in the first person singular. Since ancient Christian authors never speak of more than one “Gospel according to Peter,” it has been argued that only this text can be the one to which those authors refer. This is correct, but we should note that we know of other ancient Christian texts in which Peter appears as a first-person narrator, and these cannot be identified with the *Gospel of Peter* (cf. e.g., the *Revelation of Peter 2*; *Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles* 1.30–31 [NHC V, 1]).<sup>12</sup>

*Secondly*, although this inference is certainly very plausible, even if it is correct, we must bear in mind a second problem, viz. that the concrete textual form of a *Gospel of Peter* that for example Serapion of Antioch may have read at the end of the second century, need not be identical with the text which we find—in fragmentary form—in the Akhmîm Codex. Rather, we must assume that in the course of its transmission, the form of the text was altered to a greater or lesser extent.<sup>13</sup> This assumption is strengthened not only by the fact that the

<sup>10</sup> On the Akhmîm Codex, cf. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium*, 25–31.

<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the edition by D. Lührmann is open to misunderstanding on this point: *Fragmente*, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. also T. Nicklas, “Ein ‘neutestamentliches Apokryphon’? Zum umstrittenen Kanonbezug des sog. ‘Petrusevangeliums’,” *VigChr* 56 (2002): 260–272, esp. 266.

<sup>13</sup> Nearly a century ago, O. Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Litteratur 1: Vom Ausgang des Apostolischen Zeitalters bis zum Ende des zweiten Jahrhunderts*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1913 [reprint Darmstadt: WBG, 1962]), 368, wrote: “The most compelling proof of the popularity of the apocrypha is supplied by the remarkable character of their manuscript transmission. Parts of both the original texts and the translations are found even today in an extreme variety of reworkings, expansions, and abbreviations. There is surely no other literary field in which, with a frequency comparable to the apocrypha, each individual manuscript represents an individual text.” Cf. also the recent reflections by J. Tromp, “Zur Edition apokrypher Texte: Am Beispiel des griechischen Lebens Adams und Evas,” in *Recent Developments in Textual Criticism. New Testament, Other Early Christian and Jewish Literature. Papers Read at a Noster Conference in Münster, January 4–6, 2001*, ed. W. Weren and D.-A. Koch, STAR 8 (Assen: Royal van Gorcum, 2003), 189–205.

fragment of the Greek *Revelation of Peter* which is also found in the Akhmîm Codex very obviously belongs to a late redactional stage of this work,<sup>14</sup> but also—and above all—by P. Oxy. XLI 2949, the only other fragment known today that can be assigned with some measure of certainty to the *Gospel of Peter*: its extremely fragmentary text displays clear divergences from the parallels in the Akhmîm Codex.<sup>15</sup>

This means that the first result of our investigation is the following: *One should not too simply equate the surviving text of the “Gospel of Peter” with the text that was read by early Christian authors of the second or third century.*

This naturally reduces the value of the text in P. Cair. 10759 for the “quest of the historical Jesus.” It must also be asked whether it is methodologically possible (or meaningful) to undertake literary-critical analyses and identify hypothetical sources in a writing where textual criticism cannot with certainty identify the “original.”<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, we must be very cautious about accepting the reconstructions of a possible *Cross Gospel* or of earlier literary stages of the text which would point to a very early period.<sup>17</sup>

We cannot exclude the possibility that the surviving *Gospel of Peter* contains strands of earlier traditions, nor indeed that we may find such traditions in portions of the text that still await discovery. However, the value of the surviving text for the quest for the historical Jesus is extremely modest, for the following reasons.

*First*, the text seems hardly at all to reflect knowledge of the historical circumstances in Palestine at the time of Jesus: for the *Gospel*

<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it can even be regarded as a witness to another part of the Gospel of Peter. For more details see T. Nicklas, “Zwei petrinische Apokryphen im Akhmim-Codex? Kritische Anmerkungen und Gedanken,” *Apocrypha* 16 (2005): 75–96.

<sup>15</sup> On the problems connected with this textual witness, cf. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium*, 55–58.

<sup>16</sup> On the problems involved in speaking of the “original texts” of ancient Christian writings (here, with reference to the New Testament), cf. the suggestive reflections by E. J. Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term ‘Original Text’ in New Testament Textual Criticism,” *HThR* 92 (1999): 245–281.

<sup>17</sup> On this, cf. above all J. D. Crossan, *Cross That Spoke*. Cf. however also A. Dewey, “Time to Murder and Create’: Visions and Revisions in the Gospel of Peter,” *Semeia* 49 (1990): 101–128. Crossan’s reconstruction has been criticized from a great variety of perspectives; we need not list these in detail here. Cf. e.g., J. H. Charlesworth and C. A. Evans, “Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus. Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 479–553, esp. 504–514, and the bibliography given there.

of *Peter*, the main figure in the trial of Jesus is “Herod the king” (v. 2), who pronounces the sentence on Jesus, and Pilate has to ask him for the corpse of Jesus, who is in fact not yet crucified (v. 4). Jesus is handed over to the people, and it is clear that it is they themselves who crucify him.<sup>18</sup> Historically speaking, this constellation is completely unthinkable; it can be understood only on the basis of a perspective which intensifies the tendency in the canonical gospels to emphasize the negative role of the “Jews” in Jesus’ trial, whereas the Roman authorities are portrayed as positively as possible.<sup>19</sup> It is true that Herod plays a minor role in the passion of Jesus as early as Luke 23:6–12, but a genuine collaboration between him and Pilate is found only in second-century texts (Justin, *I Apol.* 40.5–6, possibly on the basis of Ps 2 LXX); and parallels to the idea that it was Herod who gave the order for Jesus’ crucifixion are found only later (e.g., in the Syriac *Didascalia* 21; Melito, *Paschal Homily* 93; *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* 26; Manichaean *Bema Psalm* 241). Besides this, the text suggests that its author may not have been aware of the distinction between Herod the Great and his son Herod Antipas (cf. however Mark 6:14 and John 4:46).<sup>20</sup> Similar (sometimes even clearer) tendencies to confuse the two figures are found in other apocrypha of the second and third centuries too, e.g., the *Acts of Peter* 8.

*Secondly*, the Christology of the text likewise points to an advanced stage of early Christian tradition. The evaluation of the text as a document of docetic Christology—due primarily to the testimony of

<sup>18</sup> The one-sidedly negative portrait of the “Jews” in the *Gospel of Peter* is not however completely consistent. For further details, cf. T. Nicklas, “Die ‘Juden’ im Petrus-evangelium (PCair. 10759). Ein Testfall,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 206–221.

<sup>19</sup> On the hostility of the text to the Romans, cf. the brief remarks by C. Bussmann, “Josef, der Freund des Pilatus und des Herrn’ (Petrusevangelium 2). Ein Blick auf das Verhältnis Ecclesia-Imperium in den sogenannten Apokryphen zum Neuen Testament,” in *Rom und das himmlische Jerusalem. Die frühen Christen zwischen Anpassung und Ablehnung*, ed. R. von Haehling (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000), 85–96, esp. 90–91.—But for a more balanced view see now H. Omerzu, “Die Pilatusgestalt im Petrus-evangelium,” in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertexte*, ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, TU 158 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 327–347.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. also K. Beyschlag, *Die verborgene Überlieferung von Christus* (München and Hamburg: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), 44–45: “Historically, the entire picture is imaginary. Obviously, the author is completely unaware that ‘King Herod’ had died long before the date at which Jesus was executed. He confuses... the Galilean tetrarch Herod Antipas... with this Herod, and this leads him to construct a Jewish authority to perform executions which... did not in the least exist in Palestine at the time of Jesus’ death.”

Serapion, mentioned above—seems indeed to have been abandoned, not only because scholars have found it necessary to emphasize the problematic character of the concept of docetism,<sup>21</sup> but also because the text of the *Gospel of Peter* has been given a fresh interpretation. Nevertheless, a number of traits in the text, such as the consistent use of the term κύριος for Jesus<sup>22</sup> and the (probable) interpretation of his death as a martyrdom, exhibit a closeness to writings such as the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*<sup>23</sup> and point clearly to a date in the second century. Similarly, the tendency to strengthen the role of Peter and to underplay that of the women at the tomb seems more in keeping with a late period in the gospel tradition.<sup>24</sup> A late date is also indicated by the fiction that the text is the work of Peter himself.<sup>25</sup> Less significant for the dating of the text—but an important indicator of its scanty historical credibility—seem to me its tendencies to exaggerate the miraculous element in the resurrection of Jesus, which takes place (doubtless for apologetic reasons) before a large number of eye-witnesses.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The decisive impulse here came from N. Brox, “Doketismus’—eine Problemanzeige,” *ZKG* 95 (1984): 301–314.

<sup>22</sup> This view is also taken by H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien*, 117. “The Lord” is nowhere given the name “Jesus of Nazareth,” or even the title “Christ.”

<sup>23</sup> For further details, cf. P. M. Head, “On the Christology of the Gospel of Peter,” *VigChr* 46 (1992): 209–224, esp. 212–213. See also T. Nicklas, “Die Leiblichkeit der Gepeinigten. Das Petrus-evangelium und frühchristliche Märtyrerakten,” in *Martyrdom and Persecution in Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. J. Leemans, BETL 241 (Leuven: Peters, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> However, caution is required in using this argument: a variety in the presentation of the role of women need not reflect diachronic historical developments, but may just as well reflect a variety of synchronous perspectives. On this problem, cf. especially A. Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*, HTS 51 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 65–71.

<sup>25</sup> This is the view of W. Rebell, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen und Apostolische Väter* (München: Kaiser, 1992), 97.

<sup>26</sup> The interest in the miraculous did not intensify with the passage of time; rather, this is a sign of the milieu in which the text was composed. As yet, scarcely any detailed grammatical investigations which would permit us to locate the text on the basis of linguistic particularities, have been carried out (but cf. J. Karavidopoulos, “‘Hapax legomena’ et autres mots rares dans l’Évangile Apocryphe de Pierre,” *Apocrypha* 8 [1997]: 225–230; F. Weissengruber, “Grammatische Untersuchungen zum Petrus-evangelium,” in *Das Petrus-evangelium*, ed. A. Fuchs, SNTU B 2 (Freistadt: Plöchl, 1978), 121–144, and now: T. J. Kraus, “Die Sprache des Petrus-evangeliums? Methodische Anmerkungen und Vorüberlegungen,” in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertexte*, ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, TU 158 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 61–76, and S. E. Porter, “The Greek of the Gospel of Peter,” *ibidem*, 77–90). We must also draw attention to the problem that *individual* linguistic



*Thirdly*, the only logion of Jesus—for otherwise “the Lord” is silent (cf. v. 10)—in the *Gospel of Peter* is found in v. 19a. The sentence ἡ δύναμις μου, ἡ δύναμις, κατέλειψάς με is best understood against the background of Mark 15:34 par. Matt 27:46. The last words of Jesus in these two synoptic scenes must already be understood as a sign of theological reflection on the event of the passion with the aid of Ps 22; here, this is further developed by means of the circumlocution δύναμις for God.<sup>27</sup> This makes it pointless to assert that these are the words of the historical Jesus.

*Fourthly*, it follows that the *Gospel of Peter* is less valuable as a source of information about the “historical Jesus” than as a witness to the further developments (doubtless historically conditioned) of the texts and traditions about the passion and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth which continued to be handed on both in writing and by word of mouth. It is also a witness to developments in theology and possibly also in piety. And it is a text that can stimulate the discussion of the role of scripture in early Christian reflection on the Christ event.<sup>28</sup>

## 1.2. Unidentifiable Fragments in Greek

### 1.2.1.

One of the most important candidates for a fresh evaluation in the context of investigation into the historical Jesus is the so-called “unknown Gospel” on P. Egerton 2 and P. Cologne 255 (occasionally, secondary literature refers somewhat unfortunately to this text as the “Egerton” Gospel).

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observations do not permit a dating, since it is possible that these details entered the text only in the process of its transmission. Cf. however the methodologically problematic approach by F. Weissengruber, “Zur Datierung des Petrusevangeliums,” in *Das Petrusevangelium*, ed. A. Fuchs, 117–120.

<sup>27</sup> On the other differences vis-à-vis the canonical texts, on the question whether this logion belongs within Gnosis (e.g., in Valentinianism), and on the interpretation sketched above, cf. P. M. Head, “Christology,” 213–214.

<sup>28</sup> The first to make this point was M. Dibelius, “Die alttestamentlichen Motive in der Leidensgeschichte des Petrus- und des Johannesevangeliums,” in idem, *Botschaft und Geschichte 1: Zur Evangelienforschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953), 221–247 (first published in 1918). Cf. however also the observations by H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1990), 221–230, and T. Hieke, “Das Petrusevangelium vom Alten Testament her gelesen,” in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertexte*, ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, TU 158 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 91–115.

P. Egerton 2 (= P. Lond. Christ. 1) came via Egyptian dealers in antiquities into the possession of the British National Library. When the manuscript was published by H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat in 1935, it quickly caused a sensation,<sup>29</sup> since the two editors dated the fragment to the mid-second century. At that time, this made P. Egerton 2 the earliest known Christian manuscript.<sup>30</sup> Since this manuscript was testimony to an apocryphal gospel, the significance of at least some ancient Christian apocrypha for early Christianity came to be seen in a new light.

P. Egerton 2 consists of remnants of three leaves from a codex, written in one column on both sides (11.5 × 9.2 cm; 11.8 × 9.7 cm; 6 × 2.3 cm).<sup>31</sup> It is no longer possible to specify with certainty the height of the pages, since the lower margin of the fragments is missing. The lines are ca. 9 cm in breadth, with a margin on the side. A little more than fifty years after the edition by Bell and Skeat, the question of the dating of P. Egerton 2 was posed anew by the discovery and edition of P. Cologne 255, a fragment measuring 5.5 × 3 cm, which comes from the same papyrus codex as P. Egerton 2.<sup>32</sup> Not only does P. Cologne 255 offer an expansion of fragment 1 of P. Egerton 2 from line 19 *verso* and line 39 *recto*, amounting to five lines in each case; an apostrophe between the consonants γ and κ of the word ἀνενεγκον (line 44) argues for a late dating of the manuscript to ca. 200.<sup>33</sup>

This somewhat later dating of the only surviving *manuscript* of the “unknown gospel” is not in the least an argument that could be leveled

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<sup>29</sup> H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat, eds., *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1935): “[I]t is unquestionably the earliest specifically Christian manuscript yet discovered in Egypt” (1). For a new commentary on the “unknown gospel” see now T. Nicklas, “The ‘Unknown Gospel’ on Papyrus Egerton 2 (+ Papyrus Colojne 255),” in T. J. Kraus, M. J. Kruger and T. Nicklas, *Gospel Fragments*, Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009, 9–120).

<sup>30</sup> P. Egerton 2 lost this rank shortly afterwards, thanks to P. Ryl. 3.457, better known as P52 (John Rylands Library, Manchester, Gr.P. 457), from the first half of the second century, which contains remnants of John 18:31–33, 37–38.

<sup>31</sup> This also makes the manuscript one of the earliest witnesses to the ancient Christian preference for the codex rather than the scroll.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. M. Gronewald, “255. Unbekanntes Evangelium oder Evangelienharmonie (Fragment aus dem ‘Evangelium Egerton’), in *Kölner Papyri (P. Koln) 6*, ed. M. Gronewald et al., ARWAW. PapyCol VII (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1987), 136–145, esp. 136: “The little fragment comes from the same papyrus codex as P. Lond. Christ. 1, better known as P. Egerton 2.”

<sup>33</sup> Cf. M. Gronewald, “Unbekanntes Evangelium,” 137.

against an early dating of the *text* in P. Egerton 2 and P. Cologne 255.<sup>34</sup> The arguments *pro* and *contra* in this question depend on the text alone—which however presents a number of problems.

*First*, the sequence in which the individual fragments should be ordered within the text as a whole is unresolved. Originally, it was thought probable that P. Egerton 2 fr. 1 *verso*, a dispute between Jesus and the “teachers of the law” or “the rulers of the people,” should be read *before* fr. 1 *recto*, which narrates an attempt to stone Jesus and then speaks of the healing of a leper. This makes sense *per se*, since the attempted stoning would be regarded as the conclusion to the dispute. However, the discovery of P. Cologne 255, which follows on fr. 1, prompts the question whether—on the analogy of the relation between the text which we now have and Johannine parallels—the reversed sequence is more likely.<sup>35</sup> A certain decision is not possible; besides this, the relationship between fr. 2 and the text as a whole is not completely clear. Fr. 3 offers so little text (a parallel to John 10:30–32 is probable) that it is impossible to reconstruct it, still less to locate it in the text as a whole.

*Secondly*, the text of fr. 2 *verso*, which very obviously appears to go back to a tradition different from that of the canonical gospels, is so fragmentary that one can only suppose in very general terms that it describes a miracle (perhaps a miraculous gift) which may perhaps be the response to an introductory question and has something to do with the river Jordan.<sup>36</sup>

Since space does not permit a detailed discussion of the numerous problems associated with the “unknown gospel,” let me mention only a few important points with regard to the quest for the historical Jesus. The relationship between the “unknown Gospel” and the canonical Gospels is a matter of dispute. While some exegetes maintain the total independence of this text from the canonical texts, others hold it probable that it depends on all four canonical Gospels.<sup>37</sup> The following ideas seem to me to be plausible.

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<sup>34</sup> Even with this later dating, the “unknown Gospel” is still attested at an earlier date than the canonical Gospel of Mark, the oldest known witness to which, P45, is dated to the third century.

<sup>35</sup> This view is taken e.g., by D. Lührmann, *Die apokryph gewordenen Evangelien*, 137.

<sup>36</sup> The attempted reconstructions diverge so widely that it is impossible to answer the further question about the potential historicity of the narrative.

<sup>37</sup> For example, J. B. Daniels, *The Egerton Gospel: Its Place in Early Christianity* (unpublished dissertation at Claremont), Ann Arbor: University Microfiches 1990, pleads for independence vis-à-vis the canonical gospels; he is followed by H. Koester,

(1) The discovery of P. Cologne 255 makes it more plausible to postulate a close and probably literary link between the “unknown gospel” and the Gospel of John. Here, the most likely assumption is that the “unknown gospel” in its present form presupposes the Gospel of John.<sup>38</sup>

(2) A number of parallels to the synoptic texts can also be observed. Here, I believe that it is much more difficult to determine whether the “unknown gospel” presupposes one or more of the canonical Gospels in a written form. At the least, the knowledge of synoptic traditions is extremely probable.<sup>39</sup>

(3) Unlike Tatian’s Diatessaron, however, the “unknown gospel” should not be regarded as a mere harmonization of the texts that had become canonical. Where canonical (or related) texts or traditions are adopted and reworked, this is done in a manner that shows that the “unknown gospel” lays claim to an autonomous position in the history of early Christian theology.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, it is also clear, at least on the basis of fr. 2 *verso*, that in addition to the texts and traditions

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*Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1990), 205–216. The opposite position is asserted vehemently by F. Neiryck, “The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark,” in *Evangelica II 1982–1991*, BETL 89 (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 715–772, esp. 753–759, 771–772; idem, “Papyrus Egerton 2 and the Healing of the Leper,” *ibid.*, 773–785. Many scholars agree with Neiryck. Cf. also T. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus zum viergestaltigen Evangelium* WUNT 120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 300–368. For a more detailed discussion see now T. Nicklas, “P.Egerton 2”; and idem, “Das ‘unbekannte Evangelium’ auf P.Egerton 2 und die ‘Schrift,’” *Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt* 33 (2008): 41–65.

<sup>38</sup> This view is also taken by J. W. Pryor, “Papyrus Egerton 2 and the Fourth Gospel,” *ABR* 37 (1989): 1–13; E. Norelli, “La papyrus Egerton 2 et sa localisation dans la tradition sur Jésus. Nouvel examen du fragment 1,” in *Jésus de Nazareth. Nouvelles approches d’une énigme*, ed. D. Marguerat et al., *MoBi* 38 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1998), 397–435, esp. 427–430; T. Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert. Studien zur vorirenäischen Aneignung und Auslegung des vierten Evangeliums in christlicher und christlich-agnostischer Literatur*, Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000), 206–207.

<sup>39</sup> On this point, I follow the cautious argumentation by E. Norelli, “La papyrus Egerton 2.” A similar position is taken by J. W. Pryor, “Papyrus Egerton 2.”

<sup>40</sup> I have indicated important aspects of this topic in my Habilitation dissertation *Christliche Apokryphen lesen*. For example, the question discussed in fr. 2 *recto*, whether it is permissible to give kings that which is appropriate to their sovereignty, is formulated in a manner completely different from the question about tax in Mark 12:13–17 par., which is often adduced as a parallel. An investigation of the text which does not concentrate exclusively on the question of literary dependencies shows that it is more than merely a “free retelling of individual pericopae from all four canonical Gospels” (as is maintained by T. Heckel, *Vom Evangelium des Markus*, 308).

from canonical gospels known to us, the author drew on unknown material. Unfortunately, however, the condition of fr. 2 *verso* allows only hypotheses about the exact profile of these traditions, and this means that no reliable consequences can be drawn on the historical level.—Since it survives only in a fragmentary form, the “unknown gospel” in P. Egerton 2 and P. Cologne 255 can be used only to a very limited extent as a witness in the quest for the historical Jesus, thanks to what it tells us about the development (and possibilities of development) of synoptic traditions and to the possibility that it may once have contained extra-canonical information about Jesus—and we may at least hope that this information will one day be rediscovered.

In addition to the relatively extensive manuscript P. Egerton 2, some other fragments bear witness to texts which with a greater or lesser degree of certainty can be categorized as remnants of apocryphal gospels (or as excerpts or quotations from such texts, etc.), but which cannot be assigned to any text mentioned specifically by ancient Christian authors.

### 1.2.2.

The best known of these texts is certainly the narrative in P. Oxy. V 840, which most likely comes from an apocryphal Gospel.<sup>41</sup> On a total of 45 surviving lines on a parchment leaf from a miniature codex measuring 7.4 × 8.8 cm,<sup>42</sup> probably dating from the fourth century, we find a text which recalls synoptic scenes and which can be divided into two parts. Up to the middle of line 7, fragments of logia of Jesus, probably addressed to his disciples, have been preserved. A space in the manuscripts separates this section from the second part, a dispute between Jesus and a Pharisee high or chief priest about questions of cultic

<sup>41</sup> *Editio princeps*: B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, “840. Fragment of an Uncanonical Gospel,” in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 5 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1908), 1–10, fig. 1. For a detailed discussion of the text and its backgrounds see now M. J. Kruger, *The Gospel of the Savior. An Analysis of P.Oxy. 840 and its place in Gospel Traditions of Early Christianity*, TENT 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2005). I disagree with Kruger’s quite optimistic view of the author’s knowledge about the circumstances in the Jerusalem temple. See T. Nicklas, “Critical Study: M. Kruger, The Gospel of the Savior,” in *Apocrypha* 17 (2006): 329–336.

<sup>42</sup> In the past, P. Oxy. V 840 was often held to be an amulet, but this identification is doubtful. We may agree with M. J. Kruger, “P. Oxy. 840: Amulet or Miniature Codex,” *JThS* 53 (2002): 83–94, and T. J. Kraus, “P. Oxy. V 840—Amulett oder Miniaturkodex? Grundsätzliche und ergänzende Anmerkungen,” *ZAC* 8 (2004), that the fragment is a miniature codex.

purity (the closest canonical parallels are Mark 7:1–23 and Matt 15:1–20). We see Jesus entering the ἀγνευτήριον (“inner sanctuary”?) of the (or a?) temple. A Pharisee ἀρχιερεύς named Levi appears and asks Jesus who gave him permission to enter the sanctuary and to look at the sacred vessels. Jesus and his disciples are accused of being in a state of insufficient purity. Jesus then asks the priest if *he* is pure. When the priest answers in the affirmative, Jesus berates him as “blind”: in the waters in which the priest has bathed, swine lie day and night, and he has rubbed down the skin of his body as do the prostitutes and female flute players, who nevertheless are full of scorpions and all evil within. But Jesus and his disciples have bathed in waters (of life?/of eternal life?). At this point, the fragment breaks off.

From the very beginning, scholarly discussion of this text has centered almost exclusively on its alleged value as a source with reference to the question of the historical Jesus. For a long time, positions were starkly divided—for example, while J. Jeremias spoke of a “powerful witness to the authority of Jesus,”<sup>43</sup> T. Zahn dismissed the text as “nonsense that runs counter to history.”<sup>44</sup>

Scholars have questioned whether a Pharisee as ἀρχιερεύς is conceivable at the time of Jesus, and various translations of this noun have therefore been proposed;<sup>45</sup> whether the buildings in the temple mentioned in this text are compatible with those of the temple in Jerusalem; and whether the text reflects Jewish practices at the time of Jesus.

Although the scene in the temple described in P. Oxy. V 840 does seem in principle to be compatible with the practices in the temple in Jerusalem in the first century,<sup>46</sup> we should not suppose that we have here the historically reliable account of a detailed scene that can be

<sup>43</sup> J. Jeremias, “Der Zusammenstoß Jesu mit dem pharisäischen Oberpriester auf dem Tempelplatz. Zu Pap. Ox. 840,” in *Seminarium Neotestamenticum Upsaliense*, ed. *Coniectanea Neotestamentica XI in honorem Antonii Fridrichsen sexagenarii* (Lund and Copenhagen: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1947), 97–108, esp. 97. See also idem, *Unbekannte Jesusworte. Unter Mitwirkung von O. Hofius völlig neu bearbeitete Ausgabe* (Ath ANT 16; (Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 3rd ed. 1963): Gerd Mohn, 50–62, esp. 52: “a pearl of Gospel narrative art.”

<sup>44</sup> T. Zahn, “Neue Bruchstücke nichtkanonischer Evangelien,” *NKZ* 19 (1908): 371–386, esp. 379–380.

<sup>45</sup> It is in this context that we should understand the recent critical remarks by O. Hofius in his review of D. Lührmann, *Fragmente apokryph gewordener Evangelien*, *MThSt* 59 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 2000); *ThLZ* 126 (2001): 906–907, esp. 907. Hofius argues that ἀρχιερεύς should be translated as “chief priest,” not as “high priest.”

<sup>46</sup> This is the position taken by M. J. Kruger in the abstract of his dissertation.

located in the life of Jesus. The Jewish opponent of Jesus (Pharisee + high/chief priest + Levi) can be viewed as a “synthesis” of all the designations of Jewish opponents in early Christian texts, and the dialogue seems to presuppose the existence of several canonical passages (Luke 11:37–52; Matt 23:1–39; John 7:1–52; John 13:10; Mark 7:1–23). This text, which may have its origin in a Jewish Christian group in Syria in the mid-second century, thus presupposes all the canonical gospels.<sup>47</sup> Accordingly, although it is not unlikely that the historical Jesus was in fact involved in discussions of the *halakhah* about purity,<sup>48</sup> we may be certain that this text offers us no new information about the Jesus of history. This, however, does not mean that P. Oxy. V 840 is devoid of historical interest: the text reflects questions and debates which were important to Christian groups of (probably) the second century. P. Oxy. V 840 is also an early archaeological testimony to Christianity in ancient Upper Egypt, where interest in this text obviously continued into the fourth century, when it was written down on the miniature codex.

Something comparable can be said (in varying degrees) of each of the other known fragments:

### 1.2.3.

P. Oxy. II 210 (third century)<sup>49</sup> is a fragment measuring 17.2 × 9.4 cm of a papyrus written on both sides which unfortunately has survived only in a very fragmentary form.<sup>50</sup> The suggestion by the first editors,

<sup>47</sup> Cf. M. J. Kruger, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> On this, cf. e.g., T. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Purity?*, CB NT 38 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002), 256–260, esp. 260: “Thus we must treat this tradition [viz., P. Oxy. V 840] as another piece of evidence retaining the memory of displaying a controversial attitude to purity, which was motivated by giving more weight to inner purity than outer purification.”

<sup>49</sup> *Editio princeps*: B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri 2* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1899), 9–10. New editions with a large number of different textual decisions have been made by C. H. Roberts, “An Early Christian Papyrus,” in *Miscellanea Papirologica Ramon Roca-Puig en el Seu Vuitantè Aniversari* (Barcelona: Fundació Salvador Vives Casajuana, 1987), 93–196, and S. E. Porter, “POxy II 210 as an Apocryphal Gospel and the Development of Egyptian Christianity,” in *Atti del XXII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia, Firenze, 23–29 agosto 1998*, ed. I. Andorlini et al., 2 (Florence: Istituto papirologico G. Vitelli, 2001), 1095–1118. For further information cf. *idem*, “Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 201 (P. Oxy. II 210),” in *Antike christliche Apokryphen*, ed. C. Marksches and J. Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Only two or three letters are legible on a second, very small fragment of the same papyrus.

Grenfell and Hunt, that this text comes from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*,<sup>51</sup> was not accepted by other scholars. Where the text can be reconstructed, we find parallels to Mark 10:17–19 par. and Matt 7:17–19 par., reflections of the Johannine “I”-language, but also parallels to texts in the Corpus Paulinum. It is relatively probable that this is a fragment of an apocryphal gospel which already presupposes canonical gospels and offers a new interpretation of these in connection with texts and motifs from the epistolary literature of the New Testament, in the context of Egyptian Christianity.<sup>52</sup>

#### 1.2.4.

P. Merton II 51,<sup>53</sup> a papyrus fragment measuring only 3.9 × 5.3 cm, is dated by its editors to the third century. The text is reconstructed with the help of canonical parallels; it may be a passage from an apocryphal gospel, with a parallel to Luke 6:7 (cf. also *Gos. Thom.* 45).

#### 1.2.5.

P. Oxy. X 1224<sup>54</sup> (fourth century) is the name given to two papyrus leaves, written on both sides, from a codex which was originally more extensive. Two columns can be discerned on the larger fragment 2 (6.3 × 13.1 cm). The text that can be reconstructed displays parallels to Mark 2:15–17 par.; Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27–28; Mark 9:40; Luke 9:50. J. Jeremias has argued in favor of the authenticity of the apocryphal logion: [*He who today*] *stands far off will tomorrow be [near to you]* on fr. 2 recto col. 1.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 2, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. S. E. Porter, “POxy II as an Apocryphal Gospel,” 1108.

<sup>53</sup> *Editio princeps*: B. R. Rees, H. I. Bell, and J. W. B. Barnes, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Greek papyri in the Collection of Wilfred Merton* 2 (Dublin: Walker, 1959), 1–4. For information, cf. D. Lührmann, *Fragmente*, 155–157, and T. J. Kraus, “Papyrus Merton 51 (P. Merton II 51),” in *Antike christliche Apokryphen*, ed. C. Marksches and J. Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>54</sup> *Editio princeps*: B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 10 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1914), 1–10. For information, cf. also D. Lührmann, *Fragmente*, 170–177, and T. J. Kraus, “Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1224 (P. Oxy. X 224),” *Antike christliche Apokryphen*, ed. C. Marksches and J. Schröter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Cf. J. Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*, 91–92, esp. 92: “It is hard to imagine what objection could be made to the genuineness of this brief sentence. The following arguments favor authenticity: (1) the fact that it is coupled with two well known (and freely quoted) logia of Jesus; (2) the antithetical *parallelismus membrorum*, which Jesus liked to use [...]; (3) the contents.”



## 1.2.6.

P. Oxy. LX 4009<sup>56</sup> is a papyrus fragment 9 cm in height and 2.9 cm in breadth, written on both sides. It is dated to the second century, or possibly to the third. Although no reconstruction of the text on the *verso* has so far been successful, D. Lührmann, drawing on synoptic logia (Matt 9:37–38 par.; Matt 10:16b [*Gos. Thom.* 39]; Matt 10:16a par; Matt 10:27 par.) and 2 Clement 5.2–4, has presented a reconstruction at least of the *recto* of the papyrus.<sup>57</sup> This means that at any rate we have here a parallel to an apocryphal logion of Jesus which is attested by the apostolic fathers at an early date.

## 1.2.7.

The so-called Fayyûm Gospel, P. Vindob. G 2325, is a small fragment measuring 3.5 × 4.3 cm of a papyrus written on one side, which can be dated to the third century CE.<sup>58</sup> The fragmentary text which has survived may come from an apocryphal gospel. It offers a parallel to Mark 14:27–30 par. (without v. 28).<sup>59</sup> Linguistically, the occurrence of two New Testament *hapax legomena* (ἀλεκτρούων for “cockereel” and κοκκύζω for “crowing”) is remarkable.

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<sup>56</sup> *Editio princeps*: D. Lührmann and P. J. Parsons, “4009. Gospel of Peter?,” in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 60 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1994), 1–5. Cf. also D. Lührmann, “POx 4009. Ein neues Fragment des Petrus-evangeliums,” *NT* 35 (1993): 390–410; idem, *Fragmente*, 78–79; T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium*, 59–63.

<sup>57</sup> We should however note that the “gospel” attested in 2 Clement itself clearly refers back to the canonical gospels. On this point, cf. Lührmann, *Fragmente*, 132–137.

<sup>58</sup> On the edition, cf. now T. J. Kraus, “P. Vindob. G 2325: Das sogenannte Fayûm-Evangelium—Neuedition und kritische Rückschlüsse,” *ZAC* 5 (2001): 197–212; T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium*, 65–68, with a reconstruction differing somewhat from that of D. Lührmann, *Fragmente*, 80–81, which makes it improbable that this text comes from the Gospel of Peter. Cf. also T. J. Kraus, “P. Vindob. G 2325: Einige Modifikationen von Transkription und Rekonstruktion,” *ZAC* 9 (2005) and idem, “P. Vindob. G 2325: The So-called Fayum-Gospel—Re-Edition and Some Critical Conclusions,” in his *Ad fontes. Original Manuscripts and their Significance for Studying Early Christianity. Selected Essays*, TENT 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 69–94.

<sup>59</sup> On this, cf. J. B. Bauer, “Schriftrezeption in den neutestamentlichen Apokryphen,” in *Stimuli. Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum: Festschrift Ernst Dassmann*, ed. G. Schöllgen and C. Scholten, JAC E 23 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 43–48, esp. 44–45.

## 1.2.8.

P. Dura 10 is a nearly rectangular papyrus fragment measuring 9.5 × 10.5 cm written on one side. At least parts of its fourteen lines of Greek text are legible. It was discovered in March 1933, in the course of excavations in Dura-Europos in Syria (destroyed in 256/257). The fragment (0212 in the list of Gregory-Aland) can be dated to the third century. It contains a passage from a gospel harmony, or possibly from a homily based on such a harmony, probably a version of the Greek Diatessaron of Tatian.<sup>60</sup>

It is possible that other fragments (P. Cair. 10735; P. Berol. 11710; P. Aberd. 3; P. Ryl. III 463; PSI XI 1200bis; P. Oxy. XI 1384) may come from apocryphal Gospels; but because of the small amount of text that has been preserved, and/or because of their late date, they scarcely have anything to offer to a quest for the historical Jesus.<sup>61</sup>

1.3. *The So-called “Unknown Berlin Gospel” (UBG; “Gospel of the Savior”)*

In 1967, the Egyptian Museum in Berlin purchased the remains of a sixth-century parchment manuscript. It was not until 1991 that this was examined more closely by P. Mirecki; it was first published in 1999 as *Gospel of the Savior*.<sup>62</sup> The *editio princeps* by Hedrick and

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<sup>60</sup> On the discovery of the fragment, cf. C. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979). The *editio princeps* by C. H. Kraeling, *A Greek Fragment of Tatian’s Diatessaron from Dura*, StD 3 (London: Christophers, 1935) was corrected on some points by C. B. Welles et al., *The Excavations at Dura-Europos Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report V.1: The Parchments and Papyri* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). A new investigation of the manuscript, with a new description, several corrections, and a new interpretation was undertaken by D. C. Parker, D. K. G. Taylor, and M. S. Goodacre, “The Dura-Europos Gospel Harmony,” in *Studies in the Early Text of the Gospels and Acts*, TS NS 1 (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1999), 192–228; they doubt whether this text comes from the Diatessaron. For a critique of this position, cf. however J. Joosten, “The Dura Parchment and the Diatessaron,” *VigChr* 57 (2003): 159–175.

<sup>61</sup> Let me emphasize once again that this judgment does not mean that these fragments are uninteresting *per se*, or that they lack any historical value.

<sup>62</sup> C. W. Hedrick and P. A. Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior. A New Ancient Gospel*, California Classical Library, (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999). Cf. also C. W. Hedrick, “A Preliminary Report on Coptic Codex P. Berol. Inv. 22220,” in *Ägypten und Nubien in spätantiker und christlicher Zeit. Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses, Münster, 20.-26. Juli 1996 2: Schrifttum, Sprache und Gedankenwelt*, ed. S. Emmel et al., *Sprachen und Kulturen des Christlichen Orients* 6.2 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1999), 127–130.

Mirecki was soon criticized by S. Emmel, who proposed a different sequence of the fragments.<sup>63</sup>

The text, in Sahidic Coptic, presents a dialogue between the Redeemer and his disciples which recalls the farewell discourses in the Gospel of John.<sup>64</sup> We can thus recognize a large number of parallels to canonical logia of Jesus. The initial euphoria which flourished especially in non-academic circles<sup>65</sup> has however yielded place to a sober consideration of this text. Cautious suggestions that it might be a witness to the Gospel of Peter must be judged unconvincing;<sup>66</sup> but scholars discuss whether the extremely fragmentary (and insufficiently edited) fragment of the Strasbourg Coptic Gospel<sup>67</sup> may be the remains of a second manuscript of the *Gospel of the Savior*.<sup>68</sup> It is no longer possible to maintain the early dating of the text to ca. 200 on the supposition that UBG presupposes the canonical Gospels of Matthew and John but

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. S. Emmel, "The Recently Published *Gospel of the Savior* ('Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium'): Righting the Order of Pages and Events," *HThR* 95 (2002): 45–72; idem, "Preliminary Reedition and Translation of the *Gospel of the Savior*: New Light on the *Strasbourg Coptic Gospel* and the *Stauros Text* from Nubia," *Apocrypha* 14 (2003): 9–53. See however also the reply by C. W. Hedrick, "Caveats to a 'Righted Order' of the *Gospel of the Savior*," *HThR* 96 (2003): 229–238.

<sup>64</sup> On this, cf. e.g., J. Frey, "Leidenskampf und Himmelsreise. Das Berliner Evangelienfragment (Papyrus Berolinensis 22220) und die Gethsemane-Tradition," *BZ NF* 46 (2002): 71–96, and T. Nagel, "Das 'Unbekannte Berliner Evangelium' und das Johannesevangelium," *ZNW* 93 (2002): 251–267.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. e.g., the quotations from newspapers in U.-K. Plisch, *Verborgene Worte Jesu*, 28.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. the cautious remarks by H.-M. Schenke, "Das sogenannte 'Unbekannte Berliner Evangelium'," *ZAC* 2 (1998): 199–213, esp. 205–207.

<sup>67</sup> The edition by A. Jacoby, *Ein neues Evangelienfragment* (Strasbourg: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1900), 6–12, fig. I–IV, was immediately criticized very severely by C. Schmidt in his review in *GCA* 162.6 (1900): 481–506. Among more recent scholarship, cf. especially D. A. Bertrand, "Papyrus Strasbourg copte 5–6," in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* 1, ed. F. Bovon and P. Geoltrain (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 425–428.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. S. Emmel, "Unbekanntes Berliner Evangelium = Strasbourg Coptic Gospel: Prolegomena to a New Edition of the Strasbourg Fragments," in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction. Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften's Thirtieth Year*, ed. H.-G. Bethge et al., NHMS 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 353–374; idem, "'The Gospel of the Savior': A New Witness to the Strasbourg Coptic Gospel," *Bulletin de l'AEIAC* 12 (2002): 9–12; idem, "Preliminary Reedition and Translation of the *Gospel of the Savior*: New Light on the *Strasbourg Coptic Gospel* and the *Stauros-Text* from Nubia," *Apocrypha* 14 (2003): 9–53, esp. 13–20. See the critical remarks by P. Nagel, "Zur Herkunft und Datierung des 'Unbekannten Berliner Evangeliums'," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 219–223.

does not use these in the sense of written, still less of normative sources.<sup>69</sup> Linguistic investigations by P. Nagel shed doubt on the thesis that this text is translated from Greek:<sup>70</sup> some passages are clearly dependent not only on the canonical gospels, but in fact on the Sahidic translation of these passages (e.g., UBG 98.63–99.3 = Matt 26:31; UBG 102.6–9 = Matt 26:39 [P. Morg. 569]; etc.).<sup>71</sup> According to P. Nagel, both the Christology and the understanding of the eucharist speak for a genesis of the text in Upper Egypt in the second third of the fifth century (or even later) in a milieu in which the treatises of Shenouda too were written.<sup>72</sup> This judgment was confirmed by the independent discoveries by S. Emmel, who sees close links between UBG and the Nubian cross-text and has noted points of reference to many other Coptic texts.<sup>73</sup> Despite the presence of some hitherto unknown material, therefore, UBG cannot seriously claim our interest as a potential source of information about the historical Jesus.

#### 1.4. *Apocryphal Infancy Gospels*

Interest in the childhood of Jesus was generated primarily by the post-Easter perspective: the composition of narratives about his childhood—a subject about which the earliest Christians assuredly possessed very little historical information—is to be seen as a projection of Christological and theological (and later, of associated Mariological) ideas back onto the events surrounding the birth and infancy of Jesus. This is why the primary historical value of even the canonical infancy narratives (Matt 1–2; Luke 1–2) lies in the fact that they are to be read as testimonies to developments in the history of theology. Only to an extremely limited extent can they be read as narratives of historical

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. C. W. Hedrick and P. A. Mirecki, *Gospel*, 21–23. Hedrick speaks even more clearly in a later article against the use of the canonical gospels as written sources: cf. idem, “An Anecdotal Argument for the Independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Synoptic Gospels,” in *For the Children* (n. 69 above), ed. H.-G. Bethge, 113–126, esp. 121–123. For criticism, cf. T. Nagel, “UBE und Johannesevangelium,” 265; J. Frey, “Leidenskampf,” 79.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. especially the summary by P. Nagel, “Herkunft und Datierung,” 234–235.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. P. Nagel, “Herkunft und Datierung,” 235–236. Textual references here follow the sequence established by S. Emmel.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. P. Nagel, “Herkunft und Datierung,” 248.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. S. Emmel, “Preliminary Reedition,” 22–37.

events.<sup>74</sup> It is difficult to underestimate the influence of the Protevangelium of James in particular on the history of piety; but for the reasons indicated above, scholars have almost never attempted to investigate the numerous apocryphal infancy gospels to see what information they might contain about the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, Richard Bauckham has attempted to evaluate in this context at least one piece of information supplied by apocryphal infancy gospels.<sup>75</sup> On the question of the “brothers” and “sisters” of Jesus who are mentioned in the canonical gospels,<sup>76</sup> two or three second-century apocryphal gospels offer the same information, possibly independently of each other: the *Protevangelium of James* 9.2; 17.1–2 and 18.1, the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 16.1–2, and (possibly) the *Gospel of Peter* (according to Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* 10.17) tell us that the “brothers” and “sisters” of Jesus were the children of Joseph from an earlier marriage. Since the statement by Origen probably refers to the Protevangelium of James rather than to the *Gospel of Peter*,<sup>77</sup> my discussion will concentrate on the first two texts. Bauckham himself clearly recognizes the legendary character of both these apocryphal writings, but he asks whether an ancient piece of information may be contained in the tradition that lies behind their affirmations. At any rate, the two texts show no signs of mutual dependence; and the age of the tradition can be seen in connection with the statement preserved at Mark 6:3 that Jesus was called “the son of Mary” in Nazareth. According to Bauckham this was done to distinguish him from the children of Joseph’s first marriage: “It is easy to suppose that, whereas outside Nazareth Jesus would have to be identified as ‘the son of Mary’ precisely because James, Joses, Judas, and Simon were not sons of Mary . . .”<sup>78</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Naturally, this affirmation says nothing about the theological “truth” which we encounter in these texts, nor about their significance for us!

<sup>75</sup> On what follows, cf. R. Bauckham, “The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus: An Epiphonian Response to John P. Meier,” *CBQ* 56 (1994): 686–700, esp. 695–698.

<sup>76</sup> On the discussion of this problem and an overview of the proposed answers from the early church onwards, cf. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 318–332.

<sup>77</sup> On this, cf. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas, *Petrusevangelium*, 16–17. Unfortunately, Bauckham, “Brothers and Sisters,” 696, does not quote the exact text here. In fact, Origen appeals to the *Gospel of Peter* or to the “Book of James.”

<sup>78</sup> R. Bauckham, “Brothers and Sisters,” 700. On the problem of the brothers of Jesus, cf. also idem, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 19–32.

Even Bauckham draws these conclusions only with considerable reservations; he indicates other possible interpretations which I myself find more probable, e.g., that the statements in the two infancy gospels are the fruit of a continuing reflection on the virginity of Mary, which came to seem less and less compatible with the statements in the canonical gospels about the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Besides this, one can adduce strong arguments against Bauckham's thesis: above all, the testimony in the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is not as unambiguous as Bauckham says. In this text, Joseph is nowhere explicitly called a widower; James is indeed older than Jesus, but he is not unambiguously called a son of Joseph's first marriage. This means that the *Protevangelium of James* is the only undisputed witness to this motif, which also fits well into the narrative structure of the text (9.1–2; 17–18).<sup>79</sup>

### 1.5. *Dialogue Gospels Found at Nag Hammadi*

Whereas most of the gospels mentioned up to this point contain more or less extensive narrative sections and relate events which are said to have occurred during the life of Jesus, the genre of "dialogue gospels"<sup>80</sup> contains primarily logia material that Jesus—often understood as "the risen one"—is said to have revealed to his disciples after Easter.<sup>81</sup> These texts are indeed late,<sup>82</sup> but many scholars, in the light of the theses of

<sup>79</sup> J. P. Meier has criticized Bauckham in detail: "On Retrojecting Later Questions from Later Texts: A Reply to Richard Bauckham," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 511–527.

<sup>80</sup> On the definition of this genre, cf. especially J. Hartenstein, *Die zweite Lehre. Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen als Rahmenerzählungen frühchristlicher Dialoge*, TU 146 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 27–28, 249–262.

<sup>81</sup> On the genre, cf. W. Schneemelcher, "Dialog des Erlösers. Einleitung," in idem, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 1, 6th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 189–191.

<sup>82</sup> It is not always easy to date these texts, since points of reference outside them are lacking. The texts discussed in this section have been dated as follows:

(1) *The Apocryphon of James*: second half of the first century—first half of the second century (D. Kirchner, "Brief des Jakobus," in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 1, ed. W. Schneemelcher, 6th ed. [Tübingen: Mohr, 1990], 234–244, esp. 235); 125–150 (W. C. van Unnik, "The Origin of the Recently Discovered 'Apocryphon Jacobi,'" *VigChr* 10 [1956]: 149–156, esp. 156; second century (U.-K. Plisch, *Verborgene Worte*, 63); second to third centuries (D. Rouleau, *L'épître apocryphe de Jacques [NH I,2]*, BCNHT 18 [Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1987], 22); third century (F. E. Williams, "The Apocryphon of James, in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* 1, ed. J. M. Robinson [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 15–53, esp. 27).

H. Koester, who posits a close link in terms of form history between the “Dialogue Gospels” and the “collections of sayings” (which he dates very early),<sup>83</sup> have argued that at least some of these “Dialogues” contain ancient material, especially logia of Jesus, but also parables.

The texts which are most frequently mentioned in this context<sup>84</sup> are the Apocryphon (Letter) of James from Codex Jung (NHC I, 2)<sup>85</sup> and the Dialogue of the Savior.<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, space prevents a detailed review of all the texts that could be adduced here. Nevertheless, the following two examples from the Apocryphon of James can illustrate the possibilities and the problems that we encounter when we read these sources.

First, NHC I, 2 presents the following logion of Jesus about the *basileia*:

ⲛⲓⲱⲠ ⲁⲧⲣⲉⲧⲙⲏⲧⲣ̅ⲱ ⲛⲏⲓⲛⲏⲥ ⲡ̅ ⲡ̅ⲗⲁⲓⲉ ⲡ̅ⲓⲛⲧ ⲧⲏⲛⲉ

The translations of this logion diverge in a striking manner:

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- (2) *Dialogue of the Savior*: early second century (H. Koester and E. Pagels, “Introduction,” in *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior*, ed. S. Emmel, et al., NHS 26 [Leiden: Brill, 1984], 1–17, esp. 16; second century (B. Blatz, “Der Dialog des Erlösers,” in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, 6th ed. [Tübingen: Mohr, 1990], 245–253, esp. 247, and U.-K. Plisch, *Verborgene Worte*, 143); second half of the second century (H.-J. Klauck, *Apokryphe Evangelien*, 239).
- (3) *Book of Thomas*: second or third century (H.-M. Schenke, “Das Buch des Thomas,” in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen 1*, ed. W. Schneemelcher [Tübingen: Mohr, 1990], 192–204, esp. 193–194).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. H. Koester and J. M. Robinson, *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des frühen Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971), 147–190; H. Koester, “Überlieferung und Geschichte der frühchristlichen Evangelienliteratur,” *ANRW* 25.2 (1994): 1463–1542, esp. 1512–1524; idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels. Their History and Development* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990), 173–200.

<sup>84</sup> Both texts are explicitly described by C. W. Hedrick, “The Tyranny of the Synoptic Jesus,” *Semeia* 44 (1988): 1–8, esp. 5, as especially important material. J.-M. Sevrin, “Paroles et paraboles de Jésus dans des écrits gnostiques coptes,” in *Logia. Les paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus*, ed. J. Delobel, BEThL 59 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1982), 517–528, esp. 519–521, also discusses the Book of Thomas (NC II,7).

<sup>85</sup> Textual edition with introduction: F. E. Williams, “The Apocryphon of James,” in *The Coptic Gnostic Library: A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices 1*, ed. J. M. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 13–53.

<sup>86</sup> S. Emmel, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex III,5: The Dialogue of the Savior*, NHS 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

Lasst nicht das Himmelreich in euch veröden.<sup>87</sup>

Do not make the kingdom of heaven a desert within you.<sup>88</sup>

Let not the Kingdom of Heaven become a desert within you.<sup>89</sup>

In his analysis of this logion, C. W. Hedrick observes that the translation of the text largely depends on the background one postulates for its genesis; the logion fits very poorly into its present context.<sup>90</sup> In simple linguistic terms, a number of other translations would be possible:

Do not cause the Kingdom of Heaven to become abandoned by you (*or*: among you).

Do not cause the Kingdom of Heaven to be laid waste by you (*or*: among you).

Do not cause the Kingdom of Heaven to become desolate by you (*or*: among you).<sup>91</sup>

Despite this openness, we can draw some basic conclusions. The logion presupposes the presence of the *basileia* and postulates a connection between the action of the individual and the possibility of the success or failure of the *basileia*. It links an image with negative connotations to the kingdom of heaven. All three points can be paralleled in other sayings of Jesus. The logion can be localized in a context in which doubts about the success of God's rule have arisen: it is addressed to the disillusioned disciples. Since it thus satisfies the criteria of dissimilarity and of coherence, it is possible that we have here a logion from the earliest strata of the tradition about Jesus.<sup>92</sup> This argumentation is compelling and logically coherent; it is indeed possible that one can

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<sup>87</sup> D. Kirchner, "Brief des Jakobus," in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen* 1, ed. W. Schneemelcher, 6th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1990), 234–244, esp. 243 (my quotation is adapted to the new official German orthography). A similar translation is offered by U.-K. Plisch, *Verborgene Worte Jesu. Verworfenen Evangelien. Apokryphe Schriften des frühen Christentums*, Brennpunkt: Die Bibel (Erfurt 2000), 73: "Lasst nicht das Reich der Himmel in euch veröden."

<sup>88</sup> F. E. Williams, "Apocryphon of James," 49.

<sup>89</sup> M. Malinine et al., *Epistula Iacobi Apocryphon: Codex Jung F.Ir-F.VIIIv (p. 1–16)*, (Zürich and Stuttgart: Rascher, 1968), 127.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. C. W. Hedrick, "Kingdom Sayings and Parables of Jesus," *NTS* 29 (1983): 1–24, esp. 7. Hedrick employs here the concept of *Sitz im Leben*, which however is not understood in the German-speaking world as the *place* of the genesis of the logion.

<sup>91</sup> C. W. Hedrick, "Kingdom Sayings," 8.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. in more detail C. W. Hedrick, "Kingdom Sayings," 8–9.



assemble the individual elements to form the kind of reconstruction that is proposed here.

It is however possible to question whether this is in fact the case. Can the criterion of dissimilarity<sup>93</sup> really be applied to such a brief saying? Or, to put it differently: is it genuinely unthinkable that another person than Jesus could have “invented” a logion with such an “open” meaning and attributed it to the “risen Redeemer,” either in the kind of situation which Hedrick assumes or in a milieu with gnostic tendencies (and in the latter case, with a meaning certainly different from that which Hedrick reconstructs)?<sup>94</sup>

On another level, I believe that we have a problem which applies in general to logia which are detached from their narrative context:<sup>95</sup> precisely this kind of text is open to very various interpretations. And if Hedrick’s arguments are correct, this may perhaps be the very reason why this particular logion was transmitted. This however prompts us to ask what help we find for the quest for the historical Jesus in a logion with a polyvalent text that can be ascribed *hypothetically* to the historical Jesus. If in fact the only reason for such a potential attribution is the fact that the logion *allows* an interpretation which is coherent with other statements that can be attributed with a great measure of probability to the historical Jesus, then I believe that such a logion in fact offers us no help at all.

*Secondly*, we find in the Apocryphon of James not only a catalogue of parables (NHC I, 2: 8.4–10),<sup>96</sup> but also three parables which are not

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<sup>93</sup> On the discussion of this criterion, which for a long time played a decisive role in the quest for the historical Jesus, cf. above all T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the Main Criterion of Jesus-of-History Research,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 47–80; D. S. du Toit, “Der unähnliche Jesus. Eine kritische Evaluierung der Entstehung des Differenzkriteriums und seiner geschichts- und erkenntnistheoretischen Voraussetzungen,” in *Der historische Jesus. Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 89–129, with a valuable bibliography.

<sup>94</sup> C. W. Hedrick, “Kingdom Sayings,” 8, is completely correct to state that the text does not necessarily presuppose a gnostic interpretation, but that it could be interpreted in a gnostic sense. We can however reverse this: the text does not necessarily presuppose Hedrick’s interpretation, and it *can* certainly owe its genesis to gnostic circles.

<sup>95</sup> On this, cf. also my article: T. Nicklas, “Zur Problematik der so genannten ‘Agrapha’: Eine Thesenreihe,” in *Revue Biblique* 113 (2006): 78–93.

<sup>96</sup> On the problems connected with this passage, cf. J.-M. Sevrin, “Les écrits gnostiques coptes,” 523–524; idem, “Écriture et traditions dans l’apocryphon de Jacques,” in *Écritures et traditions dans la littérature copte. Journée d’études coptes, Strasbourg*

known from canonical texts. This is all the more remarkable because (on the one hand) we may take it as highly probable that narratives in the form of parables were typical of the historical Jesus, and (on the other hand) it is clear that relatively few new parables (as opposed to logia ascribed to Jesus) had their genesis in the early church.<sup>97</sup> The most interesting example for the quest for the historical Jesus is perhaps the “parable of the ear of grain” (NHC I, 2: 12.21–31):

ΓΑΡ ΗΜΠΗΥΕ ΕΣΕΙΝΕ ΠΗΟΥΖΠ̄C ΕΑΦΡΩΤ ΖΠ̄Η ΟΥCΩΩΕ ΔΥΩ ΠΕΒΙ  
 ΠΤΑΡΕΦΧΕΤΕ ΔΑCΙΤΕ ΠΠΕCΚΑΡΠΟC ΔΥΩ ΔΗ ΔΑΦΜΟΥΖ ΠΤCΩΩΕ ΠΖΠ̄ΖΠ̄C  
 ΔΚΕΡΑΜΠΕ ΠΤΩΤΠ̄ ΖΩΤ ΤΗΝΕ ΒΕΠΗ ΔΤΡΕΤΠ̄ΩΖC ΠΗΤΠ̄ ΠΟΥΖΠ̄C ΠΩΗΖ  
 ΧΕΚΑCΕ ΕΡΕΤΗΑΜΟΥΖ ΔΒΑΔ ΖΠ̄ ΤΠ̄Π̄Π̄Π̄Ο<sup>98</sup>

For the kingdom of heaven is like an ear of grain after it had sprouted in a field. And when it had ripened, it scattered its fruit and again filled the field with ears for another year. You also, hasten to reap an ear of life for yourselves, that you may be filled with the kingdom!<sup>99</sup>

The formal link to the context is slight, and this permits the conclusion that this text presents older material from the tradition. Formal reasons suggest that the concluding demand in the imperative, which introduces the motif of “filling” (which is important for the Apocryphon of James) and the new motif of the “living ear of corn” and can be understood as an allegorization, can be detached as secondary elements.<sup>100</sup> The rest of the text is certainly comparable to the well known parables of growth in the synoptic gospels, and one cannot reject out of hand the possibility that this parable (in some form or other) does in fact go back to the historical Jesus.<sup>101</sup>

28 mai 1982, Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 1983), 73–85, esp. 78–81; P. Nagel, “Beiträge zur Gleichnisauslegung in der Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha (NHC I,2),” in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction. Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften’s Thirtieth Year*, ed. H.-G. Bethge, NHMS 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 157–173, esp. 166–172.

<sup>97</sup> On this, cf. e.g., W. D. Stroker, “Extracanonial Parables and the Historical Jesus,” *Semeia* 44 (1988): 95–120, esp. 97.

<sup>98</sup> Text: F. E. Williams, “Apocryphon of James,” 46.

<sup>99</sup> Translation: Francis E. Williams, [www.bibliotecapleyades.net/nag\\_hammadi/jam.htm](http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/nag_hammadi/jam.htm).

<sup>100</sup> On this, cf. W. D. Stroker, “Extracanonial Parables,” 114–115. On the structure of the parable, cf. also J.-M. Sevrin, “L’Apocryphon de Jacques,” 82 and 85; on its closeness to Matthean parables, cf. *ibid.* p. 84.

<sup>101</sup> As far as I am aware, this was first proposed by R. Cameron, *Sayings Traditions in the Apocryphon of James*, HThSt 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 8–11 and 126.

In principle, therefore, it is certainly possible that even a text like the Apocryphon of James, which we possess in a late redaction, or other “Dialogues,” may contain at least in some passages material that points back to early stages of the development of the tradition. In some cases, we may find parallels here that help to establish the historicity of canonical texts and statements; in other cases, we can add some elements to the stock of material that has survived from the oldest stages of the tradition about Jesus.<sup>102</sup> Above all, however, when we study texts that have been preserved only in single Coptic manuscripts, which are often fragmentary, we must bear in mind that these have already undergone a complex process of transmission. The refractions due to translations—in the plural!—mean that in many instances, these texts reflect at most a glimpse of the oldest tradition about Jesus.<sup>103</sup>

#### 1.6. *The “Secret Gospel of Mark”*

Scarcely any other apocryphal text has unleashed controversial debates to compare with the so-called “*Secret Gospel of Mark*.” This is undoubtedly due to the very obscure circumstances of its discovery, but even more to the subsequent disappearance of this text.

While he was looking for ancient manuscripts in the monastery of Mar Saba near Jerusalem in 1958, Morton Smith discovered on the final blank pages and the inside cover of a copy of Isaac Voss’ edition of the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch (1646) a handwritten text three pages in length.<sup>104</sup> This text turned out to be a hitherto unknown letter

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<sup>102</sup> In addition to the passages from the Apocryphon of James mentioned here, scholars have also discussed e.g., the parable of the date-palm (NHC I, 2: 7.22–25), the parable of the grain of wheat (NHC I, 2: 8.10–27), or the logion about the *basileia* (NHC I, 2: 2.29–33). We should also mention the parable of sun, vinestock and weeds from the Book of Thomas (NHC II, 7: 144.14–36). In each of these cases, however, I believe that a certain measure of historical skepticism is advisable.

<sup>103</sup> On the problem of the textual transmission in Nag Hammadi, cf. the important reflections by S. Emmel, “Religious Tradition, Textual Transmission, and the Nag Hammadi Codices,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years. Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. J. D. Turner and A. McGuire, NHMS 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 34–43.

<sup>104</sup> The circumstances of the discovery are related in many publications, not only by Smith himself, but also by other studies of the Secret Gospel of Mark. Cf. e.g., M. Meyer, “The Youth in the *Secret Gospel of Mark*,” in *Secret Gospels. Essays on Thomas and the Secret Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 109–134, esp. 109–110. For a review of the history of the investigation of this text, cf.

by Clement of Alexandria (born 140/150; died after ca. 220) in which he quotes twice from a “mystical Gospel of Mark” which was in circulation in Alexandria. Smith announced his discovery in 1960 at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, but the definitive publication of the text, based on photographs which Smith had made when he discovered it, and accompanied by a translation and commentary, did not take place until 1973.<sup>105</sup> The photographs on their own do not permit a definitive decision about whether the manuscript genuinely comes from the eighteenth century or is a later forgery; but by 1973, the manuscript had disappeared, and this led to a great number of speculations about the text. The publication itself gave rise to extreme controversies. A number of scholars drew very far-reaching consequences from the manuscript with regard both to the quest for the historical Jesus and to the history of the redaction of the Gospel of Mark, but others remained highly skeptical and accused Smith (more or less explicitly) of having forged the manuscript himself.<sup>106</sup> Not even the recent discovery and publication of other photographs has succeeded in bringing a decisive light into the gloom that surrounds the *Secret Gospel of Mark*.<sup>107</sup>

The arguments for and against authenticity lie on three distinct levels.

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Meyer, op. cit., 114–119, and E. Rau, *Das geheime Markusevangelium. Ein Schriftfund voller Rätsel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 13–35.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). A more popular version: idem, *The Secret Gospel: The Discovery of the Secret Gospel According to Mark* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>106</sup> This was expressed in extreme terms by J. Neusner, *Are There Really Tanaitic Parallels to the Gospels: A Refutation of Morton Smith*, *South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism* 80 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 27–31, esp. 28: “Forgery of the century.” Smith was vigorously attacked also by Q. Quesnell, “The Mar Saba Clementine: A Question of Evidence,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 48–67. Although Quesnell does not actually say it explicitly, the only inference that can be drawn from his essay is that he believes that Smith himself is the forger. On the further controversy, cf. M. Smith, “On the Authenticity of the Mar Saba Letter of Clement,” *CBQ* 38 (1976): 196–199, and Q. Quesnell, “A Reply to Morton Smith,” *ibid.* 200–203.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. C. W. Hedrick and N. Olympiou, “Secret Mark,” *The Fourth R* 13.5 (September–October, 2000), 3–16, esp. 11 and 14–15. I am grateful to C. W. Hedrick for sending me a copy of this publication, which I could not otherwise have studied. The fact that G. G. Stroumsa, “Comments on Charles Hedrick’s Article: A Testimony,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 147–153, now asserts that he himself once saw the manuscript (which is still lost), ultimately proves nothing.

*First*, Smith himself concentrated above all on the textual level, and collected detailed observations in support of Clement's authorship<sup>108</sup> and of an early dating of the surviving fragments. But critics have made the following points: (1) The contents of the alleged fragment of Clement diverge so clearly from Clement's ideas in his genuine writings that it is impossible to accept this text as original.<sup>109</sup> (2) The style of the letter displays a greater number of characteristics of Clement's language than we find in any genuine writing of this author;<sup>110</sup> similarly, the passages from the *Secret Gospel of Mark* seem to be more Marcan than the Gospel of Mark itself.<sup>111</sup> (3) The title of the manuscript obviously assumes that the text is part of a collection of letters by Clement, and this would mean that this text, originally allegedly addressed to "Theodore," was intended for a group of readers over and above the original situation of communication. In the letter itself, however, Clement exhorts his addressee to preserve the mystery of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* and, in this context, to go so far as to tell untruths. This is not particularly appropriate in a text destined to be published in a compilation of letters, but it is certainly apt to kindle the interest of those who read a forgery.<sup>112</sup>

*Secondly*, and at least of equal importance, we have the problem—unfortunately much neglected in the scholarly discussion—of how we are to envisage the concrete transmission of the alleged fragment of Clement which is contained in the manuscript. It is at any rate conceivable that the manuscript presented a text that could be from the hand of Clement of Alexandria. John Damascene, who informs us that he possessed letters of Clement, was active in the Mar Saba monastery in the eighth century; and it is clear that eighteenth-century monks of this monastery often copied texts from old manuscripts onto blank

<sup>108</sup> Cf. M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria*, 5–85.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. E. Osborn, "Clement of Alexandria: A Review of Research, 1958–1982," *Second Century* 3 (1983): 219–244, esp. 223–225.

<sup>110</sup> On this, cf. A. H. Criddle, "On the Mar Saba Letter Attributed to Clement of Alexandria," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 215–220.

<sup>111</sup> This was already pointed out by C. C. Richardson in his review of M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria . . .*, *TS* 35 (1974): 571–577, esp. 573. Cf. similar remarks by E. Best in his review of E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel*, *MSSNTS* 33 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978): *JSNT* 4 (1979): 69–76, esp. 71–76.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. C. E. Murgia, "Secret Mark: Real or Fake?" in *Longer Mark: Forgery, Interpolation, or Old Tradition*, ed. R. H. Fuller (Berkeley: The Studies, 1976), 35–40, esp. 38–39.

pages of more recent books. This means that we cannot absolutely exclude the possibility that Smith may indeed have stumbled across an ancient text here. The vagueness of this possibility ought however to warn us not to link all too lofty historical speculations to the text that we have.

If the manuscript discovered in Mar Saba does in fact go back to a genuine letter of Clement, this text would have come down to the eighteenth century only via linear transmission, i.e., the repeated copying of the text in dependence on one single manuscript. The manuscript could thus be nothing more than the umpteenth copy of the copy of an ancient manuscript; besides this, it is highly probable that when it was copied for the last time, it displayed marks of damage by fire. In such a text, which cannot be checked by means of other manuscripts of the same work, we must expect new errors to creep in each time it is copied over the centuries; and in the further course of transmission, new errors and unsuccessful attempts at improving the text must also have occurred. This however is not the case in the manuscript discovered by Smith.<sup>113</sup>

*Thirdly*, it is at the very least surprising<sup>114</sup> that not even Smith himself made any further attempt to secure the manuscript, or to examine it a second time after his initial discovery, using better methods, in order to prove its authenticity. As he tells the story, he was under pressure of time when he made the discovery; but it is clear that although he was to publish so much about those photographs he had taken with a pocket camera, he made no endeavors at a later date to see the manuscript itself.<sup>115</sup>

It is above all the points mentioned in the *second* paragraph here that lead us to judge the authenticity of the text with great caution, and indeed with skepticism. Even the discovery of the manuscript and the demonstration that it did indeed come from the eighteenth century

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<sup>113</sup> This is pointed out *en passant* by C. E. Murgia, "Secret Mark," 40. Unfortunately, subsequent scholarly discussion usually has not taken up this point. In his reply to Murgia, M. Smith, "Clement of Alexandria and Secret Mark: The Score at the End of the First Decade," *HTHR* 75 (1982): 449–461, esp. 451, does not take up this very important observation. As far as I can see, its significance has not been noticed in more recent discussions. One of the few exceptions is E. Rau, *Das geheime Markusevangelium*, 19.

<sup>114</sup> This criticism is also made by B. D. Ehrman, "Response to Charles Hedrick's Stalemate," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 155–163.

<sup>115</sup> This was pointed out by Q. Quesnel, "The Mar Saba Clementine: A Question of Evidence," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 48–67, esp. 49–50.

would not constitute *proof* in the opposite direction.<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, at least the possibility remains open that new discoveries of older manuscripts would confirm the vague possibility that we have here authentic material from the second Christian century.

If we confine our attention to the text itself, and accept the hypothesis of its authenticity, what does it tell us?

The alleged letter of Clement is addressed to a certain Theodore and describes three recensions of the Gospel of Mark: the original Mark was written in Rome, and its author expanded the text in Alexandria “for those who were being perfected,” resulting in the *Secret Gospel of Mark*. A third recension by the libertine Carpocrates (the *Carpocratian Gospel of Mark*) added further material. The author quotes two fragments from the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, which are inserted into the Gospel which we know.

Fragment 1 was allegedly read as an insertion between Mark 10:34 and 10:35:<sup>117</sup>

And they come into Bethany. And a certain woman whose brother had died was there. And, coming, she prostrated herself before Jesus and says to him, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me.’ But the disciples rebuked her. And Jesus, being angry, went off with her into the garden where the tomb was, and straightway a great cry was heard from the tomb. And going near Jesus rolled away the stone from the door of the tomb. And straightway, going in where the youth was, he stretched forth his hand and raised him, seizing his hand. But the youth, looking upon him, loved him and began to beseech him that he might be with him. And going out of the tomb they came into the house of the youth, for he was rich. And after six days Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God. And thence, arising, he returned to the other side of the Jordan.

The second fragment is said to have been inserted between 10:46a and 46b:

And the sister of the youth whom Jesus loved and his mother and Salome were there, and Jesus did not receive them.

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<sup>116</sup> This is because a forgery need not be the work of M. Smith himself. One can certainly imagine a pious forgery from an earlier period, perhaps even from antiquity, or perhaps from the Renaissance. On this, cf. e.g., H. Musurillo, “Morton Smith’s Secret Gospel,” *Thought* 48 (1973): 327–331; E. Osborn, “Clement,” 223–225.

<sup>117</sup> Translation: Morton Smith.

It must be granted that the insertion of these fragments into the canonical Gospel of Mark creates a new narrative strand which allows a fresh interpretation of some Markan scenes that are already well known. This is the story of a “young man” who now plays a role several times: and this makes the text of canonical Mark more coherent: Mark 10:17–22, *Secret Mark* fr. 1 and 2, Mark 14:51–52, and Mark 16:1–8. Fragment 2 “heals” a rather abrupt break in the text, and we now have a plausible background to the appearance on the scene of the young man at Mark 14:51–52. In this interpretation, the young man in the empty tomb (16:5–6) is not an angel: he is identical with the young man who is mentioned in the first four scenes. A new explanation of the abrupt conclusion to Mark is also possible: although Jesus’ disciples have fled and the women’s fear leads them to keep silent about what they have seen, the “young man” remains as a disciple of Jesus who announces the resurrection. The reader is meant to take the part of this young man.<sup>118</sup> With regard to the quest for the historical Jesus, the *Secret Gospel of Mark* offers a second source (alongside John 3:22) that tells us that Jesus himself baptized.<sup>119</sup> It must however be said that even if both fragments of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* do in fact come from an authentic letter of Clement, their contents—e.g., the obvious parallel of the first fragment to John 11, and quotations from, or allusions to, Luke 18:23 and 9:53—strongly suggest that this is not a text that goes very far back in the direction of the period of the historical Jesus. If this text *is* in fact of historical interest, this would lie rather in the impulse it might give to investigate links and parallels between the epiphenomena of early Christianity (e.g., in second-century Egypt) and the mystery cults,<sup>120</sup> and to inquire into the relationships between the synoptic and Johannine streams of tradition.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> For further reflections, cf. M. Meyer, “Youth,” 128–130.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. also C. W. Hedrick, “The Secret Gospel of Mark: Stalemate in the Academy,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003): 133–145, esp. 142–143.

<sup>120</sup> I find the suggestion by C. W. Hedrick, “Secret Gospel,” 143, that the *Secret Gospel of Mark* can be considered a witness to the instability of the Gospel texts in the first two centuries, methodologically problematic. Hedrick is doubtless correct to say that precisely the non-canonical texts were exposed for a long time to considerable variations in their text; but I believe that the same methodological reservation would also be appropriate in the case of the vaguely transmitted alleged letter of Clement with its quotations from “Secret Mark.”

<sup>121</sup> On this, cf. e.g., M. Meyer, “Youth in *Secret Mark*,” 135–148.



### 1.7. *The Newly Discovered Gospel of Judas*

One of the most spectacular discoveries of early Christian texts in recent decades is certainly that of the Coptic *Codex Tchacos* probably from the fourth century CE, which contains, in addition to other apocryphal texts, the *Gospel of Judas* which was mentioned by Irenaeus of Lyons (*Adv. haer.* 1.31,1; cf. also Epiphanius of Salamis, *Pan.* 38.1,5).<sup>122</sup> The *Gospel of Judas* has generated a rather intense media discussion, because it seems to reverse the usual perspective of the story of Jesus' death: here, Judas Iscariot becomes the central character in the narrative and it has been discussed whether the *Gospel of Judas* presents him as a kind of ideal disciple. A closer reading of the text, however, seems to indicate that the *Gospel of Judas* presents him as even worse than the others.<sup>123</sup>

Can this text lay any claim to historicity? Does it indeed intend to make such a claim? In three theses, I will limit myself to an evaluation of the significance of this text for research into the historical Jesus.<sup>124</sup>

#### 1.7.1. *The Simple Fact of its Genre means that the Gospel of Judas is Scarcely Interested in the Historical Jesus*

The focus on the revelations to Judas which are imparted in the form of a dialogue mean that the *Gospel of Judas* has affinities to the so-called "dialogue gospels" or "dialogues with the risen Jesus." Strictly speaking, we cannot call it a "dialogue with the risen Jesus," since it does not relate appearances of the *risen* Lord; but this is because the resurrection cannot play any role in a text which is concerned about fleeing from the human husk and sacrificing the human being who "bears" Jesus (*Gospel of Judas* 56).<sup>125</sup> However, the function of this

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<sup>122</sup> The critical edition has been published 2007: R. Kasser and G. Wurst, eds., *The Gospel of Judas together with the Letter of Peter to Philip, James, and a Book of Allogenes from Codex Tchacos. Critical Edition* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2007).

<sup>123</sup> For a more detailed discussion see, e.g., A. DeConick, *The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says* (London: Continuum, 2007), and J. Brankaer and H.-G. Bethge, *Codex Tchacos: Texte und Analysen*, TU 161 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

<sup>124</sup> For further details about the quest of the historical Judas, and to the general (positive) significance of the text, cf. my essay "Das Judasevangelium—Dimensionen der Bedeutung eines Textfundes," *Biblische Notizen* 130 (2006): 79–130, on which my remarks here are based.

<sup>125</sup> For the translation "bear" or "carry" and its background see the important essay by P. Nagel, "Das Evangelium des Judas," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 213–276, here 257, 265–270.

text, as a dialogue between Jesus and the only one of his disciples who is able to make an appropriate confession of faith, is comparable to the function of the dialogues with the risen Lord. The text wishes to demonstrate the lack of understanding on the part of the other disciples, who represent a Christianity which continues to bow down before the Old Testament God and his cult while Judas detaches himself from this group. He becomes the addressee of secret revelations which intentionally have little to do with the preaching of the earthly Jesus, since that was addressed to “everyone,” whereas the *Gospel of Judas* understands itself as a “secret account of the revelation” (cf. the *prooemium*) which is meant only for a small circle of the elect. Naturally, we can never wholly exclude the possibility that even the discourse sections of a dialogue gospel of this kind may contain material that possibly has its origin in impulses going back to the historical Jesus; but I see scarcely any indication of this in the text of the *Gospel of Judas*.<sup>126</sup>

#### 1.7.2. *A Number of Indications in the Text Itself Suggest that the Gospel of Judas has Little Interest in the Figure of the Historical Jesus of Nazareth*

If the *Gospel of Judas* were genuinely interested in the historical Jesus, this would mean that the text would wish at least in a rudimentary manner to understand the *history* of the Jewish Messiah Jesus of Nazareth as the history of a concretely tangible human being of his age. This element is not completely lacking, but it plays only a marginal role. The only more or less specific place which is mentioned is “Judea” (*Gospel of Judas* 33), where Jesus is present with his disciples “one day.” This mention of the place name “Judea” dangles in mid-air, so to speak. The narrative of the *Gospel of Judas* never makes it clear why Jesus is in Judea rather than anywhere else, and it is only canonical intertexts that allow the reader to infer that his presence in Judea—most likely in Jerusalem which is never mentioned in the *Gospel of Judas*—is connected with the celebration of the “passover” feast

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<sup>126</sup> The text does however contain three “non-canonical words of the Lord” which could be of interest in the broadest sense for the history of tradition: (1) “[And they] have planted trees without fruit, in my name, in a shameful manner” (*Gospel of Judas* 39); (2) “A baker cannot feed all creation under [heaven]” (*Gospel of Judas* 41–42); (3) “It is impossible to sow seed on [rock] and harvest its fruit” (*Gospel of Judas* 43–44). But it is highly improbable that these logia have any relevance to the quest of the historical Jesus.

mentioned in the prologue. The concluding narrative framework of the text also mentions the *kataluma*, the “dwelling” or “guest room” which Jesus (probably) enters in order to pray (*Gospel of Judas* 58). We learn no details about this place. “*Their* high priests” assemble there too. Naturally, this refers to the chief priests of the Jewish people, but the text on its own does not make this clear. The only information about Jesus’ public ministry in the text is that he worked miracles; but we are nowhere given any details. In some unspecified manner, these miracles served the salvation of “humanity”; nothing is said about any special role of the people of Israel (*Gospel of Judas* 33). The “people” (the text leaves open *which* people is meant!) reacts to Jesus’ activity by seeing him as a prophet (*Gospel of Judas* 58). Taken as a whole, therefore, the data that could be described in some way as a narrative framework with a potential historical reference are minimal, and the Jesus of the *Gospel of Judas* withdraws again and again from even these few coordinates of “space” and “time”: even during his earthly ministry, he appears repeatedly as a “child (?)” (*Gospel of Judas* 33) among the disciples,<sup>127</sup> and his presence is an “appearing” and “disappearing” (cf. e.g., *Gospel of Judas* 36).

1.7.3. *Although there are only Few Concrete Passages in which the Literary Dependence of the Gospel of Judas on Canonical Texts can be Unambiguously Demonstrated, the Text seems to Presuppose in its Readers the Knowledge of Canonical Gospels, or at least of Traditions Related to these*

I give only two examples here.<sup>128</sup> *First*, nothing is said in detail about Jesus, Judas Iscariot, or the twelve disciples. The text appears to assume that the reader already knows at least something about these figures and their roles. Although one of the central ideas in the text is that the twelve are wrong to think that Jesus is the Son of their (i.e., the *Jewish*) God, we are nowhere told explicitly that the disciples are Jews, nor that almost the entire public ministry of Jesus took place in Palestine.

*Secondly*, the same applies to the end of the text. It is basically impossible to understand the closing scene unless we assume that it alludes at least to a core narrative which is comparable to the accounts

<sup>127</sup> The translators propose a second translation of the term *hrot* as “apparition,” and this would lend even stronger support to this thesis.

<sup>128</sup> For further references, cf. my essay “Das *Judasevangelium*” (n. 124 above).

of the passion in the canonical gospels. The text does not tell us who “their” high priests (or chief priests) or “the scribes” are, nor are we told the identity of “the people” who call Jesus a “prophet”;<sup>129</sup> according to the introduction (*Gospel of Judas* 33), the earthly ministry of Jesus aimed at the salvation of humankind. Above all, however, it is unclear what Judas actually does. The concluding sentences make sense only if the reader knows that the leaders of the *Jewish* people will have a share in the responsibility for the *death* of Jesus—since the text of the *Gospel of Judas* does not actually tell us that Judas’ action in “handing over” Jesus will lead to his death.

## 2. *Apocryphal Gospels and the Quest for the Historical Jesus*<sup>130</sup>

### 2.1.

From a purely methodological point of view, Christian apocrypha must be treated with the same openness and with the same skeptical criticism as canonical texts in the quest for the historical Jesus. In principle, they must be investigated against the background of general historical questions.<sup>131</sup> This demand sounds the most natural thing in the world, but it must be proposed again and again because from antiquity onwards, the designation of a text as “apocryphal” has generated prejudices on two levels: apocryphal texts tend either to be condemned *a priori* as marginal, heretical, or simply worthless in historical terms, or else to be regarded as secret writings in which the real truth has survived, despite their suppression or prohibition by powerful orthodox circles.<sup>132</sup> Neither prejudice proves tenable. Rather, each text—and hence each tradition—must be investigated on its own. In other words,

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<sup>129</sup> The only point of reference in the text itself is the mention of “Judea” (*Gospel of Judas* 33).

<sup>130</sup> Not all potential candidates have been discussed here. In this context, one might for example also study the *Gospel of Mary*, the fragments of “Jewish Christian” Gospels quoted by patristic writers, and other texts.

<sup>131</sup> Naturally, this also means that we must apply the same strict criteria to the apocryphal texts and to the canonical texts, as D. M. Smith demands: “The Problem of John and the Synoptics in Light of the Relation between Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels,” in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. A. Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 147–162, esp. 151.

<sup>132</sup> On the history of the way in which the term “apocryphal” has been employed, cf. T. Nicklas, “Apocrypha/Apocryphal Writings (New Testament),” *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* I (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

the canonicity of texts means that some specific community links a claim to truth with these texts. But truth and historicity are not simply to be equated, nor is the claim to truth—still less, to historicity—limited to canonical texts.<sup>133</sup>

## 2.2.

Even if we accept this evaluation in principle, the result of our brief panoramic survey of some important texts is mostly negative, at least at first sight. In general, most of them contribute nothing that could take us beyond what we know from the canonical texts or lend new accents to the portrait of the historical Jesus.<sup>134</sup> Where this is the case—for example, with the *Secret Gospel of Mark*—their value as sources is extremely disputed. In part, this is certainly a question of methodology: where a basic stock of possible historical data about the life of Jesus exists, and further data are added to this basic stock only where they can be understood to cohere with the basic data, the very character of these additional data means that they cannot alter the picture. But where new data are not coherent with already existing data, the authority of the sources which attest them must be so great that they outweigh the authority of the sources which have been used hitherto. But no apocryphal gospel known to us at present has an undisputed historical authority surpassing that of the canonical gospels, especially the synoptics; at most, one could perhaps discuss the extent to which this might be true of the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>135</sup>

Before one too hastily rejects these texts as historically “worthless,” however, one should bear in mind the following points:

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<sup>133</sup> The perfect example of this principle is Q, strictly speaking a non-canonical text which can be considered an apocryphon (albeit an apocryphon which is reconstructed on the basis of the canonical gospels), but is decisively important for the quest of the historical Jesus.

<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, one might ask the (somewhat exaggerated) question: Is there any information found in the canonical gospels that could not also be found in one or other apocryphal text?

<sup>135</sup> However, even if one regards the traditions which have been elaborated in the *Gospel of Thomas* as very ancient—and this is probably true, at least in some instances—we must ask whether the very character of this work as a collection of logia means that it is less suitable than the narrative gospels as a source of information about the historical Jesus. For further reflections, cf. J. Schröter, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie. Methodologische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens*, BThS 47 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 39–42, 51–54.

*First*, at least in some passages, apocryphal gospels—especially the oldest fragments, but also the texts from Nag Hammadi—offer parallels to already known logia of Jesus, or at least parallel references to behavior or to a characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth, or to a theme that probably played an important role in his life. Even when it is difficult to demonstrate independence of the canonical gospels, especially in the case of very fragmentary texts, and this independence necessarily remains a matter of hypothesis, we find here again and again traces of traditions that can be important as “cross-section evidence.”

*Secondly*, even in those cases where apocryphal texts about Jesus can be shown to be dependent on already known canonical traditions, the apocrypha can still shed some light on tendencies inherent in the further development of traditions.<sup>136</sup> This in turn can shed an indirect light on the methodological question; in some cases, it can help us make up our minds about disputed points.

*Thirdly*, even in passages where apocryphal texts have no concrete significance for the quest of the historical Jesus (or the historical Paul, etc.), they are not historically worthless. Rather, on the level of praxis, as the expression of an historical situation of communication between their author and their first readers, they bear witness to problems, ideas, and concepts in *this concrete situation*.<sup>137</sup> In precisely the same

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. also M. Meyer, *The Unknown Sayings of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1998), xx: “It could be argued that the greatest significance of the unknown sayings of Jesus lies in their contribution to our understanding of the transmission and development of sayings of Jesus. Both within and outside the New Testament we can observe something of the complex process through which sayings of Jesus were remembered... and applied to the needs of communities of believers.” J. M. Robinson, “The Study of the Historical Jesus after Nag Hammadi,” *Semeia* 44 (1988): 45–55, offers an example (Luke 17:21c and parallels) in which the second-century Gospel of Mary, which is normally evaluated as worthless for the quest of the historical Jesus, is significant for the question of the transmission of texts. D. Lührmann, *Die apokryph gewordenen Evangelien*, 191–215, offers a fine example on the basis of the story of a sinful woman which is transmitted by Didymos of Alexandria in his Commentary on Qoh 7:21–22a. He demonstrates that the narrative of the woman caught in adultery, which some manuscripts of the canonical gospels insert between John 7:53 and 8:11, cannot go back to the historical Jesus.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. also F. Wisse, “The Use of Early Christian Literature as Evidence for Inner Diversity and Conflict,” in *Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity*, ed. C. W. Hedrick and R. Hodgson, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1976), 177–190, who develops at least some aspects of this idea; idem, “Indirect Textual Evidence for the History of Early Christianity and Gnosticism,” in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction. Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften’s Thirtieth Year*, ed. H.-G. Bethge et al., NHMS 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 215–230.

way, the often fragmentary manuscripts in which they are transmitted are archaeological witnesses to ancient and mediaeval Christianity—“fingerprints”<sup>138</sup> of people far distant in time, viz. the people who wrote, read, and used these texts.

### 2.3.

Another question is posed precisely by texts which are preserved only in a fragmentary state, and of logia which are detached from a narrative context (e.g., in the framework of quotations by patristic writers, in dialogue gospels, or in collections of logia): does the openness of such texts, which are often extremely brief, permit genuinely methodological points of reference for the quest for the historical Jesus? We can express this question as follows: *What complexity must a text reach, before the criteria relevant to historical inquiry can be applied? And what is the historical value for the quest of the historical Jesus of the attribution to him of extremely open and brief logia?* In other words, *If it is a fact that an historical personage possibly (or very probably) uttered the sentence x at some point in his or her life, what does this tell us about the personage in question?* I believe that this fact tells us first of all something about those who transmitted the sentence, since it seems that they found it a significant statement (perhaps with a meaning that went beyond what was originally intended).

### 2.4.

As I have said, this basically rather negative judgment about the texts known to us at present does not mean that we should suppose that the canonical gospels must have formed the historical beginnings of the written tradition about Jesus. This idea is refuted by the very plausible hypothesis of Q—basically, an apocryphal gospel which has been lost as a text and can be reconstructed only thanks to its reception. Other ancient texts may likewise have been lost, and new discoveries could change the picture. The very recent discovery of the Gospel of Judas is one sign that the age of spectacular discoveries of new texts is clearly not yet past. The situation of our sources thus remains open.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>138</sup> See T. J. Kraus, “*Ad fontes*: Gewinn durch die Konsultation von Originalhandschriften am Beispiel P. Vindob. G 31974,” *Bib.* 82 (2004): 1–16, esp. 1.

<sup>139</sup> English translation: Brian McNeil.

## JESUS TRADITION IN EARLY PATRISTIC WRITINGS

RIEMER ROUKEMA

Early patristic writings provide us with a wealth of Jesus tradition. But in spite of this promising introductory statement, for those who are interested in early patristic Jesus traditions that have a chance to be historically reliable and are not known from the books which now make up the New Testament canon, the harvest may still be disappointing. However, even small scraps of possibly reliable extracanonical Jesus traditions deserve to be taken into account for the study of the historical Jesus. In this chapter we will give a survey of the different kinds of such extracanonical traditions, in order to make it clear in which context the more valuable ones—valuable with respect to the historical Jesus—have been transmitted.

We will confine our survey of early patristic writings roughly to authors of the second century CE, i.e., from Clement of Rome, whose *Epistle to the Corinthians* is usually dated to the end of the first century, to Clement of Alexandria, whose works date to the end of the second and the beginning of the third centuries. We will also pay attention to the philosopher Celsus who wrote a book against the Christians around 178 CE. He is certainly not a patristic author, but the fact that large parts of his book, *Alèthês Logos*, have been preserved in Origen's apology *Against Celsus* (of 248 CE) is a good reason to include him in this chapter.

In patristic writings of this period we will distinguish the following categories of Jesus traditions.

1. Extracanonical traditions about Jesus' origin, birth, youth, and baptism.
2. Traditions about Jesus' teaching that seem to derive from or are quoted from the canonical gospels.
3. Words of Jesus that may derive from an independent tradition that has also been included in the canonical gospels.
4. Traditions about Jesus' teaching and passion that are quoted or derived from extracanonical gospels.
5. *Agrapha* that seem to be transmitted independently.



6. Records of a secret oral tradition that Jesus transmitted to a small number of his disciples.
7. Extracanonial traditions about the risen Jesus.

Some comments may be added to this classification:

- a. We will see that often there is no unanimity about whether words of Jesus are borrowed from the canonical gospels or whether they derive from independent tradition that has also been included in these gospels (categories 2 and 3).
- b. Sometimes it is not clear whether a saying is quoted from an extracanonial gospel or should be classified as an independent *agraphon* (categories 4 and 5).
- c. For the second century the terms “canonical” and “extracanonial gospels” are admittedly anachronistic, but we use them for convenience’s sake.<sup>1</sup>
- d. One possible category is conspicuously absent: early patristic literature does not contain any extracanonial records of miracles attributed to Jesus.

### 1. *Extracanonial Traditions about Jesus’ Origin, Birth, Youth, and Baptism*

Apart from the canonical stories on Jesus’ origin, birth, and baptism, Justin Martyr transmits the tradition that Jesus was born in a cave, which he considers a fulfilment of Isaiah 33:16 LXX (“he will dwell in a high cave of a strong rock”).<sup>2</sup> He relates that Jesus, who was considered the son of Joseph the carpenter, also worked as a carpenter and made ploughs and yokes.<sup>3</sup> Justin narrates that, when Jesus stepped into the

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<sup>1</sup> See R. Roukema, “La tradition apostolique et le canon du Nouveau Testament”, in *The Apostolic Age in Patristic Thought*, ed. A. Hilhorst, VigChr.S 70 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 86–103.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 78.5–6 (cf. 70.2), ed. M. Marcovich, PTS 47, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997). Jesus’ birth in a cave is also narrated in the *Protevangelium Jacobi* 18.1, ed. and comm. H. R. Smid, ApocrNT 1 (Assen: van Gorcum, 1965), 125–127.

<sup>3</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 88.8; cf. *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 13.1, trans. in *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, J. K. Elliott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 78.

water in order to be baptized, a fire was kindled in the Jordan.<sup>4</sup> Justin's version of the divine voice that was heard from heaven after Jesus' baptism coincides with the text of the Codex Bezae and the Old-Latin version of Luke 3:22: "You are my Son, today I have begotten you".<sup>5</sup> From an historical point of view these details on Jesus' birth and life must be considered legendary.<sup>6</sup>

Celsus's book against the Christians introduces a Jew who says that Jesus was born of the adultery of his mother with a soldier named Panthera, and that as a consequence the carpenter who was betrothed to her turned her out. His birth is said to have taken place in secret.<sup>7</sup> Although this story seems related with the apparent Talmudic tradition concerning Jeshu ben Pandera (or Jeshua ben Pntr', or similar names),<sup>8</sup> Johann Maier maintains that, in contradistinction to later Talmudic manuscripts and other Jewish literature, the original texts of the Talmud did not refer to Jesus. This conclusion makes him deny a connection between the Talmud and the far earlier tradition of Celsus' Jew; this

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<sup>4</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 88.3 (PTS 47). This element also occurs in the *Sibylline Oracles* 6.4–6, ed. J. Geffken, GCS 8 (Leipzig: Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1902), 130, trans. J. J. Collins, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth, vol. I (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983), 407, and in the *Praedicatorio Pauli*, a text quoted in Pseudo-Cyprian, *De Rebaptismate* 17, ed. G. Hartel, CSEL 3,3; (vienna: Apud C. Geroldi Filium Bibliopolam Academiae, 1871), 90; see D. A. Bertrand, *Le baptême de Jésus. Histoire de l'exégèse aux deux premiers siècles*, BGBE 14 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1973), 43–44, 52–55, 96, 128. A variation of this tradition occurs in Tatian's Diatessaron and in Matthew 3:15 in the Old-Latin codices Vercellensis (a) and Sangermanensis (g<sup>1</sup>), which testify that at Jesus' baptism a light shone from the water. See L. Leloir, *Le témoignage d'Ephrem sur le Diatessaron*, CSCO Sub 227, 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 1962), 105–107; P. Henne, "Pourquoi le Christ fut-il baptisé? La réponse de Justin", *RHPPhR* 77 (1993): 567–585, at 574–576.

<sup>5</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 88.8; 103.6 (PTS 47). See Bertrand, *Baptême*, 131–132; Henne, "Pourquoi le Christ fut-il baptisé?", 581–582. The *Gospel of the Ebionites* reads: "You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased, today I have begotten you"; in *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, ed. K. Aland, 15th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 27.

<sup>6</sup> S. A. Panimolle, "Storicità e umanità del Cristo nelle Apologie di S. Giustino Martire", *RivBib* 38 (1990): 191–223, investigates how Justin defended Jesus' historicity and humanity in his two Apologies, but this paper does not deal with extracanonical traditions.

<sup>7</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.28; 1.32; 1.38–39; ed. and trans. M. Borret, SC 132 (Paris: Cerf, 1967). Cf. the English translation by H. Chadwick, *Origen. Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953; reprint 1980).

<sup>8</sup> See M. Lods, "Étude sur les sources juives de la polémique de Celse contre les chrétiens", *RHPPhR* 21 (1941): 1–33.

judgement was accepted by Enrico Norelli.<sup>9</sup> However, Celsus may have drawn on another Jewish source. Jane Schaberg presumes that the tradition of Jesus' illegitimate birth is most likely historical.<sup>10</sup>

Celsus' Jewish interlocutor also says that, because of his poverty, Jesus hired himself out as a workman in Egypt, where he tried his hand at certain (magical) powers, after which he returned full of conceit and gave himself the title of God.<sup>11</sup> This portrayal seems to originate from a malicious confusion of the canonical gospels and extracanonical traditions.<sup>12</sup>

Clement of Alexandria writes that Jesus' birth took place in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus (i.e., 4/3 BCE), when for the first time a census was ordered. For this information he quotes from Luke 3:1–2 that the word of the Lord came to John in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (i.e., 28/29 CE), and from Luke 3:23 that Jesus was about thirty years old when he was baptized. According to Clement there were 194 years, one month and thirteen days between Jesus' birth and the death of Commodus (who died December 31, 192 CE).<sup>13</sup> From these data it may be computed that Jesus was born in 3 BCE, more precisely on November 18. However, Hans Förster points out that this does not fit in with Clement's reference to the census (cf. Luke 2:1) that took place in 6/7 CE.<sup>14</sup> It is interesting that Clement also refers to those who said that Jesus' birth

<sup>9</sup> J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung*, EdF 82 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 130–267; E. Norelli, “La tradizione sulla nascita di Gesù nell' ἈΛΗΘΗΣ ΛΟΓΟΣ di Celso”, in *Discorsi di verità. Paganesimo, giudaismo et cristianesimo a confronto nel Contro Celso di Origene*, ed. L. Perrone, SEAUG 61 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1998), 133–166.

<sup>10</sup> J. Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus. A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 165–169, 195; see also M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (London: Victor Gollanz, 1978), 58–61.

<sup>11</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.28 (SC 132).

<sup>12</sup> Cf., e.g., Matthew 2:13–20; 12:24; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 69.7 (PTS 47); *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 9–26, trans. A. Walker, *Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, and Revelations*, ANCL 16 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1870), 103–111; *Pseudo-Matthew* 23, trans. Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 96. References to Celsus's knowledge of the canonical gospels occur, e.g., in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.68; 2.13; 2.27; 2.49; 2.74 (SC 132); cf. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 58–60. D. Rouger, “Celse et la tradition évangélique du Codex de Bèze”, in *Codex Bezae. Studies from the Lunel Colloquium June 1994*, ed. D. C. Parker and C.-B. Amphoux, NTTS 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 240–247, concludes that Celsus used the “western text”.

<sup>13</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 1.145.1–5, ed. C. Mondésert, M. Caster, SC 30 (Paris: Cerf, 1951).

<sup>14</sup> See H. Förster, *Die Feier der Geburt Christi in der Alten Kirche. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Anfänge des Epiphanie- und des Weihnachtfestes*, STAC 4 (Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 11–15.

took place on the twenty-fifth of Pachon, which is May 20, in the twenty-eighth year of Augustus.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, he mentions followers of Basilides who maintained that Jesus was born on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth of Pharmouthi, which is April 19 or 20, the year remaining unspecified. The Basilideans said that Jesus was baptized in the fifteenth year of Tiberius on the fifteenth of Tubi (i.e., January 10, 28/29 CE), whereas some of them upheld that Jesus' baptism took place on the eleventh of Tubi (i.e., January 6).<sup>16</sup> Reckoning from Commodus' death, Clement appears to date Jesus' death on November 18, 27 CE, but he also mentions the views of the Basilideans, who maintained that Jesus' passion took place in the sixteenth year of Tiberius (29/30 CE), either on the twenty-fifth of Phamenoth or on the twenty-fifth or the nineteenth of Pharmouthi (i.e., March 21, April 20 or 14).

Summarizing the complicated discussion of ancient calendars and proposed emendations of Clement's text that should eliminate the contradictions, Förster concludes that Clement knew different sources on Jesus' birth, baptism, and passion.<sup>17</sup>

## *2. Traditions on Jesus' Teaching that Seem to Derive from or Are Quoted from the Canonical Gospels*

In the second century most references to Jesus are taken from, inspired by, or closely related to the canonical gospels, which implies that they mostly do not add anything new to the search for Jesus traditions that might possibly be historically reliable. In this section we will only introduce some monographs from 1950 onwards that deal with the reception of these gospels by Clement of Rome and second-century authors and which, admittedly, are more important for the textual history and the history of canonisation of these gospels than for the purpose of this chapter. However, since most of these monographs also pay attention

<sup>15</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 1.145.6 (SC 30); see Förster, *Feier*, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 1.146.2–4 (SC 30); see Förster, *Feier*, 15–16.

<sup>17</sup> Förster, *Feier*, 11–38; 193. See, e.g., E. Preuschen, "Todesjahr und Todestag Jesu", *ZNW* 5 (1904): 1–17; R. H. Bainton, "Basilidean Chronology and New Testament Interpretation", *JBL* 51 (1932): 81–134; W. Hartke, *Über Jahrespunkte und Feste insbesondere das Weihnachtsfest*, *SSA* 6 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956), 18–30; S. K. Roll, *Toward the Origins of Christmas*, *LiC* 5 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995), 77–79; W. A. Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule. Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts*, *WUNT* 83 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 42–48.

to extracanonical traditions and since it is not always clear whether early patristic authors used the canonical gospels or similar independent traditions, most of these publications will appear to be relevant for the next sections as well.<sup>18</sup>

In 1950 Édouard Massaux published his thesis on the influence of the Gospel of Matthew before Irenaeus, in which he also pays attention to the other gospels.<sup>19</sup> He points out the popularity of the Gospel of Matthew, and of the Sermon on the Mount in particular, in this period. He concludes that in comparison with Matthew, the Gospels of Luke and John are less influential, and that literary traces of the Gospel of Mark are absent.<sup>20</sup> But when in 1957 Helmut Koester (or, Köster) submitted his thesis on the synoptic tradition in the Apostolic Fathers, his conclusions differed considerably from Massaux's (whose thesis was unknown to him), for in his view words of Jesus were at that time still transmitted independently from the written gospels, so that it is often difficult to distinguish between reception of these gospels and common tradition.<sup>21</sup> In 1959 F.-M. Braun published his study on the reception of the Gospel of John in the early church, but for our purpose it is not very useful.<sup>22</sup> In 1967 A. J. Bellizoni concluded that Justin Martyr usually quoted from "post-canonical sources based on the synoptic gospels" rather than from the synoptic gospels themselves, and that "his harmonies were of a limited scope and were apparently composed for didactic purposes."<sup>23</sup> This hypothesis has been confirmed by Leslie L. Kline and Helmut Koester, but countered by Georg Strecker.<sup>24</sup> In 1973

<sup>18</sup> For older research see M.-É. Boismard, "Une tradition para-synoptique attestée par les Pères anciens", in *The New Testament in Early Christianity*, ed. J. M. Sevrin, BEThL 86 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 177–195, at 177–181.

<sup>19</sup> E. Massaux, *Influence de l'évangile de saint Matthieu sur la littérature chrétienne avant saint Irénée*, DGMFT II, 42 (Louvain and Gembloux, 1950); reprinted by F. Neiryck, ed., with a supplement by B. Dehandschutter, BETL 75 (Leuven: Peeters, 1986); also E. Massaux, "Le texte du sermon sur la montagne utilisé par saint Justin", *EThL* 28 (1952): 411–448.

<sup>20</sup> Massaux, *Influence*, 647–655.

<sup>21</sup> H. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65.5, 10 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957); idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels. Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> F.-M. Braun, *Jean le Théologien et son évangile dans l'Église ancienne*, EtB (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1959).

<sup>23</sup> A. J. Bellizoni, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Writings of Justin Martyr*, NTS 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 140–141.

<sup>24</sup> L. L. Kline, "Harmonized Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies and Justin Martyr", *ZNW* 66 (1975): 223–241; G. Strecker, "Eine Evangelienharmonie bei Justin und Pseudoklemens?", *NTS* 24 (1978): 297–316; H. Koester, *Ancient Christian*

Donald Hagner presumed that Clement of Rome was acquainted with the synoptic gospels, but he admits that Clement's epistle provides us with little positive indication of this acquaintance.<sup>25</sup> In 1987 Wolf-Dietrich Köhler appeared less confident about the early use of the written Gospel of Matthew than Massaux in 1950, for in his thesis on the reception of Matthew before Irenaeus he concludes that in this period there was still much freedom and lack of precision in the use of written gospels.<sup>26</sup> Like Braun's book, three recent studies of the reception of the Fourth Gospel in the second century are not very useful for our purpose.<sup>27</sup>

The fact that several of these monographs deal with the period before Irenaeus (Braun's study on John being the exception) suggests that Irenaeus's use of the canonical gospels differs from his predecessors. This is indeed the case, for Irenaeus is the first to maintain that only the four Gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John are authoritative.<sup>28</sup> Yet it is remarkable that, apart from his numerous explicit gospel quotations, Irenaeus also appeals to "the words of the Lord" as if these sayings were a distinct tradition, even though they occur in the gospels as well.<sup>29</sup> It is interesting that he even appeals to some extracanonical words of Jesus, to which we will come back in the fifth section.

In addition, it is noteworthy that Irenaeus refutes the opinion that Jesus preached during one year, which was based on Luke 4:19, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (KJV), and that he suffered in

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*Gospels*, 360–402. For further discussion on Justin's use of a gospel harmony see C. D. Allert, *Revelation, Truth, Canon and Interpretation: Studies in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*, VigChr.S 64 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 20–21, 188–220, who is in favour of this hypothesis.

<sup>25</sup> D. A. Hagner, *The Use of the Old and New Testaments in Clement of Rome*, NT S 34 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 135–178, 332–335, at 332.

<sup>26</sup> W.-D. Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus*, WUNT 2.24 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), 527–536.

<sup>27</sup> T. Nagel, *Die Rezeption des Johannesevangeliums im 2. Jahrhundert. Studien zur vorirenäischen Aneignung und Auslegung des vierten Evangeliums in christlicher und christlich-gnostischer Literatur*, ABG 2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2000); C. E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); B. Mutschler, *Das Corpus Johanneum bei Irenäus von Lyon. Studien und Kommentar zum dritten Buch von Adversus Haereses*, WUNT 189 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.9–11, ed. and trans. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, SC 211 (Paris: Cerf, 1974).

<sup>29</sup> See H. von Campenhausen, *Die Entstehung der Christlichen Bibel*, BHTh 39 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1968), 223–237; Y.-M. Blanchard, *Aux sources du canon, le témoignage d'Irénée*, CFi 175 (Paris: Cerf, 1993), 196–229.

the twelfth month of this year. Irenaeus deduces from Luke 3:23 that when Jesus was baptized he had not yet completed his thirtieth year, and he concludes from John 8:57, where “the Jews” say to Jesus that he is not yet fifty years old, that such language is used for someone who is almost fifty. For Irenaeus this implies that Jesus had the advanced age of a master when he taught his disciples. For this view Irenaeus also invokes the authority of the presbyters who had heard this from John and the other apostles.<sup>30</sup> In 1857, W. Wigan Harvey pointed out the unsatisfactory character of this tradition.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. *Words of Jesus that May Derive from an Independent Tradition that Has Also Been Included in the Canonical Gospels*

Although it is often difficult to distinguish between the reception of the canonical gospels and independent oral traditions that have also been included into these gospels, it is inevitable to make this distinction. This comes to light, e.g., in Clement’s *Epistle to the Corinthians*, which contains two explicit sayings of Jesus. The first quotation reads, “Show mercy, that you may be shown mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven you. As you do, so it will be done to you; as you give, so it will be given to you; as you judge, so you will be judged; as you show kindness, so will kindness be shown to you; the amount you dispense will be the amount you receive.”<sup>32</sup> Even though this quotation is closely related to synoptic texts,<sup>33</sup> scholars who have studied this exhortation agree that Clement drew on an independent source.<sup>34</sup> Alfred Resch considers

<sup>30</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.22.5–6, ed. and trans. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, SC 294 (Paris: Cerf, 1982).

<sup>31</sup> W. W. Harvey, *Sancti Irenaei episcopi Lugdunensis libros quinque Adversus Haereses*, vol. I (Cambridge: Typis Academicis, 1857), 331.

<sup>32</sup> ἐλεᾶτε, ἵνα ἐλεηθῆτε· ἀφίετε, ἵνα ἀφεθῆ ὑμῖν· ὡς ποιεῖτε, οὕτω ποιηθήσεται ὑμῖν· ὡς δίδωτε, οὕτως δοθήσεται ὑμῖν· ὡς κρίνετε, οὕτως κριθήσεσθε· ὡς χρηστεύεσθε, οὕτως χρηστευθήσεται ὑμῖν· ᾧ μέτρῳ μετρεῖτε, ἐν αὐτῷ μετρηθήσεται ὑμῖν. Clement, *Corinthians* 13:2, ed. and trans. B. D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24, (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 56–59.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Matthew 5:7; 6:14–15; 7:1–2, 12; Mark 4:24; 11:25; Luke 6:31, 36–38.

<sup>34</sup> Massaux, *Influence*, 7–13; O. Knoch, *Eigenart und Bedeutung der Eschatologie im theologischen Aufriß des ersten Clemensbriefes. Eine Auslegungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Theoph. 17 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1964), 70, 73–74; M. Mees, “Schema und Dispositio in ihrer Bedeutung für die Formung der Herrenworte aus dem 1. Clemensbrief, Kap. 13,2”, *VetChr* 8 (1971): 257–272; Hagner, *Use*, 135–151; idem, “The Sayings of Jesus in the Apostolic Fathers and Justin Martyr”, in *Gospel Perspectives. The Jesus Tradition outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, vol. 5 (Sheffield: JSOT

this saying, including the non-synoptic words, “as you show kindness, so will kindness be shown to you,” an authentic word of Jesus.<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that both Polycarp and Clement of Alexandria also knew this saying or at least part of it, possibly thanks to Clement of Rome.<sup>36</sup> The other explicit quotation of a saying of Jesus in Clement’s epistle reads, “Woe to that person! It would have been good for him not to be born, rather than cause one of my chosen to stumble. Better for him to have a millstone cast about his neck and be drowned in the sea than to have corrupted one of my chosen.”<sup>37</sup> In this case several scholars presume that this text is taken from the Gospel of Matthew or from the synoptic gospels,<sup>38</sup> whereas others judge that it derives from independent tradition.<sup>39</sup>

A similar dissension among scholars about the use either of the Gospel of Matthew or of independent tradition is true for the *Didache*. It is evident that this early Christian manual is often close to the Gospel of Matthew, especially to the Sermon on the Mount, and some scholars conclude that its author actually depended on this Gospel,<sup>40</sup> whereas others think that the author had access to independent Jesus tradition, so that this writing would throw light on the sources of the Gospels.<sup>41</sup>

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Press, 1984), 233–268, at 234–237; Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 12–16; idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 66–69; Köhler, *Rezeption*, 67–71; A. Lindemann, *Die Clemensbriefe*, HNT 17 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1992), 54; H. E. Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, KAV 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 214–216.

<sup>35</sup> A. Resch, *Agrapha. Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente*, 2nd ed; TU 30/NF 15.3–4 (Leipzig: Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1906), 88; 386; cf. section 5.

<sup>36</sup> Polycarp, *Philippians* 2:3, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24, 334–337; Clement, *Stromateis* 2.91.2 (SC 38).

<sup>37</sup> οὐαὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ· καλὸν ἦν αὐτῷ, εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη, ἢ ἕνα τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν μου σκανδαλίσαι· κρείττον ἦν αὐτῷ περιτεθῆναι μύλον καὶ καταποντισθῆναι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, ἢ ἕνα τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν μου διαστρέψαι. Clement, *Corinthians* 46:8, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24, 118–119.

<sup>38</sup> Massaux, *Influence*, 23–27; Köhler, *Rezeption*, 62–64; Knoch, *Eigenart und Bedeutung*, 70–72, who refers to the Gospels of both Matthew and Luke; Lindemann, *Clemensbriefe*, 137. Cf. Matthew 18:6; 26:24; Mark 9:42; 14:21; Luke 17:2; 22:22.

<sup>39</sup> Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 16–19; idem, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 69–70; Hagner, *Use*, 152–164; idem, “Sayings of Jesus”, 237–239; Lona, *Der erste Clemensbrief*, 496–498.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Massaux, *Influence*, 604–641; Köhler, *Rezeption*, 19–56. C. M. Tuckett, “Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache*”, in *The New Testament in Early Christianity*, ed. J.-M. Sevrin, 197–230, concludes that the author of the *Didache* knew the finished Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

<sup>41</sup> E.g., J.-P. Audet, *La Didachè. Instruction des apôtres*, EtB (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1958), 166–186; Hagner, “Sayings of Jesus”, 240–242; J. Draper, “The Jesus Tradition in the *Didache*”, in *Gospel Perspectives. The Jesus Tradition outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, vol. 5 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 269–287; W. Rordorf and A. Tuilier, *La*



An intermediary position is that the original text of the *Didache* was independent of the synoptic Gospels, and that later additions were influenced by them.<sup>42</sup>

These different assessments of the use of the synoptic gospels, especially of the Gospel of Matthew, are also made with respect to the *Epistle of (Pseudo-)Barnabas*, the *Second Epistle of (Pseudo-)Clement*, and the Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch. In general Massaux mostly perceives a literary influence of the Gospel of Matthew in these “Apostolic Fathers”,<sup>43</sup> whereas Koester usually concludes that the authors drew on independent tradition,<sup>44</sup> and Köhler takes up an intermediary position. As for Justin Martyr, Köhler concludes that he quoted the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and Mark from memory and thus freely, but Köhler does not conclude that Justin drew on independent tradition that was also included into the synoptic gospels.<sup>45</sup> Yet Marie-Émile Boismard demonstrates with much acuity that not only Justin, but also Clement of Alexandria and other Fathers do sometimes quote an independent tradition that is more archaic than the textual form of the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>46</sup>

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*doctrine des douze apôtres (Didachè)*, 2nd ed., SC 248<sup>bis</sup> (Paris: Cerf, 1998), 83–91; H. van de Sandt, D. Flusser, *The Didache. Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity*, CRINT 3.5 (Assen: van Gorcum and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 35–50; A. Milavec, “Synoptic Tradition in the *Didache* Revisited”, *J ECS* 11 (2003): 443–480; idem, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50–70 C.E.* (New York/Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 159–241, at 239–241; C. N. Jefford, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, VigChr S 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 144–145; K. Niederwimmer, *Die Didache*, KAV 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1989), 71–77.

<sup>43</sup> Moreover, see P. F. Beatrice, “Une citation de l’Évangile de Matthieu dans l’Épître de Barnabé”, in Sevrin, ed., *The New Testament in Early Christianity*, 231–245.

<sup>44</sup> In the case of Ignatius, Koester’s conclusions are confirmed by J. Smit Sibinga, “Ignatius and Matthew”, *NT* 8 (1966): 263–283, who concludes that the evidence is against Ignatius quoting Matthew.

<sup>45</sup> Köhler, *Rezeption*, 161–265, at 256–265; as for Justin’s knowledge of Mark, he disagrees with Massaux, *Influence*, 653, who does not find any literary influence of Mark in the literature before Irenaeus. Bellinzoni, *Sayings of Jesus*, 140, concludes that Justin used a harmony that also drew on Mark.

<sup>46</sup> Boismard, “Tradition para-synoptique”, 181–195; he discusses Matthew 5:16, 17, 37, and refers to many older studies.

#### 4. *Traditions about Jesus' Teaching and Passion that are Quoted or Derived from Extracanonical Gospels*

Since extracanonical, "apocryphal" gospels are discussed as such in a previous chapter, we will give a survey only of those early patristic writings that include words of Jesus from such gospels, and some other traditions that may be related to these gospels.

Clement of Alexandria is the only second-century patristic author who explicitly quotes gospels that are now extracanonical. Although he speaks of "the four gospels that have been handed down to us"<sup>47</sup> and thus, like Irenaeus, recognizes their prominent position, Clement is remarkably free in drawing on other sources as well. A survey of his use of canonical and extracanonical sources has been given by J. Ruwet.<sup>48</sup> For example, without any reserve Clement quotes from the *Gospel of the Hebrews*: "He that wonders will reign, and he that has reigned will rest".<sup>49</sup> This saying is apparently meant as a word of Jesus, although Clement does not say so explicitly. In another context he quotes a longer version of this saying but without reference to the *Gospel of the Hebrews*: "He who seeks, will not stop till he finds; and having found, he will wonder; and wondering, he will reign; and reigning, he will rest".<sup>50</sup> With the same openness he quotes sayings from the *Traditions of Matthias*<sup>51</sup> and from an anonymous gospel.<sup>52</sup> Only when he quotes

<sup>47</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 3.93.1 (GCS 52 [15]).

<sup>48</sup> J. Ruwet, "Clément d'Alexandrie, Canon des Écritures et Apocryphes", *Bib.* 29 (1948): 77–99, 391–408; see also J. A. Brooks, "Clement of Alexandria as a Witness to the Development of the New Testament Canon", *SecCen* 9 (1992): 41–55; Roukema, "Tradition apostolique", 99–100.

<sup>49</sup> ὁ θαυμάσας βασιλεύσει καὶ ὁ βασιλεύσας ἀναπαύσεται. Clement, *Stromateis* 2.45.5 (SC 38).

<sup>50</sup> οὐ πάσεται ὁ ζητῶν, ἕως ἂν εὕρη· εὐρὼν δὲ θαυμηθήσεται, θαυμηθεὶς δὲ βασιλεύσει, βασιλεύσας δὲ ἀναπαύσεται. Clement, *Stromateis* 5.96.3, ed. and trans. A. Le Boulluec, P. Voulet, SC 278 (Paris: Cerf, 1981); cf. Ruwet, "Canon", 398–400. The saying is also included in the *Gospel of Thomas* 2, ed. and trans. B. Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, vol. I, NHS 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 52–53, 113, 126.

<sup>51</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 2.45.4 ("Wonder at what is before you"; SC 38); Ruwet, "Canon", 401–402, doubts whether Clement personally knew this writing and thinks that he borrowed his quotations from another author.

<sup>52</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 5.63.7 ("My mystery is to me, and to the sons of my house", SC 278); cf. Ruwet, "Canon", 400–401.

Salome's dialogue with Jesus in the *Gospel of the Egyptians* does Clement sometimes display a slight reserve.<sup>53</sup>

An exceptional record of a deed of Jesus noted by Clement holds that Jesus baptized Peter.<sup>54</sup> Since John 3:22, 3:26 and 4:1 present Jesus as a baptizer (which is "corrected" by John 4:2),<sup>55</sup> we should not exclude the possibility that this report of Peter's baptism is historically reliable.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Clement tells that when John wanted to feel Jesus' body, it yielded as he pressed on it and had no fleshly substance.<sup>57</sup> This docteric testimony is apparently borrowed from an apocryphal book.<sup>58</sup>

Another exceptional tradition occurs in Clement's presumed *Epistle to Theodore*, which Morton Smith discovered in the Mar Saba monastery south-east of Jerusalem in 1958 and which he published in 1973.<sup>59</sup> The letter includes two fragments of a *Secret Gospel of Mark* that Mark had allegedly inserted into the initial, shorter version of his Gospel,

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<sup>53</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 3.45.3; 3.63.1–2; 3.64.1; 3.66.1–2; 3.92.2–93.1 (GCS 52 [15]). Jesus' answer to Salome's question, "How long shall death hold sway?" is: "As long as you women bear children". Other sayings of Jesus from the Gospel of the Egyptians are: "I came to destroy the works of the female"; his answer to Salome's remark, "I would have done better had I never given birth to a child" is: "Eat of every plant, but eat not of that which has bitterness in it"; his answer to Salome's question when she would know the answers to her questions: "When you trample on the robe of shame, and when the two shall be one, and the male with the female, and there is neither male nor female"; trans. J. E. L. Oulton, H. Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, LCC (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 61, 69–70, 83. Cf. Clement, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 67.2, ed. and trans. F. Sagnard, SC 23 (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 190–191; *Gospel of Thomas* 22; 37. See Ruwet, "Canon", 396–398 and S. Petersen, "Zerstört die Werke der Weiblichkeit!" *Maria Magdalena, Salome und andere Jüngerinnen Jesu in christlich-gnostischen Schriften*, NHMS 48 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 203–220.

<sup>54</sup> *Hypotyposesis* 5, ed. O. Stählin, L. Früchtel, GCS 17<sup>2</sup> (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), 196. The fragment goes on to relate that Peter baptized Andrew, and that Andrew baptized James and John, and these the others.

<sup>55</sup> E.g., K. Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums. Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen/Basel: Francke Verlag, 1995), 121–123.

<sup>56</sup> Church Fathers like Tertullian, Augustine, and Ambrose deduced Peter's baptism from his dialogue with Jesus in John 13:6–10, where Jesus calls Peter one who has bathed (ὁ λελουμένος). See D. A. Bertrand, "Jésus baptiste", in *Figures du Nouveau Testament chez les Pères*, ed. P. Maraval, Cahiers de Biblia Patristica 3 (Strasbourg: Centre d'Analyse et de Documentation Patristiques, 1991), 7–29, at 11–18.

<sup>57</sup> *In Epistolam primam Iohannis* 1.1, ed. O. Stählin, L. Früchtel (GCS 17<sup>2</sup>), 210.

<sup>58</sup> See the *Acts of John* 89; 93, ed. and trans. E. Junod and J.-D. Kaestli, *Acta Ioannis*, CCSA 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 192–193, 196–197.

<sup>59</sup> M. Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

and that are discussed elsewhere in this volume.<sup>60</sup> Since, except for Morton Smith, only a few scholars actually saw the manuscript,<sup>61</sup> and it has been lost since then so that no one else had the opportunity to investigate it, this text has been suspected of being a falsification, although many scholars gave it the benefit of the doubt. However, when S. C. Carlson investigated the circumstances of the presumed discovery and scrutinized the photographs of the manuscript, he was able to prove definitely that the *Epistle to Theodore* and thus the fragments of the *Secret Gospel of Mark* were written by Morton Smith himself.<sup>62</sup>

Apart from the works of Clement of Alexandria, the only other second century writing that apparently includes words of Jesus from extracanonical gospels is the *Second Epistle of (Pseudo-)Clement*.<sup>63</sup> Although the author quotes a good many words of Jesus that are known from or similar to the canonical gospels, this is not true of all his quotations.<sup>64</sup> Once the author explicitly refers to “the gospel” and quotes a saying of Jesus that occurs only partially in the canonical gospels. It reads, “For the Lord says in the gospel, ‘If you do not keep what is small, who will give you what is great? For I say you that the one who is faithful in very little is faithful also in much.’”<sup>65</sup> Koester suggests that

<sup>60</sup> See T. Nicklas’ article.

<sup>61</sup> G. G. Stroumsa, “Comments on Charles Hedrick’s Article: A Testimony”, *J ECS* 11 (2003): 147–153, relates that David Flusser, Shlomo Pines, Archimandrite Meliton, and he himself saw the text in 1976.

<sup>62</sup> S. C. Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax. Morton Smith’s Invention of Secret Mark* (Baylor University Press: Waco TX, 2005). See also A. Le Boulluec, “La lettre sur l’« Évangile Secret » de Marc et le *Quis Dives Salvetur* ? de Clément d’Alexandrie”, *Apocrypha* 7 (1996): 27–41; A. Jakab, “Une lettre « perdue » de Clément d’Alexandrie ? (Morton Smith et l’« Évangile Secret » de Marc)”, *Apocrypha* 10 (1999): 7–15; C. W. Hedrick, “The Secret Gospel of Mark: Stalemate in the Academy”, *J ECS* 11 (2003): 133–145; B. D. Ehrman, “Response to Charles Hedrick’s Stalemate”, *J ECS* 11 (2003): 155–163; E. Rau, *Das Geheime Markusevangelium. Ein Schriftfund voller Rätsel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003); P. Jeffrey, *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled. Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> For the presumed date of this writing see, e.g., Lindemann, *Clemensbriefe*, 195.

<sup>64</sup> See Massaux, *Influence*, 139–155; Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 62–111; *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 353–360; K. P. Donfried, *The Setting of Second Clement in Early Christianity*, NT S 38 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 49–82, at 79–82; Hagner, “Sayings of Jesus”, 244–246; Köhler, *Rezeption*, 129–149.

<sup>65</sup> εἰ τὸ μικρὸν οὐκ ἐτηρήσατε, τὸ μέγα τίς ὑμῖν δώσει; λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ πιστὸς ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ πιστὸς ἐστίν. 2 *Clement* 8:5, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24: 176–177; the second part of this saying corresponds to Luke 16:10. The first part corresponds to Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.34.3 (SC 294); see section 5, where we note that no claims for its authenticity have been made.

the author of *2 Clement* used a collection of words of Jesus based on Matthew, Luke, elaborations of synoptic words, and apocryphal texts, which collection was called “the Gospel” in 8:5.<sup>66</sup> According to R. Warns, all extracanonical sayings of Jesus quoted in *2 Clement* should be ascribed to this unknown gospel.<sup>67</sup> Yet neither Koester’s nor Warns’ thesis can be proven.<sup>68</sup> Since one of *2 Clement*’s extracanonical quotations is similar to Clement of Alexandria’s extracts from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the author might also have drawn on this gospel. The text in question reads, “For when the Lord himself was asked by someone when his kingdom would come, he said, ‘When the two are one, and the outside like the inside, and the male with the female is neither male nor female’, [then] ‘the kingdom of my Father will come’”.<sup>69</sup> Alfred Resch once defended the authenticity of this saying, but this confidence is not shared generally.<sup>70</sup> Koester thinks that another extracanonical saying of Jesus in *2 Clement* partially corresponds to the *Gospel of the Nazarenes*. It reads, “Even if you were nestled close to my breast but did not do what I have commanded, I would cast you away and say to you, ‘Leave me! I do not know where you are from, you who do what

<sup>66</sup> Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 110; *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 353–355.

<sup>67</sup> R. Warns, “Untersuchungen zum 2. Clemensbrief” (Dissertation, Marburg, 1989), 466–468, referred to by Lindemann, *Clemensbriefe*, 194.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Hagner, *Use*, 282; Köhler, *Rezeption*, 147.

<sup>69</sup> ὅταν ἔσται τὰ δύο ἓν, καὶ τὸ ἔξω ὡς τὸ ἔσω, καὶ τὸ ἄρσεν μετὰ τῆς θηλείας, οὕτε ἄρσεν οὕτε θῆλυ... ἐλεύσεται ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς μου. *2 Clement* 12:2, 6, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24: 182–185; cf. Clement, *Stromateis* 3.92.2 (GCS 52 [15]; see note 53); *Gospel of Thomas* 22. Since the other extracanonical quotations in *2 Clement* are not paralleled by the *Gospel of Thomas*, it is unlikely that he used this Gospel; cf. Donfried, *Setting*, 73–77, who also concludes that because of the dissimilarities with the *Gospel of the Egyptians* there is little reason to believe that *2 Clement* is dependent on this Gospel (see also *Setting*, 152–154).

<sup>70</sup> See T. Baarda, “2 Clement 12 and the Sayings of Jesus”, in *Logia. Les paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus*, ed. J. Delobel, BETL 59 (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), 529–556, at 551–553; also in T. Baarda, *Early Transmission of Words of Jesus. Thomas, Tatian and the Text of the New Testament* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1983), 261–288; he refers to A. Resch, “Miscellen zur neutestamentliche Schriftforschung, VI. Gal. 3,28 = Clem. Rom. II, 12,2”, *ZKWL* 9 (1888): 232–245. Later, Resch wrote more cautiously that the saying corresponds to Jesus’ teaching, in *Agrapha. Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente*, 2nd ed., TU 30/NF 15.3–4 (Leipzig, Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1906), 95. D. M. MacDonald, *There is no Male and Female. The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism*, HDR 20 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), maintains that the saying is very ancient, although he makes no judgement concerning its authenticity as a saying of Jesus; he assumes that Paul used it in Galatians 3:26–28. J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 295–298, holds that it is an interpretation of a saying of the historical Jesus.

is lawless”.<sup>71</sup> Köhler, however, doubts whether the attribution of the extracanonical words of this saying to the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* is correct.<sup>72</sup> One may conclude that, as long as the presumed collection of words of Jesus allegedly used in *2 Clement* has not been rediscovered, it is wiser to classify this and other extracanonical words of Jesus quoted in *2 Clement* as independent *agrapha*, which will be discussed in the following section.

We will close this section by pointing out that Justin Martyr may have known and used the *Gospel of Peter*. Although Bellinzoni concludes that there are no parallels between Justin’s text of the sayings of Jesus and the *Gospel of Peter*, and Graham N. Stanton maintains that there is no evidence that Justin knew or used any apocryphal gospel, Adolf Harnack and Peter Pilhofer show that there are some correspondences between Justin’s discussion of Jesus’ passion and precisely the *Gospel of Peter*.<sup>73</sup> Among other, perhaps less convincing similarities both Harnack and Pilhofer point out that both Justin and the *Gospel of Peter* relate that the Jews (and not the Roman soldiers) mocked Jesus, saying “judge us” or “judge righteously, king of Israel”, and that the Jews (and not the Roman soldiers) crucified him.<sup>74</sup> For Pilhofer the proof of Justin’s knowledge of the *Gospel of Peter* is that both use the rare (and non-canonical) word λαχμός (“lot”) when the Jews cast lots in order

<sup>71</sup> ἐὰν ᾗτε μετ’ ἐμοῦ συνηγμένοι ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ μου καὶ μὴ ποιήτε τὰς ἐντολάς μου, ἀποβαλῶ ὑμᾶς καὶ ἐρῶ ὑμῖν· ὑπάγετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς, πόθεν ἐστέ, ἐργάται ἀνομίας, *2 Clement* 4:5, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24: 170–171; Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 91–93; *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 355–357. Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 168, and J. H. Ropes, *Die Sprüche Jesu die in den kanonischen Evangelien nicht überliefert sind* (see note 79), 57–58, consider this text a mixture of “canonical” texts (Matthew 7:23; 25:12; Luke 13:25–27; John 13:23; 14:21; 15:10, 14).

<sup>72</sup> Köhler, *Rezeption*, 143–144, 288–302. Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 168, does not consider it an original word of Jesus.

<sup>73</sup> Bellinzoni, *Sayings of Jesus*, 139; G. N. Stanton, “Jesus Traditions and Gospels in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus”, in *The Biblical Canons*, ed. J.-M. Auers, H. J. de Jonge, BETL 153 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 353–370, at 364; A. Harnack, *Bruchstücke des Evangeliums und der Apokalypse des Petrus*, TU 9.2 (Leipzig, Hinrich’sche Buchhandlung, 1893), 37–41; P. Pilhofer, “Justin und das Petrus-evangelium”, *ZNW* 81 (1990): 60–78. Bellinzoni, *Sayings of Jesus*, 139, points at the difference between Jesus’ word on the cross in Justin’s *Dialogue* 99.1 (PTS 47), “God, God, why have you forsaken me?” and the *Gospel of Peter* 6.19, ed. and trans. M. G. Mara, SC 201 (Paris: Cerf, 1973), “My power, [my] power, you have forsaken me”.

<sup>74</sup> κρῖνον ἡμῖν. Justin, *1 Apology* 35.6, ed. M. Marcovich, PTS 38 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994); δικαίως κρῖνε, βασιλεῦ Ἰσραηλ. *Gospel of Peter* 3.7 (SC 201); Harnack, *Bruchstücke*, 38–39; Pilhofer, “Justin”, 69–73.

to divide Jesus' cloths.<sup>75</sup> John Dominic Crossan hypothesizes that the *Gospel of Peter* goes back to a very early "Cross Gospel" (from the middle of the first century CE), which implies that the traditions that Justin seems to have borrowed from it might be more reliable than the accounts of the canonical gospels.<sup>76</sup> According to the present author, however, there is no basis for attributing historicity to these details, which exonerate the Romans from Jesus' death to the detriment of the Jews.

### 5. *Agrapha that Seem to be Transmitted Independently*

In 1776 J. G. Körner introduced the term *agrapha* as a designation of sayings of Jesus that have been transmitted apart from the New Testament.<sup>77</sup> In some way this term has historical roots, for in the second century it was used for the secret teaching that Jesus had allegedly transmitted to a small number of his disciples, and to which we will come back in the following section. However, in research of the last centuries the term *agrapha* is, with some variations, mostly used in the meaning introduced by Körner.<sup>78</sup> In 1889 Alfred Resch wrote an important study of the extracanonical words of Jesus that were known at that time, in which he launched the hypothesis that originally there was a Hebrew gospel consisting of words of Jesus, upon which the authors of the synoptic gospels and of the New Testament epistles would have drawn. Because of the criticism of this theory by several reviewers, of whom James Hardy Ropes was the most prominent, and since in the meantime other sayings of Jesus had been found in Oxyrhynchus, Resch published an improved and enlarged second edition in 1906, in which he however maintained his theory of an early source used by the New Testament

<sup>75</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 97.3 (PTS 47); *Gospel of Peter* 4,12 (SC 201); Pilhofer, "Justin", 73–75; also Harnack, *Bruchstücke*, 39.

<sup>76</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Cross that Spoke. The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 16–30, 60, 188, 191–197, 404–410.

<sup>77</sup> J. G. Koerner, *De sermonibus Christi ἀγράφοις* (Dissertation, Leipzig, 1776), as mentioned by Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 1 (where 1776 should be read instead of 1778); 14.

<sup>78</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York: 1991), 1:112, explains the term *agrapha* as "unwritten [sayings and deeds]" of Jesus (emphasis RR).

authors.<sup>79</sup> Resch's and Ropes' fundamental studies also contain surveys of older research on extracanonical words of Jesus.<sup>80</sup>

Resch points to the different meanings that can be attached to the term *agrapha*. If it is used in opposition to γράφειν or γραφή in general, it refers to oral tradition. It may also be used in opposition to the canonical Scriptures, so that both isolated extracanonical words of Jesus and sayings that occur in apocryphal writings like the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Gospel of the Egyptians* are all considered *agrapha*. Yet Resch prefers to restrict the term to the category of extracanonical sayings of Jesus that have been transmitted apart from the apocryphal writings, and thus to distinguish between *agrapha* and *apocrypha*.<sup>81</sup> In his conclusions Resch gives a list of thirty-six *agrapha* that he considers authentic words of Jesus.<sup>82</sup> Ropes is more restrictive; he counts fourteen *agrapha* that are, in his view, probably authentic words of Jesus.<sup>83</sup> However, both Resch and Ropes take these *agrapha* from all possible sources, even from the New Testament itself, of which the most evident one is Jesus' saying quoted in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive".<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, they draw their selections of highly valuable *agrapha* from New Testament manuscripts,<sup>85</sup> patristic literature of several centuries, and, in the case of Ropes, from the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and the *Talmud*.<sup>86</sup> This implies that many of their selected *agrapha* are not relevant to the present chapter.

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<sup>79</sup> A. Resch, *Agrapha. Ausserkanonische Evangelienfragmente in möglichster Vollständigkeit zusammengestellt und quellenkritisch untersucht*, TU 5.4 (Leipzig: Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1889); idem, *Agrapha. Aussercanonische Schriftfragmente*, 2nd ed., TU 30/NF 15.3-4 (Leipzig: Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1906) (we refer to the second edition); J. H. Ropes, *Die Sprüche Jesu die in den kanonischen Evangelien nicht überliefert sind. Eine kritische Bearbeitung des von D. Alfred Resch gesammelten Materials*, TU 14.3 (Leipzig: Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1896).

<sup>80</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 1; 11-22; Ropes, *Sprüche*, 1-10.

<sup>81</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 2.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 385-387.

<sup>83</sup> Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 160-161.

<sup>84</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 24-25, 385; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 136-137, 160. Strangely enough, Resch does not pay any attention to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, which Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 152-154, 161, considers a probably authentic saying of Jesus.

<sup>85</sup> For example, the pericope of the adulterous woman (John 7:53-8:11) is also considered an *agraphon*; Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 386. Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 144, 160, notes that one may assume that Papias says of this passage that it occurs in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*; see Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.17, ed. and trans. K. Lake, vol. I, LCL 153 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heineman, 1926).

<sup>86</sup> Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 145-151.



In 1948 Joachim Jeremias published another survey of twenty-one *agrapha* that he considered most valuable, ten of which he regarded as authentic words of Jesus. In 1963 he published an enlarged and revised third edition in which he selected eighteen *agrapha* that in his view might be historically authentic.<sup>87</sup> Most of these sayings occur either in the New Testament (Acts 20:35; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17), in New Testament manuscripts, in Oxyrhynchus papyri, or in extracanonical gospels, so that only a few sayings of his selection stem from the early patristic literature discussed in this chapter.

In the present chapter we follow Resch's distinction between words of Jesus quoted from extracanonical gospels (which were discussed in section 4),<sup>88</sup> and other words that cannot be attributed to one of the extracanonical gospels and seem to be transmitted independently. However, in the preceding section we saw that sometimes it is difficult to establish the provenance of sayings that might be quoted from extracanonical gospels, although this is not said explicitly. In any case, we will now deal with those *agrapha* of Jesus that have been quoted by patristic authors of the period we investigate, where these were not mentioned in the preceding sections.

In the beginning of the second century, Papias of Hierapolis appears to be an important person for the collection of oral Jesus traditions, for Eusebius quotes from his five books entitled *Interpretation of the Lord's Sayings* that he preferred the *viva vox* (ζῶση φωνή καὶ μενούσα) of presbyters who had known Jesus' apostles and other disciples to written documents.<sup>89</sup> Several scholars pointed out that Papias' preference for oral transmission of a master's teaching stands in a firm Greek tradition.<sup>90</sup> However, since his *Interpretation of the Lord's Sayings* itself

<sup>87</sup> J. Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*, AThANT 16 (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1948; 3rd ed. Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1963) (we refer to the third edition).

<sup>88</sup> In addition, see T. Nicklas' articles in this volume

<sup>89</sup> Eusebius, *Church History* 3.39.1–17 (LCL 153). See U. H. J. Körtner, *Papias von Hierapolis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des frühen Christentums*, FRLANT 133 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); J. Kürzinger, *Papias von Hierapolis und die Evangelien des Neuen Testaments*, EichM 4 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1983).

<sup>90</sup> L. Alexander, "The Living Voice: Scepticism towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman Texts", in *The Bible in Three Dimensions. Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. E. Fowl, and S. E. Porter, JSOT S 87 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 221–247; W. A. Lohr, "Kanongeschichtliche Beobachtungen zum Verhältnis von mündlicher und schriftlicher Tradition im zweiten Jahrhundert", ZNW 85 (1994): 234–258; J. Mansfeld, "Papias over traditie", *NedThT* 49 (1995): 140–153; A. D. Baum, "Papias, der Vorzug der *viva vox* und die Evangelienchriften", *NTS* 44 (1998): 144–151.

is lost, we depend on early testimonies to his collection.<sup>91</sup> Of the remaining fragments only one text contains an otherwise unknown saying of Jesus, followed by a short dialogue with Judas. The *agraphon* has been transmitted by Irenaeus and deals with the abundant fertility of the earth during the eschatological millennium, which was doubted by Judas.<sup>92</sup> Scholars who have studied this description of the millennium, which resembles several Jewish apocalyptic texts, do not accept it as an authentic saying of Jesus.<sup>93</sup>

The *Epistle of (Pseudo-)Barnabas* contains three *agrapha* that are, or may be, attributed to Jesus (apart from other *agrapha* that are quoted as Old Testament texts). The first one is introduced by “the Lord says” and reads, “See! I am making the final things like the first”.<sup>94</sup> This saying resembles the synoptic text, “So the last will be first, and the first will be last”,<sup>95</sup> and Revelation 21:4–5, “for the first things have passed away . . . See, I am making all things new”. Resch interprets “the Lord” as Jesus, but he does not conclude that this is an authentic saying, and Ropes agrees.<sup>96</sup> Koester, however, holds that the expression “the Lord says” points to an Old Testament apocryphon.<sup>97</sup> The second *agraphon* concerning Jesus deals with the question why the priests alone had to eat the intestines of the scapegoat, unwashed, with vinegar (the source of which is unknown).<sup>98</sup> The answer is, “Why is this? Since you are about to give me gall mixed with vinegar to drink—when I am about to offer my flesh on behalf of the sins of my new people—you alone are to eat, while the people fast and mourn in sackcloth and ashes”.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>91</sup> The fragments have been edited by R. M. Hübner and translated by J. Kürzinger, in Kürzinger, *Papias*, 89–138.

<sup>92</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.33.3–4, ed. and trans. A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, C. Mercier, SC 153 (Paris: Cerf, 1969); Kürzinger, *Papias*, 94–95.

<sup>93</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 166–167; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 109–111; Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*<sup>3</sup>, 37–38; Körtner, *Papias*, 97–107; J. D. Dubois, “Remarques sur le fragment de Papias cité par Irénée”, *RHPhR* 71 (1991): 3–10.

<sup>94</sup> ἰδοῦ, ποιῶ τὰ ἔσχατα ὡς τὰ πρῶτα. *Barnabas* 6:13, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, LCL 25 (Cambridge MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 34–35.

<sup>95</sup> Matthew 20:16; cf. 19:30; Mark 10:31.

<sup>96</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 167–168; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 43–44.

<sup>97</sup> Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 127. P. Prigent and R. A. Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, SC 172 (Paris: Cerf, 1971), 125, and F. R. Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, KAV 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 275–276, do not interpret this text as an authentic saying of Jesus.

<sup>98</sup> *Barnabas* 7:4, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, LCL 25.

<sup>99</sup> πρὸς τί; ἐπειδὴ ἐμὲ ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν μέλλοντα τοῦ λαοῦ μου τοῦ καινοῦ προσφέρειν τὴν σάρκα μου μέλλετε ποτίζειν χολὴν μετὰ ὄξους, φάγετε ὑμεῖς μόνοι, τοῦ λαοῦ

This is apparently meant to be a saying of Jesus, but Koester correctly judges that it has been shaped by the author.<sup>100</sup> The third *agraphon* is explicitly attributed to Jesus and reads, “And so he says: those who wish to see me and touch my kingdom must take hold of me through pain and suffering”.<sup>101</sup> Resch is optimistic about its authenticity, but Ropes judges that by these words the author summarizes and explains his preceding passage and does so by introducing Jesus without the intention to quote a traditional saying.<sup>102</sup>

Justin Martyr transmits three *agrapha* in his *Dialogue with Trypho*. The first one reads, “There will be divisions and factions”.<sup>103</sup> According to Resch this is an authentic word of Jesus quoted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:19 (“there have to be factions among you”), but Ropes rejects this hypothesis; Jeremias considers the saying possibly authentic.<sup>104</sup> Justin’s second *agraphon* reads, “In whatsoever things I shall apprehend you, in them also I shall judge you”.<sup>105</sup> In Resch’s view this is an authentic saying of Jesus, but this judgement is generally denied, since Clement of Alexandria<sup>106</sup> and many other Fathers quote similar forms of this saying without attributing it to Jesus, and some of them consider it a quotation from Ezekiel.<sup>107</sup> Justin’s third *agraphon* is for-

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νηστεύοντος καὶ κοπτομένου ἐπὶ σάκκου καὶ σποδοῦ. *Barnabas* 7:5, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, LCL 25.

<sup>100</sup> Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 128, 148–152; similarly Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, 132; Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 296–298. Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, and Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, do not discuss this text.

<sup>101</sup> οὕτω, φησὶν, οἱ θελοντές με ἰδεῖν καὶ ἅψασθαί μου τῆς βασιλείας ὀφείλουσιν θλιβέντες καὶ παθόντες λαβεῖν με. *Barnabas* 7:11, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. II, LCL 25.

<sup>102</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 89–90; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 17–18. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 127, and Prostmeier, *Barnabasbrief*, 316–317, agree with Ropes, but according to Prigent and Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, 137, it is unlikely that the author coined this saying.

<sup>103</sup> ἔσονται σχίσματα καὶ αἰρέσεις. Justin, *Dialogue* 35.3 (PTS 47).

<sup>104</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 100–101, 386; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 96–97; Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*<sup>3</sup>, 74–75. Cf. Bellinzoni, *Sayings of Jesus*, 101–102, 131; Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 361–362, 371–374. All these authors also refer to later patristic citations of this saying.

<sup>105</sup> ἐν οἷς ἂν ὑμᾶς καταλάβω, ἐν τούτοις καὶ κρινῶ. Justin, *Dialogue*, 47.5 (PTS 47); trans. Th. B. Falls, FaCh 6 (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948).

<sup>106</sup> Clement, *The Rich Man’s Salvation* 40, ed. and trans. G. W. Butterworth, LCL 92 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press / London: William Heinemann, 1919), 352–353.

<sup>107</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 102, 322–325, 386; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 137–140; A. J. Bellinzoni, “The Source of the Agraphon in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* 47:5”, *VigChr* 17 (1963): 65–70; idem, *Sayings of Jesus*, 131–134.

mulated in indirect speech; Jesus predicts that after his resurrection on the third day he had to “appear again at Jerusalem to eat and to drink with his disciples; and predicted that in the meantime before his second advent there would arise, as I already stated, heresies and false prophets in his name”.<sup>108</sup> Resch analyses the traditions included in this saying without pleading for its authenticity.<sup>109</sup>

One more saying of Jesus reported by Justin may be worth quoting, although its authenticity is not acknowledged. In his first *Apology*, when explaining the meaning of baptism, Justin quotes Christ as follows: “Unless you are born again, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven”.<sup>110</sup> With regard to the related texts in John 3:3 and 3:5 (“Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God”; “unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”; RSV), Bellinzoni concludes that “Justin has independently preserved a liturgical baptismal text in an older form than that found in John”, and that this “is the only instance where Justin quotes a pre-gospel tradition”.<sup>111</sup> Other scholars, like Köhler and Nagel, are less confident that Justin makes use of a pre-gospel tradition and suggest that, apart from Matthew 18:3 (“Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”), he consciously or unconsciously alludes to the Gospel of John.<sup>112</sup>

In a treatise *On the Resurrection*, which was formerly attributed to Justin but is now generally held not to be by him, Resch finds the

<sup>108</sup> ... καὶ παλιν παραγενήσεσθαι ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ, καὶ τότε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ συμπιεῖν πάλιν καὶ συμφαγεῖν· καὶ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ χρόνῳ, ὡς προέφην, γενήσεσθαι αἱρέσεις καὶ ψευδοπροφήτας ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ προεμήνυσε. Justin, *Dialogue*, 51.2 (PTS 47; Marcovich’s reading αἱρέσεις is his emendation of ἱερεῖς (“priests”) in the manuscript; moreover, after ψευδοπροφήτας he adds <καὶ ψευδοχρίστους> from Matthew 24:24 and *Dialogue* 35.15–16; 82.10).

<sup>109</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 172–174; cf., e.g., Acts 1:4; 10:41; Ignatius, *Smyrneans* 3:3 (LCL 24).

<sup>110</sup> ἂν μὴ ἀναγεννηθῆτε, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. Justin, *1 Apology* 61.4, ed. E. J. Goodspeed, *Die ältesten Apologeten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914); Justin continues, ὅτι δὲ καὶ ἀδύνατον εἰς τὰς μήτρας τῶν τεκουσῶν τοὺς ἀπαξ γενομένους ἐμβῆναι, φανερόν πάνσιν ἐστί (“Now it is clear to all that it is impossible for those who have once come into being to enter into their mothers’ wombs”; *1 Apology* 61.5, ed. Goodspeed; Marcovich, PTS 38, reads γεννωμένους instead of γενομένους), which corresponds to John 3:4, although the wording is different; translation L. W. Barnard, *St. Justin Martyr: The First and Second Apologies*, ACW 56 (New York and Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1997).

<sup>111</sup> Bellinzoni, *Sayings of Jesus*, 134–138, at 136–137, 138. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 361, agrees.

<sup>112</sup> Köhler, *Rezeption*, 207–209; Nagel, *Rezeption*, 96–100.

following *agraphon*, which he considers authentic: “He said that our dwelling-place is in heaven”;<sup>113</sup> he thinks that this saying was part of the presumed extracanonical gospel that would have been used by several New Testament authors.<sup>114</sup> Ropes, however, does not consider these words a real quotation, but a free rendering of a well-known early Christian idea that also occurs in New Testament texts.<sup>115</sup>

Apart from the three extracanonical sayings of Jesus in 2 *Clement* that were discussed in section 4, one other *agraphon* deserves to be mentioned, although Resch does not claim its authenticity. It is included in the following dialogue: “For the Lord said, ‘You will be like sheep in the midst of wolves’. But Peter replied to him, ‘What if the wolves rip apart the sheep?’ Jesus said to Peter, ‘After they are dead, the sheep should fear the wolves no longer. So too you: do not fear those who kill you and then can do nothing more to you; but fear the one who, after you die, has the power to cast your body and soul into the hell of fire.’”<sup>116</sup> Interestingly, Ropes considers this dialogue probably authentic.<sup>117</sup>

We saw that Irenaeus quotes one of Papias’ testimonies to sayings of Jesus. Two other *agrapha* occur in his extant works. The first one reads, according to the Greek text preserved by Epiphanius and the Latin translation, “I have often desired (ἐπεθύμησα) to hear one of these words, and I had (ἔσχον) no one who uttered them”, but the editors conjecture that the text should read, “They have often desired (ἐπεθύμησαν) to hear one of these words, and they had (ἔσχον) no one

<sup>113</sup> καθὼς εἶρηκεν, ἐν οὐρανῷ τὴν κατοίκησιν ὑπάρχειν. Pseudo-Justin, *On the Resurrection* 9, ed. M. Heimgartner, PTS 54 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001).

<sup>114</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 103–104, 386; he refers to Philipians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 5:1–2; Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; 13:14; John 14:2.

<sup>115</sup> Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 32–33.

<sup>116</sup> λέγει γὰρ ὁ κύριος: ἔσεσθε ὡς ἀρνία ἐν μέσῳ λύκων. ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος αὐτῷ λέγει· ἐὰν οὖν διασπαράξωσιν οἱ λύκοι τὰ ἀρνία; εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τῷ Πέτρῳ· μὴ φοβείσθωσαν τὰ ἀρνία τοὺς λύκους μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν αὐτά; καὶ ὑμεῖς μὴ φοβείσθε τοὺς ἀποκτείνοντας ὑμᾶς καὶ μηδὲν ὑμῖν δυναμένους ποιεῖν, ἀλλὰ φοβείσθε τὸν μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν ὑμᾶς ἔχοντα ἐξουσίαν ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος τοῦ βαλεῖν εἰς γέενναν πυρός. 2 *Clement* 5:2–4, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24: 170–173; cf. Matthew 10:16; 10:28; Luke 10:3; 12:4–5; Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 169–170. Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung*, 94–99 speaks of “sekundäre Bildung” and suggests that it may originate from the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* (98–99); Köhler, *Rezeption*, 144–146, also supposes an extracanonical source.

<sup>117</sup> Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 146–147; 161.

who uttered them”.<sup>118</sup> This conjecture is confirmed by the plural in a similar saying in the *Gospel of Thomas*, “Many times you have desired to hear these words which I am saying to you, and you have no one else to hear them from”.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, this saying is paralleled by Matthew 13:17 (“Many prophets and righteous men longed... to hear what you hear, but did not hear it”) and Luke 10:24 (“Many prophets and kings desired... to hear what you hear, but did not hear it”).<sup>120</sup> The second *agraphon* quoted by Irenaeus reads, “If you have not been faithful in that which is small, who will give you that which is great?”<sup>121</sup> and corresponds to the quotation from “the gospel” in *2 Clement* 8:5 which was discussed in the preceding section. Neither Resch nor Ropes makes a claim for its authenticity.<sup>122</sup>

Apart from Clement of Alexandria’s quotations from extracanonical Gospels, discussed in section 4, he is also a rich source of (other) *agrapha*, of which we will discuss the most important ones.<sup>123</sup> He quotes, apparently as a word of Jesus, “Seek what is great, he says, and the small things will be added unto you”,<sup>124</sup> which is similar to Matthew 6:33 (“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you”, according to Codex Sinaiticus). Resch considers it an authentic saying, and Ropes and Jeremias think that it may be authentic.<sup>125</sup> Ruwet, however, calls it a “pseudo-logion”.<sup>126</sup> Clement is the first author who quotes as a text from Scripture a saying that was

<sup>118</sup> πολλὰκις ἐπεθύμησα[ν] ἀκοῦσαι ἓνα τῶν λόγων τούτων, καὶ οὐκ ἔσχον τὸν ἐροῦντα. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.20.2, ed., trans., and notes A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, SC 263, 290–291; SC 264, 264–265.

<sup>119</sup> *Gospel of Thomas* 38, trans. T. O. Lambdin, in *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7, ed. B. Layton, vol. I (NHS 20), 69.

<sup>120</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 179, and Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 56–57, regard this text as a parallel of the synoptic saying.

<sup>121</sup> *Si in modico fideles non fuistis, quod magnum est quis dabit uobis?* Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.34.3 (SC 294).

<sup>122</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 170; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 16–17.

<sup>123</sup> They have been collected and investigated by J. Ruwet, “Les « Agrapha » dans les œuvres de Clément d’Alexandrie”, *Bib.* 30 (1949): 133–160.

<sup>124</sup> αἰτεῖσθε γάρ, φησί, τὰ μεγάλα, καὶ τὰ μικρὰ ὑμῖν προστεθήσεται. Clement, *Stromateis* 1.158.2 (SC 30); cf. 4.34.6, ed. and trans. A. van den Hoek and C. Mondésert SC 463 (Paris: Cerf, 2001).

<sup>125</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 111–112; 387; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 140; Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*<sup>3</sup>, 94–95. These authors also indicate where Origen and other Church Fathers quoted this *agraphon* and added καὶ αἰτεῖτε τὰ ἐπουράνια, καὶ τὰ ἐπίγεια ὑμῖν προστεθήσεται (“Seek the heavenly things, and the earthly things will be added unto you”).

<sup>126</sup> Ruwet, “Agrapha”, 138–139.

very popular in early Christianity and was considered a word of Jesus, “Be skilful money-changers”.<sup>127</sup> Resch does indeed accept this as an authentic word of Jesus, and Ropes and Jeremias rank it among the *agrapha* that are possibly authentic.<sup>128</sup> Next, Clement quotes as a saying of the Lord, “Let not the married person seek a divorce, nor the unmarried person marriage; he who has confessed his intention of being celibate, let him remain unmarried”,<sup>129</sup> which seems to be inspired by 1 Corinthians 7:27 and 7:32–36. Resch suggests that it may stem from the *Gospel of the Egyptians*; Ropes agrees and emphasizes that it cannot be authentic.<sup>130</sup> In his sermon on the rich man’s salvation (on Mark 10:17–31) Clement quotes as a saying of the Lord, “For I will give not only to my friends, but also to the friends of my friends”.<sup>131</sup> This means that Jesus will be lenient towards those who give alms to the poor. However, Ruwet speaks of a “pseudo-citation” coined by Clement.<sup>132</sup> In his *Excerpts from Theodotus* he quotes a word of the Saviour that was in use among the Valentinians, “Save yourself and your soul”.<sup>133</sup> Ropes rejects this as a word of Jesus, but according to Jeremias it may be authentic.<sup>134</sup> All other presumed *agrapha* in Clement’s works are either not clearly attributed to Jesus, or are too close to canonical texts to be discussed here and should be considered free quotations.

<sup>127</sup> γίνεσθε δὲ δόκιμοι τραπεζίται. Clement, *Stromateis* 1.177.2 (SC 30).

<sup>128</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 112–128, 386; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 141–143, 160; Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*<sup>3</sup>, 95–98. Ruwet, “Agrapha”, 146–148, has the rather unlikely suggestion that Clement did not consider this saying a word of Jesus but “une formule plus expressive” of 1 Thessalonians 5:21. See J. S. Vos, “Das Agraphon ‘Seid kundige Geldwechsler’ bei Origenes”, in *Sayings of Jesus: Canonical and Non-Canonical. Essays in Honour of Tjitze Baarda*, ed. W. L. Petersen, J. S. Vos, and H. J. de Jonge, NT S 89 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 277–302.

<sup>129</sup> ὁ γήμας μὴ ἐκβαλλέτω καὶ ὁ μὴ γαμήσας μὴ γαμείτω, ὁ κατὰ πρόθεσιν εὐνουχίας ὁμολογήσας μὴ γῆμαι ἄγαμος διαμενέτω. Clement, *Stromateis* 3.97.4 (GCS 52 [15]); trans. Oulton and Chadwick, *Alexandrian Christianity*, 86, where—as in GCS 52—only the first part is printed as a saying of the Lord.

<sup>130</sup> Resch, *Agrapha*<sup>2</sup>, 182–183; Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 107–108; Ruwet, “Agrapha”, 136–138, presumes that the second part is Clement’s interpretation of the Lord’s saying.

<sup>131</sup> δῶσω γὰρ οὐ μόνον τοῖς φίλοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς φίλοις τῶν φίλων. Clement, *The Rich Man’s Salvation* 33.1 (LCL 92).

<sup>132</sup> Ruwet, “Agrapha”, 140–141. Neither Resch nor Ropes pays attention to this *agraphon*.

<sup>133</sup> σώζου σὺ καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ σου. Clement, *Excerpts from Theodotus* 2.2 (SC 23).

<sup>134</sup> Ropes, *Sprüche Jesu*, 122; Jeremias, *Unbekannte Jesusworte*<sup>3</sup>, 75–77. Resch does not discuss this saying.

Moreover, numerous *agrapha* occur in patristic literature of the third and fourth centuries, a few of which are sometimes considered authentic or possibly authentic.<sup>135</sup>

#### 6. *Records of a Secret Oral Tradition that Jesus Transmitted to a Small Number of his Disciples*

In the preceding section we saw that Papias preferred the oral transmission of Jesus' teaching to written reports. His preference was not only firmly rooted in the Greek tradition of oral teaching, according to which books were less reliable, but was also shared by other Christians and Christian Gnostics of the second century and beyond, which implies that Papias was not alone in preferring oral tradition.<sup>136</sup> Often this oral tradition was regarded as secret. For example, Irenaeus repeatedly refers to the secret traditions of his Gnostic adversaries; once he says that the Valentinians read these traditions in ἄγραφα, by which he means writings that are foreign to the Scriptures.<sup>137</sup> On another occasion he reports the heretics' claim that the tradition of the truth was not transmitted by writings, but by the *viva vox*, for which they quoted 1 Corinthians 2:6 ("Yet among the mature we speak wisdom, though not a wisdom of this age").<sup>138</sup>

In this chapter we will not dwell on the "heretical" Gnostic traditions, but point out that the patristic author Clement of Alexandria also says that Christian teaching is both unwritten (ἄγραφος) and written (ἔγραφος).<sup>139</sup> Like the other Gnostics he speaks of a "gnostic tradition"

<sup>135</sup> For the Pseudo-Clementine literature see L. L. Kline, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, SBL DS 14 (Missoula, MT: SBL / Scholars' Press, 1975); J. van Amersfoort, *Het Evangelie van Thomas en de Pseudo-Clementinen. Een studie van de woorden van Jezus in het Evangelie van Thomas en hun parallellen in de evangeliecitaten in de Pseudo-Clementijnse Homiliae en Recognitiones* (Dissertation, Utrecht, 1984).

<sup>136</sup> As a matter of fact, Jews also attached much importance to oral tradition; see B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript. Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup and Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1964), 71–189; M. S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth. Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For this section see also R. Roukema, *Jesus, Gnosis and Dogma* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 132–144.

<sup>137</sup> E.g., Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.3.1; 1.8.1 (ἐξ ἀγράφων ἀναγινώσκοντες); 1.8.5; 1.11.1; 1.21.1; 1.24.6; 1.25.5; 1.30.14 (SC 264).

<sup>138</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.2.1 (SC 211).

<sup>139</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 1.7.1; cf. 1.4.1; 1.5.1 (SC 30).



that Christ taught to his apostles and that had been transmitted ἀγράφως to a small number of people.<sup>140</sup> Once he says that the Lord transmitted this *gnosis* to James the Just, John, and Peter *after his resurrection*, and that they subsequently transmitted it to the other apostles, and these to the seventy.<sup>141</sup> However, if according to Clement Jesus transmitted his Gnostic teaching only after his resurrection, this element should be included in our following section. In any case, Clement maintains that his own tutors taught him the true tradition that came directly from the apostles Peter, James, John, and Paul.<sup>142</sup> It is this oral tradition that he intends to commit to writing in his miscellaneous notes called *Stromateis*.

Jean Daniélou shows that Clement's *gnosis* includes contemplation of the divine world, the ascension of the soul, and knowledge of the abodes and the hierarchy of the angels. Daniélou demonstrates that these traditions originate from the apocalyptic milieu that is known from Jewish and Christian apocrypha.<sup>143</sup> Salvatore Lilla puts a stronger emphasis on the Platonic frame of Clement's esotericism, and this too is correct.<sup>144</sup> These authors do not ask whether these traditions may go back to the historical Jesus. In 1954, R. P. C. Hanson regarded Clement's claim as entirely untrustworthy.<sup>145</sup> Margaret Barker, however, associates the secret teaching that, according to the canonical gospels, Jesus gave to his disciples (Mark 4:11–12), with the hidden tradition mentioned by Clement. Furthermore, she refers to Ignatius of Antioch and to

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<sup>140</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 6.61.1–3, ed. and trans. P. Descourtieux, SC 446 (Paris: Cerf, 1999); cf. 1.15.2 (SC 30); 4.3.2 (SC 463); 7.55.6, ed. and trans. A. Le Boulluec, SC 428 (Paris: Cerf, 1997). In order to distinguish between the “heretical” and Clement's Gnostics, we use a small letter for Clement's *gnostic* tradition. For his distance vis-à-vis the “heretical” use of the term “gnostic”, see, e.g., his *Instructor* 1.52.2, ed. H. M. Marrou and M. Harl, SC 70 (Paris: Cerf, 1960), 168–169; *Stromateis* 3.30.1 (GCS 52 [15]).

<sup>141</sup> Clement, *Hypotyposesis* 7 (GCS 17<sup>2</sup>), which is borrowed from Eusebius, *Church History* 2.1.4 (LCL 153).

<sup>142</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 1.11.1–3 (SC 30).

<sup>143</sup> J. Daniélou, *Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux II<sup>e</sup> et III<sup>e</sup> siècles*, BT HD 2 (Paris: Desclée, 1961), 409–425; also idem, *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*, BT HD 1 (Paris: Desclée, 1958), 59–64.

<sup>144</sup> S. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria. A Study of Christian Platonism and Gnosticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). See also G. G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom. Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, SHR 70 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 27–45, 109–131.

<sup>145</sup> R. P. C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1954), 67–71.

Irenaeus who also write about the arrangement of the heavenly realms, and to other patristic authors who testify to a secret tradition.<sup>146</sup>

In order to assess the reliability of the reports of this secret Jesus tradition, one should bear in mind that in the synoptic gospels Jesus is often linked with angels and with heaven, and speaks about angels.<sup>147</sup> We read that his baptism is followed by a vision of the heavens torn open (Mark 1:10), and he allegedly had a vision of Satan falling from heaven (Luke 10:18).<sup>148</sup> This implies that the synoptic gospels depict Jesus as an apocalyptic visionary of heavenly things, and this finds some confirmation in the Gospel of John.<sup>149</sup> If it is true that Jesus was an apocalyptic visionary, we cannot exclude *a priori* the possibility that some of his experiences and teachings in this field were remembered and transmitted after his death, without being included in the canonical gospels. Yet one cannot make a reasonable case that Clement's secret tradition as he wrote it down in his *Stromateis* originated from the historical Jesus. At most, one can say that Clement was acquainted with Jewish apocalyptic traditions with which Jesus too may have been familiar.

### 7. Extracanonical Traditions about the Risen Jesus

Of course, traditions about the risen Jesus cannot be called historical, but belong to the realm of faith. Yet to complete this survey we will mention the few sayings of the risen Jesus that are quoted in early patristic literature.

In order to confirm that Jesus had risen bodily from death, Ignatius relates that after his resurrection Jesus came to those who were with Peter and said, "Reach out, touch me and see that I am not a bodiless

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<sup>146</sup> M. Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2000), 1–4; eadem, *The Great High Priest. The Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 1–14; she refers to Ignatius, *Trallians* 5, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24, and to Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 3; 9–10, trans. A. Rousseau, SC 406 (Paris: Cerf, 1995).

<sup>147</sup> E.g., Mark 1:13; 8:38; 12:25; 13:27; 13:32; Matthew 19:28; 26:53; Luke 12:8–9.

<sup>148</sup> See U. B. Müller, "Vision und Botschaft. Erwägungen zur prophetischen Struktur der Verkündigung Jesu", *ZThK* 74 (1977): 416–448; S. Vollenweider, "'Ich sah den Satan wie einen Blitz vom Himmel fallen' (Lk 10,18)", *ZNW* 79 (1988): 187–203; J. Marcus, "Jesus' Baptismal Vision", *NTS* 41 (1995): 512–521; M. Barker, *The Risen Lord. The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith*, SJT CIT (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 27–41.

<sup>149</sup> E.g., John 3:12–13; 3:31; 6:38; 6:51; 8:23.

demon". Ignatius then says that the disciples touched Jesus and that he ate and drank with them.<sup>150</sup>

Clement of Alexandria quotes from the *Preaching of Peter* a saying of Jesus to his apostles which is apparently situated after his resurrection. It reads, "If any one of Israel, then, wants to repent, and by my name to believe in God, his sins shall be forgiven him. After twelve years, go forth into the world, that no one may say, 'We have not heard'".<sup>151</sup> Another saying from the *Preaching of Peter* quoted by Clement is explicitly situated after Jesus' resurrection and contains his commission to the twelve apostles to preach the gospel in the whole world, so that mankind may know that God is one and that salvation and knowledge of the future are given by faith in Christ.<sup>152</sup>

## 8. Conclusions

As we stated in the introduction to this chapter, the harvest of possibly authentic Jesus traditions in the patristic literature that we investigated is fairly meagre, especially if we distrust some of Resch's isolated positive assessments. The result consists of a small number of words of Jesus that, according to some scholars, are authentic or may be authentic.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>150</sup> The saying reads, λάβετε, ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε, ὅτι οὐκ εἰμὶ δαιμόνιον ἄσώματον. Ignatius, *Smyrneans* 3:1–3, ed. and trans. Ehrman, *Apostolic Fathers*, vol. I, LCL 24, 298–299 (who spells it "daimon"); cf. Luke 24:39–43. Part of this saying is also quoted by Origen, *De Principiis* 1 praef. 8, ed. H. Görgemanns, H. Karpp, *Origenes Vier Bücher von den Prinzipien*, TzF 24 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 94–95 (*non sum daemonium incorporeum*), who attributes it to the *Doctrina Petri*. Eusebius, *Church History* 3.36.11 (LCL 153), however, writes that he does not know the source of this quotation. Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 16.3–4, ed. and trans. A. Ceresa-Gastaldo, BPat 12 (Florence: Nardini, 1988), 106–107, 264, ascribes it to the *Gospel of the Hebrews*.

<sup>151</sup> ἔάν μὲν οὖν τις θελήσῃ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ μετανοήσας διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος μου πιστεῦειν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἀφεθήσονται αὐτῷ αἱ ἁμαρτίαι. μετὰ <δὲ> δώδεκα ἔτη ἐξέλθετε εἰς τὸν κόσμον. μή τις εἴπῃ· οὐκ ἠκούσαμεν. Clement, *Stromateis* 6.43.3 (SC 446). The tradition that the apostles should wait twelve years before going out to preach to the gentiles is confirmed by Apollonius, who wrote a book at the end of the second century, extracts of which have been preserved by Eusebius, *Church History* 5.18.14 (LCL 153), and also occurs in the *Acts of Peter* 5, ed. R. A. Lipsius, *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha*, vol. I (Leipzig, 1891, reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1959), 49.

<sup>152</sup> Clement, *Stromateis* 6.48.1–2 (SC 446).

<sup>153</sup> Clement of Rome, *Corinthians* 13:2: "Show mercy, that you may be shown mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven you. As you do, so it will be done to you; as you give, so it will be given to you; as you judge, so you will be judged; as you show kindness, so will kindness be shown to you; the amount you dispense will be the amount you receive"; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.158.2: "Seek what is great, and the small

Undoubtedly the reason why their authenticity is surmised is that, except for the dictum “Be skilful money-changers”, these sayings resemble Jesus’ teaching according to the synoptic gospels. Furthermore, although some scholars might conclude that the traditions of Jesus’ illegitimate birth and Peter’s baptism by Jesus may be historical, these elements cannot be established as historically reliable facts.

These results coincide with John P. Meier’s verdict that not much is to be expected from the *agrapha* (understood as “unwritten [sayings and deeds]”), and with James D. G. Dunn’s assessment, that “They [i.e., the *agrapha*, understood as “unknown sayings”; RR] do not add much to the overall picture, their credibility as sayings of Jesus largely depending on their compatibility with the more familiar Synoptic traditions”.<sup>154</sup>

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things will be added unto you”; *Stromateis* 1.177.2: “Be skilful money-changers”; *Excerpts from Theodotus* 2.2: “Save yourself and your soul”.

<sup>154</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1:112–141, at 114; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 172.



# JESUS TRADITION IN CLASSICAL AND JEWISH WRITINGS

ROBERT E. VAN VOORST

In this essay we will first examine the historical value of references to Jesus in seven classical authors of the early Common Era: Thallo, Pliny the Younger, Suetonius, Tacitus, Mara bar Serapion, Lucian of Samosata, and Celsus. We will then examine Jesus traditions in Jewish writings, particularly Josephus and the rabbinical literature. Finally, we will present our conclusions on classical and Jewish traditions on Jesus.

## 1. *Thallos: The Eclipse at Jesus' Death*

Probably around 55 CE, a historian named Thallos wrote in Greek a three-volume chronicle of the eastern Mediterranean area from the fall of Troy to about 50 CE. Most of his book, like the vast majority of ancient literature, perished, but not before it was quoted by Sextus Julius Africanus, a Christian writer, in his *History of the World* (ca. 220 CE). This book likewise was lost, but some of its citations of Thallos were taken up by the Byzantine historian Georgius Syncellus in his *Chronicle* (ca. 800). According to Syncellus, when Julius Africanus writes about the darkness at the death of Jesus, he added,

In the third (book) of his histories, Thallos calls this darkness an eclipse of the sun, which seems to me to be wrong.<sup>1</sup>

This fragment of Thallos used by Julius Africanus comes in a section in which Julius deals with the portents during the crucifixion of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> Julius argues that Thallos was “wrong” (ἄλογος) to argue that this was

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<sup>1</sup> All translations in this essay are my own, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Text: F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, II B (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 1157; ANF 6:136. Treatments: F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974), 29–30; Maurice Goguel, *The Life of Jesus* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1933), 91–93; Craig A. Evans, “Jesus in Non-Christian Sources,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 454–455; Robert E. van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 20–23.

only a solar eclipse, because at full moon a solar eclipse is impossible, and the Passover always falls at full moon. Julius counters that the eclipse was miraculous, “a darkness induced by God.” Thallos could have mentioned the eclipse with no reference to Jesus. But it is more likely that Julius, who had access to the context of this quotation in Thallos and who (to judge from other fragments) generally used his sources carefully, was correct in reading it as a hostile reference to Jesus’ death. Thallos was probably arguing that this was no portent of change, but a natural event. Certainty cannot be established about this short quotation, but most of the evidence points to Thallos’ knowledge of the death of Jesus and the portent of darkness that Christians said accompanied it (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44).

Who is this Thallos? Perhaps he is the Thallos to whom the Jewish historian Josephus refers, a Samaritan resident of Rome who made a large loan to Agrippa (*Ant.* 18.163) and who may have been Augustus’s secretary. Since this name is not common and since the first-century time is the same, this identification is at least possible. If it is incorrect, this Thallos remains an otherwise unknown author. The dating of Thallos’ work is also somewhat uncertain. Eusebius’s *Chronicle*, which survives only in Armenian fragments, states that Thallos wrote about the period from the fall of Troy only to the 167th Olympiad (112–109 BCE). However, other fragments of Thallos’ history preserved in several sources indicate that he wrote about events at least until the time of the death of Jesus. One possible solution is to argue that Thallos did indeed write until only 109 BCE, and Eusebius knows this first edition, but it was later extended by someone else in an edition that Julius Africanus used in 221 CE. Another solution is to argue that the report we have in the Armenian fragments of Eusebius’ *Chronicle* is wrong. C. Müller, followed by R. Eisler, emends the reading of the lost Greek original from ρεζ (167th Olympiad, 112–109 BCE) to σζ (207th Olympiad, 49–52 CE).<sup>3</sup> Overall, the second solution is seen by most scholars as more likely, placing Thallos’ work between 50–60 CE.

In sum, a fog of uncertainty surrounds Thallos’ statement: its extreme brevity, its third-hand citation, and the identity and date of the author. Nevertheless, a tradition about Jesus’ death probably emerges from this fog. Like Christian tradition as found in the synoptic gospels, Thallos accepts darkness at the death of Jesus. Against that tradition, he explains

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Goguel, *Life of Jesus*, 92.

it as a natural eclipse of the sun. We can conclude that this element of Christian tradition was known outside of Christian circles, probably by Christian preaching, and that Thallos felt it necessary to refute it. His argument makes him, if our dating is correct, the first ancient writer known to us to express literary opposition to Christianity.

## 2. *Pliny the Younger: The Christ of Christian Worship*

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus (ca. 61–ca.113) was the nephew and adopted son of the writer Pliny the Elder. His Letter 96 of Book 10, the most discussed of all Pliny's *Epistles*, deals with Pliny's judicial treatment of Christians and mentions Christ three times:

Other people, whose names were given to me by an informer, first said that they were Christians and then denied it. They said that they had stopped being Christians two or more years ago, and some more than twenty. They all venerated your image and the images of the gods as the others did, and reviled Christ. They also maintained that the sum total of their guilt or error was no more than the following. They had met regularly before dawn on a determined day, and sung antiphonally a hymn to Christ as if to a god (*carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem*).<sup>4</sup>

The only statement Pliny could be making about the historical Jesus is found in the words *carmenque Christo quasi deo dicere secum invicem*, "and sung antiphonally a hymn to Christ as if to a god." M. Harris, following Goguel, argues that by using *quasi* Pliny implies that the divine Christ whom Christians worship was once a human being.<sup>5</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White points out that in Pliny "*quasi* is used commonly without the idea of supposal to mean simply 'as'."<sup>6</sup> However, Pliny can also use *quasi* in its typically hypothetical meaning ("as if, as though").<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Text: W. den Boer, *Scriptorum Paganorum I–IV Saec. De Christianis Testimonia*, Textus Minores 2, rev. ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1965). Treatments: Stephen Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 4–14; A. N. Sherwin-White, *Fifty Letters of Pliny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 23–29.

<sup>5</sup> Murray Harris, "References to Jesus in Classical Authors," in *Jesus Traditions Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1982), 346–347.

<sup>6</sup> Sherwin-White, *Fifty Letters of Pliny*, 177.

<sup>7</sup> P. G. W. Glare (*Oxford Latin Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968–82]) states that with the ellipsis of the verb, as in the clause under discussion, *quasi* typically means "as if."



So while *quasi* may perhaps imply here that the Christ Christians worship was once a man, we should not place too much weight on this. If Goguel and Harris are correct, Pliny furnishes only the barest witness to the historical Jesus (which no one at the time doubted), but this was not at all his aim.

All the specific information about Christ related in Letter 96 probably comes from Pliny's own experience in Bithynia, as he seems to suggest; he shows no knowledge of other sources such as Christian writings. He has obtained this information from former Christians, and corroborated it with information obtained under torture from two women deacons. As such, it is not a witness to Jesus independent of Christianity. What is related about Christ in this letter confirms two points made in the New Testament about the "Christ of faith" rather than the "historical Jesus": first, Christians worship Christ in their songs (e.g., Phil 2:5–11; Col 1:15–20; Rev 5:11–13), and second, no true Christian reviles or curses Christ (1 Cor 12:3).

### 3. Suetonius: *The Instigator Chrestus*

The Roman writer Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus (ca. 70–ca. 140), in his *Lives* of the Caesars, summarily lists the actions taken by Claudius, who ruled from 41–54 CE, toward various subject peoples during his reign. In *Claudius* 25, after reporting how he dealt with Greece, Macedonia and others, Suetonius writes tersely,

He [Claudius] expelled the Jews from Rome, since they were always making disturbances because of the instigator Chrestus (*Judaeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantis Roma expulit*).<sup>8</sup> (*Claud.* 25.4)

Even considering one textual variant that reads "Christo," the Latin text is reliable and authentic. A Christian interpolator would more likely have spelled this name correctly. Also, he would not have placed Christ in Rome in 49 CE or called him a troublemaker. (Of course,

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<sup>8</sup> Text: M. Ihm, ed., *C. Suetoni Tranquilli Opera*, Teubner Series (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1978) 1:209. Treatments: H. Botermann, *Das Judenedikt des Kaisers Claudius*, HE 71 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996); H. Dixon Slingerland, *Claudian Policymaking and the Early Imperial Repression of Judaism at Rome* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); F. F. Bruce, "Christianity under Claudius," *BJRL* 44 (1961): 309–326; Harris, "References to Jesus," 353–56; Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 160–167; van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 29–39.

these arguments rest on an identification of “Chrestus” with Christ, a question we will take up below.) The overwhelming majority of modern scholarship concludes that the reading “Chrestus” is original. It is most often translated in a way similar to the influential Loeb edition, “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”<sup>9</sup> Yet *impulsor* does not mean “instigation,” but rather “instigator.” The immediately joined *impulsore* and *Chresto* agree with each other grammatically, making *Chresto* an appositive, and so they are better rendered “the instigator Chrestus.”

Who is this “Chrestus”? Some historians have recently argued against the traditional consensus identifying “Chrestus” as Christ, that Chrestus is an otherwise unknown agitator in Rome. Stephen Benko presents the most persuasive case.<sup>10</sup> He argues that Suetonius would not misconstrue “Christus” as “Chrestus,” because Chrestus was a common name in Rome. Moreover, in *Nero* 16.2 Suetonius spells the closely related word *Christiani* correctly, and so he must have known that its founder was Christus, not Chrestus. Benko concludes that this Chrestus was a Jewish radical, a member of a Zealot-like group that wanted to induce the coming of God’s kingdom by violence. When Chrestus incited Roman Jews to riot over the abolition of the Jewish client kingdom of the Herodians by Claudius in 44, Claudius acted to preserve order in his capital by expelling the Jews in 49, the event which Suetonius records. Although Chrestus/Χρηστός was indeed a common name among Greco-Roman peoples, and especially common among slaves and freedmen, among *Jews*, which all interpreters including Benko hold to be Suetonius’ meaning here, this name is not attested at all. Because “Chrestus” was not a common Jewish name but was a familiar Gentile name, the door opens more widely to the possibility that Suetonius (and/or his source) may indeed have confused “Christus” for “Chrestus.” Benko also asserts that Suetonius’ statement about Christians in *Nero* 16.2 shows that he would have known the correct spelling of “Christus,” and thus would have written “Christus” if he had meant it. However, this passage makes no reference to the founder of the Christians’ movement, nor does it mention Judaism. *Claud.* 25.4,

<sup>9</sup> J. C. Rolfe, *Suetonius*, 2nd ed., vol. II, LCL 38 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 51.

<sup>10</sup> S. Benko, “The Edict of Claudius of AD 49,” *TZ* 25 (1969): 406–418. See also his *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 18–20.

on the other hand, does not refer to Christians, but to Jews. Suetonius' statements indicate that he may not have associated Judaism with Christianity, much less have known that they were closely connected religious movements in the year 49. He says that Christians hold to a new superstition, and implies that they are a distinct "class" (*genus*), while he knows that Jews practice an ancient religion. His statements may indicate that he did not associate the Jewish *Chrestus* with *Christianoi*. Corroboration of this widespread Roman misunderstanding is provided by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.22), who must explain to his readers that "Christians" comes from "Christ." Therefore, because Suetonius can spell "Christians" correctly in *Nero* does not necessarily mean that he would know that "Chrestus" is a mistake in *Claudius*.

Benko argues that Chrestus may have been a Jewish radical attempting to force the advent of the kingdom of God by violence, activities that led to rioting among Jews in Rome. Erich Koestermann also holds that *Chrestiano*i belonged to a Jewish revolutionary movement led by an otherwise unknown Chrestus.<sup>11</sup> However, no other evidence corroborates this supposed Jewish political rebellion in Rome to which Benko and Koestermann relate Chrestus. A more likely explanation of this trouble leading to expulsion, one based on a pattern in the history of Roman Judaism, relates to Jewish missionary activity. As Louis Feldman has argued, the most likely explanation of all three expulsions of the Jews from the city of Rome is trouble over Jewish missionary activity among non-Jewish Romans.<sup>12</sup> Suetonius may well be commenting about a civil unrest caused by proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. Continued public unrest over this Christ led Claudius to take the same action that other Roman officials had taken in this sort of situation—send the troublemakers packing, at least until they learned their lesson and could return with a more civil attitude. We need not posit a religious-political revolt, quite the opposite of missionary activity. In conclusion, Benko's arguments, fascinating though they are, do not persuade. In this passage, "Chrestus" is most likely Suetonius' mistake for "Christus."

The source of Suetonius' information is not named. A Christian source, whether written or oral, would have gotten the information

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<sup>11</sup> E. Koestermann, "Ein folgenschwerer Irrtum des Tacitus?" *Historia* 16 (1967): 456–469.

<sup>12</sup> L. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 300–304.

about Christ more right than wrong. Nor is it likely that this information originated from Jews, since its mention of their expulsion is uncomplimentary to them. More likely is the supposition that Suetonius is using a Roman source, perhaps from the imperial archives or archives of “police” reports. As the emperor’s secretary, he may have had access to these archives, but he makes no quotation of the imperial correspondence after his chapter on Augustus. Suetonius may have copied a mistake from his source, and the source may have been written near to the event when the name “Christ” was not widely known in Rome. Repeating a mistake in his sources is characteristic of Suetonius, who often treats them uncritically and uses them carelessly.<sup>13</sup>

The main thrust of the sentence is clear: Claudius took measures against at least some Jews in Rome after continual disturbances caused by Christ. Suetonius’ statement indicates how vague and incorrect Roman knowledge of the origins of Christianity could be. Similar sounds and spelling led him, like others, to misread *Christus* as *Chrestus*. From this initial misunderstanding came the idea that this Chrestus was actually present in Rome as an instigator in the 40’s. Although Suetonius did view Christ as an historical person capable of fomenting unrest, his glaring mistakes should caution us against placing any weight on his evidence for Jesus.

#### 4. Tacitus: *The Executed Christ*

Chapters 38–45 of Tacitus’ *Annals* Book 15 describe the great fire in Rome and its aftermath in 64 CE, an issue that entails introducing Christians and Christ. *Ann.* 44 begins by listing the official acts to cope with the aftermath of the fire, presumably carried out under Nero’s direction. Then Tacitus reveals the reason for these measures:

[2] But neither human effort nor the emperor’s generosity nor the placating of the gods ended the scandalous belief that the fire had been ordered. Therefore, to put down the rumor, Nero substituted as culprits and punished in the most unusual ways those hated for their shameful acts [*flagitia*], whom the crowd called “Chrestians.” [3] The founder of this name, Christ, had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator

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<sup>13</sup> “Suetonius followed whatever source attracted him, without caring much whether it was reliable or not” (M. C. Howatson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 542).

Pontius Pilate [*Auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat*]. Suppressed for a time, the deadly superstition erupted again not only in Judea, the origin of this evil, but also in [Rome], where all things horrible and shameful from everywhere come together and become popular.<sup>14</sup>

There are good reasons for concluding with the vast majority of scholars that this passage is textually sound, despite difficulties which result in no small measure from Tacitus' own compressed style. The style and content of this entire chapter are typically Tacitean. The statement about Christ fits well in its context, and is the necessary conclusion to the entire discussion of the burning of Rome. As Norma Miller delightfully remarks, "The well-intentioned pagan glossers of ancient texts do not normally express themselves in Tacitean Latin,"<sup>15</sup> and the same could be said of Christian interpolators. Moreover, no Christian forgers would have made such disparaging remarks about Christianity as we have in *Ann.* 15.44, and if a Christian forger added only the sentence about Christ, he probably would not have been as purely descriptive as in 15.44.3.

Tacitus can spell "Christus" correctly, and he uses this spelling to correct the common misspelling "Chrestians." In his eyes, Christians (and, by association, their founder) are certainly not "Chrestians"—"good, useful ones." Rather, they are rightly hated for their "shameful acts" (15.44.2), and have "a guilt which deserved the most exemplary punishment" (15.44.5). Tacitus uses *Christus* as a personal name, and he calls Christ "the originator/founder [*auctor*] of this name" of "Christians." Thus there is a material connection between *Christus* and *Christianoi*. This is important in the link he implicitly makes between the punishment Christ received and the punishment his followers received at the hands of Nero. The occasional use of *-ianoi* as a pejorative suffix fits the context here, where Tacitus has nothing good to say about Christians. He continues by informing his readers that Christ "had been executed in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate." Some translations reverse "the reign of Tiberius" and "by the

<sup>14</sup> Text: F. Römer, *P. Corneli Taciti, Annalium Libri XV–XVI*, Wiener Studien 6 (Vienna: Böhlau, 1976), 65–67; K. Wellesley, *Cornelius Tacitus 1.2, Annales XI–XVI*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner 1986), 114–115. Studies: R. Martin, *Tacitus* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1994); Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus* (New York: Routledge, 1993); van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 39–53.

<sup>15</sup> N. P. Miller, *Tacitus: Annals XV* (London: Macmillan, 1973), xxviii.

procurator Pontius Pilate,” but Tacitus gives them in this more proper order, which should be preserved in translation. For “had been executed,” the Latin reads somewhat periphrastically *supplicio adfectus erat*. *Supplicio* means “punishment,” especially capital punishment, and *adficere* when construed with punishment often denotes “inflict.” But he does not say explicitly that Jesus was crucified. That Nero executed Christians links their fate with Christ’s, who was executed under Tiberius. Repetition of the verb *adficere* ties the two together: Christians were punished [*poenis adfecit*] by Nero, and Christ had been executed [*supplicio adfectus erat*] by Pilate.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Tacitus remarks that Christ was executed “in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator Pontius Pilate.” Tacitus does not give the year of Christ’s death in the more formal way, “the Nth year of the reign of Tiberius.” Nor does he state the crime for which Christ was crucified; his readers would have assumed it to be a crime against Rome, and he presents Christ’s death as a purely Roman matter. “Even if he had known about it, [Tacitus] would not have had the slightest reason to mention participation of the Jews.”<sup>17</sup> Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from 26 to 36, years that fall in the reign of Tiberius. Pilate’s name, the location in Judea, and the time are given accurately, in agreement with the canonical gospels, Philo, and Josephus.<sup>18</sup> The four gospels are unanimous that Pilate did indeed give the order for Jesus to be put to death. Bruce’s judgment is fitting: “It may be regarded as an instance of the irony of history that the only surviving reference to [Pilate] in a pagan writer mentions him because of the sentence of death which he passed on Christ.”<sup>19</sup>

Tacitus’ description of Pilate as a *procurator* is doubtless an anachronism.<sup>20</sup> Until 41 CE, when Claudius gave each provincial governor from the equestrian class the title *procurator augusti*, the Roman governor was called a “prefect” (*praefectus*). This was born out by the “Pilate Stone” in Caesarea Maritima, dated to about 31, which calls Pontius Pilate a “prefect.” Even after this change in 41, there may have been fluidity in the use of these two titles, especially in non-official writings.

<sup>16</sup> As noted by Harris, “References to Jesus,” 349.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1965), 32.

<sup>18</sup> Philo, *Legat.* 299–305; Josephus, *War* 2.169–177; *Ant.* 18.55–89.

<sup>19</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974), 23.

<sup>20</sup> For a concise discussion of this issue, see Evans, “Jesus in Non-Christian Sources,” 465–466.

Most agree that Tacitus, like other contemporary authors,<sup>21</sup> has made use of the *procurator* title, which was more common in his own time, rather than the earlier and historically correct “prefect.” A mistake like this hardly impeaches the accuracy of Tacitus’ other statements about Jesus.

What is the source of Tacitus’ information about Christ? First, Tacitus did not draw, directly or indirectly, on writings that came into the New Testament. No literary or oral dependence can be demonstrated between his description and the gospel accounts.<sup>22</sup> Nor is it likely that Tacitus drew his information from another Christian document. Second, Tacitus does not seem to have drawn on general hearsay. He would probably indicate this with an expression like *dicunt* or *ferunt*, or call it a *rumor*, as he does the report that Nero mounted his private stage and accompanied the burning of Rome with a song (15.39). Moreover, hearsay typically does not produce Tacitus’ “documentary precision” about controversial topics like Christ and Christianity.<sup>23</sup> We cannot rule out that Tacitus found this information about Christ in another, now lost Roman history that he used as a source. However, this cannot be demonstrated either, because Tacitus rarely indicates where he is relying on his sources. A more likely source, but still not demonstrable, is a police or magistrate’s report made during investigations after the fire, which may have mentioned the genesis of Christianity. The *Commentarii Principis*, the court journal of the emperors, was closed to those outside the imperial court, so he could not consult it. The *Acta Senatus*, the senate’s archive of its own actions and activities, were open. The Senate *could* have investigated the fire of 64 and made some comment for explanation about Christ that ended up in its archive, but this remains a supposition. Moreover, Tacitus’ anachronistic use of “procurator” may indicate that he is not using an official imperial or senatorial document, which would not be likely to have made such a mistake.

The most plausible source of Tacitus’ information about Christ is Tacitus’ own dealings with Christians, directly or indirectly. In two periods of his life, he could have acquired knowledge of them. The later

<sup>21</sup> Philo, *Legat.* 38; Josephus, *War* 2.117, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Goguel, *Life of Jesus*, 95; Harris, “References to Jesus,” 351–352.

<sup>23</sup> Pace Paul Winter, who argues that Tacitus has no direct knowledge of Christianity and writes from hearsay (“Tacitus and Pliny: The Early Christians,” *Journal of Historical Study* 1 [1967–68]: 31–40; idem, “Tacitus and Pliny on Christianity,” *Klio* 52 [1970]: 497–502).

period was when Tacitus was governor of the province of Asia. At the same time, his close friend Pliny the Younger was governor of the neighboring province of Pontus-Bithynia and had difficult dealings with Christians. Tacitus could have had similar investigations or trials of Christians, who were present in several cities of Asia, or gained information about Christians from Pliny. An earlier period when Tacitus may have learned of Christians is typically overlooked. In 88 CE, he became a member of the *Quindecimviri Sacris Faciundis*, the priestly organization charged *inter alia* with supervising the practice of officially tolerated foreign cults in the city. It is not unreasonable to suppose that a priestly college charged with regulating licit religions would know something about the illicit ones, so information about Christians may have come to him through this association. Regardless of its source, what Tacitus says about Christ is clear. In his sparse but accurate detail, Tacitus gives the strongest evidence outside the New Testament for the death of Jesus.

##### 5. *Mara Bar Serapion: The Wise Jewish King*

Sometime after 73 CE, Mara bar Serapion wrote an eloquent letter in Syriac to his son, who was also named Serapion. The sole manuscript that has survived comes from to the seventh century.<sup>24</sup> We know nothing else about Mara or Serapion apart from this letter. To judge from its contents, he was a Stoic.

Mara's city had been destroyed in a war with Rome, and he with others had been taken prisoner. Most of his letter is taken up with an admonition to pursue wisdom in order to deal with the inevitable difficulties of life. Its wider, more quixotic purpose is to persuade the Romans to leave his homeland. Mara says that when the wise are oppressed, not only does their wisdom triumph in the end, but God also punishes their oppressors:

What advantage did the Athenians gain by murdering Socrates, for which they were repaid with famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, because their country was completely covered

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<sup>24</sup> For the Syriac text, English translation, and brief treatment, see W. Cureton, *Spicelegium Syriacum* (London: Rivington, 1855); German translation and more extended treatment, F. Schulthess, "Der Brief des Mara bar Serapion," *ZDMG* 51 (1897): 365–391. See also Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 52–57; Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 30–31; van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 53–58.



in sand in just one hour? Or the Jews [by killing] their wise king, because their kingdom was taken away at that very time? God justly repaid the wisdom of these three men: the Athenians died of famine; the Samians were completely overwhelmed by the sea; and the Jews, desolate and driven from their own kingdom, are scattered through every nation. Socrates is not dead, because of Plato; neither is Pythagoras, because of the statue of Juno; nor is the wise king, because of the new laws he laid down.

Although he is not named, Jesus is doubtless the one meant by “wise king.” First, Mara speaks of this Jew as a king, and “king” is prominently connected to Jesus at his trial, and especially at his death in the *titulus* on his cross (Mark 15:26 par.). Jesus’ preaching of the “kingdom of God” may also play a role here. Second, Mara’s link between the destruction of the Jewish nation and the death of the “wise king” is paralleled in Christianity, where the destruction of Jerusalem is a punishment for Jewish rejection of Jesus. The synoptic gospels imply this connection (Matt 23:37–39; 24:2; 27:25; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 19:42–44; 21:5–6, 20–24; 23:28–31), but Justin makes it explicit (1 *Apol.* 32.4–6; 47–49; 53.2–3; *Dial.* 25.5; 108.3). In later church writers this becomes a common theme. Third, “the new laws he laid down” is probably a reference to the Christian religion, especially its moral code.

That Mara does not use “Jesus” or “Christ” is striking, because he implicitly appeals to the fame of the wise king’s teaching. This king and his laws are on a level with Socrates and Pythagoras, who were “household names” in the ancient world. Blinzler suggests without any supporting argument that “the writer was not familiar with the name of Jesus or Christ.”<sup>25</sup> While this is possible, it seems unlikely that Mara would appeal to the fame of a new movement and yet be unfamiliar with the name of its founder. It is more likely that he suppresses Jesus’ name for the same reason that he suppresses the explicit statement that Jesus was killed. Cureton suggests that Roman persecution of Christians at the time of this letter led Mara to suppress Jesus’ name, while making an allusion to him quite unmistakable.<sup>26</sup>

Those who have dealt with Mara’s letter give it widely varying dates, but most place it in the first century, shortly after the Roman conquest of Commagene in 73 to which the author seems to refer. However, a date in the second century is more likely. It fits the situation of the writer just as well as the first century, and the situation of the Jewish

<sup>25</sup> Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 35.

<sup>26</sup> Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum*, xiii.

people better. As Cureton argues, “The troubles to which the writer alludes as having befallen himself and his city will apply to those inflicted by the Romans upon the countries about the Tigris and Euphrates which had been excited to rebel against them by Vologeses, in the Parthian war under the command of Lucius Verus, AD 162–165.”<sup>27</sup> The way the author speaks of what has happened to the Jewish nation also points to a date sometime after the second Jewish revolt (132–135). His observation that “driven from their own kingdom, [the Jews] are scattered through every nation” applies particularly to the aftermath of the second revolt.

Where did Mara obtain this tradition on Jesus? In favor of a non-Christian source is the fact that Mara does not state either that Jesus’ death is redemptive or that he lives through his resurrection, central elements in most types of Christianity. Some Christian apologists were able to compare Jesus to Socrates and other philosophers, but with the argument that Jesus was superior, not (as Mara implies) equal. Another argument pointing to a non-Christian source is that “king” is not a typical christological title in early Christian literature, and “wise king” is not attested at all. Nevertheless, the balance of the evidence favors a Christian origin. First, Mara states that the Jews *wrongly* killed Jesus; they killed him just as the Athenians wrongly killed Socrates and the Samites Pythagoras. While Jewish tradition also states (as we will see below) that the Jewish authorities executed Jesus, this tradition may not have found its way into a wider polemic that Mara would have known. Moreover, the tradition that reached Mara seems to contain a negative judgment on the death of Jesus that Jewish traditions, which justify the death of Jesus as legal, would not have. Second, as we have seen, Mara links the death of Jesus with the destruction of the Jewish nation, as only Christian tradition did. While a Christian source is thus more likely, we cannot rule out that Mara also had non-Christian information, especially if the “new laws” of the “wise king” were as well known as he implies.

The results for study of the historical Jesus are slim. Mara’s letter does not contain an independent witness to Jesus, for two main reasons. First, it obviously links the life of “the wise king” with his movement and its teachings, making it likely that Mara learned about the wise king from Christians, either directly or indirectly. Second, its assertion

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<sup>27</sup> Cureton, *Spicelegium Syriacum*, xv.

that the Jews killed Jesus is dubious at best. By his own logic, for Mara to implicate the Romans would go against his main point, that people who persecute and kill their wise men do so at their own peril. Nevertheless, the Letter of Mara shows the appeal that Christianity could have for some educated people. Mara's positive allusion to Christ and Christianity should not be read as an endorsement, any more than his mention of Socrates and Pythagoras is an endorsement of their respective philosophic schools. But he uses the example of Jesus and his teachings to urge his compatriots to persevere and the Romans to relent.

#### 6. *Lucian of Samosata: The Crucified Sophist*

Lucian of Samosata (ca. 115–ca. 200) was a well-known Greek satirist and traveling lecturer. More than eighty works bear his name, most of them genuine, satirizing the faults and foibles of his time. In his book *The Death of Peregrinus*, written shortly after 165, Lucian warns readers against the infamous Peregrinus of Parion, whose emotionality and theatricality were opposed to the reasonable moderation that Lucian advocated.<sup>28</sup> In the course of describing how easily a charlatan like Peregrinus can dupe Christians, Lucian comments on the founder of Christianity and his teachings:

During this period [Peregrinus] associated himself with the priests and scribes of the Christians in Palestine, and learned their astonishing wisdom. Of course, in a short time he made them look like children; he was their prophet, leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. . . . They looked up to him as a god, made him their lawgiver, and chose him as the official patron of their group, or at least the vice-patron. He was second only to that one whom they still worship today, the man in Palestine who was crucified because he brought this new form of initiation into the world. (§11)

Peregrinus was jailed and Christians came to his aid, bringing meals and money. Then Lucian explains why they did this:

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<sup>28</sup> Text and Eng. trans. in A. M. Harmon, *Lucian*, vol. V, LCL 302 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936). Studies: C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986) 117–132; H. D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament*, TU 76 (Berlin: Akademie, 1961); J. Hall, *Lucian's Satire* (New York: Arno, 1981), 212; van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 58–64.

That first lawgiver of theirs persuaded them that they are all brothers the moment they transgress and deny the Greek gods and begin worshipping that crucified sophist and living by his laws. They scorn all possessions without distinction and treat them as community property; they accept such things on faith alone, without any evidence. So if a fraudulent and cunning person who knows how to take advantage of a situation comes among them, he can make himself rich in a short time while laughing at these foolish people. (§13)

The text of the references to Jesus is stable. Lucian talks about Christ in the context of his attack on Christianity. He knows that Christians worship a god who was a man, and one who was crucified in Palestine. They have a strong belief in life after death, which affects their present life. Christians “live according to his [i.e., Christ’s] laws,” especially brotherly love. Christians have their own scriptures that are regularly read and expounded. They visit and help their imprisoned fellow believers, and communicate widely with each other. Christians accept their key teachings by faith, not by philosophic reasoning.

Lucian’s every remark about Jesus drips with contempt. First, we note that he gives no name to this founder. Instead, he uses the derogatory “that one”: “that one whom they still worship today” (§11); “that first lawgiver of theirs” (§13); “that crucified sophist” (§13). Lucian clearly does mean Jesus, judging from the other things said about him in these sections. Lucian calls him by implication a “patron” or “protector” (προστάτης), a “lawgiver” (νομοθέτης), and “that crucified sophist” (ἀνασκολοπισμένον ἐκεῖνον σοφιστήν). To call Jesus a “patron/protector” is another way of saying that he is the leader of the group. Lucian sees this leadership as a matter of following his laws. When Lucian twice calls Jesus a “lawgiver,” he refers to the “laws” of the way of life Jesus laid down for his followers. He sees Christianity’s way of life as coming from Christ himself. “Lawgiver” is not found in early Christian literature as applied to Jesus, although Jesus’ teachings can be called laws (Gal 6:2, Rom 3:27, James 2:8, 12), and Christianity is sometimes called a “new law” (e.g., *Barn.* 2:6; *Ignatius Magn.* 2). So it is not difficult to see how Lucian can construe Jesus as a “lawgiver.” Lucian also calls Jesus a σοφιστής, “sophist.” In the second century, this derisive label was aimed at one who taught only for money and who could at times also be labeled, like Peregrinus, a “cheat.”<sup>29</sup> The second lawgiver, Peregrinus, defrauded them just as the first did. This notion is implied

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<sup>29</sup> LSJ, 1622.

but not developed in the application of “sophist.” Lucian gets even more specific by calling Christ “that crucified sophist,” having already stated that the original founder was “the man in Palestine who was crucified for bringing this new form of initiation into the world” (§ 11). The verb he uses for crucifixion in both cases is a rare word, ἀνασκολοπίζειν, not ἀνασταυροῦν, the word usually used by ancient writers and always used in the New Testament and other early Christian literature. Lucian’s verb means “to impale,” but unquestionably refers here to crucifixion. He uses this verb exclusively for crucifixion; it also occurs in his *Prom.* 2, 7, and 10, and in *Jud. voc.* 12. The cause of this crucifixion is that “he brought this new form of initiation into the world.” Lucian’s main point seems to be that Christianity was from the first a condemned movement. His repetition of “crucified” emphasizes the shameful origin of Christianity: it was founded by an executed criminal.

In section 13, Lucian outlines the teaching of Jesus. He construes his teachings as “laws,” and Jesus is the Christians’ “first lawgiver.” As we have seen, this is generally in line with some early Christian views. Next, Lucian states that Jesus taught his disciples to “deny the Greek gods” and links this to “transgression,” probably the transgression of Roman law. To judge from the evidence of the New Testament, Jesus never explicitly taught such a thing, apart from his affirmation of the Shema, which implicitly denies other gods—if not their existence, certainly devotion to them. Christians who spread the gospel among Gentiles had to deal with belief in other gods (e.g., 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Cor 8:4–6), but the canonical gospels do not trace this topic to Jesus, in whose predominantly inner-Jewish milieu there was no need for such teaching. Moreover, gospel traditions, whether canonical or non-canonical, do not support the affirmation that Jesus taught that fellowship among Christians is associated with denial of the Greek gods.

Did Jesus teach his disciples to worship him, as Lucian claims? Here again, Lucian is reading back from his knowledge of Christians into the life of Jesus. While Jesus may have received informal acts of worship during his ministry, the New Testament nowhere says that he *taught* it. Finally, Lucian implies that Jesus himself taught community of property among his followers. Once again, while Jesus certainly taught his followers a radical attitude to possessions and the need for sharing, the actual treating of possessions as community property is not attested in the ministry or teaching of Jesus, but only in the first part of Acts (chs. 4–5). Of course, in Lucian’s view this attitude toward possessions, when coupled with the alleged credulity and misplaced

goodness of Christians, made them easy prey to a charlatan like Peregrinus.

What is Lucian's source of information about Jesus? He knows that Christians have sacred books, and this raises the possibility that he drew his knowledge of Jesus from them. To judge from what he says here, it is unlikely that Lucian had read them. Most of the correct information he relates about Christianity was common knowledge in his time. The use of the non-New Testament words "patron" and "lawgiver" as applied to Jesus, and especially Lucian's characteristic word for "crucified," also argue tellingly against a New Testament source. So there is no literary or oral connection between Lucian and the New Testament and other early Christian literature in regard to the person of Jesus. In sum, it is likely, but not demonstrable, that some information about Jesus came with the story of Peregrinus itself and was embellished by Lucian for his purposes.

### 7. *Celsus: Christ the Magician*

Sometime around 175 CE, the Neo-Platonist thinker Celsus wrote a comprehensive attack on Christianity entitled *True Doctrine* (ἀληθῆς λόγος). This work perished, but not before a large amount variously estimated at between 60 and 90 percent was incorporated into Origen's vigorous response, *Against Celsus* (*Contra Celsum*), about 250 CE.<sup>30</sup>

Celsus mounts a wide attack against Jesus as the founder of the faith. He discounts or disparages Jesus' ancestry, conception, birth, childhood, ministry, death, resurrection, and continuing influence. According to Celsus, Jesus' ancestors came from a Jewish village (*Cels.* 1.28), and his mother was a poor countrywoman who earned her living by spinning cloth (1.28). He worked his miracles by sorcery (1.28; 2.32, 49; 8.41). His physical appearance was ugly and small (6.75). To his discredit,

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<sup>30</sup> Text: M. Borret, *Origène: Contre Celse*, SC 132, 136, 147, 150, 227 (Paris: Cerf, 1967–1976). Studies: Henry Chadwick, *Origin: Contra Celsum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Celsus, On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Gary T. Burke, *Celsus and Late Second-Century Christianity* (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1981); Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origin on Jesus*, SBLDS 64 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982); Graham N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 169–171; Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 94–125; van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 64–68.

Jesus kept all Jewish customs, including sacrifice in the temple (2.6). He gathered only ten followers and taught them his worst habits, including begging and robbing (1.62; 2.44). These followers, “ten sailors and tax collectors,” were the only ones he convinced of his divinity, but now his followers convince multitudes (2.46). The reports of his resurrection came from a hysterical female, and belief in the resurrection was the result of Jesus’ sorcery, the wishful thinking of his followers, or mass hallucinations, all for the purpose of impressing others and increasing the chance for others to become beggars (2.55). Celsus’ fullest statement about Jesus comes at 1.28, where Origen summarizes Celsus’ attack on Jesus. The words that probably derive from Celsus (following Chadwick’s edition) are italicized.

He portrays the Jew having a conversation with Jesus himself, refuting him on many charges. First, *he fabricated the story of his birth from a virgin; and he reproaches him because he came from a Jewish village and from a poor countrywoman who made her living by spinning. He says that her husband, who was a carpenter by trade, drove her out when she was convicted of adultery. Then he says that after her husband had driven her out and while she was wandering disgracefully, she secretly bore Jesus. He says that because (Jesus) was poor he hired himself out as a laborer in Egypt, and there learned certain magical powers which the Egyptians are proud to have. He returned full of pride in these powers, and gave himself the title of God. (Cels. 1.28)*

Later Celsus expands on the charge of illegitimacy:

Let us return, however, to the words put in the mouth of the Jew. *The mother of Jesus is described as being turned out by the carpenter who was engaged to her, because she had been convicted of adultery and had a child by a soldier named Panthera. (Cels. 1.32)*

Finally, Celsus says:

*Was the mother of Jesus beautiful? Did God have sexual intercourse with her because she was beautiful, although by his nature he cannot love a mortal body? It is unlikely that God would have fallen in love with her, since she was neither wealthy nor of royal birth. Indeed, even her neighbors did not know her. He only ridicules when he says, When the carpenter hated her and expelled her, neither divine power nor the gift of persuasion could save her. Thus he says that these things have nothing to do with the kingdom of God. (Cels. 1.39)*

These charges of illegitimacy are the earliest datable statement of the Jewish charge that Jesus was conceived as the result of adultery, and that his true father was a Roman soldier named Panthera. (We will

revisit this tradition below.) Panthera was a common name among Roman soldiers of that period, but most interpreters hold that some Jews used this name because of its rough similarity to παρθένος, “virgin.” If this were the case, it would mean that this is a Jewish reaction to the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth, which does not become a leading Christian theme until near the end of the first century. Celsus has Jesus proclaiming his own virgin birth, which is of course not reflected in Christian writings but is attested in later Jewish polemic.

Celsus employed varied sources. He had informed himself about Christianity, both from its writings and from personal contact with Christians. He had read widely in Matthew, Luke, and 1 Corinthians, and had a passing knowledge of other Christian books. He knew Matthew’s account of the death and resurrection of Jesus in some detail. He also seems to have read the writings of some early Christian apologists now unknown to us. Celsus also knew about Marcionite Christianity and Gnostic sects, whether from their writings or by some other means (we cannot tell). He presents a Jewish contemporary as his source for Jewish polemic about Jesus. Origen questions this, and modern scholarship agrees in seeing this as a literary device that Celsus employed to give a unity to information he likely culled from diverse Jewish traditions.<sup>31</sup>

Because we do not have the exact or complete wording of *True Doctrine*, conclusions about it must be tentative. Nevertheless, it is clear that Celsus’ main attack on Christianity is philosophical, not historical. His more detailed information about Jesus, which by virtue of his knowledge of Christian writings should be fairly accurate, is distorted by his sharp polemic. Celsus is a rich source for our knowledge of pagan and Jewish polemic against Christianity, and to a lesser degree, against its Christ. Indeed, among pagan authors Celsus is unique in relaying both Jewish and Greco-Roman objections to Christianity. However, despite all his treatment of Christ, Celsus adds little or nothing to our knowledge of the historical Jesus.

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<sup>31</sup> See Burke, “Celsus,” 93.



### 8. *Josephus: Jesus who is Called the Christ*

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE) became a writer in the employ of the Flavian emperors Vespasian, Titus and Domitian. His *Jewish Antiquities* is mostly a defense of the Romans and an admonition for the Jews to live peaceably under them. In this work, he makes a short statement about Jesus:

He [Ananus the high priest] assembled the Sanhedrin of the judges, and brought before it the brother of Jesus called [τοῦ λεγομένου] Christ, whose name was James, and some others. (*Ant.* 20.200)<sup>32</sup>

The overwhelming majority of scholars hold that the words “the brother of Jesus called Christ,” as well as the whole passage in which it is found, are authentic. “Called Christ” is neutral and descriptive, intended neither to confirm nor deny Jesus as Messiah. The use of “Christ” here reflects Jewish usage as a title.

Josephus’ main statement about Jesus, traditionally known as the *Testimonium Flavianum*, the “Witness of Flavius (Josephus)” to Jesus, is found in *Ant.* 18.63–64. (Virtually all scholars discount a much fuller form of this passage in a later Slavonic version.) The present text reads,

Around this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is right to call him a man. For he was a worker of amazing deeds and was a teacher of people who accept the truth with pleasure. He won over both many Jews and many Greeks. He was the Christ. Pilate, when he heard him accused by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, [but] those who had first loved him did not cease [doing so]. For on the third day

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<sup>32</sup> For text and translation of Josephus’ works, see the Loeb edition edited by Henry St. J. Thackeray, Ralph Marcus, and Louis Feldman (LCL 186, 203, 210, 242, 281, 326, 365, 410, 433, 456) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926–65). Recent studies: Harold W. Attridge, “Josephus and His Works,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second-Temple Period*, ed. M. E. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 185–232; Paul Winter, “Excursus II: Josephus on Jesus and James: *Ant.* xviii 3,3 (63–64) and xx 9, 1 (200–203),” in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Emil Schürer, 3 vols., rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, Matthew Black, and Martin Goodman (Edinburgh: Clark, 1973–87), 1:428–441; Claudia Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians: History and Polemics, 30–150 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 105–109; Graham Twelftree, “Jesus in Jewish Traditions,” in *Jesus Traditions Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1982), 290–310; Louis Feldman, “The Testimonium Flavianum: The State of the Question,” in *Christological Perspectives*, ed. R. F. Berkey and S. A. Edwards (New York: Pilgrim, 1982) 179–199; Geza Vermes, “The Jesus-Notice of Josephus Re-examined,” *JJS* 38 (1987): 1–10; van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 81–104.

he appeared to them alive again, because the divine prophets had prophesied these and myriad other things about him. To this time the tribe of Christians named after him has not disappeared.

Until the rise of historical criticism in early modern times, most scholars believed this passage to be authentic. Their evidence for its authenticity is based on the wording of the passage, which points away from Christian interpolation at several key points. Moreover, if it were a Christian interpolation, we should expect more laudatory language about Jesus. However, other scholars deny the authenticity of the entire passage. Their argument is based on the context of the passage in the *Antiquities*, the arguably Christian wording of the passage, and Josephus' belief that the Roman general Vespasian was the messiah (*War.* 6.312–313; cf. 3.400–402).<sup>33</sup>

This debate over the authenticity of this passage has continued for hundreds of years, partly because the evidence can be—and has been—argued both ways. While a few scholars still reject it fully and even fewer accept it fully, most now prefer one of two middle positions involving a conjectural reconstruction of this passage. The first middle position reconstructs an authentic Josephan passage *negative* to Jesus, and the second reconstructs an authentic passage *neutral* toward Jesus. The negative reconstruction reads, according to F. F. Bruce, whose reconstruction is indicative of the main lines of others' reconstructions (conjectural wording italicized):

Now there arose about this time *a source of further trouble in one* Jesus, a wise man who performed surprising works, a teacher of men who gladly welcome *strange things*. He *led away* many Jews, and many Gentiles. He was the *so-called* Christ. When Pilate, acting on information supplied by the chief men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had *attached themselves* to him at first did not cease to *cause trouble*. The tribe of Christians, which has taken its name from him, is not extinct even today.<sup>34</sup>

The neutral reconstruction reads, according to John P. Meier,

<sup>33</sup> Franz Dornseiff, "Zum Testimonium Flavianum," *ZNW* 46 (1955): 245–250; Etienne Nodet, "Jésus et Jean Baptiste selon Josephé," *RB* 92 (1985): 320–348, 497–524.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 39 (italics mine). For similar negative reconstructions, see especially Ernst Bammel, "A New Variant Form of the Testimonium Flavianum," in idem, *Judaica*, WUNT 37 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 190–193; also Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth," 169–171; Twelftree, "Jesus in Jewish Traditions," 303, 310.

Around this time lived Jesus, a wise man. For he was a worker of amazing deeds and was a teacher of people who gladly accept the truth. He won over both many Jews and many Greeks. Pilate, when he heard him accused by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, [but] those who had first loved him did not cease [doing so]. To this time the tribe of Christians named after him has not disappeared.<sup>35</sup>

Although certainty is not possible, the neutral reconstruction is the better explanation of this difficult passage. Most scholars favor it, and we can adduce seven main reasons for their support. First, the neutral reconstruction explains why we have any mention of Jesus in Josephus at all. At the end of antiquity, only Christians copied Josephus' books, to a significant degree because of their value to the Christians. If Christian copyists had found in Josephus' writings a negative passage about Jesus, it is more likely that they would have deleted it as an embarrassment than that they would have rewritten it.<sup>36</sup> Second, there is an argument from style: the neutral reconstruction reads just as smoothly as the negative reconstruction. Third, the neutral reconstruction accords better than the negative reconstruction with the more certain reference to Jesus in the *Antiquities*, "Jesus who is called the Christ." Fourth, the neutral reconstruction with its later pro-Christian interpolations makes good sense of the pattern of ancient Christian references to Josephus. In about 250, Origen does not know these interpolations (*Cels.* 1.45; *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17), while Eusebius several decades later does (*Hist. eccl.* 1.1.7–8). The fifth reason for favoring the neutral over the negative reconstruction is based on a recent discovery which tends to corroborate the neutral reconstruction. In 1971, an Arabic version of the *Testimonium* was found in Agapius' tenth-century *Universal History*, in a form that resembles the neutral reconstruction more than the negative reconstruction.<sup>37</sup> Sixth, the neutral presentation of Jesus is supported by a roughly parallel presentation of John the Baptizer, which almost all interpreters regard as undoubtedly genuine (*Ant.*

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<sup>35</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1:61; see also Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives of the Gospels*, ABRL 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:373–374; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1986), 71–74.

<sup>36</sup> As Geza Vermes asks, "Would these writers have salvaged the work of a Jew who was the author of a wicked slander concerning Christ, who for these apologists was a divine being?" (Vermes, "Jesus-Notice," 10, n. 46).

<sup>37</sup> S. Pines, *An Arabic Version of the Testimonium Flavianum and Its Implications* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1971).

18.116–119). That Josephus can write sympathetically about a controversial figure like John the Baptizer indicates that he could write a neutral description about Jesus as well. Finally, this neutral reconstruction has much to commend it, when we bear in mind two important scholarly conventions of reasoning from evidence, with regard to explanation and simplicity. It explains well the passage as we have it now, with its mixture of authentic and interpolated content, and it is the simplest theory to account for most of the facts, internal and external, in the interpretation of the *Testimonium*. It involves significantly less conjectural wording than the negative reconstruction, while proposing a solution that is equally explanatory. In conclusion, while certainty is not possible, and the negative reconstruction has strengths that commend it to several leading researchers, we may conclude that the neutral reconstruction is more likely, and is correctly supported by a majority of scholars today.

When we employ the neutral reconstruction of the *Testimonium Flavianum* and the other reference to Jesus, significant information about the life, ministry, and death of Jesus emerges.<sup>38</sup> Josephus corroborates the New Testament's dating of Jesus' life and ministry. He confirms Jesus' reputation as a teacher and worker of healing miracles, yet not without any detail or endorsement. He confirms that both the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate acted to condemn Jesus to death. Finally, he states that Jesus "the Christ" was the founder of a continuing movement that bears this name. Josephus has given us something unique among all ancient non-Christian witnesses to Jesus: a carefully neutral, highly accurate and perhaps independent witness to Jesus, a wise man whom his persistent followers call "the Christ."

### 9. *The Rabbis: Jesus the Deceiver*

The proposed references to Jesus preserved in the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE) and the earliest, Tannaitic layer (pre-200 CE) of the Babylonian Talmud are of two types: by a code name, and by his actual name.

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<sup>38</sup> The value of the negative reconstruction, if correct, should also be indicated. It too gets Jesus' name correct and places him in the right time period. He is a wise (or clever) man who worked miracles. He was put to death by order of Pilate. Jesus death is more politically charged in the negative reconstruction; the ties to later "deceiver" polemics against Jesus are explicit; and trouble in the later Christian movement is tied to trouble in the life of Jesus.

Research into rabbinic traditions on the historical Jesus has largely been restricted to the earliest layers, on the supposition that they contain the best information.<sup>39</sup>

Some scholars have argued that early hostility to Christianity led to numerous references to Jesus within rabbinic writing by means of insulting pseudonyms such as “Ben Stada,” “Balaam,” and “a certain one.” Two present Ben Stada as a worker of evil magic (*b. Shabb.* 104b, *t. Shabb.* 11:15). Two passages parallel to each other describe an ancient Torah-enforcement “sting operation” against him (*b. Sanh.* 67, and *t. Sanh.* 10:11; *y. Sanh.* 7:16). As an example, here is the first of these four passages, which shows the complexity of the Ben Stada traditions:

It is taught that Rabbi Eliezer said to the Wise, “Did not Ben Stada bring spells from Egypt in a cut in his flesh?” They said to him, “He was a fool, and they do not bring evidence from a fool.” Ben Stada is Ben Pantera. Rabbi Hisda said, “The husband was Stada, the lover was Pantera.” The husband was [actually] Pappos ben Judah, the mother was Stada. The mother was Miriam [Mary] the dresser of women’s hair. As we say in Pumbeditha, “She has been false to [*satath da*] her husband.” (*b. Šabb.* 104b)

Other passages are said to present Jesus as Balaam, the non-Israelite prophet who figures rather positively in Numbers 22–24, but negatively in Num 3:16 and thereafter in Jewish tradition. The first two Balaam passages from the Mishnah have been thought by a few scholars to speak of Jesus’ exclusion from the people of Israel (*m. Sanh.* 10:2, *m. ‘Abot* 5:19). The third Balaam passage is the Dantesque “Jesus in Hell” account from the Talmud (*b. Git.* 56b–57a), and the fourth passage from the Talmud deals with the age of Balaam at his death (*b. Sanh.* 106b). On the question of which Israelites will be excluded from the world to come, the Mishnah relates, “Three kings and four commoners have no part in the world to come. The three kings are Jeroboam, Ahab, and

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<sup>39</sup> Studies: G. H. Dalman, *The Words of Jesus* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1902); H. Laible, *Jesus Christ in the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and the Liturgy of the Synagogue* (Cambridge: Deighton & Bell, 1893); R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1903); Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth* (London: Macmillan, 1925); Morris Goldstein, *Jesus in Jewish Traditions* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); Jacob Z. Lauterbach, “Jesus in the Talmud,” in idem, *Rabbinic Essays* (New York: Ktav, 1973), 473–570; Johann Meier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung*, ErFor 82 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978); Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007). See also Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins*, 54–65; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:93–98; van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, 104–122.

Manasseh. . . . The four commoners are Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel, and Gehazi” (*m. Sanh.* 10:2).

Still other texts speak of “a certain person” (פלני) who has been identified by some with Jesus. A key reference to “a certain person” occurs in a discussion of the definition of a “bastard,” who according to Jewish law has restricted rights (*m. Yebam.* 4:13 and *b. Yoma* 66d; cf. *t. Yebam.* 3:3–4): Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai said, “I have found a family scroll in Jerusalem, and in it is written, ‘A certain person is a bastard through [a transgression of the law of] the kinsman’s wife’” (*m. Yebam.* 4:13).

Current scholarship has largely settled on the following consensus in evaluating these three putative code words. First, פלני as a reference to Jesus is so intentionally vague in itself as to refer to almost anyone. Some have translated it “so-and-so,” but this English translation misleadingly leaves a negative impression. פלני has no inherently negative connotation in post-biblical Hebrew. The Mishnah section on “bastards” in which it appears, *m. Yebam.* 4:13, deals not just with any garden-variety bastards, but with those who are the offspring of “near of kin, which is forbidden.” The “certain one” whom Rabbi Joshua mentions as an illustration is the offspring of such a violation. Since Jewish polemic against Jesus never claimed that he was an offspring of such a sin, this is not likely to be a cryptic reference to Jesus.

The specific application of “Balaam” to Jesus is also untenable for the earliest stage of rabbinic tradition. The wide field of Balaam references in the New Testament<sup>40</sup> and rabbinic Judaism reflects a long polemical tradition that typologically identifies many people as “Balaam.” Moreover, Balaam was not an Israelite, despite the inexplicable identification of him as an “Israelite commoner” in *m. Sanh.* 10:2. The rabbinic tradition everywhere knows that Jesus was Jewish. Moreover, nothing else in the passage allows one to suspect Jesus. Other rabbinic texts (*b. Git.* 56–57) manifestly present Balaam and Jesus as two separate people, and their attitudes to Judaism are also opposed. All this makes it highly unlikely that Jesus is referred to by Balaam in these earlier passages. Since “Balaam” was a traditional prototype of the deceitful prophet from outside Israel, it was natural that Jesus, whose movement now opposed Judaism from the outside, would come to be

<sup>40</sup> See 2 Pet 2:15; Jude 11; Rev 2:14. Balaam is presented as an outsider who seduces the people of God to a false religion, a traditional portrait shared by rabbinic writers.

associated with him. However, the evidence points away from concluding that “Balaam” was used as a code name for Jesus in Tannaitic times.

Neither can Ben Stada be a code name for Jesus. The first explicit identification of Jesus as Ben Stada comes in the later Amoraic layer. Moreover, information given about Ben Stada disagrees at almost every point with more certain data from the New Testament. Further, the portrait of Ben Stada does not fit other, more certain rabbinic traditions about Jesus, especially the one in *b. Sanh.* 43a relating to his trial and death. The passage also reflects confusion over the identity of Stada; is he Mary’s husband, or Mary herself? This passage settles on the latter, using a pun to illustrate the point. She is called “Stada” because she has been false to (*satath da*) her husband. In another passage, the only telling connection to the Jesus traditions of the Talmud—the statement in *b. Sanh.* 67 “they hanged him [Ben Stada] on the day before the Passover”—is in all likelihood tacked on later in order to apply polemic against Ben Stada to Jesus.

In the second type of proposed Talmud passages on Jesus, he appears under his own name. Because the name Jesus (Yeshua) was a common one, the content must indicate that the Jesus being spoken of is Jesus of Nazareth. The first is a passage discussing Israelites who have no place in the world to come (*b. Sanh.* 107b, cf. *b. Sotah* 47a):

When King Jannaeus [died 76 BCE] was killing our rabbis, Rabbi Joshua ben Perahiah and Jesus escaped to Alexandria, Egypt. When peace was restored... he set off (for home), and came to a certain inn, where he was given a warm welcome. He said, “How lovely is the inn!” He [Jesus] replied, “Rabbi, she has narrow eyes.”<sup>41</sup> Rabbi Joshua said, “You villain, is that what you are thinking about?” So he sounded four hundred trumpets and excommunicated him. Many times Jesus came and pleaded to be allowed back, but he would not listen. But one day, when Rabbi Joshua was reciting the Shema, Jesus approached him. Deciding to welcome him back, he made a gesture to him. However, Jesus thought he was ordering him to leave, and he went and set up a brick and worshipped it. “Repent,” he [Rabbi Joshua] told him, but he answered, “I have learned from you that no chance of repentance is given to one who sins and leads others into sin.” And a teacher has said, “Jesus the Nazarene practiced magic and led Israel astray.”... Our rabbis taught: Let the left hand push away, but the right hand always invite back, not like Elisha who pushed Gehazi

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<sup>41</sup> The Hebrew word for “innkeeper” also means “inn”; Rabbi Joshua uses it in the former sense, and Jesus (to his discredit) uses it in the second.

away with both hands, and not like Joshua ben Perahiah who pushed Jesus away with both hands (*b. Sanh.* 107b; cf. *b. Sotah* 47a; this passage has an earlier parallel in the Jerusalem Talmud which does not mention Jesus, *y. Hag.* 2:2; cf. *y. Sanh.* 23c).

Other texts also characterize the ministry of Jesus and his disciples negatively (*b. Sanh.* 43a, cf. *t. Shabb.* 11:15; *b. Shabb.* 104b; *b. Sanh.* 103a, cf. *b. Ber.* 17b, and *b. Sanh.* 43a).

Jesus' trial and death are treated in a passage from the Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 43a). Here Jesus is explicitly named, and again there is little doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is meant. This has rightly been called the "most important reference to Jesus in Rabbinic literature":<sup>42</sup>

It was taught: On the day before the Passover they hanged Jesus. A herald went before him for forty days [proclaiming], "He will be stoned, because he practiced magic (כִּשְׁף) and enticed Israel to go astray (נִדְּן). Let anyone who knows anything in his favor come forward and plead for him." But nothing was found in his favor, and they hanged him on the day before the Passover. (*b. Sanh.* 43a)

This one Tannaitic passage on the trial and death of Jesus not only names Jesus explicitly, but gives other information that confirms Jesus as the subject. This short narrative is the only surviving rabbinic treatment of the death of Jesus beyond a simple reference to it. It has many problems that are probed extensively in several treatments;<sup>43</sup> space precludes our consideration of them here. On the whole, scholarship holds it to be an inner-Jewish explanation and justification of how one famous criminal, Jesus of Nazareth, was put to death, and implicitly a warning to stay away from his movement.<sup>44</sup>

As has been seen, most passages of the Tannaitic period that have been argued to refer to Jesus cannot be held to do so. Only the passages that cite Jesus by name, and perhaps by "Ben Pantera," are from this period. Further, we can discern information from the rabbis about Jesus that accords with reliable traditions in the New Testament: Jesus was born of Mary, was claimed to have Davidic descent, worked miracles,

<sup>42</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 78.

<sup>43</sup> Besides Martyn, see also Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:376–378; Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 344–360; Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays*, 473–496; Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 216–229.

<sup>44</sup> For one example of the debate over the interpretation of Jesus traditions, see L. H. Silberman, "Once Again: The Use of Rabbinic Material," *NTS* 42 (1996): 153–156; R. E. Brown, "The Babylonian Talmud on the Execution of Jesus," *NTS* 43 (1997) 158–159.



had disciples, and was executed. Rabbinic tradition is negative from the start of its Jesus references, and consistently portrays Jesus as a magician (מכשף) and deceiver (מסית). Good evidence from the more certain references to Jesus suggests that what the rabbis say about Jesus is largely a polemic reaction to Christian traditions, either written or oral.

All this raises the question of how the rabbis gained this information about Jesus. The third-century rabbis seem to have had no traditions about Jesus that originated in the first century. Some rabbinic traditions concerning Jesus may represent responses to Christian preaching from the end of the first century, not from the time of Jesus. The presentation of Jesus' trial and death in *b. Sanh.* 43a is probably a Jewish rebuttal of Christian traditions about Jesus' death. It cannot be claimed to represent early, independent information about Jesus, although according to the synoptic accounts, some leading Pharisees were present at the trial of Jesus. The more specific information given here by the rabbis diverges from reliable traditions in the New Testament, and shows no signs of being from the first century.<sup>45</sup> It proceeds instead from polemical imagination, which ran free in rabbinic storytelling: Jesus was a failed rabbinical student, whose own teacher excommunicated him; he was tried after a forty-day period of inquiry, and executed by Jews alone. Perhaps the most telling indication that the rabbis had no independent, early traditions about Jesus is their failure to place him in the right century. Some place him in the first century BCE, others in the second century CE. A chain of tradition from the first century would have set this error straight. The better explanation of all the rabbinic information on Jesus is that it originated in the second and third centuries. While it reflects traces of Jewish polemic against Christians at that time, its main use in the rabbinic writings was, no doubt, to remind Jews that Jesus was a deceitful apostate and that his followers were still in error.

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<sup>45</sup> Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and False Prophet," has argued carefully from the canonical gospels that a Jewish charge that Jesus was a magician most probably goes back to the lifetime of the historical Jesus. Yet although the *charge* may be found in Jesus' lifetime, the rabbinic tradition cannot be shown to preserve this first-century charge; rather, it seems to originate after Jesus' lifetime.

10. *Conclusions*

We will first draw conclusions from our treatment of classical sources. A question arises: why are the classical references to Jesus not more *contemporary* with him? First, a time lag typical of the ancient world explains why classical writers who are contemporary with Jesus do not mention him. Most works by major historians, those most likely to be preserved over time, used recognized literary sources from earlier, lesser writers. Josephus, in the introduction to his *Jewish War*, had to justify writing about “events which have not previously been recorded” (*War* 1.13–16). Second, Roman writers seem to have considered Christianity an important topic only when it became a perceived threat to Rome, and would not have treated Christianity unless and until it became an important Roman political or social issue. If it had not become a significant religious movement, philosophers like Lucian and Celsus would not have attacked it. As it is, historians like Tacitus and Suetonius held Christianity in disdain, and may have written reluctantly about its founder. Third, Romans had little interest in the historical origins of other groups, especially “superstitions.” “Romans regarded as impractical the detachment so prized by Greek thinkers,”<sup>46</sup> and this often drove them away from a dispassionate consideration of the origins of others. Roman practicality led them to consider only what foreign religions were now, and only insofar as they impacted on Roman rule. In the light of these factors, we cannot suppose that classical writers on Jesus would be either numerous or close in time. Indeed, the references to Jesus that we do have in major early second-century writers such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger are quite what we should expect.

A second main conclusion to be drawn from the classical writers is that they see Christ through Christianity. Christianity as a movement is their primary concern. They almost always mention Christ as the founder, leader, or teacher of the movement. This strong connection between Christ and Christianity in the minds of classical writers helps to explain why they use the name “Christ” and not “Jesus,” even when their knowledge of Christianity would indicate that they might have known the latter name (Tacitus, Pliny, and Lucian).

A third conclusion is that the depth of treatment Jesus receives is quite shallow. The treatment we have seen in this chapter runs from a

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<sup>46</sup> Mellor, *Tacitus*, 2.

few words (Suetonius) to a little over one sentence (Tacitus, Mara), but rarely more (Celsus). To those accustomed to great detail in treatments of the historical Jesus, this seems remarkably cursory and superficial. However, at this time (50–150 CE), Christianity was only occasionally significant to most Romans. Moreover, they knew it as a *superstitio*, a term Christianity likely inherited from Roman views of Judaism. This label probably served to dampen any small interest in Christianity's founder. By the time Christianity was written about, it was a widely disapproved, occasionally persecuted movement.

Fourth, what classical writers know about Jesus comes almost completely from Christians. They seem to have little or no knowledge about him independent of Christianity. The only *possible* exception is Tacitus, but even here it is more likely that he derived his information from Christians, either directly or by way of his friend Pliny the Younger. As a consequence, we obtain no reliable information about Jesus from the classical writers that we do not have in the Christian writings of this time. To judge from the surviving classical writings, it seems that early traditions about Jesus did not pass independently of Christianity through the classical Roman world and surrounding areas.

Now we turn to conclude our treatment of Jewish sources. First, in addition to having more numerous mentions of Jesus than do the classical non-Christian sources (with the exception of Celsus), Jewish sources tend to have more depth of treatment. We obtain more information from them (accurate and inaccurate) than from classical sources to corroborate the main lines of the traditions about Jesus found in the New Testament. As regards the rabbinic tradition, the reason for this can be traced to the polemic of Judaism against Christianity—it needed material to use against the church. While some traditions on Jesus' life were known, very little if anything of his teaching was remembered or invented.

A second conclusion about Jewish sources is that like the classical writers, they do not treat Jesus independently, but see him through Christianity. Christianity as a movement is their only main concern; in their eyes, Jesus himself was dead and gone. Josephus mentions Jesus as the founder of a movement still present, and prominent, in Rome. The rabbinic literature rarely mentions Jesus without having Christians in view, and it deals with Christians as sectarians and heretics much more often than with Jesus. By the time the rabbis started to write down their traditions, Judaism was overtly hostile to Christianity, and this

surely must have colored how often the rabbis wrote of Jesus and what they said. Because the Tannaitic and Amoraic rabbis correctly saw the importance of healing and other miracles in Christianity, it is not surprising that they portrayed Jesus primarily as a magician (e.g., *t. Hul.* 2:22–23; *y. Abod. Zar.* 2:2). If this movement had not survived to the end of the first century, neither Josephus nor the rabbis would likely have written about him.

This leads us to the third conclusion. Aside from Josephus, Jewish tradition is uniformly negative toward Jesus. Indeed, against the background of the more neutral, descriptive language of Josephus, the rabbinic traditions about Jesus appear even more negative. The rabbinic tradition, which represents the main position of Judaism, has nothing good to say about Jesus: not about his parentage, his teaching, or his movement. Jesus fully deserved his punishment.

Fourth, rabbinic literature evidently failed to preserve one earlier Jewish polemic against Jesus. Matt 28:11–15 relates the rumor that Jesus' disciples stole his body and falsely proclaimed him raised from the dead, attributing its origin to the chief priests and the elders of Israel. The significant historical difficulties of this Matthean passage do not militate against its closing point, that this story was widely current among Jews as anti-resurrection polemic when this Gospel was written. Matthew would be unlikely to report, much less invent, such a vivid, powerful anti-Christian story if it were not in circulation. It may be generalizing to all Jews what is known in its area and time, perhaps Antioch in the 80's. Nevertheless, this story is also reported in Justin, *Dial.* 108.2 (probably in dependence on Matthew), and Tertullian, *Spect.* 30.6 (more likely independent of Matthew). The least we can safely deduce from the failure of this tradition to appear in rabbinic literature is that the Tannaitic rabbis seem to have made no attempt to be comprehensive in preserving and reporting earlier anti-Christian polemic.

Finally, Jewish tradition on Jesus was negative from the start, but may well have grown more negative and more extensive over time, as the conflict between church and synagogue intensified. Josephus' neutral perspective, if correct, may reflect an early Jewish attitude toward Jesus that had not yet grown negative. Josephus is not completely idiosyncratic on Jesus. The first body of rabbinic literature, the Mishnah, does not mention Jesus at all, although roughly concurrent traditions do to a small extent. In the earliest stages of the Babylonian Talmud, material about Jesus is still sparse, but in later layers Jesus looms larger

as figures like Balaam and Ben Stada are tied to him. In sum, most classical and rabbinical traditions on Jesus arise in a polemical *Sitz im Leben*, and add little to our knowledge of the historical Jesus. At the end of the day, the study of the historical Jesus in these traditions points to the New Testament and other early Christian writings.

PART TWO

FUNDAMENTALLY ABOUT JESUS



THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS  
HOW DO WE KNOW THAT JESUS EXISTED?

SAMUEL BYRSKOG

Biblical scholars are convinced that Jesus existed.<sup>1</sup> While they disagree on several matters of central importance to the understanding of Jesus and early Christianity, this is a crucial point of considerable agreement. The quest for the historical Jesus is not a quest for his existence as such, but for the more precise contours of his person and career. But how do we know that he in fact existed? In what sense can we speak of his historicity? How do we approach history? How do we employ the ancient documents in order to reconstruct the historical Jesus? What sources do we have and what is our attitude to them? Is it really possible to move out of our own context and reach back to the bare history via documents and traditions? Questions such as these have recently come to the fore in historical Jesus research and promise a more hermeneutically informed sensitivity to the conviction that Jesus in fact existed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The “we” in the title of the present essay is the guild of biblical scholars. Those who deny that Jesus existed usually treat the issue of historicity and the sources in a manner which invalidates any kind of informed, mutual discussion. Cf. recently (again) George Albert Wells, *Can We Trust the New Testament? Thoughts on the Reliability of Early Christian Testimony* (Chicago: Open Court, 2004). For reference to and evaluation of earlier proposals, see Robert E. van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence, Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 6–16. What follows is not an attempt to enter into that debate, but to look critically at how biblical scholars reason, and (possibly) should reason.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., for instance, Jens Schröter, “Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus und der Charakter historischer Erkenntnis,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 207–254; idem, “Von der Historizität der Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. idem and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 163–212.



### 1. *Reconstructing History*

The search for the historical Jesus is beset with a number of ways of conceptualizing the entire enterprise of historical reconstruction. We mean different things when claiming that someone existed in history. For some it entails an account of the total reality of that person, what s/he thought, felt, experienced, did, and said. Obviously, this ambition to equate the historical description of someone's existence with an account of her/his total reality fuses what is commonly believed to be very different perspectives on history. For others, an historical account of someone's existence involves reconstructing everything we can possibly know about her/him by using the tools of modern historical research.<sup>3</sup> The claim that someone existed in history is based on what is perceived as the scientific enterprise of historical reconstruction.

What do we mean by such labels as historical research and historical reconstruction? Are the two perspectives mentioned above strictly distinguishable? It depends on how we approach history. The scholarly use of terms such as historicity and history is often unclear. Tom Wright distinguishes five ways of employing the term history: (1) it is an event (what really happened); (2) it is a significant event ("geschichtlich," not "historisch"); (3) it is a provable event (what may have happened); (4) it is historiography (writing and speaking about the past); (5) or it is that which can be stated by a modern historian (combination of 3 and 4).<sup>4</sup> The term is perhaps most commonly understood in reference to the verifiable past existence of certain phenomena in the causality of time and space (Wright's no. 3). Having proved scientifically that something really happened or that someone really existed is, in effect, to have claimed the historicity of that event or person. This excludes, in principle, from the category of the "historical" matters which are not verifiable. Implicit in this notion of history is the idea of reality as a closed system in which causes and effects can be measured and, more vaguely, the conviction that scientific verification provides the phenomena with a kind of reality irrespective of other contextual factors influencing the way we perceive and make use of them. We are dealing with

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. John P. Meier's distinction between the real Jesus and the historical Jesus in *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 21–24.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 3 (London: SPCK, 2003), 12–14.

the ambition to find out objectively and solely the “brute facts” of history.<sup>5</sup>

This is a modern understanding of history, strongly influenced by the idealistic views of the leading European historians of the 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>6</sup> In more recent times there has emerged an increasing awareness that historical facts do not exist in abstraction from interpretation but are available as language-bound perceptions of reality and that the scientist concerned with what went before participates in the same structure of being as the one which is the basis for her/his entire understanding of the past.<sup>7</sup> This new hermeneutical attentiveness is, to a significant extent, reminiscent of the ancient Greek *historia* as investigation and interpretation in conjunction.<sup>8</sup> Some post-modern scholars would draw the conclusion that the pastness of history is for ever lost in the contextualized arena of fiction and subjectivity, and objectively irretrievable. A more modest position would be to argue that history exists as a relation between the past and the present.<sup>9</sup> It is

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<sup>5</sup> The discussion about the “James ossuary” has revealed the strong desire among biblical scholars for the “brute facts” of history. The enormous interest which it has aroused is a curious scholarly phenomenon in itself, since it brings no new historical insights. The conclusion that can be drawn today with some degree of scientific certainty is that archaeology, palaeography, linguistics, and onomastics provide a number of possibilities within a century at least. For a cautious assessment, cf. Émile Puech, “James the Just, or Just James? The ‘James Ossuary’ on Trial,” *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 21 (2003): 45–53.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the famous though rather time-conditioned and old German expression formulated by Leopold von Ranke: “Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, beigemessen: so hoher Aemter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloss zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen ist” (*Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1514*, Leopold von Ranke’s sämtliche Werke 33; 2nd ed.; [Leipzig: von Duncker & Humblot, 1874], vii. The first edition appeared in 1824).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the ground-breaking philosophical hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Gesammelte Werke I: Hermeneutik I; 6th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990). Although Gadamer’s view has been seen as an exaggerated belief in hermeneutical understanding as a universal phenomenon and he has been accused of neglecting the problem of distorted communication, the present hermeneutical debate is heavily indebted to his work.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, 2001, and Leiden: Brill, 2003), 145–198.

<sup>9</sup> I have developed this discussion in “Exegetisk teologi vid en teologisk högskola: Reflektioner kring bibelvetenskapens uppgift vid en teologisk högskola,” *Tro & Liv* 62 (2003): 10–14; and in “Räisänen through Theissen: A Program and a Theory,” in *Moving Beyond New Testament Theology? Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 88 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &

not constituted by the facts of past existence, but by the inquirer's informed perception of them on the basis of certain data. This position does not deny the possibility of knowing that something or somebody existed. It seeks to avoid the epistemological naïveté of historical positivism and the absolute relativism of post-modernism, seeking a critical realism that holds on to the idea that the reality of the thing known is something other than the knower (it is real) and yet that our access to this reality lies along the path of an investigational dialogue between the experience, understanding, judgment, and belief of the scientist and the various kinds of data about the past (it is critical).<sup>10</sup>

The issue of the historicity of Jesus thus takes on a somewhat different nuance. To be sure, the third quest has been said to be a historical one.<sup>11</sup> It employs to a larger extent than before social data and sociological tools in order to place Jesus within his socio-cultural context. We certainly seek the Jesus of history by employing the methods of historical study; and today, theology mostly plays only an implicit rather than an explicit role. This search, however, means essentially entering into a relationship with the pastness of Jesus. We have our own master narratives which we apply to the old material—whether we admit it or not—and we have our own analytical perspectives which present conceptual avenues to his socio-cultural context.<sup>12</sup> We approach him from the viewpoint of the contextualized researcher and cannot but look into the otherness of his existence in history by means of analogies to our

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Ruprecht, 2005), 197–220, and in “När gamla texter talar: Om att tolka det Jörgångna,” *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrikt* 84 (2008): 49–57.

<sup>10</sup> I allude here to the similar expression of Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (London: SPCK, 1992), 35. Cf. for fuller discussion, *ibid.*, 81–98. The “critical realism” was introduced into New Testament study by Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament*, Princeton Theological Monographs 17 (Allison Park: Pickwick, 1989); *idem*, *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994). Meyer builds on the work of Bernard J. F. Lonergan. See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); *idem*, *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, 2nd ed. by F. E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> So, for instance, Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861–1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 379.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Halvor Moxnes, “The Historical Jesus: From Master Narrative to Cultural Context,” *BTB* 28 (1998): 135–49. Moxnes distinguishes between grand narrative as the story of all humanity and master narratives (or meta-narratives) as the stories of groups or regions.

own present situation.<sup>13</sup> The past can be known only in relation to what we already know, both in terms of its similarities and its distinctiveness.<sup>14</sup> The basis of our knowledge of the historical Jesus is therefore contextual, not of course in the sense that we speculate freely, but in the sense that the documents which we scrutinize are the object of our own set of parameters concerning how to find the adequate data and scientifically determine the probability of his historicity. What comes out at the end is a reconstruction of history, to be sure, but a reconstruction which is essentially an informed kind of reconfiguration, fictionalization, and narrativization of somebody we believe existed in the past. This, it seems, is what we do when speaking of the historicity of Jesus.

## 2. *Texts as Sources*

We claim to know that Jesus existed because certain texts which we classify as sources say so. Scientific knowledge in historical study builds on a disciplined use of such sources. We put questions to them and seek answers from them.<sup>15</sup> It is essential, however, to realize that the sources are not sources *per se*. They *become* sources in the hands of the historians. We experiment with them, turning them into something

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<sup>13</sup> It was Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) who drew attention to the three important characteristics of historical inquiry in theology: probability, analogy, and correlation (“Wechselwirkung”). See his “Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 2: *Zur religiösen Lage, Religionsphilosophie und Ethik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), 729–753.

<sup>14</sup> Troeltsch writes: “Diese Allmacht der Analogie schließt aber die prinzipielle Gleichartigkeit alles historischen Geschehens ein, die freilich keine Gleichheit ist, sondern den Unterschieden allen möglichen Raum lässt, im übrigen aber jedes Mal einen Kern gemeinsamer Gleichartigkeit voraussetzt, von dem aus die Unterschiede begriffen und nachgeföhlt werden können” (“Ueber historische und dogmatische Methode,” 732).

<sup>15</sup> Tom Wright formulates five questions that all historians interested in the historical Jesus must answer: (1) How does Jesus fit into Judaism? (2) What were his aims? (3) Why did he die? (4) How and why did the early Church begin? (5) Why are the Gospels what they are? (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 [London: SPCK, 1996], 89–116). He adds a sixth question: How does the Jesus we discover relate to the contemporary Church and world? (*ibid.*, 117–121). Only Wright’s fifth question, which he discusses very briefly, deals separately with the sources, and then only with the gospels. Cf. more pointedly Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, “Der umstrittene historische Jesus: Oder: Wie historisch ist der historische Jesus?” in *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung. Zum 60. Geburtstag von Gerd Theissen*, ed. A. Merz, FRLANT 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 3–32, at 3–7. For them, the first question to be asked is how dependable the sources are.

which they were not from the beginning. The scholars involved in Jesus research use ancient documents as sources for historical reconstruction, while these documents intrinsically exhibit other primary characteristics than that of reporting about the past.

The sources are, to begin with, textual. We have almost no archaeological evidence mentioning Jesus. Furthermore, the texts are mostly literary writings. The epigraphical findings are few and indirect. The writings, moreover, are biased. Like all literature in antiquity, the writings which mention Jesus as an historical figure are ideologically loaded already from the horizon of the author(s). This holds true both of Christian and of non-Christian writings.

A literary text can be many things. In antiquity the text was not such a fixed entity as it is in modern times, sometimes being no more than an aid for what one was to know by heart.<sup>16</sup> The message could also be conveyed in purely oral form. Several people preferred this form of communication as a reliable and realistic mode of conveying things from past. When Papias is said to have favored things of the living and enduring voice to things from books in order to find out what the disciples of Jesus had said (Eus., *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.2–4), he reflects a common notion that written material cannot convey the same kind of vivid and sensitive account of the past that the oral medium provides.<sup>17</sup>

Modern research has no direct access to the oral messages, but it can reconstruct them through the available documents. Writings from ancient times are not entities unto themselves. They are fragments of a larger setting which influenced their meaning and significance. As texts they carry an oral dimension, since they are composed and performed by word of mouth. The text, although written down, was an “oral text.” It was essentially a web (cf. Latin *texere*) of ideological meanings and meaning effects conveyed orally.<sup>18</sup> Its “diachronic threads”

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<sup>16</sup> The classic text for this notion is Plato, *Phaedrus* 274c–277a. For a broader discussion, see Dorothea Frede, “Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit: von Platon zu Plotin,” in *Logos und Buchstabe: Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Judentum und Christentum der Antike*, ed. Gerhard Sellin and François Vouga, TANZ 20 (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1997), 33–54.

<sup>17</sup> Byrskog, *Story as History*, 244–245.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Byrskog, “History or Story in Acts—A Middle Way? The ‘We’ Passages, Historical Intertexture, and Oral History,” in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, SBL Symposium Series 20 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 257–283.

therefore have to be singled out before it can be used as a source.<sup>19</sup> In order to faithfully reconstruct and reconfigure the history behind this kind of textual writings and determine the historicity of Jesus, we pose questions concerning their reliability, sifting through their literary and ideological contextuality with the aim of moving into the realm of the extra-textual, diachronic reality. In this process, we inquire into the genre, date, location, and dependence of the writings, before asking about their referential character in regard to the historical Jesus.

### 3. *The Letters of Paul*

The earliest extant sources to Jesus are the letters of Paul.<sup>20</sup> Most scholars agree that he dictated at least seven of them during a period of approximately one decade, starting with 1 Thessalonians or Galatians at the end of the 40's.<sup>21</sup> As letters they exhibit rhetorical and ideological agendas which are far different from the one of reporting that Jesus existed. Many scholars therefore disregard them entirely as sources for the historical Jesus. Nevertheless, it is possible to approach them with another set of questions. There are basically three ways of using them as sources for the historical of Jesus.

The first way argues that the letters presuppose that Jesus existed in history and that this in itself is an indication of his historicity. Paul's career, writings, and theology are incomprehensible without the assumption that Jesus had in fact lived and died a few years earlier. When Paul claims that he no longer knows Christ "according to the flesh" (2 Cor 5:16), he is not describing his ignorance of the earthly Jesus but his failure to recognize the crucified Jesus as the Messiah. He knows that he has seen the Lord (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:16) and would insist that

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Vernon K. Robbins' basic insight that the text is a web in his book *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, society and ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 18. For the ancient Greek and Roman background of this metaphor, see John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, *Revealing Antiquity* 9 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Q is not an extant source. The same holds true for other attempts to reconstruct hypothetical sources from the time before the composition of Paul's letters. See further below.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the standard New Testament introductions. For the chronology of Paul, see the detailed account by Rainer Riesner, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus: Studien zur Chronologie, Missionsstrategie und Theologie*, WUNT 71 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994).

these intrinsically revelatory appearances are as real and historical as the ordinary observation of other concrete persons and events.

This way of reasoning could be extended to several other writings which in one way or the other presuppose that Jesus existed. It is clearly insufficient. No doubt, Paul's Christ is not a purely mythological figure. He was convinced that Jesus had existed, and that conviction is of historical significance. But it is also biased, being partly an inference from his conviction that Christ is the present Lord. It therefore needs to be supplemented with other considerations.

A second, complementary way of using the Pauline letters as historical sources is to investigate passages where he refers specifically to events in the life of Jesus. His mention of Jesus' death is especially prominent. It is significant in two ways. First, he knows that Jesus died. In 1 Cor 15:3 he claims to have received important information "that Christ died." Paul was converted ca. two years after this event and probably received at that time the tradition to which he refers.<sup>22</sup> His reference constitutes in that case the earliest extant documentation of Jesus' death. Secondly, he knew that Jesus died by crucifixion. Since the notion of a crucified Messiah was totally foreign to Jewish expectations, it was hardly invented in order to fit his cross theology. Rather, his theology is comprehensible only as an attempt to consistently relate his vision of the risen Lord to the paradoxical information that Jesus died on the shameful cross.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, he knew that Jesus was a Jew (Gal 4:4), that he was of Davidic lineage (Rom 1:3), and that he had brothers, one of whom was called James (1 Cor 9:5; Gal 1:19). There is reason to believe that he actually met James in Jerusalem a few years after his conversion. He also describes Jesus' character. Jesus did not please himself (Rom 15:3); he showed meekness and gentleness (2 Cor 10:1) and compassion (Phil 1:8).<sup>24</sup> It is however impossible to verify these characteristics as historical information. They might simply be part of Paul's own interpretation of Jesus' death.

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<sup>22</sup> Riesner estimates that Jesus died on April 7 in the year 30 and that Paul was converted in 31/32 (*Die Frühzeit*, 63).

<sup>23</sup> For the importance of the Damascus experience, see Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Die Berufung des Paulus als Ursprung seiner Theologie*, WMANT 58 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985); Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel*, WUNT 140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> For a more extensive list, cf. Paul W. Barnett, *Jesus and the Logic of History*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 3 (Nottingham: Apollos, 1997), 57–58.

A third way of employing Paul's letters as sources is to identify his use of Jesus tradition.<sup>25</sup> We have already noticed his reference to tradition in 1 Cor 15:3. This is a tradition *about* Jesus, and there is reason to trust it historically, but Paul does not identify it as *Jesus* tradition. In fact, he does so only on three or four occasions, in 1 Cor 7:10–11; 9:14; 11:23–25; and possibly 1 Thess 4:15–17.<sup>26</sup> On all three or four occasions he attributes the tradition directly to the Lord, and this raises the question whether he in fact thought of it as a personal revelation. At least 1 Cor 11:23–25 does not warrant this conclusion. Paul uses technical terminology for receiving and passing on tradition and formulates in a way that is strikingly reminiscent of what is known as Jesus tradition in Luke 22:19–20. His reference to tradition at this point is significant, because it places the words of Jesus within a small narrative context. As is well known, there are two different strands of the tradition concerning the Lord's Supper, the other one being recorded in Mark 14:22–24/Matt 26:26–28, but it seems historically reasonable to assume that Paul gives testimony to an early conviction that Jesus had celebrated a particularly important evening meal together with his disciples towards the end of his life.

Although it is circumstantially probable that Paul knew about the ministry of Jesus,<sup>27</sup> his use of the Jesus tradition is difficult to employ in any more extensive way in the search for the historical Jesus. His implicit reference to it on several occasions is perhaps an indication that he had come to realize that the risen Lord appeared in history as a divinely commissioned teacher. This is a common characteristic of Jesus in the gospels.<sup>28</sup> To be sure, Paul never speaks directly of him as a teacher, since he is more focused on the crucified and risen Lord. Nevertheless, Rom 6:17 could be interpreted as evidence that he regarded him as someone who provided a pattern of ethical instruction for his followers, as teachers normally should do. This interpretation

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<sup>25</sup> The literature on this topic is vast. For a broader monograph on the question of Paul and Jesus, cf. David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> The phrase ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου in 1 Thess 4:15 would be an unusual citation formula.

<sup>27</sup> The fact that Paul in his letters never identifies a tradition as coming from Jesus and only occasionally as coming from the Lord is no argument against this. See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 185–195, 651–658.

<sup>28</sup> See, for instance, my article "Das Lernen der Jesusgeschichte nach den synoptischen Evangelien," in *Religiöses Lernen in der biblischen, frühjüdischen und frühchristlichen Überlieferung*, ed. Beate Ego and Helmut Merkel, WUNT 180 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 191–209.



acquires added significance from the fact that Paul seems to allude to Jesus' teaching on several occasions in his paraenesis.<sup>29</sup> It is likely that he also was concerned to assure the proper care of that teaching and tradition in the churches which he founded.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4. *The Gospels and their Interdependence*

The gospels are the earliest extant narratives of Jesus' life and bear the characteristics of the flexible ancient *bios*.<sup>31</sup> Their dating is difficult to estimate precisely, but most scholars opt for the latter half of the first century CE, the earliest one being composed shortly before or after 70.<sup>32</sup> The issue where and for whom they were written remains largely unresolved. If the intended audience was a much wider one than the local community,<sup>33</sup> they are communicatively more open than is often assumed.

In order to employ these *bioi* as sources, we cannot escape posing the question of dependence. The gospels might depend on each other

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<sup>29</sup> Most striking are the similarities between Rom 12:14 and Matt 5:44/Luke 6:27–28; Rom 12:17 and Matt 5:39–42/Luke 6:29–30; Rom 14:14 and Mark 7:15; 1 Thess 5:2, 4 and Matt 24:43/Luke 12:39–40; 1 Thess 5:13 and Mark 9:50; and 1 Thess 5:15 and Matt 5:39–48/Luke 6:27–38. See further Dale C. Allison, Jr, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels," *NTS* 29 (1982): 1–32.

<sup>30</sup> Heinz Schürmann, "... und Lehrer". Die geistliche Eigenart des Lehrdienstes und sein Verhältnis zu anderen geistlichen Diensten im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter," in *Orientierungen am Neuen Testament: Exegetische Gesprächsbeiträge*, Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1978), 116–156; Alfred F. Zimmermann, *Die urchristlichen Lehrer: Studien zum Tradentenkreis der διδάσκαλοι im frühen Urchristentum*, WUNT 2.12, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Dirk Frickenschmidt, *Evangelium als Biographie: Die vier Evangelien im Rahmen antiker Erzählkunst*, TANZ 22 (Tübingen: Francke Verlag, 1997); Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> For the most thorough attempt to place all the New Testament writings before 70 CE, cf. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976).

<sup>33</sup> So the contributions in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audience*, ed. Richard Bauckham, (Edinburgh: Clark, 1998). For a survey of the debate, see Edward W. Klink, "The Gospel Community Debate: State of the Question," *CBR* 3 (2004): 60–85. Margaret M. Mitchell's discussion mentioned by Klink is now published: "Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim that 'The Gospels Were Written for All Christians'," *NTS* 51 (2005): 36–79. I have addressed the related issue of the use and misuse of the form-critical category of the *Sitz im Leben* in "A Century with the *Sitz im Leben*: From Form-Critical Setting to Gospel Community and Beyond," *ZNW* 98 (2007): 1–27.

and on tradition not available to us. As is well known, the synoptic gospels seem too similar to be entirely independent of each other.<sup>34</sup> There is a growing discussion as to how precisely this interdependence is to be accounted for.<sup>35</sup> The situation is today more complex and uncertain than ever.

Scholars interested in using the synoptic gospels as sources for the historical Jesus are forced to take a stand on this issue. While experts in the particular field of research of the synoptic problem debate the matter intensely, in the “third quest” the most common explanation of the data is that Mark was the primary source for both Matthew and Luke. The decisive arguments for Markan priority, it seems, are not the differences in the Triple Tradition (material common to the three synoptics), which admittedly can be explained on the assumption that the author of Mark knew and performed Matthew and Luke, but the internal evidence of the date of the gospels and, more importantly, the absence of material from the Double Tradition (material in Matthew and Luke alone) in Mark.<sup>36</sup> It is, for instance, very difficult to explain convincingly why the author of Mark did not include the Lord’s Prayer had he known about it from Matthew or Luke. It would have fitted in

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<sup>34</sup> John M. Rist argues that there is no direct literary dependence of one synoptic on another (*On the independence of Matthew and Mark*, SNTSMS 32 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978]). Most scholars recognize that the large amount of verbal agreement makes this thesis untenable.

<sup>35</sup> There is today a bewildering flora of rejections and modifications of the “Two Source Hypothesis.” The most influential challenge to Markan priority is the “Griesbach Hypothesis” or “Two Gospel Hypothesis” advocated by William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1976); idem, *The Gospel of Jesus: The Pastoral Relevance of the Synoptic Problem* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994). For an evaluation, see Christopher M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis: An Analysis and Appraisal*, SNTSMS 44 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). A useful collection of essays for and against the “Two-Source Hypothesis” can be found in *The Two-Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Arthur J. Bellinzoni, Jr., (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985). Cf. also the “Multiple-Stage Hypothesis” advocated by Pierre Benoit and Marie-Émile Boismard, *Synopse des quatre évangiles en français*, 2 vols, 2nd ed. (Paris: Cerf, 1972, 1980). This hypothesis has not won much international approval due to its sheer complexity. All three hypotheses are presented and discussed in part 1 of *The Interrelations of the Gospels: A Symposium led by M.-É. Boismard—W. R. Farmer—F. Neiryck*, ed. David L. Dungan, BETL 95 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 3–288.

<sup>36</sup> For further arguments based on Christological development, see Peter M. Head, *Christology and the Synoptic Problem: An Argument for Markan Priority*, SNTSMS 94 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

perfectly well after his account of the withered fig tree and Jesus' teaching on prayer in 11:20–25.

The minor agreements between Matthew and Luke in material which is recorded in Mark, as well as the inexplicable omission of some Markan material in Matthew and Luke (e.g., Mark 4:26–29; 12:32–34; 15:44), give reason for some modification of the simple notion of Markan priority. To several scholars these observations suggest that the author of Matthew and Luke used a somewhat different version of Mark than the one included in the canon—an earlier one (“Ur-Markus”) or a later one (“Deutero-Markus”).<sup>37</sup> This is a plausible inference. As noted above, written texts were often somewhat instable and orally modified in antiquity.

An even more open issue is the relationship between Matthew and Luke. Luke claims to have known other (written) accounts of the Jesus event (Luke 1:1) and the possibility exists that one of these accounts was the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>38</sup> Scholars in “the third quest” rarely take this option seriously but mostly work on the assumption that the author of Matthew and Luke drew independently from a lost Greek source, Q. Here the situation is hopelessly uncertain. While Q remains a hypothetical source which is very difficult to reconstruct with a sufficient amount of probability, the assumption that the author of Luke used Matthew faces equally serious difficulties in explaining why Luke shows so little awareness of Matthew's additions to Mark in Markan material and of his birth narrative.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> For discussion, cf. Frans Neiryneck, ed., *The Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark with a Cumulative List*, BETL 37 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974); Georg Strecker, ed., *Minor Agreements: Symposium Göttingen 1991* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); Andreas Ennulat, *Die „minor agreements“: Untersuchungen zu einer offenen Frage des synoptischen Problems*, WUNT 2.62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Frans Neiryneck, “Goulder and the Minor Agreements,” *ETL* 73 (1997): 84–93.

<sup>38</sup> This is the so-called “Farrer Theory” introduced by Austin M. Farrer, “On Dispensing with Q,” in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot*, ed. Dennis E. Nineham, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 55–88. Cf. also Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974). For a defence of this theory, cf. Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2002). Goodacre, a former student of Goulder, builds on previous studies of his.

<sup>39</sup> For an attempt to explain these obstacles to the theory, cf. Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way Through the Maze*, The Biblical Seminar 80 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 128–133.

The Gospel of John, probably the latest of the four, includes narratives and sayings material which exhibit both similarities and dissimilarities to the extant versions of the synoptic gospels. It must be admitted that these features are open to different explanations. Again, no scholarly consensus has emerged. They suggest either that the author made his mosaic story on the basis of written copies of one or several of the synoptics, or that he based his story on his own reminiscences of one or several of them, or that he employed traditions independent of them all.<sup>40</sup> The increasing recognition that the gospel tradition was orally transmitted and performed could give support to the old notion that the author knew of oral versions that differed from the wording of the synoptics,<sup>41</sup> but it is difficult to determine whether these differences emerged in his own immediate setting as one or several gospels were re-oralized in performance or elsewhere.

### 5. *The Gospels and the Gospel Tradition*

Not only is the interdependence of the gospels important for determining the historicity of Jesus, but also their dependence on previously formulated material. The distinctive character which sets the gospels apart from other Greek and Roman literature of the same biographical character is the extent to which they build on oral and written tradition. It is as if the authors were concerned not to be confused with contemporary abuses of encomiastic rhetorical writing.<sup>42</sup> At a synchronous hearing/reading of them this feature is not immediately evident. A closer examination of the material indicates however that they depended on material that had been previously formulated orally and in writing. The author of Luke admits explicitly that he is building on tradition (Luke 1:2). It is also of no little significance that the authors

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<sup>40</sup> For a survey of the debate, see D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

<sup>41</sup> See the standard work of Charles H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963). Dodd's view is followed up by James D. G. Dunn, "John and the Oral Gospel Tradition," in *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. Henry Wansbrough, JSNTSup 64 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 351–379.

<sup>42</sup> See my article "Performing the Past: Gospel Genre and Identity Formation in the Context of Ancient History Writing," in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis for His Eightieth Birthday*, ed. Sang-Won Son, (New York: Clark, 2006), 28–44.

of Matthew and Luke both preferred to use the rather scanty Markan account as the master narrative of their own stories.

It becomes more problematic when the tradition no longer exists. Granted the likelihood that also the earliest Gospel depends on tradition, the scientific claim that Jesus existed needs to determine where and in what way it is diachronically founded. The early form critics—Karl Ludwig Schmidt, Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius—were convinced that the author of Mark, while being innovative in his creation of the gospel genre, employed oral and written traditions tied together by common forms, themes, and words and a connected story of Jesus' suffering and death.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to verify this position and identify precisely the traditional units with a sufficient amount of credibility.<sup>44</sup> The present state of research shows that the form-critical criteria no longer hold water and the more recent redaction-critical way of reasoning tends to become too static and circular.<sup>45</sup>

Yet the view that the author of Mark made no or very little use of tradition is equally speculative. Even those scholars who ascribe the connected passion narrative to the author of Mark detect various strands of pre-Markan material.<sup>46</sup> It would be utterly surprising if no reports concerning Jesus' passion existed before Mark. The basic reason for assuming the existence of pre-Markan tradition—probably in some

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<sup>43</sup> Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu: Literarkritische Untersuchungen zur ältesten Jesusüberlieferung* (Berlin: Trowitzsch und Sohn, 1919); Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931); Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933).

<sup>44</sup> For a form-critical attempt to do so, though with rather meagre results, cf. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, SUNT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971). For a survey of research, see William R. Telford, "The Pre-Markan Tradition in Recent Research (1980–1990)," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, ed. Frans van Segbroeck, Christopher M. Tuckett, Gilbert van Belle, and Joseph Verheyden, vol. 2, BETL 100 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 693–723.

<sup>45</sup> For an evaluation of the early form-critical approach, see my review essay of Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, *JBL* 122 (2003): 549–555.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Eta Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte*, FRLANT 102 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); Werner H. Kelber, ed., *The Passion in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Genre and Function of the Markan Passion Narrative," *HTR* 73 (1980): 153–184; Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 247–312; Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*, with a new introduction by the author, *Voices in Performance and Text* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 184–199.

varying format due to its oral performances—is Paul’s quotation of and allusions to traditional formulations related to the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:23–25) and the handing over (παραδιδόναι) of Jesus to a shameful death by crucifixion (Rom 4:25; 8:32; 1 Cor 11:23; Gal 2:20). Paul would hardly have been able to refer to “the night in which he was handed over” (1 Cor 11:23) had he not heard about significant episodes of Jesus’ passion. In addition, it is indeed noteworthy that the author of Mark at this point arranges the material according to a more coherent narrative framework than previously in the Gospel.<sup>47</sup> To be sure, the detailed work on identifying the source and tracing its development has not reached a scholarly consensus, but this in itself points perhaps to a somewhat flexible tradition with significant interaction between written and orally performed material.<sup>48</sup>

It is difficult to verify the existence of other pre-Markan material. Those scholars who detect collections of miracle stories, a synoptic apocalypse, disputations, didactic sayings, and parables on a pre-Markan level inevitably have to work with a large amount of uncertainty. One way to anchor this kind of analysis in a frame that is external to the circular reasoning of much redaction-critical work is to take seriously Papias’ note quoted by Eusebius that Mark wrote down from memory what he had heard from Peter (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15). In antiquity it was common procedure to refer to an eyewitness when trying to truthfully and persuasively communicate to others about essential events from the past.<sup>49</sup> Scholars are divided as to the usefulness of Papias’ piece of information. Once accepted as generally trustworthy and put into a broader socio-cultural framework of ancient historical inquiry, it moves the Gospel of Mark significantly closer to the historical Jesus, without

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<sup>47</sup> For further discussion, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* 2 vols, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994). Cf. also Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative*, WUNT 2.33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988); Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu: Literarische Analyse und historische Kritik der Passionsdarstellungen der Evangelien*, BZNW 69 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> For an emphasis on Mark’s dependence on orally performed material, cf. Whitney T. Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> Byrskog, *Story as History*, 272–292.

neglecting the fact that the author was indeed an interpreter of individual *chreiai* and a creative story teller.<sup>50</sup>

Some scholars would regard Q as the most important source for reconstructing the teaching of the historical Jesus.<sup>51</sup> By far the most common explanation for the texts—predominantly logia—which Matthew and Luke have in common in addition to their Markan material is the existence of this source. Assuming that they composed their Gospels independently of each other, they must have employed another Greek source, which perhaps was available in somewhat different recensions.<sup>52</sup> Scholars disagree on the date and place for its composition. One influential hypothesis is to date its final redaction to the first Jewish revolt or just after,<sup>53</sup> though some prefer an even earlier date due to alleged allusions to “sign prophets” and to Caligula’s attempt in 39/40 to set up an effigy of himself in the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>54</sup> Most advocates of this hypothesis agree that it was composed somewhere in Palestine, possibly in Galilee,<sup>55</sup> and cherished by a community.

Strictly speaking, Q is part of the hypothetical reconstruction of the historical Jesus, not an extant source. The process of reconstruction does not begin with Q, as is often implicitly assumed, but with the extant sources. One of the major problems with Q in Jesus research is that the tentative proposal as to its existence and outlook quickly turns into an established truth and thus tends to blind scholars to the fact that they introduce an entirely hypothetical element into the fundamental basis for the reconstruction of the historical Jesus. The evidence is too ambiguous to warrant unqualified assertions of scientific progress

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<sup>50</sup> See Samuel Byrskog, “The Early Church as a Narrative Fellowship: An Exploratory Study of the Performance of the *Chreia*,” *Tidsskrift for Teologi of Kirke* 78 (2007): 207–226.

<sup>51</sup> So Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 45.

<sup>52</sup> The standard edition is now James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French translations of Q and Thomas*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, and Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: Clark, 2000).

<sup>54</sup> For discussion, cf. Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), 49–54.

<sup>55</sup> But cf. Marco Frenschkowski, “Galiläa oder Jerusalem? Die topographischen und politischen Hintergründe der Logienquelle,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 535–559.

in this respect.<sup>56</sup> All we know is that Matthew and Luke have a large amount of sayings material in common, which, in view of the difficulties with assuming that Luke employed Matthew, suggests a common core of material. The variation in agreement complicates the picture significantly and supports the hypothesis of a common body of flexible material that could be orally supplemented,<sup>57</sup> rather than a written Q-source corresponding to the history and theology of a specific community at a particular time and place.

The matter is even more uncertain as regards the material peculiar to Matthew and Luke, respectively (“M” and “L”). Because this material is supposed to have been formed by the same people who shaped the gospel narratives, it is extremely difficult to distinguish it from the creative additions of the authors themselves. The vocabulary, style, and ideology of the special material may coincide with those of the authors. Only when secure criteria are established for arguing that it diverges from the authors’ own additions are we in a position to assume that the material actually comes from tradition. Even then, however, scholars face the fact that by definition, this material lacks any close parallels which could secure its traditional character by comparison with an independent source. In view of these caveats, the special material is a minor source for the historical Jesus and must be employed with much caution.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Craig A. Evans, “Authenticating the Words of Jesus,” in Bruce Chilton and Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, NTTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 3–14. For a cautious use of Q by an expert in this area of research, see Christopher M. Tuckett, “Q and the Historical Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 213–241.

<sup>57</sup> This insight is one of the most important aspects of Dunn’s book on the historical Jesus. See James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 147–160. Dunn has stated his view in several other publications. He could have sharpened his stress on the importance of orality even further. See my comments in “A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition: Reflections on James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 459–71; and in the updated comments in “A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition: Reflections on James D. G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*,” in *Memories of Jesus: A Critical Appraisal of James D. G. Dunn’s Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Robert B. Stewart and Gary R. Habermas (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010). Joachim Jeremias, who worked intensely with the historical Jesus, long ago dispensed with a written Q-source in favour of an oral one. See his article “Zur Hypothese einer schriftlichen Logienquelle,” *ZNW* 29 (1930): 147–149. Jeremias concludes: “Die Hypothese, daß der gesamte gemeinsame Logienstoff des Matthäus und Lukas aus einer gemeinsamen schriftlichen Quelle (Q) stamme, ist nicht zu halten” (*ibid.*, 149). For a recent assessment along these lines, see Birger A. Pearson, “A Q Community in Galilee?” *NTS* 50 (2004): 476–494.



This uncertainty concerning the special material makes the question of Jesus' historicity somewhat tricky. It not only indicates that a significant and large amount of material included in the gospels can be used as sources for the historical Jesus within the frame of already established patterns of his life, but adds particular insecurity to our knowledge concerning his birth. The two birth narratives are probably independent and belong to the special material, carrying the characteristics of each author's vocabulary, style, and ideology.<sup>58</sup> While we are confident that Jesus did exist, we are more ignorant as to how he historically came into being.

There are two possible ways of introducing complementary considerations which could help to avoid undisciplined speculation. The first and most obvious one is to compare the two independent versions and see where they converge. This is common historical methodology. Both versions testify to the conviction that Jesus' parents were called Joseph and Mary, that he was of Davidic lineage and that he was born to be the son of God. It is then up to each scholar to evaluate the historicity of these core convictions according to the criteria of historical probability. A further consideration is to ask whether the material indicates that it builds on a source close to the event. In the Lukan account Mary figures as a person who kept treasuring all the things concerning Jesus' birth (Luke 2:19, 51). In antiquity it was common procedure to seek out family members for information concerning one or several of their relatives; and Luke can report that Mary was present in the Jerusalem community after the death of her son (Acts 1:14).<sup>59</sup> Of course, no one can deny the formidable literary creativity evident in the Lukan birth narrative, and Matthew contains no such indication, but Mary's peculiar role as an observant eyewitness might still be of circumstantial value as a further source-critical clue.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The standard work on this material is Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (ABRL, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993).

<sup>59</sup> For arguments and literature, see my *Story as History*, 89–90. It is unfortunate that many considerations of the role of eyewitnesses are labelled apologetic and conservative, even when they recognize and stress the interpretative element in all kinds of visual observation.

<sup>60</sup> For an appreciation of this kind of investigation, see Richard Bauckham, "The Eyewitnesses and the Gospel Traditions," *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 28–60; idem, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006). Cf. also Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (London: Clark, 2002), 257–310. I have indicated the differences between my own and

The Fourth Gospel refers to the implied author as an eyewitness (19:35; 21:24). Although this reference functions primarily as an authorial legitimation which overcomes the distance in the narrative between the present time of the Gospel and the pastness of the Jesus event,<sup>61</sup> it is to be noted that the author elsewhere provides information not included in the other Gospels. Details like “Aenon near Salim” (3:23), “the pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha, which has five porticoes” (5:2), “the town called Ephraim” (11:54), etc., serve no evident theological purpose and look like historical reminiscences. Similarly, the account of the beginning and length of Jesus’ ministry, the enumeration of his signs, the more frequent visits to Jerusalem, and the chronology of his last week might point to historical information with roots in traditions independent of the synoptics.<sup>62</sup> This does not mean that John can be put on the same level as the other gospels in terms of being a source for the historical Jesus. It is clearly the latest gospel, and there is no way to cross-check the information not included in the other gospels. It testifies to a more developed stage of tradition and reflection. The use of the narratives for symbolic purposes and the theological program of the sayings constitute a much more colourful web and are further advanced than in any of the synoptics. It does not add much to the question how we know that Jesus existed, but implies some data to be considered as possible additional features at different points of his career.

This survey points to Mark as the primary source in historical-Jesus research. It is with this Gospel that the process of reconstruction and scholarly reconfiguration of the historical Jesus begins. His existence is attested also in other sources, but as the earliest extant account of his life, its traditions are of essential significance for locating him more precisely in time and place. The other gospels are brought in as a means to cross-check the information from material dependent on or independent of Mark, and complement the picture at certain points. To be

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Bauckham’s approach in two articles. See “The Eyewitnesses as Interpreters of the Past,” *JSHJ* 6 (2008): 157–168, and “A ‘Truer’ History: Reflections on Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitness: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*,” *Nova et Vetera* 8 (2008): 483–490.

<sup>61</sup> Byrskog, *Story as History*, 235–238.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Francis J. Moloney, “The Fourth Gospel and the Jesus of History,” *NTS* 46 (2000): 42–58, who focuses on Jesus’ relationship with John the Baptist (John 1:19–28, 29–34; 3:22–30), the calling of disciples (1:35–51), and the so-called purification of the Temple (2:13–22).

sure, the complex state of research challenges the scholar to repeatedly ask if the reconstruction would look different from the perspective of an alternative hypothesis concerning the dependence of the gospels. In the end, however, scientific work often has to be content with the conceptual frames established on the basis of very fragmentary information.

### 6. *The Historical Jesus Beyond the Gospels*

Moving beyond the gospels to other parts of the canon and Christian writings, we detect almost no further information of significance. We know of no important events in Jesus' life that have been recorded elsewhere in the canon but not in the gospels. Jesus' sayings have entered into various strands of the New Testament, but almost all of them have been recorded in one form or the other in the gospels. The (mostly) implicit Jesus tradition in the letters of Paul is the earliest data and as such of importance, as we have seen, but it does not yield additional information concerning the Jesus of history besides what is to be found in the gospels. Likewise, the Jesus tradition in James, 1 Peter, and other New Testament writings, while occasionally perhaps reflecting earlier stages of the tradition than the one in the gospels, merely includes sayings which are to be found also in one or several of the gospels. In fact, they can be defined as Jesus tradition only because they have parallels in the gospels. In Acts 20:35 Paul quotes "words of the Lord Jesus" which are not included in the gospels, but this is a rare exception and at odds with the fact that Paul never directly quotes Jesus in his letters.<sup>63</sup> Otherwise, such events and sayings, which are not many, have entered into variant readings of the gospels. The vast majority of them are secondary, the account of Jesus' encounter with a man working on the Sabbath in Codex D (5th cent.) to Luke 6:5 being the only instance which might reflect an early tradition.

By the same token, additional narratives and sayings of Jesus in early tradition independent of the gospel tradition are rare in Christian writings outside the canon. We are on secure ground when assuming a rather small number of unknown sayings whose authenticity admits of

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<sup>63</sup> The saying seems to be a Greek aphorism with a slight Christian touch. Cf., for instance, Thucydides, 2.97.4 (attributing it to the Persians); Plutarch, *Mor.* 173d. 1 Thess 4:15–17 is sometimes thought to include an early apocryphon, but it is not evident that Paul is here actually quoting anything at all.

serious consideration. In addition to the textual variant to Luke 6:5 mentioned above, critical scholarship has reduced the number to eight further instances. Five of these might depend on earlier tradition, leaving only four sayings which possibly reflect independent and otherwise unknown sayings from the historical Jesus.<sup>64</sup> Even if we would adopt less strict criteria for identifying such *agrapha*, their number is strikingly small considering the large amount of Christian literature of the time. Nor do they add much to the overall picture of Jesus.

It should be noted that recent scholarship is divided on whether additional material of significance is to be found in extra-canonical Christian literature.<sup>65</sup> Among the references mentioned in this discussion are the documents picturing Jesus in dialogue with different persons (the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, the *Apocryphon of James*), the two fragments indicating Jesus' discussion about the Law and the tax, the unsuccessful stoning of him, and some miracles (Papyrus Egerton 2), the extracts of a secret gospel mentioning the raising of a young man and Jesus' encounter with the sister and mother of that man and Salome (the *Secret Gospel of Mark*), the tradition about Jesus' passion behind the account in the *Gospel of Peter* (the "Cross Gospel"), etc. The majority of scholarship employs this material with much caution as sources for the historical Jesus.<sup>66</sup>

A more serious candidate as an additional source to the historical Jesus is the *Gospel of Thomas*. To be sure, it adds nothing to our knowledge of the major events of Jesus, but more than half of the 114 logia have no clear parallel in the canonical gospels. Moreover, the order of

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<sup>64</sup> In addition to the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D) to Luke 6:5, cf. also *Gos. Thom.* 82 cited by Origen, *In Jer. Hom.* 3.3 and by Didymus, *In Psalm.* 88.8; P. Oxy 1224; *Gos. Heb.* in Jerome, *In Eph.* 5.4. For discussion, see Otfried Hofius, "Agrapha," *TRE* 2 (1978): 103–10; idem, "Unbekannte Jesusworte," in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien: Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher, WUNT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 355–382; idem, "Agrapha," in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung 1: Evangelien*, 5th ed. by Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 76–79.

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the scholarly conflict on this point, see David E. Aune, "Assessing the Historical Value of the Apocryphal Jesus Tradition: A Critique of Conflicting Methodologies," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 243–272.

<sup>66</sup> For a critical discussion, see James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans, "Jesus in the Agrapha and Apocryphal Gospels," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 479–533, at 491–532.

the sayings which do have parallels seems to be entirely independent of the order in the gospels. Scholarship is divided on the usefulness of the *Gospel of Thomas* as a source for the historical Jesus. As with all material which appears in one particular writing only once—we can compare the “M” and “L” material—the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas* which are not attested elsewhere can be attributed to the historical Jesus only tentatively and mostly on the basis of an already established picture of what he could have said. The circular kind of reasoning inevitable in most historical reconstructions is here particularly narrow and problematic. The primary usefulness of this Gospel is therefore that it gives a possibility of comparing Jesus sayings in the canonical gospels and acquiring a fuller picture of how they were remembered and performed in different settings. Whether the version in the *Gospel of Thomas* is earlier or later than those in the canonical gospels, or whether it is dependent on them or not, has to be determined from case to case. It adds more to our knowledge of the traditioning process than the historical Jesus.

Non-Christian authors from the first centuries CE are important only in so far as they have no particular interest in arguing that Jesus in fact existed.<sup>67</sup> Josephus’ is the earliest, referring to Jesus twice in his *Jewish Antiquities*, written in the 90’s (*Ant.* 18.63–64; 20.200).<sup>68</sup> Despite the Christian redaction of the first passage,<sup>69</sup> we learn from him that Jesus appeared as a popular wise man who was crucified by Pilate and that he was the brother of James. In the early second century Tacitus claims that Jesus, whom he calls *Christus*, was executed by Pilate during the reign of Tiberius (*Ann.* 15.44). Suetonius, who was also active during the second century, tells of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 49 CE because they constantly made disturbances at the instigation of “Chrestus” (*Claud.* 25.4). This piece of information is of no value for the quest of the historical Jesus. Even if it does refer to Christ, which

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<sup>67</sup> For a more complete survey of the material, see Craig A. Evans, “Jesus in Non-Christian Sources,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 443–478; van Voorst, *Jesus outside the New Testament*.

<sup>68</sup> Perhaps the Letter of Mara bar Sarapion of Samosata includes an even earlier independent reference to Jesus as the wise king of the Jews. The recent edition of the letter dates it to 72 CE. See Annette Merz, David Rensberger, and Teun Tiedman, eds., *Mara Bar Sarapion: Letter to His Son* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

<sup>69</sup> Geza Vermes, “The Jesus Notice of Josephus Re-Examined,” *JJS* 38 (1987): 1–10.

is uncertain,<sup>70</sup> it merely indicates that certain people in Rome were his adherents in the reign of Claudius. The references to Jesus in the rabbinic material are equally of little value. They are not only difficult to date, but also perhaps secondarily inserted.<sup>71</sup>

All in all, it is not easy to know from where these authors had received information concerning Jesus. It is likely that some of them merely reacted to the activity of contemporary Christian groups. We should note that none of them refutes the existence of Jesus. This holds true also for authors who were strongly antagonistic towards the Christians. The best known is perhaps Celsus' polemic in the second century. While according to Origen he denied that Jesus was born by a virgin and knew from a Jewish interlocutor that Jesus' real father was the Roman soldier Panthera (*Contra Celsum* 1.28, 32, 33, 69), he did not deny that Jesus had existed.

The search for the historical Jesus beyond the gospels provides meagre results. The Gospels have included almost all the pieces of important information concerning him. John's remark that there are also many other things that Jesus did besides the ones written down in the Gospel (21:25) serves more to point to the extraordinary character of Jesus' activity than to the actual existence of additional tradition. The historical Jesus beyond the gospels is essentially the historical Jesus of the gospels.

This negative result is still of significance in evaluating the basis of our conviction that Jesus existed. While it is understandable that non-Christian authors show little interest in Jesus, the scantiness of additional data in Christian literature outside the gospels indicates that new items concerning Jesus were not added at random. It appears that there were people, from early on, who knew what there was to be said and not to be said about the Jesus of history. Once that had been recorded in the canonical gospels, there was not much to add. This is not to say that those traces of Jesus tradition that we find elsewhere are secondary to the gospel tradition—on some occasions the letters might reflect

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. H. Dixon Slingerland, *Claudian Policymaking and the Early Imperial Repression of Judaism at Rome*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 160 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 203–217.

<sup>71</sup> Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978). Some scholars would see a Tannaitic reference to Jesus (Yeshu) in *b. Sanh.* 43a. Even so, the notion that he was stoned and hanged on the eve of Passover indicates that the story has been conformed to rabbinic legal procedure.

variant forms of Jesus tradition—but merely to take due notice of the fact that the gospels have accounted for almost everything important there was to know about Jesus. Granting that the Jesus tradition was mainly orally transmitted, it seems that it was never allowed to take the form of wide-spread rumours and spontaneous *ad hoc* performances, but at an early time collected into a manageable body of material.<sup>72</sup> Later on, when the need for biographical completeness and the elevation of pious self-identity sought to fill out the gaps of historical information, the legends began to flourish and new gospels emerged.

### 7. *Tradition as History*

No matter what hypothesis we prefer concerning the inter-dependence of the gospels and the gospel tradition, we do have enough data at hand to firmly claim that Jesus in fact existed. In order to put this assertion on firmer footing, historians evaluate the gospels and the traditions according to certain criteria. Having established that the earliest gospel builds on tradition, and that the other gospels might use tradition independent of the earliest one, we are faced with the equally intricate task of making history out of tradition. It should be stressed that the traditionality of an account is not to be equated with its historicity, but merely gives the present narrative a dimension of intrinsic pastness without proving that this pastness in fact is real history. The traditionality of the gospels and the historicity of the gospels are two different things and imply two distinct kinds of diachronic inquiry.

Tradition may mean many things.<sup>73</sup> In its most elementary sense it refers to anything which is handed down from the past to the present (Latin *traditum*). It functions both to preserve and to communicate things from what went before. The difficult issue in historical-Jesus research is to determine precisely the relationship and interaction between these two aspects of tradition in early Christianity. The ques-

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<sup>72</sup> This insight has been stressed several times by Birger Gerhardsson. See, for instance, his article “Der Weg der Evangelientradition,” in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien: Vorträge vom Tübinger Symposium 1982*, ed. Peter Stuhlmacher, WUNT 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 79–102; and the other contributions included in *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001).

<sup>73</sup> I will discuss the Jesus tradition more fully in a second contribution to this Handbook, in the essay entitled “The Transmission of the Jesus Tradition.” See volume 2. Here I am interested only in noting how tradition functions for assessing the historicity of Jesus.

tion is whether we are able to speak of the Jesus of history in any other sense than the Jesus of the tradition as communicated to others. When the tradition is performed in various rhetorical settings, the performer and the audience shape their identity and sense of belonging by creating a picture of what they perceive as the Jesus of history, while essentially this picture of him is the Jesus as remembered by tradition. In the oral performance there is no real sense of history, some would argue.<sup>74</sup> History is present only as performed tradition.

In the recent, extensive book about the historical Jesus, James D. G. Dunn goes a long way in this direction, but also insists that there is a genuinely diachronic aspect to tradition.<sup>75</sup> Jesus made a profound impact on his disciples and the subsequent performance of tradition manifests the impact as a social memory of the past. Scholars have sought to penetrate this memory in different ways. The form-critics correlated the traditional sayings with their form in the life setting of the Christian community and traced the tradition backward, mostly ending up with finding Jesus reconfigured in the future-oriented kerygma of the church. Gerd Theissen's more recent view that itinerant charismatics cared for the sayings material in the context of discipleship, while persons with narrative competence among the ordinary folk transmitted brief episodes of Jesus' miracles, works not so much with forms as with how ideological, geographical and temporal perspectives are represented in the texts.<sup>76</sup> But as he himself admits, it is essentially a way of broadening the sociological horizon of the form-critical approach. Others have focused on the firm elements within the flexible tradition process and tried to determine the contexts where tradition entailed memory in the form of memorization.<sup>77</sup> The Jesus of history is the Jesus as memorized in tradition. Still others seek first to establish the

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<sup>74</sup> So, for instance, Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, 209; Joanna Dewey, "The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Good Story?," *JBL* 123 (2004): 495–507, at 500 n. 21. For a critique of this view, see Byrskog, *Story as History*, 131–138.

<sup>75</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 173–254, 881–884. For critical reflections on Dunn's methodological perspective on history, see Bengt Holmberg, "Questions of Method in James Dunn's *Jesus Remembered*," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 445–457.

<sup>76</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 25–131. Theissen maintains his opinion in more recent publications. Cf. idem, *Die Jesusbewegung: Sozialgeschichte einer Revolution der Werte* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2004), 33–98.

<sup>77</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity; with Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, and Livonia: Dove, 1998).



historically most certain sayings or events in Jesus' life as a bedrock of historicity. Since most scholars agree that the parables go back to Jesus himself, the authenticity of his teaching is to be measured against this material;<sup>78</sup> or since most scholars agree that Jesus cleansed the temple, his entire activity is to be understood in light of this decisive, eschatological act.<sup>79</sup> The Jesus of history emerges as the Jesus measured against his most significant sayings or deeds. Again, a basically similar way of proceeding is to first establish a broad meta-narrative from the Jewish background or the socio-cultural conventions of the contemporaneous Mediterranean environment and then fit the details of the Jesus tradition within that larger hypothesis.<sup>80</sup> The historical Jesus is the Jesus of his own background and environment.

There is of course a certain amount of convergence between the different ways of reaching back to Jesus, especially as most of them relate their procedure to a source-critical classification of the texts. John Dominic Crossan articulates this convergence and tries deliberately to integrate several strands of the rather disparate methodologies, working with a conjunction of three vectors (cross-cultural and cross-temporal anthropology, Greco-Roman history, and literary analysis) and connecting them to his own inventory, stratification, and attestation of the Jesus tradition.<sup>81</sup> The Jesus of history is not necessarily a modern Jesus, but surely the Jesus of a complex and particular methodology of how to turn tradition into history. This is to some extent the case also with other studies of the historical Jesus, but Crossan makes it more evident that once the methodology falls, the reconfigured Jesus of history disappears entirely and we are left asking ourselves how it is possible to know anything about him at all.

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<sup>78</sup> For instance, Robert W. Funk, *Honest to God: Jesus for a New Millennium* (San Francisco: Harper, 1996). Funk has stated his view in several other publications as well.

<sup>79</sup> Edward P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); idem, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1995). Cf. Craig A. Evans, "Authenticating the Activities of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Evans, NTS 28.1; (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 3–29.

<sup>80</sup> For instance, Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*; Bruce J. Malina, "Criteria for Assessing the Authentic Words of Jesus: Some Specifications," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Evans, NTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 27–45.

<sup>81</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), xxviii–xxxiv. Crossan has repeated his view in several publications, most significantly *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998).

Apparently, tradition does not easily yield to history. In this bewildering scholarly situation a new interest in establishing secure criteria for determining the historicity of the Jesus tradition has emerged.<sup>82</sup> At the time when this interest was being articulated, the old criterion of double dissimilarity had already vanished from the agenda of historical-Jesus research.<sup>83</sup> Virtually all scholars today agree that the historicity of Jesus essentially entails the elements of distinctiveness and similarity rather than total dissimilarity to his Jewish environment and that the multiple attestation and the positive coherence of a saying or an event, especially if the attestation is found in independent sources, are better than the single attestation and no inter-textual coherence. There is less agreement on other criteria, and their implementation varies considerably. It also remains to integrate these historiographic criteria into the methodology of tradition history.<sup>84</sup> The notion of how tradition normally develops and functions in communal settings is not entirely congruent with the way one makes use of these criteria. The criterion that a piece of information about Jesus has a claim to authenticity if it is dissimilar to the tendencies of early Christianity is in evident tension with the common idea that groups preserve only what is relevant to the present needs of the community.<sup>85</sup>

As it seems, the tradition behind the gospels does not offer a simple alternative to define the historicity of Jesus in terms of what could be

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<sup>82</sup> Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Die Kriterienfrage in der Jesusforschung: Vom Differenzkriterium zum Plausibilitätskriterium*, NTOA 34 (Freiburg [CH]: Universitätsverlag, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Stanley E. Porter, *Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); H. W. Shin, *Textual Criticism and the Synoptic Problem in Historical Jesus Research: The Search for Valid Criteria*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology 36 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> See Tom Holmén's review of Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus*, *JTS* 55 (2004): 216–228, at 225–226.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. David S. du Toit, "Der unähnliche Jesus: Eine kritische Evaluierung der Entstehung des Differenzkriteriums und seiner geschichts- und erkenntnistheoretische Voraussetzungen," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 89–129, at 121–122. Du Toit seems himself to be rather pessimistic about the possibility of this integration.

<sup>85</sup> Tom Holmén, "Knowing about Q and Knowing about Jesus: Mutually Exclusive Undertakings?" in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 497–514. Cf. idem, "Doubts about Double Dissimilarity: Restructuring the main criterion of Jesus-of-history research," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80. For critique of this functional (homeostatic) theory of (oral) tradition, see Byrskog, *Story as History*, 11, 29–30, 131–138.

securely defined as his authentic words and deeds. Coupled with a disciplined use of historiographic criteria, it presents the task of finding the most satisfactory historical explanation of how the tradition emerged and developed, forcing a modest use of labels such as authentic and inauthentic when speaking of what he said and did. Jesus' existence cannot be separated from how people remembered and spoke about him, but is an issue which calls us to listen carefully from our own horizon to their accounts as an ancient means of creating and conveying history.<sup>86</sup>

How do biblical scholars then know that Jesus existed? We are back to where we started. The question of Jesus' historicity is an issue of applying a certain contextualized perspective on the past and on the sources. His existence as a person of history cannot be strictly separated from how his reality was perceived in early Christianity and how we identify core elements of our own existence in history. We essentially enter into the reconfiguration, the fictionalization, and the narrativization that are part of all remembering and traditioning—ancient as well as modern—and relate them to the contemporary horizon of historicity and past existence. In that hermeneutical process of investigational dialogue, Jesus emerges as a person whose historicity and existence cannot be in doubt.

### 8. *Summary*

The conviction that Jesus existed results from an investigational dialogue between our contextuality and data about the past. The dialogue produces a reconfiguration, fictionalization, and narrativization of his existence by means of a methodology of historical reconstruction.

The reconstruction begins with Mark. Paul's letters are significant as the earliest assertion that Jesus existed. The other canonical gospels give the possibility of cross-checking the material and complement the picture. All the gospels build on tradition. The pre-Markan tradition is of importance. It provided material for the composition of the earli-

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<sup>86</sup> Schröter similarly challenges the historical-Jesus research to take seriously the social memory of early Christianity: "Jesus als 'Erinnerungsphänomen' wäre somit auch die angemessene heuristische Kategorie heutiger Jesusdarstellungen, die, ausgehend von dem Spektrum, in dem sich die Person Jesu in den frühen Quellen bricht, diese unter gegenwärtigen Erkenntnisbedingungen wieder zusammensetzen" ("Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus," 233–34).

est account of Jesus. The double tradition is equally significant, since it is attested in two independent documents. The tradition is however difficult to identify. The source-critical approaches need to be corroborated with an evaluation of statements in ancient documents concerning the Jesus tradition and the process of gospel writing as well as with a keen sensitivity to the orality of tradition. Other writings from the first two centuries CE provide little reliable material for Jesus' existence, indicating that the tradition did not incorporate new material at random.

Scholars must separate the traditionality and the historicity of the gospels as two distinct kinds of diachronic inquiry. The implementation of the criteria for historical-Jesus research varies considerably and rarely relates them to a consideration of how oral tradition develops. The two kinds of diachronic research and the hermeneutical aspect of historical reconstruction imply indeed that Jesus existed, because from our own horizon this is the most satisfactory explanation of how the Jesus tradition emerged and developed.



## BACKGROUND I: JESUS OF HISTORY AND THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND

JAMES H. CHARLESWORTH

Like poetry topography is to be felt.  
Statistics and prose can capture neither.

Moving through a lunaesque landscape,  
I wonder about natural marvels,  
Though such thoughts alone scarcely suffice.

Perceiving pellucidly the Galilean in his landscape,  
Requires moving beyond feeling and thinking,  
And allowing topography to express itself in me.

Then such landscape may flow through me to others,  
So history is disclosed through informed imaginations.

Then others like me may experience the supernatural within the natural,  
And feel the Creator, each morning, dressing the lilies of the field.  
[JHC, Judean wilderness, between Jerusalem and Jericho; 8.18.04]

When I wrote these words, looking at the landscape before me, I recalled a quotation from Paul Cézanne when he was asked what he was doing, sitting quietly observing the topography of southern France, at Aix-en-Provence. He stated, “The Landscape becomes reflective, human and thinks itself through me. I make it an object, let it project itself and endure within my painting. . . . I become the subjective consciousness of the landscape, and my painting becomes its objective consciousness.”<sup>1</sup> Cézanne’s insight expresses precisely that nature and the earth are not objectives; they are full of life and the source of life. As F. D. Peat states, we need to recognize that nature is a living agent, a power, and a presence.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Medina, *Cézanne and Modernism: The Poetics of Painting* (Albany State University of New York Press, 1995), 2; also see H. Dudar, “Cézanne’s Endless Quest to Parallel Nature’s Harmony,” *Smithsonian* 27 (April 1996): 82–88. I am appreciative to Colin Yuckman (one of my students) for help with this insightful quotation. Professor Walt Weaver, Dr. Robert S. MacLennan, and A. M. V. Capers helped me improve this publication; I am indebted to them for their keen eye and thoughtfulness.

<sup>2</sup> F. D. Peat, a physicist, also re-publishes the quotation from Cézanne. See Peat’s *The Blackwinged Night: Creativity in Nature and Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books, 2000), esp. ch. 2. Peat is absolutely correct to point out that creativity characterizes the

Jesus certainly bequeathed to us images and words that convey that thought. For him, and many of his followers, nature's horizons were full of meaning since they clarified human horizons, especially in an eschatological and apocalyptically charged milieu. Jesus is reputed to have said to some Pharisees and Sadducees:

When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather; for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. (Matt 16:2)

A study of topography and reflections on its importance in exegesis warn us against the fallacy represented by the subject-object paradigm advocated by Descartes and invite us to dwell within the phenomena, like ancient Palestinian topography, that shape Jesus' perception. The dawning of God's Rule (the Kingdom of God) was analogous to the dawning of a golden eschatological day.

An improved exegesis of Jesus' words and a better appreciation of his life should follow if we add to New Testament studies an examination of the topography of ancient Palestine. How, and in what way, are our gospels (*mutatis mutandis*) a possible mirror of the "objective consciousness" of Jesus and how did his landscape (which in many ways is similar to the one we may occasionally see today in Israel and Palestine) help shape his "subjective consciousness"? The following work should help those who have not lived in Jesus' landscape better feel why his topography (revealed to us in biblical landscapes assisted intermittently by archaeology) is a prerequisite for exegesis and hermeneutics.

In this paper I shall try to demonstrate something that Bargil Pixner felt passionately, having lived for decades in Galilee and Jerusalem. Reflecting on the importance of topography in Galilee and Judea, Pixner, in *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel*,<sup>3</sup> imagined that the landscape—topography in its various dimensions—provides the fifth gospel that completes the other four. I think Pixner wanted to share with others his experience of how the topography of Jesus' land often provides real contexts for comprehending Jesus' life and teachings.

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cosmos. We would wish to point out that Jesus' creativity derives from his closeness to the cosmos. I am also persuaded that Jesus' did spent all night in contemplation, as Luke reports (*dianuktereuōn*; Luke 6:12). This habit of Jesus explains the episode just before his walking on the water (Mark 6:45–48) and his last night in Gethsemane with his closest disciples.

<sup>3</sup> B. Pixner, *With Jesus Through Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel* (Rosh Pina: Corazin, 1992).

## 1. Introduction

This essay is focused on one key question: How and in what ways does an appreciation of the topography of the land in which Jesus lived and taught better help us understand his life and teachings?<sup>4</sup> To answer this question means to focus on the importance of topography for comprehending “the Holy Land” and “the Jesus of History.” How should these three concepts be defined?<sup>5</sup>

Topography is usually defined as the detailed mapping of the features of a relatively small area like ancient Palestine.<sup>6</sup> Yet, a topographical description of Jesus’ land entails much more than merely surveying the surface or physical configurations of the area.<sup>7</sup> As I shall try to demonstrate, topography—and the phenomenological perceptions that define it—include much more than geographical features.

This understanding of topography, and the following subdivisions of it, helps us refine a concept and lay the foundation for discriminating insights. The discipline is new. Modern scholars tend to follow Eusebius and Jerome and to base topographical study on literary work. We need to follow the lead of Eshtori ha-Parḥi, who seems to be the

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<sup>4</sup> Few notes will illustrate this publication, since there is nothing authoritative written on Jesus and topography, and what was published is significantly now out of date. This focused area of research is just beginning; for example, in the authoritative *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green et al. (Downers Grove, IL and Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), there is no entry for “topography,” the entries continue from “Tomb” to “Tosephta,” 831. There is, however, a superb entry by R. Riesner on “Archeology and Geography,” 33–46. This whole area of exploration is now being opened by the growing recognition of the importance of archaeology in Jesus Research; for studies on that topic see J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *Jesus and Archaeology: The Millennium Celebration in the Holy Land* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). Still helpful are the following books: G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, repr. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904); F.-M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1967); O. Keel, M. Küchler and C. Uehlinger, eds., *Orte und Landschaften der Bibel* (Benziger: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984); and W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994 [originally published in 1974]). All quotations are either my own or from the NRSV.

<sup>5</sup> References to and quotations from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha are taken from J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985).

<sup>6</sup> Too often the topographical references in the intra-canonical gospels are dismissed as merely authorial, redactional, or rhetorical. S. Freyne, however, has argued that these editorial seams sometimes have valid historical value; see Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), esp. 12–13.

<sup>7</sup> Extremely helpful, especially for the non specialist is Y. Aharoni et al., eds., *The Carta Bible Atlas*, 4th ed. (Jerusalem: CARTA, 2002).



first to engage in topographical studies of the Land. This Jewish scholar who lived in Beth-Shean in the early fourteenth century, spent two years in Galilee and five years “in the rest of the land” studying topography, and recording his discoveries in *Kaphtor Wapherah*.<sup>8</sup>

It is certain that many Jews, who shared Jesus’ love for Torah, did not imagine topography was merely geography. It was a Land shaped by God’s mighty deeds.<sup>9</sup> Eupolemus described “Solomon’s Temple,” but his descriptions probably help us understand imaginations and observations developed in the second century BCE (Eupolemus 34). Virtually unknown is the reference to the Temple by Pseudo-Hecataeus:

There, almost in the center of the city [Jerusalem], is found a stone-walled enclosure about five plethora in length, a hundred cubits in breadth; it has two entrances. Within this enclosure stands a square altar made of heaped-up stones, unhewn and unfinished; each side is twenty cubits, and its height is ten cubits. Beside this stands a large building in which there are an altar and a lampstand; both of these latter are made out of gold and weigh two talents. On them burns a light day and night—it never goes out. There is no image of a god, or any kind of votive offering; there is absolutely no trace of any plant life, whether in the form of a sacred grove or such like. Priests continually perform certain holy rituals in it day and night; they drink no wine whatsoever while in the temple. (198–199)

How then is topography, thus understood inclusively, to be distinguished from archaeology?<sup>10</sup> In many publications they are not distinguished. Yet, for our present purpose it is wise to note some distinctions. On the one hand, they are distinguished by the fact that topography is anchored in the land and geography but archaeological artifacts can sometimes be detached from the land. Thus, pots, bones, swords, coins, and images are not topographical features of the countryside; but they are certainly essential in helping us comprehend daily life and perceptions in a particular spot and time, especially among the early Jews who were

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<sup>8</sup> See the discussion in Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962, 1967, 1979), x–xi. Aharoni’s book is invaluable for ascertaining the significance of topography for the periods prior to Jesus; a similar book needs to be written for the first century CE, with a focus on the period between Herod in 40 BCE to the destruction of 70 CE.

<sup>9</sup> For further reflections, see Charlesworth, *The Millennium Guide for Pilgrims to the Holy Land* (North Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL Press, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> See Broshi, “The Archaeology of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, ed. W. Horbury, W. D. Davies, and J. Sturdy, vol. 3 (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 1–37.

deeply influenced by biblical symbols.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, archaeology and topography overlap and enrich each other. Sometimes they cannot and should not be distinguished, since a monument or a city, like Sebaste, Scythopolis, and Sepphoris, are topographical features of the Land and they are aspects of ancient civilization revealed for exploration and understanding due to archeological excavations. My point now is to stress that a topographical description of Jesus' landscape must include what is being learned from archaeological excavations.

By "the Holy Land," I mean the Promised Land celebrated in the Bible, from Dan to Beer Sheba. While Ezekiel used the adjective "holy" to describe the Temple Mount, the concept "the Holy Land"<sup>12</sup> appears to be adumbrated in Zechariah's reference to the "holy ground."<sup>13</sup> Thus the concept of the Holy Land begins to appear in the words of the prophet Zechariah; it seems to be used, in Greek for the first time, in *Second Maccabees*, which was composed in the late second century BCE, perhaps in Alexandria, and based on a work by Jason of Cyrene.<sup>14</sup>

While the *Temple Scroll* mentions frequently "the Land" and uses the term "Holy," the author and compilers never refer to the Holy Land. The author puts emphasis on "the holy Temple" (*mqdš hqwdš*). It is so holy that it must be separated from the city, Jerusalem, by a trench so that "I might dwell in their midst" (11Q19 XLVI, 10). The *Temple Scroll* does indeed help us to envision the Temple and the concept of sacred space for those who loved the "Holy City."<sup>15</sup>

Roman authorities recognized the importance of the Temple for devout Jews, both those living in the Land and in the Diaspora. During

<sup>11</sup> As F. Manns states, there is scarcely any aspect of Jewish life during the time of Jesus which was not shaped or influenced by biblical symbolism. See Manns, *Le symbole eau-esprit dans le Judaïsme ancien*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Analecta 19 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1983), esp. 25.

<sup>12</sup> This is the translation in many translations, including the following: *JPS: Hebrew-English TANAKH* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999 [5759]), 1386, and *The Holy Scriptures: Hebrew and English* (Jerusalem: I.A.D.B.W. and B.S.I., 1997), 987. The translators of the NRSV chose to render the Hebrew with "the holy land."

<sup>13</sup> Hebrew *'dmt hqds*; Zech 2:16 [12]; the LXX renders the Hebrew with *epi tēn hagian* ("upon the holy"); cf. also *'dmt-qdš* in Gen 3:5.

<sup>14</sup> See the discussion in R. L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 17–19, 264–265; although Wilken is interested in Christian perceptions of the Holy Land, he does include reflections on the earlier period. Wilken seems to miss the use of the *terminus technicus* in the Jewish apocryphal works and tends to confuse the fact that Zechariah referred to "the holy ground."

<sup>15</sup> This point is clearly made by A. Roitman in his *Envisioning the Temple: Scrolls, Stones, and Symbols* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2003).

the time of Jesus, Caesar Augustus ordered that Jews not be prevented from gathering to send money to Jerusalem,<sup>16</sup> and Marcus Agrippa ordered that the money Jews sent to the Temple in Jerusalem is “sacred money,” so that those who steal such money are to be “dragged out and handed over to the Jews under the law which temple-robbers are dragged out.”<sup>17</sup>

As already intimated, “the Holy Land” is not a “Christian” concept that postdates Jesus.<sup>18</sup> The *terminus technicus* appears in many Jewish texts, including 2 Maccabees 1:7,<sup>19</sup> *Wisdom of Solomon* 12.3,<sup>20</sup> *Testament of Job* 33, Pseudo-Philo 19.10 (*terra sancta*), 2 *Baruch* 63.10, and 4 *Ezra* 13.48.

Torah-observant Jews felt the “Land” (*eretz*) was holy because it was the place promised to Abraham as a gift.<sup>21</sup> The Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible) specifies the rules that Israel must obey in order to retain the gift of the Land.<sup>22</sup> Most devout Jews did not feel the necessity to add the adjective “holy” in Hebrew; “land” (*eretz*) sufficed. Jesus and his first followers, living out these traditions, inherited the concept of “the Land” that was promised to Abraham; the adjective “Holy” was for them redundant.

Though big in history and western traditions, this Land is a relatively tiny land. It is less than 230 miles from Dan in the north to Beer Sheba in the south. Dan is sequestered between the high Upper Galilean hills and the western slopes of Mount Hermon (Jesus and his followers most likely knew the legend that the rebellious angels descended to earth on Mount Hermon [cf. *1 En* 6.6; cf. *Gen* 5:18–6:22]). Dan is cradled by a verdant landscape, nestled beside the gently flowing Senir River. Water often explodes majestically from beneath the ground nearby.

Beer Sheba is in a hot and arid setting, a semi-desert terrain with hills to the east. The seven wells (the meaning of the Hebrew name “Beer Sheba”) provide water that is essential for life. According to the limited reports by the Evangelists, Jesus never visited Dan or Beer Sheba.

<sup>16</sup> Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 315; Josephus, *Ant* 16.169–170.

<sup>17</sup> Josephus, *Ant* 16.166–168.

<sup>18</sup> As a metaphor of “heaven,” the term Holy Land seems to be Christian; see Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7:29.

<sup>19</sup> The Greek is ἀπὸ τῆς ἁγίας γῆς.

<sup>20</sup> The Greek is τῆς ἁγίας σου γῆς.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of this gift, see W. Brueggemann, *The Land* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), esp. 47, and M. Weinfeld, *The Promise of the Land* (Berkeley, Oxford: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> See esp. J. Neusner, *The Emergence of Judaism* (Louisville, KY, London: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 5–7.

Perhaps Jesus never ventured south of Bethlehem, which is only about ten miles south of Jerusalem, but he may have walked to Tel Dan to see the ruins of the ancient city occupied by the tribe of Dan, since it is only about four hours walk from Caesarea Philippi (Banias = Panias).

By “the Jesus of History,” I would like to mean the historical person named Jesus of Nazareth who is behind the New Testament narratives. But this person can be known historically only via critical scholarship as the historical Jesus. It is the broad perspective about this Galilean as understood by most Jesus scholars today (Sanders, Meier, Charlesworth) that concerns us now.

As indicated already, “topography” needs to be defined so that it means more than a mere description of the natural landscape of ancient Palestine. If we are interested only in some aspect of physical geography, we will never be able to enter into the setting in which Jesus and his fellow Jews lived and thought. The term “topography” thus needs to be subdivided so we might be more discriminating in our search of how the landscape of the Holy Land helped shape Jesus’ life and thought. It is wise to separate observations on the meaning of topography into three aspects (that is, to trifurcate the concept of topography). What are these three aspects of topography?

In order to provide more precision in studying the importance of topography for a better understanding of the historical Jesus it is helpful to divide topography into geophysical topography, cultural topography, and tradition topography. Obviously, there is considerably overlapping and one should remember that the adjectives are defined by the governing noun, topography.

## 2. *Geophysical Topography*

The first of the three helpful distinctions is *geophysical topography*; this aspect of topography denotes the geological formations that have not changed in ten thousand years.<sup>23</sup> In this category, the physical nature of the Land dominates. While Jewish lore claimed the earth was divided

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<sup>23</sup> For Jerusalem, see D. Bahat, “The Topography of the City,” in *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: CARTA and New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 12–19.

into three regions by Noah,<sup>24</sup> the Land is usually conveniently divided into four geographical regions: the coastal plain (with only two flowing streams, the Yarqon and the Qishon), the central mountain range that runs from northern Galilee to south of Hebron,<sup>25</sup> the Jordan Rift Valley (which includes the Kinneret), and the highlands of Transjordan.<sup>26</sup> According to the intra-canonical gospels, Jesus spent significant time in three of these, but it is possible that he also visited the coast, and he did enter the region of Tyre and Sidon.

While Spain is the most diverse land in Europe, with mountains, rivers, beaches, and a desert, the Holy Land is the most diverse land on earth, with mountains (especially Hermon in the north), rivers (notably one: the Jordan), beaches (especially near Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jaffa [and also further south at Eilat]), a desert (near Beer Sheba), and more. One is astounded by the Ramon Crater, but it is south of Beer Sheba. Those who are awestruck by the Dead Sea often need to be reminded they are standing at the lowest spot on our earth; it is 1,275 feet below sea level. Walking down the Wadi Kelt, or climbing the Herodium, awakens in one the setting of the Good Samaritan, and reminds one of the dangers in the hidden recesses of the wilderness.

In Nazareth, Cana, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Magdala, Jericho, and Jerusalem, in one sense, the physical conditions are fundamentally the same. One walks among harsh terrain with sharp rocks and prickly brambles. The sun beats down, sometimes unbearably; the vegetation is similar, with olive trees and vineyards dominating among willows, bamboos, oaks, cedars, and an occasional senna (perhaps Moses' burning bush). In each city, there are the same weather patterns (January is the coldest month and August the hottest), with the rainy season running from early November to March in most years,<sup>27</sup> punctuated with sporadic violent storms, and prolonged droughts remain a perennial threat. Snow falls not only on Mount Hermon; heavy snowfalls affect the Galilee and Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> While these cities, and others in ancient Palestine, did not suffer from hurricanes, tornadoes, and the

<sup>24</sup> See the *Apocalypse of Adam* 4.1, "Then Noah will divide all the earth among his sons, Ham and Japheth and Shem."

<sup>25</sup> The highest point is in Upper Galilee at Meron; it is 1,208 meters above sea level.

<sup>26</sup> See Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, 21. In modern times, the fourth division is reserved for the Negev Desert. See [www.exploit.com/Israel-Topography-cy.php](http://www.exploit.com/Israel-Topography-cy.php).

<sup>27</sup> Rainfall in the extreme south is about 100 millimeters per year and in Galilee about 1,128 millimeters.

<sup>28</sup> On "snow" see *Jubilees* 2.2 [in Greek] and the *Prayer of Jacob* 16.

destructive force of volcanoes, most of them were shaped by earthquakes, especially the powerful one of 31 BCE (which left cracks in and near Qumran).<sup>29</sup> Earthquakes are mentioned in many Jewish documents near the time of Jesus (viz. in Artapanus, Pseudo-Philo, *Lives of the Prophets, Jannes and Jambres*, and *2 Baruch*). Not only near but sometimes within the Galilean cities on the shores of the Kinneret that were frequented by Jesus are sandy fields parched by a blistering and blinding sun.

The similarity includes what is too often forgotten in the study of biblical geography and topography. Topography includes not only the earth but also the sky, since sun and clouds change the landscapes throughout the day. The cliffs near the Jordan Valley change colors, depending on the amount of sun or shadow they receive, turning almost instantly, for example, from beige to fuchsia. At night, the sky can explode with so many stars that one cannot begin to count them (and according to the apocalypses the stars are angels or living beings; cf. esp. *Sib.Or.* 5; *2 En.* 11).<sup>30</sup> The full moon can pop unexpectedly over the Golan Heights or over the western walls of Jerusalem. Then, many are stimulated by thoughts about how so many so long ago, including Jesus, his followers, and the Evangelists, probably saw exactly what is moving us. Once out on the Kinneret at midnight I looked around at the surrounding hills and imagined to myself that nothing had really changed in that place for thousands of years. The night has the ability to bring us close to those who were here, in the Land, before us.

In the Jordan Valley, especially near the Dead Sea, the twilight, in the evening and before dawn, lingers longer than usual, since the sun disappears from view long before night falls and light comes long before the sun appears. During these long periods of twilight the Qumranite would most likely rise to pray for light to come into the world again. These Jews called themselves “the Sons of Light” and their prayers were clearly cosmic (see esp. 4Q503, *The Morning and Evening Prayers* or *Daily Prayers*). Topography shaped the prayer lives of many Jews; the many who chanted the *Amidah* (*18 Benedictions*) called on the Lord as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> Read the account in Josephus, *War* 2.369–372 and *Ant* 15.121–126. Also, see the *Treatise of Shem* 7, which refers to a severe earthquake in Galilee.

<sup>30</sup> On the living nature of stars, see Plato, *Timaeus* 30b, Philo, *De opificio mundi*, and Origen, *On First Principles*.

Provide dew (*tl*) and rain (*wmtr*) for the earth  
 And satiate thy world from thy storehouses of goodness,  
 And bestow a blessing upon the work of our hands  
 (Benediction 9).<sup>31</sup>

In another sense, there are significant differences. In Galilee, at Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Magdala, one can find (or could have found in the first century CE) commerce and daily life defined by a large clear water lake, the Kinneret whose north shores are often framed by marshes. The water in the lake sometimes recedes, exposing a sandy beach. Then the lake turns light brown, especially near the shore. During heavy rains or when water gushes down (sometimes underground) from the Anti-Lebanon mountains, the topography changes. The water invades the shoreline and becomes light green. In Jericho the climate can become harsh, and despite the spring nearby and the far-off Jordan River the desert sand can make human life harsher.

The Jordan River which Joshua crossed, according to the Bible, was far more majestic in Jesus' day than the little river now seen. Irrigation channels in Israel and Jordan, and the systematic pumping of water to the Negev, have drained the mighty river known in Christian hymns. Even in Jesus' day, the Jordan River was not near the road that led from Galilee to Jericho and then up to Jerusalem. The river was hundreds of yards to the East.

Neither Jericho nor Jerusalem is blessed by a majestic river or a cool lake. These cities in arid and semiarid land are not to be confused with the many western cities that are defined by lakes. The cities in Judea are not like Bonn, Paris, London, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Toronto. The lack of fresh water defines topography in the Land, except on the Kinneret.

Moving from Jericho to Tiberius and Capernaum, along the western rim of the Jordan Rift Valley, one is intermittently amazed by many topographical marvels. Here is a selection:

spinning dust devils (funnels of ascending desert sand);  
 sheer precipices that lead eastward and downward from over 1,000 feet,  
 dangerous side winds;  
 falling or fallen boulders weighing many tons;

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<sup>31</sup> For the text, see S. Schechter, "Genizah Specimens," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* O.S. 10 (1898): 657. For the English translation, see J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, *Studia Judaica* 9 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 28.

the intermittent rise and fall of a shifting serpentine route;  
 groups of brownish camels (the ships of the desert), meandering with  
 often royal pomposity;  
 Bedouins intently urging a donkey forward;  
 villages of sheep, mixed among goats, adroitly stepping over sloping rocks;  
 sheer blue skies, devoid of any semblance of a cloud;  
 birds who shoot by overhead or circle looking for a "kill."

It is easy to contemplate how Jesus' mind would become poetic and even mystical when surrounded by such natural wonders.

While nations have come and gone, cities risen and been razed, the geophysical topography that Jesus and his followers saw has not changed. Intermittently, we literally see what he and they saw:

the simmering greenish water of the Kinneret after a heavy rainy season,  
 the dangerously spontaneous storms on the Kinneret, especially when the  
 winds blow northward from the Jordan Valley,  
 the hypnotizing rhythm of a small boat on a lazy Kinneret,  
 the sheer drop of death-defying crevices and wadis,  
 the limestone hills, like the Arbel, pockmarked by innumerable caves,  
 the juxtaposition of verdant meadows with rock-filled terrain,  
 the precarious borders of cultivated land with desert sand,  
 the green pastures of the Jordan Valley joining verdant Galilee,  
 the inviting hills and mountains, with the sensational vistas of the Kinneret and  
 valleys, like the Jezreel and Netofa, from Nazareth,  
 the full moon cresting over the Golan Heights and setting behind Tabor,  
 the darkness of the Kinneret and then the creeping golden dawn,  
 the explosion of an orange, fiery, and vibrating globe over the eastern ridges,  
 the long dark moonless evenings when the stars seem as numerous as God  
 had suggested to Abraham (and even closer),  
 the hills (tells) that betray hidden cities long ago destroyed, as at Megiddo,  
 the Roman aqueducts and roads (now in ruins) that antedate Jesus,  
 the "mountains" like Tabor, that reminded the ancients of a woman's breast,  
 the undulating, serpentine road with massive and shocking drops in Samaria,  
 the incomparably undulating topography of the beige hills east of Jerusalem,  
 the monumental Jewish tombs in the Kedron Valley,  
 the western retaining wall of the Temple with the humongous stones,  
 the first-century streets and shops (now in ruins) beneath the Temple Mount,  
 the ancient dark grey olive tress congregating on the Mount of Olives,  
 the restful coolness provided by vines, olive trees, and bubbling springs,  
 the marvelously silver waterfalls near Caesarea Philippi,  
 and the stimulating warmth of a friendly sun on a cold day.

Reflecting, as one walks through the valleys and ravines of the Land, reminds one of Jesus' story of the lost sheep (Matt 12 and Luke 15). Seeing shepherds and their habits help us comprehend many poems, psalms,



and narratives (viz. Ps 23 and John 10). Such treacherous terrain brings life to our reading of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

### 3. *Cultural Topography*

The second of the three helpful distinctions in studying the impact of the Land on Jesus' consciousness is *cultural topography*. This term signifies the aspects of topography that are not dimensions of geography but are also part of the phenomenological topography that shaped human culture, like the various Jewish groups, trees, animals, winds, vistas, sounds, smells, wells dug by humans, and all human creations, including gymnasia and hippodromes, along with the Roman roads and the monumental masterpieces constructed under the "kingship" of Herod the Great, notably the new cities of Caesarea Maritima (on the coast) and Sebaste (in the heart of Samaria), and the transformation of Jerusalem into a major city in the Roman Empire.<sup>32</sup>

We have already noted that the Land in which Jesus was born and in which he lived had been made holy by God's choice of place and people (Jesus' people). In one deep sense, the people of Israel—Jews like Jesus—also are a part of the Land and become a part of topography. Theologically, all humans are attached to the earth and move from "dust" to "dust," but Jews, like Jesus and those in the Palestinian Jesus Movement, have a special attachment to a special land: the Land.

Jesus' landscape was not only defined by a nation, Israel; it was culturally defined by numerous Jewish groups. Too many scholars have assumed that Josephus rightly divided Judaism into four groups: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots (*Ant.* 18.11–25; cf. *War* 2.119–166). There were many more groups and each of the four groups was subdivided significantly. Jesus' cultural topography included more than the four groups usually mentioned. We must not forget the Samaritans, Enoch groups, Baptist groups, the *'ammê ha-'ares* (the land-people who were not necessarily illiterate and secular), and the

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<sup>32</sup> B. Mazar rightly points out that Herod the Great transformed Jerusalem into "a splendid metropolis," especially by the addition of his palace in the northwest of the Upper City and the expansion and improvement of the Temple on the eastern promontory, "Mount Zion"; Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord: Excavating Jerusalem* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), 78.

domineering sacerdotal aristocracy that included more than Pharisees and Sadducees.

Trees loom large in the minds of many who have given us the biblical text and the parabiblical documents.<sup>33</sup> The Bible begins with the story of Paradise; in central focus is the tree of life. The Psalmists often refer to the righteous as an evergreen tree well planted (as in the famous passage in Ps 1:3). Isaiah imagined Israel as the trees of a vineyard (Isa 5:7). The Righteous Teacher, so important for the Qumranites, envisioned that through him God had planted men who are “trees of life,” like the cypress, elm, and cedar (1QH XVI [olim XI]).

Knowing Jesus’ landscape helps us appreciate his metaphorical use of the olive tree, the vineyard (Mark 12, Matt 20 and 21), the good and bad tree (Matt 7 and 12), the fig tree (Luke 13 and 21), and the vine and its branches (John 15). Clearly, Jesus knew the biblical metaphor of tree; frequently he must have pondered the symbolical meaning of the tree as he sat under one or saw many trees around him or in the distance or looked down on Jerusalem from among the olive trees in the Mount of Olives. Perhaps he knew, since he admired the serpent, that trees, like serpents, are in touch with the source of life; that is, they are chthonic beings.<sup>34</sup>

Animals are dimensions of cultural topography. That is certainly clear, when one sits quietly in a cave and the landscape changes with the appearance of gazelles (often appearing in the same beige color as the ground). To reply that animals only move above the landscape is imperceptive. They help define what is being seen; and, moreover, snakes move over water, creep on the land, and slip down into regions the ancients considered mysterious. While elephants,<sup>35</sup> giraffes, cobras, and crocodiles remind us of other places (like India, Africa, and Egypt), donkeys, camels, sheep,<sup>36</sup> goats, eagles,<sup>37</sup> pigeons, bees,<sup>38</sup> and doves help

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<sup>33</sup> Very helpful are the insights found in E. O. James’ *The Tree of Life: An Archaeological Study*, Studies in the History of Religions 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

<sup>34</sup> See the discussions in Charlesworth, *The Serpent*.

<sup>35</sup> See the humorous use of elephants in 3 Maccabees.

<sup>36</sup> Sheep had developed a deep symbolical meaning, long before Jesus; see esp. *1 Enoch* 89–90.

<sup>37</sup> Eagles were known to denote God’s messengers; see esp. *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*.

<sup>38</sup> Concerning the metaphorical use of bees, recall the diet of John the Baptizer and consult the use of bees in *Joseph and Aseneth*. Also honey with milk was an old metaphor for the Land (e.g., Exod 3:8, 17), which continued in the *Odes of Solomon* 4, 30, and 40.

us comprehend the Holy Land.<sup>39</sup> Many such animals, as is obvious, appear in the story of Jesus found in the intra-canonical gospels. Sheep, goats, and donkeys were part of Jesus' topography. Seeing and hearing them move over the rocky terrain in the Middle East helps remind one of the Parable of the Vineyard and the Parable of the Prodigal son.

Winds shape life in the Land. On some days, especially in Jericho and Jerusalem, the hot hamzins, the desert storms that blow northward out of the Negev or Arabah, often cover everything with desert sand. These storms from the desert can stop work, but they also add rich soil to gardens and fields. On other occasions, an unbearable day can become almost pleasant when a cool breeze picks up, especially if it brings a little moisture from the Mediterranean.

The vistas are so awe-inspiring that one's views sporadically stimulate reflection about God, creation, and the astounding beauty of the earth. Driving down from Jerusalem to Jericho, I often pull over to marvel at the landscapes that seem ethereal. Such thoughts as the following have come to mind over the past three decades: How and in what ways has topography helped shape biblical theology? What did many Jews, including Mary Magdalene and Jesus, think when they saw such startling scenery?

Sounds shape culture; the quiet in Lower Galilee, especially near Korazin, and in the Judean desert contrasts with the noise of commerce, especially in the suq of Jerusalem. One can imagine the quiet contemplation of Qumranites as one sits in a high cave, looking down on Khirbet Qumran, and realizing in the silence that an ibex has paused outside, quite oblivious of your presence. No virtual silence is as salubrious as that which accompanies the dawn near the rhythmic restful shores of the Kinneret. One may appreciate the old Jewish legend that the lake is called "Kinneret," because it is shaped like a harp (in Hebrew *kinnor*) or because the waves produce music that is reminiscent of strumming from a harp. In the early morning, if one is lucky one might hear the approach of a shepherd boy leading his flock, which is salubriously calm due to his playing of a flute.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> On the symbol of the "dove" see the *Odes of Solomon* 24 and the *Apocalypse of Elijah* 3.

<sup>40</sup> Major Mark Johnston shared with me his experience, after sleeping alone near Ein Gedi in the Spring of 1989, when assigned to Battalion 2/6 of the Second Marine Division: "I heard the playing of a flute. As the sound of the flute came closer to where I was camping, I realized that a shepherd boy was playing a flute. A small flock of sheep followed him. The sound of the flute tended to calm the sheep. I watched and

Sounds certainly shape the day in the Holy Land today. One is awakened in Jerusalem by the call to prayer by the muezzin, the Muslim crier who from a minaret five times daily calls “the faithful” to prayer. In many villages and cities, especially Jerusalem and Nazareth, the day moves forward by the rhythmic ringing of the large bells in the cathedrals of the Greek Orthodox, the Lutherans, the Roman Catholics, and other Christian groups. These clarions may perhaps help us hear other echoes from sounds that shaped days two thousand years ago. Two alone must now suffice. First, Jews, like Jesus, heard the blowing of the shofar (the ram’s horn) that announced festivals and other religious occasions; eventually the shofar was blown in synagogue services to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Second, many Jews, including Jesus, heard the peal of the trumpet from the top of the Temple Mount (the stone on which the trumpeter stood has been recovered).<sup>41</sup>

Many sounds are exactly as they were in the first century. On hillsides and in the busy Jerusalem suq we hear the braying of donkeys for no apparent reasons. On occasion, especially in the rolling hills west of Jericho, one might hear the howl near dawn of a hungry hyena or be confronted by the snarl from a rabid dog. Near Qumran, on the Mount of Olives one often hears the deep unforgettable and unique sounds of camels clearing their throats expressing some displeasure. And, of course, in many villages and on the outskirts of cities one may hear the crowing of the cock at sunrise (recall Mark 14:27–31, 72).

One cannot really “feel” the topography of the Land until one smells it. Very pleasant to me is the scent from the saffron and other spices in the market places, the smoke from nargila pipes, and the jasmine in Jerusalem that fills the evening and morning air with pungent and pleasing aromas. Other odors shock the senses: the smell of women and men, especially those living close to the land, who do not take baths frequently and often have not been introduced to deodorant, and of course the stench of droppings from camels, goats, horses, and donkeys (and to be honest, even humans).

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listened for about twenty minutes before they all disappeared from view. I felt transported to the time of David, who according to tradition had hid from Saul near here.” Major Johnston helps us better comprehend how cultural and tradition topography enables us to read with more empathy the biblical narratives.

<sup>41</sup> For an informed study of the Temple Jesus knew, see D. Bahat, “The Herodian Temple,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, 3:38–58.

Jacob's well in Shechem provided water for his flocks and can still be seen today. According to the author of the Fourth Gospel, Jesus knew Jacob's well. He paused at the well, exhausted and thirsty, and conversed with a Samaritan woman: Jesus left Judea and headed "to Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria. So he came to a city of Samaria, named Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, exhausted as he was from his journey, sat down beside the well" (John 4:3–6).

Houses and monuments that were constructed just before or during Jesus' ministry have been unearthed. These help us comprehend some aspects of his life. The walls of houses in Capernaum seem too narrow to support tiled roofs, as in Jerusalem and Pompeii, so the account of the moving of the room so as to let down a paralytic makes sense in that environment. The monumental tombs, some of which may still be seen in the Kedron Valley, help us better know how and what ways we might better perceive and comprehend Jesus' Jewishness.

The gymnasia and hippodromes in many places, including Jerusalem, indicate that Jews as well as Romans, Idumeans, and others also frequented athletic contests.<sup>42</sup> Psychological, sociological, and archaeological examinations of these aspects of Jesus Research help us discern how a culture helps shape one's perception of topography.

We learn, *inter alia*, that the house of study (beth midrash) was called a "synagogue," a place in which Jews came (*ago*) together (*syn*). The Greek name indicates the level and extent to which Greece and Rome had penetrated into and reshaped the cultural topography of the Land. The crosses erected above the land that marred the landscape warn us that protests against these incursions erupted, especially during the time of Jesus, and it is unwise to assume positivistically that Mark created the concept of Jesus' followers carrying the cross and placed the logion in the mouth of one who had never seen crosses in Galilee and in the Land (cf. Mark 8:34).

But there is more that must be reported now, even though space for discussion is severely limited. With the conquests of Alexander and his

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<sup>42</sup> A hippodrome was built in Jerusalem; and one was built on the shores of the Mediterranean within Roman Caesarea. Though now considerably dated, H. A. Harris' book on athletic contests and the Jews deserves careful reading; see Harris, *Greek Athletics and the Jews*, Trivium Special Publications (Cardiff: The University of Wales Press, 1976).

incursions into Palestine in the fourth century BCE, and the direct involvement of the Hellenistic kingdom ruled by the Seleucids,<sup>43</sup> the Land of Israel became more significantly part of world culture, as it had been earlier, notably in the sixth century BCE. Monuments recently erected in Palestine during the time of Jesus signified Roman suppression,<sup>44</sup> broke the second commandment, and thrust emperor worship into Jewish minds. Many Jews, not only the devout but also the secular, felt what the Romans intended: a slap in the face. Other Jews, even some who would have claimed to be devout, saw no problem with full accommodation to Greek and Roman cultures. For example, we now know that astrology, which clearly began within non-Jewish cultures, was inherited and re-minted by many Jews, both within (the Qumran horoscopes) and without Palestine (*Treatise of Shem*).<sup>45</sup>

It is well known that Greek art overpowered and influenced Roman art,<sup>46</sup> but it is not widely perceived that Augustus, when he obtained sole power over the Roman Empire in 31 BCE, had to re-invent worship, art, and a new visual language.<sup>47</sup> Augustus' reforms not only reshaped the landscape of Rome, but also redefined the cultural topography of ancient Palestine, which had already felt the incursions of

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<sup>43</sup> See the discussion of the world culture developed during the Hellenistic period by J. J. Pollitt in *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986).

<sup>44</sup> Recall the oath of Gangra, of 3 BCE [E] 315], according to which all in the Roman Empire were obligated to report whatever was spoken against or plotted against the Empire. While this oath is linked to Pamphlagonia, it would be unwise to think such an oath was irrelevant for Palestinian Jews. Herod had his spies, as is certainly clear. For the oath, see D. C. Braund, *Augustus to Nero: A Sourcebook on Roman History 31 BC–AD 68* (Totowa, New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books, 1985), 185–186.

<sup>45</sup> For further reflections, see Charlesworth (with J. R. Mueller), "Die 'Schrift des Sem': Einführung, Text und Übersetzung," *ANRW* II 20.2 (1987): 951–987, and Charlesworth, "Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Period," *ANRW* II 20.2 (1987): 926–950 (with colored illustrations).

<sup>46</sup> For a study of iconography and symbology during the time of Jesus, see Charlesworth, *The Serpent: A Symbol of Life or Death?* Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> I am indebted to the research published by P. Zanker. See his *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. by A. Shapiro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988, 2000), esp. 2–4. Although Zanker does not delve into the re-shaping of Palestinian culture after Augustus and through Herod the Great, the book contains some insights fundamental for a perception of the cultural topography that helped shape Jesus' mind.

Roman culture, especially through Pompey the Great<sup>48</sup> and Antony.<sup>49</sup> During the time of Jesus, Herod the Great minted coins with the caduceus on the back (that is, two serpents facing each other). Images of the emperor appeared on coins, and the eagle was depicted on standards; these images shocked faithful Jews, who rioted against them during the time of Pontius Pilate.

As we Westerners look eastward to Rome—as well as Greece and the Land—for culture, art, architecture, and language, so the Romans looked to the East for culture and wealth. As the East, including Iran, had helped shape Roman culture, including the monarchy,<sup>50</sup> Rome had re-shaped the cultural topography of Jesus' land. Palestine was thus not a backwater country, as so many tend to claim; it was the bulwark of Rome against Parthia and Iran, the only other major power in or near the Roman Empire. Perhaps such incursions into the Land of the covenant made Jesus more Jewish, as we know especially from his retort to the Syrophenician woman and the charge, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles” (Matt 10:5).

Two examples alone must now suffice to stimulate reflections on how this aspect of cultural topography shaped the life and teaching of Jesus from Nazareth. Jews must have been offended when they saw Romans raising a colossal statue to a god or the emperor in Caesarea Maritima, during the constructions directed by Herod the Great. Walking through Galilee they were most likely shocked by the construction of the monumental edifice to Augustus raised up in the Golan on the road that led from Capernaum to Damascus (this “temple” was once thought to be in Caesarea Philippi).<sup>51</sup>

It is too easy to overlook the fact that Roman art served propaganda and the proclamation of “the good news” from the emperor. Emperor worship and pagan gods were seen re-shaping topography. The Romans

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<sup>48</sup> Recall that Hyrcanus II had appealed to Pompey to settle his dispute with Aristobulus II; thus, in 63 BCE Rome entered Jesus' land, but not peacefully as too many scholars have claimed. Pompey subdued Jerusalem after a three-months siege and when the Jews were resting on Shabbat.

<sup>49</sup> Recall that, in Rome before the Senate, Antony nominated Herod to become king.

<sup>50</sup> I am indebted to insights obtained from reading W. Ball's *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> The monument is constructed of the most elegant marble and was also expanded later, probably during the time of Hadrian. This monument dominated the topography of Upper Galilee in the Golan, but a description of it has not yet been published.

now controlled the art and architecture early Jews saw in Palestine.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, Peter and Paul knew the colossus in Caesarea Maritima, and Jesus probably saw the elegant marble monument to Augustus in the Galilee.

The effect of Roman art was profound.<sup>53</sup> The Greeks and Romans thought of themselves as made of marble and gold, but the subjected Jews, “the elect people of God,” reduced by those to whom God had given awesome power, at least sociologically and psychologically, were in many ways reduced to imagine that they were fashioned from dust. When such loss of esteem occurred, as the topography of the so-called Promised Land became more dominated by Rome, Jews—such as Jesus—were forced to imagine that God was no longer working through history; yet God would come faithfully, as promised, from above to establish a new heaven and earth.

Observant Jews, including Jesus, moved from Galilee to Judea, to celebrate the annual festivals as demanded by Torah—Shabuot (Pentecost), Sukkot (Tabernacles), and especially Passover. Such travel was more convenient due to the construction of Roman roads. While the author of *Sibylline Oracles* 4.127, in the second half of the first century CE, referred to the “broad roads” in “the great land of the Jews,” none of these roads seem to have been constructed with the industriousness of the *Via Appia* or the *Via Egnatia*. Yet such roads must have been impressive, since the remains of a Roman road with its aqueduct can still be seen in the Wadi Kelt. Thus roads constructed to facilitate the transportation of Roman soldiers also served the migration of peoples, the flow of commerce from East to West, and the multitude of pilgrims flowing into the Holy City. These pilgrims came to the Holy City from the West (especially Antioch, Alexandria, Athens, Rome, and Cyrene) as well as the East (including Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia [to note Acts 2:9]). Along these roads those borne on gold covered litters and those riding in elegant chariots mixed with traders on camels, as well as those on lowly donkeys or walking with nothing to carry.

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<sup>52</sup> See the informative discussion of Jewish art and archaeology by R. Hachlili in *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden, New York: Brill, 1988).

<sup>53</sup> See the reflections by J. Onians in *Classical Art and the Cultures of Greece and Rome* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999); see esp. xiii.



Jesus frequented the “villages” of Cana, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Nazareth. The last two are situated in elevated terrain. Most ancient cities were built on hills for protection. The most majestic of these cities—Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, and Jericho—still rise impressively above the local terrain. Pondering how these cities rise above and dominate the topography reminds many of Jesus’ words, “a city set on a hill cannot be hid” (Matt 5:14).

Fortunately, some of the most impressive building projects in the Land occurred just before or during the time of Jesus including the cities of Zippori (Sepphoris) and Tiberias in Galilee, Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast, and Sebaste in the heart of Samaria. The latter two cities were named by Herod the Great in honor of the Roman Emperor. Attempts to understand Jesus’ life, mission, and teaching have brought into prominence that Jesus, according to our canonical records, on the one hand, never entered Zippori or Tiberias (or even Gamla in the Golan) and, on the other hand, he focused his ministry in a very small area. His ministry was limited to the villages on the northwestern shores of the Kinneret. The area is impressively circumscribed, from Migdal, on the western shore of the Kinneret, to Bethsaida, on the northeast shore of the Jordan River.

Future research on Jesus’ life and message needs to be attuned more carefully to what can be known archaeologically and sociologically about Jesus’ choice of places in which to work. This task is fortunately facilitated by what is becoming apparent regarding the location of these places and what is clear from archaeological discoveries and research. If we can trust our intra-canonical gospels, Jesus seems to have lived and worked in a cultural topographical setting that is rural, yet informed and shaped by cities being built nearby.

Jesus’ Jewishness also appears more clearly when we study mikvaot and stone vessels. Both of these were designed for the Jewish rites of purification (recall John 2). Thanks to indefatigable archaeological work, mikvaot and stone vessels have been found not only in Herodian Jericho, Qumran, and Jerusalem, but also in many of the villages in Lower Galilee, where Jesus centered his ministry. It seems rather obvious to me that Jesus knew the exaggerated rules for purification being developed within the Jerusalem cult, that spies were sent out from Jerusalem to test his observance of ritual purity, and that he rejected these new laws. In the face of the aristocrats who demanded the purchasing of

stone vessels, ritual cleansing in a mikva, and observance of heightened rules for observing ancient laws of purity codified especially in Leviticus, Jesus retorted, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person which by going in can defile; but the things which come out of a person are what defile a person” (Mark 7:14–16).

Equally fortunately for us, the first and second Jewish revolts leveled some areas, like Gamla and Jerusalem, so that beneath a stratum of black ash one can enter a world untouched for almost 2,000 years. Notably, in Capernaum one can walk beside basalt houses, one of which has a good chance of being the home of Peter. A few yards to the north, one may look beneath the foundation of the ruins of the white synagogue and observe the black basalt remains of another monumental building, perhaps the synagogue in which Jesus taught.<sup>54</sup> These topographical features clarify the cultural context of Jesus’ life and message.

#### 4. *Tradition Topography*

The third of the three helpful distinctions is *tradition topography*. It is this aspect of Palestinian topography that deeply shapes the human consciousness of those who contemplate the mighty events that occurred in the Land. The topography of Palestine was not seen by the early Jews, like Jesus, as primarily physical. As M. Merleau-Ponty pointed out in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, we do not see an objective world. We create a world in which we live through our pre-suppositions, understandings, and especially memories.<sup>55</sup> To perceive a landscape demands memory. As Merleau-Ponty stated, “in order to

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<sup>54</sup> For more on Herod the Great, the administration of the area, the economy at this time, Jewish art and architecture, and the cult, see the various chapters in M. Avi-Yonah, *The Herodian Period*, *The World History of the Jewish People* 1.7 (Jerusalem, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975). The work is, of course, considerably dated.

<sup>55</sup> As D. Mendels points out, Pausanias “had the ability to present a landscape as a space that had become an important framework for memories of the past, reminding his readers of their own individual bygones, mythological and real” (xi) It would be foolish to reserve this insight to Pausanias alone; clearly memory and landscape shaped perception for others also, including Jesus and his group. See Mendels, *Memory in Jewish, Pagan and Christian Societies of the Graeco-Roman World*, *Library of Second Temple Studies* 45 (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2004).

fill out perception, memories need to have been made possible by the physiognomic character of the data.”<sup>56</sup>

This dimension of phenomenology means that religious Jews like Jesus perceived the Land not as an object. They perceived through a shared memory; they saw the Land through memories from their own experiences as well as through memories bequeathed to them by those who shaped the Tanach and all traditions deemed sacred to them. Not only the Holy Land but all the earth receives the praise of worshipping Jews (as one would expect, since poets tend to praise earth’s beauty):

The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
The hills gird themselves with joy,  
The meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
The valleys deck themselves with grain,  
They shout and sing together for joy  
(Ps 65:12–13)

In the first line quoted, the poet referred to “wilderness.” Too often this concept is misperceived as a place of punishment. For early Jews, including, Jesus, “the wilderness” symbolized the place of preparation. The point is made clearly in the self-understanding of the Qumranites who interpreted Isa 40:3 to mean that they were to obey the Voice and go into the wilderness to prepare the Way of Yahweh (see IQS).

In a world permeated by the Torah and the celebration of God’s creating activity, the earth and the Land become alive and supply life with hope, even when God’s word seems to be drowned out by the thunderous noise from a Roman cavalry. The Jewish theology of Jesus’ time, which deeply shaped not only his thought but also his life, was permeated, almost in every scroll, by apocalypticism and eschatology.<sup>57</sup> Thus, topography was perceived to be shaped by cosmic and heavenly forces experienced on earth.

Scholars will debate how much of the traditions attributed to Jesus actually derive from him, yet most scholars will agree that Jesus is distinguished from his earliest followers by his poetic vision of the

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<sup>56</sup> M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Memory*, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), 19.

<sup>57</sup> Some authors have challenged this sound and well-accepted conclusion. For an authoritative word on how Jesus’ message was shaped by apocalyptic and eschatological thought, see D. C. Allison, “The Eschatology of Jesus,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. J. Collins, (New York: Continuum, 1999), 267–302.

Land. Many, especially the Greeks who joined the Jesus Movement, do not seem to have shared his love for the Land. We have the Greek translation of his Aramaic teachings; perhaps Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land” (τῆν γῆν, Matt 5:5). Perhaps Jesus’ prayer for his followers meant:

Your kingdom come  
 Your will be done  
 As in heaven so also on the Land (*gēs*)  
 (Matt 6:10).

For deeply religious Jews, like Jesus, the topography of the Land takes on paradigmatic significance because of the sacred traditions associated with a site.<sup>58</sup> The contrast between *tradition topography* and *geophysical topography* is extreme. Atheists and secular persons can discuss the geographical features of the topography with religious people, but secularists are rather lost in comprehending how “people of the Book” perceive the Land’s topography through spiritual symbolism.

Jesus, as well as those who heard him and others who followed him, knew the traditions that shaped the Land and defined the topography of their lives. Tradition topography shaped those with a religious consciousness and believed that God did enter history and had been present in the Land through his mediators and perhaps at times in a more direct way. This aspect of topography is usually ignored in studies of the Land, yet it shaped Jewish lives and thoughts far more deeply than the earlier geophysical upheavals that created the Ramon crater and the tectonic shifts and climate changes sometime after 60,000 BCE. These upheavals and other forces drained the fresh-water lake that once had stretched from the Hermon to the end of what is now the Dead Sea.

Mount Hermon was not primarily a mountain isolated north of Galilee. It filled symbolism so that it shaped even the perception of Zion. A psalmist proclaimed the following about unity among kindred:

It is like the dew of Hermon,  
 which falls on the mountains of Zion  
 (Ps 133:3).

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<sup>58</sup> No less than 524 sites are known; see esp. Y. Tsafrir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green, *Maps and Gazetteer, Tabula Imperii Romani: Iudaea, Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994).

Where did the Evangelists imagine was the Mount of the Transfiguration? Some tradition situates it on Mount Tabor. Perhaps it was on Mount Hermon, as some scholars now indicate.<sup>59</sup>

The poet who gave us Psalm 133 mentioned dew. “Dew” obviously obtained symbolical meaning long before Jesus (see esp. *1 En.* 75–76). Another memorable passage that develops the symbolic meaning of dew is found in a document composed a little later. The author of *3 Baruch* has Michael announce to Baruch that the birds “continuously praise the Lord,” and corrects the human claim that rain comes from the sea, revealing that there are two types of rain: “There is rain from the sea and from water on earth; but that which produces the fruits is from here. Know from now on that what is called dew of heaven comes from here” (*3 Bar.* 10.9).

Where did John probably baptize Jesus? It was, according to tradition, just north of the Dead Sea, in the River Jordan. This place is in or near the site where both the Baptizer and Jesus imagined Elijah had ascended into heaven (2 Kings 2:11). Surely, our search for the meaning of the theophany at Jesus’ birth should be enriched by imagining how tradition topography helped shape that narrative of the Evangelists. To what extent did tradition topography even shape the experience and memory of the Baptizer and especially Jesus? B. Chilton suggests that Jesus, who was clearly the Baptizer’s most famous disciple, was taught by his teacher to embody the mystical imagery of Ezekiel which anchored heaven with the Land.<sup>60</sup> Not far from the site of Jesus’ baptism is Jericho, the city that Jesus and his followers understood had been conquered magically by God through Joshua and given to the People called into existence by their liberation from bondage in Egypt.

A day’s walk up from Jericho through the Wadi Kelt is Jerusalem. This old city is where Abraham met Melchizedek. The city created by David was elevated with a Temple by Solomon. Jerusalem became the Holy City and its sacredness was enhanced by the holy things accomplished there in later times, especially during the times of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Ezra, and Judas Maccabeus, who instituted a festival Jesus celebrated, Hanukkah (1 Macc 4 and John 10:22–24).

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<sup>59</sup> See esp. B. Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus* (New York, London: Doubleday, 2000), 190–196.

<sup>60</sup> See B. Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus*, 52–53.

The early followers of Jesus remembered the Temple as the place where Jesus taught and worshipped. For example, Peter and John continue to worship in the Temple, especially at the time of prayer: "Now Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour" (Acts 3:1). Jesus' disciples were entering Herod's Temple. It was monumental, and perhaps exceeded the temples in Rome. The Talmudic sage who compiled *Baba Bathra* exclaimed, with much imagination that can now be justified due to archaeological excavations on the outskirts of the Temple Mount, "He who has not seen Herod's Temple has never seen a stately structure in his life" (4.5).

Just to the west of the walls of Jerusalem are two other sites connected with the life of Jesus. His followers commemorated the location where they knew Jesus had been crucified by Roman soldiers. Nearby was the tomb in which his corpse had been laid, and the spot from where they believed God had raised him from the dead to eternal life. Such locations were no longer merely geographical; they are associated with Jesus' life and took on new meaning in the preaching in Jerusalem during the thirties and forties (in the *didache* and *kerygma*).

Mount Tabor, which Jesus and his followers must have seen many times, and the Jezreel Valley (Emeq Yizreel or Plane of Esdraelon), through which they obviously walked, were sacred because of the miracles accomplished there, especially under Deborah. Jesus' saying that the one who lives by the sword will die by the sword might have been stimulated by thoughts of the numerous battles fought in the Jezreel Valley, which he could see spread before him just to the south as he sat on some promontory near Nazareth.

Jesus is reported to have visited Tyre and Sidon. Such a journey would have stimulated thoughts about David and Solomon, since it was the northeast border of the land controlled by the monarchy, and also about Ahab and Jezebel, the priestly daughter from Tyre who worshipped Baal.

Jesus spent time in Bethsaida and performed miracles there, even though they are only alluded to in the gospels. Bethsaida, mentioned in all four intra-canonical gospels, is also the home of some of Jesus' disciples (at least Peter, Andrew, and Philip). The city, built on and with rugged basalt stones, ceased to exist in 67 CE, during the First Jewish Revolt.

Today archeologists have exposed majestic Iron Age basalt walls on the northern side of Bethsaida. The site was probably conquered in the

eighth century BCE by the Assyrian armies, but the ancient walls would have been seen by Jesus and some of his followers. These massive walls date from the time when David took a wife, Maacah, from this place. Perhaps in Bethsaida, near such massive walls and gate, Jesus and his followers reminisced about earlier centuries, especially the time of David and his alignment with the kingdom of Geshur.

Reflections on the various dimensions of the topography of the Land help us to see the *realia* that appear in Jesus' parables. For example, in the "Parable of the Sower" (Matt 13:1–9),<sup>61</sup> the reader is prodded to remember what had been seen topographically and to imagine their spiritual meaning: house, sea, boat, beach, seeds, path, birds, rocky ground, soil, sun, root, thorns, good soil, and grain. Grain—that is, wheat and barley—not only color the Land at the time of harvest, they shape the annual pilgrim festivals; and the author of *Sibylline Oracles* 8 refers to God's work as grinding flour: "The mills of God grind fine flour, though late" (8.14 [this text, however, was most likely composed by a Jew about one hundred years after Jesus]).

### 5. Summary

It has become obvious that a study of the importance of topography for understanding Jesus includes more than geography. It entails also a study and appreciation of what is anchored in the land; among such features of topography are houses, monuments, roads, villages, and cities. Thus topography conceptually extends to include what is part of the landscape, such as winds, vistas, sounds, smells, and wells. Topography also involves an examination of the traditions through which Jesus and his fellow Jews imagined the Land. This was the part of the earth God had promised to Abraham and the people who would descend from him. In it they would constitute a multitudinous nation. This dimension of topography is demanded by the recognition that when early Jews, like Jesus, saw Hazor and Tabor they remembered how during the time of the Judges God's people had defeated the Canaanites, those who had formerly lived in this land. When they saw Jericho, they remembered the tradition of how Elisha had cleansed the water, and earlier how Joshua had conquered Jericho. Looking to the mountains east of the Dead Sea

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<sup>61</sup> According to Jewish lore, the archangel Michael taught agriculture to Adam; cf. *Life of Adam and Eve* 22.

they caught a glimpse of Mount Nebo, from which, according to old traditions, Moses looked westward and down on the Promised Land.

When Torah-observant Jews went up to Jerusalem they remembered, sometimes through word-images memorized from the Psalms, how Yahweh had so many times visited the Holy City. They recalled the memories of how David obtained the city from the Jebusites, how Solomon built the first Temple, how Hezekiah had removed the upraised serpent that had been worshipped.

Most importantly, Jesus and his disciples most likely shared the Jewish conviction that Jerusalem, the navel of the earth,<sup>62</sup> would be the center in which God would gather his elect people. This eschatological perception is preserved especially in *Psalms of Solomon* 11.2–3,

Stand on a high place, Jerusalem, and look at your children,  
From the east and the west assembled together by the Lord.  
From the north they come in the joy of their god;  
From far distant islands God has assembled them.

Applying a broad understanding of topography we may now imagine some aspects of Jesus' life.

With the imagination supplied by comprehending the full range of meanings represented by topography, we can imagine that Jesus and his group, on the way from Galilee to Jerusalem, would pause on the Mount of Olives and recall how Yahweh had protected his holy dwelling from the Assyrians, and how Ezra and Nehemiah had led the returnees from Babylon to rebuild the city and restore Torah worship. To comprehend and appreciate this dimension of topography, it is helpful to imagine how Jesus and his followers, looking from an elevated position to the East, might look down on the glistening gold of the Temple and recall reciting in the synagogue one or more of the following psalms:

O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell,  
And the place where your glory abides  
(Ps 26:8).

One thing I asked of the Lord,  
That will I seek after:  
To live in the house of the Lord  
All the days of my life,

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<sup>62</sup> Ezek 38:12; cf. *1 En.* 26.1, *Jub.* 1.2, 28; 8.19; and *Let. Aris.* 83, contrast the *Prayer of Jacob* 8.



To behold the beauty of the Lord,  
 And to inquire in his temple  
 (Ps 27:4).

How lovely is your dwelling place,  
 O Lord of hosts!  
 My soul longs, indeed it faints  
 for the courts of the Lord;  
 My heart and my flesh sing for joy  
 to the living God  
 (Ps 84:1).

Obviously, most citizens of a country tend to idolize it. Scots cherish the lochs and Burns' poems, Texans feel a deep attachment to their state, Africans admire their own country, Australians talk about their attachment to and love for their own homeland, and this list is easily extended. For those who believe in the biblical God, however, something else appears. The importance of "the Holy Land" is both axiomatic and mind-shaping. Scots, Texans, and Australians revere the land of the Bible as "the Holy Land." No one in Palestine or Israel today would call Scotland, Texas, and Australia God's Holy Land. During the time of Jesus, not only Palestinian Jews but those living in the Diaspora, revered the Land and many considered it the earth's center (cf. Jubilees). Why? The answer is surely because the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had chosen it from all the countries of the world. God's actions for his chosen people had occurred elsewhere; but they were concentrated in "the Land." Thus, Jesus' perception of Palestinian topography was culturally and traditionally colored by the sacred texts and memories bequeathed to him.

These reflections remind us that the places made sacred by God's actions had deeply shaped the perceptions of Jesus and his fellow Jews.<sup>63</sup> Such memories were awakened each time Jews, during the synagogue liturgy, celebrated God's mighty deeds on behalf of the chosen people, the "children of Israel." Further reflections should help us grasp that some of the sites now held sacred by those in the Palestinian Jesus Movement had no previous religious significance: notably, Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum, Korazin, and Migdal.

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<sup>63</sup> For a fascinating and popular re-creation of Jesus' life, according to the finest canons of historiography with in depth appreciation of topography, see G. Theissen, *The Shadow of the Galilean*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

## 6. Conclusion

One of the main tasks of a biblical professor is to inculcate in students an appreciation (and when possible aptitude) for a poetic vision of life. He or she has a daunting task: to stimulate others to perceive the real behind *realia*. A secular person today, driving through the Galilee, would see only flowering bougainvillea growing aimlessly. Those who followed Jesus, and remembered his words about the lilies of the fields, as well as the Jews who cherished the Davidic Psalms, might imagine the Spirit moving purposely and coloring the Land with flowers. Once love was expressed with images derived from landscapes, as we know especially from the Song of Solomon.<sup>64</sup> Such love was sometimes for humans and at other times for the divine.

With a better feeling for Palestinian topography we increase our chance of better understanding of Jesus' life and message in its cultural and topographical context. Perhaps we might hear Jesus' intended meaning echo off canyons we had never perceived and thus could not have pondered entering.

A study of the topography of the Land helps correct misperceptions derived from only looking at a concretized text, bound in a volume, labeled "the New Testament." We have come to understand that Jesus and his followers did not see a landscape already objective and interpreted; they perceived their topography not only in terms of its geographical feature but also in terms of how it had been framed for them culturally and traditionally.

Two centuries before Jesus, Polybius, in *Book 12*, pointed out that too many "historians" had attempted to write history by sitting in a library. Polybius correctly pointed out that the historian should visit the place in which an event occurred to obtain more precise information. Polybius advised that historiography must include, *inter alia*, "the survey of cities, places, rivers, lakes, and in general all the peculiar

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<sup>64</sup> Now, see the beautiful pictures and poetry in Ch. Getraide and Y. Taharlev, *I'll Take you There: Landscapes and Love Verses*, trans. I. Cohen (Tel Aviv: Cordinata Ltd, 2002).

features of the land (καὶ καθόλου τῶν κατὰ γῆν) and sea and the distances of one place from another.”<sup>65</sup> Perhaps the preceding reflections will prove prolegomena for an improved appreciation of Jesus’ life and teaching not only within his homeland but also within our own.

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<sup>65</sup> Polybius, *Hist.* 12.25<sup>e</sup>. For the Greek and English, see W. R. Paton, ed. and trans., *Polybius*, LCL 159 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 374–375.

## BACKGROUND II: (SOME) LITERARY DOCUMENTS

MARTIN MCNAMARA

### 1. *Introduction: Sources*

In this present part of this volume, due attention is given to the contributions made by archaeology and geography and to the results of researches in the political and social sciences with regard to the world of Jesus.

The present essay will devote itself principally to the thought world of the first century of our era, in so far as this can be known from the sources that can be legitimately used for such a study. Needless to say, while concentrating principally on Jesus, by the nature of the case what will be said holds for the entire first century of our era, if not for longer. This will include the early church, with the formation of the gospel tradition and the writings of the gospels as well as the brief period of Jesus' public ministry. The thought world, the mind set, the thought patterns, the religious language used, must hold as much for the continuation of Jesus' ministry in the Church as for Jesus himself. In fact, religious imagery, language, phraseology occurring in the gospels on the lips of Jesus and demonstrably attested for that period in Jewish literary sources, may as easily be from a later stage in the formation of the gospels, or from the evangelists themselves, as from Jesus.

#### 1.1. *Sources*

The sources on which one has to draw are the Hebrew Bible, the extra books (Apocrypha, Deuterocanonicals) of the Greek Old Testament and the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic literature and Aramaic Targums.

##### 1.1.1. *Sources: Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*

The apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha have been edited in English translation by R. H. Charles in 1913,<sup>1</sup> and a much wider collection of the

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<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha (63 in number) by J. H. Charlesworth in 1983 and 1985.<sup>2</sup> The Pseudepigrapha as edited by J. H. Charlesworth represent a great diversity of genres and have been classified in his edition as Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments, Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, and Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works.

Most of these Pseudepigrapha have been transmitted in the Christian church, rather than by Jews, and in translation (mainly Greek, Ethiopic, Syriac, Georgian, Armenian, Latin, occasionally Irish) rather than in their original language of composition, although the original Semitic originals of some of them have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The question which arises with regard to individual writings among the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is whether it is in whole or in part a Christian rather than a Jewish composition, or at least has been influenced or recast by a Christian hand. Even when regarded as of Jewish origin, the original language (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and exact place of origin (Palestine, the Diaspora) can present a problem. The questions will be considered for each of the works as occasion demands.

While we are chiefly interested in works composed in Palestine and in Hebrew or Aramaic, attention will also be paid to works written in Greek and outside of Palestine when those can be supposed to show contact with Palestinian Jewish tradition.

### 1.1.2. Sources. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*

The total number of manuscripts recovered from the Dead Sea area from 1947 onwards amounts to about 800. Of these 250 are copies of various biblical books. So little of the text of 275 to 300 other manuscripts has been preserved that they reveal little or nothing with regard to content.<sup>3</sup> The remaining manuscripts contain a variety of texts, most

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<sup>2</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd). 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, 1983; 2: *Expansions of the “Old Testament” and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (1985) (Abbreviated below as *OTP* 1 and *OTP* 2 respectively).

<sup>3</sup> See F. Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated. The Qumran Texts in English*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), xxiv.

of them hitherto unknown. These can be grouped under the following broad headings: Community rules; halakhic texts; literature with eschatological content; exegetical literature; parabiblical literature; poetic texts; liturgical texts; astronomical texts, calendars and horoscopes.<sup>4</sup> It is generally agreed that these manuscripts represent the library of a monastic community at Qumran. The group, begun apparently by a person referred to as “The Teacher of Righteousness,” broke with the Judaism of the Jerusalem Temple about 140 BCE, and withdrew to Qumran. The writings, whether biblical or otherwise, were seen by the community as connected with their tradition, their prehistory and later history. The manuscripts appear to have been deposited in the caves by the Dead Sea in 68 CE on the advance of the Roman armies towards Jerusalem. Not all the works were composed by the Qumran community. Some of them, such as texts of the Books of Enoch and possibly Jubilees, predate the community. Others do not appear to present any sectarian views. Many of them, however, contain the halakha, the religious views and eschatological outlook of the Qumran community. The manuscripts date from the third century BC to the first century CE, shortly before the works were deposited in the caves. A number of the commentaries on Scripture, seeing the biblical text as referring to their own community, were composed in the first century CE. How widely views expressed in these writings were known or shared by Jews elsewhere in Palestine and outside can only be a matter of speculation.

### 1.1.3. *Sources. Rabbinic Literature and Aramaic Targums*

Not too long ago, the chief sources used for a study of the New Testament and of questions fundamentally about Jesus were the writings of rabbinic literature. It has since been recognised that the rabbinic Mishnaic corpus was formed between the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the redaction of the Mishnah ca. 200 CE. The corpus of rabbinic Midrashic literature is also considered to be later, a certain amount of it intended to counteract Christian claims with regard to who were heirs to the earlier biblical tradition and its interpretation. While taking all this new understanding of Rabbinic tradition into account, it can be assumed that within the rabbinic midrashic corpus (especially the earlier works) there is material that represents old and pre-Christian

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<sup>4</sup> Following the headings used by García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*.

tradition and understanding of the message of the Hebrew Bible. In this matter, judgment will have to be given with regard to each particular item, weighed in conjunction with evidence from other sources.

The Targums (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible), and particularly the Targums of the Pentateuch and Prophets, were also once considered major sources for questions of New Testament study and questions relating to the historical Jesus. Their relevance was later called into question because of the date of the extant manuscripts.

From the mid-1940's to the mid-1970's there was a revival of interest in the targumic tradition, its antiquity, and its importance for an understanding of the New Testament, with a particular interest in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch, the Aramaic of which was even regarded as representing the language of Jesus. This new interest was given impetus by early texts of the Palestinian Targum from the Cairo Genizah published by Paul Kahle in 1930, Kahle's Schweich Lectures on the Cairo Genizah finds in 1941, but especially by the discovery of Codex Neofiti 1 in the Vatican Library in 1949 and its identification in 1956 by Alejandro Díez Macho as an almost complete text of the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch. The relevance of the Palestinian Targums to New Testament studies was seriously challenged in the mid-1960's. Its form of Aramaic, being from the third century at the earliest, was demonstrably much later than that of Qumran and the New Testament period. As a result of such reservations, in recent decades the Targums have been relatively little used in gospel or New Testament studies.

A general reconsideration here seems called for. There is more to the Targums than lexical forms. There is the question of religious vocabulary, expressing the mindset in which the targumic tradition originated. This was characterised by belief in the resurrection, as distinct from Qumran where there does not appear to have been any such belief. In this essay I will use the Targums as seems indicated in the consideration of individual themes.

## *1.2. Jewish Literary Documents in Palestine First Century BCE and First Century CE*

I here treat of Galilee and Judea as one entity from the religious and literary point of view, going on the view that New Testament Galilee represents in the main the continuation of a settlement there by Jews

from Judea ca. 100 BCE.<sup>5</sup> When we speak of the use of literary documents in this period the limits of our knowledge of relevant facts must be borne in mind. Outside of the Qumran community, we do not know what literary circles existed, how widespread literacy was, or how information was disseminated. However, there are indications that with regard to non-biblical material, older texts were being copied, and new works were being composed. This is true in particular of apocalyptic texts. The apocalyptic literary movement continued. Texts of the books of *Enoch* (all but the *Similitudes*, 1 *Enoch* 37–71) continued to be copied in Qumran. The author of the New Testament Letter of Jude (Jude 14–15) explicitly cites 1 *Enoch* 1:9. The *Similitudes of Enoch* were probably composed during the first century of our era. The work variously known as the *Assumption of Moses* and the *Testament of Moses* appears to have been in part reedited, if not entirely composed in this same century. The apocalyptic works 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch*, from about 100 CE (roughly contemporary with the canonical Apocalypse of John), are further proof of continued creativity with regard to works in this literary genre. As other works most probably composed in Palestine during the first century CE I may instance the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo, the *Life of Adam and Eve* (*The Apocalypse of Moses*), the *Lives of the Prophets*, the *Testament of Abraham* and possibly *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

### 1.3. Formation of a Tradition

The corpora of the Pseudepigrapha and of the Qumran texts were composed in good part between 200 BCE and 100 CE. Behind both probably stands a tradition and an understanding of the Scriptures

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<sup>5</sup> Present-day scholarship devotes particular attention to the geographical and cultural situation in New Testament Palestine, to the Jewishness of Galilee from the Hasmonean settlement there from the end of the second century BCE onwards. See in particular J. L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus. A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000), esp. 23–53; S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels. Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988); idem, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean. A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2004); idem, *Galilee and Gospel. Selected Essays*, WUNT 125 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000), esp. 1–25: brief account of the history of Galilean scholarship, including archaeology of the region); M. Rapinchuk, “The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 2.2 (2004): 197–222.



that has been in formation from the time of Ezra if not earlier. The formation of the canon of the Hebrew scriptures is not altogether clear, but it would appear that by the time of Ezra (458 BCE) a good part of the “(Latter) Prophets” had been formed. The redaction of the Pentateuch may also have been completed by then. In Ezra chapter 7 and Nehemiah 8 we read of “the book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel” (Neh 8:1). Ezra is presented as having read from this book, “from the law of God” (8:8). The book in question was in some way related to our present Pentateuch, if not identified with it. It is, however, difficult to link Ezra’s activity and reforms with any specific book or text of the Pentateuch. The nearest texts would seem to be from Leviticus.<sup>6</sup> While a process of Scripture explanation may have begun with Ezra, it is extremely difficult to establish what exactly this was and how it was carried out in Ezra’s day, or later times. It is now recognized that a certain amount of interpretation took place in the process of the final editing of the canonical books, although the extent of this is not always agreed on.

Translation, too, can be an occasion of interpretative renderings, embellishments or additions. Our oldest translation is the Greek Septuagint. The Greek (LXX) translation of the Pentateuch was made about the mid-third century BCE and that of the other books at later dates. The Greek translation of the books of the Hebrew Canon seems to have been completed by the time the prologue of the Greek translation of Ben Sirach was made (ca. 120 BCE). To what extent individual books pass beyond translation to interpretation, and specifically messianic interpretation, is debated. Some would see a significant messianic interpretative element in the LXX. In his book on Royal Messianism J. Coppens expressed the opinion that the Septuagint shows signs of a developing messianism,<sup>7</sup> a view shared by other scholars, more recently

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<sup>6</sup> See M. McNamara, “Reception of the Hebrew Text of Leviticus in the Targums,” in *The Book of Leviticus. Composition and Reception*, ed. R. Rendtorff and R. A. Kugler, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* 93, Formation and Interpretation of Old Testament Literature 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 269–298.

<sup>7</sup> See J. Coppens, *Le messianisme royal: ses origines, son développement, son accomplissement*, *Lectio Divina* 54 (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 119. In his later work *Le messianisme et sa relève prophétique: les anticipations vétérotestamentaires, leur accomplissement en Jésus*, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 38 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1974), 149, his position is less clear: “...the Septuagint displays numerous traces of a continuous development.”

by W. Horbury.<sup>8</sup> Primary texts adduced in this regard are Isa 7:14 and Ps 109(110):3. To these other scholars would add Gen 3:15; 49:10; Num 24:7, 17; 2 Sam 7:16; Isa 9:5–6; 11:4; 14:29–32; Ezek 21:30–32; 43:3; Dan 7:13; Hos 8:10; Amos 4:13; Zech 9:10, to which might be added Lam 4:20 and Ezek 27:23 which played an important role in early Christian literature. Other scholars are skeptical.<sup>9</sup> After a brief overview, J. Lust comments that one cannot say that the LXX as a whole displays a messianic exegesis. Most often the translation is literal, without any messianic bias. In other cases it shows a shift in accentuation, thereby weakening the royal messianic character of the text.<sup>10</sup> Despite the insertion of the term of ἄνθρωπος (“man”) in Num 24:7, 17 Lust comments: “There is hardly any reason to state that the LXX version is more messianic than the MT. The term ἄνθρωπος (‘man’) does not have direct messianic connotations.”<sup>11</sup>

#### 1.4. *Approach to Use of the Documents*

Documents from the late Second Temple period can be used in at least two different ways in the study of the background of the historical Jesus or the world of Paul. Each of the documents, or group of documents (for instance apocalyptic writings), can be examined individually and its relevance to the subject evaluated.<sup>12</sup> Another approach is to study specific themes in the light of the evidence from one or more of the Jewish writings as appears relevant. This is the approach followed in this contribution. Limitations of space indicate that a selection of documents and themes has to be made. In this essay I study the material under four large headings: themes and traditions that can be in some

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<sup>8</sup> W. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998): developing royal messianism (48, 50–51, 55, 130–131; supporting pre-existent messianism, 90–96; introducing messianic interpretation, 29–31, 37, 53, 147–148). References to earlier scholars with this position in J. Lust, “Messianism and Septuagint,” *Congress Volume Salamanca 1983*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 36 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 174–191.

<sup>9</sup> See L. Greenspoon, “Hebrew into Greek: Interpretation in, by, and of the Septuagint,” in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, 80–113, at 96–98 (“‘Messianizing’ in the LXX?”), with bibliography, including five studies by J. Lust.

<sup>10</sup> J. Lust, “Messianism and Septuagint,” 175.

<sup>11</sup> J. Lust, “Messianism and Septuagint,” 178.

<sup>12</sup> This is the method employed for a study of Paul, and a fresh appraisal of his setting in Second Temple Judaism in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O’Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002).

ways considered as deriving from the Bible (an interpreted Bible); Wisdom tradition; apocalyptic texts and eschatological-type documents; messianic-type expectations.

## 2. *Individual Documents and Traditions*

### 2.1. *An Interpreted Bible*

Ben Sirach's grandson's preface (whether written in 132 or 118 BCE) to his Greek translation of his grandfather's Hebrew wisdom writing seems to indicate that by the year 180 BCE or so there existed a Hebrew canon of the Law, the Prophets and the other (works), although the contents of the "other writings" was probably then not closed. Most of the Pseudepigrapha and Qumran writings presuppose the Hebrew canon, or the greater part of it, and treat or expand it in different ways. Some of the works can be regarded as rewritten Bibles (of one or more biblical books), such as *Jubilees*, the Qumran texts *The Temple Scroll* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, and Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* (from Adam to the death of Saul). Others of these writings contain principally legendary material about biblical characters, for instance the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the *Lives of the Prophets*. Though the connection of these individual post-biblical works with the Bible differs, they all indicate that their point of departure has been the Scriptures, around which different developments take place. While the canonical Scripture text would have remained intact, read and listened to as God's word privately, and publicly in liturgical services, at the same time there grew up around it an entire interpretative tradition. Sometimes this tradition was directed by the beliefs and expectations of a community such as Qumran, on other occasions by an understanding more widely accepted without any necessary connection with any particular Jewish group. Laws governing this development have not as yet been investigated.<sup>13</sup> One such law would appear to be deep reflection on the Bible,

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<sup>13</sup> For biblical interpretation see G. Vermes, *Scrolls, Scriptures and Early Christianity*, Library of Second Temple Studies 56 (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2003), 44–55; exegesis of an editorial type (grouping and collating parallel texts; harmonising expositions, clarifying additions, recasting and supplementations); exegesis of individual books (rewritten Bible-type exegesis; the Qumran *pesher*); thematic exegesis (Testimonia genre; the Qumran midrash). At the end of the essay Vermes' final comment concerns the need to insert Qumran's contribution into the corpus of Scriptural exegesis in post-biblical Judaism after investigation of its points

or particular books of the canon, accompanied by observation on the occurrence of similar phrases or incidents, and the combining of these to produce new presentations or *midrashim*. We shall examine a few of these in the midrash on the well that followed and with regard to resurrection on the third day. But there are others.

#### 2.1.1. *The Well that Followed*<sup>14</sup>

In the biblical narrative of the desert wanderings important incidents are connected with water. Thus, the water of Marah, Exod 15:22; the twelve springs at Elim, Exod 15:27; the waters brought forth from the rock at Rephidim, Exod 17:1–7; Num 33:14; the arrival at Kadesh, with the note that Miriam died there, followed immediately by the statement that there was no water for the people, and the account of the miracle of water from the rock, Num 20:1–5. Finally we have the account of the arrival at Beer (in Hebrew meaning “Well”) where the Hebrews sang the “Song of the Well” (Num 21:16–20). From this there developed a midrash on a well of water that followed Israel in the desert wanderings, and was known as Miriam’s well.

There are strong indications that this was a firmly established tradition in Palestinian Judaism in the first century of our era. We find it mentioned three times in the *Biblical Antiquities (Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, L.A.B.)* of Pseudo-Philo. This work is a rewritten Bible for the narrative from Adam through David to the death of Saul. It has many haggadic additions and interpretations of biblical texts, some of them also found in the Palestinian Targums and rabbinic literature. It is generally assigned a date in the second half of the first century CE, probably before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Some scholars, however, prefer a somewhat later date, between 70 CE and 150 CE.<sup>15</sup>

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of contact with parallel phenomena in the Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, the New Testament, Josephus, Targums and midrash.

<sup>14</sup> See M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament*, Good News Studies 4 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 241–244; G. Bienaimé, *Moïse et le don de l'eau dans la tradition juive ancienne: Targum et Midrash*, Analecta Biblica 98 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984).

<sup>15</sup> D. J. Harrington (“Pseudo-Philo,” *OTP* 2, 299) opts for a date before 70 CE. See also F. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo: Rewriting the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6; C. Perrot and P. M. Bogaert, *Pseudo-Philon: Les Antiquités Bibliques*, vol. 2 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976), 66–74. H. Jacobsen finds the arguments for a pre-70 date unconvincing and prefers a date between 70 CE and the middle of the second century (H. Jacobsen, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum. With Latin Text and English Translation*, AGJU 31 [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996], 1, 199–210). R. Deines

In *L.A.B.* the tradition on the well that followed Israel in its wanderings is first encountered at the narrative of entry into the wilderness, and last at the account of Moses' death. It is one of the three gifts of God to Israel, the others being the manna and the cloud. The first occurrence is as follow, in *L.A.B.* 10.7:

*Now he led his people out into the wilderness; for forty years he rained down for them bread from heaven and brought quails to them from the sea and brought forth a well of water to follow them. Now with a pillar of cloud he led them by day, and with a pillar of fire he gave them light by night.*<sup>16</sup>

The tradition occurs again in *L.A.B.* 11.5 where it is said that the water of Marah 'followed them in wilderness forty years and went up to the mountain with them and went down into the plains'. The same three divine gifts are noted together in the final mention of the well, in *LAB* 20.8 where the well of the water of Marah is said to have been given for Miriam.

This tradition as formulated in *L.A.B.* 11.5 is similar to the tradition as found in the Palestinian Targum of Num 21:16–20. Here the Hebrew text has a reference to a well, followed by a series of place names. In the Aramaic paraphrase the place names are interpreted as common nouns; the Hebrew text itself disappears to give a coherent midrash on the well. I give the Palestinian Targum text of Num 21:16–20 in the translation of Neofiti.<sup>17</sup> (Italics denote targumic paraphrase.)

(16) And from there *the well was given to them*. This is the well of which the Lord said to Moses: 'Gather the people together and I will give them water.' (17) Then Israel sang this song of praise: 'Spring up, O well!'—They sang to it; *and it sprang up*. (18) It is the well which the princes of the world, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, dug from the beginning; the intelligent ones of the people perfected it, the seventy sages who had been set apart; the scribes of Israel, Moses and Aaron, measured it with their rods; and from the wilderness it was given to them as a gift. (19) *And after the well had been given to them as a gift, it went on to become for them swelling*

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believes that *L.A.B.* is best characterised as a book of consolation in the time between the two revolts (70 CE and 132–135 CE) (R. Deines, "The Pharisees between 'Judaisms' and 'Common Judaism'," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, P. T. O'Brien and M. A. Seifrid, [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2001], 443–504, at 486).

<sup>16</sup> In the translation by D. J. Harrington, "Ps.-Philo, *Biblical Antiquities*," *OTP* 2, 317.

<sup>17</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Numbers*, *The Aramaic Bible 4* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 119–121.

*torrents. And after it had become swelling torrents, it went on to go up with them to the tops of the mountains and to go down with them to the deep valleys. (20) And after it had gone up with them to the tops of the high mountains and had gone down with them to the deep valleys, it was hidden from them in the valley which is at the boundaries of the Moabites, the top of the height which looks out opposite Beth Jeshimon.*

The text given is that of Neofiti, with which the Fragment Targums agree almost verbatim, and Pseudo-Jonathan differs but little. Onqelos Num 21:19 has the same paraphrase: “Now since it was given to them, it went down with them into the valleys, and from the valley it went up with them to the high country.” The paraphrase of Num 21:19 is also found in the Tosefta, *t. Suk* 3:11, “travelling with them up the mountains and going down with them to the valleys,” going on to cite Num 21:17–18 and 21:19–20.<sup>18</sup>

That this tradition was well known in Palestine in Jesus’ day seems highly probable. Paul (1 Cor 10:4) refers to it, possibly in a slightly variant form (a rock following). In the Tosefta text (*t. Suk.* 3:11) the tradition on the well following is found in conjunction with other biblical references to wells and water. This and other water marvels were apparently recalled during the ceremony of the carrying of water at the feast of Tabernacles.

#### 2.1.2. *The Cloud (of Glory) and the Manna*

In first-century Palestine with this tradition on the well we may also presume that the other two gifts of the wanderings period, the manna and the cloud (of glory) were also known. Glory and manna (the bread of life) are themes that figure prominently in the Fourth Gospel.

#### 2.1.3. *The Law as the Tree of Life in the Palestinian Targum Gen 3:24*

In the Qumran text with the Beatitudes (4Q525 [4QBeat]), considered below, the terms wisdom and the Law (Torah) are used more or less synonymously. This would have been the general belief of Judaism at the time, in particular in the Palestinian Targums. In their teaching on the Law (Torah) the Targums develop further what is already very much

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<sup>18</sup> Hebrew text in *The Tosefta according to the Codex Vienna*, ed. P. Lieberman, 2nd ed., *Seder Mo’ed*, (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, The Maxwell Abell Publications Fund: Jerusalem, 1992), 268–269; English translation by J. Neusner, *The Tosefta. Second Division: Moed* (New York: Ktav, 1981), 220–221.

present in late Second Temple Judaism, as evidenced for instance in Sirach and Baruch 3:9–36. In their approach to the Law the Targums are heirs to the traditions of the school, the *bet ha-midrash*, which by the time of Jesus the son of Sirach (ca. 180 BCE) was meditatively reflecting on Israel’s entire tradition, the Law (of Moses), the prophets and the Other Writings. In singing her own praises, Wisdom personified, which came forth from the mouth of the Most High (Sir 24:3), tells us that the Creator of all things gave her a commandment, the one who created her assigned a place for her tent, and he said: “Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance” (Sir 24:8). Ben Sirach himself practically identifies wisdom with the law of Moses: “All this is the book of the covenant of the Most High God, the law which Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob” (24:25). The Torah, or “the law which Moses commanded,” is brimful with wisdom, it runs over with understanding, it pours forth instruction (παίδεῖα) (24:25–27). Sir 24:25–27 compares the Law, identified with wisdom, with the rivers of Paradise, spoken of in Gen 2:10–14, and goes on to say that the first man (in the Garden of Eden presumably) did not know wisdom fully. The biblical account says that there was a tree of life in the middle of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:9), a tree which could be regarded as capable of making one wise (Gen 3:6). In Prov 3:18 Wisdom is described as a tree of life for all those who lay hold of her; long life is in her right hand (Prov 3:16). In Prov 8:30 wisdom says that at the beginning of God’s work she was beside him יום יום (“day day”), generally rendered “daily,” and as his delight. Now, according to a Jewish principle as found in 2 Pet 3:8 (see also Ps 90:4) one day in the Lord’s sight is as a thousand years. Thus arose the Jewish belief that the Law was there from the beginning, and in the Garden of Eden. According to Gen 2:15 the Lord God took the man (האָרם) and placed him in the garden of Eden “to till it and keep it.” This is paraphrased in the Palestinian Targum as follows: “The Lord God took Adam and had him dwell in the garden of Eden to toil in the Law and observe its commandments.” There is a neat summary of Jewish belief in the Law, the tree of life, given in a midrash inserted in the Neofiti Pal. Targum rendering of Gen 3:24. It reads (in Neofiti’s rendering; italics, for almost the entire text, denote targumic paraphrase).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1A (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 63–64.

*Two thousand years before he created the world he had created the Law; he had prepared the garden of Eden for the just and Gehenna for the wicked. He had prepared the garden of Eden for the just that they might eat and delight themselves from the fruits of the tree because they had kept the precepts of the Law in this world and fulfilled the commandments. For the wicked he prepared Gehenna, which is comparable to a sharp sword devouring with both edges. He prepared within it darts of fire and burning coals for the wicked, to be avenged of them in the world to come because they did not observe the precepts of the Law in this world. For the Law is a tree of life for everyone who toils in it and keeps the commandments: he lives and endures like the tree of life in the world to come. The Law is good for all who labour in it in this world like the fruit of the tree of life.*

#### 2.1.4. Good Works; Rewards in the World to Come

According to Matthew's Gospel (Matt 5:16) Jesus tells his disciples to let their light shine before others so that they see their good works (καλὰ ἔργα) and give glory to their Father in heaven. The phrases "good works" or "bad works" are not found in the Hebrew Bible or in Greek Septuagint. The central Pauline epistles, naturally, make no mention of "good works," but the phrase occurs in 2 Thess 2:17 and deuterio-Pauline writings (1 Tim 2:10; 5:10, 25; 6:8; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 1:16; 2:7, 14; 3:8; 3:14; Heb 10:24; 13:21).

With good works goes "reward" (μισθός), something spoken of often by Jesus as his words are recorded in all three synoptics. Those who suffer for the sake of righteousness should rejoice: their reward is great in heaven (Matt 5:12//Luke 6:23). Those who love their enemies without expecting anything in return will have great reward (Luke 6:35; see Matt 5:46). Whoever gives a cup of water to drink to someone because they bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose the reward (Mark 9:41//Matt 10:42). Jesus stresses that reward, treasure, must be laid up in heaven (Matt 6:19–21//Luke 12:32–34. The reward is from the Father in heaven (Matt 5:4, 6, 15). It is possible that this reward in heaven may be lost, especially by those who practice their piety (do their good deeds) to be seen by others, and receive glory on earth. By so doing they forfeit reward before their Father in heaven and have already received their reward on earth (Matt 6:1, 2, 5, 16). This language can be regarded as fundamentally that of Jesus. As H. Priesker has noted: "Mt. 6:19–21 = Lk. 12:33f. speak in current Jewish imagery."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> H. Priesker, "μισθός: The Concept of Reward in the New Testament," *TDNT* 4 (1967): 714–728, at 714.



In few places is this Jewish imagery of good works and merit (אגר טב) clearer than in the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch. In these there is frequent mention of good works. Whenever the Hebrew words שלם or תמים refer to persons they are translated in the Targums as “perfect in good works.” The relevance of good and evil deeds and the question of reward and punishment appear to have been a matter of debate in early Judaism. According to an inserted piece in the Aramaic translation of Gen 4:6–8, Cain and Abel argued as to whether the world was governed by God according to the fruits of good works.

The good reward is already there, stored up for the just in the world to come, or for the world to come. It is thus expressed in an oracle of Balaam, in a midrashic expansion of the biblical text: “Blessed are you (טוביכוון), just ones! What a good reward is prepared for you before the Lord for (or: “in”) the world to come” (*Pal. Tg. Num 23:23*).<sup>21</sup> All observance of the commandments has its reward, but some of the reward can be given by God in this life instead of being reserved for the world to come. In an expansion of the biblical text of Deut 7:10 the *Pal. Tg.* has Moses say of God:

(7:9). You shall know, then, that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps the covenant and steadfast love for a thousand generations for the *just* ones who love him and for those who keep the precepts of his law, (10) and who repays in this world the rewards of their good works to those who hate him, in order to take revenge on them in the world to come. And he does not delay the good reward for those who hate him: while they are still in this world, he repays them the reward of the small precepts that are in their hands.<sup>22</sup>

Abram expresses this great fear of being rewarded in this life, with no reward stored up for him in the world to come. This is clearly expressed in an expanded introduction to Gen 15 in the Palestinian Targum, which is as follows (given in Neofiti’s translation; italics denote targumic midrash):<sup>23</sup>

(15:1) After these things, *after all the kingdoms of the earth had gathered together and had drawn up battle-lines against Abram and had fallen before him, and he had killed four kings from among them and had brought back*

<sup>21</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Numbers*, 134.

<sup>22</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Deuteronomy*, The Aramaic Bible 5A (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 54.

<sup>23</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, 93–94.

nine encampments, Abram thought in his heart and said: “Woe, now, is me! Perhaps I have received the reward of the precepts<sup>24</sup> in this world and there is no portion for me in the world to come. Or perhaps the brothers or relatives of those killed, who fell before me, will go and will be in their fortresses and in their cities and many legions will become allied with them and they will come against me and kill me. Or perhaps there were a few meritorious deeds (מצוות קלילין)<sup>25</sup> in my hand the first time they fell before me and they stood in my favour, or perhaps no meritorious deed (מצוה) will be found in my hand the second time and the name of the heavens will be profaned in me.” For this reason there was a word of prophecy from before the Lord upon Abram the just saying: “Do not fear, Abram, for although many legions are allied and come against you to kill (you), my Memra will be a shield for you; and it will be a protection for you in this world and although I delivered up your enemies before you in this world, the reward of your goods work is prepared for you before me in the world to come.”

#### 2.1.5. *The Binding of Isaac (the ‘Aqedah)*<sup>26</sup>

So much has been written on the ‘Aqedah that it can be touched on here only in passing. The evidence would seem to indicate that the tradition was known in the first century CE, if not earlier. It is introduced twice into the narrative of *L.A.B.* but never directly on a comment on Gen 22. We find it in *L.A.B.* 18 in an answer by God to a query of Balaam as to why Israel should be tempted. God replies recalling his promise to Abraham that his seed would be as the stars of heaven, and that he required of him his son as a burnt offering. “And because he (Isaac) did not resist, his offering was acceptable in my sight, and for his blood I have chosen them” (*L.A.B.* 18.5). The narrative of the sacrifice of Isaac is given in some detail in *L.A.B.* 32.1–4, in a hymn sung by Deborah, Barak and all the people. It tells of Isaac’s birth and of the angels’ envy of him, leading to God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his son.

<sup>24</sup> Or: “reward for [keeping] the commandments.”

<sup>25</sup> Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Bar Ilan: University Press, 1990), 493 (under the headword קליל, קליל) renders the Aramaic words מצוות קלילין of this text of as “light commandments” and of the *Frg. Tg.* of the text as “easy commandments” (*Dictionary*, 325, under the headword מצווה).

<sup>26</sup> See M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, *Analecta Biblica* 27 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1966), 164–168; R. Le Déaut, “La présentation targumique du sacrifice d’Isaac et la sotériologie paulinienne,” in *Studiorum paulinorum congressus internationalis catholicus 1961*, *Analecta Biblica* 17–18.2 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1963), 563–574; G. Vermes, “Redemption and Genesis XXII—The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus,” in *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, *Studia post-Biblica* 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1961 [2nd rev. ed. 1973]), 193–227.

Isaac replies at length on his sacrifice, ending: “And what if I had not been born in the world to be offered as a sacrifice to him that made me? And it shall be my blessedness beyond all men, for there shall be nothing like this; and in me shall the generations be instructed, and by me the peoples shall understand that the Lord has accounted the soul of a man worthy to be a sacrifice to him” (*L.A.B.* 32.3). In his reply to Abraham God says: “And your memorial shall be before me for ever, and your name and the name of this your son from one generation to another” (*L.A.B.* 32.4).

I may here introduce the rather well-known Palestinian Targum form of the midrash on the ‘*Aqedah* (giving the text of *Targum Neofiti*). The Targum paraphrase stresses that on the journey to Mount Moriah Abraham and Isaac went together “with a perfect heart” (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 22:6). *Gen* 22:10 is thus rendered in Neofiti (italics denote additional material to the HT):<sup>27</sup>

And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son Isaac. Isaac answered and said to his father Abraham: “Father, tie me well lest I kick you and your offering be rendered unfit,<sup>28</sup> and we be thrust down into the pit of destruction in the world to come.”

Abraham’s prayer in *Gen* 22:14 is thus paraphrased:<sup>29</sup>

And Abraham worshipped and prayed in the name of the Memra of the Lord and said: “I beseech by the mercy that is before you O Lord—everything is manifest and known to you—that there was no division in my heart the first time you said to me to offer my son Isaac, to make him dust and ashes before you; but I immediately arose early in the morning and diligently put your word into practice with gladness and fulfilled your decree. And now when his sons are in the hour of distress (בשעת עקתא) you shall remember the Binding of their Father Isaac, and listen to the voice of their supplication, and answer them and deliver them from all distress (עקא), so that the generations to arise after him may say: ‘On this mountain of the sanctuary of the Lord Abraham sacrificed his son Isaac, and on this mountain the glory of the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed to him’”.

<sup>27</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, 117–118.

<sup>28</sup> Neofiti margin has: “[lest] in the hour of my distress [בשעת צערי] I move convulsively and I create confusion and our sacrifice been found blemished...”

<sup>29</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, 118–119.

2.1.6. *The Hour of Distress*<sup>30</sup>

It is agreed that “the hour” is a central theme in the Fourth Gospel. It is the “hour” for Jesus to part from this world to his Father (John 13:1), the “hour” for him to be glorified and for the Father to be glorified in him (John 12:23, 17:1). His “hour” was that of his passion and death, an hour of distress, although this word is not used in the Fourth Gospel. Jesus’ soul is troubled, and he asks whether he should request the Father to save him from this hour, answering his own question: “No, for this purpose I have come to this hour” (John 12:27).

In the context of this Johannine theme I believe the similar theme of “the hour of distress” in Codex Neofiti and its margins merits consideration. The phrase occurs seven times in Tg Neofiti outside of translation texts, “distress” being expressed by one of three synonyms **צער**, **עקא**, **עקא**—the latter a Greek loanword: ἀνάγκη—(Gen 22:10, margin; 22:14, text and margin; 35:3; 38:25; Lev 22:27; Deut 20:19; 32:15). The fundamental texts are in the midrash of the bindings of Isaac (cited above). This was Isaac’s “hour of distress,” and was intended to serve as a reminder to God to come to the aid of Isaac’s children in their hour of distress. Jacob expresses his intention to build an altar to the Lord at Bethel who answered him the hour of his affliction (**בשעת עקת**) (Gen 35:3). In a lengthy midrashic development on Lev 22:27 (with mention of a bull or sheep or goat as an offering), the mention of the “sheep” is linked with the lamb Isaac; his Aqedah is recalled, and Isaac’s children are seen as praying in “the hour of their affliction” (**בשעת אננקי**) saying: “Answer us in this hour . . . and remember in our favour the Aqedah of Isaac our father.”<sup>31</sup> The phrase “hour of his/its trouble” (**בשעת עקתה**) is used in Neof Deut 20:19 in relation to trees under siege, and in Deut 32:15 in an additional paraphrase: “they denied the fear of the Strong One who had redeemed them in the hour of their trouble” (**בשעת עקתהון**).

There is another important occurrence of the theme in a text in no way connected with the Aqedah. It occurs in a lengthy midrashic development in Tg. Neofiti Gen 38:25 on Tamar’s discourse as she was

<sup>30</sup> See M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament. Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible. A Light on the New Testament* (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 143–144; C. E. Morrison, “The ‘Hour of Distress’ in Targum Neofiti and the ‘Hour’ in the Gospel of John” (a paper read at the Fourth Congress of the International Organization of Targumic Studies, Leiden, 2004 [Forthcoming]). I am grateful to Dr Morrison for providing me with a pre-publication copy of his paper.

<sup>31</sup> Note that this midrash seems to suppose the destruction of the Temple.

being brought out to be burned. The relevant section for our purpose reads:<sup>32</sup>

*She (Tamar) lifted up her eyes on high and said: "I beseech by the mercies from before you, O Lord, You are he who answers the afflicted in the hour of their affliction (דִּי עֲנִי לְעִיקֵי בִשְׁעַת עֲקָתָהוֹן) answer me in this hour, which is the hour of my affliction (שְׁעַת אֲנִיָּקִי)..."*

### 2.1.7. *Eternal Shame*<sup>33</sup>

The beautiful midrash of *Tg. Neofiti* Gen 38:25, in part just cited, continues with a reply by Judah in which he confesses his responsibility for Tamar's pregnancy. I reproduce it here because of its similarity to some concepts and phrases in the words of Jesus (see Mark 9:43; Matt 25:41; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; Mark 4:24; Matt 7:2; Luke 6:38). In his reply Judah confesses:

*It is better for me to burn in this world, with extinguishable fire, that I may not be burned in the world to come whose fire is inextinguishable. It is better for me to be ashamed in this world that is a passing world, that I may not be ashamed before my just fathers in the world to come. And listen to me my brothers and house of my father: In the measure in which a man measures it shall be measured to him, whether it be a good measure or a bad measure.*

### 2.1.8. *Resurrection*<sup>34</sup>

The New Testament and Josephus provide ample information concerning belief in bodily resurrection among the Jews during the first century of the common era. The Sadducees denied it outright. The Pharisees believed in it firmly (Josephus, *War* 2.163; *Ant.* 18.14; Acts 4:1–2; 23:6–10). In reply to a question of the Sadducees Jesus strongly espouses the doctrine of the Pharisees on the matter (Mark 12:18–27; Matt 23:23–33; Luke 20:27–28). The Essene position appears to have been belief in an afterlife, without mention of resurrection. In Jesus' day

<sup>32</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*. On the midrash see E. M. Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics*, JSJSup 51 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 236.

<sup>33</sup> See M. McNamara, *Targum and Testament*, 135–136; *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 138–142.

<sup>34</sup> See M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism*, 180–185. M. McNamara, *Intertestamental Literature*, Old Testament Message 23 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983), 233–237.

Jewish belief in an afterlife with rewards and punishments is indicated by texts such as Luke 16:19–31 (Lazarus in Abraham’s bosom; the rich man in Gehenna) and Luke 23:43 (the repentant thief with Jesus in Paradise), while explicit belief in the future resurrection is expressed by Martha (John 11:23). Belief in the resurrection is also expressed in the *Life of Adam and Eve* (28.4), a work probably written in Palestine in the first century CE. When he is driven out of Paradise and refused access to the Tree of Life, the Lord tells Adam that when he comes out of Paradise, if he guards himself from all evil, preferring death to it, at the time of the resurrection the Lord will raise him up again, and then there will be given to him from the tree of life, and he will be immortal forever. Somewhat similarly in the Palestinian Targum paraphrase of Gen 3:19: “...to dust you shall return. *But from the dust you are to arise again to give an account and a reckoning of all that you have done.*” In the *Lives of the Prophets* (probably representing first-century CE Palestinian tradition) the doctrine of the resurrection is assumed without argument or polemic (2.15; see also 3.12).

Given belief in the resurrection of the body it was natural that Pharisee scribes and rabbis of the first century should seek a foundation for the doctrine in their scriptures. We have no evidence that they invoked Exod 3:6, the text referred to by Jesus. The texts called on for this belief by rabbis of the third and fourth centuries are Deut 3:6 (“Let Reuben live...”), Exod 15:1, Ps 84:4 and Gen 3:19.<sup>35</sup>

The prevailing belief in Palestine in Jesus’ day was probably in bodily resurrection at the end of time. The Essenes believed in immortality without bodily resurrection, and the commonly accepted view is that this was also the position with the Qumran community, although some on the strength of the text 4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q521), fragment 2, col. II, 11–13 (a text considered in greater length below) think that they believed in a resurrection. Amongst great news things that God will perform in the future age of the Messiah, “the Lord will perform marvellous acts such as have not existed, just as he sa[id]: For he will heal the badly wounded and *will make the dead live* (מתים יחיה), he will proclaim good to the meek, give lavishly [to the need]y, lead the exiled and enrich the hungry.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism*, 181–182.

<sup>36</sup> See J. Tabor and Wise, “4Q521 ‘On Resurrection’ and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition,” in *Qumran Questions*, ed. J. Charlesworth (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic

We have a good example of belief in immortality rather than in resurrection in the apocryphal work 4 Maccabees. This is a philosophical work, generally thought to have been composed in the first century CE. Its original language was Greek. It was composed in the Diaspora, more probably in Antioch of Syria rather than in Egypt. And yet it is closely linked with Palestinian tradition and seeks foundation in the Bible for its belief in eternal life for the just. At the end of the work the mother of the martyrs reminds her sons of the death of their father and of the teaching he gave them, particularly on those who bore witness to their faith in the Bible narrative. "While he was still with you he taught you the law and the prophets" (18:10). She goes on to give examples from the Law, the Prophets and the writings and concludes (18:16–19): "He recounted to you Solomon's proverb: 'There is a tree of life for those who do his will' (see Prov 3:18). He confirmed the saying of Ezekiel, 'Shall these dry bones live' (Ezek 37:2–3). For he did not forget to teach you the song that Moses taught, which says, 'I will kill and I will make alive: this is your life and the length of your days' (Deut 32:39)." We can presume that the pious father also interpreted these as containing the doctrine of immortality. They could as easily have been taken as referring to bodily resurrection.

Jesus' reasoning on the inner meaning of Exod 3:6 may have a parallel in 4 Maccabees. Jesus says that God in this passage proclaims himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, commenting that he is the God not of the dead but of the living (Mark 12:26; Matt 22:22), to which Luke adds "For all live to him" (Luke 20:38). In 4 Maccabees 7:19 the author remarks that the martyrs "believe that they, like our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do not die to God but live in God." Likewise in 16:25: "They knew that those who die for God live in God, as do Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs." They further console themselves with the belief that if they die for the commandments they will be welcomed by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (13:14–15, 17–18).

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Press, 1995), 161–163; E. Puech, "Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)," *RevQ* 15.60 (1992): 475–522; E. Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: immortalité, resurrection, vie éternelle?*, *Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien*, vols I, II, *Études Biblique Nouvelle Série* 21–22 (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 627–692.

2.1.9. *Consolation and Resurrection to Come on the Third Day.*<sup>37</sup>

A stream of Jewish belief and piety different from that of the Essenes and Qumran is preserved in the tradition handed down by rabbinic Judaism. Absence of early written documentation makes it somewhat uncertain what form this took in the early or later part of the first century of our era. One central belief in this tradition, and one absent from Qumran, was belief in the resurrection of the body. An early form of his belief is attested in the book of Daniel (Dan 12:1–3), from about 165 BCE. In this Jewish tradition, as represented by the Aramaic renderings (targumim), Israel looked forward to the tranquility of Eden (שְׁלוֹוֹתָה דְעֵדֶן), the determined time of the blessing and consolation (בְּרִכְתָּא וְנִחְמָתָא) (*Pal. Tg. Gen* 49:1),<sup>38</sup> the resurrection of the dead.

The resurrection of the dead could be regarded as synonymous with the future messianic age. In the targum of Hosea 6:2 this belief has replaced the biblical text itself.<sup>39</sup> The biblical text represents Israel as turning to the Lord in repentance. The Lord has stricken them, but will also bind up their wounds. “After two days he will revive us, and on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him” (Hos 6:2). Here “after two days” and “on the third day” are intended to

<sup>37</sup> See McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism*, 182–185; A. Rodríguez Carmona, *Targum y Resurreccion*, 148–153; “Resurrection on the Third Day,” in *Hosea*, H. W. Wolff (ET Philadelphia, 1977): 117–118; L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets and Targum Jonathan to the prophets* by Pinkhos Churgin (New York and Baltimore: KTAV Publishing House and The Baltimore Hebrew College, 1983; original edition 1927), 181–183; P. Churgin, *Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (Yale University Press, 1927), 107 (reprinted with Smolar and Aberbach, 1977, 335).

<sup>38</sup> Unpointed, the words בְּרִכְתָּא and נִחְמָתָא can be either singular or plural; here I take them as singulars; Kaufmann and Sokoloff take them as plural forms: S. A. Kaufman and M. Sokoloff, *A Key-in-Context Concordance to Targum Neofiti* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 262, no. 044; 978, no. 007. See also *Pal. Tg. (Tg. Nf.) Num* 23:23: “At this time (variant *Tg. Neof. marg.* “At that time”) there shall be announced (lit. “said”) to the house of Israel the good things and the consolations (בְּרִכְתָּא וְנִחְמָתָא) that are to come upon you and (upon) those of the house of Israel.” This is followed by a prophetic macarism by Balaam: “Blessed are you, just ones! (טוֹבִיכוֹן צְדִיקִיה) What a good reward is prepared for you before the Lord for the world to come.” For the “good things” (τὰ ἀγαθὰ) in the messianic age see *Matt* 7:11; *Rom* 10:15 (= *Isa* 52:7); *Heb* 9:11; 10:1.

<sup>39</sup> See McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism*, 182–185; also, esp. on (Targum) Hosea 6:2, Kevin J. Cathcart and Robert P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*. Translated, with a critical introduction, apparatus and notes, *The Aramaic Bible 14* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 41 (notes on *Tg. Hos.* 6:2), 7 (introduction); R. Gordon, “The Targumists as Eschatologists,” *SVT* 29 (1978): 113–130, at 115–121.



express a short space of time. The targumist paraphrases of the future messianic age of consolation and of the resurrection, rendering thus: “He will give us life in the days of consolations (אמתה, אמתה), that will come; and on the day of the resurrection of the dead he will raise us up and we shall live before him.”<sup>40</sup> The targumist paraphrases “after two days” as “in the days of consolations that will come,” and “on the third day” as “on the day of the resurrection of the dead.” This eschatological or messianic interpretation of this verse seems to have been current in rabbinic circles.<sup>41</sup> The understanding of “on the third day” of the resurrection and salvation must have been helped by the occurrence of the terms “showers” and “spring rain” in the following verse, terms which recall “dew,” understood in rabbinic tradition as indication the resurrection (see Isa 26:19), and also by rabbinic reflection on the various occurrences of “third day” in the Bible, all of which are seen to have been salvific,<sup>42</sup> e.g., Gen 22:4; 42:17; Exod 19:6; Josh 2:16; Hos 6:2; Jonah 2:1; Esther 9:2.

With regard to the concept and term “consolations” we may also note Luke’s Infancy Narrative. Symeon was awaiting the consolation of Israel (προσδεχόμενος παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ) (Luke 2:25); Anna spoke of the child Jesus to all who awaited the redemption of Jerusalem (πᾶσιν τοῖς προσδεχομένοις λύρωσιν Ἰερουσαλήμ) (Luke 2:38).

With the crucifixion, the death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the early Christian community felt a need to explain all this in connection with the Scriptures, the Hebrew and Greek texts of which were available to them. In Luke 24:27, in the narrative of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, we are told that Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. Next the risen Christ appeared to the eleven apostles and their companions, recalling the words he had spoken to them while he was still with them—that everything about him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them: “Thus it is written, that the Messiah (Christ) is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day...” (Luke 24:44–47). This text linking the suffering of Christ and

<sup>40</sup> In the translation by Cathcart and Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> See *San.* 97a; *Rosh Hashana* 31a; Churgin, 335 (original edition, 107; see note 37 above).

<sup>42</sup> See Rodriguez Carmona, *Targum y Resurrección*, 148–153.

his resurrection from the dead on the third day with scripture probably represents a very early Jerusalem tradition.<sup>43</sup> We find it again in Paul as part of traditional creed on the resurrection in 1 Cor 15:3–4: “For I handed on to you as of first importance (NRSV; ἐν πρώτοις, NBJ “in the first place”) what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures...” Paul presumably had received this formulation of the tradition from Antioch, which in turn would have received it from Jerusalem, possibly even at his first visit to Peter ca. 39 CE (Gal 1:18). The scriptures regarded as prophesying the passion and death of Christ can be presumed to have been principally the passage on the Suffering Servant in Isa 53. It is more difficult to find a scripture text about the resurrection on the third day. The text in question, as noted, is probably Hosea 6:2, but as interpreted midrashically in the Targum, in keeping with rabbinic Judaism.<sup>44</sup>

#### 2.1.10. *Legends on the Prophets*

We may consider legends about the prophets in the general context of an interpreted Bible, or expansions of the Old Testament. We consider two in particular: the so-called *Ascension of Isaiah* and the *Lives of the Prophets*.

The writing known as the *Ascension of Isaiah* is a composite work, which falls into two parts: chapters 1–5 and chapters 6–11.<sup>45</sup> The first part is now known as the *Martyrdom of Isaiah*, the second as the *Vision of Isaiah*. The *Martyrdom* is itself composite, 3:13–4:2 being an independent unit. The vision is a Christian work. The *Martyrdom* is at the

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<sup>43</sup> On “on the third day” (in Luke) see S. V. McCasland, “The Scripture Basis of ‘On the Third Day,’” *JBL* 48 (1929): 124–137; J. Kloppenborg, “Analysis of the pre-Pauline Formula 1 Cor 15:3b-5 in Light of some Recent Literature,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 350–367, at 363–364 (“on the third day” in Luke 9:22 [and Matt 16:21] as a reference to Hos 6:20); see also M. L. Barré, “New Light on the Interpretation of Hos 6:2,” *VT* 28 (1978): 129–141, esp. 138–140; Dupont, *Études sur les Actes des Apôtres*, *Lectio Divina* 45 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 256.

<sup>44</sup> See M. McNamara, *Palestinian Judaism*, 183–185.

<sup>45</sup> See M. A. Knibb, “Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah,” *OTP* 2, 143–155; C. A. Evans, “Scripture-based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 1:57–72, at 57–61; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Stories of Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 52–56 (“The Martyrdom of Isaiah”).

latest from the first century CE, but is more probably earlier, from the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, 167–164 BCE. Its original language was probably Hebrew. According to the *Martyrdom* (3.11–12; 5.1–16), Isaiah was sawn in two by a wood saw (a saw for cutting wood) during the reign of Manasseh. This tradition is probably referred to in Heb 11:37, and can be presumed to have been current in Palestine in Jesus' day.

The contents of the *Lives of the Prophets* are summed up in the title of the work in a major Greek manuscript and in some of the many vernacular translations: "The names of the prophets, and where they are from, and where they died and how, and where they lie."<sup>46</sup> In some cases the information passes beyond the biblical evidence and gives legendary information. This small work gives "lives" of the four Major Prophets (including Daniel), the Twelve Minor, and then Nathan, Abijah, Joad, Azariah, Elijah, Elisha and Zechariah son of Jehoiada. According to the *Lives* 1.1, Isaiah died under Manasseh, by being sawn in two. *Lives* 1.8 says that he was buried with great honour, which may suggest the erection of a monument, though not necessarily in the author's own time.

Although some scholars have argued for a Semitic original (Hebrew or Aramaic), the work seems to have been written in Greek, although containing Palestinian traditions. While transmitted in Christian manuscripts and versions, it contains little of Christian content and appears to be of Jewish origin, and probably from the first century CE, before the fall of Jerusalem. Herod the Great erected an expensive memorial of white marble at the entrance to David's tomb (Josephus, *Ant.* 16.182), and this may have led to a movement to build monuments to the prophets as national heroes. The saying of Jesus in Luke 11:47 (see also Matt 23:29): "Alas for you who build the tombs of the prophets, the men your ancestors killed," implies that the memorials had been only recently constructed.

The *Lives of the Prophets* 23 has the following on the death of Zechariah son of Jehoiada.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> On the *Lives of the Prophets* see D. R. A. Hare, "The Lives of the Prophets," *OTP* 2, 379–384, with English translation, 385–390; C. A. Evans, "Scripture-based Stories in the Pseudepigrapha," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 1:69–72 (with an indication of principal texts and translations, and studies on the text, 69–70, n. 28).

<sup>47</sup> In the translation by D. R. A. Hare, *OTP* 2, 398.

Zechariah was from Jerusalem, son of Jehoiada the priest, and Joash the king of Judah killed him near the altar, and the house of David poured out his blood in front of the *Ailam*; and the priests took him and buried him with his father.

This goes beyond the biblical account of 2 Chr 24:20–21 which simply says that because of his preaching, the people (of Judah) conspired against him and by the command of king Joash they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord. The *Lives*' statement that Zechariah was killed near the altar agrees with Jesus' words that Zechariah died (Matthew: "was murdered") "between the sanctuary and the altar" (Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51). Luke does not mention the name of Zechariah's father; Matthew says it was Berachiah (not Jehoiada). No satisfactory explanation of Matthew's text has been given.<sup>48</sup>

#### 2.1.11. *The Life of Adam and Eve*

This work has been preserved in Greek (under the title *Apocalypsis Moysis*), Latin (with the title *Vita Adae et Evae, L.A.E.*) and other languages. The Latin text is longer than the Greek (beginning with an account of the repentance of Adam and Eve absent from the Greek), but probably represents the original form better.<sup>49</sup> The narrative, passing beyond the biblical text, goes from the repentance of the first parents to their death and burial. It is of the Jewish midrashic kind, with a theology of the Palestinian and rabbinic type, without any sectarian tendencies. Satan is a pre-existent fallen angel. He narrates his expulsion from heaven (*L.A.E.* 12–17). He seeks to destroy men's souls (*L.A.E.* 17.1) by disguising himself as an angel of light (*L.A.E.* 9.1, 3; 12.1; *Apoc. Mos.* 19.3). The work has little that is specifically Christian and would fit Palestine of the first century CE. The original language of the work is uncertain: probably Greek, although some scholars prefer Hebrew. It was probably composed in Palestine. Its date of composition cannot be fixed exactly. It may be the first century CE, possibly a little earlier, or somewhat later—100 BCE–200 CE according to some.

<sup>48</sup> See M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 160–163.

<sup>49</sup> See J.-C. Pettoirelli, "Essai sur la structure primitive de la *Vie d'Adam et Ève*," *Apocrypha* 14 (2003): 237–256.

## 2.2. *Wisdom Tradition*

### 2.2.1. *Introduction. The Wisdom Tradition*

The origins, or at least one of the sources, of the wisdom tradition in Israel may have been in the family, and possibly continued to survive there, for some time at least. One of the collections in the Book of Proverbs is the teaching of King Lemuel's mother (Prov 31:1–9). Wisdom, after all, is always presented as female, a woman, the teacher Hochmah, Sophia. However, in good part the biblical wisdom collection of works represents the school. It is the product of a learned class, transmitted from a teacher to students within this learned tradition. Qoheleth was a teacher, who taught people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs (Eccl 12:9–10). Ben Sirach (ca. 180 BCE) is quite clear that the wisdom study to which he had dedicated his life is for the learned and those fairly well off (Sir 39:1–11; 51:13–22). He invites students to his schoolhouse (in Jerusalem), to devote themselves to the pursuit of wisdom as he had done (51:23–28). The Wisdom of Solomon was written wholly in Greek, and about 30 BCE. Although most probably written in Alexandria, and *au fait* with Greek philosophical culture, it is an extension of the biblical wisdom teaching and seems quite conversant with later Palestinian Jewish tradition.

How much of the Wisdom tradition was transmitted, was active and widely available in Palestine in the first century of our era is not altogether clear. That there was a special interest in Ben Sirach (at least in learned circles) is clear from the fragmentary manuscripts of the work from the Dead Sea Scrolls and a long text from Masada (with Sir 39:27–44:17) dating from the early first century BCE. Tobit can also be classed as a wisdom composition. Fragments of this work both in Aramaic and Hebrew (dating from ca. 100 BCE to 50 CE) have been found in Qumran.

The wisdom tradition continued to be cultivated in the Qumran community.<sup>50</sup> Among the Dead Sea Scrolls there are a number of texts which have been classified as 'Wisdom Poems'.<sup>51</sup> All are from Cave 4.

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<sup>50</sup> See F. García Martínez, ed., *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 168 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2003); D. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (London: Routledge, 1992), 88–92 on the bearing of the Qumran texts on "Jesus and Wisdom."

<sup>51</sup> In English translation in F. Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 379–398.

One (4Q184) is entitled '4Q Wiles of the Wicked Woman', an allegorical poem on Need, personified as a woman, inspired by Proverbs 7, and with magical connotations. Some of the other texts will be considered immediately below.

Most of these Wisdom texts from Qumran belong to the genre of aphorisms, sayings or instructions, so much part of the biblical and later Jewish tradition. What is missing are texts on personified wisdom found in Prov 8:22–31; Sir 1:4, 9; 24:1–22; Baruch 3:9–4:1; Wis 7:22–30. The Qumran texts do not appear to be sectarian, and might well have circulated outside of the Essene community, or could be dependent on a more widespread Wisdom tradition. The text of Ben Sirach may have been widely known throughout Palestine.

When we come to evaluate the bearing of this evidence on the question of the historical Jesus we must keep in mind the complexity of the gospel evidence, namely the question of Jesus himself during his ministry and the Jesus tradition as handed on, and reformulated in an ongoing developing Christology, in the Q document and elsewhere.

### 2.2.2. *The Wisdom Tradition and Jesus*

The logia, sayings, aphorisms of the Q document might well go back to Jesus himself, not necessarily in the formulation in which we now have them. In one sense Jesus could be described as a wisdom teacher, although of course he was much more.

There is the further question of the relationship of Jesus to personified wisdom according to Q, as presented in Luke and Matthew. For this we must consider three texts presented in Matthew 11 and their parallels in Luke. The first is the ending to Jesus' comparison between himself and John the Baptist in Matt 11:19// Luke 7:35, ending "... the Son of Man came to you eating and drinking, and they say: 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners'". Luke's continuation is: "Nevertheless wisdom is vindicated by all her children." Matthew has: "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." It is generally accepted that Luke is more faithful to Q. The meaning there would be that Jesus (with John and possibly others) is an envoy of divine wisdom. Matthew seems to have identified Jesus with wisdom, which would be in keeping with his introduction to the section: "When John heard of the deeds (τὰ ἔργα) of Christ..." (Matt 11:2). Matthew's identification of Jesus with wisdom seems clear in his ending to this section (11:28–30), absent from Luke, where Jesus speaks in language heavily dependent on Sir 51:23–27: "Come to me, all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest (ἀναπαύσω ὑμᾶς).

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." At the end of his work the teacher Sirach (51:27) calls on would-be students: "Draw near to me, you who are uneducated... Acquire wisdom... Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction; it is to be found close by. See with your own eyes that I have laboured but little, and have found for myself much serenity (ἀνάπαυσιν)..." (NRSV). It is also possible that there is an identification of Jesus with wisdom in Q as found in Matt 11:25–27//Luke 10:21–22. There is a further text towards the end of Jesus' condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (Luke, Pharisees and Lawyers) in Matthew and Luke. In Luke (Luke 11:49): "Therefore also the Wisdom of God said: 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of them they will kill and persecute.'" Matthew's text has (Matt 23:34) Jesus, not Wisdom, as the speaker: "Therefore I send you prophets, sages and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues..." What wisdom text is being referred to in the Lukan passage (whether an apocryphal work, general biblical texts, or others), is not certain. It appears that Matthew's change is due to his understanding of Jesus as Wisdom personified.<sup>52</sup>

With regard to these texts the question arises whether we are dealing with words of the Jesus of history or Christological formulations of the early Church. New Testament theologians such as James D. G. Dunn believe that the latter is the case, and would situate them with the post-Pauline writings of the New Testament.<sup>53</sup> In any event, the gospel texts indicate the continuance of the wisdom tradition in New Testament Palestine, and its use there in the formulation of early Christology.

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<sup>52</sup> For the question of wisdom in Matthew, see J. Kampen, "Aspects of Wisdom in the Gospel of Matthew in Light of the New Qumran Evidence," in *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran*. Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Oslo, 1998, ed. D. K. Falk, F. García Martínez and E. M. Schuller, (Oslo: International Organization for Qumran Studies, 1999; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 227–239; also M. D. Johnson, "Reflections on a Wisdom Approach to Matthew's Christology," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 44–64; R. Pregeant, "The Wisdom Passages in Matthew's Story," *SBLSP* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 469–493; D. C. Allison, Jr., "Two Notes on a Key Text: Matthew 11:25–39," *JTS* 39 (1988): 477–485; C. Deutsch, *Lady Wisdom, Jesus and the Sages: Metaphor and Social Context in Matthew's Gospel* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996); C. Deutsch, "Wisdom in Matthew: Transformation of a Symbol," *NovT* 32 (1990): 13–47.

<sup>53</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making. A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SCM, 1980), 196–206.

### 2.2.3. *Qumran Wisdom Text with Beatitudes (4Q525 [4QBeat])*<sup>54</sup>

4Q525 is a wisdom text in Hebrew preserved in twenty-three fragments. It is in Herodian script (late first century BCE). Fragment 2 contains a list of five beatitudes, introduced in biblical style with the word אֲשֶׁרִי. As J. A. Fitzmyer has noted, such a collection of beatitudes in a pre-Christian Palestinian Jewish writing provides an interesting example of a literary form that until now was attested only in the Greek New Testament, or in literature dependent on the gospels of Matthew 5 and Luke 6. It provides a background for the collection of beatitudes in these two gospels. The similarity between the Qumran and New Testament texts is at the level of literary form. With regard to content, the Qumran text is about wisdom and the Jewish Law, and the New Testament is eschatological in character, about the Kingdom.<sup>55</sup> With regard to the question of the historical Jesus, the question remains whether the original list of the New Testament beatitudes comes from Jesus himself or from the early Christian community, and whether the immediate Semitic source of the Greek Q text was in Hebrew or Aramaic.

The Qumran text reads:<sup>56</sup>

Frag. 2 col. II, 1 [Blessed is the one who speaks the truth] with a pure heart, and does not slander with his tongue.

Blessed are those who adhere to his laws, 2 and do not adhere to perverted paths.

Blessed are those who rejoice in her, and do not explore insane paths.

3 Blessed are those who search for her with pure hands, and do not importune her with a treacherous heart.

Blessed is the man who attains Wisdom,

4 and walks in the law of the Most High,

and dedicates his heart to her ways,

and is constrained by her discipline

and always takes pleasure in her punishments; . . .

<sup>54</sup> See E. Puech, "4Q525 et les péripécopes des béatitudes en Ben Sira et Matthieu," *RB* 98 (1991): 75–96; J. A. Fitzmyer, "A Palestinian Jewish Collection of Beatitudes," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 111–129. The translation here given is that by F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 395.

<sup>55</sup> For a comparison of the Beatitudes in the Qumran text with those of Matthew see G. J. Brooke, "The Wisdom of Matthew's Beatitudes (4QBeat and Mt 5:3–12)," *ScrBul* 18 (1989): 33–41.

<sup>56</sup> In the translation by F. García Martínez, *The Dead Scrolls Translated*, 395.



### 2.3. *Apocalyptic Texts and Eschatological-Type Documents*

#### 2.3.1. *Introduction*

The two canonical apocalyptic writings are the Book of Daniel and the New Testament Apocalypse of John (Revelation). There is also the 'Little Apocalypse' of Mark 13. This particular genre is older than Daniel and had a continuous history in Judaism until about 100 CE.

#### 2.3.2. *The Enochic Corpus*

Jewish apocalyptic has its richest manifestation in the various compositions connected with Enoch, put together in the *Book of Enoch* (1 Enoch). Thus we have 1 Enoch 1–36, *The Book of the Watchers* or *Enoch's Heavenly Journeys* from the third century BCE, if not earlier; 1 Enoch 72–82, *The Astronomical Book of Enoch*, from before 200 BCE. Then we have the apocalyptic section of the *Book of Daniel* (Dan 7–12) from about 164 BCE, and contemporary with it Enoch's *Book of Dream Visions* (1 Enoch 83–90) from about 165 BCE, followed somewhat later by another Enochic composition, *The Admonitions of Enoch* (1 Enoch 91–107; 100–75 BCE).

#### 2.3.3. *The Similitudes of Enoch*

(1 Enoch 37–71) deal with the coming judgment of the righteous and wicked, the Messiah, the Son of Man ("that Son of Man"), Paradise, the resurrection of the righteous.<sup>57</sup> The "Son of Man" is identified with Enoch. The relationship of this section of the *Book of Enoch* with the New Testament has been much discussed, especially with regard to the designation "Son of Man" and possible or likely influence of Enoch on the New Testament usage.<sup>58</sup> Because, unlike the other sections of 1 Enoch, no manuscripts or fragments of the *Similitudes* have been found among the Qumran Scrolls, J. T. Milik has argued that they are a Christian, not a Jewish composition, possibly from the third century CE. This viewpoint has not been generally accepted. There are strong

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<sup>57</sup> On the "Similitudes" see, among others, G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 214–223; J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 177–193.

<sup>58</sup> In Collins's opinion (*The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 192), "The Similitudes did not significantly influence the New Testament in this matter."

arguments in favour of a first century CE date, prior to 70 CE, possibly early or mid-first century.<sup>59</sup>

#### 2.3.4. *The Assumption (Testament) of Moses*

This work is a farewell discourse given by Moses prior to his death. It is in the format of a predictive delineation of the history of Israel from their entrance into Canaan until the end of time. It has been preserved in Latin, which is a translation from Greek, itself regarded as a version of a Semitic (Aramaic or Hebrew) original. It has reference to a mysterious person called Taxo (chapter 9) and to the thirty-four year reign and death of a king, obviously Herod the Great. Different dates of composition have been advanced: after the Second Jewish revolt (132–135 CE), Maccabean times, the first century BCE to before 70 CE. In any event it seems that it represents a form of Palestinian belief and expression of the time of Jesus. It has a description of the appearance of God's kingdom at end time (*As. Mos.* 10.1–10), the opening section of which merits reproduction here. It reads:<sup>60</sup>

Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation.  
Then the devil will have an end.  
Yea, sorrow will be led away with him.  
Then will be filled the hands of the messenger,  
who is in the highest place appointed.  
Yea, he will at once avenge them of their enemies  
For the Heavenly One will arise from his kingly throne.  
Yea, he will go forth from his holy habitation  
with indignation and wrath on behalf of his sons.

#### 2.3.5. *4 Ezra (ca. 95–120 CE)*

*4 Ezra* (2 Esdras 3–14) was composed after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. In this work, as in the contemporary work 2 Baruch and the canonical Apocalypse of John, Rome is designated as Babylon, destroyer of the First Temple. In the course of seven scenes (dialogues and visions) between the seer Ezra and God various topics are treated: the problem of evil, Israel's sufferings, God's plans for the last times, the New Jerusalem. Various signs of the end

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<sup>59</sup> Thus Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 178, with reference to the similar views of J. G. Greenfield, M. Stone, D. W. Suter, and M. Black. M. A. Knibb prefers as a date 70–135 CE (after the destruction of Qumran).

<sup>60</sup> In the translation by J. Priest, *OTP* 1, 932–933.

are given on different occasions. After the signs foretold have come to pass there will be a temporary messianic kingdom (*4 Ezra* 7:26–44). In the ‘Eagle Vision’ in the fifth scene (chaps. 11–12) symbolism is used to describe the Roman persecution of the Jews, much as the canonical *Apocalypse* describes Rome as a dragon. In the sixth scene (chap. 13) a mysterious man arises from the sea. He is the pre-existent Messiah.

### 2.3.6. *2 Baruch* (ca. 100 CE)

*2 Baruch* or *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* (preserved in full only in Syriac), like *4 Ezra*, is a Jewish response to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. It is generally believed to have been composed 95–120 CE, probably in Hebrew, possibly in Greek. It has similarities with *4 Ezra*, to be explained either through dependence on it, or dependence of both on the same or similar sources. The work seems to be a literary unity. It narrates Baruch’s fastings, his prophetic warnings, and the three visions he received explaining the destruction of the city.

*4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, from our point of view, are the end of a long line of apocalyptic writings from Enoch through Daniel, and Qumran, from ca. 200 BCE to 100 CE.

### 2.3.7. *Testament of Abraham: Vision of the Two Gates; Bosom of Abraham; Mansions of the Just* (*Testament of Abraham*; 1st century CE?)<sup>61</sup>

The work commonly known as the *Testament of Abraham* (a title found in only part of the transmission history), dealing with Abraham’s encounter with death, is really not a Testament. The Greek manuscripts fall into two clearly distinct recensions—the longer (A) and the shorter (B). These cannot be harmonized, although both may stem from a single earlier form. There has been a great diversity of opinion as to whether the work is a Jewish or Christian composition, whether the language of the original was Greek or Semitic (Hebrew), and whether the work was written in Egypt or Palestine. There is likewise a diversity of opinion about the date of composition, with regard to each of the

<sup>61</sup> See G. W. E. Nickelsburg, “Stories of Biblical and Early Post-Biblical Times,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 33–68, at 60–64; H. C. Cavallin, “Das Leben nach dem Tode im Spätjudentum und im frühen Christentum,” *ANRW* II 19.1 (1979): 240–343, at 302–304 (“Das Testament Abrahams,” with the Greek text of Recension A 11 and Recension B. 8 on the two gates).

two recensions and to the original, ranging from the third century BCE to the fourth and fifth century CE (or even later). There is now rather general agreement that the Christian content of the work is minimal. It is basically Jewish. M. Delcor has argued that the original *Testament of Abraham*, which lies behind both recensions, was a Jewish work which incorporated a variety of traditions, some traceable to the Septuagint, some paralleled in the Palestinian Targums. He believes that it was written in Egypt, perhaps by a member of the sect of the Therapeutae, about the beginning of the Christian era. There is general agreement that the original language of A was Greek. Some have argued that the language of B was Hebrew. E. P. Sanders believes that the original language of both A and B was Greek, and the place of origin Egypt. He believes that the original work combined genres and motifs known to the author from other literature: some aspects of the testament genre, the “ascension” or heavenly tour genre, and the motif of resistance to death, apparently borrowed from the Moses traditions. In his view it seems best to assume a date for the original of ca. 100 CE, plus or minus twenty-five years. This original work was rewritten by more than one hand, and A in particular shows traces of late redactional activity, including some late words and traces of New Testament passages. But the redactional activity did not extend to the work’s content. If it did, it would undoubtedly have resulted in a pronounced Christianising of the text, especially the judgment scene. In Sander’s opinion, despite being repeatedly copied by Christian scribes, the Testament of Abraham in both recensions remains unmistakably Jewish.<sup>62</sup>

The Testament of Abraham paints a remarkable portrait of Abraham in his fear of death, and in his lack of understanding of sinners—unlike God. On being told by God through a message by the archangel Michael (in A, but not in B, called *archistratêgos*, rendered by E. P. Sanders as “Commander-in-chief”; see LXX Josh 5:13–15) to prepare for death, Abraham refuses to accept the message voluntarily. He later agrees to accept if he is first given a vision of the inhabited world. He is taken in orbit in a chariot and given a view of people at their daily work, then of persons involved in sin of various kinds. At Abraham’s request these are immediately punished (by death). God gets alarmed, and calls on Michael: “O Michael, Commander-in chief, command the chariot to stop and turn Abraham away, lest he should see the entire

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<sup>62</sup> E. P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” *OTP* 1, 875.

inhabited world. For if he were to see all those who pass their lives in sin, he would destroy everything that exists. For behold, Abraham has not sinned and has no mercy on sinners. But I made the world, and I do not want to destroy anyone of them, but I delay the death of the sinner until he should convert and live. Now conduct Abraham to the first gate of heaven, so that he may see the judgments and the recompenses and repent over the souls of sinners he has destroyed” (*T. Ab.* 10. 12–15). The text continues (*T. Ab.* 11.1–12) as follows:<sup>63</sup>

Michael turned the chariot and brought Abraham toward the east, to the first gate of heaven. And Abraham saw two ways. The first way was strait and narrow and the other broad and spacious. [And he saw there two gates. One gate was broad], corresponding to the broad way, and one gate was strait, corresponding to the strait way.... [The] strait gate is (the gate) of the righteous, which leads to life, and those who enter through it come into Paradise.... [T]he broad gate is (the gate) of the sinners, which leads to destruction and to eternal punishment.... [M]any are the ones who are destroyed, while few are the ones who are saved. For among seven thousand there is scarcely to be found one saved soul, righteous and undefiled.

As Sanders remarks,<sup>64</sup> the commentators correctly note that the theme of two ways is a common feature of Jewish literature. Sanders also notes that the verbatim agreement between this passage and Matt 7:13–14, however, is marked: the combination of “gate” and “way,” the use of precisely the same four adjectives (στενή, τεθλιμμένη, πλατεία and εὐρύχωρος), and the phrases “which leads to life” and “which leads to destruction” which also appear in this chapter. Apart from such minor verbal additions, however, in Sanders’ opinion the text can be accepted as Jewish.

God commands that Abraham be taken into Paradise, “where there are the tents of my righteous ones and (where) the mansions of my holy ones, Isaac and Jacob, are in his bosom, where there is no toil, no grief, no moaning, but peace and exultation and endless life” (*T. Ab.* 20.13–14). The expression “bosom of Abraham” recalls Luke 16:22–23, the “mansions” (*monai*), John 14:2. In the account of Abraham’s death, “bosom of Abraham” is inappropriate: he and his descendants Isaac and Jacob are unwittingly presented as already in Paradise.

<sup>63</sup> Translation by E. P. Sanders, *OTP* 1, 888.

<sup>64</sup> E. P. Sanders, in *OTP* 1, 888 note b.

If this work is really Jewish, it gives us a rare insight into thought patterns and language of a world fundamentally that of Jesus: the interest in the small number of those to be saved (Luke 15:23), the theme of the many and the few (Matt 22:14; 4 Ezra 8:3), the broad and the narrow gate (door) (Matt 7:13–14; Luke 13:22–24).

#### 2.4. *Testaments (Farewell Discourses)*<sup>65</sup>

“Testaments” are a recognized genre of Second Temple Judaism, with roots already in the Hebrew Bible. While there are certain difficulties in defining the genre exactly, Testaments are characterised by a narrative framework which includes an introduction in which the testator gathers family or friends to give his near-death speech, which generally has a moral exhortation and predictions concerning the future. A number of the Pseudepigrapha classed as Testaments are generally dated to the first century BCE or the first century CE. It was thus a genre well known in first-century Palestine, and as such is of interest in the examination of questions having to do fundamentally about Jesus. Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse” (John 13–17) and Paul’s farewell address to the elders of the church of Ephesus (Acts 20:17–38) can be considered as belonging to this genre.

#### 2.5. *Messianic-type Expectations*

##### 2.5.1. *Introduction*

“Fundamentally about Jesus” is fundamentally about Jesus the Christ. The term “Christ” would appear to have become a personal name for Jesus by the forties of the first century. The original connotations of χριστός, “the anointed,” “the Messiah,” may have by then been lost in the expanding Christian Jesus movement. There seems to have been a rather general expectation of the Messiah (together with Elijah and “the

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<sup>65</sup> See J. J. Collins, “Testaments,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. M. Stone, CRINT 2.2 (Assen: van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 325–355; J. H. Charlesworth, Introduction (to Testaments), in *OTP* 1, 773; R. A. Kugler, “Testaments,” in *Justification and Variegated Nomism. Vol. 1. The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, 189–213; M. McNamara, *Intertestamental Literature*, 86–105 (with emphasis on the theology of the writings). The texts are translated by various authors in *OTP* 1, 775–995; as a background to Jesus’ farewell discourse see R. E. Brown, in *The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*, AB (London: Chapman, 1966), 597–601 (The literary genre of the Last Discourse).

prophet”) in Jesus’ day in Palestine. The Gospel of John may be representing historical fact when he has John the Baptist deny that he is the Messiah, as he was suspected of being by the Pharisees (John 1:19–28). At Caesarea Philippi Peter expressed the view of Jesus’ disciples that he was the Messiah (Mark 8:27–30), a view apparently not shared by the bulk of the people, who had mixed opinions of Jesus’ identity (John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the prophets; Mark 8:28). It will, then, be of some interest to see what roughly contemporary documents have to say on the Jewish Messiah.

While by virtue of the word Messiah, *χριστός*, anointed, could designate a king or a priest, the general meaning of the word in first-century Palestine was the son of David, expected to come to restore the Davidic dynasty and fulfil the promises made to David. These promises enshrined in 2 Sam 7:7–17 were kept alive in the liturgy. However, after the destruction of the Davidic dynasty with the destruction of Jerusalem in 585 and the failure to have it restored under Persian rule in 520 (see Hag 1–3, esp. 3:23), interest in messianism and the restoration of the house of David seems to have waned, to return again only about 100 BCE.

2.5.2. *Messianic Expectations in the Psalms of Solomon Pss. Sol. 17*<sup>66</sup>  
 The *Psalms of Solomon* (18 in number) have been fully preserved in Greek manuscripts and defectively in some Syriac texts. It is generally agreed that the original language was Hebrew. There is no evidence of any Christian influence on the work, which is Jewish through and through. From internal evidence we can say that the writer believed himself to belong to the circle of the righteous (*Pss. Sol.* 3.3–8; 9.3; 15.13). His opponents are described as the unrighteous (*Pss. Sol.* 15.4–13), sinners, lawless ones. They are accused of general misbehaviour and specifically of having set up a non-Davidic monarchy (*Pss. Sol.* 17.4–6) and with having profaned the Temple and its sacrifices (2.3; 8.11–12). The writer and his circles await in patience, and pray for, the advent of

<sup>66</sup> See G. L. Davenport, “The ‘Anointed of the Lord’ in Psalms of Solomon 17,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. J. J. Collins and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, SBLSCS 12 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980), 67–92; J. H. Charlesworth, “The Concept of the Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha,” in W. Haase and H. Temporini, *ANRW II* 19.1 (1979): 188–218, at 197–199 (Pss of Solomon); J. J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 49–56; idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 143–144.

the legitimate Davidic Messianic king (17.21–35; see also 18.5–9). The work is generally seen to refer to Pompey's capture of Jerusalem in 63 BCE and his death in Egypt in 48 BCE to which three of the Psalms refer (*Pss. Sol.* 2, 8, 17), and is regarded as having been composed in part at least about that time. The work may have been produced by a "school" rather than by a single author. While it was once believed that the author (or authors) belonged to the Pharisaic party, it is now recognised that we know too little of the religious groupings of Palestine of that period to affirm this. There may have been groups other than the three well-known ones, Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes.<sup>67</sup>

*Pss. Sol.* 17 is clearly heavily influenced by the biblical Ps 2. There is no use of Ps 110, a Davidic psalm par excellence. Possibly the linking of kingship and priesthood in this psalm may explain this. The assumption of both kingship and high priesthood by the Maccabees Jonathan and Simon (1 Macc 14:41) was highly offensive to Essenes and Pharisees.

In *Pss. Sol.* 17 the psalmist prays for the coming of the Messiah, the Lord Messiah (*Pss. Sol.* 17:21–25, 30–32):<sup>68</sup>

See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God. Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers...to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar; to shatter all their substance with an iron rod (Ps 2:9); to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth (see Apoc 2:16)...At his warning the nations will flee from his presence.... There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.

Similarly in *Pss. Sol.* 18:5–9. I cite vv. 5–6:<sup>69</sup>

May God cleanse Israel for the day of mercy in blessing,  
for the appointed day when his Messiah will reign.  
Blessed are those born in those days,  
to see the good things of the Lord  
which he will do for the coming generation;  
(which will be) under the rod of discipline of the Lord Messiah,  
in the fear of his God...

<sup>67</sup> See S. P. Brock, in *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, H. E. D. Sparks, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 651; R. B. Wright in *OTP* 2, 642.

<sup>68</sup> In the translation by R. B. Wright, *OTP* 2, 667, arguing in note to v. 32 for the retention of the manuscript reading "Lord Messiah."

<sup>69</sup> In the translation by R. B. Wright, *OTP* 2, 669, again arguing for the translation of *christou kuriou* as "the Lord Messiah," rather than "the Lord's Messiah."



### 2.5.3. *Messianic Expectations at Qumran*<sup>70</sup>

Here it is not necessary to enter in detail into the messianic expectations of the Qumran community. This is already well known, and can be found in a variety of books dealing with the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>71</sup> They looked forward to the coming of the Royal Davidic triumphant Messiah, whom the texts can also refer to as the “Branch of David,” the “Messiah of Israel,” the “Prince of [all] the Congregation” and the “Sceptre.” They also speak of the advent of a second priestly Messiah, named the “Messiah of Aaron.” They look forward as well to the coming of a person called “a prophet” (with citation of Deut 18:18–19). The text known as a Midrash on the Last Days (4QFlorilegium) (4Q174) (dating probably from the late first century BCE) contains a number of biblical passages which it interprets of the (Qumran) community and its expectations. Thus 2 Sam 7:10 is understood of the “House” (Temple) that God will build for the (Qumran) community in the end of the days. The temple is identified with their community. “This is the House into which [the unclean shall] never [enter, nor the uncircumcised,] nor the Ammonite, nor the Moabite, nor the half-breed, nor the foreigner, nor the stranger, ever; for there shall my Holy Ones be.” 2 Sam 7:11c–14 is interpreted of “the Branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time. As it is written, I will raise up the tent of David that is fallen (Amos 9:11). That is to say, the fallen tent of David is he who shall arise to save Israel.” A little later Ps 2:1 (“Why do the nations rage...”) is cited and interpreted: “Interpreted, this saying concerns [the kings of the nations] who shall [rage against] the elect of Israel in the last days.”<sup>72</sup> A text somewhat similar to the former, known as a Messianic Anthology or Testimonia (4Q175), is dated to the early first century BCE. It contains five (messianic) texts, two from Deuteronomy on the prophet like Moses (Deut 5:28–29; 18:18–19), Num 24:15–17 with the oracle of Balaam on the Star out of Jacob who will crush the temples of Moab (Royal messiah), Deut 33:8–11 with the blessing of Levi (Priestly Messiah), and Josh 6:26 followed by a text from the apocryphal “Psalms of Joshua.”<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> See J. A. Fitzmyer, “Qumran Messianism,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2000), 73–110.

<sup>71</sup> For instance Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. The revised and extended 4th ed., 60.

<sup>72</sup> Translation by G. Vermes, 353–354, at 354.

<sup>73</sup> Ed. *DJD* 5, 57–60. English translations in Vermes, *The Dead Scrolls in English*, 355–356; F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 137–138.

Together with these explicitly messianic texts from Qumran we may also consider some others which look to the future hope of God's saving visitation of his people, inspired by prophetic texts, especially the latter half of the Book of Isaiah. They indicate a presence in Israel of fulfilment not necessarily connected with a warring Messiah.

Here we examine two such texts from Qumran.

(a) *4QMessianic Apocalypse* (4Q521).<sup>74</sup> The Qumran manuscript is from the first quarter of the first century BCE. This work is classed as a wisdom text. Its first editor, Emile Puech, described it as an apocalypse, a designation called into doubt by J. J. Collins and J. A. Fitzmyer since the fragment reveals "none of the formal characteristics of apocalyptic revelation."<sup>75</sup> E. Puech believes it exhibits belief in the resurrection, a disputed point which need not detain us here.<sup>76</sup> The text clearly speaks of a Messiah (God's Messiah), but a prophetic rather than a kingly one, as J. J. Collins has remarked, acting as God's agent or eschatological prophet.<sup>77</sup> The composition draws heavily on Ps 146 and Deutero-Isaiah. God himself is given as the agent of the marvels in the new age. The text is fragmentary. I give the relevant portions of it here.<sup>78</sup>

Frag. 2 col. II, 1[for the heavens and the earth will listen to his Messiah, [למשיח] 2 [and all] that is in them will not turn away from the holy precepts, Be encouraged, you who are seeking the Lord in his service! . . . 7 For he will honour the devout upon the throne of eternal royalty, 8 freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twisted. 9 Ever shall I cling to those who hope. In his mercy he will jud[ge,] 10 and from no-one shall the fruit [of] good [deeds] be delayed, 11 and the Lord will perform marvellous acts such as have not existed, just as he sa[id] 12 for he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live (מתיים יחיה), he will proclaim good news to the meek (ענוים יבשר)

<sup>74</sup> Ed. E. Puech, *DJD* 25, 1–38; pls. I–III (with French translation of frag. 2, p. 11); idem, "Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)," *RevQ* 15.60 (1992): 475–522; idem, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: immortalité, resurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien*, vols I, II, Études Biblique Nouvelle Série 21–22 (Paris: Gabalda, 1993), 627–692; J. J. Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," *Dead Sea Discoveries* [electronic journal] 1 (1994): 98–112; J. García Martínez, "Los Mesías de Qumran. Problemas de un traductor," *Sef* 33 (1993): 345–360, esp. 347–352; J. A. Fitzmyer, "Qumran Messianism," 93–95.

<sup>75</sup> J. J. Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," 98; J. A. Fitzmyer, "Qumran Messianism," 94.

<sup>76</sup> See J. A. Fitzmyer, "Qumran Messianism," 95.

<sup>77</sup> J. J. Collins, "The Works of the Messiah," 98–99.

<sup>78</sup> In the translation by F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 394.

13 give lavishly [to the need]y, lead the exiled and enrich the hungry.  
14 [...] and all [...]

(b) *The Heavenly Prince Melchizedek (11QMelch = 11Q13)*.<sup>79</sup> The first-century BCE document sigled 11QMelch (= 11Q13) is preserved in thirteen fragments. It takes the form of an eschatological midrash in which the proclamation of liberty to the captives at the end of the days announced in Isa 61:1 is understood as forming part of the general restoration of property during the year of Jubilee (Lev 25:13), which is seen in the Bible as a remission of debts (Deut 15:2). The work cites these biblical texts, but also others, such as Isa 52:7 (“your God reigns...”). The heavenly deliverer in this text is called Melchizedek, who is to be understood here as the archangel Michael. The text is a product of the Qumran community. It uses the *peshet* form of interpretation. It expresses the expectations and hopes of the Qumran community. However, the biblical texts on which the work is based were the common property of all Israel, and a number of them may well have been high in Jewish consciousness in the first century of our era, during the days of Jesus and the formation and publication of the gospel tradition. They need not have had any necessary connection with an angelic redeemer such as Michael (Melchizedek). According to Luke (Luke 4:16–21) Jesus proclaimed that the redemption announced in Isa 61:1 was being fulfilled in his own person. I give the text in the translation of F. García Martínez.<sup>80</sup>

Col. II 1 [...] your God... [...] 2 [...] And as for what he said: (Lev 25:13) “In this year of jubilee, [you shall return, each one, to his respective property, as is written: (Deut 15:2) “This is] 3 the manner (of effecting) the [release]: every creditor shall release what he lent [to his neighbour. He shall not coerce his neighbour or his brother when] the release for God [has been proclaimed].” 4 [Its interpretation for the last days refers

<sup>79</sup> On this text see A. S. van der Woude, “Melchizedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt in den neugefundenen eschatologischen Midraschim aus Qumran Höhle XI,” *OTS* 14 (1965): 334–373; M. de Jonge and A. S. van der Woude, “11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament,” *NTS* 12 (1965–66): 301–326; J. A. Fitzmyer, “Now this Melchizedek...” (Heb 7:1)” and “Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11,” in idem, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Chapman, 1971), 221–243; 245–267; new edition and translation of the text in F. García Martínez, E. J. C. Tigchelaar and A. S. van der Woude, eds., *DJD* 23: *Qumran Cave 11.II (11Q2–18)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); for col. II, 1–19 Hebrew text, 224–225; English translation, 229–230.

<sup>80</sup> F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 139–140.

to the captives, about whom he said: (Isa 61:1) 'To proclaim liberty to the captives.' And he will make 5 their rebels prisoners [...] and of the inheritance of Melchizedek, for [...] and they are the inheritance of Melchizedek, who 6 will make them return. He will proclaim liberty for them, to free them from [the debt] of all their iniquities. ... And about him he said: (Ps 7:8-9) 'Above it you return to the heights, God will judge the peoples.' As for what he said: (Ps 82:2) 'How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah.' 12 Its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot, who were rebels [all of them] turning aside from the commandments of God [to commit evil.] 13 But, Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of God's judgements [on this day, and they shall be freed from the hands] of Belial and from the hands of all the spirits [of his lot.] 14 To his aid (shall come all the gods of [justice; he] is the one [who will prevail on this day over] all the sons of God, and he will pre[side over] this [assembly.] 15 This is the day of [peace about which God] spoke [of old through the words of Isaiah] the prophet, who said: (Isa 52:7) 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger [מבשר] who announces peace, of the messenger [מבשר] of good who announces salvation,] saying to Zion: "your God [reigns.]" 17 Its interpretation; The mountains are the prophets... 18 And the messenger [המבשר] is [the anointed] of the spirit about whom Dan[iel] spoke [...and the messenger [מבשר] of] 19 good who announces salvation is the one about whom it is written that [he will send him (Isa 61:2-3) 'to comfort the afflicted...']. To comfort the afflicted', its interpretation:] to instruct them in all the ages of the world....

#### 2.5.4. *Messianic Expectations in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*<sup>81</sup>

There is little agreement among scholars with regard to the original language, provenance or date of composition of the work known as *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, extant in Greek, Armenian and Slavonic. There are currently three main views with regard to the work. One is that it is Jewish but interpolated by a Christian. Variant forms of this view are currently defended. An earlier view was that the work is Christian, not Jewish, a position more recently defended by M. de Jonge, who stresses that in any case the final stage of the composition is Christian and that it is difficult to go behind it, a viewpoint

<sup>81</sup> See A. Hultgård, *L'Eschatologie des Testaments des Douze Patriarches*, 2 vols. (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977, 1981); A. Hultgård, "The 'Ideal' Levite, the Davidic Messiah and the Saviour Priest in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, 93-110; M. de Jonge, *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology, and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

also upheld by John J. Collins.<sup>82</sup> A third view, put forward after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (principally by A. Dupont Sommer and M. Philonenko), is that the work is of Essene origin. This view has little following. Attempts have been made to isolate what are regarded Christian interpolations from the Jewish original, and even to trace stages of Jewish formation before a Christian redaction. De Jonge repeatedly pointed out that much of the material could have been written by either Christian or Jew. Given this variety of opinion, views with regard to a date of the original differ—from Maccabean times to the second century CE or even later. With regard to the place of composition, the predominant view is that it was Egypt; another opinion opts for Syria.

Despite the uncertainties regarding the work I here give two texts from it, one on the Royal Davidic messiah, the other on the messiah from the tribe of Levi (Priestly Messiah).

(a) *The Davidic Messiah (Testament of Judah 23)*. The *Testament of Judah 23* speaks of the sins of Judah's descendants, which will bring punishment on them, including the consumption of God's sanctuary by fire. Then salvation comes, in the advent of a person who can be regarded as the Royal Messiah (*T. 12 Pabr., T. Jud. 24*):<sup>83</sup>

And after this there shall arise for you a Star from Jacob in peace: And a man shall arise from my posterity like the Sun of righteousness, walking with the sons of men in gentleness and righteousness, and in him will be found no sin. And the heavens will be opened upon him to pour out the spirit as a blessing of the Holy Father. And he will pour the spirit of grace on you. And you shall be sons in truth, and you will walk in his first and final decrees. This is the Shoot of God Most High; this is the fountain for the life of all humanity. Then he will illumine the scepter of my kingdom, and from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations, to judge and to save all that call on the Lord...

(b) *The Priestly Messiah (Testament of Levi 18)*. The *Testament of Levi 18* also tells of the divine punishments in store for the priestly house

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<sup>82</sup> J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem. Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 154; idem, *The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 133–143 (on the work's messianic expectations, 141–142).

<sup>83</sup> In the translation by H. C. Kee, *OTP* 1, 801.

of Levi. However, a new age will dawn with the advent of a new priest, who may be regarded as the Priestly Messiah. The relevant section of the *Testament of Levi* 18 is as follows:<sup>84</sup>

When vengeance will have come upon them from the Lord, the priesthood will lapse. And then the Lord will raise up a new priest to whom all the words of the Lord will be revealed. He shall effect the judgment of truth over the earth for many days. And his star shall rise in heaven like a king; kindling the light of knowledge as day is illumined by the sun. . . .

The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac. And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water].

The Jewish nature of this text can be seriously called into question, not least because of the pacific understanding of the Oracle of Balaam (on the star from Jacob) in Num 24:17, generally interpreted in early Jewish literature as referring to a warlike figure.

#### 2.5.5. *Messianic Expectations in the (Palestinian) Targums, especially Num 24:17–24*

The use of evidence from the Targums (Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible) for a study of the New Testament or first-century Judaism has been called into question over the past half century, chiefly because of the difficulty in dating the Targums or targumic traditions. For practical purposes, by reason of an early date the only Targums that are in question are Onqelos and the Palestinian Targums for the Pentateuch and the Targums of the Prophets. Over the past decades Bruce Chilton has made a deep study of the Targum of Isaiah in relation to the message of Jesus, and his work has impressed many. In his monograph *Jesus and His Contemporaries. Comparative Studies* Craig E. Evans has an excursus on early messianic traditions in the Targums. He examines in some detail thirteen texts from the Targums of the Pentateuch and the Prophets and three from Targum Psalms. At the end of his review he gives his concluding comments:<sup>85</sup>

What this survey shows is that whereas much, even most, of the messianic tradition in the Targums derives from times after the New Testament,

<sup>84</sup> In the translation by H. C. Kee, *OTP* 1, 794–95. The concluding words (within square brackets) are regarded by Kee apparently as an interpolation (see Mark 1:9–11).

<sup>85</sup> C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries. Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 155–181, at 181.

a fair portion of it reflects interpretive traditions and ways of speaking from the first century and even earlier. Bruce Chilton's work on the Isaiah Targum has shown how at many points Jesus' utterances, as well as his general concept of the kingdom of God, cohere with targumic language and themes. Jesus research cannot, therefore, neglect the Targums.

There are really only two texts in the Targums of the Pentateuch in which all the Targums (Onqelos and the different recensions of the Palestinian Targum) give a messianic interpretation, namely Gen 49:11–12 and Num 24:17–24. To these we may add the Palestinian Targums of Gen 3:15 where healing of the son(s) of the woman is predicted in the days of King Messiah: "For her son, however, there will be a remedy, but for you serpent, there will be no remedy, for they will make peace (שפיוּתִיה) in the future, in the days of king Messiah." The messianic interpretation of Gen 49:11–12 is a natural expansion, given the underlying Hebrew text. (Hebrew in RSV: "The scepter shall not pass from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of his peoples.")

Here I pay special attention to the Palestinian Targums paraphrase of the last oracle of Balaam (Num 24:14–24)—on the star to arise out of Jacob. I have treated of this in detail elsewhere.<sup>86</sup> The warlike interpretation of the oracle is found in the Qumran War Scroll (1QM; 1QWar Scroll), a work composed probably in the last decades of the first century BCE or the beginning of the first century CE.<sup>87</sup> The work is on the final war against the Kittim (Romans), possibly combined with the final forty-year war against the Gentile world as well.<sup>88</sup> In 1QM, col. XI there is a profession of faith that the battle is God's, from heaven. "Truly, the battle is Thine! Their bodies are crushed by the might of thy hand and there is no man to bury them" (1QM XI, 1). Next, this principle is exemplified through Goliath and the Philistines, then by Balaam's oracle: "Truly the battle is Thine and the power from Thee! It is not ours. Our strength and the power of our hands accomplish no mighty deeds except by Thy power and by the might of Thy great valour. Thus thou hast taught us from ancient times, saying, *A star shall come out of Jacob...*" (col. II, 5–6), with citation of Num

<sup>86</sup> M. McNamara, "Early Exegesis in the Palestinian Targum (Neofiti) Numbers 24," *PIBA* 16 (1993): 57–79. See also C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 56–57, 162–63.

<sup>87</sup> See G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 124.

<sup>88</sup> See G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 124.

24:17–19.<sup>89</sup> The oracle is interpreted in a warlike fashion again in the Damascus Document (CD) VII (from about 100 BCE), a text which also provides an insight into the manner in which the Qumran community could adapt a biblical text and reinterpret it. Because of a belief of an exile of the community to Damascus Amos 5:26–27 is cited in an adapted form. The Hebrew Text of Amos in question reads (RSV): “You shall take up Sakkuth (= the tabernacle of) your king, and Kaiwan (= the basis) your star-god (כִּיּוֹן צִלְמֶכֶם כּוֹכַב אֱלֹהֵיכֶם) which you made for yourselves; therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord.” In the Damascus Document rewriting of this text all reference to idolatrous practices are omitted or reinterpreted: “And all the apostates were given up to the sword, but those who held fast escaped to the land of the north, as God said: I will exile the tabernacle (מִכּוֹת) of your king and the bases (כִּיּוֹן) of your statues from my tent to Damascus (Amos 5:25–26). The Books of the Law are the tabernacle of the king; as God said: I will raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen (Amos 9:13). The king is the congregation; and the bases of the statues are the Books of the Prophets whose sayings Israel despised. The star [of Amos’s original text] is the Interpreter of the Law who came to Damascus; as it is written: A star shall come forth out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel (Num 24:17). The sceptre is the prince of the whole congregation, and when he comes he shall smite all the children of Seth (Num 24:17).”<sup>90</sup>

In his history of the Jewish War, Josephus mentions that a prophecy was a major factor in moving the Jewish people to revolt in 66 CE. He writes: “But what more than all else incited them to the war was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in the sacred scriptures, to the effect that one from their own country would become ruler of the world. This they understood to mean someone of their own race, and many of their wise men went astray in that interpretation of it. The oracle, however, in reality signified the sovereignty of Vespasian, who was proclaimed Emperor on Jewish soil” (*War* 6.12–314). This Jewish oracle seems to have been known independently of Josephus by Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.13) and Suetonius (*Div. Vesp.* 4.5).

<sup>89</sup> In the translation by G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 136.

<sup>90</sup> In the translation by G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 103.



The oracle of Num 24:17 is also used in the *Testament of Judah* 24, in a text already cited: "And after this there shall arise for you a star from Jacob in peace." The association of the star of this particular oracle with peace, however, makes the Jewish origin of this passage of the Testaments doubtful, a suspicion in keeping with the views of many scholars on the Jewishness of the Testaments. In the first century of our era, and earlier, the oracle was interpreted as referring to war and victory over the Gentiles. This might urge caution in seeing a reference to the oracle in the star guiding the Magi. Had Matthew wanted to make such an association he could have here cited in full, as he does for other prophecies. Militaristic associations of the current interpretation of the oracle of Balaam may have made him avoid any use of it.

After this examination of the understanding of the 'star' oracle (Num 24:17) in Judaism at the turn of the era, we can now consider the paraphrase of the Palestinian Targum as presented in *Codex Neofiti*. The Hebrew Text (in the RSV rendering) of Num 24:17, we may recall, has:

17. I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh: a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab, and break down all the sons of Seth.... 19 By Jacob shall dominion be exercised, and the survivors of cities be destroyed!

This is rendered in the Palestinian Targums as follows (in the translation of *Neofiti*):

17. I see him, but he is not here now; I observe him, but he is not nigh. *A king is to arise from those of the house of Jacob, and a redeemer and ruler from those of the house of Israel; and he shall kill the mighty ones of the Moabites and blot out all the sons of Seth, and he shall cast out the owners of property...* 19. *A king is to arise from those of the house of Jacob, and he will blot out the one who has sinned from the sinful city, that is <Rome>...*<sup>91</sup>

The interpretation of the text, with the star and scepter understood as king and ruler, can clearly be understood as messianic, and as another witness to the militaristic understanding of an oracle that was to play a major role in the history of Palestine soon after Jesus' ministry.

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<sup>91</sup> Translation by M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Numbers*, 140. The copyist of *Neofiti* omits the name Rome, possibly to avoid censorship. The name Rome is in the three texts of the *Fragment Targum*.

### 3. *Some Concluding Observations*

At the end of this examination of some of the literary documents at our disposal for a study of issues fundamentally about Jesus, a few concluding observations may be permitted.

In a consideration of the literary documents bearing on the question “Fundamentally about Jesus,” pride of place must of course be given to the books of the Hebrew Bible, especially those seen as foretelling his coming and his preaching of the kingdom. The non-canonical documents from the later Second Temple period are in various ways connected with the Hebrew Scriptures, as continuing its worldview (as in the case of apocalyptic texts and testaments), as expansions or interpretations of scripture, or as legends connected with the biblical narrative.

The available evidence shows that there was a rich production of texts connected with Palestine between 200 BCE and 100 CE. The texts represent a variety of genres. Some can be connected with specific groups within Judaism, such as the Qumran sectaries, apocalyptic circles. Others appear to represent what is often described as “mainstream Judaism.”

In New Testament times some of the earlier texts were still being read and regarded as authoritative (as *1 Enoch* 1.9 in Jude 14). In the first century BCE and the first century CE a number of new texts, and in a variety of genres, were being composed, and with a variety of interests, within the Qumran community and outside it in Palestine in Hebrew and Aramaic, and also outside Palestine (Egypt, Antioch of Syria) in Greek.

These literary documents have a direct bearing on the gospel narrative about Jesus, whether with regard to literary genre (for instance apocalyptic, beatitudes), religious beliefs (for instance resurrection, messianic expectations), expansions and interpretations of scripture and other ways. They show that the Jesus of the gospel narratives stands squarely within Palestinian Jewish tradition.

It may be recalled that the literary documents here examined are but a section of those known to us, and that the number of texts fortunately preserved represents but a fraction of those composed during the period in question. It is also worth noting that the written documents still extant or now lost would represent but a fraction of the thought world of the living tradition of Jesus’ day and that of the early church.

Awareness of the literary documents may have a bearing not only on the question of the historical Jesus but also on our understanding of the formation of the gospel tradition and of the redactional work of the evangelists. A study of the New Testament belief that Jesus was raised from the dead *on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures* indicates that the early church was reflecting on its message against a midrashic (and targumic-type) exposition of the Bible, and that this was the case from a very early period—the late thirties at the latest.

A related question is Luke's relation to earlier sources. The third evangelist may be less 'creative' than is often supposed by some, for instance in the Ascension narrative with its mention of resurrection on the third day (Luke 24:46). Similarly with regard to the opening scene of Jesus' ministry at Nazareth, and Jesus' assertion that in him the prophecy of Isaiah (Isa 61:1–2; 58:6) was being fulfilled (Luke 4:16–19). While the presentation is Lukan, the Qumran texts (11QMelch; 4QMessianicApocalypse [4Q521]) show that fulfilment of such prophetic texts was awaited in Qumran and elsewhere.

These are but a few of the many ways in which the literary documents at our disposal may be used in a study of questions relating fundamentally to Jesus during his existence on earth and of questions relating to his person and teaching as these were reflected on in the early church.

## BACKGROUND III: THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CLIMATE IN WHICH JESUS OF NAZARETH PREACHED

WOLFGANG STEGEMANN

### 1. *Introduction*

Several years ago, in 1999, an international group of Jesus researchers held a symposium at Tutzing in Germany on “Jesus in new contexts.”<sup>1</sup> The goal of this academic meeting was to debate one segment of the discussions connected with the so-called Third Quest, viz. the methodologies entailed and the knowledge gained when questions from the sphere of the *social sciences* (social history, sociology, cultural anthropology) are utilized in Jesus research. I believe that there is a striking difference precisely on this point between the so-called “Third Quest for the historical Jesus” and its predecessors. The man from Nazareth and the community of disciples which he founded are no longer considered in isolation, but rather in the context of the existential world of Israel, and indeed of the Mediterranean region as a whole. Previously, Jesus was interpreted in detachment from the socio-cultural conditions of his age. He was isolated in the manner of a “monad” from the world in which he lived; at best, he was located in a special “world (of Jesus)” all of his own, which was surrounded by other “worlds.” It is true that the social circumstances of the life of Jesus and of the Jesus movement have been investigated repeatedly from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, but social-historical Jesus research remained a marginal activity.<sup>2</sup> It is only since the last third of the twentieth century that Jesus research has concentrated more strongly on *contexts* of the preaching, the praxis, and the general experiences of the man from Nazareth, other than those contexts which belong to the history of religions. These contexts are the politics, economy, and

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<sup>1</sup> This symposium is documented in W. Stegemann, B. J. Malina, and G. Theissen, eds., *Jesus in neuen Kontexten* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2002); ET: *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (Augsburg: Fortress Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> We should mention at least J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu. Eine kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962).

society of the period in question (i.e., roughly the first third of the first century of the Common Era), as well as the cultural and religious values, institutions, and practices in Israel, or Mediterranean culture in general, at that time.

Halvor Moxnes has spoken here of “space” and “place,” and has written an inspiring monograph which seeks to “put Jesus in his place”—the title of his book is programmatic.<sup>3</sup> Space does not allow me to develop my arguments with anything like the wealth of detail, the comprehensiveness, and the differentiation in Moxnes’ book; I must limit myself to some basic remarks about the *political* and *social* contexts or “places” of the preaching and the experiences of Jesus. I am afraid that all I have to offer are my own knowledge and insights about the “place” of Jesus, i.e., insights and knowledge drawn from the reading of ancient texts and modern academic secondary literature. These cannot lay claim to be an historiographical representation of “what really happened” (to use L. von Ranke’s phrase). And I am very well aware that my picture of the social and political conditions in which Jesus lived is itself an *academic construction*. We shall not discuss this aspect of the topic, which the theory of history shows to be fundamental, but I should like at least to mention briefly that subjective decisions are involved even in the fundamental principles of historical inquiry, which are based ultimately on personal evaluations of the available data, not on so-called objective facts. And I agree with the differentiation “between event, data, and fact” which James Dunn, following R. G. Collingwood, makes:

The historical ‘event’ belongs to the ir retrievable past. All the historian has available are the ‘data’ which have come down through history—personal diaries, reminiscences of eyewitnesses, reports constructed from people who were present, perhaps some archaeological artifacts, as well as circumstantial data about climate, commercial practice, and laws of the time, and so forth. From these the historian attempts to reconstruct the ‘facts.’ The facts are not to be identified as data; they are always an interpretation of the data.<sup>4</sup>

Let us take as an example the question—still an object of dispute—whether the Jesus movement arose in a social or political *crisis* and is

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<sup>3</sup> H. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 102. For a more detailed argument: W. Stegemann, *Jesus und seine Zeit* (Suttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2010), 124–127.

therefore a “crisis phenomenon” of some kind, or whether it developed in a period of peace in which there were indeed crises, but nothing unusual or abnormal. But what do the words “unusual” and “abnormal” mean here? To illustrate the problems involved, I quote from an essay by G. Theissen:<sup>5</sup>

When Jesus and his movement are interpreted from the perspective of social history, we find an alternative which can be summarized under the headings ‘crisis interpretation’ and ‘peace interpretation.’ The crisis interpretation says that the activity of the Jesus the Jewish charismatic can be understood only in connection with the social crisis of his age; to some extent, his activity is a response to this crisis. The ‘peace interpretation’ says that the time and place in which Jesus lived were relatively free of tensions and conflicts; Jesus’ peaceful message is better explained on the basis of this kind of area than on the basis of a social crisis.

Theissen cites several representatives of these two interpretations.<sup>6</sup> Naturally, a scholar’s assessment will depend on how he or she understands the term “crisis,” but this is not the main point here. What interests me is the fact that even on fundamental issues, the quest for the historical Jesus arrives at diametrically opposite decisions on the basis of *the same* “data.” These differences are due not least to the way in which individual scholars evaluate the existing data: if it is permissible to over-simplify, we may say that even in the high-level reflections involved in the differentiated analysis of data in the quest for the historical Jesus, one scholar affirms: “The glass is half-empty,” while another affirms with equal vigor: “The glass is half-full.” In the case of the crisis/peace interpretations, the question is: Do I regard the data about social conflicts and rebellious uprisings in Galilee or Judea at the time of Jesus (which certainly exist) as the tip of the iceberg, and

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<sup>5</sup> G. Theissen, “Jesus und die symbolpolitischen Konflikte seiner Zeit. Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte der Jesusforschung,” reprinted in G. Theissen, *Jesus als historische Gestalt. Beiträge zur Jesusforschung*, ed. Annette Merz (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 168–193, at 168.

<sup>6</sup> For the crisis interpretation, cf. R. A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence. Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); E. W. and W. Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte. Die Anfänge im Judentum und die Christuskommunitäten in der mediterranen Welt*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1997) (Eng. trans. by O. C. Dean Jr.: *The Jesus Movement. A Social History of Its First Century* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999]). For the peace interpretation, cf. from a social and economic perspective, E. P. Sanders, *Judaism. Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1987), 157–169; concentrating on Galilee (in contradistinction to Judea): S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels. Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 135–175.

conclude that there was a broad potential for crisis in Jewish society at that period; or do I regard these data as information about exceptional events which are in contrast to the broad societal experience of peace and the absence of conflict? I shall return to this problem below.

I understand the structural differentiation of a society as the attempt to reduce complexity to comprehensible factors. For example, we may distinguish between the following categories of factors: cultural (including religious), social, political, economic, and ecological (geography, climate, etc.).<sup>7</sup> I am of course aware that all these are inter-connected and that none of these societal sectors has clearly definable boundaries. For example, the cultural values and norms of a society always determine its social, economic, or political activity and the corresponding communication among its members. As K. C. Hanson and D. E. Oakman put it, "For Palestine in the time of Jesus, and the Mediterranean culture generally, kinship institutions conditioned politics; both in turn conditioned [and are conditioned by] religion and economy."<sup>8</sup>

Here, we shall study only one limited sector, viz. *social* and *political* factors in Jewish society at the time of Jesus. It is in the context defined by these factors that we can understand the preaching, praxis, and experiences of Jesus, or of the Jesus movement. I hope that the concept of "climate" in the title of this essay will alert the reader to the fact that I do not assume a *causal* connection between the political and societal conditions of life and the preaching and praxis of Jesus. Rather, I shall seek to describe the kind of social and political *context* in which the preaching, praxis, and fate of Jesus can take on a measure of plausibility.

## 2. *The Political Climate*

A man who proclaims that the kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou*) is drawing near (Mark 1:14–15 parr.), and summons twelve members (*hoi dôdeka*) from the group of his adherents to form a stable institution

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<sup>7</sup> On this, cf. also K. C. Hanson and D. E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus. Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). These two authors draw a distinction in their "General Model for First-Century Palestinian Society" between two fundamental factors, viz. "Historical Factors" and "Environmental Factors" ("Mediterranean climate; Geography of the Levant"), and between two systems, viz. "Cultural System" and "Social System" (p. 15).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

which represents the twelve tribes of the people of Israel (Mark 3:16–19 parr.; 1 Cor 15:5) and perhaps even installs them as joint rulers in the kingdom of God which he has proclaimed (Luke 22:28–30); a man who enters Jerusalem in the manner of the awaited Davidic Messiah-King (Mark 11:1–11 parr.), who carries out a demonstrative symbolic action in the temple precincts (Mark 11:15–19 parr.); a man who is finally condemned in Jerusalem by Rome’s prefect in Judea to die on a cross—how could such a man be understood without the political context of his period? The data mentioned here make it clear that Jesus’ activities took place in the *public* sphere of society, and probably also intended to exercise political *influence*, i.e., to *shape* or reshape his own society and possibly also to use (heavenly) power to *enforce demands and goals* in this society.

Jesus acted here within the context of established structures of government. When problems arose, the important decisions were taken ultimately by the procurator of Rome in *Syria* and the prefect of Rome in Judea, supported by the military and by the local elite in Galilee and Judea. In Judean and Galilean society at the time of Jesus, political government was represented primarily by the leading elite of the *Imperium Romanum*, which had dominated this region since the conquest of the Palestinian territory by Pompey in 63 BCE. The very names of Galilean towns—Tiberias, Caesarea Philippi, Bethsaida Julias, or the nearby Caesarea on the coast—betray the dominant position of Rome. And the infrastructure in the towns, like the regional network of roads, similarly betrays this influence.

Against the background of this infrastructure, the close link between the Jesus movement and *Capernaum* which we see in the gospels makes good sense. This town was situated on the north-west shore of the Sea of Galilee and was easily reached by land and sea routes. It is clear that Capernaum was a *minor urban center*, easily accessible via a good network of roads. D. C. Duling has offered a detailed picture of the network of roads in Galilee (and beyond).<sup>9</sup> Estimates of the population in archaeological publications vary considerably. Meyers and Strange base their calculations on a geographical site of Capernaum

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<sup>9</sup> D. C. Duling, “The Jesus Movement and Social Network Analysis (Part I: The Spatial Network),” *BTB* 29 (1999): 156–175; idem, “The Jesus Movement and Social Network Analysis (Part II: The Social Network),” *BTB* 30: (2000): 1–12. Cf. also the regional map in J. L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus. A Re-Examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2002), 147.



covering ca. 30 hectares, and posit a population of between 400 and 500 persons per hectare, i.e., between 12,000 and 15,000 inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> J. L. Reed arrives at a significantly smaller number of inhabitants, since he posits a population of no more than between 100 and 150 persons per hectare in Capernaum, and assumes that the inhabited site there covered at most 10 hectares. According to his calculations, therefore, Capernaum had no fewer than 600 inhabitants and no more than 1,500.<sup>11</sup> He writes:<sup>12</sup>

Compared to the major Galilean cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias, which had between 8,000 and 12,000 inhabitants, Capernaum's population size was modest. At the same time, compared to the many Galilean hamlets made up of several extended families and small villages like Nazareth with fewer than 400 inhabitants, Capernaum would have been viewed as one of the larger villages.

Clearly, Capernaum was no polis, but simply a large village, with an architectural design which shows no evidence of Roman influence or Roman presence; it is only after 70 CE that inscriptions attest a Roman military presence.<sup>13</sup> It is possible that the members of the Jesus movement had a "base" in Capernaum, such as the house of Peter, from which they set out for their charismatic praxis of prophetic proclamation and healings, and to which they then returned.

It is above all the end of Jesus' life in Jerusalem, i.e., his *crucifixion* at the command of Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect in Judea, that tells us who had the supreme authority in the land: Rome had reserved to itself the special privilege of all legal matters connected with capital punishment. This should not however be taken to mean that Rome, like a modern occupying power (e.g., as in Germany after the Second World War), occupied and "administered" the entire territory of Judea or Galilee. The ca. 3,000 soldiers of the Roman auxiliary troops who were stationed there could never have carried out such a task. Their function was rather to ensure order and tranquility in the land, with garrisons at various places, e.g., in Jericho and Ashkelon. There was a garrison of ca. 500 soldiers in Jerusalem, who could quench small outbreaks of anti-Roman rebellion at once. Rome had larger military

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<sup>10</sup> E. Meyers and J. F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 58.

<sup>11</sup> J. L. Reed, *Archaeology* (n. 9 above), 149–152.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

forces stationed in Syria: three to four legions, amounting to ca. 20,000 soldiers.

Rome made use of the indigenous structures of power to administer the occupied territories, and won over the loyalty of the elite. During Jesus' lifetime, Herod Antipas reigned in Galilee as a client prince dependent on Rome (4 BCE–39 CE), but Judea was ruled directly by Roman prefects from 6 BCE onwards. During the period of Jesus' public ministry, this office was held by Pontius Pilate, who administered Judea for ten years during the principate of Tiberius (26–36 CE).<sup>14</sup> Pilate too worked closely with the Jewish elite—in this case, above all with the high priest of the day and with the Sanhedrin. In keeping with the relatively slight importance and size of Judea, Pilate as *praefectus* was only a member of the *ordo equester*, and was probably subordinate to the legate of Rome in Syria. Like all the Roman governors in the occupied territories, he was commander-in-chief of the soldiers. He was also supreme judge (especially in questions concerning capital punishment, of course); he had ritual and cultic tasks, and had to ensure tranquility and good order.<sup>15</sup> Contemporary verdicts see Pilate as extremely corrupt and cruel (cf. Philo, *Legat.* 300–303); while some modern historians view his conduct of office as cruel and anti-Semitic, others see him as a man without any extensive political experience and lacking in tact.<sup>16</sup> Here too, much depends on one's subjective evaluation. For example, Josephus tells us (*War* 2.169–174; *Ant.* 18.55–59) that Pilate brought into Jerusalem the military standards of the legions, which were decorated with images of the emperor, thereby breaching the prohibition against images. Finally, after persistent protests by the Jewish people, he had these standards removed. Pilate may have acted brutally and without political *savoir faire* on this occasion, but ultimately it is difficult to know whether this tells us anything about the alleged bad character of the prefect of Judea, since we must remember that this event was exceptional. For the same reason, it does not allow generalizing conclusions about a cruel and brutal oppression

<sup>14</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.89.

<sup>15</sup> For a brief and informative overview of the Roman provincial administration, with an extensive bibliography, cf. R. Haensch, "Die römische Provinzialverwaltung im Frühen Prinzipat," in *Neues Testament und Antike Kultur 1: Prolegomena, Quellen, Geschichte*, ed. K. Erlemann, K.-L. Noethlichs, K. Scherberich, and J. Zangenberg, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 149–158.

<sup>16</sup> H. K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

of the Jewish people by the might of Rome. However, the famous statement by Tacitus in his *Histories* (5.9) about the Jews—*sub Tiberio quies* (“under Tiberius there was calm”)—suggests that this particular epoch was an exception, and that the Roman supremacy in Judea and Galilee was normally harsh and also unjust.

The *sub Tiberio quies* applies particularly to Galilee,<sup>17</sup> where (unlike in Judea) Roman soldiers were not permanently stationed.<sup>18</sup> There are no reports of rebellions in Galilee between 4 BCE and the beginning of the Jewish-Roman War (66–70 CE). In general, we must assume that Rome’s presence in Galilee and in Judea (apart from high festivals, when the prefect resided in Jerusalem) was experienced directly, especially by the rural population, not so much through the Roman soldiers, but rather through the *tax burdens*. I agree with Dunn’s comment: “The main political impact on the villages of Galilee, and on Jesus for most of his life, would have been in terms of taxes.” Dunn calculates that the tribute to the Romans amounted to ca. 12.5% *per annum*, while the so-called religious contributions (tithes and the temple tax) amounted to ca. 15% of people’s income; in addition, there were taxes and customs fees to be paid to Herod Antipas.<sup>19</sup>

We have no exact and detailed figures that tell us the amount of the tax burdens. Estimates vary between a tax of 12% and a tax of 15% on the national product... If we... bear in mind that poor Egyptian fellahin at the same period had to pay ca. 60 drachmas out of an average annual income of 210 drachmas, it is clear that a poor Palestinian farmer would scarcely have fared better. If we assume that he had to pay taxes for a family consisting of several members and that his income lay on the subsistence level, these exactions must have been an intolerable burden... A change of ruler always meant changes on points of detail, but the sum total of the burden of taxation on the people must have been relatively constant—and that means, very high. Even Tacitus admits that the taxes in the province of Judea were a heavy burden (*Ann.* 2.42), and it is clear that Herod was obliged several times to reduce the taxes (*Ant.*

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<sup>17</sup> On this, cf. e.g., S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 BCE to 135 CE A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1980), 68–71; Reed, *Archaeology* (n. 9 above); cf. also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (n. 4 above), 310.

<sup>18</sup> Z. Safrai, “The Roman Army in the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. I. Levine, (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 103–114.

<sup>19</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (n. 4 above), 310–311.

15.303, 365; 16.64). In principle, however, the taxes were collected with absolute rigor.<sup>20</sup>

It must of course be admitted that we can do no more than estimate the severity of the burden of taxation on the population. James Dunn calculates a total burden of one third of production and income,<sup>21</sup> while others arrive at higher or lower figures. In general, however, the conclusion must be that the burden of taxes and payments was crushingly high for the great majority of the population, especially because (as the example of the rural population of Egypt shows) this amounted to a considerable percentage of a family income which was too low to begin with. When combined with the problems of debt (to which we shall return) and the ever looming possibility of catastrophe in the form of bad harvests, this high level of taxation could lead to the ruin of ordinary people. It is therefore unsurprising that there was popular anger at the taxes that went to the foreign occupying power, as well as those that went to support the local elite with their conspicuous building activities and their luxurious lifestyle. It was above all the poor rural population that suffered under the excessive taxation. Philo gives a vivid description of their situation in the first century CE (*Spec.* 3.159):<sup>22</sup>

Not long ago a certain man who had been appointed a collector of taxes in our country, when some of those who appeared to owe such tribute fled out of poverty, from a fear of intolerable punishment if they remained without paying, carried off their wives, and their children, and their parents, and their whole families by force, beating and insulting them, and heaping every kind of contumely and ill treatment upon them, to make them either give information as to where the fugitives had concealed themselves, or pay the money instead of them, though they could not do the one thing or the other; in the first place, because they did not know where they were, and secondly, because they were in still greater poverty than the men who had fled. But this tax-collector did not let them go till he had tortured their bodies with racks and wheels, so as to kill them with newly invented kinds of death, fastening a basket full of sand to their necks with cords, and suspending it there as a very heavy weight, and then placing them in the open air in the middle of the

<sup>20</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte* (n. 6 above), 113.

<sup>21</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (n. 4 above), 311.

<sup>22</sup> Eng. trans.: <http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com/philo.html>. Plutarch gives an account of similar cruelties to tax debtors in Asia Minor (*Lucullus* 20). At a later period (end of the third century CE), Lactantius describes how the tax registration (*census*) was carried out and what this led to: *De mort. pers.* 23.

market place, that some of them, being tortured and being overwhelmed by all these afflictions at once, the wind, and the sun, and the mockery of the passers by, and the shame, and the heavy burden attached to them, might faint miserably, and that the rest, being spectators, might be grieved and take warning by their punishment, some of whom, having a more acute sense of such miseries in their minds than that which they could receive through their eyes, since they sympathized with these unfortunates as if they were themselves suffering in the persons of others, put an end to their own lives by swords, or poison, or halters, thinking it a great piece of good luck for persons, liable to such misery, to be able to meet death without torture.

The readiness of the rural people to engage in a revolt or a war against Rome (and against the local elite which was Rome's ally) in the 60's of the first century is surprising, since it went against their customary behavior; but there can be no doubt that this was generated precisely by the factors I have described here. Naturally, things had not come to such a pitch in the historical epoch that interests us, the first third of the century, and the phenomenon of anti-Roman rebel groups, the so-called *sicarii* or zealots, appears only at the period of the Jewish-Roman War itself, i.e., thirty years after the death of Jesus.<sup>23</sup> This fact alone makes it difficult to affirm that there was a permanent basic revolutionary mood in Judea or Galilee. And this in turn means that despite his execution on a cross, the condemnation of Jesus as a rebel against Rome<sup>24</sup> can scarcely be derived from a general picture of Jewish society at that date.

Not even R. Horsley, who notes an increasing "spiral of violence" in the Judean territory in the time of Jesus, assumes that Jewish society at that date was a breeding ground for revolutionary violence; and he does not include Jesus among the "zealots."<sup>25</sup> Rather, he understands Jesus as a non-violent social revolutionary who criticized above all the rich elite in his society and envisaged the national renewal of Israel on the basis of an egalitarian societal model with the goal of social justice: "The principal thrust of Jesus' practice and preaching... was

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<sup>23</sup> On this, cf. the brief summary by Theissen, "Jesus und die symbolpolitischen Konflikte" (n. 5 above), 173–174.

<sup>24</sup> On this question, cf. the older monograph by S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots. A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Scribner's, 1967), and the critical analysis by M. Hengel, *War Jesus Revolutionär?* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1970).

<sup>25</sup> R. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* (n. 6 above), 167.

to manifest and mediate the *presence* of the kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup> Similarly, J. D. Crossan interprets Jesus’ preaching and praxis against the background of a *social conflict* between an oppressive urban elite of patrons and the mass of the rural populace whom they oppressed (as their clients). Naturally, this conflict was not confined to the Jewish territory; it marked all the societies in the Mediterranean world.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the background to a revolutionary interpretation is not sought directly in the political exercise of sovereignty by Rome and/or the indigenous partners of the empire, but rather in a *societal* situation which was gravely unjust; however, these scholars do not deny that the local elites and the representatives of Rome intended this state of affairs, made it worse, and finally took to arms to defend it.

The phenomenon of so-called “social banditry” is extremely important in this context.<sup>28</sup> E. Hobsbawm has described peasant revolts as “pre-political,” since they do not involve political programs or reforms.<sup>29</sup> Hanson and Oakman writes that when peasants revolt, “They react against economic, military, or ideological pressures manifested in new or increased taxes, occupation by foreign troops, disruption of temple functions.”<sup>30</sup> Social banditry is thus an ultimate form of reaction, a desperate expression of opposition to an unjust rule. Jesus himself was assuredly not a social bandit of this kind, but (as Hanson and Oakman convincingly argue) it was easy to take him for one of them:<sup>31</sup> when he is arrested, he is treated like a social bandit (γῆστῆς), as we see from Mark 14:48. He is crucified together with two social bandits (γῆσταί, Mark 15:27), and Pilate yields to pressure from the crowd and frees Barabbas, who is clearly also a γῆστῆς (Mark 15:6–15). Like the social bandits, Jesus came from the countryside (Mark 2:1) and like them, he found it

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<sup>26</sup> Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* 207. J. Laaksonen, *Jesus und das Land. Das gelobte Land in der Verkündigung Jesu* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag, 2002), 8, criticizes Horsley’s interpretation. His main argument is that “the kingdom which Jesus proclaimed” was “utterly eschatological and theocentric.” The first of these two terms has been the subject of renewed debate in recent years; and even a theocentric sovereignty means a government, as we can see in the theocracies of our own days.

<sup>27</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus. The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

<sup>28</sup> On this, cf. especially Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte* (n. 6 above), 157–160, and Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus* (n. 7 above), 86–90.

<sup>29</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969).

<sup>30</sup> Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus* (n. 7 above), 87.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

problematic to pay tribute to Rome (Mark 12:13–17). It is at any rate possible that this background explains why the Romans took notice of Jesus, and why Pontius Pilate ordered his execution. In other words, I believe that it is possible that the Romans regarded Jesus as a social bandit (*lêstês*) and that this is why they crucified him with two other social bandits. The political and social backgrounds to Jesus' preaching and praxis would thus come together precisely in his death.

### 3. *The Social Climate*

In terms of their technological standard, the structure of government, and the means of production and redistribution, the societies of the Roman world can be classified as *developed agrarian societies*.<sup>32</sup>

This societal category offers the best interpretation of Galilee and Judea in the time of Jesus. The concept of *agrarian society* indicates that agriculture formed the economic backbone and that the overwhelming majority of the population—probably more than 90%—lived in the countryside and earned their living by farming. Not only did most people find their food here: most of the working population were engaged in agriculture. The concept of agrarian society does not however express the importance of the *cities*. Economically speaking, this consisted primarily in the fields of crafts and trade; and urban dwellers were also consumers of agricultural products.

Let us take the example of Galilee. According to Josephus (*Vita* 234), there were 204 localities in Galilee in the first century, but only a few of these were cities (e.g., Sepphoris and Tiberias, or smaller places like Tarichaea/Magdala). It is estimated that between ca. 150,000 and 200,000 people lived in Galilee at this period, most of them in small places like Nazareth. Only Sepphoris and Tiberias had large numbers of inhabitants: Meyers estimates 18,000 for Sepphoris and 24,000 for Tiberias,<sup>33</sup> but J. L. Reed assumes much smaller numbers. According to

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<sup>32</sup> On the categories involved here, cf. G. Lenski, *Macht und Privileg. Eine Theorie der sozialen Schichtung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977); for a summary, cf. Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte* (n. 6 above), 19–25; Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (n. 27 above); D. A. Fiensy, *The Social History of Palestine. The Land is Mine* (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), vi–viii is fundamental. Cf. also G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1981), 210–211.

<sup>33</sup> E. M. Meyers, “Jesus und seine galiläische Lebenswelt,” *ZNT* 1 (1998): 27–39, at 27–29.

his calculations, between 8,000 and 12,000 persons lived in Sepphoris in the first century, and between 6,000 and 12,000 in Tiberias.<sup>34</sup> In Nazareth, which covered an area of ca. 5 hectares and lay off the trade routes, the population was probably under 400 persons, all of whom seem to have been involved in agriculture.<sup>35</sup> Some of them may have found work in nearby Sepphoris.

The traditional view—which can still be encountered today—that there was a sharp social, economic, and cultural antithesis between the city and the countryside seems to me to have been superseded. In the particular case of Galilee, the hostile attacks and lootings by the agricultural workers in Sepphoris and the attacks on Tiberias in the years between 66 and 70 CE, which Josephus relates in his *Vita* (66–67), do not constitute a counter-argument, because this was an exceptional situation which cannot be regarded as typical of the relationship between the urban and the rural populations. Rather, cities functioned as a kind of focal center for entire regions, so that the surrounding villages belonged to their catchment area and were influenced by them. In the case of Jesus' own village, Nazareth, this would mean that it belonged to the sphere of influence of Sepphoris, ca. 7 km away. "Tiberias and Sepphoris must be seen as minor urban centers, dominating the agricultural landscape of Galilee, but not large enough to attract substantial international trade."<sup>36</sup> In this respect, neither Tiberias nor Sepphoris can be compared to Caesarea Maritima or Tyre and Scythopolis. It is interesting to note that Sepphoris is not even mentioned in the Gospels! This has given rise to a number of speculations. Perhaps the town is not mentioned simply because it played no role in the history of the Jesus movement, which was active more in the proximity of the Sea of Galilee, especially in the vicinity of Capernaum.<sup>37</sup>

Another element in the influence of the cities on the social and political structures and on the character of the Mediterranean agrarian societies was the residence in the cities of the elites who dominated both the rural and the urban areas as big landowners with the authority

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<sup>34</sup> Reed, *Archaeology* (n. 9 above), 80–82.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–132.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>37</sup> On the problem of the relationship between city and countryside, cf. R. L. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-Industrial City in Luke-Acts," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. H. Neyrey, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 1991), 125–149.



to enforce societal control. Agricultural production (and naturally, not this alone) was subordinated to a political and societal system of government which concentrated the wealth of society via *redistribution* in the hands of a numerically small elite. This is why agrarian societies typically display not only these conditions of agricultural and economic production, but also the *social injustice* which results from the fact that the distribution of the goods of society is controlled by one small societal group, viz. the elite.

In his *Social History of Palestine*, Fiensy summarizes some essential aspects of the importance of this interpretative model of the developed agrarian society as follows:<sup>38</sup>

First of all then, peasants work their land for subsistence. They are not agricultural business people farming for profit, and land is not capital or commodity... Peasants do not view land as an investment and farming as a business. Farming is their way of life and the land their inherited means of life. Second, peasants... include... freeholders and tenants, but also day laborers and slaves... Third, peasants normally work their land as a family unit (nuclear or extended). The entire family must work together to provide a subsistence for itself. In the case of day laborers, however, the laborer works for wages usually apart from his family. Agricultural slaves may have had no families. Finally, all peasant societies are marked by a radical bifurcation in which a small group of aristocrats stands over against the mass of agriculturalists. The latter must surrender their surplus to the former...

The *social stratification* of agrarian societies is in accordance with this picture: we can distinguish between two basic societal sectors, *elite and non-elite* (i.e., the great mass of the population). Many different models of social stratification in classical antiquity have been proposed, but all contemporary models agree on this point, unlike earlier models which usually assumed the existence of a so-called middle class. We need not discuss here the nuances entailed in the distinction of these two large societal groups.<sup>39</sup> Ekkehard W. Stegemann and I have suggested the following model.<sup>40</sup>

We assume that societal systems of distribution are determined by three "basic elements": power, privileges, and prestige. These are the most important variables which determine the social position of a per-

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<sup>38</sup> Fiensy, *Social History* (n. 32 above), vii.

<sup>39</sup> A comparable model of the societal structure of Palestine in the Herodian period, but following Lenski more closely, is proposed by Fiensy, *ibid.*, 155–170.

<sup>40</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte* (n. 6 above), 58–94.

son in the societal system. We agree with Lenski<sup>41</sup> in seeing the factor of power as the chief variable. This determines how the surplus of a society (i.e., the product of work which exceeds basic needs) is distributed. The privileges, which are understood as possession or control of part of the surplus which a society produces, depend on a share in societal power. And prestige is above all a function of power and privileges. A *social class* includes all those persons in a society who are in a similar social position because of their share in *power, privileges, and prestige*.

This dichotomous model, which defines social inequality by positing the existence of upper and lower classes, or elite and non-elite (the masses), has proved useful in describing the social stratification of society in classical antiquity. The existence of a “middle class (or classes)” in ancient societies is an unacceptable hypothesis, because the sharing in power divided these societies into a small powerful elite on the one hand and the powerless masses on the other. This constellation decided what share an individual would receive in societal privileges, especially in personal property, but also in terms of legal advantages. Extensive property was the only means by which rich men who did not occupy leading political positions, as well as women without a husband and freed slaves, could compensate for their lack of direct sharing in power, since their wealth gave them *influence* over those who exercised power. This means that those who had neither a leading political office nor private wealth did not belong to the societal elite. In order to do justice to the social differentiations which existed both within the elite and within the mass of the population, I use the plural “upper class groups” and “lower class groups.”

Within the *upper classes*, we can distinguish three groups: the Roman imperial aristocracy (the emperor’s house, the senators, and the knights), the provincial aristocracy (the elite in the provinces, such as the Herodian ruling house and the chief priests in Judea/Jerusalem), and the urban aristocracy (the decurions/Sanhedrin in Jerusalem). In this context, a special role is played by the group of the so-called *retainers* of the upper class. We could also call this group the *functional elite*, since it includes persons with particular competences (e.g., scribes and the financial administrators of royal houses or cities) who performed essential tasks for the elite but did not enjoy their prestige

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<sup>41</sup> Lenski, *Macht und Privileg* (n. 32 above), 70–72.

and social status; nor was it possible for them to have a direct share in political power. In these societies, wealth is in principle a privilege of the upper classes, but here too it is distributed very variously. The elite is estimated at between 2% and 10% of the total population.

The great mass of the population makes up the *non-elite* (*lower classes*) which possessed no power or privileges, unlike the ruling groups. This includes above all farmers (and fishers in Galilee), all rural agricultural workers or tenants (γεωργοί), day laborers (μίσθιοι) or slaves, as well as craftsmen, small tradesmen and businessmen, especially in the cities. On the lower margin of the lower classes, i.e., to some extent under subsistence level, we find beggars, prostitutes, shepherds, and bandits. One who was obliged to live below this subsistence level belongs to the absolutely poor (πτωχοί) who lacked even the minimum necessary for life. Everyone else belonged to a spectrum from the relatively poor (πένητες) to the relatively well off. In general, we may say that a total lack of political power, a lack of social prestige, and economic poverty are typical of the lower classes.

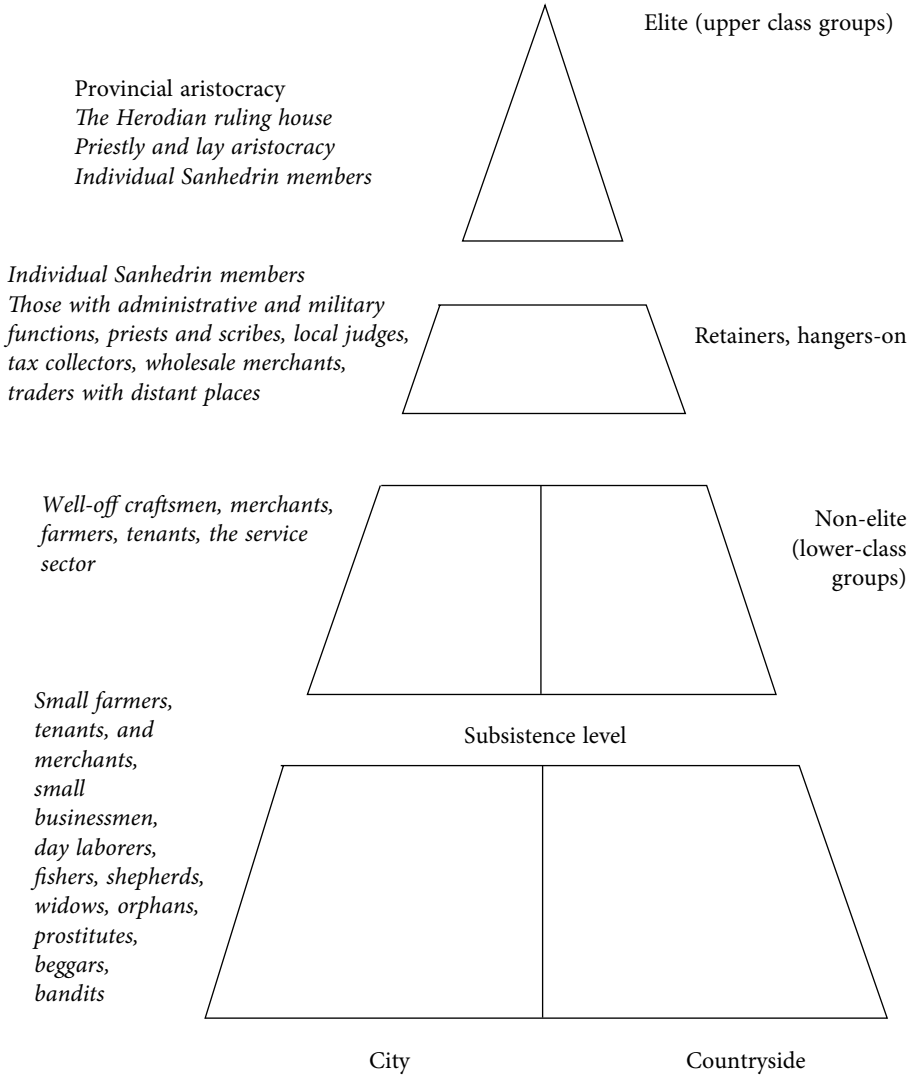
The following social pyramid (from Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte*, 127) gives an overview of this situation.

In principle, the distribution of *wealth and poverty* runs parallel to the social stratification set out above. Only members of the elite were rich in the strict sense of the term, although there were of course considerable nuances within this group.

*Examples of wealth:* wealth was expressed above all in the extensive possession of land. There was an immense concentration of landed property everywhere in the Roman empire. In North Africa, for example, 50% of landed property was in the hands of six big landowners, while in some places more than 60 peasant families had to share a plot of 2,200 square meters. In Galilee, the kings seem to have possessed extensive estates only in the outer districts, in the Plain of Jezreel, in Beth Anath to the north of Upper Galilee, and along the coast.<sup>42</sup> The wealthy had palaces (*domus*) in the cities and villas in the countryside. Their houses were usually luxuriously furnished, so that the furnishings alone represented a considerable value in monetary terms. In the imperial period, the city residences, e.g., of the senators in Rome, increased in number, and their furnishings became more elaborate. Impressive examples of the luxurious residences of the rich

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<sup>42</sup> J. L. Reed, *Archaeology* (n. 9 above), 85.



Social pyramid: Societal stratification of Jewish society in the land of Israel (without specifying religious groups)

are the palaces of the Flavians in Rome and of the Herodians in the land of Israel. Banquets were a special characteristic of wealth, and the clothing of the rich marked them off from the rest of the population. Wealth and status were signaled by a purple-dyed outer garment of wool and an under-garment of fine linen. When Jesus describes John the Baptist, he asks the people whether they went out to him in the desert to see a man in soft garments. And he himself at once answers his own rhetorical question: “Those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in king’s courts” (Luke 7:25).

It was certainly possible for individual families from the lower classes to attain a certain measure of prosperity, as we see for example in the funeral monuments of craftsmen who had worked on the construction of the Jerusalem temple,<sup>43</sup> but we cannot assume that all such lower-class craftsmen became prosperous. I believe that we have a comparable case in some free farmers, such as we find in the Lukan parables, where they are described as “rich” (πλούσιος): cf. Luke 12:16–21; 16:1–8, 19–31; 15:11–32). Perhaps the “householders” (οικοδοασπότης) whom we meet in Matthean parables (cf. Matt 13:24–30; 20:1–16) belong in the same category. In any event, however, one should not suppose that these prosperous members of the lower classes were numerous. I believe that the great majority of the population lived on a scale between “poor” and “destitute.”

This applies to the small-scale free farmers and fishers, most of whom (as Ben-David has calculated) were scarcely capable of earning the basic minimum needed for the sustenance of their families.<sup>44</sup> If his calculations are approximately correct, a free farmer in Palestine would have had to cultivate an area of at least between 8 and 10 hectares in order to guarantee the basic minimum sustenance for a family of seven persons; other calculations arrive at a somewhat smaller cultivated area,<sup>45</sup> but even if we assume that only an area of 0.5 hectares per person was required, a large family in classical antiquity—such as the family of Jesus, which according to Mark 6:3 numbered at least nine persons—would have needed a cultivated area of ca. 4.5 hectares. In

<sup>43</sup> Fiensy, *Social History* (n. 32 above), 164.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. A. Ben-David, *Talmudische Ökonomie. Die Wirtschaft des jüdischen Palästina zur Zeit der Mischna und des Talmud* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1974), 297–299. Cf. also Fiensy, *Social History* (n. 32 above), 93–94; Z. Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 358–364.

<sup>45</sup> Stegemann and Stegemann, *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte* (n. 6 above), 81–83.

Italy, according to one calculation, the small farmers possessed an area of 2.5 hectares.

J. L. Reed assumes that 1 hectare of cultivated land can provide two persons with the grain necessary for their sustenance:

The average per capita intake of grain, the basic staple of the Mediterranean diet in antiquity, is estimated at 250 kg per inhabitant. A good return on 150 kg seed per hectare in Galilee's fertile soil could yield an annual crop of 1,000–1,200 kg, of which 150 kg would have to be set aside for next year's seed. Given the necessity of a biennial fallow, and not accounting for any taxes in kind passed on outside Galilee, 1 hectare could supply grain for two people. The best arable land around Sepphoris in the Beth Netofah Valley is around 5,000 hectares; along the Nahal Zippori another 1,000 hectares are found; and the Tir'an Valley measures around 3,000 hectares. This would supply grain for around 18,000 people per year.<sup>46</sup>

There are many indications that the region around Sepphoris was one of the most fertile in Galilee; this also helps explain why the city was founded. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the Galilean population in the vicinity of Sepphoris was rich in any real sense, for if the inhabitants of Sepphoris alone numbered ca. 12,000, and a third of the harvest went to pay taxes and contributions, then in fact only the inhabitants of Sepphoris would have been able to satisfy their hunger—on this calculation, the surrounding districts with their rural population would lack food. One good example of the situation in Galilee is provided by the two grandsons of Jude, a brother of Jesus. When the Emperor Domitian asked them about their possessions,<sup>47</sup>

They said that the between the two of them they had only nine thousand denarii, half belonging to each of them; and this they asserted that they had not in money, but only in thirty-nine plethra of land, so valued, from which by their own labors they both paid the taxes and supported themselves. And then they showed also their hands... as a proof of personal labor.

This means that each grandson of Jesus' brother possessed ca. 6 hectares of cultivated land! Once taxes and contributions had been paid, this would under even the most favorable circumstances have supplied

<sup>46</sup> Reed, *Archaeology* (n. 9 above), 88.

<sup>47</sup> Hegesippus *apud* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.20,1–6. Eng. trans.: Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. H. J. Lawlor and J. E. L. Oulton, 1: *Translation* (London: SPCK, 1927), 80.

only a family of 8 persons with the grain they needed—and extremely few persons will have had as much agricultural land as this. There were big landowners in Galilee too, and it is possible that here too extensive properties were in the hands of a few persons. The so-called parable of the “wicked husbandmen” (Mark 12:1–12) describes a typical situation: the land belongs to a “lord” who is absent (i.e., who lives in a city). He lets it out to tenants and sends a representative of his interests to collect the dues. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–3) indicates that small farmers could find extra work at harvest time; at the same time, however, it indicates that this possibility of extra income was limited. Women on their own (widows) and their children were particularly hard hit by poverty and destitution, and it is not by chance that the gospels contain specific exhortations to look after children (presumably orphans or foundlings): cf. Mark 9:33–37 par.; Mark 10:13–16.<sup>48</sup>

*What did the poor wear and eat?* It seems that among the ordinary people, the possession of two under-garments distinguished the better-off from those who were poorer. The outer garment was such a valuable possession for the poor that it could serve as a “pledge” (Matt 5:40). One who wore no outer garment showed thereby either that he was extremely poor and/or that he lived outside the normal criteria, like the demoniac in Luke 8:27. In this context, the term “naked” (γυμνός) designates persons without a cloak, who had only an under-garment or rags on their bodies. Both these situations express a particularly low social status; this is also expressed by dark, rough, and shabby outer garments, which were considered typical of poor people and slaves. In principle, meat was prohibitively expensive. At most, it was eaten only on high feast days. The staple food of the poor was gray bread and olive oil, with vegetables (above all onions) or eggs where possible. We read in a midrash (*Sif. Deut.* 37.76b): “If your father is rich, he feeds you on meat, fish, and old wine... if your father is poor, he feeds you on vegetables and peas.” There can be no doubt that large sections of the population suffered from chronic undernourishment,

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. W. Stegemann, “Lasset die Kinder zu mir kommen. Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte des Kinderevangeliums,” in *Traditionen der Befreiung. Sozialgeschichtliche Bibelauslegungen 1: Methodische Zugänge*, ed. W. Schottroff and W. Stegemann, (München: Kaiser and Gelnhausen, Berlin, and Stein: Burckhardhaus-Laetare, 1980), 114–144.

and in times of distress many poor families were reducing to eating grass and roots.

The gulf between the poor and the rich is marked most clearly by the *problem of debt*, which was caused (as I have mentioned above) by the iron grip of the rulers on the land and the heavy burden of taxation. We find references to the problem of debt above all in Josephus and the synoptic gospels,<sup>49</sup> and in the Mishnah. The parable of the merciless debtor (Matt 18:23–35) gives a particularly vivid picture.<sup>50</sup> Naturally, a debt of 10,000 talents (= 60,000,000 denarii!), the first debt to be mentioned in the parable, is utterly exaggerated and scarcely conceivable among private persons, although we know of some private fortunes on this scale (indeed, some members of the imperial dynasties possessed even larger sums). Debts on such a scale or even higher were incurred only in connection with the reimbursement of the costs of a war, i.e., as tribute imposed on the conquered rulers or peoples, and when the licenses to collect taxes in the provinces were auctioned. On the other hand, debts of 100 denarii (as in the second scene of the parable) were not at all uncommon. “The great majority of debts in classical antiquity involved such sums.”<sup>51</sup> A variety of measures could be taken by creditors against tardy or insolvent debtors,<sup>52</sup> from the remission of the debt (which was in fact forbidden in the sabbath and jubilee year before the *prosbol* of Hillel; it might occur at a change of ruler), via reduction and deferment of payment, to the collection of the debt by means of public or private imprisonment (cf. Matt 5:25–26/Luke 12:57–59; Matt 18:30; Josephus, *War* 2.273), seizure by a bailiff, and debt-slavery (where above all the debtor’s children and wives had to pay for him: cf. Matt 18:25). Scholars dispute whether debt-slavery occurred in Judea, but in addition to this parable and Matt 5:25–26/Luke 12:57–59, Josephus (cf. *Ant.* 16.1–3) and rabbinic texts suggest that it did exist; it seems however that the Essenes rejected it (cf. Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 79). The coercive measures employed by creditors could also include physical violence, such as throttling the debtor (cf. Matt 18:28) or torturing him (cf. Matt 18:34); these could

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Matt 5:25–26/Luke 12:57–59; Matt 5:40; Matt 5:42/Luke 6:35; Luke 4:18; 16:1–8; 6:12; 18:23–35.

<sup>50</sup> M. Leutzsch, “Verschuldung und Überschuldung, Schuldenerlaß und Sündenvergebung,” in *Schuld und Schulden. Biblische Traditionen in gegenwärtigen Konflikten*, ed. M. Crüsemann and W. Schottroff, (München: Kaiser Verlag 1992), 104–131.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 108–110.



also be inflicted on relatives, neighbors, and friends of the debtor. The measures taken by the creditor—and indeed, whether or not he took any measures—depended on the social position of the debtor; coercive measures are more likely to have been employed when there was a large social gulf between the creditor and the debtor than in cases where the debt was incurred between members of the upper class whose position was equal. “On occasion, however, Roman provincial governors did not shrink from employing such measures in order to persuade local dignitaries to pay their debts.”<sup>53</sup> Debtors had only limited legal means to help them when debts were to be “settled” (cf. also Luke 16:1–3) but they could not pay. They could request a deferment or even a remission of payment, but it was also possible to get a more highly placed person or body to intervene in order to prevent the punishment from being carried out, as at Matt 18:31. Where this was unsuccessful, the only way out was flight or suicide. It is not by chance that the destruction of archives relating to debt is mentioned in the accounts of rebellions.

We may sum up this review of living conditions by saying that the great majority of the rural population in antiquity lived on the narrow margin between survival and hunger, because the average size of their fields was too small, bad harvests had catastrophic consequences, and the small farmers had to pay excessive taxes and incurred heavy debts. It is clear that the ordinary people in the countryside—i.e., the great majority of the population—lived in constant anxiety about whether they could earn enough for basic sustenance. We get a glimpse of the wretched living conditions of many persons in antiquity from the treatise of the physician Galen (born 129 CE) *De alimentorum facultatibus* 7.749–751:

Among many of the peoples conquered by the Romans, e.g., by the city dwellers, it was customary immediately after the harvest to gather and store up enough grain for the next year and to leave what remained over for the people in the countryside, for example peas and beans; a large amount of this too made its way into the city. The rural population ate the peas and beans in the winter, and were therefore obliged to have recourse to unhealthy foodstuffs in the spring. They ate twigs and shoots of trees and bushes, as well as tubers and roots of indigestible plants; they ate their fill of wild herbs, and also cooked fresh grass.

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<sup>53</sup> Leutsch, “Verschuldung”, 122.

This “unhealthy” consumption of twigs and fresh grass in the spring-time shows that their reserves lasted only for the winter. We must of course assume that the majority of the *urban population* too was poor, but this text by Galen suggests that they were not actually threatened by starvation. It is clear that the magistrates, especially the “inspectors of the market,” saw to this, in order to ward off social unrest. In particular, the inhabitants of Rome seem to have profited from this politically sensitive situation. Perhaps we can say in general that living conditions in the urban centers in the west of the Roman empire were more or less bearable; this was certainly the case in Rome, which covered its needs with grain from Egypt and North Africa. But we must assume that in the eastern regions of the empire, even in the cities, large sectors of the population became poorer and poorer.

#### 4. *Concluding Remarks*

Can we sum up briefly the political and social climate in Galilee and Judea at the time of Jesus? This is no doubt possible, but we must also remember that every summary of this kind is subjective. It is an academic construction that seeks, as Hegel said, to employ concepts in order to understand time (from a political and social perspective). This means that scholars can reach widely differing conclusions precisely in this field. For example, J. L. Reed criticizes the emphasis that Louise Schottroff and I made on *poverty* in one of the first social-historical interpretations of the Jesus movement—a good thirty years ago!—as an “exaggeration.”<sup>54</sup> On the basis of a large number of data in the gospels and in other texts, we concluded that there was an economic and political crisis in Jewish Palestine in the time of Jesus, and we described the Jesus movement as a “poverty movement” by and for poor Jewish men and women. We also held that this primarily concerned the rural population, whose situation we interpreted in general terms as one of crisis and economic catastrophe. We found the main evidence for this conclusion in the gospels themselves, where we saw a significant link between the preaching and experience of Jesus, or of the Jesus movement, with the problem of poverty—i.e., of *absolute* poverty, which is

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<sup>54</sup> L. Schottroff and W. Stegemann, *Jesus von Nazareth, Hoffnung der Armen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1978); Reed, *Archaeology* (n. 9 above), 97–98. He makes a similar criticism of Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* (n. 6 above).

suggested both by the relatively frequent occurrence of the Greek term *πτωχός* and by astonishingly concrete and (by comparison with other texts from classical antiquity) frequent descriptions of the situations of destitute persons. The methodological path led us from the gospels to a thorough analysis of the social history of ancient Mediterranean society as a whole, and that of Palestine in particular. We also believed that the execution of Jesus by the dominant Roman power in Palestine belonged in this context too. The mode of execution and the description of the men who were crucified with Jesus as “bandits” (*λησταί*) indicate that Jesus was (wrongly) taken by the Romans for an anti-Roman rebel, and probably for a “social bandit”—a case for which the death penalty was envisaged.

One can of course arrive at other conclusions, as does J. L. Reed. On the basis of the available data, which is much more differentiated by now, and especially of his encyclopedic knowledge of the relevant archaeological publications, he interprets the utterances of Jesus, e.g., in the so-called Sermon on the Mount (Q 6:20, “Blessed are you *πτωχοὶ*”), as a reaction to the “economic strain” imposed on the whole of Galilee by Antipas’ construction of the cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias. It was this *strain* that led to the poverty in Galilee to which the gospels refer. Reed also discusses the excessive debts of the rural population and points out with good reason that Jesus draws an antithesis between the current process of monetarization and the ideal of the traditional reciprocity between neighbors. I believe that ultimately, there is no great distance between these interpretations. Reed argues (more clearly than Schottroff and Stegemann) that the foundation of two urban centers in Galilee changed the economic situation to the disadvantage of the rural population; I willingly admit that this shift in the political and social climate of Galilee lends an additional plausibility to the rise of the Jesus movement.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Eng. trans.: Brian McNeil.

# THE CHRONOLOGY OF JESUS

HAROLD W. HOEHNER\*

Jesus Christ entered into the history of our world. Christianity, therefore, has an historical basis. Since chronology is the backbone of history, chronology serves as a necessary framework onto which the events of history may be fitted. Hence, a chronology of Jesus' life gives a framework to his activities on earth.

## 1. *The Birth of Jesus*

The earliest Christians were not as much concerned about the date as about the fact of the birth of Jesus. However, for a chronological framework there are three areas that need to be considered: (1) the year of the death of Herod, (2) the census of Quirinius, and (3) the star of the Magi.

### 1.1. *The Death of Herod*

According to Matt 2:1 and Luke 1:5, Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, king of the Jews. More specifically, in Matt 2:15–16, 19–20, he was born shortly before Herod's death. Herod was proclaimed king of the Jews by the Roman Senate by nomination of Antony and Octavius in late 40 BCE,<sup>1</sup> but he did not gain control of his domain until summer or fall of 37 BCE.<sup>2</sup> He died after he had reigned for thirty-seven years from the time he was made king or thirty-four years from the time of his possession of the land, 4 BCE.<sup>3</sup> Shortly before his death, there was an eclipse of the moon.<sup>4</sup> This is the only eclipse mentioned by Josephus and it occurred on March 12/13, 4 BCE.<sup>5</sup> After

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<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.381–385; *War* 1.282–285.

<sup>2</sup> *Ant.* 14.470–480; *War* 1.349–352.

<sup>3</sup> *Ant.* 17.191; *War* 1.665.

<sup>4</sup> *Ant.* 17.167.

<sup>5</sup> Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135)*, trans. T. A. Burkill et al., new English version rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 327 n. 165.

his death there was the celebration of the Passover,<sup>6</sup> the first day of which would have occurred on April 11, 4 BCE.<sup>7</sup> Hence, his death occurred sometime between March 12 and April 11. Since the thirty-fourth year of his reign would have most likely begun on Nisan 1, 4 BCE (March 29, 4 BCE),<sup>8</sup> his death would have occurred sometime between March 29 and April 11, 4 BCE.<sup>9</sup> For these reasons, Christ could not have been born later than March/April of 4 BCE.

This date for the death of Herod has been challenged, suggesting that he died in 1 BCE.<sup>10</sup> It is argued that Herod's appointment as king and his capture of Jerusalem took place not in 40 and 37 BCE but in 39 and 36 respectively, and therefore, reckoning the thirty-four years

<sup>6</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.10; *Ant.* 17.213.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC–AD 75*, 2nd ed., Brown University Studies 19 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 1:326–328 n. 165; Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977), 12–13; J. van Bruggen, “The Year of the Death of Herod the Great (Τελευτήσαντος δὲ τοῦ Ἡρώδου...), Mt ii 19),” in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, ed. T. Baarda, A. F. J. Klijn, and W. C. van Unnik, vol. 2, *NovTSup* 48 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 1–15; William P. Armstrong, and Jack Finegan, “Chronology of the NT,” in Geoffrey W. Bromily et al., eds, *ISBE* 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 686–687; Harold W. Hoehner, “The Date of the Death of Herod the Great,” in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 101–111; Paul L. Maier, “The Date of the Nativity and the Chronology of Jesus' Life,” in *ibid.*, 115–118; Alla Kushnir-Stein, “Another Look at Josephus' Evidence for the Date of Herod's Death,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 14 (1995): 73–86; Peter Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, *Studies on Personalities of the New Testament* (Columbia University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 18–20, 296; Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse*, *JSPSup* 30 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 172–173, 372–373; S. E. Porter, “Chronology, New Testament,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 201; cf. Daniel R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 60 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992), 157–166.

<sup>10</sup> W. E. Filmer, “The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great,” *JTS* 17 (1966): 283–295; Ernest L. Martin, *The Birth of Christ Recalculated*, 2nd ed. (Pasadena, CA: Foundation for Biblical Research, 1980); John Thorley, “When Was Jesus Born?” *Greece & Rome* (April 1981): 84–85; Ormond Edwards, “Herodian Chronology,” *PEQ* 114 (January–June 1982): 29–42; Ernest L. Martin, “The Nativity and Herod's Death,” in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 85–92; Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology: Principles of Time Reckoning in the Ancient World and Problems of Chronology in the Bible*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 299–301.

from the capture of Jerusalem, Herod would have died around 2 BCE. Furthermore, it is suggested that there was a total lunar eclipse on January 9/10 in 1 BCE and thus Herod would have died in 1 BCE<sup>11</sup> and Jesus would have been born around 2 BCE. This view is attractive to those who hold that Jesus died in 33 CE, as I do, because it is easier to explain statements such as Jesus' ministry commencing when he was thirty years old (Luke 3:23).

However, this view flies in the face of historical evidence from the first century. Two areas must be examined: (1) the calculation of the beginning and the end of Herod's reign; and (2) observation of chronological statements regarding his successors' reigns.

First, regarding the duration of Herod's reign: Herod was made king of the Jews by the Roman Senate by nomination of Antony and Octavius in the 184th Olympiad, i.e., at the end of 40 BCE.<sup>12</sup> This is the last time Antony and Octavius were in Rome together. The date of Jerusalem's capture by Herod is disputed on two grounds. On the one hand, Dio Cassius places the capture in 38 BCE during the consulship of Claudius and Norbanus (49.23.1). But this is too early, because Herod was not able to receive troops before the autumn of 38 BCE, shortly after Antony had captured Samosata (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.439–447; cf. Plutarch, *Ant.* 34.2–4), and because Josephus states that the final siege of Jerusalem was in the third year after Herod had been appointed king (*Ant.* 14.465). Thus, Jerusalem could not have been captured before 37 BCE. On the other hand, Josephus states that Jerusalem's capture occurred twenty-seven years after Pompey's capture of Jerusalem, hence Filmer would date it on the Day of Atonement 36 BCE.<sup>13</sup> However, Jerusalem's defeat could not have been as late as 36 BCE, for in the spring of that year Antony led a large campaign against Parthia (Dio Cassius, 49.24–31) with approximately 100,000 soldiers, and it seems highly unlikely that Antony would have had a

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<sup>11</sup> Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," 285–293; Edwards, "Herodian Chronology," 29–33; Martin, "The Nativity and Herod's Death," 86–87; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 300–301.

<sup>12</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.389; *War* 1.282–285; this is confirmed by Tacitus, *Hist* 5.9; Dio Cassius, 49.22; Appian, *BC* 5.75; cf. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 251, 281–282 n. 3; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 84, 292. Because of the narrative in Josephus, it is necessary for Herod's appointment to be at the end of 40 BC. This makes Josephus slightly inaccurate, because the 184th Olympiad ended on June 30, 40 BC.

<sup>13</sup> Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," 285–289.

large contingent of soldiers for the capture of Jerusalem in the same year.<sup>14</sup> Although 63 BCE minus the twenty-seven years would result in 36 BCE, Josephus must have been counting the years inclusively, as he does elsewhere, because he states that Jerusalem was captured during the consulship at Rome of Marcus Agrippa and Caninius Gallus in the 185th Olympiad, which would be in the summer of 37 BCE.<sup>15</sup> Thirty-four years subtracted from 37 BCE would then result in 4 BCE, making the thirty-seven years from 40 BCE and thirty-four years from 37 BCE, reckoning inclusively.

Second, we must observe the reigns of Herod's three sons and note how they confirm the 4 BCE date for the death of Herod. Although there was considerable dispute about who would succeed Herod, it is necessary to reckon the beginning of that person's reign immediately after Herod's death.<sup>16</sup>

Archelaus was deposed in his tenth year according to *Antiquities* (17.342), or in his ninth year according to *Jewish War* (2.111). The difference of a year could be due to Josephus' use of sources, or possibly to the fact that he counted from the time of Archelaus' return from Rome to his domain in 3 BCE, whereas in *Antiquities* he calculated from the time of Herod's death. The ten-year length of reign is more accurate, because Josephus confirms it in his *Life* (1). If this is true, reckoning the tenth year from 4 BCE would result in Archelaus' deposition in 6 CE. This is further substantiated by Dio Cassius, who explicitly states that Archelaus was banished during the consulship of Aemilius Lepidus and Lucius Arruntius, i.e., in 6 CE (55.25.1; 27.6). Therefore, the date of 4 BCE for Herod's death fits well.

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<sup>14</sup> M. Stern, "Appendix: Chronology," in *The Jewish People in the First Century. Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. S. Safrai, M. Stern, D. Flusser, and W. C. van Unnik, vol. 1, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, sec. 1.1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, and Assen: van Gorcum & Comp. B.V., 1974), 67.

<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.487; cf. *War* 1.351; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 84, 292. Filmer does not reckon the years inclusively, but Bernegger gives ample evidence that Josephus did count inclusively. Cf. P. M. Bernegger, "Affirmation of Herod's Death in 4 BC," *JTS* 34 (1983): 526–531; Hoehner, "The Date of the Death of Herod the Great," 103–105.

<sup>16</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, SNTSMS 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972; reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 18–39; Timothy D. Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," *JTS* 19 (1968): 204–209; van Bruggen, "The Year of the Death of Herod the Great," 4–8.

Herod Antipas was deposed in the summer of 39 CE.<sup>17</sup> This is substantiated by numismatic evidence which shows that the last coins of Herod Antipas were minted in his forty-third year.<sup>18</sup> Calculating backward results in 4 BCE for Antipas' accession and the death of Herod the Great.

According to Josephus, Philip the Tetrarch died in the twentieth year of Tiberius' reign (19 August 33 to 18 August 34 CE), after thirty-seven years of rule over Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, and Batanea.<sup>19</sup> Since Philip reigned for thirty-seven years, that is, he was in his thirty-eighth year (his last coin was minted in his thirty-seventh year),<sup>20</sup> and reckoning backward from the Julian year which ended on 31 December CE 34, Philip would have begun his reign in 4 BCE. Again, this would demonstrate that Herod the Great died in the same year.

Herod Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod the Great, must be considered here because of the chronological link to Philip the Tetrarch and Herod Antipas. Herod Agrippa died when he was fifty-four, in the seventh year of his reign. Josephus mentions that Agrippa reigned for four years under Gaius, ruling during three of these over the tetrarchy of Philip; Antipas' territory was added in his fourth year.<sup>21</sup> From this one can calculate that Agrippa reigned during Gaius' four years as emperor, from 18 March 37 CE to 24 January 41 CE. Although Gaius conferred on Agrippa the tetrarchy of Philip shortly after he became emperor, it was not until Gaius' second year (summer 38) that Agrippa went to secure his territory.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Agrippa acquired Antipas' territory in the fourth year of Agrippa's rule (40 CE), a year after Antipas' banishment. This is a reasonable inference, for some time must have elapsed between Antipas' deposition and Agrippa's

<sup>17</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.252; cf. 256; 19.351. See Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 262–273.

<sup>18</sup> Frederic W. Madden, *History of Jewish Coinage and of Money in the Old and New Testament*, Prolegomenon by Michael Avi-Yonah, Library of Biblical Studies (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1967; reprint, London: Bernard Quaritch, 1864), 99; A. Reifenberg, *Ancient Jewish Coins*, 2nd and rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1947), 45; Ya'akov Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period* (Tel-Aviv: Am Hassefer, 1967), 72–75, no. 75; David Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins* (New York: Amphora Books, 1987), 68–69, coins 68, 68a, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.106.

<sup>20</sup> Madden, *History of Jewish Coinage*, 102; Reifenberg, *Ancient Jewish Coins*, 44; Meshorer, *Jewish Coins of the Second Temple Period*, 76–77, no. 84; Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins*, 69–71, coin 72.

<sup>21</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 19.351.

<sup>22</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.23.



acquisition of his lands. Hence, Agrippa I's rule fits well within the chronological scheme of his acquisition of the territories of Herod's sons. All of this indicates that Herod the Great died in 4 BCE.

Because the historical data point to 4 BCE for the succession of Herod's sons, Filmer suggests that Archelaus and Antipas were co-regents with Herod until his death in 1 BCE.<sup>23</sup> However, there is no evidence in the sources to suggest this. Moreover, Herod was not inclined to share or delegate his authority. Martin, realizing Filmer's dilemma, suggests that Herod had fallen out of favor with the Emperor Augustus in 4 BCE and that another son, Antipater (not Antipas), had a two-year joint rule with Herod until Herod's death in 1 BCE.<sup>24</sup> Herod had indeed fallen out of favor with the Emperor, but this was immediately after his war with the Arabs around 10/9 BCE<sup>25</sup> and just before he killed his sons Alexander and Aristobulus in 8/7 BCE, not during the period from 4 to 1 BCE.<sup>26</sup> It is unlikely that Herod's disgrace could have happened later than after 7 BCE. Furthermore, Herod had spoken of Antipater as his successor,<sup>27</sup> and this indicates that Antipater was not on the throne as co-regent.<sup>28</sup> Besides this, how could Antipater be co-regent with Herod when he was in Rome during this time? Hence, we must conclude that Herod was sole ruler until his death in 4 BCE.

### 1.2. *The Census of Quirinius*

According to Luke 2:1–5, Augustus ordered a worldwide census prior to Jesus' birth. Subsequently, Joseph and Mary traveled to their hometown, Bethlehem, to register. The purpose of a census was to provide statistical data for the levy of taxes in the provinces. The date of this census is difficult to pinpoint. Although Luke seems to imply that a worldwide census was decreed at that particular time, no Roman historian specifically mentions this census, though there were periodic censuses in various provinces. For example, in Gaul censuses were

<sup>23</sup> Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great," 296–297.

<sup>24</sup> Martin, *The Birth of Christ Recalculated*, 115–122.

<sup>25</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 16.282–290.

<sup>26</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 16.352; cf. Hoehner, "The Date of the Death of Herod the Great," 108–109.

<sup>27</sup> Josephus, *War* 1.623; *Ant.* 17.116; cf. Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," 204–209.

<sup>28</sup> Barnes, "The Date of Herod's Death," 206.

conducted in 27 and 12 BCE, and in Cyrene in 7 BCE.<sup>29</sup> There is evidence that in Egypt a census occurred at seven-year intervals, in 11/10 BCE, 4/3 BCE, 4/5 CE, and 11/12 CE.<sup>30</sup> Augustus was the first in history to order a census or tax assessment of the whole provincial empire.<sup>31</sup> There was undoubtedly a census in Judea conducted by Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, governor of Syria (6–7 CE or 6–9 CE), after Archelaus' deposition in 6 CE, which provoked a revolt led by Judas the Galilean.<sup>32</sup> Some suggest that Luke dated the birth of Christ in connection with this census in 6 CE,<sup>33</sup> but this is clearly a historical blunder.<sup>34</sup> Although Luke acknowledged this census in Acts 5:37, he did not associate it there with Jesus' birth. This date would have been too late in light of the fact that he states in Luke 1:5 that the births of John the Baptist and Jesus took place in the days of Herod the Great, thus agreeing with Matthew's chronology (Matt 2:1). Also, Luke is consistent when he states that Jesus was about thirty years of age when he began his ministry (Luke 3:23), which was preceded a short time before by the ministry of John the Baptist, which began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius (Luke 3:1–2). Since the fifteenth year of Tiberius can be dated around 27 to 29 CE (see the discussion below), this means that if Jesus had been born in 6 CE, he would have been only twenty-one to twenty-three years old, not about thirty years old, when he began his ministry.

To resolve this issue, we must pay attention to the meaning of the adjective "first" in reference to the census in Luke 2:2. There have been several attempts to resolve this dilemma.<sup>35</sup> One view, championed by Ramsay, argues that Quirinius was governor of Syria twice: once from

<sup>29</sup> G. H. Stevenson, "The Imperial Administration," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 10: *The Augustan Empire 44 BC–AD 70*, ed. S. A. Cook, F. E. Adcock, and M. P. Charlesworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 192–193.

<sup>30</sup> Roger S. Bagnall and Bruce W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt*, Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 4–5.

<sup>31</sup> A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 168.

<sup>32</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 17.1–10; Acts 5:37.

<sup>33</sup> Mark D. Smith, "Of Jesus and Quirinius," *CBQ* 62 (2000): 278–293.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 BC to AD 100*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 106, 135–136.

<sup>35</sup> For a recent discussion, see Stanley E. Porter, "The Reason for the Lukan Census," in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Alexander J. M. Wedderburn*, ed. Alf Christophersen, Carsten Claussen, Jörg Frey, and Bruce Longenecker, *JSNTSup* 217 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 165–188.

11/10 to 8/7 BCE, the time of the “first” census, and later in 6–7 CE or 6–9, the time of the second census.<sup>36</sup> This has been challenged, since Quirinius was most likely a governor of Galatia and involved with the Homanadensian war in Galatia sometime between 5 and 3 BCE, and thus could not have been the governor of Syria.<sup>37</sup>

Another consideration was first proposed by Herwartus in the seventeenth century; it has been revived by Lagrange<sup>38</sup> and more recently by Heichelheim,<sup>39</sup> Turner,<sup>40</sup> and Ogg.<sup>41</sup> It renders the superlative πρῶτος, “first” (number one among at least three) as the comparative πρότερος, “former” (one of two), translating Luke 2:2: “This census was before that [census] when Quirinius was governor of Syria.” However, in later Greek the true comparative “πρότερος has surrendered the meaning ‘the first of two’ to πρῶτος which now means only ‘earlier’.”<sup>42</sup> Hence, it could be rendered “this census was earlier than [the census] when Quirinius was governor of Syria.” This construction

<sup>36</sup> W. M. Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem? A Study on the Credibility of St. Luke*, 2nd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898), 149–173, 227–248; W. M. Ramsay, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, 4th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920), 275–300.

<sup>37</sup> Ronald Syme, “Galatia and Pamphilia under Augustus: The Governorships of Piso, Quirinius, and Silvanus,” *Klio* 27.1/2 (1934): 131–138; Barbara Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 203–214, esp. 210–214; Robert K. Sherck, “Roman Galatia: The Governors from 25 BC to AD 114,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung, Principat*, vol. 7.2, ed. Hildegard Temporini (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 967–969, 1040.

<sup>38</sup> M.-J. Lagrange, “Où en est la question du recensement de Quirinius?,” *RB* 8 (1911): 60–84.

<sup>39</sup> F. M. Heichelheim, “Roman Syria,” in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. Tenney Frank, vol. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1938), 160–162.

<sup>40</sup> Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965), 23–24.

<sup>41</sup> George Ogg, “The Quirinius Question Today,” *ExpTim* 79 (1968): 233–235.

<sup>42</sup> F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and rev. of the 9th–10th German ed. incorporating supplementary notes of A. Debrunner by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), §62; cf. also James Hope Moulton, *Prolegomena*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1908), 79, 107; Maximilian Zerwick, *Biblical Greek. Illustrated by Examples*, trans. Joseph Smith, Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici 114 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 50; Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and aug. Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie, 9th ed. with a Revised Supplement 1996, ed. P. G. W. Glare and A. A. Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 1535; Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 893.

is cumbersome. Nevertheless, along the same line of argumentation, Higgins suggests that *πρῶτος* was used adverbially as equivalent to *πρό* in John 15:18, “It [the world] has hated me *before* it hated you.” “If this is conceded, there is no need to infer a compendious comparison, and *πρώτη* governs the participial phrase.”<sup>43</sup> In agreement, Pearson shows that *πρῶτος* is used in the same way in two other places in John: John 1:15, “He who comes after me is greater than I am because he existed *before* me,” and John 1:30, “After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed *before* me.”<sup>44</sup> Although Luke 2:2 presents a difficulty in understanding the function of the dependent genitive participle *ἡγεμονεύοντος* and how it relates to *πρῶτος*, Pearson notes that the participle is a part of the genitive absolute (*ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηνίου*) which is dependent on the preceding independent clause, with *ἐγένετο* functioning as a copulative, thus: “This census was before Quirinius governed Syria.”<sup>45</sup> Porter refines this by saying that one should not think of this as a genitive absolute, but rather take the participle *ἡγεμονεύοντος* as attributively modifying the noun *Κυρηνίου*. “The confusion here is caused by the fact that the participle and noun are in the genitive case, as is required by the comparative construction, rather than the structure being a genitive absolute.”<sup>46</sup> In fact, Luke does not distinguish an earlier census from the one conducted in 6 CE when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Rather, he states that the census at the time of Jesus’ birth took place some time before Quirinius was governor. Thus, Luke 2:2 could be translated: “This census occurred *before* Quirinius was governor of Syria.” This seems to be a reasonable way to resolve the problem.

Although the exact date of the census is not certain, it is reasonable to conclude that the census would have been taken after Herod fell into disfavor with Augustus in 8/7 BCE. More specifically, it was probably after Herod’s execution of his sons Alexander and Aristobulus in

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<sup>43</sup> A. J. B. Higgins, “Sidelights on Christian Beginnings in the Graeco-Roman World,” *EvQ* 41 (1969): 200.

<sup>44</sup> Brook W. R. Pearson, “The Lucan Censuses, Revisted,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 280–282; cf. S. R. Llewelyn, “The Provincial Census and Jesus’ Birth in Bethlehem,” in *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, vol. 6, *A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1980–81*, ed. S. R. Llewelyn and R. A. Kearsley (Sydney: Macquarie University, 1992), 130–132; Johannes P. Louw, Eugene A. Nida et al., eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), §67.18.

<sup>45</sup> Pearson, “The Lucan Censuses, Revisted,” 281.

<sup>46</sup> Porter, “The Reason for the Lukan Census,” 175.

7 BCE, when there was an intense struggle for the throne by his other sons. This led Herod to change his will three times before his death in the spring of 4 BCE.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, not only were there intrigues within the household, but Herod's illness became more intense. His death was imminent. With such instability and such a bad state of health, this would have been an opportune time for Augustus to have had a census taken in order to assess the situation before Herod's death. It must also be noted that Augustus was well aware of the situation in Israel, because each time Herod changed his will and wanted to eliminate one of his sons, he had to ask the emperor's permission. Therefore, a census within the last year or two of Herod's reign would have been reasonable, and indeed most probable. This fits well with both Matthew's and Luke's chronologies, which seem to indicate that the census and Christ's birth took place before Herod's death.

### 1.3. *The Star of the Magi*

Another element in the birth of Jesus is, according to Matt 2:1–12, the Magi (astrologers) from the East who came to Jerusalem searching for Jesus because they had seen a star at its rising (i.e., in the East) and came to worship him. There are three approaches to this story. First, some think it is a religious myth or a literary device created by Matthew with little or no historical basis.<sup>48</sup> However, the mention of historical details such as Herod, Bethlehem of Judea, and religious leaders,<sup>49</sup> supports the historical reality of a story that could be verified by eyewitnesses. Second, some think that the star was a miraculous

<sup>47</sup> Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 269–276.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 231; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, new updated ed., ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 36, 170–173, 188–200, 608–613; Christopher Cullen, “Can We Find the Star of Bethlehem in Far Eastern Records?,” *QJRS* 20 (1979): 158; Dale C. Allison Jr., “What Was the Star that Guided the Magi?,” *BRev* 9 (December 1993): 24; Kim Paffenroth, “The Star of Bethlehem Casts Light on Its Modern Interpreters,” *QJRS* 34 (December 1993): 449–460; Kim Paffenroth, “Science or Story? The Star of Bethlehem,” *ExpTim* 106 (1994): 78–79.

<sup>49</sup> For the historical validity of the Magi, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, “The Episode of the Magi,” in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 15–39.

intervention of God to announce the arrival of the Messiah.<sup>50</sup> This view helps little in the attempt to date the birth of Jesus, except for the fact that this miraculous appearance of the star occurred while Herod the Great was still alive.

The third approach is to consider that Magi of Mesopotamia, most likely Babylon or Persia,<sup>51</sup> observed an astronomical phenomenon which motivated them to come to Jerusalem. From October 1604 to October 1605, the astronomer Johannes Kepler carefully noted his observations of the supernova (a giant stellar explosion) which was in the vicinity of the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn with Mars close by, in modern times called the “massing” of the planets.<sup>52</sup> Although the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, occurring once every 19.86 years, was considered significant astrologically, the conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, occurring once every 805 years, makes the latter more significant. Kepler calculated that in 7 BCE the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn (May 27, October 6, and December 1) was followed soon (February in 6 BCE) by Mars moving into the area.<sup>53</sup> The triple conjunction and the massing of the planets would have alerted the Magi that something significant was about to occur—but would this been enough to begin their journey?

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Kenneth Boa, and William Proctor, *The Return of the Star of Bethlehem*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1980), 123–124.

<sup>51</sup> David Hughes, *The Star of Bethlehem Mystery* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1979), 35–42; Mark Kidger, *The Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer's View* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 178–179.

<sup>52</sup> Johannes Kepler, *De stella nova in pete Serpentarii et qui sub ejus exortum de novo iniit, trigono igneo*, Prague: Paul Sess, 1606, quoted by A. J. Sachs and C. B. F. Walker, “Kepler’s View of the Star of Bethlehem and the Babylonian Almanac for 7/6 BC,” *Iraq* 46 (1984): 43. See also David H. Clark and F. Richard Stephenson, *The Historical Supernovae*, Pergamon International Library of Science, Technology, Engineering and Social Studies (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1977), 191–206; F. Richard Stephenson and David A. Green, *Historical Supernovae and Their Remnants*, International Series on Astronomy and Astrophysics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 60–81.

<sup>53</sup> Sachs and Walker, “Kepler’s View of the Star of Bethlehem,” 43; Colin J. Humphreys, “The Star of Bethlehem, a Comet in 5 BC and the Date of Christ’s Birth,” *TynBul* 43.1 (1992): 45; cf. also Konradin Ferrari-D’Occhieppo, “The Star of the Magi and Babylonian Astronomy,” in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 42–46; Simo Parpola, “The Magi and the Star,” *BRev* 17 (2001): 20–23. Kidger (*Star of Bethlehem*, 198–218) makes a good case for the position that the Magi would not have set off if they had seen only the triple conjunctions in 7 BCE.

In this regard, Humphreys states that one needs to observe the characteristics of the star of Bethlehem as recorded in Matthew's Gospel.<sup>54</sup> The text states that the Magi saw the star when it rose (Matt 2:2); when they arrived in Bethlehem, the star they had seen appeared again and stood over the place where Jesus was, viz. Bethlehem (2:9). Although a supernova could have alerted the Magi that something was about to occur, Humphreys correctly notes that it would not have been close enough to the earth to lead them to where Jesus was.<sup>55</sup> Rather, he suggests that it was a comet which the Magi observed and followed, clearly visible to the naked eye over a period of time.<sup>56</sup> Halley's comet has often been suggested but that appeared in 12 BCE, too early to be the star of Bethlehem.<sup>57</sup> The Chinese, who precisely recorded visible comets, mention a comet that was first seen between March 9 and April 6, 5 BCE described as a tailed comet visible for more than seventy days.<sup>58</sup> Humphreys rightly suggests that this fits well with requirements of Matthew's text. This comet appeared in the area of the sky, including

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<sup>54</sup> Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem," 34–44. This article is very helpful in the discussion of these issues.

<sup>55</sup> Hughes thinks the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 BCE (May 27, October 6, and December 1) was the star of Bethlehem, so that Jesus was born in mid-September of that year (*The Star of Bethlehem Mystery*, 164–194, 199–200). Kidger (*Star of Bethlehem*, 219–287, esp., 253, 274–275, 282–284) believes that besides the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 BCE, the star of Bethlehem was a nova in February or March of 5 BCE (a year after the massing of the planets in 6 BCE), so that Jesus was born in late March or early April of 5 BCE. The problem with these views lies in reconciling Matthew's account (the star that stood over Jesus' birthplace) with a triple conjunction or a nova that are far away.

<sup>56</sup> Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem," 35.

<sup>57</sup> Some have proposed that Jesus was born in 12 BCE: see Jerry Vardaman, "Jesus' Life: A New Chronology," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. idem and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 55–82; Nikos Kokkinos, "Crucifixion in AD 36: The Keystone for Dating the Birth of Jesus," in *ibid.*, 160–162; idem, "The Relative Chronology of the Nativity in Tertullian," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos II: Chronological, Nativity, and Religious Studies in Memory of Ray Summers*, ed. E. Jerry Vardaman (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 119–131. However, scholars have not accepted this position, because of the difficulties it presents with regard to the historical data presented in the gospels. This view has been challenged by Jack V. Scarola, "Chronology of the Nativity Era," *ibid.*, 61–84.

<sup>58</sup> *Observations of Comets from 611 BC to AD 1640 Extracted from the Chinese Annals*, trans. John Williams (London: Printed for the author by Stangways and Walden, 1871; reprint, Hornchurch, Essex, England: Science and Technology Publishers, 1987), 10, no. 52; Ho Peng Yoke, "Ancient and Mediaeval Observations of Comets and Novae in Chinese Sources," *Vistas in Astronomy* 5 (1962): 148 (63); Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 314–315.

Capricorn, which rose above the eastern horizon in March/April. Since it was visible at twilight, the Magi saw it at its rising, that is, in the East (2:2). Since it was visible for over seventy days, this would give the Magi time to journey to Israel.<sup>59</sup> The normal route from Babylon to Israel was the Fertile Crescent, a distance of about 900 miles. With a fully loaded camel, experienced drivers could travel as much as 80 to 100 miles a day, while even clumsy and inexperienced drivers traveled no less than 30 miles a day. So it was not unreasonable to travel an average of 50 miles a day; this means that the distance could be traversed in less than 20 days.<sup>60</sup> If they first saw the comet in March/April and began to travel west shortly thereafter, they would have arrived in Jerusalem around April/May. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked where the king of the Jews had been born (2:2). On hearing this, Herod assembled the chief priests and scribes to inquire where Christ was to be born. The religious leaders informed Herod that the Old Testament prophet had written that he was to be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2). Herod summoned the Magi and asked them when the star appeared, and then sent them to Bethlehem (Matt 2:7–8), a journey of only four or five miles. When the Magi went to Bethlehem, the star they saw in its rising (the East) went before them and stood over the place where the child was (2:9). Hence, the Magi, having observed the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 BCE (i.e., May 27, October 6, and December 1) and the massing of Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars in 6 BCE, finally saw this tailed comet when they were still in the East in March/April in 5 BCE. It was then that they went to Jerusalem. They went there because of these signs, but there is no indication that the star (i.e., the comet) led them from the East to Jerusalem. It was in Jerusalem that they were told that Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. Accordingly, they proceeded south, and the star (i.e., the comet) which they had seen at its rising (the East) reappeared and they rejoiced (2:10) greatly. There have been sightings of comets over cities which resembled swords, and in Matthew it was most likely a tailed comet with the head of the comet<sup>61</sup> appearing to stand over where

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<sup>59</sup> Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem," 43–48.

<sup>60</sup> See Hughes, *The Star of Bethlehem Mystery*, 41–42.

<sup>61</sup> Seymour and Seymour believe this was the comet in April of 4 BCE, mentioned in *Observations of Comets from 611 BC to AD 1640*, 10 no. 53: John Seymour and Michael W. Seymour, "The Historicity of the Gospels and the Astronomical Events concerning the Birth of Christ," *QJRAS* 19 (1978): 195–196. However, this comet did



Jesus was, viz. Bethlehem.<sup>62</sup> Since Bethlehem was a small town, the Magi would have been able to discover where the newborn baby was. Subsequently, they did not go back to Herod as they had been ordered, and this prompted Herod to kill all the male children in Bethlehem two years old and under.<sup>63</sup> When Herod had inquired when the star appeared (2:7, 16), in all probability the Magi related to him not only the appearance of the comet of 5 BCE but also the triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 BCE and the massing of the planets in 6 BCE. Hence, Herod's slaughter of all the male babies two years of age and under left nothing to chance.<sup>64</sup>

We may infer from these data that the birth of Jesus occurred at some time in the spring of 5 BCE. Humphreys attempts to pinpoint it to the time of the Passover which was the time that some Jews thought the Messiah would be born. He suggests that Jesus could have been born on Nisan 10, the time when the Passover lamb was selected, making it April 14 or 15, 5 BCE. The crowds coming to the Passover

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not have a tail, and they think it should be labeled a nova. Yet how could it be possible to observe a nova standing directly over the place where Jesus was born?

<sup>62</sup> The astronomer Michael Molnar held that it was a comet, but two lunar occultations (laymen would label this "eclipses") of Jupiter by the moon in Aries (to the astrologers, this signified an important birth in Herod's kingdom): the first on March 20, 6 BCE when the Magi would have observed it in Babylon, and the second on April 17, 6 BCE when the Magi noticed it in Bethlehem, the latter eclipse marking the birth of Jesus: Michael R. Molnar, "The Magi's Star from the Perspective of Ancient Astrological Practices," *QJRAS* 36 (1995): 109–126; idem, *The Star of Bethlehem: The Legacy of the Magi* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999). Molnar notes that since this eclipse was first seen by the Magi in April 6 BCE, Herod may have assumed that this was when Jesus was born, and that this was why he ordered all male children two years old and under to be killed. However, the text of Matthew seems to indicate that it was a visible star rather than an eclipse. We must also ask how an eclipse could stand over the place where Jesus was born. Besides this, to date the birth of Jesus in the spring of 6 BCE makes it too early to fit with other chronological pegs for the life of Jesus.

<sup>63</sup> Some think the massacre of the male children is a legend or folklore, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Herods of Judaea* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 155; Michael Grant, *Herod the Great* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971), 12, 228–229; Brown, *The Birth of Messiah*, 227. However, the historicity of this incident has the support of many: cf. Stewart Perowne, *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1956), 172; Abraham Schalit, *König Herodes: Der Mann und sein Werk* (SJ 4) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1969), 648–649; Richard T. France, "Herod and the Children of Bethlehem," *NovT* 21 (1979): 98–120; Paul L. Maier, "Herod and the Infants in Bethlehem," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos II: Chronological, Nativity, and Religious Studies in Memory of Ray Summers*, ed. E. Jerry Vardaman (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 169–189; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 296–297.

<sup>64</sup> Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem, 36–37, 47–49.

would explain why the inn was full (Luke 2:7).<sup>65</sup> While this is possible, it seems strange that none of the Gospel writers, especially Matthew, mentions that Jesus was born at Passover time. Thus, the spring of 5 BCE remains the most likely time for Jesus' birth.

## 2. *The Commencement of Jesus' Ministry*

The next chronological marker in the life of Jesus is the commencement of his ministry. Jesus' visit to the temple when he was twelve is mentioned (Luke 2:41–51), but this incident is vague with reference to chronology. Hence, it is not helpful in establishing a chronological framework for Jesus' life. However, there are three chronological markers which do need to be considered: (1) the commencement of John the Baptist's ministry, (2) the commencement of Jesus' ministry, and (3) the first Passover of Jesus' ministry.

### 2.1. *The Commencement of John the Baptist's Ministry*

Luke 3:1–3 specifically mentions that in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, John the Baptist began his ministry in the area of the Jordan River. It was during this time that he baptized Jesus, marking the beginning of Jesus' ministry which commenced after the opening of John's ministry. Since Luke dates the beginning of John's activity with chronological notes of secular history (which he does not do for the beginning of Jesus' ministry), it is necessary to determine when John embarked on his ministry. This will establish the *terminus a quo* of Jesus' ministry.

Augustus died on August 19, 14 CE.<sup>66</sup> Since Tiberius immediately succeeded him, it is necessary to know how to reckon the fifteenth year of his reign. There are five ways to do this. The first way is the normal Roman method, which would mean that Tiberius' first year would have run from August 19, 14 CE to August 18, 15; the fifteenth year would have run from August 19, 28 CE to August 18, 29. The major objection to this view is that it would be too complicated and confusing to calculate according to dynastic years.<sup>67</sup> However, since the combined work of Luke-Acts is addressed to Theophilus (Luke 1:3)

<sup>65</sup> Humphreys, "The Star of Bethlehem", 52–53.

<sup>66</sup> See Appian, *Bella Civilia* 2.149; Plutarch, *Aug.* 56.30; Suetonius, *Caesar* 81.2; idem, *Augustus* 100.1; Dio Cassius, 56.30; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.32; *War* 2.168.

<sup>67</sup> Benedictus Niese, "Zur Chronologie des Josephus," *Hermes* 28 (1893): 210–211.

and refers to him as “most excellent” (κράτιστε), a term Luke otherwise employs only as a form of address to a Roman official (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25), it is plausible to deduce that Theophilus would have been familiar with dynastic years.<sup>68</sup>

The second method evolves from the first, because some scholars find the above date too late. They suggest that Luke was counting from the decree by which Tiberius became co-regent with Augustus.<sup>69</sup> On the basis of Velleius Paterculus, 2.121, Mommsen dates the decree to the end of 11 CE,<sup>70</sup> which would make 25/26 CE the fifteenth year of Tiberius. But this method must be rejected, because there is no evidence for its employment, either from historical documents or from coins, whereas there is abundant evidence that Tiberius calculated his first year from immediately after the death of Augustus. Any theory that has to distort the normal sense of the text is *eo ipso* suspect.

The third method proposes that Luke calculated from Nisan 1, making the first year of Tiberius begin on August 19, 14 CE and end on Nisan 1, 15; his fifteenth year would run from Nisan 1, 28 to Nisan 1, 29<sup>71</sup> or from April 15, 28 to April 4, 29.<sup>72</sup> Without any supporting evidence, Ogg assumes this to be true. Although the Mishnaic tractate *Rosh HaShanah* 1.1 specifically states that the regnal years were reckoned from Nisan 1, a discussion on this in the Talmud indicates that it was not universally accepted. During the Maccabean times, 2 Maccabees used the Seleucid era, which reckoned from October; the situation in 1 Maccabees is rather unclear, but it seems to date the years beginning with Nisan when following Palestinian sources, and beginning with Tishri when following a Syrian source.<sup>73</sup> Although Ogg concludes from the Old Testament that the Jews reckoned from Nisan 1; in fact, they reckoned from both Nisan and Tishri.<sup>74</sup> Beyond this, it

<sup>68</sup> Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 338.

<sup>69</sup> Ramsay, *Was Christ Born at Bethlehem?*, 199–202, 221.

<sup>70</sup> Theodor Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, part 2 (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1887), 1159 n. 3.

<sup>71</sup> George Ogg, *The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 200–201.

<sup>72</sup> Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC–AD 75*, 46.

<sup>73</sup> Bickermann, “Makkabäerbücher,” in *Pauly's Real-encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. Wilhelm Kroll, vol. 14.1 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), 781–784; J. C. Dancy, *Commentary on I Maccabees*, Blackwell's Theological Texts (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), 50–51.

<sup>74</sup> Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 43–60, 180.

is difficult to determine whether they used the accession-year system (where the first year of a king's reign began on the first day of the new year after he became king) or the non-accession year (where the first year of the king is that portion of the year between his accession and the first day of the new year). Schürer thinks that the Nisan system was used by Josephus for calculating the rule of Herod the Great.<sup>75</sup> But would Luke, a Gentile, use this system when writing to a Roman official? That seems most unlikely.

The fourth method is that used by Syria from the time of Augustus to Nerva, whereby the regnal years of Roman emperors were reckoned from Tishri 1, as were those of the old Syro-Seleucids.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the first year of Tiberius would have run from August 19, 14 CE to Tishri 1, 14 (October 15, 14) and his fifteenth year from Tishri 1, 27 to Tishri 1, 28,<sup>77</sup> or from September 21, 27 to October 8, 28.<sup>78</sup> Those who hold this view suppose that since Luke was from Antioch, he would have calculated the reigns of emperors according to the calendar with which he was familiar.<sup>79</sup> Besides this, the official Jewish New Year, except possibly during the exilic period, commenced with Tishri 1 (especially after Nehemiah's reformation),<sup>80</sup> making it natural to reckon regnal years from the New Year. Two difficulties with this view are that the Jews did not always reckon regnal years from Tishri, and that there is no certainty that Luke was from Antioch.

The fifth method is to suppose that Luke used the Julian calendar. By this method, if one calculates according to the non-accession-year

<sup>75</sup> Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 1:326–328 n. 165.

<sup>76</sup> Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht*, 2, part 2: 802–804. For a discussion of the Syrian calendars, see Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 53–59.

<sup>77</sup> Conrad Cichorius, "Chronologisches zum Leben Jesu," *ZNW* 22 (1923): 17–19; George B. Caird, "The Chronology of the NT," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al., vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 601.

<sup>78</sup> Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC–AD 75*, 46.

<sup>79</sup> William M. Ramsay, "Numbers, Hours, Years, and Dates," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings et al., Extra Volume (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1904), 481; Cichorius, "Chronologisches zum Leben Jesu," 18–19.

<sup>80</sup> J. F. McLaughlin, "New Year," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. I. Singer et al., vol. 9 (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1905), 254–256; Julian Morgenstern, "Year," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al., vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 923–924; cf. Mayer Irwin Gruber, "Year," in *EncJud*, ed. Cecil Roth et al., vol. 16 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem, 1972), 724–726; Ephraim Jehudah Wiesenberg, "Calendar," *ibid.*, vol. 5 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem, 1972), 43–50; *idem*, "Tishri," *ibid.*, vol. 15 (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem, 1972), 1154.

system, Tiberius' first year ran from August 19 to December 31, 14 CE, and his fifteenth year ran from January 1 to December 31, 28. However, if one reckons according to the accession-year system, August 19 to December 31, 14 is considered the accession year, and January 1 to December 31, 15 is considered the first year of Tiberius' reign. Thus, his fifteenth year would have run from January 1 to December 31, 29. The use of the Julian calendar and the calculation according to the accession-year system were employed by Roman historians such as Tacitus and Suetonius.<sup>81</sup> The chief argument for this view is that since Luke was addressing a Roman official named Theophilus (Luke 1:3), it is probable that he was addressing Roman readers or those under Roman dominion, who would be familiar with the Julian calendar.<sup>82</sup>

In conclusion, of the five methods, the second is unacceptable and the third is unlikely. If one were to accept 30 CE as the crucifixion date, the fourth method would be the most probable. This would mean that John the Baptist began his ministry sometime between September 21, 27 CE and October 8, 28. This allows for Jesus' ministry to have lasted slightly more than two years. However, if one thinks that Jesus was crucified in 33 CE, then either the first or the fifth method would be the most probable, dating the beginning of John's ministry somewhere between August 19, 28 and December 31, 29.<sup>83</sup> This would allow at least a three-year ministry of Jesus. Either of these methods satisfies the requirements of the biblical narratives, and both methods were used for calculation in Jesus' time. We would then conclude that John the Baptist's ministry began sometime in 29 CE.

## 2.2. *The Commencement of Jesus' Ministry*

Nothing is specifically stated regarding the interval of time between the commencement of John the Baptist's ministry and the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The gospels give us the impression that Jesus began his ministry shortly after John the Baptist began his.

Luke 3:23 mentions that Jesus was "about thirty years of age" when he began his ministry. If Jesus was born in the spring of 5 BCE, as concluded above, how does this agree with the fifteenth year of Tiberius'

<sup>81</sup> For a discussion of this, see Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 338–339.

<sup>82</sup> Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 338.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1:383–386.

reign, which (according to Luke 3:1–3) marked the commencement of John the Baptist’s ministry? If one accepts the fourth method listed above and dates Jesus’ baptism shortly before Passover of 28 CE, Jesus would then have been about thirty-two years of age. With both the first and fifth solutions, it is possible that Jesus was baptized early in 29 CE (on the fifth view, Jesus could have been baptized as early as the autumn of 28), with his ministry beginning shortly before the Passover of 29. Jesus would thus have been around thirty-two or thirty-three years old. However, it seems more plausible (using the first or fifth method) that John baptized Jesus some time in 29 CE, with Jesus’ ministry beginning in the summer or autumn of 29, so that Jesus would have been thirty-three years of age at the start of his ministry. This conclusion is supported by the fact that Luke uses the term “about” (ὥσεί) to denote approximation, indicating that Jesus was not exactly thirty years of age when he began his ministry. Luke 3:1 states that it was exactly the fifteenth year of Tiberius when John the Baptist began his ministry, but 3:23 states that Jesus was “about” thirty years old when he began his ministry. Luke does this elsewhere. For example, two Synoptic accounts state that the transfiguration occurred six days (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2) after Peter’s confession and Jesus’ prediction of his passion, but Luke 9:28 states that it was “about” (ὥσεί) eight days later. It is not unreasonable, then, to deduce that Jesus was “about” thirty years of age when he began his ministry.

### 2.3. *The First Passover of Jesus’ Ministry*

Shortly after his baptism, the first recorded visit of Jesus to Jerusalem (John 2:13–3:21) marks the first Passover of his ministry. It was at this time that he cleansed the temple and the Jews asked him to give them a sign that he had authority to do such a thing. He replied, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews responded, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and are you going to raise it up in three days?” There are two words for “temple.”<sup>84</sup> The first word, ἱερόν, refers to the whole sacred area which includes the three courts. The second term, ναός, refers to the sacred building alone

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<sup>84</sup> I am grateful to Finegan for the distinction he draws between the two Greek terms for “temple”: see Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 348–349.

which is located within the priests' court.<sup>85</sup> The gospels also make this distinction. When referring to the whole sacred area, ἱερόν is used (Matt 21:12 = Mark 11:15 = Luke 19:45) while on the other hand ναός is used when speaking of the sacred building (Matt 27:51 = Mark 15:38 = Luke 23:45). The Gospel of John is consistent with this distinction, noticeably in 2:14–15 where Jesus found the money changers in the temple court, namely, τὸ ἱερόν (cf. also John 2:14, 15; 5:14; 7:14, 28; 8:2, 20, 59; 10:23; 11:56; 18:20); and cf. 2:19–20 where John uses ὁ ναός when the Jews talk about the destruction of the temple edifice. Therefore, in the above mentioned passage the Jews were speaking of the temple edifice, not of the whole sacred precincts. According to Josephus, the reconstruction of the temple began in the eighteenth year of Herod's reign,<sup>86</sup> or 20/19 BCE<sup>87</sup> (this coincides with the time of Augustus' arrival in Syria, which according to Dio Cassius occurred in the spring or summer of 20 BCE),<sup>88</sup> and the first part to be rebuilt was the temple edifice (ναός). This work was carried out by the priests in one year and six months,<sup>89</sup> and thus completed in 18/17 BCE. Adding forty-six years to the last figure, we arrive at 29/30 CE. This means, then, that Jesus' first Passover was in the spring of 30 CE, or April 7, 30 CE. The Jews argued that the temple edifice had stood for forty-six years and was now just beginning its forty-seventh year. This conclusion fits well a dating of Jesus' baptism to the summer or autumn of 29 CE, as I have previously stated. Thus, there was a period of anywhere from four to nine months between Jesus' baptism and the first Passover of his ministry.

In conclusion, the fifteenth year of Tiberius, 28–29 CE, marked the commencement of John the Baptist's ministry. If John began his ministry in the early part of 29 CE and Jesus was baptized in the summer or autumn of that same year, he would have been thirty-three years old. Jesus' first Passover in 30 CE would have been four to nine

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 15.417–420. This distinction is also obvious in the description of Solomon's temple, cf. *Ant.* 8.95–96.

<sup>86</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.380.

<sup>87</sup> According to Josephus, *War* 1.401, Herod began rebuilding the temple in his fifteenth year. This may be simply a mistake on the part of Josephus; or it may refer to a time of preparation before the actual construction began (Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, 1:292 n. 12; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 347–348).

<sup>88</sup> Dio Cassius, 54.7.4–6. Dio states that Augustus went to Syria in the spring of the year when Marcus Apuleius and Publius Silius were consuls, i.e., 20 BCE.

<sup>89</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 15.421.

months after he began his ministry, which was forty-six years after the  $\nu\acute{o}\acute{o}\varsigma$  was completed. Therefore, Jesus began his ministry sometime in the summer or autumn of 29 CE.

### 3. *The Duration of Jesus' Ministry*

Since the gospel writers never specifically state the duration of Jesus' public ministry, there has been room for many differences of interpretation regarding the sequences and duration of his ministry. The synoptic gospels mention only one Passover (Matt 26:2, 17, 18, 19; Mark 14:1, 12, 14, 16; Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15) whereas John's Gospel mentions at least three (first: 2:13, 23; second: 6:4; third: 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14; some think that the feast mentioned in 5:1 refers to yet another Passover, although it is not specifically labeled as such).

Early gnostic commentators such as Valentinus (born ca. 100 CE, who was educated at Alexandria and later taught at Rome; flourished 160–80) thought that the duration of Jesus' ministry was about a year because of Luke 4:19, where he quotes Is 61:2: "To proclaim the acceptable year or the Lord." However, Valentinus' contemporary Irenaeus, from whom one obtains information about Valentinus, refuted this theory by indicating that there were a number of Passovers in the Gospel of John.<sup>90</sup> Clement of Alexandria<sup>91</sup> (ca. 150–215) and Origen<sup>92</sup> (ca. 185–254), and more recent scholars such as Conzelmann<sup>93</sup> and probably Sanders<sup>94</sup> accepted a one-year ministry of Jesus. However, to accept a one-year ministry on the basis of Luke 4:19 is questionable, because Isaiah's prophecy indicates the Messiah's arrival, not the duration of his ministry. Also, to compress Jesus' ministry into one year is to ignore John's three Passovers during: John 2:13 (at the time of Jesus' first journey to Jerusalem); 6:4 (at the time of the feeding of the five thousand); and 11:55 (the passion Passover). Furthermore, to attempt to fit a one-year ministry into the synoptic accounts is difficult. Mark 6:39 mentions "green grass" in connection with the feeding of the five

<sup>90</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 2.22.3, 5.

<sup>91</sup> Clement of Alexandria *Stromata*, 1.21.146.

<sup>92</sup> Origen, *De Principiis* 4.1.5.

<sup>93</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 30.

<sup>94</sup> E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books; New York: Penguin Books USA, 1993), 11–12, 54–55, 282–290.



thousand, which occurred at time of the second Passover recorded in John (6:4). This incident must have occurred in the year after the disciples plucked fully ripened grain (Mark 2:23), which would be in the spring, the time of the Passover. Accordingly, a year elapses between Mark 2:23 and 6:39. There would have been yet another year between Mark 6:39 and the passion Passover in Mark 14:1. This makes a one-year ministry highly untenable.

Since the Gospel of John specifically mentions three Passovers (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), it has been suggested that Jesus' ministry lasted a little over two years. Early supporters of this view are Apollinaris, bishop of Laodicea in Syria (ca. 310–390)<sup>95</sup> and Epiphanius, bishop Salamis in Cyprus (ca. 315–403).<sup>96</sup> More recent proponents of this view are Sutcliffe,<sup>97</sup> Blinzler,<sup>98</sup> Caird,<sup>99</sup> Ruckstuhl,<sup>100</sup> Schnackenburg,<sup>101</sup> Culpepper,<sup>102</sup> and Wright.<sup>103</sup> In order to maintain a two-year ministry, some assume a transposition of chapters 5 and 6 of the Gospel of John.<sup>104</sup> However, there is no textual evidence for this transposition. Even without accepting the transposition of these two chapters, there are

<sup>95</sup> Preserved by Jerome, *Commentariorum in Daniele* 9.24.

<sup>96</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.30.

<sup>97</sup> Edmond F. Sutcliffe, *A Two Year Public Ministry Defended*, The Bellarmine Series 1 (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1938).

<sup>98</sup> Josef Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu*, 4th ed. (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1969), 103–104.

<sup>99</sup> Caird, "The Chronology of the NT," 601–602.

<sup>100</sup> Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus*, trans. Victor J. Drapela (New York: Desclee Company, 1965), 6.

<sup>101</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Kevin Smyth, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 345.

<sup>102</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck et al., vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 93.

<sup>103</sup> Compare the date of 28 CE for the beginning of his ministry (N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Religions and the Question of God 2 [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996], 147) with 30 CE as the date of his crucifixion (N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Religions and the Question of God 1 [Minneapolis: Fortress Press; London: SPCK, 1992], 479).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, ICC vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), xvi–xix; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), xiii, 111–112, 209–210, 237–238; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Kevin Smyth, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 46; idem, *The Gospel according to St. John*, trans. Cecily Hastings, Francis McDonagh, David Smith, and Richard Foley, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament 2 (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1980), 90–91, 138.

two time notes, viz. John 4:35 and 5:1, which indicate that there must be more than a year between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4. This will be discussed below. Thus, a two-year ministry of Jesus is not long enough for all the events mentioned in the gospels.

It is better to advocate a three- or three-and-a-half year ministry of Jesus. Early advocates of a three- to three-and-a-half year ministry of Jesus are Melito of Sardis (d. ca. 190)<sup>105</sup> and Eusebius (ca. 260–340)<sup>106</sup> as well as other patristic writers.<sup>107</sup> More recently, a three-year ministry has been defended by Ogg,<sup>108</sup> Hendriksen,<sup>109</sup> Caird,<sup>110</sup> Hoehner,<sup>111</sup> Guthrie,<sup>112</sup> Finegan,<sup>113</sup> and Porter.<sup>114</sup>

Besides the three Passovers explicitly mentioned in the Gospel of John (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), there are reasonable grounds to suggest that there was an additional year of Jesus' ministry between the Passovers mentioned in John 2:13 and 6:4. One point of chronology that is common to all four gospels is the feeding of the five thousand (Matt 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14), which is dated some time near the Passover of John 6:4. This is confirmed by Mark 6:39, where the incidental mention of "green grass" indicates the springtime, the time of the Passover. Moreover, earlier in the synoptic gospels there is recorded the incident of the disciples plucking fully ripened grain (Matt 12:1; Mark 2:23; Luke 6:1), which would point to the spring a year earlier. On the other hand, the Passover of John 2:13 is too early for the incident of the disciples plucking grain, because

<sup>105</sup> Preserved in Anastasius Sinaïta, *Viae dux* 137.7.43–46.

<sup>106</sup> Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 8.2.106–111 (§400). The three and a half years are based on the half-week of Daniel 9:27; cf. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.10.2–6.

<sup>107</sup> For a good discussion, see Ogg, *The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus*, 76–90, 98–103, 119–128.

<sup>108</sup> Ogg, *The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus*, 1–149; Idem, "Chronology of the New Testament," in *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 729.

<sup>109</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, New Testament Commentary 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1953), 187–189.

<sup>110</sup> Caird, "The Chronology of the NT," 602.

<sup>111</sup> Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 55–60.

<sup>112</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 310.

<sup>113</sup> Finegan, "Chronology of the NT," 688–689; idem, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 349–351.

<sup>114</sup> Porter, "Chronology, New Testament," 203–204. Of course, many of those who accept the transposition of John 5 and 6 see the feast of John 5:1 as the Passover, referring back to John 6:4 (e.g., Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 225; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 240).

the Passover of John 2:13 occurred shortly after Jesus had been baptized and had started his ministry. Furthermore, after the Passover of John 2:13 his ministry was carried out in Judea; but the plucking of the grain occurred when he was in Galilee. Therefore, the plucking of the grain would fit well around the time of the Passover between the Passovers mentioned in John 2:13 and 6:4.

The additional year of Jesus' ministry between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4 is substantiated by the two time notes mentioned after the first Passover of 2:13. First, according to John 4:35, Jesus states that there are "yet four months, then comes the harvest." This would locate Jesus in Samaria in January/February after the Passover of John 2:13, and the harvest would then be in April/May of that year, the time of the unmentioned Passover. The second time note is in John 5:1 where another feast is mentioned. Although in John 5:1 a few manuscripts (e.g., C L Δ Π Ψ 0141 *f*<sup>1</sup> 33) include the article "the" feast (ἡ ἑορτή), causing speculation that this points to one of the pilgrim feasts (Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles), the preferred reading found in many manuscripts (e.g., Π<sup>66</sup> Π<sup>75</sup> A B D G N T Wsupp Θ *f*<sup>33</sup>) omits the article. Although some think it may refer to feasts such as Purim (March),<sup>115</sup> Trumpets<sup>116</sup> (September/October), or the Day of Atonement,<sup>117</sup> most exegetes think it refers to one of the pilgrim feasts. Some think it refers to the unmentioned Passover<sup>118</sup> or Pentecost,<sup>119</sup> but it seems most likely that it refers to the Feast of Tabernacles.<sup>120</sup> First,

<sup>115</sup> Karl Wieseler, *A Chronological Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, trans. Edmund Venables (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1864), 187–202; John Bowman, "The Identity and Date of the Unnamed Feast of John 5:1," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 43–56; idem, *The Fourth Gospel and the Jews: A Study in R. Akiba, Esther and the Gospel of John*, PTMS 8 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1975), 99–132.

<sup>116</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1908), 204–207; F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 121.

<sup>117</sup> C. E. Caspari, *A Chronological and Geographical Introduction to the Life of Christ*, trans. rev. by the author, trans. with additional notes by Maurice J. Evans (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1876), 130–132.

<sup>118</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 2.22.3; Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 1:225–226.

<sup>119</sup> Chrysostom, *In Joannem Hom.* 36.1; Cyril of Alexandria, *In Joannem Hom.* 36 (54.1); Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 2:93.

<sup>120</sup> Ogg, *The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus*, 298–300, 322–323; Caird, "The Chronology of the NT," 602; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 351–352; Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 177.

the Feast of Tabernacles is elsewhere referred to in John simply as “the feast”<sup>121</sup> (7:2, 10, 14, 37) whereas the Passover is not referred to as “the feast,” but rather as “the Passover” (2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55*bis*; 12:1; 13:1; 18:39; 19:14). Second, although various feasts have been conjectured here, the Feast of Tabernacles fits better chronologically in the Gospel of John. In John 2:13, the first Passover is mentioned. Then in 4:35 there is the reference to January/February after the first Passover. If 5:1 were the next Passover, it would come immediately after 4:35, whereas there is a hint of some extended time between 4:35 and 5:1 before Jesus went back to Jerusalem. The next chronological note is the Passover of 6:4, which is followed by the Feast of Tabernacles in 7:2. This means that a year has elapsed between the conjectured Feast of Tabernacles in 5:1 and 7:2.

In conclusion, the three-year ministry of Jesus from the first Passover to the passion Passover is the most viable option. Of course, since Jesus’ baptism and public ministry preceded the first Passover, the total length of his ministry would be about three and a half or three and three-quarter years.

#### 4. *The Death of Jesus*

In determining the date of the death of Jesus, it is necessary to consider both the day of his death and the year of his death.

##### 4.1. *The Day of Jesus’ Death*

There are two areas to be considered. First, on what day of the week was Jesus crucified? Because Jesus states in Matt 12:40: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the large fish, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,” some affirm that Jesus could not have died on Friday. Some think that Jesus died either on Wednesday or Thursday, allowing for three days and three nights. However, the fact is that the Jews reckoned a part of a day as a whole day. In the light of this, Jesus’ death on Friday does not present a real problem. Furthermore, the New Testament repeatedly refers to Jesus’ resurrection as having occurred on

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<sup>121</sup> If one accepts the article before the word “feast” in John 5:1, this argument gains strength.

the third day (not on the fourth day): e.g., Matt 16:21; 17:23; Luke 9:22; 18:33; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor 15:4. Moreover, the gospels specifically mention the day before the Sabbath (Friday) as the day of his death (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42). Therefore, both scripturally and traditionally, it seems best to accept Friday as the day of the week that Jesus died. The passion week can be charted as follows:

Second, what day of the month was the Last Supper? All the gospels state that Jesus ate the Last Supper the day before his crucifixion (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14; John 13:2; cf. also 1 Cor 11:23). The synoptic gospels (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7–8) portray the Last Supper as the Passover meal celebrated on Thursday evening, Nisan 14, and Jesus' crucifixion took place on the following day, viz.

Day	Event	Scripture
Saturday	Arrived at Bethany	John 12:1
Sunday	Crowd came to see Jesus	John 12:9–11
Monday	Triumphal entry	Matt 21:1–9; Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–44
Tuesday	Cursed fig tree Cleansed temple	Matt 21:18–19; Mark 11:12–14 Matt 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46
Wednesday	Fig tree withered Temple controversy  Olivet Discourse	Matt 21:20–22; Mark 11:20–26 Matt 21:23–23:39; Mark 11:27–12:44; Luke 20:1–21:4 Matt 24:1–25:46; Mark 13:1–37; Luke 21:5–36
Thursday	Last Supper  Betrayed and arrested	Matt 26:20–30; Mark 14:17–26; Luke 22:14–30 Matt 26:47–56; Mark 14:43–52; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:2–12
Friday	Tried by Annas and Caiaphas Tried by Sanhedrin Tried by Pilate, Herod, Pilate Crucified and buried	Matt 26:57–75; Mark 14:53–72; Luke 22:54–65; John 18:13–27 Matt 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66 Matt 27:2–30; Mark 15:2–19; Luke 23:1–25; John 18:28–19:16 Matt 27:31–60; Mark 15:20–46; Luke 23:26–54; John 19:16–42
Saturday	Dead in tomb	
Sunday	Resurrected	Matt 28:1–15; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–35

Friday, Nisan 15. On the other hand, John states that the Jews who took Jesus to the Praetorium did not enter it “in order that they might not be defiled but might eat the Passover” (John 18:28). This signifies that Jesus was tried and crucified before the time these Jews celebrated the Passover. This is substantiated in John 19:14, where we read that Jesus’ trial and crucifixion were on the “day of preparation for the Passover,” not *after* the eating of the Passover. Hence, seemingly contrary to the synoptics, Jesus’ Last Supper (which occurred on a Thursday night) was not a Passover, and Jesus was tried and crucified on Friday, Nisan 14, just before the celebration of the Passover. This is confirmed by Paul when he declares that “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:7), as well as by the Gospel of Peter which states that Jesus was delivered to the people “on the day before the Unleavened Bread, their feast,”<sup>122</sup> and by the Babylonian Talmud, which probably refers to Jesus when it says: “On the eve of the Passover, Yeshu (MS M adds “the Nazarean”) was hanged.”<sup>123</sup> Therefore, the synoptic gospels see Jesus celebrating the Last Supper as a Passover meal on Thursday, Nisan 14, with the trial and crucifixion on Friday, Nisan 15; in John, the Last Supper, celebrated on Thursday, Nisan 13, was not a Passover meal, with the trial and crucifixion on Friday, Nisan 14. This means that Jesus was crucified at the same time as the Paschal lambs were slaughtered.

There have been many attempts to resolve these differences. Some have conjectured that the Last Supper was not the Passover meal, and thus there is no conflict between the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John.<sup>124</sup> However, Jeremias, with other scholars, lists the following

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<sup>122</sup> Gospel of Peter 3.

<sup>123</sup> *b. Sanh.* 43a.

<sup>124</sup> Maurice Goguel, *The Life of Jesus*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1933), 429–437; Théo Preiss, *Life in Christ*, trans. Harold Knight, SBT 13 (London: SCM Press, 1957), 81–99; Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM Press, 1960), 93–98; cf. Robert F. O’Toole, “Last Supper,” in *ABD*, vol. 4 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 235–237. Some think it may have been something similar to Passover but without the Passover lamb, since it was the day before the official Passover: cf. Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966), 664–667; F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1969), 182–183; R. T. France, “Chronological Aspects of ‘Gospel Harmony,’” *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986): 43–54; Baruch M. Bokser, “Was the Last Supper a Passover Seder?” *Bible Review* 3 (1987): 24–33; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 555–559.

arguments for the Last Supper being a Passover meal.<sup>125</sup> (1) The synoptic gospels explicitly state that the Last Supper was a Passover (Matt 26:2, 17, 18, 19; Mark 14:1, 12, 14, 16; Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 13, 15). (2) It took place, as required by the Law (Deut 16:7), within the gates of Jerusalem even though the city was very crowded at the time. (3) The Upper Room was made available without difficulty, in keeping with the Passover custom. (4) The Last Supper was eaten at night (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17; John 13:30; 1 Cor 11:23). (5) Jesus limited himself to the twelve, rather than eating with the large circle of his followers (which corresponds to the Passover custom). (6) A reclining posture at the table was for special occasions only. (7) The meal was eaten in Levitical purity (John 13:10), which is not required for regular meals. (8) Jesus broke the bread during the course of the meal (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19) rather than at the beginning of the meal, as was customary. (9) The drink was red wine, which was used only on special occasions; normally, water was drunk. (10) Some of the disciples thought that Judas had left to purchase items for the feast (John 13:29); this would not have been necessary if the Last Supper took place the day before the Passover, since he would have had the whole of the next day (Nisan 14) available for this purpose. (11) Some of the disciples thought that Judas had left to give something to the poor, which was customary on Passover night (John 13:29). (12) The Last Supper ends with the singing of hymns, which would have been the second half of the Passover *hallel* (Pss 114 [or 115]–118). (13) Jesus did not return to Bethany, which was outside Jerusalem's city limit, but went to spend the night on the Mount of Olives, which was within the enlarged city limits, the required boundary for celebration of the Passover feast. (14) The interpretation of specific elements of the meal was a part of the Passover ritual. These fourteen arguments offer substantial evidence that the Last Supper was considered a Passover meal.

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<sup>125</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin, 3rd ed. NTL (London: SCM Press, 1966), 41–56; A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, SBT 6 (London: SCM Press, 1952), 20–23; Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua: Studies in the Gospels*, trans. Paul P. Levertoff (London: SPCK, 1929; reprint, New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1971), 106–132; I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 55–66; David Wenham, "How Jesus Understood the Last Supper: A Parable of Action," *Churchman* 105 (1991): 246–260, esp. 249–255; Robin Routledge, "Passover and Last Supper," *TynBul* 53 (2002): 203–221.

The problem remains: if Jesus' Last Supper was the Passover meal, how could the Jews on the next morning say they had not eaten the Passover (John 18:28)? There have been many attempts to harmonize these accounts. First, some suggest that this does not refer to eating the Passover itself but to eating the upcoming meals in the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (note Luke 22:1: "the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover").<sup>126</sup> But Morris gave a death blow to this theory by pointing out that although one may concede that τὸ πάσχα can refer to the Passover plus the Feast of Unleavened Bread (e.g., Luke 22:1; Acts 12:4; John 2:13; 6:4; 11:55; 18:39), it certainly cannot refer to the Feast of Unleavened Bread without the τὸ πάσχα, which is necessary to make this theory viable. There is no "evidence that the simple expression 'the Passover' was ever used for the second part of the combined feast when the main part had already been eaten. It was the Passover supper that was the high point. It was the supper which gave its name to the whole. That it was possible to extend the word *Passover* to include what remained after that supper had been eaten is one thing; that it could be used of that remainder by itself is quite another."<sup>127</sup>

Second, Jaubert proposed that Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, but that following the Qumran calendar, he celebrated it on the Tuesday of the Passion Week; following the official calendar, he was

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<sup>126</sup> Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. John Moore Trout et al., under the direction and supervision of Melancthon Williams Jacobus and Charles Snow Thayer, 3rd German ed., vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 282–283, 296–298 n. 17; Charles C. Torrey, "In the Fourth Gospel the Last Supper was the Paschal Meal," *JQR* 42 (1952): 237–250; Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1950), 649–670, esp. 661–663; Roger T. Beckwith, "Cautionary Notes on the Use of Calendars and Astronomy to Determine the Chronology of the Passion," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 204–205; idem, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian: Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies*, AGJU 33 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 295–296; D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 589–590; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; Leicester, England: Apollos, 2001), 238; Andreas Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 524. For a good defense of this view, see Barry D. Smith, "The Chronology of the Last Supper," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 29–45.

<sup>127</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 689–690.



crucified on Friday when the Passover lambs were slaughtered.<sup>128</sup> However, there is no indication that Jesus was associated with or ministered to the Qumran community, and certainly there is no indication in the gospels to support the conclusion that Jesus ever followed a Qumran calendar.<sup>129</sup>

Third, Mulder suggests that Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover on Thursday night, Nisan 14, along with most of the Jews in Jerusalem, whereas the Sanhedrin and their servants postponed the eating of the Passover in order to make preparations for the arrest of Jesus. Accordingly, they could tell Pilate on Friday morning that they had not yet eaten the Passover (John 18:28), and they would proceed to eat it that Friday evening, Nisan 15.<sup>130</sup> In the Old Testament, it was permissible to postpone the celebration of the Passover if one had become unclean through contact with a dead body. In that case, Passover would be celebrated one month later (Num 9:1–14), not one day later. Although the “Sanhedrin” is not mentioned in this passage, the high priest Caiaphas is specifically mentioned: on this view, therefore, the high priest did not celebrate the Passover on Nisan 14! Also, the evangelist mentions the Pharisees and chief priests (John 18:3), who would have missed celebrating the Passover on Nisan 14. This is unlikely, and it seems that John would have mentioned that Caiaphas, members of the Sanhedrin, chief priests, and/or the Pharisees had not eaten the Passover.

Fourth, some scholars hold that the Jews in Jesus’ day celebrated the Passover on two consecutive days. Chwolson reasons that the Paschal lambs were slain “between the two evenings” (i.e., 3 to 5 p.m.) on Nisan 14 as commanded in the Old Testament (Exod 12:6; Lev 23:5; Num 9:3.5). Since Nisan 14 was a Friday in the year in which Jesus died, and since not all the Paschal lambs could be slain before the Sabbath (Nisan 15) had begun, they were slain on Thursday evening

<sup>128</sup> Annie Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper*, trans. Isaac Rafferty (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1965); cf. also Eugen Ruckstuhl, *Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus*, trans. Victor J. Drapela (New York: Desclée Company, Inc., 1965).

<sup>129</sup> For a critique of her view, see Josef Blinzler, “Qumran-Kalendar und Passion-chronologie,” *ZNW* 49 (1958): 238–251; George Ogg, review of *La date de la Cène*, by Mlle Jaubert, *NovT* 3 (1959): 149–160; J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea*, trans. J. Strugnell, *SBT* 26 (London: SCM Press, 1959), 112–113; Norman Walker, “Pauses in the Passion Story and Their Significance for Chronology,” *NovT* 6 (1963): 16–19; Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 24–25.

<sup>130</sup> H. Mulder, “John xviii 28 and the Date of the Crucifixion,” in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, ed. T. Baarda, A. F. J. Klijn, and W. C. van Unnik, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum* 48 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 87–105.

(Nisan 13). Because Ex 12:10 states that the Passover was to be eaten on the night the lamb was slain, the Pharisees had the Passover meal immediately (Nisan 13/14), while the Sadducees kept the lambs for twenty-four hours and then ate them at the usual time (i.e., Nisan 14/15). In the light of this, Jesus and his disciples would have celebrated the Passover with the Pharisees on Thursday night (Nisan 13/14), while the Jews mentioned in John 18:28 were Sadducees who would not have eaten the Passover until Friday night (Nisan 14/15).<sup>131</sup> The questions which arise from this theory are as follows: (1) Would not the Sadducees have obeyed Exod 12:10 and ate the Paschal lamb on the night it was slain? (2) Would Jesus have celebrated the Passover on Nisan 13/14, when the law specified Nisan 14/15? (3) Would Jesus have been able to eat it with unleavened bread, bearing in mind that the feast did not begin until the evening of Nisan 14/15? If not, this would have changed the whole character of the Passover ritual. (4) Does this take into account the evidence adduced by Jeremias that when Nisan 15 was a Sabbath, the Jews could slaughter the victims earlier in the afternoon?<sup>132</sup>

Modifying Chwolson's theory, Billerbeck suggests that there was a day's difference between the Boethusian/Sadducean party and the Pharisees.<sup>133</sup> He conjectures that the one-day difference resulted from counting the fifty days forward to Pentecost. Leviticus 23:11, 15–16 instructs the Israelites that the Feast of First-fruits occurs on the day after the Sabbath, and from that day they would count fifty days forward to Pentecost. The Pharisees interpreted the term "Sabbath" to mean "festival" (i.e., Passover) and counted from the day following the Passover regardless of what day it was in the week, whereas the Sadducees interpreted "Sabbath" literally and counted from the Sunday after

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<sup>131</sup> D. Chwolson, *Das letzte Passamahl Christi und der Tages seines Todes nach den in Übereinstimmung gebrachten Berichten der Synoptiker und des Evangelium Johannis nebst Schlusswort und Anhang*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: H. Haessel Verlag, 1908), 20–44; cf. M.-J. Lagrange, *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, trans. by the Members of the English Dominican Province, vol. 2 (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1938), 193–196.

<sup>132</sup> Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 23.

<sup>133</sup> Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. 2 (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), 812–853; cf. also W. M. Christie, "Did Christ Eat the Passover with His Disciples? Or, The Synoptic versus John's Gospel," *ExpTim* 43 (1932): 515–519; J. B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover from the Earliest Times to AD 70*, London Oriental Studies 12 (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 241–269; Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 71–75.

the Passover.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, in the year Jesus died, the Boethusian/Sadducean party was anxious to have Nisan 16 fall on Sunday (so that both the Boethusian/Sadducean party and the Pharisees could celebrate the First-fruits and Pentecost on the same days), and the priestly calendar commission agreed to fix Nisan 1 so that Nisan 14 would be a Friday and Nisan 16 a Sunday. Consequently, the Feast of First-fruits would fall on a Sunday, then fifty days later Pentecost would also fall on a Sunday. However, the Pharisees reckoned Nisan 1 to have begun a day earlier, resulting in a compromise which meant that the Boethusian/Sadducean party celebrated Passover on Friday evening, Nisan 14, in line with the calendar commission, while the Pharisees, and with them Jesus and his disciples, celebrated it on Thursday evening (Nisan 14 according to Pharisaic reckoning).<sup>135</sup> Along similar lines, Dockx argues that although the Pharisees and Sadducees agreed on the calendar, the Galileans reckoned Nisan 1 one day earlier than the Judeans.<sup>136</sup> Thus, in the year Jesus died, there were two consecutive days for Passover. These two proposals have more merit than Chwolson's, in that both parties celebrated the Passover of Nisan 14/15, and that the Feast of First-fruits could be held by both parties. The main problem is that both are based on the conjecture that there was a debate over the commencement of the month of Nisan (i.e., how to fix Nisan 1) in the year Christ died.

Continuing the arguments for the celebration of Passover on two consecutive days, Pickl suggests that because there were too many lambs to be slaughtered on one day and not enough houses in Jerusalem for the pilgrims to eat the Passover meal, it was the custom of the Galileans to slay their lambs on Nisan 13, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted eight days (instead of seven), whereas the Judeans celebrated on Nisan 14.<sup>137</sup> This makes good sense except for the fact (as

<sup>134</sup> *m. Ag.* 2:4; *Mena.* 10:3.

<sup>135</sup> Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 2:847–850; cf. also J. van Goudoever, *Biblical Calendars*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 15–29.

<sup>136</sup> S. Dockx, *Chronologies néotestamentaires et Vie de l'Église primitive: Recherches exégétiques*, rev. ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 26–29.

<sup>137</sup> Josef Pickl, *The Messiah*, trans. Andrew Green (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1946), 120–122; cf. also David Instone-Brewer, "Jesus' Last Passover: The Synoptics and John," *ExpTim* 112 (2001): 122–123; idem, *Feasts and Sabbaths, 2: Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, forthcoming); Maurice Casey, "The Date of the Passover Sacrifices and Mark 14:12," *TynBul* 48.2 (1997): 245–247.

Jeremias has pointed out) that Pickl's conjecture of the eight-day Feast of Unleavened Bread is based on a practice of the Diaspora "where the Jews celebrated all festivals one day longer than in Palestine."<sup>138</sup>

Fifth, throughout the years many theories have been put forward concerning different calendars that were used by the Jews over the centuries.<sup>139</sup> One problem concerns how a day was reckoned. Due to the limitation of space, only a summary can be given.<sup>140</sup> Certainly, there are many passages which indicate that the day was reckoned from sunset to sunset. There is the Feast of Unleavened Bread which runs from the evening of Nisan 14 to the evening of Nisan 21 (Exod 12:18) and the weekly Sabbath (Lev 23:32; Neh 13:19–20). At the times when there was a single day's ceremonial uncleanness, the day ended at the evening (e.g., Lev 11:25–32, 39, 40, 46; 14:46; 15:5–11, 16–23, 27; 17:15; 22:6; Deut 23:11). Another indication that a day began in the evening is the listing of the evening before the morning (e.g., Gen 1:5; Deut 1:33; 28:66; 1 Sam 25:16; 1 Kgs 8:29; Est 4:16; Is 27:3; 34:10; Jer 14:17; Mark 4:27; 5:5; Luke 2:37; Acts 20:37; 26:7). There are, on the other hand, many references which reckon the day from sunrise to sunrise. There is, for example, the listing of the day before the night (e.g., Gen 1:14, 16, 18; 8:22; Exod 10:13; 13:21, 22; 40:38; Lev 8:35; Num. 9:16; 11:32; Josh 1:8; Judg 19:9, 11; 1 Sam 19:24; 28:20; 1 Kgs 8:59; Neh 1:6; 4:9; Pss 1:2; 32:4 [LXX 31:4]; Isa 21:8; 38:12–13; 62:6; Jer 33:20, 25; Amos 5:8; Zech 14:7; Luke 18:7; 21:37; Acts 9:24; Rev 4:8; 7:15; 12:10; 14:11; 20:10). Also, when the expressions "the same day" or "the next day" are used, the context clearly indicates that the night belonged to the first day and was not the beginning of a new day (e.g., Gen 19:34;

<sup>138</sup> Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 24.

<sup>139</sup> Julian Morgenstern, "The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel," *HUCA* 1 (1924): 13–78; idem, "Additional Notes on 'The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel,'" *HUCA* 3 (1926): 77–107; idem, "Supplementary Studies in the Calendars of Ancient Israel," *HUCA* 10 (1935): 1–148; Asher Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth. A Study of Their Background, Their Halachic and Midrashic Teachings, the Similarities and Differences*, *AGJU* 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 70–74; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 33–49.

<sup>140</sup> For a more detailed study, see Julian Morgenstern, "The Three Calendars of Ancient Israel," 15–28; P. J. Heawood, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day," *JQR* 36 (1945): 393–401; Solomon Zeitlin, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day during the Second Commonwealth," *JQR* 36 (1945): 403–414; Julian Morgenstern, "The Chanukkah Festival and the Calendar of Ancient Israel," *HUCA* 20 (1947): 34–40; H. R. Stroes, "Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning?" *VT* 16 (1966): 460–475; Roger T. Beckwith, "The Day, its Divisions and Its Limits in Biblical Thought," *EvQ* 43 (1971): 218–227; idem, *Calendar and Chronology*, 6–12.

1 Sam 19:11; Acts 4:3; 20:7, 11; 23:32).<sup>141</sup> The one passage in the New Testament that may more explicitly indicate a sunrise to sunrise reckoning is Matt 28:1, which states that the women came to the tomb “late on the Sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week.” This means that the new day began with sunrise. However, as Beckwith points out, this could be translated “*after* the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn *on* the first day of the week.”<sup>142</sup> With regard specifically to the Passover, there is a sunrise to sunrise reckoning in Deut 16:4, which states that nothing which is sacrificed on the evening of the first day shall remain overnight until morning. In conclusion, both reckonings were used, at times by the same author within the same book.

What about the Passover in Jesus’ time? As I have indicated above, the Passover could be reckoned either from sunset to sunset or from sunrise to sunrise. Generally, it is thought to have been reckoned from sunset to sunset. Yet Josephus, who followed the Pharisaic ways, states that the Paschal lamb had to be eaten during the night, with nothing left for the morning;<sup>143</sup> this seems to indicate a sunrise to sunrise reckoning. Then there is the Mishnah, which states that the Passover lamb must be eaten by midnight;<sup>144</sup> this seems to indicate that the new day began after sunset, viz. at sunrise.

As this discussion indicates, in Jesus’ time there were two systems of reckoning the day. This consideration appears the best explanation of the time of Jesus’ death, since it solves the disagreement between the synoptics and John by proposing that the Galileans used a different method of reckoning the Passover from the Judeans. The synoptic gospels, the Galileans, and the Pharisees used the sunrise to sunrise reckoning, whereas the Gospel of John and official Judaism (Sadducees) used the sunset to sunset reckoning.<sup>145</sup> Thus, according to the

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Beckwith, “The Day, its Divisions and Its Limits in Biblical Thought,” 224–225; idem, *Calendar and Chronology*, 4–6.

<sup>142</sup> Beckwith, “The Day, its Divisions and Its Limits in Biblical Thought,” 226; idem, *Calendar and Chronology*, 8.

<sup>143</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 3.248.

<sup>144</sup> *m. Pesa* 10:9; *Zebah* 5:8.

<sup>145</sup> Julian Morgenstern, “The Calendar of the Book of Jubilees, its Origin and its Character,” *VT* 5 (1955): 64–65 n. 2; idem, “The Reckoning of the Day in the Gospels and Acts,” *Crozer Quarterly* 26 (1949): 232–240; G. R. Driver, “Two Problems in the New Testament,” *JTS* 16 (1965): 327–328, 330–331; Julian Morgenstern, *Some Significant Antecedents of Christianity*, StPB 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 8–15; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 356–357.

synoptic gospels, the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Since the day was to be reckoned from sunrise, the Galileans, including Jesus and his disciples, had the Paschal lamb slaughtered in the late afternoon of Thursday, Nisan 14, and later that evening ate the Passover with unleavened bread.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, the Judean Jews who calculated from sunset to sunset would slay the lamb on Friday afternoon, which marked the end of Nisan 14, and would eat the Passover lamb with the unleavened bread that night, Nisan 15. Thus, Jesus had eaten the Passover meal when his enemies, who had not yet celebrated the Passover, arrested him.

This interpretation eliminates the difficulties presented in John's Gospel. First, it makes sense of John 18:28, where the Jews did not want to enter the Praetorium so as not to be defiled, since later that day they would slay the lambs for those who reckoned from sunset to sunset. Second, John 19:14 makes sense, for this passage states that Jesus' trial and crucifixion were on the "day of preparation for the Passover," not after the eating of the Passover. Third, it fits well with John 19:36, which speaks of the fulfillment of the Old Testament (Ex 12:46; Num 9:12) when no bones of Jesus, the Passover Lamb, were broken. Following the trial and crucifixion, Jesus died at the same time as the Paschal lambs were slain in the temple precincts.

This view, then, not only does justice to the data of the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John, but is also substantiated by the Mishnah. It was the custom of the Galileans to do no work on the day of the Passover, while the Judeans worked until midday.<sup>147</sup> Since the Galileans' day began at sunrise, they would do no work on the entire day of the Passover. On the other hand, the Judeans' day began at sunset, and they would work during the morning but not in the afternoon. Probably the Judeans ceased to work in the afternoon in deference to the Galileans who would be slaying their lambs at that time, Nisan 14. Hence, the order of events in Galilean reckoning would be as follows: (1) on the morning of Nisan 14 the Galileans would not work while

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<sup>146</sup> In the New Testament, the first day of Unleavened Bread was Nisan 14 and not Nisan 15 (Matt 26:17 = Mark 14:1 = Luke 22:7); according to Beckwith, this was a later custom seen in the Mishnah (*Pesa* 1:1-5; 3:6; 5:4), since one prepared for the Feast of Unleavened Bread by removing all the leaven from one's house on Nisan 14 (Beckwith, "The Day, its Divisions and Its Limits in Biblical Thought," 222 n. 4; idem, *Calendar and Chronology*, 4 n. 5).

<sup>147</sup> *m. Pesa* 4:5.

the Judeans did work; (2) the Judeans would cease working by midday; and (3) the Galileans would slay their Paschal lambs that afternoon.

The modern mind may wonder how the first-century Jews kept these variants distinct from one another, but those who have studied these problems see no real difficulty, because there is ample evidence of the simultaneous use of different calendars in Jesus' time. Stauffer states, "in Palestinian Judaism in the time of Jesus it is usual for the calendar of feasts to be calculated differently in different groups and regions—particularly in the calculation of the Passover."<sup>148</sup>

In conclusion, the proposed interpretation does justice to the data of the synoptic gospels, the Gospel of John, and the Mishnah. It can be charted as follows:

THURSDAY	Galilean Method Synoptic Reckoning Used by Jesus, his disciples, Pharisees	Judean Method John's Reckoning Used by official Judaism (Sadducees)	Midnight
			Sunrise
	Nisan 14		
	3–5 p.m. Passover lamb slain		
Last Supper		Nisan 14	Sunset
Jesus Arrested			Midnight
FRIDAY			Sunrise
6 a.m. Jesus before Pilate	Nisan 15		
9 a.m. Crucifixion			
12–3 p.m. Darkness			
3 p.m. Jesus Died		3–5 p.m. Passover Lamb Slain	
Jesus Buried			
		Nisan 15	Sunset
			Midnight
SATURDAY			

<sup>148</sup> Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story*, 95; cf. also Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth*, 70–74; Beckwith, "The Day, its Divisions and Its Limits in Biblical Thought," 226–227; idem, *Calendar and Chronology*, 8–9; Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 354–358.

#### 4.2. *The Year of Jesus' Death*

Proposed years for Jesus' death vary from 21 CE to 36 CE. Eisler<sup>149</sup> and Vardaman<sup>150</sup> propose 21 CE; Meyer<sup>151</sup> and King<sup>152</sup> 27 CE; Winter<sup>153</sup> 28 CE; Turner<sup>154</sup> and Hölscher<sup>155</sup> 29 CE; Olmstead,<sup>156</sup> Blinzler,<sup>157</sup> Ruckstuhl,<sup>158</sup> Jeremias,<sup>159</sup> Dockx,<sup>160</sup> Doig,<sup>161</sup> Donfried,<sup>162</sup> and Meier<sup>163</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Robert Eisler, *ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣΑΣ. Die messianische Unabhängigkeitsbewegung vom Auftreten Johannes des Täufers bis zum Untergang Jakobs des Gerichten nach den Neuerschlossenen Eroberung von Jerusalem des Flavius Josephus und den Christlichen Quellen*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1929), 1:xxxiii, 2:165, 254–270, 423–529; and the English condensed version: idem, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*, trans. Alexander Haggerty Krappe (New York: Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press, 1931), 16–20, 313, 363–370, 457–512.

<sup>150</sup> Jerry Vardaman, "Jesus' Life: A New Chronology," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. idem and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 55–82; idem, "A Provisional Chronology of the New Testament: Jesus through Paul's Early Years," in idem, ed., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos II: Chronological, Nativity, and Religious Studies in Memory of Ray Summers* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 316.

<sup>151</sup> Eduard Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart and Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1923), 171.

<sup>152</sup> Charles King, "The Outlines of New Testament Chronology," *CQR* 139 (1945): 145–147, 153.

<sup>153</sup> Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, SJ 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1961), 175 n.5.

<sup>154</sup> Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, "Chronology of the New Testament," in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings et al., vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1898), 411–415.

<sup>155</sup> Gustav Hölscher, "Die Hohenpriesterliste bei Josephus und die evangelische Chronologie," in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaftlich-philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 30 (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsverlag, 1940), 26.

<sup>156</sup> A. T. Olmstead, *Jesus in the Light of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), 279–281.

<sup>157</sup> Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus; the Jewish and Roman Proceedings against Jesus Christ Described and Assessed from the Oldest Accounts*, trans. Isabel and Florence McHugh, 2nd ed. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959), 72–80; idem, *Der Prozess Jesu*, 101–108.

<sup>158</sup> Ruckstuhl, *Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus*, 1–12.

<sup>159</sup> Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 236–241.

<sup>160</sup> S. Dockx, *Chronologies néotestamentaires et Vie de l'Église primitive: Recherches exégétiques*, rev. ed. (Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 21–29.

<sup>161</sup> Kenneth F. Doig, *New Testament Chronology* (San Francisco: EMText, 1991), 237–324.

<sup>162</sup> Karl P. Donfried, "Chronology: New Testament," in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al., vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1016.

<sup>163</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1:402, 407.



30 CE; Bammel<sup>164</sup> and Stauffer<sup>165</sup> 32 CE; Fotheringham,<sup>166</sup> Ogg,<sup>167</sup> Maier,<sup>168</sup> Reicke,<sup>169</sup> Hoehner,<sup>170</sup> Humphreys and Waddington,<sup>171</sup> and Finegan<sup>172</sup> 33 CE; and Keim,<sup>173</sup> Lake,<sup>174</sup> Schonfield,<sup>175</sup> and Kokkinos<sup>176</sup> 36 CE.

The year of Jesus' death can be narrowed down by means of several considerations.

#### 4.2.1. *The Officials of the Trial*

There were three officials involved in the trial of Jesus which resulted in his death. First, Caiaphas, the high priest (Matt 26:3, 57; John 11:49–53; 18:13–14), began his office in 18 CE<sup>177</sup> and was deposed at the Passover of 37 CE.<sup>178</sup> Second, Pilate, the prefect of Judea, began his

<sup>164</sup> Ernst Bammel, "Φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος," *TLZ* 57 (1952): 205–210.

<sup>165</sup> Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story*, 91–110.

<sup>166</sup> J. K. Fotheringham, "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," *JTS* 35 (1934): 142–162.

<sup>167</sup> Ogg, *The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus*, 244–277.

<sup>168</sup> Paul L. Maier, "Sejanus, Pilate, and the Date of the Crucifixion," *CH* 37 (1968): 3–13; idem, "The Date of the Nativity and the Chronology of Jesus' Life," 124–126.

<sup>169</sup> Bo Reicke, *The New Testament Era: The World of the Bible from 500 BC to AD 100*, trans. David E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 183–184.

<sup>170</sup> Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 171, 180–183; idem, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 95–114.

<sup>171</sup> Colin J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "Dating the Crucifixion," *Nature* 306 (22 December 1983): 743–746; Colin J. Humphreys and W. Graeme Waddington, "The Date of the Crucifixion," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 37 (March 1985): 2–10; Colin J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "Astronomy and the Date of the Crucifixion," in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan*, ed. Jerry Vardaman and Edwin M. Yamauchi (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 165–181; Colin J. Humphreys and W. G. Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, a Lunar Eclipse and the Date of Christ's Crucifixion," *TynBul* 43.2 (1992): 331–351.

<sup>172</sup> Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, 359–362.

<sup>173</sup> Theodor Keim, *The History of Jesus of Nazareth, Freely Investigated in Its Connection with the National Life of Israel, and Related in Detail*, trans. E. M. Geldart and Arthur Ransom, 6 vols. (London: Williams and Norgate), 1873–1883, 4:222–223 n. 2; 6:234–244.

<sup>174</sup> Kirsopp Lake, "The Date of Herod's Marriage with Herodias, and the Chronology of the Gospels," *Exp* 8.4 (1912): 462–477.

<sup>175</sup> Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Jesus Party* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), 46–47, 51–53, 305.

<sup>176</sup> Kokkinos, "Crucifixion in AD 36: The Keystone for Dating the Birth of Jesus," 133–153; idem, *The Herodian Dynasty*, 195–196 n. 82; 301, 383.

<sup>177</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35; Helen K. Bond, *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 42–43, 147.

<sup>178</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 4.90–95; Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 313–316; Bond, *Caiaphas*, 85–89, 147.

rule (Matt 27:2–26; Mark 15:1–15; Luke 23:1–25; John 18:28–19:16; Acts 3:13; 4:27; 13:28; 1 Tim 6:13) in 26 CE<sup>179</sup> and was deposed after ten years of rule in 36 CE.<sup>180</sup> Third, Herod Antipas was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (Luke 23:6–12) from 4 BCE<sup>181</sup> until 39 CE.<sup>182</sup> Christ's crucifixion occurred under Pilate's rule (26–36 CE); this would eliminate the date of 21 CE for the crucifixion.

#### 4.2.2. *The Contribution of Astronomy*

Having concluded that Jesus was crucified on Friday, Nisan 14, we must now determine when Nisan 14 fell on that day within 26–36 CE. Studies indicate that the only possible years were 27, 30, 33, and 36.<sup>183</sup> Of these, 27 CE is the least likely astronomically, for it is probable that Nisan 14 fell on a Thursday rather than a Friday in that year. Also, in 36 CE Nisan 14 probably fell on Saturday, although some scholars argue that it fell on Friday. There are some who argue that in 30 CE, Nisan 14 may have fallen on a Thursday, but it is reasonably certain that it fell on a Friday.<sup>184</sup> Accordingly, the calculations of astronomers would limit the probable years of Jesus' crucifixion on Friday, Nisan 14 to the years 27, 30, 33, and 36, with 27 and 36 CE the more questionable of these possibilities.

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<sup>179</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.35; *War* 2.169; Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 172–173; Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, SNTSMS 100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>180</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.89; Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 174–175, 313–316.

<sup>181</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 17.317–318; *War* 2.93–95; Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 33–39.

<sup>182</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.252; cf. 256; 19.351; Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 260–263.

<sup>183</sup> This is deduced from a compilation of chronological tables in J. K. Fotheringham, "Astronomical Evidence for the Date of the Crucifixion," *JTS* 12 (1910): 122; Idem, "The Evidence of Astronomy and Technical Chronology for the Date of the Crucifixion," 162; Ogg, *The Chronology of the Public Ministry of Jesus*, 270; Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 BC–AD 75*, 446; Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 38; Herman H. Goldstine, *New and Full Moons, 1001 BC to AD 1651* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), 86–87; Humphreys and Waddington, "The Jewish Calendar, a Lunar Eclipse and the Date of Christ's Crucifixion," 335; cf. also George Ogg, "The Chronology of the Last Supper," in *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament*, Theological Collections 6 (London: SPCK, 1965), 92–96.

<sup>184</sup> Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 39–40.

#### 4.2.3. *The Ministry of Jesus*

Luke 3:1–2 indicates that John the Baptist began his ministry in Tiberius' fifteenth year, viz. 28/29 CE, and that Jesus' ministry followed this. This makes the dating of Jesus' crucifixion to 27 CE not only questionable astronomically, but also impossible historically. This is confirmed in John 2:20, where at the first Passover of Jesus the Jews stated that the temple had stood for forty-six years, bringing us to the spring of 30 CE: April 3, 30. This would eliminate 27 CE as a date for Jesus' crucifixion. Furthermore, we can see that Luke 3:1 also makes impossible the other extreme, the dating of Jesus' crucifixion to 36 CE. There is no indication in the gospels that Jesus' ministry lasted six years. Earlier, we concluded that the length of his ministry was between three and a half and three and three-quarter years, thus ending before 36 CE. In addition, if the ministry of Jesus began in 29 CE, as we have established, and lasted between three and a half and three and three-quarter years, which allows for the three Passovers in John's Gospel (2:13; 6:4; 11:55), this would also eliminate 30 CE as a date for the crucifixion. Although many wish to maintain this date, it is acceptable only if Jesus' ministry lasted for *one* year. Thus, 33 CE seems to fit best, both astronomically and in terms of the time frame of the ministry of Jesus.

#### 4.2.5. *The Confirmation of History*

Up to this point, it appears that 33 CE is the best date for the crucifixion. Interestingly, both secular and sacred history agree with this conclusion, and confirm it as the date with the best support in the evidence.

Pilate is portrayed by his contemporary Philo<sup>185</sup> and later by Josephus<sup>186</sup> as a greedy, inflexible, and cruel man who resorted to robbery and oppression, much like his portrayal in Luke 13:1 where he “mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices.” However, when he tries Jesus, Pilate is portrayed as one who was readily submissive to the pressures of the religious leaders, who were demanding that Jesus be handed over to them.

How does one explain such a change of attitude? It must be understood that Pilate was probably appointed prefect of Judea through the intervention of the equestrian Lucius Aelius Sejanus, a trusted friend

<sup>185</sup> Philo, *Legat.* 301–302.

<sup>186</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.55–59; *War* 2.167–177.

of Tiberius. Sejanus was the prefect of the Praetorian Guard, and a dedicated anti-Semite who wanted to exterminate the Jewish race.<sup>187</sup>

Apparently, Pilate emulated Sejanus' anti-Jewish attitude in Judea.<sup>188</sup> Almost immediately after his arrival in Judea in 26 or 27, he brought busts of Caesar attached to Roman standards into Jerusalem, probably next to the temple.<sup>189</sup> The Jews were so outraged by the introduction of these images that a delegation was sent to Caesarea. This led Pilate to back down, since he feared a national revolt on such a scale that not even Sejanus could cover his back. However, later in 29/30 CE Pilate issued offensive coins with a crosier symbolizing Emperor-worship, possibly for the purpose of indoctrination.<sup>190</sup> Later, he seized Qurban funds from the temple treasury to construct an aqueduct in Jerusalem. When the Jews protested, the Roman soldiers beat them, killing many.<sup>191</sup> In Luke 13:1, Jesus is told about Galileans "whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices." In this case, we do not know the details of what happened, but it is in keeping with the portrayal of Pilate in Josephus and Philo. It did, however, cause a strained relationship between Pilate and the Galilean tetrarch, Herod Antipas. This most likely occurred at one of the Jewish festivals, possibly the Passover of 32 CE, when many Galileans would have been in Jerusalem.

How could Pilate continue with all these insults without a protest by the Jews to the Roman government? This was not a problem as long as Sejanus was in full control in Rome. Complaints such as this, sent to Tiberius, would be destroyed by Sejanus before they reached island of Capri where Tiberius had resided since 26 or 27.<sup>192</sup> Sejanus was making every effort to increase his power, with the ambition of becoming emperor. In order to achieve this end, he even poisoned Tiberius' son Drusus in 23<sup>193</sup> and attempted to get rid of any other possible successors.<sup>194</sup> As Sejanus continued to rise in power, he was given more and

<sup>187</sup> Philo, *Flacc.* 1; *Legat.* 159–161.

<sup>188</sup> For further discussion of Pilate's rule, see Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 172–183; Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 49–93.

<sup>189</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.55–59; *War* 2.169–174; cf. Carl H. Kraeling, "The Episode of the Roman Standards at Jerusalem," *HTR* 35 (1942): 263–289.

<sup>190</sup> Ethelbert Stauffer, "Zur Münzprägung und Judenpolitik des Pontius Pilatus," *La Nouvelle Clío* 1.2 (1950): 495–514, esp. 506–508; idem, *Jerusalem und Rom im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (Berne: Francke Verlag, 1957), 17, 134 n. 7.

<sup>191</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.175–177; *Ant.* 18.60–62.

<sup>192</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.41.

<sup>193</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.8; Suetonius, *Tib.* 62.1; Dio, 57.22.1–4.

<sup>194</sup> For a discussion of the bitter party struggles in Rome at that time, see Frank Burr Marsh, "Roman Parties in the Reign of Tiberius," *AHR* 31 (1926): 233–250;

more honor even to the extent that in 29 the Senate voted to observe his birthday publicly<sup>195</sup> and by 30 he was so influential that senators and other high officials looked upon him as if he were the emperor.<sup>196</sup> Finally, Tiberius became suspicious of his favorite minister, and proceeded with great cunning to overthrow this extremely powerful man without losing both his throne and his life.<sup>197</sup> He secretly appointed Navevius Cordus Sutorius Macro as prefect of the Praetorian Guard. This man tricked Sejanus by confirming a rumor that Tiberius was going to grant him the *tribunicia potestas*, supreme authority over civil affairs, as joint emperor with Tiberius. Sejanus, overjoyed with the announcement, rushed into the Senate to hear the letter from Tiberius, which, much to his horror, was a denouncement rather than a promotion. On that day, October 18, 31, Sejanus was accused of conspiracy, sentenced, and executed.<sup>198</sup>

This, no doubt, caused immediate tremors throughout the Empire, especially to those who were appointed through the intervention of Sejanus. In the past, Tiberius had been anti-Semitic (possibly under the influence of Sejanus), as can be seen in his expulsion of the Jews from Rome in 19 CE,<sup>199</sup> but now he became more favorable towards them. According to Philo, it now occurred to Tiberius that the charges brought against the Jews were unfounded, since they had been fabricated by Sejanus. Consequently, he ordered the governors (many of whom had probably been appointed through Sejanus' intervention) throughout the Empire not to persist in their negative treatment of the Jews.<sup>200</sup> This order certainly had its effect in Judea, for early in 32 Pilate stopped issuing coins that were offensive to the Jews.<sup>201</sup>

Philo records an incident in which Pilate had set up in the former palace of Herod the Great gold-coated shields bearing the name,

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Robin Seager, *Tiberius*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, 151–188 (chapter on Sejanus).

<sup>195</sup> Dio, 58.2.7–8; Suetonius, *Tib.* 65.

<sup>196</sup> Dio, 58.4.1.

<sup>197</sup> For a discussion of the political intrigues between Tiberius and Sejanus, see Frank Burr Marsh, *The Reign of Tiberius* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), 192–193; 304–310.

<sup>198</sup> Dio, 58.9–12; 65.14.1; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.48; Suetonius, *Tib.* 61, 65; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.181–182.

<sup>199</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.81–85; Suetonius, *Tib.* 36; Dio, 56.18.5a; Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85.

<sup>200</sup> Philo, *Legat.* 159–161.

<sup>201</sup> E. Bammel, "Syrian Coinage and Pilate," *JJS* 2 (1951): 108–110.

not the image, of the emperor. When Pilate refused to hear the Jews' request to remove these, some prominent Jews, including the four sons of Herod, appealed to the Emperor Tiberius, who rebuked Pilate for his actions and ordered him to remove the shields immediately and have them taken to the temple of Augustus at Caesarea.<sup>202</sup>

There are three significant things about this incident. First, it is difficult to ascertain why the Jews were offended by these aniconic shields, unless the inscription may have had some religious significance in connection with the emperor or the imperial cult.<sup>203</sup> Second, one can only guess who the four sons of Herod were, but it is certain that Herod Antipas and Philip the Tetrarch were two of them. With regard to Herod Antipas it is important to remember that he too had been a friend of Sejanus<sup>204</sup> and was now determined to prove his loyalty to Tiberius. Third, although the time frame of this episode has been debated,<sup>205</sup> it must have occurred later in Pilate's administration and after Sejanus' death because: (1) this is implied by the reference to Pilate's fear of impeachment; (2) the Jewish embassy was able to report to Tiberius directly; (3) Tiberius' immediate order to remove the shields so as not to offend the Jews indicates the change of attitude towards the Jews which he displayed after Sejanus' death; and (4) the fact that Pilate and Antipas, both friends of Sejanus, were now opposing each other may also indicate that this event occurred after Sejanus' death. When Sejanus was in power Pilate had nothing to fear. Therefore, since the Herodian brothers had been present in Jerusalem, the incident of the shields probably occurred at a Jewish festival, possibly at Passover,<sup>206</sup> but more likely at the Feast of Tabernacles in 32.<sup>207</sup>

What motivated Pilate to set up the shields when his position was so precarious? It is possible that he wanted to dissociate himself from

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<sup>202</sup> Philo, *Legat.* 299–305; cf. Paul L. Maier, "The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields at Jerusalem," *HTR* 62 (1969): 109–121.

<sup>203</sup> S. F. G. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 74; Maier, "The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields at Jerusalem," 117; E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 166.

<sup>204</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.250.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. A.D. Doyle, "Pilate's Career and the Date of the Crucifixion," *JTS* 42 (1941): 190–193; Maier, "The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields at Jerusalem," 111–112.

<sup>206</sup> Doyle, "Pilate's Career and the Date of the Crucifixion," 192; Maier, "The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields at Jerusalem," 114.

<sup>207</sup> Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, 180–181.

Sejanus and ingratiate himself with Tiberius by promoting adherence to the imperial cult. But this backfired. In fact, the Jews proclaimed that disrespect for the Jewish law brought no honor to Tiberius.<sup>208</sup> This gave Herod Antipas too an opportunity to dissociate himself from Sejanus and to gain the favor of Tiberius. Earlier, Herod Antipas had been at odds with Pilate when the latter had mingled the blood of the Galileans with their sacrifices (Luke 13:1). The incident of the shields gave Herod Antipas an opportunity to report Pilate's Sejanian anti-Semitic activity to Tiberius. The enmity between the two is mentioned in Luke 23:12.

With the death of Sejanus and the unsuccessful attempt by Pilate to ingratiate himself with Tiberius, Pilate was no longer stubborn or inflexible but had become compliant. This is exactly how the gospels portray him in the trial of Jesus. When the Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate and accused him of encouraging the people to be insubordinate to the Roman government, Pilate found him not guilty of anything, and this made the Jewish leaders unhappy. When they responded that Jesus had stirred up people not only in Judea but also in Galilee, Pilate sent him to Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, who was in Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 23:1–7). According to Roman law, the accused was to be tried in the province in which the misdeeds were committed, rather than in his domicile, and this prompts the question why Pilate made this move. It appears to have been a diplomatic move to improve his relationship with Herod Antipas, attempting to smooth over the incident of the Galilean massacre (Luke 13:1) as well as the incident at the Feast of Tabernacles in 32 when he had offended both the Jews and Antipas by the setting up of votive shields in Jerusalem (Philo, *Legat.* 299–304). It was probably only recently that Pilate had received Tiberius' order to remove the shields, reminding him that he dare not make another blunder that would infuriate Tiberius. Having recently displayed misjudgment, he did not want another such incident which would give Antipas cause to make another strike against him. Pilate was anxious to appease, for he had nothing to lose and everything to gain. And this worked! Herod Antipas sent Jesus back to Pilate and they became friends from that day onward (Luke 23:8–12). Some have questioned Luke's portrayal of Antipas' trial of Jesus, because there is no progress in the

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<sup>208</sup> Philo, *Legat.* 299, 301.

trial. Naturally enough, there appears to be no progress in the trial because Antipas too was exercising caution, so that Pilate would have no excuse to complain to the Roman authorities of any wrongdoing on his part. Upon Jesus' return, Pilate continues to tell the religious leaders that neither he nor Herod Antipas had found any guilt regarding the charges of incitement to rebellion and thus that Jesus should be released. But pressure from the religious leaders and the threat of a riot finally persuaded Pilate to allow Jesus to be crucified (Luke 23:13–25; Matt 27:15–23; Mark 15:6–14). It is noteworthy, in Pilate's attempt to release Jesus, that the religious leaders cried out that if he released Jesus he was not a friend of Caesar (John 19:12). The reverse implication could easily have been that he was still a friend of Sejanus and/or friendly towards his policies. If, as is likely, Pilate had just received the order from Tiberius to remove the shields, the Jews would have learned only recently of their success and Pilate would have known all too well that he could not afford to quarrel with the emperor.

Considering all the data, only 33 makes sense as a date for the crucifixion. It fits well with the evidence from sacred and secular history. Pilate was inflexible and ruthless as long as his mentor Sejanus was in power. But at Jesus' trial in 33, he appears much more compliant. Pilate was a man with a broken backbone.

### 5. Conclusion

The birth, life, and death of Jesus can be charted as follows:

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Jesus' birth	spring 5/4 BCE
Death of Herod the Great	March/April BCE
Jesus at the temple aged twelve	Passover, April 29, 8 CE
Commencement of John the Baptist's ministry	29 CE
Commencement of Jesus' ministry	summer/autumn 29 CE
Jesus' first Passover (John 2:13)	April 7, 30
Jesus' second Passover	April 25, 31
Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 5:1)	October 21–28, 31
Jesus' third Passover (John 6:4)	April 13/14, 32
Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 10)	September 10–17, 32
Jesus at the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22–39)	December 18, 32
Jesus' death	Friday, April 3, 33
Jesus' resurrection	Sunday, April 5, 33
Jesus' ascension (Acts 1)	Thursday, May 14, 33
Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)	Sunday, May 24, 33

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## THE BIRTH OF JESUS

RICHARD T. FRANCE

Any scholarly study of the birth of Jesus these days is written in the shadow of R. E. Brown's magisterial work, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1977; reprint with supplement 1993), which will be referred to hereafter as *Birth*. Brown's meticulous presentation of the evidence and thorough coverage and assessment of the secondary literature up to 1992 still stands as the definitive work on the subject. The reader of the following article is referred for fuller discussion to Brown at all points, even where no explicit footnote reference is given.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. *Sources of Information*

All that we know specifically about the birth and childhood of Jesus (as opposed to the rich resources which Jewish and pagan sources offer for reconstructing the world in which it is set) derives from the first two chapters of Luke and the first two chapters of Matthew. We shall consider below the nature and value of these chapters as historical evidence, but the historian has no choice, in that these are the only documents from the first century CE which purport to tell us how Jesus was born, and no later reflections on the event offer any additional material which has been judged to be of historical value.

The only extant second-century document which focuses specifically on Jesus' birth<sup>2</sup> is the *Protevangelium of James*, which was in wide

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<sup>1</sup> Apart from commentaries on the relevant chapters of Matthew and Luke, other specific treatments of the infancy narratives are not numerous. A more recent but much briefer and more popularly written study by E. D. Freed, *The Stories of Jesus' Birth: A Critical Introduction* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2001) (hereafter *Stories*), does not interact extensively with recent secondary literature. A stimulating and highly individual study by R. A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) (hereafter *Liberation*), provides a great deal of valuable historical information in the service of a determinedly socio-political reading of the stories.

<sup>2</sup> The *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* deals with the childhood of Jesus from the age of five, not with his birth—unless one counts his teacher's theological comment, "This child is not earth-born" (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 7:2).

circulation by the third century and was highly influential in the growth of much later Christian tradition both in the elaboration of the stories of Jesus' birth and in particular in the development of the veneration of Mary (whose own birth and childhood are narrated as fully as the birth of Jesus himself). The *Prot. Jas.* was the inspiration for some of the nativity imagery which became conventional in Christian art and for some of the motifs found in medieval Christmas carols which are still sung today. Some of this work derives from the canonical gospel accounts,<sup>3</sup> but it covers other ground, in particular the stories of Mary and (to a lesser extent) Joseph prior to the birth of Jesus, as well as adding a great deal of circumstantial detail concerning Jesus' birth in a cave and the experiences of the midwife and of Salome. The sources for this additional material can only be guessed at, though some of it reflects Old Testament motifs relating to the births of special people. The evident interest in promoting the cult of Mary as ever-virgin,<sup>4</sup> and the author's lack of familiarity with Jewish culture, do not suggest a first-century Palestinian source.

## 2. *The Historical Value of the Gospel Accounts*

Few other parts of the gospel narratives are so widely regarded as legendary.<sup>5</sup> A common basis for this view is the presence of supernatural features: divine revelations in dreams and through angels, a moving, guiding star, and birth without a human father. None of these features is essential to the basic story of the birth itself, but the fact that the evangelists record them as part of their narrative accounts makes many modern readers doubt whether what they are reading is factual history. But to conclude that what is outside normal experience must be

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<sup>3</sup> Its conflationary method may be illustrated by the fact that *Prot. Jas.* 22.1–2 interprets the (Lukan) placing of the child in an ox-manger (the birth having taken place previously in a cave) as Mary's precaution when she heard of the (Matthean) slaughter of the children.

<sup>4</sup> This concern is also the most prominent feature of a much briefer account of the birth of Jesus in the Christian part of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (possibly second century CE), which is otherwise primarily based on Matthew. See *Ascen. Isa.* 11.1–16.

<sup>5</sup> R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 162–172, analyses and criticizes some attempts to explain the stories of the birth and infancy of Jesus as deriving from a relatively standard pattern of legends concerning the birth and preservation of heroes found in Hellenistic and other cultures. Cf. R. T. France, *NovT* 21 (1979): 98–99 for other examples and references.

legendary is to take an ideological step which must have significant consequences not only for these chapters but also for much of the rest of the biblical narrative, including in particular the stories of the miracles and the resurrection of Jesus. It is a philosophical rather than a strictly historical judgment (see further comments in section 7 below), and one which belongs peculiarly to Western post-Enlightenment culture. The questions it raises apply to much of the present work, not merely to events surrounding the birth of Jesus; see the discussion in G. Twelftree's article in this volume.

But there are other issues which arise more specifically in relation to the historicity of the birth and infancy narratives of the gospels. We shall consider: 1) the relation to external evidence; 2) the coherence of Matthew with Luke; and 3) the literary character of these chapters with special reference to their use of Old Testament motifs.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.1. *The Relation to External Evidence*

With regard to the central events recorded (the conception, birth and childhood of Jesus) there is, as noted above, simply no external historical evidence against which the narratives may be tested. Given both the limited records available for the history of Roman Palestine and the socially insignificant setting of the story of the birth of Jesus, it is hardly surprising that it finds no mention in extant non-Christian sources. But there are events which Matthew and Luke associate with the birth of Jesus which might be expected to find some corroboration elsewhere. In Matthew, these are the visit of the magi and the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem; in Luke, the census which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem from Nazareth.

It is not difficult to show that the Matthean stories fit what is known of the historical setting. The celebrated visit of eastern magi to Rome to pay homage to Nero in 66 CE<sup>7</sup> is sometimes cited as an historical parallel to the story in Matt 2:1–12, though the circumstances are

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<sup>6</sup> For a fuller discussion of what follows with specific reference to Matthew see R. T. France, "Scripture, Tradition and History in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew" in *Gospel Perspectives 2*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 239–266.

<sup>7</sup> Dio Cassius 63.1–7; Suetonius, *Nero* 13. The visitors were king Tiridates of Armenia and three local Parthian princes, and their homage to the emperor was motivated by their reading of the stars; Pliny, *Nat.* 30.6.16–17 calls them magi. For more detail see R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 56–57.

different and the diplomatic motivation of a courtesy visit to the Roman emperor is lacking in the Matthean story. But the astronomical interests and deductions of Mesopotamian magi are well documented, and a special interest in “the Westland” (Palestine) can be discerned in some Mesopotamian astrological texts.<sup>8</sup> However the peculiar behavior of the star may be explained in scientific terms,<sup>9</sup> it is entirely plausible that Mesopotamian magi would travel west in response to their reading of an unusual astronomical event.<sup>10</sup> A similar verdict is appropriate with regard to Herod’s violent response to the news of a rival “king of the Jews”; compared with his elimination of a series of potential rivals from within his own family, and the other atrocities which Josephus records for the last few years of his reign,<sup>11</sup> the elimination of a few babies in a small village<sup>12</sup> reads as a relatively modest expression of his well-documented paranoia.<sup>13</sup> The absence of these incidents from Josephus’ histories of the period, written nearly a century later, may be explained either by the nature of his sources (his consistent failure

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<sup>8</sup> See passages cited by W. C. Allen, *The Gospel according to S. Matthew*, ICC, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 11.

<sup>9</sup> The most favored astronomical explanations are (a) a comet, (b) a nova or supernova, or (c) a planetary conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces. The various theories are set out by J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 238–248; R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 171–173, 610–613. The required planetary conjunction took place in 7 BCE, and a prominent supernova (or was it a comet?) is reported in Chinese astronomical records for 5/4 BCE. The planetary conjunction theory is developed in great detail, with “photographs” of the night sky at a series of relevant dates, by the astronomer Konradin Ferrari d’Occhieppo, *Der Stern der Weisen* (Vienna and Munich: Herold, 1977); he concludes that Jupiter and Saturn “stood still” and pointed to Bethlehem on 12 November, 7 BCE. He has published a summary of his views in English in J. Vardaman & E. M. Yamauchi, eds., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Festschrift J. Finegan* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 41–53. It may well be that one (or more!) of these phenomena provided the initial spur to the journey of the magi, but none seems to explain fully the movement of the star as Matthew reports it, and it may be questioned how far we should expect to be able to provide a scientific explanation for a phenomenon related from the viewpoint of a pre-scientific story-teller.

<sup>10</sup> A well-documented study of the history of magi and of the influence of astrology in the ancient world by E. M. Yamauchi in *Chronos, Kairos, Christos* (see last note), 23–39 concludes “that we can best understand the story of the Magi in Matthew not as a literary creation but as based on a historical episode”.

<sup>11</sup> See the paragraph on Herod below in section 6.

<sup>12</sup> While later Christian tradition spoke of a massacre of thousands, estimates of the population of Bethlehem at the time are usually of less than a thousand, giving probably no more than 20 male children under the age of two.

<sup>13</sup> The historical credibility of the Bethlehem incident is explored by R. T. France, *NovT* 21 (1979): 98–120, especially 114–116.

to reflect the history and concerns of the early Christian movement is notable) or by the relatively trivial nature of the events themselves. The escape of Joseph and his family to Egypt (Matt 2:13–15) is of course a purely family event with no wider political implications, but the choice of Egypt as a refuge by someone in political danger in Palestine fits a recognized historical pattern.<sup>14</sup> Thus, even though no specific external attestation of the events associated with Jesus' birth by Matthew is either available or to be expected, the stories themselves ring true to what we know of the historical setting.

Luke's reference to a census (Luke 2:1–3) is in a rather different category, since it purports to record an empire-wide event which should surely be expected to be noted by Roman historians. There was a census in Judea (not "all the world") in 6 CE, when Quirinius was indeed governor of Syria, but that is too late for a birth "in the days of King Herod" (Luke 1:5), and a Roman census affecting Judea sounds improbable before 6 CE, when direct Roman rule was first imposed there; it was precisely the unprecedented nature of the 6 CE census which caused the revolt led by Judas of Galilee.<sup>15</sup> Various solutions have been proposed, but even when due allowance is made for our lack of information about Roman provincial administration in the area, many scholars conclude that Luke has got his dates (and the extent of the census) wrong.<sup>16</sup> Even if that is so, however, the census is not essential to Luke's story of Jesus' birth: its role is to explain how Joseph, a descendant of David living in Nazareth, came to be back in Bethlehem when Jesus was born, but other explanations for a visit to his family home may be imagined.

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<sup>14</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 12.387–388; 14.21; 15.45–46; *War* 7.409–410, 416; 2 Macc 5:8, and in Old Testament times 1 Kgs 11:17, 40; 2 Kgs 25:26; Jer 26:21; 42:13–44:30.

<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.118.

<sup>16</sup> The issue is well surveyed by R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 547–556, 666–668; for a more cautiously conservative study see I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 99–104. See also the argument of R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 33–38, that Luke's interest in the census was not in the search for historical explanation but because of its symbolic value in representing the opposition between the new-born "savior" and the oppressive empire of the self-proclaimed "savior" Augustus, whose exploitative taxation policy was the basis of the census. Horsley therefore sees Luke as sitting light to historical accuracy, but using the census idea deliberately for its role in exposing the "political-economic-religious conflict" which Jesus' birth inaugurated.

## 2.2. *The Coherence of Matthew with Luke*

The remarkable fact about the nativity stories of Matthew and Luke is that their contents scarcely overlap at all. The traditional explanation for this is that Matthew's information derives ultimately from the reminiscences of Joseph, Luke's from those of Mary, and the remarkably consistent adoption of the viewpoint of the respective "source" in each gospel gives support to this proposal. Be that as it may, Matthew tells us nothing about the annunciation to Mary or indeed about the birth of Jesus itself beyond a passing reference in a subordinate clause of 1:25 and a participial phrase in 2:1, and the stories he tells of the surrounding and subsequent events of Jesus' childhood are all different from those recorded by Luke. Explicit agreement is limited to the following data: the betrothed couple called Mary and Joseph, the latter of Davidic descent, the conception by the Holy Spirit without human intercourse, the angelic revelation of the name Jesus, the birth in Bethlehem in the reign of Herod, and the upbringing in Nazareth. There is thus agreement on many of the basic data, but no mutual corroboration of the associated stories.

This lack of common ground means, of course, that there is little scope for contradiction. But a problem arises over the family home in Nazareth, which in Luke is where Mary and Joseph were already living, going to Bethlehem temporarily only at the time of Jesus' birth, whereas in Matthew Nazareth is first mentioned in 2:23, apparently as a new domicile after the escape from Judea. Matthew does not actually say where Joseph and Mary lived before the birth, but the reader would naturally assume that Bethlehem was their home, and it would fit that view that the family initially returned from Egypt to Judea, moving on to Galilee only as a matter of political necessity (2:21–22). Moreover, Luke 2:39 tells us that the family returned to Nazareth after the visit to Jerusalem in 2:22 which, from the ritual described, must have taken place when Jesus was forty days old; this hardly leaves room for the visit of the magi, the escape to Egypt for an unspecified period and the return after Herod's death, which all precede the arrival in Nazareth in Matthew 2. These discrepancies presumably arise from the dependence of each evangelist on a different source, without access to the data recorded by the other, so that Matthew is unaware of the Nazareth background and Luke of the threat from Herod and the refugee visit to Egypt. But to make this discrepancy the basis for doubting the historical value of the accounts as a whole is to require a degree

of precision and completeness which is alien to much of biblical historiography; selectivity in the details mentioned, and a consequent compression in the chronology of what is recorded, are typical of the literature of the period. Neither evangelist purports to tell us all there is to tell, and their failure to explain their omissions in a pedantic footnote is hardly an adequate reason to reject the historical value of what they *do* record.

### 2.3. *The Literary Character of the Infancy Chapters*

It is not only the supernatural features of the stories (see above) which cause readers to suspect that these chapters are something other than simply factual reporting. Both Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2 stand apart from the gospels which they introduce as having a distinctive literary character. A striking feature in Luke 1–2 is the series of poetical utterances (Luke 1:46–55, 67–79; 2:14, 28–32) which strongly reflect the diction and motifs of Old Testament psalms and oracles,<sup>17</sup> and the whole of the narrative in which they are set is strongly colored by Old Testament motifs.<sup>18</sup> Equally prominent in Matthew is the presence in these two chapters of no less than five of the eleven generally-recognized “formula-quotations” of the gospel (1:22–23; 2:5–6, 15, 17–18, 23) so that the whole of the first two chapters with the exception of the opening genealogy appears to be narrated in order to display the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, while the genealogy itself is an extended demonstration of continuity with the history of God’s people in the Old Testament. Even where Matthew tells a story apparently for its own sake in the account of the magi in 2:1–12, the scripturally-

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<sup>17</sup> The Semitic character of the Greek of Luke 1–2 as compared with the rest of the gospel has long been remarked on. An interesting study by S. C. Farris in *Gospel Perspectives* 2, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 201–237 argues statistically that these chapters (as a whole, not just the hymns within them) are translated from a Semitic source rather than simply using a deliberately “biblical Greek” (see also the fuller study by Farris, *The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narrative* [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985]). For the character of the Lukan hymns as “songs of liberation” reflecting the socio-political aspirations of Israel under Roman rule see R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 107–123.

<sup>18</sup> Some of the possible Old Testament elements involved in these chapters of Luke are discussed by E. D. Freed, *Stories*, 83–90, 109–111.



informed reader will be aware that typological themes from the Old Testament underlie its narration.<sup>19</sup>

It is no problem historically that these chapters reflect the Jewish culture in which they are set, but the obvious desire to present the events surrounding Jesus' birth as foreshadowed in the Old Testament prompts the suspicion that the wish has been father to the thought. Surely an historical record of how Jesus was born does not need all this scriptural undergirding? But that is to prejudge the nature of the evangelists' enterprise. In the case of Matthew in particular, it is quite misleading to describe his first two chapters simply as a birth or infancy narrative, as if their sole purpose was to give us a newspaper-type report of how it happened. Rather, they present a theological introduction to the Messiah who will be the subject of the following narrative, in the form of a richly-textured meditation on the fulfillment of scripture. The question the historian needs to ask is whether such a genre of literature is a suitable place to look for historical data, whether the fulfillment claimed is based on real events or whether the "events" have been spun out of the Old Testament texts.

Discussion of this issue has sometimes been obscured by the use of the Jewish term "midrash", which has been popularly understood to denote an imaginative development from Old Testament texts resulting in the creation of new stories. This was always a misleading use of the rabbinic term "midrash", which means simply "interpretation" and may take many forms.<sup>20</sup> Evidence for the inventive creation of "history" from scriptural material by Jewish writers of the period, whether described as "midrash" or not, is in fact extremely scarce, particularly when the events purportedly recorded are as recent as those narrated

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<sup>19</sup> Herod's attempt to destroy his rival recreates the attempt by Pharaoh to destroy the future deliverer of Israel (R. T. France, *NovT* 21 [1979]: 105–108). The star is often seen as an allusion to Num 24:17, and other allusions to the Balaam story are traced by R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 117, 190–196. The homage and gifts of the magi reflect Ps 72:10–11, 15 and Isa 60:5–6, and those passages in turn are based on the visit of the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kgs 10:1–13. See further M. Hengel and H. Merkel in *Orientierung an Jesus: Festschrift J. Schmid*, ed. P. Hoffman (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 139–169.

<sup>20</sup> For the debate on the meaning of "midrash" see A. G. Wright, *CBQ* 28 (1966): 105–138, 417–457; R. Le Déaut, *Int* 25 (1971): 259–282; and (with special reference to Matthew 1–2) G. M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula-Quotations in the Infancy Narratives of Matthew*, *AnBib* 63 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 12–16; R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 557–563 (supplemented by 577–579, 598–600).

by the evangelists.<sup>21</sup> Convincing Jewish parallels to the supposed creation of nativity stories out of Old Testament texts by Matthew and Luke are therefore lacking. But in any case the gospel writers must be judged by what they have in fact produced, not by imposing on them a supposed model (itself largely fallacious) from rabbinic literature. The issue has been raised especially with reference to Matthew's formula-quotations, and our discussion will be focused there.<sup>22</sup>

Jewish midrash typically took as its starting point a passage or collection of passages from the Old Testament. The biblical text thus formed the organizing principle of the midrash. Matthew 1–2 (after the genealogy), on the other hand, is structured around a series of traditions concerning the origins and childhood travels of Jesus, to which a variety of scriptural material is added either by way of explicit citation (the “formula-quotations”) or by allusive wording in the way the stories are told. The specific texts cited in the formula-quotations have no apparent previous connection with each other. Most of them are not texts which would naturally suggest themselves to someone looking for messianic proof texts. The only one which has clear messianic relevance is Micah 5:2, cited in response to the question where the Messiah was to be born (2:5–6). But there is nothing inherently messianic about a young woman conceiving a child in the eighth century BCE (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23), about Israel's exodus from Egypt (Hos 11:1; Matt 2:15), or about the exile of Rachel's children to Babylon (Jer 31:15; Matt 2:18), while the claimed “fulfillment” in 2:23 is so obscure that scholars are unable to agree what scriptural text or motif Matthew had in mind there.<sup>23</sup> The only plausible reason for Matthew's choosing such an improbable set of texts is that the traditions he was relating already contained specific features which called them to mind, viz. a

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<sup>21</sup> This is the conclusion of a wide-ranging survey by R. T. France, “Jewish Historiography, Midrash and the Gospels”, in *Gospel Perspectives* 3, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 99–127.

<sup>22</sup> The literary character of Matthew 1–2 in relation to the category of “midrash” is discussed by R. T. France in *Gospel Perspectives* 2 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 243–255.

<sup>23</sup> There is no Old Testament text which says “He shall be called a Nazoraios”, and Nazareth is not mentioned in the Old Testament. Suggestions include a word-play on the Hebrew נֶצֶר, “branch”, in Isa 11:1; an allusion to Samson the Nazirite (Judg 13:7), or, in view of Nazareth's obscurity (cf. John 1:46), the prophetic theme (the introductory formula in this case refers unusually to “the prophets”, not to a specific prophet) of the unrecognized and despised Messiah (Isa 53:1–3 etc.); see R. T. France, *NTS* 27 (1980/81): 246–249.

“virgin” conception, a return from Egypt, the loss of children in Bethlehem, and Jesus’ home in the obscure village of Nazareth, for each of which Matthew then seeks a scriptural precedent. In order to make the chosen texts fit his stories he has had to indulge in some quite imaginative “exegesis”, involving some manipulation of the actual wording of the texts to fit their “fulfillment”, but the whole exercise would have been pointless unless the details of the stories were already there. What would have been the point of choosing such an obscure set of Old Testament texts and then using them as the basis for inventing stories which can be made to fit them only with the greatest ingenuity? And what would be the meaning of claiming that the texts were “fulfilled” in fictional events spun out of the texts themselves? The whole procedure makes sense only if the traditions were there first, and Matthew employed all his creative hermeneutical skill in finding texts to fit them.<sup>24</sup>

Once the texts have been chosen to fit the stories, it is natural that the stories are told in such a way as to highlight the relevance of the text, so that there is a mutual interaction: “the narrative tradition is the motive for the selection and shaping of the texts, but the texts have become the organizing principle for the narrative.”<sup>25</sup>

Another indication of the factual basis of the stories in Matthew 2 is their apologetic focus: they are designed, according to one widely accepted exegesis, to explain the inconvenient geographical origin of Jesus.<sup>26</sup> How was it possible for Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah who, as everyone knew, must come from Bethlehem (John 7:41–42)? Chapter 2 therefore traces the geographical movements which took him from his correctly messianic birthplace in Bethlehem to his subsequent domicile in Nazareth, with each stage prompted by divine communications by angels and dreams, and each successive geographical move backed up by a formula-quotation mentioning a geographical location (Bethlehem, Egypt, Rama, Nazareth). This elaborate geographical

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<sup>24</sup> For the nuances Matthew may have intended his quotations to convey, and the means by which he has drawn them out, see R. T. France, “The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication”, *NTS* 27 (1980/81): 233–251.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 237, summarizing the discussion on 234–237.

<sup>26</sup> This paragraph follows the argument of K. Stendahl in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift J. Jeremias*, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960), 94–105, reprinted in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. G. N. Stanton, 2nd ed., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 69–80. Stendahl’s argument is further developed by R. T. France, *NTS* 27 (1980/81): 237–240.

apologetic presupposes an awkward fact to be explained: Jesus came from the wrong place. One does not invent inconvenient facts in order to defend them.<sup>27</sup>

These considerations suggest that the historian, while fully recognizing the theological creativity and the rich scriptural background which has shaped the telling of these stories by Matthew and Luke, has good grounds for assuming that the incidents recorded derive from the traditions of the events themselves as experienced respectively by Joseph and Mary, rather than simply from the imagination of the evangelists or of those from whom they received the stories.

### 3. *The Date*

The rough period of Jesus' birth may be deduced by working back from the period of Pilate's prefecture (26–36 CE) and Caiaphas' high-priesthood (18–36 CE) on the basis of Luke's statement that Jesus was "about thirty years old" when he began his public ministry (Luke 3:23), but Luke's wording is deliberately imprecise and there is no firm indication of either the length of Jesus' ministry or the year of his death (30 and 33 CE are most commonly suggested for the latter).<sup>28</sup> A more promising pointer is Matthew's statement that Jesus was born while Herod the Great was king (Matt 2:1 etc.), together with Luke's dating of the conception of John the Baptist (which preceded that of Jesus by six months, Luke 1:36) also during Herod's reign (Luke 1:5). Since it is generally agreed on the basis of Josephus' evidence that Herod died in 4 BCE,<sup>29</sup> Jesus' birth must precede that date. A date shortly before

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<sup>27</sup> A similar consideration applies to Matthew's first chapter. A genealogy which leads down to Joseph fits oddly with a narrative which says that Jesus was not Joseph's biological son (as Matt 1:16 is at pains to point out; see below n. 50). Matthew therefore has to explain in 1:18–25 how Joseph "son of David" was persuaded to accept and name (i.e., formally adopt) Jesus as his son. There would be no need for such an apologetic if it was believed that Joseph really was Jesus' father.

<sup>28</sup> It is probable that Nisan 14 fell on a Friday in these years, as the "Johannine" dating of the Last Supper requires; see J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 292–296; G. Ogg, in *Historicity and Chronology in the NT*, ed. D. E. Nineham et al. (London: SPCK, 1965), 92–96; contra J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (ET) (London: SCM, 1966), 36–41. On the reasons for preferring the "Johannine" chronology see R. T. France, *Vox Evangelica* 16 (1986): 47–54.

<sup>29</sup> Schürer 1.326–328 (n. 165); T. D. Barnes, *JTS* 19 (1968): 204–209; J. van Bruggen in *Miscellanea Neotestamentica*, ed. T. Baarda et al., vol. 2, SNT 48 (Leiden: Brill,

4 BCE is supported also by the fact that the paranoia of Herod as described in Matthew 2:1–18 fits what is known of his uneasy and violent final years (see section 6 below). Matthew links the return from Egypt with Herod's death (Matt 2:19–21), and while he gives no specific time-scale for the visit of the magi and the escape to Egypt or the length of the stay there, it seems likely that he envisages this as all occurring during Jesus' infancy (see above, section 2.2, for how these data relate to Luke's account).

There is no agreement about what specific astronomical phenomenon is described in Matt 2:2, 9 (see n. 9 above), and in any case we do not know how long the magi spent on their journey, nor how soon after the birth they arrived.<sup>30</sup> The supernova (or comet?) of 5/4 BCE or the planetary conjunction of 7 BCE would fit roughly with the general period indicated by the link with Herod's death, but we cannot define the date more closely. We can be no more definite than to say that Jesus was born some time between about 7 and 4 BCE, and probably toward the end of that period.

The traditional date of 25 December in the Western church is first attested in the fourth century, and was probably chosen for ideological reasons (in opposition to the "birth date" of the Sun in Roman religion). The only feature of the Lucan account which might give any clue to the time of year is that shepherds were spending the night out in the fields with their flocks, which is sometimes asserted to have been the case normally from about March to November, making the traditional date of Christmas perhaps the least likely from an historical point of view; but there is little clear evidence or agreement on this point.

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1978), 1–15. E. L. Martin, *The Birth of Christ Recalculated!* (Pasadena: Foundation for Biblical Research, 1978), has suggested a revised date of 1 BCE for Herod's death, and so dates Jesus' birth late in 2 BCE. Martin's proposals have not been widely supported. A more recent volume, J. Vardaman & E. M. Yamauchi, eds., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos* (see n. 9), contains articles which present the arguments for, respectively, 1 BCE (E. L. Martin, 85–92) and 4 BCE (H. W. Hoehner, 101–111) for Herod's death.

<sup>30</sup> Herod's targeting of children "two years old or under" does not mean that Jesus was supposed to be two years old at the time; it is a rough-and-ready guide for soldiers to ensure that no young infant was missed.

#### 4. *The Place*

Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the traditional home of David; it was a small village in Judea a few miles south of Jerusalem. The tradition of a birth in Bethlehem has been doubted on the basis that Jesus as an adult was always known as Jesus of *Nazareth*, and that Luke clearly understands that the family home was in Nazareth before as well as after Jesus' birth. Since there are historical problems surrounding the Roman census which Luke uses to explain how the family came to be temporarily in Bethlehem at the time of the birth (see above section 2.1), it is suggested that the whole Bethlehem tradition is a later apologetic invention to overcome the problem that the Messiah was expected to come from Bethlehem, not from an obscure Galilean village. We have noted this issue in section 2.3 above in relation to the apologetic function of Matthew 2. Matthew's apologetic presupposes that both the birth in Bethlehem and the residence in Nazareth were accepted data at the time he wrote, and his apparent unawareness of the family's earlier connection with Nazareth (see above section 2.2) would be hard to explain if it was remembered that Jesus was in fact born there. Given Joseph's Davidic lineage (on which both evangelists agree, Matt 1:1–16,20; Luke 1:27; 2:4; 3:23–31), it is hardly a matter for surprise that this expatriate descendant of David should return to his family home for a period. There thus seems to be inadequate reason to question the tradition of birth in Bethlehem which was established early enough to find its way into the independent sources used by Matthew and Luke, while a Judean location is presupposed also in the associated stories in both Matthew 2:1–18 and Luke 2:22–38.

#### 5. *The Social Setting*

Christian tradition depicts the birth of Jesus as taking place in a context of social exclusion and squalor. This tradition is based on two statements in Luke 2:7, that the baby was placed in a manger, and that "there was no room for them in the inn". As early as the second century we find a tradition of birth in a "cave" (*Prot. Jac.* 18.1; Justin, *Dial.* 79), a tradition which persisted in the East, whereas in the West the location is more commonly assumed to be a stable. Thus Jesus is born not like most babies in a normal home, but excluded from human

society. This traditional image is so firmly entrenched that it may seem foolhardy and even impious to question it, but in fact its basis in the wording of Luke 2:7 is very shaky. Luke mentions no cave or stable, but only a manger; and the unwelcoming “inn” results from a mis-translation.<sup>31</sup>

To take the “inn” first: when Luke wants to refer to a commercial lodging place he uses the appropriate Greek term πανδοχείον (Luke 10:34). But in Luke 2:7 he uses καταλύμα, which he will use again in 22:11 for the “upper room” of a private house where the Last Supper took place. It normally means a “lodging-place” or “guest-room”. It is unlikely that so small a village as Bethlehem would have had a commercial inn (let alone the sequence of unwelcoming hostelries depicted in some nativity plays!). The καταλύμα is therefore probably the guest-room of a private house. It is in any case culturally unthinkable that a visiting member of the family would be allowed, let alone required, to look for commercial accommodation if there were relatives still in the village. The problem was that in the home to which they were naturally invited either the guest-room (probably an upstairs room built onto the roof of a normal one-storey home, as in 2 Kgs 4:10) was too small to accommodate a childbirth, or there was someone else already occupying it.

An alternative place for the new-born baby was found in a “manger”. The modern Western reader assumes that since a manger implies livestock<sup>32</sup> it must be either in the open air or in a building separate from the human living quarters; hence the tradition of a “stable”. But a normal peasant home in ancient Palestine was a single large room, divided into two levels, with the family living on the upper level and the animals brought in at night into the lower part of the room. The mangers would probably be set along the edge of the living area where the animals could conveniently reach them from their lower floor.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The following argument derives from a detailed and culturally informed study by K. E. Bailey, “The Manger and the Inn: The Cultural Background of Luke 2:7”, *Near East School of Theology Review* 2 (1979): 33–44, reprinted in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 4 (1980): 201–217. Cf. also H. Must, *NTS* 32 (1986): 136–143; and brief comments by J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 105–106.

<sup>32</sup> Luke mentions no animals; the ox and ass which have become a fixed element in Christmas imagery derive from Isa 1:3.

<sup>33</sup> M. Hengel, *TDNT* 9:51–52, correctly describes the normal location of mangers as known from Palestinian sources and archaeology, but then on p. 54 inexplicably says that “According to Lk. the child lies outside the human dwelling in an unusual place where there are only animals”!

The scene is thus as follows: Joseph's relatives were slightly more affluent than many of their neighbors in that they had been able to add a *καταλύμα* to their one-room house, but there were already other guests in the upstairs room, so Joseph and Mary stayed, and the baby was born, in the main living area of the house, where a manger provided a convenient and comfortable improvised cradle. It is consonant with this reading that Matthew mentions that the magi found the child in a "house" in Bethlehem (Matt 2:11), though of course their visit need not have been immediately after the birth.

On this reading, Jesus was not born in social exclusion, nor in any more squalid a setting than most people regarded as normal living conditions. Not in a cold, draughty, unwelcoming "stable" but in a warm if rather crowded family home. His cradle was unconventional, but not uncomfortable. The details of Bailey's reconstruction are of course debatable,<sup>34</sup> but it is based firmly on what Luke actually says, interpreted in relation not to a modern Western social environment but to what we know of normal life in the ancient Middle East, where privacy is not so much prized as in our Western culture, and a birth in such a bustling family setting, with the noise and the smells of family and animals, would be far preferable to our maternity hospitals. The setting of Jesus' birth, while it took place away from his parents' home, and in circumstances very far removed from a royal palace, was not unlike that of most other village children at the time.

The mention of a *καταλύμα* raises the possibility that Joseph's Bethlehem relatives may have been a little more affluent than most. Joseph himself was a "carpenter" (Matt 13:55): *τέκτων* is used for a "craftsman" in various materials, not merely a wood-worker, and probably denotes a more general building contractor,<sup>35</sup> which suggests that within the small village economy of Nazareth Joseph would have

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<sup>34</sup> In particular, it may be questioned whether *καταλύμα* need mean a private guest-room rather than the communal "lodging-place" or *khan* (a shelter for travelers and their animals, sometimes referred to as a caravanserai, not an "inn" as we would understand it) which might be found in most villages (so J. L. Ottey, *ExpTim* 98 [1986/87] 71–73), though it is not clear how this would differ from what Luke describes as a *πανδοχείον* in 10:34. This would not, however, affect Bailey's argument about the normal location of a manger. And the cultural point that a visiting relative would never be allowed to seek shelter in a public *khan* remains a strong one. A private home would in any case provide a much more acceptable setting for childbirth; a *khan* would be very much a last resort in such circumstances.

<sup>35</sup> C. C. McCown, in *Studies in Early Christianity*, ed. S. J. Case (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 173–189; P. H. Furfey, *CBQ* 17 (1955): 204–215.



played an important role. The family setting into which Jesus was born seems therefore to belong to what we might call the “(lower?) middle-class”, neither among the rich and powerful nor at the bottom of the social scale. His birth in a normal family home suitably fits this social background.

## 6. *Characters in the Story*

### 6.1. *Mary*

It is generally agreed that the details of Mary’s parents (Joachim and Anna), birth and upbringing as described in *Prot. Jas.* 1–8 are unlikely to be based on any historical information; the influence of Old Testament stories of the birth and childhood of famous people is evident. Luke’s statement that Mary’s “relative” (Luke 1:36) Elizabeth was “of the daughters of Aaron” (Luke 1:5) suggests that Mary came from the tribe of Levi. The gospel accounts agree that at the time of Jesus’ birth Mary was betrothed, and that Jesus was her first child. Betrothal usually took place when the girl was aged about twelve or thirteen, followed by marriage about a year later,<sup>36</sup> so that the Mary of the birth narratives would probably be a young teenager.

### 6.2. *Joseph*

Outside the infancy narratives (and the Lukan genealogy, Luke 3:23) we find no mention of Joseph other than the conventional identification of Jesus as “son of Joseph” in Luke 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42. His failure to appear in the later stories (and the unexpected reference to Jesus as “son of Mary” in Mark 6:3) has been taken to indicate that he died before Jesus’ public ministry began (some time after the incident recorded in Luke 2:42–51, when Jesus was twelve). Later Christian tradition therefore depicts him as an old man already at the time of Jesus’ birth; as early as *Prot. Jas.* 8–9 he is also a widower with older sons, a significant move in the attempt to solve the problem of Jesus’ “brothers” in the light of a developing belief in Mary’s perpetual virginity.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, ET (London: SCM, 1969), 364–368, describes the pattern of betrothal and marriage in first-century Judaism.

<sup>37</sup> The other second-century infancy gospel presupposes a similar scenario, since it presents Joseph’s son James as older than Jesus (*Inf. Gos. Thom.* 16).

The gospel narratives, however, give no hint of Joseph's age or of any previous family. If the four named brothers and indefinite number of sisters of Jesus mentioned in Mark 6:3 are taken in the natural sense, Joseph must have lived and produced children<sup>38</sup> for several years after Jesus was born. Joseph's importance for Matthew lies in his status as "son of David" (Matt 1:20; see above n. 27), which means that once he has been persuaded to accept Jesus formally as his son (Matt 1:19–25) Jesus is qualified to be the Messiah, "son of David", even though his mother was probably of a different tribe (see above). The genealogies of Joseph in Matt 1:2–16 and Luke 3:23–38, while differing substantially at other points,<sup>39</sup> agree on his Davidic lineage.

### 6.3. *The Shepherds*

It is in keeping with the song which Luke attributes to Mary in Luke 1:46–55 that the first witnesses of the birth are neither those in positions of religious leadership nor the rich and powerful, but local shepherds, ordinary poor peasants. Shepherding was not for the Jews, as it was for the Egyptians (Gen 46:34), a despised occupation.<sup>40</sup> Shepherds in the area around Bethlehem were likely to be raising the sheep needed for the temple sacrifices. The great king David had formerly been a shepherd outside Bethlehem, and shepherding features metaphorically in many Old Testament descriptions of the role of God in

<sup>38</sup> Matt 1:25 should probably be taken to mean that after Jesus' birth Joseph began normal sexual relations with Mary. Cf. also Luke 2:7, "her *first-born* son", which would normally imply that others were born later.

<sup>39</sup> See R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 84–94 (and 587–589), for the relationship between the two genealogies. Brown's conclusion that they are theological rather than simply factual documents needs to be balanced against the evidence, which he discusses on pp. 87–88, for ancient Jewish concern for genealogical records and the claims of Josephus that these could be traced back for many generations in the public registers (Josephus, *Life* 6; cf. *Apion* 1.28–36). A possible clue to the reason why Matthew and Luke produce a different set of names is the fact that Matthew's genealogy includes the actual kings of Judah from David to the exile and arranges its "generations" around the turning-points of the monarchy (1:17), suggesting that he is less concerned with biological parentage than with a putative throne-succession. See further Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, 275–297; M. D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969), 99–108.

<sup>40</sup> See, however, E. D. Freed, *Stories*, 137–139, for the observation that there were bad as well as good shepherds, and for some evidence for distrust of shepherds in Jewish and Greek society. R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 102–103, rightly points out however that derogatory references to shepherds in Jewish literature belong to a later period and do not represent general first-century opinion. Shepherds represent rather "the ordinary people", "simply part of the peasantry in ancient Palestinian society".

relation to his people and derivatively of the coming Messiah (notably in Micah 5:2, based on 2 Sam 5:2, the two texts combined in the “quotation” in Matt 2:6). Luke’s introduction of the shepherds thus combines an indication of the relatively lowly social setting of Jesus’ birth with a reminder of its theological significance.

#### 6.4. *Simeon and Anna*

Jesus’ presentation in the temple at the age of forty days (Luke 2:22–24) accords with standard ritual practice, but the two people whom Luke records as meeting him there are otherwise unknown. Luke’s surprisingly detailed description of Anna (2:36–37) suggests however that he had some source other than simply his own imagination. Both are old (probably: Luke does not say this of Simeon, but his readiness for death suggests it) and devout. Anna is recognized as a prophet; no formal office is attributed to Simeon (he is not said to be a priest, though later tradition has often assumed this). They represent the pious people of God, eagerly waiting for the fulfillment of his promises (2:25, 38).<sup>41</sup> Their recognition of the new-born Messiah is attributed to divine inspiration (“the Holy Spirit”, vv. 25–27; “a prophet”, v. 36).

#### 6.5. *The Magi*

The first witnesses of the birth in Matthew’s account are very different from those recorded by Luke. While it is later tradition (based on Ps 72:10–11; Isa 60:3) that has made them “kings”, in Matthew’s narrative they are of sufficient status to be able to make a long journey, to have access to the Jewish king, and to bring expensive gifts. But they are also foreigners (from “the East”, probably Mesopotamia), and they follow a profession, astrology,<sup>42</sup> which was frowned on in orthodox

<sup>41</sup> R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 63–68, discusses R. E. Brown’s presentation of Simeon and Anna as representatives of a special type of piety characteristic of “the Jewish Christian Anawim” and associated particularly with the temple (*Birth*, 452–453, 466–468; cf. 350–355, 361–365), but concludes that they represent not a sub-group within Israel but the oppressed people of Israel in general.

<sup>42</sup> Accounts of magi indicate that their interests were wider than simply astronomy/astrology, including the interpretation of dreams and in some cases magic. See the article by E. M. Yamauchi cited at n. 9 above; more briefly G. Delling, *TDNT* 4:356–359. See also H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), 99–101, for the place of magic in the role of magi. E. D. Freed, *Stories*, 96–100, gives an account of magi which focuses on magic with surprisingly little reference to astrology.

Judaism.<sup>43</sup> See above section 2.1 for the plausibility of such a visit, to which it might be added that a Jew inventing such a story would be unlikely to attribute such a dubious profession to his characters. The story of the magi is rich in typological motifs (see above n. 19), prominent among which is the theme of the homage of non-Israelites toward Israel and its king. The pericope thus adds a further dimension to the geographical interest of Matthew 2, as visitors from Mesopotamia come bearing gifts from Arabia.<sup>44</sup> The magi serve, then, in Matthew's narrative, as an early indication of the world-wide impact of the coming of the Messiah, who will bring salvation to Gentiles as well as to Jews.

### 6.6. Herod

King Herod, client king of Jewish Palestine under the Roman imperial authority 37–4 BCE, plays in Matthew's narrative a role comparable to that of Pharaoh in the story of Moses.<sup>45</sup> It is a role for which the historical Herod was well fitted.<sup>46</sup> According to Josephus, his defense of his throne against real or imagined rivals involved the execution of his predecessors Antigonus and Hyrcanus and large numbers of their supporters and relatives, as well as other members of the Hasmonean family who were directly related to him by marriage, his brother-in-law, his mother-in-law, and even his favorite wife, Mariamme. Other political opponents, and even their families with them, were also tortured and killed. Towards the end of his reign his paranoia increased, and we hear of three large groups of real or suspected conspirators who were killed during the years 7–4 BCE, in one case in specific response to a prediction that his dynasty was to lose the throne. Within the same years he even executed his three eldest sons, Alexander, Aristobulus and Antipater, as suspected conspirators.<sup>47</sup> So, if

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<sup>43</sup> Popular Judaism, however, continued to be fascinated by magic and astrology; see P. S. Alexander in Schürer 3.342–379.

<sup>44</sup> See R. T. France, *NTS* 27 (1980/81): 238–240.

<sup>45</sup> The parallels (including those in post-biblical Jewish traditions about Moses, which significantly enhance the correspondence) are set out in R. T. France, *NovT* 21 (1979): 105–106.

<sup>46</sup> For a detailed account of the nature of Herod's reign showing how "the story in Matthew 2 comes to life vividly against the background of Herodian exploitation and tyranny" see R. A. Horsley, *Liberation*, 39–49.

<sup>47</sup> The incidents listed are narrated respectively (for the earlier period) in Josephus, *Ant.* 15.8–10; 15.172–178; 15.6, 260–266; 15.53–55; 15.247–251; 15.222–236; 15.284–290; and (for the years 7–4 BCE) in Josephus, *Ant.* 16.393–394; 17.42–44; 17.167 (with *War* 1.655; 16.392–394; 17.182–187.

Josephus is to be believed, at the likely time of Jesus' birth Herod was not one to hold back from eliminating those he regarded as a threat to his throne, and the enquiry of the magi as to the birth of a new "king of the Jews" was well calculated to provoke the violent and indiscriminate response we read of in Matt 2:16.<sup>48</sup>

### 7. *Born of a Virgin*

Some of the supernatural elements in the gospel birth narratives seem less central to the historical core of what happened: without the angels who announce, instruct and sing, and the star which moves and guides, the stories of what actually happened would still make sense, even if the motivation and decisions of some of the characters would need to be explained in other ways. But the central miracle of the story lies at the heart of what both Matthew and Luke have to tell, the conception of Jesus without a human father.<sup>49</sup> Luke spells this out in the dialogue between Mary and the angel in 1:31–38, which includes the repeated inference that the child so born will be the "Son of God" (1:32, 35). The way Matthew concludes his genealogy (1:16)<sup>50</sup> presupposes that Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, and Matt 1:18–25 is devoted to explaining Joseph's response to a pregnancy for which he knows he

<sup>48</sup> See the assessment of Herod's mental state at the time by A. Schalit, *König Herodes* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 648–649, n. 11. Also S. Perowne, *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1956), 172.

<sup>49</sup> Modern debates about the physical possibility and genetic implications of parthenogenesis are of course outside the perspective of the biblical writers, for whom miracle was a category sufficiently comprehensive to be accepted irrespective of physical normality.

<sup>50</sup> All MSS and versions of this verse agree in making it explicit that Joseph was not Jesus' father ("of whom" is unambiguously feminine), with the one exception of the Sinaitic Syriac which famously reads "Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, begot Jesus". The fact that this version mentions Mary as "betrothed" to Joseph and as "virgin" shows that the translator/scribe was aware of the story that follows, and his use of the verb "beget" for Joseph is therefore more likely due to unthinking repetition of the set formula of the rest of the genealogy than to a deliberate desire to assert Joseph's physical fatherhood; see B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 2–7. The other Syriac texts do not follow the Sinaitic reading, and the Greek text is not in doubt; the most significant variation is the reading of some Old Latin and a few Greek MSS, "to whom being betrothed the virgin Mary gave birth to [using the verb γεννώω which normally, and throughout vv. 2–16, applies to the father's act of "begetting"] Jesus...", a patent attempt to underline further the supernatural conception of Jesus. This variant is close to the wording of the Sinaitic Syriac, and may have been its source.

was not responsible. The point is sufficiently important to Matthew to be made the subject of the first of his formula-quotations in 1:22–23.

It is sometimes suggested that it was the text of Isa 7:14 which gave rise to the idea of a virgin conception. In section 2.3 above we saw reason to question the view that Matthew's nativity stories might have been spun out of the texts which are then quoted as "fulfilled" in the events. In Matthew 1:22–23, with its use of the LXX term *παρθένος*, "virgin",<sup>51</sup> this might seem more plausible, but two factors urge caution. The first is the fact that Isa 7:14 is set in a passage which speaks of events in the immediate future of the prophet's own time, so that this text does not immediately suggest itself as a basis for interpreting the birth of a Messiah more than seven centuries later. The second is that Matthew is not slavishly tied to the Greek text of the LXX, especially in his formula-quotations, and is clearly aware of other textual traditions, so that it is unlikely that he would be unaware that while the LXX term means "virgin," Isaiah's Hebrew word *עַלְמָה*, even though not the usual term for a child-bearing woman, does not in itself demand the sense "virgin" (for which the normal Hebrew term would be *בְּתוּלָה*).<sup>52</sup> Isa 7:14 was not therefore in itself an obvious text to bring into an account of the origin of the Messiah. It was only when a tradition of a virgin conception was already established that its relevance, especially in its LXX form, would be readily perceived.<sup>53</sup>

It is well known that outside the birth narratives of Luke and Matthew there is no clear indication of this tradition in the rest of the New Testament, though hints have been found in the title "son of Mary"

<sup>51</sup> Like the English "maiden", *παρθένος* is sometimes found (especially in earlier Greek) with the meaning simply "girl", without reference to her sexual condition, but by the Hellenistic period this usage is rarely attested; see R. G. Bratcher, *BT* 9 (1958): 112–116. The later Greek versions of the Old Testament (Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion), produced after the Christian use of this text had become known, use *νεᾶνις* ("young woman") in place of *παρθένος* here, probably because the more specific meaning of *παρθένος* had become an apologetic embarrassment in Jewish-Christian polemics.

<sup>52</sup> A detailed study by R. G. Bratcher, *BT* 9 (1958): 98–105, concludes that *עַלְמָה* (which occurs only seven times in the Hebrew Old Testament) "refers to a sexually mature young woman, capable of having sexual intercourse, without specifying whether or not she has had it."

<sup>53</sup> Note that Luke 1:31 also probably alludes to Isa 7:14 in speaking of Mary's supernatural conception. On the reasons for Matthew's choice of this text, and the hermeneutical basis for his treating it as a messianic prophecy, see comments on Matt 1:23 in R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 55–58.

in Mark 6:3 and in Paul's phrase "his [God's] son, born of a woman" in Gal 4:4. The ubiquitous title "Son of God" used for Jesus does not in itself demand such a biological explanation, though it is of course consonant with it. Perhaps more significant is the well-attested Jewish polemic, going back at least to the second century,<sup>54</sup> which alleged that Jesus was born outside wedlock, and even named his father as a Roman soldier called Pantera; an indication of a similar polemic in the first century has been found in the jibe "We are not illegitimate children" (John 8:41).

The lack of direct attestation of the tradition outside the birth narratives can be taken in two ways. It may be taken as evidence that Matthew and Luke simply made it up; in that case they would appear to have done so independently, in itself quite a remarkable coincidence.<sup>55</sup> But the silence of the rest of the New Testament may conversely be taken as indicating that this was not a theological dogma of the early church, so that there was no constraint on the evangelists to provide it with a narrative basis—in other words that Matthew and Luke included it not because they needed to, but because this was the tradition they had received. The indirect indications of such a tradition mentioned above would support the latter alternative. Beyond that a historian cannot expect to go, and in the end the decision as to whether the tradition of a virgin conception should be given historical credence is likely to be made on philosophical grounds of what may reasonably be believed rather than on strictly historical grounds.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.32. For the rabbinic evidence see R. E. Brown, *Birth*, 534–542; more briefly R. T. France, *The Evidence for Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 36–39.

<sup>55</sup> The traditional "Q" explanation for agreements between Matthew and Luke cannot explain their agreement on this point: no one believes in a Q birth narrative! The ways in which Matthew and Luke respectively speak of a virgin conception show no literary connections; like the rest of the infancy narratives, they appear to reflect quite independent sources. Even those who hold that Luke drew his common material directly from Matthew (or vice versa) are hard pressed to find any plausible literary link at this point.

<sup>56</sup> R. E. Brown discusses the issue "Historically, was Jesus conceived without a human father?" with his usual careful balance, with full bibliography, in *Birth*, 517–533 (based on his fuller study, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* [New York: Paulist Press, 1973]), with supplementary comment on 697–712.

## THE DEATH OF JESUS

JOEL B. GREEN

That Jesus was “crucified under Pontius Pilate,” as the Creed affirms, is historically the most stable datum we have concerning Jesus, but questions remain. Over the last three decades, scholarly study of Jesus’ crucifixion shifted from concern over *who* killed Jesus, to the question *why* Jesus was put to death on a Roman cross.<sup>1</sup> How does the crucifixion of Jesus make sense within the story of his life, and within the world in which he lived? Today, the litmus test for any representation of the historical Jesus is whether such an account can make sense of why Jesus was executed on a Roman cross as “King of the Jews.” That is, contemporary attempts to tell the story of Jesus’ life must weave together as a single cloth the manner of his life and the character of his death. After reviewing evidence supporting the historicity of Jesus’ crucifixion, I will situate the crucifixion of Jesus within three interwoven stories: the story of imperial Rome, the story of Israel, and the story of Jesus’ life and ministry, to which we have access primarily by means of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

### 1. “Crucified under Pontius Pilate”

Multiple strands of evidence—from Christian, Jewish, and Roman sources—undergird the claim that among the data available to us regarding Jesus of Nazareth, none is more incontrovertible than his execution on a Roman cross by order of Pontius Pilate.

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<sup>1</sup> The 2004 release of Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* re-excited discussion around the question of responsibility for Jesus’ death—cf. e.g., G. Jeffrey MacDonald, “Scholars Still Debate Who Crucified Jesus,” *Christian Century* (9 March 2004): 15–16; Jon Meacham, “Who Killed Jesus?,” *Newsweek* 143.7 (16 February 2004): 44–53; Tim Callahan, “Who Really Killed Jesus?,” *Skeptic* 11.1 (2004): 87–90. However, such debates in the popular press have only rehearsed long-held views among scholars.



### 1.1. *New Testament Evidence*

The New Testament materials testify to Jesus' crucifixion with passion narratives noted for their length and detail, with references to the crucifixion especially in the speeches in Acts, and through snippets of information scattered throughout the letters and the Apocalypse. Although some scholars today take the second-century *Gospel of Peter* as an independent witness to the death of Jesus,<sup>2</sup> most have concluded that this *Gospel* was dependent on one or more of the New Testament gospels as sources and thus provides little if anything by way of independent witness.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars who have explored the origin of the passion narrative in recent decades have tended to posit a very early account or accounts that were expanded into the narratives of Jesus' suffering and death known to us in the New Testament gospels. Most analysis has focused on the traditional quality of the material shared by the Gospels of Mark and John, which are taken to be independent of one another as literary sources,<sup>4</sup> or has simply argued in favor of a pre-Markan passion narrative;<sup>5</sup> other study has suggested that the passion account in Luke 22–23 builds both on Mark 14–15 and on a non-Markan passion tradition.<sup>6</sup> Such research does not prove the historicity of Jesus' cruci-

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<sup>2</sup> This is creatively argued in John Dominic Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g., Joel B. Green, "The Gospel of Peter: Source for a Pre-Canonical Passion Narrative?", *ZNW* 78 (1987): 293–301; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 116–118; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vols., ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1317–1349.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Till Arend Mohr, *Markus- und Johannespassion: Redaktions- und traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung der Markinischen und Johanneischen Passionstradition*, ATANT 70 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1982); Matti Myllykoski, *Die letzten Tage Jesu: Markus und Johannes, ihre Traditionen und die historische Frage*, 2 vols., Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae B/256 and B/272 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1991/1994); Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu: Literarische Analyse und historische Kritik der Passionsdarstellungen der Evangelien*, BZNW 69 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), ch. 4.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Vincent Taylor, *The Passion Narrative of St. Luke: A Critical and Historical Examination*, ed. Owen E. Evans, SNTSMS 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative*, WUNT 2.33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 24–104. Marion L. Soards argued on source-critical grounds that Luke 22:1–71 represents Luke's

fixion, of course, but the cumulative effect of these studies is to press backward the potential existence of narrative accounts of Jesus' passion from the time of the writing of the gospels (60's–90's CE) to the dawning years of the Christian movement. How far backward in time? Most scholars are unwilling to speculate, but some who have studied the origins of the passion narrative go so far as to locate an archetypal account in the years before 40 CE.<sup>7</sup> What motivated the early development of a narrative representation of Jesus' suffering and death? Again, viewpoints differ, but coalesce generally around the pressing need to make sense within and for communities of Jesus' followers of what was unavoidably certain—namely, that he who was proclaimed as Christ and worshiped as Lord was the same person who had been crucified on a Roman cross.<sup>8</sup>

Literarily, of course, the earliest New Testament witnesses to the crucifixion of Jesus would be the Pauline epistles, where references to the cross are strategically located,<sup>9</sup> and remarks in shorthand can recall accounts of episodes related to Jesus' passion (e.g., 1 Cor 11:23–25; Gal 3:1; cf. 1 Tim 6:13). This is the apostle who presents “Christ crucified” as the embodiment of the gospel (1 Cor 1:23) and for whom the expression “word of the cross” (1 Cor 1:18) can serve as its virtual stand-in. Within the Pauline corpus, the earliest witness to Jesus' death is likely the formulaic tradition Paul cites and endorses in 1 Cor 15:3–5: “For I handed on to you... what I in turn had received: Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures....” Several features

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redaction of Markan parallels, allowing for very little in the way of “special Lukan material” (*The Passion according to Luke: The Special Material of Luke 22*, JSNTSup 14 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1987]), whereas Étienne Trocmé concluded that Luke's account of Jesus' passion is independent of the Gospel of Mark (*The Passion as Liturgy: A Study in the Origin of the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* [London: SCM, 1983]).

<sup>7</sup> E.g., Trocmé, *Passion as Liturgy*; Rudolf Pesch, “Die Überlieferung der Passion Jesu,” in *Rückgrate nach Jesus: Zur Methodik und Bedeutung der Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, ed. Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder, 1974), 148–173; idem, “Der Schluß der vormarkinische Passionsgeschichte und des Markusevangeliums: Mk 15,42–16:8,” in *L'Évangile selon Marc: Tradition et Rédaction*, ed. M. Sabbe (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), 365–409; idem, *Das Markusevangelium*, vol. 2, 3rd ed., HTKNT 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 1–27.

<sup>8</sup> Trocmé (*Passion as Liturgy*) and Green (*Death of Jesus*) both argue in terms of a liturgical *Sitz im Leben*. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken develops a more specific concern with the ritual reenactment of Jesus' passion (*Jesus' Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion*, NTOA 53 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004]).

<sup>9</sup> Σταυρός—1 Cor 1:17–18; Gal 5:11; 6:12, 14; Phil 2:8; 3:18; Col 1:20; 2:14; cf. Eph 2:16. Σταυρώω—1 Cor 1:13, 23; 2:2, 8; 2 Cor 13:4; Gal 3:1; 5:24; 6:14. Ξυλόν—Gal 3:13.

of this formulation indicate the presence of earlier material, including the deployment of terminology associated with the transmission of tradition (παρελάβετε... παρέδωκα... παρέλαβον) and the fourfold repetition of ὅτι, marking the opening of the quotation and each of its members. As is widely recognized, this expression of “the word of the cross” reflects earlier hellenistic-Jewish-Christian tradition.<sup>10</sup>

The crucifixion of Jesus has a central role to play in the Pauline materials, but also in other epistolary texts, 1 Peter and Hebrews not least among them, as well as in the Apocalypse.<sup>11</sup> To these sources in the New Testament we should also add the speeches in Acts, where Jesus’ execution is a presupposition shared by speaker and audience (e.g., 2:23, 36; 3:14–15; 5:30; 13:28) and παθεῖν τὸν χριστόν is a kerygmatic summary (e.g., 3:18; 17:3). From the standpoint of the developing tradition, however, the echoes of Deut 21:22–23 in Acts, Galatians, and 1 Peter are of special interest:

Deut 21:22–23: “When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse...”

Acts 5:30: “The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.”

Acts 10:39: “They put him to death by hanging him on a tree...”

Acts 13:29: “When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.”

Gal 3:13: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’...”

1 Pet 2:24: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...”

This repeated reference to the death of Jesus on a *tree* (ξύλον), rather than a *cross* (σταυρός), urges consideration of the formative influence of the LXX of Deut 21 on early Christian reflection on the death of

<sup>10</sup> See the earlier work of Eduard Lohse, *Märtyrer und Gottesknecht: Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Verkündigung vom Sühntod Jesu Christi*, FRLANT 64, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 113–116, 147–149; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 251–254; more recently, Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1188–1189.

<sup>11</sup> See more fully, Morna D. Hooker, *Not Ashamed of the Gospel: New Testament Interpretations of the Death of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994); John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

Jesus.<sup>12</sup> That persons hung on a tree are thus designated as “cursed” might have suggested the need to avoid any hint of Deut 21; the testimony of these New Testament texts suggests the opposite, however. Rather than deny the shame attending the form of Jesus’ execution, his followers seemed actually to embrace it—that is, to acknowledge it so as to subject it to a different hermeneutic. The cross, rather than evidence of Jesus’ rejection, is actually the signature of the God whose purpose is realized in the atoning death of his Anointed One (Galatians, 1 Peter), in whose economy rejection is antecedent to divine exaltation (Acts).

The New Testament evidence supporting the historicity of the crucifixion of Jesus is far more plentiful than these brief remarks, but enough has been said to demonstrate that the memory of the nature of Jesus’ death was from the very beginning not only pervasive but also penetrated with reflection on its significance. Indeed, the mere memory of the cross is itself evidence of its importance for those first disciples. We might anticipate that early Christians would provide testimony to the crucifixion of their Savior, and so may find more impressive the evidence available to us from outside the Christian movement.

### 1.2. *Jewish and Roman Evidence*

Within the first century, extra-biblical evidence is found in the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, in the *Testimonium Flavianum*, the paragraph concerning Jesus in Josephus *Ant.* 18.63–64. Because this text speaks unabashedly of Jesus’ status as Messiah and of his resurrection, and even queries whether Jesus can rightly be regarded as a mere human being, this paragraph in Josephus has long been under suspicion as a Christian interpolation. It now seems more likely that an original reference to Jesus in Josephus’ work has been embellished than that the whole is entirely the result of Christian tampering. If one removes the explicitly Christian material, one is left with the following:

At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man, for he was a doer of astounding deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth gladly. He won a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. When Pilate, because of an accusation made by our leaders,

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Max Wilcox, “‘Upon the Tree’—Deut 21:22–23 in the New Testament,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 85–99.

condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. Up until this very day the tribe of Christians (named after him) has not died out.

According to this emendation of the text,<sup>13</sup> Josephus wrote of Jesus' crucifixion, and with only one or two alternatives in translation, Josephus' perspective could be characterized as more neutral or even hostile. Instead of "won a following," for example, we might read "led astray" (ἐπάγομαι; cf. Josephus *War* 7.164; *Ant.* 17.327), and those persons "who receive the truth gladly" might be regarded as simpletons.<sup>14</sup> What was the nature of the indictment brought against him? Josephus does not tell us explicitly, though we might find clues in what he has written. Thus, "astounding deeds" refers to Jesus' status as a miracle worker and healer, Josephus underscores in this short paragraph the popularity Jesus enjoyed, and he makes clear that Jesus ran afoul of the Jewish elite in Jerusalem ("our leaders"). These statements cohere well with the gospel records and may be useful in framing a picture of the reasons behind Jesus' death.

Early in the second century CE, the Roman historian Tacitus speaks of Jesus' execution as well. Writing of the persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero, Tacitus notes in his *Annals* that "Christians" take their name from "Christ, who, during the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate" (15.44).<sup>15</sup> A sample of crude graffiti cartoon, which probably dates from the early second century, portrays a young man worshipping a donkey-headed human figure on a cross. The Greek caption mocks, "Alexamenos worships [his] god"; this may well be the oldest depiction of "Christ crucified." Lucian of Samosata (born ca. 120 CE) wrote a sneering account of a person who had converted to and then rejected Christian faith. Therein, he speaks of "the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this

<sup>13</sup> Cf. John P. Meier, "Jesus in Josephus: A Modest Proposal," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 76–103; idem, *A Marginal Jew*, 1:56–69. On the problem of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, see the survey and bibliography in Craig A. Evans, "Jesus in Non-Christian Sources," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *NTTS* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 443–478, at 466–474.

<sup>14</sup> See Graham N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 164–180, at 169–171.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, identification of Pilate as "procurator" is an anachronism, consistent with imperial organization in Tacitus' own day; Pilate was *praefectus* rather than *procurator* of Judea.

new cult into the world,” and describes Christians as “worshipping the crucified sophist” (*The Passing of Peregrinus*). Clearly, the crucifixion of Jesus, sheer folly from a Gentile perspective (μορψία, cf. 1 Cor 1:18, 23), was seized upon by those antagonistic toward Christians and the Christian message so as to discredit their claims regarding Jesus. As the second-century Christian apologist Justin Martyr remarks, “They say that our madness consists in the fact that we put a crucified man in second place after the unchangeable and eternal God, the creator of the world” (*First Apology* 13.4).

### 1.3. *The Nature of Crucifixion*

What do we know about the manner of Jesus’ execution? On this, the evidence is far more ambiguous than is generally realized and popularly portrayed. Literary sensibilities in Roman antiquity did not promote graphic descriptions of the act of crucifixion.<sup>16</sup> As Cicero remarked in his defense of a Roman senator, “But the executioner, the veiling of the head and the very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but liability to them, the expectation, indeed the very mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen and a free man.”<sup>17</sup> Even the gospels are singularly reserved at this point. Reporting simply, “They crucified him” (Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:18), they are devoid of the sort of detail that apparently belonged to the shared cultural encyclopedia of the evangelists and their first readers.

Literary evidence outside of the gospels makes it clear that, when it came to the act of crucifixion, the Romans were slaves to no standard technique. In describing the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army, for example, Josephus reports that “the soldiers out of rage and hatred amused themselves by nailing their prisoners in different positions” (*War* 5.449–451). Elsewhere we learn that victims of crucifixion

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 38, 77–81. This is (over-)emphasized in Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 193–194.

<sup>17</sup> Cicero, *Rab. Perd.* 16; trans. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 42.

might be fixed to the cross with nails or with ropes.<sup>18</sup> They might be fixed to the stake in order to die, or impaled after death for public display.

Nor can we turn to archeological evidence for detailed assistance. To date, the bones of only one victim of crucifixion have been unearthed. This is not surprising when it is remembered that the crucified were generally left on their crosses as carrion for the birds in order to provide a public and gruesome reminder of the fate of those who opposed imperial rule.<sup>19</sup> Even if they were granted burial, the nature of their execution would have precluded the sort of proper burial that would provide today's physical anthropologists with evidence of crucifixion. The remains of the crucified man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar, found in 1968 in an ossuary (bone box) in northern Jerusalem, suggest that his wrists were tied to the crossbeam, and that he was made to straddle the upright beam with a single nail driven through the heel bones of one foot, through the vertical beam, and into the other.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of the paucity and ambiguity of the evidence, Martin Hengel suggests a summary sketch of the Roman procedure of crucifixion. Crucifixion included a flogging beforehand, with victims generally made to carry their own crossbeams to the location of their execution, where they were bound or nailed to the cross with arms extended, raised up, and perhaps seated on a small wooden peg (a *sedile*).<sup>21</sup> As we have seen with reference to Josephus' eyewitness account, however, this procedure was subject to wild variation.

Roman practices were guided by their interest in the deterrent value of crucifixion. Quintilian (ca. 35–90's CE) observed that, "whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect" (*Decl.* 274). Indeed,

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<sup>18</sup> According to John 20:25; Acts 2:23; Col 2:14; *Gos. Pet.* 6:21; Justin *Dial.* 97, Jesus was nailed to the cross.

<sup>19</sup> Tacitus observes that legally condemned persons were precluded from burial (*Ann.* 6.29; cf. Josephus *Ant.* 5.44; 4.202), though Philo notes that, on the eve of a festive occasion, the crucified were removed from their crosses and handed over to relatives for burial (*Flacc.* 10.83–84).

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35 (1985): 22–27. The original excavation is reported in V. Tzaferis, "Jewish Tombs at and near Giv'at ha-Mivtar, Jerusalem," *IEJ* 20 (1970): 18–32. Tzaferis dates this crucifixion to the period between the start of the first century CE and just before the outbreak of the Jewish revolt.

<sup>21</sup> Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 22–32.

variation in the manner of how victims were affixed to the cross would have served not only as sadistic entertainment, but also the need to leave the victim alive as long as possible for maximum deterrent effect.

In the context of any discussion of the material aspects of crucifixion it is important to remember that Rome did not embrace crucifixion as its method of choice for execution on account of the overwhelming physical pain it caused. This lack of interest in torturous pain is emphasized by contrasting accounts of crucifixion with the portrait of heinous suffering memorialized in the martyr-tale of 2 Macc 6:18–7:42, in which seven brothers and their mother serially experienced scalping, dismemberment, and their bodies thrown into heated pans for frying. Here the descriptive language of bodily punishment and extreme torture is fitting. On the other hand, the act of crucifixion resulted in little blood loss and death came slowly, as the body succumbed to shock.<sup>22</sup> This form of capital punishment was savage and heinous, but for reasons other than bodily torture. In the honor-and-shame based culture of Greco-Roman antiquity, bodily torture was not the worst sort of injury. Seneca speaks to the horrors of death by crucifixion:

Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long drawn-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross.<sup>23</sup>

But these are not the horrors of agonizing pain. Indeed, even in the martyr-tale of 2 Macc 6–7, the emphasis falls on dying with nobility, with honor, rather than experiencing the shame of rejecting one's ancestral faith. More than pan-frying or dismemberment, then, crucifixion brought with it the pain of humiliation. In their depiction of the ordeal Jesus endured in the hours before crucifixion and during the time of his hanging on the cross, the gospel records themselves make this clear—focusing as they do on the myriad attempts to dishonor

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<sup>22</sup> The often-repeated view that crucifixion resulted in death by asphyxiation is no longer tenable, at least in cases where the executed was fixed to the cross with arms outspread—see F. T. Zugibe, “Death by Crucifixion,” *Canadian Society of Forensic Science* 17 (1983): 1–13.

<sup>23</sup> Seneca, *Lucil.* 101; trans. Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 31–32.



Jesus: spitting on him (Matt 26:67; 27:30; Mark 14:65; 15:19), striking him on the face and head (Matt 26:67; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63), ridiculing him (Matt 27:29, 31, 41; Mark 15:20, 31), insulting him (Matt 27:44; Mark 15:32, 34; Luke 22:65), and derisively mocking him (Mark 15:16–20, 29–32; Luke 22:65; 23:11, 35–37); he even suffers the humiliation of having been abandoned by his closest friends. Executed publicly, situated at a major crossroads or on a well-trafficked artery, devoid of clothing, denied burial, and left to be eaten by birds and beasts, victims of crucifixion were subject to optimal, unmitigated, vicious ridicule.

Rome did not expose its own citizens to this form of heinous punishment, but reserved crucifixion above all for those who resisted imperial rule.<sup>24</sup> That this is true in the case of Jesus is evident from the announcement of Jesus' offense, the inscription on the cross: "The King of the Jews," which Gerhard Schneider takes as "the historically unimpeachable point of departure" in an examination of the charge brought against Jesus.<sup>25</sup> Clearly, the *titulus* was a stable ingredient of the passion tradition, with few variances<sup>26</sup>:

οὗτος ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (Matt 27:37)  
 ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (Mark 15:26)  
 ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος (Luke 23:38)  
 Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων (John 19:19)

It will not do to explain either the appearance of this charge or its persistence in the tradition by appeal to custom, as though inscriptions of this kind were affixed to the cross in Roman crucifixions as a matter of course. Various means were employed for informing the public of the indictment brought against the condemned, but an inscription fixed to the cross itself is hardly expected.<sup>27</sup> Another argument in

<sup>24</sup> This is now well-documented in Hengel, *Crucifixion*; H.-W. Kuhn, "Die Kreuzesstrafe während der frühen Kaiserzeit: Ihre Wirklichkeit und Wertung in der Umwelt des Urchristentums," *ANRW II* 25.1 (1982): 648–793, at 706–718.

<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Schneider, "The Political Charge against Jesus (Luke 23:2)," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. Ernst Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 403–414, at 404.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Gos. Pet* 10; *t. Sanh.* 9:7.

<sup>27</sup> Suetonius, *Caligula* 32: "by carrying a sign ahead of him, on which the reason for his penalty was written"; Suetonius, *Domitian* 10: "They hung a sign around the offender's neck with the inscription..."; Dio Cassius, 54.3.6–7: "...with an inscription giving the reason for the death penalty." See A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 13–14; Ernst Bammel, "The *titulus*," in

support of the historicity of the *titulus* is its Roman perspective—“king of the Jews,” a title regularly used of Herod the Great in Josephus.<sup>28</sup> (At the same time, what was first reported as a matter of public record has become in the passion narratives ironic proclamation.) It is true that Jesus is not identified as a ληστής, an “insurrectionist” (cf. Matt 26:55; 27:38, 44), but the claim to kingship would be sufficient to serve as a threat to the emperor: “Anyone who makes himself king opposes Caesar” (John 19:12).<sup>29</sup> We may conclude that the inscription announcing his capital offense marks Jesus as a pretender to the throne and thus represents first a Roman (and not a Christian) point of view: *Let the cruel execution of Jesus of Nazareth be a lesson to the Jewish population, that Rome will not tolerate any attempt to incite the people to rebellion.*

In short, *that* Jesus was crucified immediately places him historically in the story of Roman rule as a character regarded as antagonistic, even a threat, to the Empire. In this regard, it is hardly coincidental that Josephus documents the rise of Jewish revolutionary movements beginning at the turn of the era (e.g., *Ant.* 17.278–285; 17.271–276, 285; *War* 2.55–56), and the landscape of Roman-Jewish relations is dotted with skirmishes and war until the Romans did “annihilate, exterminate, and eradicate” them from the land (Dio Cassius 59.13.3).

Historical events are remembered from the standpoint of those who know the future of past forces and who weave them into narratives driven by this question: What led to this outcome? How did we get to this place? Having sketched some of the historical data concerning the crucifixion of Jesus, we are left with the conundrum: What could Jesus have done that would lead to the outcome of his crucifixion as an actual or potential adversary of Rome?

## 2. *The Death of Jesus: A Tale of Three Narratives*

In his examination of *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, A. E. Harvey characterizes our problem in this way: “Jesus was crucified as an actual

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idem and C. F. D. Moule, eds., *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 353–364.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Antony made Herod “king of the Jews” (Josephus *War* 1.282).

<sup>29</sup> Observe the use of βασιλεύς for “emperor,” e.g., in 1 Pet 2:13, 17; cf. LSJ 309.

or potential enemy of the Roman authority,” but “the portrait of Jesus, as it is presented to us not only in the gospels but throughout the New Testament, is utterly irreconcilable with this explanation of his death.”<sup>30</sup> Overlooking the generally apolitical canvass on which much New Testament scholarship has tended to paint not only Jesus but the New Testament documents more broadly, a tendency that Harvey aptly illustrates,<sup>31</sup> the fact remains that the death of Jesus on a Roman cross is an event in search of an explanation and a nonpolitical explanation simply will not do. If we know that death on a Roman cross was indeed the nature of his demise, how, we must ask, did he find himself thus incriminated and sentenced as a threat to the throne?

Those who have sought to address this conundrum typically begin with a problematic assumption, for the holy grail for which they go in search is generally the (single) rationale that explains this horrible turn of events. But events find their meaning through the narratives by which they are told; hence, in seeking to make sense of the purpose served by Jesus’ crucifixion we must account for multiple narratives and, therefore, the possibility, even probability, that his execution served multiple agenda. In what follows, I will explore the motivations for and the meaning of Jesus’ death from three perspectives: that represented by the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, the viewpoint of the Empire and its representatives, and the understanding of Jesus himself. As will become evident shortly, these three categories are not so discrete as my characterization might imply, but organizing relevant considerations in this way will remind us that multiple human characters or groups were required to bring about Jesus’ death, that his execution served multiple aims, and that the one event, Jesus’ crucifixion, could be comprehended in distinct ways.

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<sup>30</sup> Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> This is in part a reaction to the argument that Jesus was a Zealot (in recent times, by S. G. F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* [New York: Stein and Day, 1968], though see Ernst Bammel, “The Revolution Theory from Reimarus to Brandon,” in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. idem and C. F. D. Moule [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 11–68), but is due more generally to the modern compartmentalization of religion and politics. For an antidote to such an approach, see Richard A. Horsley, “The Death of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 395–422.

### 2.1. *Jesus' Death and the Roman Empire*

In his justly celebrated monograph on *Writing History*, Paul Veyne develops the importance of “plot” in the narrative representation of historical events, particularly its role in shaping our understanding of those events. By way of illustration, he introduces the death of Jesus, “a mere anecdote in the reign of Tiberius...soon to be transformed into a gigantic event”:

A historian who died at the end of the reign of Tiberius most probably would not have mentioned the passion of Christ; the only plot in which he could have placed it was the political and religious agitation of the Jewish people in which Christ would have played, as he wrote of it, and as He still plays for us, the part of a mere figure in the crowd—it is in the history of Christianity that Christ has the main part. The significance of His passion has not changed with time; it is we who change plots when we pass from Jewish to Christian history. Everything is historic, but there are only partial histories.<sup>32</sup>

Large numbers of Jews were crucified under the Jewish king and high priest Alexander Jannaeus (107–76 BCE), remembered for his crucifixion of 800 Pharisees (Josephus *Ant.* 13.380; *War* 1.97; 4QpNah 3–4 I, 7), as well as by Rome during periods of significant unrest leading up to the Jewish revolt and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE; additionally, from time to time, agents of Roman rule in Judea condemned individuals to death by crucifixion. Jesus was just one among many to have suffered death in this fashion. Working within the historical story-line available to this imagined Roman historian, can we make sense of Jesus’ death on a Roman cross? Can we find evidence to support a portrait of Jesus that reaches its finale here, in the execution of Jesus for sedition against Rome?

That the Romans were involved in the legal proceedings concerning Jesus and were responsible for pronouncing the death sentence is undeniable, whatever one makes of the role of the Jerusalem sanhedrin. The memory of Jannaeus notwithstanding, crucifixion was not a Jewish practice, so that if Jesus had been sentenced to death by the sanhedrin we might have expected, say, an account of stoning or beheading. More to the point, however, in the Roman provinces, the power of capital punishment was held by the Romans; John’s report of

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Veyne, *Writing History: Essay on Epistemology* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 42.

the words of the sanhedrin to Pilate possesses historical verisimilitude on this point: "We are not allowed to execute anyone" (18:31).<sup>33</sup>

Roman rulers were charged with taking whatever steps were necessary to maintain the "peace of Rome," so the most straightforward way to account for the problem Jesus posed Rome is by reflecting on the potential of Jesus' popularity with the crowds. Pilate's interest would surely have been piqued upon hearing these words concerning Jesus from the Jewish Council: "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea..." (Luke 23:5). Add to this the teeming masses present in Jerusalem for Passover and Unleavened Bread, the scene of the triumphal entry, and Jesus' prophetic action in the temple, and it is easy to see how Jesus might have been regarded as a threat to public order. It is worth noting, though, that Jesus was on a collision course with Roman interests long before his arrival in Jerusalem. Though relatively unknown in the Roman world, he propagated a worldview that ran counter to official Roman ideology, and he encouraged others to do the same. If the followers can be charged with "turning the world upside down," "acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor," and "saying that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:6-7), how much more the leader? Indeed, the juxtaposition of the dominion of Caesar and that of Jesus comes into focus in two key texts:

Luke 23:2: "We found this man perverting our nation, *forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor*, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, *a king*."

John 11:47-48: "Therefore, the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the sanhedrin, and said, 'What are we to do? This man performs many signs. If we allow him to continue like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and overrun both our [holy] place and our nation.'"

Neither Rome's efforts at colonization nor its projection and maintenance of imperial rule were simple acts of accumulation and acquisition. Rather, these were supported and inspired by impressive ideological formations that included notions that certain territories and people require domination. Institutions like the Roman Empire are built on, belong to, and actively perpetuate a worldview that is self-

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<sup>33</sup> See Klaus W. Müller, "Möglichkeit und Vollzug jüdischer Kapitalgerichtsbarkeit im Prozess gegen Jesus von Nazaret," in *Der Prozess gegen Jesus*, ed. Karl Kertelge, QD 112 (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 41-83.

legitimizing. Such life-centering institutions come to believe and cultivate the belief that “this is the way God/the gods would have it.” As a consequence, we must rid ourselves of the idea that Rome had political interests while the Jews had religious ones. Politics and religion cohabited the same space; political infractions were inherently moral and religious, and *vice versa*.

With reference to Jesus and Rome, potential religio-political concerns come into focus best with regard to conflicting attitudes toward the household. As Cicero put it, the household was regarded as “the seed-bed of the state” (*On Duties* 1.53–55); the orderliness of household relations was both a model for and the basis of order within the empire, with persons assigned a precise place in a vast network of orders, classes, tribes, and centuries. At the head of the house stood the *paterfamilias*, the patriarch of an extended family, with networks of overlapping obligations proceeding from him to others of the household, and with one household mapped in relationship to others in a vast hierarchical web governed by status and social obligation. The empire itself was envisioned as a great household, with the emperor the “father of the fatherland,” the benefactor or patron of all. Relations of reciprocity thus bound slaves to masters, sons to fathers, household to household, all to Caesar, and Caesar to the gods who had favored him.

Against such an ordering of the world, Jesus’ message stands in stark contrast. On the one hand, we find evidence in the gospel narratives of “business as usual” among Jesus’ followers, as they vie for places of honor. Who is the greatest? Jesus’ response to this sort of posturing for social position was to place before his disciples a little child (e.g., Mark 9:33–37). Serve these most vulnerable persons, these of lowest status, with honor; the dominion of God belongs to such persons. Here is a far-reaching inversion of Roman ideology. On the other hand, in the context of a world carefully managed by a system of reciprocity and patronage, Jesus insisted that people give without expectation of return. The household of Rome was built on social norms in which the giving of gifts (whether goods and services or invitations to banquets) brought with it expectations of reciprocity. Here was a systemic segregation of those of relative status from the dispossessed, since the latter were incapable either of advancing the social status of the former or even of returning the favor of an invitation to hospitality. Jesus set forth for his audiences an alternative Father, and a household not

characterized by concerns with debt and obligation. Services were to be performed and gifts given to others as though they were family, “without expectation of return.” Such practices, if widespread, could only subvert the Roman world order. If Jesus were able to recruit adherents to this alternative, what then?

If Rome had reason to concern itself with the political risk posed by Jesus’ mission and message, this is not to say that it was from early on aware of such a threat, and the gospel records provide little by way of suggesting that such scenarios as these were recognized for their peril. Instead, Roman interests were piqued in a more direct way by the charges brought against Jesus by the Jerusalem leadership.

## 2.2. *Jesus’ Death and the Jerusalem Elite*

From Jewish perspectives, the possible infractions associated with Jesus are several. 11QTemple LXIV, 6–13 designates those who betray Israel to a foreign power as deserving of the penalty of “hanging on a tree” (Deut 21:22–23), and blasphemy was long regarded as an infraction punishable by death. Regarding the first point, we may recall that John reports Caiaphas’ decision regarding the execution of Jesus; if Jesus were allowed to continue his public ministry, Rome would destroy the temple and the nation (11:47–53). Regarding the latter, both Mark and Matthew have it that Jesus was found guilty of blasphemy (Matt 26:59–68; Mark 14:55–65). E. P. Sanders finds these accounts inaccurate, his strongest allegation being that of missed opportunity. Whereas speaking and acting against the temple might have led to a charge of blasphemy, this indictment comes, rather, after Jesus’ statement, “(From now on) you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with (on) the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26:64; Mark 14:62; cf. Luke 22:69). Such a claim, though, is “unblasphemous,” according to Sanders.<sup>34</sup> However, Darrell Bock has shown that blasphemy in Second Temple Judaism might involve either word or deed, and that special sensitivity attached to the temple. Jesus’ reference to the Son of Man seated at God’s right hand, then, could easily have been taken as a claim on Jesus’ part that he was able to

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<sup>34</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 297–298.

enter directly into God's presence and share in his rule—a blasphemous claim, indeed.<sup>35</sup>

Graham Stanton and August Strobel have made a strong case that Jesus had to be eliminated as a religious deceiver, or magician, and false prophet.<sup>36</sup> This is suggested by the evaluation of Jesus as a deceiver in Matt 27:63 and John 7:11, but even more so in the allegations brought against Jesus in Luke 23—namely, that he “perverts our nation/the people” (vv. 2, 14). The reference to “perverting” constitutes a formal allegation against Jesus as a false prophet, rooted in Deut 13 and 17; in fact, using the same verb (δυστρέφω), Luke recounts in Acts 13:6–8 that “a Jewish false prophet...tried to *turn* the proconsul *away* from the faith.” We have already noted the correlation of Jesus as miracle-worker with his “leading the people astray” in Josephus. To this can be added rabbinic traditions describing Jesus as a magician who deceived and led Israel astray (*b. Sanh.* 107b; cf. *b. Shabb.* 104b), and the more pointed reference in *b. Sanh.* 43a: “He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed and led Israel astray.” Along a similar vein, writing in the mid-second century CE, Justin Martyr observes that, although Jesus' miracles of healing should have elicited recognition of him as Messiah, some drew the opposite conclusion: “they said it was a display of magic art, for they even dared to say that he was a magician and a deceiver of the people” (*Dialogue* 69.7; cf. Deut 13:5). These diverse testimonies lead to the same conclusion: that Jesus was charged as a deceiver and false prophet. Theissen and Merz complain that such an allegation is missing from our earliest sources, which they apparently identify with the Markan material, and claim that the indictment against Jesus as a false prophet who leads the people astray originated from a later time when Jews and Christians had parted ways, when Jews could have seen Jesus as someone who

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<sup>35</sup> Darrell L. Bock, “The Son of Man Seated at God's Right Hand and the Debate over Jesus' ‘Blasphemy,’” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 181–191. See more fully, idem, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism: The Charge against Jesus in Mark 14:53–65*, WUNT 2.106 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Stanton, “Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet”; August Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit: Untersuchungen zum Strafverfahren gegen Jesus*, WUNT 21 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980). On the hostile characterization of Jesus as a magician, see Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).



had indeed led his followers to separate from the Torah.<sup>37</sup> But, even if we allow the debatable assumption that the explicit indictment in Luke 23:1–5 is late,<sup>38</sup> this is not quite true, since before the Jewish council Jesus was mocked as a false prophet and subjected to the sort of abuse that is the fate of the prophets (Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63–65).

The proximate basis for Jesus' arrest and trial, though, is more likely to be rooted in the combination of triumphal entry and prophetic action in the temple. Jesus' relationship to the temple is of particular interest, since the temple-charge—that Jesus claimed that he would destroy the temple and rebuild another, not made with human hands—appears in the trial before the sanhedrin as recounted by Matthew and Mark and is otherwise well-established in the tradition.<sup>39</sup> “Rebuilding the temple” is a task allocated to the messiah in one significant strand of eschatological expectation concerned with the restoration of Israel,<sup>40</sup> and this only underscores the political stakes of Jesus' action in the temple upon entering Jerusalem (Matt 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45–46; John 2:13–16). Taken on its own, the temple-act could have been overlooked, but when this act is comprehended within this eschatological framework and in tandem with the popular support evident in the triumphal entry and continuing throughout the time of Jesus' teaching in the Jerusalem temple, too much was at risk.<sup>41</sup>

As the gospel narratives have it, three stable elements characterize the period of Jesus' Jerusalem ministry: Jesus' interaction with various representatives of the Jerusalem elite, the omnipresence of “the people”

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<sup>37</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 463.

<sup>38</sup> I have argued that Luke 23:2, 4–5 derive from a narrative tradition other than Mark (Green, *Death of Jesus*, 77–79).

<sup>39</sup> Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58; cf. Mark 15:29; John 2:19; Acts 6:14; *Gos. Thom.* 71.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 7:5–16; Zech 6:12–13; *Tg. Neb.* Zech 6:12–13; *Tg. Neb.* Isa 53:5; 1 Enoch 90.28–29; 4 Ezra 10.27; 4QFlor I, 1–13; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 77–90; Green, *Death of Jesus*, 277–281.

<sup>41</sup> Paula Fredrickson wonders, then, how Jesus could have been charged with sedition and crucified without Rome's having also rounded up his followers for similar action (*From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988], e.g., 110–111). Three aspects of the passion tradition may be of interest here. The gospels have it that, upon Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his disciples are increasingly absent from his side and, indeed, are implicated in heightened obtuseness; instead, Jesus is surrounded by the nameless crowds; and, upon his arrest, Jesus' disciples abandon him. If Roman interest in Jesus is narrowly focused on events subsequent to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, then identifying Jesus as a leader of a seditious band, rather than a suspicious leader of the people more generally, may have fallen outside their ken.

who look favorably on Jesus' teaching, and the persistent setting of the whole in relation to the temple. Because of the religious, political, and economic centrality of the temple in Jewish ideology, this is crucial. This is the sacred space that embodies and propagates the order of the world, and provides the axial point around which socio-religious life is aligned. If in his prophetic action in the temple, Jesus anticipates the demise of the temple system, if in a series of encounters with those groups associated with the temple Jesus finds himself in conflict on key issues related to scriptural interpretation and faithful praxis, if he claims divine sanction and authority for himself and his message, and if Jesus forecasts calamity and destruction as the old world order is overtaken by the new, has he not thus subverted the authority of the Jewish elite who have been divinely entrusted with the mediation of God's ways, who speak for God, who collect tithes and maintain the temple treasury, who handle holy things? In other words, Jesus ran afoul of the Jerusalem elite because he proclaimed by word and deed a vision of God's rule that ran counter to that of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, and it cost him his life.

Note: This is not a conflict *between* Jesus and Judaism, but a conflict *within* Judaism. When high worship and high politics are inseparable, as they were in the world view emanating from the Jerusalem temple, then the pivotal question is: Who speaks for God? If Jesus' message questions at its core the legitimacy of the Jerusalem authority, then Jesus must be marginalized; he must be shamed publicly by Jerusalem leaders who disparage his authority base or ridicule his vision of God's purpose and the nature of Israel's redemption. Failing this, if he gains a following, if the leadership finds its own position faltering before the people, then he must be silenced, permanently.

It is here that Jewish and Roman narratives are most intertwined, since political exigencies required close collaboration between the Jerusalem leadership and the agents of the emperor in matters related to social agitation. We can illustrate by returning to Luke 23:1-5:

Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." ... "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place." (NRSV)

The repetition of the allegation, "This man/He perverts our nation/the people" in vv. 23:2, 14, and the variant, "He stirs up the people" (v. 5), suggest that the formal allegation brought against Jesus is actually one

charge—"leading astray"—which is then elaborated by two other claims: forbidding the payment of taxes to Caesar and claiming to be a Messiah, a king. From within the story of Israel, "leading astray" would characterize Jesus' ministry as treasonous against the way of the Lord, as the work of a false prophet; in Pilate's hearing, though, "leading the people astray" and "stirring up the people" would have signaled rebellion and civil unrest.

What happens next is an ingenious move on the part of the Jewish assembly, who proceed to give substance to their indictment by interpreting for Pilate two aspects of Jesus' earlier teaching. (1) The question of paying tribute to Caesar had been raised in Luke 20:20–26, and the sanhedrin represents Jesus as having taught non-payment of tribute as a general policy. Of course, failure to pay the annual tribute was tantamount to disavowal of Roman rule. But Jesus had in fact sidestepped any straightforward, Yes/No answer to the question. For him, imperial demands are relativized by the prior claims of the kingdom of God so that, when these claims come into conflict, one must choose the dominion one will serve. In assuming the non-negotiable legitimacy of Caesar's claim, the Jewish council, which historically was a partner with the Empire in collecting the tribute, failed to acknowledge the priority of God's dominion. (2) Although the Jewish leadership is unwilling to grant Jesus the status of Messiah, they represent Jesus as apparently having admitted that he is the Lord's Anointed One (Luke 22:66–70), and so find here a clever means for allowing Jesus to incriminate himself. Since "Messiah" is terminology more at home in a Jewish context, they translate for Pilate, using the language of "kingship." But a claim to be a king in opposition to Caesar is seditious (cf. Acts 17:7).

We do not need to argue for the historicity of each detail of Luke's presentation to grasp two basic points. First, the crimes with which Jesus is charged cannot be relegated to religious categories, pure and simple. Religion and society and politics are all of a piece. Second, Roman and Jewish eyes and ears could see and hear quite different things in Jesus' deeds and words, and, in the end, these two streams of interpretation arrive at the confluence of one outcome: Jesus' capital sentencing. As Peter Stuhlmacher summarizes: "Jesus had to die because he made too many enemies who opposed his messianic ministry."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, *Jesus of Nazareth—Christ of Faith* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 55.

### 2.3. *Jesus and His Death*

If Jesus' crucifixion is explicable within the plot-lines of an imperial- or Jerusalem-oriented narrative, can the same be said of the story of Jesus' own life and mission? The possibility that Jesus contemplated his own violent death opens the door to reflection on what meaning he might have allotted it, and this possibility is supported by a virtual phalanx of considerations:

- From early on in his public life, Jesus met with opposition and his ministry was enveloped in conflict; to what end might this hostility lead?
- Jesus' relative and predecessor, John, lost his life at the hands of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Peraea; would this not have served as a warning to Jesus?
- The tradition runs deep and wide that Jesus was regarded and regarded himself in prophetic terms (e.g., Matt 11:9; 14:5; 21:11, 46; Mark 6:4; Luke 7:16; Luke 13:33; 22:64; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17), but the fate of all the prophets is rejection and death (e.g., Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30; *Jub.* 1.12).
- Jesus repeatedly predicts the suffering of his followers (e.g., Mark 8:34–38; 10:38–39; 14:27–28; Matt 10:25; Luke 21:12–16); would their suffering not presume his own?
- In addition to the explicit predictions of Jesus' suffering and death (e.g., Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34), the gospels witness numerous indirect sayings, and in a variety of forms (parables, pronouncement stories, narrative episodes, aphorisms, etc.), through which Jesus anticipates a violent end.<sup>43</sup>

We may take as axiomatic, then, that Jesus anticipated his death; in the charged environment of Roman Palestine how could he not have done so? To admit this is to open the door to its corollary—namely, the probability that he reflected on its significance and did so in a way that intimately related it to his mission to redeem the people of God. By

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<sup>43</sup> E.g., Mark 2:20; 9:12–13; 10:38, 45; 12:1–12. See Sydney T. Page, "The Authenticity of the Ransom Logion (Mark 10:45b)," in *Gospel Perspectives*, 1: *Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980) 137–161, at 144; Green, *Death of Jesus*, 148–154; Scot McKnight, "Jesus and His Death: Some Recent Scholarship," *CurBS* 9 (2001): 185–228, at 201–203. On the tradition history of the passion and resurrection predictions, see Hans F. Bayer, *Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection*, WUNT 2.20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

this I mean that Jesus was no masochist looking for an opportunity to suffer and die, but saw that his absolute commitment to the purpose of God might lead, in the context of “this adulterous and wicked generation” (Mark 8:38), to his death. This, he discerns and embraces in prayer on the night of his arrest, was the cup given him by God (Mark 14:32–42; Luke 22:39–46).

His mission as this is known to us in the gospels is directed toward revitalizing Israel as the people of God. Pursuing this aim compelled him to proclaim the intervention of God’s rule and to embody the ethics of this kingdom, and this brought him into conflict with the conveyers of Roman and Jewish ideologies and practices. From this perspective, we may regard nothing of significance in Jesus’ practices as irrelevant to his execution; everything—his interpretation of Israel’s Scriptures, his practices of prayer and worship, his astounding choice of table companions, his crossing of the boundaries of clean and unclean, his engagement with children, his miracles of healing and exorcism—leads to the cross. Calling twelve disciples as representative of restored Israel, weaving the hopes of New Exodus and the eschatological era into his ministries of word and deed, speaking of the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel, his prophetic action at the temple in anticipation of a temple not made by human hands—in all of these ways and more, Jesus countered the present world order and maintained that God was at work in his person and mission. This led him to a form of execution emblematic of a way of life that rejected the value of public opinion in the determination of status before God, and inspired interpretations of his death that accorded privilege to the redemptive power of righteous suffering. The way was opened for Jesus’ followers to accord positive value to his shameful death, and thus to learn to associate in meaningful ways what would otherwise have been only a clash of contradictory images: Jesus’ heinous suffering and his messianic status.

This also means that Jesus was able to gather together Israel’s history and hopes and from them forge a view of himself as the one through whose suffering Israel, and through Israel the nations, would experience redemption. That is, in elucidating the significance of his looming death, Jesus pushed backward into Israel’s history and embraced Israel’s expectations for deliverance. At the table on his last night with his followers, at a meal pregnant with the imagery of Passover and exodus, he intimated that the new exodus, God’s decisive act of deliverance, was coming to fruition in his death, the climax of his mission.

Moreover, he developed the meaning of his death in language and images grounded in the constitution of Israel as the covenant people of God (Exod 24:8), the conclusion of the exile (see Zech 9:9–11), and the hope of a new covenant (Jer 31:31–33), so as to mark his death as the inaugural event of covenant renewal. How could Jesus contemplate such thoughts? Taken together with his prophetic action in the temple, the symbolic actions at the table of Jesus' last meal with his disciples signify the disestablishment of the old ordering of Israel's life and, by means of God's great act of deliverance in his sacrificial death, the establishment of a new basis of Israel's life before God.<sup>44</sup>

Where might Jesus have gone for resources to construct such a view? Attempts to find in Israel's history a "suffering messiah" figure have proven fruitless, but this does not preclude the possibility that Jesus could have pioneered this combination of images. Given what we know of Jesus, the issue is not whether we can allow for innovation on his part. We must ask instead whether the raw materials for innovation were at hand, and this is easy to answer in the affirmative.

- The tradition of the suffering of God's messengers, the prophets: The presumed destiny of divine prophets was consistently that of rejection and death, and it is not coincidental that Jesus both identified himself in prophetic terms and presaged his solidarity with the prophets in their having been spurned and killed (see above). Importantly, within the prophetic tradition, rejection by those to whom the prophet was sent did not invalidate the prophet or the message.
- The tradition of the suffering righteous: Again, it is not coincidental that the synoptic gospels portray the death of Jesus in terms that reflect the influence of the pattern of the suffering righteous one. The materials drawn from the Psalms of the suffering righteous are

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<sup>44</sup> I mean thus to underscore the significance of the Last Supper as a point of entry into Jesus' self-understanding of his death even if its importance has been variously assessed—e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966); Rudolf Pesch, *Das Abendmahl und Jesu Todesverständnis*, QD 80 (Freiburg: Herder, 1978); I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980); and Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

everywhere to be found on the terrain of the gospel passion narratives. For example:<sup>45</sup>

Gospels		Psalms
Matt 26:3–4	gathered together and took counsel to kill	31:14 LXX
Mark 14:1//Matt 26:4	to kill by cunning	10:7–8
Mark 14:8//John 13:18	the one eating with me	41:9 LXX
Mark 14:61; 15:5; Luke 23:9	silence before accusers	38:13–14
Matt 27:34	offered gall	69:21 LXX
Mark 15:24	division of garments	22:18 LXX
Mark 15:29	mockery, head wagging	22:7 LXX
Matt 27:43	“He trusts in God. Let God deliver him!”	22:8
Mark 15:34	cry of abandonment	22:1 LXX

- Suffering and the new age: Significant strands of Second Temple Jewish literature hold the promise that the restoration of Israel as a people was related fundamentally to Israel’s reconciliation to God and that Israel’s deliverance would come by means of great suffering (already in Israel’s Scriptures—e.g., Isa 25:17–18; 66:7–8; Dan 7; 12:1–2; cf. *Testament of Moses* 5–10; *Jub.* 23.22–31; 1 QH III).<sup>46</sup>
- Redemptive suffering: Finally, the notion that the suffering of one person might have redemptive benefit for the people has good precedent. One thinks immediately of the interpretive development of the Servant-figure of Isa 52:13–53:12 in the centuries after the exile.<sup>47</sup> Such a view extends traditional sacrificial terminology concerned with the pouring out of life, grounded in the divine economy whereby the substitution of animal life for human life had efficacy in the restoration of right relations with God (cf. Lev 4–5). Broken relations between God and humanity are addressed through both mediation and substitution, and, as the echoes of both Lev 4

<sup>45</sup> See more fully, Joel Marcus, “The Old Testament and the Death of Jesus: The Role of Scripture in the Gospel Passion Narratives,” in *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity*, ed. John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 204–233, esp. 206–209.

<sup>46</sup> See the survey in Dale C. Allison Jr., *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 5–25.

<sup>47</sup> For the fecundity of the Isaianic tradition, see George W. E. Nickelsburg Jr., *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, HTS 26 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

(“guilt offering”) and Lev 16 (“scapegoat”) in Isa 53:10, 12 portend, the servant of Yahweh fulfills these roles. The innovative appropriation of the sacrificial system to a human being as a sin-offering is then developed further in texts related to the Maccabean martyrs (2 Macc 7:32–33, 37–38; 4 Macc 6:28–29; 17:22). Interpretations of this nature were available to Jesus and within Jesus’ world irrespective of whether one goes on to conclude that Jesus made explicit use of Isaiah 53 in utterances concerning his impending death.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this line of evidence. First, it is foolish to seek the one or even primary background text in Israel’s Scriptures that might have informed early interpretation of Jesus’ death, whether by Jesus himself or his followers. A redemptive interpretation of Jesus’ death does not depend on one image, one scriptural text, or one particular cord of Jewish tradition. In fact, if anything, the line of influence should be reversed: The death of Jesus becomes a hermeneutical starting-point for reading the whole of the Scriptures. This, at least, is suggested by such texts as we find in Luke (“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures” [24:26–27]) and Paul (“Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures” [1 Cor 15:3]). Second, to speak of Jesus’ death as “redemptive” is primarily to make an eschatological statement and only then to make a claim about its atoning significance. This assertion does not so much downplay the atonement as locate it more fully within the larger mural of God’s work in the advent of Jesus. Third, the seeds are so many and the ground of interpretation so fertile that it is both virtually impossible to segregate Jesus’ understanding of his death from the view of his followers and ill-advised to speculate how far down the interpretive path Jesus himself had gone. We may perceive creativity and innovation on Jesus’ part in drawing together material stamped with the divine purpose and with suffering and repulsive death, while leaving room for those interpretations to flower and for others to spring up among Jesus’ followers.

### 3. *Conclusion*

Jesus’ death, however secure from the standpoint of strict historicity, was capable of myriad interpretations. This is not because the basic



“facts” elude us but because there were so many different ways to construe those facts—or, we might say, different *locations* from which to make sense of them. The temple elite and the agents of Rome, for example, both stood over against Jesus, but, pursuing different interests, they saw in his execution the resolution to different problems. Jesus had his own view of things, too, of course, and it will not do to cast him as the victim in this great drama. Marcus Borg is right to recognize Jesus as “one who provocatively challenged the ethos of his day. He was killed because he sought, in the name and power of the Spirit, the transformation of his own culture. He issued a call for a relationship with God that would lead to a new ethos and thus a new politics.”<sup>48</sup> Jesus’ execution on a Roman cross served Jesus’ own mission.

The Jewish elite must have regarded Jesus’ ignominious demise as proof that he was no spokesperson for God—just as the two disciples on the path to Emmaus about whom Luke writes found in Jesus’ crucifixion a confusing puzzle and apparent denial of their hopes that he would redeem Israel (24:19–21). Jesus’ followers would find in Jesus’ resurrection proof of a different sort, a validation of the message and ministry of Jesus, and then of the nature and significance of his death.

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<sup>48</sup> Marcus Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 183–184.

# THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

PHEME PERKINS

## 1. *Resurrection as Kerygma*

The earliest evidence for that claim that God raised Jesus from the dead occurs in the Pauline epistles. Such formulaic expressions as 1 Thess 1:9–10, “...how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to await his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who saves us from the wrath to come,” or Rom 1:3–4, “concerning his Son who was from the seed of David according to the flesh, designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of Holiness from the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,” serve as linguistic codes for the gospel. These phrases reflect common Christian speech patterns, not peculiarly Pauline theologoumena.<sup>1</sup> Thess 1:10 reflects a common pattern in Jewish texts. Resurrection belongs to the scenario of divine judgment. Dan 12:1–3 indicates that some circles of “the pious” held such views in the second century BCE.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, AB 32B (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 120–122. Malherbe points out that the summary reflects the faith his audience now holds, not necessarily a news capsule of Paul’s preaching. Paul employs this form to focus attention on God as subject of a chronological series of actions (132). For a detailed analysis of tradition and redaction in Rom 1:3–4, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*Romans*, AB 33 [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 229–230, 233–237). Fitzmyer points out that the expression *by a spirit of holiness* reflects a phrase common in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa 63:10–11; Ps 51:13) and in Qumran texts (e.g., 1 QS IV, 21; VIII, 16) that is differently translated in the LXX and in Paul’s speech patterns. Therefore, the formula probably originated among Aramaic speaking Palestinian believers (236).

<sup>2</sup> John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 390–398; Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death. A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 262–265; N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 109–138; Émile Puech, *La Croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, Résurrection, Vie éternelle? Histoire d’une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien. I. La résurrection des morts et le contexte scripturaire. II. Les données Qumraniennes et classiques*, Études bibliques Nouvelle série N° 21 (Paris: J. Gabalda et C<sup>ie</sup> [Librarie LeCoffre]: 1993), 82–85. Puech rejects the view that belief in bodily resurrection emerged as a response to persecution and martyrdom during the Maccabean period, since he assigns the earliest Enoch traditions which include resurrection of the righteous to the third century BCE (316–317).

Paul himself prefers bi-partite expressions referring to death on the cross and resurrection since his kerygma highlights the triumph of God's wisdom and power over the absurdity of the cross (1 Cor 1:18–25; 2:2).<sup>3</sup> He can describe justification as faith in the God “who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was handed over for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:24–25).<sup>4</sup> Such expressions provide important evidence for the historian as well as the theologian. They indicate that the events at the end of Jesus' life, death on the cross, resurrection and exaltation in anticipation of a role in divine judgment, were central to the earliest kerygma. Jesus' teaching, whether remembered under the rubric of philosopher-sage or considered the activity of apocalyptic prophet and reformer, did not carry the day of itself.<sup>5</sup> Paul's own visionary encounter with the risen Son of God was sufficient to transform a violent persecutor into an apostle (Gal 1:13–16).<sup>6</sup> Jesus' earliest followers in Palestine claimed that one of their own contemporaries was alive with God, not in the intermediate state of the other righteous dead. Since he had died on a cross, Jesus could not be said to have been taken up bodily as another Enoch, Elijah or

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<sup>3</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 230.

<sup>4</sup> Fitzmyer points out that while the Greek Fathers saw the resurrection of Jesus as the cause of humanity's justification, the Latin tradition came to focus solely on the atoning death of Christ. Consequently, the resurrection becomes merely a confirmation of what has been claimed about the death. However, Fitzmyer finds exceptions to this reductionist trend in Augustine (*Sermones* 236.1; PL 38.1120) and Aquinas (*In ep. Ad Romanos* 4.3; *S.T.* III 56.2 ad 4; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 389–390).

<sup>5</sup> To understand the crucifixion of Jesus, one cannot easily make sense of a “wrong place, wrong time” death due to misguided Roman violence. Jesus' own ministry engaged existing expectations for God's coming intervention in human affairs to rescue the faithful ones from domination by evil powers. Jesus probably did self-identify as God's chosen one, tasked with initiating such a transformation. See the discussion of the contrary theories that produce a Christology free, non-apocalyptic sage in Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord, Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 53–64, 213–257. Hurtado points out the fallacy in scholarly reconstructions which claim to get back to earlier Christian beliefs of the 30's and 40's by dismissing Pauline evidence. They are predicated on an unexamined assumption that Paul got it wrong or infected Christianity with a mythical depiction of Christ antithetical to the life and teaching of Jesus himself (81–93).

<sup>6</sup> Hurtado (*Lord*, 83, 96) points out that these basic Christological views probably reflect the positions Paul had opposed as a persecutor. J. Louis Martyn (*Galatians* AB 33A [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 162) sees in Gal 3:13 the kind of argument Paul once employed against the emerging Christian movement, “venerating as though he were God's Messiah a man who had been crucified as a criminal, and who therefore stood under the curse of God's Law.”

Moses. The historian rightly asks after the basis for such an extraordinary affirmation.<sup>7</sup>

Birger Gerhardsson points to the most developed formula in Paul, 1 Cor 15:3b–8a, as evidence for Christ's resurrection.<sup>8</sup> Both the degradation of Jesus' death on a cross and the condemnation of his teaching by religious authorities should have been sufficient to squelch any messianic expectations attached to his person.<sup>9</sup> Jesus' followers would have required strong arguments to support their case. The Passion Narratives depict Jesus' trial and death in such a way as to elicit the verdict of "not guilty".<sup>10</sup> The evangelists employ four lines of argument in support of their affirmation that the Jesus who was crucified is God's messiah raised from the dead: (1) witnesses who saw and spoke with him; (2) the disappearance of his body from the tomb;<sup>11</sup> (3) recasting the narrative of these events so that they were clearly anticipated in the Scriptures;<sup>12</sup> (4) references to Jesus' own predictions that he would be executed and then raised from the dead. Only the tomb story fails to appear in the 1 Cor 15:3–8 traditions. Was it unknown in the earliest period? The "was buried" phrase assumes formal internment rather than a body left to rot in public view or tossed into a mass grave by

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<sup>7</sup> Segal points out that a simple understanding of Jesus' death as martyrdom would not distinguish him from John, the Baptist, whose own return may have been expected. He posits some form of religious experience of Jesus understood fulfillment of such prophecies as Dan 7:9–14 and 12:3 to be the best historical construction of these events (*Lord*, 387–396).

<sup>8</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, "Evidence for Christ's Resurrection According to Paul: 1 Cor 15:1–11," in *Neotestamentica et Philonica. Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 73–91.

<sup>9</sup> Without the religious condemnation, Jesus' death might be perceived as that of a righteous martyr (Gerhardsson, "Evidence," 74).

<sup>10</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave* (New York: Doubleday, 1993). The kerygmatic and theological orientation of the passion narratives does not mean that they are without value as historical evidence for what happened to Jesus of Nazareth (14–24).

<sup>11</sup> In principle this fact could have been checked by anyone, though the appeal to women as primary witnesses weakens the value of such reports for an ancient audience (Gerhardsson, "Evidence," 77).

<sup>12</sup> Coherence with ancient prophecies or Scripture was a powerful line of reasoning in antiquity where such arguments were sought to explain events or confirm the emergence of a new political regime. Contemporary readers generally undervalue the weight of such an appeal (Gerhardsson, "Evidence," 77). For a detailed discussion of the Old Testament background to the Passion Narratives see Brown (*Death*, 1445–1467).

the execution squad.<sup>13</sup> It also underlines the fact that Jesus had really died.<sup>14</sup>

The formula lists items in chronological sequence. The evidence underlying “death for our sins” and “resurrection on the third day” as according to the Scriptures never appears. The focus rests upon the witness list. In addition to Paul himself, others could also attest to having seen the Lord.<sup>15</sup> Paul considers his own vision to be of the same type as these earlier witnesses (1 Cor 15:9–10). What sort of seeing is involved? Gerhardsson concurs with the view that Jesus appeared from heaven.<sup>16</sup> Such an affirmation leaves the twenty-first-century reader in a bind. The bodily translation from and to heaven which could be attributed to divine power in the first-century hardly fits the cosmos described by modern astrophysics and biology. We may agree that a first-century respondent would have said that the risen Jesus was a bodily entity, not a disembodied, immortal soul or the sort of visionary entity encountered in dreams or in waking visions as a ghost. We may also agree that an informant would say that remains of Jesus’ corpse could not be present in a grave or dispersed as unburied body parts.

Paul does not provide reasons for skepticism concerning resurrection of the dead at Corinth (1 Cor 15:12, 19), though the subsequent argument focuses on the resurrection of the faithful at the last judg-

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<sup>13</sup> J. Dominic Crossan (*Who Killed Jesus?* [New York: HarperCollins, 1995], 160–188) insists that the burial of Jesus is apologetic fiction on the part of Jesus’ disciples to erase the disgrace of Jesus as unburied or desecrated corpse.

<sup>14</sup> Gerhardsson, “Evidence,” 82. Since crucifixion victims might remain alive for an extended period, Mark takes care to have the death confirmed prior to Pilate’s releasing the body for burial (Mark 15:44–45; Brown, *Death*, 1220–1222) while John has the soldiers see to it that all three are dead prior to Joseph’s request for the body of Jesus (John 19:31–33; Brown, *Death*, 1173–1177). John’s version assumes that there had been a general request not to have corpses defile the up-coming holy days, so all three had to have died and been buried prior to sundown.

<sup>15</sup> Neither James nor Paul was a disciple when they saw the Lord though both had been engaged with Jesus or his followers. Gerhardsson assumes that Paul is inviting those who are skeptical about resurrection to consult living witnesses (“Evidence,” 88). As a rhetorical ploy such a confirmation might be asserted. However Greek-speaking believers in Corinth can hardly query Aramaic-speaking witnesses from Palestine over two decades after the events in question. Therefore, the only accessible witness remains Paul himself.

<sup>16</sup> Gerhardsson, “Evidence,” 84–87. The heavenly mode of appearance remains characteristic of the gospel resurrection narratives. Jesus does not remain fixed in the human spatio-temporal world but appears and disappears at will, even despite such obstacles as locked doors (John 20:19).

ment, not that of Jesus. Presumably, they had received the kerygma without inferring that believers are to be transformed into the image of the risen Christ. Since the end-time resurrection and transformation of the righteous is more securely rooted in Jewish apocalyptic texts than an anticipatory resurrection and exaltation of a crucified human being, the cognitive disconnect suggests that “resurrection of Jesus” did not always carry with it the same connotations even in the first century CE.

## 2. *Hermeneutics and History*

The explosion of historical-criticism over the past century has been fueled both by expanding resources for “data” in the form of texts and artifacts and by a methodological focus on reconstructing a plausible first-century communication context. Both message and reception have to cohere with other speech-acts from the period. Exegetes acknowledge the inherent difficulties in inferring what is intended and conveyed from the written text. Nevertheless, as Raymond Brown points out in his treatment of the Passion Narratives, “comprehensibility by the ancient audience should play a role in our interpretive judgments.”<sup>17</sup> Brown acknowledges that such judgments require considerable argument, presentation and analysis of comparable material, and, in the end, “best estimate” judgments on the part of individual scholars.

Most twenty-first-century audiences have different expectations. The media outlets which produce “history” film, TV and glossy books allege that it is possible to transport the viewer back to the events themselves. All the gaps, the analogous interpretations, and the gaping holes in information disappear.<sup>18</sup> John Gaddis has challenged the “time machine” view of historical understanding from the perspective of both the historian and the original participants. Even a historian who investigates events within his or her own life-time can never provide a complete representation of what occurred or the motivations of the

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<sup>17</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 8–9.

<sup>18</sup> See Peter Richardson’s informative account of what it took to recreate Galilean village life for a television special. In the process, historians and archaeologists discovered new unanswered questions in their own imaginative constructs (*Building Jewish in the Roman East* [Waco: Baylor University, 2004], 39–53).

various actors. From the other side, those persons directly involved in the events are engaged in the minutiae of immediate experience. They may have less comprehension of what their actions will mean in a large-scale framework than the historian of a later time.<sup>19</sup>

History, Gaddis argues, operates within much the same logical framework as geology or paleontology. Certain remains from the past are there to be analyzed. If they can be discerned as part of a pattern that suggests a connection, then one must come up with an account of how they got that way. The “how” will require assumptions about processes which have been observed operating in other, analogous situations.<sup>20</sup> Just as there can be no single correct map of a region, so there may be diverse accounts of the same events. A map has to fit reality within the context of the use for which it is intended. It cannot replicate all the details of topography without losing its value.<sup>21</sup> At the same time the map must contain all relevant relationships. Elements omitted because users are presumed familiar with them will baffle the neophyte, as any driver faced with a rotary or round-about for the first time can attest.

Gaddis points out that instead of map-making historians produce narratives that are no less dependent upon one’s ability to fit details into patterns that involve varying degrees of abstraction.<sup>22</sup> The modern perception of geologic time and cosmology have unseated the traditional view that God has established an underlying order which determines the affairs of nations. For better or worse, human beings living through history bear full responsibility for what happens.<sup>23</sup> Within the past century, historians have come to discern micro-level processes behind the macro-events of a grand historical narrative.<sup>24</sup>

Consider the following. There is considerable evidence in Roman sources that would tell against the assertion “he was buried” especially for persons considered opponents of the Roman order. Emperors pro-

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<sup>19</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History. How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 3–4.

<sup>20</sup> Gaddis, *Landscape*, 40–49. Gaddis distinguishes between those sciences which confirm by replicating results in a laboratory and those which have “virtual replicability”. Only imagination and thought experiment can test a given scenario (43).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 33–34.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 15–19. He also points out the value of imaginative simultaneity in the process. Historical imagination transcends the constraints of being in only one time and place (24).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 6–7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

hibited burial for rebel soldiers (Suetonius, *Augustus* 13.1–2) or persons condemned of treason (Tiberius according to Tacitus, *Annals* 6.29). Soldiers were to keep family members from removing bodies of the crucified for burial (Petronius, *Satyricon* 111–12). The crucified were to be eaten by birds (Horace, *Epistles* 1.16.48). Yet Jewish sensibilities differed. They might agree that a criminal is not to be accorded honorable burial but confined to a common grave set aside for that purpose (*m. Sanhedrin* 6:5). Josephus insists that even those who had been crucified would be buried before sunset (*War* 4.317; *Antiquities* 5.44).<sup>25</sup> In addition to such literary evidence, one must consider the secondary burial of a crucified man found in a first century cemetery at Giv'at ha-Mivtar. Since Yehahanan's ossuary was placed next to that of Simon, builder of the temple, one must presume that his family was able to secure an honorable burial in this case.<sup>26</sup> Mark 6:29 assumes that John the Baptist's disciples retrieved his body for burial in a tomb.<sup>27</sup>

An historian who begins with the premise that a Roman prefect would not show consideration for the likes of Jesus or the two bandits crucified with him but would seek to make them an object lesson for the large crowds must judge the burial traditions fabricated. She or he must explain why and how the stories came into circulation. Another historian might even agree that the burial stories found in the gospels have been embellished in the retelling so that Jesus' burial appears that of an honored figure, not a criminal.<sup>28</sup> However, the antiquity of the kerygmatic affirmation, "he was buried", coupled with the possibility that Jewish religious sensibilities required a different practice, suggest

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<sup>25</sup> Brown, *Death*, 1207–1211.

<sup>26</sup> Brown, *Death*, 1210. The much publicized ossuary inscribed as belonging to "James, the brother of Jesus" (see Richardson, *Building*, 309–324) would be further evidence for proper burial of a person executed for blasphemy by Jewish authorities (Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.199). However, the Israel Antiquity Authority considers its inscription to be a modern forgery.

<sup>27</sup> In drawing up a collection of parallels between the Baptist's execution and that of Jesus in Mark's Gospel, Joel Marcus (*Mark 1–8*, AB 27 [New York: Doubleday, 1999], 404) remarks, "Each...is ignominiously executed and buried (6:27–29; cf. 15:16–47)." He fails to note the difference between an "honorable" burial by disciples and Jesus' burial by a pious stranger. The other evangelists convert Joseph of Arimathea into an admirer or secret disciple of Jesus.

<sup>28</sup> John's Gospel introduces an additional Jewish teacher, Nicodemus, with enough spices for a royal embalming (John 19:39) and even endows Jesus with a new "garden tomb" removing any possible suspicion that Jesus might have been put in a place reserved for criminals.



an alternative. John 19:31 provides a motivation for the removal of all three bodies, viz. concern for the ritual purity of the city and its pilgrims during the up-coming feast. Religious authorities had secured an agreement with Pilate concerning all three.<sup>29</sup>

So far burial appears just as credible as exposure and non-burial. It also requires fewer explanatory hypotheses to fill out the “how that happened” with the type of account one finds in the gospel traditions. Of course, as Brown rightly observes, another set of historical judgments belong to the mix, those concerning Pilate’s character, attitude toward Jews in general, and his relationship to Jewish religious leaders in particular. Brown has argued that Pilate’s reputation as cruel, malicious and out to bait the Jewish populace is over-played.<sup>30</sup> Pilate would have had no difficulty complying with a request to honor Jewish religious sensibilities in this instance.

Given the possibility of constructing an historically plausible account for Jesus’ burial even though he died on a cross, the only reason to challenge the tradition on that point lies in its association with the resurrection. The gospel narratives hardly provide eye-witness or contemporary evidence. Matthew, Luke and John were composed at least a half-century after the events narrated. Mark, a decade earlier, knows that the Jerusalem in which his story is set has been ravaged by war.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Brown (*Death*, 1230) suggests that at a pre-gospel stage of the tradition Joseph represented the Jewish authorities in making the request that the bodies be disposed of prior to the Sabbath.

<sup>30</sup> Brown (*Death*, 693–705). Brown suggests that Pilate’s actions against a crowd of Samaritans headed for Mt. Gerizim where a prophet was promising to uncover Moses’ hidden vessels (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.85–89), which resulted in Pilate’s removal from office, was instigated by Caiaphas, who lost the high priesthood at the same time (703–704).

<sup>31</sup> Mark 13:1–2, a dominical logion predicting the Temple’s destruction either had been or shortly would be dramatically fulfilled. For examples of similar predictions from Jewish sources see Craig A. Evans (*Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001], 296–297). Because Mark 13:2 employs biblical language to announce the destruction of the Temple (e.g., 2 Sam 17:13 LXX; Mic 3:12) and does not refer to Titus’ torching the city (Josephus, *War* 6.249–253), Evans concludes that this oracle was not an *ex eventu* prophecy composed by the evangelist just after the fall of the city but an authentic prophecy of Jesus (*Mark*, 298–299). Mark 13:3–13 depict the chaos of religious and social order in the aftermath of the Temple’s destruction (so Evans, *Mark*, 303–304). Those exegetes who tie Mark to the Christian community in Rome see in Mark 13:9–13 an allusion to the persecution under Nero (R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium II*, HTKNT 2 [1996], 288). Whether Mark was writing in Rome or in Syro-Palestine makes no difference to his audience’s awareness of the destruction of Jerusalem. The imperial triumph and subsequent celebration of the conquest on civic monuments in Rome would have kept these events in the public eye at Rome.

Brown concludes that the other gospels are dependent upon the same tradition which underlies Mark's burial account.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Mark 16:1–8 represents a single narrative tradition underlying the various accounts of how some of Jesus' women followers discovered the body missing on the morning after the Sabbath.<sup>33</sup> An audience aware of the destruction in Jerusalem would know that such a tomb could no longer be found or visited.

Historical analysis suggests that the actual tomb employed by Joseph was neither new nor his own but a common tomb area either devoted to criminals or foreigners who died without resources for burial in Jerusalem.<sup>34</sup> The evangelists emphasize the distinctiveness of Jesus' tomb in order to assure listeners that the women were able to distinguish it from others.<sup>35</sup> Luke 24:12 reports that Peter checked the women's report about the condition of the tomb and was left puzzled.<sup>36</sup> John's gospel has developed this notice into an elaborate scene involving Peter and the Beloved Disciple (John 20:3–10). It too ends inconclusively despite the evangelist's need to affirm belief in the case of the Beloved Disciple in verse 8.

Those who prefer to see the tomb stories as narrative reflections on figures from ancient mythology or hero legends<sup>37</sup> in which the body

<sup>32</sup> Brown, *Death*, 1211.

<sup>33</sup> David Aune proposes an inversion of the tradition concerning Jesus' burial and resurrection in the symbolic story of the two unburied witnesses of Rev 11:8–11 (see David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998], 617–622). Despite lying unburied in public view, the defiled corpses of the two martyrs are raised up after three days when God gives them the spirit of life. This scene provides an imaginative recreation of the moment of resurrection similar to Ezek 37:10 (the phrase "spirit of life" occurs in Ezek 37:5 LXX; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 623). A stunned crowd witnesses this resurrection, quite unlike the gospel narratives.

<sup>34</sup> Segal, *Life*, 445; Evans, *Mark*, 520. Tobit's piety consists in retrieving and burying bodies of fellow exiles that have been tossed out by their Assyrian captors (Tob 1:17–18).

<sup>35</sup> Brown, *Death*, 1206.

<sup>36</sup> Some manuscripts omit verse 12 so that the section concludes with the statement that the apostles did not believe what the women had told them (v. 11). Since the better manuscripts include verse 12, Fitzmyer agrees that it should be retained (*Luke X–XIV*, 1547). He understands the final phrase, "wondering about what had happened," as Luke's addition to traditional material (1548).

<sup>37</sup> For a detailed discussion of such traditions as the narrative background to Luke's retelling of the traditional resurrection stories in Luke 24, see Sjef van Tilborg and Patrick Chatelion Counet (*Jesus' Appearances and Disappearances in Luke 24*, Biblical Interpretation Series 45 [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 193–234). They suggest that a reader acculturated to such traditions would understand Luke-Acts to be the explanation of how a new hero cult focused on Jesus of Nazareth had come to be. Both his divine

goes missing because it has been assumed into heaven,<sup>38</sup> must account for the narrative restraint of the gospel narratives.<sup>39</sup> Acknowledgment of the obvious explanation for a missing body, theft, in both John (20:2.15b) and Matthew (27:11–15) indicates an awareness that resurrection was not the most credible explanation for a missing corpse. Without revelatory events, whether visions of angelic messengers or encounters with Jesus himself, even Jesus' own disciples would not have made the connection.<sup>40</sup> Matthew remarks that in his day Jews believe a counter-story that Jesus' own disciples had stolen the body (28:13–15). His elaborate narrative of a tomb guarded by soldiers addresses such suspicions. However, as Brown points out, there is little evidence for an historical core in the account.<sup>41</sup> The Jewish counter-story was directed at an established part of the Christian kerygma, that the disappearance of his body confirms Jesus' resurrection. As Davies and Allison point out, opponents of Christianity could agree that Jesus was alive in the intermediate state typical of all the dead.<sup>42</sup> They might even consider it plausible that he communicated with his followers. Whether Jesus belonged among the righteous or the wicked at the final judgment might be up for debate. What would not be plausible from a non-Christian, Jewish perspective is the resurrection claim itself.<sup>43</sup> Adding such apocalyptic details to his narrative as the earth-

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birth and resurrection as ascent to the heavens where he received divine status would be critical to such a legend (243–248). They point out that the apologetic value of such a depiction could cut both ways. Celsus used the similarities to insist that Christians should believe the stories of the pagan gods (205–207; *C. Celsum* 3.22–33).

<sup>38</sup> The most ubiquitous stories in the Greek-speaking world involved heroes who mounted to heaven and are resident there as astral constellations such as Hercules, Orion, Castor and Pollux, and Perseus (Segal, *Life*, 218–219). Bruce Malina and John Pilch (*A Social-Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2000]) interpret all the heavenly symbolism of Rev against this astronomical background.

<sup>39</sup> As should be evident, those scholars who attempt to insert the second-century *Gos. Peter* traditions into a discussion of the first century are forced to argue against the developmental tendencies in the narratives. See Brown's analysis of the *Gos. Peter* material concerning the passion (*Death*, 1189–1191, 1232–1234, 1317–1349).

<sup>40</sup> So Wright, *Resurrection*, 628–629, 686–688; for a detailed treatment of Matthew's story about the guard posted at the tomb (Matt 28:2–4, 11–15) and the parallel in *Gos. Peter* (9:35–11:49) see Brown (*Death*, 1294–1313).

<sup>41</sup> Brown, *Death*, 1304, 1309–1313.

<sup>42</sup> E.g. 1 *Enoch* 22.9–10; 46:6; 4 *Ezra* 7.77–96; See Michael Stone (*Fourth Ezra* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 238–240).

<sup>43</sup> W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew. III: Matthew XIX–XXVIII* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 670–673. They agree with Brown that the guard story is not to be considered historical.

quake, the angel of the Lord coming down from heaven (Matt 28:2) and the emergence of other “righteous dead” from their tombs (Matt 27:52–53) allows Matthew to confirm the established conviction that resurrection is closely correlated with God’s coming in judgment.<sup>44</sup>

### 3. *History, Hermeneutics and Visions*

Once again the question of Jesus’ resurrection comes back to the witness list. Jesus appears to followers as well as to James, his brother, and some years later to Paul. The character of that experience persuades them all that God has indeed raised Jesus from among the dead. Jesus is now enthroned with God in heaven. To what extent are such claims amenable to historical inquiry? We lack first person descriptions from the witnesses themselves. Although Peter’s vision of the Lord was evidently the first by a male disciple and foundational for others, no first-century CE narrative exists.<sup>45</sup> Paul grounds his apostolic authority over the Corinthians by appeal to his vision of the Lord in 1 Cor 9:1, “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen our Lord Jesus?”<sup>46</sup> Both Cephas and the “brothers of the Lord” are mentioned in verse 5. This rhetorical juxtaposition suggests that their visions of the Lord were not simply evidence for the kerygma. Under some circumstances such a vision

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<sup>44</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX–XXVIII*, 673: “When the Messiah enters into suffering and death and then is raised to new life amidst signs and wonders, he plays out in his own life the eschatological scenario. The end of Jesus is the end of the world in miniature.”

<sup>45</sup> The formula in 1 Cor 15:5a puts Cephas first in the list. Mark 16:7a has the angel send the women with a message for “his disciples *and Peter*”. Luke 24:34 has the assembled followers of Jesus greet the news of those on the Emmaus road with one of their own, “the Lord is risen and has appeared to Peter”: perhaps a bit of literary closure to the second unit in Luke 24. The first section concluded with Peter’s bewilderment upon confirming the women’s report. The evangelist does not explain where or when Peter gained his insight. Fitzmyer (*Luke X–XXIV*, 1541) suggests that Luke introduced Peter as subject into a tradition that “some of them” visiting the tomb (found in Luke 24:24).

<sup>46</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 666–669) cautions against reading this statement as a simple claim to power to dictate the opinions and actions of others. For Paul, an apostle is called to live out the self-negating life of the crucified who is the subject of his preaching. He has been forced by the conflict over diverse apostles in Corinth to include evidence for his authority to make decisions in such practical matters as whether or under what circumstances a person may eat meat from an idol sacrifice (668–669).

might also authenticate particular forms of leadership among Christians.<sup>47</sup>

Most appearance narratives in the gospels incorporate some word of commissioning. Women at the tomb must take a message to Jesus' disciples (Mark 16:7; Matt 28:7, 10; John 20:17b).<sup>48</sup> The disciples or the remaining Eleven are instructed to spread the gospel (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:47–48; John 20:21–23). Or, in the case of John 21:15–19, Peter is to care for the flock which belongs to Jesus. The miraculous catch of John 20:1–14 may also symbolize the missionary spread of the gospel, though its symbolism is unclear.<sup>49</sup> Only the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13–33) and Jesus' second meal appearance to resolve Thomas' doubt (John 20:24–29) lack an element of other-directed commissioning. Yet each points forward to the time in which the risen Lord will no longer be available to his followers in a visionary mode. Though Thomas correctly confesses that Jesus is to be identified with the Father, the final beatitude is reserved for those who have believed without seeing (v. 29). The Emmaus story concludes by inviting readers to discern the risen Lord present in the communal meal celebration (vv. 28–31). Thus the appearance narratives supply the scenario which kerygmatic formulae such as 1 Cor 15:3–5 seem to require. Free-floating stories of

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<sup>47</sup> "Having seen the Lord" did not retain its place as a *sine qua non* for traveling apostles. Paul's conflict with the "false apostles" of 2 Cor 10–13 establishes Paul's authority in the Lord without such an appeal. Paul's activities build up the community in the sphere of work assigned by the Lord (2 Cor 10:8, 12–18; see Margaret Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians II: VIII–XIII* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 623–625, 635, 645–647). His conformity to the cruciform pattern established by Christ's suffering far exceeds any claim that his opponents can put forward (2 Cor 11:22–33; Thrall, 722–723). When Paul does allude to his visionary experiences (2 Cor 12:1–6), he does not indicate their content and immediately counters with further evidence of apostolic suffering, a God-given check on the spiritual danger of such extraordinary revelations (2 Cor 12:7–10). Thrall (773) suggests that Paul alludes to his visions because the Corinthians have intimated that he was deficient in that crucial criterion of apostleship. However, 1 Cor 9:1 and 15:9–10 suggest that they may have acquired such expectations from Paul himself.

<sup>48</sup> Luke has recast the angels' words to the women to invoke another apologetic motif, the correspondence between what happened to Jesus and his own prior prediction of crucifixion at the hands of sinners and resurrection (24:6–7).

<sup>49</sup> If John 21:1–14 has been built on the framework of a variant to the miraculous catch in Luke 5:1–11, then its mission connotations are evident. If the unbroken net of verse 11 is read in the context of the schism which the Johannine epistles indicate had divided Johannine believers, then the story along with the Petrine commission might be read as a plea to heal that situation. Raymond Brown (*The Gospel According to John XIII–XXI*, AB 29A [New York: Doubleday, 1970], 1087) thinks that the fishing story may have preserved elements of the missing account of Jesus' first appearance to Peter.

the women at the tomb, of Jesus' appearance at a meal, or his sudden manifestation in divine glory in a familiar gathering place probably served as the basis for the written versions found in the gospels.

All suggestions about the pre-gospel accounts of disciples encountering the risen Jesus remain highly speculative. The gospel accounts taken as a group pose a number of difficulties that defy harmonization. Once the control of Mark's master-narrative is left behind, each evangelist created his own geographical and chronological setting. When and where did Jesus begin appearing? To women near the tomb on Easter morning, so Matt 28:9–10 and John 20:11–18. To various disciples toward the evening as in Emmaus (Luke 24:13–33) as well as somewhere to Peter (Luke 24:34, not recounted) as well as to the group assembled for the evening meal (Luke 24:36–49). Or only to the disciples gathered behind closed and locked doors, first on Easter and then a week later (so John 20:19–29). Or did Jesus' male disciples only begin to have visions of the risen Lord at some indefinite time after returning to Galilee from the Passover feast as Mark 16:7, Matt 28:16–28 and John 21:1–14 would have us conclude? The editor of John 21 has patched in his Galilean traditions with verses 1 and 14 but did not resolve the conflict between this return to fishing and Jesus' commission in the prior story.<sup>50</sup>

Luke presumes that Jesus' disciples never returned to Galilee. He attributes their continuous presence in Jerusalem from Passover to the subsequent feast of Pentecost to an explicit command of the risen Lord (Luke 24:49) which they promptly obey (vv. 52b–53). This focus fits Luke's emphasis on Jerusalem as the focal point for Jesus' life and death and the point from which the gospel will radiate until Paul arrives in Rome at the conclusion to Acts.<sup>51</sup> Paul indicates that a church centered in Jerusalem and its environs with Peter as its central figure existed within a year or so of Jesus' death (Gal 1:13–20). We have no information about how this group of Galileans came to relocate in Jerusalem or its vicinity. That a prophetic word or revelation of the Lord might have been responsible is coherent with general appeals to prophecy and dreams in antiquity.<sup>52</sup> However, Luke's conclusion that

<sup>50</sup> See Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 1091.

<sup>51</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1580–1582.

<sup>52</sup> Matthew employs the genre of dream instructions to move characters around in his infancy narrative. Immediate compliance with such divine direction serves as an indication of Joseph's righteousness (Matt 1:18–25; 2:13–15, 19–23) and the Magi's wisdom in interpreting divine signs (Matt 2:12).

they remained in the city encountering the risen Lord for forty days until his definitive ascension into heaven (Acts 1:3–11) and then remained gathered as a model community waiting for the Spirit at Pentecost seems to be based on nothing more secure than his own fitting together of scattered traditions.<sup>53</sup>

The Galilean appearance traditions appear too well established in diverse traditions to be dismissed. John's account of Jesus' appearance to answer Thomas a week after Easter (John 20:26) plausibly assumes that the disciples remained in Jerusalem through the duration of the Passover festival. They would have returned to Galilee with other pilgrims from the region and remained there until Pentecost. What transpired? John 21:2–3 presumes that they had returned to the occupations that they had before becoming Jesus' disciples. Perhaps some further experiences in Jerusalem at Pentecost led Peter and others to relocate there. We have no clues. Nor do we have any that would indicate how long a period is covered by the visions of 1 Cor 15:4–8. Each appearance narrative is presented as though its recipients executed the commission given immediately afterwards. Only the abruptly truncated ending to Mark's gospel in which the frightened women flee without telling anyone breaks the pattern (Mark 16:8a)—and they have not seen the Lord, only an angel. Ancient scribes familiar with the appearance story genre soon provided Mark with what was felt to be a more suitable ending.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps the short ending of Mark echoes an historical fact that even the revelations and appearances central to the kerygma initially were the source of further confusion. It may have taken weeks or even months before Jesus' disciples regrouped and began preaching. Only the foreshortened narrative style employed by the evangelists gives one the sense that one or two appearances on Easter enabled Jesus' disciples to grasp what was going on. Or more precisely, to consolidate the

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<sup>53</sup> Whether Luke intends a deliberate counter to the Galilean traditions or is reflecting an independent tradition which held that it was wrong to leave Jerusalem cannot be determined (see C.K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles I: Acts I–XIV* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994], 72–73). The place list in Acts 1:8 stops at Samaria, omitting Galilee entirely even though verse 11 refers to the Eleven as Galileans (Barrett, 80, 83). The simplest solution is to assume that the traditions which Luke has to hand in composing his second volume do not contain any indications of a Galilean mission despite the double missionary dispatch referred to in Luke's Gospel (Luke 9:1–6, from Mark 6:7–13; Luke 10:1–12, the sending out of the 70/72, from Luke's special material).

<sup>54</sup> See Evans, *Mark*, 540–551.

conceptual and linguistic expression for their unexpected experiences of Jesus alive in divine glory as resurrection. Both Luke and John hint at such a process of reformulation and new understanding. Luke embeds in each of his three scenes instructions to remember Jesus' words to interpret

Scripture as referring to him (Luke 24:6b–8, 25–26, 44–47). John situates the emergence of new understanding in the indefinite period after Jesus' departure when the Paraclete will come in his stead (John 14:25–26; 16:12–14).<sup>55</sup>

One must resist the impact of both the narrative structure of the gospels and the annual liturgical cycle on the imagination. Easter visions of the Lord were not immediately self-interpreting or the solution to the bafflement, fear and confusion of Jesus' disciples. One must even admit that the scraps of geographical data attached to appearance stories could be independent of the narrative chronology established by the evangelists. The formula in 1 Cor 15:3–5 links "on the third day" to "was raised", not to the timing of the various visions listed. If "was buried" codes for a more extensive tomb tradition, the "third day" might refer only to the discovery that Jesus' body was gone or to the women's visions. Both establish a "when" for Jesus' resurrection. Mark 16:7, Matt 28:16–17 and possibly the tradition underlying John 21:1–14 all suggest that appearances began in Galilee. If one allows for

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<sup>55</sup> Paul's brief reference to his own experience includes an immediate withdrawal into Arabia (Gal 1:17). Though the rhetorical function of the biographical narrative is to underline Paul's independence from the Jerusalem apostles (Martyn, *Galatians*, 169–70), his initial move may not have been to evangelize non-Jews, i.e., to fulfill his divine commission as apostle. On the basis of his furtive exit from Damascus (2 Cor 11:32–33), Martyn hypothesizes that Paul commenced preaching activities which Nabatean authorities found to be socially disruptive (170; similarly, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul. A Critical Life* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996], 81–85). Stories of divine calling often emphasize the immediacy with which persons respond as in the case of those whom Jesus summons to be his disciples (e.g., Mark 1:14–20; 2:13–14). Since Paul must counter opponents' claims that he has diverged from the authority of the Jerusalem apostles to whom he owes his apostleship, he intends his audience to infer that his gospel and calling were like that of the Hebrew prophets, directly from God (v. 15 echoes Jer 1:5 and Isa 49:1–6). However the rhetorical necessity of a conflict over evangelizing non-Jews some fifteen or more years later may not provide the most accurate picture of what happened at the time. As other scholars have suggested, Paul's initial withdrawal from Jerusalem (and Damascus) may have been for more prosaic reasons. He wished to steer clear of his former associates and Jewish religious authorities as much as the leaders of the group he had been persecuting. He also required time to sort out this experience of the Lord (see Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 [Dallas: Word, 1990], 30).



completion of the Passover period and travel time back to Galilee, Peter and the remaining members of Jesus' inner circle of male disciples may not have "seen the Lord" until almost two weeks after his death.

#### 4. *Forging a Lexicon*

As we have suggested, the initial experiences of the risen Jesus did not carry the well-formed story line that we find in gospel narratives a half century on. Paul's own remarks about his experience oscillate between what might be construed as "inner" vision of Jesus enthroned with God (Gal 1:16; 2 Cor 12:1–5) and external seeing of Jesus embodied as risen (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8).<sup>56</sup> One must be careful not to import our modern perceptions of the cosmos into ancient texts. Alan Segal rightly insists that since the heavens were endowed with a kind of body, there was no incongruity in presenting appearances of Jesus that are not confined by the laws of physics:

The ancient world had fewer presuppositions about physical possibilities in nature, especially when the point of the story was that God's handiwork was being made miraculously manifest... We understand that Jesus could be physically present if certain counterfactual, science fiction claims are accepted. The writers of the Gospel simply had different counterfactual assumptions about the physical world. They wanted to stress the miracle that Jesus was a real body who miraculously appeared in a locked room.<sup>57</sup>

Acknowledging the difference between what counts as "physical world" in ancient and modern perspective does not resolve the historian's dilemma. The question "what happened" is not adequately answered by simply reporting what the fictive time-traveler might learn from participants. Contemporary theologians continue to argue over what sort of event the resurrection of Jesus is: (1) an event in the psychological and social experience of Jesus' followers; (2) an historical event like any other with the proviso that God's power is active in human affairs; or (3) an "eschatological" event which involves a theological claim about God's intention for the world and creation itself.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> One should not press the distinction between the two forms of expression, as Betz rightly points out (H.D. Betz, *Galatians* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], 71).

<sup>57</sup> Segal, *Life*, 457.

<sup>58</sup> See George Hunsinger, "The daybreak of the new creation: Christ's resurrection in recent theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 57 (2004): 163–181.

We cannot enter into this theological problematic here. Without a theological hermeneutic, historical reconstruction cannot discern the transcendent. Since ancient understandings of the historical process often assumed that divine causality is necessary to discovering the truth of human events, one cannot simply translate first-century judgments concerning reality into modern discourse.<sup>59</sup> Alan Segal points out that much contemporary thinking on these issues lacks sensitivity to two central phenomena: (1) social movements in which religion, not politics or economics, constitutes the language;<sup>60</sup> (2) religiously interpreted states of consciousness.<sup>61</sup> Individuals learn the language and even contents appropriate to such states:

Combined with that experience is whatever content is available in the culture for explaining such intense, mystical experiences. If the adept has been studying the texts of previous journeys in a specific mystic, apocalyptic, or shamanic tradition, chances are that the content of the experience will confirm the tradition.<sup>62</sup>

All levels of the tradition refer to non-ordinary elements in experiences of the risen Jesus. Religious interpretation is key to making sense of the events in question.

Elements of confusion and uncertainty such as Paul's confrontation with Corinthian skepticism in 1 Cor 15, the women fleeing in Mark 16:8, or the Thomas episode in John 20:24–29 suggest problems with the lexicon. Jewish apocalyptic texts in which we find much of the resurrection imagery contemporary with the New Testament may have been penned for circles of adepts who cultivated such religious experiences.<sup>63</sup> Paul presents himself as such a visionary in 2 Cor 12:1–5.<sup>64</sup> Segal points out that while Paul shares with his Jewish contemporaries an uncertainty about whether or not the heavenly journey involves a bodily translation of the seer into the heavens, modern sci-

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<sup>59</sup> See Hunsinger's trenchant criticism of N.T. Wright for ignoring the hermeneutical problematic involved in his claims about reality ("Daybreak," 170–171).

<sup>60</sup> See Segal (*Life*, 314–315) on oppression, deprivation and the danger of disconfirming religious views as the factors which produce martyrdom.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 323–333. Segal acknowledges modern research on the neurological basis for such states as mystic union with the divine, near death experiences or heavenly ascent (333–336).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>63</sup> Segal (*Life*, 333–336) proposes that the seers who produced Dan 7–12, 1 *Enoch* or 4 *Ezra* carried their Scriptural study of texts such as Ezekiel into the experience of dream visions.

<sup>64</sup> Thrall, *II Corinthians: VIII–XIII*, 775–797; Segal, *Life*, 407–421.

ence compels us to describe what occurred as a vision or trance.<sup>65</sup> Whether Paul's visions were all subsequent to his initial vision of Jesus as Lord or had been part of his earlier Jewish training we cannot say. Segal thinks that Paul was already involved in Jewish mystical practices prior to his conversion.<sup>66</sup>

The lexicon of meanings which Paul associates with resurrection derive from Dan 12:1–3 and the vision of a human figure ascending to God's throne in Dan 7:13–14. As a consequence of his vision of the risen Lord, Paul recognizes that God's apocalyptic plan of salvation is in process. He reaffirms the scenario with Jesus as agent of judgment (e.g., 1 Thess 1:10; 4:13–18). Believers will be transformed into the likeness of the risen Jesus, the spiritual Adam, when they are raised on the last day (1 Cor 15:20–55). Paul assumes, as do other Jewish sources, that risen persons are transformed bodies.<sup>67</sup> He does not operate with the concept of a separable soul to which personal and spiritual identity is attached.<sup>68</sup> As a consequence of his willingness to suffer in his bodily afflictions the death of Jesus (2 Cor 4:8–10), Paul also anticipates the reward of the martyred few, "who lead many to knowledge" in Dan 12:2–3, viz. transformation into angelic glory.<sup>69</sup>

Paul's letters show him to be a sophisticated and eloquent user of the apocalyptic lexicon which associates suffering, divine judgment, resurrection, and transformation of God's righteous ones into heavenly glory. The piece of the traditional lexicon which appears to be of no interest to Paul involves the intermediate state of the dead and the

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<sup>65</sup> "The question of whether a heavenly journey could take place in or out of the body may be settled for us by assuming that this was an ecstatic journey... When a heavenly journey is described literally, the cause may be literary convention or the belief of the voyager; but when reconstructing the actual experience, only one type can pass modern standards of credibility" (Segal, *Life*, 411).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

<sup>67</sup> Bodies are summoned from the earth in which they sleep (4 *Ezra* 7.32–34; 1 *Enoch* 51.15–16; 103.3; 108.11–15; 2 *Bar* 42.8). See Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead. Studies on Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, SuppNovT XLIII (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 269–288. Bauckham points to the close link between 1 Cor 15:35, "How do the dead rise? With what sort of body do they come?" and the two-step scenario of 2 *Bar* 50:2 where the dead first rise in the form they had when alive so that they can be recognized. Then the righteous are transformed in glory (283).

<sup>68</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 230.

<sup>69</sup> Segal, *Life*, 412.

punishment to be meted out to the wicked.<sup>70</sup> He takes it for granted that such persons, including those who persecute Christians, will suffer divine punishment (e.g., 1 Thess 2:14–16; Rom 12:18–21). The questions Paul confronts in 1 Thess 4:13–18 and 1 Cor 15 suggest that Paul’s language was not always intelligible to his audience. They did not possess the metaphorical or conceptual framework to associate the fate of the Christian dead with the glory of the risen Lord.

Stripped of its links to divine judgment, final defeat of evil, transformation of the righteous into the divine image (or glory) and new creation, the semantic range of resurrection is considerably reduced. Paul’s Gentile converts may have heard “God raised Jesus” in the *kerugma* as equivalent to the *apothēōsis* of a semi-divine hero figure. Segal poses a similar question about the resurrection narratives in the gospels. In part, their fixation on the empty tomb and the physicality of Jesus’ resurrection is a narrative requirement.<sup>71</sup> But in the process of externalizing the story of Jesus, the gospels lose Paul’s emphasis on a visionary, transforming experience of God’s presence in Christ. Those who wrote and used the gospels a quarter century after Paul had a completely different understanding. Segal comments:

For him [Paul], Jesus’ resurrected body was a spiritual body (*soma pneumatikon*). But for the evangelists, Jesus’ resurrected body was a literal, physical body revived. This exactly correlates with the approach of apostolic succession, which is not based on visions of Christ... so much as personal testimony of those most trustworthy men who had witnessed the events of Jesus’ life.<sup>72</sup>

Segal heightens the gulf between the gospels and the Pauline tradition by adopting two positions which our analysis has dismissed: (1) that Paul either did not know or “did not like” the empty tomb tradition;<sup>73</sup> (2) that there is no middle ground which unites Paul’s “spiritual body” language and the mysterious bodily appearances of Jesus.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Puech (*La Croyance* I, 314) observes that Paul focuses on conforming his life to the suffering of Christ as a condition of participating in Christ’s resurrection and urges believers to do the same (e.g., Phil 3:11–4:1). He is not interested in what happens to the wicked.

<sup>71</sup> Segal, *Life*, 444.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 442.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 446.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 451, 461.

Does Paul's visionary language provide our only historical template for the earliest Christian affirmations, as Segal concludes? The key, he suggests, lies in the early Christian identification of Jesus with the heavenly figure "like a Son of Man" in Dan 7:13–14.<sup>75</sup> Resurrection as exaltation to God's throne combined with this text enabled the earliest believers to perceive Jesus as God's messiah despite the crucifixion. Son of Man sayings attributed to Jesus himself appear in three contexts: (1) to affirm divine backing for actions challenged as offensive to God (e.g., Mark 2:10, 28); (2) in predictions of his impending death and resurrection (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34), and (3) in sayings that refer to future judgment (Mark 8:38; 13:26). Jesus quotes a composite of Dan 7:13 and Ps 110:1 in response to the High Priest's question about his messianic identity in Mark 14:62. Although the topic continues to be hotly debated, some scholars hold that Jesus himself used allusions to Dan 7:13–14 in anticipation of divine vindication for his own ministry.<sup>76</sup> He presumed that the coming Son of Man would be an angelic being, not himself. After the resurrection Christians identified Jesus as this heavenly Son of Man as the visions of Rev 1:7 and 1:18 demonstrate.<sup>77</sup>

If Jesus' own preaching and enactment of God's reign breaking into human experience was grounded in the imagery of an apocalyptic defeat of evil and renewal of creation, as I would argue it was,<sup>78</sup> then resurrection as vindication of God's righteous probably belonged to his lexicon. However, Dan 12:2–3 does not figure in the tradition of Jesus' sayings.<sup>79</sup> The resurrection/vindication assumed in the logion

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<sup>75</sup> Segal, *Life*, 448. Segal admits that Paul never uses the expression, a linguistic divergence which he attributes to Paul's grammatical sophistication. He knew that the Greek phrase is nonsensical as a rendering of the Aramaic (426). Segal seeks to demonstrate that Paul was familiar with a Christological use of the Dan 7:13–14 text by arguing that the following passages are dependent upon it: Gal 2:20, a paraphrase that substitutes "Son of God" for the logion in Mark 10:45; in 1 Cor 15:25–28 where v. 27 echoes Ps 8:6, Segal argues that subjection of all things to the rule of Christ until the Son turns all things over to God depends upon Daniel.

<sup>76</sup> See the extensive treatment by Adela Collins in John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 90–105.

<sup>77</sup> A. Collins in *Daniel*, 105.

<sup>78</sup> See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 291–397.

<sup>79</sup> Almost all echoes of Dan 12 are found in Rev, so A. Collins (*Daniel*, 110–111). Collins reintroduces the influence of the text by asserting that it somehow underlies the centrality of resurrection in the New Testament (112). However, the centrality of resurrection is more likely a reflection of the kerygma concerning Jesus' death and resurrection.

urging indifference to those who can only kill the body (Matt 10:28–31//Luke 12:4–7) could take the form of the martyr's confidence in 2 Macc 7:9–29.<sup>80</sup> God's creative power is sufficient to endow the faithful martyrs with a new gift of bodily life. Van Henten observes that eschatological reward does not figure as a motive for martyrdom. The martyrs exhibit absolute loyalty to God, strict adherence to Torah, and the intent to serve as a model for others by enduring a gruesome death rather than capitulate.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Jesus may have had little to say on the eschatological rewards question as he sought to establish new understandings of what single-hearted fidelity to God's rule entailed.

We would suggest that Jesus' followers probably had a much less sophisticated lexicon of apocalyptic hopes than those schooled in such visionary traditions. Jesus' own use of an image from Dan 7:13–14 indicates an audience familiar with judgment scenes that involved angelic figures. Scholars who have studied epitaphs from first century Galilee and Judea conclude that there was a vaguely defined belief in the afterlife.<sup>82</sup> It included resurrection, judgment and reward for the just. When Jesus' sayings mention "treasure in heaven" (e.g., Matt 6:19–21//Luke 12:33–34; Mark 10:21), he draws on common conceptions of reward and punishment.<sup>83</sup> For such an audience, resurrection imagined as emptying the tombs or giving life to those who sleep in the earth is a more normal mode of thought than a visionary journey toward the divine. When Jesus promises his followers that they will drink wine together in the Kingdom (Mark 14:25), they would anticipate a banquet with the messiah. The location of this banquet was indeterminate. For many, resurrection and new creation suggested an earthly fellowship between the messiah and the righteous.<sup>84</sup> Nothing in

<sup>80</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 431.

<sup>81</sup> Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabees as Saviors of the Jewish Race. A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, SupJSJ 57 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 125.

<sup>82</sup> Jon Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 111; Puech, *La Croissance I*, 190.

<sup>83</sup> One finds speculative accounts of the "treasuries" in which souls are sorted prior to the final judgment in apocalyptic traditions (e.g., *1 Enoch* 22.9–10; *4 Ezra* 7.77–96). Michael Stone (*Fourth Ezra* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 238) notes that the elaborate description of the intermediate fate of souls in *4 Ezra* is unique in ancient Jewish literature. Puech (*La Croissance I*, 321) sees these developments as an unwillingness to leave the wicked and righteous in the same state prior to judgment. Consequently, the judgment appears to make punishments or blessings already in effect permanent.

<sup>84</sup> As in *4 Ezra* 7.28–29. Richard Bauckham (*Revelation*, 49) understands the language of new creation in Revelation to refer to the renewal of this creation, not its replacement.

this relatively simple lexicon provides for the irruption of a single resurrected person into the time line prior to the end-time.<sup>85</sup> The only mode by which a human person might enter God's presence would have required a bodily assumption into heaven as in the case of Elijah. The brute facts of Jesus' death and burial ruled that possibility out. The crowd is said to have confronted Jesus with that image at the cross (Mark 15:36//Matt 27:49).<sup>86</sup> On the assumption that these elements are a good approximation of the conceptual repertoire that Jesus' disciples brought to the events in question, they are unlikely to interpret their experiences of the risen Lord in the same way that Paul does.

### 5. Conclusion

Religiously interpreted experiences are inextricably entwined with the cultural vocabulary available to participants. As we have seen, our sources do not permit a clear reconstruction of the events that underlie the later narratives. Some scholars insist that the only "real event(s)" were visions like Paul's. Jesus is not among the dead awaiting the coming eschatological judge. He is enthroned at God's right hand and will return as judge from there (as in Acts 3:13–21). No one was concerned about the tomb or the bodily reality of Jesus. The powerful visionary experiences now replicated in the case of numbers of other believers are sufficient to persuade. A half century later, there are no living witnesses. Those who must believe without seeing (John 20:29) require the kind of narrative that will show the truth of the message Christians preach, as Luke says of his gospel (Luke 1:1–4). The accounts of the empty tomb, the revealing angel, and Jesus' encounters with various followers serve that purpose.

As we have suggested, scholars who insist that the disciples used resurrection to refer to visions of the exalted Jesus have to explain why the narratives concerning the tomb and resurrection appearances have the shape they do. How did the incoherent jumble of locations and times come into existence? They were circulating independently prior to being set down in the gospels. Therefore we prefer to imagine a somewhat different sequence of events behind these traditions. Although crucifixion victims were left to rot elsewhere under Roman

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<sup>85</sup> Wright, *Resurrection*, 205.

<sup>86</sup> See Brown, *Death*, 1062–1063.

rule, Jewish piety and ritual sensibilities changed the rules of the game in Jerusalem. The priestly religious officials implicated in turning Jesus over to Roman execution may have requested that executions cease and the corpses be disposed of prior to the feast. Since burial of victims in a tomb provided for criminals was customary, the women disciples had reason to wait and see what would happen. Joseph acted out of Jewish piety and used a common tomb. The original burial is rapid and minimal, designed to meet ritual requirements, not to honor the deceased.

After the Sabbath, the women returned to find the tomb empty. They may have had a vision of an angel or even Jesus. Or they may have fled in fear because they assumed that robbers had broken in and stolen the corpse. Whether or not they brought male disciples back to check is insignificant. Insignificant Galileans are in no position to press inquiries into the whereabouts of their leader, executed as a criminal by Rome and condemned as a blasphemer by religious authorities. Because the tomb in question did not belong to Jesus alone, or even to a disciple, it could not be a focus of veneration. Nor could those hostile to the Christians disprove the claim that Jesus was raised by pointing to a tomb with a corpse in it. Even if the women, Peter and some others began having visions of Jesus on the same day, they might not have used the term “resurrection”, since the end of the world had not come. The rest of the world including the Temple and its rituals were going on as usual.

Once the Passover was over they all returned to Galilee and to the lives that had been interrupted by Jesus a year or so earlier. Perhaps they lived with a heightened eschatological expectation. They may even have anticipated that Jesus had been caught up to heaven and was about to return as the mysterious Son of Man about which he had spoken.<sup>87</sup> Visions continued and Jesus’ disciples picked up the habits of preaching (and perhaps healing) that they had learned from Jesus during his life. As they tried to explain what had happened to Jesus, the convergence of their vivid visionary experiences of Jesus and the missing body led the disciples to speak of Jesus having been raised. We do not know how long the appearances of the Lord lasted. If the male

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<sup>87</sup> Though the word to the disciples that Jesus would see them again in Galilee found in Mark 14:28 and 16:7 apparently refers to the earlier resurrection predictions in Mark’s Gospel, the saying may have originated as a parousia saying.



disciples did not see the Lord until they had returned to Galilee, then the Jerusalem traditions either occurred later, around Pentecost (?), or were relocated there. John's Gospel shifts back and forth between Galilee and Judea. Luke's has a focus on Jerusalem as the center from which salvation is to radiate out. Within a year or two Jesus' disciples have left Galilee to preach the crucified and risen Jesus as God's messiah in Jerusalem.

## FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND FOES

JOEL B. GREEN

### 1. *Introduction*

The particulars of Jesus' ministry are worked out in the context of his relationships with others: his family of origin, those whom he called as disciples, the crowds of nameless persons, the sick, those who monitor his behavior, and many more. Moreover, that we know anything at all of Jesus is due to the persons with whom he interacted, those whom he gathered to himself and those who were attracted to him, whether for good or ill. Who were these people?

Even to raise the question is to become immediately entangled in a briar patch of prickly problems of method. The notion of "family," for example, is a culture-conditioned one. From the perspective of the twenty-first century West, we might think in terms of "the nuclear family," a description which itself is susceptible to varying definitions. In the Roman world, "family" might refer to blood relations and relations by marriage, as well as to extended kin relations inclusive of persons unrelated by the traditional ties of blood or marriage. Israel, too, was the home of households defined by blood and marriage, together with others who lived within the household boundaries for protection and contributed to its livelihood.<sup>1</sup> With an eye to issues of composition and function, Santiago Guijarro sketches a typology of four types of "families" in the area of Jesus' home base, first-century Galilee: large families, multiple families, nucleated families, and scattered families.<sup>2</sup> According to the synoptic gospels, however, Jesus operates with his own definitions: "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? And

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<sup>1</sup> See Beryl Rawson, ed., *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Leo G. Perdue et al., *Families in Ancient Israel, The Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches, The Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Santiago Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 42–65.

pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother’” (Matt 12:48–50). What might it mean, then, for us to pursue an interest in Jesus’ “family”?

To speak of “friends” is to enter a similar minefield. The notion of “friend,” lexicalized by the word φίλος (*philos*, “friend”), has an esteemed history in the ancient worlds of Greece and Rome, and is important for our understanding of kinship, status, and economic relations.<sup>3</sup> Among the gospels, however, φίλος is relatively rare, appearing only once in Matthew, 15 times in Luke, and six times in John; and even more rarely of Jesus as “friend” or as having “friends” (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34; 12:4; John 11:11; 15:13–15). Clearly, attention to this term will not carry us very far in our investigation of Jesus’ social relationships.

A third dilemma focuses on the difficulty of identifying Jesus’ foes. My concern here is the ease with which we stereotype those who opposed Jesus’ mission, failing to notice that in some instances their concerns overlapped with Jesus’ own, to account for nuanced and sometimes even shifting loyalties among those with whom Jesus’ held social relationships, and generally to appreciate the depth and texture of the characters with whom Jesus interacts in the context of his ministry. Our unfortunate tendency is sometimes to transform these flesh-and-blood persons and diverse people-groups into cardboard personages, with the result that we demonize the Pharisees, for example, while at the same time valorizing those comprising Jesus’ inner circle. In doing so, it is true, we are helped along by the gospel writers themselves, whose portraits, while more nuanced than we sometimes allow, more often than not are somewhat one-sided and mono-dimensional in their presentations of persons and groups. The untrained eye might therefore overlook, for example, the significant camaraderie that must have existed between Jesus and the Pharisees in order for him to have been found so often in their homes and at their tables. The significance of sharing a meal at table, after all, included but extended beyond the satiation of hunger as a ritual of companionship, and Pharisees in particular committed themselves to maintaining

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<sup>3</sup> Cf., e.g., David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John T. Fitzgerald, ed., *Greco-Roman Perspectives on Friendship*, SBLRBS 34 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1997).

ritual purity in their households and among their eating companions. To those Pharisees whose invitation lists included this itinerant from Nazareth (cf. Luke 7:36; 14:1), Jesus must have seemed, however temporarily, a person of “clean hands” (see Mark 7:3–4; Luke 11:37–38). By way of analogy, is it not significant that in the Acts of the Apostles, the leading witness of the resurrection, Paul, is simultaneously a Pharisee and a follower of Jesus, and Pharisees share with Jesus’ followers “the hope of the resurrection,” even if it is also true that even those Pharisees who are believers prove capable of misconstruing the gospel (e.g., Acts 23:6–8; 15:1–12)?

Nor can we overlook that even Jesus’ closest followers demonstrate a capacity to misunderstand the character of his mission and, however unwittingly, to oppose him (e.g., Mark 8:33). In the end, his disciples betray (Judas), deny (Peter), and desert him. Are Jesus’ followers friends or foes? The line between these two categories is porous and meanders.

We face problems of category, then, in our investigation of Jesus’ social relationships. We face a prickly problem of another sort as well—namely, a question of sources. Because we are interested in the historical Jesus and not simply how, say, the Gospel of Matthew, portrays Jesus’ parents or the Herodians, the problem of sources entangles us in three ways: first, the paucity of sources for some persons of concern; second, the inherently perspectival character of all of our sources;<sup>4</sup> and, third, the simple reality that, in those instances where we have the benefit of multiple sources, we sometimes have also the blight of conflicting accounts. Our hope is not in our finding or generating an unbiased study of the persons in question, as though we could determine and present “who they really were.” Indeed, our interest in their relationships with Jesus already biases our approach, limiting the scope of our investigation and pressing us toward character sketches that make sense of what we know of Jesus’ mission and influence.

My sketch of these methodological issues serves not to deter us from our agenda but as an important warning about the nature of our

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<sup>4</sup> Since this statement is widely accepted, it is unclear why reconstructions of historical personages often accord privilege to non-biblical sources—as in the case of Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, SNTSMS 100 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); idem, *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004). Is it any less true of Josephus or Philo when compared to Mark or Luke that such persons function in their accounts as “literary figures” serving the author’s political (and other) interests?

work. We must be open to nuance, aware of the broad strokes with which we are necessarily able to paint, and attentive to the fluidity of our categories.

## 2. *Jesus and His Family*

Perhaps on account of the relative paucity of information on the subject in our sources, speculation regarding the relatives of Jesus has proliferated through the centuries. The near-silence of the New Testament gospels regarding Jesus' childhood apparently served as an open invitation to fill in the gaps with material otherwise more at home in mythology surrounding the children of the gods.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Jesus' siblings, scholarly and ecclesial interest is sometimes aroused due to theological concerns grounded in claims of Mary's perpetual virginity (so that the brothers and sisters mentioned, e.g., in Mark 3:31–35; 6:3, would have been Joseph's children by a previous marriage [*Prot. Jas.* 9.2] or cousins, rather than blood relatives). The general lack of attention given to Jesus' household of origin in the gospels is not so much a void waiting to be filled, however, as it is itself worthy of consideration. We cannot explain away the void of information regarding Jesus' family and early home life with an appeal to the ancient conventions of genre. It is true that biographical writing in the Greco-Roman world was not guided by modern interests in developmental psychology, and hence placed little emphasis on childhood, focusing instead on the public "life" (*bios*) of the individual in question. As the second-century *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* illustrates with its portrait of Jesus as a rather impish child, precocious in interactions with his teachers, and endowed with extraordinary powers, however, Roman sensibilities did not as a matter of course preclude all literary interest in youth. Instead, one of the assumptions of great persons in antiquity was that they possessed in childhood the qualities of greatness for which they were known as adults, and this assumption could be demonstrated in narrative accounts. What is more, between them, our New Testament sources do bring to light certain considerations worthy of attention—Jesus' lineage, for example, the remarkable circumstances surrounding

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<sup>5</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, "Infancy Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, Edgar Hennecke; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 1:363–417.

his birth to Mary and Joseph, his kinship with John the Baptist, and his presentation at the temple at age 12. Less noticeable but all the more remarkable, then, is the rhetorical consequence of so little narrative attention to Jesus' childhood and youth. To a startling degree, he is a person without a home.

### 2.1. *Jesus, Son of David*

Jesus' identity within the ancestral family of David is secure in the New Testament. He is of the lineage of David (Matt 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38); born in Bethlehem, “the city of David” (Luke 2:4, 11); born into the household of or adopted by Joseph, “of the house and lineage of David” (Matt 1:20–25; Luke 2:4); is heir to the Davidic dynasty (Luke 1:32–33; cf. 2 Sam 7:10–16); is named “Son of David” by those in need (e.g., Matt 9:27; 15:22; 20:31; Mark 10:46–52); and enters Jerusalem as Son of David (Mark 11:1–11). For Paul, Christ Jesus “was descended from David” (Rom 1:3; cf. 2 Tim 2:8). These texts emphasize not that Jesus was *a* son of David, one among many, but his identity as *the* Son of David, the “righteous branch” who would fulfill his role as God's agent of the restoration of God's people (e.g., Jer 23:5–8; Zech 3:9–10; 6:12–15; Hag 2:21–22; cf. Rev 5:5; 22:16), the eschatological ruler who would eliminate oppression and gather to himself a holy people (*Pss. Sol.* 17–18). Jesus' understanding of his Davidic descent surfaces in Mark 12:35–37 (Matt 26:41–46; Luke 20:41–44). Here, while teaching in the temple, Jesus refers to himself implicitly as the Messiah through whom the kingdom of God is brought near.<sup>6</sup>

In lineage- or descent-based status systems, ancestral references, whether lengthy genealogies (e.g., Matt 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38) or fragmentary (e.g., Luke 1:69), perform the important role of locating persons on the map of kinship. They mark inherited status. Depending on the honor of one's family heritage, ancestral references might provide legitimation for one's mission in the world or forbid even the possibility of honorable achievement. Although we find in the Gospel of Mark evidence against Jesus' honor on the basis of family connections (Mark 6:2–3), his location in the family of David and his identity as the fulfillment of God's promise to David is crucial to the story of Jesus of Nazareth.

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<sup>6</sup> See the brief discussion in Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 365–367.

## 2.2. *Relatives of Jesus*

Concerning *Jesus' parents*, Joseph and Mary, little is known. Joseph is a member of the household of David (Luke 1:27), though one of relatively low status, living apart from the ancestral land (Luke 2:4), a carpenter in an economically impoverished region (Matt 13:55), regarded in Matthew's account as a man of integrity, obedience, and faith (Matt 1:18–25; 2:13–21). The complete silence of the gospels regarding his father once Jesus' public ministry has begun is often and best explained by the likelihood that Joseph was already dead by this time. Mary, on the other hand, is present throughout Jesus' public ministry, survives her son, and is portrayed in Acts as one of the early followers of Jesus (Acts 1:12–14). Though present in Matthew's birth narrative, Mary neither acts nor speaks, but is continuously "with" Jesus (Matt 2:11, 13, 14, 20, 21), highlighting the degree to which her life and fate are intertwined with that of her child.

In Luke's Gospel, we first meet Mary as a resident of Nazareth of Galilee, a young woman, perhaps 14 years old, betrothed to Joseph (1:26–27). She is also known for her kinship to Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (1:36). Her devout faith is celebrated in Luke's Gospel, where she and Joseph are able to provide only the sacrifice reserved for the poor (that is, turtledoves rather than sheep, 2:24; cf. Lev 12:8). Luke's opening chapters portray Mary as a person intimate with the Scriptures of Israel, able to interweave images and language from Israel's Scriptures in order to celebrate and give definition to the mighty and merciful activity of God in bringing his covenant to fruition in Jesus. Along with Joseph, she is presented as one who is guided in God's purpose by Torah and whose devotion to Torah is unambiguous. Moreover, as her response to Gabriel ("Here am I, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me in accordance with your word" [1:38]) demonstrates, she is a model of discipleship. It is nonetheless true that Mary herself does not appear to grasp fully the significance of what God is doing, but gives herself to mulling over the meaning of these things; indeed, at one point she fails altogether to comprehend the consequence of Jesus' filial relationship with God (cf. 2:19, 48–50, 51). This is a reminder that Mary's importance in the story of Jesus goes beyond her role in child-bearing; rather, she is esteemed as one who hears and obeys the word of God (see 11:27–28; 8:19–21). For Luke, Mary hears and reflects on the divine word, embraces that word positively, and even proclaims the word in the fashion of a prophet

(1:26–38, 46–55; 2:19, 51). This anticipates Luke’s final testimonial to Mary, Acts 1:14, where she is explicitly counted within the community of Jesus’ faithful disciples.

Although she is never named in the Gospel of John, Mary appears as Jesus’ mother in two scenes, the wedding at Cana (2:1–12) and at Jesus’ crucifixion (19:25–27). The interaction between Jesus and his mother at the wedding celebration has confounded interpreters who question its coherence or wonder at Jesus’ apparent rudeness to his mother. The account itself gives no reason to attribute hostility to Jesus in his response to his mother; instead, with its emphasis on Jesus’ “hour,” the narrative urges the view that their conversation is designed to raise early on the question of Jesus’ aims. Mary’s appearance in this scene also testifies to Jesus’ humanity as one with a physical, earthly family. Jesus’ references to his mother from the cross highlight again his humanity and remind John’s readers that this “hour” is his reason for coming, about which Jesus had spoken at Cana.<sup>7</sup>

A smattering of texts refers to Jesus’ brothers (Matt 12:46–49; 13:55; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12; 7:3, 10) or brothers and sisters (Mark 4:31–32; 6:3; Matt 13:56); his brothers are named as “James and Joses and Judas and Simon” (Mark 6:3) or “James and Joseph and Simon and Judas” (Matt 13:55). In addition, at the cross, Mary is identified as “mother of James the Less and Joses” (Mark 15:40) or “mother of James and Joseph” (Matt 27:5); at the burial as “mother of Joses” (Mark 15:47); and at the empty tomb as “mother of James” (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10).<sup>8</sup> James, “the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19), assumes leadership of the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18). He is known to the Jewish historian Josephus as “James, the brother of Jesus, who was called the Christ” (*Ant.* 20.200), and regarded by Eusebius as Jerusalem’s first “bishop” (*Hist. eccl.* 2.23.1). Two letters that appear among the General Epistles in the New Testament are attributed to Jesus’ brothers,

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<sup>7</sup> Regarding Mary, see more fully, Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Mary: Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> For an insightful assessment of the importance of Jesus’ relatives in the early church, see Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus*, to which should be added, for the sake of completeness, his monograph on *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage*, New Testament Readings (London: Routledge, 1999). For a recent assessment of the relationship of these “brothers and sisters,” concluding that they were in fact Jesus’ siblings, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 318–332.



James and Jude. Interestingly, both James and Jude claim to be the servant of Jesus and not a brother (Jas 1:1: “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ”; Jude 1: “servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James”)—reminding us that, in the Jesus-movement, familial status is determined in relation to the word of God rather than on the basis of blood lines.

*John the Baptist* was both a relative of Jesus and, in some sense, his teacher. Our identification of the nature of their familial ties turns on the relationship of Elizabeth and Mary (Luke 1:36), but we receive little help here. Συγγενίς (*sungenis*) connotes nothing more certain than “kinswoman.” More significant is that Jesus submitted to John’s baptism, thus identifying himself with the major themes of his movement: the eschatological coming of God and the concomitant urgency of repentance and a faithful life. Jesus’ baptism by John, too, marked Jesus’ experience of messianic vocation.

### 2.3. *Without a Home*

Even though our sources provide us with scant detail regarding Jesus’ family, what we have presents a complex portrait. First, we have brief reminiscences the inclusion of which seems to serve no apparent agenda other than the preservation of historical memory or to provide an anchor point for later developments in the movement. Why else would the evangelists list the names of Jesus’ brothers? Second, we grasp the pivotal importance of Jesus’ ancestry. He is a descendant of David and this “family name” is the primary contribution Jesus’ father, Joseph, brings to the story of Jesus. Third, members of Jesus’ family—specifically, his mother Mary and his more distant kin John—play significant roles. Mary is noteworthy for her exemplary response to God’s redemptive intervention and her ongoing faithfulness, while John is identified as the herald of the Messiah, more than a prophet (Matt 11:9; Luke 7:26), the most esteemed within the human family (Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28). Yet, fourth, it is obvious that what particularly distinguishes Mary and John within the gospel narratives is not their familial relations with Jesus as family is normally judged. Conventional family ties are rendered problematic in at least three groups of texts: (1) the exchange between Mary and the boy Jesus, contrasting her identification of herself and Joseph as Jesus’ mother and father with Jesus’ identification of God as his father (Luke 2:48–49); (2) the attempt on the part of Jesus’ mother and brothers to “restrain him,”

thinking him out of his mind (Mark 3:21);<sup>9</sup> and (3) repeated reports or directives indicating that relationships determined by blood are either mitigated in their importance or altogether eclipsed by relationships determined by faithful responsiveness to the gospel (e.g., Mark 1:16–20; 10:28–30; Luke 9:57–62; 11:27–28; 12:51–53; 14:26; 18:28–30).<sup>10</sup>

The enigma of the category of “family” reaches its apex in Jesus’ explicit recognition of his social location outside of normal family relations. This is illustrated in Jesus’ acknowledgment that, as a prophet, it is only to be expected that an appearance in his hometown should be the occasion of dishonor and rejection (Luke 4:24). As troublemakers of the conventional, prophets almost by definition occupied the further reaches of acceptable society. Mark’s account presses the motif of rejection even further, extending it from Jesus’ “hometown” to include also Jesus’ “kin” and even his own “household” (Mark 6:4). Even more stark is Jesus’ claim in Luke 9:57–58: “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Jesus thus declares himself completely dependent on the generous hospitality of others; apart from it, he is homeless.

### 3. *Friends*

From the onset of Jesus’ public ministry, he was surrounded by followers. Indeed, one of the characteristic features of his ministry was the calling and development of disciples.

According to three of our New Testament gospels, Jesus’ first public act was the calling of disciples (Matt 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–51; cf. Luke 5:1–11). Along the way, other followers are mentioned, both named and anonymous (e.g., Luke 7:36–8:3). The list of disciples is extraordinary for its inclusiveness: fishermen (e.g., Mark 1:16–20), a self-proclaimed “sinner” (Luke 5:8), a toll collector (e.g., Matt 9:9–13), and both men and women (e.g., Luke 8:1–3). The disciples are “with” Jesus (e.g., Mark 3:14; Luke 6:17; 7:11). They are

<sup>9</sup> The implicit subject of the verbs in Mark 3:21 (οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ) is provided in v. 31 (“his mother and his brothers”) and v. 32 (“your mother and your brothers and your sisters”).

<sup>10</sup> See Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, SNTSMS 80 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

the special recipients of his teaching (e.g., Mark 4:33–34; 10:23–45; 11:12–26; 13:1–37). Some are instructed for and sent on a mission that is an extension of his own (e.g., Mark 6:7–13, 30; Matt 9:35–11:1; Luke 9:1–10; 10:1–12). At least in part, the call to discipleship is a call to “catch people” (Luke 5:10; cf. Mark 1:17). In the end, Jesus’ commissions those whom he has chosen to propagate his ministry to all nations (Matt 28:16–20; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8).

In the gospels, we also come across disciples of John the Baptist (e.g., Matt 9:14; Mark 6:29; Luke 7:18–20; 11:1; John 4:1) and disciples of the Pharisees (e.g., Mark 2:18; Matt 22:16). John’s disciples embraced his teaching regarding the coming of God’s kingdom, demonstrating their commitment in such characteristic behaviors as fasting and prayer (Matt 3:7–10; Mark 2:18; Luke 11:1). According to the Gospel of John, some of Jesus’ earliest followers had first been disciples of John (1:35–37). This is perhaps only to be expected, since both John and Jesus were eschatological prophets proclaiming the arrival of the kingdom of God, and since John identified Jesus as the “coming one” (John 1:25–51; cf. Mark 1:7–8; cf. Luke 7:18–23). Nevertheless, some continued their loyalty to John after his arrest and death at the hands of Herod—carrying out John’s requests, burying him, and, apparently, maintaining themselves as a kind of John-sect characterized negatively by Jesus’ disciples, since these followers of John failed to recognize that Jesus was the Messiah whose coming John had anticipated (see Luke 3:15–17; Acts 18:25–26; 19:1–7; John 1:6–8, 15, 19–28; 3:25–30). Little is said of the disciples of the Pharisees, apart from their practice of fasting, though we should assume that they adhered to beliefs associated with the Pharisees and attached themselves to Pharisees for training.

These parallels demonstrate that Jesus was not unique in attracting followers. We know of other precursors in Israel’s past, for example in the circles associated with the prophets (e.g., 1 Sam 19:20–24; 2 Kgs 4:1.38; 9:1; Isa 8:16). A closer analogy would be the calling of Elisha by Elijah (1 Kgs 19:19–21), a call narrative echoed in Luke 9:57–62 (cf. Matt 8:18–22). Additionally, in the wider Greco-Roman world, the term “disciple” (μαθητής, “learner,” “pupil”) could describe an adherent to a teacher or a learner attached to a master. However, it would be anachronistic to imagine that, in Jesus’ day, there were discipleship models any more formal or institutionalized than the presence of rabbis, most of whom would have been Pharisees, recognized for their understanding of the Torah, who attracted groups of disciples for purposes of learning and interpreting Torah (cf. “the tradition of the elders” in Mark 7:1–15).

Jesus himself was addressed as “Rabbi” (ῥαββί; e.g., Mark 9:5; John 9:2; cf. ῥαββουνί, “my master,” in Mark 10:51; John 20:16) or “Teacher” (διδάσκαλος), suggesting that the relationship between Jesus and his followers should be understood according to the Pharisaic (rabbinic) analogy. The similarity breaks down on some points, however. For example, whereas in the usual scenario a would-be disciple would approach a rabbi with a request to study under his tutelage, the gospels have it that Jesus typically initiated the master-disciple relationship (e.g., Mark 1:16–20; 2:13–14; John 1:43; 6:70; 15:16). What is more, in doing so, Jesus used language that recalls those biblical scenes in which God called individuals, prophets, as messengers of his word. We find other models in the gospels as well—namely, potential followers approach Jesus, who tests their resolve (Matt 8:19–22; Luke 9:57–62), and introductions to Jesus mediated by others (John 1:40–42, 44–46). Furthermore, adherence to Jesus as rabbi included learning how to interpret Torah, but this was only one aspect of the commitment. This is signaled in the language of Jesus’ appointment of certain disciples as apostles: “And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons” (Mark 3:14–15). The two primary aspects of this call are “to be with him” and “to be sent out,” with the other two phrases, “to proclaim” and “to have authority” modifying the nature of their being sent. As the gospel accounts make clear, being “with Jesus” entails companionship, to be sure, but also sharing in his success and failure, his acceptance and rejection, and identifying with and being shaped by his life and mission. This includes abandoning the security of vocation, possessions, and home, even repudiating family ties and responsibilities, on the model of Jesus’ abandonment of home in favor of complete dependence on God (e.g., Luke 9:57–62). Accordingly, discipleship involves “following” him (ἀκολουθέω), parsed in these terms: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). Evidently, the model and criterion for faithful discipleship was the service-oriented self-abandonment of Jesus’ own demise, his death on the cross (see Mark 10:35–45).<sup>11</sup>

In addition, whereas Jesus’ peers among the rabbis focused their instruction on their followers, Jesus extended his teaching to wider

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<sup>11</sup> See Larry W. Hurtado, “Jesus’ Death as Paradigmatic in the New Testament,” *SJT* 57 (2004): 413–433.

and wider circles—teaching the masses in the presence of the disciples, and teaching the disciples in the presence of the crowds, even when those crowds included Jesus’ own antagonists. In this way, Jesus’ ministry was like a sower who went out to sow, casting his seed indiscriminately (e.g., Mark 4:1–20). Finally, disciples more generally aimed to achieve an expertise in Torah in order themselves to become teachers of the law. Jesus, on the other hand, explicitly forbade such ambitions (Matt 23:8). His followers would not replace him as much as serve as his agents in mission (cf. Mark 6:7–13; Luke 10:1–24; Acts). Whereas in the rabbinic model, then, a disciple would associate with the master for a limited period, perhaps even moving among teachers, discipleship with Jesus was to be an exclusive and permanent arrangement. Clearly, Jesus was a rabbi, but more than a rabbi. He was an eschatological prophet and messianic deliverer—though not the sort whose aims would be vested in stirring up the masses for revolution (cf. Acts 5:36–37; 21:38).

### 3.1. *Jesus and the Twelve*

From the wider group of his followers, Jesus chose twelve (Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:13), often called apostles and sometimes simply “disciples.” Although some scholars have doubted the historicity of this number, it is not only fixed in the gospels, but finds expression in 1 Cor 15:5; Rev 21:14. Moreover, Acts 1:15–26 evidences the importance of having *twelve* apostles—even though, after his appointment as replacement for Judas Iscariot, Matthias never again enters Luke’s story (nor do the Twelve play any particular role as a subset of the disciples).<sup>12</sup> The historicity of the Twelve is also supported, ironically, by the lack of stability in the naming of the Twelve. In the synoptic gospels and Acts, we find these lists:

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<sup>12</sup> See Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias*, WUNT 2.187 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

MATT 10:2–4	MARK 3:16–19	LUKE 6:13–16	ACTS 1:13
<i>Simon, called Peter</i>	<i>Simon, named Peter</i>	<i>Simon, named Peter</i>	<i>Peter</i>
Andrew, brother of Peter	James, son of Zebedee	Andrew, brother of Peter	John
James, son of Zebedee	John, brother of James	James	James
John, brother of James	Andrew	John	Andrew
<i>Philip</i>	<i>Philip</i>	<i>Philip</i>	<i>Philip</i>
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew the toll collector	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>	<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>	<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>	<i>James, son of Alphaeus</i>
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon, called the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Cananean	Simon the Cananean	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
<i>Judas Iscariot the betrayer</i>	<i>Judas Iscariot the betrayer</i>	<i>Judas Iscariot the betrayer</i>	

It is not only that these lists witness different names among the Twelve, but that, with few exceptions, the order of the names is flexible, as though the status (with the obvious exceptions of Peter and Judas Iscariot) differed according to different tradents.

With regard to these catalogs, perhaps most interesting is a comparison of Luke 6 and Acts 1, since these come from the same author. In Luke's second list, Peter is known only by the name given him by Jesus; "Simon" is no longer needed (though cf. Luke 22:31; Acts 15:14). Andrew's identity is independent of his brother's. Judas Iscariot excepted, the two lists name the same persons, though transposing the order of some. Most importantly, John now appears second, an indication of the leadership role he will serve in the community (3:1, 3, 11; 4:13, 19; 8:14). James has been moved to the third position (see 12:2), but the others will appear only *en masse* (e.g., 2:14, 37, 43; 5:12, 18). Although the names appear in groups (do Peter, Philip, and James lead these divisions of four?), Luke does not develop the identity of subgroups, nor the character of any of the apostles apart from Peter

and, to a much lesser degree, John and James. Nor does Luke express interest in specifying in what sense Simon is a “zealot”; elsewhere, Luke can characterize believers as “zealous for the law” (21:20) or “for God” (22:3); it is also possible that Simon was simply “a zealous person,” and there is no reason to imagine that he belonged to a party of “Zealots” identified by Josephus, whose existence prior to the 60’s CE is not at all clear. (Note that, when they are present in Acts, revolutionaries stand in contrast to Jesus’ followers—e.g., 5:34–39; 21:37–40.) Most conspicuous about the list in Acts is its provision of only eleven names. Judas Iscariot has been dropped in a deliberate strategy that raises the need to rectify this shortage (thus, Acts 1:15–26).

The choice of twelve was almost certainly motivated by the symbolism of the number: the twelve disciples represented the twelve tribes of Israel. Apparently, Jesus shared the expectation of the eschatological restoration of the twelve tribes (cf. Hos 11:11; 2 Macc 1:27; 2:18). Note that Matt 19:28; Luke 22:28–30 encourage a relationship between the number twelve and the end-time rule. In his choice of the Twelve, then, Jesus calls Israel to repentance in anticipation of the arrival of the kingdom of God.

### 3.2. *The Women around Jesus*

Among Jesus’ companions during his public ministry, women were certainly included. This is widely attested in the scenes of Jesus’ crucifixion. According to Mark’s Gospel, for example, “There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem” (15:40–41). Women, too, played a central role in the post-resurrection appearances, as a consequence of their arrival at the tomb to exercise their piety in preparing Jesus’ body in burial (e.g., Luke 24:1–23). Located as they are at the end of the gospels, these texts are somewhat surprising, since the gospels otherwise have little to say about the presence of women among those who itinerated with Jesus. The well-known exception to this silence is Luke 8:1–3, which speaks of those who traveled with Jesus “through cities and villages”: “The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza,

and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.” Even this explicit report is not without precedent, however, since it is otherwise amply attested that Jesus conducted his ministry among women—a ministry that included healing, exorcism, teaching; and, among those women, those with and without homes, with and without family (e.g., Luke 4:38–39; 7:11–17, 36–50; 8:40–56; 10:38–42)—some of whom, having been the recipients of restoration, would have been incorporated into the community being formed around Jesus (cf. Mark 10:29–30). Read together, these Markan and Lukan texts make clear that women were both the recipients of and benefactors for Jesus’ ministry (with his graciousness toward them mirrored in their graciousness toward him), that women modeled in their lives Jesus’ own practices of service, and that, like the apostles, women were “with” Jesus as his disciples.

### 3.3. *Conclusion: Concentric Circles of Discipleship*

Jesus’ mission, oriented broadly to the restoration of Israel, encompassed relations with a wide array of persons along a well-nuanced continuum measured in terms of the depth of one’s response to his message. Thinking in terms of a series of concentric circles, the outermost circle would have been occupied by the undifferentiated crowds that gathered as recipients of his ministry, and sometimes followed him by the thousands. He taught them, fed them, and healed them. Indeed, his popularity was undoubtedly measured in large part by his status as a healer. In a world in which only the wealthy could afford the care of a trained physician, village people were especially vulnerable to the abuse of charlatans who took what little money they had but provided little by way of a cure (e.g., Mark 5:26) with the result that agents of divine healing were all the more attractive. The crowds comprised potential disciples, but also potential opponents, since they could be swayed one way or the other. The innermost circle was the Twelve and, within this group, three disciples in particular: Peter, James, and John (e.g., Matt 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33). Working from the inside, the next circle would have included the seventy-two whom Jesus sent out, two by two (Luke 10:1–20); women, named and unnamed, including Mary Magdalene, Susanna, Mary and Martha, and Joanna. And next would be those about whom we know almost nothing, except that they qualified themselves as members of Jesus’ extended family as persons who both heard the word of God and did



it (Luke 8:21), who were children of peace (Luke 10:5–7), persons (including Gentiles) who demonstrated faith (Luke 7:1–10) and love (Luke 7:36–50), who recognized Jesus as God’s Righteous One (Luke 23:40–43), and those whose discipleship was maintained secretly, at least for a time (John 19:38–39).

Of course, this image of concentric circles should not be pressed too far. The lines separating these groups are fuzzy and porous. For example, women, who are never mentioned among the circle of the Twelve, are present at Jesus’ crucifixion and, after the Sabbath, come to his place of burial, while, among this innermost circle, Peter denied Jesus, Judas betrayed him, and the rest deserted him. Conversely, some who belonged to groups more famous for their opposition to Jesus befriended him (John 7:50–51; Matt 27:57; Mark 15:43) or warned him of impending danger (Luke 13:31).

#### 4. *Foes*

If the portrait of Jesus and his followers weaves its way through our understanding of Jesus and his mission, this is balanced with a narrative thread of a different, more ominous sort. We can trace the ebb and flow of his popularity among the masses, as well as the strengthening and periodic waning of the loyalty of his most prominent followers. Far more predictable is the gradual but unrelenting crescendo of hostile forces aligned against him, beginning already in Galilee, culminating in his arrest, trial, and execution on a Roman cross.

How could it be otherwise? After all, Jesus’ predecessor and kin, John, had first been imprisoned and then put to death by Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Perea. If Jesus were to continue along the course set by John, of proclaiming and enacting the coming of God’s kingdom and drawing followers to his movement, how could Jesus’ fate be any different? Moreover, in Israel’s history, the fate of God’s prophets has been rejection and death at the hands of God’s own people (e.g., Neh 9:26; Jer 2:30). Given that, whatever else he might have been, Jesus was regarded by others and understood himself in prophetic terms (e.g., Matt 21:11, 46; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:16–30; 7:16; 13:33; 22:64; 24:19; John 4:19; 6:14; 7:40; 9:17), would he not similarly attract ill-will and violent action? Indeed, according to the gospels, Jesus himself anticipated his suffering and death at the hands of the Jerusalem leadership (elders, chief priests, and scribes) and the Gen-

tiles (e.g., Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). Reflecting backward over the whole of the gospels, and not only their passion accounts, we find that those aligned against Jesus included especially the Pharisees, scribes, Herodians, and Sadducees.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.1. *Jesus and the Pharisees*

Among the expressions of Judaism in the Second Temple period, the Pharisaic movement is perhaps the most susceptible to misunderstanding by readers of the New Testament. This is due in part to the overt hostility between the Pharisees and the movement associated with Jesus. In the gospels, Pharisees are generally depicted in opposition to Jesus and his followers. They monitor his behavior, are critical of his words and deeds, and plan his demise. Conversely, Jesus warns his followers against the godless piety of the Pharisees, counters their traditions of instruction, and undermines their machinations for positions of honor. Misunderstanding is also possible due to the inordinate amount of interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees, according to the gospels, potentially giving rise to the mistaken impression that the Pharisees were numerous and/or were formally recognized as leaders within Judaism. Moreover, the heightened record of hostility between the Pharisees and Jesus can overshadow the degree to which Jesus' message and Pharisaic beliefs overlapped and, indeed, the degree to which they regarded him as one of their own—so much so that members of this group, known for its scruples around the choice of table companions, repeatedly share their tables with Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Although some Pharisees would have belonged to the circle of professional scribes (see below), Pharisaism was a lay movement, with adherents drawn from all walks of life. Central to any portrait of the Pharisees is their concern with assiduous interpretation of Torah, debating and extending the traditions of interpretation they had inherited. This does not make them a “religious” group, pure and simple,

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<sup>13</sup> For fuller treatment, see, e.g., John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, 3: Companions and Competitors*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 2001), Part Two; and the older, but still useful Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> In fact, it is precisely the similarity between Jesus and the Pharisees that helps to explain the hostility between them, as this is recorded in the gospels. This is because their similarities raised the stakes on determining what was distinctive, with the identity of one worked out to a significant degree in the negation of the other.

since any vision for the life and future of the Jewish people would be necessarily social and political, as well as religious. Theirs was a reform movement, and they competed with other movements within Judaism for adherents and influence. The evidence suggests that their interpretations and practices focused on full tithing, the proper observance of Sabbath, and the application of ritual purity, more generally associated with the temple, to daily life, including the preparation and consumption of food. Their concern for holiness in these areas expressed itself in relative segregation from others—not withdrawal from society at large, but separation from those who did not exercise their level of scrupulousness. In effect, concerns for holiness at the table extended from what they ate to the holiness of the persons with whom they ate, contributing to their reputation for maintaining an exclusive table fellowship. Pharisees were also known for their belief in the resurrection.

Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God shaped and colored the entirety of his mission and message, so it is easy to overlook the degree to which he shared Pharisaic beliefs and practices. They shared a belief in the resurrection, trained their disciples in acts of piety such as prayer, and embraced the ongoing authority of Torah, concerning themselves with its faithful appropriation. The similarity between Jesus and the Pharisees is evidenced above all in his repeated presence with them at the table, though it is also at the table that he most powerfully distinguished himself from Pharisaism. They apparently regarded him as one of their number, yet, in their presence at the table Jesus criticized their attitudes toward tithing, their segregating themselves from the marginal, and their interest in roles of privilege. He transgresses their interpretations of Torah with regard to keeping the Sabbath holy and to purity—not because he dismissed Torah but because he interpreted Torah differently, particularly with regard to the demarcation between purity and impurity. Instead of imagining that ritual impurity was a contagion, Jesus seems to have imagined that holiness of heart and life could be communicated among others. When Jesus denounced Pharisaic hypocrisy, he was characterizing them less as play-acting or disingenuous (as the Greeks would have understood "hypocrisy") and more as persons who misconstrue and nullify God's will by drafting Torah to serve their own interpretations.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For this broader understanding of "hypocrisy," see Job 34:30; 36:13; David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, *NovT* 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

Though the Pharisees are typically aligned against Jesus and his movement, and are remembered to have conspired against him (e.g., Mark 3:6), the overall portrait is more ambivalent. He was a guest at their table, for example, and they warned Jesus against Herod's desire to put him to death (Luke 13:31). Paul was and remained a Pharisee, and, in Acts, Christianity and Pharisaism shared a common hope in Israel's restoration (Acts 23:6–8; 26:5–7). Though in the gospels they are often singularly aligned against Jesus during his Galilee ministry, Pharisees are virtually absent from the gospel accounts of his days in Jerusalem and play no role in his passion.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.2. *Jesus and the Scribes*

“Scribe” in antiquity might refer to a wide range of roles up and down the social, political, and educational ladder—much like the modern-day term “secretary,” which refers as easily to a typist as to a chief executive officer of an organization or a governmental official at the cabinet level.<sup>17</sup> The gospels tend to use the term with a more narrow referent, however. “Scribes” are legal experts, teachers of the law, both guardians and purveyors of the traditions of interpretation of Torah, generally associated with Jerusalem, and almost universally opposed to Jesus. Matthew may hint at a more positive assessment of the scribal role and of individual scribes (e.g., Matt 8:19; 13:52; 23:34; cf. Mark 8:11–13; 12:28–34), but even in Matthew's Gospel scribes, as a group, are implicated in disputes with Jesus and in the move against Jesus that led to his crucifixion (e.g., Matt 15:1; 16:21; 21:15–16; 26:57). And in Matt 23 Jesus rails against the scribes, together with the Pharisees, for their hypocrisy. According to Mark 1:22, the essential difference between Jesus and the scribes is the manner of his teaching. Those gathered in the Capernaum synagogue “. . . were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Rather than deliberately setting his instruction within the great stream of interpretation tradition, Jesus' instruction had a charismatic hue, comprising speech acts in which he seemed to speak directly on God's behalf, using images and axioms whose logic did not require the

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<sup>16</sup> The exceptions are John 18:3 (the Pharisees are said to have joined the chief priests in sending out a police to join the posse in Jesus' arrest), and Matt 27:62–66 (after Jesus' death, the Pharisees join the chief priests in ensuring that Jesus' tomb is secured).

<sup>17</sup> Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 242.

verification of tradition, framed in reference to Scripture directly and not as mediated through authoritative traditions of interpretation, and, at least in part, validated through his ministry of healing and other miracles (cf. Mark 1:27; 6:2).

#### 4.3. *Jesus and the Herodians*

Almost nothing is known of the Herodians, but must be gleaned from the name itself. *Herodiani* denotes “those who ally themselves with Herod.” Since “Herod” can represent the Herodian dynasty, which ruled the area of Palestine from 50 BCE to around CE 100, the term might refer more broadly to those who supported one of the Herods or the dynastic regime. Herodians appear in the gospels at two points.<sup>18</sup> In Mark 3:6, in the context of Jesus’ healing on the Sabbath, they are aligned with the Pharisees in a conspiracy how to destroy Jesus. In Mark 12:13 (Matt 22:16), they appear again with the Pharisees, now in an attempt to entrap Jesus with the question, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?” Political reverberations emanate from both texts—from the first on account of the need to involve the reigning Herod (presumably Herod Antipas, who bore responsibility for John’s decapitation) in a decision for capital punishment, and from the second on account of the ramifications of paying, or refusing to pay, tribute to Caesar. That the servants of Herod were not universally antagonistic toward Jesus is indicated by the presence of “Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza” among Jesus’ followers (Luke 8:3) and, later, of “Manaen, a member of the court of Herod the ruler” among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1).

#### 4.4. *Jesus and the Sadducees*

The Sadducees are mentioned explicitly only 14 times in the New Testament, but their hand is felt in the events leading to Jesus’ passion. Our sources are consistent in noting the antagonism between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Certainly, they differed with regard to belief in the resurrection and afterlife, a point on which Pharisees and Christians would have been allied against the Sadducees (e.g., Mark 12:18–27; Acts 23:1–10; Josephus, *War* 2.163–165; *Ant.* 18.14, 16). In the

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<sup>18</sup> See also Mark 8:15 where “the yeast of Herod” appears in tandem with “the yeast of the Pharisees.”

gospels and Acts, the Sadducees are proximally associated with Jerusalem, and especially with the temple, from which they garnered their authority and status. Although the Jerusalem Council, or Sanhedrin, would have included both Pharisees and Sadducees (as Luke notes in Acts 23:6–7), in the passion accounts of the New Testament gospels, the Sanhedrin is represented by the Sadducees, whose numbers would have been drawn from the families of the chief priests and Jerusalem aristocrats (cf. Acts 4:1–2; 5:17; Josephus *Ant.* 13.297–298; 18.16–17). Accordingly, they would have heard any statement against the Temple, whether by Jesus or Stephen (Acts 6:8–8:2), as a direct challenge.

### 5. Conclusion

As with any person, so Jesus' identity is worked out significantly in the context of his social relationships—his family, friends, and foes. What is startling about the relationships we have surveyed is their multi-textured character. Family is redefined. Jesus' closest associates are slow to grasp the nature of his mission and the nature of his identity before God. As for his enemies, although as character groups they are aligned against him, taken individually members of these groups are capable of a more positive valuation of and association with Jesus. From the standpoint of discipleship with Jesus, this is important insofar as it underscores the potential of any of his followers, past and present, to find themselves allied with his enemies. Hence, Jesus' words ring down through the ages, setting parameters around his understanding of family in terms of hearing and putting into practice the will of God (e.g., Luke 8:18, 21), and urging his followers to be on the lookout for the tendencies resident in every person to embrace beliefs and behaviors more at home with his enemies than with his friends (e.g., Matt 6:1; Mark 12:38; Luke 12:1).



# THE LANGUAGE(S) JESUS SPOKE

STANLEY E. PORTER

## 1. *Introduction*

There are three major questions that may be posed in regard to the language or languages that Jesus may have spoken: What are the languages that Jesus could have spoken? What is the New Testament evidence regarding the languages that he spoke? And what, from a linguistic perspective, can we say regarding the languages that Jesus may have spoken? Numerous articles and books have recently recounted and discussed the various types of evidence available to make estimates regarding the likelihood that Jesus may or may not have spoken any given language. Most of this research presents itself in terms of documenting the types of material remains, such as inscriptions, papyri, and other documentary and literary evidence available. I myself have presented and discussed such evidence on previous occasions.<sup>1</sup> Rather than rehearse this evidence again, in this article I wish to place the question of the language or languages that Jesus may have spoken within a number of larger contexts implicated by the questions posed above. These contexts include the possible languages that Jesus could have spoken as a Jew of first-century Galilee and Palestine, the New Testament evidence regarding the languages that he spoke, and linguistic considerations regarding the languages that Jesus may have spoken. Before these tasks can be addressed, however, a number of useful preliminary definitions should be offered.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., S. E. Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluating the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 123–154; idem, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), esp. 126–180; and idem, "Greek Language," in *New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. K. D. Sakenfeld, vol. 2: *D-H* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 673–681, among a number of sources. Pertinent bibliography is cited in these sources, as well as in my chapter in volume 1 of this series on Greek Language Criteria.



## 2. *Preliminary Definitions*

To facilitate the ensuing discussion, it is useful to recognize the complexity of language acquisition and production, especially in a multilingual context such as that of the Greco-Roman world.<sup>2</sup> As a result, it is worth differentiating several sets of terms.

The first set of terms attempts to characterize language acquisition and production by means of various times of acquisition and types of competence. One set of terms involves diachronic categories, such as first language acquisition versus second or subsequent language acquisition. This is sometimes also described in relation to primary or secondary language facility. This set of categories does not necessarily say anything about language competence, but about the order and age of acquisition, and the possible attrition of a first language.<sup>3</sup> Thus, one might well say that a person born in Rome in the first century might have first language acquisition of Latin if the person was a citizen of an eminent family and second language acquisition of Greek, and be fully bilingual. Government officials may well have had such linguistic competence, such as Pilate. Another set of terms involves synchronic categories. This involves distinguishing between active or productive versus passive or receptive multilingualism. This type of linguistic competence constitutes variable points along a cline or continuum, rather than constituting a dichotomy. Active multilingualism means that the speaker has the ability to understand and to express himself or herself in a given language, but passive multilingualism means that the speaker is able to understand but not to express herself or himself in that language (the question of how well one expresses oneself might be further parsed, if necessary).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See B. Spolsky, "Bilingualism," in *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey*. IV. *Language: The Socio-Cultural Context*, ed. F. J. Newmeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 100–118.

<sup>3</sup> On these and related issues, see P. Fletcher and M. Garman, eds., *Language Acquisition: Studies in First Language Development*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); W. Klein, *Second Language Acquisition*, CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); K. Hyltenstam and L. K. Obler, eds., *Bilingualism across the Lifespan: Aspects of Acquisition, Maturity, and Loss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); H. W. Seliger and R. M. Vago, eds., *First Language Attrition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> See H. Baetens Beardsmore, *Bilingualism: Basic Principles*, 2nd ed. *Multilingual Matters 1* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1986) 1–42; cf. F. Grosjean, *Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

A second term that needs to be defined is *lingua franca*. There has been some misunderstanding of this term in recent discussion. A *lingua franca* is defined as follows: "Where a mixed speech community uses a natural language as a convenient general medium it is known as a *lingua franca*..."<sup>5</sup> Note that it is a natural language, such as was Greek, used in a multilingual or mixed speech community so as to constitute a common medium.<sup>6</sup> It is well established, and will not be argued further here, that Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world, and especially of the eastern Mediterranean and Roman east.<sup>7</sup>

A third term is that of prestige language.<sup>8</sup> A variety of sociolinguistic factors, such as power, economics, social hierarchy, and education, push toward one variety of language constituting the prestige language. In the environment of Alexandrian multilingualism, the prestige language would have been koine Greek, the *lingua franca* of the dominant economic, political and educational powers, first the Greek rulers and then the Romans, and it would have been the first language especially of those in positions of institutional control, as well as of others with important social positions. In the multilingual environment of Palestine, the prestige language (while still koine Greek, the *lingua franca*) was probably a second language for many more people than in Egypt.<sup>9</sup>

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Press, 1982); J. F. Hamers and M. H. A. Blanc, *Bilinguality and Bilingualism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> B. Comrie, "Languages of the World: Who Speaks What," in *An Encyclopaedia of Language*, N. E. Collinge (London: Routledge, 1992), 956–983, here 982. Comrie notes that Latin has often served as a *lingua franca* (hence the use of Latin for the terminology), such as in the medieval church.

<sup>6</sup> M. Casey, "In Which Language Did Jesus Teach?" *ExpTim* 108.11 (1997): 326–328, here 326; idem, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel*, SNTSMS 102 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78, contends that Aramaic was the "*lingua franca* of Israel." No one is denying that Aramaic was a first language for many, probably most, Jews born in Palestine, but this fails to fit the definition above.

<sup>7</sup> See G. Horrocks, *Greek: A History of the Language and its Speakers* (London: Longmans, 1997), 72.

<sup>8</sup> See E. Haugen, "Problems of Bilingualism," *Lingua* 12 (1950): 271–290, esp. 278; R. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, 2nd ed., CTL (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30–34; W. Downes, *Language and Society*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 185–196. Cf. S. E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood*, SBG 1 (New York: Lang, 1989), 154–155.

<sup>9</sup> A number of scholars have been confused on the issue of prestige language. Hebrew may have been the prestige language in relation to Aramaic, but Greek was the prestige language of Palestine in relation to the Semitic languages, Aramaic included. See Porter, *Criteria*, 175.

Therefore, asking the question of the languages spoken by Jesus involves potentially a complex of issues. He may have had first language active ability in one language, but active or passive abilities in a number of second or subsequent languages. The question of which languages Jesus spoke seems to imply a moderately active competence, that is, more than passive competence such as would be indicated by being able to understand a spoken language, yet not necessarily as much competence as would be required to actively and regularly teach in the language, although this might be the result indicated (to say nothing of whether Jesus could write or not).<sup>10</sup>

### 3. *The Possible Languages that Jesus May have Spoken*

The world in which Jesus lived was one of linguistic diversity. Discussion of the languages of Jesus typically attempts to limit the number of languages by only examining a limited number of possibilities: Aramaic ostensibly because he was Jewish, Hebrew possibly because he was Jewish, perhaps Greek because he lived in Roman-controlled Palestine, and Latin because of Roman occupation.<sup>11</sup> This characterization typically overlooks the full range of possible languages with which Jesus would have come into contact—even if it is unlikely that he would have spoken them.

This linguistic diversity is revealed both synchronically and diachronically. In terms of synchrony, there were numerous local languages that were possibly available for Jesus to speak.<sup>12</sup> Many if not most of these were Afro-Asiatic languages that were spoken in the northeast of Africa, across Palestine and into Arabia.<sup>13</sup> The Afro-

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<sup>10</sup> There has been a variety of opinion on whether Jesus could write. On the basis of his being a teacher, and in the light of his indicated reading competence, it is plausible that he could write. This is not the place to explore this topic.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., most studies, including the excellent one by J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Languages of Palestine in the First Century AD,” originally published in *CBQ* 32 (1970): 501–531; repr. in *The Language of the New Testament: Classic Essays*, ed. S. E. Porter, *JSNTSup* 60 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 126–162. In terms of the title of his essay, Fitzmyer is probably correct to restrict his article to the four languages.

<sup>12</sup> Jerusalem was a world-city and attracted people from all over the Mediterranean world, as Acts 2 indicates. I am not discussing all the possible languages that would have come to Palestine, but the ones in contact with Palestine with which Jesus could have come into contact.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., A. Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, trans. J. Elwolde (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25–27; M. Hadas-Lebel, *Histoire de*

Asiatic language family can be divided into a number of subgroups and subbranches. In ancient times, these included the Egyptian language, written with Demotic characters (and which later under Christian influence was developed into Coptic).<sup>14</sup> The Semitic subgroup of languages would have been the most widespread in Palestine and the surrounding areas. Many of these languages would have been regional varieties of Aramaic, which resulted once the influence of the Persian Empire had been curtailed in the fourth century BCE. Examples of Aramaic dialects would include Palestinian Aramaic spoken in Palestine,<sup>15</sup> and Nabataean spoken in the Nabataean region that stretched from east of the Jordan to the Negev.<sup>16</sup> Hebrew, if it were a spoken language of the time (see below), would also have been one of these Semitic languages. Besides the Afro-Asiatic languages, there would have been several languages from the Indo-European family that may have been spoken by Jesus as well, in particular the koine Greek of the first century and Latin. There were of course other possible languages throughout the Roman Empire of the first century, but these would have constituted the major languages that Jesus may have spoken on the basis of contact with native speakers.

On the basis of his contact through living and travel, there are six possible languages that Jesus may have spoken: Palestinian Aramaic, Hebrew, koine Greek, Latin, Ancient Egyptian and Nabataean. Jesus is not recorded as having passed through or spent any time in Nabataea, and so it is unlikely he spoke Nabataean, though it was a possibility. If the account of Jesus traveling to Egypt is to be taken seriously (see Matt 2:13–21), there is the possibility that Jesus would have at least come into passive contact with speakers of ancient Egyptian, over the course of what would have been at most two years in Egypt. However, the Jewish community in Egypt would have had Greek or Aramaic as

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*la langue Hébraïque: Des origines à l'époque de la Mishna* (Paris: Peeters, 1995), esp. 8–9, 12–21; K. Katzner, *The Languages of the World*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 7, 27–28; cf. Comrie, “Languages of the World,” esp. 958–959, 973.

<sup>14</sup> Katzner, *Languages*, 158–159.

<sup>15</sup> See L. T. Stuckenbruck, “An Approach to the New Testament through Aramaic Sources: The Recent Methodological Debate,” *JSP* 8 (1991): 3–29; cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, “The Phases of the Aramaic Language,” in his *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*, SBLMS 25 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 57–84.

<sup>16</sup> See G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 12–27, 59–75, 90–109. Nabataean has now been found in some of the Nahal Hever documents.

its first language,<sup>17</sup> and so Jesus' learning Egyptian would have been unlikely. There is little doubt that Jesus heard Latin on numerous occasions, as it was used by those in authority in the Roman Empire, but again it would have been a passive use as he would not have needed it for any regular communication. The question regarding Hebrew (see below) is whether Hebrew was a ritual language, or whether it was an active language. In any case, as a Jewish man with religious interests there is at least the opportunity for Jesus to have learned Hebrew. On the basis of what has been noted above, Jesus no doubt had active contact with users of Greek and Aramaic, with the likelihood that Aramaic was the first language of his home.

#### 4. *New Testament Evidence for the Languages that Jesus Spoke*

The evidence from the New Testament regarding languages that Jesus spoke provides a variety of direct and indirect evidence, as well as what might best be called inferential evidence. There are no direct statements regarding Jesus' knowledge of language in the gospels, so far as I can tell.

##### 4.1. *Direct Evidence*

Direct evidence involves an episode or episodes in the New Testament in which Jesus is depicted as either actively using or passively understanding a given language. There is direct evidence of various kinds that Jesus actively used Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew.

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<sup>17</sup> For Aramaic Egyptian evidence, see Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramean*, passim; for Greek Egyptian Jewish evidence, besides documentary papyri and translation of the Old Greek Bible (Septuagint), see V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (New York: Atheneum, 1975 [1959]), 347, who states that "Jews outside Palestine spoke, wrote, and generally thought in Greek," citing evidence including Philo, *Conf. Ling.* 129, who refers to Greek as "our language" (524–525). It is worth noting that the vast majority of Jews who lived in the Greco-Roman world lived outside of Palestine and Greek was their first language, whether they learned Aramaic or Hebrew as a second language or not. See S. E. Porter, "The Greek of the Jews and Early Christians: The Language of the People," in *In Search of Philip R. Davies: Whose Festschrift is it Anyway?*, ed. D. Burns and J. Rogerson (London: T&T Clark, forthcoming).

#### 4.1.1. *Greek*

All four of the gospels are written in Greek. Papias says that there were logia of Matthew in a Semitic language (according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16), but scholars on this point are undecided what this passage means and how it relates to our canonical Gospels.<sup>18</sup> The extant literary evidence is that the gospels as we know them were in Greek from the earliest records that we have. This means that Jesus is clearly depicted in the Gospels as speaking and understanding Greek in virtually all of his conversations. This means that he is recorded as speaking in Greek with his closest associates, such as the disciples and other close followers, his opponents such as the Pharisees and other religious leaders, those he encounters in the everyday routine of life, extraordinary people that he encounters, and religious and civic authorities. On the basis of this appearing to be an unrealistic possibility, earlier scholarship at one time posited that the gospels must have been translated documents out of the Semitic language that Jesus spoke on all such occasions.<sup>19</sup> However, no such earlier documents have been discovered. More to the point, however, even many who hold to Jesus primarily speaking a Semitic language do not take the gospels as translated documents but as literary documents in Greek.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4.1.2. *Aramaic*

The direct evidence for Jesus speaking Aramaic consists of a number of instances where Jesus is recorded as citing a few words in Aramaic. Sometimes these are phrases, but sometimes they are simply individual words (see section 5 for lists of the words). It is worth noting that in every instance where Jesus is reported as using an Aramaic phrase (Mark 5:41; 7:23; 15:34//Matt 27:46), a translation of the Aramaic is offered by the author. This does not necessarily have relevance to whether Jesus used Aramaic, but may well indicate that the author believed that the audience would not understand Aramaic without a translational gloss.

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<sup>18</sup> For options, see L. M. McDonald and S. E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 297–298.

<sup>19</sup> See my chapter in this set of volumes on Greek Language Criteria for a recent survey of this evidence.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 274.

#### 4.1.3. *Hebrew*

Direct evidence regarding Jesus speaking Hebrew is very limited, and consists of his possibly speaking Hebrew when he calls out to God while on the cross: *eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani* (Mark 15:34; see discussion below). There is dispute among scholars over the language of this cry in the two New Testament passages.

Thus the direct evidence is strong that Jesus spoke Greek, because he is recorded as speaking Greek, while there is also direct evidence that he spoke some Aramaic and perhaps Hebrew.

#### 4.2. *Indirect Evidence*

Indirect evidence consists of situations and circumstances, including conversational partners, where the evidence, while not directly evidencing the language used, would indirectly indicate that a particular language was spoken by Jesus. The indirect evidence is much more difficult to assess, because of the diachronic linguistic developments of the Jewish people. Even though the Jewish people spoke Hebrew when they went into exile in 586 BCE, when they emerged from exile after only a relatively short amount of time in 537 BCE, they spoke Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the extensive Persian Empire. Those who resettled in Palestine continued widespread use of Aramaic. For those Jews who relocated to other places in the wider Mediterranean world, the evidence indicates that by the time of the first century CE the vast majority of the Jews of the Mediterranean world, and especially the vast majority living outside of Palestine, spoke Greek as a first language. As a result, the indirect evidence seems to indicate that Jesus spoke Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew, and possibly Latin.

##### 4.2.1. *Greek*

In previous research, I have investigated contexts in which the various factors, such as conversationalists and subjects, may have indicated the use of Greek on a given occasion. These occasions include (others have been explored as well): John 12:20–28, Jesus' discussion with certain Greeks; Matt 8:5–13//John 4:46–54, Jesus' conversation with the centurion or commander; Luke 17:11–19, Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan leper; John 4:4–26, Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman; Mark 2:13–14//Matt 9:9//Luke 5:27–28, Jesus' calling of Levi/Matthew; Mark 7:25–30//Matt 15:21–28, Jesus' conversation with the Syrophenician or Canaanite woman; Mark 12:13–17//Matt 22:16–22//Luke 20:2–26, Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees and Herodi-

ans regarding the Roman coin; Mark 8:27–30//Matt 16:13–20//Luke 9:18–22, Jesus’ conversation with his disciples near Caesarea Philippi; Mark 15:2–5//Matt 27:11–14//Luke 23:2–4//John 18:29–38, Jesus’ trial before Pilate.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4.2.2. *Aramaic*

There is significant and noteworthy indirect evidence that Aramaic was spoken by Jesus on a number of occasions. Even though the vast majority of the Jews worldwide may have spoken Greek even as a first language, probably the numbers were larger who spoke Aramaic in Palestine as a first language. Nehemiah 8:8 indicates that when Nehemiah read the law to the Jewish people who had returned to Palestine from exile, they could not understand the sacred text in Hebrew, and he had to translate into their language, which would have been Aramaic (hence Targums were developed). Similarly, the Jewish people of Palestine in the first century, including the religious leaders—regardless of whatever other language they may or may not have known—continued to use Aramaic as their first language. Thus, when Jesus spoke with various Jewish people he encountered, such as the local Jewish population up to Jewish religious leaders—even though he is recorded as using Greek<sup>22</sup>—he would have used Aramaic.

#### 4.2.3. *Hebrew*

The indirect evidence for continued use of Hebrew apart from religious contexts is not strong. Even though many of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written in Hebrew, this does not necessarily indicate the widespread use of Hebrew by the local population, or by Jesus. Nevertheless, it is still possible that there is indirect evidence that Jesus used Hebrew, especially when he was in a specifically liturgical context. One of these occasions may have been the episode in Luke 4:16–21 in the Nazareth synagogue, when he is handed the scroll of Isaiah to read. Jesus reads a passage that combines Isa 61:1 with Isa 58:6. The composite nature of his quotation may raise the question of whether Jesus was reading a paraphrase or even an Aramaic paraphrase, but the

<sup>21</sup> See Porter, *Criteria*, 141–164; idem, “Luke 17:11–19 and the Criteria for Authenticity Revisited,” *JSHJ* 1.2 (2003): 201–224.

<sup>22</sup> The exception would be those contexts noted above where the evidence indicates that Jesus used Greek.



presumption would be that he read in Hebrew from the biblical scroll, perhaps interpreting it as he read.

#### 4.2.4. *Latin*

Roman officials who were stationed throughout the Empire made virtually no attempt to become linguistically acclimatized, especially in a relative frontier posting such as Palestine. Instead, they carried on much of their local business by using the *lingua franca* of the Empire, Greek, and by using the official language, Latin, when official circumstances warranted it. As noted above, it is entirely possible and even most likely that Pilate spoke to Jesus (as well as the Jewish leaders) in Greek. However, Pilate knew Latin, and so the conversation between Jesus and Pilate provides the only possible indirect evidence that their conversation may have been in Latin. This evidence is weak.

### 4.3. *Inferential Evidence*

Inferential evidence is evidence where there is not either direct or indirect evidence, but where inferences can be drawn on the basis of the contexts presented in the gospels regarding the languages that Jesus may have spoken. The inferential evidence is that Jesus spoke Greek, Aramaic, and possibly Hebrew.

#### 4.3.1. *Greek*

The inferential support for Jesus actively using Greek is severalfold. One is that the vast majority of Jews in the Mediterranean world used Greek as a first language, and if not as a first, as a second language. Another is that there were numerous Jews, even within Palestine, who used Greek, as is indicated by a range of evidence (e.g., Acts 6:1, which refers to Greek-speaking Jews;<sup>23</sup> the further evidence is summarized below in section 5). A third is that bilingualism, or perhaps better, multilingualism, was a much more widely accepted and understood phenomenon in the ancient world, especially among oppressed peoples in the midst of the Roman Empire, than we usually recognize. As a fourth, the nature of the trade that Jesus was involved in, and the trades of his closest companions, would have required that he have a level of communicative competence in Greek to sell his products to

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<sup>23</sup> See Porter, *Criteria*, 141 n. 33.

those who traded in the area, some of whom could have come from Decapolis cities. A fifth is that Jesus came from a region, the Galilee, where there was significant influence of Greek language use. A final argument is that Jesus encountered a number of situations, involving both people and circumstances, in which it is implausible to believe that he spoke with them in another language except Greek (see the indirect evidence above).

#### 4.3.2. *Aramaic*

The inferential support for Jesus actively using Aramaic is also manifold in nature. One is that it is the language that one would have expected a Jew to use in first-century Palestine. A second is that Jesus was a religious teacher and so he was in constant contact with those who were most closely associated with the traditional Jewish establishment, one that especially wanted to maintain many of its cultural and religious characteristics, even in the face of near-overwhelming external cultural influence from Greco-Roman society. A third is that the nature of Jesus' discussions and those with whom he conducted these conversations in many, if not most, instances fits an Aramaic language context. For example, Jesus was known and widely recognized as a teacher of parables, and the parables that he used were often associated not with philosophical concepts but with situations in day-to-day life (e.g., sowing, managing land, etc.).<sup>24</sup> A fourth is that there are glimpses throughout the gospels, by means of the citations of Jesus speaking Aramaic, especially at crucial times (such as during a healing), that he regularly spoke Aramaic, even if the gospels are in Greek for a later Greek-speaking audience.

#### 4.3.3. *Hebrew*

There is some inferential evidence that Jesus spoke Hebrew. While this evidence is not nearly as strong as it is for the active use of Greek and Aramaic, nevertheless, the arguments are worth recounting. One is that there are a select number of episodes where it makes more sense to infer that Jesus spoke Hebrew than it does any other language. These episodes would include some of his religious encounters (e.g., with the religious leaders, such as the Sanhedrin) and the episode in

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<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke (London: SCM Press, 1972), 21.

Luke 4 in the Nazareth synagogue, among possibly others. Another is that Hebrew was the traditional, historical and scriptural language of the Jewish people, and it is plausible that those who were intent upon preserving the essentials of Judaism, as Jesus claimed to be (Matt 5:17–19, where he uses an example from Semitic language features), would also be interested in preserving the traditional language of the Jewish people, especially in the face of Roman oppression. A third is that there is other evidence from outside of the gospels, such as the Dead Sea community, that indicates a plausible linguistic background, and possible widespread use, at least by one group, of Hebrew.

### 5. *Linguistic Considerations Regarding the Languages that Jesus Spoke*

Before entering into more detailed linguistic considerations regarding the languages that Jesus spoke, it is worth summarizing the material evidence for the use of the major languages: Greek, Aramaic, Hebrew and Latin.<sup>25</sup>

#### 5.1. *The Evidence*

##### 5.1.1. *Greek*

Scholars have long recognized the role that Greek played in Palestine, including among the indigenous Jewish population there, with recent scholarship often noting the potential multilingual environment. This is legitimated by the fact that Greek, on the basis of the conquests of Alexander the Great and the subsequent establishment of his Greek Empires, which the Romans usurped, was the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire, and especially of the eastern portion of that Empire. This influence of Greek as a language of trade included both Galilee in the north and major cultural centers such as Jerusalem further to the south. The evidence for the widespread use of Greek, including the possibility that Greek was a language of Jesus, entails the following considerations. There is widespread and significant epigraphic, docu-

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<sup>25</sup> In what follows, I freely paraphrase material that I first presented in Porter, “Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee,” 123–129; idem, “Did Jesus Ever Teach in Greek?” repr. in *Studies in the Greek New Testament*, SBG 6 (New York: Lang, 1996), 139–171, esp. 140–144; idem, *Criteria*, 164–180. A fuller bibliography is included in those publications.

mentary and literary evidence of the use of Greek. This includes there being more Greek than other inscriptions in most significant regions of Palestine, with Greek inscriptions roughly equaling those in Aramaic in Jerusalem. Documentary evidence includes the many preserved papyrus documents from Egypt that arise out of similar linguistic contexts, finding correlation in the Bar Kokhba Greek epistolary evidence. The literary evidence includes original Jewish works composed in Greek (e.g., 1 Esdras, 2 Maccabees, Pseudo-Eupolemus, Eupolemus, Jason of Cyrene, and possibly some testamentary literature) or translated into Greek (e.g., 1 Maccabees, Esther, Song of Songs, Lamentations and Qoheleth) in Palestine. Further, the New Testament itself, as noted above, has been transmitted from its earliest documents in Greek.

#### 5.1.2. *Aramaic*

Scholars have long agreed—since at least the late nineteenth century—that Aramaic constituted the predominant first language of the indigenous Jewish population of Palestine, including Galilee, and hence the primary language of Jesus, in which he had active first-language competence. The direct evidence, as noted above, is not as strong for this position as some scholars would like to think; nevertheless, this hypothesis regarding Aramaic rests securely upon a number of established facts. These include the observation that, even though Greek clearly constituted the *lingua franca* of the Greco-Roman world of the first century, Greek in Palestine never fully replaced Aramaic, which had become the predominant Jewish language of Palestine since the return from the exile. The claim of Aramaic to be the predominant Jewish language, in terms of primary language usage by Jews, includes the following: Aramaic portions of the biblical writings of Daniel and Ezra and non-canonical *1 Enoch*, a large amount of inscriptional evidence (some may be Hebrew, and most is proper names),<sup>26</sup> including ossuaries, and epistolary, papyrological and literary evidence (some late, however), both from Qumran and from other Judean Desert sites such as Murabba'at, Masada and Nahal Hever. The direct evidence for Jesus' use of Aramaic, as indicated above, includes Mark 5:41 with *talitha koum*, 7:34 with *ephphatha*,<sup>27</sup> and 15:34//Matt 27:46 with

<sup>26</sup> Fitzmyer, "Languages of Palestine," 149.

<sup>27</sup> See J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1971), 7 n. 4, for an argument for this probably as Aramaic.

Aramaic used in Mark and possibly a composite Hebrew/Aramaic quotation used in Matthew,<sup>28</sup> for complete clauses (even if only one word in length), and a number of other Aramaic words: e.g., *abba* (Mark 14:36), *amen* (used 59 times in the gospels);<sup>29</sup> *bar/bene* (Matt 16:17; Mark 3:17), *be'el* (Matt 10:2; 12:27//Luke 11:19; but see below); *gehinnam* (Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Matt 5:22, 29–30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Luke 12:5); *kepa* (John 1:43); *mamona* (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:9, 11, 13); *pasha* (Mark 14:14//Matt 26:18//Luke 22:7; Matt 26:2; Luke 22:8, 15); *reqa* (Matt 5:22); *sabbeta* (Mark 3:4; Matt 12:5, 10–12); *sata* (Matt 13:33//Luke 13:21); *satana* (Mark 3:23, 26; 8:33; Matt 12:26; 16:23; Luke 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:31).<sup>30</sup>

Throughout discussion regarding the strength of the Aramaic evidence, there have been some scholars who believed that Aramaic was in a period of decline in the two centuries on either side of the time of Jesus Christ. However, in the last fifty years or so, this theory has receded in the light of a plethora of important language-related discoveries that have confirmed the place of the Aramaic language within Palestine, and hence in Jesus' ambit.

### 5.1.3. *Hebrew*

By comparison to those who argue for the use of Aramaic by Jesus, there is a relatively small group of scholars that maintains that some form of Hebrew—either biblical or Mishnaic—was an important language in first-century Palestine and used actively by Jesus, possibly as a first and certainly as a second language. According to Birkeland, Jesus, being from the lower classes and not the elite, would have used Hebrew as opposed to Aramaic.<sup>31</sup> Segal, on the other hand, on the basis of the rabbinic writings, suggests that Mishnaic Hebrew was the predominant Jewish vernacular for Jews of all social levels from 400 BCE to the middle of the second century CE.<sup>32</sup> The evidence on which such conclusions as Segal's rest includes: the Hebrew Judean Desert documents, such as those from Qumran and the Bar Kokhba letters; a

<sup>28</sup> Jeremias, *Theology*, 5 n. 2.

<sup>29</sup> See Jeremias, *Theology*, 35–36.

<sup>30</sup> All of the above are taken from Jeremias, *Theology*, 5–6. I exclude proper names and place names. Some have suggested that “son of man” is Aramaic, or at least distinctly Semitic. This is questionable. See Porter, *Criteria*, 167–168 n. 113.

<sup>31</sup> H. Birkeland, *The Language of Jesus* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1954).

<sup>32</sup> M. H. Segal, *A Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 5–19.

small number of Hebrew inscriptions, including ossuaries; and numismatic and literary evidence, such as the writing of Ben Sira. Although Jesus is not recorded as reading anything aloud in Luke 4:16–30, the evidence may include at least part of what he uttered from the cross (see above), the use of *amen* (if this has not been taken over into Aramaic), *ephphatha* (Mark 7:34; probably taken over into Aramaic), *korban* (Mark 7:11), and *zebul* (Matt 10:25; 12:27//Luke 11:19), only the last two actually Hebrew.<sup>33</sup>

#### 5.1.4. *Latin*

Though apparently Inchofer proposed in the seventeenth century that Jesus spoke Latin, this view has not been widely held.<sup>34</sup> The use of Latin has usually been attributed to the Roman officials who were placed in Palestine and elsewhere and who were functioning in an official capacity.<sup>35</sup> This would account for much of the official evidence for Latin use at the time, which consists of inscriptions such as for public declarations (including the trilingual titulus on the cross; see John 19:20, where this Latin term is used), and on buildings, aqueducts, tombstones, milestones, and legionary tiles. Nevertheless, there is some evidence to summarize regarding non-official uses of Latin in Palestine during this time,<sup>36</sup> some of which may indicate a possible use by Jesus. This evidence includes: some common inscriptional evidence, such as storage jars with Latin on them; and some documentary evidence, such as a fragment of Vergil found at Masada and Latinisms in some Bar Kokhba letters. There are also a number of Latin words used in the gospels. While some of these are easily dismissed regarding their significance (e.g., units of measure, coins, etc.), others have some significance. Such words include: *census*, *custodia*, *praetorium*, *sudarium*, and *flagellium*. Some of the Latin words appear in Greek texts for the

<sup>33</sup> Jeremias, *Theology*, 7.

<sup>34</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1910), 270.

<sup>35</sup> Fitzmyer, "Languages of Palestine," 129. See 129–133 for evidence.

<sup>36</sup> See A. Millard, "Latin in First-Century Palestine," in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Z. Zevit, S. Gitin and M. Sokoloff (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 451–458; summarized in S. E. Porter, "Latin Language," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 630–631.

first time in the first century. However, few of these words are used by Jesus, only by the gospel writers.

### 5.2. *The Analysis*

A linguistic analysis of the evidence indicates that Aramaic was probably a first language for the majority of Jews born and living in Palestine, with the likelihood that Greek was a second language for many of them, with at least passive competence if not active competence. Latin may have been an active second language for a limited number in strategic positions, and a passive second language for others (e.g., some tax collectors or possible religious leaders). The evidence is significant and strong that Greek was a second language for many indigenous Jews in Palestine, and a first language for some of them, and especially for those who were born and reared outside of Palestine (whether Aramaic was a first language or not), an example of such a person being Paul the apostle (born outside of Palestine, with Greek as a first language, and probably Aramaic and Hebrew as second languages, though with active competence). For those born outside of Palestine Latin too could have been an active or, probably more likely, passive second language depending upon one's social, political and economic status. Hebrew appears to have been a second language for Jews from both within and outside of Palestine in a limited number of cases, especially those connected with the religious hierarchy (e.g., Pharisaism, or as liturgical leaders).

The answer to the question of where Jesus fits within this analysis appears to be that Jesus had active multilingual competence in at least Greek and Aramaic, and possibly Hebrew. As a native-born Jew in Galilee, and closely associated with maintaining Jewish tradition, he probably learned Aramaic in his home as a first language, and continued to use this language throughout his life, both for casual conversation and for formal teaching. The evidence also indicates, however, that "a knowledge of Greek can no longer be denied to Jesus."<sup>37</sup> In his business as a tradesman in Galilee, he would have needed to be able to converse in Greek. He probably acquired this as a second language but developed an active competency, certainly enough to con-

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<sup>37</sup> H. D. Betz, "Wellhausen's Dictum 'Jesus was not a Christian, but a Jew' in Light of Present Scholarship," *ST* 45 (1991): 83-110; repr. in his *Antike und Christentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze IV* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 1-31, here 15.

verse with first-language Greek speakers, and possibly even to teach in Greek (e.g., Matt 4:25–7:23). This conclusion is supported by the direct and indirect evidence in that it fits completely with the evidence from the gospels themselves and the evidence from the early church. Jesus is depicted in the gospels as being able to converse with those from within Palestine and those from without, including such people as the Syrophoenician woman, the Samaritan woman and Pilate, among others. The early church does not seem to know of a message or teaching of Jesus that was not in its earliest form recorded in Greek.<sup>38</sup> As for his knowledge of Hebrew, this is more difficult to say. However, the evidence seems to indicate that he had at least some active knowledge of Hebrew, enough to read from a scriptural text. It is highly unlikely that Jesus had active competence in Latin, perhaps possible that he had passive competence, but most likely that he conversed with Pilate in Greek.

## 6. *Conclusion*

The question of the languages that Jesus spoke raises a number of issues. These issues include matters of evidence and of method. Rather than simply summarizing and discussing the kinds of material evidence that have been treated elsewhere, in this essay I attempt to put this kind of evidence within a context of what linguistic situations would have been confronted by a Jewish man born in Palestine in the first century. By framing the analysis in this way, I believe that a number of questions have been opened up in terms of the kinds of evidence, the languages that need to be considered in such an analysis, the means by which such evidence is scrutinized, and the types of conclusions that can be substantiated. The multilingualism of the first century, including Palestine, indicates a much more complex linguistic scenario than is often presented, and points toward Jesus, along with many others of his time, having multilingual competence, including at least Aramaic and Greek.

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<sup>38</sup> Betz, "Wellhausen's Dictum," 12–16.





## THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF JESUS

MATTHIAS KREPLIN

When we look at the history of research, we see that two methodological approaches have been taken in studying the question of how Jesus understood himself.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, some have attempted to show that Jesus expressed his self-understanding by using a title of sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Our first question must therefore be whether Jesus chose to designate himself by means of a title, either one formed by earlier

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<sup>1</sup> The following works are of fundamental importance for this subject, and will be referred to in subsequent footnotes only by brief titles: Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazareth* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1996). Hans Bietenhard, “Der Menschensohn”—ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: *Sprachliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu einem Begriff der synoptischen Evangelien 1: Sprachlicher und religionsgeschichtlicher Teil*, ANRW II 25.1 (1982): 265–350. Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith* (San Francisco: Harper 1996). Carsten Colpe, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, *ThWNT* 8 (1969), cols. 403–481. Joachim Gnllka, *Jesus von Nazareth: Botschaft und Geschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 3rd ed., 1993 [1st ed. 1990]). Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum*, FRLANT 83 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1963). Marinus de Jonge, *God’s Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus’ Own View of His Mission*, *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998). Matthias Kreplin, *Das Selbstverständnis Jesu: Hermeneutische und christologische Reflexion. Historisch-kritische Analyse*, WUNT 2.141 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001). Ragnar Leivestad, “Der apokalyptische Menschensohn ein theologisches Phantom,” *ASTI* 6 (1968): 49–105 [cited as *Menschensohn*]. Idem, *Jesus—Messias—Menschensohn*, ANRW II 25.1 (1982): 220–226 [cited as *Messias*]. Helmut Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, SBS 111 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1983). Mogens Müller, *Der Ausdruck “Menschensohn” in den Evangelien: Voraussetzungen und Bedeutung*, *Acta theologica danica* 17 (Leiden: Brill 1984). Ed Parish Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Allen Lane Penguin Press, 2nd ed., 1995 [1st ed. 1993]). Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus. Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1996). Hans Weder, *Gegenwart und Gottesherrschaft: Überlegungen zum Zeitverständnis bei Jesus und im frühen Christentum*, *Biblisch-theologische Studien* 20 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Thus e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie 1: Die Verkündigung Jesu*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 239–241, and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1992), 107–125. Frequently, there is an apologetic interest in the background here: the post-East ascription to Jesus of the titles of sovereignty is to be legitimated by showing that Jesus himself used at least one of these titles as a self-designation.

tradition or one that he himself formed (Section 1); in this context, we must pay special attention to the vigorously debated question of the “Son of Man” (Section 2). On the other hand, independently of all titles, scholars have asked what claim is implicit in Jesus’ conduct and in his preaching, since this would indicate which role he regarded as his own (Section 3). These two paths lead to results which at first sight appear contradictory. The task of the concluding argumentation will be to show that this apparent contradiction is in reality deeply rooted in Jesus’ own self-understanding (Section 4).

### 1. *Did Jesus Use One or More Traditional Titles in order to Express His Self-Understanding?*

There has long been a broad consensus in the historical-critical research into the life of Jesus that he did not require others to address him as “Messiah” (Hebrew: מָשִׁיחַ; Aramaic: מְשִׁיחָא; Greek: ὁ χριστός),<sup>3</sup> “Son of David,”<sup>4</sup> or “king (of the Jews),” and that he did not designate himself in this way. When we look at the New Testament gospels—including John!—we see at once that almost all the verses in which these titles are attested fall into one of two categories: either these are clearly redactional passages, or else other persons ascribe these titles of sovereignty to Jesus. There are only a very few passages in which Jesus himself reacts positively to one of these messianic titles.<sup>5</sup> We must

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g., Borg, *Meeting Jesus*, 29; Ferdinand Hahn, *EWNT* 3, 1154. This thesis is confirmed by the fact that neither Q nor the Gospel of Thomas employs the title χριστός.

<sup>4</sup> Even if Jesus was of Davidic descent (this is discussed by Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 183–184), nothing indicates that he based a claim to be Messiah on this genealogy.

<sup>5</sup> These passages are the following:

*First*, at Luke 19:40 (specifically Lukan material), Jesus welcomes the messianic acclamation by the disciples when he enters Jerusalem. Obviously, however, this logion of Jesus depends on its link with the following prophecy about the future of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–44), which must be regarded as a *vaticinium ex eventu*. This means that Luke 19:40 must be seen as a secondary construction.

*Secondly*, according to the tradition of the Gospel of Mark, when the high priest asks: “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus replies: “I am; and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:61–62; on this, cf. Matt 26:63–64/Luke 22:67–70). It is however scarcely possible to demonstrate the authenticity of the high priest’s question and of Jesus’ reply; the same applies to the similar logia which are transmitted in Matthew and Luke. The high concentration of central Christological titles and *theologoumena* such as “Christ,” “Son of the Blessed,” “the coming of the Son of Man with the

assume that they were all created after Easter. John 6:15 shows clearly that Jesus rejected the people's wish to make him king—and how could such a trait have entered the tradition, if Jesus had in fact described himself as Messiah or king of Israel?

“Son of God” as a title (various expressions are found in Hebrew and Aramaic; in Greek, we often find ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) may or may not have been in use as early as the time of Jesus as a title of sovereignty,<sup>6</sup> at any rate, Jesus did not claim this for himself.<sup>7</sup> Here too, almost all the relevant passages involve ascriptions of this title to Jesus by others.<sup>8</sup> And it is likely that the absolute use of the term “the Son” (ὁ υἱὸς), to which the demonstrably secondary address of God as “my Father” corresponds, does not go back to Jesus, but originated after Easter.<sup>9</sup>

The thesis that Jesus understood himself as the embodiment of the pre-existent Wisdom (Hebrew: *חֵכֶמָה*; Greek: σοφία) is untenable.<sup>10</sup>

It is probable that the historical Jesus was occasionally addressed by the polite Jewish form of address “Lord” (Aramaic: *רַבִּי*; Greek:

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clouds of heaven,” and “sitting at the right hand of God,” strongly suggests that this passage has been consciously shaped from a post-Easter perspective.

Thirdly, in his trial before Pilate (Mark 15:2/Matt 27:11/Luke 23:3/John 18:37), Pilate asks: “Are you the king of the Jews?” and Jesus replies ambiguously, “You say it” (σὺ λέγεις). This answer can be paraphrased in two ways. It can be understood as agreeing with Pilate's question: “As you say, that is indeed the case.” But it can also be understood as an evasive form of disagreement: “You say this, but my opinion is different.” This means that Jesus' ambiguous reply does not permit us to infer that he maintained before Pilate the claim to be the Messiah.

It is nevertheless significant that the two passages in which Jesus comes closest to making a claim to a messianic title come in the passion narrative. On this, cf. Section 4 below.

<sup>6</sup> On the disputed interpretation of the only pre-Christian attestation of a messianic significance of the title “Son of God” (4Q 246) which has been discovered up to now, cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 491–492 and 527–528.

<sup>7</sup> Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again*, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Only two passages in the synoptics assert that Jesus himself called himself “Son of God”: viz. the reply of Jesus to the question of the high priest, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61/Matt 26:63/Luke 22:70), which is transmitted in Mark and is most likely inauthentic (cf. n. 4 above); and the account of the mockery of Jesus in Matthew's redaction (Matt 27:43).

<sup>9</sup> Thus Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, 321–327, and Helmut Merklein, *Die Gottesherrschaft als Handlungsprinzip: Untersuchung zur Ethik Jesu*, *Forschungen zur Bibel* 34 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 2nd ed. 1981 [1st ed. 1978]), 89.

<sup>10</sup> This is given consideration by Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again*, 102. In the two passages which Borg adduces as evidence (Luke 11:49–50/Matt 23:34–35 and Luke 7:33–35/Matt 11:18–19), the expression σοφία does not refer unambiguously to Jesus. Cf. e.g., Hengel, *Early Christology*, 84 and 86.

κύριος); but it was only after Easter that this address acquired its Christological significance.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, it is likely that the title “prophet” (Hebrew: נָבִיא; Aramaic: נְבִיאָא; Greek: προφήτης) was applied to Jesus.<sup>12</sup> There is however no indication that Jesus identified himself with this title.<sup>13</sup> Finally, Jesus was frequently also addressed as “teacher” (Aramaic: רַבִּי or רַבּוּנִי; Greek διδάσκαλος), but there is no authentic passage in which Jesus demands that others address him in this way.<sup>14</sup>

Since therefore Jesus did not use any of these titles as a self-designation or insist upon being addressed with one of these titles,<sup>15</sup> it is scarcely possible to find any access to the self-understanding of the historical Jesus via these titles.

## 2. Jesus—the Son of Man

The debate about the expression “the Son of Man” has a different character. Scholars have discussed a large number of tradition-historical alternatives and interpretations of this phrase, but there is as yet no sign of any consensus.<sup>16</sup>

In the early Christian writings which have come down to us, without counting clear parallels, there are about fifty logia in which Jesus is called the Son of Man. With very few exceptions,<sup>17</sup> the concept is

<sup>11</sup> Thus Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, 95.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mark 6:15/Luke 9:8; Mark 8:28/Matt 16:14/Luke 9:19. Clearly, Jesus was rumored to be John the Baptist, risen from the dead (cf. Mark 6:14.16/Matt 14:1f./Luke 9:7.9).

<sup>13</sup> Thus also Becker, *Jesus*, 267. In two probably authentic logia (Mark 6:4/Matt 13:57/Luke 4:24/John 4:44 and Matt 23:37/Luke 13:34), Jesus compares his own fate with that of the prophets. However, the third prophet-logion on the lips of Jesus (Luke 13:33) is probably a post-Easter creation (cf. François Bovon, EKKNT 3.2, 444). The two authentic prophet-logia do not however permit us to conclude that Jesus understood himself as a prophet in the Old Testament sense, or as the kind of eschatological prophet who was expected to come in the last days.

<sup>14</sup> Even John 13:13–14 shows that Jesus did not lay claim to the title of “teacher.”

<sup>15</sup> Thus e.g., also Becker, *Jesus*, 249 and 271; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 480.

<sup>16</sup> Recent comprehensive presentations of the hypotheses that have been proposed with regard to the “Son of Man” problem and the scholarly discussion of these hypotheses can be found in Anton Vögtle, *Die “Gretchenfrage” des Menschensohns. Bilanz und Perspektive*, QD 152 (Freiburg: Herder 1994), 22–175; and Müller, *Menschensohn* (1984), 27–65, 157–167, and 219–244.

<sup>17</sup> The anarthrous concept υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου referring to the person of Jesus is found in early Christian literature only in the quotation from the Psalm at Heb 2:6, in the two visions Rev 1:13 and 4:14, and at John 5:27. In Heb 2:6, this concept serves to identify Jesus with the affirmations made in Ps 8; the author presupposes that Jesus

always employed with two articles: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. In the Jesus tradition, this expression, which sounds strange in Greek, is found—with one exception<sup>18</sup>—only in logia which are attributed to Jesus himself. It is found in all the sources apart from the epistolary literature: in Q, Mark, the material specific to Matthew and to Luke, in John, and in the Gospel of Thomas.<sup>19</sup> The criterion of multiple attestation makes it impossible to dismiss all the “Son of Man” logia wholesale as post-Easter creations.<sup>20</sup> This phrase must therefore go back to the earthly Jesus himself.

The Greek expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου translates the “determinate”<sup>21</sup> Aramaic concept ܒܪ ܢܫܐ, which was frequently used in the same sense as the “indeterminate” concept ܒܪ ܢܫܐ. Historically speaking, the more original forms had an initial Aleph—ܒܪ ܢܫܐ or ܒܪ ܢܫܐ—and it is uncertain whether the shorter forms came into general use only in the second century of the Common Era, or (as is more probable) were already employed in the Galilean Aramaic dialect in the time of Jesus.<sup>22</sup> This Aramaic expression could be used in various senses. Initially, it was practically identical with ܢܫܐ, “the (individual) human being”; this basic meaning then led to its use as a generic concept designating “the human being (as such)”; finally, it

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is “the Son of Man.” In the visions in Revelation, the point (echoing Dan 7:13) is that Jesus looks like a human being. John 5:27 employs the anarthrous concept υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου wholly in the sense of a generic concept, in order to emphasize the humanity of Jesus which makes it possible for Jesus, the Son of God, to sit in judgment upon human beings. On this interpretation, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 188–191.

<sup>18</sup> The exception is Acts 7:56, where the dying Stephen has a vision of the heavenly Son of Man. As at Heb 2:6, this passage presupposes that Jesus is “the Son of Man.”

<sup>19</sup> We could add to these the passage from the Gospel of the Hebrews which Jerome quotes at *De viris illustribus* 2; cf. also Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23.13. However, even these two very late attestations display exactly the same linguistic usage as the early Christian sources.

<sup>20</sup> This position was maintained in the 1960’s by Philipp Vielhauer, “Jesus und der Menschensohn. Zur Diskussion mit H.E. Tödt und E. Schweizer,” *ZTK* 60 (1963): 133–177. More recently, it can also be found in Anton Vögtle, *Die “Gretchenfrage”* (n. 16 above).

<sup>21</sup> The distinction between “determinate” and “indeterminate” forms lies in the so-called *emphaticus* ending, which does not completely correspond to a definite article, but comes close to this: cf. Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen* (Hildesheim: Olms 1962), 84–85.

<sup>22</sup> On this, cf. Colpe, *ThWNT* VIII, col. 406; Bietenhard, *Menschensohn*, 272.

was also used in the indefinite senses as a substitute for indefinite pronouns such as “one,” “someone or other,” or “someone.”<sup>23</sup>

The Johannine logia<sup>24</sup> occupy a special place among the Son of Man logia in the gospel literature. Since they are marked by the independent theology of the Gospel of John and have no parallels in the other sources, the starting point for our analysis must be the synoptic Son of Man logia, some of which are attested multiply. It is customary to divide these synoptic Son of Man logia<sup>25</sup> into three thematic groups: the logia about the earthly activity of the Son of Man;<sup>26</sup> the logia about the suffering Son of Man;<sup>27</sup> and the logia about the eschatological activity of the Son of Man.<sup>28</sup>

Are logia from all three groups authentic logia of Jesus? Or do logia from one or two groups form the starting point for the genesis of those logia which were formed at a secondary stage? Does the stable

<sup>23</sup> Colpe, *ThWNT* 8, 405f., and Bietenhard, *Menschensohn*, 272.

<sup>24</sup> John 1:51; 3:13–15; 6:27; 6:53; 6:61–62; 8:28; 9:35–38; 12:23; 12:34; 13:31. The indeterminate use of the expression υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου at John 5:27 is not a Son of Man logion: cf. n. 16 above.

<sup>25</sup> The only Son of Man logion in the Gospel of Thomas (*Gos. Thom* 86) has a direct parallel in the synoptic gospels.

<sup>26</sup> This group includes:

- in Q: Luke 6:22/Matt 5:11; Luke 7:33–34/Matt 11:18–19; Luke 9:58/Matt 8:20/*Gos. Thom* 86; perhaps also Luke 11:30/Matt 12:40; Luke 12:10/Matt 12:31–32/(Mark 3:28–29).
- in Mark: Mark 2:10/Matt 9:6/Luke 5:24; Mark 2:28/Matt 12:8/Luke 6:5; Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28 (Luke 22:27).
- in the Matthean redaction: 16:13/(Mark 8:27).
- in the special Lukan material: 19:10.
- in the later textual tradition: Luke 9:55b and Matt 18:11 (these two passages are not found in the earliest manuscripts).

<sup>27</sup> This group includes:

- in Mark: Mark 8:31/Matt 16:21/Luke 9:22; Mark 9:9/Matt 17:9; Mark 9:12/Matt 17:12; Mark 9:31/Matt 17:22–23/Luke 9:44; Mark 10:33–34/Matt 20:18–19/Luke 18:31–33; Mark 14:21/Matt 26:24/Luke 22:22; Mark 14:41/Matt 26:45.
- in the Matthean redaction: 26:2.
- in the Lukan redaction or the special Lukan material: 17:25; 22:48; 24:7.

Since Q contains no predictions of future suffering which refer exclusively to the person of Jesus, it contains no logia about the suffering of the Son of Man.

<sup>28</sup> This group includes:

- in Q: Luke 12:8–9/(Matt 10:32–33); Luke 12:39–40/Matt 24:43–44; Luke 17:24/Matt 24:27; Luke 17:25.30/Matt 24:37.39;
- in Mark: Mark 13:26/Luke 21:27; Matt 24:30–31; Mark 14:62/Matt 26:64/Luke 22:69.
- in the Matthean redaction or the special Matthean material: Matt 10:23; 13:37.41; 16:28; 19:28; 25:13; 25:31.
- in the Lukan redaction or the special Lukan material: Luke 17:22; Luke 18:8b; Luke 21:36; Acts 7:56.

expression “the Son of Man” take up an established title, or was it formed by Jesus himself or by earliest Christianity? If the latter is the case, what is the substance of this expression? In order to clarify these questions, various hypotheses have been proposed, sometimes in combination with one another.

### 2.1 *First Hypothesis: At the Outset Stands “Son of Man,” an Apocalyptic Title of Sovereignty*

A whole generation of older German-speaking scholarship<sup>29</sup> assumed the existence of an apocalyptic expectation of the Son of Man, attested for the first time in the Book of Daniel. In Dan 7, the vision of the four beasts and the Son of Man is described and then interpreted. At the end of the account of the vision, we read:

(13) I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man [כְּבָר אֲנָשׁ] and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. (14) And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

This vision is taken up in the Similitudes of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (*1 Enoch* 36–71) and in the vision of the storm in *4 Ezra* 13. For a long time, these apocalyptic texts were read as evidence of an expectation of the Son of Man which had taken on a definite form as early as the time of Jesus. Accordingly, the expression “the Son of Man” was understood as an established title of sovereignty for an eschatological judge or ruler, comparable to the title “Messiah,” and the Son of Man logia in the gospels were seen as referring to this apocalyptic expectation of salvation. And it can in fact be shown that at least some of the logia about the eschatological coming of the Son of Man contain allusions to Dan 7.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Following Rudolf Bultmann, the following have made important contributions to the development of this hypothesis: Heinz Eduard Tödt, *Der Menschensohn in der synoptischen Überlieferung* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag 1959); Hahn, *Hoheitstitel*, 1963; Colpe, *ThWNT* 8, 403–481; down to Anton Vögtle, *Die “Gretchenfrage”* and Becker, *Jesus*, 249–267.

<sup>30</sup> This applies at any rate to Mark 13:26/Matt 24:30/Luke 21:27 and to Mark 14:62/Matt 26:64/(Luke 22:69), which speak of his coming on the clouds (of heaven), and to Matt 25:31 and Mark 8:38/Matt 16:27/Luke 9:26, which announce his coming in glory. However, since the idea of the “coming of the Son of Man” is a very general notion, this conceptuality on its own does not entitle us to affirm that these logia lie on the line of tradition history which begins with Dan 7.



On the basis of these assumptions and observations, the logia about the eschatological activity of the Son of Man must necessarily have formed the starting point for the development of the tradition. Since Jesus' logia speak of the Son of Man only in the third person, most scholars argued that Jesus himself did not identify himself with the coming Son of Man, and that it was only the post-Easter community that took this step. The central piece of evidence for this thesis was the logion at Luke 12:7–8/Matt 10:32:

Every one who acknowledges me before human beings, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.

Scholars saw a distinction in this logion between Jesus and the Son of Man which contradicted the post-Easter identification between the two, and this was taken as proof of its authenticity. Similar logia about the eschatological coming of the Son of Man were ascribed in this manner to the earthly Jesus, but the logia about the present activity and the suffering of the Son of Man were all declared to be post-Easter creations, since these presupposed the identification between Jesus and the Son of Man.

This hypothesis enjoyed validity, at least in the German-speaking countries, for many decades, but it inevitably collapsed when ever weightier arguments were brought against the existence of an established Jewish "Son of Man" title.<sup>31</sup> First of all, it was clearly shown that the concept "Son of Man," which is employed in an indeterminate manner in Dan 7:13, is merely a generic concept used for the visionary description of the figure like a human being who is the antithesis of the preceding beasts: in other words, it is not employed as a title. A more exact analysis of the Similitudes in the Ethiopic Book of Enoch shows that although these texts identify the figure of one like a human being from Dan 7 with the Messiah, the figure is nowhere given the title "Son of Man."<sup>32</sup> The tradition of the rabbinic

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<sup>31</sup> Here, the following works are particularly important: Leivestad, *Menschensohn*; idem, *Messias*; Müller, *Menschensohn*. The arguments are summarized in Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 88–102 and 104–108.

<sup>32</sup> We find three different expressions in *1 Enoch*, all of which are usually translated "Son of Man." These three conceptions are only employed with references back to the detailed description of this figure. Similarly, *4 Ezra* (probably written towards the end of the first century CE) continually refers with demonstrative pronouns and relative clauses back to the figure of the one like a human being, who is obviously unknown to the reader.

exegesis of Dan 7 runs completely parallel to this.<sup>33</sup> And this is confirmed when we look at the New Testament tradition: if an established title of “Son of Man” had indeed existed in the time of Jesus and of earliest Christianity, the identification of Jesus with this Son of Man would not have gone unchallenged in the Jewish environment, and we would surely find traces in the early Christian writings of the same kind of debate as was prompted by the application of other established titles to Jesus.<sup>34</sup> Besides this, it is more than a little surprising that early Christian literature contains no confessions of faith in Jesus as the Son of Man; nor do we find the kind of direct address (e.g., “O Jesus, Son of Man”) that we so frequently find for other titles of sovereignty. This means that an established “Son of Man” title existing in the apocalyptic tradition of Judaism at the time of Jesus is a phantom of historical scholarship.<sup>35</sup>

It follows that this independent expression “the Son of Man,” which is not attested anywhere else, was created by Jesus himself or by earliest Christianity. And this in turn means that a distinction between Jesus and the eschatological Son of Man who is to come cannot be posited at any stage of the development of the tradition. There can be no doubt that all the logia about the coming Son of Man refer to Jesus alone. But is this true of the logia about the present Son of Man?

## 2.2 *Second Hypothesis: At the Outset Stands the Generic Use of the Expression “the Son of Man” by Jesus Himself*

On the basis of the observation that the Aramaic expression  $\text{בְּרִי (א)נְשָׂא}$  can also be used generically and should then be translated “every human being” or “the human being as such,” Carsten Colpe elaborated the hypothesis that one basic starting point of the development of the tradition lies here. This hypothesis has recently been repristinated by J. D. Crossan.<sup>36</sup> The representatives of this hypothesis understand at

<sup>33</sup> The rabbis speak not of the “Son of Man,” but of the “man of the clouds”: cf. Strack and Billerbeck I, 486; Bietenhard, *Menschensohn*, 337.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. e.g., 1 Cor 1:23; Luke 24:26.46; Matt 27:39–43; John 7:26–27; 7:41–42; 7:52.

<sup>35</sup> Leivestad has the merit of being the first to assert this (1968). An increasing number of scholars agree with this position: e.g., de Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 88; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 473.

<sup>36</sup> Colpe, *ThWNT* 8, 433–435, and John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins 1991).

most the following four logia about the present activity of the Son of Man in such a way that they speak not only about Jesus himself, but about the human person in general (and naturally, this includes Jesus):

Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head (Q: Luke 9:58/Matt 8:20; cf. *Gos. Thom* 86).

In the narrative of the healing of the paralytic, the objection is raised: “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” Jesus introduces his healing with the words: But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . (Mark 2:10; cf. Matt 9:6/Luke 5:24).<sup>37</sup>

The sabbath was made for the human person, not the human person for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath (Mark 2:27–28; cf. Matt 12:8/Luke 6:5).

Every one who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Luke 12:10—but cf. the other versions of this logion: Matt 12:31–32; Mark 3:28–29; *Gos. Thom* 44; *Didache* 11.7).

Another affirmation by Jesus, with a somewhat different use of  $\text{Ⲡⲱⲛ}(\text{ⲛ})$   $\text{Ⲓⲃ}$ , is considered as belonging to the same category:

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; the Son of Man came [ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου—in the sense, “someone came”] eating and drinking, and they say, “Behold, a glutton and a drunkard [ἰδὸν ἄθροπος φάγος καὶ οἰνοπότης], a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Q: Matt 11:18–19/Luke 7:33–34).

Serious objections have been made to a generic interpretation of the expression “the Son of Man” in all five logia,<sup>38</sup> and these arguments have established the likelihood that here too, it refers exclusively to the person of Jesus. We need not repeat these objections in detail here, since another consideration shows how problematic this approach is. In other passages in the Jesus tradition, we likewise find a generic reference to the human person, either by means of the singular ὁ ἄνθρωπος<sup>39</sup> or the plural οἱ ἄνθρωποι,<sup>40</sup> or else by means of the

<sup>37</sup> Matthew’s redactional addition at 9:8 shows that at least he has understood this logion in a generic sense.

<sup>38</sup> On the discussion and the interpretation of the individual logia, cf. Müller, *Menschensohn*, and Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, ad each of these texts.

<sup>39</sup> E.g., Matt 8:9/Luke 7:8; Mark 7:15.17.20/Matt 15:11.18; Mark 8:36–37/Matt 16:26/Luke 9:25; Mark 10:9/Matt 19:6; Luke 11:24/Matt 12:43; Matt 10:35–36; Matt 12:12.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Matt 9:8; Matt 12:31; Mark 12:30; Matt 21:25; Luke 20:4.

word ὄστυς or τίς.<sup>41</sup> With one exception, however,<sup>42</sup> we never find here the concept “Son of Man” or “sons of men.” There must therefore have been some special reason to employ the awkward ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου as the translation for a generically used Aramaic concept אַנְשָׁא(א) בְּרַ in these five logia, since a simple “the human person” or “human beings” or an indefinite pronoun would have sufficed. For Colpe, the background here is of course the Jewish title of sovereignty “the Son of Man,” which led the earliest Christians to choose a literal translation which is awkward in Greek, in order to document Jesus’ special claim to authority; but if we eliminate this presupposition, it becomes very difficult to explain the texts. Clearly, אַנְשָׁא(א) בְּרַ must have meant more on the lips of Jesus than “the human person as such” or “one” or “someone,” and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου must be the translation of a special linguistic usage of Jesus which was different from customary speech.

### 2.3 *Third Hypothesis: At the Outset Stands the Circumlocution “the Son of Man” Which a Speaker Could Use in Aramaic to Refer to Himself*

The insight formulated at the close of the preceding section is also the decisive argument against the hypothesis first proposed by Geza Vermes, that the expression אַנְשָׁא(א) בְּרַ is a possible indirect self-reference in Aramaic, and thus a circumlocution for the personal pronoun “I.”<sup>43</sup> This form of speech was used in order to refer discreetly to one’s own self.

It is a matter of dispute whether the passages cited by Vermes genuinely offer evidence of the linguistic usage which he postulates.<sup>44</sup> But

<sup>41</sup> E.g., Mark 8:4; Mark 8:34/Matt 16:24/Luke 9:23; Mark 9:30; Mark 13:21/Matt 24:23; Luke 14:26; Matt 5:39,40,41.

<sup>42</sup> At Mark 3:28, we read of τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων. It is striking that this occurs in a context where Luke and Matthew present a logion with ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (cf. Luke 12:10/Matt 12:31–32).

<sup>43</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins 1973), 147–152.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* He gives five examples of Aramaic texts in which the speaker refers to himself as אַנְשָׁא(א) בְּרַ or אַנְשָׁא(א) בְּרַ. In all these passages, we would have a meaningful sentence if we replaced this expression by the first-person singular pronoun. However, when we look more closely at the texts which Vermes cites, we see that אַנְשָׁא(א) בְּרַ could be understood generically or indefinitely in all these passages, which would then be read as general affirmations about the human person which are applied in the specific context to the one who is speaking. None of Vermes’ texts reproduces a statement which is to be applied exclusively to the speaker. This is the fundamental

even if this usage was in fact common in Aramaic or in the Galilean dialect at the time of Jesus, Vermes cannot explain why then the simple personal pronoun was not used in the translation of Jesus' logia. Why was the cumbersome concept ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου chosen?

Nevertheless, this hypothesis draws our attention to one important observation: viz., that all the Son of Man logia can be transformed without any contextual problems into logia in which a personal pronoun is used instead of the phrase "the Son of Man."<sup>45</sup> In other words, the straightforward interchangeability between the personal pronoun and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου can be demonstrated directly. Any sustainable solution to the problem of the Son of Man must bear this fact in mind.

#### 2.4 *Fourth Hypothesis: By Means of the Expression "the Son of Man," Jesus Himself Created a Concept Which Expressed his Own Eschatological Expectation*

After scholars had accepted the insight that neither Jesus nor earliest Christianity could have had recourse to an established apocalyptic "Son of Man" title, it was proposed that Jesus himself, adopting the linguistic tradition of Dan 7, had employed the expression "the Son of Man" in order to express his own role in the eschatological fulfillment.<sup>46</sup> This would mean that a basic core of the logia about the coming of the Son of Man goes back to Jesus himself. Jesus did not employ this expression as a defined title which was linked to a clear expecta-

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difference between the Aramaic examples presented by Vermes and the New Testament logia about the Son of Man, most of which refer exclusively to Jesus. For further criticism of Vermes' thesis, cf. also Joachim Jeremias, "Die älteste Schicht der Menschensohn-Logien," *ZNW* 58 (1967): 159–172, 165, and Leivestad, *Messias*, 246–247.

<sup>45</sup> On this, cf. also R. E. C. Formesyn, "Was there a Pronominal Connection for the Bar Nasha Self-Designation?," *NovT* 8 (1966): 1–35, at 27–28: "there is no single exception: all Son of Man titles are replaceable by a personal pronoun of the first person. Secondly, the fact that the title never occurs in the position of a predicate can be described in the same way: it does not occur where we cannot have the personal pronoun 'I,' 'me,' etc. As the personal pronoun is never a predicate (except in unusual cases) so we never find Son of Man as a predicate. As we can never have 'he is I,' or 'Jesus is I,' etc., so we never have 'he is the Son of Man,' or 'Jesus is the Son of Man.'"

<sup>46</sup> This thesis has been proposed recently e.g., by Hengel, *Early Christology*, 105; de Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 88; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 476–480.

tion about the role he would play; he merely used it as a concept “laden with sovereign dignity.”<sup>47</sup>

This approach can accept that not only logia about the coming Son of Man, but also logia about the Son of Man who is active at present and who will suffer go back to Jesus, since he himself saw his present activity, his expected suffering, and his role in the eschatological fulfillment within one overarching context. The inherent unity of the Son of Man logia is derived, not from an already existing understanding of the concept “Son of Man,” but from Jesus’ own self-understanding.

Philipp Vielhauer has made an important objection here,<sup>48</sup> viz. that an eschatological expectation of the Son of Man would contradict Jesus’ proclamation of the rule of God which was to be accomplished in the future, since we find no eschatological mediator figure in the expectation of the kingdom of God. There are indeed a few traditions apart from the Son of Man logia which see Jesus in an eschatological role as judge or divine representative, but serious objections can be made to the authenticity of every one of these logia,<sup>49</sup> and they cannot be used to prove that Jesus envisaged a special role for himself in the eschatological fulfillment.

We can counter these objections by pointing to the striking parallels between Jesus’ proclamation of the future fulfillment of the rule of God and the Son of Man logia. In both traditions we hear of the suddenness of the end;<sup>50</sup> in both traditions we find a complementarity between something that can be experienced in the present and something that will be fulfilled or disclosed in the future.<sup>51</sup> It has also been argued that the motifs of “kingdom of God” and “Son of Man” were already linked in the apocalyptic tradition.<sup>52</sup> And finally, one cannot exclude the possibility that when Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God and spoke the Son of Man logia, he juxtaposed two

<sup>47</sup> Thus Theissen and Merz, *ibid.*, 480.

<sup>48</sup> Philipp Vielhauer, “Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu,” in idem, *Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*, Tübingen 31 (1965): 55–91, and idem, “Jesus und der Menschensohn” (n. 20 above).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Section 3.1 below, and Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis Jesu*, 209–211.

<sup>50</sup> In the Son of Man logia: Luke 12:39–40/Matt 24:43–44; Luke 17:24/Matt 24:27; Luke 17:26–29/Matt 24:37–41; Matt 25:13. Outside the Son of Man logia, e.g., Mark 13:33–37/Luke 12:36–38; Luke 12:41–46/Matt 24:42.45–51.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 479.

<sup>52</sup> Thus Becker, *Jesus*, 112–116.

different groups of motifs, without explicitly declaring how they were related to each other.

Objections have also been made to the hypothesis that a basic core of the logia about the coming Son of Man goes back to the earthly Jesus himself. To begin with, many of these logia can be understood clearly only from the post-Easter perspective, in which Christians awaited the return of their Lord—but in a pre-Easter perspective, Jesus would have had to explain to his disciples how his present activity and his future return were related.<sup>53</sup> If however Jesus himself had created the concept “the Son of Man” to express both his present role and (above all) his future role, why then was this concept not included in the early Christian confessions of faith? Since Jesus clearly refused to accept other titles of sovereignty, would it not have been much more natural to take an expression of sovereignty which he himself had used and turn this into a title, rather than to have recourse to titles which Jesus himself had not employed?<sup>54</sup>

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, who have maintained this hypothesis in a recent publication, are themselves uncertain whether they have really solved the problem of the Son of Man.<sup>55</sup> If however this hypothesis proved correct, the Son of Man logia—especially those about the coming Son of Man—would offer an important access-route to Jesus’ self-understanding. If one rejects this hypothesis and thereby disputes the authenticity of the logia about the eschatological coming of the Son of Man, one must then explain the genesis of the secondary formation of these logia, since this could not have been motivated by an already existing apocalyptic “Son of Man” title.

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<sup>53</sup> There are only two passages which establish a relationship between the present Son of Man and his future coming: Matt 13:36–43 and Luke 17:24–25. However, it is highly probable that these are secondary, or else shaped by the redaction of the gospels. It is indeed true that some of the logia about the suffering of the Son of Man already refer to the resurrection of Jesus (Mark 8:31/Matt 16:21/Luke 9:22; Mark 9:9/Matt 17:9; Mark 9:31/Matt 17:22–23/Luke 9:44; Mark 10:33–34/Matt 20:18–19/Luke 18:31–33), but many scholars regard these as post-Easter *vaticinia ex eventu*. And the prediction of the resurrection is not the same thing as a prediction of the parousia.

<sup>54</sup> It would also be necessary to explain why “Son of Man,” an expression of sovereignty which derived from Jesus himself, could disappear not only from early Christian linguistic usage, but also—and so soon—from other logia about the parousia which continued to be handed on (e.g., the “word of the Lord” at 1 Thess 4:15–17 with Mark 13:26–27/Matt 24:30–31 and Mark 8:38–39/Matt 16:27–28/Luke 9:26–27). How was it possible for this expression to be replaced by other titles of sovereignty?

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 477.

### 2.5 *Fifth Hypothesis and Attempt at a Solution: Jesus Created the Name “the Son of Man” as an Indirect Self-designation*

I believe that the best solution to the question of the Son of Man begins with the assumption that Jesus himself coined this expression as a name which he habitually employed to speak (indirectly) about himself.<sup>56</sup> Unlike a title, a name is not linked to concepts of specific roles. On the other hand, a symbolic name means more than a personal pronoun, since it evokes a number of associations.

This means that some of the logia about the present activity of the Son of Man, and perhaps also some basic forms of the logia about his suffering, must be acknowledged as authentic Jesus tradition; but the logia about the future activity of the Son of Man, almost all of which ascribe to him a specific role in the eschatological event, must be categorized as secondary.<sup>57</sup>

We find parallels in the Jesus tradition and in earliest Christianity both to the bestowal of names and to the indirect self-designation. There are several indications that Jesus bestowed names on his disciples, some of which were even translated into Greek.<sup>58</sup> As was frequently the case with personal names, such symbolic names were mostly employed with a definite article.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, it was possible in the Aramaic environment of Jesus to speak of oneself in the third person.<sup>60</sup> Besides this, we have other attestations of the possibility of

<sup>56</sup> This hypothesis was first elaborated by Leivestad, *Menschensohn* (1968). The hypothesis presented here, viz. that the expression “the Son of Man” is a name coined by Jesus as a self-designation, must be distinguished from the hypothesis presented in section 2.3 above, viz. that when Jesus designated himself in this way, he was employing a form of indirect self-reference which already existed as a possibility in Aramaic. If we regard Jesus’ indirect self-designation as “the Son of Man” as an expression which he himself coined, it is easy to understand why this expression had to be translated.

<sup>57</sup> An exception is the probably authentic logion about confessing and denying (Luke 12:8–9/Matt 10:32–33), in which Jesus is given only the role of a witness, not that of the judge in the eschatological judgment: see below (cf. also Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 159–165).

<sup>58</sup> E.g., אֲנִי/Κηφῶς = Πέτρος and אֲנִי רִבְבִי/Βοανεργός = υἱὸς βρονηῆς. In the case of Peter, the Greek translation of the name coined by Jesus became the commonest personal name of the apostle. Clearly, the original meaning of the words was the decisive factor in the selection of the names of these persons.

<sup>59</sup> For example, the determinate form ὁ Πέτρος is commoner in the synoptic gospels than the indeterminate form.

<sup>60</sup> Bietenhard, *Menschensohn*, 280–302 and 307, presents a large number of instances of this kind of indirect self-designation. It was even possible in one and the same



using indirect speech about oneself in the authentic Jesus tradition,<sup>61</sup> in the self-designation of the Johannine Jesus as “the Son,” and in the passage where Paul speaks “like a fool” (2 Cor 12:2–5). These parallels in linguistic usage show that those who listened to Jesus and engaged in conversation with him would have had no difficulty in understanding him if he used the name “the Son of Man” as a self-designation.

The interchangeability between the personal pronoun and the expression “the Son of Man” which can be observed in Matthew shows that the evangelist understood this phrase as a name. A secondary logion created by Matthew proves this. In his redactional work, Matthew changes the Markan formulation “Who do people say that I am?” (Mark 8:27) into: “Who do people (οἱ ἄνθρωποι) say that the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) is?” (Matt 16:13); the change may be due to the play on words. If the concept of one particular role had been linked to the expression “the Son of Man,” this concept would have had to be formulated in the disciples’ answer. If the expression was meant generically, the disciples’ answer would necessarily speak of human beings in general. Naturally, however, the answer concerns the identity of Jesus—and this means that the expression “the Son of Man” is employed as a name. Not one of the Son of Man logia (even those handed down outside the synoptic tradition) can be adduced in support of the contrary position; none of them proves that the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου was *not* understood as a name for Jesus.<sup>62</sup> The interchangeability between the personal pronoun and “the Son of Man” in Mark (Mark 14:41–42/Matt 26:45–46) and the dialogue with the man born blind after Jesus has healed him (John 9:35–38) demonstrate that other early Christian authors too understood the expression “the Son of Man” as a name. Thus, when the healed man asks who the

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sentence to refer to oneself as “I” and as “your servant,” “your handmaid,” “that man,” “that woman,” and similar expressions.

<sup>61</sup> Significant instances are the metaphor at Mark 2:19/Matt 9:15a/Luke 5:34 (“Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?”) and the words about the “son” in the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Mark 12:6–8/Matt 21:37–39/Luke 20:13–15), where Jesus speaks indirectly of himself by means of the characters in the parable.

<sup>62</sup> On this, cf. the individual exegesis of all the Son of Man logia in Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 102–196. In the case of two logia, it might be worth considering whether they presuppose the concept of one specific role: Luke 17:26.30 and Luke 21:36. Even here, however, it is possible to understand the expression as a name.

Son of Man is, Jesus reply is a simple statement of identity: “You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you” (John 9:36–37).

This hypothesis offers a satisfactory explanation of why בֶּרֶךְ (אֱ)נִשְׂאָא was translated into Greek by means of the cumbersome form ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, while at the same time the expression “the Son of Man” remained *de facto* interchangeable with a personal pronoun or with the name “Jesus” itself. It is also easy to see why it was impossible to coin a confessional formula such as “Jesus is the Son of Man”: this would have been little more than the declaration that two names were identical.

It is also difficult to conceive of the designation of Jesus with the name “the Son of Man” either in direct address by others or in narrative passages. This concept contains an element of lowliness, as the address of the prophet with בֶּרֶךְ אֱנִשְׂאָא in the Book of Ezekiel shows.<sup>63</sup> Thus means that there would have been a dismissive undertone if this concept had been employed in addressing Jesus or in a narrative passage about him. Far from being a title of sovereignty, it would have indicated lowliness.<sup>64</sup>

It is also easy to see why the Son of Man logia in the Gospel of John link completely different affirmations to the expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου from those we find in the synoptic tradition. All that unites the Son of Man logia in these two spheres of tradition is the basic fact about the expression “the Son of Man”: viz., that it was a name which Jesus himself employed as a self-designation in indirect speech.

This hypothesis does however require an explanation of how it was possible at a secondary stage for logia about the eschatological activity of the Son of Man to be formed. Several explanatory patterns play an important role here.

*First*, a number of logia still allow us to discern how the expression “the Son of Man” supplanted other concepts at a secondary stage. The king who utters sentence in the parable of the judgment of the world

<sup>63</sup> In the Book of Ezekiel, the prophet is addressed ninety-three times as בֶּרֶךְ אֱנִשְׂאָא, which is reinforced twenty-three times by אֱתִתָּה. Colpe, *ThWNT* 8, 409, says that this form of address expresses the “weakness and lowliness of the creature confronted by the glory of the God of Israel.”

<sup>64</sup> This concept was understood in this way at an early date in the ancient church. A designation of Jesus as “the Son of Man” was found offensive (cf. *Barnabas* 12.10); later on, it was seen as a reference to the incarnation (Ignatius, *Eph.* 20.2; Justin, *Dial.* 100.3).

(Matt 25:34.40) becomes the Son of Man who, echoing Dan 7:13–14, takes his seat for judgment. Against the background of the common post-Easter κύριος address, parables which spoke of the “lord” who would come (cf. e.g., Luke 13:25–28/Matt 25:10–11; Mark 13:33–37/Luke 12:35–38; Luke 12:47–48) could lead to the warning: “You do not know on what day *your Lord* is coming” (Matt 24:42), and finally, since “the Son of Man” was well known as a name of Jesus, to the phrase: “the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt 24:39). Similarly, the “day of the Lord” soon becomes the “day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8; 5:4–5; 2 Cor 1:14) or the “day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6; 2:16). It then becomes easy to speak of the “day of the Son of Man.” This process can be clearly recognized by means of a comparison of Luke 12:40/Matt 24:44 both with the context and with 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15.

*Secondly*, logia which speak of the fulfillment of the kingly rule of God lead to affirmations about the kingly rule of the Son of Man (Matt 13:37, 41; cf. Matt 16:28 with Mark 9:1/Luke 9:27; and cf. the addition in later manuscripts at Matt 25:13).

*Thirdly*, the logion about confessing and denying (Luke 12:8–9/Matt 10:32) originally envisaged Jesus, the Son of Man, in the role of witness at the eschatological judgment, giving testimony before the angels—a role that was ascribed to every righteous Jew and even to non-Jews (cf. Matt 12:41/Luke 11:31–32). This is therefore the only logion about the eschatological activity of the Son of Man which should be included among the authentic logia of Jesus. In the further course of tradition, with recourse to linguistic traditions from Dan 7:13–14, Jesus the witness becomes the Son of Man who exercises judgment (cf. Mark 8:38/Luke 9:26/Matt 16:27).

In all these trajectories between authentic logia of Jesus and secondary formations of the logia about the eschatological activity of the “Son of Man,” we must never forget the influence of learned scribal exegesis. Jesus’ words about the coming of the kingdom of God and his self-designation by means of the name “the Son of Man” must have suggested to learned exegetes in Palestinian Jewish Christianity, with their openness to apocalyptic, the identification of Jesus with the figure described in Dan 7:13–14. The formation of secondary Son of Man logia was also made easier by the fact that, as words *about* Jesus “the Son of Man,” they were grammatically indistinguishable from words which Jesus himself had spoken using the third person. On

this hypothesis, therefore, the line which connects the use of the expression “the Son of Man” in Dan 7:13–14 to the Son of Man logia in the New Testament goes back, not to Jesus, but to learned apocalyptic exegetes in the post-Easter community.<sup>65</sup> The time of composition may be the epoch of apocalyptic interpretation and redaction of traditions about Jesus which probably occurred during the Caligula crisis in 40 CE.<sup>66</sup> This secondary exegetical identification of Jesus with the eschatological figure in Dan 7:13–14 (who was interpreted in messianic terms) may have received an impetus from the developing expectation of the parousia, which cannot be derived either from the preaching of the historical Jesus or from faith in his resurrection; the very close coupling of the expectation of the parousia with the name “the Son of Man” in the synoptic tradition argues in favor of this possibility.

Finally, we must discuss the logia about the suffering Son of Man. The insight that Jesus himself employed the expression “the Son of Man” as a name lends greater plausibility to the authenticity of simple basic predictions of his suffering which were expanded at a secondary stage by insertions and additions, for now there are no tensions between the affirmations made by these logia and any “Son of Man traditions.” If Jesus did indeed speak of himself as a sufferer—and a number of factors suggest that he did so—then it would in fact be probable that he employed the expression “the Son of Man” on such occasions, since the logia about the earthly activity of the Son of Man likewise often serve to present Jesus’ specific fate.

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<sup>65</sup> Thus, all the logia with a more or less direct relationship to Dan 7:13 belong to the group of Son of Man logia which speak of the eschatological activity of the Son of Man and are to be regarded as secondary. We follow here the analysis by Müller, who demonstrates that all the Son of Man logia in which a direct or indirect reference to Dan 7 can be discerned “are speaking about the exaltation and return of Jesus. This use of the Danielic passage was demonstrated here even in the case of texts in which the expression ‘the Son of Man’ does not occur. Thus, it is not only this expression that indicates a link to Dan 7:13–14. Rather, such a relationship emerges above all from the contents of what is said. In other words, the expression ‘Son of Man’ can no longer be taken as a certain sign of the influence of the Danielic passage” (Müller, *Menschensohn*, 154).

<sup>66</sup> On the apocalyptic reworking of traditions about Jesus during the Caligula crisis in 40 CE, cf. Gerd Theissen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, NTOA 8 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag 1989), 133–176.

Four motives may have led Jesus to choose this name as an indirect self-designation.

*First*, Jesus chose the expression “the Son of Man” as a cipher because of its mysterious character. This puzzling phrase was meant to protect him from being categorized in terms of already existing expectations, and to provoke the question: “Who is this Son of Man?” (cf. John 9:35).<sup>67</sup>

*Secondly*, by means of the indirect self-designation as “the Son of Man,” Jesus employed in an unusual manner a phrase which was customarily employed generically in Aramaic,<sup>68</sup> in order to deflect attention from one’s own person in the very act of saying something about oneself.<sup>69</sup> Unlike other generic forms of speech, however, the expression “the Son of Man” referred exclusively to Jesus.

*Thirdly*, Jesus used the expression “the Son of Man” with an implied allusion to the Book of Ezekiel, where the address  $\text{בְּנֵי אָדָם}$  emphasizes precisely the lowliness of the prophet vis-à-vis God, while at the same time highlighting the prominent role of the prophet as God’s messenger to humanity.<sup>70</sup>

*Fourthly*, Jesus had in mind the literal meaning of the expression “the Son of Man”: he wished to express in a hidden manner the fact

<sup>67</sup> Thus Eduard Schweizer, “Der Menschensohn: Zur eschatologischen Erwartung Jesu” (1959), in idem, *Neotestamentica* (Zürich: Zwingli 1963), 74–75; Volker Hampel, *Menschensohn und historischer Jesus. Ein Rätselwort als Schlüssel zum messianischen Selbstverständnis Jesu* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner 1990), 164; and Hengel, *Early Christology*, 80 and 387.

<sup>68</sup> One may compare the indirect self-designation as “one” in English or “man” in German. Cf. Bietenhard, *Menschensohn*, 302: “To speak of oneself in the third person singular expresses modesty and restraint. On the one hand, one is compelled to speak of oneself, i.e., to place one’s own person in the foreground; on the other hand, however, one finds this compulsion or necessity embarrassing or unpleasant, and this is why one endeavors to remove one’s person from the spotlight and to conceal it. One is compelled to move oneself into the front line, but one would prefer not to do so. Accordingly, this manner of speech expresses an ambivalent mood: both the emphasis and the withdrawal of one’s own person.”

<sup>69</sup> For similar interpretations, cf. Leivestad, *Messias*, 251–253; Müller, *Menschensohn*, 255–260; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 477–480.

<sup>70</sup> Leivestad, *Exit*, 266–267, emphasizes the lowliness which is one component of the expression “the Son of Man.” This possibility is also discussed by Colpe, *ThWNT* 8, 409. The possible connection to the “Son of Man” address in Ezekiel does not mean that Jesus saw himself as a prophet like Ezekiel; Ezekiel does not seem to have played a central role for Jesus (cf. Leivestad, *Menschensohn*, 102).

that he understood himself as the true human being, the prototypical renewer of the human race.<sup>71</sup>

It is only on the basis of Jesus' self-understanding that we can decide to what extent these four motives played a role in the choice of the name "the Son of Man."<sup>72</sup> Since however the titles of sovereignty and the name "Son of Man" provide either no access or only an insufficient access to his self-understanding, we must choose another methodological route.

### 3. *The Self-Understanding which Finds Expression in Jesus' Activity*

Jesus worked in a sovereign and authoritative manner. This makes it possible to find an access route to his self-understanding by studying the role that Jesus adopted in his activity and claimed for himself in his proclamation.<sup>73</sup> This is not primarily a matter of identifying ready-made categories in terms of the sociology of religion into which we can then insert the figure of Jesus. Rather, we must ask what role Jesus adopted and claimed with regard to the kingdom of God which he proclaimed, which had already drawn near in the present and which awaited its fulfillment in the future.<sup>74</sup> There is, after all, a broad consensus in the historical-critical study of Jesus that the center of his activity was the proclamation of the rule of God which had drawn near in its eschatological power. We must therefore inquire into the relationship between Jesus' message and his person.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Thus Charles F. D. Moule, "Neglected Features in the Problem of the 'Son of Man,'" in *Jesus und der Menschensohn: Festschrift Anton Vögtle*, ed. Joachim Gnllka (Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 419–424; and Leivestad, *Menschensohn*, 102.

<sup>72</sup> The following reflections will show all that all four motives (and especially the last three) could have played a role here: cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 305–308.

<sup>73</sup> The question of the role that Jesus claimed and *de facto* adopted is more open, and permits more nuanced perceptions, than such questions as Jesus' consciousness of his mission, the authority of his mission, the consciousness of his authority, or the position that he occupied.

<sup>74</sup> On the concept of the divine rule which is presupposed here, with its present and future dimensions, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 201–208.

<sup>75</sup> On this point, we should bear in mind that the *Leben-Jesu* investigations of the nineteenth century reached the negative conclusion that thanks to the process of collection and redaction which led to the composition of the surviving early Christian writings, it is no longer possible to reconstruct with methodological certainty any development in Jesus' self-understanding.

### 3.1 *The Future Fulfillment of the Rule of God and the Person of Jesus*

For the future, Jesus awaited the eschatological judgment and the fulfillment of the divine rule. Did he claim for himself any prominent role in these events, e.g., the role of the eschatological judge or the eschatological ruler?

As we have already seen, the logia about the coming Son of Man are probably secondary creations. This means that we must disregard the largest bloc of potential evidence that sees Jesus in the position of the eschatological judge or ruler.

In the case of those few logia which see Jesus explicitly or implicitly in the position of the eschatological ruler, it is clear that the tradition originally spoke of the judgment of God, and that the reference to the person of Jesus has entered the tradition only at a secondary stage.<sup>76</sup> It is even more significant that those logia about judgment which most likely go back to Jesus himself speak only of God as the eschatological judge.<sup>77</sup> “It remains very remarkable that the sayings dealing with God’s kingdom in the future do not mention a role for Jesus at the final breakthrough; all emphasis is on the final realization

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<sup>76</sup> The following blocks of tradition are relevant here:

- The metaphors which speak of the judgment at Luke 13:25–28 implicitly understand Jesus as judge: this is made clear by the allusions to his activity in 13:26. It is however obvious that this allusion already presupposes the post-Easter praxis of the Lord’s Supper. We should therefore conclude that it has entered the tradition at a secondary stage.
- The clearly distinct parallel at Matt 7:21–23 likewise presupposes the praxis of the earliest Christian communities (various charisms are listed). It is only the introductory logion at Matt 7:21 that may be a development of the genuine logion of Jesus at Luke 6:46. This logion, however, refers to Jesus’ life on earth, not to an eschatological function as judge.
- Luke 13:35/Matt 23:39 is understood after Easter as a concealed reference to the parousia of Jesus. If however it is authentic, it does not make any explicit identification in the pre-Easter perspective between Jesus and the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
- Finally, the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–12), which has close linguistic links to Matt 7:21–23 and Luke 13:25–28 (cf. Matt 25:12), could be read as an allegorical expression of Jesus’ claim to the function of eschatological judge. However, this parable was probably formulated originally as a parable about the fulfillment of the rule of God, not as a parable about the parousia.

<sup>77</sup> Thus Mark 10:27/Matt 19:26/Luke 18:27; Mark 13:32/Matt 24:36; Matt 6:4.6.18; Matt 18:25; Luke 12:20–21; Luke 12:32; Luke 18:7–8 or in the form of the *passivum divinum*: Mark 9:43–48/Matt 18:8–9; Matt 10:15/Matt 11:22–24/Luke 10:12–15; Matt 24:40–41/Luke 17:34–35.

of God's sovereign rule."<sup>78</sup> The prediction at Mark 14:25/Matt 26:29/Luke 22:16,18, which most scholars regard as authentic, makes it clear that Jesus did not claim for himself any prominent role in the eschatological judgment and in the fully realized rule of God: "Amen I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Here, Jesus sees himself as a participant in the heavenly meal, not as the giver of the feast or the bringer of salvation, and still less as judge.<sup>79</sup>

This means that all the individual traditions which see Jesus in the position of the eschatological judge originated after Easter. Similarly, the parables, metaphors, and other logia which speak of the rule of God which is realized after the judgment do not refer exclusively to the person of Jesus.<sup>80</sup> There is no evidence anywhere that Jesus believed he was entrusted with some particular role or task in the eschatological judgment<sup>81</sup> or in the fully accomplished kingdom of God.<sup>82</sup> Jesus did not envisage himself as exercising any function and carrying out any commission beyond his death.

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<sup>78</sup> De Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 83; cf. also 65.

<sup>79</sup> A similar position is taken by Joachim Gnilka, EKKNT 2.2, 246–247; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 233; and de Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 59 and 66–69. Matthew immediately makes good this Christological deficit (cf. Matt 26:29).

<sup>80</sup> Similarly, every reference to "the kingdom of Jesus" is secondary (cf. Matt 13:41; Matt 16:28; Matt 20:21/[Mark 10:37]; Luke 22:30). On this, cf. Wolfgang Wiefel, *ThWNT* 3, 372–373.

<sup>81</sup> Thus also Hans Conzelmann, "Das Selbstbewußtsein Jesu" (1963/1964), in idem, *Theologie als Schriftauslegung: Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament* (München: Kaiser 1975), 40; and de Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 85.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Hans Conzelmann, "Das Selbstbewußtsein Jesu," 37. This accords with the fact that the idea of the kingdom of God is scarcely ever linked to messianic concepts in the Jewish tradition, since "the concept of the rule of God primarily means that Yahweh, whom Israel professes to be the only God, will eliminate everything that prevents people from professing him as the only Lord (king) and from calling on his name as the only authoritative name" (Merklein, *Botschaft*, 41). In the post-Easter situation, the gospels link the expectation of the rule of God with the profession that Jesus is the Messiah; but even so, we find a messianic or directly Christological idea of the rule of God only in a few secondary passages (cf. Merklein, *ibid.*, 17). Finally, it is striking that in the letters of Paul too, "the parousia is never explicitly mentioned together with the kingdom of God" (de Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 73–74). Cf. also the affirmation by Theissen and Merz that Jesus had a "theocentric" expectation of the kingdom of God: *Jesus*, 251.



### 3.2 *The Kingdom of God which has Drawn Near in the Present, and the Person of Jesus*

Jesus is convinced that the eschatological rule of God is not only something that belongs wholly to the future. In terms of the history of religions, the special characteristic of his message is that this kingdom has already entered into the sphere of human experience today. Jesus was certain that the decisive eschatological turning point had already taken place.<sup>83</sup> The eschatological relationship to God, a life close to God, is possible even now, together with the certainty that one will enter into the fully realized rule of God in the future. Jesus does not see this eschatological relationship to God as simply a continuation of the covenant relationship which the people of God has enjoyed since ancient times; rather, it is based on a new, “eschatological act of election by God.”<sup>84</sup> The eschatological turning point which has taken place is also manifested in the fact that the “shining out” of the kingdom of God can be perceived already in the present.<sup>85</sup> And this is why Jesus (unlike apocalyptic) does not see the present time only as a period in which one must prove one’s worth. The present is already the age of salvation, in which the rule of God can be experienced in a genuine—albeit only fragmentary—manner.

#### 3.2.1. *Jesus as the One who Proclaims the Eschatological Relationship to God*

With regard to the proclamation of the rule of God, which is understood as having drawn near in this way, Jesus’ role consists first of all in announcing to others, in the name of God, the eschatological relationship to God. The paradigmatic example of this role is the beatitude pronounced on the poor, the hungry, and those who weep

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<sup>83</sup> Thus also de Jonge, *Final Envoy*, 44–58; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 234–239; Weder, *Gottesherrschaft*, 43; J. Becker, *Jesus*, 124–154. In this connection, we should refer also to the logion “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18), with its apocalyptic overtones: this speaks of an eschatological turning point that has really taken place, not of a future eschatological turning point that is only the object of hope.

<sup>84</sup> Merklein, *Botschaft*, 50, 52, 58, etc. On the relationship between the eschatological relationship to God and the covenant, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 204–205.

<sup>85</sup> On the metaphor of “shining out (*Aufblitzen*),” cf. Weder, *Gottesherrschaft*, 53. This metaphor is preferable to that of the “irruption” or “breaking in” of the kingdom of God, which assumes a development of God’s rule from a small beginning until its full realization. Jesus awaits the full realization of the kingdom of God in one sudden act, not in an evolutionary process.

(Luke 6:20b–21). These words promise the rule of God to those who are fundamentally destitute both in this world and in relation to God.<sup>86</sup> Jesus' role can also be seen in his act of assuring others that their sins are forgiven: this is implicit in his action of welcoming tax collectors and sinners,<sup>87</sup> and was probably carried out explicitly in the forgiveness of sins.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the special role of Jesus can also be seen in his instruction to address God as "Abba,"<sup>89</sup> which presupposes an intimacy in the relationship to God which was hardly known until then.

Jesus' proclamation of the new relationship to God is not based on an overarching context from which it could be inferred by way of argumentation. Consequently, we find no attempt on Jesus' part to offer arguments in justification of his message that the rule of God has drawn near. This distinguishes Jesus from the Old Testament prophets, and probably also from John the Baptist.<sup>90</sup> This proclamation of the new relationship to God has its roots in Jesus' special awareness that God has resolved to bring about the eschatological salvation.<sup>91</sup> Accordingly, when he proclaims that the kingdom of God has drawn near, Jesus is claiming implicitly to stand in the place of God, i.e., to be the eschatological representative of God.<sup>92</sup>

When Jesus teaches his followers to address God as Father, he is making available to them the way in which he himself addresses God.

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<sup>86</sup> On the interpretation of the beatitudes as the proclamation of the eschatological relationship to God, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 212–24, and Merklein, *Botschaft*, 45–51.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. e.g., Mark 2:15–16/Matt 9:10–11/Luke 5:29; Mark 2:1–12/Matt 9:1–8/Luke 5:17–26; Luke 7:36–50; 15:1–2; 19:1–10. In part, these texts have probably been revised in the processes of transmission, and some may indeed have a redactional origin. Nevertheless, they should be read as a reminiscence of Jesus' dealings with sinners and tax collectors.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Mark 2:5/Matt 9:2/Luke 5:20; Luke 7:48. Naturally, both these passages may be suspected of offering a legitimation of the post-Easter behavior of the community, which forgave sins in the name of Jesus; they would therefore be the creation of the community itself. On the other hand, it is striking that in the logia, Jesus does not himself forgive sins in the name of God, but only notes the forgiveness of sins which God has granted. The post-Easter community would surely have formulated this differently.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Luke 11:2/Matt 6:9; Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.

<sup>90</sup> The prophets could adduce the people's failure to satisfy the demands of the Torah as the reason why they preached judgment (cf. e.g., Jer 7:3–15). Their argumentation was certainly not accepted by all their contemporaries (cf. Jer 26), but they did attempt to make their message plausible through recourse to the tradition.

<sup>91</sup> Thus Nilka, *Jesus*, 156; Merklein, *Botschaft*, 59; Becker, *Jesus*, 349; Sanders, *Jesus*, 239.

<sup>92</sup> Thus also Merklein, *Botschaft*, 65. Sanders writes that Jesus "regarded himself as having full authority to speak and act on behalf of God": *Jesus*, 238.

Jesus can make available to others the new, eschatological relationship to God because he himself stands in this relationship. In other words, he not only represents God vis-à-vis human beings: he also represents the human being who has fully accepted the message about the kingdom of God which has drawn near. He himself lives the faith and the trust in God's closeness which he attempts to communicate to other people.

We can define more precisely the role which Jesus plays in the proclamation of the kingdom of God which has drawn near, when we examine how he saw himself in comparison to John the Baptist.<sup>93</sup> It is obvious that he esteemed the Baptist highly.<sup>94</sup> For example, he acknowledges the value of John's preaching about repentance without devaluing the Baptist in relation to his own person. Nevertheless, such formulations as "the law and the prophets until John" (Luke 16:16), "all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matt 11:13), and the continuation of the logion about the Baptist: "But the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Matt 11:11b/Luke 7:28b) indicate that Jesus saw John as belonging to the salvation-historical epoch of promise, i.e., the period in which the rule of God was only announced prophetically,<sup>95</sup> whereas the period of Jesus is the period of fulfillment. "In Jesus' eyes, the Baptist really still belongs to the old age. He stands on the threshold immediately before the salvific turning point."<sup>96</sup> As the last and greatest of the prophets, he brings the period of the prophets to an end; this however means that the role he plays in relation to the kingdom of God is fundamentally different from that of Jesus. Jesus sees himself as the awaited eschatological representative of God. Whereas John the Baptist only announced this turning point as something still in the future, Jesus bears witness that it has already occurred. He thereby claims for himself a unique role which surpasses all the prophetic figures of the past, a role that eschatologically transcends all that went before.

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<sup>93</sup> On this, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 221–224.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Matt 11:16–19/Luke 7:31–35 and Matt 11:7–9.11/Luke 7:24–26.28; cf. also *Gos. Thom.* 46.

<sup>95</sup> This judgment about the place of John in salvation history corresponds to the self-understanding of the Baptist himself. As far as our sources permit us to judge, he saw himself as the last preacher of repentance before the dawning of the rule of God (on this, cf. Gnllka, *Jesus*, 79–83). And this is one good reason for regarding this positioning of the Baptist in the history of salvation as an authentic logion of Jesus.

<sup>96</sup> Becker, *Jesus*, 98; similarly, Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 196.

### 3.2.2. *God's Rule Shines Out in what Jesus Does*

A number of logia express Jesus' claim that his period is the eschatological period of salvation. As soon as Jesus begins to work in public, the eschatological rule of God enters the experiential realm of human beings.<sup>97</sup> In a very special way, Jesus makes this claim about his healings and exorcisms (Luke 11:20/Matt 12:28): "If I drive out the demons with the finger of God (ἐν δακτύλῳ θεοῦ), then the rule of God has come upon you (ἔφθασεν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς). This means that God's rule can be directly experienced in healings and exorcisms.<sup>98</sup> Besides this, many of his parables which speak *prima facie* of the rule of God must also be understood as an implicit "explication of Jesus' conduct."<sup>99</sup> Jesus intends by means of these parables to help his hearers perceive his activity as a genuine experience of the rule of God.<sup>100</sup> He sees the healings and mighty deeds as real experiences of the rule of God in the present-day world, i.e., not merely as signs which point to the *future* kingdom. By acting thus on the commission and "in the place

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<sup>97</sup> In this context, a number of logia are relevant. They were certainly revised to some extent after Easter, but their core probably goes back to Jesus.

- Luke 10:23-24/Matt 13:16-17: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Amen, I tell you: many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."
- Matt 11:2-6/Luke 7:18-23: "The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf here, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."
- Luke 17:21: When Jesus is asked about the coming of the kingdom of God, he replies: "The rule of God is ἐντὸς ὑμῶν."
- Mark 2:19a/Matt 9:15a/Luke 5:34 describes the period of Jesus' activity as the eschatological period of salvation: "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them?"
- Matt 11:12-13/Luke 16:16. This logion contains an affirmation about the rule of God which can be interpreted in two ways, either to mean: "The rule of God presses on with force, and those who have made up their minds grab it for themselves" (thus Gnilka, *Jesus*, 151; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 235), or to mean: "The rule of God suffers violence, and the violent oppress it" (thus, with some reservations, Ulrich Luz, *EKKNT* 1.1, 176-177). Irrespective of which alternative one chooses, however, the logion expresses Jesus' evaluation of the present time as a period in which the rule of God has already become something that people can experience.

<sup>98</sup> Thus also Gnilka, *Jesus*, 136; Merkley, *Botschaft*, 71; and Sanders, *Jesus*, 168.

<sup>99</sup> Hans Weder, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern: Traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Analysen und Interpretationen*, FRLANT 120 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1978), 168.

<sup>100</sup> On this, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 234-236.

of God,<sup>101</sup> Jesus takes on the role of the eschatological representative of God when he performs his healings and his mighty deeds.

Jesus sees the eschatological turning point that brings salvation as an event that God himself has brought about. This is essentially something antecedent to Jesus' activity, since it is only this event that makes Jesus' activity possible. This means that Jesus does not himself bring about the eschatological revolution. It is not he who brings about the salvific turning point.<sup>102</sup> It is therefore inexact to call him "the one who brings in the rule of God" or the "inaugurator of the kingdom," since "it is not Jesus who brings the *basileia*, but the *basileia* that brings Jesus."<sup>103</sup>

In Jesus eyes, his message about the rule of God that has drawn near is rooted exclusively in God's salvific decision. Similarly, he sees the origin of his power to perform healings and mighty deeds as lying exclusively in the activity of God. It is God who is at work in these healings and mighty deeds, not some miraculous power belonging to Jesus. In other words, his power derives directly from his authorization by God. Jesus never claims to possess an ability of his own to make the rule of God an experiential reality; all he does is to "*point*" the finger of God in a specific direction.<sup>104</sup> And when he commissions his disciples to perform similar healings and mighty deeds, he makes it clear that he does not believe that God's activity is restricted to his own actions. This means that it is probably too much to say that "through him, the rule of God makes its way, inexorable and irrevocable, as the definitive event in which this rule is brought about."<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, it is insufficient to see Jesus only as the "witness" and "interpreter" of the divine action.

Faith plays a decisive role not only in the proclamation of the new relationship to God, but also in the healings and mighty deeds of Jesus—both as a reaction to what Jesus does and as a precondition for his mighty deeds and healings. This is not primarily a question of faith in Jesus, but rather of faith in the mighty power of God which

<sup>101</sup> Weder, *Gottesherrschaft*, 26.

<sup>102</sup> This sentence echoes the somewhat exaggerated formulation by Becker, *Jesus*, 274.

<sup>103</sup> Weder, *Gottesherrschaft*, 43, following Eberhard Jüngel. This is why Jesus does not see his own death as posing a threat to the realization of the rule of God (cf. Mark 14:25 and Becker, *Jesus*, 419).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Weder, *Gottesherrschaft*, 26.

<sup>105</sup> Becker, *Jesus*, 274.

can be experienced in the present moment. A the logion about the power of faith, which is transmitted in several variants, shows that<sup>106</sup> Jesus himself seems to have regarded such a faith as a necessary precondition for carrying out his mighty deeds and healings; and this means that he not only takes on the role of God's eschatological representative vis-à-vis human beings when he performs these actions, but is at the same also the human being whose actions are wholly permeated by trust in the rule of God which has drawn near. And thus, precisely in his mighty deeds and miracles, Jesus represents the archetype of the human being who has totally accepted and committed himself to the message about the kingdom of God that has come near.

Jesus' special role comes even more clearly into view when we compare it with the role of his disciples. Jesus' relationship to his disciples is far different from comparable relationships in his milieu between a teacher and his pupils.<sup>107</sup> The rabbinic pupils themselves sought out their teachers and always retained the right to change to a different master, but Jesus with charismatic authority summons people to follow him,<sup>108</sup> and he sometimes even rejects persons who are willing to follow him.<sup>109</sup> He demands a total loyalty which goes to the very limits of ethically acceptable conduct and indeed to the surrender of one's own self.<sup>110</sup> The goal of a rabbinic pupil is to become a rabbi, but the disciples always remain in principle dependent on Jesus. From the very beginning of their discipleship, they are in principle subordinate to Jesus, and this specific relationship never changes.

Jesus summons men and women to follow him, in order that they can support him in his activity. The disciples' task consists in the

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<sup>106</sup> Luke 17:6/Matt 17:20; Mark 11:23–24/Matt 21:21–22; cf. also Mark 9:24 and Mark 6:1–6/Matt 13:53–58.

<sup>107</sup> On what follows, cf. Martin Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mt 8,21f und Jesu Ruf in die Nachfolge* (Berlin: Töpelmann 1968), 18–63; Gnllka, *Jesus*, 167–174; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 198–199.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Mark 1:16–20/Matt 4:18–22; Luke 5:1–11; Mark 2:13–14/Matt 9:9/Luke 5:27–28; Mark 10:21–22/Matt 19:21–22/Luke 18:22–23. These vocation narratives, as we read them today, are doubtless cast in an idealized and typical form, but they all still allow us to see the charismatic authority of Jesus.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Mark 5:18–19/Luke 8:38–39; Luke 9:57–62/Matt 8:19–22.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Matt 8:19–22/Luke 9:57–62; Luke 14:26–27/Matt 10:37–38; Luke 14:28–33; Mark 8:34–35/Matt 16:24–25/Luke 9:23–24.

proclamation of the rule of God which has drawn near (cf. Matt 10:7; Luke 9:2; 9:60; 10:9) as well as in exorcisms and healings (Mark 6:7/ Matt 10:1/Luke 9:1f.; Luke 10:9), as we see in the discourse in which he sends them out.<sup>111</sup> Jesus presupposes here that the rule of God will shine out in the preaching and healing activity of the disciples too. This however does not mean that the disciples become independent representatives of God: the relationship between Jesus and his disciples is defined by the basic relationship of discipleship even when he commissions them to work on their own. It is *Jesus* who commissions and empowers the disciples to engage in preaching; they then carry out *his* commission. And the disciples' certainty is rooted exclusively in *Jesus'* certainty that God is offering his people a new relationship to God and that God even now permits his rule to shine out in healings and mighty deeds. It is only via Jesus that the disciples have access to God's eschatological decision to grant salvation, and they experience their empowerment to perform healings and drive out the demons as an authority which Jesus grants them. Consequently, the disciples do not carry out a role of their own which would be similar to that of Jesus. They do however receive a share in his role.<sup>112</sup> Accordingly, in comparison to his disciples, Jesus' own relationship to the rule of God which has drawn near is an exclusive relationship.<sup>113</sup>

We should note a further point. Jesus not only gives his disciples a share in his role as the one who proclaims the rule of God which has drawn near, and commissions them to perform healings and exorcisms. He also expects that their lifestyle as disciples will be permeated by their commitment to the rule of God which has drawn near. The disciples must represent God vis-à-vis human beings with Jesus and in the name of Jesus; and they must follow him as the one whose life is based completely on trust in the rule of God which has drawn near.

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<sup>111</sup> This discourse is transmitted in several variants; cf. Mark 6:7/Matt 10:1/Luke 9:1–2 and Matt 10:7–8/Luke 10:9. It is certain that secondary elements have entered the formulations of this discourse as we find them in the gospels, but it is very likely that Jesus commissioned his disciples too to perform healings and exorcisms. Recollections of this commission are preserved e.g., at Mark 9:18/Matt 17:16/Luke 9:40. Cf. also Gnllka, *Jesus*, 171; Martin Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma*, 82–89.

<sup>112</sup> Thus also Merklein, *Botschaft*, 66, and Gnllka, *Jesus*, 174. Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 200: "The women and men disciples share in Jesus' mission and authority."

<sup>113</sup> This is expressed substantially in Matt 10:24/Luke 6:40/John 13:16.

### 3.2.3. *The Attitude to Jesus as a Criterion in the Future Judgment*

Jesus takes it for granted that those who put their faith in his preaching, and thus welcome the fact that the rule of God has drawn near, have already gained access to the eschatological salvation. This can also be stated in negative terms: a considerable number of logia show that where people refuse to accept the preaching of Jesus, they exclude themselves from the rule of God which has drawn near.<sup>114</sup> To turn one's back on Jesus is to turn one's back on the rule of God, and thereby to lose the eschatological salvation.<sup>115</sup> This claim on the part of Jesus is the logical consequence of his claim to be the eschatological representative of God.

Jesus however nowhere claims that faith in *him* is the precondition for entry into the kingdom of God. He never says that only those who sympathize with his preaching—still less, only those who follow him—will receive the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is open to others, even to people who do not know Jesus.<sup>116</sup> It is indeed true

<sup>114</sup> The following blocks of tradition are relevant here:

- The logion about confessing and denying, Luke 12:8-9/Matt 10:32-3: "Everyone who acknowledges me before human beings, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but he who denies me before human beings will be denied before the angels of God."
- The logion about judgment, Luke 11:31-32/Matt 12:41-42: "The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with this men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."
- The cry of woe uttered against the Galilean towns Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Luke 10:13-15/Matt 11:21-24).
- The logion about discipleship, Mark 8:35/Luke 9:24/Matt 16:25 and Matt 10:39/Luke 17:33/John 12:25: "The one who seeks to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake, will find it."
- The beatitude at Matt 11:6/Luke 7:23, "Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."
- The metaphor of the house built on sand or on rock which closes the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:47-49/Matt 7:24-27).

Although questions arise about the authenticity of the individual logia, their sheer number certainly permits us to draw conclusions about Jesus' intention. John too has preserved this intention; his formulations are secondary, but they are substantially correct—cf. e.g., John 3:17-18; 3:36; 5:24; 12:46-48.

<sup>115</sup> Thus also Becker, *Jesus*, 58-59; Weder, *Gottesherrschaft*, 48 n. 79; Gnilka, *Jesus*, 149 and 158; Merklein, *Botschaft*, 36; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 242-243.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Luke 6:20/Matt 5:3; Matt 25:31-46—if the basic core of this text goes back to Jesus himself. The expression εἰσέρχεσθαι ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ is usually not



that the rule of God has drawn near in Jesus, but it cannot simply be identified with him: the rule of God is larger than Jesus. This is why Jesus also envisages an access to the rule of God which is not mediated via the personal relationship to his own person.

The structure of Jesus' claim that one's attitude to him decides salvation or damnation is not unique. We find the same structural claim in all the prophets. Unlike the Old Testament prophets, however, Jesus makes his claim in an eschatological context: he is the final and definitive representative of God.

### 3.2.4. *The Eschatological Reconstitution of the People of God*

Jesus addressed his message that the rule of God had drawn near not to the whole of humanity, but to the people of God, to Israel.<sup>117</sup> Jesus does not seek encounters with Gentiles, although he does not reject non-Jews in principle, when these approach him.<sup>118</sup> The occasional periods which he spends in areas where Gentiles live should be seen as attempts to withdraw; they are not motivated by the desire to preach.<sup>119</sup> "This does not mean that Jesus wishes to exclude the Gentiles from the coming salvation. It is probable that his ideas on this subject remained entirely in keeping with the prophetic expectation of the eschatological pilgrimage of the peoples to Zion" (cf. Isa 2:2–5; Mic 4:1–4).<sup>120</sup> The people of Israel provided the framework for Jesus' activity, which however implicitly included a universalistic tendency.<sup>121</sup>

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linked directly to the person of Jesus: Matt 5:20; Matt 7:21; Mark 9:43–47/Matt 18:8–9; Mark 10:14–15/Matt 18:3; Matt 19:14/Luke 18:16–17; (Matt 19:17); Mark 10:23–25/Matt 19:23–24/Luke 18:24–25; Matt 21:31–32.

<sup>117</sup> Historically speaking, this affirmation is virtually certain, since the mission of the post-Easter community to the Gentiles begins only after a number of painful stages in which they acquire the relevant insights: cf. also Matt 10:5–6; Matt 15:24; Mark 7:24–30/Matt 15:21–28.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. the traditions about the healing of the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30/Matt 15:21–28) and the healing of the servant of the officer in Capernaum (Matt 8:5–13/Luke 7:1–10). The core of these two traditions is certainly authentic.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Mark 7:24/Matt 15:21.

<sup>120</sup> Merklein, *Botschaft*, 42. Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 395–398; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 233; and Sanders, *Jesus*, 192, who makes this point with greater caution. We should however note that Jesus never interprets this special position of the Jews in nationalistic-imperialistic terms, whereas there are Jewish traditions which interpret the pilgrimage of the peoples to Zion as the submission of the Gentiles (cf. e.g., Isa 49:22–23; 60:14; Psalms of Solomon 17.21–31).

<sup>121</sup> The reason for this universalistic tendency is that Jesus sees the eschatological turning point which brings salvation as based, not on the special election of Israel,

This turning to Israel as the people of God is also manifested in Jesus' founding of the group of the twelve.<sup>122</sup> The re-establishing of the people in twelve tribes was a stable element in the Jewish expectation of eschatological salvation, since it was envisaged that the end time would entail the reconstitution of the ideal past.<sup>123</sup> When Jesus posits the symbolic action of calling twelve men to hand on his message to the entire people of God, and perhaps even to be the symbolic representation of the eschatological people of God,<sup>124</sup> he is spelling out his claim that the eschatological turning point has already occurred and that the restitution of the people of God, which was expected for the end-time, is now possible. The re-established people of God of the eschaton becomes visible in the symbolic group of twelve. By calling the twelve, Jesus makes it clear that the eschatological reconstitution of the people of God is now beginning. However, he does not carry out a genuine separation of the true people of God from the false Israel: he leaves this for the full realization of the rule

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but exclusively on the grace and kindness of the Creator, which is expressed in the fact that Jesus occasionally portrays the Gentiles as exemplary figures who ought to be imitated by the members of his own people (Luke 10:30–35; Luke 11:31–32/Matt 12:41–42; Luke 7:9/Matt 8:10; Luke 13:28–30/Matt 8:11–12). Cf. also Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 246.

<sup>122</sup> Some scholars regard the group of the twelve as a body which came into being after Easter in order to direct the community; it is argued in support of this thesis that the twelve are not mentioned in Q and that, according to Acts 1:12–26, the twelve played a decisive role in the early post-Easter community. A weighty argument in favor of the pre-Easter founding of the twelve is the fact that Judas Iscariot is always mentioned as one of the twelve. What could be the point of making Judas a member of the twelve, if this is a post-Easter body projected back onto the time of Jesus? We should also mention that 1 Cor 15:5 already mentions “the twelve” among the witnesses to the resurrection. In discussing this problem, we should note that Luke was the first to designate the twelve as “apostles”; in Mark they are always simply called “the twelve.” On these problems, cf. the very detailed argumentation by Bédard Rigaux, “Die ‘Zwölf’ in Geschichte und Kerygma,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus: Beiträge zum Christusverständnis in Forschung und Verkündigung*, Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthiae (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2nd ed. 1961 [1st ed. 1960]), 469–482. The following scholars assume that Jesus founded the group of the twelve before Easter: Becker, *Jesus*, 32–33; Gnllka, *Jesus*, 187–188; Merklein, *Botschaft*, 42; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 201.

<sup>123</sup> For textual evidence, cf. Gnllka, *Jesus*, 188–189.

<sup>124</sup> The synoptics agree in linking the vocation of the twelve with their commission to preach and to heal (cf. Mark 3:13–19/Matt 10:1–5/Luke 6:12–16). It is possible that they also function as representatives (Sanders, *Jesus*, 120 and 122). It is probably only at a later date that the idea arose that the twelve would be the leaders and rulers of the eschatological people of God (as in Matt 19:28/Luke 22:29–30. On this, cf. Gnllka, *Jesus*, 189).

of God. Jesus' claim to represent God in the eschatological age is also implicit in his symbolic calling of the twelve: for it is *Jesus* who appoints the twelve.

### 3.2.5. *Jesus' Role when He Imparts His Directives*

Jesus was not only the one who proclaimed that the rule of God had drawn near; he was also the exegete of God's will. According to the Jewish understanding, however, God's will is documented in Torah. We must therefore inquire at this point into Jesus' position vis-à-vis Torah.<sup>125</sup>

Jesus never denies in principle that the Torah is a valid communication of the will of God. Nevertheless, the consequence of his preaching is a relativization of Torah. To begin with, he implicitly calls its soteriological function into question: it is not through the observance of a Torah which must be expounded by means of refined casuistry that people will find access to the rule of God, but by accepting the gracious offer of God which is addressed to them in Jesus' message and by living in the nearness of the kingdom of God which he has given them as a gift. In this way, Jesus implicitly claims that his message is superior to Torah,<sup>126</sup> and he renders Torah and covenant obsolete as mediators of the gift of salvation.<sup>127</sup> Now, with his message, Jesus is the decisive mediator of salvation, and it is he who now makes possible in God's name a new access to salvation. Secondly, Jesus proclaims that this insight into the nearness of the rule of God gives a new, immediate access to the will of God. And this too "relativizes" Torah as "the sufficient and decisive communication of the will of God."<sup>128</sup> This new basis for knowledge of the will of God makes it possible for Jesus to proclaim God's will

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<sup>125</sup> This question has given rise to vehement disagreements in the historical investigation of the life of Jesus. It is not possible to discuss it adequately in the framework of the present essay. For further details, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 247–259.

<sup>126</sup> On this, cf. Sanders, *Jesus*, 237: "If the most important thing that people could do was to accept him, the importance of other demands was reduced, even though Jesus did not say that those demands were invalid."

<sup>127</sup> Thus also Becker, *Jesus*, 354. This is why the concept of "covenant" is found only once in the Jesus tradition, when he speaks of a "new covenant."

<sup>128</sup> Wolfgang Schrager, *Ethik des Neuen Testaments*, GNT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1982), 63.

authoritatively and directly, without recourse to Torah.<sup>129</sup> His reception of Torah traditions sometimes intensifies these,<sup>130</sup> and sometimes plays them down<sup>131</sup>—but in each case, the reason is his own insight into the will of God. Jesus also deals with ethical questions which are not regulated in Torah.<sup>132</sup>

Although one cannot say that Jesus in effect abolished Torah, it would be equally wrong to see him as a “Jew who was faithful to the law” and merely offered his own particular exegesis of scripture,<sup>133</sup> since we must not overlook the fact that Jesus “displays an authority and a certainty about what God really wants—and these can be explained only in the context of his eschatological mission, or of his eschatological knowledge.”<sup>134</sup> This is why the role that Jesus claims for himself in the directives which he gives is not that of a rabbi who has studied the scriptures.<sup>135</sup> “He taught them like one who has ἐξουσία and not like the scribes.”<sup>136</sup> And this means that when he imparts his directives, Jesus also plays the role of God’s eschatological representative. “Jesus dares to demand obedience to God’s will as if he himself stood in the place of God.”<sup>137</sup> In view of the authority and power to which Jesus lays claim when he proclaims his teaching, it is all the more astonishing that he does not offer any legitimation even

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<sup>129</sup> Accordingly, most of Jesus’ directives contain no argumentative recourse to Torah. Where he does refer to Torah, this often happens antithetically (cf. the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount and Mark 10:2–9/Matt 19:3–9).

<sup>130</sup> It is above all social commandments such as the command to love one’s enemies or the prohibition of divorce that are intensified.

<sup>131</sup> It is above all cultic commandments such as the law of purity which are neutralized.

<sup>132</sup> E.g., the requirement that one put one’s trust in God’s care, or the summons to discipleship.

<sup>133</sup> Thus David Flusser, *Jesus—in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, rororo-Biographien 140 (Reinbeck near Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978 [1st ed. 1968], 44 and 71.

<sup>134</sup> Merklein, *Botschaft*, 100.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Jesus*, 238: “His authority (in his own view and that of his followers) was not mediated by any human organisation, not even by scripture. A rabbi, or a teacher of the law, derived authority from studying and interpreting the Bible. Jesus doubtless did both, but it was not scriptural interpretation that gave him a claim on other people.” Thus also Becker, *Jesus*, 279 and 350; against Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 350. This is not contradicted by the fact that Jesus was initially perceived by outsiders as a rabbi and was also addressed as such.

<sup>136</sup> Mark 1:22/Matt 7:29/Luke 4:32; cf. John 7:46. This summary of Jesus’ activity is probably a post-Easter formulation, but it is a substantially correct description of Jesus.

<sup>137</sup> Ernst Fuchs, “Die Frage nach dem historischen Jesus,” *ZTK* 53 (1956): 210–229, esp. 219.

in this area of his preaching—and this shows that Jesus' position with regard to Torah and his directives are based exclusively on his own certainty about God.

Jesus' teaching must be considered from yet another perspective. It is not only the authoritative proclamation of the will of God; like the rest of his preaching, it helps make the rule of God a present reality. When Jesus' followers accept his word and love their enemies, forgive their debtors, renounce revenge, and welcome into their fellowship those who had been excluded, the rule of God shines out even now. And this means that when Jesus' disciples follow his directives, they themselves help to make God's rule a present reality. Jesus' disciples not only possessed his *teaching* as a source of orientation: it is clear that Jesus himself *lived* what he demanded of others. When he called others to follow him and thus challenged them to share in his own way of life, he implicitly presented himself as the paradigm of the human being who lives in accordance with the will of God.<sup>138</sup> When he imparted his directives, therefore, Jesus represented the human being “who lives wholly on the basis of the rule of God which has drawn near and commits himself to serve this rule. Jesus takes it completely for granted that there is an intimate connection” between his role as God's eschatological representative in relation to human beings in the directives which he gives, and his own existence in total confidence in the rule of God which has drawn near.<sup>139</sup>

### 3.2.6. *Summary: The Role of Jesus in the Rule of God which has Drawn Near*

We can now summarize these various aspects and make the following affirmations about the role which Jesus *de facto* took on and implicitly claimed in the eschatological rule of God, which had drawn near and was the object of his proclamation.

Jesus saw himself as the eschatological representative of God. His proclamation of the eschatological relationship to God and his ethical directives are rooted exclusively in his own certainty with regard to God. He claimed to be speaking and acting in the place of God. In this way, he took on the role of the one who proclaimed the rule of God. Unlike the prophets and John the Baptist, who had made simi-

<sup>138</sup> Thus also Becker, *Jesus*, 287.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

lar claims, Jesus saw himself as the decisive eschatological messenger of God, with the task of proclaiming a qualitatively new decision by God to grant salvation.

Jesus not only proclaimed that the rule of God had drawn near. In his healings and exorcisms, and in his calling of the group of the twelve, he was already accomplishing in a fragmentary manner the rule of God which had drawn near. He himself is the instrument through which the rule of God is realized. In this respect, Jesus did not see himself as playing an exclusive rule: he gave his disciples the task of letting the rule of God shine out in their activity too. Nevertheless, the disciples acted as persons who were authorized and commissioned by Jesus, and they remained dependent on *his* certainty with regard to God.

Jesus not only takes on the role of God's eschatological representative vis-à-vis human beings. At the same time, he is also the human being who lives in the totality of his existence on the basis of the rule of God which has drawn near. He himself has the eschatological relationship to God which he makes available to others. He performs his mighty deeds and miracles on the basis of his faith in God's salvific nearness and lives in accordance with the will of God. Clearly, it is possible for Jesus to take on the role of God's eschatological representative only because he himself is the first one who hears and lives his own message. Jesus must therefore be seen also as the representative of the new eschatological existence. He is the one in whom the rule of God becomes a reality.

Did Jesus regard himself as the Messiah? When we consider the various articulations of the Jewish messianic expectation,<sup>140</sup> we see that the nuanced role which Jesus took on and claimed for himself with regard to the rule of God which had drawn near is not completely isomorphic with any of the various messianic concepts. On the other hand, the Jewish messianic expectation was so pluriform that Jesus' self-understanding could certainly have been perceived as messianic. He claimed a role which entailed a sovereignty and dignity that were undoubtedly on the same level as the various messianic expectations: Jesus saw himself as the eschatological representative of

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<sup>140</sup> On this, cf. e.g., Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 464–467; Hengel, *Early Christology*, 32–41; Johannes Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran: Königliche, priesterliche und prophetische Messiasvorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*, WUNT 2.104 (Tübingen: Mohr and Siebeck 1998).

God. He perceived a qualitative difference between himself and all the other messengers of God in the past. He understood himself as the definitive and decisive representative of God. And thus we can say that “Jesus had a messianic self-understanding, but without the title ‘Messiah’.”<sup>141</sup>

#### 4. *The Contradiction in Jesus’ Activity, and its Explanation*<sup>142</sup>

Jesus had a messianic self-understanding, but he did not lay claim to any messianic title. In other respects too, he was very reserved about his own person.

For example, he employed the *passivum divinum* to speak of his own activity,<sup>143</sup> or else spoke only indirectly of himself by means of formulations such as: “Something greater than Solomon/Jonah is here.”<sup>144</sup> Formulations such as: “Many prophets longed to see what you see”<sup>145</sup> and “The rule of God is ἐν τὸς ὑμῶν”<sup>146</sup> leave the reference to his own person puzzlingly open. This indirect way of speaking about his person and his activity was also a basic trait of Jesus’ parables, which are to be understood as a theological explication of his activity.<sup>147</sup> Jesus’ person remained mysterious. He refused to legitimate his claim in any way. He did not tell any story about an experience of being called, nor did he describe any visions and heavenly voices. He did not employ the classical prophetic formulae which the prophets had used to identify their message as the word of God. He also refused the demands to authenticate himself by means of a miracle.<sup>148</sup> When challenged to show his legitimation, he answers evasively.<sup>149</sup> He never justifies his proclamation by speaking explicitly

<sup>141</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 468.

<sup>142</sup> On this entire section, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 272–302.

<sup>143</sup> Matt 11:2–6/Luke 7:18–23.

<sup>144</sup> Luke 11:31–32/Matt 12:41–42.

<sup>145</sup> Luke 10:23–24/Matt 13:16–17.

<sup>146</sup> Luke 17:21.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. e.g., Mark 2:19a/Matt 9:15a/Luke 5:34. On this, cf. also Hans Weder, *Gleichnisse*, 95.

<sup>148</sup> Mark 8:11–12/Matt 16:1.4/Luke 11:16; Matt 12:38–39/Luke 11:29; cf. also John 2:18–22; 6:30. It is clear that a prophet was expected to work authenticating miracles (cf. the various examples in Rudolf Meyer, *ThWNT* 6, 827). Mark 2:1–12/Matt 9:1–18/Luke 5:17–26 is not an authenticating miracle, since it is only the Son of Man logion, inserted secondarily at Mark 2:10, that makes this narrative a miracle of this kind.

<sup>149</sup> Mark 11:27–33/Matt 21:23–27/Luke 20:1–8.

of the status of his own person. In several stories of healing,<sup>150</sup> Jesus refuses to place too much emphasis on his own abilities as healer and exorcist, and sends away the healed person with the words: “Your faith has saved you.”<sup>151</sup> Instead of accepting the acknowledgment and veneration of his person after the healings, Jesus employs these words to withdraw his own person from the spotlight. He points instead to the faith of the person who has been healed and to the activity of God. In keeping with this, the surviving accounts never tell us that Jesus turned his healings to his own profit: we never hear of financial payments or of gifts. On the contrary, the tradition remembers Jesus as withdrawing from the crowd after healings and miracles. He did not permit his own person to be celebrated.<sup>152</sup> These observations are reinforced by two other strands of tradition, which hand on words of Jesus that are probably authentic. When the rich man asks him about eternal life, genuflecting before him and addressing him as διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ, Jesus replies: “Why do you call me ‘good’? No one is good but God alone!”<sup>153</sup> And he coldly rejects the indirect glorification of his own person through the beatitude pronounced on his mother, replying with an antithetical beatitude: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Mark 5:34/Matt 9:22/Luke 8:48; Mark 10:52/Luke 18:42; Luke 17:19 (probably secondary here); cf. also Luke 7:50; Matt 8:10.13/Luke 7:9; Mark 2:5/Matt 9:2/Luke 5:20; Mark 9:23/Matt 17:20/Luke 17:6; Matt 15:28 (/Mark 7:29); Mark 5:36/Luke 8:50. Against these passages, cf. Matt 9:28–29, which however is redactional. In this context, the narrative of the healing of the woman with the flow of blood is paradigmatic (Mark 5:24–34/Matt 9:20–22/Luke 8:42b–48). It is precisely the special character of Jesus’ person that makes her healing possible (cf. Mark 5:30/Luke 8:46, “power went forth from him”—unlike Matthew, who derives the healing from Jesus’ word); but the closing words, “Your faith has made you well,” transpose the cause of the healing from Jesus’ power to the faith of the woman.

<sup>151</sup> These words of farewell are not to be understood—as probably happened after Easter (cf. Matt 9:28–29)—to mean: “Your faith *in me* has helped you.” Rather, they meant: “Your faith that *God* is at work has helped you—it is *not I* who helped you.” In individual cases, it is difficult to determine which traits in the tradition of the narratives of healing are authentic, but it is very difficult to imagine that an element which reduces Jesus’ own share in the healings could have penetrated these stories after Easter. It is more probable that the reserve on Jesus’ part which is expressed in these words was a striking aspect of his behavior when he performed healings, and that this was clearly remembered after Easter; this is why this trait could make its way even into narratives of healing which were created only at a secondary stage.

<sup>152</sup> E.g., Mark 1:32–38/Luke 4:38–43; John 6:15; cf. also John 2:24.

<sup>153</sup> Mark 10:17–18/Luke 18:18–19.

<sup>154</sup> Luke 11:27–28; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 79.



To sum up: Jesus not only refused to claim the veneration of his own person, sovereignty and honor, he also refused to describe (still less, to define) the role which he took on before God and human beings. He refused to answer the question: “Who is this Jesus?,” or indeed to let this question be discussed—since such a discussion could have created the preconditions for veneration by others or for a claim on his part to sovereignty and honor.<sup>155</sup>

Many scholars have attempted to explain this reserve by Jesus *ab extra*, so to speak.<sup>156</sup> For example, it has been suggested that Jesus had strategic motives.<sup>157</sup> He could not use any already existing messianic title of sovereignty, because this would have risked immediate and massive sanctions, calling his entire public ministry into question. Didactic motives have also been suggested. Jesus did not want to supply people with a comfortable formula for their orthodoxy; or else he did not want to make the understanding of his message dependent on the antecedent acknowledgment of his person. It has also been suggested that Jesus employed no title of sovereignty because the special role which he played was not envisaged in the eschatological expectation of his contemporaries. Another theory claims that Jesus understood himself as the *messias designatus* who as yet lived in concealment, awaiting the future day when God would reveal him in power. Finally, the attempt has been made to demonstrate that Jesus was so reserved about his own person because it was only in this way that he could correspond to particular messianic expectations.

These hypotheses may help to make plausible some aspects of his reserve, but none of these proposed explanations can tell us why Jesus completely refused to give any explicit account of his self-understanding. It is indeed true that nuanced explanations would have prevented him from being interpreted in incorrect categories, at least

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<sup>155</sup> This is not contradicted by the emphatic “I” of Jesus in the antitheses, in which Jesus is contrasting his own authority to other traditions. Not even here does he offer any explanation of his own authority, or speak explicitly of his own person. The emphasis on his “I” is thus generated by the competition with other authorities. A comparable instance is the ἐγώ which is inserted at a secondary stage in Luke 11:20/ Matt 12:28.

<sup>156</sup> For details of these positions, cf. Kreplin, *Selbstverständnis*, 276–284.

<sup>157</sup> Ben F. Meyer thinks along these lines, in a very nuanced manner: “Jesus’ Ministry and Self-Understanding,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 337–352.

by his followers; this would have helped from the outset to ward off a misunderstanding. If however these explanatory models were correct, Jesus would actually have been obliged to cultivate the private instruction of his disciples, in order to help them acquire a full understanding of his person and his role. Clearly, however, he did not do so.

This is why an explanation for this reserve on Jesus' part can be found only *ab infra*, so to speak, as the logical consequence of his own preaching. Jesus' reserve about his own person must be understood here as one dimension of his paradigmatic existence, which was entirely marked by the fact that the rule of God had drawn near. We can recognize three motifs which make Jesus' reserve absolutely essential, given his eschatological ethos. These motifs overlap to some extent.

*First*, the rule of God is a gift that cannot be merited, but only received.<sup>158</sup> When confronted with the rule of God, all human ideas about rank and dignity collapse.<sup>159</sup> Now that the rule of God has drawn near, anyone who appeals to some special status that is higher than other people is failing to display the correct attitude vis-à-vis God's kingdom.<sup>160</sup> And it is precisely in my conduct vis-à-vis my fellow human beings that I reveal the attitude I take to God and to the rule of God which he has inaugurated. If Jesus had disclosed his own self-understanding and thereby explicitly claimed an exalted status for himself, he would no longer have been the man whose existence was wholly orientated to the rule of God that has drawn near. Instead, he would have created a distance between himself and his fellow human beings—a distance that would have diametrically contradicted his own preaching.

*Secondly*, as the concept itself affirms, the "rule of God" means the exclusive sovereignty of God and thereby the end of human sovereignty over other human beings.<sup>161</sup> Honor and glorification will belong to God alone.<sup>162</sup> Now that the rule of God has drawn near, it is impossible to lay claim to sovereignty, superiority, power, or even merely some special honor. The only mode of conduct which is possible now is that of service, which endeavors to shatter the existing

<sup>158</sup> Mark 10:15/Luke 18:17/Matt 18:3; Luke 17:7–10; Luke 6:20–21.

<sup>159</sup> Mark 10:31/Matt 19:30/Matt 20:16/Luke 13:30.

<sup>160</sup> Luke 18:9–14; Matt 20:1–15; Luke 15:25–32.

<sup>161</sup> Mark 10:42–44/Matt 20:25–27/Luke 18:25–27.

<sup>162</sup> Matt 6:9–10/Luke 11:2.

structure of superiority/inferiority by means of the voluntary acceptance of subordination. Human existence in the context of the rule of God which has drawn near means serving. Jesus himself saw his own activity as an exemplary realization of this ethos of service: "The Son of Man did not come in order that he might be served, but in order to serve."<sup>163</sup> This would have been contradicted by a claim to an exalted position.

*Thirdly*, since the future accomplishment of the rule of God will bring honor to one's person, it is not necessary to seek recognition, honor, and respect in the present day.<sup>164</sup> This is shown by the exhortation to lay up treasures in heaven.<sup>165</sup> One who trusts the message that the kingdom of God has drawn near need not expect to be honored in the present time: he can wait for the future fulfillment of God's rule, in which the dignity of his own person will be revealed. Jesus saw the present time as completely determined by the fulfillment of the rule of God, which would certainly take place in the future. It follows that he was able—and indeed, obliged—to renounce any glorification of his own person in the present time.

These three arguments make it clear that Jesus' renunciation of an exalted status, of sovereignty, and of any claim to the veneration and acknowledgment of his own person is a consequence of his message that the rule of God has already drawn near. If Jesus wished to remain faithful to his commission as the eschatological representative of God—which entailed leading a life totally oriented to the rule of God which had drawn near—then he was obliged to draw as little attention as possible to his own person and to say as little as possible about his self-understanding. Jesus was obliged to say nothing about his own role precisely in his dealings with the disciples: for if he had offered a clear definition of the exalted status which he undoubtedly possessed in the group of disciples, he would have been justifying a *claim* to this status. Every presentation of his self-understanding, whether to outsiders or to disciples, would have laid the basis for various kinds of veneration and for the ascription to him of sovereignty and lordship. Precisely because Jesus understood himself as

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<sup>163</sup> Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28 and Luke 22:27.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Luke 12:16–21; Luke 14:12–14; Luke 6:32–35/cf. Matt 5:46; Matt 6:1–8, 16–18.

<sup>165</sup> Matt 6:19–21/Luke 12:33–34; Mark 10:21/Matt 19:21/Luke 18:22.

God's eschatological representative, he was obliged as far as possible to leave unresolved the question of his own identity. He could not speak about his self-understanding.

If this analysis is correct, it was Jesus himself who shrouded his person in mystery, and the Markan conception of the messianic secret goes back at least in part to Jesus himself. We must therefore conclude that the injunction to the disciples to keep silence, which is formulated in very general terms—"And he commanded them not to speak to anyone about him" (Mark)—has an authentic core.<sup>166</sup>

If this analysis is correct, we must also assume that, as the tradition relates,<sup>167</sup> Jesus testified in the interrogation before the Sanhedrin and possibly also in the interrogation before Pilate to his self-understanding as God's eschatological representative, and thereby laid claim to the messianic dignity. This was because Jesus encountered the question about his self-understanding in a completely different context here than during his public ministry. In the interrogation(s), the explication of his self-understanding did not mean that he was claiming sovereignty, power, and honor. Rather, it intensified the risk that he would suffer violence. Silence here would be an attempt to save his own life by refusing to make the admission demanded of him. This agrees with the fact—attested by the probably historical inscription on the cross and the dominance of the title "King of the Jews" in the passion narrative—that Jesus was executed as a messianic pretender. And this helps explain how the title of Messiah could become the central Christological concept so soon after Easter, and why it was used at an early date as a name for Jesus: since he himself had admitted to being the Messiah, his disciples could understand the resurrection of Jesus as God's confirmation of this messianic status, and then proclaim him as the Christ.

I close this essay with a theological judgment—not an historical judgment. When the earliest Christians ascribed the title of Messiah to Jesus, they were recognizing and confirming the role in which

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<sup>166</sup> Matt 16:20 and Luke 9:21 immediately tone down this commandment to keep silence, even in its general application.

<sup>167</sup> Mark 14:61–62/Matt 26:63–64/Luke 22:67–70; Mark 15:2/Matt 27:11/Luke 23:3/John 18:33.37—although the traditional formulations of the questions addressed to Jesus and his answers certainly bear the marks of post-Easter conceptions.

Jesus had seen himself. And they were obliged to call Jesus “Messiah” for exactly the same reason that had obliged Jesus to refuse this title before Easter. Accordingly, the pre-Easter messianic secret and the post-Easter messianic confession do not amount to an historical discontinuity. They are two sides of the same coin.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> English translation: Brian McNeil.

## THE MESSAGE OF JESUS I: MIRACLES, CONTINUING CONTROVERSIES

GRAHAM H. TWELFTREE

Controversies surrounding the miracles of Jesus have ebbed and flowed over the last two or more centuries.<sup>1</sup> Dating from the last two decades of the twentieth century, “A Renaissance in Jesus Studies”<sup>2</sup> has involved a renewed interest in the miracles of Jesus. It is not that there has been an accent on the miracle traditions.<sup>3</sup> Rather, the problem of miracle has returned to center stage as one of the dividing lines in present-day Jesus research.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For histories of the study of the miracles of Jesus see, e.g., B. L. Blackburn, “The Miracles of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 353–394; W. Kahl, *New Testament Miracle Stories in their Religious-Historical Setting* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 13–36; G. H. Twelftree, “The History of Miracles in the History of Jesus,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. S. McKnight and G. Osborne (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker and Leicester: InterVarsity, 2004), 191–208; G. H. Twelftree, “Miracle Story,” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Craig A. Evans (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 416–420. I record my thanks to Jami Simon, Catherine W. Wait and especially Eric Eve for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this chapter and to the staff of Löhe Memorial Library (Australian Lutheran College, Adelaide) for their hospitality.

<sup>2</sup> M. J. Borg, “A Renaissance in Jesus Studies,” *TToday* 45 (1988–89): 280–292. For a survey of the literature see B. Witherington, *The Jesus Quest* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1997). It remains debatable as to whether or not this is a continuation of the second quest or is to be called a third quest and, if so, when the third quest might have begun. See W. R. Telford, “Major Trends and Interpretive Issues in the Study of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 33–74.

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to B. B. Scott, “From Reimarus to Crossan: Stages in a Quest,” *CurBS* 2 (1994): 253–280, at 272, and N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 186. Indeed, J. D. Crossan, L. T. Johnson and W. H. Kelber, *The Jesus Controversy* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 1999), 51, 72, 83, 114, only make passing reference to the miracles, and the subject does not feature in Telford, “Trends” or in D. S. du Toit, “Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. M. Labahn and A. Schmidt (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 82–124.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., J. P. Meier, “Dividing Lines in Jesus Research Today. Through Dialectical Negation to a Positive Sketch,” *Int* 50 (1996): 355–372, deals with: the question of sources, the Q document, the eschatology of Jesus’ proclamation, Jesus as Messiah, institutional elements from the historical Jesus, and the miracles of Jesus. Cf. W. Barnes Tatum, *In Quest of Jesus*, rev. and enl. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1999), Part Three.

That is, the miracles are being treated more carefully than at any time since the beginning of the scientific study of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> This interest has arisen for a number of reasons: because of the failure to show that miracles originated outside the Jesus tradition;<sup>6</sup> the increased confidence in the historical reliability of the gospel traditions;<sup>7</sup> the increased interest in and knowledge of the milieu in which Jesus lived;<sup>8</sup> the use of social-scientific methods broadening ways of understanding miracles;<sup>9</sup> methodological prudence in not being too hasty in judging what is historically not possible;<sup>10</sup> the general sensitivity

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<sup>5</sup> On this paragraph see also, and those cited by, Twelftree, "The History of Miracles," 207. See also the discussion by Blackburn, "Miracles," 353–394 and J. P. Meier, "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 477–483, esp. 479 nn. 46–48, who cites D. E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW* II. 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557; G. Theissen, *Miracle Stories in the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1983); E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1991); G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr and Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993); Kahl, *Miracle Stories*; S. L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer* (London: SCM, 1995); H. C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983). See also Meier, *Marginal*, 2:509–1038; G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999) and E. Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, JSNTSup 231 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 281–330, esp. 330, though see, e.g., J. Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York and Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 172, who says that we cannot exclude the possibility that "on occasion a non-Christian legend about an itinerant miracle worker was retold from a Christian point of view."

<sup>7</sup> Evans, "Research," 14–15.

<sup>8</sup> See the review by J. H. Charlesworth, "The Historical Jesus in Light of Writings Contemporaneous with Him" *ANRW* II 25.1 (1982): 451–476 and his *Jesus Within Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Crossan, *Jesus*, esp. chapter 13; Davies, *Healer*; J. J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> So Wright, *Victory*, 189; cf. Meyer, *Aims*, 99–104. This prudence arises from (1) an increasingly rigorous philosophical and theological defense of the possibility of miracles. See, e.g., R. F. Holland, "The Miraculous," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1965): 43–51; R. Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (London: Macmillan, 1970); R. C. Wallace, "Hume, Flew and the Miraculous," *Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1970): 230–243; R. Swinburne, ed., *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier Macmillan, 1989); J. Houston, *Reported Miracles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Also (2), even if there was a "renaissance of belief in the miraculous"—Theissen, *Miracle*, 274—there is a recognition that the miracle traditions have not arisen in an entirely credulous world. See, e.g., F. G. Downing, "Access to Other Cultures, Past and Present (on the Myth of the Cultural Gap)," *Modern Churchman* 21 (1977–78): 28–42; J. Barton, "Reflections on Cultural Relativism," *Theology* 82 (1979): 191–199; E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 143; Becker, *Jesus*, 175; G. N. Stanton, "Message and Miracles," in *Cambridge*

and sophistication in historical methods;<sup>11</sup> and the participation of Roman Catholic, Jewish and evangelical scholars in Jesus research.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, controversies continue. Beginning with a broad question that is commanding some attention, this chapter identifies and seeks to elucidate the debates which now surround the study of the miracles of Jesus.<sup>13</sup>

### 1. *How Important are the Miracles?*

Although there are important dissenters,<sup>14</sup> the view of Adolf Schlatter (1852–1938), that it is fruitless to search for a miracle-free Jesus tradition,<sup>15</sup> is in the ascendancy. Thus it is now generally agreed that the historical Jesus can be credited with performing miracles of some kind.<sup>16</sup> However, there is no consensus on the question of the importance of the miracles for Jesus; how much time he spent performing wonders and, at another level, how significant they are for understanding his mission and, perhaps, his self-consciousness.

There are those who are agreed that Jesus was a miracle worker yet give the miracles only minimal place and significance. For example, though Markus Bockmuehl suggests Jesus explicitly understood his healings and exorcisms as inaugurating the kingdom of God, the miracles or miracle traditions are not mentioned in his summary of Jesus.<sup>17</sup> For Marcus Borg the miracles are somewhat more important.

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*Companion to Jesus*, ed. M. Bockmuehl (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66.

<sup>11</sup> See the discussion by Telford, "Trends," 49–51.

<sup>12</sup> Meier, "Present State," 461–464.

<sup>13</sup> This chapter develops and extends Twelftree, "History."

<sup>14</sup> See the discussion by M. A. Powell, *Jesus as a Figure of History* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1998), 178–179 and, e.g., Becker, *Jesus*, 171–172 and B. L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988), 215: "The earliest miracle stories were not reports of the miracle-working activity of Jesus." The dissent is more considerable in relation to the nature miracles. See also Blackburn, "Miracles," 369 n. 71 citing Aune, Borg, Bornkamm, Bultmann, Charlesworth, Fuller, Gnilka, Harvey, and Pesch.

<sup>15</sup> A. Schlatter, *The History of the Christ* (1921; ET, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 174.

<sup>16</sup> Aune, "Magic," 1524 n. 76; Blackburn, "Miracles," 392. Cf. G. Maier, "Zur Neutestamentlichen Wunderexegese im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *The Miracles of Jesus, Gospel Perspectives*, ed. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg, vol. 6 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 49–87.

<sup>17</sup> M. Bockmuehl, *This Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 164–167. See also J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus for Today," *TToday* 52 (1995–96): 66–74 who does not mention miracles. Though, more recently in *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,



In a seventy-five-second (171 words) presentation, Borg was invited to present on NBC's *Today Show* on Good Friday 1995 a summary of the pre-Easter Jesus. In what he calls a five-stroke sketch of the pre-Easter Jesus, Borg set out that he was a Spirit person, a healer, a wisdom teacher, a social prophet, and the initiator of a movement.<sup>18</sup> Borg also says that during his lifetime Jesus was known primarily as a healer and exorcist.<sup>19</sup> Then, not only does John P. Meier devote a great deal of attention to the miracles of Jesus, he also perceives that it is the explosive convergence and mutual reinforcement of the usually distinct activities of prophet, gatherer of Israel, teacher, as well as healer and exorcist and raiser of the dead, that makes Jesus stand out.<sup>20</sup>

Over against those who see the miracles as not particularly significant—and also even beyond those who see the miracles as important—a case can be made that Jesus' miracles are the interpretive key or of fundamental significance in reconstructing his life.<sup>21</sup> That we should consider taking the miracles as the interpretive key for the historical Jesus is the suggestion of Morton Smith (1915–91).<sup>22</sup>

To begin with, the fundamental importance of the miracles of Jesus can be seen by taking into account the following points. (1) Even though the gospel traditions available to us do not allow for any precision on the matter, Jesus' miracle working appears to loom large in the historically reliable data so that it is reasonable to conclude that miracle working dominated the activity of Jesus before Easter.<sup>23</sup> (2) In some traditions Jesus was remembered as primarily a miracle worker. First, assuming him to be a powerful healer, Jesus' name was used by

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2003), Dunn has devoted 29 (667–696) of the 800 plus pages to Jesus as “A Doer of Extraordinary Deeds.”

<sup>18</sup> M. J. Borg, ed., *Jesus at 2000* (Boulder, CO and Oxford, UK: Westview/HarperCollins, 1997), 10–11.

<sup>19</sup> M. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 60. See also M. J. Borg, “The Historian, the Christian, and Jesus,” *TToday* 52 (1995–96): 8–10.

<sup>20</sup> J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 3 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991, 1994, 2002), 2:1039–1047; Meier, “Present State,” 477–483.

<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed argument see G. H. Twelftree, “The Miracles of Jesus: Marginal or Mainstream?” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 104–124.

<sup>22</sup> M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (London: Gollancz, 1978). For other possible starting points for the life of the historical Jesus—e.g., Jesus' teaching, or temple activity, or association with sinners—see the discussion by Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 3–7.

<sup>23</sup> Meier, *Marginal*, 2:970.

other miracle workers in their healings.<sup>24</sup> Also, the memory of Jesus as a miracle worker underlies almost all attacks on Jesus in the rabbinic traditions.<sup>25</sup> Further, Josephus described Jesus as a “wise man” (σοφὸς ἄνθρωπος), which he unpacks in terms of an ability to perform “surprising feats” (παραδόξων, “miracles”),<sup>26</sup> as well as to teach (*Ant.* 18.63).<sup>27</sup> What is significant for us is that, in summing up the work of Jesus, miracle working takes pride of place. Then, in a speech in Acts where Jesus’ ministry is summarized, Peter says Jesus went about “doing good and healing” (εὐεργετῶν καὶ ἰώμενος, Acts 10:38). This phrase may well be a hendiadys for in Acts 4:9 Peter and John’s healing of the lame man is simply described as a “good deed” (εὐεργεσία). Thus, Acts 10:38 is probably another tradition remembering Jesus as primarily a miracle worker.<sup>28</sup>

(3) There is also evidence that Jesus thought of himself as primarily a miracle worker. On being asked if he was “the one who is to come,” Jesus is reported as replying: “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them” (Matt 11:3, 5/Luke 7:19, 22).<sup>29</sup> Not only does miracle working dominate this description of his

<sup>24</sup> See Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 139–140 and those cited. I am no longer as confident that the evidence is as extensive. See G. H. Twelftree, “Jesus the Exorcist and Ancient Magic,” in M. Labahn and B. J. Liethaert Peerbolte, eds., *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007), 78–81.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. A. E. Harvey, *Jesus and the Constraints of History* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 98.

<sup>26</sup> Josephus uses παραδόξων variously, including for the miraculous; e.g., *Ant.* 2.223, 285, 295, 345, 347; 3.1, 30, 38; 5.28; 9.58, 60; 10.214, 235.

<sup>27</sup> Of course, this point depends on the veracity of the *Testimonium Flavianum*, both generally and in relation to the particular points made here. On the debate concerning the veracity of the testimony of Josephus see, e.g., G. H. Twelftree, “Jesus in Jewish Traditions,” in *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, Gospel Perspectives 5 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985): 301–308; G. Vermes, “The Jesus-Notice of Josephus Reconsidered,” *JJS* 38 (1987): 1–10; Meier, *Marginal*, 1:56–69; K. A. Olson, “Eusebius and the *Testimonium Flavianum*,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 305–322.

<sup>28</sup> That this memory was, at least, part of Luke’s tradition is suggested by the absence from it of Luke’s penchant for balancing word and deed; on which see P. J. Achtemeier, “The Lukan Perspective on the Miracles of Jesus: A Preliminary Sketch,” in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C. H. Talbert (Danville, VA: Association of Baptist Professors of Religion and Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978), 153–167, at 156.

<sup>29</sup> On these verses reflecting the voice of Jesus see the summary discussions by J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas Word, 1989), 326–327 and W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, 1991, 1997), 2:244–245.

ministry, the phrase “the poor have good news brought to them” is likely to be part of the description of Jesus as a miracle worker. That is, in drawing on Third Isaiah (Isa 61:1, LXX), where the poor are not the disadvantaged sections of society but are the entire nation of humiliated and dispirited returnees in Jerusalem awaiting salvation,<sup>30</sup> it is reasonable to conclude that the “poor” in the saying of Jesus are to be understood not (only) as a disadvantaged section of society requiring gracious or encouraging teaching from him but as the nation of Israel as a whole, suffering, subjected and oppressed, waiting and expecting God to bring salvation.<sup>31</sup> In context here, that salvation is described as coming not through words but through the miracles of Jesus.<sup>32</sup> Further, in Q there is the saying: “if in Tyre and Sidon had been done the works (αἱ δυνάμεις) done in you, they would have repented long ago” (Matt 11:22/Luke 10:13).<sup>33</sup> What is notable is that the miracles (αἱ δυνάμεις), without the teaching, are assumed to sum up his ministry and to have been sufficient to elicit repentance.<sup>34</sup> In these texts we are obliged to move beyond seeing miracle working as the most time consuming, or even important activity of Jesus, to seeing such activity as encapsulating (though not eclipsing) his whole pre-Easter ministry. The same view arises from noting Jesus’ understanding of the kingdom of God.

(4) The clearest and best known saying of Jesus on the relationship between the kingdom of God, his miracles, and also on his self-understanding is the so-called Spirit-finger saying: “But if in God’s Spirit (Luke has ‘finger’) I cast out the demons, then has come (ἔφθασεν)<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. D. P. Seccombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts* (Linz: Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt, 1982), 21–43; also J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1971), 112–113 also noting Ps 34:18 [19]; Isa 57:15; 66:2; IQM XIV, 7; 1QS XI, 1.

<sup>31</sup> See also Pss 9:18; 68:10; Zech 11:7, 11; *Pss. Sol.* 10:6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:243. See also the discussion by J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, AB 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 147–149.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion of the probability that this saying can be traced back to the historical Jesus see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 70–71 and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:270–271.

<sup>34</sup> In so far as becoming a follower of Jesus involves repentance, the gospel writers are agreed that repentance can arise out of the miracles. See, e.g., Mark 1:30–31/Matt 8:14–15/Luke 4:38–39; Mark 10:46–52/Matt 9:27–31/20:29–34/Luke 18:35–43; John 6:14; cf. Matt 8:16–22.

<sup>35</sup> That the plain sense of the ἔφθασεν, along with the saying as a whole, is that the kingdom of God is either being realized or in the process of arriving in the exorcisms of Jesus see the discussion in Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 218–219.

upon you the kingdom of God" (Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20).<sup>36</sup> Regardless of which particular word can be traced back to Jesus—Spirit or finger<sup>37</sup>—the result is the same: for Jesus, his exorcisms were not preparatory to, nor were they signs or evidence of, the coming of God's reign; they were, in themselves, the kingdom of God expressed in the lives of those healed.<sup>38</sup>

Two further points are to be taken into account in the case to show that Jesus' miracles were not simply important but the interpretive key to his ministry. (5) That is, there is evidence the miracles contributed, at least, indirectly to his arrest. For example, in the synoptic stories of the healings of the paralytic (Mark 2:1–11/Matt 9:1–8/Luke 5:17–26) and the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1–6/Matt 12:1–14/Luke 6:1–11), and in the Johannine story of the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1–41), Jesus is portrayed as coming into conflict with the authorities as a direct result of performing a miracle (cf. Matt 12:27/Luke 11:19). Even if it was granted that the conflict motif is the responsibility of Mark,<sup>39</sup> Sanders is probably right to say that, "One can move from *miracles* to *crowds* to *teaching* to *tumult* to *death* much more easily than from a *teacher* of law to a *miracle worker* to a *prophet* whose passion for sanctity irritated the authorities in Jerusalem."<sup>40</sup> (6) The interpretive significance of the miracles can also be seen in that those who sought to follow and emulate Jesus

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<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the historicity of this saying see J. D. G. Dunn, "Matthew 12:28/Luke 11:20—A Word of Jesus?" in *Eschatology and the New Testament*, ed. W. H. Gloer (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 29–49. For more details on what follows see Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 268 and esp. n. 63. While Becker, *Jesus*, 172, is technically correct to note that "Jesus' central concept of the kingdom of God appears in none of the miracle stories" he fails to take into account the eschatological import of Matt 11:5/Luke 7:22 (see above).

<sup>37</sup> See R. A. Piper, "Jesus and the Conflict of Powers in Q," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 329 n. 40. Eve, *Jewish Context*, 331, speculates that those not committed to the two-source hypothesis may see these verses flowing directly from Matthew's pen, tidying up Mark without the aid of any prior tradition, and copied by Luke.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 269.

<sup>39</sup> See the summary of discussions in R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC 34A (Dallas: Word, 1989), 83 and 132–133.

<sup>40</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 164, his emphases. Cf. Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 16–17; D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 49: "Jesus as miracle worker—probably explains in great measure Jesus' great popularity and helps us understand why people paid attention to what he had to say."

conducted miracles, which, like Jesus, they explained in terms of the powerful presence of God now being evident in human affairs.<sup>41</sup>

From these points it is reasonably established that the miracles can be taken as that feature, above all others, whose removal would fundamentally distort and undermine any credible reconstruction of the historical Jesus.<sup>42</sup> Not only did the performing of miracles probably dominate Jesus' public ministry and loom large in his impact on others. In terms of significance, from his perspective, the miracles were, in themselves, the powerful presence or kingdom of God. Without the miracles there would have been no kingdom to announce.<sup>43</sup> Further, it was in the conducting of miracles that Jesus had his experience of the endowment by the eschatological Spirit confirmed—defining the nature of his ministry, his teaching, and who he understood himself to be: God's anointed messiah. At least some members of the audience also concluded that Jesus was the eschatological messiah so that, along with him attracting dangerously large crowds, his collision with his Jewish opponents catapulted him beyond mere legal wrangles into the Roman political arena which killed him.<sup>44</sup> We have also noted that, beyond Easter, the miracles of Jesus remained fundamental in how he was understood by his followers for, continuing or reproducing his ministry, they included miracles in their activities.

## 2. "Divine Man:" A cul de sac?

Even granting that the miracles are part of, or are of fundamental significance in any reconstruction of the historical Jesus there is little agreement on how he would have been—and should be—understood as a miracle worker. In the exploration of what D. F. Strauss (1808–74) had called the "gemeiner Volksglaube" of the time of Jesus, for those who are associated with what came to be called the *Religionsgeschichte*

<sup>41</sup> Cf., e.g., Mark 3:14–15; Luke 9:1–2; 10:9 Acts 3:1–26; Rom 15:18–19; 1 Cor 4:20; 1 Cor 12:12; Gal 3:2–5; 1 Thess 1:5.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. S. Davies, "The Historical Jesus as a Prophet/Healer: A Different Paradigm," *Neot* 30 (1996): 21–38.

<sup>43</sup> See also, Twelftree, "Mainstream," 123. Cf. Schlatter, *History*, 174: "By omitting works and limiting oneself to mere teaching Jesus' regal will would fall by the way-side."

<sup>44</sup> So also, Twelftree, "Miracles," 123–124.

liche Schule,<sup>45</sup> the dominance of the Old Testament gave way to the contemporary background of the New Testament writers for interpreting the miracle stories. Stimulated by the sensational archeological and papyrological discoveries,<sup>46</sup> an important point established by members of the School was that the reported miracles of Jesus in the gospels are similar to the miracles reported of other miracle workers of the period.<sup>47</sup> However, just which traditions the miracles of Jesus were like, and what that analogy may mean, was and remains a matter of debate. One suggestion has been that Jesus should be understood as a “divine human” (θεῖος ἄνθρωπος) or “divine man” (θεῖος ἀνὴρ), with Apollonius of Tyana generally taken as the classic example.<sup>48</sup>

According to Richard Reitzenstein (1861–1931), one of the products of the history of religions school is that a “general conception of the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος begins to prevail, according to which such a divine man combines within himself, on the basis of a higher nature a personal holiness, the profoundest knowledge, vision, and the power to work miracles.”<sup>49</sup> The concept was used—notably by Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976)—to explain the hellenistic origin and Christology of miracle stories in the gospels.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> On which see K. Rudolph, “Religionsgeschichtliche Schule,” in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Macmillan and London: Collier Macmillan, 1987), 12:293–296; W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (London: SCM, 1973), Part V. Those most consistently recognized as part of the school are: H. Gunkel (1862–1932); J. Weiss (1863–1914)—Bultmann’s *Doktorvater*; W. Bousset (1865–1920); E. Troeltsch (1865–1923); and W. Heitmüller (1869–1926). In relation to this school and the miracles of Jesus see Kahl, *Miracle Stories*.

<sup>46</sup> Cf., e.g., A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910); G. Milligan, *Selections from the Greek Papyri* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910).

<sup>47</sup> See R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906); Deissmann, *Light*; O. Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder* (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1909).

<sup>48</sup> See in particular C. R. Holladay, *THEIOS ANER in Hellenistic-Judaism* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977); B. L. Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions* (Pittsburgh, PA: Pickwick, 1978), 26. See also L. Bieler, *THEIOS ANĒR. Das Bild des ‘Göttlichen Menschen’ in Spätantike und Frühchristentum*, 2 vols. (Vienna: Höfels, 1935–36).

<sup>50</sup> M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (1919, ET Cambridge and London: Clarke, 1971), 70–97; R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921, ET New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 241.

While there were refinements of this theory,<sup>51</sup> by the early 1980's there were a number of studies that called into question the concept of a divine man itself,<sup>52</sup> or its value for understanding the synoptic<sup>53</sup> or Johannine<sup>54</sup> miracle traditions. Despite some continuing attempts to use the *theios anēr* notion to interpret the gospel traditions of the miracles of Jesus,<sup>55</sup> the idea should be laid to rest.<sup>56</sup> For there was great diversity among miracle workers, performing a diverse range of miracles in the New Testament era, whose divinity was judged and expressed with a range of criteria and terms equally diverse,<sup>57</sup> though rarely was the term *theios anēr* used.<sup>58</sup> More fruitful, though not without contro-

<sup>51</sup> E.g., that the *theios anēr* concept made its way into early Christianity through Hellenistic Judaism see F. Hahn, *The Titles of Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1969), 11–13, 289 and those cited by Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 4 n. 12.

<sup>52</sup> P. W. von Martitz, “υἰός,” *TDNT* 8:338–340; D. L. Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972); Holladay, *THEIOS ANER*; E. V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician?* (Chicago, IL: Scholars Press, 1982); J. D. Kingsbury, “The ‘Divine Man’ as the Key to Mark’s Christology—The End of an Era?” *Int* 35 (1981): 243–257; J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark’s Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 33–37 and those he cites 34 n. 42.

<sup>53</sup> O. Betz, “The Concept of the So-called ‘Divine Man’ in Mark’s Christology,” in D. E. Aune, ed., *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 229–240; H. C. Kee, “Aretology and Gospel,” *JBL* 93 (1973): 402–422; H. C. Kee, *Aretologies, Hellenistic ‘Lives,’ and the Sources of Mark* (Berkeley, CA: The Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1975), 1–21; R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2 vols. (Freiberg: Herder, 1976), 1:278–281; O. Betz, and W. Grimm, *Wesen und Wirklichkeit der Wunder Jesu* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1977); Kee, *Miracle*, 146–170, 297–299.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 48–94; D. Moody Smith, “The Milieu of the Johannine Miracle Source: A Proposal,” in R. Hammerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs, eds., *Jews, Greeks and Christians* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 164–180.

<sup>55</sup> More recently, e.g., H. D. Betz, “Gottmensch II,” in *RAC* 12 (1983): cols. 234–312; G. P. Corrington, *The “Divine Man”* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986); G. P. Corrington, “Power and the Man of Power in the Context of Hellenistic Popular Belief,” *Helios* 13 (1986): 75–86.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. J. R. Brady, *Jesus Christ. Divine Man or Son of God?* (Lanham, MD, New York and London: University Press of America, 1992), esp. 118–137; E. Koskenniemi, *Apolonios von Tyana in der neutestamentlichen Exegese* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994) on which see the critique by J.-J. Flinterman, “Review Article: The Ubiquitous ‘Divine Man,’” *Numen* 43 (1996): 82–90.

<sup>57</sup> Martitz, “υἰός,” *TDNT* 8:334–340 (339) and B. L. Blackburn, “‘Miracle Working ΘΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ’ in Hellenism (and Hellenistic Judaism),” in Wenham and Blomberg, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 185–218, esp. 188.

<sup>58</sup> Blackburn, “ΘΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,” 185–218, esp. 188; cf. Blackburn, *Theios Anēr*, 94–96; and B. L. Blackburn, “Divine Man/*Theios Anēr*” in *DJG*, 189–192.

versy, have been the discussions of the Jewishness of Jesus as a miracle worker.<sup>59</sup>

### 3. *Jesus Among Jewish Miracle Workers*

Paul Fiebig (1876–1949) devoted an enormous number of publications to the rabbinic miracle stories<sup>60</sup> and became convinced of the closeness of Jesus to the rabbis. However, Schlatter disputed that Judaism proved a model for the miraculous activity of Jesus on the extraordinary grounds that neither Josephus nor the Mishnah contain any miracle story which dates back to the first century of this era.<sup>61</sup> This enabled Schlatter to uphold the superiority of Jesus over the rabbis who, in contrast to Jesus, used magical devices.<sup>62</sup>

More recently, in a number of accessible and highly regarded publications, Geza Vermes has set out to demonstrate the obvious, though often unappreciated, statement that “Jesus was a Jew and not a Christian.”<sup>63</sup> Just what particular kind of Jew remains a matter of contention.<sup>64</sup> Vermes may have general support for saying that “Jesus impressed his countrymen, and acquired fame among them, chiefly

<sup>59</sup> See the discussion by T. Holmén, “The Jewishness of Jesus in the ‘Third Quest,’” in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, ed. Labahn and Schmidt, 143–162.

<sup>60</sup> See the publications of Fiebig’s cited in Kahl, *Miracle Stories*, 17–19.

<sup>61</sup> A. Schlatter, *Die Gemeinde in der apostolischen Zeit und im Missionsgebiet—Das Wunder in der Synagoge* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1912), 53–70; cf. Schlatter, *History*, 176. On miracles in Josephus see, e.g., O. Betz, “Miracles in the Writings of Flavius Josephus,” in *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity*, ed. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 212–235. On miracles in early rabbinic tradition see, e.g., M. Becker, *Wunder und Wundertäter im frührabbinischen Judentum*, WUNT 2.144 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2000) and Eve, *Jewish Context*.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Schlatter, *History*, 176–177.

<sup>63</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM, 1983), 1. See also his *Jesus the Jew* (Glasgow, UK: Fontana/Collins, 1973 and London SCM, 1983) and *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM, 1993). W. Horbury, “Jesus the Jew,” *Theology* 77 (1974): 227–232, at 229, cites Arthur Marmonstein as having compared Jesus with the miracle working rabbis. Similarly, L. E. Keck’s review of Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* in *JBL* 95 (1976): 508 draws attention to R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1938). Cf. D. Flusser, “Jesus and the World of Judaism,” *Judaism* 35 (1986): 361–364, at 362, reviewing Vermes’ *Jesus and the World of Judaism* says; “independently... I came to the conclusion that Jesus was a Galilean ‘hasid’ and wonderworker.” Most recently see also D. Flusser, *Jesus* (1968, Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998); and C. R. Evans, *Jesus and his Contemporaries* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), ch. V.

<sup>64</sup> See G. Vermes, “Jesus the Jew: Christian and Jewish Reactions,” *TJT* 4 (1988): 112–123.



as a charismatic teacher, healer and exorcist.<sup>65</sup> However, there is less agreement that Jesus is to be seen as the paramount example of the early Hasidim—holy men, part of charismatic Judaism—who made their strongest impact through their miracles.<sup>66</sup> What is pointed out is that Vermes has made an unwarranted distinction between the holy men (Honi and Hanina ben Dosa) and the rabbis (Yohanan ben Zakkai and Eliezar). For, on the one hand, miracles are also associated with the rabbis and, on the other hand, teaching is also credited to the holy men.<sup>67</sup>

Although the rabbis and holy men provide near parallels to Jesus, it is the very miracles on which Vermes relies that set Jesus over against other contemporary holy men.<sup>68</sup> As Vermes tells us, the association of miracle and prophecy is not peculiar to the Jewish holy men, for the expectation of prophetic miracles is rooted in the biblical heritage of Jewry as a whole.<sup>69</sup> Further, so far as I know, none of the Jewish holy men made any connection between their miracles and a message. Also, as Vermes points out, Jesus' healing technique is simplicity itself compared to the rabbis.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, Vermes does not take in to account that the rabbis and holy men were not the only miracle workers in Palestine in Jesus' time (see the next section). This means that it is neither possible to conclude that the style of the charismatic rabbi is one that Jesus chose<sup>71</sup> nor that Jesus is to be seen solely in light of these Jewish figures.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Vermes, *World of Judaism*, 5; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 79, 223–224. For critical and more detailed assessment of Vermes see B. J. Hubbard, "Geza Vermes's Contribution to Historical Jesus Studies: An Assessment," *SBLSP* 24 (1985): 29–44; D. Flusser, "Jesus and the World of Judaism," *Judaism* 35 (1986): 361–364; Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 209–212.

<sup>66</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 58–82, 223–224.

<sup>67</sup> Evans, *Contemporaries*, 241, citing A. Büchler, *Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.* (New York: Ktav, 1968), 7–67 and B. D. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus* (University Park, PA Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 92 n. 5. Evans, *Contemporaries*, 242–243 also notes that Hillel the Elder is not credited with any miracles. On neither Hanina in particular nor miracle-workers in general belonging to the Hasidim see Eve, *Jewish Context*, esp. 294.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 211.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Horbury, "Jesus the Jew," 230.

<sup>70</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 65 and n. 31; Vermes, *World of Judaism*, 8.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Harvey, *Constraints*, 107.

<sup>72</sup> Evans, *Contemporaries*, 243.

In providing a broader sketch of Judaism for the context of the miracles of Jesus than Vermes, Eric Eve<sup>73</sup> concludes that (1) most of the Jews who produced Second Temple literature were little preoccupied with the miraculous; that (2) where there was an interest in miracles it was usually through an interest in biblical miracles, especially the miraculous events surrounding the exodus; and that, (3) outside Josephus, stories of post-biblical miracles were rare.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Eve shows that, in what he terms the Enochic-Qumran traditions, there seems to be slightly more interest in healing miracles and even more interest in exorcism. He reasonably suggests, therefore, that “perhaps the best way of understanding the context of Jesus’ healing and exorcism is at the creative confluence of three streams within Judaism: the widespread traditions about prophets like Elijah and Elisha, the Enochic-Qumran traditions concerned with the eschatological defeat of demonic powers, and popular folk-religion.”<sup>75</sup>

In trying to locate Jesus’ miracles in his Jewish context, Eve draws attention to the fact that, given the comparative wealth of material on angels and demons in general, it is significant that there is a comparative paucity of material on possession and exorcism.<sup>76</sup> This is true when considering stories of, or traditions about, individual historical exorcists. However, the background to the miracles of Jesus includes the material remains of ancient magic<sup>77</sup> for it probably reflects the most common forms of exorcism in late antiquity, including first century Palestine.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Eve, *Jewish Context*, chapter 9. Recognizing the impossibility of examining every available text from the Second Temple period, Eve restricts his treatment to the main bodies of Second Temple literature (in order of his treatment): Josephus, Philo, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ben Sira, Pseudo-Philo, the Book of Watchers in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*, selected Qumran texts including the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1Qap Gen), the *Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242) and the *Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521), Tobit and Artapanus. For what follows, in more detail, see G. H. Twelftree, review of Eve in *JETS* 47 (2004): 512–514.

<sup>74</sup> Eve, *Jewish Context*, chapter 9.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 12.

<sup>77</sup> I use the term “ancient magic” neutrally, as a term of convenience, to describe the materials and literature well known in, but not limited to, what are called the magical papyri.

<sup>78</sup> Note Esther Eshel, “Genres of Magical Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Die Dämonen; Demons*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger and K. H. Diethard Römheld (Tübingen; J. C. B. Mohr, 2003), 395–415 for evidence of such material in Palestine at the turn of the era. Further on the dating of this material see Twelftree, “Ancient Magic.”

4. *Jesus Among Ancient Magicians*<sup>79</sup>

The issue is not, was Jesus a magician?—that will be discussed in the next section. Rather, the controversy here is over how far the so-called magical material is useful in understanding the miracles of Jesus, especially his exorcisms.<sup>80</sup> For, despite any detailed parallels, in this material healings are understood to depend more on what is said and done than on the identity of the healer (e.g., *PGM* IV:1231–1239, 3025).<sup>81</sup> The rationale was that the healer is not presuming to operate in his own power or any power he may have imbibed from the god; the god is called up to perform the exorcism. There was also the view that the forceful expulsion of the daimon from the person is expected to be successful because the practitioner himself is using the strength or authority of the gods named as the means to effect the cure (cf. IV:1239–1241, 1245–1246).

From the data available to us<sup>82</sup> these healing methods were sometimes used by anyone following generally accepted lines (cf. Justin, *Dial.* 85:2–3). There were also professional healer-magicians who were called upon to help people find a lover, restrain anger, get rid of a friend, produce a trance, gain control of a god, acquire business and customers, and cause sickness, for example, as well as to heal.<sup>83</sup> Often

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<sup>79</sup> In more detail and specifically in relation to exorcism see Twelftree, “Ancient Magic.”

<sup>80</sup> That this “magical” material is not useful see, e.g., R. Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1988), 167. To the contrary see, e.g., Aune, “Magic,” 1507–1557, esp. 1523–1539. It needs to be stressed that, in this point, “magic” is not to be understood pejoratively over against miracle. Instead, the terms “magic” and “magician” are to be understood in connection with the material and healers described particularly (though not only) in the magical papyri.

<sup>81</sup> See the extended discussion in Twelftree, *Exorcist*, §3.

<sup>82</sup> In relation to exorcism see Twelftree, “Ancient Magic.” More broadly see, e.g., Aune, “Magic,” 1533–1538.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Josephus *Ant* 8.45–49; *PGM* IV. At Qumran the healers (a Maskill or scribe) are best described as designated practitioners; cf. 4Q560 on which see D. L. Penney and M. O. Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran (4Q560),” *JBL* 113 (1994): 650; P. S. Alexander, “‘Wrestling Against Wickedness in High Places’: Magic in the World View of the Qumran Community,” in S. E. Porter and C. A. Evans, eds., *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, JSPSup, 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 330. Cf. J. Naveh, “Fragments of an Aramaic Magic Book from Qumran,” *IEJ* 48 (1998): 252–261. See also 11Q5 (11QPs<sup>a</sup>); 11Q11; 4Q510; 4Q511 on which see the discussion in Twelftree, “Ancient Magic,” 63–64.

peripatetic,<sup>84</sup> they were so well regarded that they were sought in the highest circles (Josephus *Ant.* 8.46). The healers reflected in the Qumran documents needed only a text which they may have memorized. Other healers could also perform healings using words alone or include activities or, perhaps, dispense some article (e.g., a finger ring) or phylactery—or both—that was already imbued with preternatural power (cf. *PGM* XII. 266) to bring about healing. They also had on hand a wide range of materials, including vegetable matter and sheets of papyrus and metal, for example, and, probably, possessed such containers and utensils that facilitated the preparation of their prescriptions. Some of these healer-miracle workers took on apprentices who may have included family members (cf. Matt 12:27/Luke 11:19; Acts 19:14).<sup>85</sup> There is also evidence that they gave attention to their personal diet as well as to ritual purity.<sup>86</sup>

Against this background Jesus is said to stand out as commanding healing without any aid.<sup>87</sup> It is true that there appear to be distinctive features to Jesus as a miracle worker: (1) there is no evidence he collected, maintained or used artifacts or a library of incantations; (2) his healing commands were extremely brief and did not involve mentioning his power-authority; and, (3) although like his contemporary miracle workers, exorcism was only part of Jesus' activity, exorcism dominated his public ministry.<sup>88</sup>

However, these differences must not be allowed to obscure those factors Jesus and the magicians hold in common. (1) In saying "If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom to your sons cast them out?" (Matt 12:27/Luke 11:19) Jesus places himself on the level of other

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<sup>84</sup> See W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution, Revealing Antiquity*, 5 (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 41–46; R. Kotansky, "Greek Exorcistic Amulets," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World*, 129 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1995), 243–277, at 253 n. 23.

<sup>85</sup> See also Burkert, *Revolution*, 44–46. That Jesus is referring to his own followers rather than unknown Jewish exorcists associated with the Pharisees see R. Shirock, "Whose Exorcist are They? The Referents of οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν at Matthew 12.27/Luke 11.19," *JSNT* 46 (1992): 41–51.

<sup>86</sup> *PGM* IV. 3079–3084. Cf. Burkert, *Revolution*, 55–64.

<sup>87</sup> E.g., C. C. Caragounis, "Kingdom of God, Son of Man and Jesus' Self-Understanding II," *TynBul* 40 (1989): 223–238 at 230–231. Cf. A. Oepke, "ἰάομαι, κτλ.," *TDNT* 3:194–215, at 210; W. Grundmann, "δύναμαι/δύναμις," *TDNT* 2:284–317 (302); J. J. Rousseau, "Jesus, an Exorcist of a Kind," *SBLSP* 32 (1993): 129–153 at 148; Becker, *Jesus*, 176.

<sup>88</sup> See Twelftree, "Miracles," 104–124.

miracle workers. Further, by him saying that he cast out demons “by the Spirit (or finger) of God” (Matt 12:27–28/Luke 11:19–20), Jesus indicates that he was *not* healing unaided but was using a power-authority. In this Jesus shared the same views as those involved in ancient magic: at will they used a power-authority to heal through language they understood to be performative (or empowered) because it was dependent on (or infused with) a power-authority.<sup>89</sup> Not surprisingly, then, all Jesus’ commands, or supposed words of power, have parallels in ancient magic.<sup>90</sup> Concomitantly, if not generally as clipped as the commands of Jesus, the healer-magicians also, on occasion, used simple commands uncluttered by any artifacts or extended incantations.<sup>91</sup> Notwithstanding, (2) both Jesus and the healer-magicians used artifacts. As a healer Jesus used a herd of pigs into which he is said to have allowed the daimons to go, in a process which transferred the daimons from the man into the water, one of their assumed habitats.<sup>92</sup> He also used spittle, mud and touch.<sup>93</sup> (3) The initial dramatic confrontation that is reported to have taken place between Jesus and the demoniacs<sup>94</sup> probably has its resonance, if not parallel, in ancient magic expecting daimons to flee from the presence of rings and amulets that had been charged or imbibed with

<sup>89</sup> Cf. PGM XII:301–306. See Iamblichus, *de Mysteriis* 5:26 and the discussion by F. Graf, “Theories of Magic in Antiquity,” in P. Mirecki and M. Meyer, eds., *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 141 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 94–95.

<sup>90</sup> M. J. Geller, “Jesus’ Theurgic Powers: Parallels in the Talmud and Incantation Bowls,” *JJS* 28 (1977): 141–155; G. H. Twelftree, “ΕΙ ΔΕ...ΕΓΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ...,” in Wenham and Blomberg, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 378–381 and Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 153–155.

<sup>91</sup> This simple approach can be seen in the amulets and the various once-isolated incantations that are now components of the more complex and developed forms reflected in some of the magical papyri (e.g., PGM IV:1227–1264), and particularly in the report Justin gives of Jewish exorcisms (Justin, *Dial.* 85:2–3). See also the comments on incantations from Qumran by E. Eshel, “Genres of Magical Texts,” 405.

<sup>92</sup> O. Böcher, *Christus Exorcista*, BWANT 5.16 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972), 20–32. On the transfer of daimons from one habitat to another see Twelftree, “ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ,” 382 n. 80 and those cited; Burkert, *Revolution*, 62 and n. 30; and, also on the historicity of this aspect of the story, see Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 74–76, 155.

<sup>93</sup> See S. Eitrem, *Some Notes on Demonology in the New Testament*, Symbolae Osloenses fasc. supplet. 20 (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966), 55–70 and Aune, “Magic,” 1533–1538.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Mark 1:23–24; 5:6–7. On the probable historicity of this aspect of the Jesus tradition, even though it was probably taken up and enhanced by Christian tradition, as in Mark 3:11, see Twelftree, “ΕΚΒΑΛΛΩ,” 371–372 and Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 146–148.

supernatural powers.<sup>95</sup> From this we can deduce that, like the healer-magicians, Jesus would have been understood to be imbued with, or linked to, such powers.

It is reasonable to conclude that healer-magicians provide a part of the appropriate background for understanding the miracles of Jesus for he also worked with the same rationale as the healers of ancient magic.<sup>96</sup> The two most significant points at which Jesus stands out from the healer magicians is that he chose to conduct so many of them<sup>97</sup> and then makes the unique claim<sup>98</sup> that his particular miracles<sup>99</sup> had eschatological significance.<sup>100</sup>

### 5. Was Jesus a Magician?<sup>101</sup>

The debate over whether or not Jesus was a magician is not new;<sup>102</sup> but it was given focus and a new lease of life in 1978 with the

<sup>95</sup> See PGM IV. 2145–2240; XII. 270–350; XXXVI. 275–283. Cf. *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* 4:5.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Aune, “Magic,” 1532: “The great gulf which some New Testament scholars would place between ‘the powerful word of the Son’ and ‘magical incantation’ is simply non-existent.” To the contrary, e.g., H. C. Kee, “Magic and Messiah,” in *Religion, Science, and Magic*, ed. J. Neusner, E. S. Frerichs, and P. V. McCracken Flescher (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 121–141, at 139: “there is no evidence in the gospel tradition that Jesus engaged in methods of magic.”

<sup>97</sup> E.g., Becker, *Jesus*, 170: “To no miracle worker in all of Antiquity were as many miracles attributed as there were to Jesus.”

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Twelftree, *Exorcist*, e.g., 228 and D. Trunk, *Der messianische Heiler*, Herders biblische Studien, 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 426.

<sup>99</sup> This takes account of the parable of the strong man—Mark 3:27/Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21–22, which is probably close to something Jesus said; R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2 vols., HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 1:219—and gives full weight to the ἐγώ of Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20. However, see the caution by Dunn, *Remembered*, 695 n. 384.

<sup>100</sup> See Matt 12:28/Luke 11:20; Mark 3:27/Matt 12:29/Luke 11:21–22; Matt 11:2–6/Luke 7:18–23 and Matt 11:20–24/Luke 10:12–15 on which see Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 268–274. Cf. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 278: Jesus “combines two conceptual worlds which had never been combined in this way before, the apocalyptic expectation of universal salvation in the future and the episodic realization of salvation in the present through miracles.”

<sup>101</sup> In this section I am indebted to discussions and correspondence with S. Brian Pounds and am able to correct my conclusions in *Exorcist*, esp. 206–207 on which see the discussion by John W. Welch, “Miracles, Maleficium, and Maiestas in the Trial of Jesus,” in *Jesus and Archeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2006), 349–383, at 359–360 n. 17.

<sup>102</sup> The earliest indisputable, post-canonical, extant reference to such a debate is Justin Martyr (c. 100–c. 165), *Dial.* 69. See also the discussion in J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM, 1974), 1–4.

publication of Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician*.<sup>103</sup> Even though Smith's particular program can be shown to have failed,<sup>104</sup> and few have followed directly in Smith's footsteps,<sup>105</sup> in recent times an increasing number of scholars have concluded that Jesus was, or was charged with being, a magician.<sup>106</sup> At the heart of the problem of deciding whether or not Jesus was a magician are a number of the issues. (1) Until recently the debate has been confused by a lack of agreement on how magic is to be defined.<sup>107</sup> Although there is by no means a consensus, the debate has moved to a concerted effort to define magic in terms of ancient rather than modern theories.<sup>108</sup> What emerges is a great variety of notions so that magic is more in the eye of the beholder than in what or who is described. Nevertheless, there remain some who see magic as a degenerate form of religion.<sup>109</sup> Others continue to define magic as functionally separate from religion, identifiable on the basis of techniques used.<sup>110</sup> Sometimes this conclusion

<sup>103</sup> M. Smith *Jesus the Magician* (London: Gollancz and New York: Harper & Row).

<sup>104</sup> See the extended discussion by Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 190–207 and the devastating critique by J. Neusner, "Forward," to B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), xxv–xxxii.

<sup>105</sup> Cf., e.g., Crossan, *Jesus*, chapter 8.

<sup>106</sup> E.g., Aune, "Magic," 1507–1557; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 166, 169; Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 311; G. N. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in J. B. Green and M. Turner, eds., *Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans and Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1994), 164–180, at 178. In the minority are, e.g., Kee, *Magic*, 139; Meier, *Marginal*, 2:551 and Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 190–207 (though see below).

<sup>107</sup> For brief histories of the study of magic see F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 8–19 and those cited.

<sup>108</sup> A. F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, eds., *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions, Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain*, 91 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 349–375; Graf, *Magic*, esp. chapters 1 and 2; Graf, "Theories," 93–104; T. E. Klutz, "Reinterpreting 'Magic' in the World of Jewish and Christian Scripture: An Introduction," in idem, ed. *Magic in the Biblical World*, JSNTSup 245 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 1–9, esp. 1–5.

<sup>109</sup> So, e.g., H. D. Betz, "Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri," in idem, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation Including the Demotic Spells*, 2d ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), xli–lviii, at xlvi: "instead of turning against religion, as the skeptics among the Greek and Roman philosophers did, the magicians made use of it."

<sup>110</sup> E.g., Kee, *Miracle*, 212; E. Yamauchi, "Magic or Miracle? Diseases, Demons, and Exorcisms," in Wenham and Blomberg, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 89–183 at 135–139. H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3. Dunn, *Remembered*, concentrates on "four fea-

is used to distance Jesus from the charge of magic,<sup>111</sup> other times to show the similarity between Jesus and magic.<sup>112</sup> This takes us to a related issue.

(2) There has sometimes been a lack of clarity on the issue of perspective—from whose perspective is Jesus being considered a magician?—so that it is unclear whether or not it is being concluded that the charge of magic was brought against the historical Jesus by his opponents, later ancient detractors, or by current scholarship.<sup>113</sup> (3) From the perspective of later times, including our own, one of the difficulties of determining whether or not the historical Jesus was accused by his opponents of being a magician is that the term μάγοι does not appear in the gospel traditions. Therefore, one of the issues is determining the meaning of the terms that are used.

A lucid and persuasive case that the language of Jesus' opponents reflects them labeling and attempting to marginalize him as a magician has been set out by Graham Stanton.<sup>114</sup> Recognizing the risk of anachronism in working back from later times, Stanton starts with criticisms of Jesus found in Jewish, Christian and pagan writings in the middle of the second century. He notes that the double polemical accusations against Jesus of "magician" (μάγος) and "false prophet" (ψευδοπροφήτης) or "deceiver" (πλάνος) are very closely related in this literature.<sup>115</sup> Stanton also notes that this double accusation cannot be dependent on the New Testament for, even though the πλάνος accusation occurs, Jesus is never called ὁ μάγος. Further, Stanton notes that, although the polemic sometimes involves only one of these terms,<sup>116</sup> the other can be taken as implied since there was a

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tures of Jesus' technique" (690)—material aids, touching, faith, power source—in his discussion "Was Jesus a Magician?" (689–694).

<sup>111</sup> E.g., Harvey, *Constraints*, 109.

<sup>112</sup> E.g., Aune, "Magic," 1538.

<sup>113</sup> Particularly the case with Smith, *Magician*. See the assessment by Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 190–206.

<sup>114</sup> Stanton, "Magician," 164–180. A similar case is made by S. R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), ch. 1; cf. S. R. Garrett, "Light on a Dark Subject and Vice Versa: Magic and Magicians in the New Testament," in *Religion, Science, and Magic*, ed. Neusner, Frerichs and McCracken Flesher, 142–165.

<sup>115</sup> Stanton, "Magician," 172–173 citing, e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 69.7; *b. San.* 43a; 107b; *Acts Thom.* 96; 102; 106–107.

<sup>116</sup> For the single accusation that Jesus was a sorcerer, Stanton, "Magician," 171, cites Justin, *Apol.* 1.30.1; Celsus (Origen, *CC* 1.6, 28, 68, 71; 2.32, 48–49). For the single accusation that Jesus was a false prophet or deceiver, Stanton (171–172), cites



close relationship in antiquity between them.<sup>117</sup> To these two accusations—magician and false prophet (or deceiver)—ancient polemic tied a third. That is, even in the New Testament, it was alleged that the magician and the false prophet were able to act because of a close relationship to the devil or demons (Acts 13:6–12; Rev 16:13–14; 19:20).<sup>118</sup>

When Stanton turns to the gospels he notes that leading people astray—the second part of the double accusation implying the first part of being a magician—is found at the level of redaction.<sup>119</sup> However, as there is no reason to suppose the accusation arose at the level of redaction, and that John the Baptist, with whom Jesus was closely aligned, was labeled by Q as a demon-possessed false prophet,<sup>120</sup> it is almost certain Jesus was so accused.

Also, the third part of the accusation (carrying out exorcisms by the prince of demons) is found in Mark 3:22 and Q (Matt 12:24/Luke 11:15). Given the close association of the three-part accusation, Stanton is right to say there is “little doubt that both the Markan and Q traditions are tantamount to a charge that Jesus was a magician.”<sup>121</sup> Further, “[s]ince few scholars have any reservations about the authenticity of these two traditions, it is highly likely that Jesus was written off by his opponents as a magician, and thus a social deviant.”<sup>122</sup> In

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Justin *Dial.* 108; *T. Levi* 16:3 on which see further G. N. Stanton, “Aspects of Early Christian Jewish Polemic and Apologetic,” *NTS* 31 (1985): 377–382, reprinted in G. N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 232–255.

<sup>117</sup> Stanton, “Magician,” 172–173 citing Acts 13:6–12; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.315; Josephus *Ant.* 20.169–172; *War* 2.261–263; cf. Acts 21:38.

<sup>118</sup> Stanton, “Magician,” 173–175 citing, e.g., Justin, *Dial.* 7.3; 69; Celsus (Origen, *CC* 1:68). Cf. Garrett, *Demise*, 15–17 citing, e.g., *Jub.* 48.9–11; *CD V*, 17b–19; *Herm. Mand.* 11 and J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy*, *NovTSup* 37 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 38–43, 55, 95.

<sup>119</sup> Stanton, “Magician,” 175–178 citing, e.g., Matt 9:34; 10:25; 27:63–64; Luke 23:2, 5, 14; John 7:12, 25–27, 40, 46, 47.

<sup>120</sup> Stanton, “Magician,” 180.

<sup>121</sup> Stanton, “Magician,” 178. In that some of Jesus’ teaching and healing rescinded the action—consequence principle and, therefore, would have opened himself to the suspicion of magic see T. Holmén, “Jesus and Magic: Theodicean Perspectives to the Issue,” in M. Labahn and B. J. Liethaert Peerbolte, eds., *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007), 43–56.

<sup>122</sup> Stanton, “Magician,” 178. His supporting evidence that “In his healing miracles and exorcisms Jesus undoubtedly used techniques which would have been perceived by contemporaries to be magical” (178 n. 44, cf. 176, 177)—citing Aune, “Magic,” 1523–1529 and Smith, *Magician*, 94–139—is unconvincing for it assumes that magic was perceived as involving technique.

other words, aside from any consideration of his technique or how he compares to his peers, it is reasonable to conclude that the historical Jesus was accused by his opponents of being a magician; in league with the devil and leading people astray.<sup>123</sup>

### 6. *What did the Miracles Mean?*

It is not so easy to penetrate behind the various gospel traditions to the understanding Jesus may have had of his miracles.<sup>124</sup> This difficulty is exhibited in the variety of ways the miracles have been interpreted. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that, as E. P. Sanders puts it, we cannot say that “Jesus proffered his miracles to his audience” as bearing evidence of his status. For the tradition has it that Jesus refused to give a sign. However, perhaps, Sanders reflects, “Jesus himself saw them as evidencing his status as true spokesman for God, since that sort of inferences was common in the Mediterranean,” for Jesus spoke and acted with divine authority and, at least in replying to John, appealed to the miracles as establishing his authority.<sup>125</sup>

That the miracles are expressions of compassion is the view of A. E. Harvey. He seeks to understand what the miracles meant for Jesus through a discussion of the options open to a person “who possessed psychic or supernatural powers.”<sup>126</sup> Harvey clears the ground by setting out all the options Jesus did not take. He shows that Jesus did not use his powers to foretell the future in order to be seen as an abnormally wise and divinely gifted man in line with Hellenistic traditions.<sup>127</sup> Neither did Jesus choose the style of the “Charismatic,”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Citing M. W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 99, Welch, “Miracles,” 361 n. 21 suggests that “Jesus’ connection with prostitutes, who were often associated with magic, might also have linked Jesus in some kind with magic.”

<sup>124</sup> However, in view of the probably authentic sayings (see below) it is unlikely L. E. Keck, *Who Is Jesus?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 83 is correct in saying that Jesus may not have had a view.

<sup>125</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 172. Cf. Allison, *Jesus*, 91 notes that the central beliefs of millenarians are authenticated by a prophet’s miracles.

<sup>126</sup> Harvey, *Constraints*, 105.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

nor, as others have agreed,<sup>129</sup> did he heal by normal medical means.<sup>130</sup> According to Harvey the miracles Jesus chose to perform do not seem to be a means of drawing attention to the power of the thaumaturge and investing him with unanswerable authority.<sup>131</sup> Nor do they seem to have been performed in a spirit of competition with other charismatic figures. Further, Harvey does not think that the reports of miraculous activity can provide us with anything of value for determining his religious significance for, "Messiahs must be capable of wonder-working, even if this is not what is primarily stressed in their mission."<sup>132</sup> Instead, put positively, "we find," says Harvey, that "an impressive number of them took the form of an attack on the limitations of the human condition which seemed most intractable, most inexplicable, and most stubbornly to prevent mankind from moving into that better world which is surely intended for us in the future purposed of God."<sup>133</sup> As convincing as this may be, as we will see, from the evidence of probably authentic sayings of Jesus, this does not go far enough.

For John Dominic Crossan,<sup>134</sup> the significance of the miracles is in their intersecting with Jesus' table fellowship. This forms the heart of Jesus' program as a Cynic peasant whose aims are not seen simply in his teaching but also in his offering of free miracles and in his eating freely with anyone. Crossan says that "[m]iracle and parable, healing and eating were calculated to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God and unmediated physical and

<sup>129</sup> Blackburn, "Miracles," 374 n. 92 and those cited.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. the report of Emperor Vespasian; Harvey, *Constraints*, 107–108 citing Solon fragment 13.61–62 (West); Seneca *Benef.* 6.16.2; Galen *Nat. fac.* 3.7; Tacitus *Hist.* 4.81; and Seutonius *Vesp.* 7. Harvey notes that, nevertheless, Jesus' use of touch and spittle were normal medical procedures.

<sup>131</sup> Harvey, *Constraints*, 110.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 101 citing, B. R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium* (London: Heinemann, 1973), 134.

<sup>133</sup> Harvey, *Constraints*, 118.

<sup>134</sup> J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus* (North Blackburn, VIC: CollinsDove, 1993). Cf. J. D. Crossan, "The Presence of God's Love in the Power of Jesus' Works," *Concilium* 10 (1969): 34–40. On what follows see also Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 355–356. For critical discussions of the work of Crossan see, H. Childs, *The Myth of the Historical Jesus and the Evolution of Consciousness* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); D. L. Denton, *Historiography and Hermeneutics in Jesus Studies*, JSNTS 262 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004). On Crossan's treatment of the miracle traditions see P. F. Craffert, "Crossan's Historical Jesus as Healer, Exorcist and Miracle Worker," *RelTheol* 10 (2003): 243–266 and Crossan's response, "Methodology, Healing, Story, and Ideology," *ibid.* 296–303.

spiritual contact with one another. He announced, in other words, the brokerless kingdom of God.<sup>135</sup> The miracles represent Jesus' response to a colonial people under political and religious pressure.<sup>136</sup> Thus, Jesus' understanding of the kingdom is not to be interpreted against the background of an apocalyptic longing but against the wisdom tradition's recognition of a present kingdom in which the wise, good and virtuous share.<sup>137</sup> However, the evidence does not support the view that Jesus pitted himself against an exploitative temple and priesthood which claimed an exclusive right to broker healing.<sup>138</sup> Also, at least in view of few miracles being associated with the Cynic tradition,<sup>139</sup> it is of only limited value to view Jesus in terms of contemporary Cynics. Further, Jesus' egalitarian motive is speculative and there is no evidence that Jesus rejected the notion of an apocalyptic kingdom.<sup>140</sup>

In *Jesus and the Victory of God* N. T. Wright says that Jesus intended his healings to function in exact parallel with the welcome of sinners because most, if not all, of his mighty works could be seen as the restoration to membership in Israel of those who had been excluded.<sup>141</sup> Wright notes that many of the people Jesus healed came from banned or excluded categories—the blind, deaf, mute, lepers, Gentiles and a Samaritan, for example. Jesus' healings not only brought physical wholeness but inclusion so that, at the deepest level on the part of Jesus and his contemporaries, they also were “part of that open welcome which went with the inauguration of the kingdom.”<sup>142</sup> Wright also takes the multiplication of the bread and the storm stillings, with their overtones of the exodus, as signs of covenant renewal so that we

<sup>135</sup> Crossan, *Jesus*, 422.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, e.g., 292. Cf. B. D. Ehrman, *Jesus* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 197.

<sup>137</sup> Crossan, *Jesus*, 287–291.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Vermes, “Reactions,” 115, notes that Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 301–302, “is to be commended for his pertinent reminder that the disciples of Jesus were not persecuted by Pilate, which surely would have happened if they had been seen as representing a revolutionary faction.”

<sup>139</sup> See the discussion in Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 28–30 and the critique of Jesus being viewed as an itinerant Cynic see R. Horsley, “Jesus, Itinerant Cynic or Israelite Prophet?” in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: TPI, 1994), 68–97.

<sup>140</sup> See H. C. Kee, “A Century of Quests for the Culturally Compatible Jesus,” *TToday* 52 (1995): 17–28 (17); also Blackburn, “Miracles,” 391–392.

<sup>141</sup> Wright, *Victory*, 191.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

are glimpsing the simple reconstruction of Israel.<sup>143</sup> The exorcisms stand out as being part of a battle in which he alone was involved, for they were neither part of Jewish expectations nor a major focus for the early church. They show that Jesus saw himself as surrounded by places, people and influences that belong to the enemies of Yahweh and his people.<sup>144</sup> However, it is not Rome but the Satan and his hordes who are the enemy. Therefore, the mighty works were not showy magic or attempts to win support or indications that Jesus was “divine.” “They were signs which were intended as, and would have been perceived as, the physical inauguration of the kingdom of Israel’s god, the putting into action of the welcome and the warning which were the central message of the kingdom and its redefinition.”<sup>145</sup>

Similarly, though without the covenantal aspect, James Dunn also sees the most distinctive feature of Jesus’ exorcisms and healings to be found in the eschatological significance that Jesus attributed to them.<sup>146</sup> Dunn notes the key saying in Matthew 12:27–28/Luke 11:19–20: “It was the fact that Jesus achieved his success by the *Spirit/finger of God* which demonstrated or proved that the *kingdom of God* had come to them.” Dunn says that it is this that distinguishes Jesus’ exorcistic success from his contemporaries; “he laid claim to a plenitude of power which, by implication, these other exorcists did not experience.”<sup>147</sup> Then, the saying at the conclusion of the reference to the eschatological blessings in Jesus’ mission—“Blessed is the one who takes no offence at me” (Matt 11:6/Luke 7:23)—shows Jesus saw his mission “as embodying these blessings, himself as the decisive agent in the realization of eschatological hopes.”<sup>148</sup> Despite what Dunn recognizes as the increasingly social and political interpretations of eschatology in contemporary scholarship, in this material he affirms Bultmann’s description of “the immediacy of [Jesus’] eschatological consciousness.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Wright, *Victory*, 193.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>146</sup> Dunn, *Remembered*, 667–696, esp. 694–696; cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 175.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 694.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 695.

<sup>149</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 126. However, there Bultmann says, “we cannot without more ado be sure that passages whose Jewish origin is improbable are genuine sayings of Jesus.”

In helping resolve the controversy over the meaning of the miracles, there are a number of Jesus' sayings that could reasonably reflect his voice.<sup>150</sup> From these it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Jesus considered he was performing miracles—astonishing events carrying the signature of God.<sup>151</sup> Further, this material gives the impression that Jesus considered performing miracles the main focus of his ministry and that exorcism was the epitome of his ministry. In particular, despite Sanders' uncertainty,<sup>152</sup> it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, for Jesus, the miracles—especially the exorcisms—were, in themselves, not demonstrations or confirmations of the kingdom of God<sup>153</sup> but its realization or expression in the lives of those healed.<sup>154</sup> To this we must add that although (against Crossan) the themes of solidarity and integration do not appear,<sup>155</sup> in light of the segregating impact of sickness,<sup>156</sup> Jürgen Becker is probably right to say that Jesus' miracles are to be understood “as the eschatological restoration of life and as inclusion in the end-time community.”<sup>157</sup>

Also, if we are to be true to the evidence we cannot ignore the fact that, at least *because* of his miracles, *Jesus appears to have been conscious he was God's key figure or Messiah* in a situation where he thought God's expected end time reign was taking place in and through his activities.<sup>158</sup> And, we can see, especially in the answer to John the Baptist (Matt 11:2–6/Luke 7:18–23) and the “Woes” (Matt

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<sup>150</sup> The parable of the strong man (Mark 3:27/Matt 12:29/Luke 11:21–22); Jesus' answer to John the Baptist (Matt 11:2–6/Luke 7:18–23); the “woes” on Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Matt 11:20–24/Luke 10:12–15); the “Spirit/Finger” saying (Matt 12:27–28/Luke 11:19–20); the saying about a sign from heaven (Matt 12:38–39; 16:1–4; Mark 8:11–13/Luke 11:16, 29; John 6:30) and Jesus' saying “Tell that fox...!” (Luke 13:32).

<sup>151</sup> For a discussion of the definitions of miracle, especially for Jesus and the gospel traditions see Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, 24–27, 348–350 and the literature cited.

<sup>152</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 133–140, 148–150, discussed in Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 218–219.

<sup>153</sup> So, e.g., Dunn, *Remembered*, 694; Stanton, “Message,” 60.

<sup>154</sup> Further see Twelftree, *Miracle Worker*, esp. 268–269. Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 175: “His miracles themselves become experiences of the rule of the God, who is presently at work establishing his kingdom.”

<sup>155</sup> So also Becker, *Jesus*, 177.

<sup>156</sup> See Lev 13:45–46; Deut 28:28–29; 1QSa II, 5–7; 11Q19 XLV, 12–13; XLVIII, 14–15 cited by Becker, *Jesus*, 177.

<sup>157</sup> Becker, *Jesus*, 177. On Jesus' expression of this in his table fellowship see, e.g., Meyer, *Aims*, 158–162.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. B. F. Meyer, “Jesus' Ministry and Self-Understanding,” in Chilton and Evans, *Studying the Historical Jesus*, 345: “Jesus was the conscious bearer of a (indeed, of *the*) climactic and definitive mission to all Israel” (his emphasis).

11:20–24/Luke 10:12–15) that, as Ben Meyer (1927–95) put it, “[t]he whole of this activity [the mission of Jesus] was designed to elicit an act of faith-recognition.”<sup>159</sup> In this we can probably see why Jesus chose to perform miracles: they were an inescapable yet ambiguous signal of his messianic significance. Added to this are the exorcisms which exemplified his idea that his ministry was a battle with and the first stage of the defeat of Satan. Also, some of the miracles were able to highlight God’s involvement in Jesus’ activity and others showed Jesus expressing compassion in the miracles.

In light of this it is plain to see that, though less canvassed in recent times, the long favored view that, for Jesus, the miracles were “signs” having little or no intrinsic significance save to point beyond themselves to the more important message of the kingdom of God,<sup>160</sup> is not supported by the evidence.<sup>161</sup> Even though the Fourth Gospel understands the miracles to be signs, they are not intended to point to the less significant message of Jesus but to Jesus himself.<sup>162</sup> Further, the sayings of Jesus we have noted in this section (n. 148 above) suggest a different relationship between miracle and message. It is not that Jesus understood his miracles to be evidence of the dawning or nearness of the kingdom of God.<sup>163</sup> Nor can we agree with Marcus Borg that the coming of the kingdom of God refers to the power of the other realm active through Jesus the holy man instead of the eschatological coming of the reign of God.<sup>164</sup> Rather, *the miracles are, themselves, the eschatological kingdom of God in operation or made manifest.*<sup>165</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Meyer, “Jesus’ Ministry,” 351.

<sup>160</sup> E.g., M. Dibelius, *Jesus* (1939, ET London: SCM, 1963), 81; R. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 12–13. Also, A. Fridrichsen and H. N. Ridderbos cited by H. van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus*, NovTSup 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 282.

<sup>161</sup> So also J. Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 129 citing Dibelius, *Jesus*, 69.

<sup>162</sup> See John 2:23; 4:54; 10:38; 12:18; 20:30. Cf. R. H. Hiery, “Satan, Demons, and the Kingdom of God,” *SJT* 27 (1974): 35–47, at 37–38; A. Fridrichsen, *The Problem of Miracle in Primitive Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1972), 63–72.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (London: SCM, 1952), 7.

<sup>164</sup> M. J. Borg, “An Orthodoxy Reconsidered: The ‘End-of-the-World Jesus,’” in L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright, eds., *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 207–217, at 216–217.

<sup>165</sup> See those cited by Blackburn, “Miracles,” 373–374; cf. Gnilka, *Jesus*, 129. See also the discussion in Twelftree, *Exorcist*, 166–171 and also D. Connolly, “Ad miracula

Given the fundamental importance and interpretive significance of the miracles (see above) it is reasonable to conclude that the miracles are not illustrative of a more fundamental message, nor that the miracles (or other activities) flowed from the message.<sup>166</sup> Rather, Jesus was a healer who needed to explain the significance of the miracles and the new state of affairs they embodied.

### 7. *Miracles of Nature: Legend or History?*

While there may be a general consensus that the healing and exorcism stories probably reflect reminiscences of the historical Jesus, this is not agreed in relation to the so-called nature miracles, which have caused scholars considerable angst (cf. n. 14 above). Difficulties with these stories abound: only the disciples appear to be aware of them, their support in the sayings of Jesus is limited or non-existent,<sup>167</sup> they are not mentioned in the summaries of Jesus' miraculous activity,<sup>168</sup> and they are flush with Old Testament motifs as well as beliefs and practices of the early church.<sup>169</sup>

At one end of a spectrum, following in the footsteps of Herman Reimarus (1694–1768),<sup>170</sup> is Gerd Lüdemann. On the grounds that “one cannot change one's picture of the world at will” and that taking “refuge in the ancient picture of the world simply because this is presupposed in the Bible is mistaken in every respect,” Lüdemann states baldly that the “modern picture of the world has no room” for nature miracles.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, Jürgen Becker argues that, along with the epiphanies and especially the raisings of the dead, the nature mir-

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sanationum apud Matthaeum,” *VD* 45 (1967): 306–325 and C. Dietzfelbinger, “Vom Sinn der Sabbatheilungen Jesu,” *EvT* 38 (1978): 281–298.

<sup>166</sup> So Keck, *Who is Jesus?* 83.

<sup>167</sup> See the discussion in Blackburn, “Miracles,” 370 nn. 75–76; cf. Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 157.

<sup>168</sup> Barnes Tatum, *Quest*, 217.

<sup>169</sup> See R. H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (London: SCM, 1963), 37–39, discussed by Blackburn, “Miracles,” 370–371.

<sup>170</sup> For Reimarus the miracles were not only invented by Christians but also only of secondary importance, secondary because “miracles of themselves do not constitute a single article of faith” and because “Christ himself would have the miracles accounted as secondary.” H. S. Reimarus, *Reimarus: Fragments 1774–1778*, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1970 and London: SCM, 1971), 239–240, cf. 160, 232–234.

<sup>171</sup> G. Lüdemann, *The Great Deception* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1999), 70, cf. 71–72.



acles “are all dimensions of the picture of Jesus that reveal the church’s own Easter experience.”<sup>172</sup>

Although Meier thinks that the story of the feeding of the multitude may have a symbolic base (a meal Jesus shared with a large crowd) and was only later taken to be miraculous,<sup>173</sup> he comes to the same point as Lüdemann: all the so-called nature miracles appear to be the creation of the early church.<sup>174</sup> Crossan also acknowledges the dramatic and symbolic aspects of the nature miracles but asserts that the stories should be grouped together with the post-Easter apparitions.<sup>175</sup> For they are not concerned with control over nature before Jesus’ death but are about power and authority in the earliest Christian communities.<sup>176</sup> In any case, nature miracles such as the raisings from the dead are to be dispensed with on his view that: “I do not think that anyone, anywhere, at any time brings dead people back to life.”<sup>177</sup>

More popular, and not resorting to invention, are those who propose that the miracles are to be interpreted rationally.<sup>178</sup> Karl F. Bahrtdt (1741–92), who is to be counted among those first to apply a non-supernatural interpretation to the miracle stories of the gospels,<sup>179</sup> sought to explain them rationally. In the case of Jesus walking on the sea, for example, he said that we can imagine that there was a piece of timber in the water near the shore. Jesus stepped onto it and finding it bore his weight approached the boat on it. The reason why the disciples cried out in fear when they saw Jesus was that they were prisoners to the prejudices of their miracle-believing age and disregarded the natural causes of events. Thus only their limited knowledge caused the disciples to assume a miracle had taken place. We

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<sup>172</sup> Becker, *Jesus*, 173. See also those cited in n. 14 above.

<sup>173</sup> Meier, *Marginal*, 2:968.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:970.

<sup>175</sup> J. D. Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 181; cf. Gnilka, *Jesus*, 133; P. J. Madden, *Jesus’ Walking on the Sea*, BZNW 81 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997), 138–139.

<sup>176</sup> Crossan, *Biography*, 186.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>178</sup> For other recent proponents of rational interpretations of miracles also see, e.g., H. Braun, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979) and Gnilka, *Jesus*, 133–134.

<sup>179</sup> A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 2000), 37; cf. 42–46 where *Natürliche Geschichte des grossen Propheten von Nazareth*, 4 vols. (Copenhagen: Bethlehem, 1800–1802<sup>1</sup> and 1806<sup>2</sup>) by Karl Heinrich Venturini (1768–1849) is also discussed.

know better: "The laws of Nature are eternal and unalterable. Miracles suspend them. Therefore miracles are impossible."<sup>180</sup>

Sanders draws attention to the need for rational explanations to be modern, making it easier for people to continue to believe the Bible is historically accurate and scientifically sound. He thinks that the principle is partly right in that "it is plausible to explain an exorcism as a psychosomatic cure."<sup>181</sup> However, taking into account there being little response to the major miracles, he says that, "Possibly Jesus' actual miracles were relatively minor and excited the public only temporarily." He grants that this is speculative, though he thinks it a reasonable solution.<sup>182</sup>

In dealing with "the most 'extraordinary deeds' attributed to Jesus"—the stilling of the storm, the feeding of the 5,000 and the walking on the water<sup>183</sup>—James Dunn finds incidental details which he takes to "suggest that some historical reminiscences have been incorporated into these stories."<sup>184</sup> Also, taking his lead from Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), Dunn suggests that levitation and "psychical phenomenon of *operatio in distans*" may help explain these miracle stories.<sup>185</sup> However, in the case of the story of Jesus walking on the water, with such statements as "they thought they saw a ghost" and the repeated descriptions of fear, Dunn says, "if truth be told, the story at this point reads more like a straight ghost story than anything else."<sup>186</sup> Importantly, as they now stand, the nature miracle stories have been shaped to bring out biblical echoes and parallels: Jesus is greater than Jonah in the stilling of the storm, greater than Elisha in the feeding of the 5,000, and enacts or embodies the Creator's mastery over the elements in walking on the sea.<sup>187</sup> Possibly, then, he says, "we have to envisage traditions given the shape which still

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<sup>180</sup> K. F. Bahrtdt, *Briefe über die Bibel im Volkston* (Halle, 1702), 16th letter, cited in E. and M.-L. Keller, *Miracles in Dispute* (London: SCM, 1969); 71–72.

<sup>181</sup> Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 159.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 157, cf. 164.

<sup>183</sup> Dunn, *Remembered*, 683–684.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 687. He mentions, e.g., "the other boats with them" and the "cushion" (Mark 4:38) in the story of the stilling of the storm, and the numbers "five" and "two" and "green" grass (6:38–39) in the story of the feeding of the crowd.

<sup>185</sup> Dunn, *Jesus*, 72–73 citing R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (London: Lutterworth, 1943), 347–350, 368–374.

<sup>186</sup> Dunn, *Remembered*, 688.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 686–687.

determines them more or less from the first telling, and by those reflecting on experiences which they interpreted in and by the telling. But," he concludes, "even granted the possibility I doubt whether much weight can be placed on it."<sup>188</sup>

Going much further than Dunn, and arguing for the essential historicity of nature miracles, are some of the essays collected by David Wenham and Craig Blomberg.<sup>189</sup> However, Borg speaks for probably most of the academy when he says that the miracles of nature are to be left in a "historical suspense account."<sup>190</sup> He argues that the historical verdict about whether or not such events really happen will depend, in part, on whether or not we think even a charismatic can do these kind of things. Also, he says, the symbolic elements in the stories make it difficult to determine what Jesus actually did.<sup>191</sup>

### 8. *Summary and Conclusions*

In this chapter we have identified and set out the major controversies associated with the miracles of Jesus. In doing so we have seen that, over against Bultmann, Schlatter's view that the "attempt to find a miracle-free Gospel as the first form of Christian tradition to which only later miracle accounts were attached has no chance of success,"<sup>192</sup> is, with important exceptions (see n. 14 above), the majority opinion. However, as secure and important as the miracle tradition may be, the view brought to the English speaking world by C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) that the miracle stories are peripheral to the *kerygma*<sup>193</sup>—which remains intact—cannot be sustained in view of the evidence. Instead, the evidence points to the miracles being fundamental to any legiti-

<sup>188</sup> Dunn, *Remembered*, 688–689.

<sup>189</sup> Wenham and Blomberg, ed., *The Miracles of Jesus*. See also Loos, *Miracles*; R. Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles* (New York: Paulist, 1988).

<sup>190</sup> Borg, *New Vision*, 70 citing a phrase used by Fuller, *Miracles*, 38. Cf. H. E. W. Turner, *Jesus, Master and Lord* (London: Mowbray, 1954), 181 who suggested leaving the nature miracles "in a kind of theological 'suspense account'."

<sup>191</sup> Borg, *New Vision*, 67, 70.

<sup>192</sup> Schlatter, *History*, 174.

<sup>193</sup> So J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959), 59. Even before Dodd there were a number of studies of the historical Jesus subordinating the miracles to the teaching of Jesus, e.g., A. C. Headlam, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus the Christ* (London: John Murray, 1923).

mate reconstruction of the historical Jesus, including how he understood himself.

Second, a cadre of controversies shows that there is no agreement as to how Jesus is to be seen in relation to miracle traditions and workers of the period, save that he was remembered as a particularly prolific miracle worker. Attempts to fit Jesus into one of the perceived categories of miracle workers of the time have not been successful. Nevertheless, Eric Eve may have come closest to portraying accurately the context of Jesus' miracles as the creative confluence of traditions about prophets like Elijah and Elisha and the Enochic-Qumran traditions concerned with the eschatological defeat of demonic powers, as well as popular folk-religion,<sup>194</sup> provided it is understood that this includes the magical traditions. For in these we see parallels to Jesus' brief healing commands, to his use of a power-authority, to his use of artifacts, as well as evidence of a dramatic encounter between the healer and the sickness.

Third, as unpalatable as it may now be, Jesus' contemporaries most probably accused him of being a magician. However, this was not because of his approach or techniques, which were paralleled in the so-called magical literature, but rather, not least, because he was thought to be leading people astray.

Fourth, there is no agreement as to the meaning of the miracles: are they expressions of compassion, or Jesus' response to a colonial people under political and religious pressure, or restoring people to membership of Israel or—as the evidence more likely shows—the eschatological kingdom of God in operation or made manifest, and also reflecting Jesus' self-consciousness that he was endowed with the eschatological Spirit? Perhaps, then, for Jesus, the miracles evidenced his status as spokesman for God.

Finally, though the discussion is not extensive, the lines are drawn most clearly and firmly regarding the status of the miracles of nature. We have observed that, inevitably reflecting philosophical and theological presuppositions, some see them as pure invention, others as either containing historical reminiscences—perhaps explicable by paranormal means, or even reflecting events as they stand. Not a few Jesus scholars have deposited these stories in a “historical suspense account” unable (or unwilling) to withdraw them. Whether or not

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<sup>194</sup> Eve, *Jewish Context*, 259. Cf. Meier, “Present State,” 482–483.

nature miracles can be withdrawn from such an account depends on solving profound metaphysical and epistemological problems relating, for example, to the way God is thought to act, and how it could be known (including, not least, from ancient documents) that such a miracle had taken place. Further, any entertaining of the idea that nature miracles could be considered a legitimate part of the Jesus tradition also depends on the broad question: “Is Jesus the sort of person to Whom such a mastery over nature can reasonably be ascribed?”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Turner, *Jesus*, 181, discussing A. Richardson, *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1941), 123–130.

## THE MESSAGE OF JESUS II: PARABLES

ARLAND J. HULTGREN

For people who have even a basic acquaintance with the teachings of Jesus, his parables are the best known units within the gospels. Moreover, it is generally thought among scholars that, if one wants to get at the message of Jesus, one should go to the parables.<sup>1</sup> Even if they have been passed on and written down by evangelists who interpreted and edited them, many of the parables are regarded as conveying authentic material.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. *What is a Parable?*

The English word “parable” is derived from the Greek word παραβολή, and like its Greek antecedent its basic and primary meaning is a “comparison.” A parable is a figure of speech, such as a simile or a brief narrative, by which the speaker makes a comparison between some transcendent, mysterious, or otherwise puzzling reality and that which is familiar to common human experience. Although people immediately think of the parables of Jesus whenever the subject of parables comes up, certain types of parables are actually found elsewhere in the literatures of antiquity. Aristotle speaks of parables as illustrations that a teacher such as Socrates might use to confirm a point being made within a larger discourse (*Rhetoric* 2.20). And figures of speech called

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the statement of Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 11: “The student of the parables of Jesus... may be confident that he stands upon a particularly firm historical foundation.” Cf. comparable statements by C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961), viii; Bernard B. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 63; Marcus J. Borg, “The Teaching of Jesus Christ,” *ABD* 3:804–812, at 807; and Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Of the 33 parables considered, 23 of them are classified as “authentic” (5 as certain and 18 as probable) in the work of the Jesus Seminar, as recorded in *The Parables of Jesus: Red Letter Edition*, ed. Robert W. Funk et al. (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988), 74.

“parables” appear in the works of Plato (e.g., *Gorgias* 493–94; *Republic* 6.487–89) and in the writings of certain Cynics and Stoics (e.g., Epicurus, *Discourses* 1.14.15; 2.14.21–22).

Parables and parabolic sayings appear within the Old Testament and other literatures of Jewish origin as well. The best-known parable in the Old Testament is the address of the prophet Nathan to King David after David had arranged for the death of Uriah and took Bathsheba as his wife (2 Sam 12:1–4). The passage is not actually called a “parable” within the Old Testament itself, nor are any other such stories that employ narration and partially resemble parables in content and function (e.g., 1 Kings 20:39–40; Isa 5:1–7; 28:23–29), but they are a mode of story-telling that anticipates that of Jesus. Parables appear also in rabbinic literature,<sup>3</sup> illustrating the existence of parable telling in the ancient Jewish world. But the degree to which the rabbinic parables antedate the rise of Christianity is debated. Most rabbinic parables that remain in written sources are from the second and third centuries CE.

By means of parables Jesus carried on instruction by making comparisons between eternal, transcendent realities and that which was familiar to the common human experience of his day. Although some scholars have proposed definitions,<sup>4</sup> there is no commonly agreed-upon definition of what a parable is within the scholarly literature. Within his own work, the author has used the following as a working definition:

A parable is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between God’s kingdom, actions, or expectations and something in this world, real or imagined. There are two types of parables:

1. Narrative parables: the comparisons made include narration; these parables typically have a “once upon a time” quality about them and the particularity of stories set in the past.

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<sup>3</sup> For a fine collection of rabbinic parables, cf. Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston, *They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). For a major study, cf. David Stern, *Parables in Midrash* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Examples of proposed definitions appear in the works of C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1961), 5, and Bernard B. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 8.

2. Similitudes: the comparisons are made without stories but by means of the words “is like” or “is as if”; analogies are made between their subjects and general and timeless observations.<sup>5</sup>

Some examples of the first type are the familiar Parables of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32) and the Ten Maidens (Matt 25:1–13). They contain delightful and memorable stories. The stories have been composed as though they are unique happenings that have taken place and are recalled by the story teller, even though they are not historical reports. Some examples of the second type, the similitudes, are the familiar Parables of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30–32//Matt 13:31–32//Luke 13:18–19) and the Leaven (Matt 13:33//Luke 13:20–21). These are extremely brief, do not contain stories, and make a succinct comparison. Their imagery is familiar, constant, and often observed in everyday life.

In addition to these two types of parables, it is possible to add a third. In some major studies they are called Example Narratives (or in German *Beispielergählungen*).<sup>6</sup> There are four parables placed in this category, all of them appearing in the Gospel of Luke. They are the Parables of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37), the Rich Fool (12:16–21), the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31), and the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector (18:10–14). The reason that they are sometimes considered to be in a category by themselves is that their meanings are transparent (as models of behavior), and they simply call for application, whereas narrative parables leave the hearer with enigmas to ponder. In form, however, they are actually narrative parables. If they are placed into a separate category, that is on the basis of their message, not their form.

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<sup>5</sup> Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1899; reprinted, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 1:114; 2:585–641; Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 177–179; B. T. D. Smith, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 18.



## 2. *The Parables in the Gospels (Canonical and Apocryphal)*

The parables of Jesus are located in both canonical and non-canonical gospels. If we limit ourselves to the New Testament alone, all of the parables of Jesus are located in the synoptic gospels. Sometimes the passage in John 10:1–6, in which Jesus speaks of himself as the shepherd who enters the sheepfold by way of the gate, is considered a parable, and in some translations of the New Testament the term *παροιμία* used at the end of the passage (10:6) is translated as “parable” (KJV, ASV). But the passage is more commonly regarded as a Christological discourse, and then the Greek term is translated simply as “figure of speech” (RSV, NIV, NRSV).

A discussion of the parables of Jesus gets complicated by the question of what should be included under the term “parable.” Scholarly works concerning the parables differ widely in this. The massive work of Adolf Jülicher deals with 53 units within the gospels as parables, while the work of Joachim Jeremias takes up 41, and that of C. H. Dodd only 32. Clearly the question of what to include in a treatment of the parables of Jesus is not easy to resolve. For example, are the sayings of Jesus about not placing a patch of new cloth on old clothes and not putting new wine in old wine-skins (Mark 2:21–22//Matt 9:16–17//Luke 5:36–38) to be classified as parables? Luke calls them “parables” (5:36), but Mark and Matthew do not. Some interpreters include them in their lists of parables,<sup>7</sup> but others do not.<sup>8</sup> Even though these sayings are to a certain degree parabolic (making comparisons), it is questionable whether they should be considered parables. They do not correspond fully with what are clearly the shortest of parables (the similitudes) in which an explicit comparison is made, such as, “the kingdom of God is like...,” nor do they correspond to the longer parables that contain narratives. It is fair to say that they are parabolic sayings, even if not full-fledged parables. Since they are

<sup>7</sup> A. Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden*, 2:188–202; C. H. Dodd, *Parables*, 6, 90; Charles E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 14–15, 62–66, 125–129. John D. Crossan, “Parable,” *ABD* 5:146–52 (148), speaks of it (and other units) as an “aphoristic parable.”

<sup>8</sup> Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 25, calls the sayings “possible examples of parables.” J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 247–248, does not include them in his “Index of Synoptic Parables,” but on p. 90 he mentions them while discussing “paired parables and similes,” and on p. 117 refers to them as “sayings.” W. Oesterley, *Parables*, does not include them.

questionable, they have not been included in the following list. The list provided here consists of 37 units of synoptic tradition that can safely be classified as parables. Other things might be included, but inclusion of them would be controversial. The parables are listed here according to their sources, based on the standard two-source theory of gospel origins.

Those that appear in the Gospel of Mark (five, often with parallels) are:

- The Sower (4:3-8//Matt 13:3-8//Luke 8:5-8)
- The Seed Growing Secretly (4:26-29)
- The Mustard Seed (4:30-32//Matt 13:31-32//Luke 13:18-19)
- The Wicked Tenants (12:1-12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19)
- The Waiting Slaves (13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38)

Those attributed to the Q source (a total of six) are:

- The Father's Good Gifts (Matt 7:9-11//Luke 11:11-13)
- The Wise and Foolish Builders (Matt 7:24-27//Luke 6:47-49)
- The Children in the Marketplace (Matt 11:16-19//Luke 7:31-35)
- The Leaven (Matt 13:33//Luke 13:20-21)
- The Lost Sheep (Matt 18:12-14//Luke 15:4-7)
- The Faithful and Wise Slave (Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:42-46).

Parables distinctive to the Gospel of Matthew (a total of ten) are:

- The Weeds in the Wheat (13:24-30)
- The Treasure in the Field (13:44)
- The Pearl of Great Price (13:45-46)
- The Dragnet (13:47-50)
- The Unforgiving Slave (18:23-35)
- The Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)
- The Two Sons (21:28-32)
- The Wedding Feast (22:1-14)
- The Ten Maidens (25:1-13)
- The Talents (25:14-30)

Parables distinctive to the Gospel of Luke (numbering sixteen) are:

- The Two Debtors (7:41–43)
- The Good Samaritan (10:25–37)
- The Friend at Midnight (11:5–8)
- The Rich Fool (12:16–21)
- The Barren Fig Tree (13:6–9)
- The Great Banquet (14:16–24)
- Building a Tower (14:28–30)
- The King Going to War (14:31–33)
- The Lost Coin (15:8–10)
- The Prodigal Son (15:11–32)
- The Unjust Manager (16:1–8)
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31)
- The Slave at Duty (17:7–10)
- The Unjust Judge (18:2–8)
- The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:10–14)
- The Pounds (19:12–27)

To these 37 parables some would want to add one more, viz. what is sometimes called the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which is distinctive to Matthew (25:31–46).<sup>9</sup> Strictly speaking, however, that passage is not a parable from beginning to end. It has a parable-like beginning—that of the Son of man being compared to a shepherd who separates the sheep from the goats—but after that it is an eschatological discourse concerning the final judgment, and so it is often named the Final Judgment, not the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

In addition to the parables in the synoptic gospels, there are additional parables in the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Truth*. Five parables in the *Gospel of Thomas* have parallels in the synoptic gospels. These are the Sower (Mark 4:3–8 par.; *Gos. Thom.* 9), the Weeds in the Wheat (Matt 13:24–30; *Gos. Thom.* 57), the Rich Fool

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<sup>9</sup> It is treated as a parable, for example, in the works of J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 206–210; John Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 109–125; and Jan Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished: The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 196–235. It is not discussed at all in the works of A. Jülicher, C. H. Dodd, B. T. D. Smith, E. Linemann, and B. Scott.

(Luke 12:16–21; *Gos. Thom.* 63), the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16–24; *Gos. Thom.* 64), the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1–12 par.; *Gos. Thom.* 65), and the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:12–14 par.; *Gos. Thom.* 107). Moreover, that same gospel contains four additional parables not found in the synoptics: the Wise Fisherman (*Gos. Thom.* 8), the Disciples as Little Children (21), the Woman with a Jar (97), and the Assassin (98). The apocryphal *Gospel of Truth* (31–32) contains one parable of Jesus, which also appears in the synoptic gospels, viz. the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

### 3. *Some Landmarks in Parable Interpretation*

From the first century into modern times the allegorical method was used to interpret the parables of Jesus. The English word “allegory,” like “parable,” is a loanword from Greek. The word in Greek (ἀλληγορία) is a compound from ἄλλος (“other”) and ἀγορία (“speaking”), and thus means “speaking otherwise than one seems to speak,” and in common usage it is defined as “an extended or continued metaphor.”<sup>10</sup> Allegorical interpretation of the parables of Jesus rests on the assumption that they contain more than what is immediately seen in the story line, and interpretation proceeds by assigning meaning to virtually every detail being narrated. In the history of allegorical interpretation of the parables the details have regularly been considered to refer symbolically to classic Christian doctrines. But it is important to notice that allegorical interpretation started very early. It appears already in the New Testament itself, such as in the interpretations given there to the Parables of the Sower (Mark 4:13–20 par.) and the Weeds in the Wheat (Matt 13:37–43). A classic case of allegorical interpretation is in St. Augustine’s treatment of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Among other things, he sets up the following equivalencies: the man who travels from Jerusalem to Jericho is Adam; his descent from Jerusalem is his loss of immortality; the thieves are the devil and his angels; the Samaritan is Christ; the inn is the church; and the innkeeper is the apostle Paul.<sup>11</sup> Clever as

<sup>10</sup> J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 20 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 1:333.

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller summary, cf. C. H. Dodd, *Parables*, 1–2, summarizing from Augustine, *Quaestiones Evangeliorum* 2.19.

that interpretation is, it can hardly be expected to have been the meaning of the parable as Jesus told it to his first hearers or for Luke the evangelist as he wrote it down.

A decisive break was made toward the end of the nineteenth century with the publication of Adolf Jülicher's two-volume work on the parables. Jülicher called for a non-allegorical interpretation, insisting that the interpreter should seek to find and explicate the "one point" that a parable makes.<sup>12</sup> While that view has been granted ever since Jülicher's work, it goes without saying that the ancients did not distinguish as carefully as modern interpreters might do between parable and allegory, and the parables of Jesus often contain allegorical elements. Surely the groom in the Parable of the Ten Maidens (Matt 25:1-13) represents Christ—and so there is an allegorical element present. In fact, some parables can be considered allegorical parables in their entirety, such as the Parables of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16-24), the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1-14), and the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-12 and parallels). The allegorical elements have to be taken into account in interpreting these parables. Having said that, however, Jülicher's plea is important, and it has been widely accepted that the interpreter should not allegorize. As to whether or not one should look for the main point of a parable, discussion continues. Often Jülicher's "one point" approach is criticized as too narrow. But the parables do not say just anything. They have at least a direction or thrust to them, inviting the hearer to see things in new ways. Moreover, some parables may have more than one point or thrust to them. For example, the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 14:11-32) portrays the overwhelming love and grace of God for the one who has fallen away but has been restored (15:11-24), but it goes on also to expose the hardness of heart of the one who cannot accept it (15:25-32). The parable makes what might be called "complementary points," for they are related as two sides of a coin, but are not actually the same.

Major shifts were made in the twentieth century. Particularly in the works of C. H. Dodd and Joachim Jeremias there was an attempt to recover the meaning of the parables within their ancient Palestinian settings and within the ministry of Jesus. For C. H. Dodd the task of

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<sup>12</sup> A. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 1:61, 74, 317.

parable interpretation is to answer the question, "What was the original intention of this or that parable, in its historical setting?"<sup>13</sup> Joachim Jeremias thought of his work on the parables as "recovering their original meaning."<sup>14</sup> As he puts it succinctly:

Each of [Jesus'] parables has a definite historical setting. Hence to recover this is the task before us. What did Jesus intend to say at this or that particular moment? What must have been the effect of his word upon his hearers? These are the questions we must ask in order...to recover the original meaning of the parables of Jesus, to hear again his authentic voice.<sup>15</sup>

The positive side of Dodd and Jeremias is that they stressed the importance of the historical setting of Jesus and the gospels. But their approach has some down sides. Here we can limit ourselves to Jeremias. In his work he seeks constantly to peel away secondary accretions from the gospel writers to get to the original parable and thereby hear the "actual living voice" (the *ipsissima viva vox*) of Jesus. This gets to be speculative. The assumption is that the evangelists are not only interpreters (which they are), but also roadblocks to confronting the message of Jesus.

But equally difficult is the question of the function of the parables in their original settings.<sup>16</sup> Jeremias claimed in a rather dogmatic fashion that "all the Gospel parables are a defence of the Good News" addressed to critics.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Jeremias has written that Jesus used parables as "weapons of controversy" that he lobed against his opponents.<sup>18</sup> Never could parables have been used by Jesus for teaching in the way that the gospel writers have presented them. By such a sweeping generalization, Jeremias precluded the possibility that a given parable could have been uttered by Jesus for a didactic purpose to the disciples or to the crowds. To exclude that possibility in

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<sup>13</sup> C. H. Dodd, *Parables*, vii–viii. Cf. also 14, 18–19.

<sup>14</sup> J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the following comments: Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 254: "...we do not know to what situation these parables were originally fitted"; and Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 199: "*The original meaning of many similitudes has become irrecoverable in the course of the tradition*" (italics original).

<sup>17</sup> J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 145; cf. 33–38.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

advance seems unjustified, even strange, in the world of Jesus. We should keep our minds open to the possibility that Jesus used the parables for a wide range of objectives, to various audiences, and at various points in his ministry.<sup>19</sup>

It is fair to say that the book on the parables by Jeremias has had a central place in parable interpretation since the middle of the twentieth century. But it has never stood alone. Other interpreters have approached the parables in the light of modern linguistic theories, including semiotics,<sup>20</sup> or in the light of psychological dynamics,<sup>21</sup> and socio-economic realities of the ancient world.<sup>22</sup> It has been recognized too that the parables can have multiple meanings.<sup>23</sup> Then too there are those who have sought to interpret the parables within the contexts of the particular gospels in which they appear,<sup>24</sup> an approach that recognizes that the parables reflect not only the preaching of Jesus but also that of the early church, plus redaction by the gospel writers themselves. There is no one approach to parable interpretation, but the history of their interpretation is instructive, showing some directions that are widely accepted in the scholarly literature: the parables should not be allegorized; they should be understood in the light of their setting in the ancient world (so information concerning their "local color" is important); and they should be interpreted within their literary contexts, the synoptic gospels, recognizing that the evangelists edited and interpreted them for their own times and places. If

<sup>19</sup> A. Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden*, 1:146.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. essays in Daniel Patte, ed., *Semiotics and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976); and Bernard B. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> Richard Q. Ford, *The Parables of Jesus: Recovering the Art of Listening* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

<sup>22</sup> William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> On this, cf. especially Mary A. Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

<sup>24</sup> B. T. D. Smith, *The Parables of the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1937); Eta Linnemann, *The Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1966); Charles E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Jan Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished: The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); John R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); and Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2000).

one seeks to discern the message of the historical Jesus, that means that one has to be mindful of how the parables of Jesus were transmitted and preserved, how they reflect interests of the church in their oral period of transmission, and how the evangelists provide their own interpretations. That such happened is clearly seen at a literary level in several cases. One of the most obvious is the presentation of the Parable of the Lost Sheep in the Gospels of Matthew (18:12–14) and Luke (15:4–7). Luke's version highlights the immense joy of the shepherd (symbolizing God) in discovering the one sheep that was lost. Matthew's version, however, highlights the urgency of the shepherd (symbolizing God) in seeking the one that had gone astray. The comment in 18:14 ("So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost"), which is not in Luke's version, gives a clue to Matthew's interest in using the parable. For him, it is critical that persons be kept from going astray, and it is urgent to reclaim those who do. There is then an ecclesiological interpretation that most likely does not go back to Jesus. The version in Luke's Gospel can most likely be closer to the original proclamation of Jesus.

#### 4. *The Message of Jesus in the Parables*

Discerning the message of Jesus in his parables requires attention to both his manner of teaching and to what is typical of the content of the parables. Such discernment discloses several features. The first section below has to do primarily, but not exclusively, with the manner of teaching in the parables. The second section takes up the content of Jesus' teaching.

Prior to the discussion of Jesus' message in the parables, a brief preface may be necessary. If one is to get at the message of Jesus, rather than simply to the message of the gospel writers, it has to be recognized that all of the parables appearing in our texts have been set into frameworks by the evangelists. Furthermore, they were transmitted over the years in oral form, and they have been edited by the evangelists at the point of their being written down. That means that it is impossible to get at the exact wording of Jesus, if that is what is meant by his "message." But that is to restrict matters too much and demand more of the sources available than is possible. One must be content with less. What is possible is to discern teachings that emerge



not simply in one parable, which may be a composition of the evangelist who has written it down, but in other parables and traditions across the spectrum of traditions, thereby giving us a higher degree of confidence in seeking what can be traced back to the historical Jesus.

#### 4.1. *The Manner of Jesus' Teaching*

##### 4.1.1. *Direct Address*

One of the most striking things about the parables is their directness of address to the audience—a feature that is attested in all streams on tradition (Mark, Q, L, and M—and thus has the ring of authenticity). While this feature is present in all of the parables of Jesus, it is particularly evident (and confirmed) in those in which he begins to speak to his hearers with such penetrating questions to them as: “which one of you?” (Luke 11:5; 14:28; 17:7; 15:4//Matt 12:11),<sup>25</sup> “what woman?” (Luke 15:8), “what father among you?” (Matt 7:9//Luke 11:11), “what king?” (Luke 14:31), “will any one of you?” (Luke 17:7), “who then is the faithful and wise one?” (Matt 24:45//Luke 12:42), and “what do you think?” (Matt 18:12; 21:28). At other times the question is more oblique: “with what can we compare the kingdom?” (Mark 4:30) or “to what shall I compare the kingdom?” (Luke 13:20). Or at still other times there is the simple indicative: “everyone who hears . . .” (Matt 5:24). Such opening phrases engage the hearers immediately, putting them on the spot and eliciting a response.

##### 4.1.2. *Authoritative Speech*

Contrary to many other examples of parable telling in antiquity, the parables of Jesus are not simply building blocks within a larger, longer argument that is to be concluded outside of the parables themselves. The parables are themselves front and center bearers of the message of Jesus; little more, or even nothing, needs to be said. At most there will be a single sentence or two of application. Thereafter the parables of Jesus leave room for interpretation.

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<sup>25</sup> This formulation does not seem to have any contemporary parallels, according to J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 103.

This point is important when comparing the parables of Jesus to known rabbinic parables. Interpreters have often made the point that the latter are primarily exegetical. That is to say, their purpose is to interpret, clarify, and apply the scriptural tradition of Israel.<sup>26</sup> Typically the rabbinic parable interprets a biblical text, and its meaning is controlled by the text being cited. There is hardly any room at all for interpretation. So Daniel Boyarin says that it can thus be called a “closed text, not an open one.”<sup>27</sup> However characteristic it may be of rabbinic parables to be exegetical, that is not typical of the parables of Jesus. There is only one parable that is elicited from Jesus on the basis of reference to a biblical text. That is the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which Jesus tells in response to the lawyer who asks “And who is my neighbor?” in connection with a previous reference to Leviticus 19:18.<sup>28</sup> Aside from that one instance, normally Jesus utters parables with an apparent sense of sovereign freedom. His manner of teaching by parables without recourse to biblical texts may be the basis for the claim that he taught “as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22).

#### 4.1.3. *Familiar, Simple Metaphors*

The fact that the parables of Jesus are not used for argumentation in the sense of the ancient philosophers, popular rhetoricians, or rabbinic masters is significant for the content of Jesus’ parables. There is very little previous learning that Jesus’ hearers need to bring to the occasion beyond what is gained through life experience. The subject of the parables is typically the familiar things of everyday life: men and women working, losing, and finding; fathers and sons in strained and joyous relationships; kings, rich men, and slaves in stereotypical roles; domestic animals, seeds, plants, vineyards, leaven, and the like. These become symbols, to be sure, resonating with Jewish symbols of

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<sup>26</sup> Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1996), 69; H. McArthur and R. Johnston, *They Also Taught in Parables*, 172; D. Stern, “Jesus’ Parables from the Perspective of Rabbinic Literature,” in *Parable and Story in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Clemens Thoma and Michael Wyschogrod (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 58; and Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 80–83.

<sup>27</sup> D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 82.

<sup>28</sup> That is not to overlook the fact that scriptural allusions abound in the parables of Jesus. The most obvious are in the Sower and the Wicked Tenants (Mark 4:3–8; 12:1–12 and parallels).

previous generations. Yet they would have been familiar to anyone who had even a rudimentary acquaintance with the Jewish heritage, an acquaintance that anyone of that time and place would gain from life experience.

#### 4.1.4. *Oral Techniques*

Story telling requires that the narrator keep the plot simple in ways not necessary when composing at the desk. This is particularly the case for the longer parables of Jesus. An excellent example is the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:16–24). In this parable a wealthy man sends out only one slave to do his bidding, but the tasks he does are more than any one person could do in the time allowed. He makes the rounds to call all who had been invited, records their excuses, reports back to his master, is told to go out and “bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame,” responds that that has been done already (apparently prior to his report), and then he is ordered to go out to the roads and lanes and compel people to come in. All this takes place while the food for the banquet is still fresh and warm!

In addition to simplicity, good story telling—especially when done as an oral performance—requires that any tension within the plot be held to the end, but must be arrived at efficiently. That is precisely what happens in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1–16). Those who are hired in the eleventh hour get paid first, so that those who worked throughout the day have the opportunity to make their complaint when they are paid the same amount, which to them is an injustice. If the latter were the first to be paid, and were then on their way, the parable simply would not work.

One of the problems with the modern reader who reads the parables is that the temptation is always there to ask questions that are irrelevant to story telling in an oral culture. But to do so can ruin a good story. One need not, and should not, ask what the shepherd did with the ninety-nine sheep that he left behind while looking for the one that was lost in the Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:12–14// Luke 15:4–7). Attention is to be directed instead to the shepherd who goes out to seek the one that is lost. Nor is it helpful to ask why the bridegroom was delayed or how the foolish maidens could obtain oil for their lamps in the middle of the night in the Parable of the Ten Maidens (Matt 25:1–13). The parable does not narrate an actual event in the first place. The narrative goes on toward the outcome of the

story very quickly, and stopping along the way to ask questions about the details can impede hearing the story's ending.

These and other techniques of story telling appear in the parables of Jesus. Because of their familiarity with the parables, modern readers often miss the techniques employed and consequently the impact they would have had in the ministry of Jesus.

#### 4.1.5. *Surprise Endings*

Characteristic of many of the parables of Jesus, not all, is the element of surprise in the way they end. Over against common assumptions, the parables of Jesus do not always portray typical human behavior as illustrative of God. Time and again the behavior described is not typical, and that is decisive for the teaching at hand about God. Within the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1-16), for example, in which the "eleventh-hour workers" receive pay equal to that of those who worked all day, "Jesus deliberately and cleverly led the listeners along by degrees until they understood that if God's generosity was to be represented by a man, such a man would be different from any man ever encountered."<sup>29</sup>

#### 4.1.6. *Wisdom and Eschatology*

The parables of Jesus capture, combine, and make use of two major Jewish traditions: wisdom and eschatology. Sometimes the two traditions appear in separate spheres of thought and teaching.<sup>30</sup> The wisdom tradition takes for granted that wisdom is timeless, consisting of truisms that are valid for all times and places. The eschatological tradition, on the other hand, makes assertions related to temporality. But the two traditions converge in the parables of Jesus, and this gives them a distinctive character. For example, the women in the Parable of the Ten Maidens (Matt 25:1-13) can be divided into wise and foolish, but it is only the wise who in the end are admitted to the wedding feast. The hearer knows then that a certain kind of wisdom is needed to enter the kingdom, and that is made clear by the words: "Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour"

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<sup>29</sup> Norman Huffman, "Atypical Features in the Parables of Jesus," *JBL* 97 (1978): 209.

<sup>30</sup> This is so even if the apocalyptic tradition has its roots in the wisdom tradition, as suggested by Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962-65), 2:306.

(25:13). The servant in the Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant (Matt 24:45–51//Luke 12:42–46) considers his duty with care and performs it. If he does not do so, he is punished. The hearer is to be wise and apply the parable in such a way that he or she remains faithful, lest in the judgment he or she is cast out. Not all of the parables combine both the wisdom and eschatological traditions of the Jewish heritage, but the two traditions are so interwoven among so many of the parables that such an interweaving can be considered characteristic of the parables of Jesus.

#### 4.2. *The Content of the Message*

##### 4.2.1. *God (Theology)*

The parables are thoroughly theological.<sup>31</sup> But what is striking about them is that they do not describe God's attributes or discuss God's nature theoretically. As parables, they can hardly do that. What is characteristic rather is the sense of God's intimacy and familiarity through the use of common metaphors—a father, king, shepherd, owner of a vineyard, or a woman who sweeps her house. The concreteness of the metaphors keeps the discussion from abstractions. What is distinctive about the parables is the way that these metaphors for God are put to work. The behavior of the protagonist is so often not typical, since the parables are about God, whose love and grace exceed normal expectations. A theology of the parables affirms certain facets about the character of God that can be discerned.

The clearest affirmation about God is that God is good and gracious beyond human expectations. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus compares God to a father who *runs* to meet his wayward son who is coming home (Luke 15:20). Where else in the world of Jesus can one find anything comparable? Aristotle has written that a dignified man walks with slow steps,<sup>32</sup> and a middle-aged father cannot be expected to run down the road in a world where honor and shame

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<sup>31</sup> This is not universally granted. Cf. the statement of W. Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 28: "The parable... was not primarily a vehicle to communicate theology or ethics but a codification designed to stimulate social analysis and to expose the contradictions between the actual situation of its hearers and the Torah of God's justice." As a generalization, however, that viewpoint does not work, as the author admits (p. 4), and in fact he can apply it to only nine parables.

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3.1125.10–15; cited by Kenneth E. Bailey, *Finding the Lost: Cultural Keys to Luke 15* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 144.

guide one's behavior. Furthermore, the father will not listen to the son's litany of repentance (contrast the son's broken-off speech of 15:21 with what he had practiced in 15:18–19). The father is clearly a metaphor for God, and so in this parable Jesus portrays God as more loving and merciful than any human father that one might know. Similarly, in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23–35), in which a certain king forgives his slave an indebtedness of 10,000 talents, the figure is so astounding that it is impossible to imagine. In order to earn that amount of money, a common laborer would have to work for about 200,000 years. Another way of putting it is that it is comparable to a year's wages for 200,000 laborers. The amount owed and subsequently forgiven simply for the asking is ridiculously high. Once again, however, the parable is about the love, mercy, and grace of God.

The love, mercy, and grace of God extend to persons who are not considered worthy of it by normal standards of judgment. That becomes clear in those parables that portray God as reaching out to the lost, as in the Parables of the Lost Sheep (Matt 18:12–14//Luke 15:4–7) and Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10) and in the speech of the father to the elder son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:31–32). The same theme appears in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1–16); those who work only one hour are not worthy of the wages given to those who work all day, and yet they are paid the same. In these parables we have God portrayed as a shepherd, a woman, a father, and a wealthy landowner who employs day laborers for his vineyard. Their actions are not typical of ordinary persons in those roles. Jesus is a masterful storyteller who has these persons act in extremely unusual, non-typical ways, since they symbolize God. But if God's love, mercy, and grace extend to persons not ordinarily considered worthy, the obverse is also the case. God opposes the proud who parade their righteousness (the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, Luke 18:9–14).

Although God is clearly loving and merciful, God is also a God of judgment. That is illustrated in the parable just mentioned. God has already made a judgment when, according to Jesus, the one man goes down to his house "justified" (Luke 18:14), but the other does not. God condemns those who, though lavishly forgiven, will not forgive others, as in the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave, in which the slave who does not forgive is cast into prison (Matt 18:23–35). Similarly, the rich man in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is

consigned to torment because of his arrogant, uncaring, and inattentive conduct in this life (Luke 16:19–31). The Parables of the Weeds in the Wheat and the Dragnet (Matt 13:24–30, 47–50) use metaphors for a final judgment (reaping, gathering, and burning in the first of them; sorting and casting away in the second).

#### 4.2.2. *The Kingdom of God*

Frequently the parables are about “the kingdom of God” or—in the language of the Gospel of Matthew—“the kingdom of heaven.” The latter no doubt means the same as the former, since “heaven” can be a circumlocution for “God,” as in the utterance of the prodigal son, “I have sinned against heaven” (Luke 15:18.21). The phrases are very common in the four gospels, appearing some 94 times (counting parallels) within the synoptic gospels.

The English phrase “kingdom of God” represents the Greek expression ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, which could just as well be translated as “the rule of God” or “the reign of God,” since it is a dynamic expression referring to an activity, not a territory (as it usually means in modern English). Several of the parables open with explicit reference to the kingdom of God. They are introduced by a formula, such as “The kingdom of God/heaven is like...” There are eleven such parables. Two are in Mark and parallels: the Parables of the Seed Growing Secretly (4:26–29) and the Mustard Seed (4:30–32//Matt 13:31–32//Luke 13:18–19). One is from Q: the Parable of the Leaven (Matt 13:33//Luke 13:20–21). Eight can be assigned to the Special Matthean tradition: the Parables of the Weeds in the Wheat (Matt 13:24–30), the Treasure in the Field (13:44), the Pearl of Great Price (13:45–46), the Dragnet (13:47–50), the Unforgiving Servant (18:23–35), the Workers in the Vineyard (20:1–16), the Wedding Feast (22:1–14), and the Ten Maidens (25:1–13). None can be assigned to the Special Lukan tradition.

Although there are fewer than a dozen parables that begin with the introductory phrase concerning the kingdom of God, the theme of the kingdom is present to some degree in virtually all of the parables of Jesus, as well as in so much of his teaching in general. By means of this expression, Jesus reaches back into the scriptural tradition of Israel, where it is affirmed that God is king of the universe and reigns over all things, both nature and human affairs (Ps 22:28; 47:2, 7–8; 95:1–3; 103:19; Isa 43:15; 44:6). But in the history of Israel it was often abundantly clear that God’s reign was not always evident. In

those times the rule of God became a future hope (Pss 102:12–22; 145:10–13; Dan 7:18; Mic 4:6–8). In his own ministry Jesus revived the concept of the reign of God, affirming that it is both a present reality and a future hope. It is dawning already so that its effects are made known in the healings that Jesus performed, and the ethic that he taught was essentially a “kingdom ethic,” that is, a declaration of what life in God’s kingdom (or under the rule of God) entails. The metaphor of the present of Jesus’ ministry as the “dawn of the kingdom” is helpful.<sup>33</sup> The dawn precedes the rising of the sun, but its effects can be seen as lighting up the present. So the ministry of Jesus was, in this way of thinking, a time in which the effects of the kingdom could be seen, even if its coming in its fullness had to be awaited as a future event.

The parables that speak of the kingdom explicitly compare it to one who sows, a king who gives a marriage feast, ten maidens, etc. The comparison, however, is not to a person, but to the story that follows. Some speak of the kingdom of God as growing. These include the so-called Parables of Growth (the Seed Growing Secretly, Mark 4:26–29; the Mustard Seed, Mark 4:30–32; and the Leaven, Matt 13:33). Others speak of the kingdom as a joyful discovery, in which God’s reign becomes a wonderful event in one’s life (the Treasure in the Field, Matt 13:44; and the Pearl of Great Price, 13:45–46). If we ask what the circumstances were in which Jesus spoke these parables, it may well be that the Parables of Growth were uttered in times in which it appeared to his disciples that his ministry (and following) seemed to amount to very little. By means of these parables, Jesus taught that the reign of God, though seemingly having little impact in the present, shall come in its fullness. Or as one interpreter has put it succinctly, “Though the ministry of Jesus in Israel often did not lead to anything, yet it was the condition for and the initial realization of the coming of the kingdom of God.”<sup>34</sup> And those parables concerning discovery of the kingdom expressed the joy that comes to the one who experiences the reign of God to the extent that he or she can detach the self from a commitment to other things, giving them

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<sup>33</sup> The metaphor has been employed by G. Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 92.

<sup>34</sup> Nils A. Dahl, “The Parables of Growth,” *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 162.



a secondary significance, and commend oneself to God's continuing rule and future fulfillment of it.

There are other parables of the kingdom, however, in which the kingdom cannot simply refer to the reign of God as a subject in itself. Something more is meant. These parables are all in the Gospel of Matthew, and they speak of the kingdom in the most general way, conveying a theological truth concerning God's activities as ruler in the present or future, signifying that what people do in the present will come under scrutiny and testing at the Final Judgment. And so, in spite of the fact that the followers of Jesus are to exhibit a righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees (cf. Matt 5:20), there is to be no purifying of the community prior to the Final Judgment, for one cannot always be confident in making judgments (the Weeds in the Wheat, 13:24–30; the Dragnet, 13:47–50). The disciple, who has been forgiven so generously by God, is to forgive others (the Unforgiving Servant, 18:23–35). One cannot consider others as undeserving of God's grace, for it is beyond human comparison (the Workers in the Vineyard, 20:1–16; the Wedding Feast, 22:1–14). And the wise disciple will be prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom, even if his coming is far into the future (the Ten Maidens, 25:1–13). The last of these is quite clearly allegorical to the extent that the Bridegroom represents Christ, who is to come. Yet the parable may well be rooted in the teaching of Jesus, in which the imagery of God as Israel's husband exists (Isa 54:5–8; 62:5; Jer 31:32; Ezek 16:8–14; Hos 2:1–23), and the imagery of a marriage feast and feasting as metaphors for the kingdom is common in Jesus' proclamation (Matt 8:11//Luke 13:29; Matt 22:1–10; Luke 12:37; 22:16). It is then surely possible that Jesus composed a parable by which to set forth the need for his disciples to be prepared for the coming of the kingdom. If they are wise, they will be ready whether that is soon (as expressed elsewhere in the gospel traditions; cf. Mark 9:1; 11:10; Luke 19:11) or late.

#### 4.2.3. *Life in the Presence of God*

As indicated above, four of Jesus' parables provide examples of behavior, and they are often placed into a category known as Parables of Exemplary Behavior or Example Stories,<sup>35</sup> all of which are located in

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<sup>35</sup> The latter is the term used by B. T. D. Smith, *Parables*, 18; A. M. Hunter, *Parables*, 11; and in the English version of R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 177.

the Travel Narrative of the Gospel of Luke (9:51–19:27), a section where Luke makes no use at all of materials from the Gospel of Mark. They are distinct among the parables in that they do not make *comparisons* between that which is told in story form and some other reality (such as the kingdom), but provide illustrations or *examples* of both attitudinal and ethical matters. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37) is a response of Jesus to a lawyer, who has quoted the love commandment of Leviticus 19:18 (“you shall love your neighbor as yourself”) and then asks concerning the meaning of the word “neighbor.” In this parable, one of the best known of all, Jesus in effect turns the question around, so that the lawyer is confronted with the question concerning what it means to be a neighbor. The one who proves to be a neighbor is “the one who showed mercy,” an expression used by the lawyer so that he need not speak the word “Samaritan.” The thrust of the parable is to make the point that a person should not limit the meaning of the word “neighbor” by a definition of the term, for to do so is in fact to ask who is not one’s neighbor. Moreover, the question to be asked is not “Who is my neighbor?” but “Am I a neighbor?” The Parable of the Rich Fool (12:16–21; *Gos. Thom.* 63) is an assault by Jesus on the attitude that one can secure a meaningful life by an increase in material resources. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19–31) warns the “haves” of the world to put away any arrogance they have toward the “have-nots” and to involve themselves in relieving their plight. And the Parable of the Tax Collector (18:9–14) exposes the self-righteousness of those who can boast of their acts of piety, and commends the one who has nothing to offer before God except repentance.

Beyond these four Parables of Exemplary Behavior, several other parables have to do with life in the presence of God, teaching the hearer about attitudes and behavior fitting for the kingdom. As indicated already with certain parables of the kingdom, there are teachings about the need to extend forgiveness (the Unforgiving Slave, Matt 18:23–35), to leave judgment up to God (the Weeds in the Wheat, Matt 13:24–30), and to be a faithful and wise disciple, even if that may entail readiness for the long haul (the Ten Maidens, Matt 25:1–13).

Other parables pick up still other themes, a virtual miscellany of them. What is the meaning of fidelity to God? It is not a matter of words and good intentions, but of doing what one is asked to do without any pretensions to righteousness about it (the Parable of the Two Sons, Matt 21:28–32). What does an authentically human life

mean, except to be faithful and wise even when there is no apparent check on one's attitude and behavior? In the final analysis, an accounting will take place, but in the meantime the person committed to God and his reign, as understood by Jesus, must have inner strength to persevere (the Faithful and Wise Slave, Matt 24:45–51// Luke 12:42–46). Living in the presence of God, as interpreted by Jesus, one should make use of the gifts one has. The wise but forthright, uninhibited use of gifts will bring fullness of life, while not making use of them leads to loss (the Talents, Matt 25:14–30, and the Pounds, Luke 19:12–27). In the case of these parables it becomes clear that interpreting them and other parables simply as ways in which Jesus subverted or replaced conventional wisdom, as is sometimes done, does not do justice to them. Then they become banalities. They are meaningful only when a life of commitment to God, as envisioned by Jesus, is presupposed.

#### 4.2.4. *The Final Judgment*

As indicated earlier, God is portrayed in the parables of Jesus not only as a God of love and mercy, but also of judgment. The Final Judgment is presupposed and alluded to in several of the parables, such as in the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31) and the Unforgiving Slave (Matt 18:23–35), but in those cases it is hardly dominant as a theme. There are two parables, however, in which the Final Judgment is prominent as a theme, signifying that it will be a moment of accounting and a separation of those who will be condemned from those who are gathered into the realm of those who are saved. Those are the Parables of the Weeds in the Wheat and Its Interpretation (Matt 13:24–30, 37–43; *Gos. Thom.* 57) and the Dragnet and Its Interpretation (Matt 13:47–50). Furthermore, if we consider it a parable, one can also include the discourse on the Final Judgment (Matt 25:31–46), often called the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

These three units, all in the Gospel of Matthew alone, clearly reflect Matthean theological concerns, and each contains Matthean terminology to a high degree. That does not mean, however, that they are Matthean compositions. Scholars often assign them in their basic form to Jesus, allowing however for some Matthean redaction.<sup>36</sup> The

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<sup>36</sup> On the Weeds in the Wheat, cf. C. H. Dodd, *Parables*, 148; B. T. D. Smith, *Parables*, 198; J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 227; Jan Lambrecht, *Out of the Treasure: The Parables*

fact that the Final Judgment is spoken of, or referred to, in teachings of Jesus outside the parables and in various strands of tradition (with attestation not only in Matthean traditions at Matt 10:15 and 11:24, but also in Q, Matt 11:22//Luke 10:14 and Matt 12:41–52//Luke 11:31–32) gives support to the view that it is present as a theme also in the parables of Jesus.

### 5. *Concluding Comment*

The parables of Jesus do not provide the sum total of his teaching. Many of his teachings, both theological and ethical, lie outside of the range of the parables. Furthermore, one cannot consider any of the parables as a clear theological statement. They cannot bear the entirety of Jesus' message (or his theology). They bring forth facets of his message, provoking the hearer—and reader of the gospels of today—to reconsider their views concerning God, God's kingdom, and God's expectations and to see different ways to construe those views. Descriptive or doctrinal statements could never have generated and elicited those ways of seeing to the degree that the parables were able to do. If one is to speak of the genius of Jesus the man, that will have to include reference to his ability to tell parables and to tell the ones he did. The person who has tried to compose a parable, and to match those of Jesus, soon begins to marvel at those told by Jesus.

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*in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1992), 165; and Hans Weder, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern: Traditions- und redaktionsgeschichtliche Analysen und Interpretationen*, FRLANT 120 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 123–124. On the Dragnet, cf. A. Jülicher, *Gleichnisreden*, 2:569; C. H. Dodd, *Parables*, 150–152; J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 225–227; and H. Weder, *Gleichnisse*, 144. On the Final Judgment, cf. J. Jeremias, *Parables*, 206–210, and other references in A. Hultgren, *Parables*, 325 (n. 75).



PART THREE

JESUS AND THE LEGACY OF ISRAEL



# JESUS AND GOD

MARIANNE MEYE THOMPSON

## 1. *Introduction*

In the history of Christian thought, the question of the “novelty” or “uniqueness” of the New Testament vis-à-vis the Jewish matrix from which it sprang has been raised often. In years past, the emphasis tended to fall on the radical disjuncture between the Christian and Jewish faiths, typically underscored by characterizing aspects of Christian belief and practice as “unique” and, consequently, superior to Judaism. Within this overall framework that pits the early Christian movement against its Jewish context, Christian theologians have, on the one hand, emphasized both the distinctiveness of Jesus’ understanding of God and (consequently) the discontinuity between Jesus and Judaism (or sometimes the Old Testament) on precisely this point. For example, William Bousset wrote:

What is most completely original and truly creative in the preaching of Jesus comes out most strongly and purely when he proclaims God the heavenly Father. . . . The [Judaism of Jesus’ time] had neither in name nor in fact the faith of the Father-God; it could not possibly rise to it.<sup>1</sup>

Bousset’s pupil, Rudolf Bultmann, echoed his teacher’s view:

[In Judaism] God had retreated far off into the distance as the transcendent heavenly King, and His sway over the present could barely still be made out. For Jesus, God again became *a God at hand*. This contrast finds expression in the respective forms of address used in prayer. Compare the ornate, emotional, often liturgically beautiful, but often overloaded forms of address in Jewish prayer with the stark simplicity of “Father”! . . .<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1892), 41, 43, cited and translated in G. F. Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *HTR* 14 (1921): 197–254, at 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. (ET: New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951, 1955), 1:23, 25.



Similarly, in his article on *abba* for the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel wrote,

Jesus' term for God...shows how this Father-child relationship to God far surpasses any possibilities of intimacy assumed in Judaism, introducing indeed something which is wholly new.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, more recently a number of scholars have also argued for the fundamental continuity of Jesus' convictions about God with those of the Jewish matrix from which he came. So, for example, Brevard Childs writes: "Jesus brought no new concept of God, but he demonstrated in action the full extent of God's redemptive will for the world which was from the beginning."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, N. T. Wright notes that the teachings of Jesus do not present an "innovation" in their portrayal of the actions of God. Commenting on the parable of the prodigal, Wright asserts:

For Israel's god to act in this way is not an innovation; it is consistent with his character as revealed throughout Israel's long and chequered history. This is who he is, who he will be.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Wright argues that Jesus shared the fundamental convictions of Jewish monotheism about God and God's relationship to Israel; indeed, Jesus' own convictions about his mission depended upon and arose from those beliefs. Jesus would scarcely have appeared as a teacher of new ideas, including new ideas about God, however much his later interpreters sought to argue to the contrary.

It is the contention of this chapter that Jesus taught little about God that could be called innovative in the sense of introducing concepts about God unheard of in Judaism. Indeed, it would be difficult to argue a case at all that Jesus thought his primary mission was to teach people ideas, let alone ideas about God. It is even somewhat artificial to isolate Jesus' "teaching about God," as though it formed a distinct subject matter on which he taught, for his understanding of God weaves its way through exhortation and warning, parable and story, as well as through the very fabric of his life. Jesus did often

<sup>3</sup> "abba," *TDNT* 1:6.

<sup>4</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 358.

<sup>5</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 130.

rebuke his listeners for failing to act in ways that he deemed consonant with Israel's understanding of and commitment to God. For example, when Jesus spoke of God's mercy, he was not introducing a new idea about God, but rather emphasizing a fundamental tenet of Israel, which he contended needed to be freshly appropriated in the daily life and practice of God's people. Or, again, while accepting the common and biblical notion of a righteous God who would judge the wicked, Jesus drew the lines between righteous and unrighteous differently than did many of his contemporaries. We should not think, therefore, of Jesus as an innovator with respect to beliefs about God, but rather as picking up and weaving together already existing threads, even if sometimes he produced new and distinctive patterns.

## *2. The God of the Scriptures and Early Judaism*

The Scriptures of the Old Testament provide the substance of Jesus' understanding of God. Therefore, it is no surprise that Jesus' convictions about God do not come to expression as a list of attributes of God, but rather are inseparable from the basic narrative of God's calling of and covenant with the people of Israel, and the demand for obedience and faithfulness inherent in that calling and that covenant. Jesus read the Scriptures as containing promises of God's provision for his people, God's commands with regard to appropriate conduct, as well as warnings of God's judgment on disobedience. Such promises and commands at times explicitly articulate and, at other times, assume implicitly an understanding of God as faithful, providing, commanding, judging, holy, and merciful.

These characteristics of God are found persistently in the literature of Second Temple Judaism, although that literature manifests differences about such matters as how a righteous God judges, when and how justice will be meted out, and to whom and on what basis God will be merciful. Here we see that the primary issues for discussion are not "abstract" attributes of God, but how God acts towards his people and the world. In the brief discussion that follows, we shall try to single out those scriptural convictions about God that are particularly emphasized at the time of Jesus. This means that we will therefore neglect certain matters, such as the historical development of ideas. For our purposes, it is more important to know what beliefs might have been current at the time of the first century than to trace

the development of these convictions. But this discussion should help us to see how Jesus understood God in the light of his reading of Scripture, his understanding of Israel's identity and situation, and his own experiences within the broader shared experience of his people.

Foundational to Israel's belief in God was the confession of Yahweh as the one and only God. The regularly recited *Shema*, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4), expresses Israel's basic understanding of God and of its relationship to God as God's chosen and covenant people. The emphasis on God as the unique God, who alone merits Israel's worship and obedience, came to pointed expression in the insistence that one could not serve both God and other masters (Josephus, *War* 2.118). Often, too, Yahweh was said to be an incomparable God, different from all other deities. Particularly in the Old Testament prophets, the emphasis on God's uniqueness was often coupled with polemic against the worship of other gods, who are regarded as "dead idols," artifacts created by human hands. Israel believed that God had called it to a peculiar destiny and that it owed God a peculiar obedience, and the prophetic tradition testifies repeatedly that disobedience in the form of idolatry or injustice would bring God's judgment.

The prophets' attack on idolatry was often coupled with the insistence that God was the sole creator of all that is. The belief that God created the world can be found in various places throughout the Scriptures of the Old Testament, including particularly the Psalms and portions of Isaiah. Especially in Second Isaiah, God is portrayed not only as the Creator of the world, but emphatically as the *sole* Creator of the world (Isa 44:24) and indeed of all that is (40:28; 45:7). God is the "creator of the ends of the earth" (40:28), whose hand "laid the foundation of the earth" (48:12-13; cf. 42:5; 44:24; 45:11-12).

Because God is understood as the Creator of all things, God is also often spoken of as a living God, the God who lives, or the God of life. We find in the Old Testament the epithets "the living God" (Deut 5:26; Jer 10:10), the "everlasting God" (Isa 40:28), and "the living God and everlasting King" (Jer 10:10).<sup>6</sup> God is the Everlasting God

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<sup>6</sup> According to Paul A. Rainbow, the identification of God as "living" and/or "true" is one of ten features of explicitly "monotheistic speech" in Greco-Roman Judaism. As Rainbow points out, such phrases as "living God" or "true God" are often linked with other formula which posit the uniqueness of Yahweh, and gener-

(Gen 21:33; Isa 40:28; Jer 10:10; Hab 1:12), the one who is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Pss 90:2; 93:2). Related to these assertions is the oath formula, “As Yahweh lives,” or “As I live, says Yahweh.”<sup>7</sup> All these expressions are grounded in the simple assertion, “Yahweh lives” (Pss 18:46), which means, as the book of Daniel puts it, that “Yahweh lives forever” (Dan 12:7; Deut 32:40; cf. Isa 48:12; Pss 41:14, 106:48). The designation of God as the “living God” often serves to contrast God, the one who made the earth, with “dead idols,” made from the things that God had made, and made by human hands (1 Sam 17:26, 36; 2 Kgs 19:4, 16; Jer 23:36; Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; Pss 42:2, 84:2; Isa 40:18–20; 41:21–24; 44:9–20, 24; 45:16–22; 46:5–7). “[Idols] are the work of the artisan and of the hands of the goldsmith... they are all the product of skilled workers. But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God and the everlasting King” (Jer 10:8–10). The living God is the creator and source of life (Ps 36:9; Jer 2:13; Ezek 37:1–6).

Not surprisingly, this emphasis on God as Creator and Living God is found also in the literature of Second Temple Judaism. Josephus notes, for example, that the Essenes give thanks to God before meals in order to honor the “bountiful giver of life” (Josephus, *War* 2.131). God is “the beginning and middle and end of all things,” who created the world “not with hands, not with toil, not with assistants of whom He had no need” (*Apion* 2.190–192; cf. *Ant* 8.280, “the beginning and end of all”). In fact, Josephus argues that the etymology of the Greek word Zeus shows the proper understanding of deity, for the name comes from the fact that “he breathes life (*zēn*; ζῆν) into all creatures” (*Ant*. 12.22). Indeed, the God of Israel is “the God who made heaven and earth and sea” (*Apion* 2.121, 190–192).<sup>8</sup>

Along these same lines, in 2 Maccabees, God is spoken of as the “creator of all things” (2 Macc 1:24). In the apocryphal book Bel and the Dragon, Daniel asserts that he worships “the living God, who created heaven and earth and has dominion over all flesh” (Bel 5, 6, 24, 25). Sirach writes of God that, “He who lives for ever created the whole universe” (18:1). Israel’s God is the “Lord God who gives life to all

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ally imply that other gods do not exist or simply cannot be compared with the one God. See Paul A. Rainbow, *Monotheism and Christology in 1 Corinthians 8:4–6* (Oxford, D.Phil. diss., 1987), 44–46.

<sup>7</sup> See Hans-Joachim Kraus, “Der lebendige Gott. Ein Kapitel biblischer Theologie,” *Evangelische Theologie* 27 (1967): 169–199.

<sup>8</sup> See also Jdt 9:12; *Jub.* 2.31–32, 12.19, 16.16–27, 22.5, 26–27; 2 Macc 1:24; 7:28.

things" (*Jos. Asen.* 8.4), the "Creator of all things" who, in his mercy, gives "life and breath" (2 Macc 1:24, 7:23). Precisely in this life-giving activity, God is unique. Echoing the words of Isaiah, one of the Scrolls from Qumran reads, "You are the living God, you alone, and there is no other besides you" (4Q504 5.9). Similarly, for Philo, God is the source of the life of the world (*Her.* 206); Creator and Maker (*Spec. Leg.* 2.30; *Somn.* 1.76; *Mut.* 29; *Decal.* 61); planter of the world (*Conf.* 196); Father; Parent (*Spec. Leg.* 2.198); "Cause of all things" (*Somn.* 1.67);<sup>9</sup> and fountain of life (*Fug.* 198).<sup>10</sup>

Given this persistent emphasis on God as creator, it is not surprising that E. P. Sanders boldly states, "The doctrine of creation—that this world was made by God, is good, and is to be cared for as his—is perhaps Judaism's most important single contribution to civilization."<sup>11</sup> But Sanders—and others—have also noted that a strong doctrine of God as creator goes hand in hand with the understanding that God continues to rule over the entire world. Indeed, these themes also appear in the Old Testament and again, particularly in the latter half of Isaiah, where the understanding of God as creator cannot be separated from the view of God as sovereign over the world that he has made. Having made the world, God does not simply abandon it to its own devices. Sirach, for example, stresses God's sovereignty over the earth through the regular use of the epithets "Creator" and "Maker." God's sovereignty comes to expression in two ways: he commands the natural phenomena (39:16, 28–31; 42:21), who "never disobey his word" (16:28; 39:31; 43:5, 10), and orders the events of history. Therefore, Sirach draws parallels between God's creation of the heavenly bodies, living beings, and human beings (16:26–17:32). Similarly, God created human beings, and gave them a fixed number of days (17:20). In the same vein, the Egyptian romance *Joseph and Asenath*

<sup>9</sup> See *Decal.* 52: "The transcendent source of all that exists is God."

<sup>10</sup> "God is the most ancient of all fountains.... God alone is the cause of animation and of that life which is in union with prudence; for the matter is dead. But God is something more than life; he is, as he himself has said, the everlasting fountain of living."

<sup>11</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE to 66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1992), 247. For further discussion, see also Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), esp. 9–13; Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 73–77, 136–40.

notes that the heavenly luminaries “never transgress [God’s] ordinances, but are doing [God’s] will to the end,” inasmuch as God created them (12.2; cf. *L.A.B.* 30.5, 312).

In the Dead Sea Scrolls, we read of a similar correlation between God’s creation of the world and God’s providential ordering of events and the destinies of human beings:

From the God of knowledge stems all there is and all there shall be. Before they existed he made all their plans, and when they came into being they will execute all their works in compliance with his instructions (1QS III, 15–16; cf. CD II, 7–10).

In the hymns of the community, there are numerous descriptive epithets for God, many of which testify to the inextricable link between God’s creation and sovereign rule over the world. God is called “my justice,” “foundation of my well-being,” “source of knowing,” “spring of holiness,” “peak of glory,” and “all-powerful one of eternal majesty” (1QS X, 11–13). God’s creation of the world inevitably implies God’s continued governance of it. The providential ordering of events is simply a corollary of a belief in God’s creation of all that is. Any statement regarding God’s continued providential rule in the world raises the question of how the manifestation of God’s providence was understood. Apocalyptic literature is frequently characterized as a response to the crisis created by an apparent absence of God’s providential ordering of current events in history, or at least by a puzzling turn of events in the fortunes of his people. Hence, questions regarding God’s sovereignty over the world are often couched in contexts of human suffering: why do the righteous suffer? The fact that they do so does not count as testimony against the sovereignty of God, whose justice will surely vindicate the faithful.

Israel’s peculiar character and obligation were found in its call to be holy as God is holy (Lev 20:22–26). In Leviticus, the command is set in the context of the separation between Israelites and Gentiles, which was to be expressed in part in the distinction to be made between clean and unclean foods. By the time of Jesus, there was heightened emphasis upon those practices of the law, including circumcision and the observance of Sabbath and purity laws, that distinguished Jews from their neighbors. Yet the precise ways in which these were to be kept were debated among first-century Jewish sectarians. So, for example, one finds various texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls that speak of what one may or may not do on the sabbath in

order not to violate the commandment to keep the sabbath holy (e.g., CD XI, 12–16). Could one, for example, pull an ox or person out of a pit on a Sabbath? Such discussions are echoed in the gospels and later in rabbinic literature (e.g., Mark 2:23–28, 3:1–6; Luke 13:10–17; *m. Yoma* 8:6). While on the surface the issue has to do with how one keeps the law, ultimately the issues at stake are what it means to live as and to be the holy people of God in keeping with one's understanding of the will and identity of God.

Israel was also set apart from other nations by the presence of the temple in Jerusalem, the dwelling of God, which was to guard and reflect God's holiness. The ritual baths that have been excavated at the site of the Jerusalem temple are testimonies to the efforts to preserve the purity of the temple as the "house" of a holy God. Similarly, various texts from the first century, notably the Dead Sea Scrolls, indicate that certain individuals or groups expected judgment upon the temple, because those in charge, sometimes illegitimately so, had allowed it become a corrupt economic center rather than a place of prayer and worship of God (1QpHab VIII, 10–13; IX, 3–5; XII, 2–10). The Scrolls also underscore and link the holiness of God to the holiness and purity of the temple (11QTemple *passim*). Josephus faults the high priesthood for its corruption, greed, and violence (*Ant.* 20.181; 20.206–207), and elsewhere he criticizes Jewish revolutionaries for turning the temple into a fortress. While he continues to refer to it as "the Holy Place" (*War* 4.147–54), he also laments to the temple, "You were no longer the place of God" (*War* 5.19–20). The destruction that followed passed judgment not on the temple, but on those who had defiled the temple as the holy place of a holy God.

God's own holiness was preserved in a number of other ways too. The name of God was deemed unspeakable in everyday discourse, as the prohibition in the Dead Sea Scrolls illustrates (1QS VI, 27–VII, 2; cf. *Ant.* 2.275–276; *War* 5.438). Numerous circumlocutions, such as Lord, Power, the Name, the Blessed One, or the Almighty, were biblical terms used in order to avoid pronouncing the holy name of God. In certain written texts of Second Temple Judaism, the name of God is often rendered by a series of four dots (4Q176; 4Q462), the use of older scripts, or various other practices to avoid writing the name of God.

These substitutions not only serve to guard the holiness and transcendence of God; they also sometimes give expression to functions or traits of God in the Scriptures, and further underscore various fac-

ets of God's character and activity. Designations for God such as Almighty, Lord of Hosts, Most High, and King express belief in God's sovereignty, that the God who had created the universe also continued to govern it. That God is sovereign meant that God is a just and righteous God who would some day vindicate the righteous who had trusted in him, and thereby display his righteousness as well. God could be expected to judge justly, to vindicate the righteous and to punish the wicked, because God is the "all-seeing" God who does not overlook injustice and evil. Because God was just, God would eventually act on Israel's behalf to release it from oppression by foreign nations. God could be trusted to accomplish these ends, because God is all-powerful. God was also a merciful God. Indeed, God's actions uniquely manifested "the two measures" of justice and mercy. God metes out justice; but God also bestows mercy.

One of the prominent images of God in the Old Testament that gathers together an understanding of God's sovereignty, justice, and judgment is the image of God as king. A number of Psalms, for example, praise the God who is King and who will judge the earth (Pss 93, 96, 99). Isaiah promises that God's vindication of Israel will be revealed to all nations in a judgment that will show that the Lord is reigning on heaven and earth (Isa 24:21–23; 33:22–34). It is the task of the herald of good news to announce "Your God reigns!" (Isa 52:7; cf. Isa 59–61). Daniel envisions a kingdom given to the "saints of the Most High," a kingdom that will supplant the wicked kingdoms of the pagan nations. Throughout the Old Testament, there is both a universal and a particular manifestation of God's rule. God is king of all the nations and king of the universe, and yet in a particular way also king of Israel. The vindication of God's sovereignty, therefore, will not mean the dissolving of all boundaries of national identity, but rather will issue in God's rule on Zion, through Israel, over the entire world. The tension between God's universal and particular rules will not continue indefinitely, but will be resolved in the establishment of God's kingly rule.

In other words, God's "kingdom" has as its goal the establishment of God's rule of justice, which implies judgment upon the wicked and upon all injustice, and the vindication of the righteous. In judgment, God displays his holiness and righteousness, and vindicates his claim to be the one sole king and lord of all. In the Old Testament prophets, God's judgment sometimes falls on the nations and thus vindicates Israel (Isa 13; 34; Jer 46:10; Ezek 30; Zech 12–14); sometimes it falls



on Israel itself (Isa 2:12–17; Ezek 7; Amos 5:18–20), and sometimes first on Israel and then on the nations (Joel 1:4–2:17; 2:18–3:21).<sup>12</sup> Seldom is Israel exempt from God’s words of warning and judgment. Within the literature of early Judaism one finds, on the one hand, the hope for the vindication of Israel and judgment upon the wicked who oppress it. So, for example, the *Psalms of Solomon* envision a day of the Lord’s judgment, on which God enacts his sovereignty over all the world, as wrath for sinners and mercy for the righteous, both living and dead (14.9). Israel’s visitation is conceived of not as destruction or punishment, but as the Lord’s discipline of his people (8.26; cf. 8.29; 13.7–10). On the other hand, there are also texts that have in view the judgment of individuals, whether Jew or Gentile, according to their good and evil deeds (e.g., *Jub.* 5). So also the Dead Sea Scrolls assume a vindication of the “sons of his truth” and a great judgment upon the “sons of iniquity,” who clearly include those within Israel who do not properly keep God’s law (see 1QH; 1QM XI; 11QMelch II, 13).

God is a God of judgment; but God is also a God of mercy. One of the images used to characterize God with a particular view to his mercy is that of God as Father. The picture of God as father, found in the Old Testament and in Second Temple Judaism, encompasses God’s saving and nurturing role in relationship to Israel, both as present reality and as future hope. In the pages of the Old Testament itself, God is referred to as the father of Israel (Isa 63:16, 64:8–9; Jer 3:19, 31:9).<sup>13</sup> The prophet Jeremiah, for example, speaks of the time of Israel’s restoration:

In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel,  
and together they shall come from the land of the north  
to the land that I gave your ancestors for a heritage.  
I thought  
how I would set you among my children,  
and give you a pleasant land,  
the most beautiful heritage of all the nations.  
And I thought you would call me, My Father,  
and would not turn from following me. (Jer 3:18–19)

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<sup>12</sup> For fuller discussion see Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in its Jewish Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Promise of the Father* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 35–48.

Similar, too, is Jeremiah's poignant description of the "return" of the exiles, both to their land and to their God:

With weeping they shall come,  
and with consolations I will lead them back,  
I will let them walk by brooks of water,  
in a straight path in which they shall not stumble;  
for I have become a father to Israel,  
and Ephraim is my firstborn. (Jer 31:9)

As the father of Israel, God is the one who calls Israel into being, cares and provides for it, disciplines and instructs it, and gives it its inheritance (Deut 32:4–6; Jer 3:19; 31:9; Isa 61:7–10, 63:16). Israel, in turn, owes to God honor and obedience (Deut 32:6; Mal 1:6). Hence, the image of "Father" refers to God's redemptive purposes for Israel (Mal 2:10; Deut 32:18), and to God's purposes to "beget" a people who honor, love, and trust God, and who derive their identity from God's election and their sustenance from his compassion (Pss 27:10; 103:13).

In keeping with standard themes of prophetic criticism, Israel's obedience to God was to be manifested in faithful relationships with each other. For example, Malachi exhorts the people with the queries, "Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our ancestors?" (2:10). Because the people of Israel belong to God as Father, they also belong to each other as kin or family. They are to live faithfully both with respect to God and also with respect to each other.

Many of these same notes regarding God as Father are picked up in various texts of Second Temple Judaism, suggesting that the image of God as the father of Israel was not only an important way of understanding God's mercy and care, discipline and instruction, but also provided an image for expressing God's call in the past and his promise of redemption in the future.<sup>14</sup> So, for example, *Jubilees* envisions a time when God will create a new spirit for Israel, with the result that, "They will do my commandments. And I shall be a father to them and they will be sons to me. And they will all be called 'sons of the living God.' . . . I am their father in uprightness and righteousness. And I shall love them" (*Jub.* 1.23–25). One of the hymns found in the Dead Sea Scrolls celebrates God as a "Father to all the sons of

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<sup>14</sup> Thompson, *The Promise of the Father*, 48–55.

thy truth" (1QH XVII, 35–36), thus limiting God's "fatherhood" to those who know and follow God's truth.

### 3. *God and the Gospels*

As we turn to examine Jesus' convictions about God, we are faced with various matters of method in the study of the gospels, and at the outset we will sketch briefly some of our assumptions. First, I assume that the synoptic gospels provide the primary data for this study. The Gospel of John, focused so sharply on the identity of Jesus in relationship to God, contains little of the synoptic material on matters such as God's mercy, justice, righteousness, holiness, and forgiveness, themes which play an important role in the Old Testament and later Jewish thought. Nevertheless, particularly in the emphasis on God as the source of life, judge of all the wicked and righteous, and righteous sovereign of Israel, John's understanding of God squares with the portrait sketched above. Although it develops more fully certain features of biblical and Jewish thought about God, it does not sketch a decidedly different portrait of God than we find in the synoptic gospels. Therefore, John can be used as a corroborating witness to the picture of God found in the other three canonical Gospels.

While I adopt the so-called two- (or four-) source theory of gospel origins, few conclusions reached here would be changed were one to adopt another hypothesis. The traditions regarding Jesus' convictions about God remain relatively stable throughout various forms and sources, in all likelihood because so much of the picture of God in the gospels reflects core convictions found in the Old Testament and in early Judaism. As noted earlier, Jesus' innovation did not lie in forging new ideas about God, but in emphasizing certain convictions and bringing them to bear on his proclamation of God's kingdom and his call to God's people.

Second, along with a number of other scholars who take part in the quest for the historical Jesus, I deem the "criterion of dissimilarity" or "discontinuity" to be of limited value for the purposes of understanding Jesus in context. In the present instance, this criterion would in fact prove useful in only a few respects. For example, it is a commonplace in the Old Testament, Judaism, and in early Christian literature to say that God is king. On the basis of the criterion of dissimilarity, then, the conviction of God's future sovereign rule could

scarcely be deemed authentic. Yet the thesis that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God—an idea that rests on the underlying conviction that God is king and will one day rule as king—is arguably one of the best attested aspects of Jesus’ proclamation. However, it must also be noted that the criterion was intended to have a primarily positive function in establishing as unassailable certain aspects of Jesus’ teaching and deeds. With respect to Jesus’ convictions regarding God, the criterion might be deemed to be useful in testifying to the likelihood that Jesus addressed God as *abba*.<sup>15</sup> But while the criterion of dissimilarity has been invoked to bolster the authenticity of Jesus’ address to God in this way, the argument can be carried through successfully. For as we shall see, the address to God as *Father* is not unprecedented, and Jesus seems more likely to be calling to mind a familiar theme linked with God’s restoration of the people of Israel than to be introducing a novel idea about God. Furthermore, the image of God as Father becomes highly significant in the rest of the New Testament outside the gospels.

Finally, Jesus’ understanding of God cannot simply be limited to his teaching. The evidence provided by the shape of his life and praxis, such as his prayer, exorcisms, table fellowship, and healing, also illuminate Jesus’ convictions about God and how God’s purposes were to be lived out among his people. Hence, I use the “convictions” rather than “beliefs,” to steer clear of the notion that we are interested in uncovering Jesus’ “ideas.” To speak of Jesus’ convictions suggests that the entire shape of Jesus’ life and career bears testimony to his understanding of Israel’s God and also to his own identity and vocation with respect to that God.

#### 4. *Jesus and God: The Testimony of the Gospels*

At the outset we do well to note that Jesus’ proclamation is characterized by its tenacious theocentricity. The *Shema*, with its call to love God with all one’s heart, soul, strength, and mind, was taken by Jesus as the heart of the Torah and the cornerstone of human life before God (Mark 12:28–34; Luke 10:25–37). Jesus exhorted his followers to

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<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of Jeremias’ arguments, as well as the Jewish data at this point, see Thompson, *The Promise of the Father*, 21–34.

seek the kingdom of God before all else (Matt 6:33; Luke 12:31), to commit themselves to God and not to riches (Luke 12:21). Echoing the views of Judas the Galilean that one cannot submit both to human masters and to God, Jesus warned his listeners that no one can serve two masters (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13). He therefore called for single-minded devotion to God, promising that those who were “pure of heart” would see God. To the young man who called him “Good Teacher,” Jesus responded, “No one is good but God alone,” making God the measure of all truth and goodness (Mark 10:18). Jesus’ call to love and obey God above all else demonstrates, as one scholar has put it, that Jesus’ “concentration on God and his kingdom is what was constitutive of Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> In keeping with the emphases in the teaching of Jesus, the evangelists portray Jesus’ rebuffing the temptations of Satan with words that point to his own dependence upon and wholehearted commitment to the one God: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him” (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8). The impression given by the gospels is that Jesus called others to live as he himself lived: in wholehearted obedience to God. Moreover, in doing so, he articulated his own understanding of Israel’s defining confession and the heart of the Torah.

As I noted above, certain attributes or functions ascribed to God in both the Old Testament and Judaism were deemed distinctive and defining of God’s identity. In particular, the identity of God as creator and as sovereign over the world and its affairs stand out. While the Old Testament and Jewish sources refer often to God as Creator—as, indeed, do various portions of the New Testament (cf. John 1:1–3; Col 1:15–17; Heb 1)—the theme plays little explicit role in the synoptic gospels’ presentation of the teaching of Jesus. The lack of this *topos* in the gospels indicates that for Jesus and his contemporaries, this aspect of God’s work was not in question. The gospels are not apologetic works directed to pagans, nor do they contain the sort of polemic against the existence of other gods that we find, for example, in the prophets and in some of Paul’s letters. It is implicitly assumed rather than explicitly argued that God created the world and that God continues to care for it. Yet, for Jesus, God’s continued care over the world becomes the basis for the exhortation to trust in God’s provision and goodness. So, for example, it is God who sends the

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<sup>16</sup> Leander Keck, *A Future for the Historical Jesus: The Place of Jesus in Preaching and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 213.

rain and sun alike (Matt 5:45), who clothes the birds of the air and the grass of the field (Matt 6:26–30; Luke 12:24–28), and knows when a sparrow falls (Matt 10:29–31; Luke 12:6–7). Indeed, as Creator, God has the power of life and death (Luke 12:4–5), and as sovereign, God can demand an account of human beings at any time (Luke 12:19–20). In these sayings of Jesus, one finds the inextricable link between God as the one who created the world and as the one who remains sovereign over it.

As I have just noted, the teachings of Jesus do not manifest the attack on idolatry found in the Old Testament and some Jewish apologetic texts, as well as in various New Testament texts (Acts 15:20, 17:16; Rom 1–2; 1 Cor 8:6, 12:2; 2 Cor 6:16). Hence, we do not find in the teachings of Jesus any echoes of the biblical attacks on worship of “dead idols” rather than “the living God.” Nevertheless, Jesus’ understanding of God as the living one does undergird his conviction about the resurrection of the dead, a conviction shared widely in Second Temple Judaism.<sup>17</sup> When challenged by the Sadducees regarding the possibility of future resurrection with the deliberately ludicrous scenario of a woman married to seven different husbands, Jesus defends the resurrection with the statement that “God is the God of the living” (Mark 12:27 pars).

Jesus believed God to be a holy God. Indeed, the opening petition of the so-called Lord’s Prayer,—“May your name be sanctified”—reflects the opening petition of the Jewish *Kaddish* prayer, “Magnified and sanctified be his great name.” It was to be the prayer of every Israelite, and of Jesus’ followers, that God would be honored and exalted in his holiness. The formulation of this petition uses one of the various circumlocutions for the name of God, which was deemed unspeakable in everyday discourse. Jesus’ references to “the kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven” may reflect first-century reluctance to utter the name of God.

The temple was a tangible symbol of the holiness of God and, as such, it was to be guarded as holy. Regulations regarding ablutions prior to entry into the temple were intended to prevent impurity from contaminating the purity of God’s temple. Like his contemporaries, Jesus assumed that the temple was to be kept holy as the house

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<sup>17</sup> See Dan 12:2–3, 13; 2 Macc 7:9, 14, 21–23, 28–36; 12:44; 1 En 51.1–5, 62.13–15; 103.4; 4 Ezra 7.28–32; 2 Bar. 50.2–4; 4Q521 2 II, 1–13; 7; 5 II 1–7; 1 QH XIX, 10–14; L.A.B. 3.10, 19.12–13; Josephus, *Apion* 2.217–218; *m. Sanh.* 10:1; *m. Sotah* 9:15.

of God. However we are to interpret the “temple action” of driving out the money changers and sellers, whether as “cleansing,” a portent of the coming judgment, or both, his prophetic warnings of the temple’s destruction reflect the belief that as the house of God the temple ought to be a holy place. Judgment would fall precisely because the temple had been defiled by those who had made it a “den of thieves” (Mark 11:17; Matt 21:13; Luke 19:46). According to Josephus, the Essenes refused to take oaths (*War* 2.135). Jesus likewise cautioned against swearing oaths by heaven, earth, or Jerusalem, on the grounds that these represented respectively the throne, the footstool, and the city of the King. Heaven, earth, Jerusalem, and temple encompass the entire domain of God and, as God’s, these domains were holy. (Matt 5:34–35). To swear by that which was holy was to defile it. Similarly, Jesus was repeatedly said to drive out “unclean spirits” and to “cleanse” lepers of their impurity. These actions demonstrate Jesus’ understanding that God, in his merciful sovereignty, intended to bring about the eschatological purity of Israel, the people of a holy God.

But strict preservation of ritual purity was not the animating vision behind Jesus’ teaching and practice, and this is due ultimately to his understanding of God and God’s will for Israel. When, for example, proper interpretation of the law and obedience to it were disputed, Jesus insisted that mercy and compassion provided the norms for how the law should be lived out (Luke 10:25–28; Luke 6:32–36 par. Matt 5:43–48; Matt 9:9–13, 12:1–8; 18:23–35; 25:31–46). According to Matthew, Jesus asserts that the “greatest commandment in the law” is to love God, and a second weighty commandment is to love one’s neighbor. “On these commandments depend all the law and the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:40). By contrast, *Sipra Lev.* 195 (on 19:2) asserts that “most of the principles of the Torah” depend upon the contents of the command, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” It is important to note here that Matthew does not portray Jesus as contrasting love of God with obedience to the law; rather, the heart of the law is precisely to be found in wholehearted obedience to God. Hence, like the prophets, Jesus emphasized the point that without mercy and compassion, zealous devotion to ritual purity or cultic observance was fruitless, or worse (Matt 23:23).

In defending his disciples’ action of plucking grain to eat on the Sabbath day, Jesus contended that “the Sabbath was made for human beings.” Therefore, their pressing needs could be met on the Sabbath.

Similarly, just as one might be allowed to pull an ox out of a well on the Sabbath day—a point that the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, dispute (CD XI, 14)—one could heal a man's withered hand (Matt 12:9–13). And if one might lead an animal to give it water on the Sabbath, so might one heal on the Sabbath day a woman who had suffered many years (Luke 13:11–15). Whereas some may have eaten only with those they knew to be also strict in their observance of laws of purity and tithing, Jesus ate at table with tax collectors and the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Jesus' views undoubtedly rested on his convictions that the sovereign rule of God, God's “kingship,” entailed the concrete expression of God's mercy and compassion. Here Jesus echoes the prophetic critique against reliance on ritual and sacrifice, such as we read in many well-known passages from the Old Testament prophetic tradition (Isa 58:6–7; Jer 7:3–4; Amos 5:21–24; Mic 6:8). The traditions of the gospels indicate that Jesus assumed that God desired justice, mercy, and love, inasmuch as God is a just, merciful, and loving God. Jesus articulates the correlation between God's character and human conduct when he explicates his command to love one's enemies, “so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (Matt 5:44–48; Luke 6:32–36).

God's mercy also lay at the heart of Jesus' understanding of his mission as the one who proclaimed and enacted the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaimed that God's sovereignty and justice on earth would be manifested in healing, the release of captives, and the deliverance of the oppressed. His extensive healing ministry attests to his belief that God's sovereignty was active through him to bring wholeness to people. In the synoptic gospels, the exorcisms are described as carried out by the power of the Spirit of God to expel the various spiritual and demonic powers that victimized people's lives (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20). So also Jesus likened his table fellowship to the healing work of a physician who had come to make people well, to restore them to wholeness (Mark 2:17). The captives to whom Jesus promised redemption included a woman who had been “bound by Satan” for thirteen years, as well as Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector who had been enslaved to the power of mammon (Luke 13:10–17; 19:1–10). Whenever such actions of deliverance appeared to violate the laws that protected the sanctity of the Sabbath or that guarded Israel's purity, Jesus appealed to the fundamental principle that God's mercy took precedence over other matters of observing the law. Even here, Jesus can scarcely be said to



be an innovator in his understanding of God: the prophets before him had similarly demanded justice, mercy, and the humility as the heart of the worship and obedience to God.

Because God's sovereign rule was demonstrated through mercy and compassion, God's sovereignty would also be manifested in judgment on injustice and unrighteousness. These are often portrayed in parable and metaphor in terms of separation. The parables of the wheat and the weeds, the great net, and the sheep and the goats are all parables in which the righteous and wicked are separated, and these are parables of judgment (Matt 13:24–30, 47–50; 25:31–48). While there are numerous passages in both the Old Testament and Jewish literature that foresee judgment upon the enemies of Israel, many of the images of judgment in the gospels point to a judgment upon Israel. There will be a division between the wicked and righteous within Israel, rather than between Israel and its neighbors. Jesus pronounced judgment upon various cities and villages for their failure to respond to his teaching (Matt 11:21–24), and was particularly harsh in his condemnation of the leaders of the people and of the Pharisees for their failures to serve as faithful shepherds of the flock (Matt 23; Luke 11:38–52). When God's justice was established, it would bring with it a number of surprises: those who found acceptance in God's sight were not those who in terms of commonly shared notions of righteousness ought to have merited favor before God, such as the zealous Pharisee, but those, such as the tax collector, who approached God with a humble, open posture, acknowledging their sin and casting themselves on God's mercy (18:9–14). The sovereign and all-powerful God did not seek and favor the powerful, but the poor in spirit, the humble, the obedient, the just, and the merciful.

God's justice was thus expressed not in the vindication of the "righteous," but in the vindication of the humble, the merciful, the unrighteous. In the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–15), the owner of the vineyard shows unexpected generosity to those who did not deserve it. But if God chose to be merciful, who could complain? What is particularly striking in this parable is that God's sovereignty manifests itself first and foremost as graciousness, as mercy. Here we do not have an arbitrary capriciousness—although one can well imagine that those who were not paid so generously might have thought so! Rather, God's sovereign decision to do what he wants "with that which belongs to him" (Matt 20:15) takes the form of an abundant and generous mercy.

Within this framework, we may also understand some of the other enigmatic sayings of Jesus. For example, Jesus gives thanks to God because in his “gracious will” he had “hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and...revealed them to infants” (Matt 11:25–26). Such a prayer seems to thank God for hiding truth from some; but it is the “gracious will” of God that those who might not otherwise have access to these hidden things are now the beneficiaries of God’s generosity. Still, God remains sovereign, and that conviction gives a hard edge to Jesus’ sayings, including this one about God’s “gracious will.” A similar passage is quoted from Isa 6:9–10 in all four gospels: here, Jesus, like Isaiah, preaches to a people who are apparently blind and deaf to the presence of the kingdom of God in the work of Jesus (Mark 4:10–12; Matt 13:13–15; Luke 8:10; cf. John 12:40). The saying in the original context in Isaiah, as well as its application in the gospels, is difficult because it points to that blindness and deafness as the judgment of God. And yet Jesus, like Isaiah, does not imagine that the judgment which issues in the failure to see and hear need be permanent; God can also open the eyes and ears of his people. For God was surely a merciful God.

Indeed, God’s mercy was also made known in forgiving the sins and hearing the prayers of his people. Both Luke and John particularly stress that Jesus was a person of prayer, but numerous traditions in the gospels point to Jesus’ sense of dependence upon God and God’s kindness and goodness to his people. Jesus promises that God can be trusted to hear the prayers of his people, encouraging them to make their petitions known with boldness and persistence (Matt 7:7–11; Luke 11:5–8; 18:1–7). He himself is pictured as calling upon God in times of need, including in face of approaching death (Mark 14:36), and entrusting himself into God’s hands at the hour of his death (Luke 23:34, 46). Again, the gospels portray Jesus as living out the faith and trust to which he called his followers.

The exhortation to trust in God is particularly grounded in Jesus’ understanding of God as Father. In all likelihood, Jesus used the Aramaic term *abba* (“father”), but he may also have used various other forms such as the Hebrew *abinu* (“Our father”). Although the authenticity of Jesus’ address to God as *abba* has been challenged, there are good grounds for arguing that it originated with Jesus himself. A striking fact is that both Mark and Paul repeat the Aramaic term *abba* in documents (Mark, Galatians, Romans) which were most likely intended to be read by those whose native tongue was not

Aramaic, suggesting an unusual respect for the term. While both the genesis and preservation of this address have been attributed to its origin in the Palestinian Aramaic-speaking churches, there is no reason to rule out the fact that Jesus himself used this form of address and taught his disciples to do so as well. The address of God as Father is found in multiple forms and sources of the gospel tradition, and stands in continuity both with the Old Testament and with Second Temple Judaism, as well as with the use and importance of the term in the early church. The recurrence of both “my father” and “our father” in prayer, parable, and sayings of the Jesus tradition, shows that it played a larger role in the Gospel traditions than in either the Old Testament or the literature of Second Temple Judaism. Taken together, these arguments suggest that the prominence of “father” in the gospels is best understood as reflecting Jesus’ own practice of addressing God.

In speaking of God as Father, Jesus appropriates a prophetic image for God to announce to Israel that the time for its renewal and restoration was at hand. Jeremiah, for example, linked the time of Israel’s restoration with its calling upon God as “My Father” (3:18–19; 31:9). In Jesus’ address to and portrayal of God as Father, he invoked such biblical imagery to signal that God was calling Israel to offer its allegiance, honor, and love to God. In calling upon people to return to God as their Father, much as Jeremiah did, Jesus’ call manifested the same single-mindedness that we have seen elsewhere. He exhorted his followers, “Call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven” (Matt 23:9). No other figure of authority properly merited the designation of Father; indeed, it was God who manifested the care and provision that one expected of human fathers. Hence, God saw and tended to the needs of his people and could be trusted to provide bread for his children (Matt 6:25–33; 7:7–11).

If Jesus’ followers were to call upon God as Father, then they were also to regard each other as kin, as brothers and sisters (Mark 3:34; Matt 18:15–18). They were to mirror the compassion of their heavenly Father, who provided food and clothing, by themselves feeding the hungry and clothing the naked (Matt 25:31–46). They were to forgive each other as they had been forgiven (Matt 6:12; 18:21–22). Jesus’ announcement that God was merciful was not news to Israel. But Jesus was now calling those who had experienced the mercy of

God to make that the motivation and measure of their action. Indeed, perhaps Jesus' most famous parable, the so-called "parable of the prodigal son," pictures a compassionate father who welcomes his wandering younger son home, and encourages his older son to welcome his brother with equal joy and forgiveness. Those who are children of the father are siblings to each other, and they are to treat each other with the same kind of generosity and forgiveness that they have received from their father.

In thinking of God as Father, a number of questions arise which have to do with the distinctiveness of Jesus' relationship to God as Father. These questions have implications not only for Jesus' understanding of God, but also for his understanding of his own role and identity. As such, these questions begin to take us into other areas of exploration. Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus' understanding of God has implications for his understanding of his mission and identity, shows that these topics are inextricably linked. Here we shall briefly sketch some key features of Jesus' designation of God as "Father," without fully exploring the possible ramifications for trying to get at Jesus' own aims and self-consciousness.

The work of Joachim Jeremias has been seminal in studies of God's fatherhood. Jeremias argued that "the complete novelty and uniqueness of *Abba* as an address to God in the prayers of Jesus shows that it expresses the heart of Jesus' relationship to God."<sup>18</sup> Jeremias thus argued (1) that this address of God as *Abba* was unique; and (2) that this unique form of address disclosed Jesus' own understanding of his relationship to God. In these conclusions he has been followed by numerous New Testament scholars. But while Jeremias' work has been highly influential, it has also often misinterpreted as holding that Jesus taught a unique—and new—understanding of God as near, loving, and accessible. No longer was God a remote and distant king; now God was an accessible and loving Father. But Jeremias did not argue that Jesus' *view* of God was novel or unique; rather, he argued that Jesus addressed God in a distinctive way because his experience of God was distinctive, even unique. Moreover, the uniqueness of Jesus' view was dependent upon his conviction of the nearness of

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<sup>18</sup> *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 67.

God's kingdom. That is to say, there was an explicitly "eschatological" dimension to Jesus' use of "Father" for God. This squares with those Old Testament passages that foresee the restoration of Israel as Israel's return to trusting in God as Father. Jesus' teaching about God as Father undoubtedly reflected the way in which he perceived God's fatherly care for Israel, but it also contained within it the promise that God would now welcome Israel as a father welcomes his children home.

The gospels consistently maintain a distinction between Jesus' address to God as "my father" and his references, when speaking to his disciples, to God as "your father." "Our Father" occurs only in the address of the Lord's Prayer, when Jesus instructs his disciples how they are to pray. The distinction likely rests on the two-pronged characterization, found in the Old Testament, of the King of Israel as a son of God and the Israelites as children of God. We have already examined some of those passages in the Scriptures where Israel is referred to as God's "son" and the Israelites are to respond to God as Father. There are also passages, notably Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:12-14, which speak of the relationship between God and the king of Israel as the relationship of father and son. This relationship marks the king out in his role of representing Israel to God and, conversely, God to Israel. We note in the gospels and other writings of the New Testament the implicit linkage between the designations of Jesus as "son of God" and "Messiah" (Matt 16:16; Mark 1:1; John 20:31; Rom 1:1-6). This conjunction of "son of God" and "Messiah" is probably a development of the biblical designation of the king of Israel as son of God. While "King"—and later, "Messiah"—and "Son" cannot simply be collapsed into each other, the traditions of the gospels show that Jesus referred to God as his own father, and also as the father of his disciples, and that he was called "Messiah." The distinction between Jesus' filial relationship to God, and the relationship of his own disciples to God, becomes central in the Gospel of John and, eventually, in early Christian reflection upon both the identity of Jesus and of God.

# JESUS AND THE SABBATH

SVEN-OLAV BACK

## 1. *Introduction*

Both in the Old Testament and in ancient Jewish literature the Sabbath is seen as a great gift of God, filled with divine blessing. At the same time, the Sabbath commandment stands out as a fundamental obligation. As a “sign” (אֹת) of the covenant between God and Israel, the Sabbath was, and still is, one of the major Jewish symbols. Keeping the commandment faithfully—and hence doing no “work” (מְלָאכָה) whatsoever on the holy day—indicates one’s fidelity towards the covenant, but disregarding the Sabbath is a sure indication of disloyalty.

The Old Testament provides some examples of what counts as “work,”<sup>1</sup> but there is no exhaustive definition. Hence, it is only natural that different Jewish groups tried to find out more precisely what might have been meant by מְלָאכָה. There was a great deal at stake. It comes as no surprise, however, that a complete consensus was not achieved. It is true that some basic rules were generally accepted, but we also hear complaints about mistaken views regarding the Sabbath commandment. Thus, for example, the Damascus Document claims that even “all Israel” has gone astray (תַּעֲרָה) regarding the holy Sabbaths of God.<sup>2</sup>

If the New Testament Gospels may be trusted, Jesus of Nazareth was one of those who attracted criticism and disapproval on account of his Sabbath behaviour. For one thing, he performed acts of healing on the Sabbath. The texts describe how people suffering from chronic diseases are restored to health by Jesus: a man with a withered hand (Mark 3:1–6; Matt 12:9–14; Luke 6:6–11), a crippled woman (Luke

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<sup>1</sup> Ploughing and reaping (Exod 34:21), treading winepresses (Neh 13:15), cooking (Exod 16:5, 23), lightning of fire (Exod 35:2), gathering wood (Num 15:32–36), buying and selling (Neh 10:32; 13:15–22), carrying loads through the city gates or out of the houses (Jer 17:19–27), leaving one’s place (מִקוֹם) (Exod 16:29), doing one’s pleasure, one’s ways, and—mysteriously—“speaking a word” (*dabber dābār*, Isa 58:13).

<sup>2</sup> CD III, 12b–16a.

13:10–17), a man suffering from dropsy (Luke 14:1–6), a paralysed man (John 5:2–9, cf. vv. 15–16; 7:19–24), and a man born blind (John 9:1–7). In addition, Jesus is reported to have authorised his disciples' plucking of ears of grain—i.e., “work”—on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–38; Matt 12:1–8; Luke 6:1–5).

What shall we make of these texts? Are they simply to be understood as products of the primitive Church and the evangelists, reflecting the disputes of the Church and the opinions of the early Christian writers? Or can we use them to find historically reliable information about Jesus? If so, how should we understand the position of Jesus with regard to the Sabbath?

In Part 5 of this article, I will provide an outline of a reasonable answer to the last question. I start, however, with an overview of the scholarly discussion on the subject “Jesus and the Sabbath” (2). This will show the need for the parts that follow: a short description of some early Jewish positions with regard to the Sabbath—with an emphasis on matters of halakhah and practice (3)—and an assessment of the general historicity of the Sabbath stories of the synoptic Gospels (4).

## 2. *The Scholarly Discussion: a Sketch*

Thirty years ago, F. Neiryneck opened a survey of the scholarly discussion of our subject by giving an account of E. Lohse's investigations.<sup>3</sup> This remains a good starting point as there are several points in Lohse's articles that have been broadly accepted in subsequent studies: (a) First, Jesus was indeed involved in conflicts that were triggered by his acts of healing on the Sabbath. This is true even if the Sabbath stories in the Gospels to a large extent reflect debates between the primitive Church and “the Synagogue.”<sup>4</sup> (b) Secondly, there are three authentic Sabbath sayings embedded in the polemical material

<sup>3</sup> Frans Neiryneck, “Jesus and the Sabbath: Some Observations on Mark 2.27”, in Jacques Dupont, ed., *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, BETL 50 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, Gembloux: Éditions J. Duculot, 1975) 228–231; Eduard Lohse, “Jesu Worte über den Sabbat”, in Walther Eltester, ed., *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift J. Jeremias*, BZNW 26 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960), 79–89; idem, “σάββατον κτλ.”, *ThWNT* VII, 21–31. Cf. idem, *Grundriß der neutestamentlichen Theologie*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln/Mainz: Kohlhammer, 1984), 32.

<sup>4</sup> Lohse, “Worte”, 79–84; “σάββατον”, 22 n. 172.

of the Church, viz. Mark 2:27, Mark 3:4, and Matt 12:11–12a par Luke 14:5.<sup>5</sup> (c) Thirdly, Mark 2:27 is regarded as of crucial importance when it comes to finding out the Jesuanic attitude to the Sabbath.<sup>6</sup> A fourth element in Lohse's overall view, viz. that the story about the cornfield incident (Mark 2:23–28) is a fabrication by the earliest Church,<sup>7</sup> is also quite common among scholars, but it has not won the same amount of approval as the three other points.

As far as Jesus' attitude to the Sabbath is concerned, Lohse's interpretation is this: the love commandment is the highest commandment; hence, human beings and human needs must not be subjected to "the Jewish Sabbath casuistry." Jesus thus turns against the scribal halakhah. However, there is also a sense in which Jesus turns against the written commandment of the Torah as well: by giving a higher value to human beings and their needs, Jesus denies the absolute binding force ("Allverbindlichkeit") of the Sabbath commandment.<sup>8</sup>

In all essentials, H. W. Dione reaches the same conclusions as Lohse. The authentic sayings (those identified by Lohse) show that Jesus acted and spoke out against Jewish Sabbath regulations. For him, human beings were more important than Sabbath rules. He refused to interpret the Law in a literal manner and subordinated it to humans. By his critical attitude, Jesus shook one of the foundations of Judaism.<sup>9</sup>

Joachim Jeremias differs from Lohse in sharply distinguishing between Jesus' attitude to the written Torah and his attitude towards later halakhah. He claims that Jesus decidedly rejected the halakhic tradition of the Pharisees. The Sabbath rules, in particular, were the objects of Jesus' aversion. The maxim in Mark 2:27 states, on one hand, that the Sabbath is a divine gift to people; on the other hand, it attacks the Sabbath halakhah, "this meticulous casuistic system, which categorized all the actions which were forbidden on the Sabbath." Jesus also transgressed the Sabbath halakhah in action, particularly

<sup>5</sup> Lohse, "Worte", 84; *Grundriß*, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, "Worte", 85, 89; "σάββατον", 25; *Grundriß*, 32. Cf. Neiryneck, "Jesus", 31: "It is on [Mark 2:27] that the exegetical literature on 'Jesus and the Sabbath' is most concentrated." For some more references to typical statements regarding Mark 2:27 as a key to the proper understanding of Jesus attitude to the Sabbath, see Sven-Olav Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1995), 96.

<sup>7</sup> Lohse, "Worte", 82; "σάββατον", 22.

<sup>8</sup> Idem, "Worte", 85, 89; "σάββατον", 25; *Grundriß*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> H. W. Dione, *Jésus et le Sabbat: contribution à la recherche historique sur Jésus de Nazareth* (unpublished diss.; Strasbourg, 1989), 316–324.



through acts of healing. This he justified by referring to the love commandment (Mark 3:4).<sup>10</sup>

Willy Rordorf, wishing to add “a couple of complementary points of view” to Lohse’s interpretation,<sup>11</sup> sees Jesus as not only harshly attacking the “casuistic hair-splitting” of the Pharisees, but also as setting aside the Sabbath commandment itself. Through the statement of principle in Mark 2:27, Jesus destroyed the entire Sabbath theology of post-exilic Judaism. Jesus’ actions on the Sabbath were deliberate provocations. But Jesus did not only aim at destruction and provocation; his Sabbath actions were first and foremost “veiled proclamations” of his messiahship.<sup>12</sup>

Jürgen Roloff distances himself from an interpretation that would depict Jesus as voicing a “humanitarian” protest against the “legalism” of the Pharisees. Rather, he stresses—in a way that is reminiscent of Rordorf’s view—the Christological implications of Jesus’ words and actions. In the final analysis, Jesus’ stance in the Sabbath conflicts amounts to a veiled proclamation of his ἐξουσία.<sup>13</sup>

According to Stephen Westerholm, Jesus had no intention of abolishing the Sabbath or bringing in a new law to replace it. Nor did he systematically reject the Sabbath halakhah of the Pharisees. He did oppose it at times, but his opposition was not based on his having made a careful distinction between biblical law and extra-biblical rules. Nor is it sufficient to say that Jesus was simply more lenient than the Pharisees, and thus showed greater concern for human needs. Rather, a deep difference in the understanding of God’s will was at stake in the Sabbath conflicts.<sup>14</sup> The Pharisees treated the rules in the Torah as statutes, the very wording of which was binding.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, for Jesus it was important that one penetrated behind the wording of the Torah to the divine purpose behind this wording. In

<sup>10</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie I: Die Verkündigung Jesu*, 3rd ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), 198–202 (201).

<sup>11</sup> Willy Rordorf, *Der Sonntag: Geschichte des Ruhe- und Gottesdiensttages im ältesten Christentum*, AThANT 43 (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1962), 58.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 55–71.

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus: historische Motive in den Jesus-Erzählungen der Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 52–71.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (Lund: Gleerups, 1978), 102–103.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–52.

Jesus' view, the will of God was fulfilled by a heart in tune with God's purpose, not by mere compliance with statutes.<sup>16</sup>

Berndt Schaller, like did Roloff and to some extent Westerholm, dissociates himself from the view that Jesus would have held "love," or "a radical ethos," or "humanity" in greater esteem than "cultic piety" and the Sabbath commandment.<sup>17</sup> Instead, following a suggestion by Christian Dietzfelbinger, Schaller understands Jesus' healings on the Sabbath in the context of his proclamation of the kingdom of God. The acts of healing were a "commentary" on the kingdom proclamation. "Der Sabbat ist in dieser Sicht gerade der Tag, an dem Jesus die heilende Herrschaft Gottes über den Menschen in der Tat verkündet."<sup>18</sup>

Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz detect three motifs behind Jesus' Sabbath behaviour. First, there is an ethical motif, suggesting that helping people overrides the Sabbath commandment (and other commandments as well). Secondly, there is an eschatological motif, discernible for instance in the saying which interprets an act of healing as a liberation from the bond of Satan (Luke 13:16). Thirdly, there is a messianic motif: the authority of Jesus is comparable to that of David (Mark 2:25–26). These different motifs fit well together: God's eschatological saving acts mean "help" to suffering people, and thus have an ethical quality; and this "ethical will of God," overriding the common Sabbath practice, is connected to charismatic (messianic) authority.<sup>19</sup>

The above-mentioned scholars assume that Jesus, through his Sabbath healings, really transgressed the Sabbath halakhah of the Pharisees (or other adversaries under the influence of the Pharisees).

<sup>16</sup> Westerholm, *Jesus*, 53–125, esp. 98–103.

<sup>17</sup> Berndt Schaller, *Jesus und der Sabbat*, Franz-Delitzsch-Vorlesung 1992 (Münster: Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum, 1994), 25.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–27, at 27. Cf. Christian Dietzfelbinger, "Vom Sinn der Sabbatheilungen Jesu," *EvTh* 38 (1978): 294–298. T. W. Manson long ago emphasized Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God as the key to a proper understanding of Jesus' actions on the Sabbath: "Jesus did not break through the Sabbath rules lightly or unadvisedly, but because 'the King's business required haste'; because the service of the Kingdom of God and the warfare against the kingdom of Satan must go on day in and day out; because the business on which God had sent Him was the most important business in the world," *The Sayings of Jesus*, repr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 190.

<sup>19</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: ein Lehrbuch*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 329.

Some of them, referring to Mark 2:23–24, also hold that Jesus authorised the “reaping” by some disciples in the cornfield.

These views, however, are challenged by several scholars, who maintain that Jesus was either totally law-abiding (e.g., David Flusser)<sup>20</sup> or, at least, was involved in no conflicts as far as the Sabbath was concerned (e.g., E. P. Sanders). Sanders claims, “There was no substantial conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees with regard to Sabbath, food, and purity laws.”<sup>21</sup> Regarding the Sabbath, Sanders does not in fact allow for any conflicts at all between Jesus and Pharisees. The reasons for this position are primarily the following: (a) The synoptic Sabbath stories do not portray any transgression of the Sabbath commandment on the part of Jesus. It is the disciples, rather than Jesus, who are rebuked for plucking ears of grain in the cornfield (Mark 2:23–24).<sup>22</sup> Further, “The stories of healing on the Sabbath reveal no instance in which Jesus transgressed the Sabbath law.”<sup>23</sup> Hence, the Sabbath acts of healing, as depicted by the Gospels, would have met no objections. Therefore, the stories do not seem credible.<sup>24</sup> (b) The Sabbath stories reflect later disputes about the Sabbath commandment—partially disputes among Christians and partially disputes with non-Christian Jews. These disputes are, firstly, the reason why the Sabbath stories have such a prominent position in the Gospel tradition. Secondly, they have given rise to an early Christian “production” of Sabbath stories.<sup>25</sup>

Lutz Doering contends, against Sanders and others, that Jesus did heal sick people on the Sabbath, and that he thereby indeed transgressed the Sabbath commandment as it was understood by contemporary interpretations, including the Pharisaic one.<sup>26</sup> He accepted and

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<sup>20</sup> David Flusser, *Jesus in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1968), 44–49.

<sup>21</sup> Ed P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 265. See also 264, 291–292, 318.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 266, 292.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 266. See also the discussion in Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), 19–23.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Jewish Law*, 1: “In *Jesus and Judaism* I brushed aside the disputes about sabbath, purity and food as being probably inauthentic, and I have not changed my mind.”

<sup>25</sup> *Idem*, *Jesus*, 264, 266, 292. See also *idem*, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1993), 214–215, 217, 223.

<sup>26</sup> Lutz Doering, *Sabbat: Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum*, TSAJ 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 445–450, 477.

honoured the Sabbath as an institution (it was made for the sake of man, Mark 2:27), but showed no particular interest in matters of the halakhic sphere—except for the principle that saving a human life (פְּקוּחַ נַפְשׁ in later Rabbinic terminology) “overrides” the Sabbath. In Mark 3:4, Jesus alludes to this halakhic principle. However, he gives it a broad interpretation. He goes beyond the usual limits by applying the principle even to chronic illness: healing sick people is indeed ψυχήν σώσαι.<sup>27</sup>

Applying the פְּקוּחַ נַפְשׁ-principle—especially in this liberal way—means valuing human beings higher than the Sabbath. Now, this is exactly the point of Mark 2:27. With this saying, which implicitly refers to Gen 1:26–2:3 (man created before the Sabbath, not vice versa), Jesus insists on the “Vorordnung des Menschen vor den Sabbat und Einordnung des Sabbats als eine dem Menschen dienende Institution.”<sup>28</sup>

These views, Doering suggests, are probably connected to Jesus’ eschatological ministry and proclamation. There is a correspondence between the *Endzeit* and the *Urzeit*: the eschatological Kingdom of God makes the *Urzeit* relation between humans and the Sabbath once again a living reality.<sup>29</sup>

According to Andrea J. Mayer-Haas, there is no evidence to show that healing on the Sabbath was considered unlawful by anyone in ancient Judaism.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Jesus had to defend his Sabbath acts of healing—which were “Ausdruck seines menschenfreundlichen

<sup>27</sup> Doering, *Sabbat*, 452–454, 477. “Jesus setzt an bei erkannten Themen zeitgenössischer jüdischer Sabbathalacha..., weitet aber den Horizont, indem er die Heilung chronisch Kranker unter dem Blickwinkel der Lebensrettung betrachtet und somit das... anerkannte Prinzip der Lebensrettung ausdehnt” (454). The view that Jesus “widens the horizon” in Mark 3:4 is also held by Theissen and Merz, who add the comment, “Aber das ist im Grunde nur ein kleiner Schritt über das hinaus, was im Judentum schon an Tendenzen vorhanden war” (*Jesus*, 329; cf. 266). See also Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville, KY/London: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 181.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 416–419, 423–424, 477 (416; emphasis removed).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 424, 454–456, 477.

<sup>30</sup> Andrea J. Mayer-Haas, “Geschenk aus Gottes Schatzkammer” (*bSchab 10b*): *Jesus und der Sabbat im Spiegel der neutestamentlichen Schriften*, NTAbh 43 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2003), 672–673, 678.

Gottesbildes”<sup>31</sup>—against criticism on the part of rigorists.<sup>32</sup> There are authentic traces of this defence in Mark 2:27 and in the saying behind Luke 14:5 and Matt 12:11.<sup>33</sup> As these sayings show, Jesus appealed to contemporary Jewish Sabbath theology and to the Sabbath practice of his “Hörer/innen.”<sup>34</sup>

### 3. *The Sabbath in Early Judaism: Some Pertinent Points*

Doering recently took a fresh look at Sabbath halakhah and practice in ancient Judaism 475 BCE–135 CE, and presented his findings in a work running to almost 700 pages.<sup>35</sup> This standard study may be consulted both for the broad lines and for questions of detail. Here, my aims are more modest. First, I offer some general remarks (together with halakhic examples) on Sabbath halakhah and practice in the period from Jubilees to the early Tannaites. Secondly, I investigate the special question of healing on the Sabbath.

The sources provide some examples of non-conformism with regard to the Sabbath commandment. In addition to the obvious case of the apostates in the days of the Hellenistic reform (1 Macc 1:43), we may refer to the radical allegorists criticised by Philo (*Migr.* 89–93); they emphasised the inner, “spiritual” meaning of the Sabbath and argued that outward obedience to the commandment was superfluous. In addition, a handful of Aramaic ostraca from first-century Palestine make mention of one person’s delivery of figs, bread and meal on the Sabbath and thus seem to testify to a lax Jewish Sabbath practice similar to the one criticised by Nehemiah (13:15).<sup>36</sup> But these

<sup>31</sup> Mayer-Haas, “*Geschenk*”, 679. Mayer-Haas also suggests that Jesus understood his acts of healing “im Kontext seiner Botschaft von der hereinbrechenden Königsherrschaft Gottes” (678). On the other hand, however, she rejects the understanding of Doering, “der Jesu Sabbatheilungen in einer eschatologischen Perspektive interpretiert” (679, n. 30).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 677–679.

<sup>33</sup> The latter saying is reconstructed in three different ways by Mayer-Haas. The first version is printed on 210–211 (as a possible part of the pre-Markan version of Mark 3:1–6); a second one (without  $\nu\iota\omicron\nu\ \eta$ ) is implied on 210, n. 358; and on 347 there is a third version.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 678–679.

<sup>35</sup> Doering, *Sabbat*. The former date refers to the Elephantine ostraca, and the latter to the Tannaitic Rabbis of the Yavnean era.

<sup>36</sup> See the discussion in Doering, *Sabbat*, 387–397. The ostraca were published by A. Yardeni: “New Jewish Aramaic Ostraca,” *IEJ* 40 (1990): 130–152.

instances of non-conformism are probably to be seen as exceptional.<sup>37</sup> Eagerly seeking to be obedient was the normal Jewish way, especially once the acute Hellenistic crisis was over.<sup>38</sup>

The duty to obey is integral to the covenant: as the people of God, Israel stands under the obligation to keep all the commandments of God.<sup>39</sup> This includes observing the Sabbath and thus refraining from all kinds of מלאכה on the seventh day of the week. As Jubilees (2.19) puts it:

And he said to us, "Behold I shall separate for myself a people from among all the nations. And they will also keep the sabbath. And I will sanctify them for myself, and I will bless them. Just as I have sanctified and shall sanctify the sabbath day for myself thus shall I bless them. And they will be my people and I will be their God."<sup>40</sup>

But how was the Sabbath commandment to be understood and applied? The *Book of Jubilees* almost immediately goes beyond general admonitions, and provides lists defining in some detail what constitutes "work" (2.29–30; 50.8–12).<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the Sabbath section of the Damascus Document begins with the general command... אַל יַעֲשֶׂה אִישׁ מְלָאכָה (CD X, 14–15), and then continues with a series of detailed halakhot specifying the concept מלאכה (CD X, 10–XI, 18).<sup>42</sup> In *m. Shabb.* 7:2 there is the classical Tannaitic list of forbidden Sabbath "works." Also, from the works of Philo, a lengthy list of Sabbath rules may be put together.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the Pharisees, renowned for their remarkable ἀκριβεία in legal matters,<sup>44</sup> must have given the

<sup>37</sup> For the moment, we disregard the Gospel evidence.

<sup>38</sup> Cf., e.g., Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr.*, WUNT 10, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973), 532–564.

<sup>39</sup> Ed P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), 81–84 and passim.

<sup>40</sup> James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. II* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), 57.

<sup>41</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 70–108.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–210. Doering also analyzes some 4Q fragments containing Sabbath rules (*ibid.*, 215–255). See also Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran*, SJLA 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), a study of the Sabbath halakhah in the Damascus Document.

<sup>43</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 328–366.

<sup>44</sup> Josephus describes the Pharisees as σύνταγμα τι Ἰουδαίων δοκοῦν εὐσεβέστερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων καὶ τοὺς νόμους ἀκριβέστερον ἀφηγεῖσθαι (*War* 1.110). See further *War* 1.648; 2.162; *Ant.* 17:41; *Life* 191 and Acts 22:3; 26:5. On the Pharisaic ἀκριβεία, see Alfred I. Baumgarten, "The Name of the Pharisees," *JBL* 102 (1983): 411–428;

Sabbath commandment serious attention and tried to define it meticulously, but there are only relatively few pieces of evidence regarding the results they achieved.<sup>45</sup>

As indicated above, no complete consensus was reached regarding the correct Sabbath halakhah in ancient Judaism, all the efforts notwithstanding. We cannot speak of a “normative” halakhah that all Jewish groups accepted as binding.<sup>46</sup> Doering observes the existence of two main halakhic “schools” working with the Sabbath commandment.<sup>47</sup>

First, there is the “priestly” school, represented mainly, but not exclusively, by Jubilees and the Damascus Document; the Sadducees may also have belonged to this school. The priestly Sabbath halakhah was strict.<sup>48</sup> For example, it tolerated sacrifices on the Sabbath,<sup>49</sup> but, it seems, no other “overriding” of the commandment was permitted.<sup>50</sup> It did not accept legal fictions like the *‘erūb*,<sup>51</sup> it showed great interest in defining even certain types of talking as forbidden on the Sabbath (*dabber dābār*, Isa 58:13)<sup>52</sup> and was stringent regarding the Sabbath day’s walk.<sup>53</sup> In addition, it demanded that people should celebrate the Sabbath in a state of ritual purity.<sup>54</sup>

The other halakhic school is “non-priestly.” It is reflected in the views of Philo, Josephus, and the early Tannaites. The Pharisees were also among its representatives. This school was more lenient in its halakhot than the “priestly” one. It was more accommodating and

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Günter Stemberger, *Pharisäer, Sadduzäer, Essener*, SBS 144 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 86–87; Ed P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, Philadelphia: Trinity, 1992), 420–421.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Back, *Jesus*, 31–50; Doering, *Schabbat*, 516–527, 535–536.

<sup>46</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 575.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 576 and *passim*.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Josephus’ remark on the Essenes as strict in Sabbath matters: φυλάσσουνται ... ταῖς ἑβδομάσιν ἔργων ἐράπτεσθαι διαφορώτατα Ἰουδαίων ἀπάντων (*War* 2.147), and note the criticism voiced against “all Israel” in CD III, 12–16a.

<sup>49</sup> Important texts: Jub 50.10–11; CD XI, 17b–18a; cf. Doering, *Schabbat*, 68, 205–210.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. CD XI, 16–17a; 4Q265 VI, 6–8; Doering, *Schabbat*, 117, 201–204, 232–235, 281.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Jub 2.29; 50.8; CD XI, 7b–9a; *m.Er* 6:2; Doering, *Schabbat*, 72–75, 180–181, 524–527.

<sup>52</sup> Jub 50.8; CD X, 17b–19; 4Q264a I, 5–8; cf. Doering, *Schabbat*, 83–87, 114, 138–143, 225–227, 272.

<sup>53</sup> Jub 50.12; CD X, 21b; cf. Doering, *Schabbat*, 87–91, 145–151.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Jub 50.8; CD XI, 3–4a; XI, 14b–15a; 4Q265 VI, 2–4; Doering, *Schabbat*, 67, 79–83, 165–169, 196–198, 236–237.

willing to take people's ability to obey the Law into consideration. For instance, the Sabbath limit was at the distance of 2,000 cubits from the edge of the village (or town)<sup>55</sup>—not 1,000 cubits, as in the halakhah of the Damascus Document. Further, the legal fiction of the *'ērub* was accepted,<sup>56</sup> as well as several instances of “overriding” of the Sabbath—e.g., for the purpose of saving a human life (the so-called *פיקוח נפש*—principle).<sup>57</sup> This school of halakhah did not demand the celebration of the Sabbath in a state of ritual purity. It was also possibly more relaxed in its views on “talking” on the Sabbath (cf. Isa 58:13).<sup>58</sup>

But even with halakhic schools with different views on the Sabbath, there was also a “pool” of common Jewish halakhot, so that the Sabbath halakhah of a particular group—e.g., the Pharisees—contained both group-specific and commonly held rules.<sup>59</sup> Among the commonly held rules were not only the basic biblical commands (e.g., no lighting of fires, no cooking, no agricultural work), but also more detailed regulations.

An example of this is the very clear-cut ban on anything resembling harvesting; cf. Exod 34:21: “Six days you shall labour, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the ploughing season and harvest you must rest.” Both the “priestly” and the “non-priestly” schools were uncompromisingly strict in this matter. According to the Damascus Document, one is allowed to walk in a field (*הדש*) on the Sabbath (X, 20, 22b–23a), and it is permitted to pick up and eat what has fallen to the ground and thus has entered the process of decaying (*אבד*, X, 22b–23a), but it is presupposed as self-evident that one must not reap anything.<sup>60</sup> According to Philo, the Sabbath rest must also include animals and even every species of plant and tree; hence, one is not allowed to reap anything whatsoever: οὐ γὰρ ἔρνος, οὐ κλάδον, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ πέταλον ἐφεῖται τεμεῖν ἢ καρπὸν ὄντινῶν δρέψασθαι (*Vit. M.* 2:22). Another first-century source attributes the same strict approach

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Acts 1:12; *m. Sotah* 5:3; *m. Erub.* 4:3; Doering, *Schabbat*, 151–154, 569–570.

<sup>56</sup> *m. Erub.* 6:2; Doering, *Schabbat*, 524–527, 531–532, 533–534.

<sup>57</sup> For texts pertaining to the *פיקוח נפש*—principle, see *ibid.*, 355 n. 334, 567 n. 6 (cf. the discussion on pp. 566–568). For other cases of “overriding” of the Sabbath, see *ibid.*, 522–524, 528–529, 533.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *Life* 277–279; Doering, *Schabbat*, 496–497.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 575: “Die unterschiedliche Realisierung des Gebots in den verschiedenen Gruppen und Kreisen hat zur je charakteristischen Mischung von auf breiterem Konsens beruhender und gruppenspezifischer Sabbathalacha geführt” (emphasis removed).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.



to the Pharisees, who object to the plucking of ears of grain on the Sabbath: ἴδε τί ποιοῦσιν τοῖς σάββασιν ὃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν (Mark 2:24).<sup>61</sup> The same halakhah has similarly found its way into Rabbinic literature; plucking (שלל) is categorised as a form of harvesting.<sup>62</sup> On the basis of this material, Doering concludes:

Das Verbot des Entfernen von Teilen einer eingewurzelten Pflanze (auch zum sofortigen Verzehr) ist im antiken Judentum gruppenübergreifend belegt. Es handelt sich offenkundig um eine gemeinsame Tradition, der ein bestimmtes Verständnis des Ernteverbots zugrundeliegt. Als spezifisch pharisäisches Verbot ist es nicht bezeugt.<sup>63</sup>

Turning to the question of healing (רפואה) on the Sabbath, and focusing directly on the acts of healing attributed to Jesus in the Gospels (Mark 3:1–6 par Matt 12:9–14, Luke 6:6–11; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6; John 5:2–9 [cf. vv. 15–16 and 7:19–24]; 9:1–7), one finds that these texts clearly imply that Jesus' healing of people suffering from chronic illnesses transgressed the Sabbath commandment as it was understood by his adversaries.<sup>64</sup> Most scholars have accepted the implied picture of Jesus' historical opponents as being to the point. They have argued, or assumed, that healing on the Sabbath was indeed seen as a “work” (מלאכה), and that this “work” was not allowed to “override” the Sabbath unless human life was at stake.

In principle, this common view could be challenged in two ways. One could argue (a) that the healings described by the Gospels would not in fact have been regarded as מלאכה in ancient Judaism, or one could suggest (b) that they would have been allowed to “override” (דחה) the Sabbath. These are the two ways of justifying healing on the Sabbath from a halakhic point of view.

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<sup>61</sup> In this context, I do not use the Markan story as a historically correct description of a factual incident, but rather as a first-century illustration of the halakhic principles of the Pharisees. They are depicted here as ἀκριβεῖς, but in this case their ἀκρίβεια is in no way extraordinary.—The Pharisees' walking in the cornfields on the Sabbath is of course not incompatible with their being ἀκριβεῖς. The Essenes were reputed to be the most strict of all Jews in questions concerning the Sabbath; nevertheless, as noted above, the (Essene) Sabbath halakhah of the Damascus Document presupposes as self-evident that walking in a שדה is permitted on the Sabbath (CD X, 20, 22b–23a)—granted, of course, that one does not stray outside the Sabbath limit.

<sup>62</sup> See *t. Shabb.* 9:17.

<sup>63</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 429 (emphasis removed); cf. 574.

<sup>64</sup> Mark 3:2, 6; Luke 13:14; John 5:16; 7:23; 9:16.24.

As seen in Part II above, the common view has in fact been challenged in recent times, especially by some scholars involved in the “Third Quest.” These scholars have decided on option (a) above and thus argue that the Gospel stories (or at least the earliest one; cf. below) about Jesus healing on the Sabbath do not describe anything that would have been understood as “work” by Jews in the time of Jesus and/or the Gospels. According to Geza Vermes, “none of the Sabbath cures of Jesus entailed ‘work’, but were effected by word of mouth, or at most, by the laying on of hands or other simple physical contact.”<sup>65</sup> E. P. Sanders and John P. Meier, for their part, wish to distinguish between healing by physical contact/laying on of hands (cf. Luke 13:13; 14:4; John 9:6), which was indeed regarded as work,<sup>66</sup> and healing by word of mouth (cf. Mark 3:5; John 5:8), which was not work. Commenting on Mark 3:1–6, Meier contends that Jesus “performs no action” since he only speaks; hence, no “work” is done:

Jesus literally *does* nothing—that is, he performs no action—and so in no sense can he be said to break the Sabbath by working. Thus, it is incredible that Pharisees or anyone else would seek to put Jesus to death for the event described in Mark 3:1–6. It is also difficult to believe that any group of Jews could or would accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath when all Jesus did was to speak a few words that brought healing to a crippled hand.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM, 1993), 23. Cf. Sanders, *Jesus*, 266: “The stories of healing on the Sabbath... reveal no instance in which Jesus transgressed the Sabbath law. The matter is quite simple: *no work was performed*. If Jesus had to remove a rock which was crushing a man’s hand, there would have been a legal principle at issue: was the man’s life in danger, or could the work have waited for the sun to set? But the laying on of hands (Luke 13:13) is not work, and no physical action of any kind is reported in the other stories.” For Sanders’ change of mind regarding the laying on of hands, see the following footnote.

<sup>66</sup> Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 10–11; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 684. Cf. Sanders’ comment on Luke’s lack of awareness of the halakhic point in question: “I somewhat doubt that Luke was aware of this fine legal distinction—that the laying on of hands was work—though in an actual debate in Palestine it would have been an important issue” (*Jewish Law*, 20).

<sup>67</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:683. Meier concludes: “Consequently, I do not think that the Sabbath controversy, as it is presented in Mark 3:1–6, goes back to a historical event in Jesus’ ministry”. Cf. *ibid.*, 732 n. 22: “It is remarkable how many exegetes simply take for granted that the pericope depicts Jesus breaking the Sabbath prohibition of work, without ever raising the question whether Jesus performs any physical action in the story.”

What is the basis for the opinion that no Jewish group would have regarded healing by mere words as a מלאכה? Meier refers to Sanders, who presents an argument from silence: “Jesus heals a man by telling him to stretch out his hand [Mark 3:5]. Talking is not regarded as work in any Jewish tradition, and so no work was performed.”<sup>68</sup>

The reasoning of these scholars is partly convincing—but only partly. Sanders and Meier are right in arguing that healing by the laying on of hands (or other physical contact) would have been regarded as מלאכה, and Vermes is right in suggesting that the distinction between healing “by word of mouth” and “by the laying on of hands or other simple physical contact” is not relevant. The rest of the argument of these scholars, however, is not convincing. Before indicating the reasons for this judgment, I wish to underline two things. First, for the moment I am only discussing the halakhic acceptability or non-acceptability of Jesus’ acts of healing as they are described by the Gospels, not the historical authenticity of the Gospel stories. Secondly, the source material relevant to our problem is very limited. Except for the Gospels, there are no pre-Tannaitic sources dealing with healing on the Sabbath;<sup>69</sup> and the Tannaitic texts deal only as it were incidentally with the matter.

Let us now look at the reasons why the common view about Sabbath healing is right, and why the dissenting proposals of Vermes, Sanders, and Meier ought not to be accepted. A preliminary observation is that Sanders’ statement to the effect that “talking” is not regarded as “work” in any Jewish tradition is not quite correct. As we noted above, Isa 58:13 (prohibition of *dabber dābār*) was an influential text within the “priestly” halakhic school, and certain kinds of talking were in fact not allowed on the Sabbath (Jub 50.8; CD X, 17b–19; 4Q264a I, 5–8; cf. also Philo, *Migr.* 91). It seems too simple to argue that talking cannot in any circumstance have been regarded as work.

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<sup>68</sup> Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 21; Meier, *Marginal Jew* 2:732 n. 22. See also Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 215: “There was no interpretation of the Sabbath law that made speaking unlawful. We would expect someone to object had Jesus massaged and bandaged the hand, but talking is not work.”

<sup>69</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 448.

Another point is that there are no relevant Jewish texts directly supporting the claims by Vermes, Sanders, and Meier to the effect that healing by mere words is not מלאכה.<sup>70</sup>

A third point is the fact that the Gospel stories show no particular interest in *emphasizing* that acts of healing are work (מלאכה, ἔργον); rather, they presuppose this as a matter of course.<sup>71</sup> Luke 13:14, in particular, is illuminating. Here it is only indirectly stated that an act of healing is an ἔργον. The synagogue ruler says: ἐξ ἡμέραι εἰσὶν ἐν αἷς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι· ἐν αὐταῖς οὖν ἐρχόμενοι θεραπεύεσθε καὶ μὴ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου.

The most important evidence however, is provided by the Mishnah. The reasoning in the following text is simply baffling unless it is based on the presupposition that one must not, on the Sabbath, engage in רפואה since it is a form of מלאכה:

Greek hyssop may not be eaten on the Sabbath *since it is not the food of them that are in health*, but a man may eat pennyroyal or drink knot-grass-water. He may eat any *foodstuffs* that serve for healing [לרפואה] or drink any liquids except purgative water or a cup of root-water, *since these serve to cure jaundice*; but he may drink purgative water *to quench his thirst*, and he may anoint himself with root-oil if it is not used for healing [לרפואה]. If his teeth pain him he may not suck vinegar through them but he may take vinegar *after his usual fashion, and if he is healed, he is healed* [ואם נתרפא נתרפא]. If his loins pain him he may not rub thereon wine or vinegar, yet he may anoint them with oil but not with rose-oil. Kings' children may anoint their wounds with rose-oil *since it is their custom to do so on ordinary days*. R. Simeon says: All Israelites are kings' children! (*m. Shabb. 14:3–4*).<sup>72</sup>

The tendency here is to circumvent a rule that is taken for granted—i.e., “no רפואה on the Sabbath”—without infringing on the letter of the rule. One is of course allowed to eat and drink on the Sabbath, as long as it is a question of normal food and drink. However, eating and drinking is forbidden if the sole purpose thereof is to effect רפואה. The רפואה may only be a side-effect, an accidental outcome

<sup>70</sup> See Westerholm, *Jesus*, 149–150 n. 18; Schaller, *Jesus*, 11–12; Doering, *Schabbat*, 446–447 on some Rabbinic texts (*b. Sanh.* 101a; *t. Shabb.* 7:23; *y. Shabb.* 14:3) which allow the use of magical incantations in certain cases (e.g., against snakes) on the Sabbath.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 373.

<sup>72</sup> Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 113.

(אם נתרפא נתרפא).<sup>73</sup> Similarly, anointing with ordinary oil is not work, but exactly the same action—anointing—is in fact a forbidden work if one uses a special liquid, since one would then show that the sole purpose of the anointing is to effect רפואה. We observe the same principle at work in *m. Shabb. 22:6*: “They may not straighten a [deformed] child’s body or set a broken limb. If a man’s hand or foot is dislocated he may not pour cold water over it, *but he may wash it after his usual fashion*, and if he is healed, he is healed [ואם נתרפא ונתרפא].”<sup>74</sup>

These Mishnah passages are important in this context for two reasons. First, they show—even if only indirectly—the existence of a definition to the effect that healing (רפואה) is work (מלאכה) and thus not allowed on the Sabbath. Secondly, they offer an analogy that shows just how unconvincing it is to argue, “Talking is not regarded as work in any Jewish tradition, and so no work was performed.”<sup>75</sup> Of course talking is permitted on the Sabbath (at least in general). So are eating and drinking; but eating and drinking may nevertheless be banned as מלאכה on the Sabbath, namely, if this activity takes place precisely in order to effect רפואה.<sup>76</sup>

My point here is not that the Mishnah passages as such should be dated to the first century. The point is rather that the rule, “No רפואה on the Sabbath,” is not only presupposed by the first-century Gospels, but also by a third-century Jewish source. Now, perhaps some would like to argue that (a) the Gospels are mistaken: there was no such rule in first-century Judaism; and that (b) the non-existent rule “presupposed” by the Gospels came into existence later on and was eventually included in the Mishnah. This is of course a theoretical possibility. But it seems far more likely that (a) the rule in question was already in fact in existence in the first century, that (b) the Gospels alluded to it, and that (c) it survived and was also presupposed

<sup>73</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 449.

<sup>74</sup> Danby, *The Mishnah*, 119. Sanders is of course aware of the rule presupposed by the Mishnah passages quoted above: “The discussions pay some attention to ways of getting around the general ban... The implied definition, ‘practicing medicine is work’, and the implied rule, ‘no minor cures on the sabbath’, are tough” (*Jewish Law*, 13). Referring to the circumvention of the rule, he adds: “...but the application is more humane”.

<sup>75</sup> Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 21.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 329: “Natürlich waren Worte am Sabbat erlaubt. Erlaubt war aber auch Essen und Trinken—jedoch nicht dann, wenn beides ausschließlich einem therapeutischen Zweck diente.”

in *m. Shabb.* 14:3–4; 22:6.<sup>77</sup> There is hardly any reason to suppose that the rule was exclusively Pharisaic.<sup>78</sup>

#### 4. *The Sabbath Stories as Evidence of Jesus' Sabbath Practice and Attitude*

In this section I offer some considerations regarding the Gospel Sabbath stories as evidence of Jesus' Sabbath practice and attitude. I do not intend to investigate every Sabbath story in detail here, but instead address the question whether, taken as a whole, the stories may be seen as witnesses to Jesus' Sabbath practice and attitude, or whether they instead reflect the views of the primitive Church and/or the Gospel writers. Most of the following comments pertain to the Gospel Sabbath stories—especially the synoptic ones—in their present form. However, for the sake of clarity, I wish to indicate my stance regarding the earliest layer of the synoptic Sabbath material. This layer is as follows: the pronouncement stories Mark 2:23–26; Mark 3:1–6; Luke 13:10\*, 14, 16, and the sayings Mark 2:27; Luke 14:5 par Matt 12:11–12a.<sup>79</sup>

It is of course possible that even the earliest versions of the Sabbath stories and sayings reflect concerns and attitudes of early Christians. However, even if it could be shown what those concerns and attitudes were, and if a correlation between them and the Sabbath stories could be established, it would be simplistic to argue that the stories therefore cannot also be used as evidence of the Sabbath acts and sayings of Jesus. Let us recall, e.g., Gerd Theissen's hypothesis of the *Wandercharismatiker*. Theissen uses (mainly) the synoptic Gospels as sources in his sketching out of the life-style, activities and convictions

<sup>77</sup> There is an often-quoted "liberal" Rabbinic ruling in *m. Yoma* 8:6: "If a man has a pain in his throat they may drop medicine into his mouth on the Sabbath, since there is doubt whether life is in danger, and whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger his overrides the Sabbath" (Danby, *The Mishnah*, 172). This ruling can of course not be quoted against my argument here. On the contrary: precisely by invoking the *נפיקה פיקוה* principle in the case of the sore throat, the ruling indirectly shows that the basic rule is, "No *רפואה* on the Sabbath." Cf. Back, *Jesus*, 49; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 329.

<sup>78</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 517: "Wahrscheinlich ist das Verbot des Heilens am Sabbat... nicht speziell pharisäisch, sondern ist von weiten Kreisen des antiken Judentums vertreten worden."

<sup>79</sup> See Back, *Jesus*, 68–147.

of the itinerant charismatics. Among other things, he suggests that these early Christians imitated the freedom of the “Son of Man” with regard to the Sabbath.<sup>80</sup> Even if this suggestion were judged to be plausible, nothing would follow as far as the question of the authenticity of the Sabbath stories is concerned. As Theissen points out, there is not necessarily a connection between the *Sitz im Leben* of Jesus traditions and the authenticity (or non-authenticity) of these same traditions:

So kann die Frage offen bleiben, ob es sich um echte oder unechte Jesustraditionen handelt. Setzen wir die Echtheit einer Überlieferung voraus, so dürfen wir annehmen, daß die Tradenten ihr Leben in Übereinstimmung mit der Überlieferung gestaltet haben. Nehmen wir ihre Entstehung in der nachösterlichen Jesusbewegung an, so kann vorausgesetzt werden, daß die Tradenten die Überlieferung in Übereinstimmung mit ihrem Leben gestaltet haben.<sup>81</sup>

On a general level, the notion of a complete correlation between Jesus traditions and the behaviour and convictions of group(s) carrying on these traditions is far from persuasive.<sup>82</sup> However, at this point, we merely note that even a complete and positive correlation between the Sabbath stories and the beliefs and practices of, say, early Christian itinerant charismatics would in principle have no bearing on the question of the authenticity of those stories.

On the other hand, however, we have to reckon with the possibility (or the probability) that even traditions that originally came into being through the impact of Jesus and thus from the start reflected his acts and sayings, have been elaborated on in the course of their transmission—and of course also through the redactional work of the

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<sup>80</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Urchristentums*, Theologische Existenz heute 194, 2nd ed. (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1978), 28: “Daß der Menschensohn Herr über den Sabbat ist, bedeutet ja konkret, daß die wandernden Jünger die Sabbatgebote brechen durften wie einst der heimatlose David (Mk 2,23ff).” See also Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 329–330 (the itinerant charismatics as transmitters of the Sabbath stories), and Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 112–118 (on the transmitters and the function of the Gospel apophthegms in general).

<sup>81</sup> *Soziologie*, 12.

<sup>82</sup> See, e.g., Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 119–125; Tom Holmén, “Knowing about Q and Knowing about Jesus: Mutually Exclusive Undertakings?”, in Andreas Lindemann, ed., *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 497–514.

evangelists. Hence, it is quite legitimate to use the Sabbath stories to investigate the attitude of the evangelists and other early Christians. This however is not the main task of this article; here, my primary interest is in Jesus' acts and sayings.

What reasons are there, then, to consider the Gospel stories as evidence of Jesus' Sabbath practice and attitude? First, with an eye on the discussion in Part III of this article, two simple observations can be made. (a) In ancient Judaism there were different ways of understanding the Sabbath commandment, and sometimes harsh criticism was voiced against groups who were thought to be mistaken and going astray concerning the Sabbath. More specifically, there is first-century evidence of people who did not conform even to the generally accepted Sabbath rules; cf. Philo's critique of the radical allegorists for the Diaspora, and the above-mentioned Aramaic ostraca for Palestine. From an outsider's perspective, Jesus, as described by the Gospels, was another non-conformist. (A closer look, however, will show Jesus' own profile in the matter.) (b) The testimony of the Gospels to the effect that Jesus and his disciples really offended pious Jews, including Pharisees, by healing sick people and by plucking ears of grain (and, in Jesus' case, defending this)—this testimony makes perfect sense when these actions are viewed in a first-century Palestinian context; the arguments to the contrary are far from persuasive.

Secondly, let us observe the attestation of Jesus' controversial Sabbath practice. There are two pronouncement stories in Mark (Mark 2:23–26; 3:1–6), and an additional two in the Lukan *Sondergut* (Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6).<sup>83</sup> The Gospel of John also has a couple of stories depicting Jesus' Sabbath healing (John 5 and 9). There is a common Sabbath saying behind Luke 14:5 and Matt 12:11–12a,<sup>84</sup> and

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<sup>83</sup> The Lukan Sabbath stories are not redactional fabrications. Luke found the pronouncement story Luke 13:10\*, 14–16 among his *Sondergut* and reworked it. In the process, he also added vv. 11–13 and most of v. 10. For a more detailed discussion, see Back, *Jesus*, 121–126. The story in Luke 14:1–6 was thoroughly reworked by Luke, but not created by him; see *ibid.*, 132; Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, NTD 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 154; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X–XXIV)*, AB 28A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1038–1039; Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, THKNT 3 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 267. Some scholars argue that Luke 14:1–6 was part of Q, but the evidence for this view is scant; see Back, *Jesus*, 131–132.

<sup>84</sup> It is possible that the saying was once part of Q; for this view, see, e.g., Frans Neiryneck, "Luke 14,1–6: Lukan composition and Q saying", in F. van Segbroeck,



the many minor agreements between Matt 12:1–8 and Luke 6:1–5 against Mark 2:23–28 seem to indicate the existence of a parallel tradition, i.e., a version of the cornfield incident that Matthew and Luke were aware of, in addition to Mark 2:23–28.<sup>85</sup> There is, then, a relatively wide sweep of sources attesting to the controversial Sabbath practice of Jesus.<sup>86</sup>

Thirdly, there are no substantial reasons to assume that the Sabbath stories originated as reflections of early Christian Sabbath controversies or suchlike. A *conditio sine qua non* for such a view of the stories is that a correlation can be shown to exist between the Sabbath stories and early Christian controversies. But (a) there is no clear correlation between the Christian Sabbath disputes known from first-century sources and the Gospel Sabbath stories, and (b) the attempts to show analytically that the Gospel stories reflect otherwise unknown post-Easter Sabbath controversies are not at all persuasive.

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ed., *Evangelica II* (1982–1991): *Collected Essays by F. Neiryck* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, Leuven: Peeters, 1991) 183–204; Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 414–416; cf. Back, *Jesus*, 133 (more references). Due to the significant difference in wording between Matthew and Luke here, this suggestion is however unlikely. It is more probable that the two versions of the saying represent different translations from an Aramaic original.

<sup>85</sup> See the discussion in Back, *Jesus*, 71–74 (with reference to scholars holding this view); Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 328; Tom Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, *Biblical Interpretation Series* 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 93–94.—Matt 12:5–7 is not an M-saying but rather a creation by the evangelist; see Back, *Jesus*, 102–105.

<sup>86</sup> According to Kloppenborg, the people behind Q knew nothing about Jesus being involved in Sabbath controversies; hence, he argues, Jesus was in fact hardly involved in such controversies. John S. Kloppenborg, “The Sayings Gospel Q and the Quest of the Historical Jesus”, *HThR* 89 (1996): 332–334. This line of argument does not seem persuasive. (a) First, even if we disregard the possibility that the saying in Luke 14:5 par Matt 12:11–12a and the parallel tradition used by Matthew and Luke in their version of the cornfield incident (cf. above) were indeed part of Q, we cannot confidently say that Q showed no knowledge of Sabbath controversies. In the nature of the case, we cannot know for certain what Q did *not* include; but, of course, in order to make an argument from silence—in itself a highly questionable enterprise!—we must first be able to establish that silence. (b) Secondly, even if that silence on the part of Q could be demonstrated, an argument from silence would still be shaky, since “we know little or nothing of Q’s sources at the level of material available to Q but which Q chose to omit”: Christopher M. Tuckett, “Q and the Historical Jesus”, in Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, eds., *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 232. (c) Third, a good case can be made for the position that the Q redactor(s) found the Sabbath stories potentially dangerous and therefore “deliberately *not* included them” (ibid., 228–233 [232]).

(a) While there is no evidence for first-century disputes between Christian Jews and other Jews concerning the Sabbath, the *Corpus Paulinum* does contain references to Sabbath disputes among Christians. In Gal 4, Paul refers to the demands put forward by Jewish Christians to the effect that the Gentile Galatians must keep “days, months, seasons, and years”; the Sabbath is probably included in the “days” here. Paul firmly rejects these demands and seems horrified that the Galatians are giving in to them (Gal 4:10–11). The conflict concerns the question whether Gentile Christians have to keep the Sabbath or not. The answer to this question is either “no” (according to Paul) or “yes” (according to other Jewish Christians). The conflict hinted at in Rom 14 is similar in nature. The “weak” Christians wish, among other things, to make a distinction between “days”—*ἡμέραν παρ’ ἡμέραν κρίνειν* (Rom 14:5)—and they also insist that the “strong” should do the same. Again, the point of the dispute concerns an either/or question: to keep the Sabbath or not. Paul sides, in principle, with the “strong”: there is no need to worry about making distinctions between “days.” In Colossians, the problem is, once again, fundamentally of the same nature (Col 2:6–23, esp. 16). Outside of these passages from the Pauline corpus, there is no further explicit evidence of internal Christian Sabbath disputes. There is also no evidence to suggest, for instance, that healing or reaping on the Sabbath were typical activities among first-century Christians.<sup>87</sup>

It is not clear how the Sabbath stories and sayings in the Gospels could be taken to hint at a solution to the either/or problems attested to by the Epistles. None of the sayings of Jesus can plausibly be construed as an attempt to “abrogate” the Sabbath. It is true that Mark 2:27 has been interpreted in a very “radical” way. For instance, Beare thought the saying sounded like Protagoras of Abdera (*πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος*); Wong understands it as being extremely anti-Jewish; and Rordorf maintained that it amounted to an attack on the Sabbath commandment, meant the destruction of the entire Sabbath theology of post-exilic Judaism, and opened the way to transgress the Sabbath commandment.<sup>88</sup> But these interpretations are

<sup>87</sup> On attempts to show analytically that the Gospel Sabbath stories reflect otherwise unknown conflicts, see below.

<sup>88</sup> F. W. Beare, “The Sabbath Was Made for Man?” *JBL* 79 (1960): 132; Eric K. Wong, “The Matthaean Understanding of the Sabbath: A Response to G. N. Stanton”, *JSNT* 44 (1991): 7; Rordorf, *Sonntag*, 61–63.

arbitrary. The “radical” saying Mark 2:27 is in fact very close to the well-known Rabbinic saying, “The Sabbath was handed over to you, but you were not handed over to the Sabbath,” and this saying, of course, is not Protagorean, nor is it anti-Jewish, nor does it imply any “abrogation” of the Sabbath.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, there are no signs of an “abrogation” of the Sabbath in the rest of the Gospel material. It is clear, then, that the early Church transmitted the Sabbath stories without assimilating them to the either/or problem which is disclosed by the Pauline corpus.<sup>90</sup>

(b) Attempts to show analytically that the Sabbath stories reflect otherwise unknown disputes, and, at least in part, were crafted in response to those disputes, are in my view unconvincing.

Let us recall Rudolf Bultmann’s hypothesis regarding the Sabbath stories and the other *Streitgespräche* in the synoptic tradition. According to Bultmann, the *Sitz im Leben* of the “controversy dialogues” was the apologetics and polemics of the primitive Palestinian community. This community, Bultmann argued, must initially have assumed a relatively free attitude of mind towards parts of the Law. (Later on, following the rise of James the Lord’s brother to the leadership of the community, there was a regressive development, and the free attitude was transformed into obedience to the Law.) There was, among other things, an early liberal Sabbath practice, which attracted criticism from non-Christian Jews. The ensuing Sabbath controversies are reflected in the Gospel Sabbath stories, which were fabricated in the primitive Palestinian community.<sup>91</sup> An important part in this

<sup>89</sup> See, e.g., Schaller, *Jesus*, 18; Back, *Jesus*, 98–100; Doering, *Schabbat*, 417–419.

<sup>90</sup> Back, *Jesus*, 59–61; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 328; Holmén, *Jesus*, 97–99.—An exception to the non-assimilation pointed out here is provided by the “apocryphal” pronouncement story in Luke 6:5D, which seems to make a point very similar to the one made by Paul in Rom 14. Paul writes, μακάριος ὁ μὴ κρίνων ἑαυτὸν ἐν ᾧ δοκιμάζει· ὁ δὲ διακρινόμενος ἐὰν φάγη κατακέκριται; cf. Jesus’ warning to the Sabbath worker in Luke 6:5D: εἰ μὲν οἶδας τί ποιεῖς, μακάριος εἶ· εἰ δὲ μὴ οἶδας, ἐπικατάρατος καὶ παραβάτης εἶ τοῦ νόμου. Stephen H. Smith claims that a situation like that addressed by Paul in Rom 14–15 is also reflected in Mark 3:1–6: Jesus’ opponents are “a paradigm for the hardline Judaizing Christians” in Mark’s community, whereas the man with the withered hand is “symbolic of the new Israel, the Christian community, which is offered salvation from the oppression of Jewish institutionalism” (“Mark 3,1–6: Form, Redaction and Community Function”, *Bib* 75 [1994]: 173). Unfortunately, “within the available space” Smith did not have the opportunity to reveal how he reached these conclusions.

<sup>91</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 9th ed., FRLANT 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 39–56; idem, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 9th ed., UTB 630 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 56–60.

construction is played by the observation of an interesting trait in the texts, namely, that Jesus on several occasions defends the behaviour of his disciples:

Sie raufen am Sabbat Ähren aus [Mark 2:23], sie fasten nicht in der Weise der Johannes-Jünger [Mark 2:18], sie essen nicht mit gewaschenen Händen [Mark 7:2, 5],—hat sich denn etwa Jesus in all diesen Dingen so korrekt verhalten, daß er nicht angegriffen wird? Und woher, wenn er so konservativ gewesen wäre, die freie Haltung der Jünger? Oder *wagt* man ihn nicht direkt anzugreifen? Aber warum wagt man es denn bei den Sabbat-Heilungen? Nein! Die Jünger sind die Angegriffenen, d.h. die Gemeinde ist es, und sie wehrt sich mit der Berufung auf ihren Meister. Nur bei den Sabbat-Heilungen muß sich der Angriff naturgemäß gegen Jesus selbst richten; den die Heilungen sind ja zugleich Wunder, die ihn verherrlichen sollen.<sup>92</sup>

Bultmann's hypothesis contains several problematic aspects which I will not dwell on here. However, in this context it is important to point out the flaws in the argument quoted above.

(i) First, it is difficult to imagine the post-Easter community being attacked for not fasting, and then defending itself with a reference to the physical presence of Jesus (Mark 2:18–19a). Bultmann's reasoning, however, implies that this was indeed the case—or, alternatively, that the community, defending its non-fasting, in fact originally referred to Jesus' "spiritual" or "mystical" presence (v. 19a), but that this presence was later on reinterpreted as being physical in nature (i.e., through the addition of v. 19b–20). In the case of Mark 2:18–20, then, Bultmann's reasoning leads to absurd consequences.<sup>93</sup>

(ii) Moreover, his observation on Mark 2:23–26 is not to the point. Jesus is not presented here as "correct" or "conservative," nor is it the case that *not he*, but *instead* the disciples are being criticized and that he defends them rather than himself. In fact, the people plucking ears of grain are Jesus' own disciples. As their teacher, he is—quite naturally—seen as responsible for their actions. Accordingly, he is in fact

<sup>92</sup> Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 50. This argument by Bultmann has received wide support; cf., e.g., Sanders, *Jesus*, 266: "It is very likely that the pericope on plucking grain on the Sabbath... is a creation of the church. Bultmann long ago observed that the disciples (that is, the church) are criticized, not Jesus, and the passage represents a Christian response to Jewish criticism."

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Martin Hengel & Roland Deines, "E. P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism', Jesus, and the Pharisees," *JTS* 46 (1995): 7: "The widespread superstition that the Gospels deal primarily with problems of their immediate present frequently leads *ad absurdum*."

the main target of the Pharisees' criticism. The Pharisees "want to know what kind of teacher Jesus is if he permits his disciples to defy the Law."<sup>94</sup> Since it is not odd, but quite natural, that Jesus should be criticized for the action of his disciples, the Markan scene contains no item that requires an explanation like that suggested by Bultmann ("d.h. die Gemeinde ist es"). Consequently, Bultmann's attempt to buttress his case with textual observations is not convincing. Those observations support neither his general view of the *Sitz im Leben* of the "conflict dialogues," nor his claim regarding the fabrication of the Sabbath stories.<sup>95</sup>

Lutz Doering has recently proposed that Jesus' non-halakhic stance, as expressed in his Sabbath healings, lived on and was further radicalized by post-Easter Jewish Christian communities. Christians were not only influenced by the Jesus traditions, but also by the "Christ kerygma" and the implications of the Gentile mission. Their Sabbath practice was a liberal one, and it is reflected in the Sabbath stories which these communities transmitted and even partially created.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ellis Rivkin, *A Hidden Revolution: The Pharisees' Search for the Kingdom Within* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), 92. Concerning the teacher's responsibility for his disciples, see, e.g., Erik Beijer, *Kristologi och etik i Jesu Bergspredikan* (Stockholm: Diakonistyrelsens bokförlag, 1960), 182; David Daube, "Responsibilities of Master and Disciples in the Gospels", *NTS* 19 (1973): 1–19; Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 430–431; Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community*, ConBNT 24 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994), 327; John P. Meier, "The Historical Jesus and the Plucking of the Grain on the Sabbath", *CBQ* 66 (2004): 569. For some illustrations of the responsibility in question, see 1 Sam 3:11–14; *War* 1.648–655; Plato, *Apol.* 24B; Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.1; 1.2.12.

<sup>95</sup> In this context, it is perhaps appropriate to recall Schmithals's stern comments: "Die Texte selbst verraten auch in Bultmann's Analyse ihren 'Sitz im Leben' offenkundig nicht, so daß er auf bloße Vermutungen angewiesen bleibt... Weder Dibelius noch Bultmann gelingt es auch nur an einem einzigen Text der synoptischen Überlieferung... die Frage nach dem 'Sitz im Leben' anders als hypothetisch zu beantworten... Und prüft man die vorgetragenen Hypothesen an den uns zur Verfügung stehenden Quellen nach, lassen sie sich in keinem Fall verifizieren, vielmehr nur als unwahrscheinlich oder als unhaltbar erweisen" (Walter Schmithals, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985], 310).

<sup>96</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 406–407, 412, 424–425, 430, 445, 477. Doering is vague on the question how this more liberal stance came to expression. Evidently, these Christians did no acts of healing on the Sabbath (445), and it was not their habit to harvest on the Sabbath either: "Sicher rechtfertigt die Gemeinde... nicht eine typische Praxis sabbatlichen Ährenruffens. Sie könnte aber anhand des in ihr Berichteten *exemplarisch* ihren Umgang mit dem Sabbatgebot darstellen" (412; cf. 430). J. P. Meier accepts

Doering feels that this proposal is confirmed by his analysis of the texts.<sup>97</sup> The only textual observation he invokes as support, however, is exactly the same as Bultmann's, namely Jesus' defence of the disciples in Mark 2:23–26.<sup>98</sup> Hence, textual observations lend no substantial support to Doering's proposal.<sup>99</sup>

It seems, then, that we can argue in the following way.<sup>100</sup> (a) Since there are no substantial reasons to assume that the Sabbath stories originated as reflections of early Christian Sabbath controversies, the earliest stories were probably from the start transmitted first and foremost as memories of Jesus' acts and sayings. (b) The relatively wide sweep of sources attesting to the controversial Sabbath practice of Jesus is also best accounted for by assuming that Jesus was in fact involved in such practice. (c) Moreover, this assumption is confirmed by the fact that the Gospel testimony to Jesus' Sabbath actions and the criticism they attracted makes good sense in the context of first-century Palestine.

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this way of reasoning ("Plucking", 580 n. 36). I find it puzzling that one should, on one hand, insist on a one-to-one correspondence between the text and the underlying situation of its transmitters (the disciples, i.e., the community is being criticised for its activity on the Sabbath, and refers to Jesus in its defence), but then, on the other hand, back off and refuse to accept the testimony of the text regarding the offensive activity. This kind of reasoning is beyond methodological control.

<sup>97</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 478 n. 440.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 412–413.

<sup>99</sup> Doering is aware of the criticism levelled against Bultmann to the effect that a teacher is responsible for the actions of his disciples, and that Jesus' defence of his disciples (and, indirectly, of himself) accordingly constitutes no reason to regard the story in Mark 2:23–26 (or, as Doering [409–412] would prefer, Mark 2:23–24.27[–28]) as a *Gemeindebildung*. Somewhat oddly, he transforms this critique of Bultmann into a direct and positive argument in favour of the authenticity of the scene, and then counters: "Doch dieser Einzelzug der Perikope spricht *nicht für die Historizität der Szene*, da Verantwortlichkeit des Meisters auch als *Topos in Überlieferung und Literatur* begegnet. Es handelt sich somit um ein *kulturelles* Phänomen, das für die Gestaltung der Szene benutzt werden konnte" (412–413). Quite so, the possibility ("konnte") exists—but what basis is there, in the first place, to suspect a *Gemeindebildung* in this instance? The mere possibility is of course no substantial basis.—Mayer-Haas claims, "Mk 2,23f.27\* rechtfertigt, veranschaulicht am Beispiel einer geringfügigen Sabbatverletzung seitens der Jünger, die 'liberale' Sabbatpraxis seiner Träger unter Berufung auf die Autorität Jesu und brandmarkt die Vertreter strengerer Sabbatruhe als Jesusgegner" ("*Geschenk*", 187), but is unable to show why this proposal should be understood as anything else than a sheer possibility (cf. *ibid.*, 184–187).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 373; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 327–328; Holmén, *Jesus*, 91–100.

In addition, (d) the Sabbath acts and sayings of Jesus, as they are presented in the earliest layer of the synoptic Sabbath material, are coherent with the main lines of Jesus' ministry and message. This is shown in the following section (V).

### 5. *Jesus' Understanding and Defence of His Sabbath Acts*

I have elsewhere argued for the basic historical authenticity of the earliest layer of the synoptic Sabbath material, mentioned above, including the sayings in Mark 2:25–26; 2:27; 3:4; Luke 13:16; Matt 12:11–12a/Luke 14:5.<sup>101</sup> There is no space and no need to repeat the argument here.

In order to understand Jesus' attitude, as it is reflected in the aforementioned material, more than an outsider's perspective is needed. It will not do to claim, e.g., that Jesus' Sabbath behaviour indicated that he was a "liberal" Jew with a *menschenfreundlich* view of God.<sup>102</sup> We must rather try to reach Jesus' own understanding and defence of his Sabbath acts. Jesus should of course be understood as a first-century Palestinian Jew, but he was distinctive within his context,<sup>103</sup> and this distinctiveness is also manifest in his Sabbath acts and sayings. On the following few pages, I will try to indicate the main points regarding (a) Jesus' understanding of his Sabbath acts, and also regarding (b) his defence of those acts. I will here focus on the acts of healing, giving only cursory attention to the cornfield incident.

But first a few words on Mark 2:27: τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐγένετο καὶ οὐχ ὁ ἄνθρωπος διὰ τὸ σάββατον. As we observed above, this saying has frequently been declared the key to a proper understanding of Jesus' attitude towards the Sabbath. Moreover, it has often been understood as making the point that human beings and their needs are more important than the Sabbath commandment: "Nicht mehr der Sabbat und die Forderung des Gesetzes stehen an erster Stelle, sondern der Mensch und seine Bedürfnisse werden höher bewertet als das Sabbatgebot."<sup>104</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See Back, *Jesus*, 86–90, 100–101, 116–119, 128–129, 141.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Mayer–Haas, "Geschenk", 679.

<sup>103</sup> Theissen and Winter, *Quest*, 172–212.

<sup>104</sup> Lohse, "Worte", 85.

Both of these interpretative moves involving Mark 2:27 are problematic. As Neiryck points out, “For an originally free-floating logion—as Mk II,27 probably was—it is especially difficult to define its content.”<sup>105</sup> But if the meaning of the saying is especially difficult to define, it cannot be taken as a key or a starting point. It is rather the case that Jesus’ Sabbath actions and the rest of his Sabbath sayings must provide the key to an understanding of Mark 2:27. Let us now proceed to Jesus’ Sabbath acts and his own interpretation of them.

(a) It is clear that healing (including exorcisms) was a significant element of Jesus’ ministry.<sup>106</sup> On the basis of the previous section (IV) we have reason to believe that this important activity also occurred on the Sabbath. There is no basis for the assumption that Jesus used to heal people predominantly on the Sabbath or precisely because it was the Sabbath; but it is clear that he did not break off his healing ministry on the holy day.

Did his refusal to break off amount to a transgression of the Sabbath commandment? We cannot of course venture to act as judges in matters of first-century halakhah and, e.g., provide our own definition of מלאכה. But we have to acknowledge that Jesus did transgress the Sabbath commandment as it was understood by teachers of halakhah—including Pharisees—in first-century Jewish Palestine. He showed no interest in keeping the Sabbath in an exact manner. He was not among those whom Josephus describes as οἱ μετ’ ἀκριβείας δοκοῦντες ἐξηγεῖσθαι τὰ νόμιμα (*War* 2.162). He was a non-conformist, at least to a certain extent.

However, his attitude should not be confused with, say, the position of the radical allegorists which provoked the ire of Philo, nor with the laxity of the writer of the first-century Palestinian ostraca referred to earlier in this article. There is also no basis for the view, sometimes held, that Jesus simply wanted to show dissent or provoke

<sup>105</sup> Neiryck, “Jesus”, 269. Cf. Andreas Lindemann, “‘Der Sabbat ist um des Menschen willen geworden...’ Historische und theologische Erwägungen zur Traditionsgeschichte der Sabbatperikope Mk 2,23–28 parr.,” *WD* 15 (1979): 89: “Der Sinn des Logions Mk 2,27 läßt sich nicht erfassen, wenn man nicht die Situation kennt, in der es gesprochen wurde.”

<sup>106</sup> See, e.g., Barry M. Blackburn, “The Miracles of Jesus”, in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluation of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, *NTTS* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 354–368; John P. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:617–631; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 256–283.



pious people on the Sabbath. Instead, he must have viewed his Sabbath acts of healing in the same way as the rest of his healing ministry—i.e., as manifestations of the eschatological, salvific βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. “Present by operation but future in its fulness, the reign of God was being mediated by its proclaimer”<sup>107</sup>—not however by proclamation only, but also by mighty acts (δυνάμεις). In the eyes of his adversaries, he was a non-conformist and a transgressor. But as for himself, he must have thought he was doing “the King’s business.”<sup>108</sup>

From the Jesuanic perspective, people who were confronted with his healing acts—including the Sabbath healings—were brought face to face with God’s own activity and power (Luke 11:20/Matt 12:28). Those with truly seeing eyes and truly hearing ears could experience how the kingdom of God made its way with force (Luke 16:16/Matt 11:12–13). The *fulness* of the Kingdom was still not there; that was a matter for the future (Luke 6:20b–21/Matt 5:3–6; Luke 11:2/Matt 6:9–10; Luke 13:28–29/Matt 8:11–12). But the Kingdom was present *by operation*: as the parables of growth (Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19; Luke 13:20–21/Matt 13:33; Mark 4:3–8; Mark 4:26–29) indicate, “[t]he Kingdom has begun to come in the mission of Jesus; and now it must run its course to the final consummation.”<sup>109</sup> The promises of the prophets were being fulfilled; divine blessings were at hand (Luke 7:22–23/Matt 11:5–6); things that had been the object of the yearning of previous generations were now happening in front of people’s eyes (Luke 10:23b–24/Matt 13:1–17); and the kingdom of the Evil One was receiving blow upon blow (Mark 3:27; Luke 11:20/Matt 12:28; cf. Luke 10:18).<sup>110</sup> The ministry of Jesus ushered in the eschatological and salvific reign of God all the days of the week. As the Sabbath acts of healing indicate, Jesus insisted that “the service of the Kingdom of

<sup>107</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 171.

<sup>108</sup> Manson, *Sayings*, 190.—On Jesus’ interpretation of his ministry of healing, see Helge Kjær Nielsen, *Heilung und Verkündigung: Das Verständnis der Heilung und ihres Verhältnisses zur Verkündigung bei Jesus und in der ältesten Kirche*, ATDan 22 (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 28–107; Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2.54 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993); Blackburn, “Miracles,” 372–392.

<sup>109</sup> Manson, *Sayings*, 122, commenting on the parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. H. Kruse, “Das Reich Satans”, *Bib* 58 (1977): 29–61, esp. 37–44.

God and the warfare against the kingdom of Satan must go on day in and day out,”<sup>111</sup> the Sabbath commandment notwithstanding.

This understanding of Jesus’ position vis-à-vis his healing acts on the Sabbath would seem sound even without any knowledge of Jesuanic Sabbath sayings. It involves only the simple assumption that Jesus interpreted his healing acts on the Sabbath in the same way as he interpreted his other healings. It comes as no surprise, however, to see our assumption being confirmed by several of the Sabbath sayings (Luke 13:16; Mark 3:4; Luke 14:5/Matt 12:11–12a).

In Luke 13:16, Jesus interprets the healing of the diseased woman in a mythical way. The idea of the eschatological war between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan is the presupposition of his interpretation, which indicates what happens to the woman when she is healed: ταύτην δὲ θυγατέρα Ἀβραάμ οὖσαν, ἣν ἔδησεν ὁ σατανᾶς ἰδοὺ δέκα καὶ ὀκτὼ ἔτη, οὐκ ἔδει λυθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ τούτου τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ σαββάτου; Jesus brings the woman in touch with the kingdom of God, and this means liberation for her; the bonds of Satan are untied. In terms of another saying (Mark 3:27), the woman has been a “possession” in the house of the Strong One. But now the Strong One meets another, superior in strength, and must suffer his own house being robbed.

The healing of the woman means that the Sabbath commandment (in its common interpretation) is put aside. It must not stand in the way of the λύειν, the manifestation of the eschatological and salvific reign of God, for “the warfare against the kingdom of Satan must go on on the Sabbath as well as on the other six days.”<sup>112</sup>

In Mark 3:4, Jesus stresses the necessity of healing on the Sabbath: ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασιν ἀγαθὸν ποιῆσαι ἢ κακοποιῆσαι, ψυχὴν σῶσαι ἢ ἀποκτεῖναι; The alternatives are clear cut: it is a matter of either doing good or doing evil—yes, even more: either saving a “soul” or killing it. If these are the alternatives, then it is imperative that Jesus heals and thereby saves the “soul” which is in grave danger. But how can the healing of a chronically ill person be described in this manner? And what is meant by ψυχὴν σῶσαι here? I would suggest that the application of ψυχὴν σῶσαι to the healing of a chronic illness

<sup>111</sup> Manson, *Sayings*, 190.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

implies an eschatological transformation of the Old Testament view of illness and healing.

According to a view abundantly attested in the Old Testament, a disease constitutes a serious threat to the “soul” (נפש).<sup>113</sup> When a human being is afflicted by a disease, he, or his “life,” or his נפש, can be said to be near the pit (שחת, Job 33:22), near the gates of death (Ps 107:18), near Sheol (Ps 88:4), even *in* Sheol (Ps 30:3–4). And when he is cured, he is delivered (Ps 6:5), saved (Ps 6:5), and brought up from Sheol (יהוה העלית מן־שאול נפשי, Ps 30:3–4). Mark 3:4 shows that Jesus shares this Old Testament view of the affliction and salvation of the נפש (ψυχή).<sup>114</sup> He makes no clear distinction between diseases and suffering on one hand and death on the other; in essence, disease and death constitute the same kind of threat to the “soul.” Hence, even healing a withered hand (as in Mark 3:1–6) is saving a נפש (ψυχή).

The Old Testament view presupposed by Jesus in Mark 3:4 is not eschatological at all.<sup>115</sup> But in the Jesuanic context, ψυχήν σῶσαι takes on an eschatological nuance. The non-eschatological Old Testament notion is transformed into an eschatological one.

A clear example of this kind of transformation is provided by the Qumran *Hodayot*. One of the hymns begins with the following words:

אודכה אדוני כי פדיתה נפשי משחת  
ומשאול אבדון העליתני לרום עולם. (1QH 11:19–20a).

I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast redeemed my soul from the Pit, and from the hell of Abaddon Thou hast raised me up to everlasting height.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>113</sup> For the following comments, cf. Johannes Pedersen, *Israel I–II: Sjæleliv og Samfundsliv*, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen: Povel Branner, 1934), 116–117, 258–259, 363–366; Christian Barth, *Die Errettung vom Tode in den individuellen Klage- und Dankliedern des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag A.G., 1947), 93–102, 124–146; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theologie der Psalmen*, BKAT 15:3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 207–209; Nielsen, *Heilung*, 36.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Eduard Schweizer, “ψυχή κτλ.” *TWNT* IX, 637; Klaus Seybold and Ulrich B. Müller, *Krankheit und Heilung*, *Biblische Konfrontationen* 1008 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), 102.

<sup>115</sup> Nielsen, *Heilung*, 36.

<sup>116</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 197.

A “soteriological confession” which exults in the gifts of salvation then follows: God has granted to those who have joined the community new creation, forgiveness of sins, and communion with the angels (1QH XI, 20b–23).<sup>117</sup> The introductory words (1QH XI, 19–20a) allude to the aforementioned Old Testament view of illness and healing. But a transformation has taken place: the expressions *פדיתה נפשי משחת* and *ומשאול אבדון העליתני* are filled with a renewed meaning and now refer to the eschatological salvation which for the Qumran community has become a reality in the present (*gegenwärtiges Heil*).<sup>118</sup>

A similar transformation occurs in Mark 3:4. Within the context of Jesus’ healing ministry—and his interpretation thereof—the saying indicates what happens when a diseased person is confronted with the eschatological and salvific reign of God. This reign, although not yet present in its fullness, is now mediated through Jesus. Whereas in Luke 13:16 the experience of the person in question was described in terms of liberation from the bonds of Satan (*λυθῆναι ἀπὸ τοῦ δεσμοῦ τούτου*), it is now a matter of a “soul” being “saved” (*ψυχὴν σώσει*).<sup>119</sup> And again, this must happen in spite of the limitations of the Sabbath commandment.

The saying behind Luke 14:5 and Matt 12:11–12a was probably originally used to defend a Sabbath act of healing by Jesus. It included a reference to the “son” (Luke 14:5), but lacked the conclusion *πόσω οὖν κτλ.* (Matt 12:12a).<sup>120</sup> The “son” was also part of the original

<sup>117</sup> Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil: Untersuchungen zu den Gemeindeliedern von Qumran mit einem Anhang über Eschatologie und Gegenwart in der Verkündigung Jesu*, SUNT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 45–52. For the term “soteriological confession,” see *ibid.*, 26–27.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–61.

<sup>119</sup> The eschatological overtones of this expression are recognised by Grundmann, Guelich, and Marcus in their commentaries on Mark. See Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 10th ed., THKNT 2 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1989), 96; Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC 34A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 136; Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 252: “Here as elsewhere . . . Jesus reinterprets Old Testament or Jewish principles in an apocalyptically intensified manner . . . For Mark’s Jesus, the eschatological war is already raging, and on that battlefield every human action either strikes a blow for life or wields one for death.”

<sup>120</sup> Daniel Kosch, *Die eschatologische Tora des Menschensohnes: Untersuchungen zur Rezeption der Stellung Jesu zur Tora in Q*, NTOA 12 (Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag, 1989), 204; Back, *Jesus*, 133–135.

Aramaic saying, which probably contained a wordplay involving ברא (υἰός), בעירא (βοῦς, πρόβατον), and בירא (βόθυνος, φρέαρ).<sup>121</sup> This saying, containing ברא (υἰός), cannot be understood as making an *a fortiori* argument to the effect that help granted to an animal should all the more be granted to a human being.

It should rather be understood in the same manner as the other so called τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν-sayings,<sup>122</sup> i.e., I. Luke 11:11–13/Matt 7:9–11 (a father being asked for bread by his son); II. Luke 15:4–7/Matt 18:12–14 (a shepherd and his lost sheep); III. Luke 15:8–10 (a woman and her lost coin); IV. Luke 11:5–8 (a head of the house being disturbed at midnight by a friend); V. Luke 14:28–30 (a man wishing to build a tower); VI. Luke 14:31–32 (a king going to war); and VII. Luke 17:7–10 (a master and his working servant). As Greeven pointed out, the τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν-sayings reveal the mindset of God towards human beings “durch einen Hinweis auf das unter Menschen allgemein übliche Verhalten.”<sup>123</sup> The sayings make an *a fortiori* argument: if this is true of humans, how much more is it true of God! He responds to prayer (I, IV), he seeks out lost people and rejoices when he finds them (II, III), he has resources and strength to finish what he has begun (V, VI), and he has the right to require a lot from his servants (VII). The reference to God is often underlined by common standing metaphors, such as father, shepherd, king, and master.<sup>124</sup>

The τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν-sayings do not simply reveal the mind of God in a general sense, but carry an eschatological significance.<sup>125</sup> II and III concern the eschatological “good news” to the “poor”; this is probably true of I, as well (ἀγαθά are eschatological good gifts); IV gives assurance to those praying for the coming of the Kingdom in its full-

<sup>121</sup> Suggested by Matthew Black as a pun on words behind Luke 14:5 (*An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1967], 168). Cf. the discussion in Back, *Jesus*, 135–136, where Joachim Jeremias’ suggestion regarding the secondary nature of ברא is rejected. Cf. Jeremias, Review of Black, *Approach*, in *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen* 210 (1956), 8–9. Jeremias’ unlikely proposal is defended by Doering, who makes the dubious claims that (i) בעירא and בירא sounded “gleich,” whereas ברא only sounded “ähnlich,” and that (ii) the original wordplay would have been made up solely of words that were (allegedly) “gleich” (*Schabbat*, 458).

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Heinrich Greeven, “Wer unter euch...?”, *WD* 3 (1952) 86–101; Back, *Jesus*, 137–139.

<sup>123</sup> Greeven, “Wer unter euch...?”, 86.

<sup>124</sup> For references, see Back, *Jesus*, 138.

<sup>125</sup> For a more detailed argument, see *ibid.*, 139.

ness; VII has the coming judgement in view; and V and VI refer to God's ability to bring forth the consummation of his Kingdom.

If the Sabbath saying behind Luke 14:5 and Matt 12:11–12a is considered together with the other  $\tau\acute{\iota}\varsigma \xi\acute{\xi} \upsilon\mu\omega\upsilon\nu$ -sayings, we must conclude that it, too, aims at the mind and action of God. Polag, commenting on the saying, remarks, "Wenn schon die Menschen so urteilen, um wieviel mehr dann Gott,"<sup>126</sup> and Marshall correctly concludes that there is here "an unexpressed *a fortiori* argument from what *men* do on the Sabbath to what *God* does."<sup>127</sup> We should moreover observe that the saying concerns God's action, but is used to explain and defend Jesus' action: God's action on the Sabbath takes concrete form in the action of Jesus;<sup>128</sup> Jesus' healing is God's own intervention in the misery of man. This is of course quite natural if we remember Jesus' overall interpretation of his healing ministry. Once again, this ministry must, in Jesus' view, go on, in spite of the Sabbath commandment.

(b) But Jesus' stance was contested by people—including Pharisees—who criticized him and insisted that the commandment be kept according to the usual interpretation, which among other things stated that healing (רפואה) was work (מלאכה) and therefore forbidden on the Sabbath. Behind this demand lay, of course, the view that the matter involved one's loyalty toward the covenant.

Regarding Jesus' defence of his Sabbath behaviour, two points can be affirmed: Jesus defended himself (i) with an awareness of his immediate knowledge of God's will and mindset, and (ii) with an awareness of his being on "the King's business," inaugurating His eschatological and salvific βασιλεία.

(i) A closer look at Jesus' overall attitude,<sup>129</sup> as it is reflected in his sayings on various issues covered by the Torah, will reveal an

<sup>126</sup> Athanasius Polag, *Die Christologie der Logienquelle* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 80.

<sup>127</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 580.

<sup>128</sup> For a discussion of this line of reasoning in several of Jesus' parables, see Jacques Dupont, "Les implications christologiques de la parabole de la brebis perdue", in *Origines*, 346–350; idem, *Pourquoi des paraboles? La méthode parabolique de Jésus*, Lire la Bible 46 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1977), 34–38; also Eta Linnemann, *Gleichnisse Jesu: Einführung und Auslegung*, 6th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 93, 159–162.

<sup>129</sup> For the following two paragraphs, see Back, *Jesus*, 178–192 and the literature cited there.

underlying claim of *independence* with regard to the Torah. In his statements, he does not depend on the support of the Torah either in the form of general references or in the form of Torah exegesis. Also, the commandment of Lev 19:18 (“love your neighbour as yourself”) does not seem to stand out as the governing principle behind his Torah-related sayings. Rather, his statements are supported by his own authority. His independence does not necessarily imply criticism of the Torah, and he never offers explicit criticism thereof; but he is not very concerned about being in agreement with it either, and sometimes he does criticize it in an implicit manner. It should be noted that his independence as well as the implied criticism is not confined to the post-scriptural halakhah of the Pharisees (and others), for the distinction between Torah and halakhah does not in general seem important to him.<sup>130</sup>

His independence with regard to the Torah is but one side of the coin. The other side is his claim to an *immediate knowledge* of God’s will and mindset. Kümmel saw this long ago and reasonably explained, “Er (erhebt) den Anspruch, *unmittelbar* Gottes Willen zu wissen: *Ich* aber sage euch, und was ich sage, das *ist* Gottes Wille.”<sup>131</sup> This claim of immediacy with regard to God’s will causes independence with regard to the Torah, and means that Jesus is able to speak and act, as Mark says, ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων.

The claims to independence and immediacy are reflected in several Sabbath sayings. Greeven pointed out in his seminal article on the τίς ἔξ ὑμῶν-sayings that these sayings are marked by *Unmittelbarkeit*; they convey the Jesuanic claim to know God’s mindset and actions without Torah exegesis.<sup>132</sup> This is also true of Luke 14:5/Matt 12:11–12a. Interpreting and defending his Sabbath healing, Jesus speaks as if he knew the ways of God immediately; even if an important Torah commandment was involved, there seemed to be no need to consult the texts.

<sup>130</sup> With an eye on the whole law-related authentic material in the synoptic Gospels, Westerholm correctly comments: “It is not sufficient to say that he [sc. Jesus], like the Sadducees, rejected scribal additions to scriptural law; with the exception of the polemic connected with the handwashing dispute [Mark 7:6–13], he made no attempt to distinguish the two” (*Jesus*, 91; cf. *ibid.*, 61, 89, 128).

<sup>131</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, “Jesus und der jüdische Traditionsgedanke,” *ZNW* 33 (1934): 126.

<sup>132</sup> Greeven, “Wer unter euch...?”, 100–101.

In Mark 3:4, Jesus makes the point that healing on the Sabbath is simply necessary, no matter what the Sabbath commandment might have to say about the case at hand. For Jesus, the necessity was of course founded in the will of God. As far as the “free-floating” saying in Mark 2:27 is concerned, a reasonable conjecture would seem to be that it was originally used as a defence of Sabbath healing. Jesus then claimed to know that his healings were in accordance with the Creator’s will behind the Sabbath. By healing sick people, Jesus claimed to realize this divine will, to which he had immediate access.

A consequence of Jesus’ claims to independence and immediate knowledge of the ways of God was that he did not argue on the basis of a superior knowledge of Scripture or halakhah. He did not engage in halakhic or exegetical discussions of the Sabbath commandment. His approach was non-exegetical and non-halakhic.

Thus, we do not find him suggesting any new interpretation of the commandment. There is no attempt to indicate what מלאכה really is, and no attempt to show that his actions are not actually “work” but in fact allowed by the Torah. There is also no effort to distinguish between the written Torah on one hand and later halakhic definitions on the other, and there is no critique of the adversaries to the effect that their position involves a flawed interpretation of the Law.<sup>133</sup> Quite on the contrary, in Mark 2:25–26 he defends himself—i.e., the fact that he, as a teacher, had authorized the “reaping” on the part of his disciples—on the assumption that a transgression of the Sabbath commandment had indeed taken place (David, too, had done something which was not allowed: οὐκ ἔξεστιν, Mark 2:26).

However, as we noticed earlier, some scholars suggest that Jesus in Mark 3:4 as it were extends the פקוּחַ נפֿשׁ-principle so that it includes not only cases of life-threatening situations or lethal illnesses, but chronic diseases as well.<sup>134</sup> If this were the case, Jesus would, after all, be the originator of a new Sabbath halakhah.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>133</sup> In Matt 12:7 the Pharisees are blamed for a lack of knowledge of the Scriptures, in this case Hos 6:6: ἔλεος θέλω καὶ οὐ θυσίαν. But first, this ignorance is connected to their misunderstanding of Jesus, whose ministry is marked by mercy (ἔλεος). And secondly, Matt 12:5–7 is probably a creation by the evangelist. Cf. Back, *Jesus*, 102–105.

<sup>134</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 266, 329; Doering, *Sabbat*, 453–454, 477; Theissen and Winter, *Quest*, 181.

<sup>135</sup> Pace Doering, who oddly speaks of Jesus’ “non-halakhic position” although he himself insists that Jesus in Mark 3:4 appeals to a principle “die fest in den



An explanation along these lines would fit Matt 12:12b rather well,<sup>136</sup> but it is a bit off the mark as far as Mark 3:4 is concerned. Here, Jesus does not in fact reason on the basis of a principle which he tries to reinterpret by suggesting a wider application of it. Rather, he criticizes the halakhic approach by making it seem absurd. This effect is achieved by combining the halakhic term ἔξεστιν with the black-and-white alternatives ψυχήν σῶσαι and ἀποκτείνειν. Of course ψυχήν σῶσαι is not only allowed but simply necessary, the alternative being ἀποκτείνειν. Nevertheless, Jesus suggests, there is an approach which, when confronted with Jesus' healing activity, triggers the question whether it is "allowed" to "save a soul" rather than to "kill" on the Sabbath. This is the halakhic approach of his adversaries, who follow the common interpretation of the Sabbath commandment.

This interpretation is now called into question by Jesus. But—and this is significant—the object of his criticism is not a certain interpretation in distinction to the commandment itself. There is no hint of any distinction between the Torah and the halakhah here. Jesus simply turns against the Sabbath commandment as it was interpreted by the teachers of halakhah—without indicating whether the interpretation in question is correct or not.

Jesus, then, does not seem to have been very interested in correcting or modifying existing rules or in proposing new ones—not even in Mark 3:4. His was not an exegetical or a halakhic approach.

(ii) Jesus also defended his Sabbath acts with an awareness that he was inaugurating the eschatological and salvific reign of God. The essentials of this aspect should be clear by now (see above), but an additional comment is apposite here. It concerns what may be termed the "ethical character" of the βασιλεία, which was being mediated by Jesus through his mighty acts.<sup>137</sup> Healing sick people means of course fulfilling their "needs" and showing them "love." Nevertheless, it would be inadequate to state that Jesus simply subjected the Sabbath commandment to human needs or that he appealed to a higher command-

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halachischen Diskussionen über den Sabbat verankert ist" (*Schabbat*, 477; cf. *ibid.*, 478).

<sup>136</sup> In Matthew 12:11–12, there is an argument which concludes with the statement ὥστε ἔξεστιν τοῖς σάββασις καλῶς ποιεῖν, which certainly sounds like a new halakhic rule. But this rule is of course secondary; it is the outcome of Matthew's redactional work on Mark 3:4, and hence cannot be used to illuminate Jesus' stance in the matter.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 329.

ment within the Torah, i.e., the love commandment of Lev 19:18. The healing of the withered hand in Mark 3, for example, may of course be described as “eine einfache Liebestat,”<sup>138</sup> but such a description would still not reach the heart of the matter, viz. Jesus’ interpretation of this “simple act” as an instance of the future reign of God being in the process of breaking through into this world of human suffering.

## 6. Conclusion

Jesus did acts of healing on the Sabbath. This meant that he transgressed the Sabbath commandment as it was interpreted by Pharisees and others. Jesus, then, showed no interest in keeping the Sabbath ἀκριβῶς. He was a non-conformist, but not in the same sense as the radical allegorists, nor in the sense that he was ignorant or lax or liberal, but because he was engaged in “the King’s business”, the βασιλεία-work. Jesus interpreted his acts of healing and his exorcisms in terms of the βασιλεία: God was bringing in the eschatological salvation. This interpretation is reflected also in his Sabbath sayings.

When criticized, he answered the criticism and defended his actions, speaking ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων. But he did not defend himself in a halakhic way. He did not create a novel Jesuanic Sabbath halakhah, e.g., by interpreting the Sabbath commandment in a new way or by extending current halakhic principles. Instead, the basis of the Jesuanic ἐξουσία was a conviction of having an immediate awareness of God’s will and of being on “the King’s business.”

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<sup>138</sup> Kümmel, “Jesus,” 121. Similarly Jeremias, *Theologie*, 202; James D. G. Dunn, “Mark 2.1–3:6: A Bridge Between Jesus and Paul on the Question of the Law”, *NTS* 30 (1984): 408: “The episode illustrates how Jesus extracted from the breadth of the law one overriding principle—love your neighbour.”



## JESUS AND THE TEMPLE\*

JOSTEIN ÅDNA

Any historical treatment of Jesus of Nazareth must include a discussion of his relationship to the temple in Jerusalem, in view of its position as the religious centre for almost all Jews both in the land of the fathers and throughout the wide Diaspora in the first century CE.<sup>1</sup> Irrespective of how one categorises *the historical figure of Jesus*<sup>2</sup>—i.e., as a charismatic miracle worker, an itinerant sage, a teacher, a prophet, a messianic claimant, or otherwise—he must be assumed to have consciously and deliberately positioned himself in regard to the temple. In fact, both the gospels and other New Testament writings contain a great number of references to the temple. Hence, there seems to be plenty of evidence accessible for a discussion of Jesus' attitude to the temple. However, an investigation committed to the limited as well as ambitious goal of clarifying how the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth related to the temple in Jerusalem, must critically scrutinise the evidence in order to distinguish between what actually portrays and reflects Jesus within the historical context prior to Easter, and what represents a post-Easter perspective. Consequently, our first task must be to identify the material that might serve our objective of describing Jesus' relationship to the temple in Jerusalem.

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\* Thanks to John Goldie MA for helpful suggestions for linguistic corrections and improvements.

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the temple in Jerusalem as the religious and national centre of the Jewish people in the 1st century CE, also with important political and economic functions, cf. *inter alia* Shmuel Safrai, "The Temple," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern, CRINT 1.2 (Assen/Maastricht: van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976; repr., 1987), 865–907; Ed P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE–66CE* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 47–169; Kurt Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu: Die Traditionen von Tempelzerstörung und Tempelneuerung im Neuen Testament*, FRLANT 184 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 136–149; and Gregory Stevenson, *Power and Place: Temple and Identity in the Book of Revelation*, BZNBW 107, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 115–182.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the book by Ed P. Sanders with the corresponding title: *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993).

### 1. *A Survey of Texts in the New Testament Relating to the Temple*

New Testament writings whose contents explicitly and unequivocally belong to the post-Easter period, like the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, might, notwithstanding their late date, still be of some indirect relevance with regard to the historical Jesus.<sup>3</sup> According to Acts the Christian community in Jerusalem regularly assembled in the temple precincts and porticoes (2:46; 5:12, 42) and, in spite of some obvious tensions and conflicts with the temple authorities (cf. 4:1–3; 5:19–21, 25–26), members of the Christian community also participated in the service of the temple congregation and in sacrificial rites (cf. 3:1; 21:23–24). Of course, a number of varying factors might have influenced Jewish Christians in Jerusalem to act in regard to the temple in these ways.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that one decisive formative element has been Jesus' relationship to it; hence, the more easily the post-Easter Christian practice and theology relating to the temple can be drawn from or at least be put in some causal connection to our reconstructed picture of Jesus' attitude to the temple, the more plausible this reconstruction turns out to be.<sup>5</sup>

Turning to the gospels, the Gospel of John stands out as a particular case which raises a number of specific challenges not unique to the theme of Jesus and the temple, but of a more general kind relating to all research on the historical Jesus. As a matter of fact, the temple, both

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview over the pertinent texts cf. Jostein Ådna, "Christlicher Umgang mit dem Tempel in Jerusalem: Neues Testament," *RGG*<sup>3</sup> 8:149–150 (English version forthcoming in the English edition *Religion in Past and Present* [Leiden; Boston: Brill]). A more detailed treatment is offered by Gabriele Fassbeck, *Der Tempel der Christen: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Aufnahme des Tempelkonzepts im frühen Christentum*, Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 33 (Tübingen: Francke, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Or, to put this with greater historical caution, a number of factors might have brought Luke or the authors of his sources to conceive of such a practice among early Christians in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> Personally, I include here also theological expositions on Christ or the church as the new sanctuary (e.g. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:22) and on the death of Christ as the ultimate atoning sacrifice surpassing and substituting the sacrificial cult (e.g. Rom 3:25–26; 1 Pet 3:18; Heb 9:26–28) as parts of early Christian theology assumed to have been influenced by Jesus' position towards the temple. Many scholars are more hesitant with regard to such an *a priori* assumption of a causal link between Jesus and this kind of post-Easter theology, because they consider Easter to be such a radical break that much theological reasoning in the early church was developed on the basis of the belief in and the experience of the resurrected Lord without any traceable continuity to the pre-Easter situation.

as an institution and as a theological issue, has during recent years attracted Johannine scholars to such an extent that there seems to have been published more on (Jesus and) the temple in the Gospel of John than on the same theme in the other gospels or on the historical Jesus and the temple.<sup>6</sup> Within the synoptic gospels the infancy narratives in Luke 1–2 are characterised by a religious piety oriented towards the temple (cf. 1:5–23; 2:22–24, 41, 49).<sup>7</sup> However, for the purpose of this article we must restrict ourselves to materials that relate to the public ministry of Jesus. Apart from the general presentation in all the gospels that Jesus whilst in Jerusalem spent much time in the temple precincts and porticoes (e.g. John 7:14, 28; 8:20; 10:22–23; Mark 11:27–13:2 par.; Luke 21:37–38), retrospectively summarised by himself at his arrest in Gethsemane, “Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me” (Mark 14:49 NRSV; biblical quotations not following NRSV will be explicitly marked), in particular some specific accounts and logia are relevant. To these belong the accounts about the poor widow’s offering (Mark 12:41–44 par. Luke 21:1–4), the payment of the temple tax (Matt 17:24–27) and the healing of a man with leprosy (Mark 1:40–44 par. Matt 8:1–4 and Luke 5:12–14) and, further,

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<sup>6</sup> Due to restricted space I cannot list this literature here. Cf. references in the bibliography of Kåre Sigvald Fuglseth, *Johannine Sectarianism in Perspective: A Sociological, Historical, and Comparative Analysis of Temple and Social Relationships in the Gospel of John, Philo and Qumran*, NovTSup 119 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005) to *inter alia* the monographs of Gunnar Østenstad, Johannes Frühwald-König, Johanna Rahner (1998) and Alan R. Kerr (2002) as well as to the articles of Mark Kinzer (1998), Judith Lieu (1999) and Jarl H. Ulrichsen (2003). Not mentioned by Fuglseth are Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); Ricardo López Rosas, *La Señal del Templo Jn 2,13–22: Redefinición Cristológica de lo Sacro*, Biblioteca Mexicana 12 (México: Departamento de Publicaciones Universidad Pontificia de México, 2001) and Mark R. Bredin, “John’s Account of Jesus’ Demonstration in the Temple: Violent or Nonviolent?,” *BTB* 33 (2003): 44–50. After the completion of this article two new monographs on the temple and the temple act in Mark have appeared: Timothy C. Gray, *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in its Narrative Role*, WUNT 2.242 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Solomon Hon-fai Wong, *The Temple Incident in Mark 11, 15–19: The Disclosure of Jesus and the Marcan Faction*, New Testament Studies in Contextual Exegesis 5 (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2009).

The most recent major work on Jesus and the temple in the other gospels that I am aware of, is Emilio G. Chávez, *The Theological Significance of Jesus’ Temple Action in Mark’s Gospel*, Toronto Studies in Theology 87 (Lampeter: Mellen, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Here I refrain from an historical analysis of Luke’s infancy narratives. But even if much of the material in Luke 1–2 might be legendary, nevertheless it reflects a dedicated closeness to the temple characteristic of the Jewish Christian tradents of this source material taken up by the evangelist and utilised by him for the introductory part of his gospel.

the sayings about the offering of a gift at the altar (Matt 5:23–24) and about Jerusalem and the temple as the dwelling place of God (cf. Matt 5:35b and 23:21) as well as Jesus' lament over Jerusalem and its "house" which will be desolated (Luke 13:34–35 par. Matt 23:37–39, cf. also Luke 19:41–44). Notwithstanding the relevance of all these texts, there are, however, one particular account and one group of related logia that stand out as the most conspicuous material for any investigation of Jesus' relationship to the temple in Jerusalem, viz. the account about his temple act, related by all four evangelists (Matt 21:12–17; Mark 11:15–19; Luke 19:45–48; John 2:13–22), and the logia about the destruction, or the destruction and the establishment of the (new) temple (Matt 24:2 par. Mark 13:2 and Luke 21:6, on the one hand, and Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19; *Gos. Thom.* 71; Acts 6:14, on the other hand). If the temple act is an historical incident and the sayings about the destruction and renewal of the temple are authentic, these traditions will definitely be the most decisive evidence for clarifying how Jesus of Nazareth related to the temple in Jerusalem. Hence, the bulk of this article (parts 2–4) will be dedicated to an investigation of the temple act and the temple sayings, followed by a very short reflection on how they relate to the rest of the temple-related traditions from Jesus' public ministry, mentioned above (part 5).

## 2. *Historicity and Authenticity of the Temple Act and the Temple Sayings*

### 2.1. *The Temple Act*

Even though the differing contextual positioning of the account about Jesus' temple act in John, on the one hand, and in the synoptic gospels, on the other, viz. at an early point in Jesus' career *contra* during his last stay in Jerusalem, has caused a few scholars to deduce that Jesus acted twice in the temple and some more to assume that the Johannine date is correct, the vast majority concludes on very solid grounds in favour of the synoptic chronology.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> To many modern scholars it is probably a surprise to learn that prior to the upcoming of critical biblical scholarship during and after the Enlightenment there was not a unanimous assumption in exegesis that Jesus performed two temple actions. Christina Metzdorf, *Die Tempelaktion Jesu: Patristische und historisch-kritische Exegese im Vergleich*, WUNT 2.168 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 42–127, has shown that

However, the demonstration of an original position for the temple act *paradosis* within the account about Jesus' final stay in Jerusalem does not yet answer the crucial historical question regarding this alleged incident. As a matter of fact, in scholarship weighty objections have been voiced against the temple act, both with regard to the way the evangelists recount it, and with regard to whether it is an imaginable historical event at all. Formulated as critical questions, these objections can be put in the following way: 1) How was one person alone able to drive out all the merchants, animals and buyers from the huge outer court of the temple? 2) Why did the money-changers and the sellers, and perhaps the buyers as well, not resist this enforced closing of the temple market? 3) Why did the Jewish temple police not intervene to stop Jesus in obstructing the market activities? 4) Finally, why did the Roman soldiers in the Antonia fortress, at the north-western corner of the temple area, not intervene to put down this violent uprising?<sup>9</sup>

An unconvincing attempt to counteract these serious objections against the historicity is, in my opinion, the claim that Jesus actually acted together with a huge group of followers in attacking and success-

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both the number of incidents as well as many other historical questions relating to the temple act were extensively discussed in patristic literature. For a survey of opinions in modern scholarship on the number of temple actions and, in case of only one, its chronological date cf. Metzdorf, 183–185, and Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel: Die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung*, WUNT 2.119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 190 n. 89, 309–316. The most recent advocacy of an early date for Jesus' temple act has been presented by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Jesus and the Money Changers (Mark 11:15–17; John 2:13–17)," *RB* 107 (2000): 42–55. The premise for his assumption that "Jesus' action against the money changers in the temple must be placed very early in his career" (53), is that it was borne by an attitude and a message identical to that of John the Baptist which Jesus according to Murphy-O'Connor shared during the first phase of his public ministry and is to be distinguished from the second, independent phase after the arrest of the Baptist.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed presentation of these objections against the historicity of the temple act, with due references to the scholarly literature (e.g. Ernst Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu: Eine Erklärung des Markus-Evangeliums und der kanonischen Parallelen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968], 382–389), cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 8–11, 300–301. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, KEK 1.2, 17th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 237, has managed to concentrate the most crucial points in one sentence: "Geschichtlich läßt sich der Vorfall kaum noch ganz erkennen; denn es ist schwer vorstellbar, wie Jesus allein den weiten Tempelplatz sollte gesäubert haben, weshalb die Tempelpolizei nicht eingegriffen hat...oder die römische Wache auf der Burg Antonia, weshalb diese Tat in dem Prozeß Jesu keine Rolle spielt." Objections of this kind against the historicity were already discussed in patristic exegesis; the most detailed discussion is to be found in Origen according to Metzdorf, *Die Tempelaktion Jesu*, 50–54.



fully bringing the whole temple under his control so that there was no time or room for any resistance.<sup>10</sup> A potentially valid defence of the historicity against the referred objections is, however, that the scene of Jesus' temple act was limited to a small area within the temple precincts and that the incident itself was a fairly modest episode not even attracting the interest of the Roman soldiers. An important result of the archaeological research in Jerusalem after 1967 has been a more precise comprehension of the character of the Herodian Temple than before. The combination of the available archaeological-architectural and literary evidence now leads to the conclusion that the temple market was situated in the basilica-like hall along the southern wall of the Herodian Temple complex, extensively described by Josephus, and named by him the *Royal Stoa* (*Ant.* 15.411–416).<sup>11</sup> During recent years a number of scholars have accepted the Royal Stoa (or the Royal

<sup>10</sup> Those who regard Jesus as a messianic claimant with affinity to the Zealots describe his temple act as a revolutionary attack on the temple, cf. S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967), esp. 331–340. However, the assumption that Jesus was supported by a huge crowd of followers in taking over the control of the temple has also been advocated independently of the idea that he was a Zealot revolutionary, e.g. by Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 228, and Ben F. Meyer, *Christus Faber: The Master Builder and the House of God* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 263–264. For a critical assessment of such “maximalist” historical reconstructions cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 301–306.

Bruce Chilton, who already in *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992) repeatedly spoke about “Jesus’ occupation of the Temple” (cf. *inter alia* the title of the sixth chapter, 91–111), has recently given a vivid description of Jesus’ takeover of the temple, assisted by some 150 to 200 supporters, in *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 228–230. What Chilton offers is purely novelistic fiction, however, which might be entertaining and fascinating to read, but which has nothing to do with serious historical reconstruction.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. numerous articles by the late Benjamin Mazar, the director of the excavations south and south-west of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during the years 1968–1977, and by his co-worker, the architect Leen Ritmeyer, e.g. B. Mazar, “The Royal Stoa in the Southern Part of the Temple Mount,” *PAAJR* 46–47 (1979–1980): 381–387, repr. in *Recent Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, ed. H. Shanks (Washington: Biblical Archaeology Society; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1984), 141–147. For a detailed archaeological and architectural analysis supporting the identification of the Royal Stoa as the site of the temple market, cf. Jostein Ådna, *Jerusalem Tempel und Tempelmarkt im 1. Jahrhundert n.Chr.*, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 25 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 3–90. Although not mentioning the Royal Stoa explicitly, Dan Bahat, “Jesus and the Herodian Temple Mount,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 300–308, at 306, also situates the stalls of the money changers here, i.e., in the “space which is more or less in the area occupied today by the Aqsa mosque.”

Portico) as the scene of Jesus' encounter with the money-changers and the vendors of doves.<sup>12</sup>

Before we can go any further towards a conclusion regarding the historicity of Jesus' act based on historically imaginable circumstances in the temple, we must also address another set of objections that have been raised in recent scholarship. According to George Wesley Buchanan, the account of Jesus' action is a midrashic composition in which early Christians who believed that Jesus was the Messiah attributed to him an act of cleansing of the temple from an alleged "necessity of the doctrines and messianic expectations."<sup>13</sup> Henk Jan de Jonge has proposed a similar origin for this *paradosis*, claiming that the belief among Christians that Jesus had inaugurated God's kingdom on earth brought some of them to deduce that Jesus then must have fulfilled the prophetic vision of Zechariah 14 which culminates in the statement: "and there shall no longer be traders in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day" (v. 21b). Hence, the cleansing of the temple, recounted in Mark 11:15, "is a response in narrative form to the prophetic vision of Zech 14:21," and as a consequence of this recognition of the character of the tradition "any attempt to interpret it as an account of an historical event in Jesus' life becomes superfluous."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to those already mentioned in *Adna, Jerusalemer Tempel*, 89—viz., Richard M. Mackowski, Eckhart Otto, David Flusser, Peter Stuhlmacher, Rainer Riesner and Helmut Merklein—cf. P. M. Casey, "Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple", *CBQ* 59 (1997): 306–332, at 309; Murphy-O'Connor, "Jesus and the Money Changers," 44; Adela Yarbro Collins, "Jesus' Action in Herod's Temple," in *Antiquity and Humanity: Essays on Ancient Religion and Philosophy Presented to Hans Dieter Betz on his 70th Birthday*, ed. idem and M. M. Mitchell (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 45–61, 58; Anna Maria Schwemer, "Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester: Das *munus triplex* und die frühe Christologie," in *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie: Vier Studien*, ed. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, WUNT 138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 165–230, at 221; Dieter Zeller, "Die Beseitigung des Handels im Tempel (Mark 11,15–19): Ein Beispiel für die umstrittene Stellung Jesu zum jüdischen Kult", in *Variationen des Christseins—Wege durch die Kirchengeschichte: Festschrift Peter Fiedler, Übergänge 7*, ed. Reinhard Wunderlich and Bernd Feininger (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2006), 65–81, at 69 and 80.

<sup>13</sup> G. W. Buchanan, "Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple?," *NTS* 37 (1991): 280–290, at 284.

<sup>14</sup> Henk Jan de Jonge, "The Cleansing of the Temple in Mark 11:15 and Zechariah 14:21," in *The Book of Zechariah and its Influence*, ed. Christopher Tuckett (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003), 87–99, at 93. *Ibid.*, 94: "The idea . . . that in Jesus' ministry God had begun to intervene in the history of mankind . . . was given a narrative form with the aid of the notion of the absence of traders from the temple . . . If Jesus' followers believed him to be the one who had inaugurated God's reign on earth, it was quite natural for them to believe that on arriving in Jerusalem he had driven out the traders from the temple."

Some other scholars have suggested that the scene in the temple was invented by the evangelist Mark as a fictitious narrative unit to serve his overarching theological agenda.

The temple act cannot be historical. If one deletes from the story those themes essential to the Markan plots, there is nothing left over for historical reminiscence. The anti-temple theme is clearly Markan and the reasons for it can be explained.<sup>15</sup>

[T]he act fits the Second Gospel's plot line so well that its compositional appropriateness far outweighs the difficulties in trying to conceive it as a historical event...When the aims of Mark are considered, the temple act can be seen to fit nicely into his literary agenda for his gospel. Logic dictates that the compositional alternative be chosen over the historical one.<sup>16</sup>

In two almost identical essays on historical method Robert J. Miller has argued strongly in favour of the methodology inherent in these two quoted examples, only conceding a valid assumption of historicity if "we have no other reasonable way to account for the presence of a story in the text."<sup>17</sup> Such extreme pleading on principle against historicity in the New Testament gospels, exemplified in the rejection that "*any* behavior by the historical Jesus...might have stood as the source of the traditions concerning the temple act,"<sup>18</sup> has provoked some strong counterattacks. For instance, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor has characterised Miller as a "partisan of ahistoricity," and he cor-

<sup>15</sup> Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 292.

<sup>16</sup> David Seeley, "Jesus' Temple Act," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 263–283, at 280 and 283. Cf. also Seeley's reaction to the criticism by P. M. Casey (cf. n. 12) in "Jesus' Temple Act Revisited: A Response to P. M. Casey," *CBQ* 62 (2000): 55–63. Also in this second article Seeley firmly holds to his rejection of the historicity of the incident: "[T]he easiest and simplest course is still to take the episode as a Marcan composition" (63).

Whereas Seeley, "Jesus' Temple Act," 280, considers it as possible that Mark "may have come upon Zech 14:21 and realized that it offered just the tack he needed for his narrative," de Jonge ascribes the creation of the temple act narrative, inspired by this verse, to some anonymous followers of Jesus prior to Mark, and claims that Mark probably was no longer aware of the narrative's origin in this prophetic vision: "For Mark, the traditional Jewish religion had failed. Mark's view of the temple cult is diametrically opposed to that of Zech 14. It is hard to believe, therefore, that Mark still saw any relationship between his cleansing story and Zech 14:21" (de Jonge, 95).

<sup>17</sup> R. J. Miller, "The (A)Historicity of Jesus' Temple Demonstration: A Test Case in Methodology," *SBL.SP* 127 (1991): 235–252; idem, "Historical Method and the Deeds of Jesus: The Test Case of the Temple Demonstration," *Forum* 8 (1992): 5–30. The quote is taken from "Historical Method," 29.

<sup>18</sup> Seeley, "Jesus' Temple Act," 264 n. 2 (italics in the text).

rectly observes that “Miller’s statement is not a methodological principle guaranteeing knowledge, it is an invitation to scepticism.”<sup>19</sup> He is joined by P. M. Casey who states,

Since this excludes *by method* any possibility that a gospel writer could find his plot on correct information about an important sequence of events, it should not be accepted as a principle for serious historical research. Rather, it illustrates the destructive nature of this approach to criticism of the Gospels.<sup>20</sup>

According to Casey’s judgement, the method of giving priority to a compositional origin of gospel accounts “is especially disastrous in dealing with the cleansing of the temple, which has a *Sitz im Leben* only in the life of Jesus.”<sup>21</sup> Whether or not the account about Jesus’ temple act might have a plausible *Sitz im Leben* exclusively in the historical context of Jesus and not in the early church is, of course, a matter of dispute linked to the discussion of how this episode is to be interpreted. But anyway, the justification for assuming an origin of the temple act *paradosis* in an historical event is in my opinion well founded. If we return to the point made above regarding an historically imaginable frame for an act of this kind in the basilica-like Royal Stoa in the temple, and supplement the finding of this plausible scene with a literary-critical and a traditio-critical analysis of the pertinent gospel texts, we will be able to reach a more definite conclusion on the historicity.

There is almost unanimous agreement among scholars that the Matthean and Lukan versions of the temple act are dependent on the Markan account.<sup>22</sup> Whether there exists a literary link to the Johannine

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<sup>19</sup> Murphy-O’Connor, “Jesus and the Money Changers,” 44. Contrary to its claim, the principle of priority of a compositional origin over an historical one weakens the critical judgement regarding historicity because “all that one needs to deny the historicity of an event is an imagination fertile enough to develop a hypothesis explaining how the story might have been created” (*ibid.*).

<sup>20</sup> Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 331 (*italics in the text*). Addressed at Seeley in particular, Casey declares that his “argument excludes *by method* even the possibility that there was a real event which was later written up with secondary material... Seeley has done what he accuses Mark of: he has written fiction, only he has done it by making up interpretations of which there is little or no sign in the text” (329, 330; *italics in the text*).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 329. In Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 317–321, I discussed the contributions by Buchanan, Mack, Seeley and Miller and concluded in agreement with Casey.

<sup>22</sup> This evaluation, in full agreement with the dominant two source theory on the synoptic problem, is upheld among scholars in spite of the fact that the Markan version contains some additional elements missing both in Matthew and Luke, i.e. in

version too is more disputed. In agreement with *inter alios* Peder Borgen and Mark A. Matson I consider John's version to be literarily independent of the synoptics.<sup>23</sup> The assumption of the literary independence of John 2:13–22 naturally leads to considerations about whether the present version is the result of a redactional adaptation of an earlier pre-Johannine stage of the tradition, and consequently about the relationship between this version and the alleged pre-Markan stage of the synoptic branch of tradition. It is common to regard certain elements unique to the pre-Johannine tradition—foremost the presence of sheep and cattle in the temple market as well as Jesus' usage of a whip of cords—as secondary, dramatising features added to the story.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, scholars only rarely claim a general priority for the whole part of the pre-Johannine version with a comparable parallel in Mark, i.e. John 2:14–16\*, over against the corresponding pre-Markan tradition. Till Arend Mohr is one of the few firm proponents of such a view.<sup>25</sup> My own conclusion to a detailed traditio-critical analysis of John 2:13–22 is that the earliest level of pre-Johannine tradition is restricted to elements which are common with what is recounted in Mark 11:15, i.e. that Jesus overturned tables of the money-changers and that he had a confrontation with the sellers of doves.<sup>26</sup>

Turning finally to the traditio-critical analysis of Mark 11:15–19, we find that a number of scholars restrict the pre-Markan part of the tra-

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particular the whole verse Mark 11:16 and the phrase “for all the nations” (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) in the quotation from Isa 56:7 as part of Jesus' accompanying word. In my opinion it is not necessary to claim that there existed an “Ur-Markus” in which these elements were not present and to which the two other synoptic gospels related, in order to advocate Matthew's and Luke's dependence on Mark. Cf. my literary-critical analysis of the synoptic parallel accounts in Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 159–178.

<sup>23</sup> The assessment of this question partly depends on how scholars view the literary relationship between John and the other gospels in general. For a denial of literary dependence cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 179–190; Peder Borgen, “John and the Synoptics,” in *idem*, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 121–157, and M. A. Matson, “The Contribution to the Temple Cleansing by the Fourth Gospel,” *SBLSP* 128 (1992): 489–506, at 499: “We are left, then, with too many unexplained differences to fit into a model of literary relationship... it is best to conclude that John contains an independent version of the same episode.”

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 191–193. Sheep and cattle were purchased at markets outside the temple (cf. Ådna, *Jerusalem Tempel*, 120–126).

<sup>25</sup> Till Arend Mohr, *Markus- und Johannespassion: Redaktions- und traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung der Markinischen und Johanneischen Passionstradition*, *Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments* 70 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 86–92.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 72–74 and Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 191–212 and the scholarly literature referred to there.

dition solely to v. 15b, “And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves.”<sup>27</sup> According to these scholars, the subsequent v. 16, “and he did not allow anyone to carry any vessel through the temple” (my translation), is a secondary expansion.<sup>28</sup> However, many scholars do not accept the premise that v. 16 contradicts v. 15b or that it is too enigmatic to be an inherent part of the *paradosis*, and therefore they consider v. 16 to belong to the same stage as v. 15(b).<sup>29</sup> Moving on to v. 17, we find that many scholars who have different opinions regarding the inner relationship between the preceding verses 15(b) and 16, agree that this verse did not belong to the original form of the *paradosis*; mostly they regard it as a Markan redactional addition: “He was teaching and saying, ‘Is it not written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations”? But you have made it a den of robbers.’” Although they do not recognise v. 17 as part of the pre-Markan version, many of these scholars nevertheless assume that

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<sup>27</sup> Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 234–242, delivers a literary- and traditio-critical analysis of Mark 11:15–19 which concludes that only v. 15b belongs to the earliest level (of a development in altogether four stages): “Da nun an V. 15b keinerlei Spuren späterer Bearbeitung zu erkennen sind, steht Mark 11, 15b somit als die älteste greifbare Tradition der Tempelreinigung Jesu und damit wohl auch als der historische Kern dieser Überlieferung fest” (241–242). Also Ed P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985) (deduced from his explicit statements about the secondary character of vv. 16 and 17 [364 n. 1 and p. 66]) and Zeller, “Die Beseitigung des Handels,” 68, reckon v. 15b as the traditio-critical nucleus of the temple act *paradosis*. Maria Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen Jesu: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem geschichtlichen Jesus*, Forschungen zur Bibel 37 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1980), 83–84, holds the whole of v. 15 to be original.

<sup>28</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 364 n. 1 even seems to contemplate the possibility that this verse might be a late gloss added to the Markan text. Some scholars consider v. 16 as a Markan redactional addition, but because of the verse’s enigmatic character, as seen from a Markan perspective, it is more common to ascribe v. 16 to a particular Jewish-Christian stage of the tradition process, as do Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen*, 108–109, and Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 240–241, according to whom v. 16, together with parts of v. 17, represents the second stage, characterised as “juden-christliche Neuinterpretation” (242), of the four he reckons with (cf. n. 27).

<sup>29</sup> E.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 29, 9th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 36; Mohr, *Markus- und Johanespassion*, 92; John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 359; Peter Richardson, “Why Turn the Tables? Jesus’ Protest in the Temple Precincts,” *SBL.SP* 128 (1992): 507–523, 521; Collins, “Jesus’ Action in Herod’s Temple,” 46–47, and Casey, “Culture and Historicity,” 310: “Jesus’ prohibition of carrying through is entirely coherent with his removal of traders.”

Jesus' action in the temple was accompanied by some words that commented on or explained what he was doing.<sup>30</sup> Varying proposals have been made regarding which original saying has been replaced by the present v. 17: First, the corresponding words of Jesus in the Johannine version, "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" (John 2:16b) have been suggested as the original accompanying saying;<sup>31</sup> second, both Mark 13:2 and 14:58, or some pre-Markan version of these sayings, have been proposed;<sup>32</sup> and, third, some have suggested an original saying by Jesus of which no direct trait or echo is any longer preserved in the New Testament.<sup>33</sup> However, in spite of this widespread scepticism against Mark 11:17, during recent years an increasing acceptance of the authenticity of this verse can clearly be observed.<sup>34</sup> In my opinion, both vv. 15b–16 and 17 belong to the original temple act tradition, with a possible exception for the introduction of the saying in v. 17, καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, whereas v. 18 is a redactional, albeit historically accurate, comment, and vv. 15a and 19 make up the redactional frame which integrates the episode in the temple into the Markan chronological scheme of eight days for the events

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Zeller, "Die Beseitigung des Handels," 68: "[E]s deutet doch einiges darauf hin, dass die Handlung Jesu in einem vormarkinischen Stadium einmal von einem tadelnden Wort Jesu, womöglich mit Anspielung auf die Schrift, begleitet war."

<sup>31</sup> Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 36; Mohr, *Markus*, 89, 92–95.

<sup>32</sup> Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen*, 122–126; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 71–77, at 75: "[T]he action and the saying form a unity. Jesus predicted (or threatened) the destruction of the temple and carried out an action symbolic of its destruction by demonstrating against the performance of the sacrifices." Cf. also Sanders, *The Historical Figure*, 260. Alternatively, Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 359, opts for *Gos. Thom.* 71 as the version of the temple saying spoken by Jesus at the occasion of his action in the temple.

<sup>33</sup> If, as some scholars assume, the temple act was inspired by or intended to hint at some other prophetic texts than those clearly reflected in Mark 11:17 (cf. 3.2.4), Jesus likely expressed this in an appropriate saying.

<sup>34</sup> Among recent advocates of the authenticity of Mark 11:17, the following can be mentioned: Barry D. Smith, "Objections to the Authenticity of Mark 11:17 Reconsidered," *WTJ* 54 (1992): 255–271; Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 311; Kim Huat Tan, *The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus*, SNTSMS 91 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 181–185; Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple (Mark 11:15–18): A Comparative Religion Approach," *JBL* 116 (1997): 455–472, at 458 and 467. Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 225 n. 240, for more scholars in favour of the authenticity of Jesus' saying in v. 17b. Whereas Crossan in *The Historical Jesus* favoured *Gos. Thom.* 71 as the authentic saying of Jesus on the occasion of the temple act (cf. n. 32), John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts*, rev. and updated ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), 262–263, accept the scriptural citation from Jer 7:11 and only mention *Gos. Thom.* 71 in passing as "an independent version" (264).

from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem until the finding of the empty tomb (Mark 11:1–16:8).<sup>35</sup> Together with most scholars, I assume that in the pre-Markan stage the account about Jesus' temple act was directly combined with the request for his authority to act in such a provocative way in Mark 11:27–33.<sup>36</sup>

Combining the outcome of the literary-critical and traditio-critical analysis with the discussion of historical plausibility above, we reach a conclusion regarding the historical reconstruction of the episode in the temple: Inside the Royal Stoa, where the temple market was situated, Jesus overturned some tables and seats belonging to the money-changers and the vendors of doves. Further, he did not allow the transport of vessels between the market area and the inner parts of the temple,<sup>37</sup> and he began to drive out of the market hall some of those who were selling and buying sacrificial items.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2. *The Sayings About the Temple*

We turn to the second group of traditions that we have identified as important for clarifying Jesus' attitude to the temple. The most

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed analysis, with extensive references to the scholarly literature, cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 213–231, 315.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 231–238, with due references to the scholarly literature.

<sup>37</sup> This is my understanding of Mark 11:16; cf. *Jesu Stellung*, 256–265 (see the criticism in Zeller, "Die Beseitigung des Handels," 69 n. 14).

<sup>38</sup> Although during recent years more scholars than those referred to above have rejected or, at least, strongly doubted the historicity of Jesus' temple act (e.g., Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996], 407–410; Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews* [New York: Vintage Books, 2000], 232, 251; Peter Fiedler, "Kultkritik im Neuen Testament?," in *Liturgiereformen: Historische Studien zu einem bleibenden Grundzug des christlichen Gottesdienstes. I: Biblische Modelle und Liturgiereformen von der Frühzeit bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. Martin Klöckener and Benedikt Kraneemann, *Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen* 88, [Münster: Aschendorf, 2002], 68–94, 84–85), it is nevertheless widely accepted today that *something* happened at this occasion in the temple. In addition to the scholars referred to in nn. 12 and 27–34, this holds true for *inter alios* Marcus J. Borg (cf. 3.1.3); N. Thomas Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 2 (London: SPCK, 1996), 415 n. 175, 424–425; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, *Christianity in the Making*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 637; Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. I.2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 61, and Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: A Key or a Puzzle?," *ZNW* 97 (2006): 1–22, at 6–8. A strong case in favour of the historicity is now also made by Klyne R. Snodgrass, "The Temple Incident," in *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence*, ed. Darrel L. Block and Robert L. Webb, *WUNT* 247 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 429–480, esp. 429–439.



detailed treatment of this material is to be found in Kurt Paesler's book *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, which actually is the only monograph ever exclusively dedicated to a source critical analysis and a historical interpretation of Jesus' temple saying(s), and in my book *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel*.<sup>39</sup> The following presentation will, therefore, mainly be based on these two studies.

Few scholars claim that absolutely all the logia about the destruction and renewal of the temple in Jerusalem which the gospels attribute to Jesus, originated after Easter, or even after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.<sup>40</sup> However, the variations between the different versions of the temple sayings—e.g., between those consisting of only one part, portending the destruction of the temple (Mark 13:2 par.; Acts 6:14), and those which add a second part about the succeeding renewal, or the differences regarding the exact content (Mark 14:58 being the most comprehensive version)—play a decisive role in combination with the scholars' general theories about how the sources are interrelated, when they seek to reconstruct an authentic form of Jesus' temple logion.

The most comprehensive version of the temple saying is found in Mark 14:58: "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (ἐγὼ καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τὸν χειροποίητον καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω)." Paesler and I agree that all the shorter variants in Mark 15:29; Matt 26:61; 27:40 and Acts 6:14 are secondary to or dependent on Mark 14:58 in spite of its comprehensiveness. More specifically, Paesler considers all four to be redactional adaptations of Mark 14:58.<sup>41</sup>

The temple saying is also present in the Gospel of Thomas; "Jesus says: 'I will [destroy this] house, and no one will be able to build it [again]'" (*Gos. Thom.* 71).<sup>42</sup> John Dominic Crossan has argued in

<sup>39</sup> Cf. how Christina Metzdorf, *Die Tempelaktion Jesu*, 192–194, compares the results of Paesler's and my analyses of the temple saying traditions.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret*, 402–406, for such an evaluation of the evidence.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 11–60, and Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 111–128. Alternatively, some scholars assume that the first part of the temple saying with the threat of destruction originated in Stephen and his Hellenistic circle; cf. Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels*, NovTSup 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 161–162 (cf. the helpful overview of Gaston's position in Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 364–365 n. 5), and Morna Hooker, "Traditions about the Temple in the Sayings of Jesus," *BJRL* 70 (1988): 7–19 (16).

<sup>42</sup> English translation according to *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, 15th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996), 537. Retranslation of the Coptic text of

favour of the primacy of this version, whose second part he interprets as an emphatic statement of the temple's complete and irrevocable demolition, expressed through the rendering, "I will destroy this house *utterly beyond repair*."<sup>43</sup> However, the inherent assumption that the second element of this saying was secondarily substituted by a contradictory positive statement about a future (re)building of the temple<sup>44</sup> is very unlikely.<sup>45</sup> Further, the usage of the auxiliary verb δύνασθαι in the second part as in Matt 26:61 and of "house" (οἶκος) instead of "temple" (ναός) as object also indicates the secondary nature of this version of the saying.<sup>46</sup> According to Paesler, "house" has replaced "temple" and has probably taken on the metaphorical meaning of "human body."<sup>47</sup> If this analysis is correct, in *Gos. Thom.* 71 the saying has been transformed to a denial of man's bodily resurrection. Within the context of the Gospel of Thomas this logion clearly expresses a gnostic notion of surpassing the material world and liberation from bodily imprisonment.<sup>48</sup>

After having eliminated the synoptic parallels of Mark 14:58 as well as Acts 6:14 and *Gos. Thom.* 71, we are left with John 2:19 as the last competing alternative: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will

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logion 71 to Greek: λέγει Ἰησοῦς· καταλύσω [τοῦτον τὸν] οἶκον καὶ οὐδεὶς δυνήσεται [πάλιν] οἰκοδομῆσαι αὐτόν (ibid.).

<sup>43</sup> Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 359 (my italics). Crossan's inclination to give priority to the version extant in the Gospel of Thomas is, at least partly, influenced by his general preference for this gospel as a source of reliable information about the historical Jesus (cf. ibid., 427–450).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Crossan, 356: "I take *Gospel of Thomas* 71 as the most original version we have, and it simply states emphatically: I will destroy this house so utterly that rebuilding will be impossible. The rebuilding does not, initially, reflect any spiritual substitution but is merely an emphatic way of stating utterly, completely, totally, and forever. It is not this version that eased off the rebuilding, taken negatively, but the other versions that have developed the rebuilding, taken positively."

<sup>45</sup> Cf. the convincing argument in Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 116.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Paesler, 116–118. He rejects Stephen J. Patterson's proposal that "this house" originally meant the Herodian dynasty and only after the death of Agrippa I in 44 CE was secondarily applied to the temple (cf. Paesler, 111–112, with references to Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1993]).

<sup>47</sup> Paesler regards 2 Cor 5:1 as a variant of the temple saying in which "house" (οἰκία) has the same metaphorical meaning (93–110). "House" as a metaphor for the human body has a Platonic background (cf. 96–97 n. 19 and 117 nn. 38, 39).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Paesler, 119–120: "In seiner heutigen Gestalt meint das Tempelwort des ThEv vermutlich den Leib. Möglich ist auch eine Deutung auf den Kosmos als οἶκος des Menschen; ein wesentlicher Unterschied zwischen beiden Deutungen besteht nicht, da das Log 71 in beiden Fällen die in Jesus begründete Aufhebung aller materieller Bindung als das Heilsziel des Gnostikers beschreibt."

raise it up (λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν).” Some scholars combine the observation that the version in Mark 14:58, according to which Jesus is the one who will destroy the temple (ἐγὼ καταλύσω), is characterised by the evangelist as a false testimony (Mark 14:57), and the usage of the imperative plural in John 2:19 (λύσατε), which is introduced by the evangelist as an explicit saying by Jesus himself, and conclude that the distortion in the presentation given by the witnesses during the interrogation recounted in Mark 14:53–55 must have been the accusation that Jesus himself intended to destroy the holy place.<sup>49</sup> In John 2:21 the temple that Jesus will raise up in three days is identified as his risen body. The use of ἐγείρειν in the second part of the temple saying instead of οἰκοδομεῖν as in all the parallels is obviously a redactional alteration to facilitate this application (cf. John 2:22, as well). The change to the second plural in the first part, which makes the saying an address to the Jewish opponents of Jesus, serves exactly the same adaptation of the saying to the body of Jesus; we can render it as follows: “If you destroy my body, I will raise it from the dead in three days.” According to the evangelist this is exactly what happened as his narrative unfolds (cf. John 11:47–53; 18:30.40; 19:6–7.12). In my opinion all the differences in John 2:19 as compared to Mark 14:58 can be explained as conscious editorial alterations of the Markan version.<sup>50</sup>

Kurt Paesler too regards the Johannine version of the temple saying as the result of redactional activity,<sup>51</sup> but unlike me, he does not derive it from Mark 14:58, but from an alleged independent pre-Johannine version: καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν οἰκοδομήσω αὐτόν (John 2:19\*<sup>52</sup>). Paesler is convinced that the phrase “in three days” must refer to the resurrection of Jesus,<sup>53</sup> and because of the inner tension between the object in the first and in the second part caused by διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν, he assumes an even earlier version without this

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 115 n. 89, for examples of scholars who argue in this way.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 112 n. 84 and 116–117, including n. 93.

<sup>51</sup> According to Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 66–67, the editorial changes by the evangelist include the imperative of λύειν, the preposition ἐν and ἐγερῶ. Paesler, 61–75, discusses the Johannine version of the temple saying within the context of John 2:13–22 and attributes also the combination of the temple act and the saying to the evangelist (68–69).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 74–75.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 167–178.

element—καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τούτου καὶ οἰκοδομήσω αὐτόν (labelled John 2:19<sup>(\*)</sup>)—according to which the temple in Jerusalem will be the object of both Jesus' future destruction and his (re)building activity.<sup>54</sup>

The most conspicuous difference between the reconstructed John 2:19<sup>\*</sup> and Mark 14:58 is the latter's distinction between the temple that Jesus will destroy and the one that he will build, expressed through the added attributes χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος. Paesler submits these epithets to a detailed examination. They are *topoi* from Greek and Jewish philosophical temple criticism, taken up by Hellenistic Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who had replaced the atoning cult of the temple by the invocation of Jesus' name, and in line with this Christological replacement of the temple had added the attributes χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος to the earlier version of the temple saying found in John 2:19<sup>\*</sup>.<sup>55</sup>

As already noted above, I consider John 2:19 to be directly dependent on Mark 14:58 and see no need or justification for assuming any independent pre-Johannine variant(s) as the earliest version of the two-part temple saying, from which both John 2:19 and Mark 14:58 are allegedly drawn. In my opinion, the epithets χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος applied to the temple in Jerusalem are associated with a strong Jewish apocalyptic tradition, frequently relating to Exod 15:17b–18 as its scriptural basis, that the eschatological temple on Mount Zion unlike its historical predecessors will not be built by human hands, but by God himself.<sup>56</sup> The temporal element in the saying, διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν, can also carry a general meaning completely independent of any reference to the resurrection, as it is a well-known expression for a short time span.<sup>57</sup> Hence, contrary to Paesler's claim, the additional elements in Mark 14:58 over against the earliest pre-Johannine stage of the saying in John 2:19<sup>(\*)</sup> do not necessarily presuppose a post-Easter origin, but are equally imaginable within the context of the historical Jesus. If the characterisation of the witnesses in Mark 14:57–59 as false can be taken to mean something else than merely that they applied to Jesus a saying that he had never uttered,

<sup>54</sup> Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 188–189, supported by Wedderburn, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 203–227, esp. 221–225.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 35–49, 91–110, in agreement with Schwemer, "Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester," 223. See *inter alia* 4Q174 1 I, 1–5; 11Q19 XXIX, 9–10; *1 En.* 90.29; 91.13; *Jub.* 1.17, 29; *Tob* 14:5; *4 Ezra* 13.36.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Ådna, 119–121, with references.

and if Jesus' statement that *he*—not God—is the one who will raise another temple not made with hands can be plausibly accounted for, there is no absolute hindrance for assuming that all of Mark 14:58 might be authentic. I consider that the two conditions just mentioned can be convincingly met,<sup>58</sup> and, supported by further observations, for example that Mark 14:58 can be retranslated to Aramaic, I have concluded in the affirmative regarding the authenticity of Mark 14:58.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, we must turn to the prediction of the temple's destruction which introduces Jesus' eschatological speech in all three synoptic gospels (Mark 13:2; Matt 24:2; Luke 21:6). Once again, the Matthean and Lukan parallels are dependent on the Markan version:<sup>60</sup> "Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down (οὐ μὴ ἀφεθῆ ὧδε λίθος ἐπὶ λίθον ὃς οὐ μὴ καταλυθῆ)" (Mark 13:2b). Paesler has undertaken a detailed analysis of Mark 13:1–2 leading to the conclusion that the logion in v. 2b is authentic.<sup>61</sup> As I stated above, he has reconstructed a pre-Johannine version of the "complete" temple saying, consisting of two parts, upon which according to him all extant variants of this saying, including Mark 14:58, depend. The earliest form of the two-part saying—καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ οἰκοδομήσω αὐτόν (John 2:19<sup>(\*)</sup>)—is in Paesler's opinion a post-Easter reworking of Mark 13:2\*, in which the divine act of destroying the temple (expressed through a *passivum divinum*) was transferred to

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 113–116, 130–151.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 127–130, 151–153. In spite of her corresponding understanding of the epithets χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος (cf. n. 56), Schwemer is more reserved regarding the reconstruction of the original wording: "...den ursprünglichen Wortlaut (können wir) nicht mehr sicher rekonstruieren" (Anna Maria Schwemer, "Die Passion des Messias nach Markus und der Vorwurf des Antijudaismus," in *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie*, Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, 133–169, at 147). Wilckens, *Theologie*, vol. I.2, 62, seems to accept the authenticity of Mark 14:58 with the exception of the first person singular for which he substitutes a passive that "im Mund Jesu... als Umschreibung des Handelns Gottes aufzufassen (ist)" (62 n. 23).

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 440–441 n. 25, and Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 87.

<sup>61</sup> Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 76–92, 256, 259–260. Despite the claim to the contrary, Mark 13:1–2 is not a *vaticinium ex eventu* (84–87); form-critically it is an *apophthegma*, whose earliest element is the saying in v. 2b (87–89), which can easily be retranslated to Aramaic (89). "In der Tat sprechen einige Anzeichen dafür, daß in Mark 13, 2\* die *ipsissima vox* Jesu vernehmbar ist, so die Formulierung des Wortes im *Passivum Divinum* und die Tatsache, daß das an sich anstößige Wort trotz des Vorliegens einer offensichtlich *nicht erfüllten* Prophetie weitertradiert wurde" (89–90; italics in the text). On pp. 90–91 he refers to a number of other scholars who agree that Mark 13:2 is authentic.

the exalted Christ and according to which the destruction would be succeeded by the reconstruction of the sanctuary, once again an act to be performed by the risen Lord.<sup>62</sup>

Some scholars favour a reversed relationship between Mark 13:2 and 14:58 and claim that the former depends on the latter.<sup>63</sup> However, although I assume the authenticity of Mark 14:58, I see no valid reason for rejecting the thesis that Mark 13:2 too is authentic, as Paesler and others have convincingly argued.<sup>64</sup>

### 2.3. Conclusion

In spite of innumerable variations regarding exact reconstructions, there is a far-reaching agreement in recent scholarship that Jesus'

<sup>62</sup> Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 189–193. As is evident from the presentation above, Paesler considers Mark 14:58 to be derived from Mark 13:2—albeit through the intermediary stages of the “Ur-Tempelwort” John 2:19<sup>(\*)</sup> and John 2:19\*. Other scholars who also reckon Mark 14:58 to be dependent upon Mark 13:2 are mentioned by Paesler, 77–79 nn. 12–24 and 91 nn. 109–114.

<sup>63</sup> For representatives of this opinion cf. Paesler, 77 nn. 8–11.

<sup>64</sup> Ádna, *Jesu Stellung*, 440–442. Zeller, “Die Beseitigung des Handels,” 78–79 n. 53 comments on Paesler’s and my opposing proposals for the reconstruction of the authentic saying(s): “Beide Versuche sind wohl zu zuversichtlich.”

Without necessarily accepting the authenticity of either, some scholars assume, as I do, that Mark 13:2 and 14:58 are mutually independent, e.g., Wolfgang Kraus, *Der Tod Jesu als Heiligtumsweihe: Eine Untersuchung zum Umfeld der Sühnevorstellung in Römer 3,25–26a*, WMANT 66 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991), 220: “Mk hat sowohl in 14,58 wie auch in 13,2 traditionelles Gut aufgenommen.”

A reference must also be made here to Folker Siegert, “‘Zerstört diesen Tempel...!': Jesus als ‘Tempel’ in den Passionsüberlieferungen,” in *Zerstörungen des Jerusalemer Tempels: Geschehen–Wahrnehmung–Bewältigung*, ed. Johannes Hahn, WUNT 147 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 108–139, although the hypothetical character of much of his reasoning and argument complicates the assessment of his article. Anyway, he seems to consider that both Mark 13:2, understood as an announcement of the end of the Solomonic-Herodian temple (133), and the two-part temple saying (cf. the hypothetical reconstruction, 109) might have their origin with Jesus. “Ein zweiteiliges Tempelwort, wie Matt 26,61 und John 2,19 es wiedergeben, könnte ihm nun gerade in seiner offenen Symbolik, seiner Antithetik und der Selbstimplikation des Sprechers Jesus zugetraut werden” (133).

The two most recent discussions of the temple sayings and of whether they were part of the charges brought against Jesus are found in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, and in Wedderburn, “Jesus’ Action in the Temple,” 15–20. Dunn refrains from any attempt at reconstructing an authentic version, but states that “we can be confident that something Jesus had said about the destruction (and restoration) of the Temple provided the chief ground or excuse for bringing him before Caiaphas’s council. The charge was not without substance!” (632–633). Favouring Mark 13:2\* as possibly authentic, Wedderburn regards Mark 14:58 as most probably a reflection of controversy between Jews and Christians caused by the Christians’ claim to be themselves God’s temple (cf. 17).

temple act is historical and his temple saying authentic. When we ask how the act and the saying relate to each other, not surprisingly most scholars who accept the historicity and the authenticity regard them as coherent with regard to their content or message as intended by Jesus. The identification of such a coherence is, of course, most emphatic on the part of those who assume that the authentically reconstructed temple saying was spoken by Jesus on the occasion of his act in the temple as its interpretation.<sup>65</sup> Some other scholars, for example Dieter Zeller, contest the simultaneity of the act and the saying(s), assuming that Jesus uttered the prediction or threat of destruction only when he realised that the temple act did not bring about the lasting effects which he had hoped for.<sup>66</sup> Accepting the historicity of the temple act, including Mark 11:17 as the accompanying interpretative word, as well as both Mark 13:2 and 14:58, I suppose that Jesus spoke the complete temple saying some time during his first days in Jerusalem before the questioning regarding his authority (Mark 11:27–33) made it obvious that the religious leaders of the people would not accept the message conveyed through the temple act and saying, and as a reaction to their lack of willingness to repent, Jesus then uttered his unconditioned prediction of destruction transmitted in Mark 13:2.<sup>67</sup>

### 3. *Interpretation of Jesus' Temple Act*

There are numerous interpretations of Jesus' temple act, and it is in no way self-evident how the differing understandings relate to each other, or how they might be systematised. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the distinction between eschatological and non-eschatological interpretations is probably the most fundamental and, consequently, will serve as the major systematising criterion.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> In addition to Trautmann and Sanders, referred to in n. 32, we may mention Kraus, *Tod Jesu*, 226–227, and Joachim Gnilka, *Jesu von Nazaret: Botschaft und Geschichte* (Sonderausgabe; Freiburg, Basle and Vienna: Herder, 1993), 279–280. Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 75 n. 86 and 259, also contemplates the possibility that the authentic saying by Jesus transmitted in Mark 13:2 was originally uttered on the occasion of the temple act. Dunn, *Jesu Remembered*, 639, leaves such a simultaneity open, but is nevertheless confident that act and saying both provided “sufficient excuse for a policy of *realpolitik* to dictate Jesus' removal from the scene.”

<sup>66</sup> Zeller, “Die Beseitigung des Handels im Tempel,” 78–79.

<sup>67</sup> Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 151–152 and 443–444.

<sup>68</sup> Here I am in agreement with Matson, “The Contribution to the Temple Cleansing,” 500. Metzendorf, *Die Tempelaktion Jesu*, 201, considers the distinction between

### 3.1. *Non-Eschatological Interpretations*

#### 3.1.1. *A Prophetic Protest Against Deplorable Conditions in the Temple*

If Mark 11:17, with the accusation taken from Jer 7:11 of having made the temple a den of robbers, is accepted as the authentic accompanying interpretative saying, the consequence is frequently an understanding of Jesus' act as a strong prophetic protest against some morally unacceptable conditions of the activity in the temple. If we ask what these deplorable conditions were, a number of scholars maintain that the chief priests, generally and in particular with regard to the temple market, exploited their monopoly position for personal enrichment to the detriment of the common priests and the general population.

We propose that Jesus intended his action in the temple to be a prophetic protest against the mismanagement of the temple by the priestly aristocracy... it can be seen that such a prophetic demonstration is also implicitly a challenge to the political-economic base in Jerusalem.<sup>69</sup>

However, there is no evidence of general exploitative conditions at the temple market like high prices for monopoly products or unjustified charges for money-changing, nor could a protest against the wealth and privileges of the chief priests easily be understood as an intended message of the recounted acts by Jesus.<sup>70</sup>

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messianic and non-messianic interpretations as the most important. In *Jesu Stellung* I, too, treated "Messianische Interpretationen" as a distinct category within the chapter submitted to "Interpretation der Tempelaktion Jesu" (cf. 334–430, with 376–387 dedicated to the messianic interpretations). Because of limits of space the messianic aspects will not be treated separately here.

For other recent presentations of the most frequent varying interpretations, combined with evaluations and critique, cf. Collins, "Jesus' Action in Herod's Temple," 48–53; Zeller, "Die Beseitigung des Handels," 71–78; and Wedderburn, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 1–6, 9–11, 13–14.

<sup>69</sup> Tan, *Aims of Jesus*, 185 and 187, cf. 231–232, too. Cf. further *inter alios* Richard Bauckham, "Jesus' Demonstration in the Temple", in *Law and Religion: Essays on the Place of the Law in Israel and Early Christianity*, ed. Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: Clarke, 1988), 72–89, 171–176; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple and Evidence of Corruption in the First-Century Temple", in idem, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 319–344 (cf. also Evans' article in *CBQ* 51 [1989]: 237–270), and Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 313–316. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 638–639, also regards the act of Jesus predominantly as harsh criticism of how priestly authorities ran the temple, as does Wedderburn, 22: "Jesus' action is not so much a removal of impurity as a protest against a system from which the high-priestly caste benefited, but which impeded the common people in their approach to God."

<sup>70</sup> For an overview, with references to many more scholars, and critical assessment cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 335–342.



### 3.1.2. *A Protest Against the Desecration of the Temple*<sup>71</sup>

Traditionally, and frequently implicit in the common designation of Jesus' act as the "cleansing of the temple," it has been regarded as a protest against desecration. According to this view the market activity inside the temple area threatened the holiness of the sanctuary and disturbed worship.<sup>72</sup> Further, most scholars who accept the historicity of the short note in Mark 11:16 that Jesus did not allow anyone to carry any vessel through the temple, interpret this as a countermeasure on his part to protect the holiness of the site against a widespread practice of using the temple area "as a shortcut for getting from one side of the town to the other."<sup>73</sup>

Some scholars, most resolutely Peter Richardson and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, regard the presence inside the temple area of coins with images of Gentile gods and rulers as an intolerable offence to pious Jews who considered this as a violation against the two first commandments, and they interpret Jesus' attack on the money-changers as an expression of a protest against such desecration of the holy site: "Jesus' action in the temple can be read as an explosion of outrage at the Jewish authorities' invitation of a foreign god and an alien custom into the holiest place of Judaism."<sup>74</sup>

The grand expansion of the temple in Jerusalem undertaken by Herod the Great was inspired by international architectural models and served predominantly as a symbol for his ambitions to be accepted and respected on Hellenistic terms as the legitimate ruler of the Jewish

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 342–346, for a more detailed presentation and criticism of the variants within this category.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Betz, "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple," 461–462: "The problem that apparently irritated Jesus was that the merchants and the bankers had moved inside the sacred precinct to conduct their business. This situation brought about a conflict between business and worship, with business increasingly disturbing worship not only by the inevitable noise, confusion and filth but also by introducing different interests and values. Once allowed inside the sacred precinct, business inevitably expanded into the space reserved for worship, subverting the very purpose of the sanctuary."

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 457; cf. 462, as well. E.g., also Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 145 n. 1, and Meyer, *Christus Faber*, 265, understand Mark 11:16 in this way; cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 257–259, for many more representatives of such a view.

<sup>74</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, "Jesus and the Money Changers," 50; cf. Richardson, "Why Turn the Tables?," 520; Casey, "Culture and Historicity," 315 and Collins, "Jesus' Action in Herod's Temple," 60. Even for payment of the annual temple tax such offensive coins, viz. silver shekels of Tyre carrying the head of the city god Melkart (or Heracles) on the obverse and a Tyrian eagle on the reverse, were used; cf. Richardson, 512–518; Ådna, *Jerusalem Tempel*, 96–118, 146–148; *Jesu Stellung*, 251–253; Murphy-O'Connor, 46–49; Collins, 59–60.

people.<sup>75</sup> Hans Dieter Betz thinks that Jesus in his temple act reacted in particular against the violation of the sanctity of the holy site that this remodelling of the temple implied: “In his judgment, we can conclude, the proper worship of God was compromised by Herod’s subjection of the Temple to the political purpose of glorifying his kingship and by the intrusion of commercialism.”<sup>76</sup>

### 3.1.3 *A Protest Against a Nationalistic Holiness Ideology*

Marcus J. Borg thinks that the temple in Jerusalem, not only during the war against the Romans 66–70 CE, but already at the time of Jesus, was the ideological and strategic centre of a Jewish nationalism opting for a strict separation from all Gentiles. As the money-changers and the vendors “served and symbolized the quest for holiness understood as separation,” Jesus chose them as the target of his action and spoke the words transmitted in Mark 11:17; “the ‘odd gesture’ and the words of interpretation cohere: the quest for a holy, separated nation had made of the Temple a ‘den of violent ones’; the merchants, typifying that separation by their activity, were expelled because ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations,’ not a center of resistance to the nations.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Betz, “Jesus and the Purity of the Temple,” 462–467 and Collins, 53–58, who accepts my proposal in *Jerusalem Temple*, 32–89, 142–145 (cf. also *Jesu Stellung*, 248–249), that Herod’s remodelling of the temple in Jerusalem in particular followed the architectural pattern of the so-called *Kaisareion* (*Caesareum*). Now also Max Küchler, Jerusalem: *Ein Handbuch und Studienreiseführer zur Heiligen Stadt*, Orte und Landschaften der Bibel 4.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 134–136, supports my proposal of the *Kaisareion* as the architectural model for the Herodian temple.

<sup>76</sup> Betz, 472. Collins thinks that Jesus’ protest against the Herodian temple focused on the mixture of religious and civic activities: “[H]is action... indicates his advocacy of an ideal Temple along the lines of those depicted by Ezekiel and the *Temple Scroll*. The outer court was to be sacred space devoted to prayer and teaching, not civic space open to the general public and devoted to profane activities... Jesus’ aim was... to extend the holiness of the inner court to the whole Temple” (58, 61). (All references above to Adela Yarbro Collins relate to her article in the *Festschrift* for Hans Dieter Betz from 2001; however, she also broadly expressed the same points of view in A.Y. Collins, *Jesus and the Jerusalem Temple*, International Rennert Guest Lecture Series vol. 5 [Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1999].)

<sup>77</sup> M.J. Borg exposes his view in *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (New York / Toronto: Edwin Mellen, 1984, quotation from 176). In his later book *Jesus—A New Vision: Spirit, Culture and the Life of Discipleship* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), Borg seems, on the one hand, to weaken somewhat the emphasis from the former book on Jesus’ alleged universalism and, on the other hand, to mark more decisively the non-eschatological

### 3.1.4. *An Attempt to Reform the Temple Cult in Order to Include All Israel*

Bruce Chilton thinks that Jesus performed his temple act in order to bring his rival understanding of purity to the fore, according to which all Jews and Samaritans were pure and, consequently, had a right to appear as the real owners of the sacrifices that they were to offer:

Jesus' occupation of the Temple was directed against animals that did not genuinely belong, in his estimation, to those who were to offer them, because they were procured by means of a purely financial transaction in the Temple... [H]e confronted the authorities in the Temple with the claim that their management was a scandal, and that the direct provision of animals by a forgiven, purified Israel was what was required for the experience of holiness and the reality of the covenant to be achieved.<sup>78</sup>

## 3.2. *Eschatological Interpretations*

### 3.2.1. *An Act to Establish the Temple's Holiness*

If Jesus' action is interpreted as a fervent advocacy of the temple's holiness and this concern is given a firm eschatological orientation, we must distinguish this understanding from the one presented in paragraph 3.1.2 above. Whereas the former identifies the protest against desecration as a concern to *re-establish* a lost previous state of purity, this one sees the commitment of Jesus to the holiness of the temple as borne by his eschatologically shaped message and mission. A proposal to understand the incident in the temple as an act on the part of Jesus to establish the proper holiness when the eschatological kingdom of God is about to be realised, has recently been presented by Dieter Zeller, according to whom Jesus wanted to prepare the people of Israel for the imminent eschatological coming of God to Zion by extend-

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character of Jesus' mission of a "politics of compassion" opposed to the "politics of holiness." Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 346–349, for a presentation and criticism of Borg.

<sup>78</sup> Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus*, 128, 136. Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 349–352, for a presentation and criticism of Chilton. Regrettably, Chilton restricts the description of "The Attitude of Jesus Toward the Temple," part of the article "Temple, Jewish" in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL and Leicester: InterVarsity, 2000), 1167–1183 [1173–1176], only to a presentation of his own understanding, thereby giving readers with limited knowledge of the recent scholarly discussion a very misleading impression of how the temple act is generally understood today.

ing the sanctity beyond the inner temple courts to include the whole temple complex.<sup>79</sup>

When the interpretation of Jesus' act as a *cleansing* of the temple is clearly conceived in eschatological terms, it is sometimes combined with a messianic understanding. Just as the cleansing purifications of the temple recounted in the Old Testament had been undertaken by Davidic kings (cf. 2 Chr 29–31; 34–35), the eschatological cleansing would be performed by the Davidic Messiah. Such a messianic interpretation is further substantiated if the historicity of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–10) is accepted and regarded as a kingly enthronement.<sup>80</sup>

Jesus, the disciples, and the pilgrim crowds combined to make the entry a messianic event, so investing the cleansing of the temple with a messianic dimension... The entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple constituted a messianic demonstration, a messianic critique, a messianic fulfilment event, and a sign of the messianic restoration of Israel.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Zeller, "Die Beseitigung des Handels," 75–78, cf. esp. 78: "... (wir) kommen zur eschatologischen Motivation, die das Handeln Jesu trägt... Nach jüdischer Erwartung tritt Gott auf dem Zion seine Herrschaft an... Bei Jesus finden wir zwar sonst keine solche auf den Zion und den Tempel bezogenen Konkrektionen der Basileia, aber vielleicht deshalb, weil sie schlicht selbstverständlich sind. So ist es wahrscheinlich, dass er durch die symbolische Ausdehnung der Heiligkeitszone auf den ganzen Tempelberg den Tempel und Israel, das sich in den Tagen des Paschafestes dort versammelte, auf das Kommen Gottes vorbereiten wollte."

<sup>80</sup> This messianic interpretation has been unfolded most consistently by Mohr, *Markus- und Johannespassion*, 96–97: "Den Anspruch, den Jesus bei seinem Einzug in Jerusalem geltend machte, erhebt er in nicht minderem Masse bei der Beseitigung des Marktgetümmels im Vorhof der Heiden. Als Messias, der gemäss 2Sam 7,14 (Ps 2,7) für sich die Gottessohnschaft reklamiert, handelt er im Tempel mit der Machtbefugnis eines stellvertretenden Hausherrn, der die Heiligkeit dieses Hauses gewahrt wissen will." Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 378–381, for a presentation and criticism of Mohr.

<sup>81</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 199. Christina Metzendorf, *Die Tempelaktion Jesu*, 221–240, gives a detailed presentation of "Die Auslegung der Tempelaktion bei Ben F. Meyer," in which she precisely recognises the combination of messianic demonstration and cleansing (cf. 225–226). Tan, *Aims of Jesus*, 152, 158–159, 192–196, also emphasises the historical and theological connection between the entry, expressing a "kingly" claim, and the temple act, although he is hesitant regarding an explicit messianic interpretation; and Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 639–642, holds it as likely that "among the reverberations set off by" the entry into Jerusalem and "Jesus' action in the Temple would be the question, 'Could this be the expected Davidic Messiah?'" (639).

### 3.2.2. *A Symbolic Act Pointing to the Renewal of the Temple, or to a New Temple*

Making the temple act and sayings the point of departure for his description of the historical Jesus in his monograph *Jesus and Judaism* (1985),<sup>82</sup> Ed P. Sanders sparked off a whole new wave of scholarly engagement with Jesus' relationship to the temple. Identifying the overturning of some tables as the historical kernel, Sanders himself sees this

as a demonstrative action...it symbolized destruction. That is one of the most obvious meanings of the action of overturning itself...But what does this mean? On what conceivable grounds could Jesus have undertaken to attack—and symbolize the destruction of—what was ordained by God? The obvious answer is that destruction, in turn, looks towards restoration... We should probably think that his expectation was that a new temple would be given by God from heaven, an expectation which is not otherwise unknown during the period, even if it may not have been universal.<sup>83</sup>

Sanders has been joined by Paula Fredriksen in the understanding that Jesus' symbolic destruction actually meant eschatological renewal: "In the idiom of Jewish apocalyptic, destruction implies rebuilding; and a new or renewed temple...would imply, more directly, that the Kingdom of God was at hand."<sup>84</sup> However, destruction is not the self-evident implication of the overturning of some tables, nor is it obvious

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<sup>82</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61–76. Due to his importance, Metzdorf is justified in choosing Sanders, besides Meyer (cf. n. 81), as the second modern scholar for a detailed treatment in her chapter on the exegesis of the temple act in the 20th century (cf. *Die Tempelaktion* Jesu, 201–221). Metzdorf is right that both Meyer and Sanders concede a prominent position to the temple act within their respective interpretations of Jesus and his message, but her claim that the understandings of these two scholars are "vollkommen gegensätzlich ausgerichtet" and that "Sanders und Meyer stellen jeweils die Außenpole dar, zwischen denen sich die übrige Exegese des ausgehenden 20. Jahrhunderts bewegt" (4) is unjustified.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, 71, 73.

<sup>84</sup> Paula Fredriksen, "Jesus and the Temple, Mark and the War," *SBLSP* 126 (1990): 293–310, at 299. Also in her monograph *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 112–113, Fredriksen stated that Jesus' overturning of tables in the temple "would [probably] have been readily understood by any Jew watching as a statement that the [current] Temple was about to be destroyed...and accordingly that the present order was about to cede to the Kingdom of God" (113, italics in the text; literally repeated in "Jesus and the Temple," 299 with the two words in brackets added). More recently, Fredriksen has voiced severe doubt about the historicity of the incident, cf. n. 38.

that a symbolic enactment of destruction points beyond the destruction itself to restoration or renewal as its real, inherent meaning.<sup>85</sup>

With some hesitation I also include N.T. Wright under this entry. He criticises Sanders for regarding the building of a new temple as an obvious implicit element of a symbolic destruction performed within a programme of eschatological expectation,<sup>86</sup> but he, too, sees Jesus' temple act as "a dramatic symbol of imminent destruction,"<sup>87</sup> and presupposes that Jesus expected a salvific substitute for the destroyed temple: "I think that Jesus saw himself, and perhaps his followers with him, as the new Temple."<sup>88</sup> Surprisingly, and inevitably with an inner tension to his position as a consequence, Wright adds also a royal, messianic aspect to his interpretation, invoking classical texts about the king and the Messiah as temple builder like 2 Sam 7:12–14 and Zech 6:12–13: "Jesus would do, in some sense or other, what David's son Solomon had done—or, *mutatis mutandis*, what Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers had done. His Temple-action was a claim to royal status."<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2.3. *An Act Preparing Zion for the Pilgrimage of the Peoples*

Grounded in prophetic texts like Isa 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–4; Jer 3:17 and Zech 8:20–23 there were expectations of a pilgrimage of the Gentile peoples to the temple at Mount Zion at the end of time. A number of scholars, frequently combining this with an acceptance of the

<sup>85</sup> Sanders' interpretation of the temple act has been vehemently criticised by numerous scholars. Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 354–357, for a more detailed presentation and criticism.

<sup>86</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 425–426.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 424; cf. 416–428 for all the aspects Wright includes as the background of Jesus' "acted parable of judgment" (416, cf. 334), in particular, as implied in the den of robbers accusation, that "the Temple had become, in Jesus' day as in Jeremiah's, the talisman of nationalist violence, the guarantee that YHWH would act for Israel and defend her against her enemies" (420).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 426, with a cross reference to ch. 13 of the book (pp. 612–653), in which Wright expounds the notion that Jesus "was not content to announce that YHWH was returning to Zion," but that he "intended to enact, symbolize and personify that climactic event" (615; italics in the text) and in this sense also claimed to represent the new, eschatological temple *in persona*. However, this is an anachronistic anticipation of the Christology represented by John (cf. 2:19–21) and Revelation (cf. 21:22).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 494; cf. 427–428, 490–494. For a presentation of the biblical and early Jewish texts on the Messiah as builder of the new temple, cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 50–87. Wright's attempt to combine this messianic tradition, which necessarily presupposes a new temple building on Mount Zion, with his claim that Jesus did not foresee any such new real, physical temple, is unconceivable to me.

authenticity of the citation of Isa 56:7b in Mark 11:17, have suggested that Jesus' act was meant as a preparation for this eschatological event. For example, James D.G. Dunn has interpreted this quotation by Jesus as expressing his expectation of the pilgrimage of the peoples: "The implication would then be clear: that the action was eschatological in significance—a symbolic representation of the 'cleansing' of the Temple which would be necessary if it was to serve its intended eschatological function, and possibly even a symbolic attempt to bring about these conditions."<sup>90</sup>

### 3.2.4. *The Temple Act as a Fulfilment of Prophetic Announcements*

Obviously, scholars who accept the authenticity of Mark 11:17 regard in some way or the other the temple act as a fulfilment of Isa 56:7b, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."<sup>91</sup>

Apart from this oracle, scholars most frequently refer to Zech 14:21b, "And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day," as the prophetic announcement that likely inspired and motivated Jesus to perform his act in the temple, as seen, e.g., in Ben F. Meyer, James D. G. Dunn, Hans Dieter Betz and Anna Maria Schwemer.<sup>92</sup> Kurt Paesler has presented the most detailed argument in recent scholarship in favour of a conscious link between Zech 14:21b and Jesus' temple act.<sup>93</sup> As I have said, he considers what is recounted in Mark 11:15b as the historical kernel of the incident, which is not to be understood as a cleansing or as an attempt at a reform, but as a symbolic abolition of the temple cult. The reason why Jesus, according to Paesler, in this way marks the present validity of the eschatological

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<sup>90</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 48. (In his more recent *Jesus Remembered*, 640, Dunn seems more inclined to attribute this understanding to "earliest Christian interpretation", but cf. 650, as well.) For a critical assessment of this interpretation under due consideration of a number of scholars cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 358–364.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 276–287, for an analysis of this oracle, distinguishing between its original context and meaning within the text unit Isa 56:3–8, and secondly, its meaning within the frame of the whole book of Isaiah, and, thirdly, its usage by Jesus.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 198 and 305 n. 61; Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 48–49; Betz, "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple," 467 n. 44; Schwemer, "Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester," 222–223. More scholars are mentioned in Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 373.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 243–249, with due references to other scholars (cf. esp. 245–246 n. 84).

conditions described at the end of the prophetic book of Zechariah (cf. Zech 14:20–21) is his proclamation of the presence of the kingdom of God, which ushers in the eschatological era in which the distinction between holy and profane, pure and impure, is transcended.<sup>94</sup>

A third prophetic announcement sometimes taken to be the background of Jesus' act is Mal 3:1, "See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts." Ben F. Meyer also reckons with influence from this oracle, as does Alexander J. M. Wedderburn.<sup>95</sup> Finally, mention must be made of Lynn Allan Losie, who thinks that Jesus considered himself to be the eschatological prophet and messenger, preparing the coming of the Lord; hence, he proposes Isa 52:7–12 as "motivating factor" for Jesus' act in the temple.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.2.5. *A Spiritualising Surpassing or Transcendence of the Temple Cult*

Some scholars attribute already to Jesus a radical rejection of the need for a physical temple and temple cult in line with Acts 7:48–50 (quoting Isa 66:1–2) and 17:24. Such an understanding can easily take an anachronistic form, ascribing to Jesus and his contemporaries certain

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<sup>94</sup> Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 247–248: "Daß... Gott unmittelbar zugänglich ist, da die Gottesherrschaft bereits angebrochen ist, ist ein Konstitutivum der Verkündigung des irdischen Jesus. Es ist daher recht wahrscheinlich, daß Jesus... die hier [Zech 14:20–21] ausgesagte Unmittelbarkeit des Zugangs zu Gottes (*sic*)—die er in seiner eigenen Predigt und Person gegeben sah—durch das Austreiben der Händler zeichenhaft dokumentierte. Mit seiner Ankunft in Jerusalem sagt Jesus das von Sacharja erwartete eschatologische Laubhüttenfest an."

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, 201 and Wedderburn, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 21.

As exemplified by Henk Jan de Jonge with regard to Zech 14:21b (cf. n. 14), some scholars who reject the historicity of Jesus' temple act consider prophetic texts to be the background for the fictitious story about Jesus in the temple. Walther Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament 2, 2 vols. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1979), can be mentioned as someone propagating the same for Mal 3:1–3: "Die *Basis* des Berichtes ist die Mal. 3,1ff. verheißene und zur Zeit des Erzählers historisch erfahrbare 'Reinigung' des jüdischen Gottesdienstes durch die Begründung der christlichen Gemeinden" (2:496, italics in the text).

<sup>96</sup> L. A. Losie, *The Cleansing of the Temple: A History of a Gospel Tradition in Light of Its Background in the Old Testament and in Early Judaism* (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984), 264. He discusses "Jesus' Cleansing of the Temple," 250–284, see esp. 265–267. Cf. the presentation and criticism of Losie's view in Ádna, *Jesu Stellung*, 374–376.



presuppositions which arose only in the early church after Easter or even after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Maria Trautmann has managed to develop an interpretation of Jesus' temple act as a symbolic relativisation or cancellation of the current temple cult without falling into the anachronistic pit.<sup>97</sup>

### 3.2.6. *An Ultimate Call for Repentance at the Threshold of the Kingdom*

It is easily conceivable that Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God could turn out to be in rivalry with the temple service. If Jesus is the harbinger or even the exclusive mediator to the people of Israel of the imminent realisation of the eschatological kingdom, the appropriate reaction would be to accept his message and mission and become his disciples. An interpretation of Jesus' temple act from this perspective has been launched for instance by Helmut Merklein and Thomas Söding.<sup>98</sup> According to the latter, in the temple Jesus expresses his call for repentance and belief through an act that must be understood within the context of the message of the kingdom of God. Jesus criticises the notion that salvation is guaranteed by the ongoing temple cult as deceptive, because it actually ignores what God is about to do in order to bring salvation to his people who are completely entangled in sin.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen Jesu*, 121: "Jesus stellte in seiner Aktion am Tempel das gesetzlich vorgeschriebene Opfer mit kultreinen Tieren wie auch die jährliche Tempelsteuer und damit das auf den Tempel konzentrierte und von den Sadduzäern verfochtene Kult- und Sühnewesen in Frage. Die intendierte Kritik Jesu übertraf somit das faktische Ereignis der Tempelreinigung. Es stellte zeichenhaft eine Relativierung des zeitgenössischen Tempelkults, wenn nicht eine Aufhebung desselben dar." Paesler, presented above in the paragraph 3.2.4, comes very close to Trautmann when he states: "Jesu Aktion, wie sie in V. 15b [Mark 11:15b] beschrieben ist, (wird) kaum anders zu verstehen sein denn als *Angriff* auf den Tempelkult, ja als *zeichenhafte Verunmöglichung* und *Aufhebung* des Jerusalemer Kultbetriebes" (*Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 244 [italics in the text]). Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 364–368, for a presentation and criticism of more examples of interpretations of the incident in the temple as an act of simply surpassing or transcending the cultic activities.

<sup>98</sup> Helmut Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft*, SBS 111, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), esp. 133–139; Thomas Söding, "Die Tempelaktion Jesu: Redaktionskritik–Überlieferungsgeschichte–historische Rückfrage (Mark 11,15–19; Matt 21,12–17; Luke 19,45–48; John 2,13–22)," *TTZ* 101 (1992): 36–64.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Söding, "Tempelaktion" 59–62. "Mit seiner Aktion stört Jesus symbolisch die laufenden Opferriten, die Steuereintreibung und den gesamten Tempelbetrieb. Durch diese Unterbrechung deckt er auf, daß der Tempel nicht etwa jener Ort ist, an dem Gottes Herrschaft besonders deutlich erfahrbar würde, sondern gerade im Gegenteil jener Ort, an dem sich die Ablehnung der mit Jesus nahekommenen Basileia geradezu institutionell formiert. Der Kult bleibt von dieser eschatologischen Kritik nicht

Whereas Merklein and Söding interpret Jesus in prophetic categories, Peter Stuhlmacher and I have combined the interpretation of the temple act as a call for repentance with a messianic understanding of Jesus' mission.<sup>100</sup>

By means of the messianic, symbolic action of the cleansing of the temple Jesus questions the temple's priesthood (and Israel with them) about whether they intend to continue to carry out the atonement ritual without acquiescing to Jesus' message of repentance. Jesus sees that the time has come to worship God in the Spirit of truth and to cleanse the temple for such worship.<sup>101</sup>

#### 4. *Collocation of the Temple Act and the Temple Saying(s)*

When both the historicity of the temple act as well as the authenticity of the temple saying(s) are accepted, they must, of course, be seen together and possibly given cohering interpretations. Among scholars

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ausgenommen. Das Naherkommen der Gottesherrschaft bestätigt ihn nicht etwa, purifiziert ihn auch nicht, sondern führt ihn in die Krise" (61–62). Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 368–372, for a more detailed presentation of Söding, Merklein and other proponents of the interpretation of the temple act as a call for repentance.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Peter Stuhlmacher, "Jesus of Nazareth as Christ of Faith," in idem, *Jesus of Nazareth—Christ of Faith* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 1–38, esp. 22–28 and "The Messianic Son of Man: Jesus' Claim to Deity", in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and Scot McKnight (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 325–344 (translated from Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1: *Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus*, 3rd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005], 107–124); Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 136–142. A thorough and impressive defence of Jesus as Messiah has been presented by Martin Hengel, "Jesus der Messias Israels", in *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie*, Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer 1–80; cf. in the same volume also Anna Maria Schwemer, "Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester," 207–229.

<sup>101</sup> Stuhlmacher, "Why Did Jesus Have to Die?", in *Jesus of Nazareth*, 39–57, 48. Cf., further, *Biblische Theologie*, 1:102: Jesus "griff sogar den Opferbetrieb im Tempel an, solange dieser an seinem messianischen Umkehrruf vorbei praktiziert wurde"; 1:146: "[D]ie gleich nach dem Eintreffen in Jerusalem vollzogene Tempelreinigung (war) eine messianische Zeichenhandlung, mit der Jesus die Tempelpriesterschaft aufforderte, sich seinem Umkehrruf zu stellen"; cf. 149–150, as well. My interpretation will be exposed below in part 4. Also Snodgrass, "The Temple Incident," 474, interprets the temple act as a symbolic, messianic act, implying "an enactment of the kingdom." However, he rejects any intention "to bring about the cessation of sacrifice" (468) as an aspect of Jesus' act. Moreover, Snodgrass combines his eschatological-messianic interpretation with a strong commitment on the part of Jesus for the protection and extension of the temple's holiness and a protest against commercialism and corruption (ibid., 468–471), with some inner tension as an inevitable consequence in combining the categories 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.2.1 above.

presented above, for instance Maria Trautmann, Ed P. Sanders, John Dominic Crossan and Kurt Paesler all appeal to the cohering collocation of their respective interpretations of act and sayings as a strong indication of plausibility.

Trautmann categorises the temple act as a symbolic act in the tradition of Old Testament prophets. Such a symbolic act must be accompanied by an interpretative saying which in the case of Jesus is the two-part temple saying on which the extant expanded version in Mark 14:58 is based (cf. n. 32). Both the act and the saying are utterly critical to the current temple and cult,<sup>102</sup> but the second part of the saying points beyond the destruction.<sup>103</sup>

Sanders states more resolutely that the overturning of tables, allegedly an evident symbol of destruction, points to eschatological restoration (cf. 3.2.2). Further, like Trautmann, he combines the temple act and the saying, but oscillates between Mark 13:2\* and 14:58\* (cf. n. 32). Particularly if Mark 13:2 should be closer to what Jesus actually said while overturning the tables,<sup>104</sup> there is a striking tension between the negative character of the symbolic act and the accompanying saying, which only announces destruction, and Sanders' claim that the inherent message is a proclamation of eschatological renewal. However, if the two-part temple saying with the announcement that a new temple

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<sup>102</sup> Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen*, 122 and 124: "Die Tempelhandlung Jesu mußte... als Zeichen der Kritik am Tempel und Tempelkult verstanden werden... Jesu Vertreiben von Käufern und Verkäufern und Umstürzen von Tischen (stellte) ein geringfügiges, aber markantes Vorgehen dar, das seine größere Sinnhaftigkeit durch die verbale Ankündigung eines analogen, jedoch den Tempel in seiner Gesamtheit betreffenden Geschicks erkennen ließ."

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Trautmann, 124: "Wahrscheinlich auch war das Wort schon im Munde Jesu nicht nur ein 'Zerstörungslogion' gewesen, sondern hatte bereits auch das konstruktive Element des Neuaufbaus enthalten." The combination of act and saying will not only announce judgement, but points to "ein letztlich positives Tempelgeschehen" (127). However, because Trautmann exclusively interprets the act as an abolition of the cult (cf. 3.2.5 and n. 97), it remains completely unclear what the alleged positive element of a new temple construction actually means (cf. the criticism in Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 257–259). It seems as if the surpassing of the temple cult leaves no room or need for a new future temple.

<sup>104</sup> Sanders, *The Historical Figure*, 260: "I conclude that Jesus' symbolic action of overthrowing tables in the Temple was understood in connection with a saying about destruction, and that the action and the saying, in the view of the authorities, constituted a prophetic threat. Moreover, I think it highly probable that Jesus himself intended the action to predict the destruction of the temple."

will be built to replace the destroyed one is the authentic version, Sanders' positive interpretation is more justified.<sup>105</sup>

John Dominic Crossan favours the version of the temple saying extant in the Gospel of Thomas (*Gos. Thom.* 71) as authentic (cf. 2.2 and nn. 42–44), originally spoken on the occasion of the temple act (cf. n. 32). Interpreting the act as a symbolic destruction<sup>106</sup> and combining it with a saying also restricted to an emphatic destruction statement (“I will destroy this house utterly beyond repair”), Crossan succeeds better than Trautmann and Sanders in delivering a substantial cohering interpretation of both the act and the saying. However, both the improbability that *Gos. Thom.* 71 was the authentic version of Jesus' temple saying (cf. the criticism above in 2.2), and Crossan's notion that the rationale behind Jesus' rejection of the temple was that he considered himself in his mission as an itinerant sage to be an alternative and substitute for the temple in Jerusalem,<sup>107</sup> make this historical reconstruction and interpretation absolutely unconvincing.<sup>108</sup>

As distinct from Trautmann, Sanders and Crossan, Paesler leaves it open whether or not the temple saying, i.e., Mark 13:2\*, was spoken on the occasion of the temple act (cf. n. 65). Anyway, he regards the symbolic abolition of the temple cult, grounded in the present realisation of the kingdom of God, as the message of the act (cf. 3.2.4 and nn. 93, 94 and 97), and the announcement of judgement against the temple in Mark 13:2\*, as mutually coherent. The implicit consequence of a rejection of Jesus' kingdom proclamation is that the cult in the temple in Jerusalem, as in the time before King Josiah's reform, is perverted to idol service.<sup>109</sup> There is, however, possibly a certain tension

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 261: “He was a prophet, and an eschatological prophet. He thought that God was about to destroy the Temple. And then what? ... Jesus probably thought that in the new age, when the twelve tribes of Israel were again assembled, there would be a new and perfect Temple, built by God himself.”

<sup>106</sup> Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, 357–358: “That action is not, of course, a physical destruction of the Temple, but it is a deliberate symbolic attack. It ‘destroys’ the Temple by ‘stopping’ its fiscal, sacrificial, and liturgical operations.”

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Crossan, 355: “Jesus was ... atopic, moving from place to place, he coming to the people rather than they to him. This is an even more radical challenge [sc. than John the Baptist] to the localized univocity of Jerusalem's Temple, and its itinerancy mirrored and symbolized the egalitarian challenge of its protagonist. No matter, therefore, what Jesus thought, said, or did about the Temple, he was its functional opponent, alternative and substitute.”

<sup>108</sup> Cf. my criticism in *Jesu Stellung*, 367–368.

<sup>109</sup> Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 260–261: “Der Kult auch am Jerusalemer Tempel wird—wie vor Josia—zum Götzendienst, wenn er sich dem Anspruch Gottes verschließt,

in Paesler's analysis when he seeks to combine this interpretation of the temple act and saying with an alleged respect and acceptance of the temple cult on the part of Jesus.<sup>110</sup>

Personally, I have advocated the authenticity of Mark 11:15b–17 as well as of both Mark 13:2 and 14:58 (cf. nn. 35, 59, 64), and chronologically situated the destruction prediction in Mark 13:2 after the utterance of the complete temple saying and the incident in the temple as a reaction to the outcome of the temple act (cf. n. 67).

These sayings and the act in the temple must be seen against the background of Jesus' proclamation of the imminent kingdom of God and his messianic mission related to the realisation of the kingdom. In my opinion, his (last) journey to Jerusalem together with the Twelve shortly before Passover and his focus on the temple after the arrival in the city are not coincidental, but on the contrary, constitute direct and conscious links to his kingdom message. The expectation that the temple on Mount Zion will be the centre of God's eschatological reign is deeply rooted in biblical and Jewish tradition, and I think that we have sufficient evidence to state that Jesus accepted and endorsed the Zion tradition.<sup>111</sup> In the temple saying in Mark 14:58 he alludes to Exod 15:17b–18 as the most important scriptural basis for the notion of God's eschatological reign in the sanctuary not made with human hands (ἀχειροποίητος), but raised by God himself. However, by stating that *he* would establish this eschatological temple within a very short time span (διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν...οἰκοδομήσω), Jesus laid claim to a divine act. This is a firm expression of his high and unique calling which granted him an authority that surpasses all traditional limitations of prophetic and messianic offices.<sup>112</sup>

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und dieser Anspruch ist in der Predigt Jesu von der Gottesherrschaft ergangen und offenbar abgelehnt worden. Wenn aber der Tempel (wieder) Ort des Götzendienstes wird, wenn Jerusalem in ihm das Fundament seiner religiösen Selbstgewißheit hat und seine Einwohner bzw. deren Führer sich daher der von Jesus gepredigten Gottesherrschaft verweigern können, dann muß Jesus auch dem Tempel Jerusalems in schroffer Form sein Ende durch das göttliche Gerichtshandeln ansagen, wie er es auch im Fall der galiläischen Städte Chorazin und Bethsaida getan hatte."

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 249, and the criticism in Wedderburn, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 3 n. 12.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 25–27, 130–133, and in particular the monograph by Tan, *The Zion Traditions and the Aims of Jesus*. Hence, it is possible to substantiate the assumption of Zeller regarding the links between the kingdom message and the temple on Mount Zion (cf. n. 79).

<sup>112</sup> For more examples of how Jesus as the messianic Son of Man laid claim to divine prerogatives and acted correspondingly cf. the references in n. 100. Hence, it is

The establishment of the new temple as a result of the eschatological realisation of the kingdom of God has consequences for the old temple and the cult performed there. Jesus demonstrates this in his action in the temple.<sup>113</sup> By accusing the temple authorities and the people of having made the temple a den of robbers in the accompanying saying in Mark 11:17, Jesus clearly alludes to the prophet Jeremiah's corresponding accusation against his contemporaries in Jer 7:11. Within the speech of Jer 7:1–15, the metaphor characterises the people's schizophrenic practice of seeking refuge and security in the temple while they at the same time worship idols and disregard God's commandments. Obviously, Jesus has an analogous estimation of the current situation; clinging to the traditional temple cult instead of obediently answering Jesus' call for repentance and discipleship at the threshold of the kingdom of God, the people deceive themselves in seeking their security in an apparatus and order which are no longer appropriate. The implication of the Jeremiah reference must have been plain to those present: Like the sanctuary in Shiloh (cf. Jer 7:12–14) and the temple of Solomon, the Herodian temple would become the victim of destruction if the priests and the people did not react properly to the words and acts of Jesus. Jesus' saying in Mark 11:17 contains also an explicit quotation of Isa 56:7b, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." By the first century, this oracle was generally interpreted as relating to the eschatological temple (cf. n. 91), and by citing it Jesus points to the legitimate function of the future temple as the site for all nations' worship of the one true God. Whereas the old atonement cult becomes obsolete when the eschatological renewal is fulfilled, the redeemed and saved of all nations will still perform a worship of prayer and adoration. The contrasting references to the Scripture bring the radical alternatives to the fore: A stubborn clinging to the old will ultimately bring destruction upon the temple, whereas an obedient response to Jesus' call will prepare for the eschatological transformation of which a new, or a renewed temple on Mount Zion, will be a part.

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characteristic that Jesus did not appeal to the less ambitious tradition about the Messiah as a human builder of the temple (cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 50–87).

<sup>113</sup> I fully agree with those scholars referred to above who see a connection between Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom and his act in the temple (e.g., Zeller and Paesler, cf. nn. 79, 109); more precisely, the act is to be understood as a challenging call for repentance by accepting Jesus' kingdom message (e.g., Merklein, Söding and Stuhlmacher, cf. 3.2.6).

The targets of Jesus' temple act were the money-changers, the vendors of doves, and the vessels used for transport of either money or sacrificial ingredients between the Royal Stoa and the inner parts of the temple. Through his action Jesus disturbed functions vital to the temple cult. Doves were extensively used for burnt offerings and sin offerings by people who could not afford more expensive victims, like lambs or goats (e.g., Lev 5:7; 12:8; 14:21–23). Thus, by overturning the seats of the sellers and by ordering them to remove the baskets or the cages in which they kept the doves, Jesus interrupted the free trade of the objects of sacrifice most in demand for individual sin offerings. Finally, the overturning of the tables of the money-changers disturbed not only the regular service of exchange of different currencies needed when travellers arrived from all of the widespread Diaspora inside and outside the Roman Empire, but affected in particular the collection of the temple tax. The temple tax was the financial source for the collective sacrificial cult, administered daily by the priests in Jerusalem on behalf of the whole Jewish people. The centre of this cult was constituted by the so-called *tamid*, i.e. the lamb sacrificed as a burnt offering twice a day (cf. Exod 29:38–42; Num 28:3–8; *m. Tamid*). At the time of Jesus, the daily *tamid* offering—together with the rites and offerings of the *annual* Day of Atonement—was considered as the fundamental basis for upholding a continuous state of purity and holiness of Israel, because they “appease and effect atonement between Israel and their Father in heaven” (*t. Sheqal*. 1:6; cf. *Jub.* 6.14; 50.11). Further, on the basis of Exod 30:12–13, the temple tax, as the means through which each Jew shared in the atoning effect of the *tamid*, could be called a ransom (cf. *Spec.* 1.77; *Her.* 186; *b. B. Bat.* 9a). Hence, the action of Jesus hit crucial functions of the temple service and was a symbolic gesture towards disrupting the sacrificial cult and, consequently, smoothly coheres with the accompanying saying. The old atonement cult must be brought to an end because it is inappropriate in the eschatological era, about to be ushered in, in which it will be replaced by the eternal worship of the redeemed from all the nations.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 381–386, with cross-references to the detailed exegetical analyses and arguments throughout the monograph. In English, an abbreviated presentation of my argument is available in my article “Jesus’ Symbolic Act in the Temple (Mark 11:15–17): The Replacement of the Sacrificial Cult by his Atoning Death,” in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel—Community without Temple*, ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 461–475, esp. 464–470. However, when writing this article I did not yet fully grasp how the citation from

Being convinced that the decisive moment had arrived, Jesus pushed things to extremes by his provocative act and words in the temple. The outcome would either be that the religious leaders of Israel would finally react appropriately to Jesus' call, or that they would firmly reject him and his message and probably seek options how to pacify or even put an end to his activity. As we know, the reaction of the Jewish authorities was negative. According to Mark, "the chief priests and the scribes...kept looking for a way to kill him" (11:18), and within a few days they were successful as the Romans put Jesus to death on the cross.<sup>115</sup> Hence, it quickly became obvious to Jesus (cf. the questioning about his authority in Mark 11:27–33) that the reaction to his symbolic act and his words in the temple was in the negative. This meant, of course, that the implied warning in the reference to Jer 7:11 about the temple's destruction remained a real threat, and in the announcement transmitted in Mark 13:2 Jesus confirmed that this would be the destiny of the Herodian temple: "Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." If not voluntarily as an effect of Israel accepting Jesus' message, the obsolete atonement cult would then be abandoned by force when the temple was destroyed.

However, in this case of a disobedient reaction to the repentance call too, there is a positive message inherent in the symbolic temple act. The implication of Jesus' attack on the atonement cult is that it will be replaced under all circumstances, if not by the immediate realisation of the eschatological renewal on Mount Zion, then in a different way. The alternative is that Jesus dies vicariously as a ransom (cf. Mark 10:45), and that his body is given and his blood poured out for many (cf. Mark 14:22, 24). Jesus foresaw his violent death and declared, most explicitly in the words of administration during the Passover meal with the Twelve, that his death would have an atoning effect. In case of the negative outcome of the confrontation in the temple, Jesus was

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Isa 56:7b relates to the future eschatological temple and how the temple act and the temple saying in Mark 14:58 interrelate. In spite of some criticisms, Schwemer, "Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester," 221–223 basically agrees with my collocation of the temple saying and the temple act, the messianic interpretation and the connection to the atonement cult.

<sup>115</sup> I assume a causal link between Jesus' temple act and his death, but it is not possible here to discuss any details of the succeeding events culminating in the historically verified fact of his crucifixion.



willing to offer himself and consequently take over and substitute for the sacrificial cult in the temple as the basis for atonement.<sup>116</sup>

5. *The Relationship Between Jesus' Temple Act and Saying(s) and Other Accounts and Sayings in the Gospels Relating to the Temple*

In the survey in part 1, I briefly listed the most relevant further traditions in the synoptic gospels which have to do with Jesus' attitude to the temple. Not surprisingly, opinions vary a lot within scholarship regarding the authenticity and the interpretation of these materials. Broadly speaking, it seems possible to distinguish between traditions positive to and negative to the temple. Generally, there is a correspondence between how scholars evaluate these traditions, on the one hand, and the temple act and saying(s), on the other hand.

The most outstanding "negative" tradition is Jesus' lament over Jerusalem and its "house" (οἶκος) that will be desolated in Luke 13:34–35 par. Matt 23:37–39. If the "house" is understood to be the temple, this saying likely coheres with the prediction in Mark 13:2, and we observe for example in a scholar like Kurt Paesler, who puts Mark 13:2\* at the centre of Jesus' message relating to the temple, support for

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<sup>116</sup> For a short presentation of this aspect of the temple act cf. Ådna, "Jesus' Symbolic Act in the Temple," 471–473. A detailed exposition is given in *Jesu Stellung*, 412–430 ("Die Zeichenhandlung auf dem Tempelmarkt und Jesu messianische Leidens- und Opferbereitschaft"), preceded by a description of the atonement cult in the temple in Jerusalem as the proper theological background (387–412). Wilckens, *Theologie*, vol. I.2, 62–65, also strongly approves a mutually interrelated interpretation of the temple act and the temple saying. Their common message is the destruction of the temple and the end of the sacrificial cult: Jesus' "Vorgehen gegen die Händler und Geldwechsler galt in der Tat dem Opferkult: dessen Ende durch Gott selbst. Darum wird Gott den Tempel zerstören: Die Sühne für die Sünden Israels, die durch die Opferhandlungen bewirkt wird, hat ihre Heilskraft verloren. Israels Sünde ist von solchem Ausmaß und Gewicht, daß sie nur durch Gottes Endgericht gesühnt werden kann" (64–65, italics in the text). According to Wilckens, Jesus clearly realised that such an attack on the temple would lead to his own death, which he considered as the replacement of the temple cult: "Sein Tod wird als Sühnesterben für 'die vielen' an die Stelle der Sühneopfer im Tempel treten und diese ein für allemal ablösen" (65). Wilckens elucidates how Jesus sets out this point at the Passover meal in the passage entitled: "Das Abschiedsmahl als Sühne wirkende Umstiftung des Päsachmahls" (65–85). Cf. also Peter Stuhlmacher, "Jesus' Readiness to Suffer and His Understanding of His Death," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, 392–412 (translated from idem, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1, 3rd ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005], 124–142).

the authenticity of Luke 13:34–35a.<sup>117</sup> A firm proponent of the authenticity of the whole unit, i.e. also Luke 13:35b par. Matt 23:39, is Kim Huat Tan.<sup>118</sup>

Whereas scholars favouring a reforming or a cleansing understanding of the temple act can easily include the “positive” traditions, those who consider the temple act and saying(s) to be expressions of condemnation and destruction will presumably have more difficulty in accepting and integrating this material. Both Jesus’ instruction to the man whom he had healed from leprosy in Mark 1:44 par., “Show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded” (cf. Lev 13–14), and his saying in Matt 5:23–24 imply an acceptance of at least certain parts of the sacrificial cult in the temple. Some critics try to circumvent this fact by claiming that the real emphasis in these texts lies somewhere else—viz. on the faith in Jesus’ healing power (cf. Luke 17:12–19, as well) and on the willingness to reconcile with one’s brother—but such exegetically justified observations cannot invalidate the fact that these texts take the fulfilment of certain sacrificial rituals for granted.<sup>119</sup> Further, the accounts of the poor widow’s offering (Mark 12:41–44 par. Luke 21:1–4) and the payment of the temple tax (Matt 17:24–27) express an acceptance of financial support of the temple.<sup>120</sup> Personally, as an exponent of a “destruction” understanding

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 250–255. See *ibid.*, 260, for his description of how Luke 13:34–35 relates to Mark 13:2\*. It should not be overlooked, however, that Paesler leaves out the last element of the unit in Luke 13:35b, respectively Matt 23:39, as “eine sekundäre Ergänzung der Q-Tradenten” (252).

<sup>118</sup> Tan, *Aims of Jesus*, 100–128. Tan considers it likely that Luke 13:34–35 was spoken “during the last phase of Jesus’ public ministry while in Jerusalem, possibly just after the ‘cleansing’ of the temple” (124–125). Such a dating of the announcement of the desolation of the temple coheres well with my chronological positioning of Mark 13:2 (cf. above). Given such a date, the foreseen turning point in Luke 13:35b must refer to the return of Jesus as judge at his parousia, at which the greeting of him by the Jerusalemites with the words of Ps 118:26 still expresses a hope for the conversion of the nation of Israel (cf. Tan, 115–121). Insofar as the destruction of the present temple is succeeded by a reversed reality of salvation, Luke 13:34–35 par. Matt 23:37–39 might even be considered to contain an analogous structure to the two-part temple saying in Mark 14:58.

<sup>119</sup> Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, 224, sees Jesus here in agreement with “standard Jewish advice, which reflects endorsement of the sacrificial system.” Paesler, *Das Tempelwort Jesu*, 231–232, accepts the authenticity of Matt 5:23–24 and infers from it, “daß Jesus den Jerusalemer Kultbetrieb als selbstverständlich gegeben voraussetzt” (232). This seems to be one more example of the inner tension in Paesler’s portrait of Jesus, criticised above (cf. n. 110).

<sup>120</sup> However, in the case of the widow the point is clearly her exemplary attitude of giving everything to God and of exclusively putting her trust in his care. The tradition

of the temple act and as a supporter of the authenticity of Mark 13:2 and 14:58, I consider all these “positive” traditions as potentially authentic and coherent with Jesus’ temple act and temple sayings as long as they are chronologically placed prior to Jesus’ last stay in Jerusalem, during which he acted and spoke out against the old temple and its sacrificial cult. Jesus was deeply rooted in the holy traditions of Israel. He venerated Jerusalem with the temple on Mount Zion as the dwelling place of God (Matt 5:35b; 23:21; cf. n. 111), and his willingness to die vicariously confirms the need for atonement which the sacrificial cult in the temple had effected in a legitimate way, until the very moment of the eschatological turning point signified by Jesus’ radical call for Israel’s repentance in his action in the temple.<sup>121</sup>

Our sources for the first decades of the early church seem to reflect varying attitudes towards the temple in Jerusalem. To a large extent, although not with absolute consistency, the differences can be attributed to the so-called “Hebrews” and “Hellenists” respectively (cf. Acts 6:1). Whereas the Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians in Palestine, under the leadership of James, continued a practice of regularly visiting the temple and even participating in sacrificial rites, the Greek-speaking Jewish Christian “Hellenists” originating in Jerusalem—but soon spreading far beyond Judaea—seem to have conceived of the death of Jesus in such a way as a once and for all substitute for the atonement cult in the temple (cf. Rom 3:25–26 and Hebrews) that Christians no longer needed to nor should take part in the sacrificial rites in the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>122</sup> To me, it seems that the “Hebrew” position corresponded to the attitude of Jesus throughout most of his ministry, as reflected in the “positive” traditions shortly commented upon above, and that the “Hellenist” position much more clearly grasped the far-reaching implications of his act in the temple and his death. In spite of the differing approaches towards the temple within the early church and in spite of the rather frustrating range of disagreements in modern scholarly evaluation of Jesus’ temple act and sayings, I nevertheless find good reason to conclude this review of

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about the temple tax contains a number of exegetical difficulties and is ambiguous in its view of the tax and whether it is proper to pay it.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Ådna, *Jesu Stellung*, 434–440 for a fuller treatment of how the “positive” temple traditions relate to the temple act.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Paul Barnett, *The Birth of Christianity: The First Twenty Years, After Jesus*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 66–76.

recent scholarship with a claim that Jesus' temple act and the related sayings remain crucial to any portrayal of the message of Jesus of Nazareth and his understanding of his own mission.<sup>123</sup>

[Only after having finished this article and too late to be taken into account I discover that one of the editors, Tom Holmén, extensively covers both the temple sayings and the temple act in his monograph *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, Biblical Interpretation Series 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 296–329. Similarly, the treatment of the temple act in Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*, WUNT 2.204 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 286–290, 368–376, 475 should definitely have been included in the presentation of recent scholarship.]

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<sup>123</sup> Hence, I disagree with the conclusion in Wedderburn's recent survey of the scholarly debate, according to which the temple act remains too puzzling to serve as a key to Jesus' ministry (cf. Wedderburn, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 22). In contrast, I consider the decision by the editors of *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research* to include E. P. Sanders' initial chapter in *Jesus and Judaism*, 61–76 (with notes, 363–369), serving as the point of departure for portraying Jesus (cf. 3.2.2 above), as one of altogether five contributions on major events in Jesus' career under the title "Jesus and the Temple" (361–381), as concurring with my judgement regarding the centrality of the temple act and sayings to research on the historical Jesus.



## JESUS AND THE SHEMA

KIM HUAT TAN

The Shema<sup>1</sup> is in Jewish thought the supreme affirmation of the unity of God and is frequently regarded as the acceptance of the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>2</sup> If the Shema may be understood as Judaism's most basic confession and something like a creed during the time of Jesus, exploring and elucidating his understanding and employment of it in his ministry becomes a task worth pursuing.

Two things need to be ascertained before results may be arrived at. The first concerns the status of the Shema in Jesus' day. To what extent can the evidence of the Mishnah be retrojected back to Jesus' ministry? Whether we can speak of a creed or simply the frequent use of a passage, such as Deut 6:4–5, has important ramifications. If Jesus was dealing with a creed and made novel statements about its meaning, the overturning of an identity-making consensus may be at work. If he was simply highlighting the importance of one popular passage, what may be at work may simply be an employment of something popular for the building of a new proposal. Of course, the latter is still important for an assessment of the impact Jesus' ministry had on his people, but it would not carry as great a significance as it would have done if the former were true.

The second concerns, of course, whether the gospel traditions, which feature Jesus' discussion and use of the Shema, may confidently be traced back to him and are not merely the products of the post-Easter community. This will involve painstaking sifting and analysis, the results of which will doubtless not be convincing to everyone. However, if it is possible to derive results with a fair measure of confidence, exploring whether Jesus has offered anything new or creative to his contemporaries' understanding of the Shema becomes something that scholarship on the historical Jesus cannot bypass. Indeed, if a leitmotif

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<sup>1</sup> In today's Jewish liturgy, it comprises three paragraphs: Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21; and Num 15:37–41. The name is derived from the first two words of Deut 6:4: שמע ישראל (Hear, O Israel!).

<sup>2</sup> L. Jacobs, "Shema, Reading of," *EncJud*, 1372. Cf. *b. Ber.* 13b.

can be identified, the significance will be great, as it may very well lead us to the heart of Jesus' ministry. There will then be ripple effects on our understanding of Jesus' Jewishness.

### 1. *History of Research*

Surprisingly, scholarship on such an important topic has been meagre. Even if we attribute this dearth of interest to anti-Semitism of a bygone era, the lack of scholarly attention to such a topic in modern times is still baffling. This becomes even more apparent when it is realised that the citing of Deut 6:5 in the synoptic gospels (Matt 22.37//Mark 12:30; Mark 12:33; Luke 10:27) presents a most fascinating and intricate problem. They come in different forms. No one citation agrees with another. They all do not appear to conform to either the Masoretic Text (MT) or the LXX. J. Jeremias lamented in 1961<sup>3</sup> that this glaring problem was not addressed by commentators up to his day.<sup>4</sup> The exception to this was the lonely voice of T. W. Manson, who took notice of it but confessed that it was a very complex textual problem which he, unfortunately, was unable to solve.<sup>5</sup> For Jeremias, this phenomenon of textual divergences over the gospels' citation of Deut 6:5 is curious, especially when the Shema was a liturgical text of the Jews of Jesus' day. What proposals did he come up with to explain this curious phenomenon? Beginning from the premise that the Shema was a creed in Jesus' day,<sup>6</sup> he proposed that the divergences in the synoptic gospels had arisen because the Greek-speaking church had stopped reciting it. The Lord's Prayer had taken over its place in the liturgy of the church (*Didache* 8.3). This contributed to early Christianity's lack of precision over the words of the Shema. Consequently, he concludes:

both the prayers of Jesus and those of the early church stand in the [Jewish] liturgical tradition. The custom of praying three times a day is taken over from Judaism, but the new life bestowed through the gospel

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<sup>3</sup> In a lecture delivered during the VIII<sup>e</sup> Semaine d'Études Liturgiques at the Institut de Théologie Orthodoxe Saint-Serge, Paris, which was subsequently published. The work utilised is the English Translation, published as *The Prayers of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Jeremias, *Prayers*, 80.

<sup>5</sup> T. W. Manson, "The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus," *BJRL* 34 (1951-2): 312-332, at 318.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremias, *Prayers*, 80.

shatters the fixed liturgical forms, especially with regard to the content of prayers.<sup>7</sup>

The replacement of an important liturgical element by something novel is a very significant move, since it signals the change in approach to the God who is worshipped and this, in turn, may imply the coming into being of a new community. Jeremias was aware of such implications and, for him this novelty signalled the arrival of the eschatological age.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted here that Jeremias was dealing principally with early Christianity and did not attempt to analyse how the Shema was utilised in Jesus' ministry, and whether there might have emerged a leitmotif in relation to the eschatological age Jesus was inaugurating.

One who comes close to tackling the topic of this essay is B. Gerhardsson. He has devoted a lifetime's study to the possible influence of the Shema on the gospel traditions. His earliest attempt at such a probe is published in 1966 as *The Testing of God's Son*.<sup>9</sup> Incomplete though the book may be, the argument found in it is none the less coherent and significant. Gerhardsson argues that the triadic pattern of the temptation story in Matt 4:1–11 is based on the rabbinic interpretation of Deut 6:5,<sup>10</sup> where the first temptation may be related to loving God with the heart, the second, the soul, and the third, the might (Mammon). Such a subtle but profound use of the Shema indicates for Gerhardsson that the temptation narrative was written up as a coherent unit from the start by a Pharisaic scribe, well-trained in the methods of rabbinic exegesis.<sup>11</sup> This discovery led him subsequently to look for other passages which might provide evidence of their being influenced by the Shema at the deep structural level. The numerous essays he wrote, barring those in Swedish, are now collected conveniently as a volume entitled *The Shema in the New Testament*.<sup>12</sup>

Gerhardsson works at the level of the final form of the gospel text without making a detailed excursion into tracing these traditions back to Jesus. That said, the assumption he works with is that, as pious men,

<sup>7</sup> Jeremias, *Prayers*, 81.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 78, 81.

<sup>9</sup> B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son (Matt 4.1–11 & Par.)* (Lund: Gleerup, 1966).

<sup>10</sup> The key text in Gerhardsson's arsenal is *m. Ber.* 9:5, although other rabbinic passages are utilised, Gerhardsson, *Testing*, 73–76.

<sup>11</sup> Gerhardsson, *Testing*, 79–80.

<sup>12</sup> B. Gerhardsson, *The Shema in the New Testament* (Lund: Novapress, 1996).



Jesus and his disciples must have recited the Shema twice a day, every morning and every evening.<sup>13</sup> He proposes after a lifetime of work that the Shema forms the deep structure not only of Matt 4:1–11 but also that of many other passages in the NT. Six may be singled out for mention: the Parable of the Sower together with the interpretation (Mark 4:1–9, 13–20 and par.); part of the Matthean Passion narrative (Matt 27:33–50); the central portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:1–6, 16–21); the six parables accompanying the Parable of the Sower in Matthew (Matt 13:24–50); the description of the believers in Acts 4:32; and the paean to love in 1 Cor 13:1–3. These passages are analysed to show that a triadic pattern underlies them and their themes correspond with that of heart, soul and might in Deut 6:5, at least in the way the rabbis would have recognised (*m. Ber.* 9.5).

Gerhardsson's thesis has not met with wide approval, due mainly to two reasons. The first is that his argument is based mainly on texts that postdate the formation of the New Testament. Can one use the Mishnaic evidence to analyse texts emanating from an earlier period? Information on pre-Mishnaic Jewish prayer is extremely scanty, and what is available has been debated with respect to its historicity and significance. The second is that his exegesis often appears fanciful and forced.<sup>14</sup> Two examples will suffice: his unpacking of the themes of the six parables in Matthew (Matt 13:24–50) as reflecting the triad of heart, soul and might, in that order, has not been taken up by any major commentary on Matthew. One also wonders whether the description of Jesus' passion in Matthew has been written intentionally to correspond with the triad of heart, soul and might. Such detective work often appears to be over-subtle. Since the gospel traditions are religious traditions, they may easily be pressed into the mould made by the triad of heart, soul and might as such themes are often naturally present in religious discourse. Consequently, it is easy to over-interpret. Clear indicators are needed if we are to be confident that such allusions were originally intended.

That said, Gerhardsson is to be thanked for raising our awareness of possible correspondences between some gospel passages and Deut 6:5. If Gerhardsson's case is cogent, the Gospel traditions may be regarded

<sup>13</sup> Gerhardsson, *Shema*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew ICC*, vol. I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 353.

as profoundly shaped by Jewish themes, especially the Shema. From its presence in the gospel traditions, Gerhardsson conjectures, although he does not insist, that it is eminently possible that Jesus himself was also influenced accordingly.

In many ways a parallel to Gerhardsson's work, J. Marcus has recently proposed that the Shema played an important role in the composition of Mark.<sup>15</sup> Both work at the level of the final form of the gospels and not that of the Jesus of history. But while Gerhardsson looks for the triadic formula in his investigations, Marcus focuses on the passages that utilise the concept of monotheism, a central concern of the Shema. Marcus points out that in addition to the explicit reference to the Shema in Mark 12:29, two other Markan passages—2:7 and 10:18—implicitly refer to it because the word εἷς, instead of the adjective μόνος, is joined with θεός. The latter would be more fitting if Mark simply wants to say that only God can forgive sins and is good (cf. Luke 5:21). This, then, points to the use of the Shema in the Markan passages,<sup>16</sup> which naturally leads to the question why Mark is interested in the theme of the oneness of God. Marcus's proposal is that Mark was responding to Jewish objections, based on the Shema, to the Christian claims about Jesus.<sup>17</sup> In other words, when Christians attributed to Jesus Christ the authority to forgive sins and other related activities, they also argued that such claims did not militate against monotheism. Jesus would then be regarded as the plenipotentiary of God on earth. For this argument to work, Marcus has to follow the consensus view which states that the practice of reciting the Shema goes back to the Second Temple period. Such a consensus needs examination in the light of a recent and spirited challenge, which will be taken up below.<sup>18</sup> Marcus is certainly to be thanked for a stimulating piece that encourages us to take a further step into the shadowy domains of the Jesus of history and see whether such themes may also be predicated of him.

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<sup>15</sup> J. Marcus, "Authority to Forgive Sins upon the Earth: the *Shema* in the Gospel of Mark," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, JSNTS 104/SSEJC 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 196–211.

<sup>16</sup> Marcus, "Authority," 197–98.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 199–200.

<sup>18</sup> P. Foster, "'Why did Matthew get the Shema Wrong?' A Study of Matthew 22:37," *JBL* 122 (2003): 309–333.

Mention must also be made of the volume of essays edited by Perry Yoder.<sup>19</sup> Three essays are devoted to exploring the use of the Shema by the synoptic gospels.<sup>20</sup> Although argued with vigour, the results arrived at can be questionable at times, such as the insistence that Mark's discussion of the Shema in Mark 12:28–34 was formulated for a Hellenistic Jewish audience and not a Gentile one;<sup>21</sup> and the collapsing of the command to love God and the command to love the neighbour into a single command in Luke 10:25 as being unprecedented.<sup>22</sup> These essays treat the matter at the evangelists' level and eschew relating it to the historical Jesus.

## 2. *Did the Shema Have the Status of a Creed pre-70 CE?*

It is usually claimed that the Shema formed the very centre of the synagogal liturgy and occupied the pivotal place in the worship of the Second Temple.<sup>23</sup> Versepnt puts it succinctly: "It is commonly agreed... that the recitation of the *Shema* twice a day antedated the destruction of the Second Temple."<sup>24</sup> L. Jacobs' reconstruction is widely accepted: the Shema as it is recited today has undergone the following stages of development: (i) the recitation of Deut 6:4; (ii) the reading of Deut 6:4–9; (iii) the reading of Deut 6:4–9; 11:13–21; and Num 15:37–41; and (iv) the additions of the benedictions.<sup>25</sup> As every Jew of Jesus' day had to recite it twice a day, it may then be assumed that Jesus of Nazareth did the same. Consequently, when the text-forms of the Shema as found in the gospels evince divergence, and when none of the forms appears to be derived either from the MT or the LXX, a conundrum ensues. To add to this confusion, one may refer to Justin Martyr's writings where he cites Deut 6:5 in a binary

<sup>19</sup> P. B. Yoder, ed., *Take This Word to Heart: The Shema in Torah and Gospel* (Scottsdale, PA/Waterloo, ON: Herald, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> J. W. Carlson, "The Shema in Mark: For a Gentile or Jewish Audience," 52–70; J. T. Williams, "The Significance of Love of God and Neighbour in Luke's Gospel," 71–99; and A. Barker, "The Double Love Command: Matthew's Hermeneutical Key," 100–133.

<sup>21</sup> Carlson, "Shema," 69–70.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, "Significance," 77–86; on this, see our treatment later.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 139.

<sup>24</sup> D. J. Versepnt, "James 1:17 and the Jewish Morning Prayers," *NovT* 39 (1997): 177–191, at 179.

<sup>25</sup> Jacobs, "Shema," 1370.

form!<sup>26</sup> How could such an important text be cited with such variation? Would not its status as the central liturgical item lead to fixity of form? This conundrum is usually resolved in two ways. Jeremias conjectures that this is so because the Greek-speaking church has stopped using the Shema in favour of the Lord's Prayer.<sup>27</sup> Falk points out that when something is made liturgical, its form is not necessarily fixed (cf. the different forms of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew, Luke and the *Didache*).<sup>28</sup>

Not surprisingly, some Matthean scholars have argued that behind the composition of the First Gospel stood a Gentile and not a Jew.<sup>29</sup> This verdict, incidentally, dovetails with Jeremias' conjecture. But in a spirited defence of the first evangelist's Jewishness, Foster has recently argued that the peculiar Matthean text-form does not prove the contrary because there was no fixed form to begin with.<sup>30</sup> Instead, the practice of reciting the Shema as a creedal statement, which gave rise to a fixed form in its wake, actually started in the Tannaitic period. This conclusion is based on two central arguments: there is no explicit reference to the liturgical use of the Shema prior to *m. Ber.* 1:1–4; and there is evidence which suggests that such use is a rabbinic innovation (*b. Ber.* 21a). The key documents usually cited in the consensus view, viz. the Nash Papyrus, 1QS X, the *tefillin* and the *mezuzot* from Qumran, and Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 4.212–213, need closer examination.

We shall begin with the Mishnaic evidence. As E. P. Sanders observes: "the mishnaic rabbis simply took it for granted, as something that did not require debate or proof, that every Jew said the Shema' (along with daily prayers) twice a day."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the passage in *m. Ber.* 1.3 is most instructive, for it purportedly records a debate which pre-

<sup>26</sup> In three places the following is found: ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου (*Dial.* 93.2; 93.3; *1 Apol.* 16.6). Cf. R. F. Shendinger, "A Note on the Variant Form of the *Shema* in the Writings of Justin Martyr," *HTR* 93 (2000): 161–163.

<sup>27</sup> Jeremias, *Prayers*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> D. K. Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature and the Jerusalem Church in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. R. J. Bauckham (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 261–301, at 276 n. 28.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., K. W. Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *JBL* 66 (1947): 165–172; G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), esp. 26.

<sup>30</sup> Foster, "Matthew," 332.

<sup>31</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 196.

dated Jesus' ministry. The School of Shammai and the School of Hillel differed over the interpretation of the posture to be adopted when reciting the Shema. The fact that the debate was over such a trivial matter as the posture indicates that the content of the Shema had already reached a kind of creedal status and may be assumed as something agreed upon universally. Furthermore, we may cite *m. Tamid* 5.1, which purportedly describes a communal and liturgical recitation of the Shema and the *berakoth*, led by priests:

The officer said to them, "Recite ye a Benediction!" They recited a Benediction, and recited the Ten Commandments, the *Shema*, and the *And it shall come to pass if ye shall harken* [Deut 11:13–21], and the *And the Lord spake unto Moses* [Num 15:37–41]. They pronounced three Benedictions with the people: "True and sure," and "Abodah" and the Priestly Blessing; and on the Sabbath they pronounced a further Benediction for the outgoing Course of priests.

Much of what is found in today's synagogal liturgy is similar to what is described in the above passage (cf. also *m. Ber.* 1:4). Although we do not know what the first benediction is,<sup>32</sup> what is so interesting about this passage is the conjoining of the Ten Commandments (the essence of the Torah) and the Shema (the foundational belief of Israel), and the enveloping of the Shema with benedictions.

Although the compilation of the Mishnah was completed at the end of the second century, the many and varied discussions of the Shema indicate that it was not a recent innovation and had indeed been normative for the rabbis for quite a while. If this is to be objected to, how else could one explain the data found in the Mishnah? Is it credible to think that for the rabbis, the notion began only after the destruction of the Temple and quickly gained normative status so much so that they need not argue over whether the Shema should be recited, but how it should be recited, and in fact harked back to the Schools of Shammai and Hillel? Of course, the critical question is whether such normative status was early only for the rabbis, since *b. Ber.* 21a suggests that the practice might have been a rabbinic innovation even though it may be granted that it was derived from their predecessors. It reads:

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<sup>32</sup> But see J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 230.

Rab Judah said: If a man is in doubt whether he has recited the *Shema*, he need not recite it again. If he is in doubt whether he has said "True and firm," or not, he should say it again. What is the reason?—The recital of the *Shema* is ordained only by the Rabbis, the saying of "True and firm" is a Scriptural ordinance.

The words "True and firm" refer to the *Emet Ve-Yaziv*, a benediction pronounced after the morning recitation of the Shema. This saying of R. Judah, albeit codified late, threatens to undo the consistent picture of Shema recitation in the Mishnah. This issue will be addressed after a discussion of the critical pre-Mishnaic passages, which suggest that the practice under discussion is not confined just to the rabbis.

We begin with the Nash Papyrus. This document is the linchpin of the consensus view. Coming to the attention of the scholarly world in 1903,<sup>33</sup> this document, which probably emanated from Fayyum and is to be dated to the second century BCE on palaeographical grounds,<sup>34</sup> contains the Decalogue and the Shema conjoined. The text preserved shows affinity with the LXX. The document breaks off after the second letter of the first word of Deut 6:5,<sup>35</sup> but what is preserved is sufficient to show that, at a very early stage in the religious development of Second Temple Judaism, the Decalogue and the Shema were critical items. E. Würthwein surmises that the document could have functioned either liturgically, devotionally or served as an instructional collection of texts.<sup>36</sup> Whatever option we choose, the following may be deemed to be clearly indicated: (i) the importance of the Decalogue and the Shema for the Jewish faith was established early; (ii) the conjoining of these two passages indicates that there is an intimate link between them in Jewish religious thought; and (iii) this gives supporting evidence for believing that the practice envisaged in *m. Tamid* 5:1 may have predated the destruction of the Second Temple.<sup>37</sup>

The Qumran evidence becomes critical at this juncture. If it can be established that a sect has not abandoned the use of the Shema in its

<sup>33</sup> Published by S. A. Cooke, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 25 (1903) 34–56. Cooke dated it to the second or first century CE.

<sup>34</sup> This dating was argued for by W. F. Albright and has since prevailed in the scholarly world. See his "A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabean Age: The Nash Papyrus," *JBL* 56 (1937): 145–176.

<sup>35</sup> וְהַבְּרִית

<sup>36</sup> E. Würthwein, *The Text of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Biblia Hebraica* (London: SCM, 1980), 33.

<sup>37</sup> Foster failed to see such implications in his "Matthew," 327–328.

liturgy, we then have a further indication of the widespread use of it in Jewish society. The Qumran evidence comes principally from two sources: 1QS X and the texts found in the *tefillin* (1Q13; 4Q128–148; 5Q8; 8Q3) and the *mezuzot* (4Q149–155, 8Q4).<sup>38</sup> To begin with the latter: *tefillin* and *mezuzot* are containers bound to the hand or the head and to doorframes respectively, in which are found biblical passages. The inspiration for such a practice comes mainly from Deuteronomy 6:8–9. A quick survey of the contents of these Qumran finds reveals a very interesting picture. The passages in the *tefillin* are varied. Simplifying for the sake of clarity, they may be ascribed to five blocks of texts: Exod 12:43–13:18; 20:7–12; Deut 5:1–6.9; 10:21–11:21; 32:14–33. These blocks of texts seem to cluster around not so much the theme of confessing Yahweh as one, as that which emphasises the need to remember Torah through the use of religious accoutrements. This being the case, it is not too surprising that the first paragraph of the Shema (Deut 6:4–9), or parts of it, is found only in six of the twenty-four *tefillin* that could be opened and their contents deciphered (4Q130, 135, 136, 140, 142; 8Q3). The second paragraph of the liturgical Shema (Deut 11:13–21) fares slightly better. The passage or a part of it is found in eight *tefillin* (1Q13; 4Q128, 130, 131, 136, 143, 146; 8Q3). Only 4Q130 and 4Q136 conjoin the two passages (or parts of them). There is no mention whatsoever of Num 15:37–41, the third paragraph of the liturgical Shema. The *mezuzot* present a similar picture but with a higher frequency for the first paragraph (Deut 6:4–9): three out of the seven discovered (4Q150, 151, 152); while the second paragraph (Deut 11:13–21) is found twice (4Q153; 8Q4). To sum up: contrary to what is usually believed, the *tefillin* and the *mezuzot* from Qumran do not offer strong corroborating evidence for the consensus view.<sup>39</sup> The Scriptural passages chosen are selected based on the theme of remembrance through accoutrements, and the theological ideas that are to be remembered range from the Exodus and Torah to the Shema. No special preference is given to the last mentioned. Indeed, the third

<sup>38</sup> There are three *tefillin* from Cave 5 (5Q8) which unfortunately could not be opened. In addition, it should also be mentioned that there are also three others, which are unfortunately unclassifiable because no one knows from which cave they came. See J. C. Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 33.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. S. C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 83, 347 n. 26; and Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature," 287.

paragraph in the recitation of the Shema, as evidenced in the Mishnah, is not featured at all.

The evidence from 1QS X is assessed differently by scholars. The passage around which much discussion has taken place is found in lines 10 and 13–14:

<sup>10</sup>At the onset of day and night I shall enter the covenant of God, and when evening and morning depart I shall repeat his precepts...<sup>13</sup>... When I start to stretch out my hands and my feet I shall bless his name; when I start to go out and to come in,<sup>14</sup> to sit and to stand up, and lying down in my bed I shall extol him; I shall bless him with the offering that issues from my lips in the row of men.

The entering into covenant with God, its position parallel to the recitation (אמר) of the precepts in line 10, which refer to the Torah, and the allusion to Deut 6:7 in lines 13–14<sup>40</sup> have been judged as unmistakably referring to confessing the Shema.<sup>41</sup> Lines 13–16 contain a series of three *berakoth*. Since line 10 refers to the recitation of the Shema, lines 13–16 may be taken as showing that such a recitation takes place together with the uttering of the *berakoth*, constituting a parallel to the Mishnaic evidence. Talmon surmises that this evidence from Qumran indicates the beginning of the process of the institutionalisation of Jewish prayers.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the Nash Papyrus provides evidence that the Torah, in the form of the Decalogue, and the Shema have been brought together before. Foster remains unnecessarily sceptical and states that the Shema is not explicitly mentioned and what 1QS X, 10–14 may be referring to is some sort of ritualistic practice of covenant renewal taking place in the community.<sup>43</sup> But what is the content of the covenant renewal? In our judgment, this amounts to explaining the obscure with something much more obscure, not with something closer to hand. If it may be argued that 1QS X, 10–14 alludes to the Shema, three implications arise: (i) the twice-daily recitation coincides with the pattern found in the Mishnah; (ii) the Shema governs the life of the community, since sunrise and sunset (and through the night)

<sup>40</sup> The order is reverse with sunrise being mentioned first. The Qumran community most probably reckoned day from sunrise to sunrise instead of the standard Jewish practice of sunset to sunset. See S. Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989), 175–176.

<sup>41</sup> Versepunt, "Jewish Morning Prayers," 184–185; Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature," 287–288; and Talmon, *World of Qumran*, 226.

<sup>42</sup> Talmon, *World of Qumran*, 225 n. 83.

<sup>43</sup> Foster, "Matthew," 329.



are expressions of the course of the entire day; and (iii) the recitation of the Shema is described as entering the covenant and this has implications for our understanding of the important status of the Shema in the community's understanding of covenantal identity. Falk even suggests that the *berakah* concerning the heavenly luminaries (beginning from 9.26) and the singing of praise to God among the holy ones, which precedes line 10, have themes in common with the *Yoşer* or the first benediction preceding the Shema in the rabbinic liturgy.<sup>44</sup>

What about the evidence offered in Josephus? For at least one scholar, this evidence confirms that the practice of enveloping of the Shema with benedictions is pre-rabbinic.<sup>45</sup> The passage in question is *Ant.* 4.212–213:

Twice each day, at the dawn thereof and when the hour comes for turning to repose, let all acknowledge before God the bounties which He has bestowed on them through their deliverance from the land of Egypt: thanksgiving is a natural duty, and is rendered alike in gratitude for past mercies and to incline the giver to others yet to come. They shall inscribe also on their doors the greatest of the benefits which they have received from God and each shall display them on his arms; and all that can show forth the power of God and his goodwill towards them, let them bear a record thereof written on the head and on the arm, so that men may see on every side the loving care with which God surrounds them.

What must be stated first of all is that the Shema is nowhere explicitly mentioned. Consequently, scholars scrutinise phrases that may allude to the Shema. The first allusion may be found in the phrase “twice each day,” as this is a synonymous way of stating “when you lie down and when you rise up” (Deut 6:7). Secondly, the last clause of 4.213 may be a reference to the *mezuzah* being placed on doorposts.<sup>46</sup> If this is correct, the mention of displaying gratitude to God on the arms, heads and doorposts indicates that Deut 6:8–9 is being alluded to. However, the passage speaks of acknowledging God for his blessings, especially that of the deliverance from Egypt. This is something not mentioned in the first two paragraphs of the liturgical Shema but in the third. But it must also be pointed out that the Exodus forms the backdrop

<sup>44</sup> Falk, “Jewish Prayer Literature,” 288, based on M. Weinfeld, “Traces of Kedushat Yotzer and Pesukey De-Zimra in the Qumran Literature and in Ben-Sira” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 45 (1976): 15–26.

<sup>45</sup> Verseput, “Jewish Morning Prayers,” 183.

<sup>46</sup> So H. St. J. Thackeray, ed., *Josephus*, vol. IV (London and New York: Heinemann and Putnam's Sons, 1930), 578 n. b.

of the injunctions in the Deuteronomic passages. Some scholars have actually taken the description of the postulated Shema as thanksgiving as attesting to the conjoining of the *berakoth* with the Shema.<sup>47</sup> This serves then as evidence that what is attested in the Mishnah actually predates the destruction of the Second Temple.

On their own, the different pieces of evidence from the Nash Papyrus, the Qumran finds and Josephus are not compelling. But when they are brought together, they support the conclusion that it is eminently plausible that at least Deut 6:4–9 forms the bastion of Jewish orthodoxy and religious duty before 70 CE. It may be far-fetched to speak of its being a creed but if Jewish communities were asked to summarise their faith and establish a communal liturgy, the one text that they would start with may arguably be Deut 6:4–9. This is further supported by two considerations. First, the love of God and the love of neighbour or humanity have often been regarded as the summary of Torah by many Jews (cf. *T. Iss.* 5.2; 7.5; *T. Dan* 5.3; *Let. Aris.* 229; Philo, *Virt.* 95; *Spec.* 2.63). The injunction to love God is found expressed in the *locus classicus*, Deut 6:5. Second, monotheism may be regarded as a fighting doctrine of many Jews of the Second Temple period.<sup>48</sup> This was given accelerated development because of the Maccabean experience and because of the ethos in which many Jews found themselves: subjects of an Empire which endorsed a plurality of religions. Indeed, the later Talmudic tradition that Rabbi Akiba died with the Shema on his lips as a fulfilment of what it means to love Yahweh with all one's soul (or life)<sup>49</sup> indicates that Deut 6:4–9 was the driving force of Jewish piety and theology. It is only in Deut 6:4–9 that the cardinal ideas of love for Yahweh and monotheism are found conjoined.

What are we, therefore, to make of *b. Ber.* 21a? The first thing that needs to be mentioned is that *b. Ber.* 21a shows that there was a debate on the normative status of the recitation of the Shema and it implies that such recitation takes a subordinate role to that of the *berakoth*. We may very well have here a peculiar view of some rabbis which did not represent the view of the majority. That said, another explanation

<sup>47</sup> Falk, "Jewish Prayer Literature," 287; Versepunt, "Jewish Morning Prayers," 183.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 247–259, esp. 248. See also L. W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 32–42.

<sup>49</sup> *b. Ber.* 61b.

is possible. The repartee by R. Joseph and the rejoinder by Abaye in the same paragraph of *b. Ber.* 21a are instructive. These demonstrate that the whole debate was not about whether the Shema was important, but about whether it should be recited in the way that the *berakoth* should, which (for the rabbis) was clearly commanded by Scripture. Indeed, it may be argued that the fact that even though the recitation of the Shema was widely practised, although there was no clear Scriptural commandment for it, serves to show its significance.

If what is presented in this section is on the right track, assessing Jesus' attitude towards the Shema and his employment of it in his arguments with the religious leaders of his day becomes a compelling task. In what follows, we will be principally concerned with Deut 6:4–5 and the themes found in it.

### 3. *The Shema in the Gospel Traditions*

If we think that a probe into the gospel traditions for indications that Jesus either discussed the Shema or employed it in his teaching ministry will yield only meagre results, we are in for a surprise. There are a couple of important passages which are worthy of close scrutiny. Indeed, if we were to include the theme of rendering service to God alone, more passages may be added to the database. Due to constraints of space, this essay can only take up the evidence from the synoptic gospels.

#### 3.1. *The Shema in Matt 22:34–40//Mark 12:28–34*

Mark records in 12:28–34 that in response to a scribe's question about the first (ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων = most important)<sup>50</sup> commandment, Jesus replies by quoting Deut 6:4–5. This Markan passage has a parallel in Matthew. There would have been no controversy over the hypothesis that Matthew depended wholly on Mark for the composition of this pericope, if it were not for Luke 10:25–8. This is because some Matthean divergences from the Markan text resemble that of Luke 10:25–8, raising all sorts of questions regarding the source-critical problem. Davies and Allison sum up ably the key agreements

<sup>50</sup> Cf. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI and Carlisle: Eerdmans and Paternoster, 2002), 479.

between Matt 22:34–40 and Luke 10:25–8 against Mark 12:28–34, and they need not be repeated here.<sup>51</sup> Suffice it to say that these differences concern mainly the identity of the enquirer (the use of νομικός in Matthew and Luke instead of Mark's γραμματεὺς) and his insidious motive; the epithet given to Jesus (διδάσκαλος); the omission of Deut 6:4; the omission of the Markan repetition of the commandment to love and the statement about offerings; and certain nuancing, such as making it clear that the entire Torah is being referred to (ἐν τῷ νόμῳ). In view of this list of agreements against Mark, the following theories for explaining the relationship of the three passages have been proposed:

- i. Luke is dependent on Matthew, who in turn has redacted Mark;<sup>52</sup>
- ii. Matthew and Luke used a version of Mark different from that which we possess today;<sup>53</sup>
- iii. Mark is dependent on Matthew and Luke (the Griesbach hypothesis);<sup>54</sup>
- iv. Matthew and Luke are dependent on both Mark and a Q version of the pericope;<sup>55</sup>
- v. Matthew and Luke are dependent on Mark and oral tradition;<sup>56</sup>
- vi. Matthew has a special source, usually referred to as M, and this latter document is dependent on Mark and possibly a Q version;<sup>57</sup> and
- vii. Matthew is dependent on Mark, but Luke has followed a different source.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 235.

<sup>52</sup> R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 448.

<sup>53</sup> G. Bornkamm, "Das Doppelgebot der Liebe," in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann*, BZNW 21 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1957), 85–93.

<sup>54</sup> B. C. Butler, *The Originality of St. Matthew: A Critique of the Two Document Hypothesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 19–21; cf. C. M. Tuckett, *The Revival of the Griesbach Hypothesis*, SNTSMS 44 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 125–133.

<sup>55</sup> R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* II (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), 244–245.

<sup>56</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew* III, 236.

<sup>57</sup> A. J. Hultgren, "The Double Commandment of Love in Matt 22.34–40," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 373–378.

<sup>58</sup> C. A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 262.

In our opinion, hypothesis (vii) best explains the state of affairs. The agreements between Matthew and Luke are not as significant as the differences between them.<sup>59</sup> The settings are different and the questions asked are totally different. The one asked about the greatest commandment, the other about gaining eternal life; again, the one has only one question but the other asked a second question relating to the identity of the neighbour. It seems to me it is the assumption that there could only be one pericope preserved about Jesus' discussion of the Shema that encourages the adoption of the hypothesis that Luke was drawing upon the same tradition. Indeed, it may be more cogent to regard the agreements as merely coincidental and as demonstrating that Jesus was confronted more than once with the important question of the most important commandment.<sup>60</sup>

Omitting the data from Luke, one may then cogently argue that Matthew has performed the following redactional procedure, summed up ably by Hagner.<sup>61</sup> Matthew makes several substantial omissions. The first which needs to be accounted for is the omission of Mark 12:32–34. The reason for this is the hostility of Matthew towards the scribes and religious leaders. This climaxes in a series of denunciations against them in chapter 23.<sup>62</sup> Thus, a didactic story (Mark) has been converted into a conflict story (Matthew), and understandably the scribe is described as attempting to test Jesus (πειράζων αὐτόν, Matt 22:35). In addition, Matthew also omits the citation of Deut 6:4, the opening words of the Shema. Following Hagner, we may regard this omission as being made in the interest of brevity, i.e., the focus is on the commandments and thus there is no need to record the monotheistic confession of Deut 6:4.<sup>63</sup>

The third omission presents a puzzle. Mark 12:30 records a quartet of modifiers to the verb ἀγαπάω as opposed to a triad in Deut 6:4. The third item, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας is not found in the MT. This modifier is rarely attested in the LXX,<sup>64</sup> but not one LXX or MT manuscript attests to a quartet of modifiers. The Matthean passage has three modifiers, following the Old Testament, but what is so surprising

<sup>59</sup> So Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 262.

<sup>60</sup> T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus: As Recorded in the Gospels according to St. Matthew and St. Luke* (London: SCM Press, 1950), 259–260.

<sup>61</sup> D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC 33B (Dallas: Word, 1994), 644–646.

<sup>62</sup> See the work of D. E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23*, SuppNovT 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1979).

<sup>63</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 645.

<sup>64</sup> Chiefly B and Theodotion.

is that it omits Mark's fourth modifier, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου, and retains the rare third instead! It is clear why Matthew follows a triadic structure as this is attested in the Old Testament; but the reason for Matthew's omission of Mark's fourth item and not the third is puzzling, and will be taken up shortly. Continuing with our analysis of Matthean modifications, we come now to the statement in Matt 22:40. This fits in well with the Matthean emphasis on Jesus' having fulfilled the Law and the Prophets.<sup>65</sup> The epithet διδάσκαλος (Matt 22:36) is a constantly recurring title for Jesus in Matthew. Thus, all the major differences between the two accounts can be accounted for on the basis of the notion of Matthean redaction of Mark. To reach the layer of the dominical Jesus traditions, we will then have to reckon with the Markan account.

Mark places the story within the framework of Jesus' teaching in the Temple. Most of v. 28 and the final clause of v. 34 may be regarded as the result of Markan editorial activity in providing the narrative framework, setting the scene and concluding it. This leaves us with the verbal exchange between Jesus and the scribe. It is well known that R. Bultmann is rather ambivalent about its historicity. Classifying it as a scholarly dialogue, he believes it is certainly plausible that Jesus was asked this sort of question, but he has doubts over the setting, which he believes may be a church creation. However, he is willing to grant that a historical reminiscence may be found in the pericope if it can be demonstrated that no special interests of the church are evident in it.<sup>66</sup> In a similar vein, the majority of the Fellows of the Jesus Seminar opine that the verbal exchange is a unitary composition, containing Jesus' views but written in the words of the young Jesus movement.<sup>67</sup> It is highly plausible that the *ipsissima vox Jesu* is found here. First, the setting and the subject matter fit in well with the Palestinian milieu of the first century. Second, the commendation of the γραμματεὺς is unique and stands out in the monolithic depiction in the gospels of tension between Jesus and οἱ γραμματεῖς. This is true even for Mark, as the earlier chapters show them in conflict with Jesus (2:6–7, 16; 3:22; 7:1, 5; 8:31; 10:33;

<sup>65</sup> Cf. J. P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel*, AnBib 71 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976).

<sup>66</sup> R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 54–55.

<sup>67</sup> See R. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 104.

11:18, 27).<sup>68</sup> It is true that, in this pericope, the scribe says something that the post-Easter community would approve of. But what is spoken of only marginally supports the church's claim, which is usually Christologically-shaped. Thus, the pericope is unlikely to be a wholesale post-Easter creation. The foregoing arguments may not convince every scholar but they certainly make its dominical status plausible. The setting, although full of Markan vocabulary, need not be deemed fictional, as such a dialogue must have taken place with an interlocutor. What interlocutor would better fit the bill than someone steeped in Torah? So if we grant that the *ipsissima vox Jesu* is found here, the mapping out of the key ideas of the passage, especially in relation to status the Shema had in Second Temple Judaism, becomes necessary.

According to the Markan pericope, the question which prompts Jesus' reply with the Shema asks about the first among all commandments (ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων, Mark 12:28). Why should this be asked? Three reasons may be operating here. The first is that amidst all the laws and commandments, the enquirer wants to know whether they can be succinctly summed up. This leads to the second reason, viz. that this summing up will reveal the essence of orthodoxy and orthopraxy for the Jews. Consequently, one will then have a hermeneutic for interpreting Torah, the charter of Israel's faith. Hence, whenever there is a conflict of laws, the enquirer will know which has priority.<sup>69</sup> The third reason is that if the essence of one's faith and practice can be defined, the understanding of what constitutes membership in the covenant will then be clarified.<sup>70</sup> At a time when there is great diversity in Judaism,<sup>71</sup> such a question is most understandable. Indeed, Hillel was asked a similar question: whether he could teach the whole of Torah while the learner was standing on one leg. His reply

<sup>68</sup> For a treatment on Mark's attitude towards scribes, see É. Trocmé, *The Formation of the Gospel according to Mark* (London: SPCK, 1975), 94–99.

<sup>69</sup> Note that the rabbis themselves discuss which commandments are "heavy" and which are "light." The rabbis often used the word כּלל for a summarising principle. See *b. Ber.* 63a and *b. Mak.* 24a. Cf. P. S. Alexander, "Jesus and the Golden Rule," in J. H. Charlesworth and L. L. Johns, eds., *Hillel and Jesus: Comparisons of Two Major Religious Leaders* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 363–388, esp. 383–388; and A. Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 571–572.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Evans, *Mark 8.21–16.20*, 263.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. the essays in J. Neusner, W. S. Green and E. S. Frierichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

was: "Do not do to your neighbour what is hateful to you; this is the whole of Torah: the rest is commentary."<sup>72</sup>

Jesus' reply cites the Shema. A close examination of this citation will reveal that there is a puzzling element to it because four modifiers to the verb ἀγαπάω are mentioned, and not three, as is the case with the MT or LXX of Deut 6:5. Why this is so will be treated later. But what must be taken into consideration for a thorough understanding of this passage is that the Shema sums up for Israel her fundamental belief and her fundamental praxis (cf. Josephus, *Apion* 2.190).<sup>73</sup> The Shema then is to be understood as the essence of the pluriform Torah and therefore provides the hermeneutic to a proper understanding of it. What is interesting is that Jesus goes on to speak of the second commandment, something which was not elicited from him by the scribe. Why is this the case? It is because the praxis of the Shema must be related intimately to the praxis of loving one's neighbour. The conjoining of the love for God and the love for neighbour to form the key commands is certainly not the invention of the church, as there is ample evidence to show that many Jews in the Second Temple period thought the same (*T. Iss.* 5.2; 7.5; *T. Dan* 5.3; *Let. Aris.* 229; Philo, *Virt.* 95; *Spec.* 2.63).<sup>74</sup>

However, what is implied in Jesus' answer is that he is harking back to the pristine period of Israel's faith before, according to the story of the Tanakh, religion was institutionalised through the building of the Temple and the schism between the Samaritans and the Jews existed. When this is juxtaposed with Jesus' announcement of the dawn of the eschaton, we can then infer that for Jesus the concept of *Endzeit* = *Urzeit* often operates (cf. the pericope on divorce, Mark 10:2–12 and parr.). Fulfilment of Torah is envisaged in the new covenant (Jer 31:31–34).<sup>75</sup> The fundamentals of the Jewish faith are not abandoned. The *Endzeit* recaptures and fulfils the intentions of the *Urzeit*. The

<sup>72</sup> *b. Shabb.* 31a. Cf. also Rabbi Akiba's statement in *Sipra Lev.* § 200 (on Lev 19:15–20).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. R. W. L. Moberly, "Toward an Interpretation of the Shema," in *Theological Exegesis*, ed. C. Seitz and K. Greene-McCreight (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 24–144.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. D. C. Allison, "Mark 12.28–31 and the Decalogue," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. C. A. Evans and W. R. Stegner, JSNTS 104/SSEJC 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 270–278.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. H. D. Potter, "The New Covenant in Jeremiah xxxi 31–34," *VT* 33 (1983): 347–357; B. P. Robinson, "Jeremiah's New Covenant: Jer 31,31–34," *SJOT* 15 (2001): 181–204.



scribe gets the cue from Jesus and replies that this will mean the relativising of the cult.<sup>76</sup> This relativising is not arbitrary, in that it stems from the fundamental belief and praxis of Israel. Thus, if there is one God, the key praxis of the people of God must be to love him and to love the neighbour. This being the case, the badge of covenantal identity cannot be supplied by the cult.

This insight elicits from Jesus the reply that the scribe is not far from the kingdom of God. The key point is that the kingdom of God, i.e., the *Endzeit* recapturing the *Urzeit* and demonstrating that what endures through time is the fundamental belief and praxis of Israel, is summed up in the Shema and expressed through loving one's neighbour. This is what is meant when God is said to rule powerfully.<sup>77</sup> The pericope ends there, but the implicit question is that if this is the fundamental hermeneutic for understanding Torah, will it mean that certain current badges of covenantal identity may need rethinking?

To sum up: Jesus believes that the Shema is the fundamental belief and praxis (when this is joined with the love for neighbour) of the people of God. It also provides the hermeneutic for understanding Torah. When this attitude is juxtaposed with the eschatological shape of his ministry, one may then argue that one powerful concept working in his ministry is that of *Endzeit* = *Urzeit*. Without destroying the fundamentals, the contemporaneous understanding of what constituted boundary markers, such as those linked with the cult, is questioned and these markers transcended. The Shema then becomes Jesus' hermeneutic for Torah and the explication of covenantal identity.

What should also be noted here is that Matthew omits the first line of the Shema (Deut 6:4) in the interest of brevity, which unfortunately obscures an important point. In the Second Temple period, covenantal identity is often expressed through loyalty to monotheism (Judith 8:18; Wis 11–15; *Sib. Or.* 3.8–45).<sup>78</sup> This, in turn, is expressed through certain exclusivistic actions or attitudes, often centred on the cult. The implication of Jesus' approval of the scribe's insight is that loyalty to monotheism is not the same as loyalty to the cult.

<sup>76</sup> ὀλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν in the LXX may be regarded as a set phrase to refer to the cult (cf. 1 Kgs 15:22; Hos 6:6).

<sup>77</sup> On the notion of God's Kingdom as God's royal rule, see the extensive discussion in J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus, 2: Mentor, Message and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 234–288.

<sup>78</sup> Note the Maccabean revolt and also that Rabbi Akiba was said to have died with the Shema on his lips (*b. Ber.* 61b) and Jacobs' comments that Jewish martyrs generally died reciting the Shema ("Shema," 1374). Cf. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 32–42.

Why does Mark include four modifiers? This is a puzzle which admits of no confident solution. It may be argued that Mark includes all the attested modifiers in the Septuagint, i.e., if we think the evangelist has replaced δύναμις with the synonymous ισχύς<sup>79</sup> (see Table 1 below) although no LXX manuscript contains the entire quartet. The reply of the scribe in 12:32 evinces a strange triad: διάνοια is dropped and ψυχή is replaced by σύνεσις, which is not attested at all in the LXX tradition. The language of Mark is most probably that of the LXX.<sup>80</sup> Matthew probably trims the Markan quartet to a triad based on his understanding that the original Old Testament text has only a triad.<sup>81</sup> However, in so doing, he simply deletes the fourth item from the Markan text. Whether this was incredible for a Jew to perform depends to a large extent on whether the wording of the Shema was fixed in this period.<sup>82</sup> We have mentioned that there is evidence to show that even if a text was used liturgically in the period under study, this did not necessitate fixity of wording. There is an alternative explanation, which has recently been suggested by Menken. Beginning from the premise that Matthew must have been familiar with the rabbinic interpretation of מאר as referring to wealth or property, and regarded it as irrelevant or ruinous to a person's quest to belong to the kingdom of God (Matt 6:19–34), it follows that he would not speak of loving God with all one's δύναμις or ισχύς (= מער). The triad of modifiers is hence completed with διάνοια.<sup>83</sup>

Table 1 The modifiers and their order

MT	LXX Rahlfs	LXX Göttingen	Mark 12:30	Mark 12:33	Matt. 22:37	Luke 10:27
לבב	καρδία	διάνοια	καρδία	καρδία	καρδία	καρδία
נפש	ψυχή	ψυχή	ψυχή	σύνεσις	ψυχή	ψυχή
מאר	δύναμις	δύναμις	διάνοια ισχύς	ισχύς	διάνοια	ισχύς διάνοια

<sup>79</sup> Evans, *Mark* 8.21–16.20, 264.

<sup>80</sup> Mark and the LXX share the same preposition, ἐκ. Matthew uses ἐν instead, following the Hebrew ך.

<sup>81</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew* III, 242.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. the thorough discussion in Foster, “Matthew,” 313–321.

<sup>83</sup> M. J. J. Menken, *Matthew's Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 218. Cf. J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI and Bletchley: Eerdmans and Paternoster, 2005), 911, where he suggests that Matthew seeks to focus on the inner dispositions, leaving the sphere of outer and energetic actions for the command to love the neighbour.

### 3.2. *The Shema in Luke 10:25–37*

The Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke is incontrovertibly regarded as stemming from Jesus. The Fellows of the Jesus Seminar concur and thus the words of the parable are printed in red in *The Five Gospels*.<sup>84</sup> The frame of the parable describes a lawyer coming to ask Jesus how he might obtain eternal life, provides the answer of Jesus in the form of a question, and reports Jesus' eliciting a response from him after the parable is told. Since the answer of the scribe to the all-important question about gaining eternal life cites Deut 6:5 (with four modifiers as in the case of Mark!), we have potentially another passage which shows Jesus' employment of the Shema to deal with the critical issues of Jewish faith and covenantal identity. Unfortunately, doubts have often been expressed over the authenticity of the frame.

The scepticism over the frame is based mainly on the consideration that it appears suspiciously like Mark 12:28–31 and on the belief that Luke has the tendency to generalise.<sup>85</sup> Scholars have often classified this parable as an example story<sup>86</sup> and such a classification certainly helps to bolster the case for the frame's inauthenticity. Indeed, if it is derived from Mark 12:28–31, we may then have to admit that the frame is patently inauthentic, created in the interest of achieving a hortatory point through the incorporation of an example story. But we have mentioned reasons to think that Luke 10:25–9 may not have been derived from Mark 12:28–31.

In a separate article, I have examined these arguments and found them unconvincing. In fact, there are many indications that the frame is original to the parable.<sup>87</sup> Much of what follows is derived from that study. The key considerations are the following. First, if we are willing to bracket off the notion that this is an example story, we may be open to considering the meaning of the parable differently, a meaning which is anchored in the Jewish context and makes clearer sense in the light

<sup>84</sup> Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 323–324.

<sup>85</sup> B. Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 193. Cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, WBC 35B (Dallas: Word, 1993), 580.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., J. Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1899), 114; Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition*, 178; J. D. Crossan, "Parable and Example in the Teaching of Jesus," *Semeia* 1 (1974): 63–104; and Witherington III, *Jesus the Sage*, 192–193.

<sup>87</sup> K. H. Tan, "Community, Kingdom and Cross: Jesus' View of Covenant," in *The God of Covenant*, ed. J. A. Grant and A. L. Wilson (Leicester: Apollos, 2005), 122–155, esp. 129–139.

of the narrative frame. Secondly, Gerhardsson's argument that the parables in the Jesus' tradition are not naked narratives with indeterminate meanings but are instead contextually anchored is to be taken seriously.<sup>88</sup> To deny this depends not on considerations found in the gospels themselves but on considerations outside them, which may actually be dependent on certain agendas operating in some prominent schools of interpretation today.<sup>89</sup> The third is that the frame and the parable exhibit elements of the rabbinic *yelammendenu rabbenu* method of discourse which has a four-part structure: (i) question about a scriptural text (vv. 25–7); (ii) a second text cited to illuminate (vv. 28); (iii) the exposition, which in this case is the parable (vv. 30–5); and (iv) the final remarks (v. 37).<sup>90</sup> Thus, the parable and its frame are given a Jewish setting.

If we regard the frame as authentic, what results for our study on Jesus and the Shema? We may begin by analysing the scribe's question. This concerns the obtaining of eternal life or the life in the age to come (העולם הבא), a key concern of many Jewish writings of the Second Temple period.<sup>91</sup> Jesus' reply points the scribe back to Torah, the charter of Israel's covenant. The scribe cites Deut 6:5, which gains the approval of Jesus, who in turn refers to Lev 18:5 to make the point that he should do what he has said and then he would live, i.e., have a share in the life of the age to come. The discussion then focuses on the identity of the neighbour.<sup>92</sup> In the light of diverse Jewish groupings, such a question is indeed understandable (cf. Sir 12:1–4).

<sup>88</sup> B. Gerhardsson, "If We do not Cut the Parables out of their Frames," *NTS* 37 (1991): 321–335 (322).

<sup>89</sup> This may be the desire to give the parables autonomy, treating them as naked texts and divorcing them from the particularity of history. This fits in well with certain post-modern agendas.

<sup>90</sup> C. L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 231. On the possibility of Jesus' using rabbinic methods, see B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1961); R. Riesefeld, *The Gospel Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1981); and most recently, S. Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher: Didactic Authority and Transmission in Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism and the Matthean Community* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1994).

<sup>91</sup> See the many references in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135)*, rev. and ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Black, vol. II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 537–538; cf. also Sanders, *Judaism*, 279–303.

<sup>92</sup> The context of Lev 19:18 presupposes that the neighbour is a member of the covenant community and ער should most probably be interpreted as a fellow Israelite. This concept is appropriated and further illuminated in *y. Ned.* 9:4. Cf. J. Milgrom,

Jesus' reply through the Parable of the Good Samaritan makes use of the famous triad of examples: priest, Levite and Samaritan are mentioned. That these particular characters are mentioned and that the victim is described as ἡμιθάνη—probably meaning half-dead<sup>93</sup>—prompt R. J. Bauckham to argue that the parable is about the resolution of potential conflicts in the injunctions of Torah.<sup>94</sup> The result is that love for the neighbour takes precedence over cultic purity. This need not be contradicted. However, this interpretation is still inadequate for the following reasons. If the parable was told just to establish a halakhic point, Jesus would have been expected to make it clear that the victim was dead. Instead, the parable uses the word ἡμιθάνη. Secondly, rabbinic discussions on the corpse of obligation (מת מכוח) actually make it clear that it should be buried. This is obligatory even for the high priest and the Nazirite, Israel's two most holy men (*m. Naz.* 7:1; cf. 6.5). This means that if the rabbinic discussions about the obligations to the corpse are anything to go by, the priest and the Levite in the parable will be deemed to have acted inappropriately. There is then no discussion: whether the victim is dead or alive, the two are deemed to be at fault.

The key to the meaning of the parable lies in the third character: the Samaritan. The focus is not on his good deed, but on his goodness, as J. D. Crossan ably argues.<sup>95</sup> The frame sets the stage for understanding the Samaritan's goodness and the point Jesus is trying to make. If Jesus simply wanted to show that the love command takes precedence over everything, it would be more provocative to mention a Gentile instead! That it is the Samaritan who is mentioned is because of the Shema. The confession of the Shema, i.e., if the true intent of it is carried out, leads to life in the age to come. When interpreted against the covenantal horizon, this means that true covenantal membership leads to life in the age to come and, consequently, covenantal membership is linked with the true confession of the Shema. The Shema was something both

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*Leviticus 17–22*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 1654–1656. Sir 12:1–7 and 1QS I, 9–10 give evidence that love cannot be extended to enemies or sinners.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. A. J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 96; Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 593. See also the philological discussion in T. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002), 191–193.

<sup>94</sup> R. J. Bauckham, "The Scrupulous Priest and the Good Samaritan: Jesus' Parabolic Interpretation of the Law of Moses," *NTS* 44 (1998): 475–489.

<sup>95</sup> Crossan, "Parable and Example," 75.

Jews and Samaritans would confess and not Gentiles. The point then is that the divide between Jews and Samaritans, based principally on the cult (Josephus, *Ant.* 9.288–291),<sup>96</sup> is to be eradicated in the light of the Shema's being the badge of covenantal membership. Covenantal members are neighbours of each other and hence it is not surprising that the parable is angled to make the scribe confess that the one who acted with mercy (ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ' αὐτοῦ), i.e., the Samaritan, is the neighbour.<sup>97</sup> If this is so, the scribe has answered his own question. The neighbour he ought to love is the Samaritan. There is an implicit point operating here: the Samaritan is a neighbour because he confesses the Shema (assumed) and shows mercy to the one in need (mentioned). If we may be allowed to think reflexively, the one on whom mercy is shown may also *ipso facto* be neighbour. This then enlarges the category of neighbour beyond the boundaries of the covenantal community. But we need not press this point. Suffice it to say that a neighbour is defined in this parable as the one showing mercy. This may be regarded as the main demonstration of Jesus' parable. Hence, the parable should not be understood as an example story but is instead a powerful explication of what it means to be a covenant member. The one criterion elucidated is the true confession of the Shema, demonstrated through love.<sup>98</sup>

To sum up: true confession of the Shema leads to the life to come, i.e., it is the one true badge of covenantal membership. This will heal the divide between the Jews and the Samaritans since the criterion for covenantal membership is not based on the cult anymore. In fact, different Jewish groups, dividing themselves on the basis of different cultic observations or special programmes, have missed the point of what it means to be in the covenant.

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. F. Dexinger, "Limits of Tolerance in Judaism: The Samaritan Example," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Vol. 2: *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, ed. E. P. Sanders, A. I. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (London: SCM, 1981), 88–114.

<sup>97</sup> Samaritans were regarded as enemies and put in the same category as the Philistines and Edomites (Sir 50:25–6).

<sup>98</sup> In many ways, our argument is anticipated by G. Sellin, "Lukas als Gleichniserzähler: Die Erzählung vom barmherzigen Samariter (Luke 10:25–27)," *ZNW* 65 (1974): 166–189; *ZNW* 66 (1975): 19–60. Our major disagreement is over the authenticity of the parable. A critique of this is found in Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 589–591. Nolland separates the parable from the frame and denies that neighbour refers to a member of the covenant community. He also has problems with the notion that the Samaritan represents cult-free law observance.

When this passage is viewed together with Mark 12:28–34, a leitmotif in Jesus' use of the Shema emerges. It was employed to sum up Torah's injunctions and in so doing provided a hermeneutic to Torah. This, in turn, established what the one badge of covenantal identity was. This badge was understood to transcend the many divides found in Jewish life and their relations with others, which often took the inspiration from the cult or some special programmes. The Shema and the doctrine of monotheism were used around the time of Jesus to shore up Jewish identity and to differentiate them from other people. Jesus, instead, used the Shema in an inclusive way. The creed then, in Jesus' conception, functioned not so much as a fighting doctrine as an inclusive one, at least in so far as Samaritans were concerned. Of course, this prompts the question whether the Gentiles too may be brought under this umbrella and with the same terms. This is a highly fascinating topic, which this essay, unfortunately, cannot examine.

### 3.3. εἷς θεός in Mark 2:7 and Mark 10:18//Luke 18:19

J. Marcus has helpfully pointed out in a recent article the significance of the phrase εἷς θεός in two Markan passages.<sup>99</sup> The intent of the statements in Mark 2:7 and Mark 10:18// Luke 18:19<sup>100</sup> is best expressed by using the adjective μόνος to qualify θεός, instead of εἷς. Indeed, this is precisely what is done by Luke for Mark 2:7 (Luke 5:21). This cannot but mean that the confession of the Shema is exerting its influence on the texts.

But are they authentic? The scholars of the Jesus Seminar are highly sceptical about this, assigning the words of Mark 2:7 the colour black, and that of Mark 10:18 the colour grey.<sup>101</sup> In Mark 2:7, the scribes remark that only "one God" can forgive sins. Hence, Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness has committed the sin of blasphemy. Here, the voice of the synagogue may be heard. Linking the notion of forgiveness with the action of healing, and subsuming these under the title of Son of Man, the pericope argues that Jesus has the authority to pronounce forgiveness. The implicit point may be that the Danielic Son of Man, acting as the vicegerent of Yahweh, performs the latter's

<sup>99</sup> Marcus, "Authority," 196–211.

<sup>100</sup> Luke uses exactly the clause οὐδεὶς ἀγαθὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς θεός while Matthew obscures the reference to the Shema with his εἷς ἐστὶν ὁ ἀγαθός (Matt 19:17).

<sup>101</sup> Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 44, 90–91.

tasks.<sup>102</sup> If this pericope is a reflection of Jewish-Christian debates, what can then be discerned is that the meaning of the Shema was one flashpoint. For the synagogue, one God meant only one source of forgiveness. Early Christianity's reply was that the authority to forgive sins has been given to the Son of Man, who demonstrated it through healing. Whether this means (i) there is another Power in heaven existing alongside Yahweh; (ii) the inference drawn from the Shema that there is only one source of forgiveness is wrong; or, as is remotely possible, (iii) Jesus acts for Yahweh and is actually not claiming to have the authority to forgive sins, is something the pericope does not clearly answer.

In Mark 10:18 (= Luke 18:19), Jesus responds in a rather oblique way to the rich man's address of him as good teacher. This has given rise to two streams of scholarship: one claims that Jesus is diverting attention from himself but to God by saying only God is good;<sup>103</sup> and the other that Jesus is implicitly saying that this epithet equally applies to God and himself, and thereby making himself equal with God.<sup>104</sup> As the first stream is fairly well represented in scholarship, it explains why certain Fellows of the Jesus Seminar do not think that the saying was a wholesale church creation and, thus, the words are printed in grey in *The Five Gospels*.<sup>105</sup> There is probably also a very interesting dissimilarity present in the pericope. Ascribing to human beings the epithet "good" is done frequently, and hence is not scandalous.<sup>106</sup> However, Jesus radicalises the whole concept of goodness by stating that this epithet is reserved for only one being: that which is identified in the Shema.<sup>107</sup> Thus, if there is one God, there is only one source of goodness and only he may be called good. The intention of this radicalising may be (i) to emphasise to humanity that there is no such thing as natural goodness, and thus to lead the enquirer to re-examine the concept; or (ii) to lead the enquirer to realise that Jesus stands alongside God as a worthy recipient of the epithet. Of course, the two options need not be regarded as mutually exclusive.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 127–28.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Evans, *Mark* 8:27–16:20, 96.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 553.

<sup>105</sup> Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 90.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 553.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 402.



What is interesting for historians of early Christianity is that the Shema continues to exert significant pressure on the shaping of early Christian theology, and gives an inkling of the kind of debate that could have taken place between Jews and Christians, the synagogue and the Church.

### 3.4. *The Temptation Narrative in Matthew*

Gerhardsson has made a powerful case for viewing the Matthean temptation narrative (Matt 4:1–11) as shaped by the triadic structure of Deut 6:5.<sup>108</sup> For this to be viable, the triad of **לֵבב**, **נֶפֶשׁ** and **מֵאָרֶץ** must be interpreted in the rabbinic way, which is attested in *m. Ber.* 9:5:

Man is bound to bless [God] for the evil even as he blesses [God] for the good, for it is written, *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might. With all thy heart—with both thine impulses, thy good impulse and thine evil impulse; and with all thy soul—even if he take away thy soul; and with all thy might—with all thy wealth. Another explanation is: With all thy might—for whichever measure he measures out to thee, do thou give him thanks exceedingly.*

Gerhardsson discovers that the order of the temptation in Matthew fits the order of the three modifiers in Deut 6:5, if they are interpreted in the light of the rabbinic perspective. The first temptation may be interpreted as being concerned with craving for food, i.e., an evil inclination. The second is concerned with the safety of the Son of God, i.e., it is about life. The third is concerned with gaining the kingdoms of the world, i.e., it is about possessions and property. Gerhardsson does not attempt to trace the narrative back to Jesus but insists instead that the composer of this narrative would have been a scribe with a profound acquaintance with the Old Testament. Not only that, he was also conversant with the exegetical methods of leading rabbinic schools.<sup>109</sup>

Prominent commentators on Matthew have welcomed Gerhardsson's insights even if they do not fully agree with his thesis.<sup>110</sup> If Gerhardsson is right, it demonstrates that the Shema was a template around which Christian theological reflections were also performed. This in turn raises the possibility that more occurrences of the use of such a tem-

<sup>108</sup> Gerhardsson, *Testing*.

<sup>109</sup> Gerhardsson, *Testing*, 79–80.

<sup>110</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew I*, 353; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word, 1993), 66.

plate may be found in our gospel traditions. We have earlier commented on some of those which are proposed by Gerhardsson. In our opinion, the most cogent case for this can be made only with regard to the Matthean temptation account.

### 3.5. *Possible Allusions (Matt 6:24//Luke 16:13; and Matt 23:8–10)*

If one can argue that the triadic pattern of Deut 6:5 may be found as a template for the composition of certain gospel traditions, can one take a step further to look for allusions to the Shema in terms of phraseology and themes?

If the Shema speaks of one unique God, it may justifiably be said that the notion of absolute allegiance to this one God follows naturally in its wake. The logion in Q 16:13 speaks of the necessity of serving only one Master and not two: not Mammon and Yahweh but Yahweh only. Scholars are confident that this logion may be assigned to Jesus, based mainly on the fact that a parallel saying is found in the Gospel of Thomas (logion 47). However, the information Q 16:13 provides in relation to our probe into Jesus' attitude and use of the Shema does not add anything new to what has been adduced earlier. All that can be said is that it provides a further instance of the Shema's looming large in the teaching of Jesus.

Another possible allusion to the Shema in the gospel tradition may be found in Matt 23:8–10, since the oneness theme is also closely linked up with confessing the Shema. In this passage, the disciples of Jesus are purportedly taught that they are to have only one teacher (διδάσκαλος), one Father in heaven, and one guide (καθηγητής),<sup>111</sup> the Messiah. The mention of the Father is sandwiched between the two mentions of Jesus. This at once puts God and Messiah on the one side, over against humanity on the other side, thereby dovetailing with the theme of εἰς θεός in the Markan tradition. S. Byrskog observes that this implies that "adherence to Jesus as teacher relates to the confession of the one and only God."<sup>112</sup> We have here then the use of the Shema for Christological ends, similar to the εἰς θεός passages in Mark. In the opinion of Davies and Allison, these verses represent a Christian

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<sup>111</sup> A *hapax legomenon*, not found in the LXX. See B. W. Winter's study, "The Messiah as Tutor: The Meaning of καθηγητής in Matthew 23.10," *TynB* 42 (1991): 151–157.

<sup>112</sup> Byrskog, *Jesus the only Teacher*, 300.

reaction to a late first-century development in Judaism.<sup>113</sup> Interestingly, some Fellows of the Jesus Seminar regard the sayings as distant echoes of things Jesus once said.<sup>114</sup>

#### 4. *Conclusion and Prospects*

The theme of confessing that there is one God and loving this one God and neighbour appears in the gospel traditions in many literary forms. We find it in conflict stories, didactic stories, parables, gnomic sayings etc. If Deut 6:4–5 has the role of something like a creed during the time of Jesus, the least we can say is that some important gospel traditions were developed around this creed either as explication or as response. The very heart of Judaism may then be seen as having been appropriated by early Christianity in her debates with the synagogue to show her continuity with the Old Testament heritage. Hence, Jeremias' assessment needs modification. While we cannot claim that early Christianity continued the practice of reciting the Shema morning and evening, we can none the less state, in the light of this study, that she was very well acquainted with the Shema—so much so that it became a weapon in debate and a template for reflection.

Furthermore, if we can be reasonably confident about the authenticity of some of these traditions, especially Mark 12:28–34 and Luke 10:25–37, we can draw some conclusions regarding Jesus' attitude towards and use of the Shema. The Shema summed up for him the faith and praxis of Torah and, thus, provided the proper hermeneutic to it. This was understood as relativising the cult. His use of it when compared to his contemporaries' use may be said to be inclusive. Jews and Samaritans may properly belong to the covenant community, since the badge of identity was no longer certain cultic practices or ideological programmes. Instead, the one badge was the true confession of the Shema, expressed by allegiance to this one God, and loving him and neighbour. When this is juxtaposed with Jesus' eschatological message, we may then say that the pattern of *Endzeit* = *Urzeit* operated in Jesus' ministry. This need not be surprising, as in the Jewish outlook, the eschatological time is also a time of restoration and repristination. One wonders whether with repristination comes also the

<sup>113</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew* III, 275–278.

<sup>114</sup> Funk et al., *The Five Gospels*, 240. The words are in grey.

concept of intensification. This could have happened if Mark 10:18 may be traced back to Jesus. The commonly occurring concept of goodness is radicalised. All this is tantalising, but needs to be studied together with other themes in Jesus' ministry. Suffice it here to point out that the Shema provided Jesus with a lens to view Torah, covenantal identity, and certain critical concepts such as goodness.

Understood in this light, the Shema forms a key theme in Jesus' teaching. This encourages exploration into other early Christian writings to see how the Shema has or has not impacted on them.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, it is instructive to see whether the special use of the Shema by Jesus dovetails in a profound but unexpected way with certain Pauline themes. We can name at least two that deserve scrutiny: the inclusive nature of Pauline theology, where the badge of covenantal identity is faith and not some Jewish boundary markers;<sup>116</sup> and the employment of the concept of monotheism to argue precisely this point.<sup>117</sup> If there is profound harmony here, and if together they present a profound dissimilarity with much of the Jewish use of the Shema, we may have here a new angle to the study of the continuity between the ministry of Jesus and the apostle Paul.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> E.g., Verseput, "Jewish Morning Prayers," 175–191.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. J. D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *BJRL* 65 (1983): 95–122.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. T. L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 81–88.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. the proposals of A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus: Similarity and Continuity," *NTS* 34 (1988): 161–180.



# JESUS AND THE PURITY PARADIGM

TOM HOLMÉN

## 1. *Introduction*

The theme of Jesus and purity presents one of the most entangled problems of current research into the historical Jesus. To begin with, it has proven genuinely difficult for modern minds to approach and appreciate purity as a religious notion. Religious purity or impurity (henceforth “(im)purity”) keeps resisting definitions and explications that could be found uncontroversial and that would translate to our modern comprehension.<sup>1</sup> Further, (im)purity was an intricate and controversial question within first-century Judaism, too, with a rich Old Testament tradition of rules and regulations as well as a competitively ample repertoire of interpretations and explications in later Jewish literature. Spirited discussions and disputes about how to understand and fulfill the purity laws kept surfacing, attesting to the both problematic and central role of purity matters in people’s lives.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, as regards (im)purity in the Jesus tradition we are faced with a relative scarcity of material that directly addresses purity questions. Compared with Jewish writings from and before Jesus’ time where disputes about various purity issues regularly abound, explicit purity language and dwelling on the subject are conspicuously absent.<sup>3</sup> Mark 7:1–23 par. Matt 15:1–20 and P. Oxy. 840 form exceptions

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance, M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 2000) and B. Campkin and R. Cox, eds., *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), which in many aspects is a debate with Douglas’ groundbreaking work (first edition 1966).

<sup>2</sup> See below.

<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, some scholars have suggested that there emerged between Jesus and the major religious phalanges no serious debate or altercation that would have been based on purity disputes. See E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 174–211; similarly P. Fredriksen, “Did Jesus Oppose the Purity Law?,” *BRev* 11 (1995): 18–25, 42–47. There is, however, a difference between saying that disputes arose solely or even mainly on the basis of purity issues and saying that purity was one contributing factor among others in the disputes.

here but, obviously, more material needs to be included if one wanted to say anything meaningful about Jesus and purity. Part of the problem of addressing the theme of Jesus and purity has therefore been the question about the material that could and should be taken into account.

The basic importance of the issue of purity to the mission and message of Jesus should not be doubted. Because of the central role that purity played in the Judaism of Jesus time—and that it had played in the history of Jewish sectarianism<sup>4</sup>—stances taken on it were considered highly revealing. Different Jewish groupings and even individual religious figures defined themselves to a significant degree through their expositions of the purity regulations.<sup>5</sup> The impression Jesus left by his attitude to and understanding of the purity matters—whatever they were—would have been recognized by the contemporaries in many ways as characterizing what Jesus' proclamation was about.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, purity questions do loom behind some important scenes and forms of Jesus' activity. For instance, Jesus' table fellowship with sinners and outcasts is clearly relevant here even though purity may not have been the sole focus of these gatherings or the main reason why they prompted controversies. Further, in Jesus' Jewish world, purity was integrally related to the temple, and we should be able to assume that even in Jesus' message the issues of purity and temple reflected each other. The temple, again, was something of a black spot for Jesus; this in turn adds to the weight of the temple question within Jesus' message in general and with respect to his views on purity in particular.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See M. Smith, "The Dead Sea Sect in Relation to Ancient Judaism," *NTS* 7 (1961): 347–360, at 352. See also the accounts of the course of events in B. Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus Through Johannine Circles*, NovTSup72 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 15–24; E. Regev, "Abominated Temple and a Holy Community: The Formation of the Notions of Purity and Impurity in Qumran," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 10 (2003): 243–278.

<sup>5</sup> J. Neusner, *The Idea of Purity In Ancient Judaism: The Haskell Lectures 1972–1973*, SJLA1 (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 108; S. Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority* (Lund: LiberLäromedel/Gleerup, 1978), 62; M. Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul*, SNTSMS 53 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 49. "In a way, it seems that during the Hasmonean and Herodian periods there was competition within Judean society for who was the most scrupulous observer of purity": Regev, "Abominated Temple," 243.

<sup>6</sup> It is therefore interesting that the few explicit discussions on (im)purity presenting Jesus as one party that we have, namely Mark 7:1–23 par. Matt 15:1–20 and P. Oxy. 840, feature cases of using purity vs. impurity as a means of criticism and branding.

<sup>7</sup> For these aspects, *inter alia*, see sections 4 and 5 below.

However, until recently, an important and central aspect of Jesus' activities has been largely neglected in investigations into Jesus' views on (im)purity: Jesus' dealings with people who were considered ritually unclean.<sup>8</sup> The curious thing about these dealings which has often attracted scholars' attention is the unreservedness with which Jesus seems to give himself to these situations. He is not hesitant to come into close contact with people who would communicate severe impurities to him, or even intentionally to touch them. According to a common scholarly interpretation of the dealings, by this activity Jesus *inter alia* intended to make the unclean clean.<sup>9</sup> In my view, this interpretation should have some remarkable corollaries for understanding Jesus' thinking about purity, and maybe also for understanding his mission and message in more general terms. I will therefore place the dealings and the suggested interpretation of them in the center of the present study. They will form the perspective from which I propose to set out to approach the tangled skein of problems that make up the question about Jesus and purity. The other problems and other material to be discussed will align themselves according to the insights gained from this perspective (that is, the insights gained from the perspective will argue for the particular choice and disposition of material favored here).

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<sup>8</sup> The dealings take the pride of place in T. Kazen's excellent study *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* ConBNT 38 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002). Although Kazen (23) acknowledges that "[a] recent study with a section on impurity, which does start out with its sources and discusses Jesus' contacts with unclean people . . . is" Holmén's *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BibInt Series, 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), he regards my treatment as unsatisfactory. Yet the main upshot of Kazen's investigation agrees with mine: Jesus appeared indifferent to ritual impurity; see Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 250–251, 340, and Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 198, 346.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, M. D. Hooker, "Interchange in Christ," *JTS* 22 (1971): 349–361 (351); M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness & Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1984), 134–136; K. Berger, "Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer," *NovT* 30 (1988): 231–262 (245–247); R. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC, 34A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 74; C. A. Evans, "Who Touched Me? Jesus and the Ritually Impure," in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, AGJU 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 353–376, at 368–369; J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 209; somewhat hesitantly, J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate," *NTS* 48 (2002): 449–467, 461, and Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 346.



My point of departure will thus not be (a) certain definition(s) of the purity concept<sup>10</sup> nor any taxonomy of the purity paradigm in early Judaism.<sup>11</sup> Instead, I seek to understand a concrete instance of Jewish thinking about purity and to see where observing Jesus' undertakings vis-à-vis that very instance can lead us. In what follows, I shall survey how the "making the unclean clean" interpretation is manifested in Jesus' deeds and words (with focus on the deeds). Further, in order to uncover the corollaries of the interpretation, I shall seek to illuminate what the dealings and their interpretation would have meant within Jesus' Jewish context (section 3) and within the contexts both of other Jesuanic material pertaining to (im)purity (section 4) and of Jesus' overall message (section 5). Finally, I shall put forward some remarks on the question of ritual (im)purity in early Christianity (section 6).

## 2. *The Starting Point: Dealings with the Ritually Impure*

In order to successfully pursue research in the suggested direction, I shall now seek to lay as solid as possible a foundation for sustaining the interpretation which sees Jesus in his dealings with the ritually impure as intending to make the unclean clean.

The basic historicity of these dealings as a regular pattern of Jesus' behavior should not be doubted. All in all, the material to be focused on here is almost the same as that pertaining to Jesus' miracles.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore of relevance to state that the picture of Jesus as an exorcist

<sup>10</sup> For the Old Testament and Septuagintal technical terms for impurity (טמא, "to be impure"; ἀκαθαρσία, ἀκάθαρτος) and purity (טהר, "to be clean or pure"; καθάρος, καθαρίζειν) see G. André, "טמא," *TWAT* 3 (1982), 352–366, and H. Ringgren, "טהר," *TWAT* 3 (1982): 306–315 respectively.

<sup>11</sup> In Judaism, impurity was seen as a sign of God's rejection; Neusner, *Idea of Purity*, 13. This stands despite the fact that the Jewish purity paradigm is highly multifaceted. For instance, one can talk about moral and ritual impurities; see discussion in Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 221–232, esp. 230–232. Within ritual (im)purity, again, a discernibly distinct set of problems was formed by the question of the purity of food; see Lev 11; H. Rabinowicz, "Dietary laws," *EncJud* 6 (1978): 26–45, at 31–38. Modern scholarship has also divided impurities into "permitted" and "prohibited" ones; see, for instance, E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 140–145; D. P. Wright, "Unclean and clean," *ABD* 6, 729–741, at 729–730. The difference lay *inter alia* in that "permitted" impurities derive from natural, necessary occurrences, while there is no necessity why the "prohibited" ones could not be totally avoided.

<sup>12</sup> We can disregard the so-called nature miracles (Mark 4:35–41; 6:32–44; 6:45–52; 11:12–14, 20–21; Matt 17:24–27; Luke 5:1–11; John 2:1–11).

and a healer is strongly attested in the sources.<sup>13</sup> No matter what origin or role in Jesus' ministry one ascribes to these characteristics, they form an integral part of the tradition and are nowadays regarded as one of the most reliable facts about Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Naturally, this statement is not an automatic endorsement of the authenticity of every individual tradition bearing these characteristics. Further indications of authenticity will be welcome, although we may also think that the burden of proof lies mostly on the denial of the authenticity of these individual traditions.

The issue of purity is most evident in the reports of Jesus' contacts with lepers (Mark 1:41; Matt 11:5 par. Luke 7:22 [= Q]; Luke 17:11–19 [= Luke's special source])<sup>15</sup> and the dead (Mark 5:21–43; Matt 11:5 par. Luke 7:22 [= Q]; Luke 7:11–17 [= Luke's special source]),<sup>16</sup> but also in the story of the woman who had a hemorrhage (Mark 5:25–34 par.) and the story of the prostitute (Luke 7:36–50). Even Jesus' cures of the lame and the blind would probably have carried purity overtones for many people. And finally, Jesus' contacts with people with unclean spirits, which appear recurrently in the tradition, are no doubt also of relevance here.

I shall first turn to the last mentioned type of contacts, the expulsions of "unclean spirits," for they are reported almost throughout the Jesus tradition and cannot really be removed from the bedrock elements of Jesus' activity.<sup>17</sup> *πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον*<sup>18</sup> represents a known Jewish

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the historical Jesus*, 2: *Mentor, Message and Miracles* (AB Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 619–630, 646–1039.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. B. L. Blackburn, "The Miracles of Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 353–394 (392); J. H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity," in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. idem and W. P. Weaver, Faith and Scholarship Colloquies 3 (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–41 (12–13); C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 213.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. also Mark 14:3.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. also John 11:1–44.

<sup>17</sup> G. Theissen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, SNT 8 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1974), 274–277; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 44.

<sup>18</sup> See Mark 1:23, 26–27; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13; 6:7; 7:25; 9:25; Matt 10:1; 12:43; Luke (4:33); 4:36; 6:18; 8:29; 9:42.

designation for a demon,<sup>19</sup> and reflects the evil spirits' work of causing uncleanness and leading to it, or their possession of people as a consequence of an impure life.<sup>20</sup> The latter idea is discernible especially in later rabbinic literature.<sup>21</sup> The term "unclean spirit" appropriately marks off spirits which are not to be associated with God, who is holy.<sup>22</sup> Somewhat comparable expressions are "a lying spirit" (1 Kgs 22:22–23), "a spirit of affliction" (1QapGen XX, 16), "a spirit of purulence" (1QapGen XX, 26), and "a spirit of weakness" (Luke 13:11). The condition of being possessed is aptly depicted by Joel Marcus, who comments on Mark 1:23 (and the Markan expression ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ, which is probably a Semitism):<sup>23</sup> "This picture of 'a man in an unclean spirit,' enclosed by that which contaminates him, is horrifying."<sup>24</sup>

There is no reason to doubt that Jesus shared this common understanding of the nature of these spirits.<sup>25</sup> All that can be gathered from the sources suggests that he had no objections to the notion that the spirits are unclean, nor to seeing them as having contaminated the people they had taken into possession (or who had them in their possession). In fact, both Mark and Q relate that Jesus himself referred to the spirits as unclean (Mark 5:8; Matt 12:43 par. Luke 11:24). Implications for the question of cleaning the unclean should also be

<sup>19</sup> W. Foerster, "δαίμων κτλ.," TWNT 2, 1–21, at 16; Guelich, *Mark*, 56; J. Reiling, "Unclean Spirits," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 882.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, *Jub.* 10.1; 11.4; *1 En.* 19.1; 1QM XIII, 5; *T. Benj.* 5.1–3; cf. already Zech 13:2: הַטְּמָאִים הַרוּחַ, "the unclean spirit," in a cultic context; F. Hauck, "καθάρως κτλ.," TWNT 3, 416–421, 427–34, at 431–432. For the close association of demons and impurity in Judaism, see further Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah*, 301–313; C. Wahlen, *Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels*, WUNT 2.185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 24–59.

<sup>21</sup> See H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch: Exkurse zu einzelnen Stellen des Neuen Testaments. Erster Teil* (München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928), 503–504.

<sup>22</sup> Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 503; R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 83; cf. 1QM XIII, 2–5; see Mark 1:24; (3:11); 3:29–30; (5:7) and parallels.

<sup>23</sup> See also Mark 5:2.

<sup>24</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 192.

<sup>25</sup> See Kazen, *Purity Halakhah*, 332–338. Wahlen, *Impurity of Spirits*, 68 points out early Judaism's "growing interest in spirits and their relation to impurity which... is manifest also in the Synoptic Gospels." Further, he states that "the earliest Palestinian community and perhaps Jesus himself were very concerned with the notions purity and impurity in connection with demon possession, so much so that expelling these spirits is remembered as a significant part of his work" (Wahlen, *Impurity of Spirits*, 174).

clear. The removal of an unclean spirit denotes almost by definition the removal of uncleanness.<sup>26</sup>

To turn to another type of contacts, most germane to the question are naturally the situations in which Jesus is expressly said to have cleansed people from impurity. In these cases, authenticity remains somewhat less obvious but not quite devoid of arguments, complementing the above-mentioned basic historicity of this pattern of Jesus' behavior. In Matt 11:5 par. Luke 7:22 (= Q: καθαρίζονται) Jesus refers to his own work by mentioning, *inter alia*, the cleansing of lepers. Actual instances of such cleansing are mentioned in Mark 1:40–45 par. (v. 41, καθάρισθητι) and Luke 17:11–19 (v. 17, ἐκαθαρίσθησαν; cf. v. 15, ἰάθη).<sup>27</sup> These three traditions in three different and independent sources thus offer plural attestation attest that Jesus saw his activity as resulting in the purification of uncleanness. That is, we can appeal to the criterion of multiple attestation in arguing for the authenticity of this common idea within the named passages. A few words are perhaps needed regarding the two actual instances of cleansing, although their individual authenticity is not easily verified.<sup>28</sup> As the stories in Mark 1:40–45 and Luke 17:11–19 report, Jesus sends the lepers to the priests, and in Mark he even gives the order to sacrifice περὶ τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ σου. This appears to be according to the law, which proscribes: "Thus [referring to various purification rites and sacrifices] the priest shall make atonement on his behalf and he shall be clean."<sup>29</sup> However, in both New Testament stories the lepers in reality become both cured and cleansed even before they get to the priests for the sacrifice (cf. Mark 1:42; Luke 17:14). The procedure of sacrifice is undertaken for merely pragmatic reasons, which as such are of course important: the procedure was needed for the reintegration of the lepers into the ordinary social and religious life of the community.<sup>30</sup> But the acts of cleansing occur independently of this procedure.

<sup>26</sup> That is, just as the expulsion of a mute spirit results in a removal of the muteness of the possessed person; see Matt 9:32–33/Luke 11:14.

<sup>27</sup> See also Guelich, *Mark*, 74; Marcus, *Mark*, 209.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 698–705. This does not invalidate the general conclusion drawn about Jesus cleansing people from impurity. See Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 706.

<sup>29</sup> Lev 14:20.

<sup>30</sup> For the contagiousness of leprosy impurity, see *Apion* 1.281; *m. Zabim* 5:6; T. Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation in Biblical Israel," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Festschrift D. N. Freedman*, ed. C. L. Meyers and M. O'Connor, American Schools of Oriental Research, 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 399–414, at 399–400; D. P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites*

In the cases of the other acts of healing that were listed above, there is no easy way to ferret out indications of authenticity. At any event, what the sources put forward is rather obvious. Consider, for example, the story of the woman who had a hemorrhage. The nature of the woman's disease makes implications of purity inescapable.<sup>31</sup> She had been seriously unclean for all of the large breadth of time she had suffered from her illness, and this must have prevented her from leading a normal life.<sup>32</sup> That is why she is prepared to sneak in the crowd and secretly touch Jesus' cloak. Then she is made healthy again. The natural thought evoked by this scene is that, just as she became healed, she was also cleansed from her impurity. Accordingly, she is also recognized as part of Israel once more.<sup>33</sup> Hence, in the case of the lepers, purification is explicitly said to have taken place before they get to the rites that should officially assure their reintegration into the community. Here the woman's reintegration is implied as a *fait accompli* thus *presupposing* her purification.

To a certain extent, we can include here even the cures of lame and blind people. 2 Sam 5:8b reads: "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house." One can think of two slightly differing reasons why the blind and the lame should not enter the temple: either they are regarded as unclean and thus capable of polluting the temple, or they are simply seen as being able to profane the temple's holiness by virtue of their defects.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, in 11QT XLV, 12–14, a passage elaborating 2 Sam 5:8,<sup>35</sup> the blind are to be excluded so that they "shall not

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*in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature*, SBLDS 101 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 209–210. Cf. also Lev 5:3 and 13:45–46.

<sup>31</sup> Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 461.

<sup>32</sup> The discharge would have continuously kept her in a state of impurity (Lev 15:25–30). Earlier such impurities with high communicability (cf. Lev 15:19–24, which appears to describe even a fourth level impurity for a woman with a regular discharge of blood) were to be removed from the "camp"; see Num 5:1–4 which lists people with leprosy, abnormal sexual discharge, and corpse contamination. Later expulsion was reduced to apply only to people having leprosy; Wright, *Disposal of Impurity*, 168–178. Cf., however, *War* 5.227, where Josephus also mentions gonorrhoea as resulting in expulsion from the city.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mark 5:34. See J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB, 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1981), 747; Evans, "Jesus and the Ritually Impure," 368.

<sup>34</sup> S.M. Olyan, "The Exegetical Dimensions of Restrictions on the Blind and the Lame in Texts from Qumran," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 8 (2001): 38–50, at 41.

<sup>35</sup> See Olyan, "The Blind and the Lame," 38–43, who argues for 2 Sam 5:8b and a tandem reading of other Old Testament texts such as Isa 52:1 and Num 5:3b as the background of 11QT XLV, 12–14.

defile the city in the centre of which I dwell.” In other words, the blind are regarded as unclean.<sup>36</sup> Further, 1QSa II, 9b–10(11) establishes that, together with other people with physical blemishes, the lame and the blind (deaf, dumb, etc.; see the lengthy list in vv. 3–7) should be regarded as contaminated.<sup>37</sup> Hence, for those who shared the view represented by these texts,<sup>38</sup> even Jesus’ cures of people with bodily defects would have carried important purity connotations.<sup>39</sup> The restoration of sight and capability of movement (among other things) would at the same time have meant a visible and indisputable restoration of purity.<sup>40</sup>

Similar ideas are finally evoked by the stories about Jesus’ touching dead people.<sup>41</sup> A dead human body carries grave ritual impurity, the removal of which from those contaminated would require elaborate procedures and a lengthy period of time.<sup>42</sup> When now the girl of Mark 5 and the young man of Luke 7 were made alive by Jesus, what would have happened to their impurity? It is difficult to think that Jesus understood himself to have raised these people from the dead but not to have restored their purity as well. There may, however, be a further

<sup>36</sup> The lame are not mentioned in 11QT XLV, 12–14.

<sup>37</sup> D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, eds., *Qumran Cave I*, DJD, 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 116 translate “contaminé”; F. García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, trans. W. G. E. Watson, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 127 translates “defiled.” This meaning of מונוגט in v. 10 is motivated by the context (especially v. 3). Hence L. Schwienhorst, “נגט,” *ThWAT* 5 (1986): 219–226 (226) gives the verb נגט in 1QSa II, 3–6, 10 the rendering “mit einer Unreinheit geschlagen sein.”

<sup>38</sup> See also 4QMMT LV–LVII which reasons that those who do not see nor hear cannot know how to apply regulations concerning purity. Cf. even Acts 3:2, 8, 10.

<sup>39</sup> The cures of (*inter alia*) lame and blind people are related in, for example, Mark 3:1–5, Matt 11:5 par. Luke 7:22 (= Q), and Luke 13:11–13 (lame) as well as in Mark 8:22–25; 10:46–52; Matt 11:5 par. Luke 7:22 (= Q), Matt 12:22; 15:29–31 (blind).

<sup>40</sup> A cultic defectiveness along the lines of 2 Sam 5:8, be it uncleanness or the power to profane, seems to be presupposed in Matt 21:12–14. See D. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC, 33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 601; cf. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus: 3. Teilband Mt 18–25*, EKKNT 1.3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 188.

<sup>41</sup> Mark 5:35–43; Luke 7:12–16; cf. also John 11:17–44. In Luke 7:14, Jesus is said to touch the bier on which the corpse is lying. This act was almost equally serious, for a human corpse could create first-level impurities (by contact, overshadowing etc.)—that is, new sources of impurity. Hence the rabbinic term “father of fathers of uncleanness.”

<sup>42</sup> Corpse-impurity makes persons (or objects) unclean for seven days: Num 19. The impurity should be removed by sprinkling water especially blended for this purpose on the third and seventh days. The mixture consists of water and the ashes of the red cow: Num 19:2–9. On the seventh day, impure persons are to bathe and wash their clothes: Num 19:19; cf. 31:24.

point that could be advanced here. A corpse is very impure, but if it ceases to be a corpse, would not its impurity also cease to exist? After all, a corpse has not been rendered impure by being touched by a corpse but rather by being one. Such a situation differs from all the cases where a recovery had been anticipated. There are regulations for instance for the case that a leper has become cured,<sup>43</sup> that is, how such people should deal with the impurity their ailment had given them. With respect to corpse impurity, however, the comparable regulations concern only those who have acquired impurity by having somehow been in contact with a corpse, not those who have regained their lives.<sup>44</sup> According to a halakhic logic that I have been informed about, if a human corpse regains its life, its purity is as the same as if it have lived the whole time, i.e., it is no longer unclean.<sup>45</sup> If this reasoning applied as early as Jesus' time, the restored purity of the girl and the young man in Mark 5 and Luke 7 would have been evident precisely by the token of their restored life.

Be this last issue as it may, the natural conclusion regarding the healings performed by Jesus is that along with the restored health of the people came also their restored purity. This is what is expressly suggested by the cleansing of the lepers and what is clear in the exorcisms of the unclean spirits. And to the extent that the other acts of healing with more or less apparent overtones of purity provide historically reliable information, they yield not a disharmonious but rather a corroborating picture.

One more point deserves to be observed. Purity could naturally be lost for a good cause and then regained through appropriate means. In Jesus' dealings with the unclean such causes are clear, although perhaps not altogether obvious. For instance, Jesus is not a close relative of the dead girl or the dead young man, and in the case of the woman with a hemorrhage he does not even take the initiative. At any event, however, one was not supposed to gratuitously delay undertaking the measures for purification even when not with the aim of entering the

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<sup>43</sup> See Lev 13:1–46.

<sup>44</sup> See n. 42 above.

<sup>45</sup> Private communication with Professor Jacob Neusner and with my Rabbi. Cf. the First Temple stories 1 Kgs 17:17–24; 2 Kgs 4:18–37.

temple.<sup>46</sup> Delaying purification was considered a sin.<sup>47</sup> In the case of Jesus, then, the remarkable thing is that there is in the sources no mention of him employing the means of purification. This is not attested or alluded to in the data at any point where Jesus' contamination would have been evident. Similarly, Jesus is nowhere depicted as behaving as if he sought to avoid communicating the impurities he had acquired.

The silence that we encounter here is not surprising, for all the activities of Jesus described above seem by their very nature to exclude the idea that he had temporarily sacrificed his state of purity only to restore it again, and to restore it with the ordinary means of purification. Why would he have needed to implement these for his own purification when he did not need to resort to them for others? We can also account for the silence on the basis of what has been suggested all along: Jesus saw himself as being able to restore people's purity. Impurity did not threaten Jesus' state of purity, but was simply overcome by him.<sup>48</sup> (The silence is also broken in a way that supports the conclusion drawn from it here. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840 has a Pharisee accuse Jesus precisely of what we have suggested above, namely that Jesus did not regularly go through the proper means of purification.)<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> S. Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, ConBNT, 10 (Lund: Gleerup, 1978), 64; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press, 1994), 218. For evidence for extra-temple purity, see J.C. Poirier, "Purity Beyond the Temple in the Second Temple Era," *JBL* 122 (2003): 247–265, at 256–259. He states (265) in conclusion: "The notion that the ritual purity laws of Second Temple Judaism existed solely for the sake of the temple is a scholarly construct with little basis in reality." Cf. also the case of the *miqvaot* discussed below in section 3. See further J. Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary: The Priestly 'Picture of Dorian Gray,'" *RB* 83 (1976): 390–399.

<sup>47</sup> See Lev 5:1–6, which speaks of an unintentional delay; in Lev 17:15–16 find an intentional delay; *Ant.* 3.262; D. P. Wright, "Unclean and Clean: Old Testament," *ABD* 6 (1992): 729–741, at 737–738; Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 219.

<sup>48</sup> Kazen, *Purity Halakhah*, 255 is right to maintain that even if Jesus and his disciples had immersed when attending important festivals together with other pilgrims (John 13:10 probably belongs to such a context), this "is not equal to regular immersions after contact with different types of impurity bearers."

<sup>49</sup> Whatever one may make of the papyrus, it does reflect the conditions of the temple and purity discussions at Jesus' time fairly accurately; see Kazen, *Purity Halakhah*, 256–60. Very suggestive is for example the statement of the Pharisee that he has "gone down by the one stair and come up by the other." The description is strikingly illuminated by the last decades' archaeological findings of numerous *miqvaot* with both divided and double staircases; see for instance Sanders, *Practice and Belief*, 225. Grenfell and Hunt, who originally published the papyrus, ascribed this statement of the Pharisee to the author's imagination; see B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, eds., *The*



The material that has been under discussion here forms essentially part of the miracle and exorcism tradition which, as a whole, comes with high claims to authenticity. A closer look at instances of the tradition where the question of purity is most evident has produced quite a consistent result. The sources clearly affirm that Jesus purposed to make the unclean clean. Sometimes this intention of his is made explicit, sometimes it appears as the natural implication of the stories. Nothing that would contest this impression could be discerned; there appear no deviating, competing or contradicting ideas. The inevitable conclusion thus seems to be that just as Jesus demonstrated power over diseases, demons, and death, he thought he could even reverse impurity. Of course, if one completely mistrusts what the sources suggest, one can question this conclusion. From that perspective, however, all conclusions must remain questionable.

Thus, in my view, there are good grounds for understanding Jesus' dealings with the unclean along the lines of the interpretation that he saw himself making the unclean clean.<sup>50</sup> I have pressed the issue and studied it at some length in order to lay a solid foundation for the following discussion about the corollaries of this interpretation. The settings within which the dealings and their interpretation will now be studied, prompting and eliciting the corollaries, are thus Jesus' Jewish context, the context of other Jesuanic material pertaining to purity, the context of Jesus' overall message, and purity in early Christianity.

### 3. *A Specific Jewish Context*

Intriguingly, in his dealings with the unclean Jesus seems to construe (im)purity in a way that presupposes an inversion of a basic rule. The rule is succinctly expressed by the Old Testament prophet Haggai:

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*Oxyrhynchus Papyri: Part 5* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1908), 3. Less understandable is how F. Bovon, "Fragment *Oxyrhynchus* 840, Fragment of a Lost Gospel, Witness of an Early Christian Controversy over Purity," *JBL* 119 (2000): 705–728, still comments on the statement only by referring to the structure of an early Christian baptistery (717).

<sup>50</sup> All in all, we can disassemble the interpretation as follows: (a) prior to his dealings with these people, Jesus perceived them as unclean; (b) he affirmed their regained state of purity after his dealings with them; (c) he saw himself as having caused the change that had occurred and (d) interpreted this as cleansing.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests for a ruling: If one carries consecrated meat in the fold of one's garment, and with the fold touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy? The priests answered, "No." Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "Yes, it becomes unclean" (Hag 2:11–13).

As commentators state, "an obvious point has been made by this series of inquiries."<sup>51</sup> "Although defilement is contagious...holiness in contrast is not."<sup>52</sup> Uncleanness was transferable, cleanness was not, and the mere act of touching sufficed to defile. There was only one exception to this general rule of the transferability of (im)purity: The altar of the temple (and some of its utensils) could render those of clerical parentage pure or holy.<sup>53</sup> They, however, could not communicate their purity further.

In this way, purity needed protection, and the more or higher purity there was, the more it had to be guarded. Therefore everything sacred was to be carefully kept free from defilement. This applied particularly to the temple, but even to other "areas,"<sup>54</sup> such as the holy feasts of Israel (e.g., the Sabbath),<sup>55</sup> priests,<sup>56</sup> and theophanic experiences.<sup>57</sup> The different attitudes in handling corpse impurity illuminate the point in question: Ordinary people were allowed to touch and be in close

<sup>51</sup> D. L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary*, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1985), 79.

<sup>52</sup> C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB, 25 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987), 56. See also e.g., Petersen, *Haggai*, 79; R. L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, WBC, 32 (Waco: Word Books, 1984), 160; D. Kellermann, "Heiligkeit II: Altes Testament," *TRE* 14 (1985): 697–703 (702). B. A. Levine, *Leviticus ויקרא*: *The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (The JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 38 states: "The point is that whereas impurity is transferred through physical contact alone, substances do not become holy merely through contact with sacred materials. An act of consecration is required."

<sup>53</sup> Exod 29:37; 30:29. See Petersen, *Haggai*, 75–76, 78–79. However, it is probable that יקרא in these verses (as in Lev 6:11.20) merely implies that those who touch the holy things must themselves be in a holy state; Levine, *Leviticus*, 37–38, 40; *Tg. Ps.-J.* ad loc.; *Tg. Onq.* ad loc.; cf. N. M. Sarna, *Exodus שמות: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 191; but see *ibidem*, 259.

<sup>54</sup> See Kellermann, "Heiligkeit," 700–702.

<sup>55</sup> Neh 13:191, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Lev 21; Ezek 4:14; 44:31.

<sup>57</sup> Of these, we have a prime example in the people at Sinai receiving the commandments; Exod 19:10–25. The list could go on with blood, the product of trees in their first three years, etc.

contact with their deceased relatives in order to take care of them and bury them. Though a human corpse was regarded as the most serious of all sources of impurity, and rigorous purification was required after touching a corpse, the living had an imperative duty to give a person a decent burial.<sup>58</sup> In comparison, priests, holy men as they were, could take care of the dead bodies of the most nearest of their kin only, namely of the mother and father.<sup>59</sup> And the high priest, logically, was denied even this deed,<sup>60</sup> which was thus otherwise considered an indispensable act of piety and reverence.<sup>61</sup>

Hence, impurity transferred to the pure and holy, contaminating them. Not even the high priest could communicate his holiness to render even the most slightly unclean thing, let alone a human corpse, pure. On the contrary, he had to be protected all the more. Jesus, however, seems to have dealt with (im)purity in a way that utterly *inverts* the general rule described by Haggai. Coming into contact with unclean people does not make Jesus impure; that is, their uncleanness is not transferred to him. Instead, it is the unclean who become clean—that is, purity is transferred to them.<sup>62</sup> With regard to Jesus, *purity* has

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<sup>58</sup> In the Old Testament, being denied burial is pictured as the ultimate punishment and horror (Deut 28:26; Jer 7:33; 8:1–2; Ezek 6:5; 29:5). Tobit is mocked because of his eagerness to bury all the dead “brothers” he comes across (Tob 1:16–19, 2:3–8). And Josephus tells that the Jews “were so careful about funeral rites” that even crucified criminals used to be taken down and buried (*War* 4.317; cf. 3.377). See also *4 Ezra* 2.22–23.

<sup>59</sup> Lev 21:1–2. The exact list also encompasses the priest’s son, daughter, brother, and virgin sister (who is without a husband to care for her in the case of her death).

<sup>60</sup> Lev 21:10–11. A temporary denial to bury even the closest relatives was also issued to Nazirites: Num 6:5–12.

<sup>61</sup> Especially the parents were worthy of burial, and this was the imperative duty of the son. For example, Abraham and Isaac are favored by their sons’ arrangement of their burials (Tob 4:3–4; 14:11–12; *Jub.* 23.7; 36.1–2, 18–19). Being denied this service is seen as a particular misfortune (Tob 6:14; 2 Macc 5:10; *War* 5.545; see also *1 En.* 98.13). See also e.g., *m. Ber.* 3.1.

<sup>62</sup> Similarly Borg, *Holiness*, 135, explaining the healing of the leper: “it was not Jesus who was made unclean by touching the leper—rather, the leper was made clean... holiness was understood to overpower uncleanness rather than the converse”; Evans, “Jesus and the Ritually Impure,” 368, expounding the story about the woman with hemorrhage: “[i]nstead of conveying uncleanness to Jesus, whom she touches, cleanliness is conveyed to her”; and Berger, “Pharisäer,” 240: “offensive Reinheit/Heiligkeit ist...eine Reinheit, die sich von ihrem Träger aus verbreitet, die ‘ansteckend’ ist, die Unreines rein machen kann...Diese Reinheit/Heiligkeit wirkt so, wie früher Unreinheit wirkte. Die Machtverhältnisse sind jetzt und hier umgekehrt worden” [“offensive purity/holiness is...a purity which spreads out from its bearer, which is ‘contagious,’ which can make pure that which is impure... This purity/holiness works in the same way as impurity worked in the past. In this time and place, the power relationships

become contagious.<sup>63</sup> Jesus thus appears to be pursuing a kind of *inverse strategy*, which, in reality, holds two remarkable notions: (a) the diametrical change of the transferability of (im)purity and (b) Jesus' special role in being the one who is the stem of the change which has taken place—in other words, his purity has become contagious. In the following, I shall refer to this as the *inverse strategy of ritual (im)purity*, or often simply as the *inverse strategy*.

As such, alterations and new viewpoints were nothing unusual in early Judaism. Matters of purity, in particular, aroused a multitude of varying interpretations. As I have maintained, debates concerning purity can even be regarded as a central factor in the history of Jewish sectarianism. Even within this diversity, however, the view of (im)purity implied by Jesus' dealings with the unclean must be characterized as exceptional and radical. Instead of this common model of how the state of purity should be restored:

“dealings with the means of purification → pure”

we must assume this kind of scheme:

“dealings with Jesus → pure”

—although one should notice that in contacts with Jesus, uncleanness is not actually dealt with as it is with the means of purification. That is, Jesus does not act as a priest attending to the means of purification.<sup>64</sup> Nor does he acquire impurity, so that he needed to dispose of it afterwards. Instead, purity simply conquers impurity; it behaves contagiously, in the way impurity used to do. Jesus thus seems to be a holy man without a correspondent in the living representatives of Israel's holiness.<sup>65</sup> As a matter of fact, he appears to function just like

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have been reversed”; eng. trans. B. McNeil]. See also n. 9 above for other proponents of this interpretation.

<sup>63</sup> Nothing suggests that Jesus had thought of someone else as possessing capabilities similar to his own or that he had seen the inversion of the transferability of (im)purity as a general phenomenon taking place through and through at his time. If Mark 6:7–13 can be utilized in a historical assessment, it rather reveals the “authority over the unclean spirits” as an ability of individuals and of exceptionally gifted persons other than Jesus himself (see esp. v. 7). The pericope may, however, have had further meaning for the Palestinian Jesus movement. See the discussion below in section 6.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” 459.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Job 14:4: “Who can make the unclean into the clean? No one!” The translation is according to D. J. A. Clines, *Job 1–20*, WBC, 17 (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 277.

the altar of the temple which by mere touching could render people clean, but I do not wish to press this analogy too much now.

Considering all this, then, it should not go without notice that the inverse strategy of ritual (im)purity in reality entails a major change in the whole purity thinking of Judaism. At issue here are not merely questions such as what the substances that defile are, how contagious different substances can be, how long the defilement caused by them lasts, how various defilements are to be purged, etc., which were common topics of quarrels and conversations. Instead, it is the fundamental view of how ritual (im)purity behaves, i.e., the basic idea of the contagiousness of impurity, that undergoes a radical change. This was precisely what made impurities so threatening: their ability to multiply themselves, some more easily than others.<sup>66</sup> This was why questions of (im)purity kept surfacing in the debates of the learned as well as in the daily lives of common people. Close to the temple, the elaborate system of *miqvaot*, ritual baths, served precisely to work against the contagiousness of impurity.<sup>67</sup> However, such structures, both *miqvaot* and various stone vessels meant for purification, have been found not only in the vicinity of the temple, but even at greater distances.<sup>68</sup> This strongly suggests that the *miqvaot* in question were used for maintaining purity for its own sake. We may gather that delays in purification particularly in the case of severe and highly communicable impurities would have begun to threaten the purity of entire communities, as the impurities would have had more time to spread and multiply.<sup>69</sup> Hence, even when not with the aim of entering the temple, people tried to retain their status of purity and to regain it if lost. For this constant concern, the *miqvaot* furnished an indispensable help.<sup>70</sup>

Against this background, it is easy to fathom the remarkable change that the inverse strategy of (im)purity would anticipate. For someone who would have believed that he had the ability to invert the transfer-

<sup>66</sup> See n. 32 above.

<sup>67</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 214–227.

<sup>68</sup> R. Reich, “Ritual Baths,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, ed. E. M. Meyers, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 430–431; A. Negev and S. Gibson, *Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land* (New York: Continuum, rev. ed., 2003), 71; Poirier, “Purity Beyond the Temple,” 257.

<sup>69</sup> Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation,” 403.

<sup>70</sup> Kazen, *Purity Halakhah*, 75: “The fairly wide-spread use of *miqvaot* made an expansionist view of impurity possible to implement.”

ability of (im)purity, the abundance of *miqvaot*, and even more, a whole way of life would have begun to appear irrelevant. Indeed, can we avoid thinking that the inverse strategy has the potential to bring about a major transformation of Judaism? In my view, some sort of eschatological and messianic ideas need to be regarded as lying behind Jesus' purity thinking. Otherwise, it would be difficult to account for the radicality of the change of the transferability of (im)purity on the one hand, and on the other, the particular role in this change Jesus assumes for himself. I shall return to these considerations later on.

In the eyes of beholders who would not have belonged to Jesus' close followers, his unreserved dealings with the unclean could have remained obscure. It would not always have been easy for outside observers to anticipate possible other motivations behind this unreservedness. Therefore, as I have proposed elsewhere, within the framework of contemporary covenant thinking, where the purity paradigm (*inter alia*) played an integral role, this behavior of Jesus could at times have appeared suspicious and most readily explainable as laxity.<sup>71</sup> The gospel reports do, however, suggest that Jesus' own aims with this behavior were not derived from indifference or negligence, but rather from a view of the inversion of the transferability of ritual (im)purity that he sees as taking place in his person and mission. Naturally, with such a conception of transferability, impurity also loses much of its threatening character. Deprived of its ability to multiply itself, it becomes easily manageable and conquerable, and can therefore be approached with a quite different—that is, relaxed—attitude. Hence, it is not so much what comes from outside a person that can defile.<sup>72</sup>

#### 4. *Other Jesus Traditions Pertaining to Purity*

In these remarks, I have begun to consider the inverse strategy in the context of other Jesuanic material which carries purity overtones. I shall be content with two examples.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 251.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Mark 7:15.

<sup>73</sup> For the temple as obviously relevant to purity, see the following section.

#### 4.1. *An Odd Saying?*

First, the saying in Mark 7:15, which is often regarded as providing historically reliable information,<sup>74</sup> thus reveals itself to be compatible with the inverse strategy.

There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him.

In fact, the saying and the strategy can remarkably illuminate each other. Why is it that defilement from outside—i.e., forbidden foods and ritual impurity in general<sup>75</sup>—cannot defile at all or cannot defile as much as defilement from the inside,<sup>76</sup> which probably means moral contamination?<sup>77</sup> Simply because of the fact that, since Jesus is now able to invert the transferability of (im)purity, nothing from the outside, not even unclean foods, can pose the kind of threat they once had. On the other hand, with respect to moral impurities, the situation is different, for their communication does not take place in the same manner! The morally defiling acts mentioned in the Torah are sexual sins (Lev 18), idolatry (Lev 19:31; 20:1–3), and murder (Num 35:33–34),<sup>78</sup> though Jesus or other contemporary Jews need not have restricted this category to these deeds alone.<sup>79</sup> While ritual impurity, as was commonly thought, was communicated by touching, moral impurity came through *doing* the sins in question. Moral impurity did not spread by physical contact! Still, it created a longer-standing state of impurity and was impervious to the rites of purification.<sup>80</sup> In other

<sup>74</sup> For an analysis, see Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 237–249.

<sup>75</sup> Food seems to be implied by the verb “going into”; H. Räisänen, “Jesus and the Food Laws: Reflections on Mark 7.15,” in *The Torah and Christ: Essays in German and English on the Problem of the Law in Early Christianity*, ed. A.-M. Enroth, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society, 45 (Helsinki: Raamattutalo, 1986), 219–241 (223). Though food is in focus only by implication, the context (even if not originally the present one) may have made it explicit. At any event, reference to food can also be interpreted as a *pars pro toto* case, hence denoting ritual or thus “external” impurity in general.

<sup>76</sup> For these alternatives, see shortly below in the text.

<sup>77</sup> R. P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7*, JSNTSup, 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 210; Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 238–239.

<sup>78</sup> Wright, “Unclean and Clean,” 733–735.

<sup>79</sup> See J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43–60; Regev, ‘Abominated Temple’, 250–251.

<sup>80</sup> Frymer-Kensky, “Pollution, Purification, and Purgation,” 404–409; Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 26–31; Regev, “Abominated Temple,” 245.

words, moral impurity was not conceived as being contagious in the way that ritual impurities were, and it also required different means of purification. In consequence of this, the inversion of the contagiousness of (im)purity did not apply to moral defilement and did not warrant a relaxed attitude in that respect.<sup>81</sup>

Hence, the “oddy” of the saying Mark 7:15 readily disappears when we recognize the words as an expression of the inverse strategy of (im)purity. By the same token almost can almost establish that Jesus not only acted according to the inverse strategy, but also reflected verbally on what it meant with respect to various kinds of impurity.

There is also another way that the inverse strategy of ritual (im)purity can illuminate the interpretation of Mark 7:15. As is well known, the saying can be read either as an absolute denial of the defiling power of what comes from outside or as a relative statement that stresses the greater significance of moral issues (while devaluing ritual impurities). The latter reading has gained popularity of late. The tone of Mark 7:15 is clearly reminiscent of Old Testament prophetic oracles such as Jer 7:22–23 and Hos 6:6, which by stressing what is now urgently needed seemingly dismiss the opposite. Grammatically speaking, Mark 7:15 (as well as the Old Testament passages) may be understood as a ‘dialectic negation’.<sup>82</sup> As a Semitic idiom, the formula “not A, but B” (οὐ . . . ἀλλά) can be rendered “not so much A, but rather B,”<sup>83</sup> hence, “a man is not so much defiled by that which enters him from outside as he is by that which comes from within.”<sup>84</sup>

At the same time, the absolute (and literal) interpretation has run into difficulties because of the emphasis in current research on the Jewishness of Jesus. The idea that Jesus would have abrogated the food

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<sup>81</sup> The inverse strategy of ritual (im)purity is compatible with the Q saying Matt 23:25–26/Luke 11:39–41 as well.

<sup>82</sup> See H. Kruse, “Die ‘dialektische Negation’ als semitisches idiom,” *VT* 4 (1954): 385–400.

<sup>83</sup> F. Blass, A. Debrunner and F. Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, 17th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 378 (§ 448 n. 1); M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples*, English ed. adapted from the 4th Latin ed. by J. Smith, Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 114, 6th repr. (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994), 150 (§ 445).

<sup>84</sup> In similarity with this interpret, for instance, Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 83; Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 68–71; H. Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gotesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, 3rd ed. SBS 111 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 98; Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 239–241; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making, 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 574–575.



laws or even denied the distinction between sacred and secular which was so fundamental to Judaism was earlier found appealing and, since it attests to an obvious uniqueness, also suggested authenticity.<sup>85</sup> Nowadays, however, such radicality is perceived as unsuited to Jesus the Jew, and the authenticity of the saying is often made dependent on the acceptance of the relative interpretation.<sup>86</sup>

It is clear that the relative interpretation fits well with the inverse strategy of (im)purity. Ritual impurity has not vanished, but because Jesus has the power to ward it off and revert it easily, it does not require so much attention any longer. Instead, moral uncleanness stays untouched by the inverse strategy since that type of defilement has had nothing to do with contact-contagion in the first place. However, the strategy also affords an absolute reading of the saying which eschews being non-Jewish or too radical. If the straightforward inability of any outside impurity to defile—as is literally proposed in Mark 7:15<sup>87</sup>—is understood against the background of Jesus' imperviousness to such

<sup>85</sup> See, for instance, E. Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen: Erster Band*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 238; N. Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 150; H. Hübner, *Das Gesetz in der synoptischen Tradition: Studien zur These einer progressiven Qumranisierung und Judaisierung innerhalb der synoptischen Tradition* (Witten: Lutter-Verlag, 1973), 165–175. Even more recently, see W. Weiss, “Eine neue Lehre in Vollmacht”: Die Streit- und Schulgespräche des Markus-Evangeliums, BZNW 52 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 70–71; R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 69. For the use and misuse of the criteria of authenticity in assessing Mark 7:15, see T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity,” in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 28.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 47–80 (70–73).

<sup>86</sup> See, for instance, Sanders, *Jewish Law*, 28; Cf., however, J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (AB Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 173. Further, see J. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980), 112; J. D. G. Dunn, “Jesus and Ritual Purity. A study of the tradition history of Mk 7,15,” in *À Cause de l'Évangile. Études sur les Synoptiques et les Actes: Festschrift J. Dupont*, LD 123 (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 251–276 (254). For my solution to the dilemma, see T. Holmén, “Doubts about Double Dissimilarity,” 59–62.—This is also G. Theissen's assessment of the current research; see G. Theissen, “Das Reinheitslogion Mk 7,15 und die Trennung von Juden und Christen,” in *Jesus als historische Gestalt: Beiträge zur Jesusforschung: Festschrift G. Theissen*, ed. A. Merz FRLANT, 202 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 73–89 (73–76). However, Theissen himself interprets the saying absolutely and sustains its authenticity. He points out that the saying is indicatively formulated, not imperatively as later in early Christianity (*ibid.*, 80–84).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. οὐδὲν ἐστιν ἕξωθεν... ὃ δύναται κοινῶσαι. See Theissen, “Das Reinheitslogion Mk 7,15,” 76–77. Cf. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 241.

impurities and his contagious, “defiling” purity, we obtain an absolute reading which by no means abrogates the laws of ritual (im)purity. According to this reading, ritual (im)purity does not cease to exist but—seen strictly from Jesus’ perspective—simply can no longer do any harm, i.e., defile.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4.2. *Table Fellowship with the Outcasts*

As a second example, I shall look at the theme of Jesus’ table fellowship with toll collectors and sinners. Ed Sanders argues for the historicity of the theme on the following grounds: (a) the extent of the material having a bearing on this question is large; (b) there is a multiple attestation in forms: “parables, other sayings, flat declarations of purpose, reports of Jesus’ activity, and reported accusations against him”; (c) a high tolerance of sinners is dissimilar to the practice of the early church as we know it.<sup>89</sup> Sanders also maintains that the main offense of Jesus’ table fellowship was not that he ate with common people who did not observe the specific food regulations of the *haverim* or the Pharisees, but that he granted unrepentant sinners the legitimacy of the people of God.<sup>90</sup> I think Sanders is right on both points. Accordingly, the theme provides authentic information about Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God. Sharing the table was a cheerful event suitable for a cheerful message. In other words, here Jesus imparted his message and made sinners and outcasts heirs of the kingdom.<sup>91</sup>

However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this article, I believe that matters of purity, though perhaps less focally, were also involved

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<sup>88</sup> The relative interpretation perhaps sees the issue from a wider perspective, taking into account that the inversion of the transferability of (im)purity concerned only Jesus and was applied to those with whom he had dealings.

<sup>89</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 174. For the authenticity of this motif see also, for instance, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2: 149–151; D. E. Smith, “Table Fellowship and the Historical Jesus,” in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World: Essays honoring Dieter Georgi*, ed. L. Bormann, K. Del Tredici, and A. Standhartinger, *NovTSup* 74 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 135–162.

<sup>90</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174–211.

<sup>91</sup> For a recent re-evaluation of the historicity of the table fellowship as Jesus’ means of imparting his message about the kingdom, see D.-A. Koch, “Jesu Tischgemeinschaft mit Zöllnern und Sündern: Erwägungen zur Entstehung von Mk 2,13–17,” in *Jesu Rede von Gott und ihre Nachgeschichte im frühen Christentum: Beiträge zur Verkündigung Jesu und zum Kerygma der Kirche*, ed. D.-A. Koch, G. Sellin, and A. Lindemann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1989), 57–73.

in these situations of Jesus' mission. The involvement of purity questions has been suggested for instance by Bruce Chilton and more recently by James D. G. Dunn,<sup>92</sup> and I share their opinion that the presence of mixed interests can by no means be excluded. Purity questions arose at the table at least because, in general, sinners were no better than pagans,<sup>93</sup> and in particular, toll collectors were defiled because in their profession they were likely to come into contact with Gentiles.<sup>94</sup> Therefore the table fellowship theme is also helpful in probing the applicability of the inverse strategy of (im)purity.

Indeed, the strategy can well be seen as operative behind this conspicuous feature of Jesus' behavior. Table fellowship naturally brought people into close physical contact with each other. And the purity of food is surely one point here as well.<sup>95</sup> The unreservedness towards the looming impurities that Jesus displayed by this activity can again be explained by the ability to invert the transferability of (im)purity which he assumed to possess. Yet almost equally illuminating is the fact that the inverse strategy of (im)purity cannot account for the entire situation of table fellowship, since, as I have stated, purity was not the only question that arose due to the fellowship. Thus we again encounter certain boundaries to the inverse strategy of (im)purity. Together with Sanders, I hold that the inclusion of sinners in the kingdom attracted attention to Jesus' gatherings. How could Jesus treat these people with such openness? This falls outside the scope of the ritual (im)purity strategy, if only because the sinners would probably have also committed deeds resulting in moral defilement.<sup>96</sup> The conclusive answer lies

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<sup>92</sup> B. Chilton, "Jesus and the Repentance of E. P. Sanders," *TynBul* 39 (1988): 1–18. Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 465. So also Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 187, 210.

<sup>93</sup> Booth, *Laws of Purity*, 110 correctly observes that through being in contact with these sorts of people Jesus was liable to be defiled.

<sup>94</sup> Antipas' main toll collectors were probably located in Tiberias, which was not only a prominently Greek city but was also founded on an old graveyard (*Ant.* 18.36–38).

<sup>95</sup> Josephus tells of at least two groups who so strictly kept to their own table fellowship that, when this became impossible, they starved, since they would not touch other people's food. See *War* 2.143–144 about some Essenes and *Ant.* 20.181, 206–207 about some other priests. The same pattern lies behind the prohibition that a *haber* should not eat together with the "people of land" (see m.Dem). The above interpretation(s) of Mark 7:15 would work purposefully in the table fellowship practiced by Jesus.

<sup>96</sup> In the gospels, the designation "sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί), used of the group Jesus kept company with (a deviant use for instance in Luke 5:8), denotes those who had intentionally broken God's commandments, as these were understood by Jews in general, not just by some isolated group or association. The designation is advanced by many

in understanding Jesus' message about the kingdom of God. Somehow this enabled him to include even sinners.<sup>97</sup> That the inverse strategy of (im)purity was part of the kingdom message seems clear, but it did not make up the whole message.<sup>98</sup>

Hence, the inverse strategy represents ritual (im)purity as a matter relevant to Jesus while at the same time explaining his seemingly indifferent behavior in various situations and the relaxed attitude he voices. Though ritual impurity was a real and relevant issue to Jesus, it was not a problem or a danger, since for him, its sting (i.e., its contagiousness) had fallen away. Moreover, through Mark 7:15 the inverse strategy illuminates the fact that the relaxed attitude never applies to moral issues: Since moral defilement was "non-contagious," it could not be dealt with by means of Jesus' contagious purity. And the implications of the particular table fellowship which Jesus practiced corroborate and complement the picture: The inverse strategy of (im)purity accounts for the ritual concerns of the fellowship but in other questions some other solutions are clearly called for. Is it not natural to think that there thus were some other strategies Jesus operated with? The purpose of the next section is to look at the inverse strategy of (im)purity within the context of Jesus' overall message and activity. At the same time, however, it also takes us to the threshold of identifying other comparable strategies of Jesus.

### 5. *The Overall Message of Jesus*

The obvious question emerging from these remarks is how Jesus had arrived at such a view of ritual (im)purity. As I have stated, we must investigate the issues of the eschatological message of Jesus and the

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kinds of people: By the evangelist (Mark 2:15), by the Pharisees (Mark 2:16), by Jesus himself (Mark 2:17), and by people in general (Luke 19:7; Matt 11:19 par. Luke 9:34 = Q). Especially the last point shows that the people designated ἀμαρτωλοί were sinners in general respect, i.e., they were regarded as sinners by Jews in general. In fact, here probably lies the function of "the toll collectors," the regular referent of this designation. Because *everyone* disliked "the toll collectors," it conveniently serves to indicate that ἀμαρτωλοί is not meant just as some special grouping's judgement of other people. Further on this see, for instance, J. Jeremias, "Zöllner und Sünder," *ZNW* 13 (1931): 293–300; Westerholm, *Jesus and Scribal Authority*, 70–71; H. Merklein, *Die Gottesherrschaft als Handlungsprinzip: Untersuchung zur Ethik Jesu*, 2nd ed., FzB 34 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1981), 200–201; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 177–179.

<sup>97</sup> See the remarks in the next section.

<sup>98</sup> See the short remark on the table fellowship in the next section.

specific role within that message which he adopted for himself. In Jewish restoration eschatology, the task of the agent of God was to bring about God's rule, thereby at last establishing purity and righteousness.<sup>99</sup> The restoration of the purity of the land, the people and/or Jerusalem, envisaged by prophets, was longed for in many intertestamental writings and was usually pictured as involving the exclusion of sinners and ritually unclean people.<sup>100</sup> Maybe, in Jesus' view, it was this eschatological purity that through him now began to rule over impurity. In his view, however, the restoration of purity would not take place by excluding the ritually unclean people, but through the efficient expurgation of their uncleanness by means of the inversion of the transferability of (im)purity. Hence the statement: "O Jerusalem . . . the unclean shall enter you no more"<sup>101</sup> would indeed hold true, but because those with impurities have been made clean.

Would such a hypothesis find support in Jesus' overall message? To begin with, it would be illuminating to see whether motifs reminiscent of the inverse strategy of (im)purity can be located elsewhere in the gospels' Jesus tradition.

### 5.1. *A General Motif of Inversion*

Actually, there are quite a number of traditions that display the feature of inversion. First, the "parables of reversal":<sup>102</sup>

The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:10–14), the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37), the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31), the Wedding Guests (Luke 14:7–11), the Proper Guests (Luke 14:12–14), the Great Supper (Matt 22:1–10 par. Luke 14:16–24), and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32).

Secondly, some short statements clearly apply here:

"The tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you" (Matt 21:32), "whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:26), "for the Son of Man came not to be

<sup>99</sup> See, for example, Isa 42:1–7; Jer 23:5–6; Ezek 37:22–28; *Pss. Sol.* 17.

<sup>100</sup> Ps 24:3–4; Isa 35:8; 52:1; *Pss. Sol.* 17.22–23. Sometimes a powerful removal of the *uncleanness* of the people was envisioned: Isa 4:3–4; Ezek 36:25, 29; *Jub.* 4.26; 50.5; *Pss. Sol.* 17.26; 1QS IV, 20–22. However, many of these passages can also be understood as referring to the removal of the unclean people themselves.

<sup>101</sup> Isa 52:1.

<sup>102</sup> See here J. D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 53–78.

served but to serve" (Mark 10:45), "I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (Matt 8:11–12), "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

All these texts put forward ideas that invert traditional beliefs and notions. As a third group, we have some paradoxical sayings:

"But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first" (Mark 10:31), "those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it" (Matt 10:39; cf. Mark 8:35), "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind" (John 9:39; cf. Mark 4:11–12).

Naturally, the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount or on the Plain can also be seen as based on inversion.<sup>103</sup>

The relatedness of the statements in the third group to those in the second is obvious, no doubt because they all involve playing with opposites. However, their relationship lies deeper. For "paradox is to language as eschaton is to world."<sup>104</sup> The sayings in the second group express in a more informative guise how eschatology means a radical change (or inversion) in the issues and beliefs in question. The sayings of the third group use a paradoxical way of speech to accentuate the radicality of the change.

I do not suggest that every item in the above lists exhibits an authentic saying of Jesus. Similarly, the explicit Christological motif found in some of them is probably secondary. Nonetheless, since the conviction that Jesus turned upside down some basic conceptions of salvation etc. is very firmly rooted in the tradition, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the conviction has its starting point in the genuine teaching of Jesus.<sup>105</sup> In fact, this conclusion presents itself as inevitable if we choose to follow the methodological principle that James Dunn has suggested in his recent major work on Jesus, namely that one should primarily accept the basic historicity of the general and recurrent

<sup>103</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 412–413.

<sup>104</sup> Crossan, *In Parables*, 76.

<sup>105</sup> So also for instance D. L. Bock, *Luke, vol. 2: 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, 3b (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 1232; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 412–417; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, 3: Companions and Competitors*, AB Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 56–64.

motifs of the Jesus tradition.<sup>106</sup> Actually, there are quite a few scholars who hold that such motifs merit a high claim to authenticity.<sup>107</sup> In addition, however, some items from the lists merit claims to authenticity even as individual traditions. Among them is, for example, the oracle about people coming from the east and west to dine with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>108</sup>

As we can see, the inverse strategy of (im)purity appears not to have been a solitary phenomenon in Jesus' message. *It forms part of a general motif of inversion* that imperatively goes through the tradition and is best characterized as eschatological and closely connected to the message about the kingdom of God. This general motif of inversion finds a scriptural counterpart in texts which underline God's sovereignty over human fortunes, as for example in Ezek 17:24: "I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree; I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish."<sup>109</sup> We may note that Jesus' table fellowship with sinners and outcasts discussed above displays many themes that are central here: the imparting of the kingdom message, inversed purity concerns, as well as inversed apprehension of whom the kingdom belongs to, and Jesus' particular role of being the mediator in all of this. We can also hear echoes of the table fellowship in the oracle referred to about the consummation of the kingdom, where wholly unexpected kinds of people feast with Abraham and the patriarchs.

However, the inverse strategy of (im)purity clearly operates on a more particular level than the general motif of inversion. Perhaps the best way to describe this difference is to say that the inverse strategy of (im)purity is one of the things that enable for Jesus the general

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<sup>106</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 332–335.

<sup>107</sup> See, for instance, H. K. McArthur, "A Survey of Recent Gospel Research," *Int* 18 (1964): 39–55, at 48; Perrin, *Rediscovering*, 46; N. J. McEleney, "Authenticating Criteria and Mark 7:1–23," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 431–460 (434); S. E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals*, JSNTSup 191 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 86; Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 34–36; G. Theissen and D. Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria*, trans. M. E. Boring (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 177–179. See now also T. Holmén, "Seven Theses on the So-called Criteria of Authenticity of Historical Jesus Research," *RCT* 33 (2008): 343–376, at 367–371.

<sup>108</sup> See J. Schlosser, *Le règne de Dieu dans les dits de Jésus: Deuxième partie*, EBib, 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1980), 603–624; Meier, *A Marginal Jew* 2: 309–317. G. Theissen and A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 233.

<sup>109</sup> See also for example 1 Sam 2:1–8 (see Luke 1:46–53; cf. also Jas 5:1–3); Pss 75:8; 113:7–9; Ezek 17:24; 21:27; Dan 2:21.

pursuit of inversion. It makes it possible for him to bring his message about the first coming of the last comers (cf. Mark 10:31) to one particular group of last comers, namely to the ritually unclean.<sup>110</sup> In the previous section I pointed out a certain restrictedness of the inverse strategy of (im)purity. It does not apply to moral contamination, nor can it account for the openness Jesus showed towards the sinners in granting them the legitimacy of the people of God. Hence, other such strategies, or plans of action (if one wants to avoid the word “strategy”)<sup>111</sup> need to be identified, if one wishes to explain the general pursuit of inversion witnessed in the lists above of parables, sayings, paradoxes and Beatitudes. Naturally, I cannot attempt a full clarification of that now. Nonetheless, I wish to take a look at one issue which should have functioned in close proximity to the inverse strategy of (im)purity and which could help us see how further viewpoints of inversion were connected to each other: the temple.

## 5.2. *A Cooperative Dimension: The Temple and its Cult*

Issues of the temple and purity were closely connected with each other in early Judaism. The holiness of the temple was the central concern of all Jews at every period of the building.<sup>112</sup> In particular, the temple not only demanded purity but was the source of it.<sup>113</sup> The purity of the

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<sup>110</sup> Of course, temporary states of ritual uncleanness were largely an everyday matter for people. Usually, they did not give rise to any greater tragedies. When I characterize the ritually impure as “last comers,” I obviously mean those states of impurity which would have more or less completely prevented a person from leading a normal life. Examples of such states seen in this article are: people possessed by unclean spirits, lepers, and the woman with the hemorrhage.

<sup>111</sup> E. P. Sanders’ position (“ancients in general and ancient Jews in particular formulated aims and shaped their actions so as to accomplish them”... “on my reading, the evidence points towards Jesus’ having a definite programme” [*Jesus and Judaism*, 20, 21; see further *ibid.*, 18–22]), already preceded by B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), has been fully appropriated by the “Third Quest.” I would call the means implemented to fulfill a program “strategies.” See also B. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program Within Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) and appendix 3: “Jesus’ Program within Early Judaic Pluralism” (181–190).

<sup>112</sup> The Halakhic Letter 4QMMT elaborates on the purity of the offerings; the purity and appropriateness of the priesthood concerns many writers of the intertestamental period (cf., for instance, *T. Mos.* 5–7); and Josephus describes how only pure Israelites could enter the temple (*Apion* 2.193–196).

<sup>113</sup> S. Safrai, “The Temple,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern, vol. 2, CRINT 1.2 (Assen: van Gorcum, 1976), 865–907, at



temple granted the purity of the chosen people who gathered there to serve their God. Notwithstanding the modesty of Zerubbabel's temple referred to in Haggai (Hag 2:9), its altar functioned as a distributor of purity; it was accepted as the "fountain opened for... the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and impurity."<sup>114</sup>

Jesus' relationship to the temple and its cult was, however, as has been noted, "notoriously problematic."<sup>115</sup> Though there is no unanimity among scholars about what exactly the problem was, many would agree that Jesus predicted and awaited the destruction of the temple.<sup>116</sup> Probably then, for whatever reason, Jesus saw the temple as not being up to its tasks. Why else would he have awaited its fall? Granted then that there was a linkage between the temple and purity in Jesus' thinking too (as in early Judaism generally), his conviction that the temple did not work and would disappear could offer at least one reason why he adopted the role of himself—instead of the temple—functioning as the distributor of purity. Some kind of parallel can be found in the Qumran community's way of regarding itself as a collective temple, in its residing in the desert in order to atone for the land and maintain purity within the community.<sup>117</sup> Nor should we forget to consider John the Baptist.<sup>118</sup>

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876–877; Frymer-Kensky, "Pollution, Purification, and Purgation," 406. Many rites of purification included sacrifices as their integral component.

<sup>114</sup> Zech 13:1. Cf. Ezek 47:1.

<sup>115</sup> See Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings*, 34.

<sup>116</sup> Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 290–303. Cf., for example, Mark 13:1–2; 14:57–58; Matt 23:37–39 par. Luke 13:34–35; Luke 19:41–44; Acts 6:13–14. For a more detailed discussion on the theme of Jesus and the temple, see Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 275–329. See also T. Holmén, "The Temple Action of Jesus (Mark 11:15–17) in Historical Context," in *A Bouquet of Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Karl-Gustav Sandelin*, ed. K.-J. Illman, T. Ahlbäck, S.-O. Back, and R. Nurmela, Religionsvetenskapliga skrifter 48 (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Printing House, 2000), 99–127. For contemporary parallels to seeing the temple as doomed, see for instance *1 En.* 89.54, 56; *Sib. Or.* 3.270–276 (dated 163–145 BC by J. J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1: *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, 2 vols. [New York: Doubleday, 1983], 317–472 [355]); *T. Levi* 15.1; *War* 6.250, 301.

<sup>117</sup> See, for instance, 1QS VIII, 4–10; 1QSa II, 2–10; L. H. Schiffman, "Community Without Temple: The Qumran Community's Withdrawal from the Jerusalem Temple," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel/Community without Temple: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. B. Ego, A. Lange, and P. Pilhofer, WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 267–284 (272–274).

<sup>118</sup> As Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 459 states, John "offered his own ritual as an alternative to the Temple ritual." See the references for this view in Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," nn. 48 and 49.

Jesus' view of the temple would thus fittingly accompany the inverse strategy of (im)purity in explaining (at least partly) why there was a need for such a strategy. There is also an intriguing detail which connects Jesus' views of the temple with Haggai's afore-mentioned purity saying (Hag 2:11–13) in a way characteristic of the (im)purity strategy—that is, by way of inversion. In Mark 13:1, one of Jesus' disciples is reported to have been amazed by the large stones and buildings of the temple. As can be gathered, the overwhelming grandeur of the temple could easily bring into mind the words of Hag 2:9: “the latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former.” Immediately after these words in Haggai follows the regulation concerning the contagiousness of impurity.<sup>119</sup> And Haggai continues, “so is it with this people, and with this nation . . . and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean” (Hag 2:14). Nevertheless, there is now a better hope with which Haggai can console himself. Though modest, the temple initiated by Zerubbabel is there and times of blessings will come. How different indeed was the time—and now come words that are unique to Haggai in the Old Testament<sup>120</sup>—“before a stone was placed upon a stone in the Lord's temple” (Hag 2:15). “Stone on another” probably refers “to the ritual manipulation of the ‘former stone’” mentioned specifically in Zech 4:7 and laid (יָדַם) by Zerubbabel,<sup>121</sup> “a stone designed to guarantee ritual continuity with the earlier holy building.”<sup>122</sup> Intriguingly, in Mark 13:2 Jesus is said to have replied to his disciple's awe with an inversion of Haggai's words about the stone: “there will not be left here one stone upon another.”<sup>123</sup> The inversion hardly applies to the verbal level alone. In addition to Jesus' disbelief in the current temple's capacity to do what people (like Haggai in the past) expected, there may also be a disbelief in a temple “made with hands,” i.e., a human temple (cf. Hag 2:14 quoted above;

<sup>119</sup> See the quotation above.

<sup>120</sup> H. W. Wolff, *Dodekapropheton 6: Haggai*, BKAT 14.6 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 44.

<sup>121</sup> Zech 4:9.

<sup>122</sup> Petersen, *Haggai*, 90 (Emphasis added). See also D. L. Petersen, “Zerubbabel and Jerusalem Temple Reconstruction,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 366–372, at 368–369. See further in Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 294–296, 301–303.

<sup>123</sup> For the arguments for regarding this tradition as authentic, see Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 292–296, 301. These words can easily be seen as referring to the passage in Haggai; J. Schlosser: “La parole de Jésus sur la fin du Temple,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 398–414, at 407–408.

see also Mark 14:58).<sup>124</sup> The inversion of the words about the ritual stone could then imply the discontinuity between the coming divine (i.e., not made with hands) temple and the current one. Such a discontinuity would be necessary in order to signal and enforce the remarkable change in the transferability of ritual (im)purity already anticipated in Jesus' work.

I regard the connection between Mark 13:1–2, Hag 2:15, the temple and purity that I am proposing here as an intriguing hypothesis. I have explored the backgrounds of the hypothesis elsewhere.<sup>125</sup> Irrespective of the hypothesis and this interpretation of the stone words, however, Jesus' view of the temple, as briefly set out here, would accord with his view of the inversion of (im)purity. The analogy of the altar of the temple again suggests itself. At the same time, if we grant that this brief exposé is basically accurate and catches the gist of the issue,<sup>126</sup> we may be looking at something approximating the matrix of the general pursuit of inversion, something that furnishes the link which combines the different courses of action (or strategies) that, together with the inverse strategy of (im)purity, need to cooperate to make up the pursuit. For obviously, purity was not the only function of the temple. Jesus' openness towards the sinners in entitling them to the legitimacy of the people of (the kingdom of) God, for example, could be explained by the assumption that he considered himself to have the authority to forgive sins regardless of the temple institutions. In fact, if the present temple was already sentenced to destruction,<sup>127</sup> he would have judged his (present) authority greater than that of this doomed temple. Hence,

<sup>124</sup> Hag 2:14: מְעֵשֶׂה יְדֵיהֶם, "work of their hands." The *terminus technicus* χειροποίητος, "made with hands" (both χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος appear in Mark 14:58), is Septuagintal (see Lev 26:1; 26:30; Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6; Dan 5:4.23; 6:28; Jdt 8:18; Wis 14:8; Bel 1:5) and has no exact Hebrew or Aramaic equivalent. Cf. Hag 2:14 LXX: τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν. However, the formulation of Hag 2:14 can quite well have evoked the same notion. In my view, D. J. S. Clines, "Haggai's Temple: Constructed, Deconstructed and Reconstructed," *SJOT* 7 (1993): 51–77 has shown that these passages from Haggai can also invite a pessimistic interpretation of the temple's state; see especially Clines, "Haggai's Temple," 61–66. Clines does not, however, point out the possibility of seeing Hag 2:14 as a critique of a temple "made with hands."

<sup>125</sup> See my forthcoming study "‘No Stone Upon Another’—No ‘Temple made with Hands’? The Temple Criticism of Mk 13.1–2 in the Light of Haggai 2," in *Remembering Jesus: Festschrift J. D. G. Dunn*, ed. S. McKnight and T. Mournet (T&T Clark).

<sup>126</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the issue see Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 275–328.

<sup>127</sup> As thus is above proposed as Jesus' view.

although the sinners would not go to the temple,<sup>128</sup> forgiveness comes to them.<sup>129</sup> And so, inversely, it would be the sinners (who eat with Jesus) and not the righteous (who sacrifice in the temple) who would come first.

For now, these last suggestions must remain what they are, i.e., possibilities for further research. It seems clear, however, that Jesus' dealings with the unclean presuppose an eschatological vision on his part, a vision which reveals itself as all the more thoroughgoing, the further we follow the tracks left by the dealings.

As I suggested above, the inverse strategy held the potential to bring about a major transformation of Judaism. It proposed an understanding of purity which could render the way of life characterized by coping with impurities, trying to avoid contamination and taking care of the proper purification, as basically irrelevant. The question I present next is whether indeed such a transformation—or something like it—did take place in the emergence of Christianity.

### 6. *Purity in Early Christianity*

Jesus did not oppose the ritual purity paradigm, nor did he aim at devaluing it. Instead, he can be said to have had a positive and appreciative disposition to it. The paradigm was of relevance to him. A gradually increasing devaluation was to be effectuated, however, since the inverse strategy radically diminished the threat posed by impurity. Impurity began to demand decisively less attention. The contagiousness of Jesus' purity added to this effect. Thus a conspicuously relaxed attitude had become possible, and a major transformation was on its way. Jesus did not live to see development along these lines, but would it be possible to think that in one form or another the inverse strategy of (im)purity was indeed realized in early Christianity?

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<sup>128</sup> Out of laxity or due to exclusion; Num 15:27–31 (see Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary," 393); Ps 15 (see A. Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, OTL [London: SCM Press, 1962], 170); 24:3–5; Isa 33:14–16.

<sup>129</sup> In this respect, I think Sanders' (see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174–211) characterization of the people who ate together with Jesus as unrepentant sinners is important. The characterization should be qualified, however, by B. Chilton's suggestion that at the background here lies the pattern of forgiveness leading to reformation (Matt 18:23–35; Luke 7:36–50; 16:1–9; thus, an inversion of the more common order of reformation leading to forgiveness). See Chilton, "Jesus and the Repentance," 8, 10–12.

Naturally, at least the outcome fits here neatly, viz. that ritual (im)purity did not play a role in Christianity which approximated in any way to its importance in contemporary Judaism. In general, the observation holds true that while in early Judaism the purity paradigm maintained a central position, nascent Christianity very early exhibited a surprisingly relaxed attitude to many prominent elements of the paradigm.<sup>130</sup> However, there are also some specific early Christian texts that work well with the inverse strategy of (im)purity and that therefore suggest a link between Jesus and what came after him on this very point. One of the texts is 1 Cor 7:14:<sup>131</sup>

For the unbelieving husband is made holy (ἡγίασται) through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy (ἡγίασται) through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean (ἀκάθαρτα), but as it is, they are holy (ἅγια).

Some other texts point in the same direction:

If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.<sup>132</sup>

To the pure all things are pure.<sup>133</sup>

For it is written: "Cleave unto them that are holy, for they that cleave unto them shall be made holy."<sup>134</sup>

There might therefore be a case for maintaining that at least some people in some strands of early Christianity saw themselves as having become part of Jesus' contagious purity. Hence, once they had become pure through him, they would not be contaminated any more, at least not through the same channels as before, but could even themselves become communicators of purity.

More passages can be evoked when we pay attention to the fact that there is a gap between the view that Jesus thought he could spread purity and the idea that every Christian could do the same or at least something akin to that. A tradition which at least secondarily could

<sup>130</sup> The struggles seem mainly to have emerged around the food laws and eating. See Acts 10, 15; Rom 14:13–23; 1 Cor 8:7–13; Gal 2:11–14.

<sup>131</sup> See here Berger, "Pharisäer," 240–245. Berger's thesis rests mainly on the assessment of the motif of the "offensive cleanness/holiness" (see n. 62 above) in early Christianity. He considers Jesus under the last of his five points; see Berger, "Pharisäer," 246.

<sup>132</sup> Rom 11:16.

<sup>133</sup> Tit 1:15. Cf. Luke 11:41.

<sup>134</sup> *1 Clem.* 46.2.

have been used precisely to bridge that gap is the sending out of the “twelve.” In Mark 6:7, Jesus grants “the twelve” an “authority over the unclean spirits.” In effect this means that they can proclaim, cast out demons, and cure the ailing by anointing them with oil.<sup>135</sup> Matthew puts somewhat more stress on purity, and has Jesus command them: “Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons.”<sup>136</sup> It is difficult to see either version as a statement originally put forward to justify a view that Christians have been endowed with Jesus’ power to make the unclean clean. Still, secondarily the tradition may have been of some considerable help in just that.

Another way by which the early Christians could have bridged the gap between Jesus’ contagious purity and theirs derives from the logic of contemporary purity thinking itself. I have already mentioned Luke 7 and the case where Jesus is said to touch the bier on which the dead young man lies.<sup>137</sup> What makes this move astonishing is the fact that unlike other sources of impurity,<sup>138</sup> a human corpse could generate new sources of impurity. For this reason it was called by the rabbis “father of fathers of uncleanness.” Therefore, although he touched only the bier, Jesus would not have been safe: since the bier had become a source of impurity, he would have acquired corpse impurity even by this act. All with elementary knowledge of the Jewish purity regulations would have understood this when seeing (if the story calls upon a historical reminiscence) or when reading or hearing what happened.

By this remark I wish to highlight a certain aspect of the contemporary purity logic. With this in mind, we turn again to the story about the woman with a hemorrhage in Mark 5:25–34. What is important now is the observation that purity is communicated to the woman from Jesus’ cloak. This would suggest that Jesus’ contagious purity could create new sources of purity, thereby emulating the logic of corpse impurity! It may well be that the story about the woman does not particularly emphasize its inherent purity aspects. Still, for any Jew telling or hearing the story, the purity implications would have been

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<sup>135</sup> Mark 6:12–13.

<sup>136</sup> Matt 10:8. The demons are called “unclean spirits” in Matthew as well (10:1). Luke (9:1–6) completely ignores the language of purity here.

<sup>137</sup> Luke 7:14.

<sup>138</sup> Besides dead human bodies, the main sources of impurity were leprosy, human discharges, and dead animal bodies. See Editorial staff, “Purity and Impurity, Ritual,” *EncJud* 13 (1978): 1405–1414, at 1405.

inescapable.<sup>139</sup> Furthermore, what the story does emphasize is the fact that the woman touches only Jesus' cloak. In Mark this is stated first by the narrator, then by the woman herself, and lastly by Jesus.<sup>140</sup> Matthew and Luke reduce the times the cloak is mentioned but make the point conspicuous by speaking about the "fringe" (κράσπεδον) of the cloak.<sup>141</sup> Those with some knowledge of the problematic communication of impurity, as in the case of corpse impurity, would have heard this as follows: look, his cloak had turned into a source of purity.

Allowing some applied thinking, this kind of analogy could maybe have offered basis for reasoning that those cleansed by Jesus had themselves become sources of purity. This means: they would not have got exactly the same capability as Jesus had, but they would still be understood as having obtained a permanent state of purity.<sup>142</sup> Figuratively speaking, they were now to work as Jesus' κράσπεδον. Hence, to the pure all things are pure.<sup>143</sup> This would explain the rather rapid fading away of a way of life considerably centered around the warding off of impurity without the need to postulate a categorical turning against the Jewish purity paradigm on the part of the early Christians. Therefore, my statement regarding Jesus' stance to (im)purity could well be seen to apply to some early Christians as well: Ritual (im)purity was a real and relevant issue to them, but it was not a danger, since, for them too, its sting, i.e., its contagiousness had fallen away. However, as a natural course of events it rather soon became clear that the whole ritual purity paradigm would fade away.

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<sup>139</sup> Slightly modifying Dunn's (see Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 461) testimony about the four stories in Mark 5:1–20; 5:21–24.35–43; 5:25–34; and Luke 7:11–17.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Mark 5:27.28.30.

<sup>141</sup> Matt 9:20 (9:21 only "cloak"); Luke 8:44. One would not sit or lie on the "fringe" (or "tassel"). See the "fringe" mentioned in Mark 6:56 par. Matt 14:36, which has similar effects.

<sup>142</sup> As I remarked in n. 63 above, Jesus had probably not regarded anyone else as possessing capabilities similar to his. Nor had he seen the inversion of the transferability of (im)purity as a general phenomenon taking place through and through at his time.

<sup>143</sup> Tit 1:15. The locus to become part of this purity for those unable to touch Jesus physically would obviously be baptism. Cf. Rom 6, esp. v. 19.

### 7. *Summary and Concluding Words*

Jesus' dealings with the ritually unclean attest to a mode of behavior which can best be explained by an assumption of an eschatological vision on his part. This vision proposed that, with regard to Jesus, a radical change in the ways purity and impurity behave had taken place. It proposed a view of an inversion of the transferability of (im)purity, which rendered Jesus capable of cleaning the unclean without resorting to ordinary means of purification: the impurities of the unclean do not transfer to Jesus; instead, Jesus' purity transfers to the unclean. From now on, through him, this eschatological purity would start ruling over impurity. So even the ritually unclean would become part of God's kingdom.

Jesus' eschatological vision, the inverse strategy of (im)purity, did not lead him to oppose the ritual purity paradigm. He did not aim at devaluing it either. On the contrary, Jesus can be said to have had a positive and appreciative disposition to ritual purity. A gradually increasing devaluation was effectuated, however, since the inverse strategy radically diminished the threat posed by impurity. Once its contagiousness was ruled out, it demanded decisively less attention. From the other side, the contagiousness of Jesus' purity worked in the same direction. Thus a conspicuously relaxed attitude had become possible, and a major transformation was on its way. For outside observers all this would easily have seemed to be indifference and/or laxity. Indeed, in some forms of early Christianity where the inverse strategy of ritual (im)purity seems to have continued to be effective and to develop, it probably did contribute to straightforward laxity and eventually to the almost complete disappearance of the idea of ritual purity from Christian thought.

The inverse strategy of (im)purity—the reference here is again to Jesus—did not apply to moral defilement, for this was not conceived as contact-contagious. Hereby we can explain the impression given by the Jesus traditions pertaining to purity, that he stressed the moral dimensions of the law at the cost of downplaying the ritual ones. In reality, both were important for him, but different strategies were required to handle them. Similarly, in other situations where the inverse strategy of (im)purity could be found operative, viz. Jesus' table fellowship with sinners and outcasts, it showed its restrictedness as well. In this respect it is informative that the overall teaching of Jesus reveals that the inverse strategy of ritual (im)purity forms part of



a general motif of inversion inherent to Jesus' kingdom message: the first will come last and the last will come first. The scope of the present article did not permit a thorough investigation of what other strategies (or plans of action) contributed to the general inversion pursuit. The affirmations about the temple and the forgiveness of sins remain suggestions at present. Still, these issues can quite naturally be linked with the ritual (im)purity strategy. Jesus' view of the temple would appear to offer a nexus for several viewpoints of inversion, and an authority to revert sins would be a convenient complement to the power to revert ritual impurity which he assumed he possessed.

Hence, in my view, taking Jesus' way with the ritually unclean as the point of departure has indeed opened a new gateway to understanding Jesus' purity thinking and even more. It has also enabled us to see what issues are involved, how to marshal them and exactly how they are relevant to the main question. Moreover, the point of departure and the ensuing understanding of the theme of Jesus and purity have provided Jesus' views with a link to the Judaism of his time that is both simple and very meaningful. Investigations should now be broadened to include and take a cue from the insights offered by the inverse strategy of (im)purity.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> The germ of the ideas this essay essentially builds on were presented in a paper I read in Spring 1998 at the shared New Testament seminar of Åbo Akademi University (Finland), Helsinki University (Finland) and Uppsala University (Sweden), hosted by the exegetical department of Åbo Akademi University in Turku. The seminar was attended by many students, professors and colleagues, among them also my good friend Thomas Kazen. I received vigorous criticism from Anders Gerdmar, also a good friend of mine.

## JESUS AND THE LAW

WILLIAM LOADER

A detailed discussion of the question of the historical Jesus and the Law might properly begin with a consideration of such important matters as sources, criteria of authenticity, and review of previous research. It should also include some discussion of the quest for the historical Law, which has become equally problematic. Within the brief compass of this paper it is possible to do little more than flag these issues and assume an appreciation of their significance before proceeding to the discussion of the material.

Whether to rebut Jewish criticism or to confront Christian laxity, or, more likely, both, Matthew has Jesus assert: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to abolish but to fulfil” (5:17). With this form of words Matthew introduces a saying in 5:18 which occurs in variant form also in Luke 16:17. 5:19 shows that Matthew intends by 5:18 total observance of the Law and that to think otherwise makes one least in the kingdom of God or perhaps even ineligible to belong. The focus on complete adherence finds confirmation also in 5:20 and in the antitheses which give a radical interpretation of the demands of Torah.

While there have been attempts to interpret 5:18 as limiting such strictness to a past era from the perspective of Matthew, the most natural reading is to see in the saying an affirmation that every bit of Torah retains its validity. This is most likely to be the point of the saying also in Luke 16:17. Some take it as an observation that setting aside Torah, which must now happen since Christ has come, is extremely difficult—but necessary. This usually depends on a reading of Luke 16:16 along the lines that the Law and Prophets were valid up until John, but are no longer valid.<sup>1</sup> It is much more likely that 16:16–17 are meant to convey the message that as the Law and the Prophets faced resistance, all the more so does the message of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> 16:17 reaffirms that

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<sup>1</sup> So most recently Ingo Broer, “Jesus und die Tora,” in *Jesus von Nazareth—Spuren und Konturen*, ed. L. Schenke et al. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004), 216–254 at 228, but denying it to the historical Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> See William Loader, *Jesus’ Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* WUNT 2.97 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 337–338.

the Law remains part of God's order. 16:18 then illustrates the strictness by drawing attention to the prohibition of divorce and remarriage. Luke 16:16–18 function similarly to Matthew 5:17–48. Both affirm the Law in the context of the message of Jesus and both illustrate the point by citing an example of radical strictness.

The saying in Matt 5:18 and Luke 16:17 belongs within material attributed to Q. The Q material shows a coherence with its stance.<sup>3</sup> This is strikingly illustrated in Matt 23:23//Luke 11:52 which affirms a hierarchy of values among the requirements of the Law, but insists nevertheless on observance of its detail, even to the extent of listing items which go beyond the written Law. This furnishes evidence that at least among communities using Q, the view prevailed that observance of Torah was to be continued. They also saw some requirements as more important than others and these, by and large, related to ethical behaviour. Matthew and Luke inherit this approach. Whether it represented a stance of Jesus himself, can be addressed only after considering the rest of the evidence, including other traditions preserved in Matthew and Luke and not least Mark.

In 1:22 Mark contrasts Jesus' authority with that of the scribes, which finds its echo in the crowd's acclamation in 1:27 that here is "new teaching with authority." 1:40–45 depicts Jesus as forcefully insisting that a leper observe the requirements of the Law. This then creates a foil for the conflicts which follow, where by implication allegations that Jesus abandons Torah are unjust and ultimately malicious.<sup>4</sup> In none does Jesus set out to address an issue of Torah. The incidental nature of Jesus' engagement with Torah is integral to the anecdotes and is doubtless pre-Markan.

In Mark 2:1–12 the issue is Jesus' authority to declare forgiveness of sins. The allegation of blasphemy has a superficial link with the Jewish trial, which may be a Markan addition. The passive indicates that Jesus declares God's forgiveness, not his own. The issue is more likely to have been similar to the irritation which John's activity caused. Mark begins his good news with the report that John baptised for the forgiveness of sins. Reflecting the kind of integration between rite of purification and inner attitude characteristic of Qumran, but also of the prophets, John's

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<sup>3</sup> Loader, *Attitude*, 390–431.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Thomas Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* ConB 38 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002), who denies it a role in Mark's strategy (101).

baptism offered forgiveness of sins, apparently without exception<sup>5</sup> and there and then.<sup>6</sup> He might have been even more objectionable because he used a rite, but in neither case is Law contravened, nor cult rejected, any more than this is case when other Jews made similar declarations of God's forgiveness.<sup>7</sup> John's is programmatic and universal and raises important issues to which we shall return in discussing Jesus' action in the temple, which according to Mark elicited from Jesus a response which deliberately connected his and John's authority (11:27–33). In the present context, Jesus acts in relation to an individual.

According to Mark 2:10 the issue of Jesus' declaration is one of authorisation. According to the riddle of 2:9, the issue is ultimately about caring for people as the criterion for behaviour, including observance of the Law. Mark may be responsible for asserting the Son of Man's authority. It fits the contrast about authority in 1:22 and the emphasis on the Son of Man's lordship in 2:28, which in cross reference to 2:10 declares the Son of Man as lord *also* of the Sabbath.

2:13–17 reports a dispute about Jesus' eating with toll collectors and sinners. The issue surfaces elsewhere. Both Matthew and Luke (and thus Q) report that Jesus made reference to such activity and defended it (Matt 11:17–19; Luke 7:31–35). Luke suggests that Jesus' parables about the lost respond to such accusations (15:2) and adds an instance of such conflict in the story of Zacchaeus (19:1–10). Here in Mark Jesus responds with a short twofold quip: "Those who are well do

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<sup>5</sup> A similar universal forgiveness lies behind the saying attributed to Jesus about blasphemy (Mark 3:28–29). Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), notes this would surprise (159).

<sup>6</sup> So R. L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study*. JSNTS 62 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 193; cf. Cf. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 54–55: a rite promising future forgiveness.

<sup>7</sup> Against the notion that forgiveness was seen as exclusively the right of the temple, see Friedrich Avemarie, "Ist die Johannestaufe ein Ausdruck von Tempelkritik? Skizze eines methodischen Problems," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. B. Ego, I. Lange, and P. Pilhofer; (ET: *Community without Temple*), WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 395–410, who points to Num 30:6; Prayer of Azariah/Dan 3:38–40 LXX/q; Sirach 31:21–22; 28:2; 32:6–13; 38:9–11 and a wide range of other examples (399–401). John's innovation may reflect criticism of cult practices. So James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 357–361, Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1997), 195–196, but hardly an attempt to replace it. Cf. Webb, *John the Baptizer*, 197; N. Thomas Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 161.

not need a doctor, but those who are sick" (2:17). It again suggests, as *Did.* 2.9, that people's needs assume the highest priority in determining appropriate behaviour. The verse continues with something close to the Christological focus of 2:10. Jesus declares why he has come.

The critics probably saw Jesus as flouting the wisdom of keeping away from bad company (Ps 1). The "sinners" may not have been downright wicked, but they were at least abused as transgressors of the Law by others. But Jesus' action flouts no law of Torah, even if, as Mark assumes, he too probably views them as sinners, though not in the sectarian sense.<sup>8</sup> Nor was Jesus flouting purity or food laws. Nothing suggests the eating of unclean food (such as we might fear in a Gentile context). Perhaps the concern was eating food not properly tithed,<sup>9</sup> but this is not said. The sectarian perspective probably implied that those people were in some sense unclean or lax in observing rites of purification. Nothing suggests that Jesus condoned sins of either kind, but people seeking high standards of purity would normally be expected to avoid any context which might compromise them by exposure. Jesus' presence appears motivated by other concerns, also defensible on the basis of Torah, which overrode concerns about such dangers, legitimate or otherwise. A similar overriding of concern about potential contamination lies behind Jesus' instruction in Luke 10:8 that itinerants on mission eat what their hosts offer them without scruple. In *Gos. Thom.* 14 this is transferred to Gentile contexts and made thus to apply to unclean foods, a blatant conflict with Torah.

The central story, 2:18–19, is not about an issue of Law, but about consistency between Jesus and John. Whether Jesus fasted or not was an issue for those for whom fasting was highly regarded. People who objected to bad company might also be engaged in the practice of fasting. Mark may be responsible for introducing the Pharisees into what might have once been a dispute between the followers of Jesus and John. A similar contrast between John and Jesus underlies the Q saying (Matt 11:16–19; Luke 7:31–35).

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<sup>8</sup> Tom Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), notes that Jesus' positive stance to people seen as covenant breakers subverts values espoused by those who see covenant faithfulness as protecting boundaries (204–205, 220); Bryan, *Jesus*, similarly noting the possible implication that their sins are no longer seen as defiling the sanctuary and land (159–160). Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 529; "Jesus and purity: an ongoing debate," *NTS* 48 (2002): 449–467, at 465, draws attention to the abusive use of "sinners", but it would be wrong to conclude that Jesus' offence is that he associates only with the marginalised innocent.

<sup>9</sup> On such concerns see Holmén, *Jesus*, 110.

Mark's fivefold construction centres on sayings in 2:20–21 about new and old wine, new and old garments. They may also at one stage have addressed the contrast between Jesus and John, but might have circulated independently. Then they would have been capable of a variety of interpretations contrasting Jesus and someone or something else, including the Law, but without an original context we are left to speculation. They most likely referred to a contrast between Jesus and other teachers (as they now do in Mark), rather than to one between Jesus and the Law, whether directly or in the form of a contrast between the old and new covenants.

Mark's cluster of stories concludes with two controversies about the Sabbath. The first concludes with the assertion that the Son of Man is lord also of the Sabbath (2:28), an allusion to his authority to forgive sins in 2:10. Rather than showing that he can do what he likes on the Sabbath, even disregard it altogether, the anecdote assumes the need to argue the case for suspending Sabbath law, by citing David's overriding the law about the shewbread (2:25–26). One law overrules another.<sup>10</sup> 2:27 might then be a fitting conclusion to this argument. It declares that Sabbath is made for people, not the reverse, and so reflects similar emphases in the quips made in 2:9 and 2:17a. Sabbath is not disparaged. It is God's gift.<sup>11</sup> The lordship of the Son of Man is therefore not to reject the Sabbath, but to interpret it.

The alleged breach is not about making a path (an idiomatic expression), but about plucking and eating heads of grain. Hearers of Mark and earlier forms of the story would have recognised this as trivial. It was not trivial to those who saw such activity as a breach of Torah. Jesus rejects their stance. Nothing the disciples were doing need be seen as contravening Torah and nothing Jesus said in response should be seen as setting Torah aside. The earliest form of the anecdote probably focused not on response to human need (which Matthew asserts on the basis of the David episode to strengthen the argument along with the halakhic argument about priests),<sup>12</sup> but simply reflected Jesus' rejection of the expansionist tendency of some to apply such law to minor and trivial

<sup>10</sup> Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*, 101; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 568; Herbert Basser, "The Gospels and Rabbinic Halakah," in *The Missing Jesus: Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament*, ed. Bruce Chilton, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 77–99, at 90.

<sup>12</sup> *Kazen, Jesus*, 57–58 using halakhah not just haggadah. Like Luke he omits 2:27.

casual actions such as plucking and nibbling a few heads of grain,<sup>13</sup> and has a notable parallel in early Jewish tradition (*m. Yoma* 8:6).

The conclusions are similar for 3:1–6. We recognise Mark's careful composition in 3:6 which plays ironically on the contrast of the preceding saying about killing and making alive and points forward to the plots which bring Jesus to his death. Again we may well have a twofold response of Jesus ("Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm") perhaps expanded by Mark to achieve his irony ("to save life or to kill"), perhaps alluding to the controversial precedent in 1 Macc 2:27–42 (cf. *Jub.* 2.17–33).<sup>14</sup> Whether one should heal on the Sabbath is at least open to debate and should not be taken as evidence that Jesus set aside Sabbath law.<sup>15</sup> One might observe a certain carelessness in Jesus' not waiting till the next day,<sup>16</sup> but Jesus is shown as not deeming that level of observance to be necessary.<sup>17</sup>

Elsewhere in Mark, observance appears to be assumed. Thus crowds bring their sick to Jesus after sunset after the Sabbath in 1:32–34. Nothing in Jesus' activities on the preceding day, the Sabbath, appears to have evoked controversy according to Mark. The passion narrative also assumes regard for the Sabbath.<sup>18</sup>

Both Matthew and Luke repeat Mark's Sabbath controversy stories, Matthew in a context which portrays Jesus as expositor of Torah without imposing heavy burdens (12:1–14, cf. 11:28–30) and Luke with little change (6:1–11). In addition, both know a Q saying which argues that healing on the Sabbath should be justified on the same basis as rescuing

<sup>13</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*: "To thus focus too much attention on 'the fence round the Torah' was itself to endanger what the fence was intended to protect" (569). Cf. Holmén, *Jesus*, who notes "Jesus' *indifferent attitude* towards the accusation" as alarming (102). Better: low level of priority. Indifference suggests no concern. The Sabbath remains God's.

<sup>14</sup> So Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 6; Broer, "Jesus und die Tora," 224; Craig A. Evans, "The Misplaced Jesus: Interpreting Jesus in a Judaic Context," in *The Missing Jesus: Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament*, ed. Bruce Chilton, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 11–39, 32–33; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 329.

<sup>15</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 329; Basser, "The Gospels and Rabbinic Halakah," 88.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the suggested ameliorations by Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*—as an itinerant, Jesus may be moving on the next day (330)—and E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1990) that the healing is only by word (21). Cf. also Luke 6:6 which makes it the right hand, important for earning a living—so Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*, argues: "The story either attests to something approximating Jesus' opposition to the Sabbath commandment, or then it is inauthentic" (103). This is a false antithesis. It is rather a matter of one element of Torah overriding another.

<sup>18</sup> Paula Fredrikson, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 106.

an animal from a ditch. Matthew has added it to his version of Jesus' healing the man with the withered hand (12:11–12). Luke has it within the second of two further accounts of healing on the Sabbath (13:10–16 and 14:1–6). It also concerns someone who might easily have been asked to wait until the following day, thus somewhat undermining the saying. The first story has the chief of the synagogue raise this very point. The counter argument, that one would water animals on the Sabbath, fits the context better. These are all, however, not attempts to set aside Sabbath law, but to interpret it.<sup>19</sup>

The situation is different in John where Mark's assertion that the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath (2:28) would be read as justifying his setting Sabbath law aside (so 5:16–20). This reflects John's distinctive theology according to which the God-given Law is now no longer in force, because the true Light and Life and Truth which it merely reflected at the level of the flesh, and to which it pointed forward, has come.<sup>20</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 27 uses Sabbath (and fasting) metaphorically, but may reflect older tradition affirming both literally.<sup>21</sup>

Controversy stories occur elsewhere in Mark and reflect a similar structure to those in 2:1–3:6, including a bi-partite punch line response by Jesus, which embodies an argument expressed in an image or riddle, usually appearing in association with a Christological claim to authority and sometimes with argument from scripture. One deserving special attention is 7:1–23. Its punch line is 7:15, but this is now set in a fairly elaborate structure. It begins by reporting objections to the disciples' failure to wash their hands before food (7:1–5). Two sets of responses follow, one alleging the hypocrisy of the questioners (6–8) and another illustrating it in relation to abuse of the law of corban (9–13; addressed also in *m. Ned.* 9.1), before Jesus responds to the substantial allegation (15). 17–23 then depict a change of scene in which Jesus explains his response privately to his disciples. It includes Mark's explanation about Jesus' authoritative declaration that all foods are clean (7:19). For Mark, what Jesus declares in 7:15 is not a new order to replace what until then

<sup>19</sup> So Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Loader, *Attitude*, 432–491.

<sup>21</sup> So Richard J. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982) 251–298, 265. See also Loader, *Attitude*, 495. Reinhard Nordsieck, *Das Thomas-Evangelium: Einleitung—Zur Frage des historischen Jesus—Kommentierung aller 114 Logien* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), argues coherence with Jesus' transformed values of the kingdom (123–126).



was valid, but the invalidity of such assumptions in an absolute sense. It represents a serious contradiction of Torah.

Confronted with this emphasis, Matthew and Luke, who share the Q tradition of the Law's infallibility, but who affirm Mark's Christology, make changes.<sup>22</sup> Luke omits the controversy with its supporting context in Mark altogether, but shows he is not unaware of the issue. Matthew alters the wider context, omits Mark's gloss and retains the saying (in a slightly different form)<sup>23</sup> and its explanation, but appears to have understood it in a relative sense.<sup>24</sup> Arguably, Mark (and perhaps Mark's tradition) gave the saying an absolute meaning which it did not originally have. If the saying derives from Jesus, it would then belong within a rhetorical structure similar to what we find in Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," which was commonly understood not as a rejection of sacrifice, but as a strong assertion that prefers mercy to sacrifice.<sup>25</sup>

The Markan setting is plausible. Jesus responds to the issue of ritual hand washing, which may well have been more widely practiced than previously thought given the proliferation of *miqwa'oth* and stone vessels which has emerged in recent years.<sup>26</sup> The response addresses not only hand washing and halakah<sup>27</sup> and not primarily foods, but purity laws pertaining to what renders a person unclean.<sup>28</sup> Mark then relates it to food. Luke's reference to Jesus' not immersing before eating (11:38) reflects a similar context.<sup>29</sup>

As many have observed,<sup>30</sup> it is difficult to understand how there could have arisen disputes over clean and unclean food in earliest Christianity if Jesus had clearly negated that distinction, as Mark sug-

<sup>22</sup> See Loader, *Attitude*, 210–220, 316–324.

<sup>23</sup> So Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 574–576; Kazen, *Jesus*, considers it reflects an earlier form (86).

<sup>24</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 576.

<sup>25</sup> So most recently Holmén, *Jesus*, 237–246; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 576. Kazen, *Jesus*, 86; "seemingly careless attitude" (88). Bryan, *Jesus*, 167; William Loader, "Mark 7:1–23 and the historical Jesus," *Colloquium* 30 (1998): 123–151. Cf. Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 381–387; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 327, treating it as an absolute but without implying change of practice.

<sup>26</sup> So Kazen, *Jesus*, 60–85; Bryan, *Jesus*, 140. See also the reviews of the earlier Neuser/Sanders debates in Kazen, *Jesus*, 68–72 and Bryan, *Jesus*, 130–140.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Kazen, *Jesus*, 65.

<sup>28</sup> Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 463; Bryan, *Jesus*: "for Jesus the significance of bodily impurity was drastically attenuated" (168), though not abandoned, as Jesus' directive to the leper shows (167).

<sup>29</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, 229–230.

<sup>30</sup> Most recently again Dunn, "Jesus and Purity," 263.

gests.<sup>31</sup> It is also difficult to understand why in such disputes people did not appeal to this saying or its substance. Luke's tradition in Acts 10:9–16 of Peter's vision also attacks the distinction among foods on substantial grounds—all these animals have been created by God and cannot, therefore, be unclean, though Luke applies it symbolically to people not food.<sup>32</sup> The existence of this tradition and its attribution to a post-Easter context helps confirm that, at least in the mind of the bearers of that tradition, Peter had made no connection between such a saying and food and knew no such teaching from Jesus.

If the saying was not meant originally in an absolute sense, it is not a large step from declaring laws of purity in relation to food and other matters to be relatively less important in relation to ethical goodness, to declaring them dispensable.<sup>33</sup> One might then transfer the same approach to forbidden foods, an intermediate step being to declare them unimportant and a further step to declare them all clean, which appears also to have been Paul's stance reflected in Romans 14:14, and finally to declare that such laws make no sense at all, as Mark's context now assumes.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that this trajectory stood beside others which were much more conservative.

Mark's denial of the relevance of distinctions between clean and unclean challenges fundamental principles of the Law, especially in relation to holiness and cult. When Mark contrasts the temple made with hands with the temple not made with hands (14:58) and when he has the scribe contrast love of God and neighbour with offering sacrifices (12:28–34), it is likely that Mark saw the temple's sacrificial activity as having no validity.<sup>35</sup> Yet Mark does not appear to have rejected the temple itself. Its role was to be a place of prayer for all peoples. Mark 11–13 links the action of Jesus in the temple with the destruction of the temple, seen ultimately as an action of God. The truth about the false accusation at the Jewish trial and among the mockers at the cross, alleging that Jesus said that he would destroy the temple, lies in the fact

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<sup>31</sup> The same applies to the parallels to Luke 10:9 and Mark 7:15 in *Gos. Thom.* 14, where Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, even argues that a reference to Gentile mission might be seen to fit the historical Jesus and that they illustrate that the values of the kingdom must override the cultic requirements where there is conflict (74–80).

<sup>32</sup> Loader, *Attitude*, 368–379; Peter J. Tomson, "Jewish purity laws as viewed by the Church fathers and by the early followers of Jesus," in *Purity and holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus*, ed. M. J. H. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 73–91, at 89.

<sup>33</sup> Bryan, *Jesus*, 168.

<sup>34</sup> On Mark reflecting the Romans tradition see Holmén, *Jesus*, 248.

<sup>35</sup> See Loader, *Attitude*, 95–122.

that he said that God would do so. It finds its symbolic confirmation in the tearing of the curtain (15:29, 38). The grounds for the destruction of the temple lie with the alleged depravity of its leadership. Its systems built on sacrifice and the distinctions between clean and unclean made no sense to Mark. It had relevance only as a place of prayer. His new temple, founded on Christ the cornerstone (12:9–11), consists of the praying community (11:24–25), the new leadership of the vineyard, the Christian community (12:9).

As with Mark 7, neither Matthew nor Luke follows Mark's radical approach to the temple. Matthew sees the temple's destruction as God's judgement on its leadership, but nowhere suggests its structure and activity was invalid. 5:23–24 assumes offering as normal and acceptable.<sup>36</sup> Luke decries the tragedy to befall the temple and the people, again with no disparagement. Jesus teaches in the temple to the end and the early church continues to participate in the temple. John similarly has no words of disparagement for the "Father's house" (2:16), but deems it obsolete now that the hour has come for worship in the Spirit and Christ has been raised as the new temple (2:19–21; 4:21–24). In some ways Mark and John reach a similar conclusion, but for Mark it implies disparagement and irrelevance of the old, for John it implies intentional fulfilment and replacement of what had divine validity until Christ came.

Any rejection of the temple or of its biblically sanctioned practices was a rejection of large parts of Torah. Attempts to reconstruct Jesus' concerns about the temple range from suggesting he was offended by lax approaches to temple purity to seeing his action as a veiled statement that he was, himself, to be the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. We cannot review these in detail here. There is sufficient ground for claiming that Jesus was critical of the behaviour and attitude of temple authorities.<sup>37</sup> We see this reflected in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in Mark's traditions about exploitation of widows (12:38–44), in sayings about the rejection of God's emissaries in the past and the present (Matt 23:34–36; Luke 11:49–51) and in the warning that God would abandon the house (Matt 23:37–39; Luke 13:34–35). He was not alone in such criticism. Nor was he without precedent in predicting that God's judgement would fall on the temple.<sup>38</sup> While predictions of destruction imply something more

<sup>36</sup> The *didrachma* legend of 17:24–27 assumes respect for the temple and debate about the legitimacy of the tax (see Loader, *Attitude*, 223).

<sup>37</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*, 288, 291.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 321–323.

than reform or failed reform, the grounds for destruction may well be reflected symbolically also in the activities which Jesus disrupted.<sup>39</sup> He appears also to have assumed the eschatological hope that God would replace the old temple with a new one. But none of this amounts to an attack on the temple as an institution mandated in the Law,<sup>40</sup> and certainly not to a literal take-over bid.<sup>41</sup>

This is also true of John's baptism. Whether or not Jesus also baptised or baptised for a period,<sup>42</sup> there is no indication that he saw John's (or his) rite as an exclusive alternative to temple rites. Jesus does not appear to deem the temple to be so polluted as to be avoided at all costs, as did some (cf. Matt 5:23–24 and pilgrimages). Yet he declares it sufficiently corrupted as to warrant a prediction of divine judgement.

Gaps in our knowledge at this point tempt speculation. Did Jesus propound that individuals offer their own sacrifices, but in face of resistance institute his own sacrificial meal which prompted Judas' betrayal?<sup>43</sup> Did Jesus hope for repentance from the authorities, but

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<sup>39</sup> See Loader, *Attitude*, 105–116; also Hans Dieter Betz, "Jesus and the Purity of the Temple (Mark 11:15–18): A Comparative Approach," *JBL* 116 (1997) 455–472; Craig A. Evans, "The new quest for Jesus and the new research on the Dead Sea scrolls," in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. Michael Labahn and Andreas Schmidt, JSNTS 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001) 163–183, at 175.

<sup>40</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*, sees Jesus as concerned with the way the sacrificial cult functioned to give a false sense of security on the basis of which people went out to sin (296–329). Though he notes Jesus' probable observance of temple purity laws, he observes that Jesus falls outside his category of Jews who saw the temple and its cult as covenant path markers in the quest for right observance (329). Cf. E. P. Sanders, who sees the act as disrupting the system and symbolising impending judgement, but goes too far when he writes: "He challenged the adequacy of the Mosaic dispensation to provide the complete frame of reference for relations between God and human. God, in his view, would extend his mercy to include outsiders." E. P. Sanders, "Jesus from the Jewish Point of View," in *Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 618–677, at 651–652, 658. This is true in the sense that Jesus looked to a renewed covenant, but not if it implies rejection of Torah.

<sup>41</sup> Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel: die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung*, WUNT 2.119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), shows that the idea that Jesus tried to clear the entire 450 x 300 meter court, despite its defenders, is unrealistic (301–306). Holmén, *Jesus*, notes that Mark's conative imperfect already suggests a symbolic act (313) and his expelling the buyers, something more than cleansing (317).

<sup>42</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, suggests: "Jesus may well have abandoned a practice that would have most associated him with the Baptist" (460); cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:120–129, who suggests Jesus did baptize.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 115–123; also "Jesus within Judaism," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*. Part 2: *Historical Syntheses*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 262–284, at 280–281, similarly Evans, "Jesus Misplaced," 35.

failing that, did he reject the sacrificial system, replacing it by himself?<sup>44</sup> These are variants of the claim that Jesus effectively declared himself to be the replacement for the sacrificial system,<sup>45</sup> usually framed in a typically Christian way with the focus on atonement for sins and with disregard for most of the other functions which the temple and its sacrificial system fulfilled, and informed largely by Paul's letters read in the light of Hebrews.

In all three synoptic gospels, the key passage is the account of the last meal, where such views take Jesus' words to indicate that he sees his death as an act of vicarious atonement. Matthew and Luke are here are at one with Mark. Paul, who preserves the same tradition, leaves us in no doubt that for him the event of Jesus' death and resurrection was pivotal and implied that all other sacrifices and rituals for dealing with sin were thereby rendered obsolete. In a different way John also assumes a new basis for atonement which supersedes the old.

Could it be that at the end of his life Jesus, his hopes for change dashed, resolved to present himself as an alternative, indeed, as the new covenant replacement of the old, including the temple?<sup>46</sup> Does the prominence of royal messianic motifs in the passion narrative, but their relative absence elsewhere in the Jesus tradition reflected in the synoptic gospels, indicate a similar change of tack by Jesus late in his ministry?<sup>47</sup> It would make good sense of the major role that this interpretation of Christ's death plays in Paul and in many of the traditions upon which he draws. Against this, the absence of this element in the accounts of early preaching in Acts, in the early forms of the passion narrative (beyond the last meal), and in the Q material may suggest that the interpretation arose in post-Easter reflection on the death of Jesus and only in some circles.<sup>48</sup> Evidence suggests that the first Christians

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<sup>44</sup> Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel*, 439, 444–445. See also idem, "Jesus' symbolic act in the temple (Mark 11:15–17): the replacement of the sacrificial cult by his atoning death," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel: Zur Substituierung und Transformation des Jerusalemer Tempels und seines Kults im Alten Testament, antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. B. Ego, I. Lange, and P. Pilhofer (ET: *Community without Temple*); WUNT 118 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 461–475, where he speaks of Jesus' view of his own death as atoning as a "second option" (472).

<sup>45</sup> Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 380–383, claim Jesus offered his meal as an interim measure, which then became permanent.

<sup>46</sup> So Ådna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel*, who interprets 10:45 as ransom and notes the same word is used of the temple tax (419–421 and 424–426), thus representing the sacrificial system and implying Jesus' decision to replace it. Jesus understood his suffering as part of his messiahship linked with Isaiah 53 (416–419).

<sup>47</sup> See the discussion in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 652–653.

<sup>48</sup> See the most recent discussion in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 795–796.

did not abandon the temple and its cult. Even the alleged allusion to vicarious atonement in the Last Meal is contested; imagery may suggest covenant sacrifice.<sup>49</sup> Speculation about Jesus' changing his mind in this way is fraught with difficulty, especially given that the evidence is at best circumstantial and capable of alternative explanation.

One should also consider that the idea of beneficial death was not without precedent. Maccabean heroes (2 Macc 7) and the figure of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53, vicariously, were also seen as achieving benefit for others. Furthermore in neither case do we find the implication that temple rites or Law are thereby rendered obsolete or replaced. Might the same have been the case in the development of reflection on Jesus' death, including possibly his own reflections in advance shared with his disciples? This should be considered before concluding that at least at the end of his life Jesus turned to reject the temple and thus Torah in this way. It also makes better sense of the scattered indications that some Christians continued to participate in temple rites, including the Lukan Paul. Had the movement begun on the assumption that it espoused the replacement of the temple, we might expect that to surface as a major issue. In Luke's account, the rejection of the temple attributed to Stephen and the Hellenists is shown to be false, notwithstanding the assertion (shared with biblical tradition) that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 7:47–50; Isa 66:1–2; 1 Kings 8:27).<sup>50</sup>

In Mark we have passed over the controversy about divorce, partly because of the coherence of the cultic themes, and partly because it needs to be considered in the light of sayings on the theme found in independent sources.<sup>51</sup> Matthew preserves both Mark's account and an independent saying which he has incorporated within the six so-called antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount. These six sayings introduced by "You have heard that it was said to those of old, but I say to you," or some shorter form of the same, are the classical site for identifying where Jesus is alleged to take a stand against Torah. The assumption that each of the six is antithetical in a literal sense in this way stands in

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<sup>49</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, writes: "There is a clear danger that both sets of suggested allusions (Isaiah 53; Daniel 7) are more in the eye of the beholder than contrived or intended by the initial tradents" (815). See his discussion of Mark 10:45 (812–815) and the Last Meal (815–818).

<sup>50</sup> Loader, *Attitude*, 361–368. Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, who asserts it is not only true but reflects continuity with Jesus (282–283).

<sup>51</sup> For what follows I refer to my discussion in *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

tension with what precedes in 5:17–20, where Matthew portrays Jesus as declaring that the Law remains valid and is in no way to be diminished in its demand. Most scholars now recognise that in 5:21–48, Matthew, far from contradicting his image of Jesus by showing him as setting Torah aside, is in fact enhancing its demands.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, he is indicating where he sees that the priority lies in Jesus' interpretation of the Law. Matthew assumes a hierarchy of values within Torah, which is reflected in the immediate context in 5:19 (and with surprising affirmation of detail in 23:23). While the focus is primarily ethical, it is not exclusively so, as the extrapolations in 6:1–18 about alms, prayer and fasting show.<sup>53</sup>

To each of the so-called antithetical comments parallels exist in biblical and post-biblical Jewish writings of the time. Anger was a common theme; adultery, similarly. Already the prohibition of coveting lent itself to application in this way. Divorce was a matter of debate. Reaction to proliferation of oaths by abstention from oaths was not unknown.<sup>54</sup> Issues of retaliation and love of enemy were not foreign to exposition of Torah.<sup>55</sup> This renders earlier suggestions that Jesus sovereignly set aside Torah on oaths, retaliation, and love of enemy unconvincing.<sup>56</sup>

The anecdote in Mark about divorce may well have had a single pithy response by Jesus: "What God has yoked, let no one separate" (10:9). It rebuffs the discussion of what legitimises divorce. The biblical texts

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Paul Foster, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*, WUNT 2.177 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), who argues that, read in the light of 5:21–48, 5:17–20 cannot intend the upholding of the Law.

<sup>53</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 6 alludes to fasting, prayer and giving alms. While one can argue that here and in *Gos. Thom.* 14 on fasting and alms Jesus places no value on them (Loader, *Attitude*, 492–493), the case can be made that they reflect a typical approach of Jesus which gives them a subordinate place beside ethical demands—so Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, 47–50, 75.

<sup>54</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*, noting the tendency to reduce them (Sirach, Essenes, Philo), writes: "In the saying Jesus totally forbids taking oaths while the Jewish reflections remain critical only" (180). "Living according to Jesus' teaching would not lead to transgression, but the Law is implicitly pictured as allowing something that should not be done at all" (186). See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 580–581. Becker, *Jesus*, reminds us that refusing to do what law permits is not against the Law (296).

<sup>55</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*, assuming his model of covenant seeking, writes: "To love one's neighbor but to keep distance from one's enemies functions as an important general covenant path marker" (258; similarly 273–274). Jesus assumes a different approach to covenant. See also John Riches, "Jesus the Jew: His Interaction with the Judaism of his Day," in *Who do you say that I am?* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 52–60.

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance, the devastating review of new quest research in Karlheinz Müller, "Forschungsgeschichtliche Anmerkungen zum Thema 'Jesus von Nazareth und das Gesetz': Versuch einer Zwischenbilanz," in *Kirche und Volk Gottes: Festschrift für Jürgen Roloff*, ed. Martin Karrer (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 58–77.

from Gen 1:27 and 2:24 now ground marriage in the divinely created order. The saying which Mark appends and locates in private instruction to the disciples (12:10–12) has a similar structure to those found in Matthew, Luke and Paul in that it declares divorce and remarriage to constitute adultery—on the assumption that the original marriage cannot be dissolved. Matthew identifies grounds which make divorce legitimate (indeed, required), namely, adultery. In this he reflects the widespread assumption embodied in Jewish law, that a wife who has slept with another is from that point unclean for the original husband.<sup>57</sup> Very probably this is also taken for granted in the prohibition sayings in Mark, Luke and Paul.

The variant forms of the saying, including Matthew's explicit additions, Mark's (and possibly Luke's) application to women who contemplate divorcing their husbands, and Paul's exposition in relation to mixed marriages, bear witness to a common assumption that Jesus spoke against divorce (and therefore remarriage of divorced people). In the context of our discussion the issue is whether this would have been seen as a departure from Torah or a radical application of Torah. The matter of grounds for divorce was certainly subject of debate according to rabbinic reports. The material in CD IV, 20–V, 6 which also cites Gen 1:27, taken by many to be rejecting divorce, now appears more likely to concern polygamy, also reflected in the Temple Scroll (11QT LVII, 15–19). Other writings at Qumran assume the legitimacy of divorce (CD XIII, 15–17; 11QT LIV, 4–5; LXVI, 8–11). This leaves Jesus' approach standing without direct parallel. Does it derive from a departure from Torah or a will to radicalise its demands? The latter seems more probable.<sup>58</sup>

There is some further indication that Jesus took a very strict approach to matters broadly pertaining to sexuality.<sup>59</sup> While not imposing on others what was probably his own calling, namely celibacy, he extolled its worth as an option for the kingdom of God (Matt 19:11–12), and elsewhere shows that he assumes that in the age to come sexual activity

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<sup>57</sup> John P. Meier, "The historical Jesus and the historical law: some problems within the problem," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 52–79 dismisses this view too quickly (78 n. 59). See the discussion in Klaus Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu: Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament*, 1: *Markus und Parallelen*, WMANT 40 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 566–570.

<sup>58</sup> Holmén, *Jesus*: "Jesus probably did not intend his words to contradict, oppose or be directed against the law" (168). Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Band 1: Geschichte der urchristlichen Theologie*; Teilband 1: *Geschichte des Wirkens Jesu in Galiläa* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 287.

<sup>59</sup> For what follows see Loader, *Sexuality*.



would cease (Mark 12:25). He doubtless also shared John the Baptist's very strict interpretation of incest laws in attacking Antipas for marrying his step brother's wife (Mark 6:18; cf. Lev 18:16). At the same time, his exposition of the prohibition of adultery, as Matthew presents it, does not demonise women and women's sexuality, but calls men to responsibility for their actions (5:27–28). Sexual union between a man and a woman belongs to becoming one in marriage and is affirmed (Mark 10:2–9). But responsibility for the way men handle their sexuality needs to be taken very seriously, as the sayings about excision indicate (Matt 5:29–30). Mark's tradition, which also preserves such sayings, perhaps already associated with warnings against abuse of little ones, shows sensitivity to sexual abuse (9:36–37, 42–48).

None of these values runs contrary to Torah. They expound its values. Noteworthy, however, is the image of the world to come as being without sexual activity. This may well reflect a strand of Judaism (as in Jubilees) which deemed some incompatibility between the sacred and the sexual, a logical extension of the notion that the age to come is seen as a sacred space, as a temple, where nakedness and sexual activity had no place. Such values reappear in Paul, in both his personal choices and his expositions (1 Cor 7:1, 5, 7, 34) and, in Corinth, in some one-sided extrapolations.

The discussion of sexuality, far from taking us into areas where Jesus might possibly have set Torah aside, may highlight where his stance was deeply reflective of values of Torah, even including assumptions about purity and impurity. While apologists try hard to explain Jesus' prohibition of divorce on the grounds that it would thrust women into poverty, the primary concern appears to be upholding divinely created order.<sup>60</sup> That surely must also rest on perceptions of what God intends as good for people, but the divorce sayings also assume, at least in the Matthean form, notions of clean and unclean. Notions that adultery need not destroy a marriage or that remarriage may well be a compassionate option for many people, not least in the ancient world of Jesus' time, are absent. Mark's version of the saying speaks of wronging a woman (10:11), but many see that as an addition and the other sayings assume male action and the infringement of male rights.

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<sup>60</sup> See also Amy Jill Levine, "Jesus, divorce, and sexuality: a Jewish critique" in *The Historical Jesus through Catholic and Jewish eyes*, ed. Bryan F. LeBeau, Leonard Greenspoon, and Dennis Hamm (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000), 113–129, in which she challenges the assumption that divorce was widespread and Jesus was trying to save Jewish women from their plight (115–120).

There is a conservative stance here, in which the material suggests that Jesus was far from jettisoning some assumptions about what was clean and unclean.

It is worth exploring other signs that in some ways Jesus embodied a conservative approach to biblical Law, at least as his starting point. These include the traditional names of members of Jesus' family, the wearing of tassels (Mark 6:56 Matt 9:20), and indications that Galilee was strongly Jewish and that the temple played an important symbolic role for the people.<sup>61</sup> There are signs of a conservative approach in anecdotes about Jesus and Gentiles. In Q's report of the healing of the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1–10; Matt 8:5–13), the centurion's response assumes unworthiness as a Gentile that Jesus should enter his house. Jesus appears to agree, and heals his servant from a distance, perhaps having elicited that response with a question: "Am I to come and heal him?"<sup>62</sup> Luke's Peter shares similar assumptions in Acts 10:28.<sup>63</sup> Mark also records a healing from a distance—again of the child of a Gentile (7:24–30). Also striking is Jesus' first response to the woman, which speaks of Jews as children and Gentiles as dogs.<sup>64</sup> The point is not that dogs are cute, but that dogs are unworthy. Mark employed the story to herald its outcome, not to support Jesus' response. It is difficult to imagine that Christians would have invented such a response and attributed it to Jesus, but perhaps the will to invent a contrast failed to see the possible negative implications.

John suggests that contact with Gentiles came through a special initiative of Philip, as though to this point in the Johannine story no such encounter had taken place (12:20–22). Contact between Jesus and Gentiles are few, apart from the encounters which Mark locates in Gentile territory.<sup>65</sup> Matthew has Jesus declare outright that his mission is

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<sup>61</sup> So Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2002), who draws attention to the presence of stone vessels; *miqwaoth*; burial practices; no pork bones (43–52). See also Sean Freyne, "Archaeology and the historical Jesus," in *Archaeology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 1997), 117–144, at 132–138; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 293–302; Kazen, *Jesus*, 285–292.

<sup>62</sup> So U. Wegner, *Der Hauptmann von Kafarnaum (Mt 7,28a; 8,5–10.13 par Lk 7,1–10): Ein Beitrag zur Q-Forschung*, WUNT 2.14 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985) 375–380.

<sup>63</sup> Tomson, "Purity Laws," 83–84, draws attention to the differing rabbinic views on Gentiles, including their homes. See *m. 'Ohal.* 18:7–10; and *t. Ahil.* 18:6–12.

<sup>64</sup> See William Loader, "Challenged at the Boundaries: A Conservative Jesus in Mark's Tradition," *JSNT* 63 (1996): 45–61, at 45–51.

<sup>65</sup> So Kazen, *Jesus*, 23; cf. Holmén, *Jesus*, 233–236, 250–251.

not to Gentiles, nor is that of his disciples before Easter (15:24; 10:5–6) and Luke assumes the same, probably for this reason withdrawing from the centurion at the cross what in Mark is a confession of Gentile faith (23:47; cf. Mark 15:39). The parable of the mustard seed may allude to the traditional expectation that ultimately the Gentiles would gather in the shade of the kingdom or nest in its branches (Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19).

Jesus probably did see his mission as directed primarily to Israel. The mission to Gentiles appears in Matthew and Luke-Acts as a post-Easter phenomenon. In Matthew it comes as an instruction by the risen Jesus (28:16–20). It also explains why the issue of circumcision appears on the scene as something new about which no instruction from Jesus existed.<sup>66</sup>

Some hesitation, based on understandings of the boundaries between clean and unclean, may also be evident in Mark's story of Jesus' encounter with a leper (1:40–45). The sternness with which he instructs the man to follow the prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, may reflect that he sees him as having flouted the Law by his approach (according to D, evoking anger).<sup>67</sup> Perhaps a similar reaction lies behind Jesus' reaction to the woman who deliberately touched him in a state of uncleanness (5:25–34).<sup>68</sup>

For Mark, the distinctions between clean and unclean have no validity. This is also true in the preceding story of the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20). Nevertheless behind both sets of stories in Mark 5 are traditions in which such distinctions did once play a role. In the latter the motifs of the cemetery, the pigs, the legion, the sea, the Gentile territory and the demon-possessed man would have made the story a celebration of Jesus' victory over the unclean world of the Gentiles. Similarly the stories of the twelve-year-old girl, whose corpse Jesus touches, and the woman for twelve years suffering bleeding which rendered her unclean, would have been told as celebrations of restoration and resurrection. They still are that, although for Mark (as for Luke in the raising of the widow's son, 7:11–16) those aspects related

<sup>66</sup> Cf. *Gos. Thom.* 53 where Jesus addresses circumcision. *Gos. Thom.* 14 also appears to reflect Gentile mission. So Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, 47–50, 75, 213–216.

<sup>67</sup> As original: Kazen, *Jesus*, 103, but comments, "The question of purity is not even implicit in the present form of the story" (120). But see Loader, "Boundaries," 51–58.

<sup>68</sup> See Loader, "Boundaries," 58–60, but cf. Kazen, *Jesus*, who notes that Mark's notion of power transmitted by such touching has no parallel in Hellenistic miracle stories (134).

to uncleanness no longer have valency, and he now used the stories as part of his panel depicting salvation for Gentiles and for Israel.

The question is often raised whether Jesus himself flouted the Law in the context of his healing ministry. He touched a leper,<sup>69</sup> touched corpses,<sup>70</sup> and was touched by a woman who would have been unclean.<sup>71</sup> He spent some time in Gentile territory according to Mark. In daily life becoming unclean happened naturally from time to time. Men had nocturnal emissions. Women menstruated and gave birth. People died and those around them were rendered unclean for a time. People travelled to Gentile lands and returned. This has nothing to do with sin, let alone flouting the Law. There was debate about whether one should avoid contracting impurity. Generally, one should, especially if contracting uncleanness prevented one from fulfilling other duties, such as in the case of priests. In healing, Jesus touched people who were unclean. If anything, the debate might be whether becoming unclean in order to effect healing was a higher priority than avoiding uncleanness. The Good Samaritan makes the point.<sup>72</sup>

None of the extant material suggests that Jesus' healing acts raised such an issue, as for instance, his healing on the Sabbath apparently did. This is probably because it was not seen as an issue by the writers. It was certainly not disregard for the Law. The further question is whether Jesus would have observed the usual rites of purification when he was thus rendered unclean. Some suggest his power reversed the flow of contamination, so that neither he nor others would have seen his actions as making him susceptible to uncleanness.<sup>73</sup> This is possible,

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<sup>69</sup> "Objectionable, even if the impurity incurred was a 'light' one, and could be dealt with my immersion": Kazen, *Jesus*, 118.

<sup>70</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, notes that, assuming Palestinian tradition behind the raising of both the widow's son and the girl and of the response to John the Baptist, we can expect people to have sensed the corpse impurity issue (164–177).

<sup>71</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, warns against the assumption that being touched indicated anything like a will to abrogate Torah (139).

<sup>72</sup> So Kazen, *Jesus*, comments that while it does address purity concerns, it cannot serve as proof that Jesus disregarded purity laws, nor is its stance unique in the Judaism of the time, but its values are controversial (189–196). See also Bryan, *Jesus*, who links attitudes to Samaritans with land purity (172–177). Love for neighbour overrides the purity issues (177), reflecting prophetic precedents (186).

<sup>73</sup> Klaus Berger, "Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer," *NovT* 30 (1988): 231–262 (246–247); Bruce Chilton, "An Exorcism of History: Mark 1:21–28," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. idem and Craig A. Evans, NCTS 28.2, (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 215–245, at 234; Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 211; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 603; "Jesus and Purity," 461; with caution: Kazen, *Jesus*, 300–339. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, refers to transfer of purity reflected in Exod 29:37 and 1QapGen XX, 28–29 (exorcism).

particularly if clean and unclean is set within the context of demonology so that Jesus would have understood himself as acting with the Holy Spirit against unclean spirits.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, had he contracted uncleanness—and he surely must have done in some ways apart from such encounters—would he have observed the usual purification rites? Here we must interpret the silence.<sup>75</sup> Either he did not and few objected, perhaps because most people gave little attention to such things in his context,<sup>76</sup> or he did and so gave no grounds for offence, assuming people in his context would have cared.<sup>77</sup> We know some cared, especially those who otherwise criticised him; so not to have observed the usual requirements would surely become known to them and become grounds for criticism,<sup>78</sup> even more so if the majority cared.<sup>79</sup>

Where we do find controversy about purification rites, it relates in each case not to observance of Torah, but to additional requirements which some espoused and with whom Jesus disagreed. This is the case with the washing of hands in Mark 7:1–5 and with the immersion before a meal in Luke 11:37. On the other hand, it seems likely that Jesus and his disciples will have immersed themselves before the Passover.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>74</sup> So Kazen, *Jesus*, 300–339; “...not the inherent holiness of his own person, but the power of the coming reign of God, which Jesus believed overpowered demons and impurities” (346). Bryan, *Jesus*, “This suggests that for Jesus the lines that divide pure from impure are indistinguishable from the lines that separate good and evil, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. And these lines cut through Israel” (16).

<sup>75</sup> On the ambiguity of the silence see Holmén, *Jesus*, who suggests it stems from Jesus’ indifference (236).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts: Key Discoveries for Understanding Jesus in his World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002): Jesus “observed exactly the same rules about food purity as did other Galilean peasants of his time and place” (132). Kazen, *Jesus*, rejects the assumption that most did not care (272–273), pointing to indications from archaeology noted above and conservatism reflected in matters like different weights, marriage laws, attitudes to work on holy days, loyalty to Jerusalem (281–284) and suggesting rural Galilee had characteristics of the little tradition and was open to Jesus because of his pragmatism and sense of loyalty to ancestral traditions (290–292). For Jesus, contagion was not menacing enough to warrant attention (338). Holmén, *Jesus*, suggests disinterest, although otherwise “Jesus would normally have observed the purity laws” (236).

<sup>77</sup> So Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 199–207. She cites 1:40–44 as evidence because it was an elaborate ritual (203–204) and points to Matt 5:23–24 and Jesus’ participation in pilgrimage festivals. See also Dunn, “Jesus and Purity,” who argues that as a devout Jew in Jewish Galilee Jesus would have observed purity laws (450–456). Cf. Kazen, *Jesus*, 181.

<sup>78</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, assumes he did not purify himself and that this was “understood as seemingly indifferent” (198).

<sup>79</sup> As Kazen, *Jesus*, 272–273, supposes.

<sup>80</sup> The practice of immersion and thereafter only foot-washing is reflected in John 13:10 (see also 11:55). Kazen, *Jesus*, 255. On P. Oxy 840 which Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*,

Generally, Jesus does not appear to have espoused the elaborations of washing rites. In Matt 23:25–26 and Luke 11:39–40 he confronts the neglect of inner purity and compassion among those who focus on external rites of purification, which he does not, however, disparage.<sup>81</sup> Some of his sayings reflect assumptions about purity, for instance grave impurity (Luke 11:44),<sup>82</sup> just as does the burial of Jesus outside the city walls. His apparent avoidance of Tiberias and Sepphoris may indicate impurity issues, particularly in relation to the former built on a cemetery, but more likely reflects pragmatic concerns.<sup>83</sup> In the same context Jesus attacks interpreters of the Law who impose heavy burdens on people by their interpretations (Matt 23:4; Luke 11:45–46) and associates them with previous generations who rejected prophets and teachers (Matt 23:29–36, 37–39; Luke 11:47–52; 13:34–35). Mark also portrays Jesus as attacking hypocrisy and grandstanding (12:38–40). None of this suggests lack of respect for Torah; on the contrary.

If we must interpret the silence in dealing with Jesus' possible contraction of impurity during healing, we face something similar with regard to some other aspects of Jesus' mission. These include his summoning disciples to leave their families and possessions to follow him (Mark 1:16–20; 10:29–30; Luke 14:25–26). This surely stands in tension with the importance of the family in biblical law and with the promise of the land, where possessions meant land. Nowhere, however, do we find the radical call to discipleship cited against Jesus as a breach of Torah. This is probably because people were aware of comparable movements in their own time and of similar prophetic movements in the biblical tradition.

Some of Jesus' most shocking sayings belong in this context, such as the challenge to hate parents, but most notably, the challenge to one would-be follower to abandon the burial of his father: "Let the dead bury the dead!" (Matt 8:22; Luke 9:60). In a cluster of three sayings which show Jesus going one degree stricter than Elijah with Elisha, the demand is radical and immediate (Luke 9:57–62). Burial of the dead

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take as evidence Jesus did not immerse (380–383), see Kazen, *Jesus*, who concludes that it is "not . . . an historical report" (260), but a memory of conscious negligence of certain required purification rituals, yet claims "it is likely that Jesus purified himself, like most other people, at large festivals" (250).

<sup>81</sup> Tomson, "Purity Laws," 86–87; Kazen, *Jesus*, 229. See also *Gos. Thom.* 89. Sayings such as 39 about abusing the keys of knowledge, 52 about appeals to the prophets, 43 and 45 about trees and fruit may reflect Jesus' attacks on abuses.

<sup>82</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, 177–181.

<sup>83</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, 180; they represented alien values 289, 292; similarly Holmén, *Jesus*, 237.

was a fundamental obligation. Yet nothing in the context suggests that with this demand Jesus set himself against Torah. We should probably see his demand as tolerable within Jewish tradition of the time as a charismatic exception, such as might be expected when God called people to special tasks. It should not therefore be taken as evidence of disregard of Torah.<sup>84</sup>

When asked about inheriting eternal life, Jesus' response, according to Mark 10:17–22, is not to point away from the Law, but to point to it. Unlike Paul, with whom Mark shares much in common, Mark sees observing the Law as the way to eternal life. But, as in Paul, Mark is happy to affirm the commandments of the Decalogue, particularly those concerned with ethical behaviour, but regard others as invalid. While Paul argues that he upholds the Law (minus all but mostly the ethical commandments) and sees it as more than fulfilled, but indirectly, when Christians bear the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Rom 8:1–4; Gal 5:13–25), Mark has Jesus require obedience to these commandments in a radical manner which should not pose a problem if that entailed for someone selling his goods and giving to the poor (10:17–21). That dimension was lacking in the rich man. Following Jesus is not an alternative to keeping these commandments, but a matter of joining oneself to the one who radically interprets them.

Similarly, Mark portrays Jesus as affirming that God's greatest demand is the twofold commandment to love God and neighbour (12:28–34). In the Markan context, both stories will assume that in this some commandments are affirmed, while others do not apply. The scribe who answers Jesus by identifying the priority of the twofold command of love over sacrifices stands in an established biblical tradition and more likely reflects the way in which both stories will have been understood at an earlier stage of the tradition and, if historical, in the context of the ministry of Jesus. This assumes a hierarchy of values which coheres with sayings and stories of Jesus elsewhere, which assume compassion for the poor is a divine priority, so that to love God means to engage in such compassion. Matt 23:23 and Luke 11:42 similarly emphasise

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<sup>84</sup> So Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law*, 47: "The notion of a special religious duty transcending even basic family obligations is one that would have been culturally familiar to Jesus' audience." Cf. Sanders, *Jesus within Judaism*, 653–655; Holmén, *Jesus*, 330. See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 504, 581 citing Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 26–27, to the effect that the saying is a known idiom about remaining at home to care for parents. But known and used in the first century?

justice and mercy and faith (Matt) or “the love of God” (Luke), while espousing tithing beyond what biblical law demands.<sup>85</sup>

In themselves, the two greatest commandments need not lead to this conclusion. One might argue that love for God demands meticulous attention equally to all commandments, a stance espoused, for instance, in the sectarian documents found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and love for neighbour includes similar conscientiousness in relation to all relevant provisions, both in purity and in ethics. Such a saying as, “The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath” would make little sense to people adopting this approach, and still does not. Surely God’s command is God’s command. This does not appear to have been the approach of the historical Jesus, but the difference is not whether or not to set Torah aside, but how to understand and interpret it.

Our survey suggests that there appears to have been nothing in Jesus’ reported approach to the Law which would warrant the conclusion that Jesus set aside Torah or even set aside parts of Torah. Controversies concern different ways of interpreting Torah, different priorities. If Jesus had abandoned Torah or set parts of it aside or in other ways breached it a major way, we might expect to have some indication of this in the accounts of his trial and execution. This is not the case,<sup>86</sup> but with two exceptions: the charges of speaking against the temple and of blasphemy.

Mark presents false witnesses as claiming that Jesus would destroy the temple and build another in three days (14:56–58). The falsity for Mark lies in the allegation that Jesus would be the destroyer. Matthew rewrites the scene so that two (and now therefore reliable) witnesses attest to Jesus’ claim that he *could* destroy the temple. (26:60–61). Luke transfers Mark’s false allegation to the conflicts with Stephen (Acts 6:13–14). John has a version of the saying which attributes the destruction to the Jews themselves (2:18–22). In none of these variants need we conclude that Jesus rejected the biblical foundation of the temple. His action in the temple and his threat and prediction of God’s judgement, while not anti-temple and certainly not anti-Torah, would certainly have riled temple authorities and touched Rome’s interests.

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<sup>85</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, 231; but most see 23:23c as not original. See the discussion in Holmén, *Jesus*, 114–115. On Luke 18:9–14, he observes that the point is not the Pharisee’s pride or hypocrisy, but his lack of something the toll collector has found (122–126). He suggests Jesus was indifferent to tithing (126).

<sup>86</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 784–786; cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 335; Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testament*, 2 vols (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 1:119.



The charge of blasphemy is more complex. In Mark's trial scene, the Council gives it credence. Such charges were being levelled at Christians in Mark's time and before because of what Christians were claiming about Jesus. The same is true of John's Gospel, where we see some of the arguments to undermine allegations of ditheism (5:17–20; 10:30–38). Nevertheless the presence of royal messianic motifs in the early form of the passion narrative and the centrality of the messianic status of Jesus from early on in the Christian movement times make it probable that at least Jesus' relationship to messianic claims was an issue in his trial and execution.<sup>87</sup>

More difficult to determine, however, is whether Jesus committed blasphemy and how. To claim to be the Messiah or to have this claimed about oneself is not blasphemous. Suggestions of what was blasphemous in Mark range from agreeing to the claim of divine sonship in a literal sense to speaking of oneself as the Ancient of Days.<sup>88</sup> For our study, the charge of blasphemy would have to be deemed valid and Jesus, therefore, to have contravened Torah or ignored it, for it to have relevance. The gospels imply the charge is without ground.

In John's Gospel the grounds for the charge of blasphemy are clearer, namely, the implied claim that God is Jesus' father and that he is equal or one with God in a literal sense (5:18; 10:33; 19:7). There, too, the charges are to be rejected according to the author as based on misunderstanding, even though in John Jesus is pictured as one with God after a model of Christology rooted in wisdom speculation. In John Jesus assumes the divine epithets predicated of Torah as God's Wisdom and so is Word, bread, light and life and much else. He alone, not Torah, is the true bread and the true vine. With such developments, John takes us beyond what might be claimed as assertions of the historical Jesus.

Mark also reports charges that Jesus performed exorcisms with the aid of Beelzebul. (3:22–27). Similar accusations are preserved in so-called Q material, both in connection with Beelzebul (Matt 9:32–34; 12:27; Luke 11:14–15, 18–19) and in general where Jesus reflects on responses to John the Baptist and to himself as a recalcitrant son (Matt 11:16–19; Luke 7:31–35). The gospels depicts these as false accusations. The charge that Jesus was a charlatan and false prophet appears in later rabbinic tradition. Such accusations may derive ultimately from actual

<sup>87</sup> "Had no messianism been present in the pre-Easter ministry, then the resurrection would not have generated it"; Evans, "New Quest," 183 n. 41.

<sup>88</sup> See the most recent discussion in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, who thinks it possibly reflects a cynical misuse of speculation about two powers in heaven (751–752).

controversy surrounding the historical Jesus, but at most we can say that these were interpretations of Jesus' words and deeds. Nothing suggests he would have acknowledged such claims as true and so set himself deliberately against the Law.

### *Conclusion*

The evidence surveyed does not present a picture of Jesus setting out to dismiss Torah.<sup>89</sup> But nor does it present a picture of Jesus as primarily an interpreter of the laws of Torah. Most conflicts on points of Torah observance occur either incidentally, indeed, as interruptions and distractions or when others raise questions of interpretation with him. Jesus' focus appears to have lain elsewhere, namely in the proclamation of the kingdom and in living out its vision in the present.<sup>90</sup> If we confine attitudes to Torah in terms of seeking prescriptions for behaviour or marking out covenant identity, we may conclude that Jesus shows little interest.<sup>91</sup>

If, however, we understand attitudes towards Torah with its broader sense of telling the story and ways of the covenant, then the question is whether Jesus' mission belongs within this perspective or is something outside it. Seen in this perspective, Jesus' words and deeds appear to cohere well with a stance deeply rooted in Torah, even at times quite conservatively, and focused on future hope and with an emphasis which justified response to human need as something which might override other requirements of Torah and was bound to bring him into conflict

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<sup>89</sup> This is notably the conclusion of most Jewish scholars in recent times. See Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM, 1993), 21–26, though lax towards purity; idem, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973) 81; David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (New York: Adama, 1987), though differing over minutiae (22); Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 197–207; see also Beatrice Bruteau, ed., *Jesus through Jewish Eyes: Rabbis and Scholars Engage an Ancient Brother in a New Conversation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003).

<sup>90</sup> Broer, "Jesus und die Tora," 252.

<sup>91</sup> This is amply demonstrated by Holmén, *Jesus*. He concludes that Jesus had an attitude based on a new covenant (336) and that therefore observance of laws was irrelevant. "Jesus was apparently, as it seemed, not even proposing to live according to the covenant, he was not even trying to be loyal to it" (340). One could counter that he did interpret the covenant, but in a different way in the light of prophetic hope and that it gave him a set of priorities which sometimes meant he would override one part of the Law with another. Such covenant concerns are reflected in Jesus' restoration eschatology and its imagery. His last sentence, "It is likely that he—in resemblance of many contemporary figures—even saw his Judaism as the true Judaism" (343) somewhat undermines his claim about everyone else being path searchers and markers.

with those who construed the priorities differently. These include the expansionist movements of his time.<sup>92</sup> Such an emphasis, which at times sat lightly to laws which others revered, is not to be confused with blatant disregard or indifference.<sup>93</sup> Nor should it be seen as an eschatological replacement of Torah,<sup>94</sup> let alone a new Torah. It seems also unlikely to be the fruit of a pessimism one might attribute to John the Baptist according to which pollution is so total that only total repentance now matters and nothing else,<sup>95</sup> because too much of the rest (namely respect for Torah) survives.<sup>96</sup> If anything, it comes close to being the reverse: only total acceptance of the new invitation to belong matters, but this is not so radical that it ignores detailed requirements of Torah. Some, it makes more stringent. The invitation is not to a new Torah, let alone a new religion, nor to an interim ethic,<sup>97</sup> but to respond to what God requires in the present and promises in the immediate future. That sense of continuity between present and future is rooted in faith in the God of Israel and generated by Torah understood as a story of hope, which is about to be realised.

It is informed, however, by a particular understanding of God and of prophetic theology<sup>98</sup> which placed a vision of well being charac-

<sup>92</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, 197.

<sup>93</sup> Kazen, *Jesus*, "Jesus' attitude was apparently understood as *seemingly* indifferent in his contemporary context" (198), but this is not same as saying it was, although he argues that Jesus "carried relativization to the point of neglect" (261).

<sup>94</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 434–435; Hahn, *Theologie*, 1:97, claiming that Jer 31 implies a time when people no longer need Torah and some parts become superfluous (101). "Insgesamt wird damit die Tora nicht aufgehoben, aber sie wird durch die anbrechende eschatologische Wirklichkeit tiefgreifend modifiziert" (102).

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, who speaks of the "Nullpunktsituation" (50, 51). Interpreting John's rhetoric exclusively (and thus not doing justice to its prophetic heritage) he asserts covenant blessings are now invalid (91–92). The kingdom overrules Torah, which ceased to be the final authority (279; 353–354). The attractiveness of the thesis is that it would enable one to explain why minor purity laws become irrelevant given the total purity failure. Similarly Bryan, *Jesus*, 164, 186–168.

<sup>96</sup> Bryan, *Jesus*, draws attention to strands of prophetic thought which saw an end-time purity in which gradations would be irrelevant, reflected in Zech 14:20–21 and Isa 66:20–21; similarly *Jub.* 4.26; *1 Enoch* 10.22 (153–156). "In this tradition, the anticipation is that 'the Lord will become king over all the earth' (Zech 14.9)." Similarly Scot McKnight, "A parting within the way: Jesus and James on Israel and purity," in Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *James the Just and Christian origins*, SuppNovT 98 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 83–129, at 87–88, speculating that people became pure by joining the movement set in motion by John and joining in commensality (90–92), following Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus. His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice*, (University Park The Pennsylvania State University Press 1993). The problem is lack of evidence in the tradition reflecting such a central concern with purity of this kind.

<sup>97</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 583.

<sup>98</sup> Wilckens, *Theologie*, 1.1:297–302.

terised by peace and justice at its centre and offers this as a hope for all, which later would find resonance beyond his own culture in the Hellenistic Roman world from which then parallels are easily drawn. This understanding appears to have provided the hermeneutical key for interpreting Torah in daily life. The radical inclusivity of this vision, at least within Israel, finds its closest parallel in John's negative inclusion of all under condemnation and one might speculate about the shift to Jesus' positive inclusivity. Both, however, offer hope to all and threaten judgement, the difference appearing to have more to do with the claim of beginning realisation in positive ways in the present. Claims issuing from such convictions that the impending kingdom warranted overriding some requirements of Torah would have been seen by insiders as coherent with Torah's promise but by outsiders as arrogant disregard. But we know almost nothing of the latter.

Controversies preserved in the tradition focus less on overriding aspects of Torah in the interests of particular eschatological demands, such as calls to discipleship (we are still guessing about Matt 8:22), and more on unwillingness to engage in more careful observance (independent of issues of human need) or on responses to human need which reflect a distinctive weighting of human well being (and sometimes strange perceptions of human well being, such as indissoluble marriage, refusal of remarriage, including concern with impurities) over against other requirements which may be overridden. In the case of the former (probably originally behind both Mark 2:23–28 and 7:1–23) this indicated a refusal to engage in strategies of extra caution. In the case of the latter (probably commensality and Mark 3:1–6 and 2:23–28 in its present form) these values are defended as God's values, as Torah values. Like any hermeneutic they are values in the eye of the beholder, but they reflect a choice within the Law and Prophets about what matters most and are therefore inevitably controversial.

Because that vision was the realisation of what was seen as God's will expressed in the Law and the Prophets, it was not seen as a new order; nor, therefore, were expositions of Torah always expressed in terms of future eschatology. But they reflected the value system which informed the vision.<sup>99</sup> The focus was not a new covenant to replace the old, but if anything, a renewed covenant, understood in the light of what Jesus

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<sup>99</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, speaks of "a quality of kingdom life, the character of living appropriate for those who look for the kingdom's coming and who seek to live already in its light" (583). Similarly Kazen, *Jesus*, 347.

apparently envisaged as the outcome when what God has always wanted would become real by divine intervention. Thus it comes to expression in familiar images, many of which reflect distinctive traits of Israel, including notions of the twelve tribes and of the gathering of Israel. It cannot be reduced either to a social political programme, Cynic-like or otherwise, or to an apolitical individualism concerned primarily with individual atonement, or to the teachings of a charismatic sage, without ignoring much of the early tradition.

The radical generosity which extended this invitation to all without precondition set directions which would enable some to argue that in new contexts some laws of Torah itself should be permanently overridden and set aside, a stance not yet evident in what appears to derive from the historical Jesus nor required by it. This goes a long way to explaining how subsequently the followers of Jesus applied his Torah hermeneutic differently, some insisting on retaining observance of Torah in its entirety<sup>100</sup> and others insisting that some parts should be permanently overridden, and still others that the core values embodied now in central claims about Jesus effectively made those aspects of Torah which remained valid little more than confirmation of the outcomes expected of those living by these claims and the Spirit of Christ to which they bore witness.

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<sup>100</sup> So McKnight, "A parting within the way," who claims James is hardly likely to have differed in major ways from Jesus at least at the beginning (98–125).

## JESUS AND THE HOLY LAND

KAREN J. WENELL

A good starting point for a discussion of “Jesus and the Holy Land” is to open up what is meant by “the Holy Land.” If the two elements are separated, this actually highlights important contours of the matter at hand. The characteristic of holiness suggests that we are talking about the realm of the sacred and of religious belief; “the land” indicates that we are dealing with holiness that is contained within a particular location, not a temple or shrine, but an entire territory. Of course, moving beyond this general level of description, the idea of the land was highly evocative and indeed central to ancient Jewish understandings of sacred place. The foundational narratives could be articulated and defined in different ways in different periods of history, and therefore we must try to discern what this triad—God-people-land—meant in particular social and political contexts. Just as the genres and contexts of different biblical books vary, so does their understanding of the relationship between God-people-land. Norman Habel, for instance, identifies and works out the different textual connections and implications for six distinct biblical land ideologies, and yet these do not exhaust what may be said about the land. We are not looking for a single “Jewish view” of land. Habel states:

[T]here is no monolithic concept of land in the Hebrew Scriptures. There is, rather, a spectrum of land ideologies with diverse images and doctrines of land. These ideologies, moreover, are promoted by particular social groups with vested interests in promoting a given ideology to gain, regain, or maintain land.<sup>1</sup>

In order to approach what Jesus may have thought about the land, it will be important to pay careful attention to the social situation and particular interests of Jesus and his group, to see how these might relate to the issue of the land. With this in mind, we will proceed by first outlining some of the defining aspects of the land in the Old

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<sup>1</sup> N. C. Habel, *The Land is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 148.

Testament and then consider how the symbolic resources we find in these texts are taken up and interpreted anew in Jewish writings of the Second Temple period. This will begin to give us an idea of the diverse ways that texts relating to the land were interpreted closer to the time of Jesus. Taking a “continuum approach” to the historical Jesus,<sup>2</sup> it will then be appropriate to turn to how the land promise is interpreted within emerging Christian beliefs, finally considering Jesus’ specific context in Galilee in the land to try to answer the question of what Jesus himself might have made of the relationship between God-people-land. The difficulty here (and with the rest of the New Testament) is that there are few explicit sayings in the Jesus tradition relating to the land as the holy land promised to Abraham. As we shall see, however, there are important elements of Jesus’ message, most particularly his calling of the group of the Twelve, which point to allusions to the promise of the land in the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom.

### 1. *Old Testament and Early Jewish Views of the Land*

It is impossible to highlight all of the land-related trajectories which run through the text of the Hebrew Bible. As Davies notes, here is an “embarrassment” of material in comparison to what we find in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> Yet within this vast amount of material it is possible to identify certain principles, or models, for understanding the land. As space does not allow for a full discussion of the meanings of the land in the Old Testament, we will first outline a key model in the foundational narratives of the Pentateuch and Joshua. This model, though adapted and modified in other contexts, is an important starting place for understanding the land, because it represents an ideal formation of Israel as both land and people. We will then highlight some of the ideologies of land in the prophetic literature and royal narratives, since these will have particular relevance to the discussion of Jesus in relationship to the land and the kingdom.

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<sup>2</sup> T. Holmén, ed., *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus*, LNTS 352 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*, The Biblical Seminar 25 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 396.

### 1.1. *Modelling the Land in the Pentateuch and Joshua*

The beginnings of the promise of the land originate between God and Abraham (then Abram) in the simple statement: “To your offspring I will give this land” (Gen 12:7). Land is then part of the continuing story of the foundational patriarchal narratives and the covenant between Abraham and Yahweh, establishing a relationship between God, his people (the descendants of Abraham), and the land given to them by God. The covenant is set out in Genesis 15:

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I will give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.” (15:18–21)

Here both land and people are in view: the land is given boundaries in terms of peoples and the two rivers; Abraham’s descendants are identified as the people to whom God will give the land as promised by covenant. Within the Pentateuch (primarily in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers), a model of the covenantal relationship emerges in the descriptions of the camp in the wilderness as the Israelite nation moves towards a permanent, fixed relationship to the land in Joshua. Seth Kunin describes this period of movement and wandering prior to entry in the land as setting out “biblical dynamic sacred space” which is ideal and not tied to any particular location.<sup>4</sup> The description of the camp and tabernacle in the wilderness and the laws that pertain to the camp provide an ideal model for the relationship between God-people-land. It is defined by different levels of opposition encountered in the model. In order to concentrate on the category of the land rather than on the distinctions between Levites, priests and the high priests (connected with the spaces of the tabernacle court, the holy place and the holy of holies, respectively), the relationship may be represented in terms of circles set in opposition to each other without the further distinctions depicted (which would be set within the category of “Israel”).

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<sup>4</sup> S. D. Kunin, *God’s Place in the World: Sacred Space and Sacred Place in Judaism*, Cassell Religious Studies (London: Cassell, 1998), 11–23.



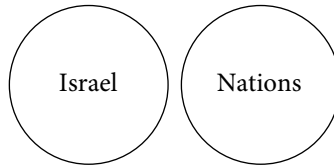


Figure 1: Seth Kunin's segmentary model of sacred space showing the widest level of opposition between Israel (land and people) and the nations (land and peoples).<sup>5</sup>

This segmentary model is a corrective to the concentric model of Israel's holy places where Israel (land and people) is understood to be holy in comparison with the nations, with the Levites, priests and high priests (with attendant spaces) placed in circles showing increasing degrees of holiness moving toward the centre. There are several advantages to the segmentary model in comparison to the concentric model, which is only able to show gradations of holiness. The segmentary model shows categories of equal cultural value (i.e., "Israel" and the "nations" are at the same level, whereas the high priest would not be set in opposition to the nations; rather, the high priest is included in the wider category of "Israel") and also shows the separation between Israel and the nations which is emphasised in the text. A text like Leviticus 18:24–30 clearly indicates a distinction between Israel, who are to keep God's law, and the people who inhabited the land before them, who committed abominations; consequently the land "vomited out the nation that was before you" (18:28). This does not suggest that circles of relative purity extend out indefinitely, but that Israel is set apart as holy, distinct and separate from the nations.

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<sup>5</sup> The full model, including Levites, priests and High Priest, is depicted in Kunin, *God's Place*, 15. See the wider discussion of the model in comparison with the concentric circles model on pp. 11–17.

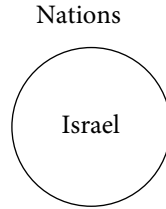


Figure 2: The concentric model showing Israel (land and people) as more holy in comparison with the nations (land and peoples).<sup>6</sup>

Even if we make a distinction between ritual and moral impurity in relationship to these texts,<sup>7</sup> there remains a strong sense that there must in practice be a clearly identifiable difference between Israel and the nations. The boundaries of Israel are to be maintained through the obedience of the people to God's commands. They adhere to the 'thinking of the land' and the symbolic system of purity and difference outlined in biblical law. Even in situations where there is a degree of openness to foreigners, distinctions are still made.<sup>8</sup>

The non-fixed ideal of the model in the wilderness becomes permanently located in the land in the narrative of Joshua (though the temple is not fixed in Jerusalem until the reign of Solomon in 1 Kings).

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<sup>6</sup> See P. P. Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOTSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), as well as the text of *M Kelim* 1:6–9. In *m.Kelim*, ten degrees of holiness are distinguished from the holy of holies to the entire land of Israel. Still, as Francis Schmidt notes, "Each circle, from the most interior to the most exterior, is surrounded, speaking like the Ancients, by a 'hedge' of purity that regulates the passage from one to the other and guarantees the cohesion of the whole, that separates and protects." (243). A sense of distinction from the Gentiles is still very much in place. Schmidt continues, "They [the Gentiles] were outside the system; they remain there. But an impurity status is conferred on them. Not a de facto impurity, but a conventional one." (243)

<sup>7</sup> J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> This borrows Francis Schmidt's phrase the "thinking of the temple," which refers to the purity system in relationship to the temple. F. Schmidt, *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism*, trans. J. E. Crowley, The Biblical Seminar 78 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001). In situations where foreigners were not excluded from either the political or the symbolic borders of the holy land, boundaries of separation could still be maintained through obedience to the law and ritual practice. See Schmidt, *Temple Thinks*, 239–244.

The wandering tribes now receive their inheritance in the twelve tribal territories:

These are the inheritances that the Israelites received in the land of Canaan, which the priest Eleazar, and Joshua son of Nun, and the heads of the families of the tribes of the Israelites distributed to them. Their inheritance was by lot, as the Lord had commanded Moses for the nine and one-half tribes. For Moses had given an inheritance to the two and one-half tribes beyond the Jordan; but to the Levites he gave no inheritance among them. For the people of Joseph were two tribes, Manasseh and Ephraim; and no portion was given to the Levites in the land, but only towns to live in, with their pasture lands for their flocks and herds. The Israelites did as the Lord commanded Moses; they allotted the land.<sup>9</sup>

This passage which I have quoted at length highlights the symbolism of the number twelve in the settlement of the tribes in the land. In the traditions about the twelve tribes, great care is taken to keep the number of tribes (people; represented by heads of tribes) and the number of territories (land; inherited portions) both at the symbolic number of twelve. This takes some amount of effort, as the Levites are one of the tribes, but receive no inheritance; rather than this reducing the number of *territories* to eleven, Joseph's tribe is split into two—Ephraim and Manasseh—to compensate (this does not then increase the number of tribes to thirteen). Further complicating matters, Manasseh is split into two territories on either side of the Jordan. In this case, rather than increasing the number of territories to thirteen, Manasseh is considered to be two *half* tribes. There is a clear interest in the texts to keep both the number of tribes and the number of territories within the land at the symbolic number of twelve.<sup>10</sup>

### 1.2. *Prophetic Literature and Royal Ideology*

Having set out the segmentary model of the land and the ideal covenantal relationship between God-people-land, it is important to emphasise that the boundaries established by defining Israel as sepa-

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<sup>9</sup> Habel's analysis of the ideology of the land in Joshua considers that it "supports the rights of each tribe, ancestral family and ancestral household to its divinely approved lot in YHWH's land. The ancestral households, as the hope of Israel, are represented as having special responsibility and are given encouragement to pursue their rights in the land allotted to them": Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> Z. Kallai, "The Twelve-Tribe Systems of Israel," *Vetus Testamentum* 47 (1997): 53–90.

rate from the nations are by no means strictly geographic, and indeed different definitions of the land are used in various interpretations and biblical boundary texts.<sup>11</sup> In the experiences of exile and dispersion, the boundaries of those who belong to Israel by descent and follow the law could be established in places outside of the physical territory of the land. Similarly, within the land, in the presence of foreigners and overlords, the distinguishing practices of Israel served to set them apart from 'the nations' who were present within the land. To suggest that the boundaries may be more cognitive than geographic does not diminish the importance of the land (and temple) within Jewish belief, for these places remain firmly part of a theological understanding of the world ordered by God and the symbolic system which included the "thinking of the land" and the "thinking of the temple." This may be illustrated by Ezekiel's exilic vision (40–48), entailing ideological maps of land, city and temple.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere in prophetic literature, there are instances where the experience of exile and removal from the land prompts concern (Jer 24:5–9), yet images of a restoration to the land recall the past promises and look toward an ideal future within the land.<sup>13</sup> In Jeremiah's letter to the exiles (chapter 29), the Lord proclaims to the people, "I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile" (29:14). In the following chapter, which articulates a new covenant, the word of the Lord to Jeremiah says, "I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their ancestors and they shall take possession of it" (30:3). This return in a Joshua-like manner will restore the covenanted relationship between God-people-land. The book of Amos also promises restoration through an agricultural image: a permanent planting of Israel in the land given to them by God. (9:14–15). It is also worth noting that the prophet Zechariah was the first to apply the term *holy* to the land, although holiness had long been associated with Israel's existence in the land and their obedience to the law within the boundaries of the land. Robert Wilken suggests that once the term "holy land" was introduced, it gained currency, "not as a replacement for *the Land of*

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<sup>11</sup> See the very helpful discussion in P. S. Alexander, "Geography and the Bible (Early Jewish)," *ABD* 2:977–988.

<sup>12</sup> J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*, CSHJ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 47–73.

<sup>13</sup> Davies, *Gospel and the Land*, 38–39.

*Israel* but as a way of designating the character of the land and Israelite hopes for its future.”<sup>14</sup> The promise of the land in prophetic context could serve as a vibrant and hopeful symbol for the nation.

Prophetic voices in Hebrew scripture often speak out in opposition to a king. A prophetic ideology of the land is quite different from that encountered within in a royal ideology of the land.<sup>15</sup> Under monarchical rule, the land expands to become an empire. In Psalm 2, Yahweh is a monarch ruling from heaven and the king, his son, rules from Zion; the boundaries of dominion extend beyond Israel to the nations:

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord has them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.” I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.”

Here, a royal perspective establishes quite a different relationship between God-people-land and places the king in the position of control over the land. Israel (land and people) are still the central focus, and distinct from the nations (land and people), but the image is of land as empire, extending from “sea to sea” (Psalm 72:8). Habel describes the role of the monarch within the royal ideology of land:

In the royal ideology, the monarch separates personal rights from those of the people and claims a discrete mandate to assume ownership of the earth. YHWH is sovereign in heaven, ruling the universe from a throne on high, rather than from a place among the people. The Davidic monarch is to rule below where the “kings of the earth” rage against YHWH and the anointed one (Ps 2:2). In this chosen capacity, the monarch is designated God’s son (2:7).<sup>16</sup>

Although the monarch is the focal point of this view in relationship to the land, the implications for ordinary Israelites are not ignored. In the story of Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21), we can see the implications

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<sup>14</sup> R. L. Wilken, *The Land Called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 18. Wilken also notes that 2 Maccabees is the first Jewish writing after Zechariah to use the term, and contains the first use in Greek (2 Macc 1:1–10): Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 24–25.

<sup>15</sup> Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 17–35 (royal ideology); 75–96 (prophetic ideology of Jeremiah).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–26.

of the royal ideology for the rights of the poor, or ordinary, Israelite. Naboth rejects the king's claims to his ancestral land, appealing to a covenantal relationship and drawing a sharp contrast between two views of land.<sup>17</sup> Yahweh sides with Naboth in Elijah's rebuke of King Ahab, and Brueggemann notes that Micah 2:1–3, where those who seize fields and oppress "a man and his inheritance" are condemned, "could well be a commentary on the Naboth episode."<sup>18</sup> Yahweh sides with the poor against those who would attempt to take their inherited land from them.

### 1.3. *The Land in Jewish Literature*

In Jewish writings from the Second Temple period, there are fewer references to the land than in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>19</sup> Still, the land is often in view, and continues to form a significant part of hopes concerning the future of Israel.

The book of Tobit dates to the second or third century BCE. Copies of the writing in Hebrew and Aramaic are found at Qumran, indicating its continuing value, at least to the community. In this writing, a "Diaspora romance," Tobit advises his son Tobias to marry from among his own tribe and not among foreigners; Tobias is told:

Remember, my son, that Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our ancestors of old, all took wives from among their kindred. They were blessed in their children, and their posterity will inherit the land. (4:12)

Here, the covenantal relationships represented in Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are highlighted, as well as the promise of inheritance of the land. Tobit's final declarations before dying verify that though "all of our kindred, inhabitants of the land of Israel, will be scattered and taken as captives from the good land; and the whole land of Israel will be desolate," nevertheless "God will again have mercy on them, and will bring them back to the land of Israel" (14:4). The vision for the future focuses on the sacred places of land and temple. Even if "all the nations in the whole world will all be converted" (14:6), these places are in view:

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<sup>17</sup> W. Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, OBT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 93–97.

<sup>18</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Davies, *Gospel and the Land*, 49.

All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together; they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety forever in the land of Abraham, and it will be given over to them. (14:7)

The theme of gathering appears in other literature of this time, and issues relating to the land emerge. In texts such as Baruch 4:4 and 5:5 and *Psalms of Solomon* 11.2, Israel's children are gathered from east and west to the land, and in particular Jerusalem. As Dale Allison notes,

In Jewish tradition "east and west" first calls to mind not the Gentile world but the Jewish Diaspora. This is because, from a Palestinian perspective, Assyria and Babylon, where there was a concentration of exiled Jews, were to the east while Egypt, which was also a centre of the Diaspora, was in the other direction.<sup>20</sup>

Geography is important to such descriptions, as the gathering happens in relationship to the central places in Jewish conceptions of place—that is, it is *to* the land and Jerusalem. Related to these traditions are those which envision the return of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Here we have texts such as 11QT LVII, 5–6, 4 *Ezra* 13.32–50, 2 *Baruch* 78.1–7 and *Sibylline Oracles* 2.170–173, as well as various references in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. This suggests a return of these tribes to take their rightful places within the land.

However, while noting the importance of the land to these hopes for the future, we should also note how such texts can redraw the covenantal relationship to the land and actually de-emphasize its significance. Betsy Halpern-Amaru, in her study of *Land and Covenant in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, concludes that both eschatologically oriented texts (*Jubilees* and the *Testament of Moses*) and historically oriented texts (*Pseudo-Philo* and Josephus' *Antiquities*) develop other aspects of the covenantal relationship between God and his people and actually "deemphasise the theological significance of the Land."<sup>21</sup> The present realities for the authors, and specifically the current situation in the land of their time, necessitated a reinterpretation of the connections between God-people-land in terms of the law and eschatology.

<sup>20</sup> D. Allison, *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), 180.

<sup>21</sup> B. Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible: Land and Covenant in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 116. See also her "Land Theology in Philo and Josephus," in *The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives*, ed. L. A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 63–93.

Still, land does not disappear, and Halpern Amaru notes how Josephus, writing from Rome for Roman readers, would have very good reason to delete any role for the land from Israel's future expectations. However,

Even Josephus, whom we know would have cause for such a deletion [of the eschatological content of the land promise], includes the Land in the divine predictions he substitutes for the covenant structure and dangerously alludes to the Land functioning as a vibrant mother country in some future time.<sup>22</sup>

From the perspective of the book of *Jubilees* also, Israel will be located within the land at the end time. The purity of the land is highlighted, yet new beliefs regarding impure spirits play a role in the purity of the land in the future:

And Jubilees will pass until Israel is purified from all the sin of fornication, and defilement, and uncleanness, and sin and error. And they will dwell in confidence in the land. And then it will not have any Satan or any evil (one). And the land will be purified from that time and forever (*Jub.* 50.5).

Here, the conventional associations of keeping purity within the land are maintained, and new beliefs about purity from evil spirits are added to the “thinking of the land” in terms of purity and an ideal future in the land.<sup>23</sup> The ideal model of Israel (land and people), distinguished from the nations (land and people), has been expanded to take into account contemporary beliefs. There is even the suggestion in *Jubilees* that not all who are related to the category of Israel by descent will be included. Although land is not an unproblematic symbol, and meanings may shift with other covenantal aspects being emphasised more than the land, it still had a place in the orientation of such texts.

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<sup>22</sup> Halpern-Amaru, *Rewriting the Bible*, 126–127.

<sup>23</sup> See J. K. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980), 112–128. See also his *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew*, *Studies of the New Testament and Its World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 58–59. On the land as a model of utopia, see J. J. Collins, “Models of Utopia in the Biblical Tradition,” in *A Wise and Discerning Mind: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, ed. S. M. Olyan and R. Culley (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 51–67; and Mary Ann Beavis’ discussion and modification of Collins’ framework in *Jesus and Utopia: Looking for the Kingdom of God in the Roman World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006).



## 2. *Perspectives on Land from the Early Church*

Moving from this discussion of aspects of the land in Jewish tradition, it is appropriate to turn to the context of the early church and to investigate views of the land which may be detected there. Taking this “continuum approach” will allow us to place Jesus’ proclamation (and how it may incorporate beliefs about the land) at the center of a discussion of Jewish spatial models of the land and early Christian spatial interpretations.<sup>24</sup> When we move to consider the New Testament texts and early church writings, we have a smaller amount of material which treats the land promise as part of the covenantal relationship than we encountered in our discussion of Jewish literature. W. D. Davies described the task as one of assiduous combing through the New Testament in order to look for “stray indications at least of a direct involvement with the theme.”<sup>25</sup> He is correct to state that what emerges from the New Testament texts is not a clearly developed understanding of the relationship of the new community to the land, but rather allusions to the issue and an indirect treatment. Davies concludes his study of *The Gospel and the Land* by attempting to draw lines between Jesus, the early Church, and Judaism’s responses to expectations regarding the land in covenantal relationship:

Jesus, as far as we can gather, paid little attention to the relationship between Yahweh, and Israel and the land. But we have seen indications that the Early Church was so concerned. This concern was part of the matrix which led to that process, often treated, whereby Jesus was increasingly draped in an apocalyptic mantle and specifically Jewish expectations developed in the Church in a form highly enhanced from that which they had assumed in Jesus’ own teaching. Where were these expectations to be fulfilled? Judaism had given its answer in terms of the centrality of the land and the indestructible connection between it and Yahweh and Israel. The Church came both to reject and to transmute this answer in various ways. After struggles which we can now only glimpse with difficulty, she remained true to the intent of her Lord.

This fairly neatly connects Jesus to the expectations of the early Church and establishes a difference vis-à-vis Judaism. However, diversity exists

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<sup>24</sup> See Tom Holmén’s essay, “An Introduction to the Continuum Approach,” in idem, ed., *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2007), 1–16, esp. 11–13.

<sup>25</sup> Davies, *Gospel and the Land*, 369.

among the beliefs relating to the land in the early period of the church, as we seen in the case of Judaism. Land was an important issue at this time, even if direct references to the promise of the land had the potential to be problematic for Jews, Christians and indeed Jesus himself in the political context of the Roman Empire. In the second century, early chiliast beliefs, such as those articulated in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies* (*Haer.* 5.32, 5.35) and Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* (25–26, 113–120), look to the promise of inheritance of the land in the future.<sup>26</sup> One particular passage in Justin's *Dialogue* merits particular notice:

And Trypho remarked, "What is this you say? That none of us [i.e., the Jews] shall inherit anything on the holy mountain of God?" And I [Justin] replied, "I do not say so; but those who have persecuted and do persecute Christ, if they do not repent, shall not inherit anything on the holy mountain. But the Gentiles, who have believed on Him, and have repented of the sins which they have committed, they shall receive the inheritance along with the patriarchs and the prophets, and the just men who are descended from Jacob, even although they neither keep the Sabbath, nor are circumcised, nor observe the feasts. Assuredly, they shall receive the holy inheritance of God" (*Dial.* 25–26).

Here, the traditional boundaries at the largest level of separation, between Israel (land and people) and the nations (land and people), have been completely rethought and redrawn. It is specifically stated that the Gentile Christians do not follow the distinctive practices of the Jews (Sabbath observance, circumcision, feasts) which serve as identity markers, and yet they will inherit the patriarchal promises. Through belief in Jesus and repentance of their sins, they have attained this status. Those Jews who "persecute Christ" without repenting will not receive the promised inheritance. For Justin, Christians of true faith believe that Jerusalem will be rebuilt and that Jesus—the replacement Joshua—will redistribute the holy land in a "new manner" and with eternal possession after the resurrection (117). This appropriation of the land promise indeed shows a radical reinterpretation of group boundaries. It is comparable, though strikingly different, to the notion at Qumran that even some among Israel cannot be purified because they do not follow the rule of the community (1QS III, 4–6). Here, in Justin's remarks, Israel is not excluded categorically (only those who

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<sup>26</sup> See Wilken, *Land Called Holy*, 55–62.

persecute Christ), and non-observant Gentiles are included. There are still boundaries associated with the inheritance of the holy land, though these boundary lines do not fall neatly at the distinction between Jew and Gentile. Though Justin is writing at a later period than the New Testament authors, this shows that the land promise continued to hold a place in (some) Christian thought as part of the process of articulating boundaries and expectations for the new group.

In Paul's writings, where obedience to the law is a major concern, the land does not feature prominently, though Seth Turner has argued that Paul's beliefs about the kingdom included an interim terrestrial reign (1 Thess 4:13–18; 1 Cor 15:22–28).<sup>27</sup> Paul does not make direct reference to the land promise, but he does refer to the promises to Abraham in Romans 4 and Galatians 3. In Romans 4, he recalls the promises and covenant with Abraham in Genesis 12 and 15. Rather than emphasising the land, however, he focuses on the promise that God will make Abraham a great nation (Gen 12:2) and that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars (Gen 15:5–6). The faith of Abraham, rather than adherence to the law, is the key to the fulfilment of the promises:

The promise to Abraham and his descendants, that they should inherit the world (κόσμου), did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (Romans 4:13)

Paul changes the focus of the promise from the specific land to the broader world (κόσμος). Those who do not obey the law (traditionally associated with 'the thinking of the land') are able to benefit from the promise and to count themselves among the descendants of Abraham. Even if we agree that Paul "spoke no unambiguous word about the land,"<sup>28</sup> nevertheless the apostle clearly evokes the covenantal relationship between God-people-land, even though he redraws this significantly. Speaking of "the promise to Abraham" and the "inheritance of the world" avoids direct mention of the land; however, it does not lose its ties to the larger discourse about the relationship between God, people (however they are defined), and land.<sup>29</sup> Reinterpreting this tra-

<sup>27</sup> S. Turner, "The Interim, Earthly Messianic Kingdom in Paul," *JSNT* 25.3 (2003): 323–342.

<sup>28</sup> Davies, *Gospel and the Land*, 185.

<sup>29</sup> Jorunn Økland shows in the case of Paul's use of the term *naos* in 1 Corinthians that the metaphor "has kept strong ties to the original field of connotation... it evokes an extra-textual discourse which shapes the production of meaning in the text":

dition and emphasizing other aspects of the covenant more than the land is comparable to the tendency identified by Halpern-Amaru in various writings of the Second Temple period. It is important to note that the relevance of the land has not disappeared completely from such writings. In the New Testament, the land promise features prominently in Stephen's speech in Acts 7, and the recollection of Israel's history in Hebrews is ultimately concerned with the narrative of God's people in the land, even if the focus is on Jesus as high priest and son of God who cares for the "house" built by God who is also the builder of everything (3:1–6). Recalling the Joshua narrative and the rest to be attained in the land, the author of Hebrews clearly states: 'the promise of entering his rest still stands' (4:1). It is right to exercise caution about identifying any one clear interpretation of the land emerging from the New Testament in light of the few, varied and oblique ways it is mentioned in the texts. It is too simple to propose a direct replacement of Israel (people and land) by the church (the believing Jews and Gentiles, perhaps understood in some circles as the "dispersion": James 1:1, John 11:52, 1 Peter 1:1); clearly, however, the understanding of this widest category of distinction and opposition, which includes "the land," was being rethought and redrawn within emerging Christian identities. The changing relationship to the law would necessitate at the very least a new "thinking of the land" in terms of a symbolic system and associated practices. Even with an emphasis on faith in Christ over obedience to the law, the evidence of chiliastic beliefs and even the references in Paul and Hebrews suggest that the land still played some role in the future hopes of the early church.

### 3. *The Historical Jesus and Land*

In the light of the prominent place of the land within the Jewish material regarding the land and the redrawing of boundaries which emerged within early Christianity, we now turn to consider the place of the holy land within the proclamation of Jesus. As we have seen,

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J. Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, JSNTSup 269 (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2004), 155. Though Paul does not employ metaphor here, but rather changes the language and terms of the original referent, there is still a sense of evoking the wider discourse, which shapes its meaning in this instance.

Davies concluded that Jesus was unconcerned with the covenantal relationship between God-people-land. More recently, Laaksonen's study comes to very different conclusions, arguing that Jesus did think in terms of a real, earthly restored land—God's people in God's land—in his proclamation of the kingdom.<sup>30</sup> My own study understands Jesus as a millenarian prophet who recalled the land promise in his message of the kingdom, but cautions against placing too much emphasis on the concrete nature of this promise.<sup>31</sup> If Jesus recalls the land promise in a similar manner to the sign prophets described by Josephus, there is a sense of relying on God to bring about a dramatic change to affairs. The new divine order which would be established does not necessarily require detailed mapping, though at times there may be more of an interest in this. John Collins notes that for apocalyptic literature, "the restored earthly order is never the primary focus."<sup>32</sup> Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God/heaven looks toward a new divine order and reign, but is critical of present society. This concept of the kingdom, though generally accepted as going back to Jesus himself, is famously difficult to define, and it is probably best to take a both/and approach to the nature of the kingdom: it is both earthly and heavenly, present and future.<sup>33</sup> The land promise does not map easily onto such a space, but it is helpful to remember the apocalyptic nature of Jesus' message of the kingdom. Like the sign prophets, Jesus could recall the promises of exodus and entry into the land without defining in detail what the future that God would bring would look like.

### 3.1. *The Twelve and the Land*

Jesus' group of twelve disciples has direct relevance to a discussion of Jesus and the holy land. Laaksonen rightly gives more prominence

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<sup>30</sup> J. Laaksonen, *Jesus und das Land: das Gelobte Land in der Verkündigung Jesu* (Åbo: Åbo Akademis Förlag, 2002).

<sup>31</sup> K. Wenell, *Jesus and Land: Sacred and Social Space in Second Temple Judaism*, Library of Historical Jesus Studies/Library of New Testament Studies 334 (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> J. J. Collins, "Temporality and Politics in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, ed. C. Rowland and J. Barton (London: Sheffield Academic Press), 2002, 26–43, at 39.

<sup>33</sup> For a full discussion of the Kingdom, see the relevant chapter in this volume. Gerd Theissen and Anne Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, is just one example of setting out of the different views of the Kingdom, with the indication that the best way through the different emphases is to affirm that both are firmly part of the tradition: *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis, MA: Fortress Press, 1996), 240–264.

than Davies had previously to the role of the Twelve in Jesus' vision of the kingdom.<sup>34</sup> As noted in the ideology of the book of Joshua above, the twelve tribes and twelve territories were a symbolic indication of all Israel receiving their allotted inheritance in the land. Within the overall story of Israel, the tribes were under the leadership of Moses during the wandering in the wilderness, looking forward to their entry into the land. Jesus' calling of the twelve disciples is a symbolic and prophetic action, comparable to the actions of the so-called sign prophets described by Josephus. These prophetic figures recall Israel's history, in particular the themes of exodus and the entry into the promised land. The Samaritan prophet promises the restoration of the holy vessels of the Gerizim temple (*Ant.* 18.85–87), Theudas gathers his followers to see the parting of the Jordan (*Ant.* 20.97–99), and several anonymous prophets promise signs and wonders in the wilderness (*Ant.* 20.167–168, *War* 2.259). The Egyptian prophet's followers expect to see the walls of Jerusalem fall like Jericho (Acts 21:38, *Ant.* 20.169–172, *War* 2.261). John the Baptist too is a figure of this type. His baptism in the Jordan river also evokes Israel's story of entry into the land.<sup>35</sup> Craig Evans notes that the mention of "stones" in Matthew 3:9 could suggest the narrative of Joshua and the altar built of twelve stones upon crossing the Jordan river (Joshua 4:21–22).<sup>36</sup> Set in this context, the Twelve are an important group for any discussion of Jesus in relationship to the land. Though Crossan and others have argued that the Twelve arose after Jesus' death and were part of the proclamation in the early community,<sup>37</sup> it is not clear why they would have

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<sup>34</sup> Laaksonen, *Jesus und das Land*, 333–371. See also my own study, where the Twelve are viewed as having a strong symbolic tie to the story of Israel in the land: K. J. Wenell, *Jesus and Land*, 104–138.

<sup>35</sup> On the sign prophets, Jesus and John, noting the themes of exodus and entry, see S. McKnight, "Jesus and Prophetic Actions," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 10.2 (2000): 197–232.

<sup>36</sup> C. A. Evans, "The Baptism of John in a Typological Context," in *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. S. E. Porter and A. R. Cross, JSNTSup 234 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 43–71, at 50–52.

<sup>37</sup> See, e.g., J. D. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus: Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996); A. van Aarde, "The Historicity of the Circle of the Twelve: All Roads Lead to Jerusalem," *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 55.4 (1999): 795–826. Older studies include P. Vielhauer, "Gottesreich und Menschensohn in der Verkündigung Jesu," in *Festschrift für Gunther Dehn, zum 75. Geburtstag am 18. April 1957*, ed. W. Schneemelcher (Neukirchen: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1957), 51–79; and W. Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, vol. 2 (Gütersloh: Güterloher Verlagshaus, 1986), v.

been invented as a group when they have a limited role in the spread of the gospel, and the group do seem to be firmly placed in the earliest traditions.<sup>38</sup> Richard Bauckham points out how the Twelve as a group basically drop out of the story Luke tells in Acts after chapter 11. From this point, James and the elders replace the group.<sup>39</sup> In his most recent treatment of Jesus and the gospels, Bauckham has upheld the authenticity of the twelve, noting their importance as a group (not as individuals) and as eyewitnesses for the shape of the story of Jesus.<sup>40</sup> As for the meaning of the group of the Twelve, Scot McKnight has highlighted the role of the Twelve in evoking the themes of covenant renewal and eschatological restoration.<sup>41</sup> Dale Allison also makes a connection between the Twelve and eschatology, noting the Q tradition (22:28–30) where the Twelve judge or rule the twelve tribes of Israel: “This assumes that the twelve tribes will soon come home to the land.”<sup>42</sup> This particular tradition can also be connected with another Q tradition (13:28–29) where a gathering from east and west is indicated. This implies as well that the gathering is *to* somewhere, and that is the land of Israel. Although it is frequently recognized that the existence of the Twelve indicates that Jesus’ message was for “all Israel,” meaning the people of Israel, it is less common for the spatial or territorial aspect of the group to be recognized. The Twelve raise the further, related question as to whether in Jesus’ mission, the restoration of Israel alluded to a return from exile.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.2. *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*

It is quite surprising that in a substantial work which understands Jesus as announcing the “real return from exile,” the land does not feature more prominently in N. T. Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of*

<sup>38</sup> J. P. Meier, “The Circle of the Twelve: Did it Exist During Jesus’ Public Ministry?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116.4 (1997): 635–72. See also E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 98–106.

<sup>39</sup> R. Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” in *idem*, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 415–480.

<sup>40</sup> R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 93–113.

<sup>41</sup> S. McKnight, “Jesus and the Twelve,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11.2 (2001): 203–231.

<sup>42</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MA: Fortress Press, 1998), 102.

<sup>43</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, *Christian Origins and the Question of God 2* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 299.

*God.* Wright gives a cursory treatment of the land, and dismisses its importance in Jesus' call to give up possessions. He says:

Closely linked with the eschatological call to cut loose from family ties was the similar call to sit loose to possessions. For most people in the ancient world, the most basic possession was land; for Jews, the land was of course the holy land, promised by YHWH to his people.<sup>44</sup>

Another comparison Wright makes is with the pearl of great price: "The kingdom was available to those who sold everything else; among the things that would have to be sold was the traditional symbol of the sacred land itself."<sup>45</sup> The eschatological promise of the kingdom was not the inheritance of the land; rather, it "swallowed up" this promise. Scot McKnight, who also views Jesus as proclaiming the restoration of Israel, more closely relates the promises of the kingdom to the promise of the land, where the message of Jesus addresses Israel's hopes: "the return from exile, the coming of God to Zion, the inheritance of the whole land, the expulsion of God's enemies from the land, the creation of a new heart for obedience to God's Torah, the reversal of injustices, and the glorious fellowship of the unified family of God."<sup>46</sup> If Jesus taps into these hopes in the context of rural Galilee, it is worth considering one aspect of Wright's statement: the role the land played in the socio-economic life in the ancient world. Jack Pastor states:

The economy of the Jewish people in Eretz Israel throughout the Second Temple period retained certain characteristics. Most lived by agriculture, so that land was the source of livelihood, wealth and power. Much of the land was owned by the ruler, whoever he was. Royal lands were an integral part of the landholding structure from the First Temple period through the talmudic age. These lands provided the crown with personal wealth, control over economically significant products, such as balsam, and a reserve of land to be allocated to whomever the ruler wished to advance. The actual work on the royal lands was performed by tenants who were either share-croppers or lessees.<sup>47</sup>

Although Morten Jenson cautions against painting a "picture of conflict" in Galilee under Herod Antipas and against viewing Jesus as

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<sup>44</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 299.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 429.

<sup>46</sup> S. McKnight, *A New Vision for Israel: The Teachings of Jesus in National Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 154.

<sup>47</sup> J. Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1997), 168.



“provoked by and opposed to” his reign, he still recognises the situation of poverty which would have existed and which is addressed in the gospels: “It is even beyond doubt that poverty was a persistent fact of life in this period and that, Antipas or not, the presence of a social prophet would not be surprising in view of the discontent that prevailed.”<sup>48</sup> John Dominic Crossan and the archaeologist Jonathan Reed consider the connections between kingdom and land. Here, both Jesus’ and John the Baptist’s ideas about kingdom were in contrast with the Herodian view of kingdom. The law was concerned with debt in relationship to the land and tried to mediate or curtail the negative implications in different ways, thus showing, in the estimation of Crossan and Reed, “what a covenantal kingdom might look like.” They highlight the fertility of the land and its value:

Actually, however, it is not the land itself, but the food it produces that is the material basis of life. The just distribution of land is about the just distribution of food. That is why those visions of the eschatological and/or apocalyptic Kingdom of God imagine not more and more land, but more and more fertility.<sup>49</sup>

They further argue that in Jesus’ context in Galilee, land redistribution could not be attempted, but redistribution of “eating and healing, of the material and spiritual bases of life” was possible and defined the kingdom of God.<sup>50</sup> Certainly, in the gospels there is a concern with the poor and with tenant farmers and day laborers who worked directly from the land. Sean Freyne describes the dominant ethos in Galilee as a “market economy which functions in favour of the ruling elite and their administrative retainers.”<sup>51</sup> Herod Antipas’ development of Galilee, and in particular Sepphoris and Tiberias, may be seen to reflect the royal ideology we encountered in the Hebrew Bible, where the monarch assumes control of the land and the mediation of its wealth (*Antiquities* 18.37). In this context, Jesus’ eschatological message recalled a different land ideology and a contrasting under-

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<sup>48</sup> M. Jensen, “Herod Antipas in Galilee: Friend or Foe of the Historical Jesus?” *JSHJ* 5.1 (2007): 7–32, at 32.

<sup>49</sup> Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 134.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>51</sup> S. Freyne, “Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee”, in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts in their Textual and Situational Contexts: Essays in Honour of Lars Hartman*, ed. D. Hellholm and T. Fornberg (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 597–622, at 609.

standing of kingdom. He espouses “a prophetic critique of the dominant prevailing ethos, based on covenantal ideals for a restored Israel, within an apocalyptic framework that made it possible to imagine and propose a radically different lifestyle and values.”<sup>52</sup> We cannot separate understandings of the land as *storied land* (in Brueggman’s terminology)<sup>53</sup> from the social and political realities encountered within the land.<sup>54</sup> Both aspects will inform each other, so that the story of the holy land may be adapted and revised in the light of particular situations; conversely, there may be a desire for change to the structures of society in the light of how the stories of place—the land—are read.

### 3.3. *Land and Temple: The Sower*

William Herzog considers parabolic material, particularly the parable of the sower (Mark 4:3–9) and the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26–29), in relationship to the question of the land, and suggests that “Jesus’ strategy was to separate the temple from the land and to critique the domination systems found throughout his world.”<sup>55</sup> With regard to the sower, here Jesus emphasises in the first three examples the negative verbs of devouring, scorching and choking. This is in contrast with the seed which falls onto “the good land” (τὴν γῆν τὴν καλὴν). Here, there is an affinity with the passages which mention the positive qualities of the promised land, “flowing with milk and honey” (Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5, etc.). Therefore, the problem is not with the land itself, but with forces which bring harm to the seed (birds, sun and thorns) which would have grown up in the fruitful land. Although their rulers may attempt to blame the peasants for their inability to observe the Torah by tithing on the land and paying Temple taxes, the blame belongs rightly with the elites “who take almost everything and leave almost nothing.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the seed growing secretly on the land which produces “by itself” indicates for Jesus a focus on the land which does not require the temple system for its productivity: “The land does not require the

<sup>52</sup> Freyne. “Jesus and the Urban Culture,” 611.

<sup>53</sup> Brueggemann, *The Land*, 185.

<sup>54</sup> See here also S. Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), where he relates the stories of conquest and settlement to the Jesus story and the place of Israel and the tribes within it (60–91).

<sup>55</sup> W.R. Herzog, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 191.

<sup>56</sup> Herzog, *Jesus, Justice*, 195.

sacrificial system and elaborate purity injunctions to ensure its fertility. The land produces seemingly by itself, reflecting the invisible generative power that derives from the blessings of the covenant God, a blessing unrelated to the machinations of the temple and the manipulations of the priests.<sup>57</sup> Here, Herzog detects an allusion to the sabbatical year for the land as found in the Pentateuch (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:2–7). He concludes:

Jesus saw the fertility of the land as a symbol of the continuing covenant of God with the people of the land, a covenant to which all had access through the brokering role that Jesus had assumed.<sup>58</sup>

If Jesus is indeed creating a wedge between the temple system in Jerusalem and the land, this could be quite a dangerous allusion to make. A comparison could be made with Jesus son of Ananias, who spoke against the temple and was considered to be a threat by Rome (*War* 6.300). By using the parabolic form, Jesus could tap into hopes about the land and the promise of God to his people to sustain them in the land without directly provoking sensitivities around these issues. Though the temple and the land are connected in Jewish understandings of sacred space, this does not exclude the possibility of criticizing one element in the system while affirming another. Support for the separation of the land and the temple may exist in the two major symbolic actions of Jesus. We have already noted the importance of the calling of the Twelve as a symbolic action of Jesus. This is a positive symbol which points toward a future when the promises of God for Israel would be fulfilled. The other major symbolic action of Jesus is of course the action in the temple. Though much has been said about this action in terms of its symbolism of the destruction of the temple, it should also be noted that there is no particular element in the action to symbolize restoration.<sup>59</sup> The identification of a positive symbol (related to the Twelve) and a negative symbol (related to the Temple) within Jesus' activity would fit with Herzog's interpretation of the parable of the sower.

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<sup>57</sup> Herzog, *Jesus, Justice*, 196–197.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>59</sup> J. Riches, "Apocalyptic—Strangely Relevant," in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. W. Horbury (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 237–263, at 246. See also Wenell, *Jesus and Land*, 49–52.

In contrast to Herzog's view, Peter Walker considers that, although the gospels do not have a great deal to say about the land explicitly, they do have a fair amount to say about the temple. Therefore, since "the temple, the city and the land were understood as three interconnecting theological *realia*,"<sup>60</sup> understanding one aspect of this triad might indicate Jesus' attitude towards the others. For Walker, Jesus took the temple as his model, but himself replaced the temple, ultimately superseding these three Jewish *realia*. In light of the different views and emphases with regard to the land that we have noted in the relevant Jewish and New Testament literature, it would seem preferable to keep open the possibility that Jesus could have adopted different attitudes to these three aspects. Although with different conclusions and a different approach from that of Walker, William Horbury also connects land and temple, noting the links in Jewish tradition between 'land, sanctuary and worship' and argues,

[T]here is a good case for seeing in Jesus himself, together with a strongly Israelite loyalty, an ethical emphasis tending to relativize land, sanctuary and sacrifice. The gospels do suggest, however, that these things mattered in themselves whenever Jesus was regarded as messiah—during the ministry... and in any case among those who first circulated and edited these gospel traditions.<sup>61</sup>

This is not the place to examine Jesus' attitude toward the temple in detail (see the relevant chapter in this volume), but it is at least possible that Jesus did view land and temple differently in his mission and message of the kingdom (including its ethical dimensions), and Herzog's suggestion, considered above, should not be discounted merely on the basis of the (undoubtedly) strong connections between the land and the temple.

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<sup>60</sup> P. Walker, "The Land in the New Testament", in *The Land of Promise: Biblical, Theological and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. P. Johnston and P. Walker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 81–120, at 101. See also P. Walker, "Christians and Jerusalem, Past and Present," in idem, ed., *The Mountain of the Lord: Israel and the Churches* (Northampton: The Becket Press, 1996), 107–130.

<sup>61</sup> W. Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context*, J. Barclay and J. Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 207–224, at 218.

### 3.4. *Borders of the Land, Borders of the Kingdom*

Returning to the segmentary model of Israel (land and people) and the nations (land and peoples), it is important to consider where Jesus may have drawn boundary lines for his group and for God's kingdom. In each version of the story of the Syrophoenician/Canaanite woman, both in Mark (7:24–30) and in Matthew (15:22–28), the woman is a Gentile; Matthew makes her a particular type of Gentile, one belonging to the nation which previously occupied the land. In Matthew's reworking of the story of the Syrophoenician woman (Mark 15:21–28), the boundaries of Israel (land and people) are brought to the fore. John Riches says,

Interestingly, Matthew himself underlines the sense in which this story is about precisely the boundaries which protect the Jewish group. The woman's Gentile identity is underlined by using a term rich in associations with Israel's history of occupation of the Land, a Canaanite; she in turn refers to Jesus as Son of David and Lord.<sup>62</sup>

Even recognizing this as Matthew's shaping of this particular story in a gospel where he has previously limited Jesus' mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (10:6), this story in both its forms calls into question the boundaries and opposition between "Israel" and the "nations." Also, as Allison points out, the gathering passage in Q (Luke 13:28–29//Matt 8:11–12) indicates that "it is those outside the borders of Israel who are redeemed whereas those inside, or at least some of them, fall under judgment."<sup>63</sup> In like manner to the prophets (e.g., Jeremiah and Ezekiel), "Jesus apparently used the restoration of the exiles to threaten those close at hand who had not supported his cause."<sup>64</sup> Thus, placement in the land does not guarantee salvation in the coming eschatological crisis. In the light of the spread of the gospel to the Gentile world, it may be best to understand some degree of weakening of this boundary in Jesus' mission. Also, Jesus' use of kingdom imagery (by Jesus himself or by his followers) could be interpreted in a manner similar to the kingdom ideology we discussed in the Hebrew Bible where the God's kingdom extends to become an empire, with Israel as land and people retaining its identity in this model.

<sup>62</sup> Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies*, 244.

<sup>63</sup> Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 144–145.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

The question of whether Jesus might have included Samaria in the borders of the land is raised by David Catchpole's discussion of Jesus and the Samaritans. Catchpole considers whether Jesus' mission strategy was open to the Samaritans to include them. He considers here the text in Luke where Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem, enters a Samaritan village (9:51–56). Though they "did not receive him" (9:53), Jesus rejects the suggestion of James and John that the Samaritans be judged with consuming fire from heaven. Catchpole identifies a pre-Lukan tradition which "drops a substantial hint that Jesus' mission was not just to unambiguous Israel but also to the ambiguous community of the Samaritans."<sup>65</sup> Therefore, as Catchpole argues, in line with the Q tradition of Luke 22:30//Matt 19:28, Jesus could well have had as part of his mission strategy an extension to the Samaritans who traced their ancestry to the two half tribes of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. It may be worth noting that among the Twelve, there is no member who is designated as a Samaritan, but in the light of the broader symbolism of the number twelve, the possibility of openness to Samaritans is not out of the question.

One further point on the boundaries that are in view in Jesus' message of the kingdom relates to the Beelzebul controversy in Mark 3:20–30. Halvor Moxnes does not draw out the implications for the land in detail, but he notes that the description of Jesus' exorcisms in the Beelzebul controversy presents an image of two territories in conflict: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

The realms of Satan and of God are, so to speak, laid on the world that Jesus and his hearers inhabit. They are figures of speech or "spaces of representation" that give to experiences of being possessed and to exorcisms a spatial dimension. Against the attempt by the community leaders to marginalize Jesus, to make him one with the possessed that he healed, Jesus brings the issue of possession and exorcisms to centre stage with spatial imagery. He does not just say that he did the exorcisms by the power of God, but that God was establishing his kingdom. The images of the realm ruled by Herod Antipas and the Romans would easily come to mind. And in this context, *basileia* clearly has a connotation that identified kingdom with power over a place, a territory.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> D. Catchpole, *Jesus People: The Historical Jesus and the Beginning of Community* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), 188.

<sup>66</sup> H. Moxnes, *Putting Jesus in His Place: A Radical Vision of Household and Kingdom* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 136.

Jesus' exorcisms indicate God's power in the present situation; as manifestations of this power, they "signal that God establishes his kingdom over the land."<sup>67</sup> As we saw in the discussion above, the *Book of Jubilees* looked forward to a time when Israel's land would be purified from satanic forces. Jesus associates the language of purity and impurity with spirits in the gospels, and Matthew 12:43–45//Luke 11:24–26 gives a very spatial description of demonic movement:

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, "I will return to my house from which I came." When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation.

Spirits roaming the earth in this manner do not respect the boundaries of the land (Cf. *1 Enoch* 16.1; *Jubilees* 50.5). Jesus' casting out of demons in the present is not a permanent purification of the land from the grip of demonic power. It shows two kingdoms struggling for power within the socio-political territory of the land under Herodian and Roman rule. There are large questions surrounding the interpretation of Mark 7 for the historical Jesus which we do not have the space to discuss here. It may be noted briefly, however, that whether or not Jesus obeyed the purity laws of oral and/or written law, the keeping of such laws does not emerge in the tradition as the primary boundary marker for Jesus and his group.<sup>68</sup> For Jesus, the "thinking of the kingdom" is defined in other ways.

#### 4. Conclusion: Matthew 5.5, the Land and Group Identity

Matthew 5:5 constitutes the most direct statement about the land in the gospels. As part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel, the Beatitudes have been shaped, following tradition, to the form we find them in the text, and they cannot be established as authentic. The phrase κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν in Matthew 5:5 appears in the same form (though without the article) in Psalm 37 in the Septuagint,

<sup>67</sup> Moxnes, *Jesus in His Place*, 141.

<sup>68</sup> See T. Kazen, *Jesus and Purity Halakhah: Was Jesus Indifferent to Impurity?* Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series 38 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002).

where it is normally translated into English as “inherit the land.” Scot McKnight views this and the other Beatitudes as describing the future blessings and promises of the kingdom, including land.<sup>69</sup> Even though we can not establish the particular phrase as authentic, its usefulness for group identity may be highlighted. Psalm 37.11 is also commented upon in a Qumran peshet where its interpretation is given as follows:

And the poor shall inherit the land and enjoy peace in plenty. Its interpretation concerns the congregation of the poor who will tolerate the period of distress and will be rescued from all the snares of Belial. Afterwards, all who shall inherit the land will enjoy and grow fat with everything... of the flesh (1Q171 II, 9–12).

Here, the group, “the congregation of the poor,” is clearly associated with the text and the eventual inheritance of the promise. Elsewhere, the community sees itself as a “holy house for Israel” chosen to “atone for the land” (1QS VII, 5–6, 10). The re-interpretation of this particular phrase from Psalm 37, for Qumran or for early Christianity (as evidenced in Matthew’s Gospel), opens up an opportunity for a group to fill in boundaries of their own and to make claims to the promise of inheritance of the land. It is possible to identify with the promise and to claim it for “our group” with “our boundaries” of correct behavior and belief.

The importance of the holy land for Jesus should not be underestimated or overestimated. Jesus’ message of the kingdom has several aspects that would relate to the spatial component of what it meant to be “Israel” as both land and people. We may include: the Twelve as indicative of a gathering into the land; the kingdom as a concept with royal territorial connotations; Jesus’ reputation as a “wandering charismatic” (in Gerd Theissen’s terminology) who does not have a fixed location within the land, recalling the period of wandering prior to entry into the land; Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan by John and his association of the language of purity and impurity—connected to the “thinking of the land”—with spirits and two kingdoms in conflict, that of God and that of Beelzebul. In a continuum perspective, Matthew 5:5 may be read as a valid interpretation of Jesus’ mission and message of the kingdom, extending God’s promise to Israel (land and people) to those meek—“our group”—who would be followers.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> McKnight, *A New Vision*, 153–154.

<sup>70</sup> R. Bauckham, “James and the Jerusalem Church,” 428.





## JESUS AND SINNERS AND OUTCASTS

BRUCE CHILTON

This is one of the few topics in the study of Jesus in which the framing of the question brought to the gospels by modern inquiry corresponds to Jesus' own framing of the issue, insofar as the texts represent his perspective (Matt 11:7–19; Luke 7:24–35):

<sup>7</sup> Yet while they were proceeding Jesus said to the crowds about John, What did you go out into the wilderness to observe? Reed shaken by wind? <sup>8</sup> But what did you go out to see? A man attired in soft clothes? See: those in kings' houses bear soft clothes! <sup>9</sup> But why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is he concerning whom it is written, See: I delegate my messenger before your face, who will ready your way before you. <sup>11</sup> Amen I say to you, there has not been raised among women-born one greater than John the Immerser! But the least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he! <sup>12</sup> Yet from the days of John the Immerser until now, the kingdom of the heavens avails itself, and availers seize it! <sup>13</sup> Because all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, <sup>14</sup> and if you want to accept, *he* is Elijah who is going to come. <sup>15</sup> The one having ears, Listen! <sup>16</sup> To what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the markets who shout to the others, saying,

<sup>24</sup> Yet while the messengers of John were going away, he began to say to the crowds concerning John, What did you go out into the wilderness to observe? Reed shaken by wind? <sup>25</sup> But what did you go out to see? A person attired in soft garments? Look: those among royals subsist in splendid apparel and luxury! <sup>26</sup> But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. <sup>27</sup> This is he concerning whom it is written, Look: I delegate my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you. <sup>28</sup> I say to you, no one among women-born is greater than John! But the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he! <sup>29</sup> All the people and the customs-agents heard and vindicated God, having been immersed with John's immersion. <sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and the lawyers annulled the counsel of God for themselves, not having been immersed by him. <sup>31</sup> To what shall I liken the humanity of this generation: and what are they like? <sup>32</sup> They are like children in market sitting and shouting to one another, that say, <sup>33</sup> We fluted for you, and

<p><sup>17</sup> We fluted for you, and you did not dance, We wailed and you did not mourn! <sup>18</sup> Because John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a demon. <sup>19</sup> The one like the person came eating and drinking, and they say, Look: a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of customs-agents and sinners. And wisdom is vindicated from her deeds.</p>	<p>you did not dance, We wailed and you did not weep! <sup>34</sup> Because John has come neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, He has a demon. <sup>35</sup> The one like the person has come eating and drinking, and you say, Look: a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of customs-agents and sinners. And wisdom is vindicated from all her children.</p>
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Contextually, Jesus' companionship with "customs-agents and sinners" is linked in both passages with issues of purity, and with Jesus' relationship to John the Immerser. Questions of the literary relationship between Matthew and Luke—or of the tradition-history of the materials they relate—do not concern us here, because the passages agree in linking the matter of companionship with the matter of purity and John the Immerser. For that reason, this essay moves in several stages: (1) the role customs-agents, and (2) their particular connection to issues of purity (and John's dedication to purity), (3) the identification of "sinners," and (4) their significance within Jesus' movement. Consideration of those four sequenced matters will then bring us (5) to a conclusion, where the role of sinners and outcasts as representative of Jesus' perspective will occupy us.

### 1. *The Role Customs-Agents*

The recent study by Fritz Herrenbrück, a detailed cultural and historical analysis, offers a suitable point of departure.<sup>1</sup> He challenges the understanding that *τελωνοι* in the gospels are to be equated with *portitores*, collectors in the service of *publicani* within Roman society. Herrenbrück's preferred models are the *τελωνοι* of the Hellenistic world (not Rome itself), local contractors ("Kleinpächter") charged with the collection of various revenues for Rome. They are "Abgabepächter," revenue contractors, rather than tax or toll collectors; "cus-

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus und die Zöllner: Historische und neutestamentlich-exegetische Untersuchungen*, WUNT 2.41 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1990), reviewed in *JBL* 111 (1992): 338–340.

toms-agents” in English conveys this sense, signaling collectors of customary payments to government.<sup>2</sup>

Herrenbrück contrasts the system of auctioning local contracts (city by city and year by year) for the collection of taxes in Greece with the system of contracting with the state (on a wider scale and for a longer period) in Rome. It is of particular interest that he documents the interpenetration of state contracts and local contracts in the case of Asia Minor.<sup>3</sup> Discussion (largely on the basis of papyri) of taxation in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman period takes up a considerable proportion of the book, in order to document a system of revenue contractors that was more tightly regulated than in Greece. That system, in turn, is the model Herrenbrück uses to understand the situation in Palestine during the first century. Despite tensions with at least strands of Pharisaism (a point to which we shall return), the revenue contractors were in Herrenbrück’s judgment well integrated socially and religiously within Judaism, and enjoyed a privileged position in terms of wealth and status.

The synoptic gospels (except for Matt 5:46–47; 18:17b, behind which Herrenbrück sees Syrian catechesis) are presented as generally reliable in the portrayal of Jesus as a friend of *τελωῶναι*. Indeed, Herrenbrück resists following the tendency of ancient and modern apologetic, which sees tribute contractors as types of sinner; he agrees rather with the translation of (*οἱ*) *τελωῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ* as “die sündigen Zöllner.” He insists that the *τελωῶναι* are to be associated with Jesus’ conscious ministry to the whole of Israel, and that attempts to invoke Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–10 as belonging to “einer sozial niederen Randgruppe” are misguided. The text of the book closes with a stunning denunciation of what he calls socio-economic dualism, to which he prefers the conception of a common devotion to God that transcends class.<sup>4</sup>

Given the breadth of Herrenbrück’s argument and the nature of the sources involved, certain questions and caveats inevitably arise. As compared to the sources for Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, those for Palestine are scarce and indirect. There is nonetheless good evidence

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<sup>2</sup> *Jesus und die Zöllner*, 37 (cf. 225). Sometimes Herrenbrück offers English renderings that confuse the issue somewhat in my view, and I have avoided them for that reason.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 103–107.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 230, 282, 285–287, 282, 293.

(skillfully handled by Herrenbrück) for the contention that during the period of Ptolemaic hegemony, Palestine was indeed taxed under a comparable system. Inference and hypothesis, however, play a greater part in the argument when the Seleucid and Hasmonean periods are characterized; the nature of the evidence is such that any argument becomes less compelling at that stage. The Roman period brings the fresh complication that the impact of political change was frequently felt within the system of taxation, although the context and results of those changes are often unclear. Herrenbrück, greatly aided by Rostovtzeff's pioneering work, documents dramatic changes introduced by Gabinius between 57 and 54 BCE, and discusses the implications of a mixed system of *publicani* and *pactiones*, as in Asia Minor.<sup>5</sup> He also follows Rostovtzeff in characterizing Caesar's reform of 47 BCE as putting an end to the privileges of the *publicani* in Judaea as well as in Asia Minor, and he denies that Augustus or Tiberius changed matters dramatically in that regard. More particularly, Herrenbrück disputes Abraham Shalit's claim that Herod attempted to establish a system along Roman lines.<sup>6</sup> Herrenbrück's exegesis of Josephus, and to a lesser extent of Rabbinic sources, gives him the better of this argument at the moment, but the Herodian settlement and the introduction of prefects into Judaea after Archelaus may well have had more implications for *τελώναι* than Herrenbrück allows. Could that sort of complication lay behind Tacitus' notice (*Ann.* 2.42.5), for example, that Syria and Judaea requested a reduction of tribute under Tiberius?

Although Herrenbrück's argument is less secure than he sometimes presents it, it remains the most convincing exposition to date, and it certainly ought to lay to rest Mommsen's simple equation of *τελώναι* and *portitores*, which has had an unaccountably long life within the history of interpretation. In the application of Herrenbrück's argument to the gospels, however, certain cautions may be observed. He nicely distances himself from the apologetics of Emil Schürer, where

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Ivanovitch Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, trans. P. M. Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); *Jesus und die Zöllner*, 185–192.

<sup>6</sup> Abraham Shalit, *König Herodes. Der Mann und sein Werk*, SJ 4, trans. Jehoshua Amir (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969); *Jesus und die Zöllner*, 187–189.

τελῶναι are types of sinner, but he at least flirts with the apologetics of Adolf Büchler, where they are types of the ever appealing עַמְמֵי הָאֵרֶץ.<sup>7</sup>

The assessment of the τελῶναι within the gospels, however, should take account of the cultural context invoked by the texts, as well as the cultural history of the period. In this respect, a persistent lacuna emerges in Herrenbrück's otherwise excellent analysis. When customs-agents appear in the synoptic gospels, they persistently do so in the setting of disputes in regard to purity (Matt 9:10–13//Mark 2:15–17//Luke 5:29–32; Matt 11:19//Luke 7:34). In Matt 5:46–47; 18:17, the assumption is that the category is negative, and the τελῶναι are explicitly linked with Gentiles, while they are paired with harlots in Matt 21:31–32. In Luke 3:12 (cf. 7:29; 15:1), they are linked with soldiers. When Matthew is identified as a τελῶνης in Matt 10:3 and Levi is so identified in Luke 5:27, the obvious inference is that Jesus' pattern of association with impure people is invoked.

The assumption throughout is of an antithesis between τελῶναι and Pharisees, as this surfaces explicitly in Luke 18:9–14. This same pattern is evident from the evidence on the side of Rabbinic literature (Mishnah tractate *Tohorot* 7:6):<sup>8</sup>

If collectors entered the house, the house is unclean. If there is a Gentile with them, they are believed to state, We did not enter. But they are not believed when they say, We entered, but we did not touch [anything]. If thieves entered the house, unclean is only the place [trodden by] the feet of the thieves. And what do they render unclean? The foods, and the liquids, and clay utensils which are open. But the couches and the seats and clay utensils which are sealed with a tight seal are clean. If there is a gentile with them, or a woman, everything is unclean.

Both the Mishnah and the gospels suppose that customs-agents raise a particular concern in regard to the purity of households, and especially of foods. Why that should have surfaced in the case of Jesus is our next section.

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<sup>7</sup> Theodor Mommsen, *Römisches Staatsrecht* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963); Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1978); Adolf Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century*, JCP 11 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928); Herrenbrück, *Jesus und die Zöllner*, 7, 189, 229–235, 254.

<sup>8</sup> This translation is adapted from Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah. A New Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); for the Hebrew, see Philip Blackman, *Mishnayot VI* (Gateshead: Judaica, 1983), 514.

## 2. *Their Particular Connection to Issues of Purity*

Jesus' practice of commensality is still commonly treated as equivalent to "cleansing all foods" (Mark 7:19)—as if that uniquely Markan construct held for Jesus' entire program in regard to purity, and as if food were the beginning and end of the issue of purity. Neither aspect of that conventional opinion has much to offer any more as an analysis of Jesus' position, but a liberal consensus, usually speaking in a Pauline idiom, makes Jesus into a cipher for grace and purity into a cipher for law. In that way, the gospels support the argument that the Torah and anything like it have been relativized by the revelation of Christ. In its present form, the consensus appears to stretch back to Adolf von Harnack.<sup>9</sup> Many "conservative" scholars attribute such a transcendence of purity to "the historical Jesus" whom they believe the gospels attest directly. In a different idiom, some scholars who proudly insist there is not much at all to be said about the figure of Jesus nonetheless find a way to have him make all foods clean: they make the Hellenistic matrix of the Gospels into an alternative to Judaic conceptions of purity.<sup>10</sup>

The liberal paradigm encounters and creates more and more anomalies, the greater our knowledge of the New Testament's development and the better our familiarity with the anthropology of purity. "Cleansing all foods" has the sheen of a universally applicable principle, until you see it demolished as such in Acts 15:13–21. Not even the liberal Jesus of conventional opinion is up to denying the laws of *kashrut*, only to have his own brother invoke them afresh. That we

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<sup>9</sup> See Wilhelm Pauck, *Harnack and Troeltsch. Two Historical Theologians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). Pauck aptly cites (31–2) Harnack's formulation in his *Wesen des Christentums*, "The Christian religion is something lofty and simple and is concerned only about one point: Eternal life in the midst of time through God's power and in his presence. It is not an ethical or social arcanum for the purpose of preserving all sorts of things or of improving them." It is the burden of Pauck's study that Harnack's liberal historical approach was consciously framed to challenge ecclesiasticism, a program which is easily instanced in the literature today.

<sup>10</sup> For a searching criticism of this Pauline reading of Jesus, courtesy of the concept of purity, see E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 172–187. More recently, see the cautions of Richard Horsley, "Jesus, Itinerant Cynic or Israelite Prophet?" in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver, Faith and Scholarship Colloquies 3 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994) 68–97, as well as his *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee. The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

are dealing with a gloss in Mark is commonly agreed (although who did the glossing is a perennial debate).<sup>11</sup> Had anything like the Markan policy been widely accepted as the dominical position, the early Christian centuries would have seen much less controversy regarding what might be eaten, and with whom than they in fact did.

A closer look at Mark 7 reveals a variety of policies in regard to purity, all of which are attributed to Jesus. An aphorism (7:14–15) speaks of the direction in which impurity flows. The assertion is easily construed in Aramaic attested from Jesus' period and place,<sup>12</sup> and is attractive when it is so rendered:

לא דמן בר אנשא / דאתה בה דמטמיה  
ברא מן דאתן מן / בר אנשא אלן דמטמיה

Representation in English can preserve the aphorism's structure:

nothing that is outside a person / entering one defiles one, except that  
things coming from / a person, these defile one.

To this teaching there are attached distinct instructions about different kinds of purity: not to make the vow of *qorban* in order to protect one's wealth from one's parents (7:6–13), not to engage in impure thoughts (7:17–23), not to insist upon hand-washing (7:1–5), and—as we have seen—a bold gloss about the significance of the teaching as a whole in regard to foods (7:19c).

Mark 7:6–13 insists that what is owed to one's parents cannot be sheltered by declaring it dedicated to the Temple. The crucial point of such a gambit of sheltering is that one might continue to use the property after its dedication, while what was given to a person would be transferred forthwith.<sup>13</sup> Complaint about the practice, especially as stated in the simple epigram of Mark 7:11–12, is consistent with taking offense at commercial arrangements associated with the cult (see Matt 17:24–27; Mark 12:41–44// Luke 21:1–4). The epigram

<sup>11</sup> See H. B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St Mark. The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 152.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the Aramaic *mashal* and its wider setting, see Chilton, "A Generative Exegesis of Mark 7:1–23," *The Journal of Higher Criticism* 3 (1996): 18–37; also in Chilton with Craig A. Evans, *Jesus in Context. Temple, Purity and Restoration*, AGJU 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 297–317.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *m. Ned.* 1:2; 3:2; 5:6; 8:7; 9:1; Z. W. Falk, "Notes and Observations on Talmudic Vows," *HTR* 59 (1966): 309–312; E. Bammel, "Gottes DIATHHKH (Gal. III.17–17) und das jüdische Rechtsdenken," *NTS* 6 (1959–60): 313–319; K. H. Rengstorff, "*korban, korbanas*," *TDNT* 3: 860–866.



about *qorban* is also hyperbolic, involving the claim that Jesus' opponents do not permit one to do *anything* for one's parents (Mark 7:12). It is reminiscent of the imagery of pearls and swine (Matt 7:6), needles and camels (Matt 19:24//Mark 10:25 //Luke 18:25), outwardly clean cups that are grossly impure (Matt 23:25//Luke 11:39).

The hyperbolic epigram has here been enveloped in a much more elaborate argument, which makes the policy about *qorban* seem different from the aphorism about defilement in rhetoric as well as in substance. Mark 7:6–13 is a syllogism, developed by means of scriptural terms of reference. Isaiah's complaint<sup>14</sup> frames the entire argument: the people claim to honor God, but their heart is as far from him as their vain worship, rooted in human commandments (Mark 7:6b–7). That statement is related in Mark 7:10–12 to the tradition of *qorban*, taken as an invalidation of the Mosaic prescription to honor parents, in both its positive<sup>15</sup> and its negative<sup>16</sup> forms. The simple and unavoidable conclusion is that the tradition violates the command of God (Mark 7:8–9, 13).

There is nothing complicated about the logic of the argument, and it can easily be structured in a different way. Matthew, in fact, takes us from the conclusion, through the Mosaic prescription in its contradiction by *qorban*, and on to the citation of Isaiah (see Matt 15:3–9). The association of similar passages is reminiscent of the rabbinic rule of interpretation, that a principle expressed in a text may be related to another passage of Scripture, without identity of wording between the two passages.<sup>17</sup> But the scriptural syllogism by no means requires the invocation of any such formal principle. The fundamental argument is that the Law and the Prophets (the latter in a Septuagintal form, referring to the "commandments of men" in Isa 29:13) are antithetical to the practice of authorities in the Temple.

The next change in rhetoric and setting, however, is of far greater importance in shaping the received meaning of the passage. The rhetorical moves involved are, to begin with, private comment and

<sup>14</sup> In Isa 29:13; the form of the quotation is closest to that of the Septuagint, but is identical to no known ancient version.

<sup>15</sup> See Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16.

<sup>16</sup> See Exod 21:17; Lev 20:9.

<sup>17</sup> See Chilton and Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and Israel's Scriptures," in *Studying the Historical Jesus. Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Chilton and Evans, *New Testament Tools and Studies* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 281–335, esp. 294–295.

catalogue (Mark 7:17–23).<sup>18</sup> In a house, apart from the crowd, the disciples ask Jesus what he means in his parabolic aphorism concerning what defiles (7:17). He replies in a way that makes “what goes into a person” the exact equivalent of food, passing through the stomach and into the latrine, where its risible lack of importance at last becomes obvious even to the uninitiated (7:18–19). What proceeds from a person, however, is equated with a list of “bad thoughts”: fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, and foolishness, these are the evils which are said to defile a person (7:20–23).

The two forms of rhetoric, the comment and the catalogue, are symmetrical. The comment, in response to a question (vv. 17–19), specifies that Jesus’ original saying had refuted the impurity of foods. The explicit gloss at the end of v. 19, “cleansing all foods,” draws out the logic of the comment. The catalogue insists, on the other hand, that defilement is to be taken seriously, once it is understood to be moral instead of alimentary (see the references to defilement, by means of the verb κοινῶω, in v. 20 and in v. 23). The list of intellectual vices defines them as the most dangerous impurities. The two rhetorical forms correspond to two complementary redefinitions of purity. It can no longer be a matter of what is eaten, but must be seen as a matter of what is thought.

Both of those concerns are characteristic of Hellenistic Christianity. Paul reports favorably on the practice in Antioch before emissaries from James came, when meals could be conducted with common fellowship among Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Jesus (see Gal 2:12). According to Paul, the arrival of those emissaries caused Peter to separate from non-Jews, and even his partner Barnabas acceded to the separation (Gal 2:12–13). The tendency of Hellenistic communities of Christians to mix their Jewish and non-Jewish constituencies, and therefore to relax or ignore issues of purity in foods, is here documented by Paul (ca. 53 CE).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> It is common to see the section as offering an interpretation of Jesus’ aphorism; cf. W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 255–256.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Lane, *Mark*, 256; and B. Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles*, *NovTSup* 72 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 109–130; *Rabbi Paul. An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 147–170.

Vincent Taylor long ago pointed out that the vocabulary of the list of vices in Mark 7 is more typical of the Pauline corpus (in the broadest sense) than of any other body of literature in the New Testament.<sup>20</sup> What is even more interesting is the express connection between such vices and the term “impurity” in Rom 1:24; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:19; 5:3; Col 3:5. It appears that early Christianity (which Paul and the deutero-Pauline corpus reflect together with Mark) saw a shift in the understanding of the medium of impurity: no longer foods, but moral intentions, conveyed the danger of defilement.

In order to recast the whole of the tradition as an assertion of a new medium of impurity, defined on Jesus’ authority, a rhetorical method needed to be found which would point all of the arguments in the same direction that the latest developments indicated. The solution was a synthetic device of enormous power: narrative context. The arguments generally—with their varying rhetorics and different topics—are presented in the context of a dispute. Pharisees and scribes observe that Jesus’ disciples do not wash their hands before meals; they object, and Jesus goes on to reply by means of the material already described (Matt 15:1–2; Mark 7:1–2, 5).<sup>21</sup>

The new context, of course, has nothing precisely to do with the arguments that are then attributed to Jesus. *Qorban*, the direction of defilement, the comparative danger of foods and vices are all interesting matters, more or less related by a common interest in what true purity is, but none of those arguments actually answers the Pharisaic/scribal objection to not washing prior to a meal. The narrative context proceeds on the supreme and laconic assurance that the readership *already understands* that all Pharisaic/scribal practices are to be grouped together, and accorded the same sort of weight one would attribute to washing one’s hands. How the community eats, and with whom, is the central concern, which then determines one’s stance in respect of all that pertains to purity. The context assumed is very much like that of Gal 2, although the position taken is different from Paul’s, insofar as a positive place is found for purity.

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<sup>20</sup> V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: St Martin’s, 1966), 347. A comparative table of usages appears on p. 346.

<sup>21</sup> In Luke 11:37–38 the narrative context is developed further. A single Pharisee invites Jesus to dine, and is astonished when his guest does not wash. Luke permits us to see an alternative development of this cycle of tradition at the time of that Gospel’s redaction in Antioch.

The power of the new rhetorical device is demonstrated by the fact that Jesus never answers the question that is posed to him by the Pharisees concerning the washing of hands. The response needs to be filled in by the hearer or reader, who has been catechized to the point that it seems evident that there is a new, inner purity of moral intention that supersedes the usual practices of Judaism.<sup>22</sup>

What is striking about all these policies is that in their different ways they map the territory of the clean and unclean, and explain how to negotiate the boundary. It is quite true that the territory looks increasingly “moral,” and less “cultic,” the closer one approaches the preferred idiom of Mark, but that in no way diminishes the sense of the contagion which an impure thought can provoke. Indeed, *The Shepherd of Hermas* opens with just the sort of disturbing thought-experiment which a serious reading of Mark 7 encourages:<sup>23</sup> what happens when one of the proscribed designs actually does proceed from one’s heart? That is to say: moving from the “cultic” to the “moral” realm does not by itself entail a denial of purity. Such moves rather map a fresh territory of the clean and unclean. Mark 7 in any case deals not only with the map of the moral “heart,” but also with the map of the household, the map of the Temple, and the map of the human body.

If Jesus and his movement are to be understood within practices of purity rather than against them, our liberal myth is evidently in trouble. An alternative is at a fledgling stage, where much remains to be worked out. Fortunately, that task has been undertaken vigorously. One of the inhibitions against seeing Jesus in the context of purity was that, especially in North American scholarship during the 1980’s, Galilee was virtually annexed in Athens. If pig bones were found in Sepphoris, the surmise has sometimes run, why would Jesus not have eaten a ham sandwich? Eric Meyers has commented:

Why so many scholars have associated the rural landscape of Galilee with all its towns and villages as being devoid of Jewish learning as well as lacking in the everyday accoutrements of a Greco-Roman lifestyle is

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<sup>22</sup> In a recent thesis discussed below, Jonathan Klawans correctly observes that both sorts of purity are at issue in Judaism, but he does not take account of variegations and shifts within Christian practice; see *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 136–157.

<sup>23</sup> See Chilton, “Christianity,” in *Women and Families*, ed. J. Neusner, The Pilgrim Library of World Religions (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1999), 26–49.

hard to understand, and I leave it for others in the discipline of New Testament to reflect on.<sup>24</sup>

More reflective archaeology has indeed stressed the regionalism of Galilee, evinced by artifacts and architectures that relate to the practice of purity. Marianne Sawicki's "cognitive archaeology"<sup>25</sup> and continuing study of synagogues and *miqvaot*<sup>26</sup> are especially eloquent in this regard, although the earlier contributions of Sean Freyne, James Strange, Eric Meyers and Richard Horsley are also very much a part of the same reevaluation.<sup>27</sup>

The immersion of John the Baptist has obvious implications for the study of Jesus, and my own address of that topic has been ancillary to other concerns.<sup>28</sup> So it was a delight for me to be involved as series editor with the rich treatment of Joan E. Taylor, which establishes that John is chiefly to be understood as a purifier. At long last the apologetic picture of John as a prophet of Jesus has been replaced with an appropriate emphasis upon his practice of repeated immersion with repentance.<sup>29</sup> This, in turn, roots Jesus' own practice within the issue of purity.

Of course, shifts in practices of purity as reflected within Christian sources are never likely to be understood apart from an appreciation of cognate shifts within Judaic sources. For this reason, the social-historical work of Craig Evans and the systemic analyses of Jacob Neusner have been immensely helpful, and collaborating with them on several

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<sup>24</sup> "Jesus and His Galilean Context," in *Archaeology and the Galilee. Texts and Contents in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Periods*, ed. D. R. Edwards, and C. T. McCollough, SFSHJ 143 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 57–66, esp. 65–65.

<sup>25</sup> *Crossing Galilee. Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000).

<sup>26</sup> See D. Urman and P. V. M. Flesher, eds., *Ancient Synagogues. Historical Analysis and Archaeological Discovery*, SPB 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1995, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> See especially in *Archaeology and the Galilee: Texts and Contexts in the Byzantine Period*, ed. D. R. Edwards and C. T. McCollough, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), and R. Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>28</sup> "Yochanan the Purifier and His Immersion," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 14.2 (1998): 197–212; *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing. His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998); "John the Purifier," *Forum* 2.1 (1999): 125–139.

<sup>29</sup> *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, Studying the Historical Jesus 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

volumes has taught me more than I can say.<sup>30</sup> Recently, books by Paula Fredricksen,<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza,<sup>32</sup> Jostein Ådna,<sup>33</sup> and Christian Grappe<sup>34</sup> represent positive engagement with the issue of purity, and in that, they are taking up the clear if less emphatic leads in the earlier works of James D. G. Dunn,<sup>35</sup> Ben F. Meyer,<sup>36</sup> Marcus Borg,<sup>37</sup> E. P. Sanders,<sup>38</sup> and N. T. Wright.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, I would suggest that an adjustment to the cultural issue of purity, together with a willingness to correct the positivism often associated with “the historical Jesus,” represent genuine advances during the past thirty years. So having learned so much from scholars who have contributed within the field of purity, what do I believe we can say, and what questions remain to be answered? By referring to some texts that have featured centrally in discussion, I will attempt both questions.<sup>40</sup>

The analogy of a map, readable in cultural rather than literally historical terms, may prove useful again at this point. Rural Galilee defines Jesus’ characteristic activity in the gospels, and Jerusalem is the only major city that concerns him. His venture east of the sea of Galilee is a disaster for a local herd of swine, and for any probability

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<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Chilton and Evans, *Jesus in Context. Temple, Purity and Restoration*, AGJU 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Chilton and Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament. Practices and Beliefs* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>31</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 1999), reviewed in *Bible Review* 16.4 (August, 2000): 54–58.

<sup>32</sup> *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2000), reviewed in *Anglican Theological Review* 83.4 (2001): 886–887.

<sup>33</sup> *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel. Die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung*, WUNT 119 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> *Le Royaume de Dieu. Avant, avec et après Jésus*, *Le Monde de la Bible* 42 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001), reviewed in *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12.2 (2002): 287–290.

<sup>35</sup> *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1975).

<sup>36</sup> *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979).

<sup>37</sup> *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, *Studies in the Bible & Early Christianity* 5 (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984). Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 144–145 attacks Borg for globally distancing Jesus from any system of purity, but it is a credit to Borg’s scholarship that he develops evidence that disconfirms the liberal paradigm he defends in the end.

<sup>38</sup> *Jesus and Judaism*.

<sup>39</sup> *Jesus and the Victory of God, Christian Religions and the Question of God* 2 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1993, 1996).

<sup>40</sup> For a fuller discussion, and citation of the associated passages, see my *The Temple of Jesus. His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), and *Rabbi Jesus. An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000).

that he would find accommodation in Decapolis (Mark 5:1–20); his venture west of Nazareth, into Syro-Phoenecian territory, finds him comparing a Gentile and her sick daughter to dogs (Mark 7:24–30). His exorcisms target unclean spirits (Mark 1:21–28), while his theory of healing is the forgiveness of sin (Mark 2:1–12). Although he keeps his distance from the Temple except for pilgrimage, his cleansing a “leper” allows for a sacrifice demanded by the book of Leviticus (Mark 1:40–44).

The last case deserves a second look, however, because Jesus famously truncates the Levitical procedure. He tells the scabby man to go directly to the Temple, not to the local priest for the preliminary sacrifice of cleansing mandated in the book of Leviticus (Lev 14:1–20). Within the Levitical map, then, Jesus keeps his bearings, but also takes a short cut. And this is not the only one. He also travels through Samaria (John 4:1–42), sends followers to eat in towns and villages in Galilee on the assumption that what is set before them to eat is pure (Luke 10:1–12), and commends a local centurion near Capernaum for his faith (Matt 8:5–13). When he makes his final visit to Jerusalem, he attacks the merchants of the Temple to insist upon the short cut that ends them all (Mark 11:15–18): Israelite offerings in the sanctuary, without commercial mediation.

As Cecil Roth suggested long ago,<sup>41</sup> Zech 14 is central to the events in Jerusalem (at least from the perspective of Jesus’ movement). But the prophetic text accounts for more than that. It almost goes without saying—although T. W. Manson did say it, and very convincingly<sup>42</sup>—that the entry into Jerusalem is accounted for by Zech 14, because so many of the elements of Zechariah and its connection with the festal procession of Sukkoth are taken up in the narratives. But beyond that, we also have in Zechariah the forgiveness of sins before the Throne of God (Zech 3:1–5, 9–10; 13:1), the promise of Spirit (4:6; cf. 7:12), criticism of fasting (7:2–7; 8:18–19), the prophecy of bad shepherding in the Temple (11:1–12:9), as well as the removal of an unclean spirit (13:2) and the climactic vision of a Sukkoth of universal range and terrible violence in a Temple cleared of merchants (14:1–21). From the present perspective, what is most startling is that Jesus shares with

<sup>41</sup> “The Cleansing of the Temple and Zechariah xiv 21,” *NovT* 4 (1960): 174–181.

<sup>42</sup> “The Cleansing of the Temple,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33 (1951): 271–282.

Zechariah and Haggai (1:14; 2:4–5, 10–19), the book with which it was closely associated, a principle of contagious purity, such that impurity could be overcome by the presence of God's Spirit (see Matt 12:28// Luke 11:20).<sup>43</sup>

To deny the relevance of this prophetic and apocalyptic scenario to an understanding of the likely motivation of Jesus is possible only by setting aside many levels of tradition in the New Testament. I understand that the liberal myth would like us to do that, reducing resonances with “the Old Testament” to proof texts, and discounting cultural resonance with Judaism—even as attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls—on the alleged grounds of the chronology of Rabbinic sources. But were concerns for purity a figment of later authors, that would not account for their rich representations within different layers of the gospels, nor for the policies later attributed to teachers such as James and Paul. These policies and their variants support the inference of Jesus' Zecharian program of purity, a practice suited to the conviction that God's Spirit was transforming the world so as to establish the divine kingdom. That warranted the inclusion of even customs-agents within Jesus' movement, since defilement moved from the inside out, rather than the outside in according to his judgment. That basic orientation emerges as a secure finding of the current generation of research. The remaining challenge is to understand how Jesus' principle was applied practically, and “the sinners” are a good guide to that application.

### 3. *The Identification of “Sinners”*

Cleanness and holiness are of irreducible or systemic importance within the Mishnah: there is no future in attempting to decipher the two conditions, of being clean and being holy, as metaphors of moral station or of accessibility to redemption. The issue naturally emerges, however, whether that Judaism evinced by Mishnah is the milieu in which the movement that resulted in the New Testament unfolded. Methodological skepticism is warranted, but an undifferentiated exclusion of the evidence of Mishnah would be most unwise. Early, pre-Mishnaic Judaism is not substantially recoverable from sectarian,

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<sup>43</sup> *Jesus' Baptism and Jesus' Healing. His Personal Practice of Spirituality* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998) 5, 71–78.



Hellenistic, and apocalyptic writings alone. They are no more “normative” than Rabbinica were once taken to be. The rabbis and their predecessors contributed to the mix of early Judaism, although their dominance later brought about a distinctive phase, a Judaism in which purity was a matter of fidelity to *halakhah*, as defined by the dual Torah, and no longer a matter of what actually could occur in association with worship in the Temple. But the issue of purity is inherent within the gospels, that is to say, within that development of Judaism—shaped by Jesus and his followers—which produced the gospels.

If we may limit our attention, for the moment, to one thematic example from the synoptic gospels, the matter of purifying leprosy proves to be of systemic importance. Jesus cleanses a leper, as we have seen, and orders him to see a priest and bring an offering (Matt 8:1–4//Mark 1:40–44 //Luke 5:12–14). Sometimes by the presentation of comparable material (cf. Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22), sometimes by employing differing rhetorical tactics and materials altogether (cf. Matt 10:8; Luke 17:12–19), Matthew and Luke contrive to present cleansing from leprosy as a characteristic and paradigmatic feature of Jesus’ ministry.

When Ed Sanders deals with the question of sayings of Jesus in which practices of purity are commended or condemned, he makes short shrift of them, as being inauthentic in their present form.<sup>44</sup> He is not loath, in principle, to dismiss entire pericopae, such as the story concerning what happened when Jesus’ disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath, as “creation(s) of the church.”<sup>45</sup> It is possible that the pericope of the cleansing of the leper might be dealt with in that way (although that has not been the trend in recent scholarship), but Sanders’ index gives no trace of such a treatment. It is interesting, in this context, that the eight “almost indisputable facts” about Jesus upon which Sanders sets out to base his work contain no reference at all to any of Jesus’ disputes concerning purity and holiness.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 260–261, 276–277 (on Matt 23:25–26), and 266 (on Mark 7:15). Luke 11:39 is not cited in the index.

<sup>45</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 266, on the same page on which Mark 7:15 is discussed.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

His closest approach to that nexus of issues is in his discussion of Jesus' occupation of the Temple. In that discussion, however, Sanders consciously dispenses with an approach based upon a sensitivity to purity,<sup>47</sup> and instead argues that "Jesus' action is to be regarded as a symbolic demonstration,"<sup>48</sup> in respect of the destruction of the Temple. The idea is that Jesus predicted the end of the extant Temple, and the establishment of a new one, as a prophet of restoration, after the pattern of Essene and apocalyptic literature.<sup>49</sup> Instead of serving as a focus of sanctity, in Sanders's judgment the Temple is simply where Jesus chooses to engage in a symbolic act. The category of cleanness is simply left to the side.<sup>50</sup>

There appear to be two reasons why Sanders proceeds in the manner he does. First, he genuinely believes that matters of purity, in the Judaism of the first century, were expendable. He conceives of the Pharisees, for example, as a party devoted to the oral law and its explication, rather than as a movement concerned systemically with issues of purity.<sup>51</sup> "Ritual" and "trivia" are to Sanders's mind a natural association,<sup>52</sup> so that a concern with such matters would not, on his assessment, characterize a group as important as the Pharisees undoubtedly were. Second, Sanders has a consistent interest in portraying Jesus as a teacher who accepted, not merely the impure, but the wicked into his fellowship. Indeed, the latter concern amounts to

<sup>47</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 67–68.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 69–71.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 77–90.

<sup>50</sup> Consistent with his disregard of Jesus' concerns with purity, Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 364 n. 1) dismisses Mark 11:16, saying that it is "probably a later addition" and therefore "plays no role in our analysis."

<sup>51</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 188, 388–389. Sanders leaves out of consideration Neusner's *Judaism: The Evidence of Mishnah* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), in which a systemic concern for sanctification is established. Two recent works, by scholars of the New Testament, accept the Pharisaic focus upon purity, cf. M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus*, SBEC 5 (New York: Mellen, 1984); and R. P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition and Legal History in Mark 7*, JSNTSup 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986). Sanders appears not to have observed that the Pharisaic and rabbinic movements did not regard their traditions as ends in themselves, but as instrumental. What distinguished them from the covenanters of Qumran, Philo, and the teachers of Wisdom in the Diaspora was not a concern for traditions of the elders, but what they did with such traditions.

<sup>52</sup> The linking of the two words in several forms appears in *Jesus and Judaism*, 180, 187, 210. Sanders first refers to "ritual and trivia" when he characterizes the tendency of scholarship to equate ritual and trivia as Pharisaic preoccupations. In his defense of the Pharisees, he seems inadvertently to consign the issue of purity to puritanical "minutiae" (187).

a driving force within *Jesus and Judaism*, and requires some explanation in respect of the present question.

In his longest consideration within *Jesus and Judaism* of the place of purity in Judaism,<sup>53</sup> Sanders accepts without demur that cleanness was fundamentally related to the suitability of persons or objects to approach the Temple. Once the issue is placed in that context, of course, the pericopae in which Jesus is said to engage in disputes concerning purity are naturally associated with those in which Jesus pronounces on cultic matters. His cultic teaching in Matthew includes reference to the taking of oaths (23:16–22), instructions for the offering of sacrifice (5:23,24), and an elaborate story that relates to the payment of the half shekel (17:24–27; cf. 23:23; Luke 11:42). All of those passages are uniquely Matthean, and yet are widely accepted as relating to the substance of Jesus' attitude towards the Temple. Multiply attested traditions—Jesus' teaching in respect of a widow's offering (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4), his occupation of the holy precincts (Matt 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15–17; Luke 19:45,46), his discourse concerning the destruction of the Temple (Matt 26:61; Mark 14.58)—consistently reinforce the impression that the Temple was no mere symbol, but a focus of active, practical concern within Jesus' movement. But Sanders ignores the natural association of purity with the Temple, and deconstructs purity, in terms of moral wickedness.

The collapse of purity, from a cultic category of integral meaning into a subset of moral stature, is accomplished by means of dubious exegesis. Proceeding from a reading of Lev 7:22–27 (the prohibition against eating fats and blood), Sanders comes to the conclusion that “A few purity transgressions, such as eating blood, are in and of themselves sins; that is, they require atonement.”<sup>54</sup> The sole justification for the finding is (a) that the penalty for the act in Leviticus is that the transgressor “shall be cut off from his people,” and (b) that “In the later Rabbinic interpretation, ‘cutting off’ puts the transgression strictly between human [*sic!*] and God, and is atoned for by repentance.”<sup>55</sup> The simple fact of the matter is, that the phrase only appears in Leviticus within the nexus of purity and sacrifice (7:20, 21, 24,

<sup>53</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 182–85.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

27; 17:4, 9, 14; 18:29; 19:8; 20:17.18; 22:3; 23:29).<sup>56</sup> That Sanders should cite a few verses in isolation, ignore their literary setting, impute a foreign meaning to them, and then transfer that meaning to the whole of “the later Rabbinic interpretation,” is astonishing.

The basis of Sanders’ perspective, of course, is less any text or group of texts than a global view of Judaism: “wickedness comes not from impurity as such, but from the attitude that the commandments of the Bible need not be heeded.”<sup>57</sup> Sanders’ intentionalist construal of Judaism is also apparent in his earlier work;<sup>58</sup> the grounds of his confident generalization are less so. It is nonetheless used as a hermeneutical category that links early Judaism and rabbinic Judaism.

Ultimately, what is required according to Sanders is that one intends to remain in the covenant, intends to be obedient.<sup>59</sup> Sanders’s conclusion therefore requires a faulty exegesis of Leviticus, an excessively unitary view of Judaism, and a hypothetically invoked myth of intentionalism. Only so can impurity be equated with wickedness. The thematic importance of that equation pervades *Jesus and Judaism*. Sanders treats “the sinners” as a primary category through which Jesus’ ministry is to be approached.<sup>60</sup> Within that treatment, the category of impurity dissolves into that of sin, and sin in turn becomes wickedness. Sanders relates the term “sinners,” in the accusation that Jesus’ fellowship included the unacceptable, to the word “wicked” in Hebrew (*resha'im*), which Sanders construes to be a technical term for those outside the pale of Judaism. No argumentation whatever is offered for the equation with ἀμαρτωλοί (“sinners”) in the Gospels, apart from a reference to *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.<sup>61</sup> The discussion in that work also does not substantiate a reading of ἀμαρτωλοί in terms of רשעים, although it does establish that “the wicked” are, on the whole, scheduled more for punishment than for repentance.

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<sup>56</sup> Lev 20:17 may appear to be an exception, in that the issue is sexual, but the context of the chapter, and particularly the material which follows, establish the normative perspective of Leviticus.

<sup>57</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 185.

<sup>58</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism. A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), 147. Sanders here calls the intentionalism on which he bases his scheme “all-pervasive.” But the “intention” to which he appeals as a rabbinic category is not defined or defended.

<sup>59</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 177.

<sup>60</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174–211.

<sup>61</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 386 n. 16, citing *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 142–143, 203, 342–345, 351–355, 357–358, 361, 399–404, 414.

The central, linguistic equation of Sanders' case, however, remains unexamined. From the point of view of ordinary, exegetical practice, that is the Achilles' heel of the thesis under consideration.

Within the Septuagint ἀμαρτωλός corresponds to five roots in the Masoretic Text (חטא, חנף, חרש, רע and רשע), only the last of which would support the equation proposed by Sanders.<sup>62</sup> When the probabilities of translation into Aramaic are also taken into account, that equation appears difficult to sustain. The root רשע does appear, for example, in the Isaiah Targum, both adjectivally and as an abstract noun. The Hebrew roots רשע and חנף are represented by the Aramaic usage, but the other three equivalents of ἀμαρτωλός are not.<sup>63</sup> Clearly, the linguistic range of רשע in Aramaic is not as wide as that of ἀμαρτωλός in Greek. By contrast, the roots רשע, חנף, חטא and several others are presented by appropriate forms of the Aramaic term חובא (and its verbal counterparts): “debtor,” or “sinner,” is the functional equivalent of words covering a variety of defects in the Masoretic Text. When the semantic range of Targumic חובא is considered, two features of the usage are immediately striking from the present point of view. First, because Hebrew רשע can be included within a wider list of roots for representation by a form of חובא, the argument that “the wicked” is a technical term appears strained. (There is, of course, no question but that “the wicked” is a harsh designation; only its technical meaning, as putting someone beyond the pale of the covenant, is at issue here.) Second, the Aramaic usage חובא, which may or may not represent (or correspond to) רשע in Hebrew, is the natural counterpart of ἀμαρτωλός in the Septuagint. As a simple matter of fact, “debtors” can be seen in the Targum of Isaiah as punished by the Messiah (11:4), destroyed by the LORD (14:4, 5), but also as capable of repentance (28:24, 25), as a species of wicked Gentile (34:2), or another enemy of Jerusalem (54:17).<sup>64</sup> Such

<sup>62</sup> E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1897; repr. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 64–65. Sanders' review of the evidence of the Septuagint is so incomplete as to be misleading; cf. *Jesus and Judaism*, 342. The simple fact is that *hamartolos* is used too flexibly to be equated with a “technical term” of restricted meaning, as Sanders claims in *Jesus and Judaism*, 177.

<sup>63</sup> J. B. van Zijl, *A Concordance to the Targum of Isaiah*, SBLAS 3 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 182–183.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. van Zijl, *A Concordance to the Targum of Isaiah*, 57–58; A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, III. *The Latter Prophets* (Brill: Leiden, 1962); and Chilton, *The*

various usages make any appeal to a univocal or exclusive meaning of the Aramaic term incredible. Quite evidently, only a contextual construal of living instances of the word will produce an accurate appraisal of its meaning.

Within the gospels, a coherent language of "debt" is attributed to Jesus. When, in the Matthean version of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus instructs his followers to ask God, "forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors," there is no doubt but that the New Testament is preserving an Aramaic idiom (6:12). Luke only partially preserves the usage: "Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us" (11:4). Jesus' recourse to the Aramaic idiom is not a mere matter of convention: several of his parables turn on the metaphorical and literal senses of "debt," much as in the Targum of Isa 50:1, where the term refers in one breath to money owed, and in another breath to sins before God.<sup>65</sup>

Several instances of parabolic presentation of "debt" in this sense are especially striking. In Matt 18:23–35, a debtor is said to owe the astronomical sum of ten thousand talents (18:24). When it is borne in mind that the annual imposition of tax by Herod Antipas upon the whole of Galilee and Peraea amounted to merely two hundred talents (cf. *Ant.* 17.319), the hyperbole involved in the parable becomes readily apparent. The debtor is in no position to repay such a debt, nor is there any credible way in which he could have incurred it. He behaves astoundingly, after his debt is forgiven (v. 27), in a manner all but calculated to trivialize such forgiveness: he refuses to deal mercifully with a colleague who owed him one hundred denarii (vv. 28–30). The latter amount is by no means insignificant: a single denarius has been estimated as the going rate for a full day of labor.<sup>66</sup> But the

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*Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, ArBib 11 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1987).

<sup>65</sup> The passage reads as follows: "Thus says the LORD, 'Where is *the* bill of divorce which I gave your congregation, that it is rejected? Or who had a debt against me, to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your *sins* you were sold, and for your *apostasies* your congregation was rejected.'" As in *The Isaiah Targum*, italicized words represent innovative departures of the Aramaic rendering from the Hebrew text which underlies it. The first usage of "debt" corresponds well to the underlying idea in the MT, which refers to creditors. The second usage (here rendered "sins") represents "iniquities" in the Hebrew text, and is also a straightforward, formally correspondent rendering. The point is, however, that both usages together produce a uniquely Targumic juxtaposition of "debt" in its literal and metaphorical senses.

<sup>66</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1976), 136–139.

contrast with the king's incalculable generosity cannot be overlooked, and the close of the parable makes it unmistakably plain that God's forgiveness demands ours (vv. 31–35). To fail to forgive one's fellow, even when what needs to be forgiven is considerable, is to betray the very logic of forgiveness that alone gives us standing before God.

Two other parables portray, in an apparently paradoxical fashion, the inextricable link between divine forgiveness and our behavior. Within the story of Jesus at the house of a Pharisee named Simon (Luke 7:36–50), a parable explains why Jesus chose to forgive a sinful woman (vv. 40–43). Of two debtors, the one who has been released from the greater debt will obviously love his creditor more. The sinful woman's great love, therefore, in an outlandish display of affection and honor (vv. 37–38, 44–46), is proof that God had forgiven her (v. 47). Her love is proof of her capacity to be forgiven.<sup>67</sup> She had succeeded precisely where the unforgiving servant of Matt 18 had failed: her actions displayed the value of forgiveness to her. The same logic, developed more strictly in respect of debt, is evident in the otherwise inexplicable parable of the crafty steward (Luke 16:1–9). The lord praised the steward for his cleverness (v. 8) in reducing the debts of those who owed commodities to the lord (vv. 5–7). The scheme was devised so that the lucky debtors would receive the steward (v. 4) after his lord had followed through on the threat of dismissing the steward for dishonesty (vv. 1–2). On any ordinarily moral accounting, the steward had gone from bad to worse, and yet his lord praises him (v. 8). Because God is the lord, what would be bribery in the case of any ordinary master's property turns out to be purposeful generosity. The effect of the steward's panic is to fulfill the lord's desire,<sup>68</sup> because the lord is the same as the unforgiving servant's king, the God who forgave the sinful woman.

The usage of "debt" attributed to Jesus in the gospels, therefore, is initially to be understood as an Aramaism. But he appears, on the

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. C. F. D. Moule, "'...As we forgive...': A Note on the Distinction between Deserts and Capacity in the Understanding of Forgiveness," in idem, *Essays in New Testament Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 278–286, 282–284. See also J. A. Sanders, "Sins, Debts, and Jubilee Release," in *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts*, ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 84–92.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus' Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time*, GNS 8 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1984), 117–123.

evidence *prima facie*, to have exploited the metaphorical possibilities of the term in a way that is precedented in the Targum of Isaiah, but in a characteristically parabolic fashion. The general activity of telling parables, of course, is well attested among early rabbis;<sup>69</sup> at issue here is not absolute uniqueness, but the relative distinctiveness that distinguishes any significantly historical figure from his contemporaries. A well-established theologoumenon of early Judaism spoke not only of debts, but also of credit in respect of God.<sup>70</sup> Jesus appears to have exploited the latter metaphor, as well as the former (cf. Matt 6:19–21; 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 12:33, 34; 18:22). But it was in his adaptation of an idiom and theology of “debt” that Jesus developed a systemic aspect of his message as a whole.

Jesus’ usage of the language of debt has provided an opportunity to test the adequacy of Sanders’s thesis. It has elsewhere been doubted whether the aspect of repentance can be eliminated from the message of Jesus as easily as Sanders would have it,<sup>71</sup> but the focus here is upon his attempt to use “wickedness” as an over-arching concept, inclusive of impurity and sin, and more powerful than either. Jesus, as portrayed by Sanders, “could truly be criticized for including the wicked in his ‘kingdom.’”<sup>72</sup> That portrayal is possible, as we have seen, only by tendentiously reducing impurity and sin to an artificial definition of “wickedness,” as an intention to put oneself outside the covenant. Sanders has provided us with a definition of Judaism as “covenantal nomism,” in which the law is an instrument of remaining within a graciously bestowed covenant. But having offered that useful insight, Sanders persists in understanding Jesus and Paul as in polar opposition to a central tenet of Judaism: Jesus includes the wicked, and Paul includes anyone who accepts participation in Christ.<sup>73</sup> Where earlier scholarship portrayed the polarity as between works and grace (utilizing the language of Paul), Sanders transposes

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Chilton and J. I. H. McDonald, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom*, Biblical Foundations in Theology (London: SPCK; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 31–43.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. F. Hauck, *TDNT* 5 (1978): 559–566.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Chilton, “Jesus and the Repentance of E.P. Sanders,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 39: (1988) 1–18; Chilton and McDonald, *Jesus and the Ethics of the Kingdom*, 40–41.

<sup>72</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 323.

<sup>73</sup> The plainest exposition of Sanders’ overall picture is available in “Jesus, Paul, and Judaism,” *ANRW* II 25.1 (1982): 390–450. The similarity with the romanticism of Adolf von Harnack is striking; cf. W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (London: SCM, 1973), 178–184.



it between the concepts of covenant and universal inclusiveness. Moreover, Sanders pairs Jesus and Paul in contrast to early Christianity generally, and so provides—in effect—a new account of the essence of Christianity in the manner of Adolf von Harnack: the radical, practically antinomian teaching of the founders is rejected by Judaism and subverted by Christianity.

#### 4. *Their Significance within Jesus' Movement*

Jonathan Klawans argues a bold thesis concerning purity and sin with considerable sophistication.<sup>74</sup> He derives his basic orientation from a reading of Lev 15 and 18. He sees in the chapters two different sorts of defilement: one—deriving from “the priestly source”—is ritual and involves bodily functions, while the other—deriving from “the Holiness Code”—is moral and involves certain sins that resulted in exile. He contends that both run through the literature of ancient Judaism. To make his case within that considerable corpus, his approach is chronological, except when it concerns the New Testament.

Particular and appropriate deference is accorded to Adolf Büchler's *Studies in Sin and Atonement*, whence Klawans derives the idea of two kinds of defilement.<sup>75</sup> In trenchant opposition to Jacob Neusner's *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism*, he insists that sin possesses “its own distinct and *nonmetaphorical* defiling force.”<sup>76</sup> As he develops the history of the approach he prefers, Klawans provides a useful résumé of discussion.

He differs from David Wright in insisting on the terms “ritual” and “moral” as referring to two kinds of impurity, rather than to “abstract categories of permission and prohibition.”<sup>77</sup> Yet because, in Klawans' own assessment, the “texts use the same terminology of defilement to describe two distinct phenomena,” he admits to having

<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), reviewed in *RRJ* 4.2 (2001): 350–355.

<sup>75</sup> Adolf Büchler, *Studies in Sin and Atonement in the Rabbinic Literature of the First Century*, *JCP* 11 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1928); 5–7.

<sup>76</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Idea of Purity in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); *Impurity and Sin*, 11.

<sup>77</sup> David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity. Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature*, *SBLDS* 101 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); *Impurity and Sin*, 17.

a problem.<sup>78</sup> He might have helped his argument at this point, had he observed that impurity itself is multivalent in the Hebrew Bible. What is unclean to Israelites is not only what is intrinsically defiled, but also what is too holy for them (as in the paradigmatic case of blood). This basic adjustment of Mary Douglas's position is now over a decade old.<sup>79</sup> Purity's referents are elastic in dimensions other than the distinction between ritual and moral.

Recognition of this wider elasticity might have helped Klawans to explain the apparent anomaly, to which he repeatedly returns, that ritual impurity is contagious, while moral impurity is not. He makes much of Jacob Milgrom's analogy of the sanctuary and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to speak of the pollution which idolatry, incest, and murder bring.<sup>80</sup> But further reflection on the theme of Oscar Wilde's short story might have been appropriate: moral corruption degrades invisibly but ineluctably. In other words, the fact of the involvement of the human will brings defilement to a place outside of sight, but it is all the more important for that. Dorian Gray is uglier than a man who ages normally, whatever he may look like, and a murderer pollutes the land, whether or not he immerses after contact with the corpse. Wilde himself observed in his preface to *The Picture* that "All art is at once surface and symbol," and that may apply to the art of sacrifice, as well.

The catastrophic impact of these sins is exile in the prophetic tradition, with the result that Ezekiel speaks of pouring water on Israel, as Klawans says "figuratively describing the ease with which God will be able to bring about a change in the people's moral status." This language, as well as Ezekiel's simile of the menstruous woman, might just have alerted Klawans to his own resort to the language of metaphor under a new name. Still, he objects to that name in itself, on the grounds that as it is deployed, scholars mean to say that "when purity language is used metaphorically, then no defilement or purification is actually taking place." To be sure, some people do speak of metaphor as if they did not refer to what is real or important, but I cannot say that I find this "rather traditional way" of using the term is as ubiquitous in the scholarly literature as Klawans suggests it is. Moreover, if

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<sup>78</sup> *Impurity and Sin*, 22–25.

<sup>79</sup> See *The Temple of Jesus. His Sacrificial Program Within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 3–87.

<sup>80</sup> *Impurity and Sin*, 29.

the usage of metaphor is as complex and as perplexing as he repeatedly claims, it is difficult to see what is elucidated by insisting that language involving moral impurity is “*nonmetaphorical*” (italics his).<sup>81</sup>

That assertion becomes increasingly problematic, the more Klawans limits its applicability:

I am not denying that there are metaphorical or figurative uses of purity language in the Hebrew Bible. What I am suggesting is that the usage described here, which has commonly been assumed to be metaphorical, is not.<sup>82</sup>

We seem to be in the face of a problem of language that this book never resolves, and perhaps should not be expected to resolve. Still, it does not seem probable that religionists and exegetes will agree to forego the use of “metaphor” on the grounds that they do not understand it very well.

In his urgent stress on the material reality of moral impurity, Klawans misses the focused importance of agency which idolatry, incest, and blood contamination involve:

In the case of ritual impurity, a real, physical process or event (e.g., death or menstruation) has a perceived effect: impermanent contagion that affects people and certain objects within their reach. In the case of moral impurity, a real, physical process or event (e.g., child sacrifice or adultery) has a different perceived effect: a noncontagious defilement that affects persons, the land, and the sanctuary.<sup>83</sup>

It is quite startling (and not a little perplexing) that such a commendable interest in the pragmatics of impurity should fail to take account of the difference between an impurity which arises in the course of the natural world and the impurity which a human being intends or knowingly indulges. In that Lev 4 and 5 reflect awareness of the issue of intentionality in *both* the types of purity Klawans speaks of, this omission is very harmful to his argument.

To help to resolve this problem, Klawans suggests that we are dealing with overlapping systems of purity, but he then overturns his own suggestion by stating that really there is only the “*single system*,” namely “Israelite religion as a whole.” Systems are explicated rather less than metaphors are. Nor is it adequately explained why “ancient

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<sup>81</sup> *Impurity and Sin*, 11, cf. 31–36.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

Israelite women probably did not find themselves ritually impure on a regular basis as a result of the menstrual taboo.”<sup>84</sup> The special role of women as bearers of blood is not explored, and Klawans also—without reference to recent discussion—falls into the equation of the modern definition of male homosexuality with the proscription of Lev 18:22.

The Second Temple period is treated on the basis of the books of Ezra-Nehemiah, where the application of the impurity of menstruation to moral defilement is acknowledged. The focus of *Jubilees* and the Holiness Code on the concern with idolatry, incest, and bloodshed is well developed, and the treatment of the Temple Scroll is excellent, showing how bribery was added to the sources of moral defilement.<sup>85</sup> That is especially striking, because the *Damascus Document*—also taken as a “nonsectarian” text<sup>86</sup>—is explained as moving to the notion that the sanctuary rather than the land is defiled by sexual sins. He discusses *1 Enoch*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and the Psalms of Solomon on that basis.

Philo of Alexandria’s position, in his concern for purification of the soul, is reviewed competently, although Klawans gets into something of a tangle in arguing that although this is “analogical,” “allegorical,” “nonphysical,” even “symbol,” it is “by no means metaphorical.”<sup>87</sup> He then turns to the “Qumran sectarian documents,”<sup>88</sup> and finds that ritual and moral purity are identified there quite strongly, so that atonement and purification were also identified at Qumran.

But here is the big surprise of the book. That usage, it is said “is best understood as a metaphor: The image of purification is used figuratively to illustrate God’s redemptive power.” If purification is a metaphor for atonement, then defilement looks like some sort of metaphor for sin. Klawans finds that there was a “compartmentalization of purification and atonement” among the Tannaim after the destruction of the Temple;<sup>89</sup> that might have led him to the consideration of the body of analytic literature that suggests that the destruction of the

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<sup>84</sup> *Impurity and Sin*, 38–40.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 44–60.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 64–65, 149.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 68–85. This analysis can now be supplemented by the recent article by Meir Bar-Ilan, “The attitude toward *mamzerim* in Jewish society in late antiquity,” *Jewish History* 14 (2000): 125–170.

<sup>89</sup> *Impurity and Sin*, 115.

Temple made a difference in the perception of the relationship between purification and atonement.

The last chapter is devoted to cataloging what Klawans writes of as errors and misconceptions about purity in scholarship of the New Testament.<sup>90</sup> Most of the alleged mistakes have already been corrected in past contributions, for example by E. P. Sanders (although the contributions of Craig Evans are ignored here). Such works are cited in the volume, but Klawans here chooses to showcase the work of Marcus J. Borg, although his contributions have mostly been of a popular nature. That enables Klawans to portray scholarship of the New Testament as outdated and jejune in relation to the issue of purity. He is more current in the literature of John the Baptist, and he admits Joan Taylor's claim that immersion was a ritual practice applied to repentance. Otherwise, however, this concluding chapter is weak. Mark 7 is treated as a homogenous text, although discrete kinds of purity have been described there in the secondary literature. Paul is accepted as the principal of the New Testament, without discussion that in Acts 15, incest, blood, and idolatry are specifically banned from the church.

A theoretical contribution such as this should be clear about its theory. Leviticus, after all, does imagine that sacrifice should be offered for certain sins, and that sacrifice should be offered following impurity and its purification. Should not that be dealt with? Would it not be reasonable to suppose that the relationship between impurity and sin might be elucidated there? Is it not of some interest that all the texts which treat of exile as a punishment for grave sin—including “the priestly source” and “the Holiness Code”—have been interpreted by most scholars over the years as reflecting the experience or memory of exile? Exclusion of the whole issue of sacrifice might be the reason why Klawans can only struggle against metaphor and deny system in his claim that impurity and sin were always seen as different. Yet if those at Qumran and John the Baptist identified sin and impurity more than the rabbis did after the destruction of the Temple, is that really likely to be just because the rabbis read Tanach better?

In the end, the attempt by Klawans to resuscitate the approach of Büchler against the direction set in motion by Neusner's *The Idea of*

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<sup>90</sup> *Impurity and Sin*, 136–157.

*Purity in Ancient Judaism* does not succeed. There are not two kinds of impurity, but two ways of becoming impure: by means of sin, and as a result of contagion. Oddly, if Klawans' views were to be accepted, they would vindicate the Hellenistic source in Mark 7, which indeed vindicates the separation of morality and contagion. A friendlier account of Israelite purification in Greek is offered by Josephus, who speaks of John's immersion as "for sanctification of the body, with the soul indeed also already cleansed by righteousness" (*Jewish Antiquities* (18.116–117)). Josephus shows it is possible to describe purity from a theoretical perspective without dissolving the practice into insignificance. From the point of view of Jesus' practice, his disagreements with John concern when contagion occurs and especially whether there is a reverse contagion, of purity into the realm of the impure. That is what made Jesus incorporate "sinners" as well as customs-agents into his movement, on the assumption that they had repented.<sup>91</sup>

### 5. *Towards a Conclusion*

The gospels and their sources perform the service of distancing us from the received pictures of who the customs-agents and sinners were, and of what their impurity meant within the Judaisms of the period. By the nature of their work, customs-agents became impure by contagion, and might well have been involved, by illegal appropriation, in the equivalent of theft. Sinners, on the other hand, are an ill-assorted group whose behavior or reputations made them impure, such that both repentance and purification were the way for them back to worship in the Temple and into regular contact with other Israelites such as the Pharisees. By his contact with such people, and his willingness to include some of them within his movement, Jesus exemplified his teaching that, as the prophets Zechariah and Haggai had declared would occur, Spirit had become a countervailing, purifying source that reversed the usual flow of contagion.

Naturally, discussion of the customs-agents and sinners within Jesus' movement and their relationship to Jesus' teaching in regard to purity does not by itself tell us how Jesus personally related to these

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<sup>91</sup> See Chilton and Jacob Neusner, "Uncleanness: A Moral or an Ontological Category in the Early Centuries A.D.?" *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991): 63–88.

groups. The sources do not directly inform us in regard to history. A similar problem is acknowledged by Ulrich Bubenheimer in his recent biography of Thomas Müntzer.<sup>92</sup> Even with the evidence of letters and notes from Müntzer, it is notable not only that there are very large lacunae, but also that the estimates of his dates of birth vary within a spectrum even wider than those usually posited in the case of Jesus. On the basis of plausible dates for beginning of one's studies (between the ages of 12 and 26) Bubenheimer whittles the spectrum down to 1480–1494, but then observes that a Ratsrechnung from Stolberg in the year 1484 can be read to back the first date up a full decade.<sup>93</sup>

As Bubenheimer observes, the social description of Müntzer is not achievable on a genealogical model: "Daher ersetze ich den Begriff 'Herkunftsfamilie' durch den weiteren Begriff 'Herkunftsmilieu', der nicht genealogische, sondern die sozialgeschichtliche Fragestellung betont."<sup>94</sup> On the basis of that sort of consideration, Bubenheimer is able to trace Müntzer's relations with craftsmen in metals and merchants. He is also able to show that the influence of Leipzig was deeper than that of Frankfurt an der Oder, although Müntzer qualified from the latter university rather than the former. The issue of his mobility is contextualized within this network, as well as in the influence of humanism on his intellectual development, and this to Bubenheimer's mind distinguishes Müntzer from Luther.<sup>95</sup>

Differences of network, in other words, correspond to differences in directions of leadership, and Bubenheimer consciously takes up this communal aspect of his *Verflechtungsanalyse* from Wolfgang Reinhard.<sup>96</sup> The gospels also attest Jesus' network. Even their varia-

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<sup>92</sup> Ulrich Bubenheimer, *Thomas Müntzer. Herkunft und Bildung*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought XLVI (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

<sup>93</sup> *Thomas Müntzer. Herkunft und Bildung*, 16–19.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 26–27 ["This is why I replace the concept of 'family of origin' by the wider concept of 'milieu of origin,' which emphasizes not the genealogical question, but rather the question of social history." (Eng. trans. B. McNeil)]

<sup>95</sup> *Thomas Müntzer. Herkunft und Bildung*, 41–65, 141–144, 145–193, 230–236. For the application of such a method to Jesus, see Chilton, "Friends and Enemies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. M. Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 72–86.

<sup>96</sup> Wolfgang Reinhard, *Freunde und Kreaturen: "Verflechtung" als Konzept zur Erforschung historischer Führungsgruppen. Römische Oligarchie um 1600*, Schriften der philosophischen Fachbereiche der Universität Augsburg 14 (München: Vögel, 1979).

tions of attestation are instructive. The names of Jesus' disciples vary in the New Testament (see Matt 10:1–4; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:12–16; Acts 1:13). That is not surprising: the people who composed the gospels a generation after Jesus' death naturally wanted to remember their teachers as among the Twelve.

But there are two more profound reasons for this variation, as well. First, there was a confusion between the large group who followed Jesus around Galilee to learn his *halakhah* as thoroughly as they could, and the select twelve whom at a later stage Jesus delegated to speak and act on his behalf. (Luke estimates the select group at around 70 people [Luke 10:1], but that is a symbolic number, corresponding to the traditional number in Judaism of all the non-Jewish nations of the world; Luke's Gospel manifests a particular interest in the promise of Jesus for the Gentiles.) A reasonable estimate is that twenty or thirty *talmidim*, some with wives and children, followed Jesus as best they could. But of course, not all of them could follow him all the time, and the identity of the group would change. That brings us to the second reason for the variation of the names: his disciples came and went, some defecting because they came to disagree with Jesus' *halakhah*.

Jesus acknowledged such defections in his parables according to the gospels. The parable of the sower includes a theology of failure, the recognition that the word of the Kingdom would not always prove productive after sowing (Matt 13:1–9; Mark 4:1–9; Luke 8:4–8). He even trenchantly spoke of some who sowed bad seed in the midst of good (Matt 13:24–30), and of fish caught, only to be destroyed (Matt 13:47–50). These are parables of harsh judgment, directed to those once associated with him, who he felt had proved themselves useless, or even as hostile as his growing opposition.

Opposition from other Jewish teachers, and defections within his own group, made Jesus more extreme in his judgment, but also more vociferous in his insistence about the joy of the Kingdom he was celebrating. Notoriously, he accepted women as disciples, implicitly proclaiming that their purity was as great as any male Israelite's. Forgiveness made them so, despite the uncleanness of their menstrual cycle. Rabbinic discussion in ancient Judaism *did* include women. Some studies have falsely claimed women did not associate with rabbis, although Mishnah indicates the reverse (see *Nedarim* 10:1–11:12). What distinguished Jesus was not speaking with women and valuing them (a generic trait of Judaism); rather, women *traveled* with him,



appearing dangerously like the camp followers of the Romans (wives, aspiring wives, and prostitutes). Their presence with him underscores both his radical commitment to purity as the inherent trait of all Israel and the doubt expressed by many of his contemporaries whether he ever really understood the danger of uncleanness.

His practice of accepting female disciples in this way opened him to the charge of sexual impropriety. Now he was called not only a glutton and drunkard, but also a friend of customs-agents and sinners (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:35), the last category referring especially to women of suspect sexual behavior. Simply remaining with a man in a private place (that is, without a third party present) made a woman suspect to some (see *Sotah* 1:2 in the Mishnah and, in the Jerusalem Talmud, *Sotah* 3:4). The anonymous woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee who touched Jesus (Luke 7:36–50), and whose touch Jesus accepted, probably belongs to that category. Being in the status of a *mamzer*,<sup>97</sup> suffering a broken betrothal, or even having a meager dowry could all give a woman the reputation of sinfulness.

Some, but certainly not all, of Jesus' women disciples should be seen in that way. Luke names three as a representative sample, Miriam from the village of Magdala in Galilee, Joanna, who had relatives in Herod's administration, and Susanna (8:1–3). Miriam, Luke states, had seven demons from which she was healed (Luke 8:2), and was evidently among the sinners. The seven demons suggest that Jesus exorcised her repeatedly.

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<sup>97</sup> Since I identified Jesus as a *mamzer* in *Rabbi Jesus*, 3–23, a considerable literature on this subject has emerged: Meir Bar Ilan, "The attitude toward *mamzerim* in Jewish society in late antiquity," *Jewish History* 14.2 (2000): 125–170; Shaye D. Cohen, "Some thoughts on 'The attitude toward *mamzerim* in Jewish society in late antiquity,'" *Jewish History* 14.2 (2000): 171–174; Marianne Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee*, 171–173; Andries van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee. Jesus as Child of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 2001); "Jésus, le *mamzer* (Mt 1.18)," *New Testament Studies* 46 (2001): 222–227; Scot McKnight, "Calling Jesus *Mamzer*," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1.1 (2003): 73–103; Charles Quarles, "Jesus as *Mamzer*: A Response to Bruce Chilton's Reconstruction of the Circumstances Surrounding Jesus' Birth in *Rabbi Jesus*," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14.2 (2004): 243–255; "Recovering Jesus' *Mamzerut*" in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 84–110. For an earlier approach, based upon assuming that a *mamzer* is a bastard in the modern sense, see Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus. A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, *Jesus and His World. An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 223–225.

Jesus apparently reveled in his reputation for consorting with allegedly loose women ("loose" being applicable to any woman who did not bear her husband's or her father's name). There were many unattached women among Jesus' disciples; when people called him "the friend of customs-agents and sinners" that was not a compliment, and Jesus' critics ranked these female disciples among the "sinners." Jesus damned his opponents in his defense of his female followers: "Amen I say to you, that customs-agents and whores precede you into the kingdom of God!" (Matt 21:31). That is obviously not a general endorsement of tax collection and prostitution as methods of salvation, but a tough rejoinder to people who despised his followers and called his females disciples "whores." In this case, we encounter perhaps the clearest example of what we have observed generally in the gospels: Jesus' contacts with sinners and outcasts, and his flaunting of those contacts, signified to his movement how God was extending the range of purity through Israel.



# JESUS AND ISRAEL'S ESCHATOLOGICAL CONSTITUTION

STEVEN M. BRYAN

## 1. *Introduction*

In his justly praised book, *Jesus and Judaism*, E. P. Sanders argued the influential thesis that Jesus was a prophet of Israel's imminent national restoration. He set this thesis against his perception that scholarship had moved decisively toward the conviction that the uniqueness of Jesus lay in his assertion that the kingdom was now present in his exorcisms, healings, and miracles, even if there remained a sense in which the kingdom of God was yet to come.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five years later, it would perhaps be fair to say that the pendulum has swung the other way. For while there remains a very significant portion of scholarship which maintains that for Jesus the kingdom was in some sense present, it is also the case that a broad swath of historical Jesus studies now places the emphasis on the futurity of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus. This is seen not so much in a groundswell of support for an eschatology that is as "consistent" or "thoroughgoing" as Sanders', though there are those who argue the case.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it is seen in the fact that for most of those who see in Jesus' eschatology a tension between the already and the not-yet, the emphasis falls unmistakably on the not-yet, particularly as measured by a comparison between indications of the kingdom's

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<sup>1</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985), 150–156.

<sup>2</sup> Those who believe that Jesus' eschatology was wholly futurist include Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 417–430; Richard H. Hiers, *Jesus and the Future* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981); C. C. Caragounis, "Son of Man," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992); Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999); Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Erich Gräßer, *Die Naherwartung Jesu*, SBS (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1973). The early and still influential works from this perspective are those of Johannes Weiss, *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God*, from the 1st German ed., translated, edited and with an introduction by Richard H. Hiers and D. Larrimore Holland, reprint 1892 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), and Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, with a preface by F. C. Burkitt (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

presence in Jesus' ministry and Jewish expectations of the time when God would restore the kingdom to Israel.<sup>3</sup> And so it is common for scholars to use terms such as "pledge" or "foretaste" or "proleptic realization" or "preliminary"<sup>4</sup> or to use analogies such as "a train drawing into a station" or of "the day beginning to dawn."<sup>5</sup> Such descriptions place unmistakable emphasis on future realities which Jesus believed were merely anticipated in his ministry.<sup>6</sup> This development is to a very significant degree a measure of the influence of Sanders.

As with much of contemporary New Testament scholarship, Sanders perceived the central issues in the study of Jesus with such clarity that the questions he posed continue to set the agenda today.<sup>7</sup> For Sanders, the key problem related to Jesus' understanding of the kingdom is simply this: if for Jesus, as in Second Temple Judaism generally, the kingdom of God is identified with the concrete social order to be introduced by God through a cataclysmic intervention on behalf of Israel, then Jesus could hardly have considered that the kingdom of God

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<sup>3</sup> Note, for instance, the view of J. P. Meier, who argues that though Jesus believed that "the kingdom was already present for at least some Israelites by his exorcisms and miracles of healing," it is nevertheless evident "that his message focused predominantly on the imminent future." *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:452, 454. A similar tendency is seen in many works which emphasize Jesus' role as a prophet of the imminent action of God while minimizing in some way the distinctiveness of Jesus' announcement of the kingdom's presence.

<sup>4</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:453.

<sup>5</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 1: *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 479.

<sup>6</sup> George Beasley-Murray, who, more than most, asserts the significance of the presence of the kingdom in Jesus' eschatology, complains about the tendency of many to subordinate the presence of the kingdom to its futurity, a tendency "evident when, for example, the work of Jesus is regarded only as a 'sign' of the coming kingdom, or an 'adumbration' of it, or 'dawning' of the kingdom (an ambiguous term, apparently intended to exclude the *light* of day)". "Matthew 6:33: The Kingdom of God and the Ethic of Jesus," in *Neues Testament und Ethik*, ed. Helmut Merklein (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 93.

<sup>7</sup> It is perhaps true that Sanders' study of Jesus has not had quite the impact of his study of Paul, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977). Nevertheless, in his study both of Paul and of Jesus, Sanders' lasting influence has been the result of his knowledge of the Jewish sources which have enabled him to set the parameters with particular clarity. As with his study of Paul, Sanders' innovative proposals concerning Jesus—e.g., that Jesus did not call sinners to repentance and that priority must be given to Jesus' actions over his sayings—have not been so widely accepted as has his interpretation of the context within which Jesus must be interpreted. As with his interpretation of Paul within the context of Jewish conceptions of the covenant, Sanders' interpretation of Jesus within the context of Jewish restorationism was not wholly without precedent. See especially G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation*, Ethel M. Wood Lecture (London: Athlone Press, 1965), and Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979).

was present *in this sense*. This point is often missed in contemporary discussions of Jesus' eschatology which are framed in some form of the familiar dichotomy between "the now and the not-yet". The problem is that the already of such an eschatology is not the already of an eschatology which is identifiably Jewish. That is to say, the already of Jesus' eschatology is often portrayed in ways that bear little resemblance to the realities associated with Israel's restoration—realities to which Jesus' unexplained use of "kingdom of God" language most readily refer. For Sanders, the idea that Jesus might also have talked about the kingdom in ways that suggested that it was already present as God's dynamic, though abstract, sovereignty in the world is no more than possible.<sup>8</sup> However, Sanders argued, even if Jesus did speak of the kingdom in this way, the actions of Jesus—especially his action in the Temple and his calling of Twelve disciples—so clearly evoke an imminent expectation of a concrete social order that it must have dominated his thinking.<sup>9</sup> For Sanders, the key elements of this social order expected by Jesus were a reconstituted tribal federation and a new temple. And the absence of these constitutional features associated with Israel's restoration serves as *prima facie* evidence that the kingdom did not arrive during Jesus' lifetime.<sup>10</sup>

Though Sanders' somewhat inconsistent bracketing of the sayings of Jesus has been subjected to vigorous criticism, his fundamental perception of the disconnect between an understanding of the kingdom of God as the social order established by God's restoration of Israel and the idea that the kingdom was present in the ministry of Jesus must still be addressed. Given the essential accuracy of Sanders' perception that Second Temple Jewish eschatology focused on the concrete social order which would emerge when God restored Israel, any assertion that Jesus believed the kingdom to be present in his ministry must

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<sup>8</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 140.

<sup>9</sup> Evident here is Sanders' well-known reliance on the actions of Jesus over against the sayings of Jesus. For Sanders, the problems surrounding the authenticity of Jesus' sayings are so great that no portrait of Jesus which depends on Jesus' sayings can be trusted.

<sup>10</sup> I draw the use of the term "constitutional" from William Horbury, "Constitutional Aspects of the Kingdom of God," in *The Kingdom of God and Human Society*, ed. Robin Barbour (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 60–79. Horbury uses the term as an alternative to "political" because he does not want to suggest that the kingdom of God is identical to the kingdom of Israel. Such a concern is less germane to discussions of the eschatological kingdom. I have used the term as a way of focusing attention on the structural features which would characterize the kingdom of God when it arrived with eschatological finality on behalf of Israel.

explain the way in which the various elements of the concrete social order associated with Israel's restoration fit within Jesus' vision of the kingdom. It is my contention that an examination of Jesus' words and actions suggest that the non-negotiable in Jesus' proclamation was, in fact, the presence of the kingdom and that Jesus, like his contemporaries, did conceive of this kingdom as a new social order in a way that was broadly consistent with the widespread expectation that the outcome of God's eschatological action would be a restoration of Israel's national life. However, Jesus did not tie the perception of the kingdom's presence to specific forms taken by various constitutional features of restored Israel's national life. Rather, Jesus believed that if the present forms of such features were not already consistent with his vision of God's rule over Israel, the present forms must come under the judgment of God and new forms be found, whatever those new forms might be. For Jesus, there are no conditions yet to be fulfilled by the nation and no thought of further delay: the kingdom of God has arrived and everything, including expectations that certain constitutional features of the eschaton would take particular forms, must give way to that reality with all its threat and promise to Israel's national life. It is only in this way that we can reconcile two otherwise contradictory features of Jesus' proclamation: the announcement of both impending judgment on Israel and national restoration.

To demonstrate this thesis, I wish first to sketch the evidence that Jesus announced impending and unavoidable judgment on the nation and then second, to examine the message of Jesus in relation to certain constitutional elements in the social order proclaimed by Jesus.

## 2. *Kingdom and Judgment in the Message of John the Baptist*

Though many studies of Jesus have stumbled at this point, any credible understanding of Jesus must make sense of the relationship between Jesus and the one with whom Jesus most closely identified his own message and mission—John the Baptist. John's message (and that of Jesus after him) differed substantially from many of his contemporaries inasmuch as he did not condition God's eschatological intervention on the repentance of Israel. Rather, the nearness of the kingdom was stated as an unconditional fact;<sup>11</sup> what John made conditional was

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<sup>11</sup> Only Matthew attributes the proclamation that "the kingdom of heaven has come near" to John as well as to Jesus (Matt 3:2; 4:17), though Luke indicates that John like Jesus preached the good news (3:18) and Mark positions John as "the beginning of the good news" (Mark 1:1). The parallel suggested by Matthew is not unlikely given

the participation of individual Israelites in the kingdom. Those who repented would participate; those who did not, would not. No one expected that every Jew would participate, but John's approach turned on its head the common supposition that Israel as a whole would be established in the kingdom when Israel as a whole repented. Instead, John declares the unconditional imminence of God's purging and renewing work in Israel.

One implication of John's proclamation of the unconditional nearness of God's decisive action on behalf of Israel is that John envisioned the possibility, even necessity, of redefining who belonged to Israel: John directs his warning against those who claim Abraham as their father but do not bear the fruit expected of the penitent Israel that God restores (Matt 3:8–9/Luke 3:8). The coming action of God would effect a separation that would cut through Israel (Matt 3:10, 12/Luke 3:9, 17). John's language excludes the possibility that he was thinking of a judgment directed only against a few apostate individuals or against a corrupt Jewish leadership; rather John anticipates a judgment that would fall on Israel as a whole; participation in John's own baptism of repentance identified recipients as Abraham's children on the last day.

It must be emphasized that both the judgment and renewal anticipated by John are national in scope. It is still remarkably common to read discussions which simply assume that John's warning of impending judgment was a warning of the impending universal final judgment of individuals.<sup>12</sup> In the face of such a judgment, "John views Israel as having reached the end."<sup>13</sup> But John's message is emphatically addressed to the nation<sup>14</sup> and depicts the outcome of God's impending action not as an ill-defined state of affairs somehow beyond the limits of history but as the formation of a purged and Spirit-renewed nation at the climax

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the links between the ministries of John and Jesus attested by the gospel traditions, links which include even the potentially embarrassing facts that Jesus identified with John's message through baptism and that Jesus, like John, made baptism a part of his own mission (John 3:26; 4:1–2). John's expectation of a coming baptism of spirit and fire would have been readily associated with the expectation of God's coming action to effect the renewal of Israel. See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 368. See also Sanders' affirmation of the comment of Walter Wink that the evangelists' "theological use of the Baptist depends on a 'historical fact, that through John's mediation Jesus perceived the nearness of the kingdom...': Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 371 n. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Note, for example, the comment of Joachim Gnilka: "Central to John's proclamation of judgment is the expected end of history": *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History*, translated by S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 72.

<sup>13</sup> Gnilka, *Jesus*, 72.

<sup>14</sup> This national focus is recalled in Acts 13:24, where we read that before the coming of Jesus, "John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."



of God's purposes for Israel within history. What relationship, if any, John perceived between the judgment about to fall on the nation of Israel and the final judgment of the people and nations of the world cannot be said. However, there is certainly little precedent for the expectation that Israel would be judged as part of God's final judgment of the world. Rather, the general expectation of the prophets and within Second Temple Judaism more generally was that final judgment would be the moment of Israel's vindication. If John expected an impending final judgment of the world, this would *not* have been an implication of his message of impending judgment on Israel but of his message regarding the restoration of Israel.

John's message does not envision the end of Israel as a nation but the renewal of Israel by God's eschatological forgiveness and the endowment of the eschatological Spirit. Apart from the suggestion that the terms of Israel's election would be recast, the material concerning John preserved for us in the gospel traditions does not indicate what John's expectations were regarding specific constitutional features of Israel's restoration. It would seem, rather, that for John the focus of his expectations fell on the qualitative ethical change that God's coming action would bring to Israel, now defined and delimited by identification with John's baptism of repentance. We see then in John the framework of a movement in which the non-negotiable nearness of God's kingdom and the renewal of Israel's ethical life in association with its arrival take priority over expectations of specific constitutional forms, and even presuppose the necessity of divine judgment on those constitutional features of Israel's national life which were inadequate within the arriving kingdom.

### 3. *National Judgment in the Proclamation of Jesus*

#### 3.1. *National and Final Judgment in the Message of Jesus*

In E. P. Sanders' view, so fully does Jesus participate in Jewish expectations of the restoration of Israel that it is impossible for Sanders to conceive of any way in which Jesus might have anticipated judgment on Israel. For Sanders, restoration occurs on the far side of judgment,<sup>15</sup> and

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<sup>15</sup> In the prophetic tradition, national restoration, often of a remnant, follows on from national judgment. In this regard, Sanders comments that "in the post-biblical literature there is not the same emphasis on the sifting or winnowing of Israel which one sees in some of the biblical prophets. That is not to say, however, that the themes of judgment and punishment for transgression recede. What recedes is the theme that

Jesus is fixed so firmly in the mold of a prophet of imminent national restoration that he cannot think of Jesus as a prophet of national judgment. Consequently, any element of judgment which might be detected in Jesus' message—and these are very few by Sanders' accounting—is directed against certain individual Jews but not against the nation. Jesus, as with the Second Temple Jewish literature generally, may anticipate the judgment of wicked Jews but he does not anticipate a further round of judgment against the nation.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Sanders allows that Jesus may have occasionally referred to the judgment of the wicked within Israel, and interprets such sayings as the parables of the tares and the fish-net as parables of “selection” or “separation”.<sup>17</sup>

The interpretation of Jesus' message of judgment exclusively in terms of final judgment has a venerable pedigree. The degree to which scholars still find it difficult to escape its sway is reflected in the recent work of James Dunn. Dunn asserts that “the expectation of impending judgment can scarcely be excluded from the core memories of Jesus' preaching,” but concludes that “the judgement in view is consistently final in overtone”.<sup>18</sup> Dunn's conclusion sits rather awkwardly alongside his view that John's warning of impending judgment was directed against the nation, with no necessary suggestion of “the imminent coming of *final* judgement.”<sup>19</sup> This awkwardness is particularly evident since Dunn places Jesus' message of judgment in continuity with that of John.

However, the expectation of national judgment cannot be excised from the Jesus tradition. A sizable body of evidence indicates that Jesus anticipated not simply a judgment in which wicked Jews as well as Gentiles would be destroyed but also a judgment of the nation of Israel as a whole.

### 3.2. *Parables of Judgment or Selection?*<sup>20</sup>

Though a sizable majority of scholars are content to subsume the whole of the judgment material in the Jesus tradition under the rubric of a

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Israel as a nation needs the sort of punishment which leads to the survival of a faithful remnant”: *Jesus and Judaism*, 113.

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 113–116.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 111, 115.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 420, 425.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed discussion of Jesus' parables of national judgment, see Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 46–81.

final, universal judgment of individuals, Sanders work is notable for the fact that he raises the question of whether Jesus expected a judgment on Israel as a nation. Nevertheless, in answering the question, Sanders fails to deal with a significant block of tradition which does seem to threaten judgment against Israel. For example, we find in the tradition multiple attestation of the fact that Jesus told parables in which the setting was a vineyard.<sup>21</sup> In each of these parables, it is likely that the vineyard functions as a stock image to represent the nation of Israel.

The identification of the vineyard as Israel is clearest in the parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1–11) with its clear allusions to the Song of the Vineyard in Isaiah 5. The connection between the parable of the tenants and Isaiah 5 is not particularly controverted, but it is crucial because of the way the vineyard imagery is used in Isaiah 5 to pronounce impending judgment on the nation because of its fruitlessness.

That this motif of divine judgment against the nation carries through the other vineyard parables is indicated most clearly by an often overlooked feature of the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9). In certain respects, this parable is the most interesting of the four vineyard parables. Sanders, who all but ignores the four vineyard parables and pays no attention whatever to the motif of the vineyard, does briefly identify the parable of the barren fig tree as the sole parable of destruction. But isolated as it is and capable of association with only two other parables which imply destruction by affirming selection (the parable of the tares and of the drag-net), the material in no way suffices as “evidence for a *message* about the coming judgement of Israel.” And so the material is set aside by Sanders, since it does not reflect a message of judgment on Israel but simply the unremarkable fact that “Jesus was not opposed to the idea of judgement,” i.e., against individuals.<sup>22</sup> Sanders’ demurral notwithstanding, the probability that the parable does relate to the judgment of Israel rises considerably when one notes that the parable is a vineyard parable which, from all appearances, has nothing to do with a vineyard. Rather, its plot focuses entirely on a fig tree and the threat of destruction which hangs over it because of its fruitlessness. Since the action of the parable hinges wholly on a fig tree, Jesus’ placement of the fig tree in a vineyard is the element of the parable which is most unexpected. “This is not to say that fig trees never grew

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<sup>21</sup> There are four vineyard parables: the parable of the tenants (Mark 1–9); the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32); the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16); and the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6–9).

<sup>22</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 114–115.

in the vineyards of first-century Palestine, only that *it is odd to place a fig tree over which one has narrative control in a vineyard when its placement there is irrelevant to the parable's plot.*"<sup>23</sup>

Once it is seen that the parable is a parable about Israel, it becomes clear that the parable does not merely threaten the destruction of individual Jews who fail to repent but threatens the nation of Israel and its misplaced confidence in its national election. The issue of Israel's election had already been the focus of the narrative context to which the parable is tightly tied. The parable is told as an elaboration of Jesus' comments on the deaths of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices and of another eighteen people who had died when a tower in Siloam had collapsed. Jesus rejects the explanation that the deaths of these Jews were to be explained as the deaths of people who had sinned so egregiously as to place themselves outside the protective shield of the covenant. Rather, those who had died were still very much a part of the nation—a nation which, with the exception of those who repented, would soon experience a fate similar to those who had died.

The other vineyard parables likewise signal the expectation of divine judgment on the nation. As in the parable of the barren fig tree, the vineyard plays a relatively minor role in the action of the parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1–9/Matt 21:33–41/Luke 20:9–16). If the vineyard in the parable of the fig tree signals to the hearer that the fig tree stands for Israel, so too in the parable of the tenants, the vineyard signals that the tenants represent Israel. This is confirmed by the parable's indication that the reason for the judgment on the tenants is their rejection of the envoys of the vineyard's owner. This is in line with the univocal indictment of the nation as a whole within the Jesus tradition for the rejection of God's prophets.

In the parables of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16) and the parable of the two sons (Matt 21:28–32), there is again, initially, little to indicate that the vineyard serves as anything more than a convenient setting for the parable. But if the parables make use of the vineyard as a stock image for Israel, they must be read as parables which address the situation of the nation. This immediately calls into question a common reading of the parable of the workers in the vineyard as a parable about rewards. Instead, the motif of the vineyard signals to the hearer that the parable is a parable about the freedom of God to determine

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<sup>23</sup> Bryan, *Jesus*, 48.

who will or will not receive the eschatological blessings promised to elect Israel and to give these blessings even to those within Israel “who by all accounts do not deserve it and who by the accounts of some at least had already cut themselves off from elect Israel.”<sup>24</sup> Similarly the parable of the two sons sent to work in their father’s vineyard suggests that the two sons correspond to two different types of people within Israel. The claim that tax collectors and prostitutes who had responded to John’s message of repentance were entering the kingdom ahead of the chief priests and elders of the people who had refused John’s baptism strongly implies a striking reversal by which those thought least likely to be included in restored Israel were included, while those whose participation had not been questioned were now at risk. If these two parables do not directly raise the specter of divine judgment on Israel, the threat of judgment is nevertheless implied in the way the parables critique accepted notions of Israel’s election.

### 3.3. *The Judgment of the Twelve Tribes*

One particularly influential part of Sanders’ argument has been his assertion that Jesus’ calling of twelve disciples was intended to evoke the hope that the twelve tribes would be reassembled in the land and reconstituted as a tribal league.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Sanders argues the authenticity of Matt 19:28 (par. Luke 22:28–30) in which Jesus says that the twelve disciples will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. It has been insufficiently noticed, however, that these two conclusions stand in considerable tension with one another. On the one hand, Sanders believes that the calling of the twelve symbolizes the imminent regathering and refederation of the twelve tribes, i.e., of all Israel. On the other hand, he allows that in Matt 19:28 the twelve represent those who act in judgment against the twelve tribes.<sup>26</sup> Given the evidence that Sanders

<sup>24</sup> Bryan, *Jesus*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> Sanders was not the first to argue such a view—see e.g., Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 234–235—but it is central to his understanding of Jesus.

<sup>26</sup> A number of scholars have followed Richard Horsley in his view that the twelve judge the twelve tribes in the sense of ruling over them, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 203. Dunn (*Jesus Remembered*) appears to be of two minds on the issue. At 416 n. 178, he comments, “The thought [of Matt 19:28] may be of the twelve ‘ruling over’ the twelve tribes” (citing Horsley), only to call the view into question at 420 n. 205, noting rightly that “the thought of the twelve judging Israel is a reversal of Israel’s hope of judging the nations.” Both Dupont and Luz note the “philological fairytale” (Luz) which props up the idea that κρινω can mean “rule”. The perception of Luz is that the

himself musters to indicate the way in which Second Temple expectations regarding the twelve tribes were focused on the reconstitution of all Israel, it is at least odd that Jesus would refer specifically to the "twelve tribes" as the object of eschatological *judgment*.

The tension between these two ideas becomes unsustainable when viewed against the backdrop of a significant set of texts which anticipate that vindicated Israel will act as the agent of God's judgment against the nations. The development of this tradition in Matt 19:28 subverts it, first by suggesting that all Israel will be the object rather than the agent of God's judgment and, second by asserting that the agent of judgment will not be Israel as a whole but Israel understood as a smaller group from within all Israel—a group whose number symbolically identifies them with Israel in restoration.<sup>27</sup> In effect, Matt 19:28 suggests that restored Israel will sit in judgment against all Israel. If so, Matt 19:28 serves not as an indication that Jesus expected the imminent regathering and reconstitution of Israel as a federation of twelve tribes in their traditional territorial allotments, but as a repudiation of that notion in favor of a belief that Israel's reconstitution had taken a wholly different form.

A similar conclusion should be drawn from Matt 8:11–12 (par. Luke 7:28–30), another text which has been understood as suggesting that Jesus expected the imminent regathering of the scattered tribes of Israel; Jewish expectations regarding the regathering of the scattered tribes would certainly have identified diaspora Jews as among "the sons of the kingdom." So it is only with difficulty that Jesus' declaration that "the sons of the kingdom" will be cast into outer darkness while many from east and west come to eat with the patriarchs in the kingdom can be taken narrowly as a reference to Palestinian Jews or their leaders.<sup>28</sup> Rather, "the sons of the kingdom" must be understood as a reference to

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interpretation of "judge" in Matt 19:28 to mean "rule" is based on the confusion of the historical fact that the judges of Israel ruled and the kings judged with the semantic meaning of κρίνω. Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 3. Teilband Mt 18–25, EKKNT (Zürich: Benziger, 1997), 129; Jacques Dupont, "Le logion des douze trônes," *Bib* 45 (1964): 355–390.

<sup>27</sup> Dunn (*Jesus Remembered*, 510 n. 103) avers that "'twelve' implies restoration rather than remnant theology," but the dichotomy is false. The prophetic tradition to which Dunn refers to demonstrate the expectation of a regathered and reunified tribal league can portray this restoration as a restoration of the remnant of survivors. So e.g., Isa 49:6: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors [remnant] of Israel..."

<sup>28</sup> Against W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–97), 2.27–28.

Israel, the heir-apparent to the kingdom. Just as Matt 19:28 can be read as a critique of the standard form of the expectation that Israel would be the agent of God's judgment on the nations, so too, Matt 8:11–12 can be seen as "a striking variation on Israel's hopes for the return of the exiles with the eschatological pilgrims from the nations."<sup>29</sup> The expectation of eschatological pilgrimage remains but the correlation of that expectation with the hope of reassembly of the scattered tribes has been cut by the threat of judgment against the "sons of the kingdom." For readers of Matthew, Jesus' shocking words are easily recognized as a continuation of the Baptist's threat that the children of Abraham may find themselves excluded from participation in the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.

It should be noted that in such texts as Matt 19:28 and 8:1–12 Jesus does not deduce from Israel's judgment that the eschatological constitution of God's people has been delayed. Jesus' calling of twelve disciples does not symbolize the future reconstitution of the tribal league but rather the belief that with the arrival of the kingdom, the failure of the twelve tribes to be eschatological Israel meant that the twelve tribes must themselves come under divine judgment and a new way of constituting Israel as the twelve be found.

### 3.4. *Temple Judgment*

A growing body of scholarship supports the idea that Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple, that Jesus' action in the temple was an enactment of this expected judgment and that the provocation of this prediction and action contributed directly to his death. All of this was argued forcefully by Sanders and is not now widely disputed.<sup>30</sup> However, the explanation of Jesus' words and actions against the temple remains contested. Much of the scholarship on these issues arose as a direct response to the argument of Sanders that Jesus merely predicted and enacted the temple's non-punitive destruction in preparation for the eschatological temple to be erected with the imminent arrival of the kingdom. For Sanders, Jesus did not fault the Second Temple; he simply asserted its impending replacement by a far more glorious temple.

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<sup>29</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 415.

<sup>30</sup> A notable exception is Paula Fredriksen, who appears to doubt that Jesus ever performed an action in the temple and thinks that if he did perform some such action it would have gone unnoticed and been unrelated to his death. *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity*, 225–232.

However, as Bauckham astutely observes, in Sanders' view, "Jesus did no more than prophesy as an event of the near future what most Jews believed would happen some day. Indeed it was their devout *hope*." Sanders' explanation thus fails to explain how Jesus' prediction and enactment of the Temple's destruction could have led to his death.<sup>31</sup>

Bauckham and others have argued that Jesus' words and actions against the temple indicate that Jesus expected judgment to fall upon the Jewish authorities, particularly the temple establishment, whom Jesus regarded as corrupt. There is certainly evidence that some Second Temple Jews regarded the temple establishment as corrupt. However, to put the matter baldly, given the massive role played by the destruction of the first temple in biblical and Jewish tradition and its univocal interpretation as an act of divine judgment on the nation of Israel, the simplest explanation for Jesus' verbal and enacted prediction of the temple's destruction is that he believed the prophetic tradition announcing impending and unavoidable judgment on the temple as the central element in God's judgment of the nation was a tradition wholly applicable to "this generation." The centrality of this tradition within Israel's story renders wholly unproblematic the assumption that Jesus' himself cited Jer 7:11—a key text in prophetic tradition which understand temple destruction as national judgment—as the explanation for his action in the temple.

#### 4. *Restoration and Kingdom in the Teaching of Jesus*

The two crucial elements in Sanders' portrayal of Jesus as a prophet of imminent national restoration were the expectations of a new temple and a regathering and reconstitution of the twelve tribes. But as I have argued above, Jesus' proclamation of national judgment was framed precisely as a message of judgment against the twelve tribes and against the temple, i.e., against precisely those constitutional features of Israel's national life in terms of which Sanders had perceived a message of imminent restoration. If that is the case, then one might expect that Jesus would have declared that the time of fulfillment of God's eschatological promises to Israel would have to be delayed until Israel was made ready through judgment. Such a pattern would fit entirely with

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Jesus' Demonstration in the Temple," in *Law and Religion: Essays on the Place of the Law in Israel and Early Christianity*, ed. Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge, England: James Clarke & Co, 1988), 86–87.



the pattern evident in the prophets whereby Israel's restoration follows its judgment. It is striking then that the expectation of further delay is absent from Jesus' message to the nation. Rather, the gospel traditions suggest that Jesus believed that the terms and conditions of the eschaton were already coming into existence.

#### 4.1. *The Ethical Reconstitution of Israel*

For many, the perception of eschatological inauguration in the teaching of Jesus is based on the close tie between Jesus' ethical demands and his proclamation of the kingdom. So, for instance, many regard the Sermon on the Mount not so much as a call to repent in view of the imminent arrival of the kingdom but as a declaration of kingdom norms applicable to Jesus' followers in the present. Such an understanding of Jesus' ethical instruction is then taken as evidence that for Jesus the kingdom was present "in some sense," that is, as an abstract power or spiritual reality already present in the lives of individuals who believe in advance of the concrete arrival of the kingdom on behalf of Israel.

The impression that this initial coming of the kingdom is understood as a non-national abstraction is confirmed by frequent assertions that Jesus is not a new "law-giver" and that the norms of the kingdom are not to be understood as new law. This may be true, but Jesus does stipulate a way of life that characterizes not merely the conduct of individual followers of Jesus but also life within the eschatological kingdom. The perception that Jesus differed from the teachers of the law was correct inasmuch as his ethical teaching is not easily categorized as a new law or as exposition of the law of Moses (Matt 7:29). However, this fact should not be taken to mean that Jesus' intent was to inaugurate a denationalized kingdom. Rather, the significance of the fact that Jesus' ethical teaching does not function as legal code or exposition is that the nature of Israel's national existence has been conceived on entirely different terms. Israel's existence as an eschatologically constituted nation has, by definition, no precedent.

It is for this reason that we struggle to find adequate categories to describe this national existence, but despite the difficulties, we must not revert to the familiar tact that steers Jesus clear of national aspiration and into the domain of pure spirit. The tension which defined the existence of Palestinian Jews in the first century was a tension that arose because of the difficulty of reconciling Roman imperial claims with the imperial claims of Israel itself—claims born of Israel's monotheism and eschatological hope.

The tension is palpable in the challenge to Jesus regarding the propriety of paying taxes to Caesar (Mark 12:13–17). The response of Jesus must not be understood as a suggestion that Caesar's kingdom belonged to a realm that differed so wholly from God's kingdom that the two could co-exist in a way that was fully compatible. Nor should the saying be understood as though Jesus advocated an understanding of God's sovereignty that implied a defiant stance of non-payment of the tax to Caesar. Rather, the issue is taxation itself. God's kingdom is not maintained or sustained by the payment of the tax. Yet Caesar's kingdom requires it. The fact that Israel's situation still necessitated the payment of the tax to Caesar in view of the arrival of God's kingdom suggested that the nation had failed to become what it should already have been. If the nation had been fully committed and faithful to the God whose kingdom is not sustained by taxation, they would no longer have been subject to Caesar's tax. Though framed as a riddle, Jesus' call for the coin bearing Caesar's image highlights the obvious fact that his interlocutors were still liable to pay tax to a pagan king. In paying taxes to Caesar, they were fulfilling what the king of any kingdom like Rome's demanded. However, whatever it is that must be rendered to God, it is certainly not a tax. This was precisely the point made by Jesus when asked about the temple tax: the king does not tax his children (Matt 17:25–27). If the Sermon on the Mount and the vineyard parables are any indication, that which must be rendered to God as king is the ethical fruit appropriate to Israel's eschatological existence. Israel's ongoing liability to taxation and its failure to produce the ethical fruit expected of Israel in the eschaton both suggest that Israel had failed to become what it should have already been.

This does not mean that Jesus was simply uninterested in the fact or continuation of Roman rule, as if its existence was compatible with an understanding of God's kingdom that was so radically new and otherworldly as to render Roman domination irrelevant. Rather, Roman rule was fundamentally *incompatible* with the arrival of Israel's kingdom. But this fundamental incompatibility is not in the first instance an indication that Rome must be judged. Rather, it is an indication that *Israel* must be judged: the continued existence of Roman rule in the face of the arriving kingdom demanded Israel's judgment—a judgment which, ironically, would take place at the hands of the Roman imperial authority which Israel should have already replaced. If Israel had failed to become what it should already have been with the arrival of the kingdom—the agent of God's sovereignty and judgment over all

creation—then the arrival of the kingdom itself would fashion a people who would function in this way.

Matt 21:43 is frequently attributed to Matthew, but, even so, it should be pointed out that Israel's judgment does not result in a non-national entity even for Matthew, though this would likely have been a reasonable way to interpret the situation of Jesus' followers in Matthew's day. Rather, the kingdom will be given to a nation (ἔθνος) which will produce the fruit of the kingdom.<sup>32</sup> This is no denationalization of Israel's kingdom but its ethical constitution.

This construal of Israel's restoration along ethical lines which did not condition or associate the kingdom's arrival on the emergence of certain specific constitutional elements may be directly traced to John the Baptist. In one striking saying, Jesus suggests that Israel's restoration, understood as its ethical reconstitution, had already been accomplished: "Elijah is indeed coming first to restore all things... But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written about him." (Mark 9:12–13). Jesus thus rejects an understanding of Elijah's restoration as a future regathering of the twelve tribes as in Sir 48:10 and associates this restoration instead with the ethical renewal initiated by John's call to repentance.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.2. *Jesus and Constitutional Features of the Eschaton*

If there is an important sense in which Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom was focused on Israel's ethical reconstitution rather than on concrete constitutional features of the eschaton, this should not be taken to mean that Jesus had nothing to say about these matters. We focus in this section on the two features isolated by Sanders: the temple and Israel's election.

As noted above, it is widely agreed that Jesus predicted the destruction of the temple. However, too little attention has been given to the correlation of such a prediction to his message of eschatological fulfillment. It is one thing to cast the prediction of the temple's destruction as an anticipation of God's punishment of a corrupt temple establishment, but it is quite another to explain how such a prediction fits with

<sup>32</sup> See especially the recent work of Wesley J. Olmstead who refutes the argument of Saldarini and others that ἔθνος refers only to new leaders for Israel, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables: The Nation, the Nations and the Reader in Matthew 21.28–22.14*, SNTSMS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89–95.

<sup>33</sup> See further Bryan, *Jesus*, 88–129.

Jesus' message of Israel's restoration. Sanders' suggestion was that Jesus anticipated the temple's non-punitive destruction and replacement by an eschatological temple built by God himself. This explanation has not met with acceptance, but it at least recognizes the incongruity of a message of restoration with a prediction of the temple's destruction.

Apart from the difficulty of suggesting that Jesus anticipated a non-punitive destruction of the temple, there is also a marked absence of evidence that Jesus expected a physical structure as its replacement. And yet it does seem that Jesus spoke not only of the temple's destruction but also of its rebuilding. In both the triple tradition and John, the temple was to be rebuilt "in three days." But did Jesus associate this rebuilt temple with himself (as John 2:21 suggests) or with his followers or possibly even with both?<sup>34</sup> The evidence is sufficient to tantalize but no more—sufficient to suggest that Jesus believed a new form would emerge or was emerging but not to define absolutely what he thought that new form would be.

Similar comments may be made with regard to Jesus' beliefs concerning the shape of eschatological Israel. The subject of Israel's election in the message of Jesus is vast, but it is possible to set forth in broad terms the way in which Jesus' eschatology shaped his understanding of Israel's constitution.<sup>35</sup> I have noted that Jesus' use of the vineyard motif in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1–16) signals to the hearer that the story he tells is about Israel and its status before God. The parable addresses notions of election which exclude those "sinners" whose willful rejection of Israel's covenant have cut them off from the covenant and its remedies for sin. The synoptic gospels' frequent references to the resentment stirred up by Jesus' association with tax collectors and prostitutes bears witness to the fact that this understanding of Israel's election was held by at least some of Jesus' contemporaries. Against this assessment of who belonged to Israel,

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<sup>34</sup> See Dunn's brief assessment of the "rather sketchy" data, *Jesus Remembered*, 514–515. A great deal of attention has been given to the Qumran community's probable self-conception as a temple community, replacing the corrupt Jerusalem cult. However, for the Qumran community, this did not rule out a future physical temple in Jerusalem (11QT XXIX, 8–10). By contrast, if the early Christians viewed themselves as a temple, this did not evidently rule out worship at the Jerusalem temple (e.g., Acts 2:46) but neither was it coordinated with an expectation of a future physical temple in Jerusalem. Since many of the New Testament writers reflect in various ways on the significance of the temple, the fact that the synoptic gospels do not attribute to Jesus a clearly determined understanding of the nature of the eschatological temple very likely suggests that he did not set one forth.

<sup>35</sup> For a fuller development of the discussion which follows, see Bryan, *Jesus*, 56–72.

Jesus tells the parable of the workers to assert God's absolute freedom to determine who would participate in eschatological Israel, who would inherit the blessings of the kingdom. Whether this determination is understood as a new act of election (cf. *1 Enoch* 93.9–10; CD I, 5–9) or as God's eschatological forgiveness of Israel (cf. Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:22–27) or both, the shape of eschatological Israel is determined only by God's free and gracious action. Such a view is entirely consonant with Jesus' willingness to suggest that those who submitted to John's baptism, even if widely regarded as apostate, were entering the kingdom ahead of those whose participation in eschatological Israel was conventionally thought beyond question (Matt 21:31–32). Jesus' calling of twelve disciples suggest both that Jesus identified the community being called into existence by God's eschatological action as Israel and that participation in that community was possible even now.

### 5. Conclusion

In the ubiquitous references to the tension between the already and the not yet in Jesus' eschatology, too little notice is paid to the fact that much of what is commonly perceived as "already" to Jesus was also "already" to his contemporaries. If Jesus believed that the rule of God was breaking in, his fellow Jews believed that God already ruled the world. If Jesus intuitively asserts the assertion of divine sovereignty, then other Jews believed that the sovereignty of God already governed human affairs so absolutely that to describe the arrival of God's kingdom as the beginning or arrival of God's rule would not only have made little sense, it would have bordered on blasphemy. The expectation was not of a time when God's rule would be ramped up, but of the assertion of God's rule *on Israel's behalf*. It is in this sense that a shift in the discussion concerning Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God to a focus on Israel's restoration is to be welcomed. But even this is inadequate if "the restoration of Israel" does not evoke the concrete social order and political reconfiguration envisioned by the prophets of Israel, ending with Jesus. *If Jesus differs from others in the band of Israel's prophets it is in his steadfast refusal to cast this new social and political order into the familiar forms of Israel's theocratic past and to gauge the assertion of God's rule on Israel's behalf in terms of the emergence of those forms.* The kingdom of God has come near, it can be entered, but with the failure of Israel and its institutions to be what they should already have

been, Israel must now be judged and the kingdom's constitutional forms are broadly open to the determination of a God who exercises his sovereign rule with complete freedom.

If the kingdom of God is in some sense not yet, it is *not* because the kingdom now present has for Jesus become a formless abstraction, still awaiting the real coming of the kingdom in concrete form. Rather, in the wake of the failure of Israel and its constitutional features to conform to the terms and conditions of the eschaton, new forms are coming into existence, among them the form of Israel itself. This is why Jesus' ethical teaching remains the best index of the degree to which Jesus' eschatology may be said to be realized. If a people conformed to the eschatological expression of God's will was already coming into existence, then Israel's restoration was already to that degree a reality—a reality effected by John and extended by Jesus. However, if this kingdom is, in the first instance, ethically constituted, it is still given to a nation, a nation through whom God's sovereignty over all creation would be asserted. As those who claim to be Jesus' followers and heirs to privileges which have come to them because of Israel's judgment, Christians must still come to grips with the theological, social and political implications of the fact that Jesus' aims were focused on the national restoration of Israel.



## JESUS, SATAN, AND COMPANY

DARRELL BOCK

One of the more interesting and controversial aspects of Jesus' ministry for modern readers has been Jesus' engagement with the devil and demons, as well as the role of exorcism in that ministry. Dealing with a world of spiritual beings, entities assumed in first-century Judaism but widely doubted in the modern world, has always pushed the modern historical method to its limits. This essay is divided into three basic parts: (1) the linguistic data and first-century background, (2) a discussion of how Satan and the demons, including the issue of exorcisms, have been read by interpreters, and (3) a look at key individual texts. A solid summary of where things stand comes from the recent work by James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the "extraordinary deeds" tied to the Jesus tradition, deeds which include exorcism, he says, "They form a major part of the Jesus tradition, and prior to the Enlightenment's problematizing the very category of 'miracle' they constituted weighty proof that Jesus was from (or of) God. Since then the probative value (and therefore the market value) of these traditions has fallen through the floor, and it has not recovered much in recent years. But the records of Jesus' 'mighty works' are too important a feature of the Jesus tradition for us to ignore." Our survey will show that although many scholars have a great deal of skepticism about confirming the details of particular events in historical Jesus study, there is at the macro-level an acceptance of the fact the ancients perceived Jesus to have performed extraordinary works. That perception was a result of events Jesus performed. His confrontation with evil forces was an important dimension of his work and message that is deeply rooted in the tradition. As a result, it has become more common to recognize or at least be open to the fact that something of substance took place, even if the details are hard to corroborate by the limits of the modern historical method.

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<sup>1</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 667.



### 1. Linguistic Elements and First Century Jewish Background

By the first century, the existence of an arch-enemy of God and a host of opposing spiritual beings was a fixture in Judaism.<sup>2</sup> In the Hebrew Scripture, Satan was a figure in the divine court who “accused” humanity, as he did Job (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; so also Zech 3:1–2). In fact, the name Satan means “accuser.” The first use of the term as a personal name appears in 1 Chronicles 21:1. The LXX often translates the term by ὁ διάβολος (Sir 21:27, along with the texts already noted; the Greek term is used 21 times in LXX with 13 appearances in Job 1–2; only twice does it not translate the Hebrew term for Satan). The figure is prominent as well in intertestamental literature (*T. Dan.* 3.6; 5.6; 6.1; *T. Gad.* 4.7) and at Qumran (1QM XIII, 11; CD XVI, 5; 1QS III, 23) as an angel of enmity. He also is called Mastema (*Jub.* 10.8) and Belial, angel of darkness (1QS I, 18; II, 5, 19; III, 20–23), a name which equals Beliar of the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Beelzebul is another name used for this figure, but the origin of that name is not clear. Sammuil is yet another name for this figure (*Jub.* 19.28). In Jewish literature, this leader of evil has various functions: (1) he tests (*T. Job.* 4.4–9; *Jub.* 16.17), (2) accuses (*Jub.* 1.20, a key text where he accuses and seduces so as to lead one to perish), and (3) leads astray, often into idolatry (*Jub.* 11.4–5; 22.16–17; *Mart. Isa* 1.9; 2.4; *T. Job* 2.2–3.5; CD XII, 2b–3; *Life of Adam and Eve* 9.1; 11.3; *T. Job* 23.11; 26.6). He is called “Lord of the Demons” (*Jub.* 10.7–13). In the end, Satan will be bound, so he cannot work his destructive power (*1 En.* 10.4; *Jub.* 5.6; 10.7–11; *T. Levi* 18.12).

References to demons are also common in the period.<sup>3</sup> They also are often associated with idolatry (*Mart. Isa* 1.8–9; *Jub.* 48.9–11; CD V, 17b–19). Demons injure and destroy (*1 En.* 15.11–12; *Jub.* 10.5), are often called unclean spirits (*Jub.* 10.1; *T. Sim.* 4.9; *T. Ben.* 5.2), defile (*Tobit* 3:7–8; 8:1–3; *T. Reuben* 2.8–9; 3.3; 1QM VII, 5), can produce illness (*Ps* 91:5–6; *Life of the Prophets* 16:38–42), and death (*Jub.* 10.1–2; 49.2; *Wis* 1:14). Their demise also comes at the end (*Jub.* 23.29; 50.5; *1 En.* 69.27–29; *T. Moses* 10.1; 1QM I, 1; IV, 1b–2; XI, 8; XIII, 11–16;

<sup>2</sup> For the following, see Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 127, n. 4; G. Foerster, σατανᾶς A–B, *TDNT* 7:151–163; O. Böcher, *EDNT* 3:234; H. Bietenhard and C. Brown, *DNTT* 3:468–473.

<sup>3</sup> G. Foerster, *TDNT* 3:1–20; O. Böcher, *EDNT* 1:272; Garrett, *Demise of the Devil*, 129 n. 15.

XV, 2–3, 15–18; XVII, 5b–6; XVIII, 1, 3, 11; *T. Simeon* 6.6; *T. Levi* 18.12–13; *T. Zebulon* 9.8–9; *T. Dan.* 5.11; *T. Asher* 7.3; 1QS III, 24–25; IV, 20–22; 1QH III, 18; 1QM I, 10–11; VII, 6; XII, 7–8.). This Jewish view appears rooted in a particular reading of Genesis 6:1–4, where the initial destructive impact of such beings was seen to have involved their cohabitating with women (*1 En.* 6–11; 15.3–12; 18.13–6; 19.1–2; *Jub.* 5.1–10; 10.5–11; *T. Reuben* 5.5–7; *T. Naph.* 3.5 Philo, *Gig.* 6–18). The sheer variety of sources that refer to Satan and the demons in Judaism, especially in intertestamental literature, shows the wide acceptance of such entities within Second Temple Judaism.

There are examples of exorcism and exorcists discussed in Judaism. Most prominent are Tobit 6–8, 1QapGen XX, 16–29 (involving Abraham), Josephus, *Ant.* 8.46–48 (Solomon/Eleazar); 6.166–69 (David and Lyre), *War* 7.185 (root of Baaras), and 4Q560 (not exorcism but prevention of possession).<sup>4</sup> Later texts include *b. Me'il* 17b (which although an exorcism is too late a text to be of use), and *Num R.* 19.8 (use of roots and smoke like the Eleazar account in Josephus, but with a Gentile idolater context). In the church fathers, Justin (*Dialogue* 85) thought Jewish exorcists were successful by magical means like the pagans. Origen's Celsus (*Cels.* 1.68) sees Jesus as a magician in this regard. In 5.45 Origen notes that the use of the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob causes the demons to be vanquished. All of these texts show that Jesus' exorcisms are not unusual for his milieu. However, it also should be noted that evidence for exorcism among Jews was not widespread.<sup>5</sup> Either a charismatic leader or an inspired prophet would perform such a role. Eric Eve, in assessing the significance of this background, notes that Jesus is unique in the amount of exorcisms he performs and in being a "Bearer of numinous power" (one through whom God's Spirit works).<sup>6</sup>

Some texts related to demons or the devil involve eschatological hope (4Q521, *T. Moses* 10, and *Jub.* 23.23–31). However, they are not tied to exorcism but either to healing or to Satan's defeat in the end

<sup>4</sup> Eric Eve, *The Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles*, JSNTS 231 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 339–349, 375–376, and 379–380. Eve questions if 1QapGen XX is an exorcism, but says the procedure is the same as one.

<sup>5</sup> Eve, *Jewish Context*, 339–349, makes this point explicitly.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 378–380. This stands in contrast to those who appeal for God to work.

(1 *En* 10: primordial evil defeated). The distinct role exorcism plays for Jesus eschatologically will be an important point to note later.

Jewish association with exorcists that might relate to the eschaton include connections to David and Solomon (David: 1 Sam 16:14–16, 23; Josephus, *Ant* 6.166–68; *L.A.B.* 60; 11Q5 [11QPsa] XXVII, 9–10 [a very fragmentary text with little detail]; Solomon: 1 Kgs 4:33; Wis 7:20; *Ant* 8.45). Prophets like Elijah and Elisha also had such ability (1 Kgs 17–19; 2 Kgs 4–8). Intriguing but without detail is 4Q521 II, 1, 8, 12, where the “anointed one” heals in the new age, an important point as sickness and demonic association could overlap in this period.

In sum, the references to Satan and the demons are part of the rich fabric of the Jewish worldview. This worldview sees the world as not just a physical creation but a place where spiritual beings exist and work largely unseen, except for their effect.

The New Testament usage associated with Jesus fits this perspective. The term Satan appears in the Gospels 16 times out of 36 New Testament uses (Matt. 4:10; 12:26 [2x]; 16:23; Mark 1:13; 3:23 [2x], 26, as a strong man who guards his goods, images of his power on earth; 4:15; 8:33; Luke 10:18; 11:18; 13:16; 22:3–4; 22:31–32; John 13:27). Synoptic uses in Mark 1:12–13; 3:22–27 and 8:31–33 and parallels make up 10 of the 15 synoptic uses.<sup>7</sup> Of these texts, only Mark 1:13, Luke 22:3–4, 31–33 are narrative comments by an evangelist. The term is used interchangeably with “the devil” (ὁ διάβολος). Synonyms include evil one (Matt 13:19), enemy (Matt 13:39); Beelzebul (Mark 3:22 par); and “ruler of [this] world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). In the gospels, Satan is an anti-divine power (Mark 3:23, 26; Matt 12:26; Luke 11:18), sometimes tied to a disease (Luke 13:16), who works as a tempter (Mark 1:13; Matt 4:1–12; Luke 4:1–13 like his function in Job 1, except that here there is a face to face encounter with the one Satan tests; Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33; Luke 22:31, seeks to sift Peter). Satan is tied to wickedness (Mark 4:15; Luke 22:3; John 13:27) and his demise is indicated by work the disciples perform (Luke 10:18, 20). As Foerster says, “The power of evil is regarded as a single power working towards a single objective. This objective is the destruction of man in every respect. In particular, there is war against Jesus of Nazareth as the bringer of the redeeming lordship of God.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Foerster, *TDNT* 7:151–163; Böcher, *EDNT* 3:234.

<sup>8</sup> Foerster, *TDNT* 7:160.

As was noted above, the devil (ὁ διάβολος) is the Greek term equivalent to Satan in LXX. There are 37 New Testament uses, with 14 in gospels, eight of those in the temptation account (Matt 4:1, 5, 8, 11; 13:39, 41; Luke 4:2, 3, 6, 13; 8:12; John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2).<sup>9</sup> The devil is the ruler of his angels (Matt 25:41), tempts (Mark 4 par), sows weeds (Matt 13:39), steals the Word of God (Luke 8:12), causes sin (John 8:44), causes Judas to betray (John 13:2), has children who follow his way (John 8:44; 6:70), causes disciples to think improperly (Matt 16:23; Mark 8:33), is destroyed at the judgment along with his angels (Matt 25:41), is defeated already (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), and abrogates to himself authority for this world, which is recognized to a degree (Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, ruler of this world in John). Of all of these references, only John 13:2 is a narrative comment by an evangelist. The temptation references describe the interplay between Jesus and Satan. The other texts show up in discourse or in parabolic contexts.

When it comes to demons, the key term is δαιμόνιον. It is used 51 times in the gospels (Matthew 11 times; Mark 11 times [longer ending has 2 more uses]; Luke 23 times; John 6 times).<sup>10</sup> In the gospels, healings and possession comprise the largest number of references. A reference to unclean spirits functions as a synonym. There is an overlap between disease and demons, although this is not always the case. Thus, demons cause dumbness (Luke 11:14), muteness (Mark 9:17, 25), and weakness (Luke 13:11). The gospels have 13 references to demon possession (Matt 7 times; Mark 4 times; Luke once; Luke; John once: Matt 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22; Mark 1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; Luke 8:36; John 10:2). However, John's Gospel does not record an exorcism. There are 7 exorcisms in the synoptics ([1] Demoniac in Capernaum [Mark 1:23–28; Luke 4:31–37]; [2] Gerasene Demoniac [Mark 5:1–20/Matt 8:28–34/Luke 8:26–39]; [3] Possessed Boy [Mark 9:14–29/Matt 17:14–21/Luke 9:37–43a]; [4] Mute/Blind Demoniac context for Beelzebul [Matt 12:22–23a/Luke 11:14/Mark 3:22–27, Beelzebul charge only]; [5] Mute Demoniac [Matt 9:32–33]; [6] Mary

<sup>9</sup> G. Foerster and G. vonRad, *TDNT* 3:72–81; Böcher *EDNT* 1:297–98; Bietenhard and Brown, *DNTT* 3:468–473.

<sup>10</sup> Böcher, *EDNT* 1:271–274. Matt 7:22; 9:33–34(2x); 10:8; 11:18; 12:24(2x), 27–28; 17:18; Mark 1:34(2x), 39; 3:15, 22(2x); 6:13; 7:26, 29–30; 9:38; [16:9.17]; Luke 4:33, 35, 41; 7:33; 8:2, 27, 29–30, 33, 35, 38; 9:1, 42, 49; 10:17; 11:14(2x)–15(2x), 18, 19, 20; 13:32; John 7:20; 8:48–49, 52; 10:20–21.

Magdalene [Luke 8:2]; [7] Syro-Phoenician Woman [Mark 7:24–30/Matt 15:21–28]). This means that exorcisms are multiply attested.<sup>11</sup> Eric Eve suggests that the uniqueness of Jesus' exorcisms, given that he is always the bearer of numinous power who drove out demons in his own name, may have contributed to the implicit Christology of the early church that saw Jesus as more than a prophet.<sup>12</sup>

This interaction with demons has a meaning for these accounts. Healings, of which exorcisms are a part because of the occasional overlap between disease and possession, fulfill prophecy (Matt 11:4–6 par Luke 7:22–23). They point to Satan's defeat (Mark 3:27 par; Luke 13:32) and the kingdom of God (Matt 12:28a=Luke 11:20a). To misunderstand this witness to God's power is to commit blasphemy against the Spirit (Mark 3:28–30 par). The demonology assumed here is that of ancient Judaism, but Jesus transcends it in the portrait given in the gospels.<sup>13</sup> The exorcisms show that the demons know the identity of Jesus as Holy One. They also know their fate and can be silenced by him. Unlike Jewish exorcists, Jesus does not pray to make this take place. Most often he merely speaks.

In sum, Jesus' involvement with the devil and demons is a key element of his ministry and a window to what Jesus is seeking to accomplish in his ministry according to the New Testament portrayal. How has this material been read and interpreted? What does this material show us about the historical Jesus? It is to those questions we now turn.

## *2. The Interpretation of Jesus, Satan, and Company in New Testament Study*

How to interpret miracles and discussions of spiritual beings was not a matter of controversy until the philosophical developments of the modern worldview. As Bruce Chilton says, "Pre-modern hearers of Mark would have required no tradition critical consideration to be convinced that story tellers intended to speak of an occurrence, and

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<sup>11</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 670.

<sup>12</sup> Eve, *Jewish Context*, 386.

<sup>13</sup> Forester, *TDNT* 7:160.

that they accomplished their intention.”<sup>14</sup> By contrast, Chilton notes that modern hearers are put in a different position, not by their understanding of the text, but by their understanding of the world. The issue here, *either for or against such entities*, is an *a priori* judgment. As Chilton says, “To say, for example, that the story is true and our view [the modern view] of the world too narrow, is a perfectly respectable philosophical reflection, but it can hardly be commended on strictly textual or historical grounds. Similarly, to say that demons do not exist and stories which suppose they do are misleading, has the attractive ring of rational consistency about it, but it would seem to reduce history to *a priori* notions of what is possible.”<sup>15</sup> Here is the great divide in reading such texts and assessing them. Historical method really does not and cannot address such questions, as the view of reality impacts on how such events are perceived and how historical method is applied.

An examination of the history of interpretation confirms this divide, although there are indications that the substantial skepticism of centuries from many modern interpreters is dissolving. Chilton goes on to note that alternate explanations, i.e., explanations which attempt to explain exorcism in naturalistic or psychological terms, leave the text behind, where exorcism is taken for granted in favor of a phenomenology of exorcism. Chilton chooses to leave the limits of historical method at what people perceived and how they acted on that perception, rather than at the level of what “reality” may be at work. This solution can be viewed in one of two ways. It can be seen either as a compromise solution out of the impasse or as a recognition of the limits of historical method as often defined by those who use it. The more basic question for those who believe in the existence of God is whether anything can be ruled out *a priori*. To put this another way, for those who see a resurrection as possible as an activity of the powerful God of creation, can something like exorcism or the existence of other spiritual beings be ruled out?

Nevertheless, the history of discussion over the last few centuries shows that these accounts have been doubted and explained in a variety

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<sup>14</sup> Chilton, “An Exorcism of History: Mark 1:21–28,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. idem and Craig Evans, NTTS 28.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 215–245 (230).

<sup>15</sup> Chilton, “An Exorcism of History: Mark 1:21–28,” 231. The full discussion covers 231–33.

of ways.<sup>16</sup> This survey concentrates on continental reaction as it often drove such discussions in the West. The note of skepticism started with Baruch Spinoza in 1670. In his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Spinoza spoke of events run by laws and rules that operate out of eternal necessity. Miracles run counter to such natural law. In English, the classic case was made by David Hume in his *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, section 10 on “Of Miracles” (1748). He added to Spinoza’s direction some arguments against miracles at a sociological level.<sup>17</sup> He made four key arguments. (1) No miracle has had a sufficiently large witness base; (2) People crave the miraculous and believe fables more readily than they should; (3) Miracles occur only among barbarous people; (4) Miracles stories exist in all religions and cancel each other out. Now points (3) and (4) are demonstrably false, as many intellectuals have accepted the possibility of miracles and most religions do not give the place to miracles that Christianity does. Point 2 has merit but this simply means claims of miracles need to be examined with care. Point 1 could be debated, as the witness base of the New Testament claims is broader than Hume implies.

Nonetheless, later rationalists elevated this “natural law” claim to a stated conviction that miracles were “impossible.” Such was the claim of Carl Friedrich Bahrdt (1741–1792).<sup>18</sup> Another twist on this issue was Schleiermacher’s claim (1768–1834) that everything God does is a miracle and so any event could be described in this light. In 1835–1836, D.F. Strauss in his *Das Leben Jesu* took the view that miracles do not happen and that mythology and symbolism explain what is taking place. This opened the door for reading miracles at a merely symbolic level. Harnack in 1913 argued that these events were either natural events understood in an exaggerated manner, projections, attempts to argue the Scripture was fulfilled, or something we can no longer explain.

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<sup>16</sup> Maier, “Zur neutestamentlichen Wunderexegese im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” in *Gospel Perspectives. The Miracles of Jesus*, ed. David Wenham and Craig Blomberg, Vol. 6 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 49–87, has a detailed survey of this history, which I summarize here. Much of Maier’s information on the period up to the first third of the twentieth century comes from G. Marquardt, *Das Wunderproblem in der deutschen protestantischen Theologie der Gegenwart* (München: Hueber, 1933).

<sup>17</sup> For this discussion, see William L. Craig, “The Problem of Miracles: A Historical and Philosophical Perspective,” *Gospel Perspectives*, vol. 6, 9–48, esp. 17–19, 22–27, and Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 77–79.

<sup>18</sup> Maier, “Zur neutestamentlichen Wunderexegese im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” 51.

By the time the History of Religions school came along in the early twentieth century, the use of parallels from other cultures came into the picture. In 1911, Paul Fiebig raised the issues of parallels from Judaism. Finally came Form Criticism. In 1921, Rudolf Bultmann in his *History of the Synoptic Tradition* argued that the miraculous tradition grew and did not exist at the oldest levels of Christian tradition, as it was rooted in Hellenism and Hellenistic Christianity. He also doubted whether a modern man could believe in such occurrences. His program of demythologizing was born out of an attempt to redeem what message was left. It largely read the text along symbolic lines, merely giving an older style of reading, reaching back to Strauss, a newer name.

There were some who did not go in this skeptical direction. They took various tacks. In 1908, Wilhelm Hermann on the theme of "Offenbarung und Wunder" suggested that miracles were a "metascientific reality" (*metawissenschaftliche Wirklichkeit*). They can be experienced but not proved. In 1910, Johannes Wendland in his *Der Wunderglaube im Christentum* maintained that to allow scientific method to be ruled by natural science (i.e., the appeal to laws of nature) is to define the scientific method too narrowly. The world of nature and spirit should not be handled in such a dualistic manner. Others such as Hermann Cremer (1900) spoke of the necessity of the breaking of causality to picture God's redeeming a fallen creation. Adolf Schlatter saw the God of creation as possessing the capability to perform miracles. In his *Geschichte des Christus* (1923), he specifically challenged Bultmann's claim that the oldest level of the tradition was miracle-free.

The divide in worldview and reading we have just traced has not changed greatly in the last half-century. But as we shall see, the form of argumentation has taken on a layer that adds considerations of parallels or textual inconsistencies to make its case. Often the claim is made that at a macro-level Jesus was perceived as an exorcist and "did exorcisms," however that is conceived. However, at a micro-level, we are left uncertain about how to verify details of particular accounts. The clearest recent presentation of this approach is found in John Meier's *A Marginal Jew*.<sup>19</sup> He confidently makes the global assertion

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<sup>19</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, 2: Mentor, Message and Miracles*, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1994),



about Jesus performing exorcisms and his opponents perceiving that he did so, but is far more nuanced in looking at specific passages. Of the seven miracle accounts, Meier sees three as historical (possessed boy, Mary Magdalene remark, and Gerasene demoniac), one as representative but recast (Capernaum synagogue healing), one as uncertain (mute demoniac of Matt 12), one as redacted by Matthew (mute demoniac of Matt 9) and one as a Christian creation (Syro-Phoenician woman and her daughter). He explains that the existence of parallels, forms of convention, the possibility of introducing detail in telling, the importance of the theme for the early church, the vagueness of description, not to mention the cultural gap between the first century and our time, complicate such historical work.

The issue of parallels also is complex. Two suggestions that seem to be falling out of favor should be noted. First, the appeal to Jesus as a type of Hellenistic “divine Man” (θεῖος Ἄνθρωπος) has fallen on hard times as a result of work by David Tiede, Carl Holloway, and Barry Blackburn.<sup>20</sup> Blackburn’s essay summarizes the history of the divine man tradition in Greco-Roman literature. He looks at all the examples and shows there was no “fixed type” for this theme on which first-century writers could draw, nor was there any standard designation for the category.<sup>21</sup> In the end, Blackburn argues three obstacles to the connection: (1) many parallel examples are late, (2) it is “almost universally recognized that the tradition of Jesus’ exorcistic and healing ministry is rooted in his own activity,” and (3) all the parallels also exist in Old Testament, Jewish, or rabbinic contexts, pointing to a potential Jewish background.<sup>22</sup>

The second, unlikely suggestion is the one by Morton Smith that Jesus was a magician.<sup>23</sup> Here Graham Twelftree makes the argument

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646–677. Meier says it is one thing to make the global assertion, quite another to “descend to particular types of miracles and individual miracle stories” (646).

<sup>20</sup> David Tiede, *The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* (Missoula, MT: SBL, 1972); Carl Holladay, *Theios Aner in Hellenistic Judaism* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977); Barry Blackburn, “Miracle Working ‘ΘΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ’ in Hellenism (and Hellenistic Judaism),” *Gospel Perspectives. The Miracles of Jesus*, vol. 6:185–218. This theory is most classically expressed in L. Bieler, *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ* (Vienna: Oskar Hofels, 1935–36).

<sup>21</sup> Blackburn, “Miracle Working ‘ΘΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,’” 188–189. In fact, he notes that how the figure was viewed as “divine” was not consistent either. Such figures engaged in 14 distinct kinds of activity (190–191). Exorcisms are particularly rare, being found in Philostatus of the third century and one Indian sage, Iarchas (192).

<sup>22</sup> Blackburn, “Miracle Working ‘ΘΕΙΟΙ ΑΝΔΡΕΣ,’” 195–196.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

against Smith.<sup>24</sup> The key argument Twelftree makes is that Jesus was not seen so much as a magician by his opponents; rather, he was charged with being a sorcerer, i.e., his power came from the devil. Secondly, charges that refer directly to magic for Jesus are late and are not accepted by those who seek to explain what he was doing. E. P. Sanders, who has some sympathy for Smith's view, sees it ultimately as inadequate because "it leaves largely out of account the pervasive evidence which makes us look to Jewish eschatology as defining the general contours of Jesus' career."<sup>25</sup>

In sum, the assessment of miracles, and hence also of exorcisms, is hindered by many factors once the text is brought into doubt. Philosophical and historical issues abound. Interpreters are divided on how to assess and synthesize all of these factors into some type of workable method. Worldviews impact on the reading and assessment of what is possible. Still, this has not stopped the discussion. Two recent options seem unlikely: that Jesus was presented as a "divine man" or that he was a magician. So we turn to the recent treatment of such issues. We will work through global issues first and then turn our attention to particular texts before summarizing the results.

### 3. *Global Considerations: Why Most Accept Jesus Was an Exorcist*

However it is conceived in terms of reality, it is fair to say that most interpreters regard Jesus' reputation as an exorcist as established with both his followers and his opponents. N. T. Wright speaks of Jesus engaged in a "head on war" with Satan.<sup>26</sup> Joachim Gnilka says that "it is hardly a matter of debate that he [Jesus] was also active as an exorcist."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2.54. Tübingen (Mohr/Siebeck, 1993), 190–207. See also Joel Marcus, "The Beelzebul Controversy and the Eschatologies of Jesus," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 28.2 (Leiden: Brill 1999), 247–277, at 264–265.

<sup>25</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 169. Eve, *Jewish Context*, 4–5, criticizes Smith as "privileging the perspective of his opponents and discovering forced parallels between Jesus' actions and those of magicians regardless of context."

<sup>26</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 195.

<sup>27</sup> J. Gnilka, *Jesus of Nazareth: Message and History*, trans. by Siegfried Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendricksen, 1997), 120.

Craig Evans has laid out the detailed arguments that lead to such a conclusion for miracles.<sup>28</sup> We apply these arguments to exorcisms. (1) The miracles are multiply attested in Mark, Q, L, M, and John. Exorcisms hold almost a similar level of attestation in Mark (Gerasene Demoniac), Matt=Luke (Blind Demoniac for Beelzebul controversy), M (Mute Demoniac), and L (Reference to Mary Magdalene). This attestation extends outside the biblical materials to records of others. Josephus is aware that Jesus performed unusual works (*Ant* 18.63). Celsus in Origen's *Against Celsus* (1.6, 38 and 63) accepted that Jesus did such works. The Talmudic tradition in *b. Sanh* 43a also accepts that Jesus performed such works. (2) The miracles are dissimilar in how they are portrayed. They do not involve prayer as with Jewish holy men, nor are they like magic. They are not a key element in early Christian preaching, appearing only now and again. (3) The Beelzebul charge does not look invented, since it meets the criteria of embarrassment. Would the church invent such a charge against Jesus? (4) Exorcisms were not an explicit part of first-century Jewish messianic expectation, although healings were seen as a part of what the eschatological era would bring. (5) We can see the effect of Jesus' ministry that led to large crowds. Jesus' miracles, including exorcisms, would have been part of what attracted these crowds. As E. P. Sanders said, "But if it is true that large crowds surrounded him in Galilee, it was probably more because of his ability to heal and exorcize than anything else."<sup>29</sup> (6) The principle of coherence fits here. Many sayings regarded as authentic point to such a ministry (Beelzebul saying; Satan's house divided; binding the strong man parable; Luke's exorcism saying in Luke 13:32). (7) The embellishment of later sources points to authenticity as well. All of this makes it likely that Jesus performed exorcisms and that this element of his ministry was embedded in the earliest layers of the tradition about him.

This finding is important because a ministry of exorcism assumes a worldview that involves Satan and the demons. In a world where there are demons to be exorcized, Satan is also present. Jesus' sayings that link exorcisms to the world of Satan say as much. So we turn our attention now to specific key texts, affirming that the global case for

<sup>28</sup> C. Evans, "Jesus and Jewish Miracles Stories," in *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 213–243.

<sup>29</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 164.

Jesus having performed exorcisms and being recognized for doing such is strong.

#### 4. *Key Sayings and Events Involving Jesus, Satan and Demons*

##### 4.1. *Eschatology and the Beelzebul Saying*

Another element of near consensus involving Jesus' exorcisms is that he made an eschatological point from them. He presented them as an indication that the new era of promise, what he called the kingdom, was breaking. These acts were evidence of Satan's defeat. Two key passages make this point. The first is the saying where Jesus proclaims, "If I cast out demons by the finger of God (Luke)/Spirit of God (Matthew), then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28=Luke 11:20). The second is Jesus' parable of the strong man overcome and bound (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21–22). To this, some add the passage where Jesus replies to John the Baptist's query about whether Jesus is the one to come. In the response, Jesus notes a series of different kinds of healings, but we shall not treat this saying as it does not mention exorcisms directly. However, it does cohere and fit into the same kingdom context.

One prominent dissenter in making this connection to the historical Jesus is E. P. Sanders.<sup>30</sup> He doubts that one can establish this association on historical grounds. His initial objection is that ancient Judaism does not have an example of exorcism bringing in the kingdom. However, this difference is precisely the point, for the fresh connection is an example of dissimilarity. The idea does not match Judaism nor does it fit the normal early church emphasis that the cross, resurrection, and descent of the Spirit are the keys to kingdom arrival. His second objection is that we cannot know exactly what Jesus said, so that the determination cannot be based on a saying. However, the fact that multiple sayings make this kind of a point means we can be confident of the kind of thing Jesus said. When Sanders makes this argument by saying he "can imagine other possibilities," he sounds like a defense attorney trying to surface other options in the face of other more solidly established evidence.<sup>31</sup> Such arguments from imagination

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<sup>30</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 134–138.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

are less evidential than statements from actual texts. One of the possibilities Sanders considers more likely is the charge that Jesus did magic, but it is not clear why the view of opponents forms a kind of either/or option for the interpreter about what Jesus said about his own work. In sum, the case against the authenticity of the Beelzebul saying and the related strong man parable is weak.

Ben Meyer has made the case for these sayings.<sup>32</sup> He begins by arguing (1) that the offensiveness of charge of sorcery would not be invented. It fits the criteria of embarrassment. (2) The charge against Jesus is also corroborated in later Jewish materials as was already noted, so this part of the saying is multiply attested. (3) He observes that there is a risk of relativizing Jesus' work by mentioning exorcisms of others in the saying. Here Meyer alludes to the previous remark in the saying where Jesus raises the question of how the sons of the Pharisees can perform exorcisms. (4) There is an implicit allusion to a rather obscure Scripture (Exod 8) in the reference to the "finger of God," an expression more likely to be original to the saying, since had the Spirit of God been original Luke would have likely used it, given that he often refers to the Spirit. (5) There is the already noted distinctive combination of exorcism and apocalyptic eschatology. This is a point also made by Rudolf Pesch.<sup>33</sup> (6) There is evidence of the style of Jesus in the antithetic parallelism of question and answer (Mark 3:33–34; 8:12; 10:18; 11:17; Matt 7:3–5; Luke 12:51; 22:25). (7) Becker adds an additional argument by suggesting that the "I form" of the saying points to authenticity.<sup>34</sup> This combination of arguments for the passage indicates that this Beelzebul saying is one of the more solid pieces of material in the Jesus tradition. As such it is a key text for discerning what Jesus thought of his exorcisms. First, it was evidence of his battle with Satan and his forces. Second, it represented the in-breaking of the divine presence associated with the promised kingdom. In Matthew and Luke, this saying is attached to the healing of a mute/blind demoniac. Although it is hard to see this healing as a part of "Q" tradition, since Q material is almost exclusively teaching material, the fact that this healing is attached to this saying by both Matthew and Luke, pos-

<sup>32</sup> B. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 155.

<sup>33</sup> R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium, 1 Teil*, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 2.1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1984), 219.

<sup>34</sup> J. Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. by James E. Crouch (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 108–109.

sibly independently of each other, may show that this linkage is made in the tradition that predates either evangelist. Whether the event had that original connection or an evangelist has associated the saying with the healing as a type of this activity, the saying still gives us the most important passage for determining what Jesus aimed to show through his work.

#### 4.2. *Mute Demoniac*

This uniquely Matthean exorcism is found in Matt 9:32-33. It largely parallels the healing that introduced the Beelzebul saying. In fact, many see it as a doublet account.<sup>35</sup> It lacks much detail and is almost a summary healing account. Although the judgment that this is a doublet discounts the option that Jesus did perform a variety of miracles on many occasions, it is also the case that this account is so sparse of detail that it does not add much to what other accounts tell us.

#### 4.3. *The Exorcism of Mary Magdalene*

A second key passage comes from "L" material. It is the offhand remark that Mary Magdalene was the beneficiary of an exorcism of seven demons (Luke 8:1-3). Fitzmyer argues that his remark is stereotyped and inherited.<sup>36</sup> So he does not think much can be made of it. But is it really stereotyped? The remark appears in a setting where nothing is being made of exorcisms. It introduces a character from a locale (Magdala) that has no biblical significance. The almost casual manner of the aside about her encounter with demons makes the remark more of a side remark, not terribly relevant to the mention of the three women who follow Jesus. The remark does set up Luke 24:10, but the detail of her exorcism does not add anything to that link. So, all in all, this remark also has the feel of being authentic.

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<sup>35</sup> U. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, trans. by James E. Couch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2001), 50; E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, Meyer Kommentar (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 180; H. Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar I* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1994), 1:328.

<sup>36</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX*, AB, 28 (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1981), 695-696.

#### 4.4. *The Gerasene Demoniac*

The most elaborately described exorcism involves the demoniac whose exorcism leads to the death of a herd of swine (Mark 5:1–20 par). This exorcism involves a third strand of tradition, namely sources that Mark used. The scene is treated with a kind of schizophrenia, in that many regard the exorcism as authentic but see the section involving the swine as secondary.<sup>37</sup> Reasons include the fact that the visual element of the swine being possessed serves as a proof of Jesus' success and so has a clear analogy in healing scenes (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 8.46–48; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20, where an exorcism leads to the spirit occupying a statue).<sup>38</sup> Ådna discusses the pigs as a symbol of uncleanness which represents paganism, but he does not consider this so crucial to a decision about historicity. However, what is important to Ådna and Meier, as well as to most of those who reject this part of the account, is the uncertainty over the tradition's description of the locale of the miracle, the difference between Gerasa and Gadara. This difference shows up between the Markan version and its parallels in Matthew 8:28 and Luke 8:26. Gerasa is about thirty miles east of the Sea of Galilee, while Gadara is over six miles from the Sea. Some like the reading Gergasa for this event, putting it right on the edge of the Sea. It is clear that there is uncertainty in the manuscript tradition about the locale and part of the reason is likely the fact that two of the locations are some distance from the water which is so central to the swine element of the healing. Gerasa qualifies as the difficult reading for this story, but as such it brings into question, for many, the swine element.

Those who support the swine element are not without responses. Gundry accepts Gergasa as the original locale, but also argues that the swine element is central to the account.<sup>39</sup> Others suggest that the difference over locale is the difference between more exact locations and

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<sup>37</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 651; J. Ådna, "The Encounter of Jesus with the Gerasene Demoniac," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, 279–301 (290–298); F. Annen, *Heil für die Heiden: Zur Bedeutung und Geschichte der Tradition vom besessenen Gerasener (Mk 5,1–20 parr.)*, Frankfurter Theologische Studien 29 (Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1976), 192–193.

<sup>38</sup> However, Ådna does not find this reason convincing ("Gerasene Demoniac," 292), in part because he agrees with Twelftree that the pig scene is not proof of success but evidence of a banishment that is a part of the cure; *Jesus the Exorcist*, 74–75.

<sup>39</sup> Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 255–257. He argues that the combination of water and cemeteries fits and that the large number of demons exorcized assumes the herd as a part

better known regional locales or other associations that cause the difference.<sup>40</sup> As already noted, Twelftree argues that the swine element is a part of the account of the cure, rather than the proof of healing. It should also be noted that Mark 5 stands in contrast to *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20 in that in the Apollonius account the dialogue explicitly indicates that the movement to the statue is a proof of the healing. Twelftree also points to the unusual, destructive nature of the act as being otherwise unlike Jesus. Interestingly, Bultmann argued that this account was always one unit.<sup>41</sup> All of this means that the secondary character of the swine section is less than certain, as the account looks too unified to be divided.

Even if the swine section were secondary, the account is still regarded by most as reflecting at its core a real event. This would mean that a third strand of tradition testifies to Jesus performing exorcism.

#### 4.5. *Exorcisms at the Capernaum Synagogue and of the Epileptic*

Although Meier doubts the specific connection between this account and an event in Capernaum, he again argues that the account does fit globally with the type of thing Jesus did.<sup>42</sup> However, others disagree. Gnilka argues for the Palestinian character of this tradition and as a result for its age.<sup>43</sup> The reference to the destruction of demons is also unlike other accounts. As a result, it is not so clear why one would hesitate to see such work in Capernaum, especially given the acknowledgement that Jesus spent much time here and the seemingly solid indications that he did much healing activity there, such as the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

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of the account. Although I do not agree with Gundry on the textual decision, the other points have merit.

<sup>40</sup> I have covered this textual issue in Luke in detail in D. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 782-784. I do not opt for a particular solution but note that either a regional reference or the issue of the man's home versus the locale of the healing may be at play in the difference. Twelftree's failure to discuss this issue is a glaring omission in his discussion of this scene.

<sup>41</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. by J. Marsh; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 210.

<sup>42</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:648-650.

<sup>43</sup> Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mk 1-8,26)*, EKK 2.1 (Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziner/Neukirchener, 1978), 77-78. He sees the reference to the Sabbath, Jesus of Nazareth, the Holy One of God, the demon's "I know who you are", the reference to crying out in a loud voice versus the use of adverbs, and the reference to a "man with an [evil] spirit" as indicators of this setting.



However, this text adds little to what we have already seen, being more corroborative and also coming from Markan sources. Another miracle from a Markan source is the healing of the epileptic, which has claims to authenticity because of the harsh manner in which the disciples are portrayed. Would the church invent such a story about its leaders? This story seems to meet the criteria of embarrassment. However, it also adds little to what has already been said.

#### 4.6. *Syro-Phoenician's Daughter*

The last of the seven exorcisms in the gospels involves the healing from a distance of the daughter of a Syro-Phoenician woman. What makes this account so unusual is that the account is more about the dialogue between the woman and Jesus over Gentiles seeking blessing than about the healing or its details. In fact, the dialogue dominates so much that Taylor calls the account more like a pronouncement story than a miracle account.<sup>44</sup> Those who question the account argue that the account's concern with Gentile relations is an early church concern; it reflects the church's theology of mission.<sup>45</sup>

Twelftree argues that the account gives evidence of historicity in the following points: the Gentile location; his hesitation to minister is uncharacteristic of his ministry; his presence in a region, not a specific city; the remark about Gentiles being like dogs, which is not a Markan expression, pointing to a pre-Easter origin and perspective; and the healing from a distance.<sup>46</sup> What is important about the reference to Gentile as "dogs" is that it does not seem to be the kind of remark someone in the early church would invent, as the embarrassment of the remark for the potential unity of the church argues against it, unless it had a sanction in Jesus' speech. The retort also neutralizes the remark. But the idea of Jesus "being bested" in a dialogue is also out of character for such scenes, especially by a Gentile woman. In addition, it is not clear how the theology of mission is affirmed in a text where Gentile blessing is given grudgingly and viewed almost as an

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<sup>44</sup> Taylor, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, 2nd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1966), 347–348. He argues for a "primitive" stamp to the account because of the location of the incident, Jesus' vain quest for privacy, the woman's witty reply, the pleasure her reply gives Jesus, the passing reference to a cure, and signs of Aramaic style and vocabulary (e.g., redundant expressions in v. 25).

<sup>45</sup> R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 1:368; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 661.

<sup>46</sup> Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 289–290.

exception. This final observation undercuts the claim that the dialogue affirms a theology of mission, rendering the key rationale for an early church text suspect. These factors mean a good case can be made for this scene being rooted in Jesus' ministry. That said, this event also does not add much to the portrait in the clearly authentic material. We already have ministry in a Gentile context with the Gerasene demoniac.

#### 4.7. *Summary on Exorcisms*

The evidence of these exorcism texts argues that the historical Jesus operated in a Jewish context and ministered with a worldview that involved the world of demons. He tied this work to evidence of an eschatological in-breaking of the kingdom. A final text that coheres with this portrait is the remark Jesus makes when his disciples minister in missionary groups during his ministry. Jesus says that he saw Satan fall like lightning as they report that demons obey them (Luke 10:18). This fits with the exorcism-Satan connection of the Beelzebul charge and strong man texts. It also coheres with the implication that the work surrounding Jesus' ministry points to the eschaton and indicates the defeat of evil. The "battle" Jesus had with forces opposed to God and to humanity is evident in all of this interaction. Exorcisms were important to Jesus not only because they led to healing, but because these exorcisms pointed to divine power and presence of the in-breaking of the kingdom. Another evidence of this battle is Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial, namely, that it is associated with a Satanic effort to cause Peter's fall (Luke 22:31). We have not made much of this text because it is uncorroborated, but it does fit into this portrait as well.

#### 4.8. *A Final Event: The Temptations*

This event reinforces what has already been shown. In one sense it is the foretaste of "the battle." It is a difficult event to corroborate, being a private, unique confrontation between Satan and Jesus.<sup>47</sup> There is the

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<sup>47</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, ICC, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 351–353, note that the evidence that the baptism and temptation are both in Q and were connected to each other early in the tradition as part of the "call" of Jesus. They regard it as a Haggadic tale spun from Deut 6–8 and paralleled by haggadic disputations

suggestion of parallels of the testing of the righteous Holy Men.<sup>48</sup> Texts in this category include: Gen 22 (God of Abraham), Job 1–2 (Satan of Job with God’s permission), Wisdom 2:12–24 (Unrighteous testing of the righteous man/Son of God), *T. Abraham* 12–13 (Death challenges Abraham in a dream), *Jubilees* 17 (Mastema and God of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac with God’s “permission,” with Mastema is the “accuser” here), *T. Job*, esp. 27.1–7 (Satan of Job, where the righteous man confronts Satan who admits defeat), and later texts such as *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 5 (Sammuel of Isaiah, leading to his martyrdom), *b. Sanh* 89b (Satan of Abraham), and *Genesis Rabbah* 56.4 (Sammael of Abraham). However, a close look at these texts shows they are not so parallel. There is an examination of faithfulness, but in none of the early texts is there a face-to-face encounter. Usually, the test is done with the evil one as the accuser behind the scenes or working through tests involving suffering. This means the text is not so much “to form” as sometimes is suggested.

The event looks like the report of a special defining event in the life of Jesus, where his faithfulness to his call as Son is being challenged.<sup>49</sup> Is this the type of call Jesus passed on much as many Old Testament prophets did in noting their entry into the vocation? What the account clearly shows and portrays is the sense of “battle” we see elsewhere in texts that are easier to corroborate. It is clear that Jesus saw in Satan and the demons an opponent to be overcome, whether they stood opposed to the path of Jesus himself, as at the temptation, or stood opposed to humanity, as in the exorcisms.

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(*b. Sanh* 97b, 89b), though these texts are late. Allison addressed the issue again in “Behind the Temptations of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, 195–213. He notes that the event possibly does “retain something of Jesus’ own interpretation of a foundational religious experience” (213). He goes on to say that even if nothing like it took place, the event does describe “with a fair sense of several things that characterized Jesus.” Interestingly, E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 117, argues that it is likely Jesus did fast and pray before beginning his ministry and that the temptations are “mythological” elaborations on that fact. In other words, at the least there is a historical kernel here.

<sup>48</sup> Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 253.

<sup>49</sup> J. B. Gibson, *The Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity*, JSNTMS 112 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), focuses on the various biblical versions of this account.

### 5. *Conclusion*

Despite the controversy surrounding the issue of exorcisms and the hurdles the category brings to the modern worldview, there is good evidence that suggests that the roots of such events run deep into the Jesus tradition and that there was recognition by both supporters and opponents that Jesus performed such unusual works. A case can be made for almost every exorcism text that it reflects an event in Jesus' life. In this, ministry was portrayed as the spiritual battle on behalf of humanity that Jesus undertook against the forces of evil. The evidence of divine power coming through Jesus pointed to the victorious presence of God in salvation and to the in-breaking of God's promised rule. By casting out demons, Jesus pointed to the in-breaking presence and power of the kingdom with its ultimate defeat of evil yet to come. The defeat of Satan and company meant that no longer did the forces of evil have a stranglehold on the destruction of humanity. In this, Jesus' interaction with Satan and the demons showed that with victory in the battle, a powerful audio-visual of victory and salvation had come.



## JESUS AND APOCALYPTICISM

CRISPIN FLETCHER-LOUIS

In an article in the second volume of this Handbook, there is a survey of the history of the study of Jewish Apocalypticism. The discussion of Jesus and apocalypticism here depends in large part on that survey along with its treatment of the primary sources and their interpretative issues. In that article the study of Jewish apocalypticism is divided into two phases which are roughly coterminous, first with the (First and) Second or New Quest and secondly, with the Third Quest. It is hoped that a better understanding of the developments in the study of the Jewish phenomenon can clarify the reasons for the current sharp divergence of opinions on the subject of Jesus' relationship to apocalypticism. And in that piece there is laid out, in broad brush strokes, an emerging new perspective on Jewish Apocalyptic that promises fresh insights and perhaps solutions to vexing problems in the study of the historical Jesus.

Prior to the 1970's, Jewish apocalyptic literature is thought to reflect a thoroughly dualistic theology centred on a transcendent end to history. After the 1970's, advances in understanding are made, though two distinct approaches have emerged. The work of John J. Collins and other North American scholars attempts a more nuanced analysis of apocalyptic literature that tries to separate out literary genre, apocalyptic eschatology, worldview and social setting. By contrast, Christopher Rowland has championed an approach which marginalises the role of a particular eschatology in apocalyptic literature whilst drawing attention to the role of religious experience in the central claim for the disclosure of heavenly secrets. The former approach stands in considerable continuity with the older view that apocalypticism is a dualistic theology quite different from biblical religion, whilst Rowland's work reflects a British aversion to the idea that the apocalypses manifest a new worldview in the history of Israelite thought.

Both the Collins and Rowland contributions have their weaknesses, although Rowland's work contains seminal insights that point towards an altogether new perspective on Jewish apocalyptic literature with further implications for our understanding of Second Temple eschatologies.

Jewish apocalyptic literature is best understood as a distinctively Jewish and biblical claim that the one true God reveals the secrets of heaven—the reality that transcends space and time—through and to the image of God, the true humanity present in the nation’s righteous representatives (Enoch, Abraham, Daniel and others). Revelation is not mediated by the idolatrous mechanisms of mantic wisdom present in other religions, though communication between God, his angels and humanity does take place within the cosmological framework that is symbolised by, and present in, Israel’s temple-as-microcosm. That temple cosmology is decidedly holistic, not dualistic. This understanding of apocalyptic texts provides a new understanding of Daniel 7. That apocalyptic scene assumes Israel’s temple-centred cosmology and the “one like a son of man” (of Dan 7:13) coming to God with heavenly clouds looks forward to the coming to God, in the clouds-of-incense-filled sanctuary, of Israel’s true (therefore both human and divine) high priest on an eschatological Day of Atonement that removes all impurity and restores cosmic order.

Temple cosmology is vital for a proper understanding not just of the apocalypses, but of Jewish eschatology in general. Visions of the end, cosmic cessation or transformation, particularly in Palestinian and (properly) “apocalyptic” texts, are not easily understood apart from the belief that Israel’s temple symbolises and/or sacramentally guarantees the stability and order of the cosmos. Since, within the non-dualistic worldview of Second Temple texts, including the apocalypses, there is a shared conviction that God acts synergistically through the righteous—his divine humanity—there is barely any evidence for the kind of “interventionist” eschatology that has so often been judged the essence of Jewish apocalypticism.

### 1. *Jesus and Apocalypticism: The Sources*

Insofar as apocalypticism has been deemed a particular kind of eschatology, the synoptic gospels present a Jesus thoroughly immersed in his Jewish world.<sup>1</sup> The material can be organised as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> For what follows see the surveys in G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: a Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 252–274; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus remembered* (Christianity in the Making vol. 1; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 406–487.

(1) Several texts seem to evince the expectation of a dramatic *imminent* and *transcendent* intervention in history; that reflects what has unhelpfully been called an “*apocalyptic* eschatology.” Here, the principal witnesses are three: (a) Mark 13 (and parr.) has a prediction of cosmic meltdown (vv. 24–25) followed by the coming of the Son of Man on clouds in glory (v. 26), the sending forth of the angels to gather the elect (v. 27); and verse 31 speaks of the passing away of heaven and earth. Verse 30 states all these things will happen within the lifetime of the first disciples;<sup>2</sup> (b) in Mark 9:1 (and parr.) Jesus says some disciples will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God coming in power; (c) in Matt 10:23 Jesus tells his disciples their mission to Israelite towns will not be completed before the Son of Man comes. Whilst these passages give a definite time frame for fulfilment, several others are less definite but still expect something very soon. Mark 1:15—“the Kingdom of God has drawn near”—and the parallel in the Q missionary discourse (Q 10:9) that summarize Jesus’ preaching are usually taken to mean the final manifestation of God’s rule is around the corner. Luke 18:1–8 expects the imminent arrival of the heavenly Son of Man to vindicate the elect and punish their oppressors.<sup>3</sup> Jesus’ message of imminence is also to be seen in continuity with the message of the Baptist: “the axe is already laid at the foot of the tree” (Q 3:9). Another tradition should also probably be added, although it has not figured prominently in the discussion: the three Markan passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34 & parr.) cannot lightly be dismissed as evidence that Jesus believed his unjust death would be followed by divine vindication—resurrection—and that this would happen quickly.<sup>4</sup>

(2) Then there are passages which do not *explicitly* refer to an *imminent* event, but which seem clearly to envisage a transcendent eschatology. In view of the material that speaks of Jesus’ expectation of

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<sup>2</sup> There are important parallels to the synoptic eschatological discourse in the Thesalonian correspondence (cf. Mark 13:26–27 with 1 Thess 4:13–17 and 2 Thess 2:1; Mark 13:5–26 with 2 Thess 2:3–9). See also Luke 21:34–36. Does the surprising arrival in Q 17:24.26–30.34–35.37 mean *imminent* arrival (cf. Q 12:42–46)?

<sup>3</sup> Sanders has also found in the traditions surrounding Jesus’ alleged prediction that he would rebuild a destroyed temple, further evidence of imminent transcendence (E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* [London: SCM Press, 1985], 71–90).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g., Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 796–824. Dunn assumes that the historical Jesus spoke of his participation in the general resurrection.



imminent transcendence, these too are usually treated as potential witnesses to an imminent eschaton.

Q 17:22–37 speaks of the coming of the heavenly Son of Man to judge. That Matthew included such material in his version of Mark 13 (Matt 24:27–28, 37–41) shows he took it to mean something within the disciples' lifetime. A similarly punitive appearance of the Son of Man is present in Matt 16:27 (cf. Mark 8:38 and Luke 9:26) and all other future Son of Man sayings are usually included here (Q 12:8, 39–40; Matt 13:41; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; Luke 21:36, cf. Rev 1:13 with 14:14). Such transcendent expectations however are not limited to Son of Man sayings. In some texts he thinks of a general resurrection (Mark 12:18–27; Q 11:31–32, cf. Q 12:5), which perhaps includes the belief that there will, at that time, be a physical ingathering of the diaspora to the Promised Land (Q 13:27–30).<sup>5</sup> He promises his disciples that they will sit enthroned as judges of the twelve tribes (Q 22:28–30); a prophecy that, coupled with his choice of twelve disciples, has been taken to mean he looked forward to the miraculous, end-time restoration of the nation.<sup>6</sup> More generally, various passages speak of coming judgement (Q 6:46–49), of a harvest that sorts out the righteous from the wicked (Mark 4:26–29; Matt 13:24–30, 47–53; Q 10:2, cf. *Gos. Thom.*, Q 3:17), and of reversal with rewards and punishments in the age to come (Matt 5:3–12; Luke 6:20–26; Mark 10:29–30; Q 10:13–15; Matt 22:1–14; 25:1–13, 31–46; Luke 13:24–30, cf. Q 12:42–46).

(3) Some material is obviously not, in isolation, a statement of a transcendent eschatology, but it certainly attests to an *imminent* expectation. In Q 11:50–51 “this generation” is to be held accountable for the accumulated guilt of bloodshed from Abel to Zechariah: the historical scope is total; the judgement would appear to be imminent, but will it take place outside of history? We might compare Mark 13:33–37; Luke 12:35–38 and Luke 19:11.

(4) Then there are passages which express the belief that the eschaton has already arrived in Jesus' ministry; through his exorcisms (Mark 3:22–26; Q 11:19–23, cf. Luke 10:18), in the joy that accompanies his table-fellowship (Mark 2:18–20, 21–22 and *parr.*), in his healing power and

<sup>5</sup> Dale C. Allison has convincingly demonstrated that this text must have in view Israelites not the Gentiles: D. C. Allison, *The Jesus tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 177–192.

<sup>6</sup> The interpretation is distinctive of E. P. Sanders' historical Jesus reconstruction (*The Historical Figure of Jesus* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993], 98–106).

attention to the poor (Luke 4:18–21; 17:20, cf. *Gos. Thom.* 113; Q 7:18–23)<sup>7</sup> and his ministry in general (Q 10:23–24; 11:31–32; 16:16, cf. Q 7:28; Matt 13:44–46 *parr. Gos. Thom.* 109, 76). The parables of growth in Mark and the double tradition provide further commentary on these claims: in Jesus the Kingdom is now already at work (Mark 4:2–32; Q 13:18–21, cf. *Gos. Thom.* 9; 21; 20, 96), the time is fulfilled (Mark 1:15).<sup>8</sup>

(5) There are texts that have in mind future—in the broad sense of the word “eschatological”—events which are *neither* necessarily imminent *nor* necessarily transcendent, but which are regularly judged in the context of Jesus’ life to be both imminent and transcendent. If Matt 5:5 is heard without the references to the Kingdom of Heaven in 5:5, 10 then its promise that the meek will inherit the earth (or “land”) is thoroughly this-worldly. And, of course many of the Kingdom sayings could have intended no otherworldliness: they could envisage simply a social and political reorganisation following a divinely instigated victory over the enemies of the elect. There are a number of parables that in no way demand a transcendent referent, but which are regularly assumed, if original to Jesus, to pertain to his “apocalyptic eschatology”: Parable of the Pounds (Matt 25:14–30; Luke 19:11–27); Two Men on the Way to Court (Q 12:58–59); Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23–35); Unjust steward (Luke 16:1–8). Does Jesus’ prayer—the Lord’s Prayer—ask for a manifestation of divine presence within history; perhaps like the angelic world that Wisdom says Jacob encountered at Bethel (Wis 10:10) and that participants in the Qumran liturgy had available every Sabbath (4QShirot ‘Olot Ha-Shabbat)?<sup>9</sup> Or did Jesus want his disciples to devote themselves to prayer for a world-ending new order beyond history-as-we-know-it?<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The sense of realised eschatology in Q 7:18–23 has come sharply into focus with the recent publication of Qumran text 4Q521 (see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 447–450).

<sup>8</sup> The classic study of these as evidence of “realised” eschatology is C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1961 [1935]). See also *Gos. Thom.* 3.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew’s “on earth as in heaven” (Matt 6:10) sounds a striking echo to the theological framework of the *Sabbath Songs* and the context in the Sermon on the Mount speaks of the present realization of Kingdom ethics in the Jesus movement (cf. 6:33). Luke seems to think that a prayer for the Kingdom’s coming is fulfilled—at least partially—in exorcistic power (11:20).

<sup>10</sup> So, for example, D. C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 151; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:291–302.

At the Last Supper Jesus vows he will not again drink wine until he drinks it anew in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14:25, cf. Luke 14:15–23; 22:30). If Jesus said this, he either thought of an *imminent* but not transcendent worldly banquet when he and his men would take their rightful place in God's dominion or he thought of an *otherworldly*, but *not imminent* celebration after his own death and later resurrection. But then again, perhaps he thought of both an *otherworldly* banquet and one that would follow shortly upon his martyrdom. Ambiguity abounds. In quite a few sayings it is not at all clear whether the Kingdom belongs to this or another world; only that Jesus has some particular point to make about the qualities of those to whom it belongs (Q 7:28; Mark 10:14–15; Matt 18:1–4; Mark 10:23–25).

(6) Lastly, there are passages which *must* refer to future social, political and intra-historical events that have to do with the coming destruction of the temple in 70 CE.<sup>11</sup> This is how the misnamed “little apocalypse” in Mark 13 (and its parallels) begins (vv. 1–2). Luke has an additional passage in which Jesus weeps over the coming fate of the city, not just the temple (Luke 19:41–44). The upheavals in the years that led up to the destruction are in view in Mark 13:5–23. Several other passages are also most plausibly taken as warning of the temple's destruction (Q 6:47–49; Matt 22:7; Luke 13:1–5, 6–9, 34–35, cf. Mark 11:12–22 and Matt 26:52).<sup>12</sup> These prophecies, of course, are regularly taken to be entirely *ex eventu* and, in any case, they are assumed to have nothing to do with Jesus' properly *eschatological* perspective.

None of this material is generically apocalyptic, though all of it one might well find in an apocalypse. Insofar as Jesus' life is described in properly apocalyptic terms there are other texts that come to the foreground.

(7) At his baptism Jesus' vision (Mark 1:10 and Luke 3:22 “he saw”) of the “heaven opened” is thoroughly apocalyptic and there are a number of important connections here to Jewish mystical traditions.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the table in M. J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 5 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 279.

<sup>12</sup> On Q 6:47–49 see N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), 292, 334, cf. O. Betz, “Felsenmann und Felsengemeinde (Eine Parallele zu Mt. 16.17–19 in den Qumranpsalmen),” *ZNW* 48 (1957): 49–77 (60, 71).

<sup>13</sup> See C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 359–363. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 374–

These connections continue in the Temptation story, especially the Q version where Jesus has a kind of heavenly journey; only, his guide is no angel, but Satan.<sup>14</sup> These two stories play a decisive role in the narrative of Jesus' life and mission as told by the synoptics. So too does the Transfiguration where apocalyptic elements are even stronger: the mountain appears as a means of ascent to heaven; a human being is transformed to a divine or angelic form; there is a theophanic cloud; the appearance of heavenly personae (Elijah and Moses); a divine voice and the revelation of mysteries restricted to a few, at least for a certain time.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the synoptics indicate that this event is bound up with Jesus' claim to fulfil Daniel's vision of an eschatological "one like a son of man."<sup>16</sup> In Luke 10:18 Jesus has a vision of Satan falling like lightning—whether because his end is nigh or perhaps to wreak havoc upon the earth.<sup>17</sup> And in Matthew's version of the Gethsemane arrest he boasts that he has at his heavenly Father's disposal twelve legions of angels (26:53, cf. Luke 22:43–44).

Besides these obvious examples of a well-established belief that Jesus functioned as an apocalyptic visionary there are others that are woven more subtly into the texture of the gospels. Chief amongst these is the way in which Jesus expounds the "mystery" of the Kingdom through parables that, like the riddles, dark sayings and fantastic visions of the apocalypses, require elucidation. Where the apocalypses

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77, discusses the experience sympathetically, though without explicit attention to the *apocalyptic* features.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus' fasting is typical of the asceticism that accompanies visionary experience, and the role of scripture in the Q version reflects the fact that meditation on and interpretation of scripture figures prominently in the apocalyptic-mystical tradition.

<sup>15</sup> The apocalyptic character of the Transfiguration was asserted in a seminal article by H. C. Kee ("The Transfiguration in Mark: Epiphany or Apocalyptic Vision?" in *Understanding the Sacred Text*, ed. J. Reumann [Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1972], 137–152). See further C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, WUNT 2.94 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 27–29, 38–50.

<sup>16</sup> See C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The Revelation of the Sacral Son of Man: The Genre, History of Religions Context and the Meaning of the Transfiguration," in *Auferstehung—Resurrection. The Fourth Durham-Tübingen-Symposium: Resurrection, Exaltation, and Transformation in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism, and Early Christianity*, F. Avemarie and H. Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2001), 247–298.

<sup>17</sup> The most recent treatment is S. J. Gathercole, "Jesus' Eschatological Vision of the Fall of Satan: Luke 10,18 Reconsidered," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 143–163.

have interpreting angels, the gospels, particularly Mark, has Jesus unveil to the chosen few the plot of coming history.<sup>18</sup>

### 1.1. *The Absence of Apocalyptic and Eschatological Matter in the Sources*

Historical analysis of all this potential evidence for Jesus' apocalyptic and eschatological character should not ignore the fact that some motifs are conspicuous by their absence in the gospels.<sup>19</sup>

We never hear of a punitive destruction of the nations nor, for that matter, a gathering of the scattered Israelites to the Land, Jerusalem and temple.<sup>20</sup> Jesus is not remembered to have had any interest in a periodisation of history; indeed at one point he denies the possibility of knowing God's eschatological timetable (Mark 13:32). Nor does he ever speak of a new temple with the kind of architectural detail that features frequently in apocalyptic visions.<sup>21</sup> This is surprising, not just because as a craftsman he might have taken a personal interest in such matters, but also because he speaks of the temple's destruction. In Luke 19:41–44 he *weeps* over the city's fate: did he not think it would need to be rebuilt? Nor does he offer a survey of past history, as the apocalypses are wont to do.

Whilst the Baptism and Transfiguration reflect the apocalypses' *vertical* axis—the interest in revelation of God's immediate perspective and the world above—other speculative and mystical concerns are missing: there is no meteorology, no astronomy or concern for the

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<sup>18</sup> See J. Marcus, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 229–233, and N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 390–396, who nevertheless fails to follow through the full significance of his insight: it is Jesus *the heavenly Son of Man* who accompanies the disciples on their journey through the Kingdom's mysteries.

<sup>19</sup> The New Quest tried to make theological capital of these apocalyptic lacunae (e.g., P. Vielhauer, "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity: 1. Introduction," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher [London: Lutterworth, 1965 (1964)], 608–642 [608–609]), but they have hardly figured in the Third Quest.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 255–256. There is talk of an eschatological banquet (Q 13:28–29; Matt 22:1–14; Luke 14:15–24; 15:3–10, 20–23) that in a Jewish context one might assume is to be held at Zion, but in the Jesus material this is never explicitly stated. At least in the texts peculiar to Luke, the point seems to be that the banquet is happening already in Jesus' table fellowship.

<sup>21</sup> The vision-of-a-new-temple motif starts in Ezekiel 40–48, is anticipated in Exod 25–40, and emerges vividly in later apocalyptic passages: *The New Jerusalem* (1Q32; 2Q24; 4Q232; 4Q554–555; 5Q15; 11Q18); 2 *Baruch* 59.4 and cf. Rev 21.

right calendar, nor cosmic cartography—the number and contents of the heavens, the throne of God, paradise and the lower regions (Luke 16:19–31 is hardly an exception)—nor developed angelology.<sup>22</sup> It should also be noted that Jesus and his disciples never have dream visions and no angel ever appears as an agent of revelation during the ministry. This apocalyptic common-place appears only after Jesus' death when angels play this role at the empty tomb and, according to Acts, when night visions (Acts 16:9; 18:9, cf. 2:17) and angelophanies (Acts 8:19, 26; 12:6–17; 16:9; 27:23, cf. Rev passim) characterise early Christian spirituality.<sup>23</sup>

How has this data been evaluated? No two scholarly assessments are the same: authentication and interpretation are a complex business. However, it is possible to group scholars according to broadly similar positions and to lay out the arguments that cause division. Some assume the old dualistic paradigm that was reviewed in this Handbook's article on Jewish apocalyptic and continue to speak in these terms of "apocalyptic(ism)." Some have paid attention to the work of Collins. Several have taken stock of Rowland's approach. No one seems yet to have brought to the Jesus Quest the fruit of those recent developments which can be brought under the banner of a "new perspective" on apocalyptic.

## 2. *Thoroughgoing Dualism and the "Non-Apocalyptic" Jesus*

For those who have taken Jewish apocalyptic to be a coherent dualistic theology, the fact that the synoptic Jesus material so obviously locates Jesus in that Jewish context creates both possibilities and problems.

In the New Quest—taken up by a group of Bultmann's pupils—a virtue is made of historiographical necessity: Jesus is an existentialist

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<sup>22</sup> However, the tradition has it that he was aware of the cosmological and apocalyptic significance of Mount Hermon: see the important study of the Caesarea Philippi episode by G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Enoch, Levi, and Peter: Recipients of Revelation in Upper Galilee," *JBL* 100 (1981): 575–600 and further Fletcher-Louis, "Sacral Son of Man," 254–282. In some apocalypses (esp. *1* and *2 Enoch*, and *Jubilees*) there is interest in the succession of (priestly) revelation from one generation to the next. This perhaps has an echo at Matt 16:16–19.

<sup>23</sup> B. Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1995), 101: "Jesus had visions, but it is a mistake to paint him as a sort of Julian of Norwich or, for that matter, a John of Patmos."

preacher whose message is clothed in a world-ending Jewish idiom.<sup>24</sup> And this apocalypticism is inextricable from Jesus' transcendence of the Mosaic Law.<sup>25</sup> Though this argument is no longer canvassed and Bultmann's existentialism is out of vogue, one still finds sympathy for an apocalyptically-based transcendence of Torah. For Bultmann and his followers the virtue of apocalyptic "mythology" is that it speaks of a divine intervention that is all grace, no human work;<sup>26</sup> a theological appropriation of the dualistic apocalyptic paradigm that persists and no doubt explains why Jesus-the-otherworldly-apocalypticist remains attractive for some.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, perhaps this rather sixteenth-century theological paradigm has contributed a good deal to the modern misunderstanding of Jewish apocalyptic itself.

But reasons to doubt the Schweitzerian "consensus" have long hampered the attempt to render the Jesus of the gospels a plausibly historical character. Material that looks to a totally transcendent future Kingdom is surely incompatible with claims in the gospels that already in his life and ministry—on this earth and in ordinary historical time—there is a realisation of God's Kingdom.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Jesus cannot be a homeless (Q 9:58), thoroughly human (Mark 2:10, 28; Q 7:34) and suffering (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33; 10:45) Son of Man and, simultaneously, a transcendent, heavenly figure who rides around on clouds in divine Glory (Mark 8:38; 13:26; Q 17:24). Whilst the Schweitzer tradition judges the transcendent Kingdom and Son of Man sayings historical at the expense of any full appreciation of material that might indicate a "realised" eschatology, the New Quest started a fashion for

<sup>24</sup> See the survey in Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 242–245.

<sup>25</sup> See the discussion of the work of Käsemann and Hengel in J. S. Kloppenborg, "As One Unknown, Without a Name? Co-opting the Apocalyptic Jesus," in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus*, ed. J. S. Kloppenborg and J. W. Marshall (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 1–23.

<sup>26</sup> E.g., R. Bultmann, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (London: SPCK, 1957 [1941]), 15: "The mythology of the New Testament is in essence that of Jewish apocalyptic and the Gnostic redemption myths. A common feature of them both is their basic dualism... Man cannot achieve this redemption by his own efforts; it must come as a gift through a divine intervention."

<sup>27</sup> See e.g., Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:330–331.

<sup>28</sup> Vielhauer, "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity," 608; E. Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology (1960)," in idem, ed., *New Testament Questions for Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 82–107 (101–102). The tension can be overcome if both present and future Kingdom sayings are given an existential interpretation (e.g., H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, New Testament Library [London: SCM Press, 1969], 114).

a “non-apocalyptic” Jesus according to which only present material is authentic; the future Son of Man and future Kingdom sayings are the product of later church creativity.

The inheritors of the New Quest’s legacy are concerned not just that he be theologically coherent, but that Jesus be fully incarnate in his material (social, economic and political) world. Those who have continued to follow Schweitzer produce a Jesus who is rather otherworldly or “next worldly”;<sup>29</sup> lacking interest in politics and social realities. In the words of one such Schweitzerian, J. P. Meier: “Jesus seems to have had no interest in the great political and social questions of his day. He was not interested in the reform of the world because he was prophesying its end.”<sup>30</sup> Nor, of course, is this Jesus much interested in the formation of a movement, let alone something that would anticipate the Christian communities that formed after his death. To this reconstruction of an apolitical Jesus it is objected, by the likes of R. A. Horsley, J. D. Crossan and M. Borg, that so much in the primary sources indicates Jesus strove for social justice and freedom from the dominant systems of oppression; that he was concerned for the welfare and future of the nation *within history*. In this he was both prophet and sage, his parabolic teaching articulating a subversive, counter-cultural vision. When that data is put centre-stage it is scarcely credible that Jesus was simply waiting for the great escape from history.<sup>31</sup> Rather, he was setting about either to reform society or to create an alternative movement and communities within it.

So there are now various members of the Jesus Seminar producing portrayals of “a non-Apocalyptic (i.e., non-transcendently eschatological) Jesus”. Their historical arguments are principally these.<sup>32</sup> As the New Questers had seen, there is an essential incompatibility between the future and present Son of Man and Kingdom sayings. Although John the Baptist had an “apocalyptic eschatology,” there are fundamental

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<sup>29</sup> The phrase is Borg’s in his review of E. P. Sanders’ contribution (M. J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994], 21).

<sup>30</sup> J. P. Meier, “Reflections on Jesus-of-History Research Today,” in *Jesus’ Jewishness: Exploring the Place of Jesus within Early Judaism*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 84–107 (92), cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:331–332.

<sup>31</sup> Borg, *Contemporary Scholarship*, 78, 82–83.

<sup>32</sup> For an overview see S. J. Patterson, *The God of Jesus: the Historical Jesus and the Search for Meaning* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 164–184, and idem in R. J. Miller, *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2001), 70–74.



differences between Jesus and his mentor; John expected an *imminent* fiery conflagration, Jesus proclaimed an *immanent* divine presence. And a strict application of the criterion of multiple attestation leaves the future Son of Man sayings without firm historical foundation.<sup>33</sup> In any case, at the historical Jesus level, the present Son of Man sayings are best interpreted as some form of non-titular Aramaic idiom.<sup>34</sup> Eschatological features of the gospel parables have long been judged the product of post-Easter allegorisation without which they stand out for their subversive but timeless wisdom. As it turns out the *Gospel of Thomas* and several other non-canonical Jesus sources also attest a Jesus devoid of futurist eschatology and these are earlier, more reliable witnesses to the historical Jesus than the canonical gospels. Alongside *Thomas* there now stands the earliest stratum of Q (Q1), which, as reconstructed by John S. Kloppenborg, is entirely sapiential; eschatological material enters the Q tradition only at a subsequent redaction (Q2).<sup>35</sup> And, similarly, Stephen Patterson has found a stratification of sources common to Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>36</sup> In the distinctive case of Borg much of the threatening language in the synoptics can be allowed to stand; but it intends not transcendent eschatological hopes, but prophecies of coming destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Rome.<sup>37</sup>

Despite an energetic and multi-pronged attack on the traditional view, Jesus the prophet of transcendent eschatological expectations remains a widely held opinion, especially when one includes the European scholarly community. The reasons why most are not persuaded by the challengers are not hard to see.<sup>38</sup> In brief: The rather

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<sup>33</sup> See J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: the Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 243–255, 454–456, and the discussion of Crossan's analysis in Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 115–120. Cf. Borg, *Contemporary Scholarship*, 84–86, who appeals also to the minimalist interpretation of the gospel Son of Man sayings in D. R. A. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992).

<sup>34</sup> The secondary literature on this question is ever-growing. For an overview see D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: a History and Evaluation*, SNTSMS 107 (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), and Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 726–728.

<sup>35</sup> J. S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>36</sup> S. L. Patterson, "Wisdom in Q and *Thomas*," in *Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. L. G. Perdue, B. B. Scott, and W. J. Wiseman (Louisville, KY: John Knox/Westminster, 1993), 187–221.

<sup>37</sup> Borg, *Conflict*, 213–238.

<sup>38</sup> For criticisms see D. C. Allison, "A Plea for Thoroughgoing Eschatology," *JBL* 113 (1994): 651–668; Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 10–39; Wright, *Jesus*, 28–82; A. Hult-

un-Jewish *Gospel of Thomas* is with great difficulty accepted as a source earlier and more trustworthy than Mark and his successors. The Kloppenborg reconstruction of Q's earliest layer is a hypothetical reconstruction of a hypothetical document.<sup>39</sup> As it is, the double tradition (Q) is shot through with eschatology. The Jesus movement was apparently birthed in the context of eschatological fervour, first the preaching of John the Baptist, and then, after Jesus' death, the proclamation of his followers, had a strongly eschatological content. At the centre of Jesus' disciples' proclamation there stood the claim that Jesus had *transcended* death in his resurrection. In particular, early in Paul's letters there is an expectation involving a strongly transcendent and imminent eschatology (1 Thess 4:13–17, c. 50 CE). Historical probability is stacked high in favour of the supposition that the bridge between John's eschatology and that of the church was Jesus himself. A Jesus devoid of eschatology is a thin figure of the man portrayed in the most reliable sources available: the hypothesis struggles to explain swathes of the gospel texts. Even if the Son of Man sayings present insurmountable problems, they are not the only base on which the eschatological edifice is founded.

But more critical than all these considerations is the fact that the “non-Apocalyptic Jesus” rests on a fundamentally false construal of Jewish eschatology and the genre “apocalypse”.<sup>40</sup> Since this Jesus is currently a distinctively North American phenomenon we should not be surprised to find that, where there is attention to recent hard-nosed study of the Jewish apocalypses and eschatology, it is the *Semeia* 14 definition and the work of J. J. Collins that is used.<sup>41</sup> But even that is not much in evidence. The Jesus Seminar's publications have definitions which exemplify the problem: “Apocalyptic” is “A type of religious *thinking* characterized by the *notion* that through an act of *divine intervention*, the *present evil world* is about to be *destroyed* and replaced

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gren, “Eschatology in the New Testament: The Current Debate,” in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, ed. C. E. Braaten and R. W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 67–89, at 84–89. E. P. Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 183: “Such views merely show the triumph of wishful thinking.”

<sup>39</sup> See assessment in Wright, *People of God*, 435–443; Wright, *Jesus*, 41–43; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 467–470.

<sup>40</sup> As Wright has seen: *Jesus*, 29–82, esp. 33. See also E. M. Humphrey, “Will the Reader Understand? Apocalypse as Veil or Vision in Recent Historical-Jesus Research,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?*, ed. W. E. Arnal and M. Desjardins (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 215–237.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g., B. B. Scott, “After the Destruction: From Mad Max to the Destruction of the Temple,” *Forum* 8 (1992): 313–336, for reliance on *Semeia* 14.

with a new and better world in which God's justice prevails".<sup>42</sup> "Apocalypticism is the view that history will come to an end following a cosmic catastrophe and a new age will begin."<sup>43</sup> Here there is perhaps evidence of *Semeia* 14 since the definition concludes: "Such views are frequently expressed in an 'apocalypse': a revelation through a heavenly vision of events to come." But Collins' attempt to distinguish between genre—"apocalypse"—and apocalypticism has not, it seems, had much success since one frequently finds texts labelled an "apocalypse" that are categorically not.<sup>44</sup> For Crossan, all eschatology—whether apocalyptic or not—is a matter of "world negation".<sup>45</sup> Even though the consistently dualistic conceptualisation of so much older (particularly continental European) scholarship may not be present, the framework is intact.<sup>46</sup>

### 3. *A Not-So-Dualistic Jesus the Eschatological Prophet?*

Most recent comprehensive studies of the historical Jesus take the synoptic presentation to be the most reliable and conclude, therefore, that Jesus was eschatologically concerned, if not eschatological through and through.<sup>47</sup> Following the work by E. P. Sanders it is also possible

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<sup>42</sup> R. W. Funk, R. W. Hoover and T. J. Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 542, italics added (repeated in R. J. Miller, *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1992 (1991)], 460).

<sup>43</sup> Funk, Hoover and Seminar, *Five Gospels*, 542.

<sup>44</sup> For example: "Mark 13 is an apocalypse" (Funk, Hoover and Seminar, *Five Gospels*, 107); *Sibylline Oracles* 1–2 is an "apocalypse," J. D. Crossan, "Eschatology, Apocalypticism, and the Historical Jesus," in *Jesus: Then and Now. Images of Jesus in History and Christology*, ed. M. Meyer and C. Hughes (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 91–112, at 96.

<sup>45</sup> See Crossan, *Mediterranean Peasant*, 109, 238, 287, 292.

<sup>46</sup> For Crossan's reliance on Collins see his index to *Mediterranean Peasant* and note also his regular citation of Nickelsburg. In a recent piece Crossan shows his full hermeneutical colours in seeking to redefine the word "apocalyptic" in a way that describes accurately his own, theretofore "non-apocalyptic" historical Jesus (Crossan, "Apocalypticism," roughly equivalent to Miller, *Debate*, 48–69). His conceptual distinctions are highly illuminating and in some respects his preferred sense of "apocalyptic" is much closer to the historical truth of the Jewish phenomenon which he does not discuss explicitly.

<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that Crossan talks of his Jesus as an "eschatological" one (e.g., *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years immediately after the Execution of Jesus*, 1st ed. [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998], 257–292; Miller, *Debate*, 119). However, for Crossan "eschatology" need not have the temporality and the transcendence evident in the Jewish sources.

to identify a distinctive set of judgements that, more or less, unites those who advocate the view originally championed by Schweitzer. Those who have taken up Schweitzer's cause in the last quarter-century adopt a much less dualistic eschatology than the New Questers. Five stand out: E. P. Sanders, J. P. Meier, D. C. Allison, G. Theissen and A. Merz, and J. D. G. Dunn.

Sanders, first of all, waters down the transcendence that had been hitherto ascribed to Jewish eschatology: Jews were expecting national restoration, not the end of the world.<sup>48</sup> He thus challenges the dualistic structure of the Schweitzerian tradition, whilst remaining committed to its seminal insight: Jesus' expected a divine intervention and transformation that never came.<sup>49</sup> Sanders knows not just the work of J. J. Collins, but also of Rowland, and so not surprisingly, he avoids talk of "apocalyptic eschatology"<sup>50</sup> Like some of his fellow Jews, Jesus expected "an otherworldly-earthly kingdom."<sup>51</sup> He was a prophet of national restoration. He expected the destruction and miraculous rebuilding of the temple (see the evidence of Mark 11:15–19; 13:1–2; 14:58; 15:29 and parallels Acts 6:15; John 2:19), a divine intervention that would bring about the gathering of the lost tribes (reflected in his symbolic choice of twelve disciples, Matt 16:27; Q 22:28–30 and Mark 14:25) in an earthly, if transformed, Kingdom (see also Mark 10:35–45; Matt 16:27). Sanders is at pains to stress that there is not, in principle, any reason to doubt that Jesus could also think that already during his ministry the Kingdom was manifest: Jesus is not a systematic thinker with a dualistic apocalyptic theology. Sanders, it is true, is reluctant to declare the "present" Kingdom sayings authentic. But this is because in each case he finds reasons to doubt reliability and, it seems, because he is averse to their potential for making Jesus "unique".<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61–156; Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 169–204. And note Collins' criticism of Sanders on this point in J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination. An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd and revised edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 260–261.

<sup>49</sup> He accepts, in part, T. F. Glasson's criticisms of Schweitzer (T. F. Glasson, "Schweitzer's Influence: Blessing or Bane?" *JTS* 28 [1977]: 289–302, discussed in Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 124–125). Sanders' distinctively non-Schweitzerian view of Jewish eschatology is first laid out in E. P. Sanders, "The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World*, ed. D. Hellholm (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983), 447–459 esp. 456–458.

<sup>50</sup> See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 375–76, n. 3.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 131–140; 154–155; *idem*, *Historical Figure*, 177.

Sanders' conceptualisation is followed, to one degree or another, by Meier, Allison and Dunn. All three lack Sanders' doubts about the present sayings. Meier painstakingly analyses a core set of eschatological sayings whose authenticity is hard to dismiss.<sup>53</sup> Dunn, like Sanders, is sensitive to the misuse of the word "apocalyptic." In an endorsement of Rowland's arguments, he decides to speak simply of "eschatology,"<sup>54</sup> and is uncertain that in any given case we have the kind of transcendent eschatology that previous discussion has assumed.<sup>55</sup> He has also mounted a strong case against the common view that eschatological prophecies could have been added to the Jesus tradition as a result of prophecies pronounced in the name of Jesus by prophets in the post-Easter church.<sup>56</sup>

Of this group the most old-fashioned reconstruction of Jesus the eschatological prophet is that of Allison.<sup>57</sup> It is old-fashioned inasmuch as Allison insists on the presence within Judaism and Jesus' teaching of both expectations of cosmic catastrophe and a transcendent (if this-worldly) hope. He continues to speak of "apocalyptic eschatology", regards Isa 24–27 and Zech 9–14 as "apocalyptic," and thinks that a very great deal of Jesus' life and teaching can be explained in relation to his eschatological enthusiasm. However, in other respects, Allison's work reflects the recent developments that have taken place in the field of Jewish studies (particularly in North America).<sup>58</sup> Where Schweitzer and the New Questers took Jewish eschatology to be a consistent, systematic *theology*, Allison thinks it more pragmatic: Jewish eschatology reflects a cross-cultural, *sociological* phenomenon.<sup>59</sup> *Jesus is a millenarian prophet*, and a wealth of cross-cultural material from Mediterranean antiquity and world history is brought in to illuminate the contours of

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<sup>53</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:288–351: the oldest version of the Lord's prayer and three of the extant beatitudes; Q 13:28–29; Mark 14:25. This set is taken up and slightly expanded in Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 253–256.

<sup>54</sup> Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 401.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, see esp. 393–396, 398–404 and 478–479.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 186–192.

<sup>57</sup> Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*; subsequently restated in D. C. Allison, "The Eschatology of Jesus," in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 1: *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. J. J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2000), 267–302, and put into a larger context in Miller, *Debate*.

<sup>58</sup> For authoritative judgments on the Jewish material Allison is reliant on: J. J. Collins et al. (see index to Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, note p. x and, perhaps, D. C. Allison, "A Response," in *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate*, ed. R. J. Miller [Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2001], 83–105, at 92.

<sup>59</sup> See Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 115, for criticism of Schweitzer on this point.

his character. Because Jesus is not a logically consistent thinker and because the millenarian type is as much interested in social transformation as in cosmic destruction,<sup>60</sup> Allison is happy to accept the present Kingdom texts and the evidence for Jesus' social agenda and sense of the Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

Theissen and Merz start with the traditional, rather dualistic understanding of apocalyptic as a theological entity quite different from biblical prophecy.<sup>62</sup> However, they bring a distinctive contribution to the table: the role of the cult in holding together present and future perspectives on God's Kingdom. In reliance upon the recent study of kingship in the Psalms and an important article by Anna-Maria Schwemer on the Qumran *Sabbath Songs*, Theissen and Merz observe that "in a liturgical context Jews in the time of Jesus could equally praise the rule of God and ask for its coming without seeing an irresolvable contradiction."<sup>63</sup> Schwemer rightly saw that in the *Sabbath Songs* "in heaven what on earth is expected in the future is eternally present."<sup>64</sup> In view of our comments above, the point can be taken further: *in the cult as perfected world-order, worship takes place in heaven-already-on-earth, divine rule is enacted through God's representatives—the*

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<sup>60</sup> See Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 61–64, 78–94, for Allison's list of defining characteristics of apocalyptic eschatology. He resists the notion that an end to history must mean necessarily a wholly negative assessment of the present world (Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 213): "In Genesis 1–8, the created world is said over and over again to be good, and yet things get so bad that everything must be destroyed. Jesus' view of things was no doubt similar."

<sup>61</sup> Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 89–92, 105, 108–110. In an earlier discussion Allison explicitly *contrasts* the pessimism of apocalyptic eschatology with Jesus' affirmation of the present Kingdom and notes that Jesus "directed attention away from a mythological, other-worldly redeemer to his own historical person" (D. C. Allison, "Apocalyptic," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. J. B. Green and S. McKnight [Downers Grove: IVP, 1992], 17–20, at 19. But latterly he has drawn attention to the combination of future and present eschatologies in Jewish material: Allison, "Eschatology of Jesus," 274–275.

<sup>62</sup> Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 240–280.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 252. See generally 246–252.

<sup>64</sup> A. M. Schwemer, "Gott als König und seine Königsherrschaft in den Sabbatlidern aus Qumran," in *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult im Judentum, Urchristentum und in der hellenistischen Welt*, ed. M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, WUNT 55 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991), 45–118, at 117. The idea seems to have influenced Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 169, though he does little with it. For a fuller study of the theology of the *Sabbath Songs* and also the dialectic between eternal cultic realities and their extension to the whole of creation in the Qumran *War Scroll* see C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, STDJ 42 (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

*priestly community; and as such there is “eschatology” inaugurated.*<sup>65</sup> It is therefore not at all surprising to find that, as Theissen and Merz argue, one recorded piece of Jesus’ distinctive “liturgical” creativity—the “Our Father”—has both a strongly present and a future dimension.<sup>66</sup> Although they accept the traditional view that Jewish apocalyptic dualistically divides human and divine activity, they ultimately conclude that Jesus believed instead in human *collaboration* with God: Jesus’ vision demands a particular ethical will; concern for the weak and sick reflects God’s own eschatological action; in the performance of exorcisms human beings participate in God’s victory over Satan; “when they forgive one another’s sins, they are taking part in God’s forgiveness of sins; when they move others to accept salvation, they are taking part in the establishment of God’s saving will.”<sup>67</sup>

With a variety of different methodologies these contributions and others in the same vein make a formidable case that must be answered by those who would have a non-transcendentally eschatological (or “non-apocalyptic”) Jesus. No one can now argue, for example, that a Jewish eschatological prophet cannot believe both in a present and in a future Kingdom. Nor is justice done to Jesus’ eschatology without proper regard for the fact that Jewish eschatology is essentially *the conclusion to a story*; the story being the one told in the Hebrew Bible that is retold and expanded in all extant Second Temple literature.<sup>68</sup> However, there are serious weaknesses in the arguments and presuppositions of these five contributions, which mostly have to do with the lingering shadow of the old dualistic paradigm.

Despite the cogency of the arguments for Jesus-the-eschatological-prophet, the followers of the “non-apocalyptic” Jesus still throw up objections. For example, the argument that Jesus was consumed with a *transcendent* and *imminent* expectation that in fact never was fulfilled looks unlikely from what we know of the social character of early Christianity. Crossan makes the point forcefully: “As the decades of the first hundred years passed without millenarian consummation,

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<sup>65</sup> Compare, for example, the theology of Ben Sirach, which both celebrates God’s kingship in the cult-as-microcosm—laid out in Ben Sirach 50 (esp. v. 15 and the portrayal of the priesthood as the true Adamic vicegerent in 49:1, 50:11–13)—and looks for the future fulfillment of God’s promises to the nation in 36:1–22.

<sup>66</sup> Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 261–264.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>68</sup> Compare Allison, “Eschatology of Jesus,” 275 for criticism of Crossan’s view that Jesus had in view an “always available divine dominion” and see, further, Wright, *Jesus*, 207–208, 224–225.

tiny ripples of surprise appear on the surface of the tradition, but I see no evidence of profound doubt or massive loss of faith. I do not find what I might have expected: profound defensive strategies, desperate explanatory interpretations but, despite them, slow and steady attrition in faith. I would have expected, in other words, a steadily decreasing number of converts and communities and I find instead a steadily increasing number of both converts and communities.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, an eschatology that requires an utterly transcendent causality sits uncomfortably with the early Christian lifestyle. Crossan again: “I think their intense missionary activity came from people who believed in ‘incarnation’ and concluded that... [this] meant active cooperation and not just passive expectation.”<sup>70</sup> If Jesus and his followers both pursued an active engagement with the world *and* looked for imminent, transcendent divine intervention then he and they are unavoidably inconsistent, if not irrational.<sup>71</sup>

There is the continuing complaint that the eschatological Jesus has no real political and social stance—despite the evidence of the gospels and early Christianity that he did. J. S. Kloppenborg takes up Allison’s point that millenarian movements frequently engage in social experimentation and alternative lifestyles in anticipation of the future state and asks “if this is so, and it surely is, then it is all the more peculiar that many of those advocating an apocalyptic Jesus—I take E. P. Sanders and John Meier as examples—arrive at a Jesus who has pronounced beliefs about the future but practically nothing to say about the present.”<sup>72</sup> And insofar as Allison allows a social dimension to Jesus’ agenda it is one largely conditioned by the future, not the present.<sup>73</sup> In view of the recent advances in the study of Jewish apocalyptic surveyed in the article in Volume Two of this Handbook, we can add a further criticism. Allison does nothing with the evidence that “heaven” as a reality in which God’s will is already done is always available in the

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<sup>69</sup> Crossan, “Apocalypticism,” 95 (= Crossan in Miller, *Debate*, 54), cf. Borg, *Contemporary Scholarship*, 79; Wright, *People of God*, 462. For “tiny ripples of surprise” the principal evidence is 1 Thess 4:13–17; John 21:21–23 and 2 Peter 3:3–8. For Allison’s response to this complaint see Miller, *Debate*, 102–103.

<sup>70</sup> In Miller, *Debate*, 65–66.

<sup>71</sup> For Allison’s insistence that we should not be surprised by this inconsistency and irrationality see Miller, *Debate*, 89–93, 110, cf. 120–121.

<sup>72</sup> Kloppenborg, “As One Unknown,” 22.

<sup>73</sup> See Borg in Miller, *Debate*, 44–48, with Allison’s reply; 101–101; Kloppenborg, “As One Unknown,” 22 n. 62.



temple, in worship and in the distinctive religious experiences to which the Jewish apocalypses bear witness. Discussion of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and Schwemer's important study is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>74</sup>

It is not enough to dismiss the desire for a political Jesus as mere "wishful thinking."<sup>75</sup> To his modern (scholarly) believers the reconstructed "eschatological historical Jesus" also has plenty to offer theologically and politically.<sup>76</sup> No Jesus scholarship is pursued in a vacuum. And in several respects the eschatological Jesus offered by Schweitzer's heirs remains (however unconsciously) indebted more to the dualistic proclivities of a particular theological tradition than to the first-century sources themselves. Take, for example, Sanders' central thesis: Jesus expected the "miraculous" rebuilding of the temple and a divine intervention that would restore the nation and its lost tribes. For this scenario Sanders appeals to Jewish sources which expected the same kind of thing. Unfortunately, these do not bear the weight of interpretation asked of them.<sup>77</sup> Many texts speak of a divinely enacted gathering in of scattered Israelites, but none says this is going to happen in the "miraculous," "interventionist" fashion Sanders claims.<sup>78</sup> One of

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<sup>74</sup> One might have expected this material to enter his otherwise valuable discussion of Jesus' millenarian spirituality (Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 172–216). But then his treatment of the Essenes and the DSS (ibid. 191–93) is also a strained attempt to find a futurist eschatological rationale for a millenarian spirituality where the texts themselves lay far greater stress on present cultic realities as the basis for ethics.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 183.

<sup>76</sup> See Kloppenborg, "As One Unknown," and D. C. Allison, "The Problem of Apocalyptic: From Polemic to Apologetics," in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus: Subtexts in Criticism*, ed. J. S. Kloppenborg and J. W. Marshall (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 98–110, at 98–104. Behind so much twentieth-century talk of Jesus as (dualistic) eschatological prophet there stand the two giants of Western political theology, Augustine and Luther, whose aversion to concrete Christian political commitment is coupled with the tendency to oppose the divine against the human.

<sup>77</sup> The relevant primary sources are laid out in Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 78–87, 96–97; Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 185, 261–262. The clearest illustration of Sanders' misreading of the evidence is his view that in the *War Scroll* it is the angels who "fight on behalf of the Jewish armies, but the final blows [are] struck by God himself" (Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 262). The *War Scroll* actually has the human fighters do the killing as God's agents, with the messiah at their head (see Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 395–475).

<sup>78</sup> Of the additional texts supplied by Allison (Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 140, n. 167) only one (*1 Enoch* 57.1, cf. *Isa* 60:8), if read woodenly, has in mind an ingathering wrought only by divine power. *4 Ezra* 13.39–47 is clear that the lost tribes will have to return through ordinary means of transport, even if the crossing of the Euphrates will be possible by the recapitulation of the miracle at the Red Sea and the Jordan.

Sanders' texts (1QM) specifically highlights the role of human agents in mustering the tribes and organising them in their eschatological fight.<sup>79</sup> Although the sources do speak of *God* building a future temple, it is never said that he will not use human agents. The assumption that he will not is born of an unwarranted dualistic interpretative framework: in several key passages we are expressly told that God uses human construction workers who, in doing his work, are, therefore, more than simply human.<sup>80</sup> "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labour in vain" (Ps 127:1) eloquently sums up the idea of human-divine synergy. That Jesus did not, in fact, expect a new physical temple to drop from the skies is consistent with other evidence. On the one hand, the Jesus tradition and the earliest Christian texts lack any interest in such a physical structure, even where they have distinct, "eschatological" hopes for the future.<sup>81</sup> And on the other, there is some evidence that in fact Jesus thought his community and his "sacrificial" death were to function as a fulfilment of, and replacement for, Israel's cultic institutions.<sup>82</sup>

In this case, perhaps Jesus in fact thought that the divine "intervention" was already happening in and through his ministry, *within history*. Allison insists that Jesus' "vision of the Kingdom cannot be identified with anything around us. God has not yet brought a radically new world"; he has not yet gathered the scattered Israel (Q 13:28–29), and the saints do not yet have an angelic nature (Mark 12:18–27).<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> See 1QM II, 1–9; III, 1–4, 13; V, 3–4, 16; VII, 9–IX, 7; X, 2–8, and so on.

<sup>80</sup> This theological anthropology goes back at least to Exodus where Moses is a divine agent of architectural revelation (Exod 24:15–18; 34:29–35) and his chief artisan, Bezalel, is the veritable image of God, endowed with the creative wisdom (cf. Ps 104:24) and the "divine spirit" (Exod 31.1–3) necessary to create the cult-as-microcosm. The idea is evoked in Josephus, *Ant.* 3.179, where Moses' construction of the tabernacle makes him a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος (cf. *1 Enoch* 89.36), and in *Sib. Or.* 5.414–433, where it takes a heavenly man to rebuild a glorious temple after the disaster of AD 70. Compare the claim in *2 Baruch* 7 and 80 that it was not in fact the heathen who destroyed the First Temple (and by implication also the Second Temple) but God himself by the hand of his angels.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, Biblical Interpretation Series 35 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 297, 329.

<sup>82</sup> See Mark 2:1–10; Luke 7:48–49; Matt 18:20; Luke 14:25–33 (discussed in C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "Jesus Inspects His Priestly War Party [Luke 14:25–35]," in *The Old Testament in the New Testament. Essays in Honour of J. L. North*, ed. S. Moyise, JSNT-Sup 189 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000], 126–143) and the evidence and recent voices discussed in Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 514–515, 786–787, 795–818.

<sup>83</sup> D. C. Allison, "Jesus & the Victory of Apocalyptic," in *Jesus & the Restoration*

Now it is true that, unless Jesus believed in the communion of the saints, the vision of resurrected patriarchs in Q 13:28–29 is yet to happen. But other passages indicate Jesus could employ metaphorical reinterpretation of such eschatological expectations. In the Prodigal Son the forgiveness of sins and joy in Jesus' company is interpreted as the real return from exile.<sup>84</sup> In Q 11:23 Jesus claims his exorcisms bring about the real ingathering of those otherwise scattered.<sup>85</sup> So perhaps when we hear of the twelve sitting on thrones judging Israel (Q 22:28–30), Jesus had in mind an Israel redefined around himself—something not unlike the community of believers that followed him after his death and “resurrection.” And there is much to suggest that the earliest Christians believed the angelic nature for which others awaited, was theirs already: God *had* already brought a radically new world; “if anyone is in Christ there is new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).<sup>86</sup> In view of the evidence from Qumran for a heaven-on-earth and transformation-of-the-righteous-through-cult there is the real possibility that, as Luke 20:34–36 would have it, Jesus thought his followers were already, during his ministry, “isoangelic.”<sup>87</sup>

An insistence on a literal interpretation of “necessarily” otherworldly eschatological language has the effect of shielding Jesus from any responsibility for a parting of the ways between Jews and Christians. But the evidence need not be taken with flat-footed literalism and ironically, that literalism is parasitic upon a now questionable view of

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of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. C. C. Newman (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 126–141, at 129.

<sup>84</sup> See Wright, *Jesus*, 125–131.

<sup>85</sup> The logion is strangely ignored by N. T. Wright. A glance at the use of “gather” and “scatter” in the concordances shows immediately that Q 11:23 makes metaphorical use of return-from-exile language. And for the use of new exodus language in Q 11:21–22 cf. C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “The Gospel Thief Saying (Luke 12.39–40 and Matthew 24.43–44) Reconsidered,” in *Understanding, Studying and Reading: New Testament Essays in Honour of John Ashton*, ed. C. Rowland and C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, JSNTSup 153 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 48–68.

<sup>86</sup> For Jesus' followers already angelic or heavenly see Acts 6:15; Phil 2:15–16 (with Dan 12:1–3); Eph 2:16; Col 3:1–4 and see further Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 72–107, 216–222. From another angle, Crossan makes a similar point: the early Christians had a “durative”, not an “instantive” eschatology (in Miller, *Debate*, 66–68).

<sup>87</sup> Compare Allison's own discussion of this text (Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 209). Crossan espouses a Jesus who believed in “heaven on earth” (e.g., Miller, *Debate*, 56). The proper—liturgically *particular*—context for such a notion is the kind of experience described in the Qumran *Sabbath Songs* and the *Jewish* apocalypses. This has barely figured in the debate, presumably because, on all sides, the discussion remains within the parameters set by an anachronistic understanding of Jewish “apocalypticism.”

Jewish “apocalyptic” as something essentially different from the religion of the Hebrew Bible: according to that view there *was* a parting from the way of Moses and the Prophets, but of course it took place long before Jesus, viz. at the dawn of “apocalyptic”. The assumption that Jesus expected God to intervene at the expense of human agency also means we need do little with those gospel passages in which Jesus predicts political catastrophe for the temple and Jerusalem (Category (6) above); these this-worldly concerns are of a different order to Jesus’ other-worldly interests. Those who argue for an eschatological Jesus have virtually nothing to say about the role these temple destruction sayings have in Jesus’ aims and vision; though they do see that they probably contributed to his trial and condemnation.<sup>88</sup> They are not related to any particular social-political programme or vision, nor are they born of any prophetic discernment and critique of the political impulses that eventually led to the disastrous war with Rome. Nor, of course, have they anything to do with the essentially *transcendent* character of Jewish (“apocalyptic”) eschatology. Sanders presents the choice clearly: “As a good Jewish prophet, [Jesus] could have thought that God would employ a foreign army for [the Temple’s] destruction; but, as a radical first-century eschatologist, he probably thought God would do it directly”.<sup>89</sup> Jesus, in other words, was not an heir to the *biblical* pattern of politically engaged prophecy; he was a failed prophet of apocalyptic eschatology (what Sanders means by “radical eschatologist”) whose vision was essentially apolitical in its denial of divine involvement in the ordinary processes of history.

In the discussion of Jewish apocalyptic in volume 2 of this Handbook we have already noted the way in which the use of social theory has caused much misunderstanding in the recent study of the apocalypses. Allison’s application of this heuristic tool is not, in principal, unwarranted. However, as an alternative, all-encompassing, metanarrative the “millenarian prophet” threatens to occlude Jesus’ distinctive personality.<sup>90</sup> For Allison, Jesus comes to us as one already very well known: “He is Wovoka. He is Mambu. He is Birsá. What we

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<sup>88</sup> There is considerable agreement that Jesus did predict the temple’s destruction, not least because the gospel accounts do not seem to know key features of the actual event, such as its burning.

<sup>89</sup> Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 259.

<sup>90</sup> For a cautionary critique of the application to Jesus of pre-existing metanarratives see Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 470–477.

think of the least of these, his brethren, we think, to a large extent, also of him.”<sup>91</sup> So, can we not think anything of Jesus that we do not think of these other millenarian prophets? Does appeal to social theory function to inoculate us against any possibility that Jesus was “unique”? Whilst the theory has potential explanatory power, it is not clear whether it is being used to determine the meaning of the texts or to further elucidate their meaning and function in an already established history. At times the theory smothers Jesus’ particularity. For example, Allison thinks Jesus’ pacifism is a stance taken “in expectation of a divinely wrought deliverance.”<sup>92</sup> But this is not the explanation given in the sources: they rather ground this ethic in a particular understanding of the imitation of God (Matt 5:43–48; Luke 6:35–36).

Lastly, we should note in criticism particularly of Allison the continued adherence to the idea that John the Baptist, upon whose shoulders Jesus stands, had a fully “apocalyptic” eschatology.<sup>93</sup> This is the assumption also of members of the Jesus Seminar, who think Jesus consciously rejected this part of his former teacher’s programme.<sup>94</sup> But others rightly see that, aside from the misuse of the word “apocalyptic” here, nothing in John’s preaching goes beyond what we might expect from a biblical prophet: whilst the coming judgement is *imminent*, the preaching is aimed at Israel only—the nations are not in view, there is no cosmic catastrophe, and nothing in John’s recorded preaching demands a transcendence of history.<sup>95</sup>

#### 4. *A Non-Dualistic Jesus the Eschatological Prophet?*

N. T. Wright has a view of Jewish apocalyptic and the historical Jesus that stands aloof from the discussions surveyed so far: with Rowland, he thinks apocalyptic is essentially a matter of the revelation of heavenly secrets.<sup>96</sup> But where most have taken the cosmological language

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<sup>91</sup> Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 216: these are the opening words of Allison’s hermeneutically oriented “Epilogue.”

<sup>92</sup> Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 63, cf. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 231.

<sup>93</sup> The idea is widely adopted in North American discussion. See e.g., Miller, *Debate*, 18.

<sup>94</sup> E.g., Crossan, *Mediterranean Peasant*, 231–232, 235, cf. A. Y. Collins, “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism: Early Christian,” *ABD* 1 (1992): 288–292, at 288.

<sup>95</sup> G. B. Caird, *Jesus and the Jewish nation* (London: Athlone Press, 1965), 265; Sanders, *Historical Figure*, 92–93; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 365, 368–369.

<sup>96</sup> Wright, *People of God*, 268–338, 390–396: Mark’s whole story of progressive unveiling is an apocalypse.

of Jewish eschatology literally, (following the British tradition exemplified by G. B. Caird) for Wright “eschatology is the climax of Israel’s history, involving events for which end-of-the-world language is the only set of metaphors adequate to express the significance of what will happen, but resulting in a new and quite different phase *within* space-time history.”<sup>97</sup> Politics and theology are inseparable. Apocalyptic literature does not represent a new worldview; rather, it takes up the burden of the biblical prophets to interpret social and political realities.

Jesus is an eschatological prophet—here Wright is with Schweitzer—who expected not a dualistic divine intervention (so Schweitzer and the majority of his followers), but the same kind of action within history, through human agency, envisaged by Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah.<sup>98</sup> On the one hand, Jesus believed that the Kingdom was being inaugurated in and around himself—through his mediation of divine forgiveness, his deliverance from the demonic, and in his subversive social, religious and political vision—and that this inauguration would come to climactic fulfilment at his death and resurrection. On the other hand, Jesus warned that those who rejected him and his ministry—his generosity, mercy, forgiveness and peace—would suffer the same kinds of consequences as those Israelites who in the sixth century BCE had ceased to be faithful to their covenant god. Those Jews would take the road of idolatrous and violent nationalism that led inevitably to the temple’s destruction. The tragedy of 70 CE would also be the Son of Man’s—Jesus’—vindication; the moment he would be revealed enthroned as Israel’s true king, the time when his message and his way of being Israel would be shown, through the events of history, to be the right one.

Reading the gospels this way not only gives maximum significance to Jesus’ predictions of the temple’s destruction, but also enables Wright to incorporate passages in our Categories 1, 2, 3 and 5 within Category 6, so that Jesus is not a failed “millenarian” prophet, but the last in the line of true biblical prophets. The arrival of the Kingdom—but not the end of the space-time universe—and the coming of the

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<sup>97</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 208. Wright, *People of God*, 280 n. 1 can give the misleading impression that Wright’s views accord with the work of J. J. Collins.

<sup>98</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 94–98, 182–186, 198–243, 320–612–662, 467–474, 510–528, 594. There is some agreement here with the approach taken by Marcus Borg, another of Caird’s pupils (see esp. Borg, *Conflict*, 163–229, 265–276).

Son of Man—not *literally* descending on clouds—*did* happen within the lifetime of Jesus’ hearers. Jesus’ vindication is also possible because Wright locates within the sphere of realised or inaugurated eschatology what the likes of Sanders and Allison think Jesus looked for in the transcendent future. For Wright, the restoration of the nation and, in particular, the long awaited real return from exile takes place already in Jesus’ ministry (as Jesus spells out in the Sower and Prodigal Son parables). And in various ways there is a new temple being built in and around Jesus (e.g., Mark 2:1–12; Q 6:46–49; Matt 16:17–19; 18:15–20; Luke 15:11–32).<sup>99</sup> This means that Jesus’ eschatology entails not just affirmation of Israel’s hopes, but also their *redefinition*; a possibility that, hitherto, Schweitzerians have little considered.

Wright’s non-dualistic understanding of apocalyptic and eschatology is not without its detractors.<sup>100</sup> In particular, it is objected that Wright’s non-literalist reading of cosmological language is without foundation: it is asserted rather than demonstrated.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, this matter is now more complicated than either Wright or his critics imagine because temple cosmology and symbolism inform apocalyptic imagery. Consider, for example, a point in D. C. Allison’s recent criticism of Wright. Allison establishes that ancient Jewish interpreters *were* willing to take cosmological language at face value, a point that tells against Wright. However he then asks: “do we really have suitable reasons...for holding that, when the Jesus tradition speaks about the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, this was not meant literally” (i.e., as a reference to real meteorological phenomena)?<sup>102</sup> To which we must now answer: Yes, we do, because within temple cosmology talk of such clouds is polyvalent. Besides *cumuli nimbi*, incense

<sup>99</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 108, 129–130, 338, 343, 362, 432–438.

<sup>100</sup> For criticisms see the essays in C. C. Newman, ed., *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999); Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 152–171; C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “Jesus, the Temple, and the Dissolution of Heaven and Earth,” in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, ed. C. Rowland and J. Barton (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 116–141.

<sup>101</sup> No doubt some, like M. Casey, “Where Wright is Wrong: A Critical Review of N. T. Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God,” *JSNT* 69 (1998): 95–103, at 97, will charge Wright with a theologically motivated distortion of history that rescues Jesus from failure. But even if we could know Wright’s (and Caird’s) motives, that need not mean their history is wrong: it could be both right *and* theologically convenient.

<sup>102</sup> Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 159. For Allison’s defense of a literal reading of apocalyptic language see *ibid.* 153–171.

clouds and the aura of divine glory that incense represents may also be in view. In isolation, Mark 13:26 may *literally* refer to the officiation (following consecration) of the true eschatological high priest in the God-ordained temple at a decisive (glorious and powerful) Yom Kippur. What Jesus might have meant by these words would then depend on his vision of the true high priesthood, temple and Day of Atonement.

What Jesus would have meant had he said Mark 13:26 would also depend on how Jesus understood the transcendence of the eschaton in relation to the climactic coming of Israel's true high priest. And here Wright pays too little attention to the specifics of Jewish eschatology and its transcendent character. Wright repeatedly chastises those who have imagined that Jews expected the end of the space-time universe and assumes that the alternative is simply that they expected the continuation of history. It may well be that the position he rejects fairly describes the thoroughgoing dualistic "apocalypticism" of the Bultmannians which still lingers in the minds of some who beat the "non-apocalyptic Jesus" drum. However, it is unlikely that this was the position of Weiss and Schweitzer and certainly, it unfairly caricatures the position of their most recent disciples.<sup>103</sup> Though Wright lists various formulations of the Jewish eschatology of Jesus' day, one which accurately characterizes a common pattern in the sources is not considered: *Eschatology as the climax to Israel's story and the story of the cosmos, involving the transcendence or transfiguration of ordinary space and time.*<sup>104</sup> Wright makes much of the claim that Jesus' aims and vision belong to a grand salvation-historical metanarrative: sin-exile-and-return. In so doing, and with some older Old Testament scholarship exemplified by the work of G. von Rad, he drives a wedge between history and creation: the cosmos has no other role in the historical drama than to provide the staging. Old Testament scholarship has since moved on and it is increasingly clear that history and creation

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<sup>103</sup> For Weiss and Schweitzer, see Allison, "Victory of Apocalyptic," 129–130; S. J. Gathercole, "The Critical and Dogmatic Agenda of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*," *TynBul* 51 (2000): 261–283, at 278–282. Dunn may also therefore misrepresent Schweitzer (Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 398).

<sup>104</sup> For Wright's presentation of the options see Wright, *Jesus*, 208. The problem is exemplified in Wright's oft-repeated statement that Jews expected the "defeat of evil" (e.g., Wright, *Jesus*, 470). No doubt many did. But many also expected Satan's elimination, the removal of all evil, along with all disease and sickness. "Defeat" and "removal" (with its utopian consequences) are not quite the same.



are a tightly-knit whole in the biblical worldview: that there remains “persistent evil” within creation—to use J. D. Levenson’s phrase,<sup>105</sup> that creation (time and space) is not what it should be, but that the cult inaugurates a transcendence of ordinary space and time to which creation’s story, with Adam’s and Israel’s stories, was always headed.

These criticisms aside, Wright’s is the only exposition of the historical Jesus that really breaks free from the spell of Schweitzer’s “interventionist” and always-incipiently-dualistic “apocalypticism”. Wright’s tightly drawn connections between Jesus’ Kingdom programme and his temple destruction prophecy is persuasive, not least because it takes seriously the politically engaged character of Jewish eschatology. Criticisms of Wright are remarkably silent at this point. And parts of his reading of Mark 13 are by no means as fanciful as they might seem. For example, his claim that the ἄγγελοι sent out to gather the elect in Mark 13:27 are in fact Christian missionaries is a possibility which must now be treated with the utmost seriousness, given the considerable body of evidence that Jews could speak freely of the righteous in angelic terms.<sup>106</sup> Even if Wright is wrong to collapse the cosmological language of the gospels into history, this need not mean that he is wrong to claim Mark 13 is really all about 70 CE, since the cosmological significance of the temple means that its desecration and destruction *would* have serious implications for the rest of creation.<sup>107</sup>

### 5. *The Son of Man*

Schweitzer made the future Son of Man sayings central to his argument that Jesus expected an imminent glorious and utterly transcendent divine intervention. The sayings were problematized in the New Quest and have never recovered the pride of place Schweitzer gave them, even amongst those who advocate an eschatological Jesus. Here there is a crisis of scholarly confidence, particularly in the English-speaking world.<sup>108</sup> Yet Schweitzer was surely right: if we are going to

<sup>105</sup> J. D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil. The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

<sup>106</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, 363–364, 515; cf. 361 n. 152.

<sup>107</sup> See further Fletcher-Louis, “Dissolution of Heaven and Earth”.

<sup>108</sup> For a survey of the different positions see Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 541–563; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 724–737.

treat the synoptic gospels seriously, the Son of Man's presence shines from beginning to end, throughout the Jesus material; from ministry, through suffering and beyond. The inability to make sense of the Son of Man sayings continually calls into question confidence in the synoptic tradition as a whole and justifies the search for surer historical footing in other material. And yet it is extremely unlikely that the Son of Man expression has been introduced to the tradition without a basis in the *ipsissima verba Jesu*.

But this is also where the "new perspective" on Jewish apocalyptic and our temple-centred reading of Daniel 7 has most to offer. Here we are confined to the following general observations:<sup>109</sup>

1. The scholarly assumption that Jesus cannot have simultaneously thought of himself as the future, glorious and heavenly Son of Man and also the frail, human, about-to-suffer Son of Man is a nonsense born of the short-sighted failure to reckon with the full and complex range of theological anthropologies available to Jewish theology in general and the understanding of priesthood in particular.<sup>110</sup> This is, of course, no more short-sighted than the agonising arguments over whether in the *Similitudes of Enoch* the divine Son of Man and Enoch are one and the same: they clearly are, just as in 4 Ezra the Son of Man is both pre-existent divine warrior and very human messiah.

2. In its first-century context, what is striking about the gospel Son of Man portrayal is *not* the combination of future and present, glorious and frail Son of Man sayings with singular reference to Jesus (as if this were possible only at the end of a long process of scriptural and theological reflection in the light of the Easter event). What is striking is that Jesus the Son of Man is situated—at least until his final hours—so far from the Jerusalem temple; its ritual time, space and boundaries. And where the comparable Jewish texts present the Danielic Son of Man only in transcendent triumph over the sinful vicissitudes of earthly reality, in the gospels he is also, first, rootlessly at home in that world below and outside the purity of heaven.

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<sup>109</sup> For more detail see Fletcher-Louis, "Sacral Son of Man," and "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 1," JSHJ 4 (2006): 155–175; "Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 2," JSHJ 5 (2007): 57–79.

<sup>110</sup> For suffering and glory combined in the Qumran passages on priesthood see J. D. Tabor, "Are You the One? The Textual Dynamics of Messianic Self-Identity," in *Knowing the End from the Beginning*, ed. L. L. Grabbe and R. D. Haak (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 179–189.

3. The Son of Man comes and goes. In Daniel 7:13 he comes to the Ancient of Days; from earth to heaven. In the majority of gospel sayings he comes from heaven to earth. The ambiguity arises directly from the temple and atonement context. The high priest both goes into the sanctuary, the holy of holies that is heaven, and comes out again having achieved atonement, in receipt of divine authority and power (cf. Dan 7:14), to act as God's agent and divine warrior on earth. The coming from heaven to earth need not have anything to do with reflection on Jesus' role in the light of post-resurrection faith. Indeed, it need have nothing to do with Jesus' death either. If Jesus thought or spoke of himself as Son of Man, that would have meant automatically ascent to *and* descent from heaven in the cultic, Jerusalem temple sense at the very least; and in any number of other possible senses that might be evoked by that particular temple cosmology. The "coming" of the Son of Man, as in Matt 10:23, might also, presumably, mean the long-awaited appearance of Israel's true eschatological high priest, on the cultic and historical stage, his ordination(?) and liturgical officiation achieving one or more climactic acts of atonement.

Of course, this remains a hypothesis until individual sayings are examined in turn. Is there enough in the Son of Man sayings collection to confirm that Jesus used the title to claim a high priestly identity? Does the hypothesis have explanatory power? This will be established only once we understand fully the breadth and depth of theological meaning that was attached to the high priest, that was available to be evoked at any one instance.

### 6. *Jesus the Apocalyptic Visionary: A Desideratum*

Since we have argued that apocalyptic is essentially a matter of a particular anthropology—the image of God—as the basis for particular religious experiences—dreams, visions, angelophanies, the ascent to heaven (and so forth) free of the trappings of pagan idolatry—within a particular cosmology—the one defined by Israel's temple, it is beholden upon us to end with a few brief comments on the evidence that Jesus was one such apocalypticist.

The serious study of the Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration and related passages that claim for Jesus an apocalyptic spirituality has played a very minor role in the quest for the historical Jesus. Morton Smith, Marcus Borg, Bruce Chilton and Sean Freyne are among the

few who have given this material any space in considering Jesus' aims, vision and self-consciousness.<sup>111</sup> To the extent that these passages claim an objectively transcendent reality they are not, of course, patient of authentication within the historiographical parameters of a modern epistemology. But that does not mean they are not historical, even precisely as described. And etic categories of analysis ("magic", the sociologist's "charismatic", for example) are no less subjectively relative than the emic category in which such experiences belong: Jewish apocalyptic. It may be possible to give thoroughgoing appreciation to these experiences in the writing of an historical account of Jesus, but that will not be an account capable of universal public assent: it will require personal assent also to the broad parameters of the apocalyptic mindset and the biblical worldview of which that mindset is a subset. Nevertheless, for any who would tread this road less travelled, the following should be borne in mind:

1. No doubt there are important continuities between the experiential realities of Jewish apocalyptic and comparative cross-cultural religious phenomena. No doubt, as Borg would insist, those continuities are as important as the *discontinuity* of worldview between modern and pre-modern or western and non-western societies. However, sight should not be lost of the fact that Second Temple "mysticism" is highly particular, distinguishing itself clearly from competing non-Jewish alternatives by its own literary genre—the apocalypses—with a definitely biblical theological content.

2. If Jesus was a Jewish apocalyptic visionary he cannot be understood apart from his view of the Jerusalem temple. Despite a well-established scholarly tradition, we should not imagine that an apocalyptic spirituality need nurture antipathy to the physical temple and its institutions.<sup>112</sup> Indeed, whilst there is little to connect a royal

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<sup>111</sup> M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978); M. Smith, "The Origin and History of the Transfiguration Story," *USQR* 36 (1980): 39–44; Borg, *Conflict*, 229–263; J. Borg Marcus, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 25–56; Borg, *Contemporary Scholarship*, 127–139; B. Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 50–58, 93–102, 109, 132–133, 155–161, 171–172, 190–196, 281–289; S. Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 158–163.

<sup>112</sup> That is the position most recently developed in dependence on Nickelsburg's understanding of the *Book of Watchers* by S. Freyne (*A Jewish Galilean*, 158–163, cf. Borg, *Conflict*, 234).

messianic consciousness to an apocalyptic spirituality, it would be priestly categories of identity that would most accord with Jesus having dreams and visions.

3. The “mysticism” of Jewish apocalyptic literature has not yet fled from history, as it would do in later *Merkabah* and *Hekhalot* mysticism. If Jesus was a Palestinian apocalyptic mystic we should assume that he was committed to Israel’s story and that he took a lively interest in eschatology. But he is also likely to have believed, not least in view of his own experiences, that the eschaton was inaugurated already in his ministry: the Baptism speaks of new creation and the Transfiguration manifests not a proleptic glory but a real divine presence.<sup>113</sup>

4. Fourthly, the particularity of *Jewish* apocalyptic mysticism means that if Jesus had such experiences it is highly probable that they will have entailed a distinctive self-consciousness. The apocalyptic seer is, like the high priest, a transcendent human being: Daniel is the veritable image of God and as such worthy of both human veneration (Dan 2) and revelatory dreams; Enoch is one who has walked with the gods, whose life transcends mortality, who is exalted to a divine and glorious throne; Levi receives “glorious” garments in his dream vision (*T. Levi* 8.5); through her encounter with the angel, Aseneth is transformed from mortality to the radiant immortality of those who live the angelic life (*Joseph and Aseneth*). The early Jewish tradition does not share the rigid distinction between divine and human, creator and creature, which characterises the later Western mystical tradition.

No doubt, there are ways in which Jesus the apocalyptic visionary was unusual, distinctive, unique. He is not recorded to have had dream visions. Why? Is this irrelevant? If there is an initiatory mystical experience in the life of Jesus according to the gospels it is not the one we might expect—ascend to heaven. Rather, at the Baptism the Spirit of

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<sup>113</sup> For new creation in the Baptism see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. vol. I (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 333–334. For real presence in the Transfiguration see Fletcher-Louis, “Sacral Son of Man.” Allison’s lack of attention to the realised aspect of Jesus’ eschatology in his recent work is of a piece with his relative lack of interest in the visionary dimension of Jewish apocalyptic and the historical Jesus. Of the historicity of material pertaining to the latter he is sceptical: see e.g., D. C. Allison, “Behind the Temptations of Jesus. Q 4:1–13 and Mark 1:12–13,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 195–213. However, Allison provides interpretative insights that could contribute to a positive appreciation of the story’s coherence with other aspects of Jesus’ actual life and ministry.

God descends to Jesus and he is not taken up into the open heaven for a vision of God on his chariot or throne (contrast Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, *1 Enoch* 14).<sup>114</sup> Why is this? Study of this aspect of his character is in its infancy, but with an emerging new perspective on apocalyptic—one that puts the experiential in its rightfully central place—there is now a new opportunity to understand better Jesus' historical character. And this should pay close attention not just to the ways Jesus' spirituality is *like* but also to ways it is *unlike* that which apocalyptic literature attests.

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. the criticism of Chilton's recent presentation of Jesus as a *Merkabah* mystic in C. L. Quarles, "Jesus as Merkabah Mystic," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 5–22, at 17.



Handbook for the Study of the  
Historical Jesus





# Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus

Volume 4

Individual Studies

*Edited by*

Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter



BRILL

LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2011

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication-Data

Handbook for the study of the historical Jesus / edited by Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-90-04-16372-0 (hardback : alk. paper) 1. Jesus Christ—Historicity—  
Study and teaching. I. Holmén, Tom. II. Porter, Stanley E., 1956–  
BT303.2.H364 2010  
232.9'08071—dc22

2010038765

ISBN *Vol.* 1: 978 90 04 17091 9

*Vol.* 2: 978 90 04 17092 6

*Vol.* 3: 978 90 04 17093 3

*Vol.* 4: 978 90 04 17094 0

*Set:* 978 90 04 16372 0

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

# THE HANDBOOK FOR THE STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS IN PERSPECTIVE

TOM HOLMÉN AND STANLEY E. PORTER

A hundred years ago, Albert Schweitzer gathered the bulk of the most important (mostly German) Jesus research done during the preceding two centuries (the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) within one cover and made an assessment of it. Today, to write a *summa historica* of Jesus studies is not an undertaking that one person could embark on and realistically hope to accomplish (not even two people), but requires a collaboration of a *legio* of the best minds from across many countries and cultures. Albert Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*<sup>1</sup> marked a significant milestone in historical Jesus scholarship, a movement that has continued in various forms and in diverse ways, but in all events unabated, until today. As a result, in a 1994 article, James Charlesworth, who himself has been actively involved in the recent expansion of historical Jesus study, asserted that historical Jesus study was expanding with "chaotic creativity."<sup>2</sup> While an apt and appropriate description of the condition of the times, this characterization is all the more accurate today, fifteen years later. Since its latest renaissance in the 1980s,<sup>3</sup> historical Jesus study has continued to expand, drawing into its broadening scope more and more scholars of the New Testament and cognate areas. There is an abundance of Jesus studies today that displays an almost overwhelming diversity of methods, approaches, hypotheses, assumptions, and results. While creativity and fecundity are theoretically

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<sup>1</sup> A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1906). The second edition was simply entitled: *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1913). The English translation was entitled: *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, trans. W. Montgomery, with a preface by F. C. Burkitt (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity," in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth and W. P. Weaver (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–41.

<sup>3</sup> See M. J. Borg, "A Renaissance in Jesus Studies," *TheoIT* 45 (1988): 280–292.

to be welcomed, chaotic creativity works against the scholarly pursuit of orderly understanding, and the sheer mass of material threatens to overwhelm even the heartiest of participants in the quest. However, in some instances such creativity can spur on and nourish various forms of enquiry that result in unpredictable and unplanned results. The future of historical Jesus study rests with the community of scholars being able to harness this chaotic creativity to its service, and to create order out of a morass of growing detail.

What are the purposes of Jesus research? The first one is clearly an abiding academic purpose. This has always been regarded as important and has, together with the latest renaissance of Jesus study, only grown in importance. In fact, if “academic” and “historical” can be seen to correlate, many scholars would claim that this is what the study of Jesus today is all about. According to many representative Jesus questers, a main characteristic of current Jesus research is that it is being spurred and guided by an outspoken historical interest. Indeed, Jesus lies at the juncture of many interests and phenomena that are crucial to understanding great lines of historical development and that form the basis of understanding the world today. There is therefore no doubt about the great historical and academic value of Jesus research. However, several other purposes, motivations, and aspirations obviously feed into the historical pursuit of Jesus. Among these are religious, political, cultural, artistic, fictional, romantic, psychological, financial, apologetic, and simply personal reasons to engage in conversing about Jesus of Nazareth. We merely state this as an observable fact: such purposes for Jesus research exist and are being pursued in practice. Unfortunately, sometimes scholars too easily classify such purposes as either well- or ill-founded. In the post-colonial, post-Einsteinian, post-modern, post-structural (some say even post-human) etc. world of ours, who can be so clear as to be able to tell the difference between relevant and irrelevant motivations, not to speak of labeling them as either good or bad? Nevertheless, in all this it is vital to genuinely retain the concepts of historical Jesus and historical Jesus research around which the variegated conversation centers and revolves. How this happens and is realized may not be an easy or altogether straightforward thing to do.

The Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus (HSHJ) was designed to be one, important means of handling both the growing abundance and the increasing diversity of Jesus scholarship. Such is not an easy task, as we the editors have grown to appreciate in the course of creating this set of volumes. Putting the diversity on display in a

controlled, manageable, and understandable fashion, while acknowledging the numerous and diverse major issues, and ensuring that as many as possible of the important adjacent themes are recognized, has been a significant task. The HSHJ seeks to offer a convenient, even if still circuitous, route through the maze of current historical Jesus research, so that scholars and other interested parties can appreciate the broad and diverse spectrum of current opinion.

There have been a number of recent efforts to survey the history of historical Jesus scholarship, which we have taken into account in planning these volumes. Some of these publications have included individual essays that try to cover the range of major topics, although no effort to date has included as many as this set of volumes.<sup>4</sup> Several of these studies are retrospective accounts that anthologize past statements of significance in the study of the historical Jesus, but they lack the contemporary coordinating force of the HSHJ.<sup>5</sup> Even those publications that attempt to address the contemporary issues in historical Jesus research in a coordinated fashion, because of their encyclopedic nature, are unable to provide the kind of depth and even breadth of exposure that these volumes contain.<sup>6</sup> Whatever merits such previous volumes may have, and they have many, none of them is designed to accomplish the same goals as the Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus.

There are many distinguishable features of the HSHJ. This collection of four volumes of essays first of all seeks to be thorough and inclusive. We realize that there are always other opinions that could be included in volumes such as these, but we have tried to solicit and elicit as much of that diverse opinion as was available for publication. We want this collection to serve, not only as a historical encapsulation of the topics of their day, but as a worthy expression of the range of viable thought currently available in historical Jesus studies.

Besides the inclusive nature of these volumes, we have sought for HSHJ to be international in scope, not simply for the sake of diversity,

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., H. K. McArthur, ed., *In Search of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Scribners, 1969); G. W. Dawes, ed., *The Historical Jesus Quest: A Foundational Anthology* (Leiden: Deo, 1999); C. A. Evans, ed., *The Historical Jesus: Critical Concepts in Religious Studies*, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004); J. D. G. Dunn and S. McKnight, eds., *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 10 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> E.g. C. A. Evans, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (London: Routledge, 2007).



but so that multiple voices can be ably represented in the discussion. The approximately one-hundred contributors to this project come from around twenty different countries. Some countries no doubt are represented more heavily than others, and some other important nationalities may be under-represented or not represented at all. This was not by design, as our purpose from the start has been to try to free the discussion of Jesus from regional or local agendas and schools of thought.

Besides the multiplicity of voices from a wide range of places and people, in the HSHJ we have sought to free study of the historical Jesus from the trammels of a variety of other restraints. We have been conscious that study of Jesus in the past has been directly linked to particular forms and contents of higher education, and even specific methodologies, and that such study has often gone hand-in-hand with particular religious, cultural or even political traditions and histories. This set of volumes has been created to move beyond, or perhaps even rise above, such artificially imposed constraints. As a result, though ideologies will no doubt be present in the individual contributions, the volumes as a whole are not reacting or responding to any particular local or even nationally determined situation with regard to historical Jesus study. Our primary criterion in selecting and welcoming the contributors has been their expertise and their addressing a topic of relevance. Despite our best efforts, there is no doubt that most of the contributors are still “white male western Europeans and European-Americans” (as Richard Horsley states).<sup>7</sup> We accept this comment, while acknowledging also that our best efforts were put into attempts not to fall victim to this as an inevitable conclusion. Nevertheless, it is probably a realistic observation of the situation that prevails in historical Jesus studies to this day. Whether it will be different in the future, we must wait and see.

The efforts above have been undertaken so that we could focus these volumes on what we consider the most important elements in current study of the historical Jesus. In order to do this, we have divided the essays into four structured volumes.

As a result of this process of assessment, what became evident was that one of the most important sources of continued diversity in historical Jesus study is the element of methodological divergence. Methodological diversity entails the formulation of varied and disparate conscious approaches to the study of Jesus. Questions of method are inevitably confronted at the outset of any scientific or historical investi-

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<sup>7</sup> See his article in volume one.

gation, and usually indicate the significant parting of the ways between differing approaches to the same body of data. Consequently, volume one of the HSHJ is dedicated to questions of method. Realizing and being knowledgeable of the different methodological starting points in historical Jesus study not only facilitates one's determination and understanding of the results, but also gives important and necessary insight into the reasons for the results and their implications. In other words, attention to method forces us to ask the question of why it is that a particular scholar comes to a specific set of conclusions, as opposed to a different set of conclusions. In this regard, the first volume of HSHJ itself speaks volumes about historical Jesus research. In this volume, we have attempted to assemble many of the world's leading experts on methodological questions regarding the study of Jesus. They present their approaches to study of the historical Jesus as a means of introducing us to the fundamental issues at stake. This is not to deny that there is some challenging reading to be had in this volume, but within this one volume the reader has easier access than before to the range of methods currently at play in historical Jesus studies. By using this volume, scholars and students alike will be able learn about methods with which they are less familiar, compare the major features of these methods, and determine how the varied hypotheses about the historical figure of Jesus are rooted in methodological choices made at the early stages of thinking and research.

The first volume is, therefore, divided into two parts. The first part includes a wide range of distinct methodological statements by advocates of those methods. This part encompasses the methods that are distinct to historical Jesus study as it has been practiced over the last twenty to thirty years. It is here that we gain further insight into the approaches that have been adopted by a wide range of scholars who have had influence within historical Jesus study, as they have tried to define the nature and characteristics of the study and its results. Part two of this volume extends the range of methodologies to the interaction between historical Jesus study and methods that have proven themselves in other areas of New Testament and cognates studies. Some of these are the traditional methods of biblical study, while others are recent innovations influenced by the rise of various types of social-science criticism. The interface of Jesus study and these methods has provided a range of results that help to ensure that the study of Jesus will not soon grow quiescent.

The second volume of HSHJ focuses on the history and future of historical Jesus research, by identifying many if not most of the specific

issues of contention that have been raised in the broad and long history of Jesus study. This volume is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the notion of quests for the historical Jesus. One of the points of continued contention in study of Jesus is not only whether there are periods in such study, but how current study relates to previous study, in terms of both its methods and its results. Here various authors address the relation of Jesus study to the various quests that have been proposed. The second part of the volume brings to the fore questions that are being asked in the contemporary climate of historical Jesus studies. These include the questions that are currently and recurrently at the forefront of discussion, often suggesting in their questions an alternative to the course that previous research has taken. Part three of this volume addresses some of the perennial topics in Jesus research. In some ways, these are issues that are either assumed or regularly taken into account in formulating various hypotheses about Jesus. They form the convenient and necessary intellectual background for pursuing historical Jesus studies.

The third volume of HSHJ brings Jesus himself as a historical figure directly into the discussion. There are three parts in this volume as well. The first part treats Jesus in regard to primary documents of the ancient world, such as the canonical gospels, other portions of the New Testament, and non-canonical works. The second part of this volume takes the elements of the life of Jesus and exposes them to rigorous critical and scholarly scrutiny. Rather than examine Jesus in terms of how he is depicted in one of the biblical books (as in the previous section of this volume) or in terms of a particular issue, this section dissects the life of Jesus in terms of its logical and necessary components, from issues of historicity to his teaching and message, and many if not most places in between. It is in studies such as these that one realizes the importance of the previous studies and approaches for the explication of these subject areas. These topics bring to bear the variety of issues previously discussed. The third part of this volume relates Jesus to the legacy of Israel. Jesus' Jewish roots and relations have long been an essential item of discussion and contention in historical Jesus studies. In this part, various key elements of his relationship to Israel are scrutinized. The result of this set of studies is to place Jesus firmly within his Jewish context, a desideratum of much recent historical Jesus scholarship.

The fourth and final volume of HSHJ is a collection of individual studies by a range of scholars. It is a positive comment on the state of current historical Jesus study that, even with the best planning and

intention, it is difficult, if not impossible, to plan and anticipate all of the necessary topics for such a comprehensive study. Therefore, we have designed this fourth volume to include important studies that we have solicited and have had submitted for which there was no other place in the volume, but that warranted a position in a compendium of scholarship such as this handbook attempts to be. There is a wide range of valuable research to be found in this fourth volume. Some of the studies explore areas for which there has been very little previous Jesus research but in which the author shows there is a lamentable lacking and oversight in the discipline. Others of the studies take topics on the fringe of either Jesus studies or contemporary culture and try to bridge the two in creative and insightful ways. Finally, some of the studies are designed to focus on particular and specific issues that would otherwise have been overlooked in the course of this study, but that a perceptive scholar realized would make a contribution to the final product.

The results of a project such as this are many and varied. We do not doubt that many of the significant contributions to scholarship found in these volumes will establish themselves as standards in the field and continue to have warranted influence on the study of the historical Jesus. Such studies may well be found in any or all of the volumes. We further believe that there are a number of essays that will have uncovered or discovered or even re-discovered insights that have been lost or lost sight of or not yet sighted, and that will bring these into consideration on the broader canvas of historical Jesus studies. There are other essays within these volumes that have broken some boundaries and will establish themselves as new and innovative ways forward in the discussion. The problem is that it is not easy to tell which essays are which, and what the significance of each individual contribution will be. We are confident, however, that these volumes contain, as much as is possible within the parameters of such a project, a responsible and representative, and in some cases even forthright or contrarian, presentation of the current state of historical Jesus scholarship. Such scholarship is the backbone of a project such as this, and is a mainstay of how one approaches contemporary New Testament scholarship. There are essays within this collection that will prove to be seminal for study of the historical Jesus, as they force both sympathetic and unsympathetic readers to contemplate issues and perspectives in ways that were unanticipated. Such scholarship helps to pave the way forward for further research. Its place of final repose cannot be predicted or estimated.



THE “DARK SIDE OF POWER”—BEELZEBUL:  
MANIPULATED OR MANIPULATOR? REFLECTIONS ON THE  
HISTORY OF A CONFLICT IN THE TRACES LEFT IN  
THE MEMORY OF ITS NARRATORS

MICHAEL LABAHN

*Dedicated to the Memory of the late Professor Martin Hengel<sup>1</sup>*

1. *Preliminary Reflections from the Perspectives of the History  
of Research*

The multiple attestations of texts with agreements in contents and linguistic convergences in different documents pose among others two serious questions. First, is there a potential literary relationship between the texts? And secondly, can we trace the paths along which they may have been transmitted? In order to answer these questions in the field of early Christian texts, and especially of the literature about Jesus, scholars have recourse to various theological and historical models which offer insight into how the traditions acquired oral and written form. The “synoptic question” and the history of the models proposed for its solution offer eloquent examples of how a variety of antecedent historical and theological judgments leads to a variety of explanatory models.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> At the invitation of Professor Jens Schröter and Professor Joseph Verheyden, an earlier version of this essay was read at the 58th General Meeting of the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas in Bonn 2003 in the seminar on “Current Studies in the Synoptic Gospels.” This essay is dedicated to Professor Martin Hengel, who emphatically recommended that it be published.—The manuscript of this article was already finished in August 2005. Due to constraints of time I was only able to update some bibliographical references [English translation: Brian McNeil.].

<sup>2</sup> For overviews of this subject, cf. D. L. Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem: The Canon, the Text, the Composition and the Interpretation of the Gospels*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1999); J. S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 11–54; W. Schmithals, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, GLB (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985); in short: M. Labahn, “Historical Criticism (or Gospel as Sources),” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. C. A. Evans (New York, London: Routledge, 2008), 280–286; idem, “Der Gekom-

In the context of the “synoptic question,” the tradition about the Beelzebul controversy in Mark 3:22–30 and Q 11:14–23 is one of those texts which are found first in the *Gospel of Mark* and secondly in Matthew and Luke—Mark’s recipients—in *the literary context where both made use of the Q document*.<sup>3</sup> This is why texts such as the Beelzebul controversy play a classic role as evidence in favor of the two-sources theory, when this is chosen as a working hypothesis.<sup>4</sup>

Until very recently, a number of attempts have been made to interpret the very small but striking field of double attestations as evidence of Mark’s dependence on Q;<sup>5</sup> we may mention here D. R. Catchpole,<sup>6</sup> H. T. Fleddermann,<sup>7</sup> J. Lambrecht,<sup>8</sup> B. L. Mack,<sup>9</sup> W. Schenk,<sup>10</sup> and

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mene als Wirderkommenden” (Habilitationsschrift, University of Halle, 2008), 21–33. U. Schnelle, “Synoptische Frage,” *RGG*<sup>4</sup> 7 (2004) 1978–1984.

<sup>3</sup> It suffices here to refer to U. Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 6th ed., UTB 1830 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 202–203.

<sup>4</sup> I refer here to the presentation of the justification and the form of the two-sources theory by Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 190–214. For critical assessments of this theory, see Labahn, “Der Gekommene,” 27–33.

<sup>5</sup> For older scholarship, cf. the overviews by R. Laufen, *Die Doppelüberlieferungen der Logienquelle und des Markusevangeliums*, BBB 54 (Königstein/Taunus: Hanstein, 1980), 70–71; also J. Schüling, *Studien zum Verhältnis von Logienquelle und Markusevangelium*, FzB 65 (Würzburg: Echter, 1991), 170–172; F. Neirynek, “Recent Developments in the Study of Q,” in idem, *Evangelica II. 1981–1991. Collected Essays*, BETL 99 (Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 409–464; Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 233–234; C. M. Tuckett, “Mark and Q,” in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism*, ed. C. Focant, BETL 110 (Leuven: Peeters 1993), 149–175.

<sup>6</sup> D. R. Catchpole, “The Beginning of Q: A Proposal,” in idem, *The Quest for Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 60–78.

<sup>7</sup> H. T. Fleddermann, *Mark and Q: A Study of the Overlap Texts* (with an Assessment by F. Neirynek), BETL 122 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995); idem, “Mark’s Use of Q: The Beelzebul Controversy and the Cross Saying,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, eds. M. Labahn and A. Schmidt, JSNTSup 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 17–33; idem, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, Biblical Tools and Studies 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 180–183.

<sup>8</sup> J. Lambrecht, “Q-Influence on Mark 8,34–9,1,” in *Logia. Les paroles de Jésus. Festschrift J. Coppens*, ed. J. Delobel, BETL 59 (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), 277–304; idem, “The Great Commandment Pericope and Q,” in *The Gospel Behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q*, ed. R. Piper, *NovTSup.* 75 (Leiden: Brill 1995), 73–96; idem, “Scandal and Salt. Is Mark Dependent on Q in 9,42–50?,” in *Forschungen zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift A. Fuchs*, ed. C. Niemand, Linzer philosophisch-theologische Beiträge 7 (Frankfurt a.M.: P. Lang, 2002), 223–234; on Q 11:14–16 and Mk 3:22–24: idem, “The Relatives of Jesus in Mark,” *NovT* 15 (1974): 241–258.

<sup>9</sup> B. L. Mack, “Q and the Gospel of Mark: Revising Christian Origins,” *Semeia* 55 (1991): 15–39; idem, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 177–179, etc.

<sup>10</sup> W. Schenk, “Der Einfluß der Logienquelle auf das Markusevangelium,” *ZNW* 79 (1979): 141–165.

W. Schmithals (in the framework of his independent model of the sources of Mark).<sup>11</sup> For various reasons, critical evaluations of these proposals have disputed the hypothesis of Markan dependence on Q. For one thing, only a very small amount of Q texts belong to the material which was allegedly received by Mark and the criteria guiding Mark's alleged selection of material from Q are matters of debate;<sup>12</sup> and besides this, there are no traces in Mark of the (final) redaction of Q material.<sup>13</sup> Further, the relative date of the traditions which have been received can be employed as evidence against dependence of Mark on Q, since the Q materials are partly later than those in Mark.<sup>14</sup>

The literary-critical approach is however not the only possible methodological access route to the phenomenon "Mark and Q." Jens Schröter emphasizes this point very strongly when he says that Q has a "Verwandtschaft mit Mk in traditions-geschichtlicher und kompositorischer Hinsicht" ("a tradition-historical and compositional relationship to Mark") and that this relationship "kann dabei als Indiz dafür gewertet werden, daß beide Entwürfe auf einem gemeinsamen Fundament zur Interpretation der Wirksamkeit Jesu aufbauen" (can be read as evidence that both works build on a common basis for the interpretation of the activity of Jesus).<sup>15</sup> In the case of the double tradition of the

<sup>11</sup> Schmithals, *Einleitung*, 403, etc.; idem, *Das Evangelium nach Markus: Kapitel 1–9,1*, ÖTBK 2.1 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus und Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1979), 57, etc.

<sup>12</sup> I. Dunderberg, "Q and the Beginning of Mark," *NTS* 41 (1995): 501–511.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g. Schüling, *Studien*, 174, drawing on Neiryneck, "Developments," 425.

<sup>14</sup> Laufen, *Doppelüberlieferungen*, 385.—In view of more recent proposals about dating the texts, one could also consider the possibility of dependence in the other direction: P. Hoffmann, "QR und der Menschensohn: Eine vorläufige Skizze," in idem, *Tradition und Situation: Studien zur Jesusüberlieferung in der Logienquelle und den synoptischen Evangelien*, NTA 28 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995), 243–278; M. Myllykoski, "The Social History of Q and the Jewish War," in *Symbols and Strata: Essays on the Sayings Gospel Q*, ed. R. Uro, SFEG 65 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 143–199. If Q is dated to the 70's, Mark cannot be dependent on Q (at least in the form of its final redaction). However, critical objections have been made to these proposed datings.

<sup>15</sup> J. Schröter, *Jesus und die Anfänge der Christologie: Methodologische und exegetische Studien zu den Ursprüngen des christlichen Glaubens*, BThSt 47 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 152 (first published as "The Son of Man as the Representative of God's Kingdom: On the Interpretation of Jesus in Mark and Q," in *Jesus, Mark and Q*, eds. Labahn and Schmidt, 34–68, at 47); cf. recently idem, "Die Bedeutung der Q-Überlieferungen für die Interpretation der frühen Jesusüberlieferung," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 38–67: "Die Beobachtungen zum Anfang von Q legen es vielmehr nahe, mit einer partiellen Überlappung von Mk und Q zu rechnen, die bei Mt und Lk notwendigerweise nur partiell in Erscheinung tritt" (Our observations about the beginning of



Beelzebul controversy, this leads to the question whether the literary-critical models of dependence adequately explain the variants. We must consider the possibility that roots in a common tradition-historical milieu can generate the formation of comparable narrative or rhetorical-argumentative texts. *My thesis is that the parallels and the differences between the two narratives point to a common core of tradition which has generated at least two "Gedächtnisspuren."*<sup>16</sup> *Despite clear differences, these traces in the memory also reveal parallel developments and analogous structures in the controversy.* Accordingly, this essay is a further contribution to the study of the path taken by the remembrance of the Jesus tradition in early Christianity.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Preliminary Methodological Reflections

We must distinguish the question whether Mark knew and used the document Q from the question whether the earliest evangelist received traditions which were also given a place in Q. The matter becomes more complex if we assume a literary process of growth in Q,<sup>18</sup> since

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Q suggest that we should assume a partial overlapping between Mark and Q, which necessarily appears only in part in Matthew and Luke).

<sup>16</sup> This concept (German: *Gedächtnisspur*) is not employed in the present essay in the technical sense of the "engram," i.e. "flüchtigen wie dauerhaften Veränderungen im Gehirn, die sich aus der neuronalen Codierung eines Ereignisses ergeben" (ET: "the changes in the brain, whether transient or lasting, which result from the codification of an event by the neurons"; M. Korte, "Engramm," in *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung: Ein interdisziplinäres Lexikon*, eds. N. Pethes and J. Ruchatz, re 55636 [Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuchverlag, 2001], 142). I employ this concept metaphorically for the recollection anchored in the individual's memory of an event which has been personally experienced or perceived; the relationships between the two ways of employing the concept are not fortuitous. For fundamental reflections, I refer here to the comparable use of this formulation by J. Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur* (München: Hanser, 1998), 35 (on the term itself).

<sup>17</sup> On this, cf. C. Breytenbach, "MNHMONEYEIN: Das 'Sich-erinnern' in der urchristlichen Überlieferung—Die Bethanienepisode (Mk 14,3–9/Jn 12,1–8) als Beispiel," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. A. Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 548–557.

<sup>18</sup> The model for a literary process of growth of the Q document that is widely in scholarly use (especially in the USA: cf. M. Ebner, "Kynische Jesusinterpretation—'disciplined exaggeration'? Eine Anfrage," *BZ.NF* 40 [1996]: 93–100, at 93) is that of J.S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999); idem, *Excavating Q*, 143–145, distinguishing three layers by a *stratigraphical analysis*. For an overview, cf. e.g. Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 227–228. For critical questions, cf. e.g. J. Schröter, *Erinnerung an Jesu Worte: Studien zur Rezeption der Logienüberlieferung in Markus, Q und Thomas*, WMANT 76 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag,

Mark need not necessarily have had recourse to the last stage of Q. In the latter case, the description of the relationship depends on antecedent literary-critical decisions regarding the pre-history of Q. The question whether the tradition about the Beelzebul controversy grew in stages should not be dismissed; but methodological clarity requires us to begin by concentrating on the literary final stages of the two texts, each of which follows its own model in the presentation of the Jesus tradition. The structure of Q, which is oriented to the tradition of logia, begins with the announcement by the Baptist of the one who is to come and ends by speaking of the return of the Son of Man who has come.<sup>19</sup> Mark's presentation is oriented to the passion, and the axis on which it is structured is the predictions of Jesus' suffering.<sup>20</sup>

The investigation of a literary relationship between texts endeavors to define *intertextuality in the narrower sense of the term*. This differs from the originally broad concept of intertextuality, which refers to a universal cosmos of texts that is brought into existence by readers;<sup>21</sup> intertextuality in the narrower sense looks at the process of reception in its orientation to production, and investigates how an earlier text is received. This involves the methodological question of *markings*, i.e. signals which point to the work of reception.<sup>22</sup> In addition to explicit signals of reception (e.g., "It is written in 'A'"), linguistic and

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1997), 450, etc.; Hoffmann, "QR und der Menschensohn," 268–269; Labahn, "Der Gekommene," 106–107.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Labahn, "Der Gekommene," *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> Schröter, *Jesus*; idem, "Bedeutung," is right to draw attention to the theological and Christological parallels between the document Q and the Gospel of Mark. Nevertheless, the total construction of the two works reveals that they are oriented to different end-points, which are expressed clearly in the works themselves.

<sup>21</sup> As is well known, this concept was coined by Julia Kristeva, *Semeiotike: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969). She envisaged an open world of relationships between written texts. The concept was taken up by Roland Barthes: there is no original text, but everything is reception, and this is why intertextuality is created by the reader. Cf. the introduction by G. Allen, *Intertextuality*, *The New Critical Idiom* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); cf. also S. Alkier, "Intertextualität—Annäherung an ein texttheoretisches Paradigma," in *Heiligkeit und Herrschaft. Intertextuelle Studien zu Heiligkeitsvorstellungen und zu Psalm 110*, ed. D. Sänger, BThSt 55 (Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 1–26; B. Kowalski, "Intertextualität als exegetische Methode," *ThGl* 96 (2006): 354–361, and the bibliography compiled by M. Schneider in *Die Bibel im Dialog der Schriften: Konzepte intertextueller Bibellektüre*, ed. S. Alkier and R. B. Hays, *Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie* 10 (Tübingen: Francke, 2005), 257–264.

<sup>22</sup> On the question of "marking," cf. the fundamental work by J. Helbig, *Intertextualität und Markierung: Untersuchungen zur Systematik und Funktion der Signalisierung von Intertextualität*, *Beiträge zur neueren Literaturgeschichte* 3.141 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1996).

terminological agreements, accompanied by parallels in the contents of the texts, indicate a possible reception. But although linguistic identity is one marker of reception, it does not provide conclusive proof of a literary relationship; the structural analogy is a particularly strong argument in favor of oral transmission, appealing to the psychology of human memory.<sup>23</sup>

“Wenn mündliche Texte nicht gerade gesprochen werden, bestehen sie nur in der Erinnerung derer, die sie sprachen oder hörten.”<sup>24</sup> This is a “kognitive/gedankliche Repräsentation des Textinhaltes im Gedächtnis des Hörers”: Wenn der Hörer nun aber zum Erzähler wird, greift er nicht auf die von ihm damals gehörte Phonemkette zurück. Diese hat er nicht mehr im Ohr. Er hat sie aber beim Hören in eine semantische Textbasis, die situationell organisiert ist, umgesetzt. Er greift auf diese kognitive Repräsentation in seinem eigenen Gedächtnis zurück und formuliert mit Hilfe seiner gedanklichen Vorstellung der Situation, von der die Erzählung handelte, eine neue Erzählung, die seinem neuen kommunikativen Kontext entspricht.<sup>25</sup> Out of this inventory, the narrator formulates a new narrative which is in keeping with his own new horizon of communication. Differences and similarities are due both to the sequence of the “plot” in the narrative and to the specific parameters within which it is narrated. The structure of the “plot” also includes the “actors” and the names which they are given. We must also assume that some linguistic elements will not vary, because it is only in this way that the *individual* character of what is remembered can be “stored.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Breytenbach, “MNHMONEYEIN,” 548–557, emphasizes the importance of this aspect in assessing the relationship between parallels in the synoptics and in John.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 554. ET: “When oral texts are not actually being spoken, they exist only in the memory of those who spoke them or heard them.”

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 554–555. ET: “cognitive/intellectual representation of the contents of the text in the memory of the hearer”: “when the hearer then becomes a narrator, he does not have recourse to the chain of phonemes which he once heard on a particular occasion in the past, since he no longer has these in his ear. When he heard them, he transmuted them into a semantic textual basis which is organized in a situational manner. He has recourse to this cognitive representation in his own memory, and uses his intellectual picture of the situation described in the narrative to help him formulate a new narrative which is in keeping with the new communicative context in which he finds himself.”

<sup>26</sup> On the question of the mutability and the constancy of non-literary and literary tradition, cf. also M. Labahn, *Jesus als Lebensspender: Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der johanneischen Tradition anhand ihrer Wundgeschichten*, BZNW 98 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 89–91.

One further aspect can help, when clear markers of intertextuality are not found. Both the Gospel of Mark and the document Q must be understood as literary compositions. This is widely acknowledged in the case of Mark, so that scholars understand him not only as a collector, but as a theologian and/or narrator.<sup>27</sup> The same tendency can be discerned in the case of Q,<sup>28</sup> e.g. when J. S. Kloppenborg investigates its argumentative structure,<sup>29</sup> E. Sevenich-Bax studies its narrative structures,<sup>30</sup> or A. Järvinen looks at its plot.<sup>31</sup> There are of course dissenting voices, e.g. M. Frenschkowski<sup>32</sup> and M. Hengel;<sup>33</sup> but I believe that we have sufficient reason to understand Q as an independent and conscious construction of meaning.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, the

<sup>27</sup> The classic work collecting path-breaking articles on Mark as narrator is *Der Erzähler des Evangeliums: Methodische Neuansätze in der Markusforschung*, ed. F. Hahn, SBS 118/119 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985); see also D. Michie and D. Rhoads, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), and J. R. Donahue and D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark, Sacra Pagina 2* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 2002); F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), as examples of commentaries using a narrative approach; cf. T. Friedrichsen, "Reading Mark as Mark. Two New Narrative Commentaries," *ETHL* 79 (2003): 134–156.

<sup>28</sup> See the general conclusions made by C. Heil, "Die Rekonstruktion des Internationalen Q-Projekts: Einführung in Methodik und Resultate," *NovT* 43 (2001): 128–143 at 141.

<sup>29</sup> Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, 122–124.

<sup>30</sup> E. Sevenich-Bax, *Israels Konfrontation mit den letzten Boten der Weisheit: Form, Funktion und Interdependenz der Weisheitselemente in der Logienquelle*, Münsteraner theologische Abhandlungen vol. 21 (Altenberge: Oros, 1993); cf. also M. Hüneburg, *Jesus als Wundertäter in der Logienquelle: Ein Beitrag zur Christologie von Q*, ABG vol. 4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> A. Järvinen, "The Son of Man and his Followers: A Q Portrait of Jesus," in *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, eds. D. Rhoads and K. Syreeni, JSNTSup 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 180–222.

<sup>32</sup> M. Frenschkowski, "Welche biographischen Kenntnisse von Jesus setzt die Logienquelle voraus? Beobachtungen zur Gattung von Q im Kontext antiker Spruchsammlungen," in *From Quest to Q: Festschrift J. M. Robinson*, ed. J. M. Asgeirsson, K. de Troyer, and M. W. Meyer, BETL 146 (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 3–42.

<sup>33</sup> M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ. An Investigation of the Collection and the Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000); cf. now more fully elaborated idem, *Die Vier Evangelien und das eine Evangelium von Jesus Christ: Studien zu ihrer Sammlung und Entstehung*, WUNT 224 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. Labahn, "Der Gottessohn, die Versuchung und das Kreuz: Überlegungen zum Jesusporträt der Versuchungsgeschichte in Q 4,1–13," *ETHL* 80 (2004): 402–422; idem, "Das Reich Gottes und seine performativen Abbildungen. Gleichnisse, Parabeln und Bilder als Handlungsmodelle im Dokument Q," in *Hermeneutik der Gleichnisse Jesu: Methodische Neuansätze zum Verstehen urchristlicher Parabeltexte*, ed. R. Zimmermann, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2008), 259–272; idem, "Der Gekommene, passim.

individual texts in their literary context have a specific sequence which can scarcely be a product of chance; and they have argumentative or narrative functions in this sequence. The traces of these functions should remain in the reception as markers of intertextuality which are evidence for or against the postulated plausibility of literary dependence.

In this article, I shall begin by investigating the literary functions of the Beelzebul controversy in each specific context, to see whether we can identify additional criteria for or against a literary relationship. I shall also compare the structures of the controversies, and then examine the linguistically-oriented comparative model.

1. We will see that the hypothesis of literary dependence is unconvincing, and that the best interpretation of the linguistic convergences is the model of oral transmission, taking into account the insights offered by the psychology of the human memory. This can explain the agreement in the common core of the Beelzebul controversy in Mark and Q.
2. This model helps to identify a comparable development, thanks to the structuring power of the memory, in groups which engaged in similar Christological reflection; naturally, however, we cannot go beyond the common core to say anything about a possible interdependence of the traditions in Q and Mark.

### 3. *The Beelzebul Controversy as a Double Transmission*

With the exception of those who deny in principle the two-sources theory,<sup>35</sup> there is a general consensus—on the basis of unambiguous textual observations—that we have a double transmission here.<sup>36</sup> Despite

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<sup>35</sup> A dissenting view is taken by A. Fuchs, who uses this controversy to test his hypothesis of a Deutero-Mark: *Die Entwicklung der Beelzebulkontroverse bei den Synoptikern: Traditionsgeschichtliche und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung von Mk 3,22–27 und Parallelen, verbunden mit der Rückfrage nach dem historischen Jesus*, SNTUB ser. 5 (Linz: Plöckl, 1980); for a critique, cf. e.g. F. Neiryck, “Deuteromarcus et les accords Matthieu-Luc,” in idem, *Evangelica: Gospel Studies—Études d’Évangile: Collected Essays*, BETL 60 (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), 769–780; M. E. Boring, “The Synoptic Problem, ‘minor’ agreements, and the Beelzebul Pericope,” in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift F. Neiryck*, ed. F. van Segbroeck, C. M. Tuckett, G. van Belle, and J. Verheyden, BETL 100 (Leuven: Peeters, 1992), 587–619, at 616–618.

<sup>36</sup> The hypothesis of a *double transmission* is based on a number of both positive and negative *minor* and *major agreements* of the longer synoptic gospels against Mark; cf. e.g. Laufen, *Doppelüberlieferungen*, 126–128; Schröter, *Erinnerungen*, 240, 242–246.

differences on points of detail in the sequence in Matthew and Luke, we can observe the following agreements against Mark:<sup>37</sup> the Beelzebul controversy with the logion about the divided kingdom, the integration of the exorcisms into the kingdom of God, the logion about the attitude that people take to Jesus, the return of the unclean spirit, and the demand for a sign with the logia about the sign of Jonah and the queen of the South or the Ninevites. Although this is a matter of some dispute, I assign the logion about the “strong man” (Matt 12:29) or the “stronger man” (Luke 11:21–22) to Q (see section 4.1 below).

In Luke’s Gospel, the Beelzebul controversy is not found in a Markan block, but in the so-called “travel narrative” which mostly combines material from Luke’s own sources and Q.<sup>38</sup> In Matthew 12, the evangelist brings together texts about conflicts from various sources and integrates these into the Markan sequence.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4. *The Placing of the Texts*

##### 4.1. *The Immediate Context*

The Beelzebul controversy displays clear terminological parallels between Mark and Q.<sup>40</sup> The continuation of the controversy, which is closely linked to it in both Mark and Q, also sheds valuable light on the

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. the Markan parallels and their placing in Mark:

Mark 3:22–26: the Beelzebul controversy.

Mark 3:27: the house of the stronger man.

Mark 9:40: “for” and “against” us—this logion is found in the context of an exorcist who does not belong to the group of disciples, but works in the name of Jesus.

Mark 8:11–12: the Pharisees demand a sign, but Jesus refuses to give “this generation” a sign. This is inserted between the feeding of the four thousand and the dialogue in the boat about the one loaf, during which the disciples are warned against the activity of the Pharisees.

There is no parallel in Mark to the return of the unclean spirit and the logion about the queen of the South or the Ninevites.

<sup>38</sup> On the composition and the origin of the material, cf. the overview by Schnelle, *Einleitung*, 207–210; cf. also Schröter, *Erinnerung*, 243.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. e.g. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 2: Mt 8–17*, 3rd ed., EKK 1.2 (Zürich: Benziger, 1999), 226–227; Schröter, *Erinnerung*, 243–244.

<sup>40</sup> My discussion is based on the proposed reconstruction by J. M. Robinson, P. Hoffmann, and J. S. Kloppenborg, eds. and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French translations of Q and Thomas*, Hermeneia Supplement Series (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

question with which we began.<sup>41</sup> This is the context of the logion about the strong or stronger man (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29; Luke 11:21–22). If we prescind from the facts that the Matthean form of this logion is a rhetorical question<sup>42</sup> and Mark 3:27 is formulated as a negative rule, there are extensive linguistic parallels between the two versions. On the other hand, Luke 11:21–22 displays few linguistic contacts with the logion in Matthew and Mark, and makes a different point. The Matthean/Markan logion indirectly emphasizes that the binding of the strong man is something *new*, something that runs contrary to all previous experience, while the starting point of the Lukan version is the *success* of the operation: although the strong man had protected his property (οἰκία is replaced by αὐλή) with weapons, he is forced to yield to one who is even stronger than himself. Both versions describe the effect produced by the kingdom of God, but where the Markan/Matthean perspective argues more dynamically, the Lukan variant concentrates on the outcome, and may therefore present a later reflection.<sup>43</sup> Despite their point of contact in the motifs associated with the “strong man,” however, the two logia are largely independent from a formal point of view; there is thus no direct dependence of one on the other. Because of the state of the tradition, it has been questioned whether the logion forms part of the Q material,<sup>44</sup> and it has been suggested that an independent variant existed in the specifically Lukan material.<sup>45</sup> However, the parable about the stronger man is found in Luke in the sequence of pericopae from Q, and its images from the world of power politics allude to the corresponding argumentation in Q 11:17–18.<sup>46</sup> At

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<sup>41</sup> I find the assertion that Luke 11:27–28 betrays a prior text in Q highly questionable. This means that the attempt to argue that Q 11:27–28 is the source of Mark 3:20–21, 31–35 (Lambrecht, “Relatives,” 249–251) is an option which depends logically on the assumption that a literary relationship exists between the Gospel of Mark and Q.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. e.g. Luz, *Matthäus* 2, 261.

<sup>43</sup> A different view is taken by Lambrecht, “Relatives,” 247, who sees Mark 3:27 as a shortening of the parable of the stronger man. B. Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum*, FRLANT 170 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 189, denies explicitly that the Q version represents an older tradition.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. F. Neiryneck, “Assessment,” in Fleddermann, *Mark and Q*, 263–307, at 271–273.

<sup>45</sup> D. Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 33: independent variant; Schüling, *Studien*, 109.

<sup>46</sup> Fleddermann, “Use,” 20–22, sees the integration by means of the catchword technique as an important indication that the logion about the stronger man belongs

the same time, it follows appropriately on what is said in Q 11:19–20:<sup>47</sup> if the new kingdom comes into being in the exorcisms, then one who is stronger (i.e., God or Jesus) is at work, and is seizing the property which the strong man had made secure.<sup>48</sup> There is noteworthy consistency in motifs and contents already on the level of Q, which would constitute an argument that this logion belongs to Luke 11:21–22 presents a Q-version—though doubtless reworked in the redactional process.<sup>49</sup> Because of the different point it makes, however, it cannot be considered as a Lukan revision of the Markan text.<sup>50</sup>

We must ask whether and how the logion about blasphemy against the Spirit (Mark 3:28–29) belongs to the core narrative of the Beelzebul controversy. This logion, which is oriented to the Beelzebul controversy in Mark 3:30, has a parallel in Q 12:10 with decisive differences both in vocabulary and in contents. The logion in Mark concerns all the sins of “the sons of men,” while that in Q 12:10 concerns the sin against the Son of Man. If we take the Markan context as our starting point, we could envisage a transposition made by Luke, since some scholars regard the context for Q 12:10 which can be inferred from Luke as unsatisfactory.<sup>51</sup> However, the context of judgment and the concept of

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to Q. He shows convincingly that the parable of the strong man is linked by its vocabulary to its context.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. e.g. M. Sato, “Wisdom Statements in the Sphere of Prophecy,” in *The Gospel behind the Gospels*, ed. Piper, 139–158, at 147–148.

<sup>48</sup> See also A. Merz, “Jesus lernt vom Räuberhauptmann (Das Wort vom Starken). Mk 3,27 (Mt 12,29 / Lk 11,21f. / EvThom 35)”, in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. R. Zimmermann in collaboration with D. Dormeyer, G. Kern, A. Merz, C. Münch, and E. E. Popkes (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 287–296 at 289.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. e.g. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew. Rethinking the Historical Jesus 2: Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 417; G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2.54 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1993), 111; J. Wanke, “Bezugs- und Kommentarworte” in *den synoptischen Evangelien*, EthSt 44 (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1981), 52; J. Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums: Redaktion und Tradition im Nicht-Markusstoff des dritten Evangeliums*, KEK-Sb (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 210 (reference to the composite verbs in Luke 11:22). Cf. also the remarks by Luz, *Matthäus 2*, 255, Fledermann, *Mark*, 52–54 and idem, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 485–488 (Fledermann however regards the Matthean version as a text close to Q). On the discussion about whether Q 11:21–22 belongs to Q, cf. the documentation in J. S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance*, Foundations & Facets (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988), 92; cf. also D. Trunk, *Der messianische Heiler: Eine redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Studie zu den Exorzismen im Matthäusevangelium*, HBS 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 73–74 n. 138.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. also Kollmann, *Jesus*, 176–177.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Luz, *Matthäus 2*, 256.



the “Son of Man” in Q 12:8–9<sup>52</sup> are probably a sufficient justification for the connection here. Besides this, it is clear that the Beelzebul controversy in Q flows smoothly without the logion about blasphemy. The redactional linkage in Mark is motivated by the accusation of demonic possessions: Mark 3:30 (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον ἔχει) is thus an allusion to the accusation in 3:22 (Βεελζεβοὺλ ἔχει—cf. also v. 21: ἐξέστη). We should note that Q links the logion about the return of the unclean spirits (Q 11:24–26) with the Beelzebul controversy; although this entails an idea which is different both in vocabulary and in contents, the motif of the evil spirits means that it is not alien to the other idea. The return of the unclean spirits is attached to the exorcism (ἐξέβαλεν δαιμόνιον), but this must be filled out Christologically by Q 11:23.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the logion about blasphemy against the Son of Man does not fit the context of 11:14–16.

The logion about being “for” or “against” Jesus (Q 11:23) concludes the immediate context of the controversy about the Beelzebul accusation in Q, but not the argumentative unit as a whole (cf. 4.2.1 below).

## 4.2. *The Macrocontext*

### 4.2.1. *The Beelzebul Controversy in the Q Document*

Let us begin by reconstructing the textual sequence, since there are significant differences between Matt 12:22–42 and Luke 11:14–32. In particular, we should note the position of the demand for a sign—which in Luke is part of the Beelzebul accusation, but in Matthew introduces the radically altered context of the “sign of Jonah”—and the logion about the return of the unclean spirit. Matthew, like Mark, follows up the logion about the decision “for or against” Jesus (Matt 12:30) from Q 12:10 (unlike Mark 9:40, the “scattering” [μὴ συνάγων μετ’ ἐμοῦ σκορπίζει] is a topic in Q 11:23) with the logion about blasphemy against the Spirit; here, he deviates from the sequence in Q. There is a

<sup>52</sup> P. Hoffmann presents weighty arguments against “the Son of Man” in Q 12:8: “Der Menschensohn in Lukas 12,8,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 357–379; cf. also idem, “Jesus versus Menschensohn. Mt 10,32f und die synoptische Menschensohnüberlieferung,” in *Salz der Erde—Licht der Welt: Exegetische Studien zum Matthäusevangelium. Festschrift A. Vögtle*, ed. L. Oberlinner and P. Fiedler (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991), 165–202.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. M. Labahn, “Füllt den Raum aus—es kommt sonst noch schlimmer! (Beelzebulgleichnis)—Q 11,24–26,” in *Kompodium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. Zimmermann, 126–132.

tension between this affirmation and the logion about the return of the unclean spirit, which Matthew therefore inserts at a later place, in order to employ it as a description of “this evil generation” on whom judgment has already been pronounced (Matt 12:41f.). We assume the following underlying sequence, which agrees with the *Critical Edition of Q* (CEQ):

- Q 11:14,17–20 Jesus’ expulsion of the demons as an expression of the rule of God
- Q 11:21–22 The stronger man
- Q 11:23 The attitude taken to Jesus
- Q 11:24–26 The return of the unclean spirit
- Q 11:16 The demand for a sign
- Q 11:29–30 The Son of Man as the sign of Jonah
- Q 11:31–32 The queen of the South and the Ninevites at the judgment

I believe that Q 11:14–32 forms a distinct argumentative unit. The distinctive signal which links these logia is the description of Jesus’ adversaries. The text works dialogically: each critique or demand of the adversaries offers Jesus the opportunity to state his position (Q 11:15 and 11:16). Jesus replies in lengthy argumentative passages (Q 11:17–26; 11:29–32). Both substantial and formal grounds show that these were originally distinct individual logia. The presence of catchwords and ideas of the adversaries<sup>54</sup> shows the rhetorical-argumentative structure of the text; this is also indicated when they are addressed in rhetorical questions, i.e. questions which look for agreement within the text itself (Q 11:18–19). The second discourse, which follows the demand for a sign, displays the characteristics of a summary. Although it takes up the central catchword of Jesus’ adversaries—“sign”—it no longer directly addresses those who are the adversaries within the text itself. Rather, this monologic unit (Q 11:29–31) pronounces judgment on the adversaries and identifies them as belonging to a broader category:

<sup>54</sup> Βεελζεβούλ—cf. Q. 11:19.

τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων. The theme of “rule” is taken up by means of the catchwords βασιλεία (Q 11:17.18; cf. also 11:20, βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) and ἰσχυρός/ἰσχυρότερος (Q 11:21–22).

ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια—cf. Q 11:19–20.

“this generation.”<sup>55</sup> This integrates the episode into the total context of the document, so that this section becomes part of the comprehensive theme of the dispute with “this generation,” an expression which occurs several times (Q 7:31; 11:29, 31, 32, 51).

The dialogic passage is set within a slender narrative framework, the “narrative abbreviation”<sup>56</sup> of an exorcism in Q 11:14. The essential elements of an exorcism are set out briefly here,<sup>57</sup> but the text appeals to the readers’ knowledge about Jesus’ exorcisms. This knowledge will permit the readers to fill in any “gaps” caused by the abbreviated form of narration; accordingly, the “narrator” is free to concentrate on the essential aspect, viz. the following argumentation. The presence of basic narrative structures is also betrayed by the narrative commentary, which refers to Jesus’ ability to see into people’s hearts: “But he saw through their thoughts.”<sup>58</sup> The individual logia tell their own brief stories, and the statements about “this generation” in Q 11:29–30, 32 and 11:31 can be understood as “narrative abbreviations” of extensive Old Testament texts (1 Kgs 10:1–14; 2 Chr 9:1–12 or Jon 3:4); but there are no other narrative passages.

The linking description of the adversaries is τινές, which CEQ rightly judges to be original. They emerge from the mass of the people for the

<sup>55</sup> Cf. also M. Hüneburg, “Jesus als Wundertäter: Zu einem vernachlässigten Aspekt des Jesusbildes von Q,” in *The Sayings Source Q*, ed. Lindemann, 635–648, at 645–646.

<sup>56</sup> On the term “narrative abbreviation” (German: narrative Abbraviatur), cf. J. Straub, “Temporale Orientierung und narrative Kompetenz: Zeit- und erzähltheoretische Grundlagen einer Psychologie biographischer und historischer Sinnbildung,” in *Geschichtsbewußtsein: Psychologische Grundlagen, Entwicklungskonzepte, empirische Befunde*, ed. J. Rüsen, Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur 21 (Köln: Böhlau, 2001), 15–44, at 23.

<sup>57</sup> First of all, the fact that Jesus carries out the exorcism is mentioned. We also hear about the man who needs help; his distress is described; and we read about the confirmation or documentation of the miracle (the man who was formerly dumb now speaks), and about the admiring reaction by those who witness it. The final point is the criticism by Jesus’ adversaries. On the inventory of the miracle stories, cf. G. Theissen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, 6th ed., StNT 8 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1990), 57–59.

<sup>58</sup> F. Neiryck, “Mt 12,25a/Lc 11,17a et la rédaction des évangiles,” in idem, *Evangetica II*, 481–492, interprets Jesus’ insight into the criticism of his opponents not as an *agreement* which points to a Q text, but as the product of each specific redaction. Matt 12:25a picks up 9:4 (ιδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὰς ἐνθυμήσεις αὐτῶν); Luke 11:17a picks up the motif inspired by Ps 93:11 LXX which he also employs at Luke 5:22; 6:8; 9:47; 20:23. Ἐνθυμήσεις and διανοήματα are semantic analogies without any direct parallel in Mark; this makes it probable that they have a basis in Q.

first time at Q 11:15 and ask Jesus to show his legitimation at 11:16 by demanding that he shall give them a sign. This is surprising, since Jesus' power has been the subject of debate in the immediate context (Q 11:14–26), and a miraculous sign has been performed in the world of the text, viz. the briefly related exorcism in 11:14. Jesus' adversaries locate him on the side of the prince of the demons because of his exorcisms (11:15),<sup>59</sup> but he replies by locating himself on the side of God (11:20). He employs argumentative tricks to demonstrate the defective logic of his opponents' accusation (vv. 17–18<sup>60</sup> and 21–22). At the same time, he integrates the exorcistic activity in his Jewish environment into his own activity (vv. 19–20).<sup>61</sup> With *subtle irony*, the accusation of the adversaries is conducted *ad absurdum*. At the same time, he points to a deeper dimension of this debate: if the accusation of his adversaries was in fact correct, this would mean that the kingdom of Satan was doomed to destruction, since Jesus—who is alleged to be the representative of this kingdom—would be a witness to its inherent disunity. And according to the line of argument in Q, it is indeed correct to say that the kingdom of Satan has been handed over to destruction. Through the exorcisms, the “stronger man” appears on the scene, and his kingdom is now present.

In Q 11:23–25, warnings are uttered against taking an inappropriate attitude to the divine activity which is associated with Jesus' exorcisms. First, one who agitates against Jesus is scattering the eschatological community (11:23); and secondly, one who does not behave in accordance with the criterion proposed by Jesus is inviting the unclean spirits to return (according to Q, the demons have not yet been defeated).

The word *τινές* signals that Q 11:16 is referring back directly to these *logia*. In Q 11:15, these *τινές* have detached themselves from the crowd of the people, who are full of astonishment, by accusing Jesus of being

<sup>59</sup> Theissen, *Wundergeschichten*, 99. Trunk's observations about Jesus' exorcisms can also be applied *mutatis mutandis* to the other exorcisms which were performed at that period: “from the perspective of a rigorous Yahwism which was authorized by scripture, the exorcist who communicated with the spirits was moving in a theological grey area” (*Heiler*, 243).

<sup>60</sup> On the logic of Q 11:17–18, cf. M. Labahn, “Jesu Exorzismen (Q 11,19–20) und die Erkenntnis der ägyptischen Magier (Ex 8,15): Q 11,20 als bewahrtes Beispiel für Schrift-Rezeption Jesu nach der Logienquelle,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 153 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 617–633, at 619.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. also Labahn, “Jesu Exorzismen,” 620–621; a different position is taken by J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18.34*, WBC 35B (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 639.

in league with Beelzebul. In Q, therefore, we are explicitly told that the demand for a sign follows upon a miracle, viz. the exorcism in 11:14. This miracle is ambiguous: it can be adduced as evidence both that the exorcist is a foe of God (as the speakers claim) and that he comes from God (as Jesus claims). We see that the τινές are unimpressed by Jesus' argumentation, and this means that they personally assign themselves a place in the immediately preceding pattern of Jesus' warnings: first, because they are against Jesus; and secondly, because their behavior is inappropriate to the eschatological quality of time they live in. This opposition and ignorance is expressed through their demand for a sign, which ignores the contents of what Jesus has just said; the sign is meant to reveal the power through which the exorcism has been performed.

Jesus' answer consists in the complete refusal to give a sign. This is followed by the strange exception of the sign of Jonah. In the structure of the text, the primary intention is to punish the Beelzebul accusation, which distrusts Jesus and refuses to obey his word. This is why the τινές are identified with "this generation." The τινές represent one part of the people, and this part is now equated with "this generation" and treated in a generalizing manner: they will not be honored with a sign.

How then are we to understand the sign that will nevertheless be given? There is a correspondence between the future and the past: καθώς. As was the sign of Jonah, so will be the sign of the Son of Man. Matthew has in mind the time that Jonah spent in the belly of the fish (Matt 12:40), but this is clearly a secondary interpretation. In the case of Q, we should note the connection with 11:31. The prophet Jonah's message of judgment brought about the repentance of the Ninevites (11:32), and this is why they will have the role of accusers in the judgment against "this generation." The demand of a sign expresses "this generation's" unwillingness to repent, which is exemplified in the τινές. In the immediate context in Q, there are sufficient signals of God's action and deeds (cf. also 7:22); and according to Q, these are linked to Jesus. The demand of a sign is a refusal to accept this, and judgment ensues. This means that the reference to Jonah's activity focuses on his message of judgment (Jon 3:4).<sup>62</sup> The counterpart to the demand for a sign is therefore the reference to the eschatological coming of the Son of Man (ἔσται). There is however a clear distinction between the activity of Jonah and that of the Son of Man. The former prompts repentance

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<sup>62</sup> M. Sato, *Q und Prophetie: Studien zur Gattungs- und Traditionsgeschichte der Quelle Q*, WUNT 2.29 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1988), 283.

in an exceptional particular instance (Jon 4:1–3), while the latter exercises judgment after repentance has been refused.

A further aspect which links the debate about the Beelzebul accusation to Jesus' answer to the demand for a sign is the conceptual field of "judging"/"judgment." We read at Q 11:19 that the "sons" of Jesus' adversaries, who themselves perform exorcisms, will be judges in the future judgment (κριταὶ ἔσονται); the threat is then intensified when we are told that the function of the queen of Sheba and of the Ninevites after their resurrection will be the κατακρινεῖν of this generation (Q 11:31–32). First, therefore, the verdict pronounced by those who are disputing with Jesus makes members of their own people, indeed their own sons, servants of Beelzebul, whereas in reality these exorcists are helping to bring about the presence of the kingdom of God (11:19).<sup>63</sup> In the second discourse, Gentiles assume the role of judges of this generation.

If A. Kirk is right in asserting that "the present Q text can just as easily be viewed as the product of a single compositional initiative,"<sup>64</sup> then its "punch-line" lies in a Christological controversy in which Jesus is contrasted with "this generation," and thus probably with the opponents of the Q-group. Through the reception of tradition, the one who has come, and whose activity is at the heart of the controversies between the Q-group and its surrounding milieu, becomes himself an actor in the controversy. This serves above all to make the group sure of itself. The Beelzebul controversy is thereby made highly relevant to the contemporary situation, where it helps in the construction of meaning.

#### 4.2.2. *The Beelzebul controversy in Mark (Mark 3:22–27)*

One important point of reference of the Beelzebul controversy can be found in the scenes of conflict which concern the authority to forgive sins, table fellowship with sinners, fasting, and the Sabbath (Mark 2:1–3:6). The themes and contents of these passages probably contain

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. A. D. Jacobson, "The Literary Unity of Q," in *The Shape of Q: Signal Essays on the Sayings Gospel*, ed. J. S. Kloppenborg (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 98–115, at 107–108; idem, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q*, Foundations & Facets (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992), 162–163; Labahn, "Jesu Exorzismen," 621–622; R. A. Piper, *Wisdom in the Q-Tradition. The Aphoristic Teaching of Jesus*, SNTSMS 61 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 123. Cf. also Twelftree, *Jesus*, 108–109. For a different view, cf. e.g. M. Trautmann, *Zeichenhafte Handlungen Jesu: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem geschichtlichen Jesus*, FzB 37 (Würzburg: Echter, 1980), 270.

<sup>64</sup> A. Kirk, *The Composition of the Sayings Source: Genre, Synchrony, and Wisdom Redaction in Q*, NTSup. 91 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 183.

information about questions which were posed in the community that handed on the traditions this unit is built upon, in such a way that they were helpful in meeting contemporary needs.<sup>65</sup> In 3:7–12, Mark summarizes Jesus' activity once again by speaking of the attention which this drew even beyond the borders of Galilee. He then speaks of the formation and membership of the group of the twelve (3:13–19). These two passages form an important basis for the following stories.

In the Gospel of Mark, the Beelzebul accusation against Jesus (3:22–27) is embedded in two texts which reflect the relationship of Jesus to his biological relatives (Mark 3:20–21; 3:31–35). Here, the relatives are contrasted with the people, who gather around Jesus (3:20) and are close to him (3:32, καὶ ἐκάθητο περὶ αὐτὸν ὄχλος). The people force him to retreat into the house, but this does not lead to a separation from the people. This success, and the closeness of the people, are the result of the impressive and authoritative proclamation of Jesus and of his public activity (cf. Mark 1:14–15, 21–22; 3:8, etc.).

The biological relatives form the counterfoil to the people who confidently throng around Jesus. This continues the theme of conflict found in Mark 2:1–3:6. In 3:21, οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ, whose identity is not more precisely defined, attempt to seize Jesus, because he is "mad" (ἐξέστη); the context of 3:22 shows that the verb ἐξίστημι cannot be understood in a positive and/or ecstatic sense here.<sup>66</sup> A close parallel to this use of the verb could be found in the introductory description of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 26th book of Polybius's *Histories*. Polybius refers to a polemical exchange of the title Epiphanes into ἐπιμανής. In the second case, at Mark 3:31–33, the relatives who are also meant in v. 20<sup>67</sup> are explicitly named: they are Jesus' mother and his brothers, who stand "outside" (ἔξω στήκοντες) and are thus "outsiders" in the full meaning of the word.

In Mark, Jesus' activity transforms outsiders into an *insider group*. It is not by chance that the accusations in connection with exorcism are framed by the affirmation about Jesus' true family. In response to

<sup>65</sup> Cf. e.g. D. Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium*, HNT 3 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 1987), 56.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. J. Lambrecht, art. "ἐξίστημι," *EWNT* 2, 2nd ed., 1992, 17–19, at 18. The interpretation that the situation "went out of control with enthusiasm" (H. Wansbrough, "Mark III. 21—Was Jesus out of his Mind?," *NTS* 18 [1971/72]: 233–235, at 235) contradicts the immediately following context.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. e.g. J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus 1: Mk 1–8,26*, EKK 2.1 (Einsiedeln: Benziger and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 144; for another view, cf. e.g. Wansbrough, "Mark III. 21," *passim*.

this accusation, a contrasting group is formed, viz. the followers of Jesus; and it is implied that in this new group, the outsider status of those “possessed” is abolished by the exorcist, and a new fellowship is established.<sup>68</sup>

In this framework, where Jesus meets rejection and a lack of understanding on the part of his closest relatives, we now hear of an external opposition, which is clearly distinct in geographical terms. It is articulated by the scribes who have come from Jerusalem. These too form a counterfoil, since we have just been told that Jesus has come to a great crowd of the people ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας καὶ ἀπὸ Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰδουμαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου καὶ περὶ Τύρον καὶ Σιδῶνα who had heard about his deeds (3:7–8). In contrast to these crowds, the scribes from Jerusalem create a distance vis-à-vis Jesus, and the narrator portrays their attitude as the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit (3:28–30).

No immediate occasion for the scribes’ accusation is mentioned; all they do is to continue the lack of understanding already shown by Jesus’ relatives. For the Markan narrator, it is not necessary to tell the story of an exorcism here, since this activity has been both related explicitly at Mark 1:21–28 and mentioned several times in a summary fashion (1:32–34; 3:7–11).<sup>69</sup> The first accusation by the scribes takes up the related accusation of madness: Jesus is described as possessed, and thus as a man manipulated by Beelzebul. The second accusation clearly refers back to the narrative sequence in the Gospel of Mark, by recalling Jesus’ activity as exorcist, which has been mentioned several times: this means that it is he who is making use of Beelzebul, and thus manipulating him.

The opponents are summoned before Jesus, and their accusations are rejected three times by means of parables. Their accusation assumes the continued existence of the satanic kingdom, but everyone knows that a kingdom and a house that are divided cannot continue to exist. The strong man must first be overcome, so that one can break into his house: and this is what the exorcisms illustrate. Besides this, the

<sup>68</sup> Cf. S. Guijarro, “Die politische Wirkung der Exorzismen Jesu: Gesellschaftliche Reaktionen und Verteidigungsstrategien in der Beelzebul-Kontroverse,” in *Jesus in neuen Kontexten*, ed. W. Stegemann and B. J. Malina (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 64–74, at 74.

<sup>69</sup> There is no obvious reason why an abbreviated narrative such as that at Q 11:14—if this remained in the tradition or in the memory of the narrator—should have been excised here.



accusation misunderstands the real power in which Jesus works (Mark 1:10; cf. 1:8),<sup>70</sup> and equates the working of the Holy Spirit with that of an unclean spirit: Beelzebul is understood to mean Satan, and is then also concretized as a demon or the prince of the demons, when he is described as an unclean spirit. In Mark, Jesus' discourse in parables is either an interrupted address to the people (4:11,12) or a way of speaking which consciously veils the meaning from his adversaries (12:1). According to J. Gnilka, "the possibility of understanding what Jesus says... exists only when one is willing to become his disciple and to follow him."<sup>71</sup> One can accept the claim made in Jesus' words if one shares the presupposition that underlies them. One who grasps that the Spirit of God is at work in Jesus knows that the dominion of Satan has been shattered by God, and he will be one of those who do the will of God and thereby belong to Jesus' true relatives (3:34–35). The appearance on the scene of Jesus' mother and brothers gives the narrator the possibility of offering a positive definition of what it means to follow Jesus, by means of the condemnation of Jesus' opponents. Through this conflict, the interest is directed to the present-day successors of the group of the twelve, i.e. to a new in-group which consists of those who are freed from the dominion of Satan and do the will of God. The conflict shows how, out of the mass of people who throng around Jesus, a new family of Jesus is formed: this family sees God at work in him, and thereby does the will of God.

#### 4.2.3. *Comparison*

Both texts found this conflict about Jesus in the form of a conflict narrative which they then elaborated, each from its own perspective. In Q, contemporary controversies in the community are reflected upon; in Mark, the conflict narratives in 2:1–3:6 and 3:20–35 serve to clarify questions about orthopraxy and the following of Jesus. This means that the Beelzebul controversy serves different purposes in the two documents, and provides no indications of literary dependence. Nor do we find any such indications when we examine the actors involved, the geography, or the construction of the context.

In Q, the exorcism at 11:14 forms the external occasion for the discussion, and is one of the few explicitly narrative texts in the document Q. Mark, on the other hand, has no account of an exorcism in the story

<sup>70</sup> Cf. also Lührmann, *Markusevangelium*, 77.

<sup>71</sup> Gnilka, *Markus* 1, 149.

of the Beelzebul controversy. The parallel in Q has often led scholars to suppose that Mark consciously omits such an account here, but this inference is not necessary. There are no parallels in Mark to Q 11:24–26 and Q 11:31–32. Although the catchword “unclean spirit” is found both in Mark and in Q, this too cannot be read as evidence of a literary relationship. The divergent insertion of texts which refer to the “unclean spirit” is prompted by the mention of the demons, but here too, the structure is due not to literary dependence, but to the *associative capacity of the memory*.<sup>72</sup>

In Mark, the demand for a sign is in a different context. It is made by a different group of persons, and Jesus refuses it on grounds of principle (Mark 8:12).

The analysis of the two contexts reveals no markings of literary intertextuality which would suggest either that one document directly depends on the other or else, more generally, that one document knew the other. There is only a core in the center of the conflict which generates the question whether a literary or pre-literary link between the two controversies is possible. As I shall show, this core includes the embedding of the two Beelzebul controversies in a dispute between Jesus and other persons.

#### 4.3. *The Structure of the Controversy*

Let us now look more closely at the formal structure of the two controversy stories in Mark 3:22–30 and Q 11:15–23 (or v. 26). The two accounts are preceded by a dissimilar narrative preparation (see above) which leads to the formation of a group of spokesmen who utter the Beelzebul accusation.

The comparison of the two versions of the Beelzebul controversy reveals a high number of parallels in the basic structure of each conflict story. The opponents speak and formulate an accusation. Jesus, against whom this accusation is leveled, refutes it in three replies and draws a conclusion. A transitional passage, which relates the activity of the protagonist and links his answer to the accusation, leads to *three* replies in which the charge is refuted. The *core* is the accusation that Jesus is in league with “dark powers,” since he is making use of Beelzebul to

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<sup>72</sup> For a different position, cf. Lambrecht, “Relatives,” 248.

## Mark 3

## Q 11

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v. 22a: arrival of the scribes from Jerusalem they <u>spea</u> k (among themselves; cf. v. 23a) v. 22b: 1st <i>accusation</i> : possessed by Beelzebel v. 22b: 2nd <i>accusation</i> : Jesus makes use of Beelzebul <i>to expel the demons</i> v. 23a: the opponents assemble before Jesus v. 23a: Jesus speaks in parables vv. 23b–26: 1st <i>reply</i> : <u>a divided kingdom</u> and <u>a divided house cannot stand</u> —introduced by a rhetorical question  v. 27: 2nd <i>reply</i> : house of the <u>strong man</u> vv. 28–29: 3rd <i>reply</i> : the sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable v. 30: <i>conclusion</i> : the opponents describe the working of the Holy Spirit as that of an <u>unclean spirit</u>	v. 14: exorcism  v. 15a: “some” of the witnesses of the exorcism <u>spea</u> k  v. 15b: <i>accusation</i> : Jesus makes use of Beelzebul <i>to expel the demons</i>  v. 17a: Jesus reads their thoughts  vv. 17b–18: 1st <i>reply</i> : <u>a divided kingdom</u> will be laid waste and <u>a divided house cannot stand</u>  vv. 19–20: 2nd <i>reply</i> : exorcisms are one aspect of the seizing of power by the kingdom of God which is already present vv. 21–22: 3rd <i>reply</i> : victory of the <u>stronger man</u>  v. 23: <i>conclusion</i> : the one who is not for Jesus is against him  vv. 24–26: return of the <u>unclean spirit</u>
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expel the demons; there is a very high measure of linguistic convergence between the texts here. This core is refuted by means of a parable—a kingdom and a house which lack unity are doomed to destruction—and here too, the vocabulary employed in the two texts is very similar (see section 5 below).

*Outside this core area*, with its formal agreements, we find clear differences in vocabulary, motifs, and contents. An initial difference between Mark and Q is that the accusation that Jesus is in league with evil powers is twofold in Mark: he is accused of manipulating Beelzebul and of being possessed, i.e. of being himself manipulated by this

demonic figure. This striking doubling may indicate a secondary expansion. The accusation of demonic possession is in accordance with the Markan context, and is prepared by the assertion of Jesus' relatives that he is mad (3:21).<sup>73</sup> Besides this, the accusation is mirrored by Mark's redactional concretization of the blasphemy against the Spirit, so that this refers to those who make the Beelzebul accusation (3:30).<sup>74</sup> This means that the doubled accusation in Mark finds its explanation in the narrative shape his redaction has given to the conflict as a whole.<sup>75</sup>

We can see further significant differences, which are attributable to the Markan narrator, in the transition to Jesus' reaction. The summoning of the opponents in Mark, like the reading of people's thoughts in Q, demonstrates an authoritative attitude on Jesus' part, but its motifs and vocabulary are clearly different. The former underlines Jesus' claim to authority, the latter points to his miraculous powers. The description of his answer as a parable has Markan parallels (Mark 4:11–12; 12:1) and should be attributed to the Markan narrator, together with the typically Markan use of προσκαλεσόμενος + object.<sup>76</sup> The accusation is refuted in three answers by Jesus which diverge considerably. There is no formal parallel in Q to the rhetorical question (πῶς δύναται σατανᾶς σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλειν;) which introduces the first refutation and which accords well with Mark's theology.<sup>77</sup> Mark does not refer to the behavior of Jesus' adversaries or of their "sons" (Q 11:19), nor does he have a positive justification of the exorcisms (Q 11:20); if a literary relationship does indeed exist between Q and Mark, one must produce good arguments to explain this omission. Mark 9:38–40 makes it unlikely that Mark has suppressed the reference to the other exorcists;<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Gnllka, *Markus* 1, 145.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Laufen, *Doppelüberlieferungen*, 154.

<sup>75</sup> See above, section 4.1; cf. Laufen, *Doppelüberlieferungen*, 153; Trunk, *Heiler*, 66. Trunk emphasizes that Mark has recourse to the oral tradition in his formulation of this second accusation; but no further source is required. According to Lambrecht, "Relatives," 249–250, such a source is present in "Lk xi 18c; probably present in Q."

<sup>76</sup> Cf. e.g. Laufen, *Doppelüberlieferungen*, 154; R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium 1: Einleitung und Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,26*, 5th ed., HThK 2.1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1989), 214; Trunk, *Heiler*, 66.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Laufen, *Doppelüberlieferungen*, 154.

<sup>78</sup> This is the position of Fleddermann, "Use," 24; idem, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 496 (used as argument for priority of Q's Beelzebul controversy with regard to Mark: "...the saying on 'your sons' implies that Jesus' power equals that of contemporary exorcist. The developing of the early Christian communities could not admit such equality"); A. Polag, *Die Christologie der Logienquelle*, WMANT 45

and I find it even less likely that he has omitted Q 11:20.<sup>79</sup> The second refutation in Mark is the logion about the house of the strong man. This corresponds semantically to the third refutation in Q, where a strong man is bound by one who is even stronger; there is however no congruence in terms of contents. The third refutation in Mark speaks of the unforgivable sin. The close link to the accusation, which is created by the conclusion to v. 30, indicates that the position of this third refutation is the work of the Markan narrator, who thereby produces a surprising agreement with the three refutations in Q. The triad can be understood as a basic scenic pattern in narratives; in view of the differences in contents, especially with regard to Q 11:20, I find the suggestion that it should be interpreted as a marker of intertextuality, in the sense of a dependence of Mark on the final text of the document Q, unconvincing. The conclusion drawn in Q—which evaluates the criticism as a fundamental opposition to Jesus, with the result that the community is scattered—is not found in the Beelzebul controversy in Mark, although the Markan conclusion performs a similar function.

A comparison of the structure of the conflict in Mark and in Q reveals once again a high measure of structural congruence, but part of this is the work of the Markan narrator. And precisely in this congruence, we can see decisive differences which are not all to be explained by the narrative intention in Q.

### 5. Linguistic Findings

To speak of linguistic “findings” is not to speak of absolute certainties, since the comparison between Mark and Q presupposes a reconstruction which must itself assume the influence of one of the two texts compared (i.e. Mark) on the sources from which Q is reconstructed; and we must also bear in mind the creative role of redaction or

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(Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 38n110. Cf. the arguments against this view by Kollmann, *Jesus*, 176.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. also Kollmann, *Jesus*, 176; Schüling, *Studien*, 111; Twelftree, *Jesus*, 106: “In the light of Mark’s evident interest in the relationship between the kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit and the exorcisms of Jesus, it is most unlikely that this saying we now have in Q was available to Mark or he would have most probably included it.” Fleddermann, “Use,” 26, sees the justification for this omission in the anticipation of Q 11:20 at Mark 1:14–15, but this is unconvincing, since Q 11:20 is much more than an affirmation that the kingdom is close at hand: it also provides a comprehensive justification of the exorcism.

re-narration in shaping the different documents we are going to compare. Nevertheless, if we prescind from points of detail and from the question of Q 11:21–22, the total picture allows us to make a comparison and to evaluate this.

In this section, when we look at linguistic convergences, we must ask whether, in view of the potential flexibility of oral transmission,<sup>80</sup> the model of independent oral transmission is preferable to that of literary dependence. We must begin by clearing up two objections to the appeal to oral transmission as an explanation of the convergences.

*First*, the flexibility of oral transmission does not necessarily mean a verbal discontinuity. Rather, we must assume that the memory which is responsible for the transmission<sup>81</sup> preserves not only a structure and a framework, but also constitutive linguistic signals.

*Secondly*, we must also examine whether the linguistic convergences are employed in the same way.

In the core of the controversy, we find the following picture:

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Mark 3:22–26

Q 11:14f., 17–20

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22 Καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς οἱ ἀπὸ  
Ἱεροσολύμων καταβάντες

ἔλεγον  
ὅτι Βεελζεβούλ ἔχει  
καὶ ὅτι ἐν τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων  
ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια.

23 Καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος αὐτοὺς  
ἐν παραβολαῖς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς·  
πῶς δύναται σατανᾶς σατανᾶν  
ἐκβάλλειν;

14 Καὶ ἐ[[<ξέ>]]βαλ[[<εν>]]  
δαιμόνιον κωφόν·  
καὶ<sup>82</sup> ἐκβληθέντος τοῦ δαιμονίου  
ἐλάλησεν ὁ κωφὸς  
καὶ ἐθαύμασαν οἱ ὄχλοι.  
ἰστινὲς δὲ εἶπον·

ἐν Βεελζεβούλ τῷ ἄρχοντι τῶν  
δαιμονίων ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια·  
17 εἰδὼς δὲ τὰ διανοήματα αὐτῶν

εἶπεν αὐτοῖς·

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. e.g. G. Sellin, “‘Gattung’ und ‘Sitz im Leben’ auf dem Hintergrund der Problematik von Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit synoptischer Erzählungen,” *EvTh* 50 (1990): 311–331.

<sup>81</sup> See section 2 above.

<sup>82</sup> According to Schröter, *Erinnerung*, 247, the conjunction καὶ did not form part of Q.

## Table (cont.)

Mark 3:22–26	Q 11:14f., 17–20
24 καὶ ἐὰν βασιλεία ἐφ’ ἐαυτὴν μερισθῆ, οὐ δύναται σταθῆναι ἡ βασιλεία ἐκείνη·	πᾶσα βασιλεία μερισθεῖσα [[καθ’]] ἐαυτή[[ς]]
25 καὶ ἐὰν οἰκία ἐφ’ ἐαυτὴν μερισθῆ, οὐ δυνήσεται ἡ οἰκία ἐκείνη σταθῆναι.	<u>ἐρημοῦται</u> καὶ πᾶσα οἰκία μερισθεῖσα καθ’ ἐαυτῆς οὐ σταθήσεται
26 καὶ εἰ ὁ σατανᾶς ἀνέστη ἐφ’ ἐαυτὸν καὶ ἐμερίσθη, <u>οὐ δύναται</u> στῆναι ἀλλὰ τέλος ἔχει.	18 καὶ εἰ ὁ σατανᾶς ἐφ’ ἐαυτὸν ἐμερίσθη, πῶς σταθήσεται ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ; 19 καὶ εἰ ἐγὼ ἐν Βεελζεβούλ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια, οἱ υἱοὶ ὑμῶν ἐν τίνι ἐκβάλλουσιν; διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοὶ κριταὶ ἔσονται ὑμῶν. 20 εἰ δὲ ἐν δακτύλῳ θεοῦ ἐγὼ ἐκβάλλω τὰ δαιμόνια, ἄρα ἔφθασεν ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

Let us look first at the accusation against Jesus, where we find the following verbal agreements. The name “Beelzebul” is striking, since it is virtually unattested outside Christian texts,<sup>83</sup> and this is a strong indicator of a common core in the conflict. We also find in both Mark and Q the affirmations that Beelzebul is the ruler of the demons (ὁ ἄρχων τῶν δαιμονίων) and that it is through him that Jesus drives out the demons (ἐκβάλλει τὰ δαιμόνια). Only small divergences result from Mark’s choice of indirect speech with the ὅτι and the redactional insertion of the first accusation, viz. that Jesus is possessed by Beelzebul

<sup>83</sup> Cf. e.g. Trunk, *Heiler*, 46–48 (with evidence); D. D. Sheets, “Jesus as Demon-Possessed,” in *Who do My Opponents Say That I Am? An Investigation of the Accusations Against the Historical Jesus*, ed. S. McKnight and J. B. Modica, LNTS 358 (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 27–49, at 29. The only Jewish exception is a magical text in Greek which is noted by R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1904), 75–76. The name is attested for Baal in Ugaritic; cf. E. C. B. Maclaurin, “Beelzeboul,” *NovT* 20 (1978): 156–160; H. Gese, “Die Religionen Altsyriens,” in idem, M. Höfner, and K. Rudolph, *Die Religionen Altsyriens, Altarabiens und der Mandäer*, Rdm 10.2 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970), 3–232, at 122.

(Βεελζεβοῦλ ἔχει). It is particularly striking that both versions speak of “Satan,” although in the accusation it is Beelzebul who is presented as the leader of the demons. This is no arbitrary coincidence; rather, it points to a common core in both versions, a stable element which survived the process of oral transmission. The strong figure of Satan, who is established by the New Testament period as the decisive opponent of God and of all who are pious,<sup>84</sup> as well as the terminological switch from the “ruler of the demons” to the name “Satan,” explain the presence of a lasting and verbally defined element in the traces in the memory.

Mark gives the first reaction conditionally, by means of the ἐάν-clause, as an individual instance; Q, by means of πάντα, envisages a general rule. In Mark, the consequence of the division within the kingdom and the house is that they cannot stand; in Q, the kingdom is laid waste, and the house cannot remain standing. In Q, the logion about Satan (Q 11:18) asks rhetorically about the impossibility for the kingdom to remain standing when it is internally divided. In Mark 3:26, Satan rises up against himself and is thus internally divided; this leads to the announcement by Jesus that he cannot remain standing, and has come to an end. This means that the accusation is consistent, since the adversaries picture the rule of Satan as unbroken (even although he is fighting against himself). There is a basic verbal element in Q and Mark which each text gives a new arrangement. There is nothing surprising in the use of the nouns βασιλεία and οἰκία, nor of the verb μερίζω and the phrase ἐφ’ ἑαυτήν. The subject under discussion and the motifs associated with it activate<sup>85</sup> the appropriate words in the linguistic storehouse of those who transmit the story.

The second response in Q (11:19–20) is not found in Mark. In the third response, the linguistic comparison meets its limits, since although there is a large measure of agreement between Mark 3:27 and Matt 12:29, this agreement against Luke 11:21–22 indicates that Matt 12:29 draws exclusively on Mark 3:27 and elaborates this text. It is possible that a Q version (older than Mark) of the “stronger” man who binds

<sup>84</sup> On the figure of Satan cf. C. Breytenbach and P. L. Day, “Satan,” in *DDD*<sup>2</sup> (1999): 726–732 with an introductory bibliography at 731–732.

<sup>85</sup> On the use of this term in the psychology of the memory, cf. the brief account by A. Mecklinger, “Aktivierung,” in *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung*, ed. Pethes and Ruchatz, 29–30.



a strong man lies behind the parable at Luke 11:21, which is likewise the product of redactional elaboration.

The counterfoil to these convergences is the presence of differences in the contents of the two texts.<sup>86</sup> I believe that these need not necessarily be seen as Markan redactional revisions.<sup>87</sup> Nor should we ignore the divergences in the second and third replies of Jesus, since these constitute a decisive argument against the hypothesis of literary dependence between the two versions. The convergences in the concept of Beelzebul and his link to Satan, as well as the thematic concentration, suggest a common core of tradition. The new structuring and transformation of the material can be considered as the work of the collective memory which hands on the story.

## 6. *Trajectories: Remembering and Transmitting as a Process of Shaping and Conserving*

### 6.1. *Summary of the Comparison*

On the level of *rhetorical-narrative linkage*, the two versions display both parallels and differences. This begins with the linkage between the Beelzebul accusation and the exorcism. Mark does not employ the exorcism at any point in his narrative in the immediate vicinity to the controversy; rather, the reader is pointed back to the narrative context as a whole, which offers sufficient references to Jesus' exorcistic activity. The integration into a pattern of conflict corresponds to the kind of controversy about Jesus that is reflected in the Beelzebul accusation, but this pattern is applied independently by each text; both the elaboration of the conflict and its concluding point are different. In Mark, the adversaries are a counterfoil to the true followers of Jesus, who have been delivered from the dominion of Satan. In Q, those who make the accusation reveal themselves to be representatives of "this generation," and their rejection reflects the experience of those who transmitted the Q material.

A comparison of the two structures shows that the transition from the accusation to Jesus' replies is formed independently: the Markan variant is an autonomous construction which betrays no direct relation-

<sup>86</sup> Cf. e.g. Trautmann, *Handlungen*, 270.

<sup>87</sup> For a different view, cf. e.g. Lambrecht, "Relatives," *passim*.

ship to Q. It is only in the first reply in Mark and Q that the position and contents of the reply agree.

*The linguistic convergences permit the supposition of a common core of tradition, but it is very difficult for a model of literary dependence to accommodate the differences, since these can be explained only in part as the result of redactional work.*

## 6.2. *Literary-Critical Solutions and Their Dilemmas*

1. This means that despite the methodologically meticulous investigation by Fleddermann,<sup>88</sup> I find the hypothesis of a *direct literary dependence* of Mark from Q unprovable.<sup>89</sup> The differences in vocabulary and contents can be explained only in part by the supposition that the Markan redaction has adopted Q. I believe that most of the differences, and above all the omission of Q 11:19–20, argue against a direct dependence.

2. Another hypothesis might explain these differences and omissions by means of literary criticism of the document Q. Recent scholarship envisages the addition of Q 11:19–20 at a late stage, so that a *literary relationship between an early stratum of Q and Mark* would be possible. Despite the rhetorical developments, the words of Jesus in Q are marked by changes of themes and motifs and by changes in the form of address. The transitions show that a variety of traditions have been combined.

It is however difficult to believe that Q 11:19–20 was formed by the redaction of Q as an addition to the logia about domination and rule. There is much to indicate that Jesus counters the accusation that he is in league with demonic powers by pointing out the inconsistency of a kingdom that is at war with its own self (11:17–18); and it is possible that the logion about the strong man who is defeated by the stronger man has been attached to this by means of linking catchwords, as a "Christological commentary."<sup>90</sup> It is certainly possible that this process of growth took place before Q had a fixed written form. The metaphorical logion in Q 11:21–22, with a parallel in *Pss. Sol.* 5:3a, could have been transmitted independently, as the parallel to Mark 3:27

<sup>88</sup> Fleddermann, *Mark*, 41–66, esp. 57–59; idem, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary*, 496–500; Lambrecht, "Relatives," *passim*.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. e.g. Schüling, *Studien*, 111 etc.

<sup>90</sup> This is the view of H.-J. Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnissen*, NTANF 13 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 179.

par. Matt 12:29 in *Gos. Thom.* 35 shows. Q 11:19–20 was inserted between the metaphorical logia Q 11:17–18 and 11:21–22.<sup>91</sup> Verse 18 was an obvious point of linkage: here, Jesus asks how the satanic βασιλεία can endure, if the accusation of his adversaries is correct. Once again, we have a chain linked by catchwords, where the emphasis moves to the theme of the kingdom of God. An important question in the process of the history of tradition is the *narrative framework*. Without a narrative framework, it would scarcely be possible to transmit Q 11:19–20.<sup>92</sup> The material in Q (11:14, 19–20) which diverges from Mark 3:22–24 offers one possible explanation. The exorcism at Q 11:14, linked with an accusation like that in Q 11:15 (catchword: “Beelzebul”), could have introduced the double logion 11:19–20.

To which stratum of Q does the Beelzebul controversy belong? On the basis of the conflict, which is interpreted in the light of the debates with “this generation” (Q 7:31; 11:29–32; 11:50–51), it has been argued that this section is a late addition.<sup>93</sup> However, this catchword is not actually employed in the controversy. Rather, Jesus’ discussion with his adversaries can be considered part of the basic substance of Q. It is only the polemical intensification, where the adversaries’ sons become their judges (Q 11:19), that may well belong to the later polemic against the Jewish milieu which was contemporary with those who transmitted Q.<sup>94</sup> Methodologically, the problem is whether this model identifies with certainty a literary dependence. May not the solution rather lie in pre-literary parallel developments?<sup>95</sup>

3. We must therefore look at a third definition of the relationship which takes its methodological orientation in the literary-critical paradigm. On the basis of a comparison of the two texts (just as in a syn-

<sup>91</sup> This is supported by the double tradition in Mark 3:22–24, where there is no convincing explanation of why the aphorism should have been omitted; cf. also e.g. Kollmann, *Jesus*, 176.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. e.g. H. Räisänen, “Exorcisms and the Kingdom: Is Q 11:20 a Saying of the Historical Jesus?,” in *Symbols and Strata: Essays on the Sayings Gospel Q*, ed. R. Uro, PFES 65 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 119–142 (at 128–129), on Q 11:20.

<sup>93</sup> J.S. Kloppenborg, *Formation*, 323–324; Mack, *Lost Gospel*, 90, 132, 165, etc.; M. Humphries, “The Kingdom of God in the Q Version of the Beelzebul Controversion,” *FORUM* 9 (1993): 121–150, at 144–146: Q<sup>2</sup>. H. Schürmann, “QLk 11,14–36 kompositionsgeschichtlich befragt,” in *The Four Gospels 1992*, ed. van Segbroeck et al., 563–586, at 584–585, envisages a late insertion.

<sup>94</sup> Labahn, “Jesu Exorcismen,” 620–621.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. also Neiryneck, “Development,” 425: “but how do we prove Mark’s dependence on Q, and not on a traditional saying or on some pre-Q collection of sayings?”

optic comparison), *an older material is distilled and traced back, on the basis of a more or less extensive discussion, to the historical Jesus.*<sup>96</sup> The oldest material is inferred directly from those elements which are transmitted in common by Mark and Q. It has been argued that these include both the Beelzebul accusation and the two replies by Jesus which employ the theme of domination and rule.<sup>97</sup> It is believed that we can identify older or more recent elements in the history of tradition.

This methodological approach must pay heed to the differences in the parallel passages and ask whether a method that has been tried out on texts with a *literary* transmission can be applied to the specific situation in which the Beelzebul controversy was transmitted. If indeed the reconstructed unit "schon als kleine Teilsammlung schriftlich fixiert war" (was already fixed in writing as a little collection on its own),<sup>98</sup> this question becomes even more urgent, since the various differences must now be explained as products of the redaction of an originally uniform unit.<sup>99</sup> This makes it necessary to employ a methodology that understands both the controversies as separate trajectories of development from one common core, so that the diachronic question must be discussed separately in the case of each trajectory. This would lead to a differentiated total picture.

### 6.3. *Traces in the Memory* ("Gedächtnisspuren")—*An Attempt at a Solution*

The convergences make it indisputable that a common core lies behind the two traditions.

The best explanatory model chooses as its starting point *Jesus' exorcistic activity (which is historically conceivable), which was linked to his*

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<sup>96</sup> Even according to the Jesus seminar, the Beelzebul controversy is estimated as an historical deed of Jesus: R. Funk, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 566.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. e.g. Trunk, *Heiler*, pp. 55–56: "Consequently, there must be a common tradition (probably an oral tradition) antecedent to Mark and Q (= T 1). The material in Q which goes beyond Mark—the exorcism which is placed at the very beginning, the second and third arguments, and the concluding logion, Matt 12:30 par.—derive from another oral tradition, or from several traditions (= T 2/3), not all of which need originally have been connected to the accusation that Jesus was in league with Beelzebul" (56). Cf. also Guijarro, "Wirkung," 65. Without Q 11:21–22: Schüling, *Studien*, 111–112; Kollmann, *Jesus*, 175–177.

<sup>98</sup> Schüling, *Studien*, 112.

<sup>99</sup> Thus e.g. Schüling, *Studien*, 113–114.

*proclamation of the kingdom of God (which had an orientation to praxis).* As an exorcist, Jesus was suspected of himself sharing in “the dark side of power,”<sup>100</sup> either as one who manipulated it or as one who was manipulated by it. As several strands of tradition, including the Johannine variants (John 7:20; 8:48–52; 10:20), show, the historical Jesus was accused of closeness to the demonic world. Similar accusations with regard to his followers, who were probably also active as exorcists,<sup>101</sup> will have helped keep alive the tradition of the offensive controversies, leaving *a concrete trace in the memory* (“*Gedächtnisspur*”) of various early Christian groups of followers of Jesus. *The traces take on a tangible literary form in Mark and Q.*

The following features are of decisive importance in evaluating the structural and linguistic nature of the core element: the atypical name “Beelzebul,” the change to the character of “Satan,” and Jesus’ reply, which is considered an unchallengeable argument, with its sapiential-rhetorical reference to the unity of the kingdom or house which is essential if it is to endure. This logic, which reveals how unreasonable the adversaries of Jesus are when they accuse him in this way, has left its traces in the memory of those who handed it on. The basic data and themes of the conflict and of Jesus’ refutation remained present in the memory of a number of “transmitters” and were developed in such a way that convergent basic structures emerged, which were variously elaborated. The linguistic uniformity owed its preservation both to the special theme and to the fact that the controversy and the motifs formed a complete unit.

In view of the free variability of the matter and the language, it is appropriate to attribute the differences between the traces in the memory to the oral tradition. We must assume that the core was developed and preserved in mutually independent processes. With C. Breytenbach, we can explain the common structures and convergences on the basis of the preservative achievement of the memory.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> On the suspicion that exorcists share in the demonic power, cf. J. Marcus, “The Beelzebul Controversy and the Eschatologies of Jesus,” in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. B. D. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTS 28.2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 247–277, at 263 (with bibliography).

<sup>101</sup> Cf. the texts and their exegesis in Kollmann, *Jesus*, 316–378.

<sup>102</sup> Breytenbach, “MNHMONEYEIN,” 554–555.

They do not compel us to accept the hypothesis of literary dependencies or connections.

The law of the triad plays a particular role in this *preservative achievement along the various tracks* until the texts take written form, or in the actual process whereby they took written form. The fact that the two early Christian documents have three refutations is not evidence of literary dependencies, but points to a fundamental phenomenon: the documents are structured by the preservative achievement of the memory of the authors who work on them. This is confirmed by analogous thematic sections, e.g. the texts about the strong/stronger man (Mark 3:27–Q 11:21–22) or the references to the Spirit (Mark 3:28–30–Q 11:24–26). While the first theme is prompted by the theme of the kingdom or house, the reflection on the Spirit indicates the fundamental category in which the mighty deeds of Jesus and of his followers are interpreted: they are understood against the background of the Spirit of God.

#### 6.4. *Consequences for the Search for Jesus Traditions*

If then it is correct that the two versions of the Beelzebul controversy which have taken written form in Q and in Mark are not documents of a literary dependence, but represent a historical remembrance (or at least, contain a core of remembrance) which has been reflected and transmitted in various ways, this gives us a clear glimpse of the process of oral tradition in early Christianity and of the way in which the Jesus tradition was remembered. A close examination of the Beelzebul controversy reveals a dynamic in the history of tradition which offers considerable help in understanding the contexts and the developments in the formation of early Christian theology. In this light, the differences and the parallels between early Christian texts about Jesus acquire a new significance and can provide information which allows us to carry out fundamental observations about the preservation and the shaping of the Jesus tradition.

It is clear that not one original narrative can be reconstructed from the two trajectories of the Beelzebul controversy, and that there are serious limitations on the mode of *re-construction* of oral tradition. This is not surprising, when we bear in mind the constructive power of the memory and the productive power of recollection and of oral transmission. What is surprising is the extent to which constancy and

agreement have been preserved both in the vocabulary and in the rhetorical structure.

We cannot however answer the question whether the paths of transmission led independently of each other to a simplification through additions or omissions. I believe that the present example offers little evidence to help decide such a question. The rhythm of the triad, which I have mentioned, is attributable to analogous structures in the process whereby the transmitters or authors reproduce what they remember.

These observations are significant for the work of historical reconstruction of the earthly Jesus. We may indeed accept in principle that it is impossible to get back literally to the *ipsissima vox*, but there is no reason to accept the *utter* skepticism about the possibility of reconstructing Jesus traditions which is sometimes presented on the basis of studies of oral tradition. This skepticism has sometimes led to a frontal assault on the criteria employed in historical research.<sup>103</sup> The important question is the extent to which oral traditions have a preservative character and are therefore reliable. It has long been recognized that oral tradition, with its character of a “performance,” covers a spectrum between preservation and change which is based both on its form and on its contents.<sup>104</sup> It is clear that traditions in the cultural memory of early Christianity preserve basic elements and structures, since these are handed on out of respect for the narrative protagonist of the Jesus traditions, who creates religious identity in the community which transmits his memory. This knowledge, taken together with our awareness that all historical work involves the construction of meaning,<sup>105</sup> can lead to insights that find a general consensus. The alternative to historical objectivism is not an historical agnosticism that merely registers

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. H. W. Hollander, “The Words of Jesus: From Oral Traditions to Written Record in Paul and Q,” *NovT* 42 (2000): 340–357, at 354: “The oral phase behind our gospel texts and pre-gospel sources makes it, historically speaking, impossible for us to ascribe any sayings to the historical Jesus.” He draws the following consequence on the same page, n. 41: “the well-known rules of judgement that are found to be helpful in reaching a decision about what material comes from the historical Jesus . . . are highly questionable.”

<sup>104</sup> R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 123–125.

<sup>105</sup> On the concept of the “construction of meaning” (*Sinnbildung*) from the perspective of exegesis, cf. U. Schnelle, *Paulus: Leben und Denken*, GLB (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 11–18; idem, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, UTB 2917 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 22–25.

the remoteness of the literary sources from the remembered event. The analysis of the Beelzebul controversy shows that we must assume that the object of memory continues to exist in the memory.<sup>106</sup> And this means that we have a sufficient basis for historical construction.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. in general e.g. M. Moxter, “Erzählung und Ereignis: Über den Spielraum historischer Repräsentation,” in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 67–88, at 67: “Wäre da nicht das *Ereignis*, wir hätten nichts zu erzählen” (“If there was no *event*, we would have nothing to narrate”).

<sup>107</sup> On the concept of “construction” in the sense of the “construction of history,” cf. e.g. J. Schröter, “Von der Historizität der Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur gegenwärtigen Diskussion um den historischen Jesus,” in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. Schröter and Brucker, 163–212, at 167–168, reprinted in: idem, *Von Jesus zum Neuen Testament. Studien zur urchristlichen Theologiegeschichte und zur Entstehung des neutestamentlichen Kanons*, WUNT 204 (Tübingen: Mohr—Siebeck, 2007), 105–146, at 108–109.





# DID JESUS BREAK THE FIFTH (FOURTH) COMMANDMENT?

PETER BALLA

## 1. *Introduction*

My thesis in this essay is to show that the “general rule” in early Christianity is a kind of child-parent relationship which can be seen in the pagan and Jewish environment of the New Testament: honouring one’s parents is strongly expected from children.<sup>1</sup> It is argued here that the radicalism of Jesus’ own way of life (and that of the wandering charismatics in the early church) does not deny the validity of that rule; it only sets certain limits to it inasmuch as Jesus and the Kingdom he preached require that he and the kingdom receive final priority. It will be further argued that Jesus’ claim of a special relationship to God implied that ultimately it was God’s will that the disciples obeyed when they followed Jesus. If so, then even the “limits” set to the general expectation of honour toward parents were not a unique element in the Jesus movement; rather, the main reason for the limits, to which we can find parallels in the socio-historical environment, was applied to Jesus: God comes before parents. This overall thesis requires to be substantiated by close examination of a host of New Testament texts. In this paper we can only discuss a few of them.<sup>2</sup> I propose that the texts are best interpreted in the light of the expectations (and limits) found in the environment. That is why, before turning to the gospel material, we shall collect some relevant views from the pagan and Jewish background of the New Testament.

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<sup>1</sup> I thank the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for enabling me to carry out research on this theme at the University of Heidelberg during twelve months in 1999–2000, and to return there for a short research visit in July 2004. I thank my *Gastgeberprofessor*, Prof. Dr. Gerd Theissen, for commenting on the manuscript that has become my *Habilitationsschrift* (see note 2). The present essay is based on that research, and on some chapters of that book.

<sup>2</sup> For more detailed argumentation concerning these texts, and for a discussion of further New Testament passages, see the following monograph: Peter Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship in the New Testament and Its Environment*, WUNT 155 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), ch. 4, 114–156.

## 2. *Some Examples from the Environment*<sup>3</sup>

Diogenes Laertius writes (7.120; in the section on Zeno): “The Stoics approve also of honouring parents and brothers in the second place next after the gods.” The very connection expressed by the phrase “next after the gods” shows that among human beings parents are to be honoured before all others; however, the “gods” have a priority over parents. We can find further examples in the writings of Hierocles.<sup>4</sup> The titles given by him to the sections imply a certain ranking: he discusses conduct first towards the gods, then towards one’s country.<sup>5</sup> Then he writes: “After considering the gods and our country, what person deserves to be mentioned more than, or prior to our parents? . . . No mistake, therefore, will be made by him who says that they are as it were secondary or terrestrial divinities.”<sup>6</sup> Although between the gods and parents there is mention of the fatherland, it is nevertheless clear that among human beings parents are to be placed first. The text implies honour as a duty, and parents are ranked very close to the gods in the list of those to whom honour is due.

Cicero has a similar sequence of the triad gods—country—parents in *Off.* 1.45.160: “even in the social relations themselves there are gradations of duty (*gradus officiorum*) so well defined that it can easily be seen which duty takes precedence over any other: our first duty is to the immortal gods; our second, to country; our third, to parents; and so on, in a descending scale, to the rest.” Cicero can also refer to the “fatherland” (*patria*) and parents without mentioning the gods (*Off.* 1.17.58): “Now, if a contrast and comparison were to be made to find out where most of our moral obligation is due, country would come first, and parents; for their services have laid us under the heaviest obligation; next come children and the whole family, who look to us alone for support and have no other protection . . .”.

<sup>3</sup> See chs. 2 and 3 in Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship*, 41–111.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Praechter has marshalled arguments in favour of his thesis that the fragments of Hierocles preserved by Stobaeus are best understood as the work of a Stoic; Praechter, *Hierokles der Stoiker* (Leipzig: Dieterich’sche Verlags-Buchhandlung, 1901). I quote the texts in David R. Fideler’s translation; Fideler, ed., *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press, 1987), 275–279.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 275–77.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 277; Greek text in Praechter, *Hierokles*, 45.

We note the argument that parents support and protect their children; this implies that children owe them a return. Once again, we observe that parents are accorded the first place among human relationships.

Seneca writes: “not to love one’s parents is to be unfilial” (*parentes suos non amare impietas est; Ben. 3.1.5*). Thus love and *pietas* are inseparable. Seneca also says that children “owe” their parents the provision of care. In *Ben. 6.23.5* he writes: “We owe filial duty to our parents” (*debemus parentibus nostris pietatem*). In this latter context he refers to the gods as well as to nature as providing for us; inasmuch as they give life to children through their parents, the gods and nature can be seen as the ground for saying that children owe their parents provision in return.

Having seen some pagan sources, let us refer to a few Jewish examples. One of our main sources is Philo of Alexandria. Philo has numerous short remarks on the relationship between children and parents. In her essay entitled “Parents and Children: A Philonic Perspective,” Adele Reinhartz affirms that comments related to the parent-child relationship appear “in every extant treatise of the *Exposition*.”<sup>7</sup> Philo has also longer sections where he discusses the Fifth Commandment.<sup>8</sup> A few quotations may suffice here.

In his treatise *On the Decalogue*, Philo treats the Fifth Commandment twice: first as it comes at its own place in the line of the Ten Commandments (*Decal. 106–120*); and then on the occasion of a summary towards the end of the treatise (165–167). Philo introduces his discussion of the Fifth Commandment in *Decal. 106–120* with the following summary (106): “After dealing with the seventh day, He gives the fifth commandment on the honour due to parents.” We note that Philo summarizes the reference to “father and mother” in the Fifth Commandment as “parents”. He divides the Ten Commandments into two sets of five. Concerning the Fifth Commandment, he affirms (106): “This commandment He placed on the borderline between the two sets of five; it is the last of the first set in which the most sacred injunctions are given and it adjoins the second set which contains the duties of man

<sup>7</sup> Adele Reinhartz, “Parents and Children: A Philonic Perspective,” in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, ed. S. J. D. Cohen (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 61–88, at 62.

<sup>8</sup> Although the commandments are not numbered in the Old Testament, Philo numbers them. I adopt his numbering which coincides with the numbering in my native church, the Reformed Church in Hungary, and in the Reformed churches in general. The Lutheran and Catholic churches refer to the commandment to honour father and mother as the Fourth Commandment.

to man.” This implies a very high view of parents, since the duty toward them is placed as the conclusion of the list of duties toward God. Inasmuch as the Old Testament does not tell us how the commandments are divided on the two tables of stone, Philo goes beyond the Old Testament when distinguishing the Fifth Commandment from other commandments concerning duties towards fellow human beings, and placing it on the “border-line between the mortal and the immortal side of existence” (*Decal.* 107).<sup>9</sup> Philo argues by referring to the procreative function of parents (107): They belong not only to the mortal, but also to “... the immortal [side of existence] because the act of generation assimilates them to God, the generator of the All.”

Philo discusses the Fifth Commandment again in his treatise entitled *On the Special Laws* (2.224–241). We found in Greek and Latin writings that parents appeared in certain “rankings.” Philo also “ranks” parents; they come immediately after God (*Spec.* 2.235): “Honour therefore, he says, next to God thy father and thy mother, who are crowned with a laurel of the second rank assigned to them by nature, the arbitress of the contest”. It is interesting to observe here that even in a passage where Philo refers to the commandment itself, he expounds it with his own interpretation by referring to “nature.”

The *Letter of Aristeeas* refers to the duty that is required by God’s commandment. The letter has a long section which relates how during the seven days of a banquet the Egyptian king put questions to each of the translators of the Septuagint (*Let. Arist.* 187–294). In *Let. Arist.* 228 we read that the king “asked the sixth guest to answer. His question was, ‘To whom must one show favour?’ The answer was, ‘To his parents, always, for God’s very great commandment concerns the honour due to parents. Next (and closely connected) he reckons the honour due to friends, calling the friend an equal of one’s own self. You do well if you bring all men into friendship with yourself.’” Here we observe the priority of parents over all other human beings.

The *Sibylline Oracles* has a passage with a certain “ranking” as well. In the third book, lines 573–574 provide the context for our relevant passage: “There will again be a sacred race of pious men who attend to the counsels and intention of the Most High.” Then in lines 593–594 we read: “and they honour only the Immortal who always rules, and

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<sup>9</sup> I owe this point to Professor Eduard Schweizer (see Balla, *The Child-Parent Relationship*, 87 n. 16).

then their parents.” We note that in these examples the appearance of the duty right after the duty of honouring God can be seen as a “limit” in one’s duty toward parents: God has a priority over parents.

Pseudo-Phocylides provides further evidence that we may call a “ranking”. Line 8 reads: “Honour God foremost, and afterward your parents”. Pseudo-Phocylides is a significant source in the realm of ethical conduct in the household, on which he has a long passage (lines 175–227), which is of significance as regards formal parallels to the Household Codes in Colossians and Ephesians.

*Jubilees* mentions parents and neighbours as those to whom honour is due; once again, neighbours come only after the parents. In *Jub.* 7.20 we read: “And in the twenty-eighth jubilee Noah began to command his grandsons with ordinances and commandments and all the judgments which he knew. And he bore witness to his sons so that they might do justice and cover the shame of their flesh and bless the one who created them and honour father and mother, and each one love his neighbour and preserve themselves from fornication and pollution and from all injustice.” Though *Jubilees* refers to Noah here, it seems likely that the Fifth Commandment and the commandment to love one’s neighbour from Leviticus can be supposed to be in the background. We observe the significant order: 1. to bless the creator; 2. to honour father and mother; 3. to love one’s neighbour.

Fragments from Qumran also confirm the presence of the duty of honouring one’s parents in Palestine, not long before the time of Jesus. In 4Q416, frag. 2, col. III, lines 14–19a we read:<sup>10</sup>

14... Study the mystery that is to come, And understand all the ways of Truth, And all the roots of iniquity 15 thou shalt contemplate. Then thou shalt know what is bitter for a man, And what is sweet for a *person*. Honour thy father in thy poverty, 16 And thy mother in thy *low estate*. For as God (*scarcely* ‘the Father’) is to a man, so is his own father; And as *the Lord* is to a person, so is his mother; For 17 they are ‘the *womb* that was pregnant with thee’; And just as He has set them in authority over thee And *fashioned (thee)* according to the Spirit, So serve thou them, And as 18 *they* have uncovered thy ear to the mystery that is to come, Honour thou them for the sake of thine own honour And *with [reverence] venerate* their *persons*, 19 For the sake of thy life and of the length of thy days. *vacat*.

<sup>10</sup> Text in Emanuel Tov ed., *Qumran Cave 4, XXIV: Sapiential Texts, Part 2*, DJD 34 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 113. In another fragment we find the same text: 4Q418 9–10. Tov’s translation is based on a composite text (his italics).

These examples may suffice to show that both the Greek and Latin pagan authors and the contemporary Jewish sources attest the duty of honouring one's parents, and—not surprisingly—the Jewish sources even confirm the validity of the Fifth Commandment at the time of Jesus. Let us turn to texts in which Jesus can be seen as one fitting into this “environment.”

### 3. *Jesus Observing the Fifth Commandment*

There are two passages in the synoptic gospels where the Fifth Commandment, “Honour your father and your mother” (RSV), is quoted in a context where it is implied that the Ten Commandments are to be observed; they are seen by Jesus and his first followers as the primary Old Testament texts that direct their behaviour. There are also passages where the Fifth Commandment is not referred to, but sayings or actions of people imply its validity. These texts affirm that Jesus and his disciples shared the norm of their environment: parents are to be honoured; they are to be obeyed and, when they grow old, they are to be cared for.

The first occurrence of the Fifth Commandment in Mark is at 7:10, in the *Korban* pericope (7:9–13). This passage has a parallel only in Matthew (15:1–9), where it is located in the same context: the preceding and following pericopes correspond to those that surround the Markan passage. As regards the whole of the pericope, Matthew's version is shorter than that of Mark. In the verse containing the Fifth Commandment, there are differences as well as agreements. The major agreement is that both Mark and Matthew have a double quotation: after Exod 20:12a (or Deut 5:16a) they also quote Exod 21:16 (LXX; in MT 21:17; cf. also Lev 20:9, which has a similar content). In the second quotation, they agree verbatim with one another, and they both differ slightly from the Septuagint version of Exod 21:16.

I think we can maintain the authenticity of this Old Testament quotation on Jesus' lips.<sup>11</sup> As a Jew, Jesus most probably acknowledged the validity of the Ten Commandments. He shared with his Jewish and pagan environment the expectation that parents have to be honoured. It is significant that in this passage, reporting on a dispute with

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<sup>11</sup> For a different view, see Harry Jungbauer, “Ehre Vater und Mutter”: *Der Weg des Elterngedots in der biblischen Tradition*, WUNT 2.146 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 266.

“Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem,” the Fifth Commandment is reported to have been quoted by Jesus himself both in Mark’s and in Matthew’s version. The early church probably held that this attitude was an important element of the picture they had of Jesus.

Having said this, it is to be acknowledged that our very passage also claims that the norm was not universally followed. Mark uses the Hebrew and Aramaic term *korban*, a gift offered to the temple, and its correct Greek equivalent, *dōron*, whereas Matthew uses only the latter, when they present the opponents of Jesus as finding an excuse not to fulfil the commandment. In Mark’s version we read (7:11–13): “but you say, ‘If a man tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is Corban’ (that is, given to God) then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on.” In v. 12, the idea of “doing” something for parents probably means caring for them when they are old. The parallel version, Matt 15:5, clearly claims that helping one’s parents equals honouring them: “But you say, If any one tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honour his father.”

Both Mark and Matthew (and/or the communities they represent) held that the Fifth Commandment was valid and should be observed without looking for reasons for exceptions. We observe that the Fifth Commandment is used here as an example of differentiating between the commandment of God and human tradition (cf. 7:8,13). It is significant that the child-parent relationship is taken as an example; this shows that this area has a special place in God’s will. In our pericope the verb “to honour” (*timan*) points to this connection: God is honoured with the lips alone (v. 6); this lip-service becomes evident from the fact that parents are not honoured (vv. 10–13).<sup>12</sup>

The other occurrence of the Fifth Commandment in Mark is at 10:19. The pericope of the “Rich Man,” often referred to as the “rich young ruler”, is transmitted by all three synoptic gospels (Mark 10:17–27; par. Matt 19:16–26 and Luke 18:18–27). The commandment to honour one’s father and mother is quoted by Jesus in all three versions.<sup>13</sup> It appears in a list of those elements of the Ten Commandments which concern

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<sup>12</sup> I owe this observation to Professor Gerd Theissen, Heidelberg (letter dated 6.1.2001).

<sup>13</sup> I note that according to Harry Jungbauer the citation of the commandment does not go back to Jesus, but is an addition of an early Christian “compiler” of this “categorical piece” (“*Ehre Vater und Mutter*,” 282–283).



fellow human beings—sometimes referred to as the second of the two tables of stones. The three versions are not exactly identical in content and order (and there are even variant readings within the individual gospel traditions), but they all agree in putting the commandment to honour father and mother at the end of the list.<sup>14</sup> We remember that Philo argued that this commandment is deliberately put at the boundary between obligations toward God and those toward fellow human beings. We may add that the position at the end of the list in the synoptic gospels can also be regarded as an emphasis. I agree with Joachim Gnilka who affirms that this position implies that the Fifth (or in his numbering the “Fourth”) Commandment is to be understood against the background of social duties toward parents.<sup>15</sup> The text does not say anything about the parents of the man who approached Jesus, but if he was indeed “rich” and “young” (as a conflation of the various synoptic accounts implies), then the social duties expressed by the commandments quoted may have been intended to have a special appeal to him: he probably did not kill anybody, but what about fair treatment of the poor and provision for his own parents?

We observe that the man claims that he has fulfilled these commandments, and Jesus does not challenge this claim (Mark 10:20–21). This raises the question how this pericope relates to the following one (in each of the synoptic gospels), which is about the disciples leaving everything behind. This latter pericope will be discussed later in this essay (section 5). It is appropriate to remark at this point that there are two possible interpretations. It may be argued that the latter pericope throws light upon the former, i.e. the rich man was also asked to leave his family when he was to sell everything. I would argue that the first pericope throws light on the second: observing the Fifth Commandment is expected, and the disciples’ leaving everything behind has to be seen against this background. In Matthew’s version, after the last part of the list from the Ten Commandment, that is, after the commandment to honour father and mother, Lev 19:18 is also added: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” Thus, at least for Matthew (and/or his

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<sup>14</sup> For a clear summary of views of scholars on the differences of content in the lists, see Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel*, JSNTSup 102 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 144 n. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, EKKNT 2.2 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1979), 87.

community) these commandments belonged together, and they were both valid.

At the end of this section we discuss briefly two further pericopes that support the picture gained in the exegesis of the previous passages. Each of them is special material of the gospel in which it is preserved: one from Luke and one from the Fourth Gospel. In Luke 2:41–52, the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus is narrated only by Luke, and even he brings it in only at the end of the birth narrative. There are scholars who doubt the historicity of this story.<sup>16</sup> Without attempting to solve this problem, I simply note that on the surface of the story we find a contradiction in Jesus' behaviour. On the one hand, he causes worry for his parents by staying behind in Jerusalem without any notice (Luke 2:48), though it has to be emphasized that it is not indicated either by the parents of Jesus or by the evangelist that Jesus was disobedient. On the other hand, at the end of the story Jesus joins his parents and returns with them to Nazareth. The text even stresses his obedience (2:51). There is no real contradiction here. Jesus simply follows the general rule we have seen in the environment (expressed in lists of those to whom honour is due): God always comes before parents. Accordingly, Jesus' answer to his parents indicates that he has his heavenly father in mind;<sup>17</sup> so the RSV inserts the term "house" into its translation (2:49): "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Whether this story is to be labeled a legend (or anecdote) or not, we note that according to this story Jesus grew up in his parents' home, and it was presupposed in a natural way that he obeyed them. The early church must have thought that Jesus observed the Fifth Commandment; otherwise this story would not emphasize his obedience to his parents.

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<sup>16</sup> François Bovon calls it an "anecdote", *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, EKKNT 3.1,2 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1989–1996), 1:154. According to him, Luke took it over from the tradition and reworked it.

<sup>17</sup> We note that if God is called "father", this implies that honour is due to fathers in general. For a discussion of the fatherhood of God in Jesus' sayings, see Dieter Zeller, "God as Father in the Proclamation and in the Prayer of Jesus," in *Standing Before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays*, ed. A. Finkel and L. Frizzell (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1981), 117–129. He argues that Jesus did not speak "to his Father exclusively" (124). Rather, Jesus used the term "father" as it was known to his listeners from the "Old Testament" (118–120). Zeller concludes that (125): "The Father, whom Jesus brings close to his listeners, remains the faithful God of Israel."

We conclude this section by briefly mentioning a passage from the end of Jesus' earthly life: Jesus' conversation from the cross with his mother and with the beloved disciple, as narrated in John 19:25–27. In vv. 26–27 we read: “When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ (27) Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.” This little scene is often said to be editorial work designed to provide a basis for the Johannine congregation.<sup>18</sup> Jean Zumstein has argued that, together with the scene of the first sign at Cana in John 2, it forms an *inclusio*.<sup>19</sup> Zumstein lists four points of contact between the two stories: (1) the expression “mother [of Jesus]”, without giving her name; (2) the address “woman” in the vocative (*gynai*); (3) mention of the “hour”; (4) closeness and intimacy between mother and son in both scenes. Irrespective of one's view regarding the historicity of the scene at the cross, it is clear that the author of the Fourth Gospel (and/or his circle) did not see any problem in “relating the fact that the dying Jesus provided for the care of his mother after his death.”<sup>20</sup> This can be seen as a special way of fulfilling the expectation that children had to provide for their aged parents. It is plausible to maintain that the early church (or at least some part of it) thought that Jesus fulfilled the general expectation we have also met in the environment of the New Testament.

#### 4. *Jesus' Call as a Cause for Tension in the Family*

We find a report of Jesus calling his first disciples in all four canonical gospels. Mark 1:16–20 and Matt 4:18–22 are similar enough to be called parallels, but Luke and John have different stories concerning the call (Luke 5:1–11; John 1:35–51). It is explicitly stated about James and John that they “left their father” (Mark 1:20b). Matthew says they left the boat and their father, but he does not mention the hired servants. Luke says in a concluding sentence (5:11) that they left “everything”

<sup>18</sup> So e.g. Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, THKNT 4 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 288–289.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Zumstein, “Johannes 19,25–27,” *ZTK* 94 (1997) 131–54; references: 150.

<sup>20</sup> So Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John. XIII–XXI*, AB 29A (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1970), 923.

(*panta*; the term “everything,” a neuter plural, can include persons as well).<sup>21</sup>

First we note that one pair of brothers, James and John, were working in the same trade as their father: they were fishing together. Although it is not stated explicitly, we may presume that the same was true of the other pair of brothers, Simon (Peter) and Andrew. They are reported to have left the boat, but there is no mention of their father. There is no enmity between children and parents implied in the calling narratives. James and John continued to be called “the sons of Zebedee” even after they became disciples of Jesus (see Mark 10:35 par. Matt 20:20; Matt 26:37; John 21:2), and Peter cared for the ill mother of his wife (Mark 1:29–31 par. Matt 8:14–15 and Luke 4:38–39). Nothing compels us to presuppose that they would not have provided for their father later if any need should have arisen.

Peter was prepared to return to his fishing business after Jesus’ death. Irrespective of the question of the authenticity of this scene reported only by the Fourth Gospel (John 21:3), it makes best sense if we presuppose that the author of the Fourth Gospel did not think that there was any enmity between Peter and his family. We emphasize again that the scene concerns Jesus calling disciples.

In their primary context, texts about “following” (*Nachfolge*) may be regarded as referring to exceptional cases, i.e. they do not apply to all disciples. David Mealand contends that the group of those who “left behind their home and family . . . probably exceeded twelve in number,” but he adds that “not all Jesus’s hearers followed him in the literal sense.”<sup>22</sup> In the following, there will be other passages, too, where the key to the interpretation will be the view that Jesus had two kinds of disciples: some who had to follow him, and those who returned to their homes right after they became disciples of Jesus. Thus not every saying applied to all of them.

John C. O’Neill takes this view a step further when he argues that some “hard sayings about discipleship—sayings about taking up the cross, about leaving all, about not loving father or mother more than

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<sup>21</sup> For an example where the neuter plural *panta* refers to people, see the variant reading at Rom 11:32.

<sup>22</sup> David L. Mealand, *Poverty and Expectation in the Gospels* (London: SPCK, 1981 [1980]), 73.

him—...are only for the few who are called to rule” as ministers.<sup>23</sup> Whether or not one makes this further step of speaking about the rulers of the communities, one can agree with the distinction between circles of disciples to whom the individual sayings applied. This is not to deny the radicalism of the call. To some extent, we might see it as a parallel to what we can see in the environment: following the lifestyle of a teacher, as in the case of Josephus who spent some years as a pupil of Bannus, the ascetic (*Vita* 11). David Mealand has argued that in the case of those “who took up the Cynic way of life, it was often financial ruin or exile which made a man turn to philosophy.” He also affirms that “Jesus and his first disciples were not thoroughgoing ascetics.”<sup>24</sup> Thus the parallels from other movements may “help a little, but do not fully explain the way in which Jesus and his disciples abandoned family, and home, and previous occupation.” The question arises as to what kind of a leader Jesus was held to be by his first followers. I hold with Mealand that “the character of Jesus’s ministry arose from his conviction that the Reign of God was imminent, and...its coming must be announced throughout the land. It is from this necessity that the itinerant nature of his ministry came about.”<sup>25</sup>

Here we cannot discuss views concerning Jesus’ understanding of the Kingdom and his messianic consciousness. I simply acknowledge that my working hypothesis is to suppose some kind of a messianic claim on Jesus’ side, and a positive response to it already by his first followers. This will be especially relevant in the course of discussing other passages where a call to follow Jesus is involved.

There is a further radical saying of Jesus that is witnessed to by Matthew and Luke (thus being assigned to Q by many scholars):<sup>26</sup> the saying concerning burying the dead. Matthew 8:21–22 and Luke 9:59–60 are not only close parallels in wording, but these verses appear in both gospels as the second part of a sequel with a common theme: Jesus speaking to individuals on the cost of discipleship. Darrell Bock has observed that “Luke 9:59–60 is one of the least doubted statements of Jesus.”<sup>27</sup> He notes that the Jesus Seminar “accepts these sayings as

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<sup>23</sup> John C. O’Neill, *Messiah: Six Lectures on the Ministry of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cochrane Press, 1984), 84.

<sup>24</sup> Mealand, *Poverty*, 76.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 213.

<sup>27</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 975.

authentic, printing them in pink type.” In Matthew, after Jesus talked to a scribe (8:19–20), we read (vv. 21–22): “Another of the disciples said to him, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ (22) But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.’” Unlike Luke, Matthew does not have a third dialogue. He closes the scene with a further reference to “disciples” (8:23): “And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him.”

After Jesus’ saying concerning the foxes and birds (parallel to Matthew), Luke writes (9:59–60): “To another he said, ‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ (60) But he said to him, ‘Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.’” John O’Neill has argued that Jesus did not speak here about the spiritually dead; he used the term only in a literal sense. O’Neill holds that this hard saying of Jesus “makes the proclaimers of the Kingdom equivalent to those who have taken a Nazirite vow”.<sup>28</sup> This suggestion solves the problem of the seemingly hard attack of Jesus on those who do not follow him, but it does leave us with the radical saying of Jesus addressed to a would-be disciple: he should leave his dead father behind without a burial. In the environment of the New Testament, providing for a funeral was among the foremost duties of children. Most scholars emphasize the radicalism of Jesus’ saying in the light of the strong expectation in Judaism that a son should provide a funeral for his father.<sup>29</sup> However, it can be argued that in spite of its radicalism, this saying is not a witness to an anti-family attitude of Jesus. The following observations point to the likelihood that this saying does not imply that Jesus failed to fulfil the duty of honouring parents at this crucial point.

First we note that the Lukan version of this text seems to be nearer to the original in an important aspect:<sup>30</sup> Matthew says that it is a “disciple” who asks Jesus’ permission first to bury his father; it is more likely that Luke is right in referring to an unspecified “other” person

<sup>28</sup> O’Neill, *Messiah*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1979), 411; C. F. Evans, *Saint Luke*, TPINTC (London: SCM Press, 1990), 441; Hagner, *Matthew*, 217.

<sup>30</sup> So e.g. Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 2nd ed., EKKNT 1.2 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1990, 1996), 21.

who has the chance to become a disciple when meeting Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Thus the saying is part of a “call” to discipleship; not in the general sense of the word, but in the special sense of the few “itinerant” disciples.<sup>32</sup> Thus it can be argued that the emphasis of Jesus’ radical saying depends on an urgency in time and a priority to be given to Jesus’ call.<sup>33</sup>

Both Matthew and Luke express this priority in some way. In Matthew, it is the would-be disciple who addresses Jesus and offers to follow him. As an answer Jesus first says, “Follow me,” and then utters the radical saying immediately. In Luke, the call to follow Jesus is not uttered together with the saying concerning the dead, because it is Jesus who addressed the would-be disciple with this call at the beginning of the scene. It may also be argued that in the original scene it was Jesus who took the initiative to address a would-be disciple. Matthew may have assimilated the form to the preceding passage: in Matthew’s version Jesus is addressed first; his sayings are answers.<sup>34</sup> In Luke, Jesus’ radical saying is followed by another sentence: “but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God” (which may be editorial).<sup>35</sup>

Both evangelists clearly indicate that the discipleship of Jesus has to be given precedence even over family ties. Howard Marshall’s observation concerning the whole pericope with the three little dialogues in Luke applies to this particular saying as well:<sup>36</sup> Jesus indicates “the stringent nature of discipleship” to three would-be disciples. Darrell Bock points to the significance of the person of Jesus who utters the call: “In fact, the remark may point to Jesus seeing himself as bringing in the new era. The ability to set priorities that go beyond the Ten Commandments may suggest the presence of messianic authority.”<sup>37</sup>

As we have seen above, J. C. O’Neill has argued that the would-be disciple is called to become the “equivalent” to those who have taken a Nazirite vow. He points to Num 6:6–8 where it is affirmed that people who have taken the Nazirite vow should not go near a dead

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<sup>31</sup> So also Peter Kristen, *Familie, Kreuz und Leben: Nachfolge Jesu nach Q und dem Markusevangelium* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1995), 110–112.

<sup>32</sup> See also O’Neill, *Messiah*, 87.

<sup>33</sup> So also Hagner, *Matthew*, 218; Bock, *Luke*, 981.

<sup>34</sup> For the view that “the arrangement in Matthew is probably secondary,” see William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, ICC 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 53.

<sup>35</sup> So e.g. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 412; Evans, *Saint Luke*, 441.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 408.

<sup>37</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 980.

body, even if it is their father or mother. The Nazirite vow can serve as a background to this saying: people around Jesus knew of that exception to the rule of burying one's parents, so the saying in itself was not scandalous to their ears (as Markus Bockmuehl has argued on the basis of a detailed analysis of the available texts).<sup>38</sup>

To sum up, the call uttered by Jesus is put in a way that should not be generalized. The saying is radical, but it does not imply that Jesus taught that his disciples do not have to fulfil their duty as children to their parents. Discipleship, *Nachfolge*, has to have precedence; people who would have remembered the example of how God has precedence in the case of the Nazirites could understand a radical call to become preachers of God's Kingdom.

### 5. *Jesus' New Family*

In the synoptic gospels, there is a report of a direct confrontation between Jesus and his mother and brothers (Mark 3:31–35 par. Matt 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21). There is no agreement among scholars as regards the historicity of this passage, or to what extent it reflects the situation of the household churches. It can be argued that it presupposes the separation of the Christian community from the synagogue.<sup>39</sup> However, it can also be argued that it is not likely that the early church created a story with such a negative attitude from Jesus' family.<sup>40</sup> The other two synoptic gospels introduce this scene in another context. It is significant that a preparatory comment is only to be found in Mark (3:21): "And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for people were saying, 'He is beside himself.'" In this translation, there are hidden two exegetical problems. First, the Greek text, *hoi par autou* ("those with him"), is not unambiguous: it can refer to the disciples or to the relatives of Jesus. It is more likely that the latter sense is to be applied here, because otherwise the scene reported in 3:31–35 is difficult to understand: why does Jesus refuse his mother and brothers if they had not given any reason for wanting to call him away?

<sup>38</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, "Let the Dead Bury their Dead' (Matt. 8:22/Luke 9:60): Jesus and the Halakhah," *JTS* 49 (1998): 553–581.

<sup>39</sup> So Walter Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, ÖTK 2/1 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1979), 212.

<sup>40</sup> So e.g. Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der Historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 104.



Secondly, “people” is inserted in the translation; in the Greek the subject of *elegon* (“they said”) is not specified. This ambiguous expression may have referred to Jesus’ relatives as the speakers.<sup>41</sup> Thus, even if Mark 3:20–21 is a Markan addition to an earlier tradition, it is a necessary explanation of the background of the scene. For our understanding of vv. 31–35, the inclusion of vv. 20–21 means that Jesus’ identification of his true family was not meant to involve the abandoning of his blood relations. It can be seen as an answer to the intended action of his non-understanding family. Taeseong Roh has rightly pointed to the difference between Jesus’ own attitude and that which was expected from the disciples. He argues that whereas Jesus defines his own new family (v. 34: “And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers!’”), there is no expectation of any breach with one’s family on the side of the listeners.<sup>42</sup> We may add that Jesus was provoked by his “non-believing” family to praise those who were accepting what he taught (for a tradition that Jesus’ brethren did not believe in him during his earthly ministry, see also John 7:5). Thus this passage does not address the child-parent relationship in the case of the disciples. In Jesus’ case, it was not his own initiative; rather, it was a response to hostile behaviour on the part of his family. He did not follow them when they wanted to hinder him in his teaching ministry. The content of his teaching is not narrated, but from the concluding (perhaps editorial)<sup>43</sup> word we may infer that it was the priority of the will of God, the heavenly Father, that caused him to be disobedient to his mother and brothers. This text can be explained by seeing in it the priority of God over parents.

We have already seen that in each of the synoptic gospels the passage on the rich young ruler is followed by a short discussion between the

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<sup>41</sup> For this view, see Timothy Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNTSup 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 106. Matthew and Luke do not have the negative claim made by Jesus’ relatives. Perhaps these evangelists did not transmit this tradition because of the later positive role of the relatives of Jesus. Ulrich Luz suggests that Matthew omitted the strong statement in Mark 3:21 (Luz, *Matthäus*, 287).

<sup>42</sup> Taeseong Roh, *Die familia dei in den synoptischen Evangelien: Eine redaktions- und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu einem urchristlichen Bildfeld*, NTOA 37 (Freiburg, CH: Universitätsverlag, 2001), 112.

<sup>43</sup> Roh (*Die familia dei*, 108–110) agrees with Dibelius in regarding Mark 3:35 as a redactional application of the preceding verses to “anyone” who is willing to do the will of God.

disciples and Jesus (Mark 10:28–31 par. Matt 19:27–30 and Luke 18:28–30). It is in this pericope that Jesus speaks about the reward for the disciples leaving everything behind. The synoptics present the scene with a very similar content, but there are also many differences. To point to but a few: only in Matthew do we read Peter’s question (“What then shall we have?”) added to his statement that the disciples have left everything. Even in the indicative sentence (“Lo, we have left everything and followed you”; Mark 10:28) there are some variations in the manuscripts: in Mark, some manuscripts have the perfect of the verb “followed,” some have the aorist; all MSS of Matthew and Luke have the aorist. NA27 prints the perfect in Mark as the main text (and the editors suggest that the aorist is due to the parallels); in this case there is a “minor agreement” between Matthew and Luke.

Matthew and Mark alone conclude the scene with the saying: “But many that are first will be last, and the last first” (Mark 10:31; Matt 19:30). Matthew repeats this saying at the end of his next pericope (his special material), the parable of the workers in the vineyard (20:16). Luke brings it as the conclusion of the saying about those who come from all four winds to sit at table in the Kingdom of God (13:30), with little changes in wording and in a reversed order. One might ask whether the meaning of this saying in Matthew and Mark at the end of our pericope differs from its meaning in the other places. Perhaps here it refers to the disciples who are last in the eyes of their fellow countrymen, because they have no financial security since they left their homes and families. Or perhaps it refers to those who think they are “first” because they keep to the good order of a settled family life—who are in fact the “last” if they do not follow Jesus.

In Mark’s version, however, there is another difference from Matthew and Luke: in Jesus’ answer, Matthew and Luke recount only the list of those whom the disciples have left, whereas in Mark’s version Jesus repeats the list when he assures the disciples of the reward for their following him. These lists are not exactly the same. In Matthew, some manuscripts have “houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands” (NA27 print this as the main text, based primarily on Codex Vaticanus), many manuscripts (including the Byzantine “majority”) add “or wife” after “lands,” and some (including family 1) have “parents” instead of “father or mother”. Some have a variation in order: they give “houses” as the last item in the list. In Luke’s version, the codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus (and some other MSS) have “house or wife or brothers or parents or children.” Many manuscripts

(including the Byzantine “majority”) have the same list but in a reverse order in the middle (“parents or brothers or wife”). Some manuscripts have this reverse order and not only “brothers,” but also “sisters.” Although there are variations in both lists, it is clear that Matthew and Luke do not have the same list. As we have indicated above, Mark has two lists. In Codex Vaticanus and the Byzantine “majority,” Jesus’ saying reads as follows (Mark 10:29–30): “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”

The original “hand” of Codex Sinaiticus does not have the second list; its first corrector adds it with “mother” in the singular, and a second corrector (with some further MSS) adds “father.” Codex Bezae incorporates the second list as a new sentence: “whoever left... [list with some changes, e.g. “house” in singular, “sisters and brothers”]... will receive”. It is to be noted that the second list does not have “father” in most of the manuscripts.

Taeseong Roh has rightly pointed out that the sequence “mother and father” is unusual; in view of the leading role of the father in the family in antiquity, one would expect that the father should be mentioned first. He offers the following solution to the manuscript evidence seen above: Matthew has changed it to the “usual order” and Luke has chosen the summarizing term “parents.” Roh argues that the Markan order (together with the sequence of Mark 3:35, “brother, and sister, and mother”) points to the community of “settled sympathizers” of Jesus. Roh suggests that the omission of “father” in the second list (in Mark 10:30) is due to a view of community which has only God as “father” and which wants to resist the claim of wandering missionaries to become their leaders: they are accepted as brothers and not as fathers.<sup>44</sup>

Roh has taken up and applied to these texts the overall thesis of Gerd Theissen concerning the wandering charismatic character of the earliest stage of the Jesus movement. The present text is one of the significant passages for the thesis of Theissen; however, it has to be seen also

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<sup>44</sup> Roh, *Die familia dei*, 127, 128, 136, 132.

in the light of how we understand the other relevant passages.<sup>45</sup> It is important to see that the context of the Jesus saying in Mark 10:29–30 (and par.) indicates what is at stake here in the eyes of the evangelists: the discipleship of Jesus. It is not only the radicalism of Jesus' call to the rich young ruler that is to be emphasized as a context for our pericope. It is equally important to see that the validity of the commandment to honour father and mother is acknowledged by Jesus just before he speaks to his disciples about the reward for following him. Each of the synoptics indicates that the "leaving" occurs for the sake of the discipleship of Jesus: for Jesus' name's sake (Matt 19:29); for Jesus' and the gospel's sake (Mark 10:29); for the sake of the Kingdom of God (Luke 18:29). It may be argued that the disciples' leaving everything is not as radical as Jesus' call to the rich young ruler to sell everything and give the proceeds to the poor. We have already seen that the disciples did have a home to return to even after they followed Jesus. This saying has to be seen in the context of a call to discipleship. It concerns priorities; it is addressed to some of the disciples and not to all of them. This saying does not deny the continuing validity of the Fifth Commandment.

#### 6. *Some Further "Hard Sayings" of Jesus Concerning the Child-Parent Relationship*

There are several sayings attributed to Jesus which affirm that children will rise against their parents. Some have strong similarities, e.g. Mark 13:12 par. Matt 10:21. The verse in Mark reads (RSV): "And brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death." There is a variant in Matthew which is more likely a grammatical correction: the majority of the witnesses give the verb "rise" in the third person plural, whereas Codex Vaticanus and some other codices bring the more correct third person singular, because the subject, "children" (a neuter

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<sup>45</sup> See Gerd Theissen, "'Wir haben alles verlassen' (Mc. X 28): Nachfolge und soziale Entwurzelung in der jüdisch-palästinischen Gesellschaft des I. Jahrhunderts n. Ch.," *NovT* 19 (1977): 161–196. In this article Theissen concedes that from a religious point of view the existence of following Jesus ("Nachfolgeexistenz," 161) is a consequence of meeting the Holy One ("Begegnung mit dem Heiligen"), but his own main task is to show from a sociological perspective that this existence is a variant of social uprootedness ("eine Variante sozialer Entwurzelung").

plural in the Greek) would require this. What is striking in this case is that the verse is part of a longer unit which has a parallel in Matthew in a different context: Mark 13:9–13 is part of the “little apocalypse,” whereas its parallel, Matt 10:17–22, occurs in Jesus’ speech concerning the sending out of the disciples. Luke 21:10–19 is a parallel passage (in a speech of Jesus concerning the last days, as in Mark), but in the very parallel to our verse the reference to children rising up against parents is missing. In all three synoptics, the saying is followed by Jesus’ affirmation: “you will be hated by all for my name’s sake.” In Mark and Matthew, Jesus concludes the little unit, but not the speech, with exactly the same words: “But he who endures to the end will be saved.” Luke has a further saying first (“But not a hair of your head will perish”), then the same content as the conclusion in the parallels, but with a different wording: “By your endurance you will gain your lives.” One might argue that the unit stood originally in the apocalyptic speech as in Mark (and Luke), and Matthew transferred it into a different context: Jesus’ speech when he sends out the disciples.<sup>46</sup>

It is significant that even in Matthew’s context there is an apocalyptic tone to the saying, due to the reference to “enduring to the end” (10:22b). Joachim Gnilka observes that the term “the end” (*telos*) in Mark 13:12 probably means the end-time, since it is used with this sense in v. 7 already.<sup>47</sup> He also points to 4 *Ezra* 6.25 as a parallel apocalyptic saying: “And it shall be that whoever remains after all that I have foretold to you shall himself be saved and shall see my salvation and the end of my world.” Gnilka also raises the possibility that Mic 7:6 may stand behind Mark 13:12 and its Matthean parallel.<sup>48</sup> It is possible that the content of the verse is in the background, but its wording is different. The only real parallel in the text of Micah is the verb “rise,” in the third person singular, as it refers to the daughter (in the singular) rising against her mother: “for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”

The saying in Mark is an extremely hard saying as regards children’s behaviour. We have to observe, however, that the context clearly shows

<sup>46</sup> So e.g. Luz, *Matthäus*, 105.

<sup>47</sup> Gnilka, *Markus*, 192.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

that the enmity arises against the followers of Jesus: It is because of Jesus' name that they will be persecuted. This persecution is carried out with such emotion that even family members turn against one another. This does not imply that Jesus' own followers would turn against their parents; rather, Jesus warns his disciples that they will be persecuted by their parents or even by their children. Thus when Jesus speaks here of an enmity between children and parents, he refers to the consequences of discipleship, which are not intended by the disciples, but have to be suffered by them unavoidably. This enmity is described with a reference to apocalyptic circumstances, whether the end would come soon in Jesus' opinion (cf. Matt 10:23, the immediately following verse), or at a non-specified time even in the possibly distant future. Thus hatred is the reaction of some people to the message of Jesus, that is, to the main theme of the mission of his disciples. William Davies and Dale Allison explain the reference to Jesus' "name" in this way: it "explains the persecution as arising from the disciples' identification with Jesus and their confession of him (cf. 1 Pet 4:14; Polycarp, *Ep.* 8.2; Justin, *1 Apol.* 4)."<sup>49</sup> The disciples have to be prepared to suffer this even from their family members; it is not implied that they would behave in the same way toward their persecutors.

Matthew 10:34–36 (par. Luke 12:51–53) is often assigned by scholars to Q, though if it comes from Q, then in the case of these verses Matthew's and Luke's Q-versions were different.<sup>50</sup> The reminiscence of Mic 7:6 raises the possibility that the text was produced by the early Christian community which explained its own situation by this Old Testament verse. However, Ulrich Luz argues that Mic 7:6 played a role also in Judaism in connection with the end-times (cf. *m. Sotah* 9:15), and Jesus caused schism in his own immediate family (Mark 3:31–35), so one can presuppose Jesus-logia in these verses.<sup>51</sup>

On the surface, it seems that according to this saying it is Jesus who initiates enmity. Matthew 10:34 reads: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." Verse 35 begins with a repetition of the term "I have come," which may be an editorial strengthening of the parallelism.<sup>52</sup> In v. 35–36 we read: "For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter

<sup>49</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 187.

<sup>50</sup> So Luz, *Matthäus*, 134.

<sup>51</sup> Luz, *Matthäus*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> So Luz, *Matthäus*, 134 n. 2.

against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; (36) and a man's foes will be those of his own household." It is significant that the Old Testament reference (Mic 7:6) has endtime connotations even in our passage. The immediate context of the quotation, Mic 7:7, refers to looking forward to the God of salvation: "But as for me, I will look to the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me," and the remaining part of the whole of ch. 7 is a consolation with future promises, including a reference to "that day" (Mic 7:12).

The saying concerns the preparation of the disciples for what will happen to them. Although the two chapters, Matt 10 and Luke 12, are not parallels as such (only some parts of them match up), both of them are long collections of sayings concerning discipleship. It can be argued in the case of both that these sayings address the theme of what the disciples have to suffer as a consequence of their decision to follow Jesus. As Darrell Bock has put it: Jesus' remark concerning the division in families "clearly recognizes that people respond differently to the hope he offers."<sup>53</sup> William Davies and Dale Allison also emphasize that *1 En.* 100.1–2 and other Jewish parallels (e.g. *Jub.* 23.16, 19; *4 Ezra* 5.9; 6.24; *2 Bar.* 70.3) show that "the conviction that the great tribulation would turn those of the same household against one another was clearly widespread."<sup>54</sup> It is possible to argue that Jesus' appearance causes the crisis (as Davies and Allison suggest), but it is also possible to see the enmity within the family as an unavoidable element of the end-time crisis. Once again, one should not interpret this passage in isolation. If we regard the larger context (including Matt 10:21–23), it is more likely that the present passage addresses the theme of the disciples' fate: spreading the gospel of Jesus leads to divisions; this has to be suffered even if the disciples only "initiate" it in the sense that they cannot but preach the gospel of Jesus. To sum up in Donald Hagner's words: "I came to divide," would ordinarily be taken in the sense of purpose, here it is more a way of describing the effect of the coming of Jesus and the proclamation of the kingdom. Response to the message of Jesus and his disciples will be mixed and hence cause dissension among members of the same household."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 1189.

<sup>54</sup> Davies and Allison, *Saint Matthew*, 220.

<sup>55</sup> Hagner, *Matthew*, 292.

There is another passage witnessed to by Matthew and Luke, addressing the issue of the priority of Jesus over against parents. The content is similar but the wording is different in the two gospels. Since the different expressions of the same content will be significant for our exposition, we quote both. Matthew 10:37–38 reads: “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Luke 14:26–27 contains one of the most striking sayings of Jesus, often understood as a witness to his radical anti-family ethos: “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” Although there are some minor textual variations in these verses, both Luke 14:26 and Matt 10:37 are well attested. There is no attempt to bring the wordings closer in the history of the manuscript tradition.

Luke 14:26 and Matt 10:37 are either witnesses of independent traditions or “Lukan” and “Matthean” versions of a common tradition. The latter view is held by scholars who assign the saying to Q.<sup>56</sup> Craig Evans affirms: Luke’s single sentence “may be more original in form” than Matthew’s two sentences beginning with a participial construction (“he who . . .”).<sup>57</sup>

It is important to see that Luke 14:26 is not in the same context in Luke as its parallel in Matthew. The former is located after the Lukan parallel of Matt 22:1–10 and a connecting Lukan verse (14:25, “Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them . . .”). Thus in Luke’s Gospel Jesus spoke this saying to the multitude around him. The Matthean version is part of Jesus’ speech at the sending out of the disciples. The saying concerning the cross (following our saying both in Matthew and Luke with some difference in wording) is a variation of a saying that is repeated by all the synoptics after the pericope concerning Peter’s confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23). François Bovon has suggested that in Luke 14:26–27 we have a parallel to Matt 10:37–38, and that two originally independent sayings were put together in the tradition prior to the time

<sup>56</sup> E.g. Luz, *Matthäus*, 134.

<sup>57</sup> Evans, *Saint Luke*, 577.



of Matthew and Luke.<sup>58</sup> If this analysis is correct, then neither Matthew nor Luke can be regarded as reporting the original context of the sayings. Whatever the original context, it is a saying concerning the consequences of discipleship; thus the Matthean context on discipleship can illuminate the meaning even if it was Matthew who organized the material in this way.

I accept that Luke 14:26 and Matt 10:37 are parallels. We can find in them the same idea expressed by different idioms: “loves more” in Matthew equals “does not hate” in Luke. The Semitic background of the term “hate” would suggest that it is about a priority and not about emotions in the modern sense. As Craig Evans has put it: “This may be an example of the Semitic expression of preference by means of antithesis—‘I love A and hate B’ meaning ‘I prefer A to B’ (cf. Gen 29:30–32; Deut 21:15; Rom 9:13)—which has been altered, but correctly interpreted, in the Matthaean form (Matt 10:37).”<sup>59</sup> God places second the one whom he “hates” as opposed to the one whom he elects (cf. also Mal 1:2–3). Howard Marshall points to further parallels (2 Sam 19:7; Prov 13:24; Isa 60:15; 1 John 2:9) and translates the term as “to love less”. He adds that the Hebrew original also means “to leave aside, abandon”: “The thought is, therefore, not of psychological hate, but of renunciation.”<sup>60</sup> If a disciple loves Jesus then he should not love his family more than he loves Jesus; he must place his family second after Jesus (in Luke’s words: he must “hate” his family).

The close context within Luke 14:26 also supports this understanding. In this verse, it is affirmed at the end of the list that one has to hate even one’s own life. This cannot mean real hating; it must mean a willingness to sacrifice even one’s own life for the sake of Jesus. As Darrell Bock argues: “The call to ‘hate’ is not literal but rhetorical. . . . Otherwise, Jesus’ command to love one’s neighbor as oneself as a summation of what God desires makes no sense (Luke 10:25–37).”<sup>61</sup> Thus, the saying is about priorities: Jesus must be more important to the disciple than the disciple’s own life. As Luke has many Old Testament allusions, he was probably capable of seeing the meaning of “putting to the second place in preferences” also in the case of *miseō*. God hated Esau, but nevertheless he made him a nation as well (though he did

<sup>58</sup> Bovon, *Lukas*, 2:527.

<sup>59</sup> Evans, *Saint Luke*, 577.

<sup>60</sup> Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 592.

<sup>61</sup> Bock, *Luke*, 1284.

punish the nation when it turned against the chosen people) according to the Old Testament tradition (Mal 1:2–3). This tradition was understood as pointing to priorities in election, as Paul witnesses when he cites this passage from Malachi in Rom 9:13.

We have to note that the reference to the disciples' "hating" their relatives occurs only in Luke 14:26 in the canonical gospels. This saying occurs twice in the *Gospel of Thomas*, 55 and 101. In the latter the need to love one's parents is also expressed. John 12:25 uses the term concerning the necessity of hating one's own life, this being another example of deciding upon right priorities.

The following saying in Luke (14:27) speaks about the necessity of taking up one's cross. It is understandable if the early church applied this saying to all Christians in a spiritual sense, but this latter meaning may not have been the original sense of the saying. Rather, it refers to a readiness for concrete hardships expected by Jesus from some of his disciples. To sum up, I argue that Luke 14:26 refers to the priority of Jesus' call over one's own family ties. It expresses the urgency of the call and does not mean a break with the Fifth Commandment.

### 7. Conclusion

I have argued that Jesus' (and his first followers') environment affirmed the duty of children to honour their parents. The environment also held that God's priority does not affect the validity of this duty. If we look at the gospel tradition from this angle, it is striking how many passages either confirm or suppose this view as a natural background for everyday life. It remains true that there are radical sayings in the gospels. It is argued here that these sayings (though they are radical indeed) do not force us to conclude that Jesus failed to fulfil the Fifth Commandment.

The texts that witness to tensions in the child-parent relationship can be classified in three groups. First, some of the texts indicate that Jesus' saying is an answer to a challenge, or that the separation within a family is a consequence of the disciples' commitment to Jesus; in other words, it is not Jesus and his disciples who initiate the separation; rather, they suffer it as a consequence of other people's unbelief. Secondly, some texts may be regarded as referring to exceptional cases, i.e. they do not apply to all disciples. Jesus had two kinds of disciples: some were called to become itinerant followers of Jesus, while others

did not have to renounce family life. However, even itinerant disciples could return to their families: they did not break off all contacts with them. Thirdly (and often in connection with the previous category), some texts are to be seen in an apocalyptic setting. They refer either to the end time or to the urgency of deciding upon priorities in the present; in neither case do they prescribe the behaviour of all the disciples of Jesus for the present age.

To sum up, the gospel material concerning the child-parent relationship allows us to put together a picture of Jesus and his first followers that corresponds to that found in the environment of the New Testament. Jesus and the early church around the evangelists observed the commandment to love father and mother; they did not break this commandment when they gave priority to God even over parents. Rather, in the area of the child-parent relationship, we can find an indirect evidence of Jesus' claim of being divine in some sense (for example, in the sense of being the "Son of God"), because he expected from his followers the same priority for himself as was expected in the environment of the early Christians only for God: only God comes before parents.

DID JESUS STAY AT BETHSAIDA? ARGUMENTS  
FROM ANCIENT TEXTS AND ARCHAEOLOGY FOR  
BETHSAIDA AND ET-TELL

HEINZ-WOLFGANG KUHN

The excavation of et-Tell, a hill close to the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, began in 1987. Since then the directing archaeologist has been the Israeli scholar Dr. Rami Arav, who teaches at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The arguments for Bethsaida ask critically whether Jesus stayed at Bethsaida (and some of his disciples grew up there), as mentioned especially in the canonical gospels; the arguments for et-Tell evaluate whether et-Tell can be identified with the New Testament Bethsaida.<sup>1</sup> There are currently eighteen universities and colleges from the United States, Europe and Israel taking part in the Bethsaida Excavations Project, founded in 1991 and administrated at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; among them is the University of Munich, the only one in Germany participating in the project. It is my pleasure to be one of the co-directors of the excavations. We are glad to include in our associated staff many specialists, for example for numismatics, pottery restoration, zooarchaeology, geography/geology and Ground Penetrating Radar. A book series entitled *Bethsaida* is being edited by Rami Arav and also by Richard Freund of the University of Hartford in Connecticut. The volumes contain reports on the excavations and historical arguments. Three volumes have been published so far.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> My former assistant Dr. Regina Franke of the Munich Institute of Roman Provincial Archaeology, who continued the drawing of the Munich plans of the excavations from 2001–2005, helped me very extensively to prepare the archaeological part of this article; my present assistant in archaeology, Dr. Stephanie Keim, has followed (2006) in her footsteps (see for the Munich plans figure 2). I am very grateful to Dr. Almut Koester (University of Birmingham) for correcting my original English manuscript. My former assistant Dr. Jacob Nordhofen was of great help in preparing the preliminary manuscript; especially my assistant Astrid Stacklies, and also Paul Henke, Nadine Kessler and others participated in the proofreading. The article is based on three lectures I gave at the SBL International Meeting at Cambridge, England, in July 2003, at the Sixth Annual Batchelder Biblical Archaeology Conference at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in October 2004, and at the “Münchener Bibelwissenschaftliche Symposien” in May 2005; cf. Postscript.

<sup>2</sup> Rami Arav and Richard A. Freund, eds., *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, Bethsaida Excavations Project 1–3 (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson

## 1. Introduction

Et-Tell, which the excavators believe to be Bethsaida, today lies a good two kilometers from the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee and only some hundred meters from an eastern branch of the Jordan river. It is the largest mound on the plain and measures four hundred by two

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University Press, 1995 [vol. 1]; Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999 [vol. 2] and 2004 [vol. 3]); see also Postscript. See also the following books on et-Tell (Bethsaida): Ilona Skupińska-Løvset, *The Temple Area of Bethsaida: Polish Excavations on et-Tell in the Years 1998–2000* (Łódź: Łódź University Press, 2006); Monika Bernett and Othmar Keel, *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor: Die Stele von Betsaida (et-Tell)*, OBO 161 (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1998); Fred Strickert, *Bethsaida: Home of the Apostles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998). See also three dissertations on et-Tell (Bethsaida), of which the first is now accessible electronically: Sandra Ann Fortner, “Die Keramik und Kleinfunde von Bethsaida-Julias am See Genezareth, Israel,” 2008 [cited 17 March 2008]. Online: [http://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/8200/1/Fortner\\_Sandra.pdf](http://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/8200/1/Fortner_Sandra.pdf) (this dissertation, presented to the University of Munich in 2005, deals only with the Hellenistic-Roman period; p. 7: collection of finds on et-Tell at least until 2000); Carl E. Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida): A Study of the First Century CE in the Galilee” (PhD diss., Drew University, Madison 2007; see Postscript); Toni Gayle Fisher, “A Zooarchaeological Analysis of Change in Animal Utilization at Bethsaida from Iron Age II through the Early Roman Period” (PhD diss., The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2005 [p. IV: analysis of “animal bones discovered during excavations from 1995 through 1998 at et-Tell”]). Following on from her intensive participation in the Bethsaida excavations, Monika Bernett wrote a Munich thesis for her “Habilitation,” which is now printed: Monika Bernett, *Der Kaiserkult in Judäa: Untersuchungen zur politischen und religiösen Geschichte Judäas von 30 v. bis 66 n. Chr.*, WUNT 203 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). The author published the following articles (besides some minor articles and three articles in the Bethsaida volumes [see above]): Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn and Rami Arav, “The Bethsaida Excavations: Historical and Archaeological Approaches,” in *The Future of Early Christianity*, ed. B.A. Pearson (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 77–91 (Kuhn), 91–106 (Arav); Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, “Zum neuesten Stand der Grabungen auf et-Tell (Bethsaida/Julias),” *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel* 3.10 (1998): 78–80; idem, “Jesu Hinwendung zu den Heiden im Markusevangelium im Verhältnis zu Jesu historischem Wirken in Betsaida mit einem Zwischenbericht zur Ausgrabung eines vermuteten heidnischen Tempels auf et-Tell (Bethsaida),” in *Die Weite des Mysteriums: Christliche Identität im Dialog*, ed. K. Krämer and A. Paus (Freiburg: Herder, 2000), 204–240; idem, “Bethsaida und das Neue Testament,” in *Leben am See Gennesaret: Kulturgeschichtliche Entdeckungen in einer biblischen Region*, ed. G. Faßbeck et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2003), 164–167; idem, “Wo wirkte Jesus in der Gaulanitis? Archäologische und historische Feststellungen zur Gleichsetzung von Betsaida/Julias mit et-Tell in frühromischer Zeit,” in *Jesus und die Archäologie Galiläas*, ed. C. Claußen and J. Frey, *Biblich-Theologische Studien* 87 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2008), 149–183 (with 17 figures); this is a partly shortened and partly also enlarged version in German of the present article, which appeared with the permission of the publishing house Brill. The full list can be found on the Web site of the Protestant Faculty of the Munich University: at the moment <<http://www.nt.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/personen/kuhn/publikationen/index.html>>, sub no. 6 of my “Publikationen”: “Bethsaida, literarisch und archäologisch.”

hundred meters. Figure 1 shows an aerial photograph of Bethsaida looking to the east. Josephus identifies Bethsaida in *Ant.* 18.28 with the city of Julias, to which the village of Bethsaida was elevated by Herod's son Philip, tetrarch of the northern territories east of the Jordan river in the days of Jesus. The statement in *Ant.* 18.28 about Julia, "the daughter" of Augustus, has been generally interpreted to mean that Bethsaida/Julias was called after the emperor's daughter who was banished in 2 BCE. Independently, the Israeli numismatist, Arie Kindler, and my collaborators and I found that on the basis of coins of Philip<sup>3</sup> Julia must have been Livia/Julia, the wife of emperor Augustus and the mother of emperor Tiberius (against what Josephus seems to say explicitly in *Ant.* 18.28).<sup>4</sup> Or does Josephus think correctly of Livia/Julia, the wife of the emperor Augustus—as recent research has suggested—when he calls her "daughter of Caesar," since Livia/Julia, who was adopted into the Julian family in 14 CE, is also mentioned in this way in two or three ancient sources of the time?<sup>5</sup> But did Josephus in the same

<sup>3</sup> See Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, "Bethsaida Excavations," 87–90.

<sup>4</sup> Kindler suggested in 1986 (for precursors see Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, "Bethsaida Excavations," 88 with n. 45) in a lecture in Haifa, which he published in 1989 in Hebrew in the Israeli journal *Cathedra* (reprinted in English translation in 1999: Arie Kindler, "The Coins of the Tetrarch Philip and Bethsaida," in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 2:245–249), that on the basis of coins of Philip the reference to Julia in the Josephus text has to be corrected in favor of the mother of Tiberius (in the translation the numbers of the notes partly do not correspond to the actual notes: nn. 6–9 should be nn. 5–8; n. 5 of an added text is missing; the number for the actual note 9 is lacking in the text). I learned about the Hebrew article of Kindler and of his precursors only in 1992. Our Munich research, after an examination of all Juliae from the Julian-Claudian house in connection with the coinage of Philip, revealed that Livia/Julia, the wife of Augustus, is the only possibility. I published our Munich results of 1989/90 in a short note in 1990: "Bethsaida: Ausgrabung einer Stadt Jesu," in *Gesellschaft von Freunden und Förderern der Universität München 68. Jahresbericht 1989* (1990), 27–32: 29; and more explicitly in 1991: Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, "Bethsaida Excavations," 87–90. Ya'akov Meshorer later accepted the interpretation of the κτίστῆς-coin of Philip and the relationship to Julias/Bethsaida, named Julias after Augustus's wife and Tiberius's mother Julia (Meshorer writes erroneously "after Augustus' mother Julia"): Ya'akov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins: From the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2001), 88. Cf. also several articles of Fred Strickert, e.g. the one mentioned in n. 5 and his book *Bethsaida*, 91–107.

<sup>5</sup> (1) Velleius Paterculus, *Historia Romana* 2.75.3 (*coniugem Augusti... sacerdotem ac filiam*), written around 30 CE; (2) on a marble plaque of "Velleia Livia" in Parma Museo Nazionale, dated around 40 CE (*Divi A[ugusti] f... matri Ti. Caesaris*); (3) on an inscribed statue base discovered at Aphrodisias (probably belonging to Livia), from around the same time (Σεβαστοῦ θυγατέ[ρα]) (both inscriptions in Elizabeth Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 211 [EpigCat. 76 Velleia; see also pp. 123–126, 139; ed.

small context refer to the wife of Augustus once as his “wife” and once as his “daughter,” and this half a century after Julia was also called the “daughter” of Augustus? In the other place in Josephus (*War* 2.167–168), where he mentions Julias in the Gaulanitis in connection with a Julia, it seems more likely that Julia, “the wife of Augustus” (2.167) and the mother of Tiberius (2.168), is indeed meant. The elevating of the “village” Bethsaida to the “city” of Julias took place around 30 CE.

Two main archaeological periods have been identified: First, Iron Age II, with finds from about 950 BCE (according to the conventional “high chronology”)<sup>6</sup> until the eighth century BCE (Stratum 6 and 5), and secondly, the Hellenistic-Roman period, beginning in the third century BCE and ending at Bethsaida with a catastrophic earthquake in the fourth century CE (Stratum 2).<sup>7</sup> The major earthquake in 363 CE was followed by a massive slope failure which must have cut off et-Tell from the Sea of Galilee, destroying the economic base for the inhabitants.<sup>8</sup>

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CIL 11, no. 1165] and 210 [EpigCat. 70 Aphrodisias; see also p. 123; ed. *AE* 1980, no. 877]). See for this interesting suggestion Fred Strickert, “The Renaming of Bethsaida in Honor of Livia, a.k.a. Julia, the Daughter of Caesar, in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.27–28,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 3:93–113 (on pp. 98 and 107 and in figures 1 and 3, Strickert mixes up the “Paestum Livia” in the Madrid Museum with the “Velleia Livia” in the Parma Museum [correct on 110 n. 10]; he ascribes to me on p. 96 a *homoioteleuton* for Josephus, *Ant.* 18.28 which I did not propose). Strickert rejects correctly on p. 97 the translation “he called it the same name as Julia, the daughter of the emperor” (instead of “he named it after Julia, the daughter of the emperor”); see the expression with the same meaning (a place called “after” a person) in Josephus, e.g. *Ant.* 5.178.

<sup>6</sup> Israel Finkelstein’s and his followers’ “low chronology” cannot be addressed here (see Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology’s New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts* [New York, NY: Touchstone, 2002]; on the palace at Bethsaida [et-Tell] see Israel Finkelstein, “Chronology Rejoinders,” *PEQ* 134 [2002]: 118–129, at 126–127).

<sup>7</sup> A survey of different strata or levels on et-Tell is given by Rami Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations: Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 2:3–113, at 14–15; as the end of Stratum 2, which has to be divided into different subperiods, should be considered the earthquake in 363 CE (until 2004 only three coins could have been dated to the fourth century CE, none with certainty after the middle of the century). Stratum 6 (Iron Age IIA) dates, according to Arav (but see his dating below in the Postscript), from 1000–925 BCE and Stratum 5 (Iron Age IIB) from 925–732 BCE (in 733/732 the kingdom of Aram Damascus was conquered by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, who also destroyed part of the city on et-Tell; cf. regarding et-Tell John T. Greene, “Tiglath-pileser III’s War Against the City of Tzer,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 3:63–82).

<sup>8</sup> For more on the earthquake see Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, “An Introduction to the Excavations of Bethsaida (et-Tell) from a New Testament Perspective,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 2:283–294, at 283

I will not deal with the splendid finds of the Iron Age II period: a palace, regarded as a *bit ḥilāni*,<sup>9</sup> the city wall with a city gate of about 30 meters in length with chambers and a high place before the entrance of the inner gate. The best information on the magnificent stela of the high place can be found in the monograph of Monika Bernett and Othmar Keel, *Mond, Stier und Kult am Stadttor*.<sup>10</sup> The finds of the Hellenistic-Roman period are less spectacular, as will be seen later. The Bethsaida Excavations Project is excavating mainly in the three Areas A, B and C. Figure 2 gives the latest Munich plan of Bethsaida. The most striking structures of the Hellenistic-Roman period are two Hellenistic courtyard-houses in Areas B (G–J 36–41) and C (E–I 29–32) and a structure in Area A, which Rami Arav believes to be a small temple of the Roman imperial cult in the first century CE (G–K 51–53).

Regarding the Hellenistic-Roman period of our dig, there are currently three main areas where scholars disagree: first, Jesus' historical activity at Bethsaida, and secondly, the identification of et-Tell with Bethsaida; few scholars question either of these.<sup>11</sup> The third problem, whether there was a temple at Bethsaida in the Hellenistic-Early Roman period, is a topic of lively debate even among the Bethsaida project staff.

A minor unsolved problem is a shard of pottery with an incised cruciform motive,<sup>12</sup> found on May 13, 1994 in the south-east corner of room 4 in the "House of the Winegrower" (Square F 29, Locus C 924, level –166.96 m [sic], basket 9243); the size of the main fragment with the "cross" (considering the convex form of the shard) is about 16 ×

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and 290 n. 5. Information on the geological research can be obtained from the geologists and geographers John F. Shroder Jr. and his colleagues from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and Moshe Inbar from Haifa University: John F. Shroder Jr. et al., "Catastrophic Geomorphic Processes and Bethsaida Archaeology, Israel," in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 2:115–173.

<sup>9</sup> See Rami Arav and Monika Bernett, "The *bit ḥilāni* at Bethsaida: Its Place in Aramaean/Neo-Hittite and Israelite Palace Architecture in the Iron Age II," *IEJ* 50 (2000): 47–81. A critical response regarding the identification of the building as *bit ḥilāni* is found in Raz Kletter, "Chronology and United Monarchy: A Methodological Review," *ZDPV* 120 (2004): 13–54, at 39–40.

<sup>10</sup> See n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> See below in sections 2 and 4.

<sup>12</sup> The incision was done probably before firing, but after drying (further information in *ZNW* 101 [2010]: 197–198 [see below in the Postscript]). Concerning the origin of the clay, Prof. Yuval Goren, today at the University of Tel Aviv, according to a report of a petrographic analysis, dated March 1, 1993, believes that an origin from Western Galilee is likely; I thank Dr. Sandra Fortner for letting me have this report in 1998 (see Fortner, "Keramik und Kleinfunde," 44).



21 cm.<sup>13</sup> The crucial factor of the cross-shaped mark is the inner circle from which the four apparently equally long arms extend in parallel lines, which are connected at the end (the upper arm is broken off, the lower seems to be shortened). According to the preliminary data of the field diary of May 13, and according to Sandra Fortner,<sup>14</sup> the shard was discovered among almost exclusively Hellenistic and also Late Hellenistic finds. I know of no parallel in the Hellenistic-Roman period (if one does not include “crosses” on synagogue lintels from Naveh in the Hauran, which belong to the third/fourth century CE and are interpreted as flowers).<sup>15</sup> To my knowledge, the closest parallels are found in the Neo-Assyrian period of the ninth century BCE (e.g., on a stone stela of Assurnasirpal II, 883–859 BCE, who wears a necklace with symbols). Christian crosses of the early Middle Ages (e.g., Alemannic crosses and already before them Langobardic crosses in Italy) show a similarity. One of the oldest similar Coptic crosses was found in Egypt and is dated to the fourth century CE.<sup>16</sup> So far I have not been able to explain the origin and meaning of the “cross” on et-Tell.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Measuring vertically and horizontally at the center of a fictive rectangle. A photograph (with a scale) of the shard, combined with two pieces below, is given in Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” colour-plate V, together with pl. 71 (for the find see here also catalogue nos. 1322–1323 and pp. 45–46); cf. for other illustrations Strickert, *Bethsaida*, 150–151; the front cover of the paperback edition of Arav and Freund, *Bethsaida* 1; Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 105–106 (19 × 20,7 cm), figure 48; Mark Appold, “Bethsaida and a First-Century House Church?” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 2:373–396, at 383, figure 4; Andrea Rottloff, “Pilger, Kreuzfahrer und Touristen—Galiläa als Reiseziel von der Spätantike bis in die heutige Zeit,” in *Leben am See Gennesaret: Kulturgeschichtliche Entdeckungen in einer biblischen Region*, ed. G. Faßbeck et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2003), 187–195, at 194, figure 334b.

<sup>14</sup> Fortner regards “eine späthellenistische Datierung” as “sehr wahrscheinlich” (“Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 45).

<sup>15</sup> Pictures in Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel*, HO, 7. Abteilung 1, 2. Abschnitt, B, Lieferung 4 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 214, figures b and c; interpretation in Frowald Hüttenmeister, *Die jüdischen Synagogen, Lehrhäuser und Gerichtshöfe*, vol. 1 of F. Hüttenmeister and G. Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen in Israel*, Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients B 12.1 (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1977), 337.

<sup>16</sup> Stela of a tomb with a young man, wearing a cross on his chest, in Emma Brunner-Traut, Hellmut Brunner and Johanna Zick-Nissen (Islam), *Osiris, Kreuz und Halbmond: Die drei Religionen Ägyptens*, 5th ed. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1984), 184, 186, no. 153.

<sup>17</sup> But see now my article in ZNW 2010 (quoted below in the Postscript). Cf. my earlier remarks in Kuhn, “Introduction,” 286–287. Strickert, *Bethsaida*, 149 entitles the relevant chapter: “An Early Christian Cross”; Appold, “Bethsaida,” 373 gives his relevant article the title: “Bethsaida and a First-Century House Church?,” arguing rather for a house church (see the “Conclusion,” 392–393, but see also his later article “Peter

After examining the problem of whether Jesus did indeed stay at Bethsaida, I will deal with the following two aspects: first, the question of archaeological data of the Early Roman period on et-Tell with an emphasis on datable small finds. The second aspect is the problem of the identification of a settlement, which existed in the Early Roman period, with Bethsaida/Julias, especially that of the ancient texts.

## 2. *The Problem of Jesus' Staying at Bethsaida*

Bethsaida is mentioned seven times in the canonical gospels. Figure 3 shows the New Testament writings which mention Bethsaida (it appears in the New Testament only in the gospels).

Q is a collection of sayings of Jesus which can be reconstructed from Matthew and Luke, as the majority of New Testament scholars believe. The archetype can be dated around 50 to 70 CE.<sup>18</sup> Two occurrences of Bethsaida in the Gospel of John do not mention Jesus himself working there. A critical evaluation of two further occurrences (the story of the Feeding in Luke and the Healing of a Blind Man in Mark) reveals that the mention of Bethsaida has no historical basis, but was only introduced on the literary level by the gospel writers. As regards the first of these two traditions, the story of the Feeding, which occurs six times in the four canonical gospels, Bethsaida is mentioned only in Luke 9:10. As I have tried to show previously in the volume *Bethsaida* 1,<sup>19</sup> it is certain that the evangelist called Luke inserted the place-name Bethsaida into his version of the story. The second secondary occurrence appears

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in Profile: From Bethsaida to Rome,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 3:133–148, at 147 n. 18, where he denies any Christian relationship).

<sup>18</sup> Were the words of Jesus before the Greek archetype of Q first collected in Aramaic, perhaps even before 50 CE? There may have been several versions of Q in Greek. The writers of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke certainly used Q in somewhat different editions (Q<sup>mt</sup>, Q<sup>lk</sup>). See the edition of Q of the “International Q Project”: James M. Robinson et al., eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); see also, e.g., Udo Schnelle, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 6th rev. ed., UTB 1830 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), § 3.3.

<sup>19</sup> “Bethsaida in the Gospels: The Feeding Story in Luke 9 and the Q Saying in Luke 10,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 1:243–256, esp. 246–248. For all problems in Luke, especially Luke 9:10, the woe-saying in Luke 10:13–15 and the so-called Great Omission of Mark 6:45–8:26, see now the important commentary of Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

in Mark 8:22, where one finds the name of Bethsaida in the first sentence of the story of the Healing of a Blind Man. The geographical beginning of the story appears to be secondarily added by the evangelist, as I have tried to demonstrate in *Bethsaida* 3.<sup>20</sup> Besides Mark 6:45, which reports a failed attempt of the disciples to reach Bethsaida by boat, probably based on an older tradition, this finally leaves only the woe-saying in Q 10:13–15. Here I will go into a few details. Let us first see both versions in Matthew and Luke. The differences are highlighted in the table on the next page.

On the whole, Luke is more original than Matthew.<sup>21</sup> Matt 11:20 is a redactional introduction. The addition in Matt 11:23b–24 seems to be a repetition of v. 21b and v. 22 and a re-adoption of Matt 10:15, a verse on Sodom and Gomorrah, which in Luke 10:12 introduces the woe-saying.<sup>22</sup> The five other differences between Matthew and Luke are so small that it is not necessary to discuss them.<sup>23</sup> The differences are the following: (1) Matthew and Luke use a different form of the same verb “to take place”/“to be done”;<sup>24</sup> (2) in the Lucan text “sitting” is added to “in sackcloth and ashes”; (3) Matthew seems to add “I tell you” in the woes on Chorazin and Bethsaida, taking this from the saying on Sodom and Gomorrah in 10:15; (4) Luke says “at the judgment,”

<sup>20</sup> “Bethsaida in the Gospel of Mark,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 3:115–131. My co-director and colleague Mark L. Appold argued at the 2007 SBL International Meeting in Vienna that Mark 6:45–8:26 is an early oral Bethsaida Jesus tradition that later entered the Gospel of Mark. Though his arguments were numerous, I was not convinced by the thorough lecture of July 26, titled “An Old Problem in New Light: Bethsaida and a Pre-Markan Tradition.”

<sup>21</sup> The opposite opinion of Bultmann is difficult to understand: Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition, with Corrections and with Additions from the 1962 Supplement*, trans. J. Marsh, rev. ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972), 112; orig. edition: *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 29 (Neue Folge 12) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931), 118 and *Ergänzungsheft*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962). Against Bultmann also, e.g., Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969), for whom Matt 11:23b–24 is secondary (62 with n. 5).

<sup>22</sup> Robinson et al., *Critical Edition of Q*, 186 n. 2 ask: “Is Matthew 11:23b–24 in Q?”; in their reconstruction at the bottom of pp. 186–187 they do not reproduce Matt 11:23b–24.

<sup>23</sup> The underlying Greek is based on the corresponding text of “The Greek New Testament” from the third edition of 1975 on, and of Nestle-Aland from the 26th edition of 1979 on.

<sup>24</sup> In both cases we have the aorist of γίνομαι: Luke 1st aorist, Matt 2nd aorist.

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 Luke 10:13–15

(13) Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you *had taken place* in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, *sitting* in sackcloth and ashes.

(14) But for Tyre and Sidon it will be more tolerable *at the judgment* than for you.

(15) And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to Hades.

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 Matt 11:21–24

(21) Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you *had been done* in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

(22) But I *tell you that* for Tyre and Sidon it will be more tolerable *on the day of judgment* than for you.

(23) And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down<sup>25</sup> to *the Hades*. *For if the deeds of power done in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until today.* (24) *But I tell you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.*

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Matthew has “at the day of judgment”; (5) Luke has an article before the Greek word for “Hades.”

I now turn to an investigation of the context of the woe-saying (see figure 4). In Luke the woe-saying is part of the commissioning of disciples; in Matthew it is a separate unit. One cannot argue that the woe-saying in the Gospel of Luke is only a secondary interruption and interpretation of an older context, and that therefore the text provides no evidence for the assumption that Jesus ever stayed at Bethsaida.<sup>26</sup> Methodologically it is important to understand that even if the woe-saying were only an interruption of an older context by the redactor of Q, the saying itself could be old and even authentic.

Let us look in detail at the context of the woe-saying in Q, now also taking Matthew into closer consideration. In Luke we find the saying in the context of the commissioning of 70 or 72 (Luke 10:1–20); in

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<sup>25</sup> Some important manuscripts have the passive of καταβιβάζω (“you will be thrown down”), probably the older reading (see Isa 14:15 HB against LXX).

<sup>26</sup> My co-director colleague Denny Clark argued in this direction in his lecture “Bethsaida in Recent ‘Q’ and Historical Jesus Research” at the Fourth Annual Batchelder Biblical Archaeology Conference at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in October 2002.

Matthew it is found shortly after the commissioning of the Twelve in 9:36–11:1. In Matthew we have a third unit about John the Baptist between the commissioning unit and the woe unit.

The commissioning of disciples is found four times in the Synoptic Gospels: once in Mark (6:6b–13 with their return in vv. 30–31); once in Matthew, following Mark and Q; twice in Luke as commissioning of the Twelve in Luke 9:1–6, 10, following Mark, and as commissioning of 70 or 72 in Luke 10, following mainly Q. But the woe-saying is found only twice: in Matthew 11 after his one commissioning unit and the unit on John the Baptist, in Luke 10 inside his second commissioning unit. We leave aside the commissioning in Mark and in Luke 9, since in their context the woe-saying is missing. It should be noted that in Q the woe-saying (Q 10:13–15) and Jesus' thanksgiving to the Father (Q 10:21–22) doubtless stood close together. This seems to be quite clear from the positions of the woe-saying in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Luke there are only a few sentences between the two units of the woe-saying and Jesus' thanksgiving. First, v. 16, ending the commissioning unit in Luke and also belonging to the end of the commissioning unit in Matthew (10:40). Secondly, the return of disciples in vv. 17–20, which is Luke's final redactional ending of his commissioning unit. In Matthew there is no text in between at all.

To summarize: while the woe-saying in Luke is part of the commissioning unit, we find this unit, independently of Luke, also in Matthew, not far away from the woe-saying. Thus we can suppose for Q that the following three units stood close together:

1. commissioning of disciples
2. woe-saying
3. thanksgiving-saying

Since Luke in 10:16 and Matthew in 10:40 (–42) conclude their mission speeches independently of each other, this must also have been the case in Q.<sup>27</sup> We have left it open whether Q or Luke puts the woe-saying in between the commissioning section. If Luke did so, as seems probable, he not only added the return of the disciples (Luke 10:17–20) after the Q section of their commissioning, but changed the place of the woe-

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<sup>27</sup> "In both Matthew and Luke, Q 10:16 (Matt 10:40) retains its function as the aphorism concluding the mission speech" (John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes & Concordance* [Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1988], 72).

saying, using v. 12 which is found in Matthew's commissioning in 10:15, as the key-saying for the woes. If it is the Sayings Source that is responsible for the position of the woe-saying as found in Luke inside the commissioning,<sup>28</sup> which is unlikely for methodological reasons, the redactor of Q interrupted the commissioning section with the woe-saying,<sup>29</sup> using also the keyword-saying in v. 12 for the starting point of the woes. This v. 12 does not fit so well with the woe-saying that one can assume that the redactor of Q created it. All this, of course, does not prove that the interruption, i.e. the woe-saying, is not old or even authentic. In any case, the woe-saying is surely not a redactional wording, but a tradition taken over by Q, where the commissioning of disciples, the woes and the thanksgiving stood close together. In Q the woe-saying was probably a singular tradition,<sup>30</sup> which stood, as in Matthew, after the commissioning unit and was followed by the thanksgiving unit. But in any event, in our case the interruption of the commissioning in Luke, for which Luke (or less probably the redactor of Q) is responsible, proves nothing regarding the authenticity or the age of the woe-saying, since Q 11:13–15 are without doubt tradition and not merely redaction.

The old question, which I will now discuss, remains whether the woe-saying is an authentic saying of Jesus, or if not, how old this tradition is to be judged. Since I have already published arguments regarding this question on several occasions in English<sup>31</sup> and German,<sup>32</sup> here I will refer in greater detail primarily to two arguments from parallel sayings. First, let me mention briefly only two arguments among others for an old age of the saying. (1) The fact that the saying does not mention the preaching of Jesus, which the later community would certainly do, but only his miracles, marks the reference to Chorazin and Bethsaida as rather old. (2) In the woe-saying, Capernaum is emphasized as a

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<sup>28</sup> It is harder to explain that Matthew separated the woe-saying from the commissioning than that Luke, using from the Q commissioning the sentence Luke 10:12 par. Matt 10:15 as key-saying, integrated a subsequent saying in Q, the woes, into the commissioning.

<sup>29</sup> For Paul Hoffmann, Luke 10:16 (against Matt 10:40) also shows the original position in Q (*Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle*, 3rd rev. ed., NTAbhNS 8 [Münster: Aschendorff, 1982], 286).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lührmann, *Redaktion*, 63: "Das Drohwort selbst dürfte, da sich nicht nachweisen läßt, daß es erst für diesen Zusammenhang geschaffen wäre, ursprünglich isoliert überliefert worden sein."

<sup>31</sup> Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, "Bethsaida Excavations," 78; Kuhn, "Bethsaida in the Gospels," 248–251, 254–255; Kuhn, "Bethsaida in the Gospel of Mark," 115–117, 125.

<sup>32</sup> Kuhn, "Jesu Hinwendung," 216; Kuhn, "Bethsaida und das Neue Testament," 164–165.

main place or perhaps *the* main place for the activities of Jesus, though it is condemned. Its great importance for Jesus does not mean, according to the saying, that Capernaum will have a privileged condition at the last judgment; rather, because of its unwillingness to repent, it will go down to Hades. In the tradition after the death of Jesus, the memory of Chorazin was lost (but is mentioned here) and Capernaum apparently became a main center of Christian activities as an analysis of Mark 1 shows.<sup>33</sup> This means that the saying was either spoken by Jesus himself at the end of his mission there, or it recalls, shortly after his death, his failure in these three places, when Chorazin was not yet forgotten, and Capernaum was not yet an early Christian center.

I now turn to the two arguments against the authenticity which could be brought forth from parallel sayings. One argument was given by Rudolf Bultmann in the second revised edition of his *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*<sup>34</sup> and was renewed, for example, by Dieter Lührmann in his book on the Sayings Source Q.<sup>35</sup> Bultmann refers to a saying about pagan people who listened to the wisdom of Solomon and the prophecy of Jonah. They are the queen of the South and the people of Nineveh who will condemn the Jewish generation of Jesus according to Q 11:31–32. The wording of Luke 11:31–32 probably comes close to the original wording in Q (the parallel is found in Matt 12:41–42). The Threat against This Generation in Q 11:31–32 reads:

(31) The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and she will condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth *to listen to the wisdom of Solomon*, and see, what is here is greater than Solomon. (32) *The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah*, and see, what is here, is greater than Jonah.

Bultmann believes that this saying belongs to the same later community situation as our saying.<sup>36</sup> For this opinion Bultmann quotes a monograph of Anton Fridrichsen of 1925.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, "Neuere Wege in der Synoptiker-Exegese am Beispiel des Markusevangeliums," in *Bilanz und Perspektiven gegenwärtiger Auslegung des Neuen Testaments*, ed. F.W. Horn, BZNW 75 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 60–90, at 72–82.

<sup>34</sup> See n. 21. For Bultmann's arguments, see also my earlier article "Bethsaida in the Gospels," 249.

<sup>35</sup> Lührmann, *Redaktion*, 64.

<sup>36</sup> Bultmann, *History*, 112–113 and 399 (*Geschichte*, 118 and *Ergänzungsheft*, 17). Cf. Kuhn, "Bethsaida in the Gospels," 249, 255.

<sup>37</sup> *Le problème du miracle dans le Christianisme primitive*, Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses 12 (Strasbourg: Librairie Istra, 1925), 49–50.

Fridrichsen points out that we have in both cases pagan people as an example, a similar situation at the last judgment and also a similar structure of the two sayings (but this will be correct only in the case of a Matthean priority of the woe-saying); finally Fridrichsen mentions the motive of repentance as a later Christian missionary matter. While the saying about the queen of the South and the people of Nineveh (see the italics in the quotation of the saying) indeed seems to reflect the Christian mission, the woe-saying about Chorazin and Bethsaida is less affirmative about the pagans of Tyre and Sidon. It says only: “they would have repented,” and this should not be turned down, as Fridrichsen does (though in this saying the hypothetical form is, of course, necessary). Further, the saying concerns Jesus’ preaching, while our woe-saying speaks—less mission-like—of his miracles. And finally, the second part of the saying about Capernaum, as it is found in Luke, says nothing about pagan people.

The saying about the queen of the South and the people of Nineveh is no real argument against the authenticity of the woe-saying or an origin close to the historical Jesus. The saying against “this generation” could be of later Christian origin, as the italics in the quotation could suggest. On the other hand, the woe-saying seems to be authentic or at least rather close to Jesus.

There is also another saying that is indeed very close to the woe-saying, referred to also by Bultmann in the same context. Luke’s section on towns in 10:8–12 in his second commissioning has in v. 12, as we have seen, a kind of key-sentence after which the woe-saying follows; in Matthew the verse found in Luke 10:12 is also part of the commissioning unit (10:15). The Threat against Towns in Q 10:12 reads: “I tell you that for Sodom it will be more tolerable on that day than for that town (τῆ πόλει ἐκείνῃ).” Other than the woe-saying the comparison with the people of Sodom is not an independent saying, but part of the commissioning speech (“that town” refers back to the general mentioning of towns in Q 10:8, 10–11). The commissioning in Luke is well composed: (1) On houses 10:5–7; (2) on towns 10:8–12; v. 12 as key-saying for the woes 10:13–15; (3) a “christological” ending 10:16 and (4) finally the return of the disciples in 10:17–20. In Matthew the passage of the return is missing; Luke’s ending 10:16 is also part of Matthew’s ending of the commissioning speech (10:40–42). But in Matthew the woes are, as we have seen, a later separate unit (10:5–7). It seems that Matthew preserved the sequences of the units in more original form and that Luke took the woes from a place after Matthew’s



commissioning speech. In any case, the woe-saying is a traditional unit, while the saying about the people of Sodom in the Threat against Towns could have been worded by the original composer of the commissioning speech, perhaps by the author of Q. The Q saying about the people of Sodom is not only dependent on the context, but also much more general and less specific, and cannot be an argument against the woe-saying as an older tradition. The woe-saying may even have been the origin of this saying about the people of Sodom.

I will now sum up the reflections on the three sayings, of which the second and third are less likely to be authentic. The situation behind the woe-saying is apparently much older than Q, belonging to Jesus himself or the time right after his crucifixion. In the saying in question, Capernaum does not yet have a respectable Christian community, a community which we can infer from Mark 1, when we use the method of redaction criticism. Chorazin, which is later never mentioned in the gospel tradition, is not yet forgotten in the woe-saying. Though I have put forward some arguments in previous publications that the saying is authentic, I have also considered that the saying may have been formulated shortly after the death of Jesus.<sup>38</sup> Even in this case we learn something about the activity of Jesus himself from the saying. While the sayings in Q 11:31–32 (against “this generation”) and Q 10:12 (against towns) are more general, the meaning of the woe-saying is that Jesus performed numerous and important miracles in Chorazin and Bethsaida. But this did not bring the people there to repent; even the notorious Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon will have a better position in the last judgment than Chorazin and Bethsaida. Since the reference to Chorazin and Bethsaida does not mention the preaching of Jesus like Q 11:31–32 in an indirect way, but only his miracles, the saying seems to be quite old. Though Capernaum is seen as a main place or perhaps *the* main place for the activities of Jesus, it will nevertheless go down to Hades because of its unwillingness to repent. After the death of Jesus, the memory of Chorazin was all but lost, and Capernaum became a main center of Christian activities, as an analysis of Mark 1 can show (a condemnation at that time is hardly a pos-

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<sup>38</sup> Discussed previously in Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations,” 78. From a rather new book on the authenticity of the Final Judgment Sayings of Jesus in Q I quote here only the result for the saying in question: “The arguments tilt strongly in favor of the authenticity of the Galilean woes, tentatively including Matt 11:23b-24”; see Brian Han Gregg, *The Historical Jesus and the Final Judgment Sayings in Q*, WUNT 2.207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 127.

sibility). This means that the saying either goes back to Jesus himself at the end of his mission there, or it recalls only shortly after his death his failure in three places.

### 3. *The Archaeological Data of the Early Roman Period on et-Tell, with an Emphasis on Small Finds*

In this chapter the evidence for the habitation of et-Tell in the time of Jesus will be presented. The period in question is mainly the first half of the first century CE, but such a narrow period is hardly detectable. It is reasonable to examine the “Early Roman period” and to exclude, as far as possible, finds whose origins are probably not before the second half of the first century CE. For convenience, the term “Early Roman” will be used here to mark the period from the capture of Jerusalem by the Roman military commander Pompey in 63 BCE until the Bar Kokhba revolt.<sup>39</sup>

First, we should mention the architectural structures that can be dated to the first century CE. No doubt there are plenty of architectural structures in the Hellenistic-Roman period,<sup>40</sup> but speaking specifically about the first century CE is much more difficult, since the Roman houses above the Iron Age inner gate and east of the inner gate could be of around second-century CE origin. Of course, we will know more about their history when a detailed analysis of all the finds, and especially the pottery according to their context, has been made.<sup>41</sup> Since 2003 a wall of about 1.5 m in length in the area east of the Iron Age inner city gate (N 56) has been under discussion, which (among other remnants) Rami Arav believes to be part of the Early Roman city wall,

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<sup>39</sup> For the first century CE on et-Tell and some time before and after it see a new article and the 2007 dissertation of the Bethsaida co-director Dr. Carl E. Savage: “Supporting Evidence for a First-Century Bethsaida,” in *Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Galilee: A Region in Transition*, ed. Jürgen Zangenberg et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); idem, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida).” In both publications Savage deals with the following items in the same sequence: Coins, Rhodian stamped handles, glass, stone vessels, architecture, oil lamps, ceramics, faunal evidence. In the following I concentrate on architecture and finds that can be dated with some certainty to the Early Roman period and especially, where this may be possible, to the first half of the first century CE.

<sup>40</sup> See now Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 109–113 (“Architecture”).

<sup>41</sup> Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” covers the excavations at least through 2000, not including the coins, which were not subject of her research. For new information see especially Savage, “Supporting Evidence,” 196–206; idem, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 76–138; for Savage see also the note before.

constructed by Philip in about 30 CE. Arav mentions for this Locus (1525) “globular cooking pots with triple-ridged rims (the first half of the first century CE).”<sup>42</sup>

Another Roman house was built against the Iron Age inner city wall, partly above the Iron Age palace (see in figure 5). From this Roman structure, Rami Arav, in *Bethsaida* 2, published two pictures of a shard of “Early Roman fineware” and a grain-threshing device (called by Arav “a flour-threshing device”), which are dated by him to the first century CE.<sup>43</sup> Three other finds can be added to that: (1) a coin of Agrippa I, giving the regnal year 6, which is 42 CE,<sup>44</sup> found in the context of the Roman house in L 43 (Locus 494); (2) a coin of the city of Tiberias, giving the regnal year 13 of the emperor Claudius, which is 53/54, found also in the context of the Roman house in M 43 (Locus 491);<sup>45</sup> (3) the fragment of a Herodian oil lamp, found also in this environment in L 44 (Locus 452).<sup>46</sup>

Two finds may help in the discussion about the proposed *Hellenistic-Early Roman temple*. One is the figurine “Lady of Bethsaida,” which is, according to my view, probably Hellenistic, and the beautiful lintel, which had been seen on et-Tell even before our excavations began in 1987.

One of the nearest parallels to the so-called “Lady of Bethsaida,” discovered in 1989 in the context of the proposed temple in Square I 52 (Locus 525), is apparently a terracotta figurine in the Staatliche Antikensammlungen in Munich (see figures 6 and 7).<sup>47</sup> The Munich

<sup>42</sup> See Rami Arav, “Bethsaida, 2003,” *IEJ* 55 (2005): 101–106, at 102–104 with a photograph of this wall on p. 104 (W856, not W855 as on the plan on p. 102); the quotation on p. 103.

<sup>43</sup> Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 86–88 (figures 32 and 33 and figure 35 on p. 90 respectively).

<sup>44</sup> See the list of Arie Kindler, “The Coin Finds at the Excavations of Bethsaida,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 2:250–268, at 258, no. 111.

<sup>45</sup> See the list of Kindler, “Coin Finds,” 259, no. 112; probably not of Agrippa II, see Andrew Burnett et al., *From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 BC–AD 69)* (vol. 1.1 of Andrew Burnett et al., *Roman Provincial Coinage*; London: British Museum Press, 1992), 671. For Meshorer, *Treasury*, 261, no. 347 it is “under Agrippa II” a “Mint of Tiberias,” “Under Claudius” in the year 13 “= 53 CE.”

<sup>46</sup> See figure 16a and also the photo in Kuhn, “Bethsaida und das Neue Testament,” 166, figure 288.

<sup>47</sup> My former collaborator Dr. Claudia Gruber and I discovered the parallel in the Munich collection in the winter of 2000/2001. Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 29 mentions this figurine. On the “Lady of Bethsaida” see Ilona Skupińska-Løvset, “Terracotta figurines from et-Tell, Bethsaida,” *Centre d’Archéologie Méditerranéenne de l’Académie Polonaise des Sciences. Études et Travaux* 20 (2005): 261–268 (she writes

terracotta belongs to figurines referred to as “Tanagra style” from a small town about 60 kilometers northwest of Athens, where such figurines were first discovered.<sup>48</sup> The repertoire of these types is dated to the late fourth- and third-century BCE terracotta production, which became enormously popular and was imitated in the east until the first century BCE and especially until the mid-second century BCE.<sup>49</sup> For the Hellenistic period there are further parallels in Asia Minor, but for the Roman period there is no figurine which is equally close to the “Lady of Bethsaida.” Not only the hairstyle should be compared, but also the whole context of the hair with face and cloth. It is important to note that faces of stone are not really comparable with terracotta figurines.<sup>50</sup>

There are reasons for proposing a temple on et-Tell,<sup>51</sup> such as the several decorated stones<sup>52</sup> and some pieces belonging to columns<sup>53</sup>

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on 267–268: “The best analogy... was supplied” by the author at a conference in 2002); cf. for the figurine also idem, *Temple Area*, 114 (no. 2), 116.

<sup>48</sup> See Latife Summerer, “Tanz der Verschleierten,” in *Hauch des Prometheus: Meisterwerke in Ton*, ed. F. W. Hamdorf (Munich: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, 1996), 110–113 with figure 140; especially Jaimee P. Uhlenbrock, “The Hellenistic Terracottas of Athens and the Tanagra Style,” in *The Coroplast’s Art: Greek Terracottas of the Hellenistic World*, ed. Uhlenbrock (New Paltz, NY: College Art Gallery, 1990), 48–53; Gerhard Zimmer, “Frauen aus Tanagra,” in *Bürgerwelten: Hellenistische Tonfiguren und Nachschöpfungen im 19. Jh.*, ed. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994), 19–28; Reinhard Lullies, “Statuette einer Tänzerin,” in *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. G. E. Mylonas (St. Louis, MO: Washington University Press, 1951), 668–673 and pl. 70. For pictures of the Munich figurine see Summerer, “Tanz,” 110 (figure 140); Lullies, “Statuette,” pl. 70; J. [Ilse] Schneider-Lengyel, *Griechische Terrakotten* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1936), figure 74.

<sup>49</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Hamdorf, “Modefrauen,” in *Hauch des Prometheus: Meisterwerke in Ton*, ed. Hamdorf (Munich: Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, 1996), 104–109 with figure 133, at 109; cf. Eva Töpferwein, *Terrakotten von Pergamon* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), 184, 194.

<sup>50</sup> Is the hairstyle of women in stone, on coins and on figurines in any way comparable?

<sup>51</sup> According to Arav: see especially “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 18–24; idem, “New Testament Archaeology and the Case of Bethsaida,” in M. Becker and W. Fenske, eds., *Das Ende der Tage und die Gegenwart des Heils: Begegnungen mit dem Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt*, AGJU 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 75–99, at 85–87; idem, “The Archaeology of Bethsaida and the Historical Jesus Quest,” in Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough, eds., *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity* (Boston, MA: ASOR, 2007), 317–331, at 319, 323–327, 329. Besides Skupińska-Løvset, “Terracotta figurines” and idem, *Temple Area*, referred below in detail, see now also Excursus 1: “The ‘Temple’ of Bethsaida,” in Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 150–158 and figures 34, 35, 37.

<sup>52</sup> See the preliminary list in Kuhn, “Jesu Hinwendung,” 224 n. 94. Cf. also Skupińska-Løvset, *Temple Area*, 105–113 (Appendix 1).

<sup>53</sup> See the photo in Sandra Fortner and Andrea Rottloff, “Signale aus der Vergangenheit:

which were partly scattered on the hill (how many were found close to the building in question is not clear).

While the dating of the “Lady of Bethsaida” speaks, according to my present judgment, more for the second century BCE, other finds seem to be arguments for a first-century CE temple.

The most interesting of the decorated stones is a lintel (see figures 8 and 9) which was already known before the Bethsaida excavations began. A picture of the lintel was published by Mendel Nun in 1977 in his book “*Sea of Kinneret*”<sup>54</sup> and by Bargil Pixner in *Biblical Archaeologist* 1985.<sup>55</sup> Before 1977, the lintel had been on et-Tell, and before 1985, in the Jordan Park. In 1993, I saw it at the entrance of the later burnt-down restaurant in the Jordan Park.<sup>56</sup> In the summer of 2007 the lintel was lying near the path leading up to the hill from the car park.<sup>57</sup> It has almost escaped notice that the lintel, which is now lying upside down, has two holes on the underside (see figure 9), one for moving the door, the other one for a bolt which was pushed into the lintel.

If there was a pagan temple at Bethsaida before the Roman period, it would have been erected most probably before the eighties of the first century BCE. Since after the Hasmoneans under Alexander Jannaeus, at the end of the eighties of the first century BCE, had taken possession of the Gaulanitis until the reorganization of territories by Pompey, the erection of a pagan temple was certainly not possible. From that time on, et-Tell (Bethsaida) was apparently a place of no importance, until Herod the Great received the Gaulanitis (as the lack

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Die Rekonstruktion des täglichen Lebens am See in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit am Beispiel der archäologischen Funde aus Betsaida,” in *Leben am See Gennesaret: Kulturgeschichtliche Entdeckungen in einer biblischen Region*, ed. G. Faßbeck et al. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 2003), 138–146, at 140, figure 232. There are arguments for a temple with which I have great problems, like the theory that the reconstructed pediment, now standing in front of the Byzantine synagogue of Chorazin, belonged originally to the temple at Bethsaida, a theory which Arav still holds (“Archaeology of Bethsaida,” 325–327). When I checked the pediment, I was not convinced; further research is needed.

<sup>54</sup> Mendel Nun, *Sea of Kinneret: A Monograph* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1977 [Hebrew]), 21.

<sup>55</sup> Bargil Pixner, “Searching for the New Testament Site of Bethsaida,” *BA* 48 (1985): 207–216, at 207, figure below.

<sup>56</sup> Pixner, “Searching,” 207: “found at et-Tell and now displayed in the nearby Jordan Park.”

<sup>57</sup> Cf. the photo in Fortner and Rottloff, “Signale,” 140, figure 232.

especially of coins suggests for that period).<sup>58</sup> But a temple of the imperial cult would most likely have been erected when Bethsaida became Julias around 30 CE.

The whorls of the meander of the above mentioned lintel run anticlockwise. There exist very good parallels to the lintel on et-Tell in the combination of meander and rosettes in Hauran temples, a territory which was taken by the Nabataeans at the beginning of the first century BCE.<sup>59</sup> The Hauran parallels are to be dated around the first century CE, surely not to the second century BCE. There are also good parallels in the Golan region which date to the second or third century CE. One finds exactly the same kind of a double meander combined with a rosette at the Hauran temple at Mušannaf, a temple probably for a local god, dated to the first half of the first century CE (see figure 10).<sup>60</sup>

The decorated stones and columns which were found scattered around the hill would seem to indicate the presence of a temple at the site. The more or less recognizable ground plan with a suggested pro-naos, antecella, cella and an opisthodom, also the antae perhaps on both small sides, a stone between them on the eastern side which seems to be part of a pillar, a doorstone found in front of the entrance and finally two incense shovels, one of them complete (apparently in a pit) and close to the building in question (about 10 m away)<sup>61</sup>—all this would fit very well with the interpretation of this structure as a temple on the

<sup>58</sup> Bernett, *Kaiserkult*, 256.

<sup>59</sup> Manfred Lindner, ed., *Petra und das Königreich der Nabatäer: Lebensraum, Geschichte und Kultur eines arabischen Volkes der Antike*, (Munich: Delp, 5th ed., 1989), 53; Peter W. Haider et al., eds., *Religionsgeschichte Syriens: Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996), 176.

<sup>60</sup> Klaus Stefan Freyberger, *Die frühkaiserzeitlichen Heiligtümer der Karawanenstationen im hellenisierten Osten: Zeugnisse eines kulturellen Konflikts im Spannungsfeld zweier politischer Formationen*, Damaszener Forschungen 6 (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), pl. 42a. Exactly the same kind of meander also occurs at a temple for a local god at Selaima (Slim), dated to the end of the first century BCE (see Freyberger, *Heiligtümer*, pl. 37b).

<sup>61</sup> The data of discovery of this shovel are: Area A, Square G 54, Locus 152, Basket 2660, found May 7, 1996; Arav, "Preliminary Report, 1994–1996," 32: in "a refuse pit" (see on pp. 32–37 the many finds there) "at the level of 167.47 m" (field diary, supervisor Fred Strickert: "167.447" [erroneously three numbers?]; Arav's level is also found in the afterwards produced computer Locus-Report). An incense shovel in a nearby refuse pit (*favissa*) would fit with the supposed temple. But there remains a small uncertainty: In the computer Locus-Report of Locus 166 (below Locus 152) for May 7 and 8, 1996 one reads only that a pit is "possible" (the field diary for Locus 166 [supervisor Fred Strickert] gives the same information); according to my private diary of July 19, 1997, Dr. Arav was certain that the archaeological context of the shovel was a pit. Cf. the photo with the original context of the shovel in Arav, "Preliminary Report, 1994–1996," 23, figure 15.

highest central level of et-Tell (–166 m),<sup>62</sup> provided the interpretations and suggestions are correct. There seems to be a consensus among scholars that in honour of “Julia,” “Mother of Tiberius,” a small temple of only about 21 x 11 m (the Bethsaida building is about 20 × 6 m) could also have been erected even in Athens,<sup>63</sup> though the dedication of the so-called “South-west temple” on the Agora is only a possibility. If a small local temple had been erected on et-Tell, perhaps in the second century BCE, it might have been later rededicated to Julia-Livia around 30 CE, just as another temple in Greece, near Marathon, was rededicated to Livia-Julia.<sup>64</sup> The Bethsaida building has several floors. It must have been used over a longer period. Two finds that speak for the use of the building in the first century CE are a coin of Philip which was found in the context of the building, and also one of the above-mentioned two Roman incense shovels. This shovel can be dated approximately at least from the second half of the first century CE<sup>65</sup> to the first half of the second century CE.<sup>66</sup> In our case it fits best, in my opinion, in the context of a small Roman temple, rededicated to a member of the Roman imperial family.

Besides considering the ground plan of a freestanding building at the highest point of the center of et-Tell I have argued for a small pre-Maccabean local temple<sup>67</sup> from 2000/2001 on, primarily because of the dating of the little figurine “Lady of Bethsaida,” found *in situ*, to the

<sup>62</sup> Cf. the published topographical plans, especially Rami Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations: Preliminary Report, 1987–1993,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 1:3–63, at 4 (figure 1: July 9, 1991 by J.M. Nielsen); idem, “New Testament Archaeology,” 93 (since I am in possession of a better reproduction of the plan, I want to clarify the height below the marker “Area A”: “–166” and south of it “–167”; in the right corner below one finds “R.A. 1997 ©”).

<sup>63</sup> Rami Arav in an interview with Vered Levy-Barzilai; see the article “Findings Unearthed at the Ancient City of Bethsaida,” in *Ha’aretz*, 19.05.2004.

<sup>64</sup> V. Vasileios Petrakos, *Rhamnous* (Athens: Archaeological Receipts Fund, 1991), esp. 29.

<sup>65</sup> See the shovels discovered in Pompeii and Herculaneum: Yigael Yadin, *The Finds from the Bar-Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963), 54, pl. 28 top left and right; Raffaele Liberatore, “Alari e Paletta.—Bronzi Pompeiani,” in *Real Museo Borbonico X* (Naples: Stamperia Reale, 1834), 1–3 and pl. 64. Of course, a date in the first half of the first century CE is possible for the Bethsaida shovel.

<sup>66</sup> See the shovels from the Bar Kokhba revolt: Yadin, *Finds*, 48–54, nos. 3–6 with figures 11–15; pls. 15–16.

<sup>67</sup> I published this theory for the first time in 2000 (“Jesu Hinwendung,” 228). Arav—though being somewhat reserved (“we may likely conclude” and “we are still in the process of study”)—still holds the theory of a “Roman imperial temple” “that Philip built at Bethsaida” (“The Archaeology of Bethsaida”; quotations from 323–324 and 327). See also his argument on 329 n. 7 (that “the temple utilized secondary earlier walls”—especially if they belonged to the Iron Age—is, of course, no argument

Hellenistic, pre-Maccabean period. Against this, but along with stratigraphical considerations concerning different pavements, the dating of the decorated lintel of an undoubtedly public building, unfortunately not *in situ*, to around the first century CE left room for rededicating the temple to the divinely honored Julia.<sup>68</sup>

Of great interest and help is the publication of Ilona Skupińska-Løvset on the *Temple Area of Bethsaida* in 2006. Prof. Dr. Skupińska-Løvset of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Lodz headed the Polish excavations on et-Tell in 1998–2000.<sup>69</sup> The main results of this expedition are: (1) The supposed temple was not constructed as “a new Roman temple” of the Imperial cult.<sup>70</sup> Skupińska-Løvset found “five usage levels”: “Three of these levels must be considered Hellenistic, one probably early Roman, one mature Roman or later.”<sup>71</sup> This proposed sanctuary “was erected on the traditional holy place on the debris after the destruction in the VIIIth century BC.”<sup>72</sup> (2) Skupińska-Løvset presents “a new conception of the reconstruction of the sacral area.”<sup>73</sup> For the first time she reconstructs the extension and structure of the area around the supposed sacred building, speaking of a temple within a “temenos,” which extends north of the supposed temple.<sup>74</sup> Although I still have questions about the proposal of a temenos of this kind (cf. the Munich plan in figure 2, going south from I–L 47) I am certain that her theory must be studied carefully. (3) Skupińska-Løvset parallels the suggested Bethsaida temple with the “Phoenician type of

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against my proposal that the temple was perhaps first erected in the Hellenistic period).

<sup>68</sup> Already before her consecration in 42 CE she was divinely honored in the east of the empire (overlooked by Skupińska-Løvset, *Temple Area*, 71). See Ulrike Hahn, *Die Frauen des römischen Kaiserhauses und ihre Ehrungen im griechischen Osten anhand epigraphischer und numismatischer Zeugnisse von Livia bis Sabina*, Saarbrücker Studien zur Archäologie und Alten Geschichte 8 (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag, 1994), 34–117, esp. at 62.

<sup>69</sup> *Temple Area*.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 72–73; see also, e.g. 102. See now also the conclusion of Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida)”: “The building [sc. “the temple of Bethsaida”] is likely to have been constructed during the second century BCE” (158).

<sup>71</sup> *Temple Area*, 102. My own dating of the supposed temple from the Hellenistic period did not depend on the Polish expeditions, but many discussions during the excavations and in other places seemed to show me that Prof. Skupińska-Løvset is not against my time proposal. The basis for my proposal was, of course, much smaller than what she presents now in her book.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 101; see also pp. 94–95.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, see especially 94–98 and 194, figures 38a–c.



sanctuary.”<sup>75</sup> She states that “in the period preceding the Roman Age Phoenician influence reached beyond the Jordan.”<sup>76</sup>

There are still no arguments for another function of the building that fits better than the interpretation as a small temple. A main argument against the proposal of a temple is, in my opinion, the height of the preserved Iron Age wall between chamber 3 and chamber 4 of the gate, which is only about two meters east of the supposed entrance to the presumed temple and confines the space before the entrance to a narrow corridor, certainly not only today.<sup>77</sup> My conclusion: At the moment we can be certain neither of the erection of the building as a temple in the second century BCE nor of its rededication to Livia-Julia—and even less of its erection in her honour. But at present I cannot think of any better explanation than the one that sees in the freestanding building a (perhaps later, in the first century CE, rededicated) small local pre-Maccabean temple.

Leaving aside now the architectural structures and also the question of a Hellenistic-Roman temple, I refer only to coins of the beginning of the first century CE, precisely to *the four coins of Philip (4 BCE–33/34 CE)*<sup>78</sup> and *the one coin of Herod Antipas (4 BCE–39 CE)* which were found on et-Tell (see figures 11 and 12). Of course, compared with silver coins these bronze coins (AE) probably remained in circulation for a much shorter period of time. It would be interesting to find out the usual archaeological *terminus ad quem* for the loss of these coins of Philip and Herod Antipas.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 101. Cf. also Arav, speaking of the time after Alexander the Great: “At Bethsaida, a larger influx of new settlers arrived, presumably from the thriving Phoenician coast” (“Archaeology of Bethsaida,” 319).

<sup>76</sup> *Temple Area*, 104. According to Skupińska-Løvset, the Phoenician influence could explain Jesus’ comparison in the woe-saying in Q 10:13–15 with the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon (ibid., 104).

<sup>77</sup> Even if a later floor (i.e. earlier floor in the excavations process) had been much higher than the present floor (which is doubtful according to my information), an explanation for the height of the present floor against the preserved height of the Iron Age wall would be necessary.

<sup>78</sup> Not five coins “in the vicinity of the temple,” as Arav states in an article of 2007 (“Archaeology of Bethsaida,” 325); until 2004/05 only four coins of Philip were found on et-Tell (according to the analysis of all Bethsaida coins until 2004/05 by Kindler), and for the subsequent period until 2008 I know of no coin of Philip found there. Only one of these four coins was found in the context of the “temple” (found 1990 in G 51; the other three coins were found in I 38, I 46 and O 56). Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 75, mentions also in his new list of Bethsaida coins only four coins of Philip. See also the Postscript for coins of 2009.

Keeping the main focus on the Early Roman period, one kind of shard is a most helpful tool for narrowing the chronological framework down to the Early Roman period: *stone vessels*.<sup>79</sup> Up to now, more than 15 fragments of limestone vessels (lathe-turned or hand-carved), more precisely white chalk vessels, have been found on et-Tell which belong at least for the most part to different cups, bowls and other crockery (see figure 13). Stone vessels are a special feature of Jewish life, since, according to Jewish law, stone vessels did not acquire impurity. As Yitzhak Magen writes in his book of 2002 about stone vessels in Israel/Palestine: They “appear suddenly in the late first century BCE and vanish after the destruction of the second temple and the Bar Kokhba revolt without remaining in use.”<sup>80</sup> Jane M. Cahill, in a paper of 1992 on chalk vessels, even suggested that “their use... was confined primarily, and perhaps solely, to the 1st century C.E.”<sup>81</sup>

Though further research is still needed, Cahill states that at present “these vessels are found almost exclusively at sites known to have been inhabited by Jews.”<sup>82</sup> The extent to which Bethsaida/Julias was Jewish or pagan in the first century is still an unanswered question. According to our excavations and historical information it was definitely Jewish, but perhaps also had a pagan population. Certainly, as the place of Peter, his brother Andrew, and of Philip, whose home was Bethsaida, according to John 1:44 and 12:21,<sup>83</sup> it was not a purely pagan village or city, although we do not know whether Jesus saw the day when the village of Bethsaida was elevated to a city around 30 CE.

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<sup>79</sup> See now Savage, “Supporting Evidence,” 199–204; idem, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 99–108 (including a list of 11 vessels in figure 19 and table 6). On some limestone vessels from et-Tell see also Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 81–82 and catalogue nos. 1525–1529 (pl. 94 with the limestone vessels is missing).

<sup>80</sup> Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period: Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002), 1.

<sup>81</sup> Jane M. Cahill, “Chalk Vessel Assemblages of the Persian/Hellenistic and Early Roman Periods,” in *Stratigraphical, Environmental, and Other Reports* (vol. 3 of A. de Groot and D. T. Ariel, eds., *Excavations at the City of David 1978–1985: Directed by Yigal Shiloh*, Qedem 33 [Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1992], 190–274, at 231).

<sup>82</sup> Cahill, “Chalk Vessel Assemblages,” 234.

<sup>83</sup> There is no reason to doubt this information; on the contrary, only the names of these three disciples of Jesus have a Greek association: “Philip” (cf. also John 12:20–22) and “Andrew” are Greek names; the name of the brother of Andrew, “Simon,” is also often found among Greeks.

By the way, fragments of other chalk vessels from the earlier Persian/Hellenistic periods, which were only hand-carved (almost always veined chalk, varying from yellow to a reddish-purple colour), have occasionally been reported from the excavations of the City of David and from other sites in Israel/Palestine.<sup>84</sup> But they differ in shape and also in the colour from the hand-carved stone vessels of the Early Roman group, so that they can easily be distinguished.<sup>85</sup> No examples of the Persian/Hellenistic variety have as yet been found on et-Tell.<sup>86</sup>

Of course, *cooking pots* of many different types were found on et-Tell. The Galilean grooved lip cooking pot has a short neck and a rim with one groove; two examples have already been published in *Bethsaida 1* by Toni Tessaro (now Mrs. Fisher).<sup>87</sup> Tessaro already recognized the parallel with cooking pots from Tel Anafa in the Golan which were examined by Andrea Berlin. Berlin writes: "This type is prevalent in the late first-century BCE and first-century CE assemblages throughout Galilee."<sup>88</sup> See figure 14.

<sup>84</sup> See Cahill, "Chalk Vessel Assemblages," 197: "lathes were not used to produce the chalk vessels of this period" (= Persian/Early Hellenistic); Roland Deines, *Jüdische Steingefäße und pharisäische Frömmigkeit: Ein archäologisch-historischer Beitrag zum Verständnis von Joh 2,6 und der jüdischen Reinheitshalacha zur Zeit Jesu*, WUNT 2.52 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 41.

<sup>85</sup> See the description of Cahill, "Chalk Vessel Assemblages," especially 195, 197, 233 and figure 14 (242); also Roland Deines in a personal communication in Munich on 05.11.2005.

<sup>86</sup> According to the kind information of Carl Savage in July 2005.

<sup>87</sup> Toni Tessaro, "Hellenistic and Roman Ceramic Cooking Ware from Bethsaida," in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 1:127–139, at 130, figure 2 (for 1992 alone she counts 29 rim fragments with one groove); Arav, "Preliminary Report, 1994–1996," 36, table 1 and 2, cat. no. 75.4 without photographs or drawings (5 rim fragments of the type "Early Roman cooking pot with short neck," found in Area A, Locus 152 [cf. Fortner, "Keramik und Kleinfunde," catalogue nos. 738, 755, 777, 778, 786], where the complete shovel of the two incense shovels was discovered); Fortner, "Keramik und Kleinfunde," 40, pls. 41–42, 726–770 and catalogue, lists 45 cooking pots "mit einfach gerilltem Rand" found on et-Tell, two of them belonging to Locus 152 (nos. 738 and 755). The two fragments of cooking pots of Tessaro on figure 14 are apparently missing in the catalogue of Fortner, "Keramik und Kleinfunde."

<sup>88</sup> Andrea Berlin, "The Plain Wares," in *Tel Anafa 2.1: The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*, ed. S. C. Herbert, Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 10 (Ann Arbor, MI: Kelsey Museum, 1997), IX–244 and pls. 1–94: 86 (dealt with especially on p. 91: "Galilean grooved lip cook pot," with pottery ware nos. PW 211–215); see also David Adan-Bayewitz, *Common Pottery in Roman Galilee: A Study of Local Trade* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1993), 124–129: Kefar Hananya Form 4A (the author suggests on p. 125 as a date: "mid first century BCE to mid second century CE"). A new (in terms of dating the period in question) and more general

“Four large jars, together with a *casserole*”<sup>89</sup> were found in a cellar (I 30, Locus 948), which seems to indicate a wine storage facility.<sup>90</sup> The casserole belongs to the “Galilean plain rim” type, which has “a short, flaring rim that angles up smoothly” from the “rounded” body, which is “gently carinated above the midpoint” (see figure 15).<sup>91</sup> It can be dated by comparison with Tel Anafa from about the late first century BCE to the early first century CE.<sup>92</sup>

In *Bethsaida 2* Arav gives a drawing of another “Early Roman casserole,” again with everted rim. It was found in Area B, in what had been the Iron Age Palace.<sup>93</sup> According to Arav in *Bethsaida 2*, in Area A further Early Roman casseroles with everted rims were found.<sup>94</sup> At this time I do not have sufficient information about the total number of Early Roman cooking pots and casseroles.<sup>95</sup>

Equally helpful for an exact dating of et-Tell into the Early Roman period are the so-called *Herodian oil lamps*: It is not necessary to give a description, because this type is very easy to recognize. “The ‘Herodian’ lamps are by far the most common lamps of the 1st century CE.”<sup>96</sup> Two

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overview on ceramics, including cooking pots and casseroles, found on et-Tell, is given by Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 121–136; cf. also idem, “Supporting Evidence,” 205.

<sup>89</sup> Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 99; Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 39, pl. 26, 521 and catalogue (the four jars here have the numbers 1075, 1088, 1103 and 1104; see 42–43).

<sup>90</sup> See Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 99. Cf. the 1993 find of fragments of three iron pruning hooks in the kitchen of the courtyard house in Area C, Loci 901 and 911, close to the cellar (Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1987–1993,” 33; Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 70 with pl. 85, nos. 1452–1454 and catalogue).

<sup>91</sup> Berlin, “Plain Wares,” 102. Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 39, pl. 26, 521–523 and catalogue.

<sup>92</sup> Arav dated the finds of the cellar “from the end of the second to the early first century BCE” (“Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 99). Adan-Bayewitz, *Pottery*, 111–119 dates this type found in many places in Galilee from “mid first century BCE to mid second century CE” (p. 119). According to Berlin, “Plain Wares,” 102 this type “first appears” in the “late 1st century BCE–early 1st century CE,” but on p. 96 n. 216 she states that the beginning is “sometime around the middle of the 1st century BCE” and the *terminus ante quem* is “early 1st century CE.”

<sup>93</sup> Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 62–63 (pl. VI.9). Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde” does not seem to record a casserole in the former palace.

<sup>94</sup> Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 36 (cat. no. 76.4; seven rim fragments without photo or drawing); Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 39, pl. 26, 522–523 and catalogue (from Area A two rim fragments of the same type as the casserole in the cellar).

<sup>95</sup> For the finds until 2000 see Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde.”

<sup>96</sup> Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, “Imported Hellenistic and Roman Pottery,” in *Excavations at Dor, Final Report I B: Areas A and C: The Finds*, ed. E. Stern, Qedem Reports 2 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1995), 183–288, at 243; see also Dan

samples from Areas A<sup>97</sup> and B on et-Tell, in fact only the characteristic nozzle fragments, are shown in figure 16.<sup>98</sup> Bethsaida co-director Dr. Carl Savage from Drew University in New Jersey lists in his dissertation of 2007 eleven examples of Herodian oil lamps.<sup>99</sup>

The *glass finds* from Bethsaida have been worked on by Andrea Rottloff, who presented 177 items of glass found at Bethsaida. Of these, I mention here only the Early Roman drinking beakers. Rottloff discovered fragments of six beakers which are especially typical of the Early Roman period; at least one of them seems to belong “to the earlier or middle first century AD.”<sup>100</sup> Apart from fragments of glass which belong especially to the time of the Flavian emperors and later (from 69 CE on), I know of at least eleven pieces of glass from the first century CE and the Early Roman period, respectively. These fragments are only a selection until 2001.<sup>101</sup>

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Barag and Malka Hershkovitz, “Lamps from Masada,” in *Masada IV: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965, Final Reports*, ed. J. Aviram et al. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), IX-147: 24–58, type C; Noam Adler and Joan Goodnick Westenholz, “Catalogue of Lamps,” in *Let There be Light: Oil-Lamps from the Holy Land*, ed. J. Goodnick Westenholz (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 22–73: 26–29; Yael Israeli and Uri Avida, *Oil-Lamps from Eretz Israel: The Louis and Carmen Warschaw Collection at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1988), 37–45.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. also the information for Area A in Arav, “Preliminary Report, 1994–1996,” 36 (no. 96.2): “Bow-spouted Herodian oil lamp” (one sample); see also 32–33.

<sup>98</sup> Area A, O 53, Locus 1508, found 27.06.2001; Area B, L 44, Locus 452, found 30.06.1994 (the last one is also mentioned above at the beginning of the chapter; according to original notes of 1994 the place of discovery of this very important find in Area B is given here correctly—also Arav, “Archaeology of Bethsaida,” 321, figure 5—against other statements naming Area A or C). Fortner also has two Herodian oil lamps (Area A, Loci 831 and 526). In Fortner’s drawing the fragment in Locus 831 (no. 280) looks almost identical to the one above in Area B (“Areal A, Locus 831” seems to be an error); see Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 26, pl. 13, 280–281, colour plate III.3 and catalogue.

<sup>99</sup> Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 114–120 (tables 7 and 8: nos. 1–10 and no. 14). Two of them (nos. 8 and 9) are nozzle fragments of Herodian oil lamps found in 2007, published with photo in the Internet; see Rami Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations: The Season of 2007,” n. p. [cited 21 April 2008]. Online: <http://www.unomaha.edu/bethsaida>, page on Area A West, Locus 2035. See also Postscript.

<sup>100</sup> Andrea Rottloff, “Pre-Roman, Roman and Islamic Glass from Bethsaida” (still unpublished), ch. 5.1.1 (see Postscript). I would like to thank Dr. Andrea Rottloff, who wrote her dissertation in Roman Provincial Archaeology at the University of Munich, for giving me her paper in May 2005 and allowing me to quote from it. A preliminary paper was published in the year 2000: “Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic Glass from Bethsaida (Iulias, Israel),” in *Annales du 14<sup>e</sup> Congrès de l’Association Internationale pour l’Histoire du Verre, Venezia-Milano 1998* (Lochem, Netherlands: AIHV, 2000), 142–146. Cf. also Kuhn, “Bethsaida und das Neue Testament,” 166, figure 289.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. now Savage, “Et-Tell (Bethsaida),” 94–98.

I close the archaeological evidence for the Early Roman period, and especially the first half of the first century CE, with a *bronze fibula* or *brooch* of the so-called Aucissa type. It can be dated mainly to the first half of the first century CE (see figure 17).<sup>102</sup> “Aucissa” is the name of the manufacturer, often found inscribed across the head of the fibula. This type was widely distributed all over the Roman Empire.<sup>103</sup> Typical of this kind of fibula is the combination of the following characteristics: a hinged pin with an arched semicircular bow, a foot ending in a bold ornamental knob, and a head with an ornamented plate.<sup>104</sup>

To sum up: Archaeological structures and numerous kinds of small finds leave no doubt that et-Tell was inhabited during the Early Roman period and certainly also during the first half of the first century CE, though the data, especially until the mid-first century CE, are not as strong and numerous as for the Iron Age or for the Hellenistic period. Future excavations and further research on the finds (from 2001<sup>105</sup> on, the subsequent period not covered by the specific dissertation of Sandra Fortner and from 2007 on, the year in which the more general dissertation of Carl Savage was finished) will certainly enlarge the data for the Early Roman period, which will provide an even sounder basis for discussions.

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<sup>102</sup> The fibula is identical with the one in Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 65, pl. 81, 1420 and catalogue.

<sup>103</sup> For date and distribution see Emilie Riha, *Die römischen Fibeln aus Augst und Kaiseraugst*, Forschungen in Augst 3 (Augst: Amt für Museen und Archäologie des Kantons Basel-Landschaft, 1979), 114–115, with parallels pl. 25, 667–668 (the Aucissa fibulae “wurden hauptsächlich von frühaugusteischer Zeit bis in die Mitte des 1. Jahrhunderts getragen” [114]); idem, *Die römischen Fibeln aus Augst und Kaiseraugst: Die Neufunde seit 1975*, Forschungen in Augst 18 (Augst: Römermuseum Augst, 1994), 101, with parallel pl. 20, 2283; Salvatore Ortisi, “Die früh- und mittelkaiserzeitlichen Fibeln,” in *Römische Kleinfunde aus Burghöfe 2*, ed. Kommission für Vergleichende Archäologie Römischer Alpen- und Donauländer der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Frühgeschichtliche und Provinzialrömische Archäologie 6 (Rahden, Westfalen: Leidorf, 2002), 9–84, at 29, with parallels on pl. 13, nos. 165–166, 168 (dating the Aucissa fibulae mainly from Augustus to Claudius). A parallel has also been published from Horvat Dafit in the Negev: *The Nabateans in the Negev*, ed. Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, University of Haifa Catalogue 22 (Haifa: Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum, 2003), 28 and 44, figure 66.

<sup>104</sup> On et-Tell (Bethsaida) a fibula of the Alesia type (used until the end of the first century BCE) was also found (both fibulae are published in Fortner and Rottloff, “Signale,” 142, figure 238; see also Fortner, “Keramik und Kleinfunde,” 64–65, pl. 81, 1419–1420 and catalogue).

<sup>105</sup> Because of political reasons, no excavation took place in 2002.

#### 4. *The Problem of the Identification of et-Tell, Especially on the Basis of Ancient Texts*

The archaeological data for a first-century CE settlement from finds on et-Tell cannot sufficiently prove that this place was elevated to the status of city around 30 CE (though the “founder”-coin of the year 30/31 CE, which Philip minted, makes the elevation of Bethsaida to Julius almost certain).<sup>106</sup> Indeed, we cannot expect such data on et-Tell, since Philip died only about three years after the elevation, and the “large number of settlers” in Josephus,<sup>107</sup> which came with the rank of a city, may be at least partly a literary topos.<sup>108</sup> In any event, the question remains: Was et-Tell Bethsaida? There are sceptics like Jürgen Zangenberg<sup>109</sup> or Shimon Gibson.<sup>110</sup>

With the help of Josephus, it is at least possible to locate Bethsaida very precisely at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. Occurrences of Bethsaida in the Rabbinical literature support this location.<sup>111</sup> Josephus is much more exact than some scholars recognize. John 12:21, which speaks of “Bethsaida in Galilee,” seems to reflect the political situation under Agrippa II at the end of the first century.<sup>112</sup> I will go into detail only in

<sup>106</sup> See among many Meshorer, *Treasury*, 88.

<sup>107</sup> *Ant.* 18.28.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. in Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations,” 79–80.

<sup>109</sup> Jürgen Zangenberg, “Bethsaida,” *BAR* 26.3 (May/June 2000): 10, 12; but Zangenberg and Gabriele Faßbeck are more cautious in their article “‘Jesus am See von Galiläa’ (Mt 4,18): Eine Skizze zur archäologischen Forschung am See Gennesaret und zur regionalen Verankerung der frühen Jesusbewegung,” in *Saxa Loquentur: Studien zur Archäologie Palästinas/Israels*, ed. C. G. den Hertog et al., AOAT 302 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003), 292 n. 5: “Die Frage, ob die auf *et-Tell* ergrabenen hellenistisch-römischen Befunde mit dem in der Literatur genannten Ort zu identifizieren sind, ist u.E. noch nicht zweifelsfrei geklärt”; the authors were waiting, as they state, for certain publications by Bennett and Fortner, which are now accessible (see n. 2).

<sup>110</sup> “Bethsaida; Beth Ramtha; Livias-Julias,” in *Archaeological Encyclopedia of the Holy Land*, ed. Abraham Negev and Shimon Gibson, rev. and updated ed. (New York, NY: Continuum, 2001), 80–81 (Gibson is the editor responsible; the widely scattered authorship of the individual articles is not clear). The article on “Bethsaida; Beth Ramtha; Livias-Julias” confuses in its first part Julius/Bethsaida in the Gaulanitis and Betaramphtha/Livias/Julias in Perea; in the second part it states about et-Tell (Bethsaida): “The Early Roman remains at the site were fairly poor, a fact that weighs against its identification as Bethsaida” (81). This is no longer correct, and the conclusion was anyhow hasty.

<sup>111</sup> See Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations,” 82; cf. also Richard A. Freund, “The Search for Bethsaida in Rabbinic Literature,” in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee*, ed. Arav and Freund, 1:267–311.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Kuhn, in Kuhn and Arav, “Bethsaida Excavations,” 86–87.

relation to two occurrences of Bethsaida in Josephus. Most important is, of course, the wording in *War* 3.515 that the Jordan river “after the city of Julias (μετὰ πόλιν Ἰουλιιάδα)” runs through the Sea of Galilee (see the fourth section in the quotation below); the next sentence in Josephus makes it clear that “Gennesar” here is the name of the Lake.<sup>113</sup>

After starting from this cave [the famous grotto of Pan at Caesarea Paneas is meant]<sup>114</sup> the Jordan, whose course is now visible,

runs through the marshy grounds and swamps of Lake Semechonitis [this is today the Ha-Khula region],

then goes on another hundred and twenty stades [this is quite accurate—about 23 kilometers]<sup>115</sup>

and after the city of Julias cuts through the middle of [the Lake of] Gennesar, from which, after traversing through a long desert region,

it ends by going into the Lake Asphaltitis [this is the Dead Sea].<sup>116</sup>

Neither today nor in the first century CE was et-Tell a place directly on the shore of the Lake. Figure 18 shows two maps based on drawings of John Shroder Jr., Chief Geologist at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and his colleagues. On the left one finds the present-day situation; on the right the picture shows the results of their research for the first century CE: Here the Sea of Galilee (in dark black) is much closer to et-Tell. The bed of the river and the swampy region are in grey. At the shore of the Lake today are found el-Araj and southeast of it el-Mesadiyeh, where some believed and some still believe Bethsaida can be found. According to Shroder and his colleagues, in the first century CE, et-Tell was much closer to the Lake than today, but even then not at the shore itself.

<sup>113</sup> Josephus writes in the next sentence in 3.516 παρατείνει δὲ τὴν Γεννησάρ ὁμώνυμος χώρα (“it [sc. a beautiful region] extends along [the Lake of] Gennesar, a region with the same name”). Cf. also 3.463.

<sup>114</sup> See *War* 1.405–406.

<sup>115</sup> See below n. 116.

<sup>116</sup> The quotations of Josephus here and below are based on a comparison of the Greek text between *Josephus*, ed. and trans. H.St.J. Thackeray et al., 9 vols., LCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926–1965) and *Flavii Iosephi opera*, ed. Benedictus Niese (vol. 6 together with Iustus von Destinon), 7 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885–1895 [= *editio maior*]); *Flavii Iosephi opera recognovit*, ed. Benedictus Niese, 6 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1888–1895 [= *editio minor*]) was not accessible. I compared for *Bellum judaicum* also *Flavii Iosephi opera omnia*, ed. Samuel Adrianus Naber, post Immanuel Bekkerum recognovit, 6 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1888–1896), for *Life* also F. Siegert et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001). In *War* 3.515 all three editions have no difference of any significance.



What does μετὰ πόλιν Ἰουλιάδα in Josephus, *War* 3.515, translated by “after,” “behind” or “below the city of Julias,” mean? With the help of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* or *Accordance*, it is now easier to say something about the use of the Greek language in Josephus.<sup>117</sup> It is to emphasize that Josephus does not say: πρὸς τῇ πόλει Ἰουλιάδι “at the city of Julias.” In fact, Josephus uses πρὸς seven times with dative and πόλις or κόμη, meaning “at,” “besides,” “near,” etc.<sup>118</sup> This is normal usage for Josephus; only once in all his writings does he use μετὰ with πόλις or κόμη.<sup>119</sup> This is the case in the passage in question. This special usage seems to suggest that Josephus means not generally πρὸς (“at”), but specifically μετὰ “after” (normally Josephus uses this preposition with the accusative as a marker of time, e.g. “after the death of” somebody). The conclusion must be that “after” (or similar) is the best translation for this wording in Josephus.<sup>120</sup> This means that between Julias and the Sea of Galilee there was some significant distance. The Jordan river did not run into the Lake at Bethsaida-Julias.

Secondly, besides *War* 3, there is one more very detailed piece of information in Josephus about Bethsaida-Julias in his *Life* 398–406. I will not discuss the whole passage, but focus only on one sentence in 399 about the distance from the Jordan river to Julias. Josephus writes:

On receiving information of this (the troops of Agrippa II close to Julias are meant), I sent two thousand soldiers under the command of Jeremia, who set pales (for a camp) a stadium away from Julias close to the River Jordan (ἀπὸ σταδίου τῆς Ἰουλιάδος πλησίον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου ποταμοῦ)...<sup>121</sup>

The meaning is that the soldiers of Josephus built a camp “close to the Jordan river” about 200 m away from *Julias*.<sup>122</sup> The wording suggests a

<sup>117</sup> I have used “Works of Flavius Josephus in Greek” (version 1.0, 2004) in *Accordance: Bible Software* (for Macintosh), OakTree Software, 2005.

<sup>118</sup> Six times in *Antiquities*: 5.64; 6.98,247; 7.305; 8.381; 9.7; once in *War*: 5.51.

<sup>119</sup> μετὰ with the accusative as marker of a position with the meaning “after” or “behind” in Josephus, e.g. *Ant.* 3.122: μετὰ δέκα πήχεας (“after [a distance of] ten cubits”).

<sup>120</sup> LCL translates “below the town of Julias.” BDAG, “μετὰ” B I translates in Heb 9:3 the local meaning of μετὰ with “behind the second curtain.”

<sup>121</sup> In the quoted text of *Life* 399 the edition of LCL, of Siegert et al. and the *editio maior* of Niese have no difference of any significance.

<sup>122</sup> BDAG, “στάδιον, ου, τό” 1 referring among other occurrences to Josephus (“about 192 meters”); cf. also J. Lust, E. Eynikel and K. Hauspie, “στάδιον, -ου,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 565 (“the representative—Olympic—stadium was ca. 192 m”). In various ancient Greek units the length is always around 200 m, the Roman unit for a *stadium* is 185 m; see

short distance of about 200 m between Bethsaida-Julias and the Jordan river. This distance fits perfectly with the distance of et-Tell to the eastern arm of the Jordan river. The wording “close to the Jordan river” also seems to indicate that Josephus does not mean a place directly at the shore of the Lake and the mouth of the Jordan river, but a place further away, i.e. to the north of it.

Thus we can be sure that according to a historian and soldier, who knew this region as commander in Galilee and the Gaulanitis during the First Jewish Revolt, the Jordan river entered the Sea of Galilee not “at” Bethsaida, but “after” it, which means a little to the south of it.

The correct localization of Bethsaida on et-Tell and not at el-Araj or el-Mesadiyeh is finally based on three arguments: It is almost impossible to think that Philip elevated a village to a city in the swamp at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee (see also below). A further argument is that there is no evidence for any remains of walls of the Hellenistic-Roman period at el-Araj or el-Mesadiyeh. Other claims are without any archaeological evidence.<sup>123</sup> Finally, the geological results of Shroder and his colleagues show that at the time of Philip the northern end of the Sea of Galilee was much closer to et-Tell. The geological results mean that el-Araj and el-Mesadiyeh were still under water in New Testament times until a catastrophic flood following a massive slope failure by an earthquake probably in 363 CE.<sup>124</sup> But even if one does not accept the modern geological results of two universities in the United States and Israel, it is not possible to argue that Philip elevated some presumed houses of fishermen in the swamp of the northern end of the Sea of Galilee to the status of a city, as stated in the first argument above. The excavations prove that there was a Hellenistic-Roman settlement of some size on et-Tell, which had already been an important city in the Iron Age II.

I will conclude by summing up my arguments. First, Jesus most probably stayed for some time at a more or less Jewish-oriented place called Bethsaida, or perhaps also Julias, located in the more or less pagan

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*Lexikon der Alten Welt*, ed. Carl Andresen et al. (Zürich: Artemis Verlag, 1965), 3423–3425.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Arav, “Archaeology of Bethsaida,” 317–318.

<sup>124</sup> Mendel Nun does not believe in the results of Shroder and his colleagues (Mendel Nun, *Der See Genezareth und die Evangelien: Archäologische Forschungen eines jüdischen Fischers*, *Biblische Archäologie und Zeitgeschichte* 10 [Gießen: Brunnen, 2001], 223–229). None of his arguments is convincing.

region of the Gaulanitis. Second, we have enough archaeological data for a settlement in the first century CE on et-Tell. Third, on the basis of geological evidence and evidence from the ancient sources, especially Josephus, Bethsaida, which Philip decided to turn into a city around 30 CE, must have been on et-Tell.

*Postscript.* Since the last additions to this article were made before summer 2008, I add some new information until April 2010 (besides the stone-by-stone plan of et-Tell [Bethsaida] of 2009 in figure 2): A fifth coin of Philip and a second coin of Herod Antipas (see figures 11 and 12) were found in 2009 and identified by the numismatist Donald T. Ariel (Israel Antiquities Authority) for the Bethsaida Excavations Project.<sup>125</sup>—The number of Herodian oil lamps increased until April 2010 to at least 19 (in the new season of excavations in May/June 2010 three more were discovered in Area A West).—Volume 4 of the Bethsaida series (see n. 2) was published also in 2009 (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press).<sup>126</sup>—The dissertation of C. Savage on Bethsaida in the first century CE (see above n. 2) is scheduled to be published in 2010 by Lexington Books, Lanham, MD (the pages I refer to in the dissertation correspond to ch. 4 and excursus 1 = pp. 68–138 and 150–163).—An article by the author, “Bethsaida und et-Tell in frühromischer Zeit: Historische, archäologische und philologische Probleme einer als Wirkungsstätte Jesu angenommenen Ortslage,” which is resp. will be published in two parts in *ZNW* 101 (2010), 1–32 and forthcoming 174–203 (with together eight plates),<sup>127</sup> gives further details.<sup>128</sup>—The latest Munich plans of the Bethsaida excavations can be seen in the Internet in a German and English version as stone-by-stone plans and as schematic plans.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Both coins were found in Area A West, the one of Philip in Locus 2082. The coin of Herod Antipas was discovered together with two other coins of the emperor Claudius (41–54 CE) in Locus 2151 in a mini-hoard.

<sup>126</sup> The volume contains among other contributions a long article on the city gate (pp. 1–122) by R. Arav (p. 3 dating Stratum 6 from “ca. 950–ca. 850 BCE” and Stratum 5 from “ca. 850–732 BCE”), an older article on glass by Andrea Rottloff (204–251; see above n. 100 [ch. 5.1.1 corresponds to pp. 215–216]), a “Bethsaida Numismatic Survey: Seasons of 1997 through 2000” by Arie Kindler (252–266) and an article on el-Araj by John F. Shroder et al. with the title “El Araj as Bethsaida: Spatial and Temporal Improbabilities” (293–309). See also R. Arav, “Bethsaida (et-Tell),” *NEAHL* 5:1611–1616.

<sup>127</sup> Including the Munich schematic plans of 2008 (p. 4) and 2009 (p. 176).

<sup>128</sup> E.g. referring to the problem of exact square data (174 n. 1), giving lists of 19 Herodian oil lamps and 16 limestone vessels (figs. 2 and 3; cf. above 2998 and 2995–2996), discussing the proposed Hellenistic–Early Roman temple (23–28; above 2988–2994) and the incised cruciform motive (196–198; above 2977–2978) and also naming some further scholars who doubt the identification of et-Tell with Bethsaida (188 n. 58; cf. above 3000 nn. 109 and 110). The English and the German article of the author complement one another.

<sup>129</sup> <<http://www.nt.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/personen/kuhn/plaene>>; cited 21 May 2010.

## PLATES



Fig. 1. Aerial photograph of et-Tell (Bethsaida) in the summer of 2003, looking to the east (courtesy Bethsaida Excavations Project; photo by Paul Bauman, Canada, for the project)

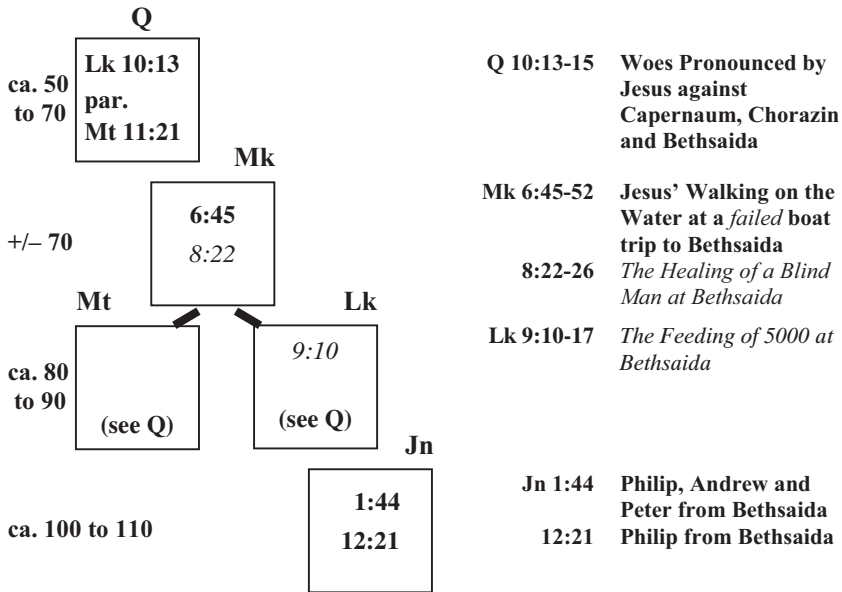


Fig. 3. Bethsaida in the canonical gospels (bold = authentic or older tradition; in italics = gospel redaction)

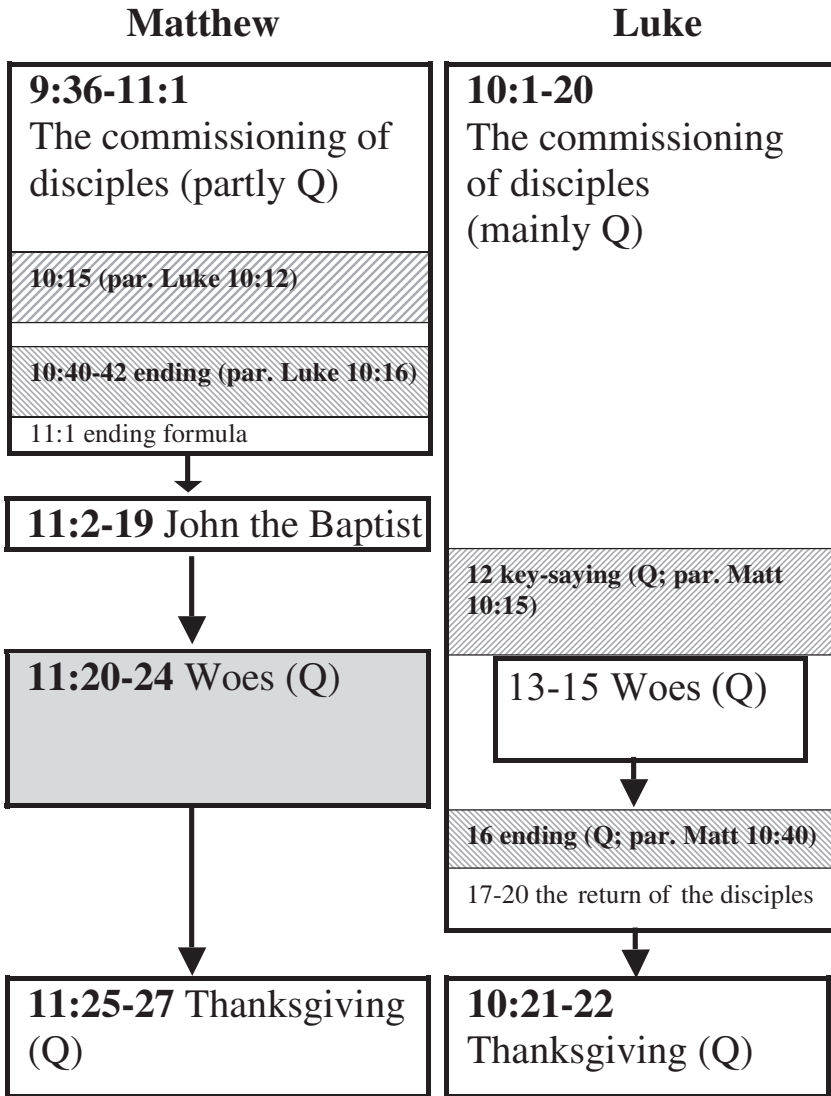


Fig. 4. The Woe-Saying in the context of the Synoptic Sayings Gospel (Q) and Matthew/Luke

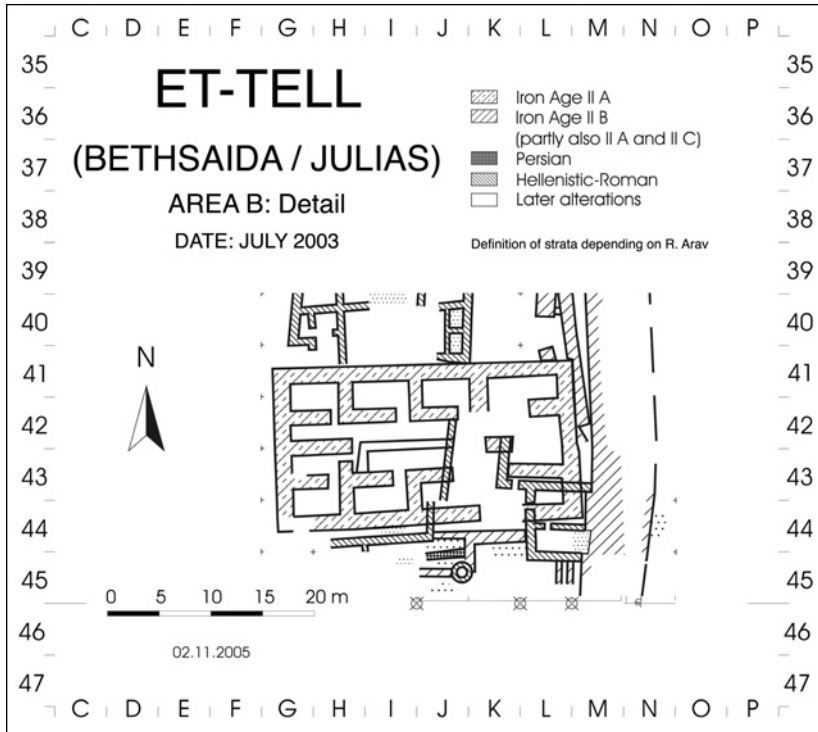


Fig. 5. Site plan, detail of Area B, Roman building at bottom right (L-M/43-45) (© H.-W. Kuhn)





Fig. 6 and 7. Left: Munich Tanagra terracotta (courtesy “Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München”); right: “Lady of Bethsaida” (photo by H.-W. Kuhn)





Fig. 8 and 9. Lintel from et-Tell (Bethsaida) (photos by H.-W. Kuhn)



Fig. 10. Sanctuary in Mušannaf (Nela): architrave, meander with rosette, from: Klaus S. Freyberger, *Die frühkaiserzeitlichen Heiligtümer der Karawanenstationen im hellenisierten Osten* (Damaszener Forschungen 6; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1998), pl. 42a (detail from photo Peter Grunwald, Berlin, with permission of Klaus Stefan Freyberger, Rom)

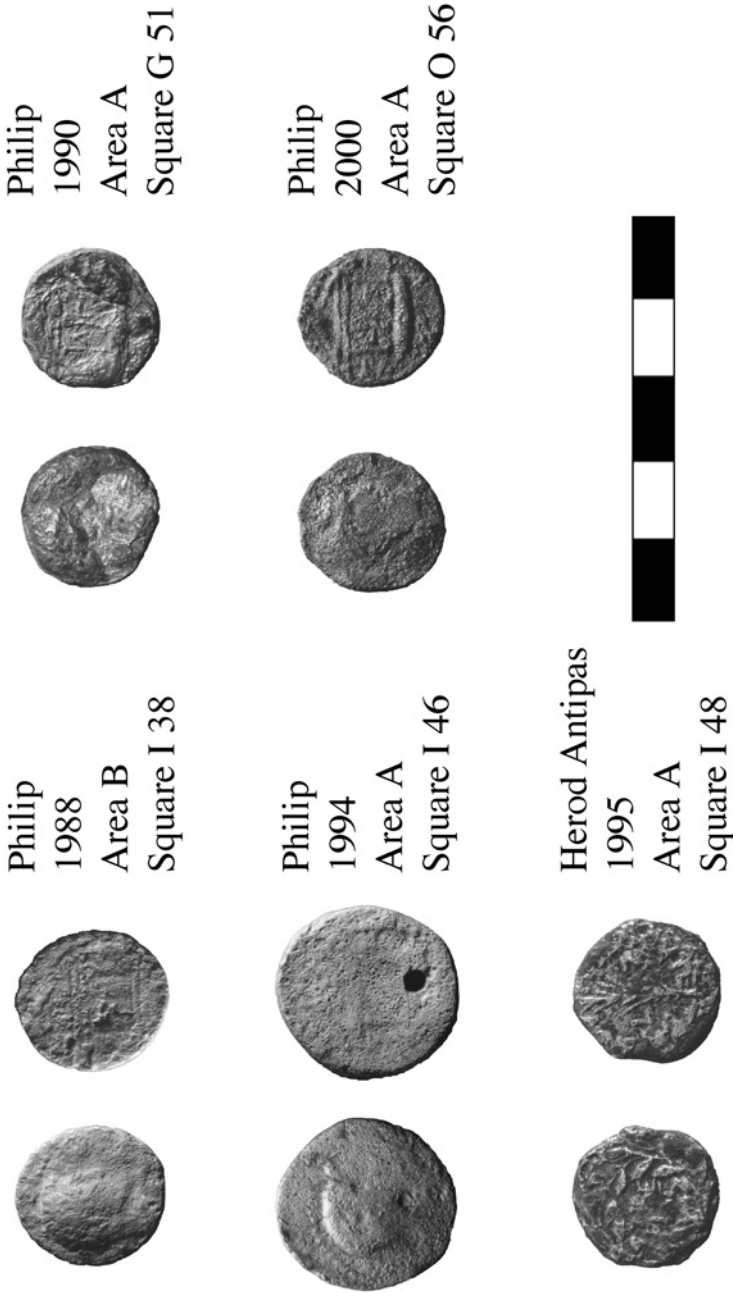


Fig. 11. The four coins of Philip and the one coin of Herod Antipas found at et-Tell (Bethsaida) until 2008 (photos by H.-W. Kuhn)

Ruler	Date of Find	Place of Discovery	Metal	Main Picture Preserved obv.	rev.	Date	Mint	Kindler, <i>Bethsaida 2</i>
Philip	1988	Area B, I 38, Locus 301	AE	Tiberius <sup>a</sup>	temple	not before 14 C.E.	Paneas	No. 110 (photo = No. 108!)
Philip	1990	Area A, G 51, Locus 550	AE	Tiberius	temple	ΛΓ = 29/30 C.E.	Paneas	No. 109 (incorrectly assigned to Area B)
Philip	1994	Area A, I 46, Locus 784	AE	Augustus + Livia (Tiberius?)	temple	30/31 C.E. (or from 14 on?) <sup>b</sup>	Paneas	No. 26 (= Augustus)
Philip	2000	Area A, O 56, Locus 433	AE	Augustus	temple	I- = 12/13 C.E.		— <sup>c</sup>
Herod Antipas	1995	Area A, I 48, Locus 858	AE	palm branch	“ΤΙΒΕ/ΡΙΑΣ” in wreath	[ΛΓ] 28/29 C.E.	Tiberias	No. 25 (“33”)

Fig. 12. List of the four coins of Philip and the one coin of Herod Antipas found at et-Tell (Bethsaida) until 2008 (see also figure 11 and Postscript)

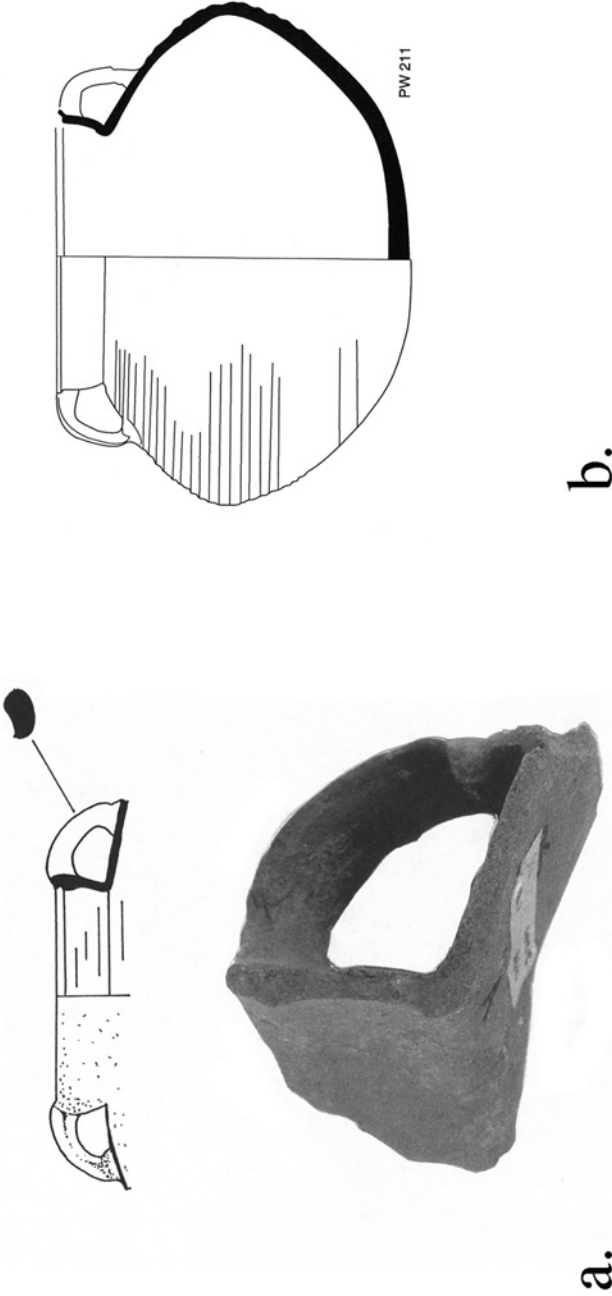
<sup>a</sup> Cf. Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, in Kuhn and Rami Arav, “The Bethsaida Excavations: Historical and Archaeological Approaches,” in *The Future of Early Christianity* (ed. B. A. Pearson; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 77–91 + 91–106: 90 n. 61.

<sup>b</sup> See Fred Strickert, “The First Woman to be Portrayed on a Jewish Coin: Julia Sebaste,” *JSJ* 33 (2002): 65–91: 67–68 thinks of this type as dating from 30/31 C.E. (= one of a complete set of four coins in four denominations with Augustus + Livia [the biggest coin], Tiberius, Livia/Julia and Philip [the smallest]); also Andrew Burnett et al., *From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 BC–AD 69)* (vol. 1.1 of A. Burnett et al., *Roman Provincial Coinage*; London: British Museum Press, 1992), no. 4951. Differently Ya’akov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins: From the Persian Period to Bar Kokhba* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2001), 87, 229 (no. 100) dates this type of coin to 14 C.E.: “should thus be dated to 14 C.E., the first year of Tiberius’ reign” (p. 87); but on p. 229 “after 14 C.E.”; more cautiously Ya’akov Meshorer, *Herod the Great through Bar Cochba* (vol. 2 of Y. Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*; New York: Amphora Books, 1982), 44: from 14 C.E. on. No coin is known for the year 14.

<sup>c</sup> According to Arie Kandler on his card 14/19 of 2000 for the Bethsaida Excavations Project falsely referred to as “Head of Tiberius”.

**a.****b.****c.**

Fig. 13. Stone vessel fragments found at et-Tell (Bethsaida): a. hand-made, Area A, Square H 56, found in 2000; b. lathe-turned, Area A, Square N 55, found in 1998; c. lathe-turned, Area A, Square H 56, found in 2000 (photos by H.-W. Kuhn)



**a.**

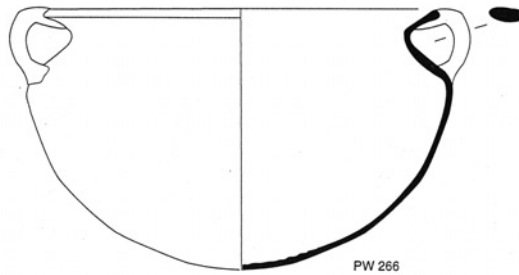
**b.**

Fig. 14. Galilean Grooved Lip Cooking Pots: a. from et-Tell (Bethsaida), Area A. Drawing (Locus 712) and photo (Locus 720) from Toni Tessaro, "Hellenistic and Roman Ceramic Cooking Ware from Bethsaida," in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. Rami Arav and Richard A. Freund; Bethsaida Excavations Project 1; Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1995), 130 fig. 2; b. from Tel Anafa. Drawing from Andrea Berlin, "The Plain Wares," in *Tel Anafa 2.1: The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*, ed. S. C. Herbert, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 10* (Ann Arbor, MI: Kelsey Museum, 1997), pl. 25, PW 211 (courtesy Andrea M. Berlin and reproduced by permission of the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*)



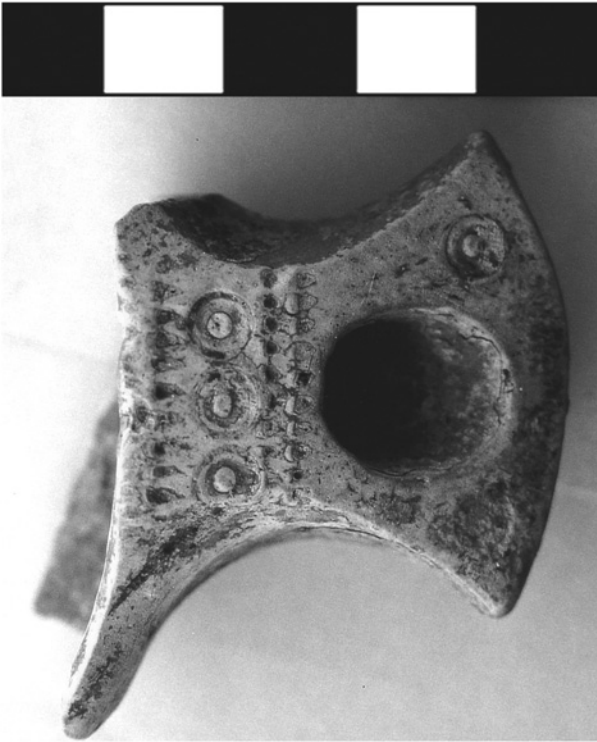


**a.**

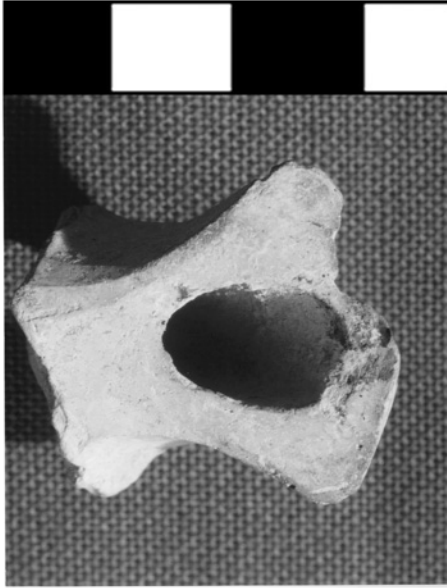


**b.**

Fig. 15. Galilean Plain Rim Casserole: a. from et-Tell (Bethsaida), Area C, Square I 30 (storage cellar), found in 1994 (photo by H.-W. Kuhn); b. from Tel Anafa. Drawing from Andrea Berlin, "The Plain Wares," in *Tel Anafa 2.1: The Hellenistic and Roman Pottery*, ed. S. C. Herbert, *Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 10* (Ann Arbor, MI: Kelsey Museum, 1997), pl. 31, PW 266 (courtesy Andrea M. Berlin and reproduced by permission of the *Journal of Roman Archaeology*)



**a.**



**b.**

Fig. 16. Herodian Oil Lamps: Two nozzle fragments found at et-Tell (Bethsaida): a. from Area B, Square L 44, in 1994; b. from Area A, Square O 53, in 2001 (photos by H.-W. Kuhn)



a.

b.

Fig. 17. Fibulae of the "Aucissa" type: a. from et-Tell (Bethsaida), Area A, Square M 54, found in 1997 (photo by H.-W. Kuhn); b. from Augst (Switzerland). Drawing from Emilie Riha, *Die römischen Fibeln aus Augst und Kaiseraugst* (Forschungen in Augst 3; Augst: Amt für Museen und Archäologie des Kantons Basel-Landschaft, 1979), pl. 25, 668 (reproduced by permission of Alex R. Furger, director of Augusta Raurica, Augst, Switzerland)

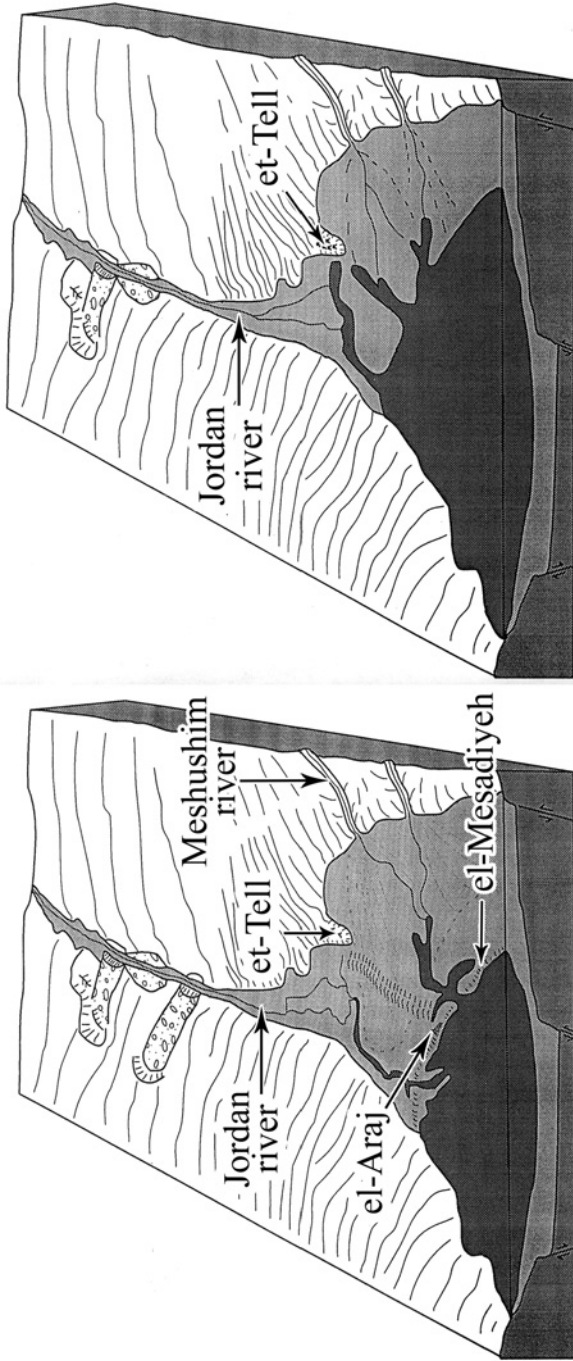


Fig. 18. The geographical situation of et-Tell (Bethsaida). Left: Present-day situation since probably 363 CE (shoreline south of el-Araj and el-Mesadiyeh is varying); right: et-Tell in the 1st century CE, can be reached by boat; el-Araj and el-Mesadiyeh still under water. Based on J. F. Shroder et al., "Catastrophic Geomorphic Processes and Bethsaida Archaeology, Israel," in *Bethsaida: A City by the North Shore of the Sea of Galilee* (ed. Rami Arav and Richard A. Freund; Bethsaida Excavations Project 2; Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1999), 169, fig. 21 and 170, fig. 22



# FLAWED HEROES AND STORIES JESUS TOLD: THE ONE ABOUT A MAN WANTING TO KILL

CHARLES W. HEDRICK

The reign of the Father is like a man  
wanting to kill a nobleman.  
He drew the sword in his house  
And pierced the wall,  
so as to know that his hand would be inflexible.  
Then he slew the nobleman.

## 1. *Introduction*

A striking feature of Jesus' stories is the number of flawed characters he created in narrative.<sup>1</sup> Seldom<sup>2</sup> are these flawed characters criticized by the narrator within the story. Criticisms, when found, are provided by the evangelists,<sup>3</sup> or the evangelists simply overlook the questionable behavior of protagonists<sup>4</sup> and focus on aspects of the story that allow

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<sup>1</sup> For example, using the traditional titles for the parables: the Treasure (Matt 13:44 [on Crossan's reading]; *Gos. Thom.* 109), the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4-6), the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:23-34), the Vineyard Laborers (Matt 20:1-15), the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16b-20; *Gos. Thom.* 63:1), the Fig Tree in a Vineyard (Luke 13:6b-9), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11b-32), the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-7), the Unjust Judge (Luke 18:2-5), the Pharisee and Toll Collector (Luke 18:10-13), the Woman and the Jar (*Gos. Thom.* 97), the Assassin (*Gos. Thom.* 98), and the Two Sons (Matt 21:28a-30). For Matt 13:44 see John Dominic Crossan, *Finding is the First Act; Trove Folktales and Jesus' Treasure Parable* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 93.

<sup>2</sup> In very few instances does the narrative voice of the stories comment positively or negatively on the morality or behavior of characters in the narrative. For the few instances this occurs see: *Gos. Thom.* 76 (shrewd); *Gos. Thom.* 8:1 (wise), *Gos. Thom.* 65 (if one restores "good" and not "usurer"); Matt 22:7 (murderers); Luke 10:33 (compassionate); Matt 25:1-12 (foolish and wise); Luke 12:20 (fool); Luke 15:13 (loose living), 15:17 (came to himself); Luke 18:2 (neither feared God nor regarded man). This list excludes statements made by characters in the story, such as Matt 25:14-28 (21, 23, 24, 26), since they may or may not represent the narrator's own views.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the Unmerciful Servant, Matt 18:35; the Rich Fool, Luke 12:15, 21; the Unjust Judge, Luke 18:6; the Pharisee and Toll Collector, Luke 18:9; the Unjust Steward, Luke 16:8.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the basic unfairness of paying workers the same amount of money for unequal amounts of work performed (Matt 20:1-15), or a father's uneven treatment of his two sons (Luke 15:11-32). And, in particular, see the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-7), where the evangelist recognizes that the steward is basically dishonest

them to express their own religious and spiritual values, which are not literally found in the story. The stories of Jesus abound with murder, violence, conflict, irresponsibility, and deceit, which the evangelists usually pass over in silence.<sup>5</sup>

The most notable stories featuring violence, physical assault, and murder—in one case multiple murders—are: the Tenants (Matt 21:33b–39 = Mark 12:1b–8 = Luke 20:9b–15 = *Gos. Thom.* 65),<sup>6</sup> the Samaritan (Luke 10:30b–35), and the (so-called) “Assassin” (*Gos. Thom.* 98). The last of this group, the Assassin, has seldom been treated seriously as a story originating with Jesus of Nazareth, generally because of its assumed “gnostic character,” although some do think the story originated with Jesus.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in the judgment of many “the gnostic character of the gospel seems fairly well established,”<sup>8</sup> and hence its new parables must also be “gnostic.” Others appear less certain that the sayings of Thomas are overtly gnostic, but are not really sure what to do with this particular story.<sup>9</sup> Many sayings in Thomas not found in the canonical gospels are thought to have originated with Jesus<sup>10</sup>

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(Luke 16:8), but makes a “silk purse out of a sow’s ear” anyway (Luke 16:8–12). In the Unjust Judge, Luke simply ignores the protagonist and focuses on a minor character, the widow (Luke 18:6–8).

<sup>5</sup> For example, the Planted Weeds (Matt 13:24b–30; *Gos. Thom.* 57); the Treasure (Matt 13:44); the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4–6); the Unmerciful Servant (Luke 18:23–34); the Tenants (Matt 21:33–39, Mark 12:1–8, *Gos. Thom.* 65); the Feast (Matt 22:2–13); the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30b–35); the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1–7); the Assassin (*Gos. Thom.* 98); the Persistent Friend (Luke 11:5b–7).

<sup>6</sup> The multiple murders are in Matthew and Mark. In Luke and Thomas there is only a single murder. The excesses of Mark’s story led C. H. Dodd to reconstruct a more realistic version of the story in response to the argument that the version in Mark was actually “an allegory constructed by the early church.” In Dodd’s reconstruction only one murder occurs—as it does in Thomas. Dodd recognized the earlier version of the story behind Mark’s allegorized version almost twenty-five years before Thomas was published. In the main, Dodd’s reconstruction is almost identical to the version in Thomas (saying 65). See Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner’s, 1936 [originally 1935]), 124–125.

<sup>7</sup> For example see William D. Stroker, “Extracanonical Parables and the Historical Jesus,” in *The Historical Jesus and the Rejected Gospels*, ed. Charles W. Hedrick, Semeia 44 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), 101–102.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the recent study of all the parables by Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 440; see 444–445 for his treatment of the Assassin. The Assassin was not treated in Brandon Scott’s major work on the parables: *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Brandon Scott, *Re-Imagine the World: An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2001), 43, 123.

<sup>10</sup> For the argument that Thomas is independent of the synoptic gospels see Charles W. Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA:

and, in particular, certain parables Thomas shares with the canonical writers in many instances are found to have been less influenced by early Christian allegorical expansion than the canonical versions.<sup>11</sup> Scholars have paid little attention to the parables of the “Assassin” and the Woman and the Jar (*Gos. Thom.* 97).<sup>12</sup>

Three issues are raised for the historian of Christian origins who sets out to analyze the Assassin as a story originating with Jesus: the general issue of the value of non-canonical Jesus traditions for reconstructing Christian origins; the specific issue of Thomas as a source for reconstructing the personal history of Jesus of Nazareth; and finally the issue of its origin: how to locate the story of the Assassin in relationship to Jesus of Nazareth, if at all. All three issues are inevitably addressed by scholars who study the Jesus tradition, even if only subconsciously.

## 2. *The Value of Non-canonical Jesus Traditions*

Do non-canonical Jesus traditions have any value as historical sources for Jesus of Nazareth?<sup>13</sup> The question may not be ignored. Non-canon-

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Hendrickson, 1994), 238–243; and more recently idem, “An Anecdotal Argument for the Independence of the *Gospel of Thomas* from the Synoptic Gospels,” in *For the Children, Perfect Instruction: Studies in Honor of Hans-Martin Schenke on the Occasion of the Berliner Arbeitskreis für koptisch-gnostische Schriften’s Thirtieth Year*, ed. Hans-Gebhar Bethge et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 119–124.

<sup>11</sup> The classic instance is Dodd’s argument that the parable of the Tenants in Mark 12:1b–11 (cf. Matt 21:33b–43 = Luke 20:9b–18) was a Christian allegory adapted from an earlier non-allegorical version of a parable originating with Jesus; see n. 6 above.

<sup>12</sup> They play no role in John Dominic Crossan’s reconstruction of the historical Jesus, for example: *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991). See also Richard Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas* (London: Routledge, 1997), 177–180; Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas: Annotated and Explained* (Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths, 2002), 118–121; Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 523–525. The Woman and the Jar has recently been extensively treated as a parable of Jesus by Brandon Scott; see Scott, *Re-Imagine the World*, 41–46.

<sup>13</sup> Extensive written material about Jesus of Nazareth exists and much of it dates from the first and second centuries CE: See Robert J. Miller, ed., *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version* (rev. and expanded; Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1992). For the bigger picture see: Wilhelm Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). For the large number of Jesus sayings not in the canonical New Testament see William D. Stroker, *Extracanonical Sayings of Jesus*, ed. Bernard Brandon Scott, Resources for Biblical Study 18 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press). And for the large number of early Christian gospels published in the early period see Charles W. Hedrick, “The 34 Gospels,” *BR* 18.3 (June 2002): 20–31, 46–47.



ical material has always raised the following issue for historians: how well does such information fit with material in the canonical tradition whose general historical reliability has already been favorably vetted by scholars? In principle, every ancient Christian text may tell the historian something about Christianity contemporary with the date of the document and/or possibly about aspects of Christianity even earlier than the date of the document, since late texts may contain early traditions. Therefore, each ancient text (including the canonical gospels) must be analyzed historically and its material evaluated. Historians who study the personal history of Jesus of Nazareth from the perspective of a modern secular historical method<sup>14</sup> are forced to use sources dated to the latter half of the first century (and later) to describe the life and times of a man who lived in the early first century. Thus historians judge these later sources (principally the canonical gospels and certain other non-canonical materials) to contain reliable historical information forty to one hundred years earlier than the text in which it appears.<sup>15</sup> That later texts can contain earlier traditions, however, is true *in principle* of every ancient text. Each newly discovered document must also be vetted for reliable/unreliable information just as the canonical gospels themselves have been vetted for the past 250 years.<sup>16</sup> Ignoring the non-canonical texts betrays a canonical bias, for the non-canonical texts can at the very least aid the historian in critiquing the canonical tradition.<sup>17</sup> Even very late texts may help the historian evaluate the earlier tradition.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Modern historians approach texts in a way similar to Thucydides, the author of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, fifth-century BCE Greece; see Rex Warner, *Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1972). In Thucydides' history the gods are not shown as manipulating affairs to secure their desired ends.

<sup>15</sup> These texts are thought to have been *composed* in the latter half of the first century and later. The *earliest complete* extant manuscripts of the canonical gospels, however, date from the fourth century.

<sup>16</sup> See the report of the Jesus Seminar on the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Thomas: Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels*. For the most recently discovered gospel text see Charles W. Hedrick and Paul A. Mirecki, *The Gospel of the Savior: A New Ancient Gospel* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> See Hedrick and Mirecki, *Gospel of the Savior*, 22–23; and Hedrick, “34 Gospels,” 46–47.

<sup>18</sup> See how the late versions of the Fig Tree in a Vineyard (Luke 13:6–9) found in Pistis Sophia (third century) and the Apocalypse of Peter (second century) can be used to inform a discussion of the canonical texts: Charles W. Hedrick, “An Unfinished Story about a Fig Tree in a Vineyard (Luke 13:6–9),” *PRS* 26.2 (Summer 1999): 169–192.

Even the canonical tradition has its problems, and provides conflicting information. Consider such a simple thing as the last thing Jesus said as he was dying. The texts disagree. Mark and Matthew report his last statement as “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34 = Matt 27:46). Luke has Jesus say: “Father into your hands I commit my spirit” (Luke 23:46); in John, Jesus says: “It is finished” (John 19:30). In this particular situation, it is simply impossible to know what Jesus said before he died. Mark’s report is the earliest in terms of time, while the reports in Luke and John are easier understood as theologically motivated revisions. In spite of attempts to find controls on the oral transmission of the Jesus tradition so as to ensure the reliability of the tradition in the period from Jesus to the writing of the gospels,<sup>19</sup> traditions passed on orally are subject to significant modifications simply in performing them and/or interpreting them in their transmission.<sup>20</sup> One only needs to read the canonical gospels comparatively to recognize the diverse ways the tradition was transmitted. For example, in several instances, the earliest gospel (Mark) and the latest gospel (John) have preserved the same tradition, but they preserve it in significantly different forms.<sup>21</sup> The simplest way to explain these (significantly different) parallels between John and Mark is that each drew from a common oral source, but performed or interpreted the tradition in ways suitable for their understanding of the story of Jesus.

To judge from the written gospels, Mark’s editors, Matthew and Luke, did not hesitate to “adapt” Mark to suit their own interests.<sup>22</sup> They used some material from Mark but omitted other materials. For example, Matthew significantly expanded (Matt 14:22–33) the Markan story (Mark 6:45–52) of Jesus walking on the water, while Luke omitted it altogether. Both Matthew and Luke omit the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26). They both use Mark’s story of the healing of the boy possessed by a spirit (Mark 9:14–29), but they

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<sup>19</sup> For example, see Birger Gerhardsson, “The Secret of the Transmission of the Unwritten Jesus Tradition,” *NTS* 51 (January 2005): 1–18.

<sup>20</sup> See John Dominic Crossan, *In Fragments: The Aphorisms of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 40–66.

<sup>21</sup> For example: the healing of the lame man (Mark 2:1–12 = John 5:2–18); the feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:30–34 = John 6:1–15); Jesus walking on the water (Mark 6:45–52 = John 6:16–21).

<sup>22</sup> This point is almost too well known to require justification; but see Charles W. Hedrick, *When History and Faith Collide: Studying Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 48–94.

significantly abbreviate Mark's narrative, and in so doing each changes the character of the story in different ways (Matt 17:14–21 = Luke 9:37–43a).<sup>23</sup>

In addition to adapting written sources, the evangelists also used oral tradition. Only by assuming they did utilize oral tradition can one satisfactorily explain the different birth narratives and resurrection appearances in Matthew and Luke, and John's distinctive traditions of Jesus' last meal and baptism. John also omits all exorcism stories, and all of Jesus' parables. Yet both narrative types were surely available to John in the undifferentiated oral tradition, even as Matthew had access to Johannine-type material, as Matt 11:25–27 argues.<sup>24</sup> The same opportunity to select and reject material and flexibility in revising it were also available to any writer who had access to the oral tradition. Hence the historian of Christian origins can ill afford to ignore any early Christian text, even if it contains a portrayal of Jesus differing significantly from the views of second-century orthodoxy. Orthodoxy's view of Jesus is a fragile harmonizing of rather diverse canonical gospels.<sup>25</sup> If the canonical gospels, in spite of their diversity, are found to have traditions passing the rigorous scrutiny of the historian, then any early Christian text, at least potentially, may contain reliable information about Jesus of Nazareth.

### 3. *The Gospel of Thomas: An Independent Source of Jesus Traditions?*

With the exception of the Secret Gospel of Mark,<sup>26</sup> scholars have never been more divided over the value of a particular non-canonical gospel

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<sup>23</sup> I have explained the phenomena in the texts from the perspective of the priority of Mark, but the "adaptation" of one text to another works no matter what explanation is used to explain their literary relationship.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew hardly used John's Gospel as a source and the most cogent way to explain this bit of "Johannine tradition" in Matthew is by its being available to Matthew in the oral tradition.

<sup>25</sup> On this point see Hedrick, *When History and Faith Collide*, 30–47.

<sup>26</sup> For the literature and the issues see Charles W. Hedrick, "The Secret Gospel of Mark: Stalemate in the Academy"; Guy G. Stroumsa, "Comments on Charles Hedrick's Article: A Testimony"; Bart D. Ehrman, "Response to Charles Hedrick's Stalemate," *J ECS* 11.2 (Summer 2003): 133–163. Most recently, Scott G. Brown has provided the guild with the first thorough sifting of scholarship on the Secret Gospel since Morton Smith's own study in 1973: *Mark's Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton Smith's Controversial Discovery*, Studies in Christianity and Judaism 15 (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University, 2005).

text than they are over the *Gospel of Thomas*. At least five positions about the relationship of Thomas to the synoptic gospels have emerged in the discussion. Two of these (Thomas is dependent on the canonical gospels; or Thomas is independent of the canonical gospels) reflect general positions in the guild; i.e., most scholars would opt for one or the other position. A third position (Thomas is irrelevant for a study of Jesus) reflects the view of some who work with the literature from a particular religious perspective.

The following two explanations for the relationship of Thomas to the synoptic gospels are not widely held. One scholar argues that Luke's gospel is dependent on sayings formed in Thomas Christianity, a position implying that Luke and Thomas have drawn from the same oral sources. Thus Luke has been influenced by the same religious attitudes that influenced Thomas, and therefore the relationship is not one of literary dependence but one of a shared tradition. The last position is my own: because Thomas contains material that did not come from the canonical gospels, each saying Thomas shares with the canonical gospels is potentially independent of the canonical gospels, until shown to be dependent.<sup>27</sup> Thus the battle over dependency/independency must be waged over each individual saying in Thomas.<sup>28</sup>

Here is a summary of the logic bringing me to this position.<sup>29</sup> In my judgment it is the only responsible position to take regarding Thomas, particularly in the light of the polarization that currently exists over Thomas. In short, each saying must be vetted as to its potential originality with Jesus of Nazareth. Nevertheless, even if one saying in Thomas (or a dozen or more) is found to derive from the canonical gospels, it is not inevitable that all sayings in Thomas came from the canonical gospels, since Thomas most probably represents a collection of collections. The three Greek fragments of Thomas and the complete Coptic

<sup>27</sup> See Hedrick, "An Anecdotal Argument," 113–14.

<sup>28</sup> See Jean-Daniel Kaestli, "L'utilisation de l'Évangile de Thomas dans la recherche actuelle sur les paroles de Jésus," in *Jésus de Nazareth: Nouvelles approches d'une énigme*, ed. Daniel Marguerat et al. (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1998), 389. For a similar view see B. Dehandschutter, "L'Évangile selon Thomas: témoin d'une tradition préluccanienne?" in *L'Évangile de Luc: Problèmes littéraires et théologiques: Méorial Lucien Cerfaux*, ed. Frans Neiryck, BETL 32 (Leuven: Duculot, 1973), 289. I am grateful to John Kloppenborg for calling these references to my attention. Kloppenborg also shares the view that the relationship between Thomas and the synoptic gospels must be argued for each individual saying.

<sup>29</sup> See Charles W. Hedrick, "Thomas and the Synoptics: Aiming at a Consensus," *SecCent* 7.1 (1989–90): 39–56.

version represent different recensions of Thomas. In addition, the presence of sayings in Thomas, clearly not derived from the canonical gospels, argues that Thomas used multiple sources, including oral tradition, since Thomas had access to the same oral materials as the canonical gospels.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Thomas' reliance on the oral tradition is conclusively shown by its use of *Gos. Thom.* saying 82: "Whoever is near me is near to the fire and whoever is far from me is far from the kingdom," a saying preserved in two independent versions in four independent ancient sources.<sup>31</sup> Although it is not a part of the canonical tradition about Jesus of Nazareth, saying 82 is likely a saying of the historical man Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. "A Man Wants to Kill": Title and Provenance

I use the most neutral term possible to title the narrative; other titles seem pejorative in one way or another. Since the narrative has no ancient title suggesting a strategy for reading it, a neutral modern title protects the ambiguity of the narrative by leaving it open to various reading strategies.<sup>33</sup> The more popular title "The Assassin" suggests that the person in the narrative was associated with some sort of clandestine organization, or that he killed for political reasons or personal gain. In either case the title passes a negative judgment on the man's deed. The same is true of the title "Murderer," a title implying that his deed was unlawful, premeditated, and hence immoral.<sup>34</sup> After analyzing the story, readers may come to view the narrative in that way, but since the narrative might be read in other ways, the issue should not be resolved by a modern title. In any case, readers should be allowed to come to their own conclusions about the actions of the protagonist in the narrative.

<sup>30</sup> See Hedrick, "An Anecdotal Argument," 113–119 (on the issue of the date of Thomas see 114–116), and idem, *Parables as Poetic Fictions: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 236–251.

<sup>31</sup> Hedrick, "An Anecdotal Argument," 119–124.

<sup>32</sup> See for example Bruce Chilton, "The Gospel According to Thomas as a Source for Jesus Teaching," in *Gospel Perspectives: The Jesus Traditions outside the Gospels*, ed. D. Wenham, vol. 5 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 168.

<sup>33</sup> With the exception of the *Ap. Jas* 8.6–10, no ancient titles for the parables were preserved. And even *Ap. Jas*. 8.6–10 lists titles only. Precisely what parable each title was intended to evoke in the mind of a reader is uncertain.

<sup>34</sup> At least to judge by ancient Christian standards: cf. for example 1 John 3:11–15.

The most neutral title was an adaptation of the incipit: “A Man Wants to Kill.”<sup>35</sup>

I am arguing that this story, having a flawed protagonist like other flawed protagonists in Jesus’ stories, is a story Jesus told and the story is accessible to modern readers as a first-century Palestinian narrative through historical and literary analysis. Two objections exist to this narrative as a story Jesus might have told: its excessive violence<sup>36</sup> and its preservation in a single non-canonical text. These objections are not convincing. Other stories with violent features exist in the parables corpus and their originality with Jesus has not been successfully challenged for that reason.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the fact that the story exists in only one version should not be an issue, since many of the parables long held to originate with Jesus are preserved in only a single version. Published explanations of the story generally assume that the story *requires* a gnostic reading, probably because it is preserved in the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>38</sup> No doubt the story is capable of being read from a gnostic perspective, just as the evangelists could read Jesus’ Jewish stories from a Christian perspective. Readers would do well to remember that not a single Christian was numbered among the peasants who sat at the feet of Jesus at the first hearing of the parables.<sup>39</sup> The final judgment on the character of the story should depend neither on its literary context in Thomas nor on a particular reader’s response, but rather on

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<sup>35</sup> See Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, vii–ix; note that Scott titles the parables by the incipits for the most part.

<sup>36</sup> At least one saying attributed to Jesus (Mark 3:27) describes a violent home invasion in which a strong man (τὸν ἰσχυρόν) is bound and his home plundered; see Stroker, “Extracanonial Parables,” 101.

<sup>37</sup> See Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels*, 510–511. The Jesus Seminar rejected the parable of the Tenants in the canonical gospels (cf. Mark 12:1–8 par.) because of its allegorical features, but accepted the Thomas version of the parable, which lacked the allegorical features. The violence of the story was not an issue. See also Stroker, “Extracanonial Gospels,” 102.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the rationale of Michael Fieger, *Das Thomasevangelium: Einleitung, Kommentar, und Systematik*, NTAbh NF 22 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), 249. If that were true, however, we would be forced to read parables that Thomas shares with the synoptic gospels as gnostic parables (for the list see Hedrick, *Poetic Fictions*, appendix B, pages 252–253). But because we know that these stories have a prior social life in Palestinian Judaism before they were used in a secondary literary context foreign to their original social context, we are justified in reading them against an earlier Palestinian background rather than on the basis of their literary context in the Christian Graeco-Roman gospels or the Gospel of Thomas.

<sup>39</sup> See Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 10–14, 101; and idem, “Prolegomena to reading Parables. Luke 13:6–9 as a Test Case,” *RevExp* 94.2 (1997): 179–197.

the nature of the story itself: i.e., how it works as a story, its realism, and the kind of social context best suited to its realism.

### 5. *Reading Strategies for the Story*

In the history of parables' interpretation there have been at least seven distinct strategies for reading Jesus' stories.<sup>40</sup> Each strategy is based on certain theoretical assumptions about both the nature of the stories and Christian origins. Every reader of the parables will, deliberately or subconsciously, make certain assumptions that determine a reading strategy. Here briefly are my assumptions: how Jesus used his parables is unknown and we have no hope of ever recovering that datum; the contexts in which we find the parables in the early Christian gospels are literary contexts, provided by a second or third Christian generation. They do not represent the original *social* contexts for the stories. Comparative frames and interpretative conclusions (*promythia* and *epimythia*) are not inside the narrative world of the story but derive from the evangelists' later social and religious contexts. The figurative character of the stories may not simply be assumed; and every interpretation of a story is a particular reader's response.<sup>41</sup>

Here briefly is my strategy for reading a parable. The classic form of what are called "parables" is basically a story: hence, a parable is "a brief, freely invented, narrative fiction, comprised of beginning, middle, and end, dramatizing a common human experience or some incident from nature."<sup>42</sup> While we do not know how Jesus used his stories, early Christians regarded and treated them as repositories of Christian truths. In order to wrest a religious lesson from essentially secular stories, appropriate for their later situation, early Christians treated them figuratively.<sup>43</sup> I assume that his stories work like any story does. Stories are told for the purpose of engaging an auditor, and it is only inside the

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<sup>40</sup> See the discussion in Charles W. Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables: Jesus and His Modern Critics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), in particular 55–88.

<sup>41</sup> See *ibid.*, 10–22, 100–104.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>43</sup> See *ibid.*, 1–9, and 36–39. On the secularity of parables, see the comment by Amos N. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 73.

story that discoveries are made. Or in the words of Frank Kermode: “Fictions are for finding things out.”<sup>44</sup>

My strategy is to engage the story as a first-century fiction. If the story does not reflect the social context of first-century Palestine, its origin as a parable of Jesus is thrown into serious doubt. A second issue is the story’s realism—how accurately does the story mimic human life in the first century.<sup>45</sup> The realism of the story acts as a brake on over-creative imaginations, effectively rules out figurative leaps of fancy, and grounds the reader firmly inside the story within the first-century social world of Jesus.<sup>46</sup>

Descriptions of the story must use the language of the story itself. If the idiom changes in the interpretative explanation, then the reader has broken off dialogue with Jesus’ story, and is describing one particular reader’s response to the story.<sup>47</sup> The narrative voice of the stories does not provide resolutions to complications raised in the stories; hence the story is eternally open, soliciting responses from every reader (and originally from every auditor).<sup>48</sup>

## 6. Analyzing the Story as a First-Century Fiction

### 6.1. Thomas’s Interpretation

No one has yet proposed a satisfactory explanation for the arrangement of the sayings in the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>49</sup> The immediate literary

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<sup>44</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 39.

<sup>45</sup> This view is generally accepted in critical New Testament scholarship: see the discussion in Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 36–44. Craig Blomberg, on the other hand, argues that allegorical features increase the probability that the story originated with Jesus: Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1990), 21.

<sup>46</sup> For examples of how this method works see Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions*, 164–235, and idem, *Many Things in Parables*, 83–99.

<sup>47</sup> On this point, see *ibid.*, 45–54.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, 84–85, 95.

<sup>49</sup> See Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 6 for a survey of the literature on this issue, and also Kenneth V. Neller, “Diversity in the Gospel of Thomas: Clues for a New Direction,” *SecCent* 7.1 (Spring 1989–90): 2–4. Thomas, in short, appears to be a collection of collections that expanded and shrank depending on the proclivities of a particular author/editor/collector. The Greek fragments of Thomas agree neither among themselves nor with the Coptic version from Nag Hammadi: see Harry W. Attridge, “Appendix. The Greek Fragments,” in Bentley Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codices II, 2–7 Together with XIII, 2\**, *Brit. Lib. Or.4926(1), and P.Oxy. 1, 654, 655*. Vol. 1: *Gospel*



context of A Man Wants to Kill seems to be occasioned by a “catch-word” connection with several other sayings that employ the expression “kingdom of the/my Father” (sayings 96–99),<sup>50</sup> but beyond that contextual association readers must rely on *Gos. Thom.* saying 1 to guide them: “Whoever finds the interpretation of these words will not taste death.” Presumably, a particular understanding of each and every saying must be achieved in order for a reader to qualify for “eternal life.” Since the “authors/collectors” give the reader no further insights, understanding comes intuitively.

## 6.2. *Modern Interpretations*

Modern explanations of the story are generally divided between understanding it to conceal some arcane meaning consistent with a gnostic perspective, and/or reading it in the light of the twin stories in Luke 14:28–32 (the Tower Builder and the A King Goes Forth to War)<sup>51</sup> as an admonition to “thorough preparation before action,”<sup>52</sup> or a combination of the two drawing on other passages in New Testament and extra-canonical literature. On the other hand, some do see *Gos. Thom.* 98, including the two stories in Luke 14:28–32, as a description of the breaking in of God’s reign.

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*According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 96–102.

<sup>50</sup> Reinhard Nordsieck, *Das Thomas-Evangelium: Einleitung, Zur Frage des historischen Jesus, Kommentierung aller 114 Logien*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004), 342.

<sup>51</sup> That A Man Wants to Kill is associated in some sense with Luke 14:25–33 is generally accepted by most scholars: Stroker, “Extracanonical Parables,” 102; Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. S. H. Hooke, rev. ed. (New York: Scribners, 1963 [German 6th edn]), 196–197; Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 444–445; Fieger, *Das Thomasevangelium. Einleitung, Kommentar, und Systematik*, 248–249; Gérard Garitte and Lucien Cerfaux, “Les paraboles du royaume dans l’Évangile de Thomas,” *Mus* 70 (1957): 314; R.McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: A. R. Mowbray, 1960), 97; Funk, Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels*, 524–525; A. J. B. Higgins, “Non-Gnostic Sayings in the Gospel of Thomas,” *NovT* 4 (1960): 304–305. Claus-Hunno Hunzinger sees all three parables (Tower Builder, King Goes Forth, and Assassin) as descriptions of the eruption of God’s reign: “Unbekannte Gleichnisse Jesu aus dem Thomas-Evangelium,” in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*, ed. Walther Eltester, BZNW 26 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960), 213–217. For a critique of Hunzinger see Higgins, “Non-Gnostic Sayings,” 304–305 and Geraint Vaughan Jones, *The Art and Truth of the Parables: A Study in their Literary Form and Modern Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1964), 233–234.

<sup>52</sup> The quote is from Higgins, “Non-Gnostic Sayings,” 304.

Ménard reads the story as a deliberate contrast between an unaware woman who loses the contents of her jar in saying 97 and the alert man in saying 98 (compare sayings 21, 76, 103), who is able to resist the Archon (“the great man”) who is attempting to impede his return through the heavens in the final ascent of the soul.<sup>53</sup> Riley takes the sword in the story as “the (ascetic) will and power of the individual soul, which is tested against the ‘house’ of the body.”<sup>54</sup> Grant reads the story in the light of Luke 14:31: a king evaluates his prospects for success in battle—hence, he concludes, finding the kingdom means counting the cost. “If he is strong enough, he can slay the ‘great man’ (probably the world).”<sup>55</sup>

Cerfaux argues for a christological-soteriological interpretation. The story has two operations: in the first the man puts his sword into the wall and in the second he kills his “powerful adversary.” The first operation that takes place “in his house” is the death of Christ. Christ’s flesh is the curtain (Heb 10:20) and the wall of separation (Col 2:14–15; Eph 2:14–16; *Gos. Truth* 20:23–33). His cross is the landmark (*la limite*) apparently successfully marking the separation of his spirit from the flesh, which represents the domain of the evil powers of chaos. Through the victory of the cross the Gnostic accomplishes the second operation: he annihilates the Powers (or the demiurge).<sup>56</sup> Bauer follows the general ideas of Cerfaux but focuses the second act on the perfected Gnostic. The story portrays the perfected Gnostic gaining control of himself/herself (“becoming a king”) by slaying the powers of the flesh in the second operation (killing the powerful man) in the same way that Christ destroyed the power of the demiurge through his death on the cross in the first operation (putting his sword into the wall).<sup>57</sup>

Philippe de Suarez suggests a psychological reading: human beings put the self (*le moi*) at the center of their lives and aim to dominate others. Little by little they learn that the self must surrender to the

<sup>53</sup> Jacques-É. Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, NHS 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 198.

<sup>54</sup> Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 152. After overcoming the body, the soul can then “overcome the ‘strongman.’” Riley does not identify the strongman.

<sup>55</sup> Robert M. Grant, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus: The Gnostic Gospel of Thomas* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), 182.

<sup>56</sup> Garitte and Cerfaux, “Les paraboles du royaume,” 325–26.

<sup>57</sup> Johannes B. Bauer, “Echte Jesusworte?” in *Evangelien aus dem Nilsand*, ed. Willem Cornelis van Unnik (Frankfurt am Main: Heinrich Scheffler, 1960), 140–141.

(divine) Self (*le Soi*), or in terms of the image in the story: the “great man” (the egotistical self) must finally die under the blows of the divine Assassin (God).<sup>58</sup> Kasser explains saying 98 in connection with the story in 97 (the Woman and the Jar), which concerns a lack of foresight. The story (*Gos. Thom.* 97) warns Gnostics that they risk losing their spirits by accident; and when they arrive at the end of their journey, they perceive their misfortune too late. The good Gnostic, therefore, will be watchful not only to acquire gnosis, but also to preserve it. Saying 98 also has the same theme (lack of foresight), by which Kasser apparently means that in this story (saying 98) foresight is being exercised.<sup>59</sup>

Valantasis finds two ways of reading the story. In the first, he suggests the story offers a bit of proverbial wisdom: if you want to kill a powerful person “practice beforehand” and thereby test your ability before proceeding. In a more esoteric explanation, he interprets the story in the light of *Gos. Thom.* saying 16 where Jesus claims to have brought violence, enmity, and conflict into the world, and thus sets in motion a struggle against the world: “The seekers, fighting the world and its ways to the end, must test their metal [*sic*], practice their swings, explore the limits of their ability to do battle, and then proceed to the killing of the world. . . .”<sup>60</sup> Davies reads the story similarly to Valantasis’s first explanation—it has a patently obvious meaning, he says: “one should prepare in advance.” By associating the story with Luke 14:28 and sayings 10, 16a, and 35 in Thomas, Davies concludes that “We may think of Jesus as a man of peace, but he may have thought of himself in much more aggressive ways. . . .”<sup>61</sup> In an unpublished paper, Bruce Malina argues that the story describes an act of revenge in which a weaker party is able to kill someone powerful.<sup>62</sup> Winterhalter takes the

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<sup>58</sup> Philippe de Suarez, *L'Évangile selon Thomas: Traduction, présentation et commentaires* (Marsanne: Éditions Métanoïa, 1974), 307. An almost identical reading is offered in Émile Gillibert, Pierre Bourgeois, and Yves Haas, *Évangile selon Thomas: Présentation, traduction et commentaires* (Marsanne: Collection Métanoïa, 1979), 249; the reading appears to be dependent on de Suarez (see 7). Gillibert was primarily responsible for the commentary (8).

<sup>59</sup> Rodolphe Kasser, *L'Évangile selon Thomas: Présentation, commentaire théologique* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1961), 109–110.

<sup>60</sup> Valantasis, *Gospel of Thomas*, 179–180.

<sup>61</sup> Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 120.

<sup>62</sup> As reported in Stephen J. Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Jesus* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1993), 90; Patterson reports that the paper was presented in *absentia* to the Jesus Seminar on March 2, 1990. Hunzinger (“Unbekannte Gleichnisse Jesu,” 212) considers it a political assassination.

sword to be “the Word”; the man’s hand is his “executive ability”; the wall of the house is the man’s “own consciousness”; the great man is “a symbol of collective error.” Thus, “the Christian warrior is to conquer error . . . in two steps: (1) in her . . . individual psyche and (2) in the collective belief system of the planet.”<sup>63</sup>

Michael Fieger thinks *Gos. Thom.* 98 is a “genuine gnostic parable.” It issues a call for self-examination and a resolute decision for the kingdom of the Father. One must reject the material “stuff” of the world, which is symbolized by the powerful man. Recognition of one’s own “light particle” comes by freeing oneself from the vexations and passions of the material world. This goal may be realized only by resolute action. In this way a parable about a political murder becomes an example for the Thomas community.<sup>64</sup>

Jeremias associates the story with the Zealots of the first century and describes the murder in the story as a political assassination. The assassin tests himself to see if he has the strength to carry the deed through.<sup>65</sup> Hunzinger thinks *Gos. Thom.* 98 is an authentic parable of Jesus. Because of the offensive nature of the subject matter of the story, it is incredible to him that any early Christian would have invented and attributed it to Jesus. The story reflects the general situation of the time of Jesus in the violence it reflects (viz. the Zealots; compare Mark 3:27). The story of the Tower Builder and A King Goes Forth (Luke 14:28–32) are also genuine parables of Jesus that should be understood in the context of Jesus’ preaching about the reign of God. These three parables describe God’s act in bringing in his reign. As the protagonist in each parable considers carefully what he is about to do, so God has carefully thought through the ultimate establishment of his reign and there is no doubt that he will bring it to completion.<sup>66</sup> Following Hunzinger, Nordsieck argues that *Gos. Thom.* 98 is a Jesus parable about the coming of God’s reign. Like the assassin in the story, God’s rule is not realized without careful planning and preparation. Hence followers of Jesus must conscientiously test their strength and capability for the great adventure,

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<sup>63</sup> Robert Winterhalter, *The Fifth Gospel: A Verse-by-Verse New Age Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 103.

<sup>64</sup> Fieger, *Thomasevangelium*, 248–249.

<sup>65</sup> Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 196–197; 74–75, and Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, 343.

<sup>66</sup> Hunzinger, “Unbekannte Gleichnisse Jesu,” 211–217.

the battle with the mighty one (*dem Mächtigen*), the powers of this world, and with their own individual selves (*Ego*).<sup>67</sup>

### 6.3. *The Elements of the Narrative: Saying 98*

In the history of its interpretation, no one has yet examined the narrative simply as a story, as I do here. This section analyzes the narrative as a brief fiction in the social context of Palestinian antiquity. The narrative is comprised of four periods (a period is a complete sentence).<sup>68</sup>

*Period One:* A man wants to kill a great man.

*Period Two:* He drew the sword in his house.

*Period Three:* He thrust it into the wall, in order to know whether his hand would carry through.

*Period Four:* Then he slew the powerful (man).<sup>69</sup>

The story proceeds in three movements: situation (period one); complication (periods two and three); resolution (period four).

*The reign of the Father is like.* Since this phrase is not mentioned inside the narrated story, but is “tagged onto” it as an introductory comparative frame, the phrase is excluded from consideration.<sup>70</sup> Stories constitute separate universes with their own rules and laws, which must be discovered by engagement. Entering the story is like stepping into another dimension apart from the reader’s world and the world of the text in which the story appears. Stories are separated from their literary contexts by thin but generally distinct lines, for the most part. Learning to bring those lines into focus and disregarding everything else best situates a reader for an encounter with Jesus’ poetic vision. If anything comes from Jesus, the story does, and only the story, therefore, is considered in this discussion. The introductory comparative frame actually represents a later interpretation of the story, i.e., how it was understood to work at some point in its transmission.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, 342–345.

<sup>68</sup> See Hedrick, *Parables as Poetic Fictions*, 59–61.

<sup>69</sup> The translation is from A. Guillaumont et al., *The Gospel According to Thomas: Coptic Text Established and Translated* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 51. My translation follows in the line-by-line translation below.

<sup>70</sup> Hunzinger recognizes that the introductory formula could be a secondary attachment to the story: “Unbekannte Gleichnisse,” 216.

<sup>71</sup> For the argument that introductory comparative frames, particularly kingdom frames, most likely derive from early Christianity’s frustration with Jesus’ secular

*A man wants to kill.* Readers know very little about this figure who wants/desires (i.e., has resolved) to kill. We do not even learn until the second sentence that he is male (ΑΥΡΩΛΜ).<sup>72</sup> The sentence is cast in the present tense, but the main verbs of the rest of the narrative are in the perfect. The present tense is not a scribal error (i.e., ΕΥΟΨΩΥ erroneously written for ΕΑΨΟΛΩΥ), but it is written in the present tense by attraction to the opening line “the reign of the Father is like.” Compare saying 97: “the reign of the Father is like a woman who is carrying . . .”<sup>73</sup>

These opening words sound shockingly immoral in the social context of a society formally structured around a religious code prohibiting homicide (Gen 9:5–6; Exod 20:13).<sup>74</sup> He “wants” to kill, meaning he has resolved to do it.<sup>75</sup> But readers are not told if this is a capricious whim, a spur of the moment decision, or if it is a carefully thought out course of action. Obviously, knowing that information would make a difference in how a reader views the protagonist. The narrator also does not tell the hearer/reader<sup>76</sup> the reasons why the man has come to such a shocking decision. Hence, for a curious reader the “situation” is also an unresolved “complication.”

*A nobleman.* The protagonist in the narrative wants to kill a nobleman, a leading figure in the land, one of the economic elite; the intended victim moves in the highest and most powerful circles.<sup>77</sup> He is scarcely

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stories, see Charles W. Hedrick, “Parable and Kingdom: A Survey of the Evidence in Mark,” *PRS* 27.2 (2000): 179–199 (see the conclusion on p. 199).

<sup>72</sup> The Coptic word ρΩΗΕ is a default translation for the Greek ἄνθρωπος, which is the generic word for “human being,” in ancient and modern Greek. So also Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, 342, but for a different reason.

<sup>73</sup> See also the opening lines (comparative frames) to sayings 21, 57, 76, 107, 109 and compare sayings 8, 20. The opening lines of Thomas parables without the appended comparative frame use the perfect or imperfect: sayings 9, 63, 64, 65.

<sup>74</sup> These passages are usually understood as a prohibition against unjustifiable homicide, since murderers are to be put to death (Exod 21:12, 14), and in the context of the “Holy War” (Gen 15:3, 1 Sam 15) killing is mandated.

<sup>75</sup> See Walter E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 500b.

<sup>76</sup> Readers of the story must never forget they are a secondary “audience”; its first hearers were Palestinian Jews.

<sup>77</sup> The word used to describe the man (ΜΕΓΙΣΤΑΝΟΣ) is generally used in association with kings and leading figures of a nation: 2 Chr 36:18, Isa 34:12, Jer 24:8, Sir 4:10, Dan 5:23, Mark 6:21, Rev 6:15. For other uses see Jer 14:3, Rev 18:23. The translation (RSV) of μεγιστῶσιν in Mark 6:21 as “courtier” is clearly mistaken. Compare the NIV: “leading men.” Nordsieck (*Thomas-Evangelium*, 342) thinks the word could describe either a physically powerful person (*Mächtiger*) or a nobleman (*Vornehmer*). The Coptic ΜΕΓΙΣΤΑΝΟΣ appears to be an inflected Greek form (genitive) of μεγιστῶν, μεγιστῶνος, which the Coptic translator preserved in translating a Greek prototype,

the “village bully,” as some have suggested.<sup>78</sup> The slaying of a prominent influential member of society is a bold and risky act, and suggests that the story describes a “political assassination,” but the narrator is silent on the matter.

*He drew the sword in his house.* The use of the definite article with sword (i.e., *the sword*) is odd in its specificity. I would have expected ΟΥΧΗΥΕ (a sword)—i.e., any sword to accomplish the deed, or ΤΕΥΧΗΥΕ (his sword) to indicate its relationship to the protagonist. The oddity of the definite article apparently struck Kasser in a similar way and he retroverted into Greek τὴν μάχαιραν αὐτοῦ (<his> sword).<sup>79</sup> The use of the article suggests that the narrator has some specific sword in view and raises the question: where did *the sword* come from? Was the protagonist wearing the sword at the precise moment the idea about killing struck him—he drew *the sword* (i.e., the one he was wearing at the time)? Or did he go and fetch *the sword* for the killing (from somewhere in his house), and then draw it from the scabbard? Thus, a logical gap exists between the first and second sentences, which readers must fill in for themselves.<sup>80</sup> How the gap is filled will affect how readers respond to the narrative. If he is wearing the sword, the act appears spontaneous and capricious. If he must first acquire the sword from some other location in his (own) house,<sup>81</sup> his act appears more deliberate.

The Coptic word CHYƆ translates a variety of Greek words, not all of them appropriate for the action described in the narrative.<sup>82</sup> The

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reading: ἄνθρωπον μεγιστᾶνος; “a man of nobility.” But compare Kasser’s retroversion into Greek: *L’Évangile selon Thomas*, 110: μεγιστᾶν.

<sup>78</sup> Robert W. Funk, Bernard Brandon Scott, James R. Butts, eds., *The Parables of Jesus. Red Letter Edition. A Report of the Jesus Seminar* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988), 23; Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels*, 525.

<sup>79</sup> Kasser, *L’Évangile selon Thomas*, 110.

<sup>80</sup> On gaps in narrative see Hedrick, *Many Things in Parable*, 47–50, and the literature cited there.

<sup>81</sup> The narrator leaves ambiguous where the man is at this moment. Depending on the amount of time one allows for the gap between sentence one and two, “his house” could be the house of the protagonist’s intended victim. In many of the stories about murders and political assassinations in Hebrew Bible the victim is killed in his own house. See for example, 1 Kgs 16:8–12, 2 Kgs 12:19–21, 2 Chr 33:24, 2 Sam 4: 5–7. And if this were the case, the protagonist appears to have rushed into the act completely unprepared for what he is about to do: that is to say, in preparation he does not concern himself with so much as even his ability to succeed until he is in the victim’s own home.

<sup>82</sup> See Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, 379a.

most likely candidate is the μάχαιρα.<sup>83</sup> This weapon is a dagger or small double-edged sword (cf. Heb 4:12; 11:34), which many people carried in a scabbard for protection (cf. the swords carried by the disciples for protection in Mark 14:43–48 par.), but certainly not by everyone (see Jesus' comment that people will need to purchase a sword in the coming time, Luke 22:36–38). Hence this sword or dagger could easily be concealed on one's person, or if one were wearing such a weapon in a scabbard, suspicion of a person's intent would not necessarily be aroused.<sup>84</sup>

*and pierced the wall.* The μάχαιρα, popularly known as an assassin's weapon, is made for thrusting rather than slashing or cutting. Its short two-edged blade and sharp point thrust into an enemy would do more damage than a slash or cut. Hence the protagonist pierces the wall, which must be a sun-dried mud brick wall, or something similar (cf. Matt 6:19–20; Matt 24:43 = Luke 12:39) typical of a peasant's dwelling, rather than stone, customary in the houses of the elite.<sup>85</sup> In small villages of Upper Egypt even today walls of houses are made of sun-dried mud brick, and walls around courtyards are made of mud plastered onto canes. Only such a "soft" wall could have been pierced with a sword; such walls are typical of the lower classes of Palestine in the first century.<sup>86</sup> Hence, a rather large social distance appears to exist between the protagonist, a man evidently of humble status, and the nobleman, who surely would not live in such a poor dwelling; the distance in their social status makes his prospects of actually killing the nobleman seem rather bleak.

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<sup>83</sup> So Kasser, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, 110; Garitte retroverts into Latin with *gladium*, the short sword used by the Roman soldier: Garitte and Cerfaux, "Les paraboles du royume," 309.

<sup>84</sup> See the discussion in W. Michaelis, "μάχαιρα," in *TDNT*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76), 4:524–527. Mark J. Fretz, "Weapons and Instruments of Warfare," in *ABD*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:893–895. J.W. Wevers, "Sword," in *IDB*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 4:469–470. T.R. Hobbs, "Sword," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1259–1260.

<sup>85</sup> John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 76.

<sup>86</sup> John J. Rousseau and Rami Arav, *Jesus and His World: An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 128.



*so as to know that his hand would be inflexible* (i.e., in carrying out the act).<sup>87</sup> He thrusts the sword into the wall not to test his own resolve, however, but to determine if he has the strength necessary to carry out the killing (i.e., is the strength of his “hand” adequate for the task?).<sup>88</sup> And now the reader knows that the protagonist is not a professional assassin or a professional military man. A professional would surely know whether he was strong enough to kill in such a fashion without having first to test his strength. Only a person unaccustomed to such activity would need to determine whether he could actually kill a person with a sword thrust.

*Then he slew the nobleman.* The gap between the previous sentence and this one is broad. In the previous sentence the protagonist was in his own home testing his strength to wield the weapon successfully. In this sentence he has already accomplished the deed. In between the two acts lie both time and events that the narrator chooses not to relate. Readers fill the gap as best they can; how they fill it will determine the character of the protagonist (and the nature of the story). Readers are not told exactly when and precisely how the protagonist accomplished the kill. Specific details leading up to the killing are lacking. Did he follow the test of his strength with meticulous and careful planning? Did he stalk the nobleman looking for just the right opportunity enabling him to accomplish his mission and evade capture, or possibly his own death? Was it done by stealth in a night raid on the nobleman’s home? Did he stab him on some busy street during daylight hours and sneak away in the ensuing confusion? But the narrator is silent.

#### 6.4. *How Does the Story Work?*

The focus of the story falls on periods two and three in which the protagonist tries to reassure himself that he is physically capable of accomplishing the killing. These two periods are bracketed by two gaps in the narrative, which further emphasize the sword thrust into the wall as a major focus of the story.<sup>89</sup> The narrative goes from conception (period one) to successful accomplishment (period four) on the basis

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<sup>87</sup> The expression is typically used of a speaker’s insistence or persistence (cf. Luke 23:59, Luke 23:5). The protagonist is therefore speaking of his hand’s “persistence” or “resolve”; i.e., that it would have the strength adequate for the task.

<sup>88</sup> Compare Jdt 13:7 for a similar concern.

<sup>89</sup> The gaps lie between periods one and two and periods three and four.

of a simple sword thrust into a wall. In other words, the complete absence of expected prudent planning for committing homicide becomes apparent by contrast to this single sword thrust into the wall.

The Tower Builder (Luke 14:28–30) and A King Goes Forth (Luke 14:31–32), on the other hand, are characterized precisely by meticulous planning in the conception stage. The assumption is that a tower builder will carefully estimate the completion of the project against available resources before beginning construction and the king in the war room will vet various battle plans to offset the enemy's superior force before beginning the battle. In Luke's brief narratives readers are not told what the tower builder and the king actually did. They are only told what *might happen* without careful planning (people will mock the tower builder if he starts and cannot finish, Luke 14:29–30), or what *could happen* with careful planning (the king averts a military disaster by suing for peace, Luke 14:32). Luke's narratives are cast as conceptions of potential actions and correspond to period one of A Man Wants to Kill. By contrast, A Man Wants to Kill goes from concept to accomplishment with no reasonable planning or forethought.<sup>90</sup> In other words, the story in Thomas is the opposite of the stories in Luke.

Common wisdom insists that in actions whose outcomes are uncertain a prudent person will take certain necessary precautions.<sup>91</sup> "Always look before you leap," says common wisdom, but the protagonist in the Thomas narrative leaps without looking, and is completely successful! And hence the story undermines community wisdom. In Luke's stories one character "sits down and counts the cost" of building; another calls a war counsel to determine strength requirements and battle plans. The Thomas character, on the other hand, is only concerned about one thing: the strength of his hand! Is he physically strong enough or not?

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<sup>90</sup> Several of the stories about murder and political assassination in the Hebrew Bible feature aspects of reasonable planning in order to ensure that the killer will be able successfully to kill the intended victim. Ehud, for example, conceals his sword when going to kill Gera, the Benjaminite (Judg 3:15–30); Joab pretends to have his sword fall accidentally out of its scabbard to deceive Amasa before he kills him (2 Sam 20:8–10; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 7.284); Jael's murder of Sisera was very carefully executed (Judg 4:17–22). In Josephus (*Ant.* 20.164–165) the killers of the high priest Jonathan concealed their daggers under their garments and pretended to be on their way to worship.

<sup>91</sup> Funk, Scott, and Butts, *Parables of Jesus*, 63.

The Thomas narrator does not condemn the protagonist either for the taking of human life or for his lack of foresight. On the other hand, the stories in Luke clearly condemn “lack of planning” by the way the story is told—“what man or king would do such a thing?” (Luke 14:28, 31), and community wisdom answers: no one would, since such action lacks common sense. Therefore, the narrative in Thomas describes a man who acts both rashly (without careful forethought) and immorally (the taking of human life without community sanction). And in presenting the story without any criticism of the act or censure of the man, even the narrator is suspect of being without morals and conscience as well,<sup>92</sup> or so a conventional reading of the story in the context of a first-century Palestinian community would suggest. In short, the story cavalierly undermines both religious values and community wisdom.

#### 6.5. *Hypothetical Responses of First-Century Jewish Audiences*

These hypothetical responses are based on what is generally known about first-century Palestinian Judaism. There are two caveats to be kept in mind, however: (1) the actual social context of first-century Palestine is known by modern scholarship only in the most general way from archaeological artifacts (which the archaeologist’s creative imagination must turn into a living social context) and from very few written records (from which the historian/sociologist reconstructs the social context using texts not originally intended for that purpose); (2) no one ever knows what goes on in the mind of another person.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, given what is known about the situation of Jesus’ socio-political world, certain responses do seem almost inevitable.

The narrator betrays nothing as to how the story should be heard, leaving it up to hearers/readers to make of it what they will. Hence, “meaning” depends on what personal baggage hearers/readers bring to the story and the kinds of situations they imagine as contexts for the story. Hearers/readers will, if gracious, confer “meaning” on the story in the nexus between what they bring to the story and the narrative itself.<sup>94</sup> In the final analysis, hearers/readers—not authors/narrators—control the meaning of a narrative unit. At least three kinds of hearers would likely have been present at the first audition of this story, and

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<sup>92</sup> See Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 84–85 and 123 n. 12.

<sup>93</sup> See *ibid.*, 94.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–54.

none of them would have been “Christian” in the sense that the later canonical evangelists were Christian (the evangelists represent the later Graeco-Roman stage of the movement that Jesus began some forty [Mark] to sixty years [John] earlier). Jesus’ first hearers would certainly have been Jews (of Galilee, Judea, or the dispersion); perhaps Samaritans, Romans, Greeks, or others in Palestine on business could also have been among his hearers (cf. Acts 2:7–11). These hearers would have responded to the story in terms of the “fictions” (i.e., mental constructs) by which they understood themselves and made sense of their lives in the world.

On the basis of the literary fictions in terms of which pious Jews and Samaritans understood themselves (both as the people of the same God who shared Torah as sacred Scripture) the story would have been scandalous. It portrays, without qualification or censure, the breaking of one of the most sacred prohibitions of Hebrew and Samaritan Scripture: the apparently unjustifiable taking of human life (Exod 20:13, Deut 5:17, and Gen 9:5–6). The Torah, shared by both groups, recognized a difference between murder and manslaughter. Manslaughter was accidental (Num 35:22–28) and murder was a deliberate act and therefore repudiated and punished (Num 35:16–21). Because the protagonist in the story apparently deliberately decided to commit homicide, he violates Torah, and Jewish and Samaritan piety would have demanded that the act (and the narrator as well) be condemned.

A zealot upon hearing the story could easily have heard it as an authorization to violence in the name of God—perhaps even in terms of “Holy War.” A “zealot,” in brief, was a person characterized by deep piety “rooted in zeal for God and the law.”<sup>95</sup> This hypothetical hearer does not have to be a member of an organized resistance movement, such as those who led armed resistance against the Romans in the period (6–66) before the war with Rome (66–74),<sup>96</sup> but he easily could

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<sup>95</sup> See the excellent discussion by David Rhoads “Zealots,” in *ABD*, ed. Freedman, 6:1043–1054.

<sup>96</sup> See Rhodes, “Zealots,” 1046–1047; and Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986), 190–243. See also the survey article by Morton Smith, “Zealots and Sicarii, Their Origins and Relation,” *HTR* 64 (1971): 2 (cf. 3, 6, 9) and 18: “From at least Maccabean times many Jews fostered the admiration of ‘zeal,’ and individuals undertook or were thought to be ‘zealots’ on the models of Phineas and Elijah” (Num 25 and 1 Kgs 18:40, 19:10; and add Mattathias, 1 Macc 2:15–28). But these examples are describing the actions of private individuals and the ideal of zeal for God rather than an organized movement.

have been. It is only required that his faith include the following ideas: that Yahweh alone should rule over Israel, and that the Torah should be obeyed.<sup>97</sup> Such a hypothetical hearer could easily be led by hearing the story to associate the nobleman allegorically with the Roman oppressors of Israel and to cast the protagonist as a pious Jew, who acts out of “zeal” to restore the land to Yahweh—heard in this way, the story authorizes “justifiable” violence in the name of God.

Early Christians associated many of Jesus’ stories with the reign of God.<sup>98</sup> The idea of Yahweh as a reigning king is deeply rooted in Jewish literature and faith.<sup>99</sup> Hence, Jewish hearers (cf. Luke 23:50–51) could easily have heard the story as a reference to the reign of God—clearly someone heard it that way, since it bears such an introductory comparative frame in Thomas. Heard in such a way, the story describes the ultimate victory of God’s reign through violent means. In short, the story images and epitomizes Matt 11:12 (SV): “Heaven’s imperial rule has been breaking in violently and violent men are attempting to gain it by force.”<sup>100</sup>

I am not arguing that Jesus actually *intended* the story to be heard in any of these ways, but only that the story *is subject* to being understood in these ways, and undoubtedly others as well, judging from the history of parables interpretation. Whatever Jesus intended with his stories is lost forever and all we have are the stories.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Compare for example the reaction of the priest Mattathias who “burning with zeal for the Torah” killed both the king’s representative who sought to enforce sacrifice and a Jew who stepped forward to make the sacrifice (1 Macc 2:15–28). This homicide was the beginning of the Maccabean revolt. There was at least one zealot attested in the Galilee area: Simon the zealot (Luke 6:15).

<sup>98</sup> Mark may have been responsible for associating the parables of Jesus with the reign of God: see Hedrick, “Parable and Kingdom: A Survey of the Evidence in Mark,” 179–199.

<sup>99</sup> See Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 16–32.

<sup>100</sup> In such an understanding of the story, the disciples are cast in the role of “the violent men”; see Nordsieck, *Thomas-Evangelium*, 344.

<sup>101</sup> See Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 45–54. Because of its ambiguity and polyvalence every narrative is capable of a variety of reasonable explanations. The story itself limits the range of reasonable readings, however. There can be no final definitive reading of a story of Jesus, because historical circumstances of hearers/readers change, and new readers emerge.

### 7. *Another Reader's Response*

I am most struck by the protagonist's naïveté. He literally does no planning at all; thrusting a sword into the wall might have been a good place to begin planning, if he were a "90 lb. weakling." But it is clearly not the place to stop. I imagine that a professional assassin or soldier, upon hearing Jesus' story, would have been amused at what would likely be seen as the actions of a rank amateur. His amusement would last only until the final line of the story, however, for a rank amateur successfully pulls off the killing of an important public figure without prudent planning, which is precisely what a professional would not have done.

I am also struck by the chilling cold-blooded character of the killing, an effect produced by the lack of detail in the story and the absence of a stated motive for the killing. The lack of motive for the killing of the nobleman creates an unresolved complication for readers, since knowing the killer's motive would provide a basis for evaluating the homicide. Without a clear motive the act appears capricious.

For obvious reasons, community wisdom in Judaism cautioned against opposing a powerful figure: "Do not contend with a powerful man, lest you fall into his hands" (Sir 8:1–3 RSV; cf. Sir 4:7). In other words: if you do go against a prominent community figure, you had better be successful, since he has the resources to ruin you.<sup>102</sup> What has driven this protagonist to such a violent irreligious and anti-social act in the face of community wisdom to the contrary? But the narrator is silent. In some ways this is surprising, since the stories of Jesus often (but not always) include an explanation of the protagonist's motivation, or motivation is clear from the story: A farmer sows his field in order to have a crop—that is what farmers do. A man finds a treasure in a field and sells everything to buy the field so as to possess the treasure. A man tears down barns and builds bigger storage facilities to accommodate his bumper crop. A man orders his vintner to cut down a fig tree because it is not bearing fruit. A woman loses a coin and she sweeps her house to find it. A dishonest steward shaves the amounts of bills

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<sup>102</sup> *1 Enoch* would probably offer different advice about opposing the rich and powerful (cf. *1 En.* 96.7–8). See John S. Kloppenborg, "Riches, the Rich, and God's Judgment in *1 Enoch* 92–105 and the Gospel According to Luke" in *George W.E. Nickelsburg in Perspective: An On-Going Dialogue of Learning*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, JSJSup (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 2:572–585.

owed to his master so as to obligate people to him when he is dismissed from his job. But motivation for all activity is not always given in Jesus' stories: why exactly does a vineyard owner pay his day laborers in the reverse order of their hiring? Why does a businessman give his steward another opportunity to cheat him? Why is a woman leavening such a large amount of flour? In these stories, as in *A Man Wants to Kill*, the explanation of motive is an unresolved complication, which frustrates an understanding of the story.<sup>103</sup>

### 7.1. *Exceptions to Prohibitions against Homicide?*

In the absence of a stated motive, the story begs the question: is there ever a time when a deliberate homicide could be deemed justifiable even though prohibited legally and morally? What conceivable circumstances would justify the taking of a human life outside the usual socially sanctioned reasons?<sup>104</sup> The answer is: under certain conditions other "justifiable" reasons for killing apparently did exist in ancient Judaism as "exceptions." For example, Jael, the Kenite, murdered the Canaanite Sisera "in cold blood," even though peace existed between their nations. Under the apparent guise of hospitality, she lulled him into relaxing his guard and killed him after he had fallen asleep thinking he was safe (Judg 4:17–22).<sup>105</sup> Even though it was a violation of the prohibitions of Hebrew law, Israelite tradition praised her for the murder (Judg 5:24–31).

Judith, an Israelite, plotted the death of the Assyrian General, Holofernes (Jdt 8:32–36; 9:13–14; 13:16), who was besieging her city. She dressed herself to beguile the Assyrians (Jdt 10:1–8), lied to them (Jdt 10:11–13), eventually got Holofernes drunk (Jdt 12:16–20), and cut off his head while he was in a drunken stupor (Jdt 3:6–10).

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<sup>103</sup> Motivation is always important for judging the character of a particular act. For example with regard to homicide, Judaism distinguished justifiable, or excusable, homicide, precisely on the basis of motive (Num 35:16–28). Clearly the protagonist in *A Man Wants to Kill* had a motive (i.e., he *wants* to kill); something moved him to kill the nobleman, but it is unstated.

<sup>104</sup> In Israel the "socially sanctioned" reasons for homicide were punishment of a murderer, holy war, war, and self-defense. Self defense is found in Exod 22:2 [Hebrew 21:37]; see Dale Patrick, *Old Testament Law* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 80. Thanks to Victor Matthews for pointing this out to me.

<sup>105</sup> See the discussion in Victor H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4," *BTB* 21 (1991): 13–21. Matthews argues that this story "contains so many violations of the hospitality code that it can only be concluded that a conscious attempt was made by the writer to justify Sisera's murder by Jael" (15).

Conceiving her deceit and deed to be noble, however, she prayed: “O Lord God of all might, look in this hour upon the work of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem” (Jdt 13:4 RSV). And just before she killed Holofernes she prayed: “Give me strength this day, O Lord God of Israel” (Jdt 13:7 RSV). She, like the protagonist in Jesus’ story, was concerned about her physical ability to carry out the killing (and it did take two blows with the sword for her to decapitate Holofernes). Apparently Judith thought her murder of Holofernes had God’s approval (Jdt 13:16–20), and indeed she did receive the praise of her people for the murder (Jdt 15:12–13; 16:6–9).

Moses murdered a man he found mistreating an Israelite slave, one of “his people” (Exod 2:11–14). He is portrayed as knowing it was wrong, since he hoped to conceal his actions (Exod 2:12). While Moses’ motives are not stated, it would appear that the situation he faced evoked in him a willingness to ignore any prohibitions against homicide and kill the Egyptian, an act he knew would require a reckoning (Gen 2:14–15). In the three examples above it appears the killing of non-Israelites under certain circumstances is a tacit exception to the prohibition against homicide.

Abraham (the father of Hebrew faith, Gen 12:1–3) resolved to commit homicide and human sacrifice.<sup>106</sup> He is portrayed (Gen 22) as believing that God required him to sacrifice his son as a test of faith. It appears from the narrative that Abraham fully intended to sacrifice Isaac in order to demonstrate his faith to God (the story does not work otherwise), but at the last moment God’s messenger stopped him (Gen 22:11–12). The later biblical writer extols the incident as an example of Abraham’s devout faith, and Abraham is rewarded for his willingness to break the strict taboos of homicide and human sacrifice (Gen 22:15–18). The point is: though he did not actually violate the code, he is portrayed as fully prepared to do so.

In a modern example Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran minister, was a participant in the conspiracy to assassinate Adolf Hitler.<sup>107</sup> The horrible situation in Germany under the Nazi regime overrode his commitment to pacifism and his aversion to violence, and

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<sup>106</sup> Human sacrifice was strictly prohibited by Torah (Lev 18:21; 20:2–3; Deut 12:31; 18:21) and censured by the prophets (Mic 6:7; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:33; Ezek 16:20–21; 20:26).

<sup>107</sup> Larry L. Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 131–148.



brought him finally to participate in the murder plot. He reasoned that the guilt accruing to murder would be less than his guilt of inaction in the face of the Nazi horror.<sup>108</sup> After the plot failed he was arrested,<sup>109</sup> and eventually hanged for his participation.<sup>110</sup>

If we knew more about the situation, the fictional protagonist in Jesus' story might well take his place among persons in the Jewish and Christian tradition like Jael, Judith, Abraham, Moses, and Bonhoeffer, who have contemplated and/or committed unsanctioned homicide for reasons they thought outweighed the prohibitions against killing. These examples of persons willing to break sacred religious and moral codes in particular situations for reasons they found to exceed the demands of the codes, are not offered to justify the homicide in Jesus' story. They only show that under particular circumstances people, usually law-abiding and religious, can be driven to violate religious and moral codes for reasons they conceive to be "justifiable," though not conventionally legal or moral. Hence, under certain circumstances even homicide can be viewed as an exception to the general moral and religious code. And some homicides committed outside the usual sanctions of Israelite law have been thought to have divine sanction.

Nevertheless, in order to judge the killing of the nobleman in Jesus' story hearers/readers must know more about the killer's motives, and more about the circumstances surrounding the killing. Yet these matters are precisely what the narrator does not reveal, and hearers/readers are left to ponder a story of a poorly planned yet successfully executed homicide without knowing either circumstance or motive. The examples given above show, however, that under some circumstances unsanctioned killing of another human being (i.e., murder) *may* be conceived justifiable. Hence the situation in Jesus' story, if readers were better informed about its circumstances, *could* be such an exception; or, on the other hand, it could simply be an egregious flouting of the legal and moral codes, and hence an act with no redeeming moral value. In either case, however, the story reflects an extreme

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<sup>108</sup> See the evaluation of Bonhoeffer by Renate Wind, *A Spoke in the Wheel: The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. John Bowden (Wenheim: Beltz, 1990), 100–101: "Now he [Bonhoeffer] faced the question which was the greater guilt, that of tolerating the Hitler dictatorship or that of removing it. In particular anyone who was not ready to kill Hitler was guilty of mass murder, whether he liked it or not."

<sup>109</sup> Edwin Robertson, *The Shame and the Sacrifice: The Life and Martyrdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), 197–220.

<sup>110</sup> Robertson, *Shame and Sacrifice*, 277.

situation in which an individual without community sanction decides to take a human life.

### 7.2. *The Focal Instance*

By the extreme character of its content, the story offends a Judeo-Christian sensitivity to regard every human life as precious and sacrosanct. The story is similar to the series of extreme commands in Matt 5:39b-42, which is incompatible with a natural human tendency to self-defense. Robert Tannehill calls such language the “focal instance,” a type of New Testament idiom evoking a field of situations by stating the most extreme instance in the field.

Because of the tension between normal life and these commands, the attention of the reader does not come to rest in the literal sense of the command. A reader knows that the commands are extreme—even bordering on the ridiculous. According to Tannehill, the extreme nature of the commands indirectly evokes everything up to and including the literal sense. In the focal instance the limits of the literal sense of the command have broken down and one senses the sweep of the field. It is not “just that,” which is commanded, but “even that.”<sup>111</sup>

Similarly Jesus’ story is not *just* about a homicide; it evokes a field of situations up to and *even including* homicide. As a focal instance the story evokes the following general questions: is there ever a time when I must challenge even the most sacrosanct laws, morals, taboos, and religious values of my community? Am I ever called upon to risk everything—my standing in society, and even my own life—in radical commitment to some higher value, which recommends itself because a certain set of circumstances causes the higher value to surpass even my most sacred traditions and obligations? But the narrator is silent and hearers/readers are left to ponder a narrative about a deliberate homicide, wondering whether any value can be so significant as to call *even them* to ignore the legal and moral constraints forming the basis of human society and culture. Because of its extreme character the story “becomes the focal point” for the field of situations evoked by these questions.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, “The ‘Focal Instance’ as a Form of New Testament Speech: A Study of Matthew 5:39b-42,” *JR* 50 (1970): 380.

<sup>112</sup> Tannehill, “The ‘Focal Instance,’” 380. Tannehill notes that the focal instance is not always a command (385).

### 7.3. *Matthew, Jesus, and the Law*

Oddly enough, the earliest Christians portrayed Jesus as a man who acted “outside the law.” Under the influence of his vision of the kingdom of God, Jesus was portrayed as relativizing the obligations of his own Jewish faith. In regard to the prohibition against unjustifiable killing in Israelite law, Jesus is described as saying:

You have heard it said to the men of old, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment (Matt 5:21–22a RSV).<sup>113</sup>

Matthew is engaged in the same kind of argument found in *Didache* 3:1–6: to extend the Decalogue’s authority to cover lesser offenses.<sup>114</sup> Pride, jealousy, contentiousness, and passion are to be avoided because they provide the matrix leading inevitably to murder, argues the *Didache*. Matthew appears to have taken the next logical step and identified the lesser offense, anger against a brother, as equal in seriousness to unjustifiable homicide. Matthew’s rationale is seriously flawed, however. Equating the attitude and the act as equal in seriousness before God may raise the level of the seriousness of anger, but at the same time it lessens the seriousness of murder. In the human community, murder is far more serious than anger, no matter how we think God regards it. Matthew 5:21–22a marginalizes human community obligations in favor of religious community associations.

Jesus’ story about a killing is similar to other shocking sayings attributed to Jesus featuring a radical commitment, which may lead to overturning conventional community morality, and a marginalizing of the obligations of conventional society (Luke 6:20; 6:29–30; 9:60; 14:26; Mark 10:23; Matt 8:20). Living on the margins of society, outside its accepted conventions, not sharing its values, and being unbound by its morality is not a lifestyle to be chosen lightly. Nevertheless, such a picture of Jesus and his earliest followers emerges in the sayings believed to comprise the early Christian Gospel Q.<sup>115</sup> “A Man Wants to Kill”

<sup>113</sup> The saying is likely Matthew’s composition; see M. Jack Suggs, “The Antitheses as Redactional Products,” in *Essays on the Love Commandment*, ed. Luise Schottroff et al., trans. Reginald H. and Ilse Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 93–107.

<sup>114</sup> My thanks to John Kloppenborg for pointing out this parallel to me.

<sup>115</sup> See the summary description of the radical lifestyle of the Q community in Leif Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus’ First Followers According to Q* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 103–106.

also fits this general picture. The story describes a man almost casually ignoring a law basic to the survival of any society. If human beings cannot be secure in their persons, they live under the law of the jungle; how can society survive, if all act like the protagonist in Jesus' story? The man's casual indifference to the value of the life of the nobleman (whatever his reasons) suggests that in the story he is bound neither by the general conventions of society nor by the strictest understanding of its religious and moral codes. He has cast off all restraints and is acting outside the law.<sup>116</sup> Little wonder that the story was not used by the canonical writers. They generally domesticated the radical edge of Jesus' words by the literary contexts in which they embedded them, as his parables show when read for themselves apart from their literary contexts.<sup>117</sup>

What can be said about a story that appears to attack the very bedrock of human society? Here is the answer: there may be times to marginalize the morals and values of society, or even times to break its moral codes by radical, or even violent acts, but such an extreme response is not without serious consequences for both the individual and society. Persons honest with themselves, however, will admit that certain situations *could* drive them outside the norms of society (although perhaps not as far as the protagonist in Jesus' story).

The examples of Moses, Judith, Bonhoeffer, and Jael appear to be exceptions to a strict understanding of the Israelite prohibition against homicide. The demands of the situation took precedence over the prohibitions against the sanctity of human life. In so doing, they may be construed as setting the Hebrew command to "love the neighbor" (Lev 19:18) over the command about the sanctity of human life: "You shall not commit murder" (Exod 20:13; Deut 5:17). In each case (with the exception of Jael), members of the "tribe" were threatened (in Hebrew Bible "neighbor" means "fellow Israelite," Deut 15:3), and thus the killers may be construed as having acted on behalf of the neighbor. Heard against such a background, Jesus' story about a homicide suddenly seems, in itself, neither moral nor immoral. Even though it describes an act (homicide) falling outside the usual conventions of society, under certain circumstances (as these examples suggest), even

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<sup>116</sup> A type of "antinomianism," perhaps one of the problems plaguing the Corinthian church: 1 Cor 4:8, 5:1-2, 6:12-20, 10:14-22.

<sup>117</sup> See the discussion in Hedrick, *Poetic Fictions*, 93-235.

homicide may be conceived as a “moral” act—or, at least, as the lesser evil of two immoral acts. But since we know neither the circumstances surrounding the homicide in Jesus’ story nor the motives of the protagonist, we simply cannot evaluate the act.

#### 7.4. *Love and Unjustifiable Homicide*

Early Christians portray Jesus as endorsing the love of neighbor (Matt 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31) and the love command even becomes a kind of existential rule in later Christianity, where it appears to be understood universally (i.e., the neighbor is my fellow human being; Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:13–14; Jas 2:8). It is entirely conceivable that Jesus actually did endorse the philosophy of love of neighbor.<sup>118</sup> What is most characteristic of Jesus, however, is his radicalizing of the Israelite love command. Jesus said: “Love your enemies” (Matt 5:44–43; Luke 6:27.35). Played off against the idea that one should love even one’s enemies, Jesus’ story about a homicide creates a moral dilemma. What does one do when the welfare of tribal members (family and friends) and enemies clash? How is it possible to love them both equally—i.e. to hold both groups in the same high regard, to hold the welfare of both groups as of equal value? In the final analysis such an idea is irrational and absurd, even if idealistic. For in trying to honor the one (viz. loving the enemy), individuals will inevitably break faith with the other (loving the neighbor), or to state it baldly: loving your enemy could get your neighbor killed. Further, if you really loved your enemies would you ever kill anyone?<sup>119</sup> Maybe not, but your love for the enemy could lead to your neighbor’s death caused by your inaction against those who regarded you and your tribe as enemy, regardless of your feelings toward them.

The story appears to correspond to other perplexing sayings of Jesus that provoke a quizzical response from hearers and readers—something like, “Huh? So what exactly am I being asked to do here?”

A camel can squeeze through a needle’s eye easier than a wealthy person can come under God’s reign (Mark 10:25).

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<sup>118</sup> Why not? Love for a fellow human being is always a good thing; although in its tribal form, it may well result in harm to those not of the tribe.

<sup>119</sup> See Funk and Hoover, *Five Gospels*, 147. While the one loving “enemies” may no longer regard anyone as an enemy, they themselves could still be regarded as an enemy by others.

Pay the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and God what belongs to God (Mark 12:17 SV).

You must be as sly as snakes and gullible as pigeons (Matt 10:16).

There are castrated men who were born that way, and there are castrated men who were castrated by others, and there are castrated men who castrated themselves because of heaven's imperial rule (Matt 19:12 SV).

If any come to me and do not hate their own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—they cannot be my disciples (Luke 14:26 SV).

Congratulations, you poor! God's domain belongs to you (Luke 6:20 SV).

Blessed are those who go hungry to fill the hungry bellies of others (*Gos. Thom.* 69:2).

These ambiguous, imprecise, and paradoxical statements leave judgment to hearers and readers, who must try, as best they can, to locate themselves at some reasonable position on the landscape of the saying. For example, how can I be both wise and gullible at once (Matt 10:16)? Must I really hate those dearest to me in order to be a disciple (Luke 14:26)? And if I recognize this saying as hyperbole, how am I supposed to incorporate it practically into my life—where do my obligations to family end and my commitments as disciple begin? What exactly are the limits of my obligations to governing authority (Mark 12:17)? How long must I go hungry in order to feed others (*Gos. Thom.* 69:2)—particularly if I have abandoned wealth as well (Mark 10:25)? These sayings of Jesus are far from precise in what they expect; they call for moral judgments on the part of hearers/readers. In the same way, Jesus' shocking story about a deliberate homicide calls for some kind of judgment: either provoking moral outrage in the light of the Decalogue prohibition against homicide, or perplexity at such a disregard of a strict reading of the Decalogue.

In the final analysis this story suggests that no absolute rules for moral engagement with society exist in following Jesus; different circumstances often require different responses.<sup>120</sup> The "right thing to do" is often only evident, if at all, after evaluating each individual situation. What is right in one situation could well be wrong in another, even if sanctioned by community, church, and synagogue.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> For example, the saying of Jesus, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12:17 RSV) is scarcely precise. Individuals must still decide the precise content of what is owed to God and the state.

<sup>121</sup> Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).

The call to “love the neighbor” (Jas 2:8; Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:13–14)<sup>122</sup> requires one to act on behalf of the other. Well and good! But frequently choices must be made between two courses of action, neither of which may be construed as a moral good in itself. For example, Jesus said: “love your enemy” (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27), but what does one do in the gray area when a choice must be made between enemies and friends, which is exactly where Bonhoeffer found himself? Perhaps, in the final analysis, Jesus’ dark story about a first-century homicide leaves readers pondering the following moral issue: can it ever be “right” to commit homicide outside the usual sanctions of society? And if homicide is never a moral act, could it at least be judged the lesser evil of two immoral acts? The ethical dilemma raised by this story is simply this: how is it possible to act in love when choosing between the lesser of two evils?

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<sup>122</sup> See the discussion in Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, 69–86; and in Luise Schottroff, “Non-Violence and the Love of One’s Enemies” in *Essays on the Love Commandment*, ed. Schottroff et al., 9–39.

# JESUS AND MAGIC: THE QUESTION OF THE MIRACLES

BERND KOLLMANN

## 1. *Jesus as a Magician in Modern Research*

Although the miracles of Jesus were associated with magical practices early in antiquity,<sup>1</sup> the question of a relationship between Hellenistic magic and the miracle narratives has been a neglected aspect for a long time.<sup>2</sup> This situation fundamentally changed in the last three decades. The question to what extent Jesus can be seen as a magician or as a shaman with magical abilities is one of the most controversial issues in present research on the gospel miracle tradition.

In his investigation into Hellenistic magic and the synoptic tradition, John M. Hull showed that the image of Jesus in the gospels, particularly in the narratives of exorcisms and healings, has been deeply influenced by magical beliefs.<sup>3</sup> According to Hull, certain aspects of the gospels are at home in the magical world-view, and a number of details in the miracle tradition reflect the central concern of magic, namely the health and happiness of individuals threatened by hostile powers. While Hull made little attempt to look behind the magical image of Jesus as presented by the early Christian tradition, Morton Smith tried to trace it

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<sup>1</sup> Christian sources such as Justin, *Dial.* 69.7; *1 Apol.* 30.1 reflect charges that Jesus was a magician (cf. Mark 3:22). Around 178 CE the Platonic Philosopher Celsus in his treatise *On the True Doctrine* claimed that Jesus was in no way different from marketplace sorcerers who learned magic in Egypt and impressed the people by exorcisms, necromancy, and other miracles effected through trickery (Origen, *Cels.* 1.6, 28, 38, 46, 68), see Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*, SBLDS 64 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982); Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century*, PatMS 10 (Cambridge: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983) 104–158.

<sup>2</sup> The categorical statement of Walter Grundmann that the miracles of Jesus “have no connexion with magic, or with magic means and processes” (*TDNT* 2:302) is a typical example. According to Samuel Eitrem, *Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament*, SO.S 20, 2nd ed. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966), esp. 31–35, 30–70, Jesus was forced to employ magical folk medicine (Mark 7:31–7; 8:22–6) only in moments of spiritual weakness, instead of effecting healings through charismatic words.

<sup>3</sup> John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, SBT 2.28 (London: SCM, 1974), esp. 61–115.



back to the historical Jesus. Under the impression of the *Secret Gospel of Mark*, Smith offered a sketch of Jesus as a magician who practiced a secret nocturnal baptism, taking his disciples along on an ecstatic ascent into heaven which gave them special powers like his own.<sup>4</sup> In his later publication *Jesus the Magician*, Smith attempted to give a coherent picture of Jesus' life following the career of a magician, portraying him in all the fundamental aspects according to the ancient polemics as presented by Celsus and the rabbinic literature.<sup>5</sup> Assuming suppressed evidence, Smith regards the traces of magic in the gospel tradition as the tip of an iceberg, since older magical material was censored and eliminated by the writers of the gospels. Smith seems to view Jesus as a higher-class magician who preferred to command a "familiar spirit" instead of employing rituals and spells. In general, however, he evaluates magic negatively and classifies Jesus as one of the marketplace sorcerers whose illusory miracles were produced by tricks and the help of demons.

Eugen Drewermann, whose concept of depth psychology as a tool for the interpretation of religious tradition marked the beginning of a new debate on the gospel miracles, avoids the term magic with its negative connotations and speaks instead of a shamanism that is closely related to certain forms of magic. Jesus is regarded as a shaman whose healings of a remarkable number of sick persons are completely acceptable from the psychological point of view.<sup>6</sup> To Drewermann, the biblical miracles do not substantially differ from those of figures such as Orpheus, Pythagoras, Empedocles, or modern medicine men. Like these miracle workers, Jesus is seen as a shaman in a primitive society whose miraculous healings caused harmony of body and soul, effecting a

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<sup>4</sup> Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) 220–251. Stephen C. Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2005), and Peter Jeffery, *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled: Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), claim that the Secret Gospel of Mark is a hoax. However, this is not the end of the debate.

<sup>5</sup> Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Eugen Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, 3rd ed. (Olten: Walter, 1992), 2:43–309. See also the interpretation of the miracle stories in idem, *Das Markusevangelium* (Olten: Walter, 1987); idem, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 4th ed. (Olten: Walter, 1990).

reintegration of the individual into the unity of the universe.<sup>7</sup> Shamanism is thought to be the pure and true form of religion that needs to be rediscovered in order to displace rationalistic theology and to heal the psychosomatic desperation of our times.

John Dominic Crossan has made the most serious attempt to establish a picture of the historical Jesus as a magician.<sup>8</sup> He is convinced that Jesus saw the kingdom of God not as an apocalyptic event in the imminent future but as a mode of life in the immediate present. Unlike Smith he evaluates magic as a positive phenomenon of social protest and states that the almost schizoid position of a colonial people has to be considered in order to understand Jesus' exorcisms. Thus "colonial exorcisms" with symbolic revolutionary implications and meals with social outcasts formed the centre of Jesus' activities. In the eyes of Crossan, Jesus provided a social program of magic and meal or miracle and table, designed to force individuals into unmediated physical and spiritual contact with God and one another.

Contrary to the view of Smith, Drewermann, and Crossan, Geza Vermes draws a sharp parting line between Jesus and the magicians,<sup>9</sup> putting Jesus' miracle-working in a charismatic pattern set by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. In Second Temple Judaism, holy men such as Honi the circle drawer and Hanina ben Dosa were true heirs of this old charismatic line. Although Jesus was said to have cast out many demons, no rite was mentioned in connection with these achievements. In accordance with the miracle activities of the holy men, Jesus' supernatural abilities did not derive from magical techniques and secret powers but from immediate contact with God. In consequence, Vermes is convinced that Jesus was not a professional exorcist but a genuine charismatic and the paramount example of the early Hasidim. John P. Meier, dealing at some length with the question whether Jesus should be labeled a magician,<sup>10</sup> claims a sliding scale of miracle and magic.

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<sup>7</sup> Drewermann, *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese*, 2:141–188. In the case of Mark 4:35–41, Drewermann assumes shamanistic foreknowledge of the weather, cf. *ibid.* 165–169.

<sup>8</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 303–353.

<sup>9</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 58–82. See also Jan A. Böhner, "Jesus und die antike Magie," *EvT* 43 (1983): 156–175, esp. 172–175.

<sup>10</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:537–552.

The “ideal type” of the miracle worker is situated at one end of the spectrum, the “ideal type” of the magician at its other end. Meier sees an objective basis for designating Jesus’ supposed wonders as “miracles” instead of “magic,” even though in a few cases magical traits are present in the miracle stories.

While Vermes and Meier argue against a closer relationship between Jesus and magic, other scholars admit that some of the techniques he employed were magical, without actually making him a magician. In his investigation of magic in early Christianity, David E. Aune makes a distinction between the typical magician and magical activities that may constitute important aspects of the role of such figures as the shaman, the sage, the prophet, and the messiah.<sup>11</sup> Although Aune is convinced that Jesus in fact made use of techniques which must be regarded as magical, it does not seem suitable to him to regard Jesus as a magician. Both historically and sociologically, those magical activities he displayed could more appropriately be subsumed under the role of messianic prophet. Graham H. Twelftree<sup>12</sup> on the one hand states that Jesus’ techniques as an exorcist have clear parallels in the magical world. The material remains of ancient magic help us to see that while Jesus appeared to use the methods of a powerful charismatic figure, he was operating with the rationale of the exorcists of ancient magic. On the other hand, Twelftree claims that Jesus was different from most exorcists of his time and refuses the view that Jesus’ contemporaries charged him with magic. There were traditions in which exorcisms relied on special techniques and others in which exorcisms relied on the personal force of the exorcist. In the eyes of Twelftree, Jesus in general represented a type of exorcist who healed predominantly on the basis of his outstanding personality, and not through mechanical devices as the majority of the ancient exorcists did. According to Peter Busch, the discussion of Jesus’ relationship with magic has to consider the difference between the perspective of the outsiders and the perspective of those professionally involved in magic. Although the miracles of Jesus could be associated with magic in the view of contemporaries, the

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<sup>11</sup> David E. Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity”, *ANRW II* 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557, esp. 1523–1539.

<sup>12</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2.54 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1993), esp. 143–165, 190–207; idem, “Jesus the Exorcist and Ancient Magic”, in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert J. L. Peerbolte (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 57–86.

ancient magicians would not have accepted Jesus as a colleague since he was no representative of professional magical learning that required widespread rituals and was not limited to healing.<sup>13</sup> In the eyes of Tom Holmén, Jesus himself would not have considered any of his deeds to be based on magic. However, the way he dealt with the problem of sin and guilt in his healings, never consistently demanding the use of the means of atonement in a way that would have been considered appropriate, provoked suspicions that they were magical in nature.<sup>14</sup>

This overview of the history of research shows that the topic “Jesus and magic” is still an open question. The following considerations intend to take a look at the relationship between the Jesus of the gospels and the magical or shamanistic patterns attested in both the Greco-Roman and the Jewish world.

## 2. Greek Magicians and Shamans

For a long time, scholars used to define magic as a decadent cultural phenomenon which employed manipulative techniques and was easily separable from religion. Recent studies on magic and religion prefer relative instead of absolute definitions and describe magic as a locative term that places certain individuals and their practices beyond the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior. According to a broad range of classical sources,<sup>15</sup> magic is a practice used to fulfill human desires, wishes, and needs with the help of deities, demons, and the powers of nature. Magic primarily aims at healing, divination, and control of nature, but also at the acquisition of love, wealth, success, and fame. The most important techniques employed by magicians are incantations, prayers, sacrifices, and sympathetic rituals. In the classical Greek era, the high esteem magicians enjoyed as wise men increasingly turned into a negative view where the practitioner of magic, the *magos* or *goēs*,

<sup>13</sup> Peter Busch, “War Jesus ein Magier?“, *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 7 (2001): 25–31; cf. idem, *Magie in neutestamentlicher Zeit*, FRLANT 218 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 160–162.

<sup>14</sup> Tom Holmén, “Jesus and Magic: Theodicean Perspectives to the Issue,” in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Labahn and Peerbolte, 43–56, esp. 52–56.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107, 120; 7.19, 37, 113, 191; Hippocrates, *Morb. Sacr.* 1.39–40; Plato, *Alc.* 1.122A; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 28.226–229; 259–260; 30.1–18; Apollonius of Tyana, *Ep.* 16–17; Apuleius, *Apol.* 26; PGM IV 2081–2087, 2449, 2453.

came close to the sorcerer and fraud.<sup>16</sup> Modern research on the nature and function of magic has demonstrated that magic and science, as well as magic and religion, are so closely intertwined that it is impossible to draw sharp distinction lines between them. Ancient magic is related to sciences such as astronomy, alchemy, and pharmacy. Moreover, magic as a form of worship of deities cannot be separated from religion. The difference between being labeled a divine man or a magician largely depends on success, social reputation, and conformance with the dominant institutions.<sup>17</sup>

In view of the negative reputation of magicians as frauds, quacks, and charlatans, several historians of religion prefer the term shamanism instead of *mageia* and *goēteia*. Shamanism is a modern religious phenomenon first discovered in Siberia and Inner Asia. In primitive societies, shamans are highly respected mediators between humanity and heaven. They act as priests, bringing offerings to the gods, and as medicine men, seeking the souls of sick persons believed to have left the body or to have been taken away by demons. They also operate as guides of the dead, conducting their souls to their new abodes in the beyond. Besides the control of familiar spirits, the main technique of shamanism is the magical flight of ecstasy during which the soul in trance separates from the body and travels through the celestial or subterranean world.<sup>18</sup> The phenomenon of shamanism can be traced back to magicians in antiquity who acted as healers, purifiers, and seers.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20–35.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Aune, “Magic,” 1510–1516; Alan F. Segal, “Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition,” in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions*, ed. Roelof van den Broek and Maarten Jozef Vermaseren, EPRO 91 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 349–375; Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 3–9. However, with regard to syncretism, the coercion of deities, and the neglect of ethical issues, several forms of magic imply a questionable practice of religion, cf. especially the curse tablets with their harmful purposes (John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992]).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964); Margaret Stutley, *Shamanism: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); Walter Sommerfeld, “Schamane/Schamanin/Schamanismus”, *RGG* 4th ed., 7:864–5.

<sup>19</sup> Eric Robertson Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 8th edn, 1973), 135–178; Walter Burkert, “ΓΟΗΣ: Zum griechischen ‘Schamanismus’,” *Rheinisches Museum* NF 105 (1962): 36–55; Luck, *Arcana Mundi*, 11–13. However, there is little secure evidence for direct links between shamanistic practices in modern Asia and ancient Greece.

Epimenides, who predicted earthquakes and similar plagues and, as a ritual purifier, averted them by sacrificing to the gods,<sup>20</sup> represents the prototype of the Greek magician with shamanistic abilities. In the case of Pythagoras, Walter Burkert convincingly demonstrated that the miracle tradition portraying him as a magician or shaman belonged to the oldest and most reliable strata in the history of Pythagoreanism.<sup>21</sup> Pythagoras developed a theory of metempsychosis. The main elements of the Pythagoras legend are closely connected to this doctrine. Pythagoras not only claimed supernatural knowledge of the soul's prior incarnations but also claimed to send his own soul on journeys to the beyond. This evoked the legend of his magical flights, enabling him to appear in different places at the same time. The old traditions of Pythagoras's descent to Hades provide evidence that he conducted the souls of the dead to the subterranean world and investigated the fate of his contemporaries' souls during their migration from one incarnation to another. Such a reminiscence of the soul's previous lives, including a revelation of trespasses during prior existences, was the precondition of ritual purification connected to music therapy. Pythagoras employed lyre-playing and incantation-singing for healing purposes in order to restore the original harmony of body and soul. In his metempsychosis doctrine, Pythagoras presumed incarnations of the soul in any kind of body, including plants and animals. He was thus believed to have talked to animals and other elements of the natural world, a behavior typical for shamans. He was also thought to have achieved knowledge of forthcoming natural events that enabled him to predict earthquakes and similar catastrophes.<sup>22</sup>

Empedocles acted on the borderline between Pythagorean shamanism and scientific medicine. He has provided us with testimony regarding his miracles and his divine status, believing that he had united

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<sup>20</sup> Diogenes Laertius 1.110; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 28.135–136. Epimenides (seventh century BCE) claimed that his soul had passed through many incarnations and that he sent it on migrations from his body (cf. Diogenes Laertius 1.114). In consequence, he was seen as a divine man (Plato, *Leg.* 1.642D).

<sup>21</sup> Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 120–165. Cf. Christoph Riedweg, *Pythagoras: His Life and Influence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> The most important miracle traditions are Apollonius Paradoxographus, *Hist. Mir.* 6; Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 2.26; Porphyrius, *Vit. Pyth.* 23–29; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 13.60–62; 28.134–143. For Pythagoras's music therapy, see Porphyrius, *Vit. Pyth.* 30; 33; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 15.64; 25.110–111.

in himself the functions of both seer and physician, and therefore claiming divinity.<sup>23</sup> Empedocles shared the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis and was convinced of his soul's prior incarnations in human beings, plants, and animals. According to the last fragment of his *Physics*, Empedocles was able to teach medical skills as well as the shamanistic abilities of controlling natural events and calling back the dead souls from Hades.<sup>24</sup> Such employment of both medicine and magic produced the famous reanimation of an apparently dead woman who had neither pulse nor breath.<sup>25</sup>

Apollonius of Tyana is the main representative of divine men who authenticated their divinity through miracles in New Testament times.<sup>26</sup> He wrote a biography of Pythagoras and completely fits the magical pattern as established by Epimenides, Pythagoras, and Empedocles. The pre-Philostratean biography by Moiragenes presented Apollonius as an impressive magician and philosopher in conflict with the Stoic Euphrates who had criticized his magical achievements and seems to have charged him with sorcery. Obviously, Moiragenes depends on the epistolary tradition that reflects this conflict and offers a good deal of reliable information about Apollonius and his self-perception as a magician.<sup>27</sup> According to Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*, magical healing and the calling up of dead souls constituted an important part of his activity. Further, Apollonius was credited with the shamanistic abilities of

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<sup>23</sup> Empedocles, *frg.* 102; 132–133, according to M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981). Cf. Spiro Panagiotou, "Empedocles on his Own Divinity," *Mnemosyne* 4.36 (1983): 276–285.

<sup>24</sup> Empedocles, *frg.* 101. Empedocles also wrote a treatise on medicine (Diogenes Laertius 8.77).

<sup>25</sup> Diogenes Laertius 8.60–62. Empedocles developed a scientific theory of respiration that seems to have enabled him to diagnose apparent death and to restore the breathing mechanism. Probably this medical reanimation was accompanied by a shamanistic descent in the underworld in order to bring back the woman's soul.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ewen Lyall Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," *ANRW* II 16.2 (1978): 1652–1699; Maria Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. D. H. Raynor, "Moeragenes and Philostratus: Two Views of Apollonius of Tyana," *CQ* 34 (1984): 222–226. In *Ep.* 16–17, Apollonius converts the charge of magic into a compliment, claiming to be a Pythagorean magician who is of a godly nature. *Ep.* 52 praises music, medicine, divination, and knowledge about demons as the benefits of Pythagoreanism. *Ep.* 23 deals with Pythagorean medicine as a godly enterprise, focusing on the care for the soul as the better part of the living being. This is consistent with the information that Apollonius taught the Pythagorean metempsychosis doctrine (Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.19.23; 6.21.43; 7.7.4)

simultaneous presence in different places, of friendship with animals, and of prediction of plagues.<sup>28</sup>

Alexander of Abonuteichos was the last of the outstanding magicians in antiquity.<sup>29</sup> His success was based on a synthesis of Pythagoreanism and the Asclepius cult. Alexander studied under a public physician whose medical knowledge came from Apollonius of Tyana. Later, he established a sanctuary of Glycon, the reborn Asclepius, in Abonuteichos where he acted as a prophet of the god. He claimed to be both a son of Podaleirius and a reincarnation of Pythagoras, while the opponents of magic classified him as a quack and a fraud. Alexander's oracles included healing instructions and predictions of plagues and earthquakes. For healing purposes, Alexander employed medicine as well as shamanism, prescribing remedies, and revealing the fate of the soul during its incarnations.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the traditions regarding these prominent figures, magical texts on papyri and metal sheets constitute an important source of information on ancient magic. The discovery of the Greek magical papyri from Egypt is particularly invaluable for the understanding of magical rituals in antiquity, as they provide spells, recipes, and instructions for procedures of every kind.<sup>31</sup> The texts are of diverse origin and nature and offer many insights into the phenomenon of magic as well as into the techniques of professional magicians. Most of the material dates from late antiquity but probably reflects practices that can reach back to earlier times. The fact that the magical papyri from Greco-Roman Egypt contain divine names as well as entire passages of Jewish origin and nature poses an interesting problem. Obviously this material, including the famous exorcism formula *PGM* IV.3019–3078, originated with Jewish magic and was later adopted by pagan magicians.

In summary, we find a fixed pattern of magic and shamanism in the Greco-Roman world that flourished over many centuries and had its

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.51 (magical flight); 4.10; 8.26 (simultaneous epiphanies); 1.20; 4.3; 5.42 (friendship with animals); 4.10; 6.43 (prediction of plagues).

<sup>29</sup> For a critical approach to Lucian's portrayal of Alexander as a fraud, see Otto Weinreich, "Alexandros der Lügenprophet und seine Stellung in der Religiosität des II. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.," *NJahrb* 47 (1921): 129–151; Christopher P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 133–148.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lucian, *Alex.* 22; 34; 43.

<sup>31</sup> For an overview, see Hans Dieter Betz, "Introduction to the Greek Magical Papyri," in idem, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xli–liii.



main representatives in Pythagoras, Empedocles, Apollonius, and Alexander of Abonuteichos. All of them developed a doctrine of metempsychosis, revealed the prior fate of the soul by undertaking shamanistic journeys to the beyond, and understood healing essentially as a purification and restoration of the soul. According to the belief in the soul's reincarnation in any kind of body, these magicians were credited with talking to animals and plants. Their life in harmony with nature seems to have enabled them to predict earthquakes, plagues, and the storms. As authorities in questions of the soul's fate and of nature's function, they saw themselves in a privileged relationship with the deities and claimed a godly nature, while the enemies of magic radically degraded them as quacks and frauds.<sup>32</sup> Before turning to the question of how Jesus fits this pattern it is useful to have a look at magic and shamanism in the Jewish world.

### 3. *Magic in Ancient Judaism*

Although magical rites can be traced back to pre-exilic times, the beginnings of a developed Jewish magic are to be found in the Second Temple period. At this time, Judaism was directly confronted with Hellenism and was forced to clarify its attitude towards magical practices that included the danger of syncretism and the improper use of the name of God in incantations. The legitimacy of magic seems to have been a matter of controversial debate in certain Jewish circles. In this context, the book of Tobit is one of the oldest and most impressive documents of a well-reasoned Jewish magic. The archangel Raphael, as a representative of God, reveals the art of expelling demons by smoke. Following Raphael's instructions, Tobias burns the liver and the heart of a fish to cause their smoke to banish the wicked demon Asmodeus to the Egyptian desert (Tob 8:1–3). The removal of evil spirits by the smoke of burning fish derives from Egyptian magic.<sup>33</sup> By that time this ritual had been integrated into Jewish religion after being subjected to

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Heraclitus (Diels-Kranz *FVS* 22B) *frg.* 81 (Pythagoras as the chief of swindlers); Diogenes Laertius 8.59 (Empedocles as a fraud [γοητεύων]); Dio Cassius 77.18.4 (Apollonius as a fraud [γοήης]); Lucian, *Alex.* 6 (Alexander as a fraud [γοήης]).

<sup>33</sup> The closest parallels are found in the Fourth Book of Cyranides, where the burning of the mouth and the bones of fish is recommended against demons (*Cyr* 4.13.2–3; 4.55.4), see Dimitris Kaimakis, *Die Kyraniden*, BKP 76 (Meisenheim: Hain, 1976), 252, 283.

a process of theological reflection and legitimation.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to the common Jewish belief that the human knowledge of magic came from fallen angels acting against God,<sup>35</sup> the book of Tobit claims that it was God's own will to send his angel to earth in order to teach humanity the art of magic. Inserted into a framework of monotheism and prayer (Tob 8:4–8), pagan magic became adaptable to Jewish religion and was no longer perceived as dangerous.

The first outstanding Jewish magician in the Hellenistic period was Honi the circle drawer who died around 65 BCE during the struggle between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II. Like Epimenides, Honi was believed to have taken a nap of seventy years.<sup>36</sup> According to both Josephus and the rabbinic tradition, Honi performed a rain miracle,<sup>37</sup> using shamanistic power over the forces of nature. After the failure of a conventional prayer for rain, Honi succeeded by applying magic.<sup>38</sup> He produced the miracle by drawing a magical circle around himself and pronouncing an oath by the name of God not to move until the rain fell. The self-enclosure in a circle was a common magical technique that gave protection against demons or hostile powers.<sup>39</sup> Honi's action implied a coercion of God and a profanation of God's name since he employed an incantation of refusal to leave the magical circle until God effected the rain miracle. For these reasons, Simeon ben Shetah, who was a key figure in the early history of the Pharisees and a determined

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<sup>34</sup> See Bernd Kollmann, "Göttliche Offenbarung magisch-pharmakologischer Heilkunst im Buch Tobit", *ZAW* 106 (1994): 289–299; Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "The Book of Tobit and the Problem of 'Magic'," in *Jüdische Schriften in ihrem antik-jüdischen und urchristlichen Kontext*, ed. Hermann Lichtenberger and Gerbern S. Oegema (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 258–269.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *1 En.* 7.1; 8.3; *Ps. Philo, L.A.B.* 34.1–4.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *b. Ta'an.* 23a. Epimenides allegedly slept in a cave for 57 years (Apollonius Paradoxographus, *Hist. Mir.* 1; Diogenes Laertius 1.109).

<sup>37</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 14.22–25; *m. Ta'an.* 3:8; *b. Ber.* 19a. Honi passed on his secret knowledge in weather magic to his grandsons Abba Hilkiah and Hanan (*b. Ta'an.* 23a–b).

<sup>38</sup> On Honi as a magician, see William Scott Green, "Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition," *ANRW* II 19.2 (1979): 619–647, esp. 634–638; Crossan, *Jesus*, 142–148. Vermes, *Jesus*, 69–72, however, claims that Honi was a Hasid whose supernatural abilities did not derive from secret magical powers but from immediate contact with God.

<sup>39</sup> Before his shamanistic descent to Hades, Menippus was enclosed in a magical circle (Lucian, *Men.* 7). In a manner similar to Honi's action, *PGM* III.273–275 recommends the magical circle after the failure of a conventional prayer. See also the self-enclosure of the injured wrestler Democrates in a magical circle, providing protection against the attacks of his adversary (Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 4.15).

enemy of magic, considered decreeing a ban of excommunication against Honi. This act was prevented only by the occurrence of the miracle that in the eyes of contemporaries legitimated Honi's magical techniques and proved his close relationship with God.

In Jesus' time, the Essenes were seen as experts in magical healing. According to Josephus, they used "writings of the ancients" to investigate medicinal roots and stones.<sup>40</sup> In ancient magic, certain stones served as amulets for healing purposes. Close parallels to the scriptures of the Essenes dealing with healing roots and stones exist in Egyptian and Babylonian magic. Around 200 BCE the Pythagorean magician Bolos of Mendes wrote a book concerning the powers of stones.<sup>41</sup> The astrological manual of Nechepso-Petosiris contained instructions "for healing of the whole body and all the diseases according to the zodiac by stones and herbs".<sup>42</sup> A great number of recipes for healing by means of stones and roots are collected in the *First Book of Cyranides*.<sup>43</sup> The Babylonian Jew Zacharias produced several books attributing humanity's destiny to the influence of stones and containing magical cures against illness.<sup>44</sup> Special circles of the Essenes apparently owned such magical manuals and studied them for healing purposes.

The Dead Sea Scrolls contain much evidence of the application of magic against demonic possession. In the recasting of Gen 12:10–20, the Genesis Apocryphon ascribes the illness of Pharaoh to an evil spirit. Abraham is portrayed as a miracle worker who expels the demon through prayer, laying on of hands and rebuking. These expansions of the biblical story appear to reflect magical techniques that were actually

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<sup>40</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.136. For the Jewish interest in magical stones, see Wis 18:24; Ps.Philo, *L.A.B.* 25.12.

<sup>41</sup> *Suda* s.v. Βῶλος Μενδησιος, cf. Max Wellmann, *Die ΦΥΣΙΚΑ des Bolos Demokritos und der Magier Anaxilaos aus Larissa I*, APAW.PH 1928.7 (Berlin: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1928); Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 117–122.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1:241. The famous Roman physician Galen examined and verified the healing power of one of the stones recommended by Nechepso (Galen 12.207), cf. Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1950), 54.

<sup>43</sup> Kaimakis, *Kyraniden*, 21–111; Maryse Waegeman, *Amulet and Alphabet: Magical Amulets in the First Book of Cyranides* (Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 37.169, cf. Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill, 1965–1970), 1:10.

used in Qumran.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, people afflicted by evil spirits were cured through the recitation of psalms. The document 11Q5 states that David was responsible for composing 4050 psalms, including four songs “for making music over the stricken.”<sup>46</sup> This seems to be an allusion to the very fragmentary scroll 11Q11, which contains three apocryphal psalms with incantation formulas, at least one of them mentioning David, and the canonical Psalm 91. In rabbinic literature, Psalm 91 is well known as the “song for the stricken” or “song referring to the evil spirits.”<sup>47</sup> The apparent purpose of 11Q11 was the banishing of demons that caused insanity.<sup>48</sup> These practices remind us of the Pythagorean music therapy, restoring the harmony of body and soul.<sup>49</sup> Like 11Q11, the documents 4Q560 and 8Q5 were used for exorcism purposes.<sup>50</sup> Since these incantation texts are not specific products of the Qumran community, but probably were brought there from elsewhere, the magic implied in the documents was typical for larger parts of Palestinian Judaism in those days. Another group of texts contains apotropaic hymns which were composed by the Qumran community itself and aimed at protecting against evil spirits; presumably, these were to be recited in the case of danger.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> 1QapGen XIX, 10–XX, 34, cf. David Flusser, “Healing through the Laying-on of Hands in a Dead Sea Scroll,” *IEJ* 7 (1957): 108–109; André Dupont-Sommer, “Exorcismes et guérison dans les écrits des Qoumran,” *VTSup* 7 (1960): 246–261, esp. 248–252.

<sup>46</sup> 11Q5 (= 11QPs<sup>a</sup>DavComp) XXVII, 9–10.

<sup>47</sup> *y. Erub.* 10:26c; *y. Sabb.* 6:8b; *b. Seb.* 15b; *Midr. Ps* 91:1, cf. Dennis C. Duling, “Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David,” *HTR* 68 (1975): 235–252, esp. 238–239; Karl E. Grözinger, *Musik und Gesang in der Theologie der frühen jüdischen Literatur*, TSAJ 3 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1982), 166–170.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Émile Puech, “11QPsAp<sup>a</sup>: Un rituel d’exorcismes. Essai de reconstruction,” *RevQ* 14 (1990): 377–403; idem, “Les deux derniers Psaumes davidiques du rituel d’exorcisme: 11 QPsAp<sup>a</sup> IV 4–V 14,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*, ed. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport, SDJ 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 64–89; James A. Sanders, “A Liturgy for Healing the Stricken (11 QPsAp<sup>a</sup> = 11Q11),” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Vol. 4 A: Pseudepigraphic and Non-Masoretic Psalms and Prayers*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 216–233.

<sup>49</sup> See also Ps.Philo, *L.A.B.* 60.1–3 where David plays an apocryphal psalm on his harp to rebuke the demon that troubled Saul (cf. 1 Sam 16:14–27).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Esther Eshel, “Genres of Magical Texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Die Dämonen. Demons*, ed. Armin Lange et al. (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2003), 395–415, esp. 396–403; especially on 4Q560, Joseph Naveh, “Fragments of an Aramaic Magic Book from Qumran,” *IEJ* 48 (1998): 252–261.

<sup>51</sup> 4Q444; 4Q510; 4Q511; 6Q18; cf. Eshel, “Magical Texts,” 406–411. In the case of 4Q510, 511, the exorcisms were conducted by a sage (*maskil*) who seems to have been an outstanding magician within the community.

In the first century CE the exorcist Eleazar was the paramount example of a professional Jewish magician. Thanks to the eyewitness report of Josephus,<sup>52</sup> much is known about his practices. Josephus states that Salomon not only uttered 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs, but also composed incantations by which illnesses were relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms by which demons were driven out. Josephus gives an account of an exorcism performed by Eleazar which he observed in the presence of Vespasian, thus providing an example of Salomon's magical power up to his own days. Eleazar held up to the nose of the possessed man a ring containing under its seal a root prescribed by Solomon and thus drew out the demon through the nostrils. The closest parallels to Eleazar's magical ring are the sympathetic healing instructions in the First Book of Cyranides recommending rings and stones enclosing roots for the cure of possession and epilepsy.<sup>53</sup> Eleazar completed the expulsion of the evil spirit with an act of anti-demonic protection. Reciting Solomon's name and incantations Solomon composed, Eleazar conjured the demon never to return and commanded him to overturn a cup of water as a sign for the successfully completed expulsion.

Josephus observed Eleazar using a magical manual allegedly composed by Solomon. This handbook included prescriptions of rings with healing roots, and poems with incantation formulas containing Solomon's name. To these facts we may add some presumptions. In Qumran, Solomon is associated with the exorcisms, since one of the incantations in 11Q11 mentions his name (I, 3). In the *Testament of Solomon*, combining Jewish and Christian elements, the demon Orniat is captured by means of a magical ring and the formula "Come, Solomon

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<sup>52</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 8.42–49, cf. Dennis C. Duling, "The Eleazar Miracle and Solomon's Magical Wisdom in Flavius Josephus's *Antiquitates Judaicae* 8.42–49," *HTR* 78 (1985): 1–25; Roland Deines, "Josephus, Salomo und die von Gott verliehene τέχνη gegen die Dämonen," in *Dämonen* ed. Lange et al., 365–394.

<sup>53</sup> *Cyr* I.13.16–22 (If the magician presents a ring of the Nemesis stone with a bit of plant enclosed under it to a possessed person, the demon will immediately admit his presence and flee); I.17.15–17; I.19.9–17, cf. Waegeman, *Amulet and Alphabet*, 103–109, 135–140, 151–159. Galen gives a scientific explanation for the healing power of the root of the peony worn as an amulet in order to cure epileptic convulsions: "It was now logical (to assume) either that certain particles of the root fell out, were sucked in by inspiration, and did thus heat the affected part—or that the air itself was tempered and changed by the root" (Gal II.859–860), cf. Owsei Temkin, *The Falling Sickness; A History of the Epilepsy from the Greeks to the Beginnings of Modern Neurology*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 25. See also the Baaras root mentioned by Josephus, *War* 7.180.

calls you" (*T. Sol.* 1.9–11). The magical papyrus of Paris contains a genuine Jewish incantation formula for healing purposes with an adjuration of the evil spirit "by the seal that Solomon placed on the tongue of Jeremiah, and he spoke."<sup>54</sup> Further, the Book of Mysteries which claims to have been disclosed to Solomon describes a magical ring containing a white herb for protection against demons.<sup>55</sup> Such Jewish incantation formulas and magical recipes associated with Solomon might have been part of the magical handbook used by Eleazar. The possibility even exists that Eleazar's manual was the Book of Remedies which is also said to have been composed by Solomon.<sup>56</sup> Eleazar was not an isolated phenomenon within first-century Palestinian Judaism, but Josephus' outstanding example of magicians using instructions in the tradition of Solomon's wisdom.<sup>57</sup>

In summary, there was a highly developed Jewish magic at the time of Jesus.<sup>58</sup> Magical practices were not limited to healing, but also covered control of nature, as the example of Honi and his successors demonstrates. The magical rites designed for healing purposes were primarily related to the miraculous wisdom of David and Solomon. Certain manuals used by Jewish magicians provided a combination of pagan, probably Egyptian, pharmacological practices and Jewish psalms with incantation formulas to be recited for the treatment of demoniacs in

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<sup>54</sup> PGM IV.3039–41. For the background and the meaning of this incantation forcing demons or dumb demoniacs to speak, see Wilfred Lawrence Knox, "Jewish Liturgical Exorcism," *HTR* 31 (1938): 191–203, esp. 195–196; Daniel Sperber, "Some Rabbinic Themes in Magical Papyri," *JSJ* 16 (1985): 93–103, esp. 95–99.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Mordechai Margalioth, *Sepher Ha-Razim: A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudim Period* (Jerusalem: Yediat Achronot, 1966), 103; Michael A. Morgan, *Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries*, SBLPS 11 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 75–76.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. David J. Halperin, "The Book of Remedies, the Canonization of the Solomonic Writings, and the Riddle of Pseudo-Eusebius," *JQR* 72 (1981/82): 269–292.

<sup>57</sup> In the case of Hanina ben Dosa, who also lived prior to the destruction of the temple, we cannot be sure that he applied magic. Crossan, *Jesus*, 148–156, portrays him as a magician who is "rabbinized." However, according to the oldest strata of the tradition, Hanina ben Dosa produced charismatic healings through prayer (*m. Ber.* 5:5; *b. Ber.* 34b; cf. *b. B.Qam.* 50). Only in later expansions of the legend is he credited with shamanistic abilities such as talking to demons and performing rain miracles (*b. Pesah.* 112b; *b. Ta'an.* 24b). Early traces of shamanism are present in Hanina's mastery of a poisonous snake (*t. Ber.* 3:20) which evokes the Pythagoras legend (Apollonius Paradoxographus, *Hist. Mir.* 6; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 28.142).

<sup>58</sup> The Syrian exorcist from Palestine (Lucian, *Philops.* 16) is an outstanding example of a Jewish magician in the second century CE; cf. Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–1984), 2:221.

order to threaten the evil spirits and to restore the harmony of the soul. We now have to ask how the miracles of Jesus fit into this framework.

#### 4. *The Miracles of Jesus in the Logia Strata of the Gospels*

While Jesus' teaching centers on the parables, miracles form the core of his activity. Jesus certainly impressed even his opponents above all with exorcisms and healings. Different traditions and genres reflect the remembrance of Jesus' miracles. Some of the most important pieces of material have been preserved in the old Logia strata of the gospels.<sup>59</sup> Empedocles and Apollonius provided us with testimony regarding their miraculous work and their divine status. Similarly, the gospel tradition contains authentic sayings of Jesus which associate the miracles with characteristic features of his message and personality. In contrast to Empedocles and Apollonius, Jesus does not claim to be a divine man or a magician with a superhuman nature, but relates his miracles closely to God's eschatological restoration of his kingdom.

Luke 11:20 is one of the most significant verses relating to our theme, stating that "if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." With regard to the unique link between the expulsion of demons and the presence of the kingdom of God, the logion can claim "the highest degree of authenticity which we can make for any saying of Jesus."<sup>60</sup> The "finger of God" seems to be a direct reference to Exod 8:15, indicating that Jesus, like Moses and Aaron, was empowered by God. The War Scroll from Qumran offers a close parallel to the expulsion of demons by the finger of God, stating that at the end of days the mighty hand of God shall bring down the

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<sup>59</sup> For a more profound analysis of the material, see Bernd Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum*, FRLANT 170 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 174–201; 239–254.

<sup>60</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1968), 162. In comparison to Matthew's "by the spirit of God," Luke 11:20 provides the more original version of the saying. Both the (questionable) criterion of discontinuity and the criterion of coherence argue for the authenticity of Luke 11:20, while nothing points in the direction of an early Christian creation (cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 413–422).

army of Satan and the angels of his kingdom.<sup>61</sup> Luke 11:20 offers an unusually clear insight into Jesus' self-perception as a miracle worker. While God effects the expulsion of demons, Jesus thinks of himself as God's instrument and medium through which the power of the kingdom becomes operative.<sup>62</sup> The double parable of the divided kingdom and the divided house (Mark 3:23–26) follows the same line of argumentation, providing Jesus' defense against the accusation of being allied with Beelzebul, the lord of demons.<sup>63</sup> Since the devil would never destroy his own kingdom, he can be ruled out as the power behind the miracles of Jesus. The only other possible source of the successful exorcisms is God. As a consequence of God's casting out demons through Jesus, the kingdom of God which Jewish eschatology expected for the end of the days had already arrived.<sup>64</sup>

A look at Luke 10:18 and Mark 3:27 helps us to understand this unique belief in the present fulfillment of eschatological salvation caused by the departure of demons. According to Luke 10:18, Jesus saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven.<sup>65</sup> The saying implies a former presence of Satan in heaven that had come to its end. In Jewish tradition, Satan was thought to sit in heaven as an accuser of humankind before God.<sup>66</sup> A heavenly war against the devil and his demons at the end of

<sup>61</sup> 1 QM I, 14–15. See also the adjuring of demons by the hand of God (SHR VI:35–6).

<sup>62</sup> Thomas W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 86.

<sup>63</sup> Mark 3:22 probably refers to the charge of the use of demonic powers in order to achieve miracles and implies an accusation of magic, cf. Stephen D. Ricks, "The Magician as Outsider in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 131–143, esp. 140.

<sup>64</sup> In Luke 11:20, ἔφθασεν (has come) means a real arrival and presence of the kingdom of God. In the eyes of Jesus, the coming of the kingdom was a dynamic development that had already started (Luke 11:20; 17:21). Although the complete arrival in power was still forthcoming (Mark 9:1; Luke 6:10), this process was inexorably activated and would automatically come to its fulfillment (Mark 4:26–32). Cf. Jürgen Becker, *Das Heil Gottes*, SUNT 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1964), 199–209; Hartmut Stegemann, "Some Aspects of Eschatology in Texts from the Qumran Community and in the Teachings of Jesus," in *Biblical Archeology Today*, ed. Jamit Amitai (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1985), 408–426, esp. 413–420.

<sup>65</sup> The authentic saying of Jesus, which was inserted into Luke's composition 10:17–20, describes not just Satan's symbolic dethronement, but a real fall from heaven to earth (cf. *T. Sol.* 20.12–17), see Samuel Vollenweider, "Ich sah den Satan wie einen Blitz vom Himmel fallen (Lk 10,18)," *ZNW* 79 (1988): 187–203, esp. 192–194; D. Crump, "Jesus, the Victorious Scribal-Intercessor in Luke's Gospel," *NTS* 38 (1992): 51–65, esp. 53–55.

<sup>66</sup> Job 1:6–12; *Jub.* 1.20; 48.15,18; *1 En.* 40.7.



the days was expected to lead to their dethronement and fall. This final defeat of the evil powers was closely related to a restoration of the kingdom of God over all his creation as in the days of paradise.<sup>67</sup> Contrary to the common belief in a future war against the devil, Luke 10:18 states that the fall of Satan had already happened. The saying refers to a vision experienced by Jesus in the past. Although the date of the vision is unknown, we may assume that Jesus, watching Satan's fall, decided to separate from John the Baptist. This event fits the pattern of a vocation-vision that marked the beginning of Jesus' own independent activity including exorcisms and healings.<sup>68</sup> The parable of the strong man (Mark 3:27), which regards the dethronement of Satan as the precondition for casting out demons, confirms this hypothesis. The binding of the strong man alludes to the Jewish tradition of the devil's eschatological binding by God, weakening the demons who lost their master.<sup>69</sup> As a result of Satan's dethronement, his kingdom can be invaded and plundered by expelling the demons. The exorcisms of Jesus, empowered by God, are "rearguard actions" in God's battle against the evil. This battle has already been won, since the ruler of the demons has been bound and thrown out of heaven.<sup>70</sup>

Healings on Sabbath are an important consequence of Jesus' eschatological thinking. Several norm miracles in the gospels reflect the charge of breaking the Sabbath.<sup>71</sup> These compositions either are based

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. *As. Mos.* 10.1 ("And then his kingdom shall appear throughout all his creation, and then Satan shall be no more, and sorrow shall depart with him"); *T. Dan* 5.10–12; *Jub.* 23.29 ("And all of their days they will be complete and live in peace and rejoicing and there will be no Satan and no evil [one] who will destroy, because all of their days will be days of blessing and healing"). According to *2 Apoc. Bar.* 73.1–3, with the restitution of the kingdom "health will descend in dew, and illness will vanish... and nobody will again die untimely."

<sup>68</sup> Ulrich B. Müller, "Vision und Botschaft: Erwägungen zur prophetischen Struktur der Verkündigung Jesu," *ZTK* 74 (1977): 416–448, esp. 427–429; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1996), 196–198. See also Paul W. Hollenbach, "The Conversion of Jesus: From Jesus the Baptizer to Jesus the Healer," *ANRW* II 25.1 (1982): 196–219. However, Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 492–493, argues against this hypothesis.

<sup>69</sup> See *T. Levi* 18.12 ("And Beliar shall be bound by him, and he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits"), where originally not the messianic high priest but God is the acting subject of Beliar's binding (Jürgen Becker, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen*, AGJU 8 [Leiden: Brill, 1970], 297–298). Cf. the binding of demons in *1 En.* 10.4; 13.1; *Jub.* 10.7, 11.

<sup>70</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, SBT 23 (Naperville: A. R. Allenson, 1957), 108–109.

<sup>71</sup> Mark 3:1–6; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6; John 5:1–18; 7:19–23; 9:1–47.

on independent sayings by Jesus thematically related to Sabbath healings, or have provided a suitable framework to incorporate the Sabbath sayings. In Mark 3:4, to do good and to save life is valued more highly than the demands of the Sabbath commandment. In other Sabbath sayings we find deductions following the principle *a minori ad maius*. Logia such as Matt 12:11 and Luke 13:15 state that if an animal may be rescued or fed on the Sabbath day, still greater was the reason to help a man or a woman. Moreover, if the circumcision to be practiced on the seventh day has to be performed on a Sabbath and concerns only one part of the body, an even greater reason exists to permit the healing of an entire person (John 7:22–3). The Jewish halachah permitted the healing of sickness on Sabbath only when a person was in danger of dying.<sup>72</sup> Jesus' need of legitimacy and justification reflected in his Sabbath sayings leads us to the conclusion that he violated the Sabbath commandment by healing sick persons who were not mortally ill. This infringement of the Sabbath halachah<sup>73</sup> was rooted in the conviction that the circumstances of creation according to Gen 1–2 had to be regarded as superior to the demands of the Sinai torah. The creation of humanity occurred before the constitution of the Mosaic Law and was therefore of higher value than the Sabbath commandment.<sup>74</sup> According to the common Jewish belief at the time of Jesus, Sabbath symbolizes an anticipation of redemption. The Sabbath possesses eschatological holiness and provides a foretaste of the world to come, which will be all Sabbath.<sup>75</sup> Since there will be no suffering in the coming

<sup>72</sup> *m. Yoma* 8:6; *m. Sabb.* 18:3; 22:6; *Mek. Exod* 31:13.

<sup>73</sup> Several scholars argue that Jesus did not break the Sabbath law; see David Flusser, *Jesus* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 48–50 (“healing by words was always permitted on the sabbath, even when the illness was not dangerous”); Ed P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 266 (“no work was performed”); Frederick J. Murphy, *The Religious World of Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), 332. However, *t. Sabb.* 7:23 seems to forbid exorcisms on Sabbath, and in general we cannot be sure that Jesus performed his Sabbath healings only by words, since the present framework of the Sabbath sayings is not original.

<sup>74</sup> See also Mark 2:27, where humankind and its needs are said to be of a greater value than the observance of the Sabbath. The well known Jewish parallel, “The Sabbath is given to you, but you are not surrendered to the Sabbath” (*Mek. Exod* 31:13), spoken in order to justify the healing of illnesses without danger to life on the Sabbath, shows that Mark 2:27 might originally have referred to healings or exorcisms on the Sabbath. In a similar way, Jesus' prohibition of divorce, a violation of Deut 24:1, is based entirely on the conviction that the situation of Gen 1 justifies an infringement of the law (Mark 10:6–7).

<sup>75</sup> *m. Tamid* 7:4; *b. Ber.* 57b; *Midr. Ps* 92:2; *Mek. Exod* 31:13. See Eduard Lohse, “σάββατον,” *TDNT* 7:1–34, esp. 8; Theodore Friedman, “The Sabbath: Anticipation of

kingdom of God, sickness and Sabbath are not compatible. For these reasons, the Shammaites even forbade praying for the sick and visiting them on the Sabbath.<sup>76</sup> Jesus, however, drew different conclusions from the eschatological significance of Sabbath by acknowledging the problem of sickness. In order to restore the Sabbath as the day created before the fall of humanity and the coming of evil, he did perform healings and exorcisms on that day, contrary to common practice.<sup>77</sup>

Jesus was not the only Jewish miracle worker with an awareness of standing on the threshold of a new world. Striking analogies to Jesus' anticipation of divine eschatological deliverance through miracles are present in the actions of the Jewish sign prophets mentioned by Josephus as frauds and false prophets.<sup>78</sup> Consistent with the eschatology of Jesus, they were influenced by the pattern "as it was in the days of old... so now it will be." In contrast to Jesus' references to Gen 1–2, the sign prophets had their biblical roots in the exodus tradition. The signs and wonders promised by them did not imply a restitution of God's reign over his creation according to the situation before the fall of humanity, but a reiteration of the exodus miracles leading to political liberation from the Romans. The miracles had the auxiliary function of confirmation signs and were intended to prove the legitimacy of the message, as was required of a true prophet in Judaism.<sup>79</sup> Jesus refused the demand for a miraculous sign from heaven (Mark 8:11–12) and rejected the expectation that he might be an eschatological prophet or a political

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Redemption," *Judaism* 16 (1967): 443–452; Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption," *JSJ* 17 (1986): 153–176.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *t.Sabb.* 16:22; *b. Sabb.* 12a–b.

<sup>77</sup> For this presence of eschatological deliverance in the Sabbath healings, see Christian Dietzfelbinger, "Vom Sinn der Sabbatheilungen Jesu," *EvT* 38 (1978): 281–298; Berndt Schaller, "Jesus und der Sabbat," *Fundamenta Judaica*, STUNT 25 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 125–147, esp. 146–147; Lutz Doering, *Schabbat. Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum*, TSAJ 78 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1999), 441–478.

<sup>78</sup> See Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 229–255; Paul W. Barnett, "The Jewish Sign Prophets—A.D. 40–70: Their Intentions and Origin," *NTS* 27 (1981): 679–697; Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 160–172; Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine. The Evidence from Josephus* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 112–144.

<sup>79</sup> See Fritz Stolz, "Zeichen und Wunder. Die prophetische Legitimation und ihre Geschichte," *ZTK* 69 (1972): 125–144; Franz Josef Helfmeyer, "תּוֹתָא," *TDOT* 1:167–188, esp. 183–185.

leader in the battle for liberation. Although outsiders compared him with the sign prophets (Acts 5:36), Jesus hardly established a specific pattern of Jewish prophecy attested by miracles.<sup>80</sup>

### 5. *Magical or Shamanistic Techniques in the Gospel Miracle Stories*

The various strata of the tradition which have preserved the memory of Jesus' miracles offer different pictures. The saying tradition accentuates the characteristic feature of the present kingdom of God and is not interested in miracle techniques. The narrative tradition in contrast does not reflect the eschatological framework of the miracles but provides detailed information about the way Jesus worked miracles. Although New Testament form criticism has proven that the requirements of the primitive Christian church considerably influenced the image of Jesus in the narrative tradition, the historical value of the miracle stories needs to be underlined.

Exorcism narratives report the casting out of a demon from a possessed person. The battle between the miracle worker and the evil spirit is one of the characteristic motifs. According to the Markan miracle tradition, Jesus rebuked (*ἐπετίμησεν*) the evil spirits.<sup>81</sup> The verb *ἐπιτιμᾶν* (to rebuke) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew or Aramaic term *רעג*. Although threats to the demon are a regular part of the ancient exorcism ritual,<sup>82</sup> the technical term *ἐπιτιμᾶν* appears in reference to the expulsion of demons neither in the Hellenistic miracle stories nor in the Greek magical papyri.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, the verb *רעג*, presumably derived from Zech 3:2, is commonly employed in Jewish

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<sup>80</sup> Barnett, "Sign Prophets," 690, however, claims that such a pattern developed by Jesus was "in some way a causal factor in the rise of the Sign Prophets." See also Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 172, who is inclined to put Jesus "closer to Theudas than to Honi or the magicians of the PGM, but that is because there is other evidence which leads us to think of Jesus as an eschatological prophet, not because the miracles make him one."

<sup>81</sup> Mark 1:25; 9:25.

<sup>82</sup> Lucian, *Philops.* 16; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 3.38 (a letter with threats to the demon); 4.20 (Apollonius speaks to the demon as a master to his impudent servant); cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Traditions* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 63–64.

<sup>83</sup> Howard C. Kee, "The Terminology of Marks's Exorcism Stories," *NTS* 14 (1967/68): 232–246, esp. 240–242.

miracle traditions to signify the threatening of evil spirits.<sup>84</sup> Apparently, the biblical use of the term ἐπιτιμᾶν in view of Jesus' exorcisms depends on רַעַל and is a Semitism of high historical value. The Markan exorcism stories do not tell the exact way the evil spirits were menaced. In ancient Judaism, the formula "May the Lord rebuke (רַעַל) you, O Satan" (Zech 3:2) was frequently recited in order to cause the departure of evil spirits.<sup>85</sup> The power to rebuke demons is ascribed to God while the magician acts as his spokesman. Although the assumption that Jesus might have used this biblical formula cannot be proven, it would fit the fact that Jesus like other Jewish exorcists acted as the agent of God (Luke 11:19–20).

In the exorcism narratives, the words Jesus uttered to the demons primarily work as commands of departure, forcing them to leave the sick person.<sup>86</sup> This is the usual form of exorcism in the magical papyri where the order "come out" (ἐξελεθε) is addressed to the evil spirits in a number of incantation formulas.<sup>87</sup> At least one of them is of Jewish origin.<sup>88</sup> According to the Talmud, Rabbi Simeon ben Yose expelled a demon named Ben Temalion with a similar command of departure.<sup>89</sup> In addition to the command of departure, Jesus' exorcism formula in Mark 9:25 includes a prevention of the demon's return. The synoptic saying tradition attests to Jesus' notion that a demon, once expelled from a person, might attempt to return and that precautions should be taken to avert this eventuality.<sup>90</sup> The practices of the Jewish magician Eleazar, who adjured the demon never to come back to repossess the

<sup>84</sup> 1QapGen XX, 29; SHR II.181–185. See also Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes; Leiden: Brill, 1985), amulets nr. A 2:8.11; 9:2.4; 14:9.

<sup>85</sup> Zech 3:20; Jude 9 = *As. Mos.*; *Vit. Ad.* 39; *b. Ber.* 51a; *b. Quidd.* 81b.

<sup>86</sup> "Come out (ἐξελεθε) of him," Mark 1:25; 5:8; 9:25.

<sup>87</sup> PGM IV.1242–1244: "Come out, daimon, whoever you are, and stay away from him"; PGM IV.3013: "Come out from NN"; PGM V.158 "Come out and follow."

<sup>88</sup> PGM IV.3019–78 is a Jewish exorcism formula that got into the hands of Egyptian magicians; cf. Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodler & Staughton, 1927), 256–264; Knox, *Exorcism*, 191–203; Kollmann, *Jesus*, 156–160. PGM V.96–171 contains several references to Jewish tradition, cf. Reinhold Merkelbach and Maria Totti, *Abrasax: Ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts*, 4 vols., PapCol 17,1–4 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992–1996), 2:153–170.

<sup>89</sup> *b. Mei'l.* 17b: "Ben Temalion leave her, Ben Temalion leave her." Cf. Markham J. Geller, "Jesus' Theurgic Powers: Parallels in the Talmud and Incantation Bowls," *JJS* 28 (1977): 141–155, esp. 141–142.

<sup>90</sup> Matt 12:43–45/Luke 11:24–26.

exorcised person,<sup>91</sup> supply the most significant parallel to Mark 9:25. The exorcism formula PGM IV.1227–1264 is likewise aware of the danger of demons returning and recommends wearing an amulet for protection.

In the narrative about the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1–20), Jesus is credited with further exorcism techniques. The demon is forced to tell his name and to leave with a sign of physical violence. Both practices are well documented in ancient magic. The Jewish exorcism by the seal of Solomon aims at making the demon speak, since the knowledge of his character, name, and provenance gives the miracle worker a hold upon him.<sup>92</sup> For the same reasons, the Syrian exorcist from Palestine interrogated the spirit about how and when he had entered the body of the demoniac.<sup>93</sup> The author of the very fragmentary incantations of 11Q11 addresses the object of his exorcism, apparently a group of evil spirits, with the question of who they are (II, 1–2). Moreover, Mark 5:13 emphasizes the departure of the demons, pointing out their destructive power outside human beings. Similarly, Eleazar commanded the demon to overturn a cup of water as proof of his departure from the possessed person, while Apollonius forced the evil spirit to destroy a statue.<sup>94</sup>

Some of the synoptic healing traditions also indicate a magical context. In narratives such as Mark 7:31–37 and 8:22–26, Jesus acts on the borderline between medical and magical cure. In both cases, the public is first removed, then the healing is produced by practices deriving from magical folk medicine, and finally those cured are not permitted to make the miracle known to others. This procedure can be associated with the commands of secrecy in the magical papyri which try to prevent a desecration and transmission of powerful techniques.<sup>95</sup> In the cure of the deaf mute, the releasing of the tongue (Mark 7:35) implies that it was bound by a demon.<sup>96</sup> Jesus spits on his hand and touches the tongue of the dumb man. Antiquity attributed magical powers to

<sup>91</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 8.47. For “I command you” (ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι) in Mark 9:25, see PGM VII.331; IV.1038.

<sup>92</sup> PGM IV.3037–3041. According to Campbell Bonner, “The Technique of Exorcism,” *HTR* 36 (1943): 39–49, esp. 41–44, the main point is to break the silence.

<sup>93</sup> Lucian, *Philops.* 16.

<sup>94</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 8.47. Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.20

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Theissen, *Miracle Stories* 68–69.

<sup>96</sup> Ancient curse tablets command the demons to bind the tongue of enemies; cf. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 304–307. Dumbness caused by demons is also implied Plut. *Mor.* 438b; PGM XIII.242–244.

spittle. The idea in Mark's story is to reduce the demon that binds the tongue by magical means to a state of weakness.<sup>97</sup> The healing is accompanied by sighing, a practice well known in the magical papyri.<sup>98</sup> Mark 5:24–34 is another miracle narrative which displays elements of magic. The woman suffering from a permanent menstrual flow believes she physically has to touch Jesus in order to be healed. Thus she draws near Jesus in the crowd, touches his cloak, and is immediately cured of her illness.

The so-called nature miracles of the gospels are influenced by the shamanistic motifs of friendship with animals and mastery of nature. Mark 1:13 credits Jesus with the ability to live in peace with the wild beasts, just as Pythagoras did. In Mark's account of the calming of the storm (Mark 4:35–41), Jesus appears as a magician endowed with the shamanistic ability to influence the weather. According to common belief at the time of Jesus, wind and waves are controlled by demons. Therefore the verbs used in reporting the miracle are well known in the exorcisms. Jesus rebuked the wind and commanded the sea to be quiet. In Jewish parallels to Mark 4:35–41, the action of the miracle worker is limited to a prayer to God who causes the calming of the storm.<sup>99</sup> By contrast, Jesus acts on his own authority and with the help of a power that dwells in him, just as Greek magicians do. Pythagoras is reported to have checked violent winds and calmed the waters of rivers and seas, so that his companions could easily cross them.<sup>100</sup> Empedocles allegedly stopped a storm cloud from overwhelming the people of Acragas and was known as "the averter of winds."<sup>101</sup> Persian magicians calmed a storm with sacrifices and incantations to the wind.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> In the case of Mark 8:22–26, the spittle therapy is medicine rather than magic. In ancient medical sources (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 28.37.76; Marcellus Empiricus, *Med.* 8.43.166; Paulus Aegineta 7.3), spittle is attested as a remedy for inflamed, bleeding or flowing eyes, and for roughness of the eyes or cataract. Paulus Aegineta gives a scientific explanation of its healing power, ascribing dispersing and disinfecting qualities to spittle. This healing technique is also well attested in Talmudic traditions (*y. Sabb.* 14:14d; *b. Sabb.* 108b; *y. 'Abod.Zar.* 2:40d; *b. 'Abod.Zar.* 28a; *y. Sota* 1:16d).

<sup>98</sup> PGM IV.2492–2493; XIII.945, cf. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1934), 85–86; Campbell Bonner, "Traces of Thaumaturgic Technique in the Miracles," *HTR* 20 (1927): 171–181, esp. 172–174.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *Pss* 107:23–32; *T. Napht.* 6.1–10; *b. BM* 59b.; *y. Ber.* 9:13b.

<sup>100</sup> Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 28.135. See also PGM XXIX.

<sup>101</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* VI.30.1; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 28.136.

<sup>102</sup> Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.191.

Furthermore, the ability to walk across the sea ascribed to Jesus in Mark 6:45–52 was also associated with Greek divine men and magicians.<sup>103</sup>

In conclusion, the Markan miracle narratives clearly portray Jesus as a magician. Almost all elements of Jesus' techniques have counterparts in ancient magic. To be sure, we always have to consider the possibility that the primitive Christian church adjusted the image of Jesus to ancient magicians and portrayed him according to their practices. Especially in the nature miracles, the Easter faith is the fundamental presupposition for attributing to Jesus magical or shamanistic abilities. However, the thesis of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* that most of the miracle stories derive from Hellenistic Christianity outside Palestine cannot be maintained. Since most of the magical techniques in the gospel miracle stories can be traced back to the Jewish world of Jesus, a far greater degree of historicity must be assumed than is usually conceded.<sup>104</sup> Precious reminiscences of the historical Jesus regarding exorcisms and therapies have been woven into the gospel narratives.

Since Jesus was credited with certain supernatural abilities in the pre-Markan strata of the miracle narratives, the history of the tradition resembles that of remarkable ancient magicians and shamans. Like Moses, Pythagoras, and Apollonius, Jesus is highly respected in the Greek magical papyri,<sup>105</sup> while he is charged with sorcery and deception by the critics. In accordance with ancient biographies of these outstanding magicians and divine men, the gospels working as "reverse aretalogies" reduce the significance of the miracles.<sup>106</sup> They partly serve as apologies defending Jesus against outsiders' charges that he was merely a magician, and against his admirers' grave misunderstanding that he was merely a wonder-worker. The Gospel of Mark qualifies the demonstration of divinity through miracles by the motif of misunderstanding and by the image of the miracle worker as a powerful teacher. The Gospel of Matthew reduces or eliminates most of the magical techniques

<sup>103</sup> See, for example, the Hyperborean magician (Lucian, *Philops.* 16).

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Barry L. Blackburn, *Theios Aner and the Markan Miracle Tradition*, WUNT 2.40 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991).

<sup>105</sup> PGM IV.1232–1233; 3019–3020; cf. PGM XIa (Apollonius); VII.795 (Pythagoras); XIII (Moses).

<sup>106</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, "Good News is no News: Aretalogy and Gospel," *Map is not Territory*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 191–207.



ascribed to Jesus in the Markan miracle tradition.<sup>107</sup> It is written partly to neutralize earlier attacks on Jesus' magical achievements and to replace the Gospel of Mark which portrays Jesus as both teacher and magician. Similarly, Philo, Philostratus, and Iamblichus intend to cleanse their heroes Moses, Apollonius, and Pythagoras of the charge of practicing magic and wish to discourage their readers from consulting earlier biographies which unduly stressed magical abilities.<sup>108</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

Our knowledge of the relation between Jesus and magic is limited. The authentic sayings of Jesus do not provide information about his healing techniques. Moreover, the extent to which the magical motifs in the miracle stories can be traced back to the historical Jesus is disputable. However, little doubt exists that Jesus' general way of healing was magical. Surely the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* would have condemned Jesus as one of the magicians whose healing techniques were not based on scientific medicine but assumed the intervention of the divine in natural processes.<sup>109</sup> In sharp contrast to scientific medicine, Jesus, like most of his contemporaries, shared a world view with ancient magicians. In the world of Jesus, the devil was believed to be the cause of evil. The idea that demons empowered by the devil were responsible for all sickness had deeply penetrated into Jewish thought. Therefore, Jesus was convinced that illnesses, such as epilepsy and mania, could be eliminated through the expulsion of the wicked spirits. According to the gospel narratives, which are of higher

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<sup>107</sup> Hull, *Hellenistic Magic*, 116–141; Otto Böcher, "Matthäus und die Magie," in *Studien zum Matthäusevangelium*, ed. Ludger Schenke (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 11–24; Dieter Trunk, *Der messianische Heiler*, HBSt 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994).

<sup>108</sup> While the pre-Philonic tradition thought of Moses as a magician (Artapanus, *FGrHist* IIIC.726.3; Strabo 16.2.39) or fraud (Lysimachus and Apollonius Molon, according to Josephus, *Apion* 2.145), Philo portrays him as a lawgiver and prophet whose friendship with God enabled him to perform miracles (*Vit. Mos.* 1.156). Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*, claiming that the miracles did not derive from magic but from wisdom (*Vit. Apoll.* 4.44; 8.7.9), should be understood as a reaction against Moiragenes' view of Apollonius as a magician (*Vit. Apoll.* 1.2–3). Similarly, Iamblichus intends to neutralize of the older tradition (cf. *Vit. Pyth.* 1.2; 32.216) since prior biographies like that by Apollonius of Tyana probably portrayed Pythagoras as a magician. Cf. Kollmann, *Jesus*, 287–306.

<sup>109</sup> Hippocrates, *Morb. Sacr.* 1.39–40.

historical value than often presumed, he applied magical techniques for these purposes.

The phenomenon of shamanism overlapping with magic is less suitable to grasp the significance of Jesus' miracles, although in the light of the Easter faith Jesus was credited with shamanistic abilities. Nature miracles typical for Honi and for Greek shamans are not mentioned in the reliable strata of the saying tradition. Jesus did not develop a theory of metempsychosis, the presupposition of every kind of shamanistic healing. Moreover, he did not preach vegetarianism as the logical consequence of the shamanistic belief in the soul's reincarnation in animals. Outstanding Greek shamans such as Pythagoras and Empedocles revealed secret knowledge fundamental to human destiny that made them think of themselves as immortal mediators between heaven and earth. Jesus saw himself as God's agent in the process of eschatological fulfillment without claiming a divine status. He did not primarily care for the individual fate of the soul but saw healing within the universal framework of the restitution of the kingdom of God.

Regarding Jesus as a magician does not imply a derogation. Modern research on the nature and function of magic clearly prefers a definition of magic as a relative term that locates certain miracle workers beyond the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior. The traditional distinction between miracle as an aspect of religion on the one hand, and magic on the other hand has become fragile. The strict dichotomy between manipulative magic and supplicative or charismatic miracle does not exist. Up to a certain point, magic and miracle involve the same sort of practices. The dividing line between charismatic and magical miracle is primarily a matter of social convention. Aspects that make magic a questionable form of religion, such as the application of magical abilities for harmful or dubious purposes, are absent from the miracles of Jesus.

Although Jesus appears to have used magical techniques and can therefore be seen as magician in a wider sense, he does not fit the magical patterns common during his time. According to ancient sources becoming a magician was not easy. The initiation lasted a long time and included doctrines as well as rituals that were very widespread.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Graf, *Magic*, 89–90: Pankrates spent twenty-three years in a secret chamber in order to become a magician. Cyprian lived ten years with the priests of Memphis who taught him magic.

It is doubtful whether Jesus had the chance to undergo a ritual instruction in order to acquire secret knowledge of magical rites and tools. The ancient Jewish and pagan sources labeling Jesus a magician claim that he produced his miracles employing hidden techniques which he had learned in Egypt. The tradition of magical training in Egypt is a common motif, attributed to almost every outstanding miracle worker in antiquity.<sup>111</sup> In the case of Jesus, it developed from the legendary tradition in Matt 2:13–21 and rested on Jesus' identification with the Jewish sorcerer Ben Stada who imported magical prescriptions from Egypt tattooed on his body and was stoned to death.<sup>112</sup> There is no reliable evidence that Jesus ever went to Egypt. John the Baptist, the only teacher of Jesus we know of, can also be ruled out in our search for the roots of Jesus' healing activities since he did not perform any miracles (John 10:41). Moreover, for Greek magicians healing constituted only a small part of their professional life. Outstanding representatives of magical art, such as Pythagoras, Empedocles, and Apollonius, claimed to control nature and to predict catastrophes. The Greek magical papyri from Egypt provide many insights into the role of the magician as religious functionary who operated as a crisis manager and had remedies for almost everything that troubled mankind. In contrast, the miracles actually performed by the historical Jesus were limited to healing and did not include practices for causing damage or getting rid of enemies. Widespread rituals of the kind we find in the magical papyri are absent from the gospel tradition.

The lack of connecting links to contemporary Jewish healing magic is perhaps most surprising. No evidence is available that Jesus used healing stones and roots as the Essenes did. Unlike the Qumran community and Eleazar who owned magical manuals, Jesus did not employ incantations and psalms allegedly composed by David or Solomon for exorcism purposes. Several remarkable links exist with charismatic movements in ancient Judaism. Regarding God as the power behind the exorcisms, Jesus places himself on a level with other Jewish healers (Luke 11:19). His main technique of exorcism was the well known rebuking of the wicked spirits possibly by reciting Zech 3:2 (frequently

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. Diodorus Siculus 1.69.4–5; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.2; Diogenes Laertius 8.3; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 4.18–19; Ps.-Clement, *Hom.* 2.22.3.

<sup>112</sup> *t. Sabb.* 11:15; *y. Sabb.* 12:13d, cf. Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung*, EdF 82 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 203–218.

documented in ancient Judaism). Like Honi, Jesus came into conflict with the Pharisees. With the sign prophets, he shared a concept of anticipated eschatological salvation through miracles. However, given the entire framework of his miracle work Jesus does not fit into any of the traditional patterns. A vision of Satan's falling apparently activated his exorcism and healing activities without any magical initiation. Unlike his contemporaries, Jesus was convinced that the destruction of evil and the restoration of God's new world, usually expected for the end of days, had already started. In this eschatological process, he thought of himself as God's instrument, eliminating what remains of evil and restoring the Sabbath as the day that was created before the fall of humanity. Operating within an overarching context of salvation history and partial realizations of the kingdom of God, Jesus was a magician of a special kind.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> I am grateful to my wife Christine Wyatt for revising the style of this article.



JESUS AND THE GREEKS:  
A SEMIOTIC READING OF JOHN 12:20–28

JOSEPH PATHRAPANKAL

Interpreting beyond borders has become a fundamental and indispensable need of our times in all branches of knowledge. In Christian theology it focuses on the emerging trans-border biblical and theological interpretation of basic issues that constitute the faith and praxis of the church which are transmitted through the centuries. Hence liberation studies, subaltern studies, post-colonial studies as well as diasporic studies have all come up in contemporary literature as part of this new branch of the discipline.<sup>1</sup> We do not want to confine the topic of our present study to any one of these newly emerging studies; but we still hold the view that this is a study which goes beyond the borders of established biblical hermeneutics. Since this study is a contribution to the fourth volume of the *Handbook of the Study of the Historical Jesus*, concentrating on concrete issues about the historical Jesus recorded in the gospels, it is supposed to be related to the narratives which are found in these gospels. But that does not mean that the study has to be only about the historical data as described in the gospels, because the gospels are not mere biographies of Jesus. They are more documents of faith, as well as reflections on faith. That is the reason why the gospels are understood more as a *kerygmatic history*, i.e. history in the form of a proclamation, containing a consequent challenge to the readers. This is not to deny the historical character of the gospel narratives, nor is it an attempt to demythologize the gospel accounts along the Bultmannian lines. Rather, it means that we have to remain within the historical and also go beyond the historical towards the message that transcends the historical and reach out to the challenge the narratives bring before us. It seems that the present state of our globalized world and the current trend of thinking and reflection in our contemporary society call for such a movement towards that which lies beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> *Interpreting beyond borders*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 11–34.

### 1. *The Challenge of a Pluralistic World*

This observation is particularly important in the context of our pluralistic world. Here pluralism means the acceptance of the other as the other with all its uniqueness, not as something opposed to oneself or as an extension of oneself, but as something with its own inalienable qualities and characteristics. Pluralism also denotes the concept of the one and the many, the one as basic to all things, coordinating the many, and the many as coordinated to the one, thereby creating harmony and peace among the many. Hence pluralism means difference and also distinction, but it is not divisiveness. As a result, a pluralistic world does not mean a divided world. Once pluralism is accepted as a basic reality of this world and its historical process at all levels, it becomes easier for all to see the legitimacy of the other to exist and operate at various levels of life, and also the positive role pluralism plays in enriching the world. It is this richness of pluralism that reveals the beauty of our human community as a whole, because God has created a world characterized by its own pluralism at various levels. It is this variety and pluralism that give beauty to the entire environment in which we live and relate to each other. As a result of these developments, world religions are also beginning to experience that their future does not any more consist in isolation, but rather in their openness to other religions. Those who are involved in the study of religions are also becoming more and more convinced that any attempt on their part to dominate or monopolize in the realm of religion is self-defeating. There is no more question of religious absolutes. Equally excluded is the tendency to establish one's own religion as something normative for the whole of humankind. In fact, the most important challenge that the churches face in our times is the challenge of religious pluralism. Hence religious pluralism deeply affects the church's self-understanding and her mission in the world. There is no more question of understanding Christianity and the church in terms of uniqueness, exclusivism and superiority over other religions.

It follows from the above observations that there is need of a new look at what is meant by religious identity. Does religious identity mean one's absolute commitment to a religion in such a manner that it has no place for accepting and appreciating the values of other religions? After centuries of hatred and mistrust, religions are now discovering a new dimension of dialogue and a complementary approach, through which every religion tries to recognize and appreciate the positive

values in other religious traditions. So also every religion feels the need of coming out of its ghetto mentality and becoming open and tolerant towards other religions. Religions are also trying to understand that they have a common patrimony and also a common task to fulfill as well as a common goal to achieve. If we look through the early history of the church, it becomes clear that the broad outlook of some of the Fathers of the church about Christianity was gradually lost sight of through the interventions of interested theologians during the following centuries, who tried to establish their own views and make Christianity a ghetto religion. We have the sublime teaching of several Fathers of the Church, such as Irenaeus and Justin, who taught that the eternal Logos was present and active in every human heart. All those who followed their inner guidance and their genuine conscience could arrive at salvation. Justin even said that all who live according to the Logos are basically Christians. But once Christianity became the official religion of the West through the conversion of Constantine, this broad outlook of Christianity on the followers of other religions was completely removed. Christianity then grew into a religion of domination and intolerance towards other religions. "No salvation outside the Church" became the standard doctrine of the church. Consequently, many steps were taken to make people belonging to other religions in other parts of the world become the members of the church as the only way for them to arrive at salvation.

Jesus Christ is very often presented as the Founder of Christianity. But if we objectively analyze his person and work, it would become clear that he is not the founder of a religion like many other founders. Jesus of Nazareth had to carve out a new group of followers from the very religious reality of which he was a member in every aspect. But he never tried to make it a new religion out of the parent religion, much less a new sect. It is true that the group comprising of his disciples was called the "sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) by some others, similar to the sect of the Sadducees (Acts 5:17), and this had far-reaching consequences for the future of the Christian movement, when Stephen had to step in and fight for its trans-sectarian characteristics. But for the New Testament writers themselves Jesus was far from being the founder of a religion or the leader of a sect. For the author of the Acts of the Apostles, the Christian movement was *the Way* (ἡ ὁδός) (Acts 9:2). Hence he has Paul make a solemn declaration of this conviction in his self-defense before Felix, where his own conviction about the Way is contrasted with the prevailing thinking about the sect among



others. Paul tells Felix: “This I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). In fact, Jesus of Nazareth inaugurated a new way of living the vertical and horizontal dimensions of religion without at the same time founding a new religion.

A recent work of John P. Meier about Jesus as a marginal Jew<sup>2</sup> has raised several interesting observations about the so-called religious identity of Jesus of Nazareth and his relation to Judaism as a whole. Since Jesus was born and brought up in the territory of Galilee, which was technically known as the Galilee of the Gentiles (Matt 4:15), he could not and did not belong to the category of those for whom the Law of Moses was the ultimate norm and controlling factor of religious identity. The Jews living in this area were surrounded by a fair number of Greeks and were also exposed to a considerable amount of Hellenistic culture and world vision. Consequently, these Jews would adhere only to the basics of their religion and religious practices. More than that, they were also prepared to see and appreciate goodness and virtue not only among their fellow humans, but also among the followers of other religious traditions. So it was quite natural that Jesus could appreciate goodness and a meaningful faith in the centurion who went to Jesus seeking healing from him for his servant who was lying paralyzed at home: “Truly, I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 8:11–12). Hence, Jesus was also spontaneous in offering him his service and he healed his servant.

The same can be said about Jesus’ attitude towards the Samaritans who were, in general, disliked by the Jews. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, it is a Samaritan who turns out to be the ideal person, for he proves by his action what it means to be a neighbor in the true sense of the word. As a Jew, Jesus should have hated him; but as one with a capacity to transcend the merely human dimensions, he praised him

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<sup>2</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew* (New York: Doubleday, vol. 1, 1991; vol. 2, 1994; vol. 3, 2001; New Haven: Yale University Press, vol. 4, 2009). Other similar works are: Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM, 1973) and *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM, 1983); *Jesus’ Jewishness*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossword, 1991).

and presented him as an example for the Jewish scholar who had approached him with the question: "Who is my neighbor?" For Jesus it was not an issue of dealing with an academic question, but of putting things into action. So Jesus said: "Go and do likewise!" (Luke 10:37). The same truth is once again affirmed in the story of the ten lepers, one of whom was a Samaritan, and he came back to thank Jesus for the favor he had received (Luke 17:11-19). The story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman and through her the whole community of the Samaritans is yet another challenging story in the Gospel of John. In his discussion with the Samaritan woman, Jesus spells out his profound convictions about what religion and worship mean. In fact, this story encourages us to approach the challenge of religious identity in our times with an open mind (John 4:21-24). What Jesus told the Samaritan woman could be understood as an epitome of religion and worship, not only for the Jews and the Samaritans of his times, but also for the followers of all religions, then as well as now. This could be summarized as follows: In the past, the followers of various religious groups had their own ways of worshipping God, often in the context of rivalry and competition. But from now on, religion itself, and worship in particular, have to assume a new meaning and a new expression. Worship is no more to be localized and monopolized by a few people who think that they are the privileged and authorized ones, from whom all others have to learn and practice the essentials of worship. Rather, worship must be the exercise of the freedom of the spirit for all humans wherever and wherever they are. All that happened in the past in the history of Judaism and Samaritans was the expression of rivalry and competition, either with one claiming superiority over the other, or with one condemning the other as false and illegitimate. The time has now come for all to rise up from such a religious enslavement and inaugurate a new era of worship in the power of the genuine operation of the spirit of God, which encompasses the universe of faiths and religious traditions.

Official Judaism would have regarded such a teaching as nothing less than heresy, and the meaning of what Jesus told the Samaritan woman was much more crucial than what is contained in his saying about the Temple of Jerusalem: "Destroy this temple; and in three days I will build it again" (John 2:19). In fact, Jesus had to get involved in a prophetic task far greater than that was assigned to the prophet Jeremiah: "Today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant"

(Jer 1:10). Jesus of Nazareth had a prophetic task of destroying and overthrowing certain inbuilt ideologies about religion and religious identity, and this was also part of his mission of inaugurating the kingdom of God as a universal situation of vertical and horizontal relationship. Biblical exegetes are called upon to explore this aspect of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in a more radical manner during these changed times of human history. It is more a question of broadening the dimensions of their theological reflection and hermeneutical fields. "Widen the space of your tent, extend the curtains of your home. Do not hold back! Lengthen your ropes, make your tent-pegs firm, for you will spread out to right and to left" (Isa 54:2-3): it is in these words that Deutero-Isaiah exhorted the returned exiles to go out of their introverted world vision and enlarge the horizons of their thinking. This exhortation is very much applicable to the theologians and exegetes of our times who are also challenged to go out of their centripetal world of theological reflection to the wider world of God. In our global village, it is only natural that the world of theologians and exegetes draws closer and shares their concerns and problems; and this will add beauty and meaning to their theological ministry.

## 2. *The New Hermeneutical Task*

The present study is also an attempt to explore the capacity of biblical texts to shape, revise and confirm readers' expectations. This too is an important aspect of hermeneutical enquiry in our times insofar as the text of the Bible is allowed to respond to the context and situation of the present, with the result that new and relevant meanings consonant with its original meaning can be derived from such re-readings. In fact, in the field of biblical studies we now have a new challenge of a more contextual understanding of the Bible. We would therefore call it a contextual interpretation of biblical texts. What is proposed here is something different from the study of the original context of the biblical text, which we would call the "author context." Contextual understanding here means the transcending of the original context as well as the *Sitz im Leben* of the biblical text, so that the biblical text is made to speak anew to the context of the reader and the interpreter. Here it is a question of what may be called a 'situational context' of the reader and the interpreter. It means that the biblical text, as the inspired Word of God, is to be further interpreted by successive generations of read-

ers in their own respective social, cultural and religious situations without at the same time losing sight of the original context as well as its original meaning.<sup>3</sup> It means that the biblical text has not only a past history accessible to us through textual and historical criticism, but also an openness to the present and to the future, which far surpasses the criteria and the issues of the past. In fact, very often the objectivism of the historical critical method prevents us from appreciating the role the reader and the interpreter have in establishing the total meaning of the text, and it often remains blind to the authentically new meaning and challenge that a text may acquire as it is read in ever new situations.<sup>4</sup> It means that the biblical text has a life of its own as it moves through history, assuming new dimensions and connotations as it relates itself to new contexts in the ongoing process of history. It also means that the inner meaning of a biblical text is not exhausted by what was intended by its author or by what the text in fact says: it is also what the readers today understand as part of the dynamic meaning of a particular text within their own historical, cultural and religious context. As a result, the interpretation of biblical texts, which have a strong bearing on the faith and praxis of the church, is to be re-examined, re-read, re-interpreted and re-applied, taking into account the changed historical, cultural and religious contexts of our contemporary society. This can be understood as an important synchronic principle of biblical interpretation that is being discussed, mainly in the religiously and culturally pluralistic situations of our times. It is also related to the new demands of the actualization of biblical text that are being applied in biblical interpretation. This is particularly so because the Bible is the Word of God, which is entrusted to the church as the source of its life and vitality. This Word of God has within itself a dynamism which allows it to take on new meanings and new horizons of ideas through its encounter with new contexts in a pluralistic world.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Joseph Pathrapankal, "Interpretation of the Word: God's Word, the Human Word and the Interpreter's Word," in *Text and Context in Biblical Interpretation* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1993), 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. E. Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); G. Meier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977); P. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> "Hermeneutics is the task of always coming back to the text under new circumstances and in new situations and it is always a re-reading of scriptures and of ourselves, our world, our society and our history" (Joseph Pathrapankal, "Editorial," *Journal of Dharma* 5 [1980]: 2).

### 3. *The Context of the Johannine Story*

It is against the background of the above considerations that we now analyze John 12:20–28, which is a unique narrative in the Johannine theology because of the significant manner in which this story is presented, and also on account of the extraordinary message it gives to the readers of the Gospel of John. Coming as it does as the last public appearance of Jesus before he departed and hid himself from the people (John 12:36b), the story is to be seen as the conclusion of the Book of Signs, the last and decisive sign in it being the raising of Lazarus back to life (John 11:1–44). This concluding event of the earthly ministry of Jesus resulted in many Jews believing in him (John 11: 45; 12:11), while some others reported the fact to the Pharisees and made them aware of the seriousness of the matter. Thereby the scene was set for the Jewish authorities to take a decision to do away with Jesus because he was a real threat to the wider interests of Judaism. The triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem worsened the matter still. Just as Caiaphas, the high priest, made a prophetic statement about the larger meaning of the death of Jesus, so too the Pharisees unintentionally announced the universal significance of Jesus: “the whole world has gone after him” (John 12:19). Hence Jesus emerged as one who had to be eliminated for the greater cause of Judaism. It is at this juncture that the story of the Greeks seeking Jesus is introduced.

The story we analyze here is about some Greeks who had gone to Jerusalem for worship in the Temple and had also listened to the teaching of Jesus in the Temple area. They were religiously well-disposed persons from the “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Matt 4:15) who could appreciate the religious practices of Judaism and had come to Jerusalem to take part in the Jewish festival. As was the case with the Temple police who confessed to the Jewish authorities about the unique and extraordinary teaching of Jesus: “Never has anyone spoken like this” (John 7:46), so also these Greeks were fascinated by the authentic and challenging teaching of Jesus on vital issues of religion. Hence it was only natural that they wanted to personally meet Jesus. As a concluding event of this major section of the gospel, it seems that this story has its own theological and pedagogical purpose. In fact, it is in this story that Jesus emerges in the most sublime and transcendent dimensions of his understanding of religious identity, as we shall try to explain below:

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor. Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (John 12:20–28).

Raymond E. Brown, in his elaborate commentary on John,<sup>6</sup> has referred to the general theological meaning of this scene. According to him, the *coming* (italics in the original) of the Gentiles is so theologically important that the writer never tells us if they got to see Jesus, and indeed they disappear from the scene in much the same manner that Nicodemus slipped out of sight in ch. 3. Brown then refers to the "awkwardness" of the whole narrative and suggests that a "poorly known incident from early tradition" was used as the basis for theological adaptation. So he concludes that "there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the basic incident." The issue seems to be not so much whether the event itself happened, as Brown suggests, but rather the theological significance of the narrative. In a certain sense, the story is also a sign as well as a paradigmatic event with a profound theological meaning and message. The raising of Lazarus to life encouraged many Jews to believe in Jesus. In a similar manner, the Greeks from Galilee who had come to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple also show signs of their readiness not only to listen to Jesus but also to have a personal experience of his magnificent personality. Their option to transcend their loyalty to their own religion and their readiness to appreciate the religious worship of Judaism in Jerusalem enabled them to see a new meaning in the very religiosity of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. At the same time, being Gentiles, they had their own apprehensions about whether Jesus would welcome them or not.

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 1:470.

#### 4. *The Dynamics of the Narrative*

Johannine narratives, in general, are known for the inner dynamics and dramatic turn of events, which add to the challenge and beauty of these narratives. At the same time, the evangelist is sure of guiding the readers to accept the inner message of these narratives. This is especially true of the signs performed by Jesus at various stages of his ministry, starting from the first sign performed at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1–11). In our story also, the Greeks proceed very cautiously in preparing the background for realizing their objectives. As they would do anywhere else, they tried to make use of native acquaintance and went to Philip who had a close relationship with Jesus. He was very much active during the ministry of Jesus (6:5, 7; 12:21–22; 14:8–9). It was also Philip who had persuaded Nathanael to follow Jesus (John 1:45–51). Since Philip was not quite sure of how Jesus would react to this request of the Greeks, he told Andrew, also his fellow townsman and the brother of Peter, so that together they could persuade Jesus, in case he had some reservations about the whole issue. It is true that there are other cases of Gentiles meeting Jesus in the synoptic gospels. The Roman officer of Capernaum came to Jesus with a request to cure his servant who was ill (Matt 8:5–13). The Canaanite woman approached Jesus with a request to heal her daughter (Matt 15:21–28). But here the context is different. What is involved here is what we may call a religious dialogue. The Greeks were willing to listen to Jesus, provided he was prepared to receive them. We do not know from the gospel itself whether they ever met Jesus at all. What we can notice here is the prevailing anxiety even among the Galilean Jews about the antipathy between the Jews and the Gentiles, especially because the event was taking place in Jerusalem, the heart of Jewish orthodoxy. So the evangelist also wants to introduce the initial stage of the story in such a manner that what later happens is almost an anticlimax of the entire proceedings. The two disciples go to Jesus and propose to him the request of the Greeks. This sets the stage for Jesus to speak and act in such a manner that here we have one of the most beautiful self-revelations of Jesus of Nazareth about understanding religious identity and inter-religious relationship.

The reaction of Jesus to the request of the two disciples constitutes the central message of the story. It would appear that Jesus must have been sad and disappointed about the protocol that was arranged for such a visit between him and the Greeks. Jesus said in very brief words:

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23). It is doubtful whether Philip and Andrew ever understood the meaning of what Jesus said in such succinct words. It is clear that for John, unlike the synoptic gospels, glory is not the final exaltation of Jesus through his resurrection; rather, it is the glory of his passion and death leading to resurrection. Hence the passion is the beginning of that glorification as well as the moment of his being lifted up from the basically earthly and human condition of his incarnate existence. Hence the passion was for Jesus a moment of transcending the limitations of his human and earthly condition, which for him was his being a Jew with all that it meant for any Jew of his times. But Jesus did not want his Jewish identity to become in any way a limiting and controlling factor as well as a stumbling block for his elevated and transformed human nature to operate beyond the barriers of his own religion. Jesus had already demonstrated this transcendence on several occasions during his earthly ministry, as is clear from numerous sayings and stories in the gospels. Here at the last stage of his earthly ministry Jesus has reached the decisive moment, the real hour. Thereby he was trying to reach out to every human person beyond the barriers of caste, color and creed.<sup>7</sup> The coming of the Greeks provided this decisive opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate his radical attitude towards religious identity and his readiness to transcend its limiting dimensions. The passion and death of Jesus on the cross are moments of his being lifted up from the earth. It was an act of his transcending the limitations of his human condition. His human nature was transformed by his divine nature.

##### 5. *The Parable of the Grain of Wheat*

It is this inner liberation of Jesus that is explained through the parable of the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying and thereby giving life and vitality to a new wheat plant growing out of it which bears much fruit (John 12:24). A grain of wheat that refuses to die remains alone and in course of time disintegrates and loses itself. Whatever be the reason that prompted its isolated and individualized existence, the

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Joseph Pathrapankal, “Jesus and the Greeks: Reflections on a Theology of Religious Identity,” in *Critical and Creative: Studies in Bible and Theology* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1986), 71–84.



outcome is that it is lost for ever. But a grain of wheat that is ready to part with its individualized existence becomes a source of life for many other grains. If it was one seed that died, it now gave birth to hundreds of similar seeds. What Jesus says here about the grain of wheat losing itself in order to gain its fuller meaning is expressed in the synoptic gospels through the concepts of “finding and losing,” “hating and keeping” as well as “losing and finding”: Mark writes: “Whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it” (Mark 8:35). Matthew has the same message: “Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Matt 10:39; 16:25). Luke also emphasizes this teaching in the context of the prediction of the passion: “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:24). It means denying oneself, taking up the cross and following Christ (Mark 8:34).

It is important to note that Jesus took this example from the nature around us and through that he wanted to show that it is something basic to the very law of nature. Although these statements are in themselves paradoxical, ultimately they imply a law of life at various levels, both religious and secular. Likewise Jesus demonstrated his readiness to die to his own limited religious identity in order to become available also to the Gentiles who came in search of him. It is this death which Jesus later explains in terms of his being lifted up from the earth (John 12:32). It is clear that this bold approach to one’s own identity is against the basic tendency of all humans because all want to love their life and every aspect of that life, whether cultural, religious or social. The result is that ultimately they all lose the very life they want to safeguard. But those who are ready to part with the many selfish concerns of life will discover that through their very losing them they were gaining more. Thereby they arrive at the very meaning of life at a higher level. This is precisely what Jesus did for himself, thereby establishing a new attitude towards one’s life and identity for the sake of the whole of humankind.

As the conclusion of the parable of the grain of wheat Jesus adds: “Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also” (John 12:26). Jesus wants all those who follow him to be ready to undergo such a *kenosis* in the realm of religious identity. All those who claim to be the disciples of Jesus must have the courage to transcend the limitations and particularities of their identity, social, cultural and even religious. That is the only way in which they can be

where Jesus himself is. Jesus adds: "My Father will honor anyone who serves me." The Father wants them too to have a share in the glory which he has given to the Son. The honour the Father gives is the awareness he gives to them that they are not prisoners of their own identity. It is a sharing in the glory which Jesus has achieved through his redemptive death. No one can attain this glory all of a sudden; the disciples of Jesus have to work for it and experience its challenge day after day. Jesus experienced the fullness of that glory through his death after he had gradually exercised his transcending capacity during his earthly ministry on various occasions. His followers have to do the same in order to share in that glory and the honour which the Father will impart to them.

But the entire scene under discussion was a very challenging and demanding one for Jesus, and it will be so also for all his followers. Hence John 12:27 gives us a glimpse into a new predicament of the personality of Jesus, as he was getting ready to face the hour of his passion and death. Hence Jesus expressed his perplexity: "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name" (John 12:27–28). These words show that Jesus was visibly disturbed and confused about his forthcoming fate; he was troubled in his innermost person. He was tempted to say "No" to the Father. No less than in the synoptic gospels, the Johannine Jesus is also fearful in the face of the awful struggle of the hour of his passion and death which he was going to face. Jesus struggles with the temptation to cry out to his Father to save him from that hour. But all of a sudden he triumphs and overcomes the temptation by submitting himself to the Father's total plans. His main and only goal is to glorify the Father's name. Then a voice from heaven came: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (John 12:28). The Father of Jesus is one who is committed to establish a new principle of God-human relationship, for which the attitude and action of Jesus are decisive. Even if it means sufferings and a painful death, it is important that Jesus goes through it, thereby making it possible for all humans to be related to each other, not on the basis of caste, colour and creed, but on the basis of the very dignity of the human person.

### 6. *The Trans-historical Message of the Story*

The story of Jesus and the Greeks, which we have analyzed above, is not just one story among the many others which happened during the earthly ministry of Jesus. It is a semiotic and paradigmatic story which has a message for every religious person, especially for Christians living in multi-religious contexts. The attitude the members of a religion should have towards their own religion and towards the followers of other religions is symbolically presented in the attitude of Jesus towards the Greeks. In the prevailing context of Jews avoiding, depreciating and even hating the Gentiles, Jesus sets the example of reaching out to the Greeks and accepting them as fellow pilgrims in the journey of life. This specific story of the Greeks wanting to meet Jesus, and Jesus taking this as an opportunity to reveal his radical attitude towards his own religious identity, has an inbuilt message which is brought out through another important saying of Jesus: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). For Jesus, his death was a moment of transcending the limitations and barriers of his human conditions. Consequently, this story with its inner message can serve as a corrective to some passages in the Bible which have in the past prompted Christians to develop a negative attitude towards the followers of other religions, such as 1 Cor 10:20–21 and 2 Cor 6:14–18.

It is clear that the context in which the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote this story did not have this additional significance it now has in our multi-religious situations. At the same time, we cannot exclude such a meaning. On the other hand, we have to say that it is included in the fuller meaning of this narrative. As we have tried to establish in the beginning of this study, a biblical text can also have a reader meaning beyond its author meaning, especially in these times when we have to live in entirely new situations, especially within the growing context of religious pluralism. It is becoming more and more clear that religious pluralism is a fact belonging to the very plan of God, which is to be accepted and respected by all.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the ever-growing religious pluralism in the world is a blessing and a challenge, not a burden we have to put up with. This healthy approach to the understanding of the Bible

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<sup>8</sup> "The religious life of mankind from now on, if it is to be lived at all, will be lived in a context of religious pluralism": Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name?* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985), 2–7: Cf. W. C. Smith, *The Faith of the Other Men* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 11.

and biblical narratives is based on the conviction that the Word of God committed to writing is something living and active and that it can penetrate into every subtle area of human reality and open up new horizons of meanings as it encounters new historical and cultural situations (Heb 4:12). The same principle can be applied to other passages of the Bible with reference to other newly evolving situations. In order to arrive at this depth meaning of biblical texts there must emerge a new dialogue between the reader and the text, by which a new contextualized and situational meaning arises, namely, a meaning that is basically of the biblical text, not against the author-meaning and the text-meaning, but rather a meaning beyond and above them. It is the result of a creative and dialogical encounter between the reader and the text. Thereby the text begins to speak anew to the readers, and the readers react to the claims of truth made on them by the text. Consequently, there is a mutual and reciprocal openness of the reader and the text. The text is open to the questions the readers pose and the readers are open to the truth claims of the text. This truth can be said to be the further illustration of the basic meaning of the text as intended by the author.<sup>9</sup>

### 7. *A New Focus on Christology*

The above reflections on how Jesus of Nazareth understood his own religious identity as a Jew and how he was prepared to transcend it for the sake of the better and greater cause of the kingdom of God invite us to develop a new attitude and approach to the question of how we have to understand the Christian doctrine of the uniqueness and universality of Christ. It seems that the ongoing confrontation among theologians between the traditional Christian approach to the significance of Christ in terms of exclusivism and the newly developed concepts of inclusivism and pluralism have contributed very little for a meaningful Christology. The attempts made by some theologians to focus on a few biblical passages, such as Acts 4:12 and 1 Tim 2:5, where the uniqueness and universality of Christ for salvation are said to be positively affirmed, do not lead to any meaningful conclusion because here we have the faith proclamations of the early believers, not

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus Meaning* (Forth Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 29–37.

metaphysical statements.<sup>10</sup> It seems that the real significance of Christ is to be discussed not in an apologetic manner as a defense of faith in relation to other religions, but rather as a doctrine which has its own basis and rationale in the writings of the New Testament, which are the primary documents of our knowledge about Christ. The gospels and the other writings of the New Testament present the significance of Jesus Christ from a perspective of experience which their writers inherited from the early Christian communities. This experience is based on the fact that Jesus was totally committed to the cause of the kingdom of God with its universal perspectives, a commitment which he sealed through his death and resurrection. It is this universal and transcendent aspect of the message preached by Jesus, realized in his life, death and resurrection, experienced and understood by his immediate followers, that stands at the center of the New Testament kerygma. Jesus of Nazareth had to broaden the horizons of the religious thinking that was current in Judaism and also among other henotheistic religious traditions of his times.

What Paul F. Knitter has formulated about the whole issue of christological discussions in our times seems to offer a healthy approach to Christology in the context of religious pluralism: "If Christians, trusting in God and respecting the faith of others, engage in this new encounter with other traditions, they can expect to witness a growth or evolution such as Christianity has not experienced since its first centuries. This growth will paradoxically both preserve the identity of Christianity and at the same time transform it. Such paradox is no mystery; we are acquainted with it in our personal lives as well as in nature."<sup>11</sup> It seems that the defenders of the absolute uniqueness of Christ are somehow victims of what L. Swidler calls a kind of "boastful *hybris*" which is creeping into Christian claims of superiority. As opposed to this, what Jesus presents about his personality is his ultimate *kenosis*. The true meaning of Christ's *kenosis* is not that he was first divine and then he became human in order once again to regain his divinity (Phil 2:6–11). The basic issue is that Jesus of Nazareth also

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Joseph Pathrapankal, "The Significance of Jesus Christ in the Context of Religious Pluralism: A Biblical Critique," in *What does Jesus Christ Mean? The Meaningfulness of Jesus Christ amid Religious Pluralism in India*, ed. Errol D'Lima and Max Gonsalves (Bangalore: NBCLC, 1999), 107–137.

<sup>11</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name?* 230.

rejected that kind of humanity which refuses to empty itself, so that by becoming perfectly selfless and altruistic he could become the instrument of God's compassion and love for the whole of humankind.<sup>12</sup>

What, then, is the substance and criterion of religious identity? Is it a question of being everything else except being oneself? It should be said that the true criterion of religious identity is being oneself and at the same time growing out of oneself to reach out to others. In other words, a Christian has to be a Christian and s/he has to be fully aware of her/his Christian identity and be sure of safeguarding that identity. But her/his being a Christian should not hinder her/him at any given moment from acknowledging and appreciating the authentic reality in other religious traditions. Nobody should be a slave of one's own religion and a prisoner of one's own religion and religious identity. All should have the courage and the freedom to exercise their religious identity with tolerance and appreciation of other religious traditions. Religions are only means; they are not an end in themselves. This is true of all religions. There is something divine in all religions; but there are also many things human in all religions. To confuse the human with the divine would be a mistake. The religion of Israel was constituted by God through the various historical events which became the basic framework of that religion. But in the course of its history it became overshadowed by many human realities. Jesus was born and brought up as a member of this religion, characterized by its legalism and formalism on the one hand, and a lack of inner richness on the other hand. Being a member of that religion, Jesus tried to establish his religious identity by going and growing out of that restricted identity whenever and wherever he found it necessary. The many stories we have in the gospels are proof of this approach of Jesus, e.g. the criticism of Jewish regulations such as the Sabbath rest, or the appreciation and recognition of the followers of other religions for their profound faith. This is true of all the gospels. The story of the Greeks seeking to meet Jesus and Jesus responding to them in a very positive manner forms the climax of this transcending character of understanding religious identity in the theology of John. As the concluding story of the Book of Signs, the story reveals the meaning of the death of Jesus

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. S. Samartha, *One Christ—Many Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 155.

as a glorification and also as his being lifted up from this earth so that he could thereby draw all humans to himself. In this sense the story of Jesus and the Greeks is a paradigmatic and semiotic story which has a message for every religious person, especially for all Christians, living in our ever-growing multi-religious contexts.

# JESUS AND THE SYNAGOGUE<sup>1</sup>

GRAHAM H. TWELFTREE

The synagogues of first-century Palestine are important to both Jews and Christians. For Jews they are important because it is out of them that Judaism sprang. These synagogues are also important to Christianity. For example, the synoptic gospels portray Jesus as habitually attending synagogues in the Galilee to speak and, frequently, to heal people there.<sup>2</sup>

In a recent explosion of studies,<sup>3</sup> there is considerable debate about the place and date of the origin of the synagogue.<sup>4</sup> More directly relevant to this chapter are the issues of the existence of synagogue buildings in first-century Palestine, as well as whether synagogues functioned primarily as communal or as religious institutions. Further, since local influences are now seen to have been crucial in shaping the synagogue, there is decreasing confidence that what can be known about the synagogues in one part of the ancient world can be applied uncritically to understand them in another.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, doubts have been raised about

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<sup>1</sup> I am particularly grateful to Paul V. M. Flesher, Susan Haber and Anders Runesson for their careful reading of and comments on an earlier draft of this chapter, and to Rodney C. Platt Jr. for help with proofreading.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 1:21/Luke 4:33; Mark 1:29/Luke 4:38; Mark 1:39/Matt 4:23/Luke 4:44; Mark 3:1/Matt 12:9/Luke 6:6; Mark 6:2/Matt 13:54/Luke 4:16; *M*: Matt 9:35; *L*: Luke 4:15, 20, 28; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20.

<sup>3</sup> See Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 9–17; idem, “The First-Century Synagogue: Critical Reassessments and Assessments of the Critical,” in *Religion and Society in Roman Palestine*, ed. Douglas R. Edwards (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 70–102, at 70–71; James F. Strange, “Synagogue,” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Craig A. Evans (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), 612–616.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Gutmann, “The Origin of the Synagogue: The Current State of Research” (1972), in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology, and Architecture*, ed. idem (New York: Ktav, 1975), 72–76; Rachel Hachlili, “The Origin of the Synagogue: A Re-Assessment,” *JSJ* 28 (1997): 34–47; Donald D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, SBLDS 169 (Atlanta, SBL, 1999); Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue*, ConBNT 37 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001); *The Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins until 200 C.E.*, ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm, ConBNT 39 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003); and the methodological discussion by Anders Runesson, “The Origins of the Synagogue in Past and Present Research—Some Comments on Definitions, Theories, and Sources,” *ST* 58 (2004): 60–76.

<sup>5</sup> Lee I. Levine, “The First Century C.E. Synagogue in Historical Perspective,” in ed. *Synagogue*, Olsson and Zetterholm, 1–24.



whether Jesus ever had any thing to do with the synagogues<sup>6</sup> and it has been suggested he would have been excluded from them if he had attempted to attend.<sup>7</sup>

Given the state of flux in synagogue studies, it behoves students of the historical Jesus to pay close attention to aspects of these discussions, as well as, from time to time, to reassess our understanding of the relationship between Jesus and the synagogue and what that can tell us about him.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to set out what we can know about the synagogue in the time and place of the ministry of the historical Jesus so that, in conjunction with an examination of the gospel data, this information can be used to help shed light on Jesus through understanding his relationship with the synagogue.

In setting out what we know about the synagogue in the time and place of Jesus we are able to take into account an inscription, archeological evidence and literary sources. We need to exercise considerable care and restraint in using data from the New Testament for it is likely that early Christian experiences of the synagogues in the Diaspora have been projected chronologically back and cross-culturally into the period and experience of Jesus and his followers in Palestine.<sup>9</sup> The same or greater care is to be exercised in relation to the rabbinic literature<sup>10</sup> so that we will make only very limited and cautious use of it. In this exercise, at times, just as important as the evidence we discover will be the evidence we do not find about the synagogue. Before subjecting the gospel data to critical scrutiny we will attempt to establish otherwise what can be known about the synagogue in the time and place of the historical Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: de Gruyter, 1998), 29–30. See the discussion by James D. G. Dunn, “Did Jesus Attend Synagogue?” in *Jesus and Archeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2006), 206–222.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Jesus* (New York: Image/Doubleday, 2002), 16, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dunn, “Synagogue?” 206–222.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Paul V. M. Flesher, “Palestinian Synagogues before 70 C.E.: A Review of the Evidence,” in *Ancient Synagogues*, 2 vols., ed. Dan Urman and Paul V. M. Flesher (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1:27–39, at 32.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart S. Miller, “On the Number of Synagogues in the Cities of ’Eretz Israel,” *JJS* 49 (1998): 51–66.

### 1. *The Synagogue in First-Century Palestine*

Even though E. P. Sanders called it a “remarkably ill-informed and often incoherent” paper,<sup>11</sup> in it H. C. Kee sparked an intense debate by championing the view that, in first-century CE Palestine, as well as in the Diaspora, the word συναγωγή<sup>12</sup> was used for informal gatherings or assemblies of people but not for formal meetings or for buildings.<sup>13</sup> However, a review of the evidence shows that it is incontestable that, as well as private dwellings which may have been used for meetings, there were synagogue buildings where Jews assembled formally, including in areas familiar to Jesus. Further, though limited, the evidence is such that we can draw some conclusions about who was using these buildings and for what purposes.

#### *An Inscription*

The only inscription available to us in the debate about the existence and function of the synagogue meetings and buildings in pre-70 CE Palestine is the Theodotus inscription (*CIJ* II 1404).<sup>14</sup> It reads:

<sup>11</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1990), 341 n. 28.

<sup>12</sup> For the variety of Hebrew, Greek and Latin terms used for the English word “synagogue” see Martin Hengel, “Proseuche und Synagoge: Jüdische Gemeinde, Gotteshaus und Gottesdienst in der Diaspora und in Palästina,” in *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt*, ed. Gert Jeremias et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 157–84.

<sup>13</sup> Howard C. Kee, “The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 CE: Its Import for Early Christianity,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 1–24; idem, “Defining the First Century CE Synagogue: Problems and Progress,” *NTS* 41 (1995): 481–500, reprinted (with slight revisions) in *Evolution of the Synagogue*, ed. idem and Lynn H. Cohick (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 1999), 7–26. See also Richard E. Oster, “Supposed Anachronism in Luke–Acts’ Use of ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ: A Rejoinder to H. C. Kee,” *NTS* 39 (1993): 178–208; Howard C. Kee, “The Changing Meaning of Synagogue: A Response to Richard Oster,” *NTS* 40 (1994): 281–283; K. Atkinson, “On Further Defining the First-Century CE Synagogue: Fact or Fiction? A Rejoinder to H. C. Kee,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 491–502.

<sup>14</sup> See Raymond Weill, *La Cité de David; Compte rendu des fouilles exécutées à Jérusalem, sur le site de la ville primitive, campagne de 1913–14*, 2 vols. (Paris: Geuthner, 1920), 1:186–90; G. M. FitzGerald, “Theodotus Inscription,” *PEFQS* 53 (1921): 175–181. Most recently, and on the significance of the epigraphic evidence, see John S. Kloppenborg, “The Theodotus Synagogue Inscription and the Problem of First-Century Synagogue Buildings,” in *Jesus and Archeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 236–282, at 252 and nn. 55 and 65, a shortened and revised form of John S. Kloppenborg, “Dating Theodotos (*CIJ* II 1404),” *JJS* 51 (2000): 243–280.

Theodotos son of Vettenus priest and synagogue leader (ἀρχισυνάγωγος) son of a synagogue leader (ἀρχισυν[αγώ]- γ[ου]) grandson of a synagogue leader (ἀρχισυν[α]γώγου) built the synagogue (τὴν συναγωγὴν)<sup>15</sup> for reading the law and for teaching commandments and the guest room and the bedrooms and the water fittings for a lodging for those in need from afar which his father founded with (καί) the presbyters and Simonides.<sup>16</sup>

Most critical for our purposes is the date of this inscription.<sup>17</sup> To begin with, the inscription could not have been brought from another geographical area<sup>18</sup> for it is fashioned from local limestone. The particular archeological context of this discovery<sup>19</sup> is the eastern slope of the City of David where Yigal Shiloh found nothing in the immediate area that dated later than the Herodian period,<sup>20</sup> and also the debris in the area after 70 CE inhibited construction; for most of the ensuing Roman period it was largely outside the built-up municipal area.<sup>21</sup> Also, the historical setting helps us in that the inscription must come from before the fall of Jerusalem when there were some wealthy priestly families in the city, and when they thought it worthwhile adding accommodation and bathing facilities for Greek-speaking pilgrims.<sup>22</sup> Further, paleographically the inscription probably belongs to the first century of our era.<sup>23</sup>

Also important for our purposes, the inscription is likely to have been

<sup>15</sup> Kloppenborg, "Dating Theodotos," 244 and Kloppenborg, "Theodotus Synagogue," 252 translates this "assembly hall."

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the translations by Rainer Riesner, "Synagogues in Jerusalem," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 4, ed. Richard Bauckham, *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans and Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1995), 179–211, at 193; Kloppenborg, "Dating Theodotos," 244 and Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> See esp. Kloppenborg, "Theodotus Synagogue," 253–277.

<sup>18</sup> As thought by Théodore Reinach, "L'inscription de Théodotos," *RÉJ* 71 (1920): 46–56, at 55–56.

<sup>19</sup> See the summary by Riesner, "Synagogues," 195–198, cf. 211 for a map of the excavation areas in Jerusalem—City of David.

<sup>20</sup> Yigal Shiloh, *Excavations at the City of David I (1978–1982)* (Jerusalem: Institute of Archeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984), 9.

<sup>21</sup> See Jane M. Cahill and David Tarler, "Excavations Directed by Yigal Shiloh at the City of David, 1978–1985," in *Ancient Jerusalem Revealed*, ed. Hillel Geva (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994), 31–45, at 42.

<sup>22</sup> So Sanders, *Law*, 341 n. 28.

<sup>23</sup> See Kloppenborg, "Dating Theodotos," 276–277. A fragment of a dedicatory inscription with lettering comparable to the Theodotus inscription has been found near the southern wall of the Temple area that can be dated from the twentieth year of Herod the Great (18/17 BCE). See Benjamin Isaac, "A Donation for Herod's Temple in Jerusalem," *IEJ* 33 (1983): 86–92.

discovered in the vicinity of what was a synagogue,<sup>24</sup> for it was found in a cistern with other finely worked stones and parts of columns that had been deposited in an orderly fashion as if for later use.<sup>25</sup> Rosettes and simple geometric patterns adorn some of these stones as at the Gamla synagogue.<sup>26</sup> Also, since the inscription mentions water fittings, it is notable that nearby the site of discovery there are three ritual baths and a little basin which could have served as a storage pool for the baths (cf. *m. Miqv.* 1:7; 4:4). Thus it is reasonable to maintain that the inscription was discovered near a synagogue and to conclude with Riesner that it is “very probable that we have here the remains of the synagogue mentioned in the Theodotus inscription.”<sup>27</sup>

The significance of this inscription for us, along with the associated architectural remains, is that not only do we have solid evidence of an elegant synagogue building with ritual baths and rooms for accommodating foreign Greek-speaking travellers in Palestine in the early first century, but also that the building existed two generations before the inscription, i.e. around the turn of the era.<sup>28</sup> With the current question in scholarship regarding who ran the synagogues in first-century Palestine,<sup>29</sup> it is notable that we learn here that the ἀρχισυνάγωγος was a wealthy priest, and had been so for three generations.<sup>30</sup> On the basis of the paternal Roman name Vettenus, suggesting he was a freedman coming from the Diaspora and therefore conservative and that Theodotus was interested in the synagogue for teaching, perhaps it could be said that he was a Pharisee.<sup>31</sup> But Theodotus could just as easily be a Sadducee or of no particular party.<sup>32</sup> However, since this is a

<sup>24</sup> Riesner, “Synagogues,” 197.

<sup>25</sup> See the description by Riesner, “Synagogues,” 197. However, the pieces would seem to have only limited, perhaps sentimental, value. The obvious question is whether the pieces were deposited quickly for safe keeping in 70 CE when the city was destroyed.

<sup>26</sup> Riesner, “Synagogues,” 197–198; Chaim Ben-David, “Golan Gem: The Ancient Synagogue of Deir Aziz,” *BAR* 33.6 (2007): 45–51, at 50 (picture).

<sup>27</sup> Riesner, “Synagogues,” 198, following Weill, *La Cité de David*, 1:9. So also Hillel Geva, “Jerusalem: The Second Temple Period,” in *NEAEHL* 2:717–724, at 723.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Riesner, “Synagogues,” 200.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Stuart S. Miller, “The Rabbis and the Non-Existent Monolithic Synagogue,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 57–70.

<sup>30</sup> It cannot be assumed that the ἀρχισυνάγωγος is hereditary, for successive generations could have been elected to the position. See n. 89 below and the discussion in Bernadette J. Broonen, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 25.

<sup>31</sup> So Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM, 1983), 18.

<sup>32</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992), 177.

semi-public synagogue<sup>33</sup> or association synagogue of Diaspora Jews, he is at least likely to come from a particular group of Jews.<sup>34</sup> In any case, it was primarily the priests who remained the teachers in the first century.<sup>35</sup> The inscription further tells us that the building functioned as a place for reading the law and teaching the commandments, as well as an inn for Jews from the Diaspora. However, there is no mention of prayer, which is understandable given the proximity of the Temple.<sup>36</sup> In the use of *πρεσβύτεροι* a governing or leading body is implied and the mention of Simonides without a title indicates that there could have been, if not leaders,<sup>37</sup> at least significant people associated with the synagogue who bore no title. The inscription itself is an example of using a synagogue to give ongoing recognition to benefactors to the institution.

### *Archeological Evidence*

For possible synagogues in pre-70 CE Eretz Israel we have the archeological remains of buildings at Gamla, Herodium, Masada, Modi'in, Qumran and, perhaps, Capernaum.<sup>38</sup> That the building at Gamla and the Zealot reconstructions of the buildings at Herodium<sup>39</sup> and

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<sup>33</sup> On the terms "semi-public" and "public synagogues" used in this chapter to distinguish between synagogues such as this one and those of the Essenes from those used by the whole Jewish community, see Runesson, *Origins*, 213–232.

<sup>34</sup> See Runesson, *Origins*, 228, 314–316.

<sup>35</sup> See the discussion of the evidence by Sanders, *Judaism*, 170–176.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Paul V. M. Flesher, "Prolegomenon to a Theory of Early Synagogue Development," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, ed. A. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner, Part 3, Vol. 4: *Where We Stand: Issues and Debates in Ancient Judaism, The Special Problem of the Synagogue* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 121–153, at 146, citing Lee I. Levine, "The Second Temple Synagogue: The Formative Years," in Levine, *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, 7–31 (19–21). Cf., e.g., Josephus, *Life* 277.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 25, 230 n. 98.

<sup>38</sup> For other candidates, such as Qiryat Sefer and Jericho, see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, ch. 3; Runesson, *Origins*, 181–182; James F. Strange, "The Synagogue as Metaphor," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, ed. Avery-Peck and Neusner, 93–113; Peter Richardson, "An Architectural Case for Synagogues As Associations," in *Synagogue*, ed. Olsson and Zetterholm, 90–117; James F. Strange, "Archaeology and Ancient Synagogues up to about 200 C.E.," in *Synagogue*, ed. Olsson and Zetterholm, 37–62, reprinted in *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 483–508; Levine, "First-Century Synagogue," 84–89.

<sup>39</sup> See Joseph Patrich, "Corbo's Excavation at Herodium: A Review Article," *IEJ* 42 (1992): 241–245, at 243, followed by Binder, *Temple*, 184, who also suggests that the Sicarii who held Herodium from c. 66–71 CE and were cut off from Jerusalem, had ample opportunity and motive to develop a synagogue.

Masada<sup>40</sup> as well as at Modi'in<sup>41</sup> were synagogues is clear from their having benches along three or four walls and *miqva'ot* nearby<sup>42</sup> and from their floor plans, which are more or less identical to those in later buildings identified as synagogues by inscriptions.<sup>43</sup>

Although there is nothing particularly religious about any of these buildings—no obvious place for the Torah shrine, no religious art or inscriptions<sup>44</sup>—the discovery of the Ezekiel scroll at Masada in the room adjacent to the building suggests that reading the prophets as well as the Torah may have been part of the meetings there.<sup>45</sup> Also, the discovery of fragments from Genesis, Leviticus, Psalms and the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, Sirach and Jubilees in the vicinity of this synagogue suggests that they too were used in the meetings. That the building at Gamla, including an adjoining study room<sup>46</sup>—the only one securely identified as a synagogue in the pre-70 CE Galilee-Golan region<sup>47</sup>—is the only public building so far known to have existed in the town, and the fact that the internal plan is reminiscent of Hellenistic public halls (*bouleuterion* or *ecclesiasterion*),<sup>48</sup> suggests that at least this synagogue

<sup>40</sup> G. Foerster, "The Synagogues at Masada and Herodium," *Eretz Israel* 11 (1973): 224–228 (in Hebrew) abridged in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society and Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 24–29.

<sup>41</sup> See Levine, "First-Century Synagogue," 86–87.

<sup>42</sup> Runesson, *Origins*, 177. The link between the baths and the synagogue was probably one of practical convenience rather than ritual necessity. That is, synagogue and bath were located together as a matter of convenience so that individuals could use the *miqveh* to attend to ritual purity on a regular basis. However, those attending the synagogue did not regularly bathe before entering. For, as Susan Haber has pointed out, we have no literary evidence that ritual washing was required in relation to the synagogue, and it is difficult to imagine how large groups of people attending meetings at a synagogue could be accommodated by one *miqveh*. See Susan Haber, "Common Judaism, Common Synagogue? Purity, Holiness and Sacred Space at the Turn of the Common Era," in *Common Judaism Explored: Second Temple Judaism in Context*, ed. Adele Reinhartz and Wayne McCready (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 63–77. I am grateful to the author for the opportunity to see her paper prior to publication.—For reservations about the Herodium and Masada being synagogues see Flesher, "Palestinian," 1:34–38.

<sup>43</sup> Strange, "Synagogue," 615.

<sup>44</sup> Lee I. Levine, "Archeology and the Religious Ethos of Pre-70 Palestine," in *Hillel and Jesus*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Loren L. Johns (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 113.

<sup>45</sup> See Binder, *Temple*, 178–179.

<sup>46</sup> Shmaryahu Gutman, "Gamala," in *NEAEHL*, 2:469–463, at 461–462.

<sup>47</sup> Danny Syon, "Gamla: Portrait of a Rebellion," *BAR* January/February (1992): 21–37, at 32; Z. Ma'oz, "The Synagogue of Gamla and the Typology of Second-Temple Synagogues," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society and Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 35–41, at 35–37.

<sup>48</sup> On the architectural models for the synagogue see G. Foerster, "Architectural

was a public building and first and foremost a communal institution.<sup>49</sup> Notably, these buildings have no structure that would have been used as a speaker's platform. Instead, focus is on the central area which was well lit by clerestorial windows. Surrounded by columns, limited vision suggests that hearing was more important than seeing and that declaiming the sacred text and discussions rather than single presentations featured in meetings.<sup>50</sup>

At Qumran we could expect there would be a semi-public synagogue in the light of Philo's report of the Essenes (*Prob.* 81–82).<sup>51</sup> Since one of the rooms (room 4) contained seating benches on all four walls, it was most probably a place of assembly.<sup>52</sup> However, the small size of the room means that probably only the elite could have met there.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, in room 77, the largest room in the complex, a paved area in one corner served as a base for a wooden platform used by a leader.<sup>54</sup> Thus it is reasonable to suppose that IQS V, 2–5 (“They shall eat, pray, and deliberate together”) could describe the synagogue-like functions of this room.<sup>55</sup> With two rooms likely to serve such functions, it is reasonable to suppose that, so far as non-sectarian documents reflect the thinking of those at Qumran, the terms “house of worship” (CD XI, 21–23), “house of the Torah” (CD XX, 10, 13) and “house of meeting” (IQM III, 4) would indicate the purpose of meetings or gatherings, as much as a particular room.<sup>56</sup> In any case, given the nature of the community the synagogue could only be for semi-public or even private synagogue meetings.

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Models of the Greco-Roman Period and the Origin of the ‘Galilean’ Synagogue,” in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: The Israel Exploration Society and Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 45–48, and Strange, “Archaeology and Ancient Synagogues,” 488–489.

<sup>49</sup> So Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 55.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Ma'oz, “The Synagogue of Gamla,” 40; Strange, “Archaeology and Ancient Synagogues,” 490–492; Strange, “Synagogue,” 615.

<sup>51</sup> Since the closest genre and contents parallels to IQS are the statutes of Hellenistic associations, Matthias Klinghardt, “The Manual of Discipline in the Light of Statutes of Hellenistic Associations,” in *Methods of Investigation of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Khirbet Qumran Site*, ed. Michael O. Wise et al. (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1994), 251–270, at 252, presumes what was a religious association rather than a cenobitic “sect” at Qumran to be a synagogue community.

<sup>52</sup> Runesson, *Origins*, 179.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>54</sup> R. de Vaux, *Archeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1973), 11.

<sup>55</sup> So Runesson, *Origins*, 180–181.

<sup>56</sup> That these are not references to the Temple in Jerusalem see, e.g., Daniel K. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 136, 233, 243–245.

At Capernaum, the foundations of the late-fourth- to mid-fifth-century synagogue are the base of the walls of a first-century CE building.<sup>57</sup> The earlier building was probably for public use, since it is constructed of basalt rather than uncut stone and beaten-earth floors.<sup>58</sup> That it is possibly a public synagogue<sup>59</sup> is suggested by a number of factors: it is the only large (24.4 × 18.5 m)<sup>60</sup> building in the village of about 15 acres; several column drums (probably from this building) were discovered beneath the later building and the later building (a synagogue) used the walls of the earlier one as foundations; this is significant because synagogues of the later period were built on earlier ones, since these were considered sacred.<sup>61</sup> That this building has no associated *miqveh* need not count against its being a synagogue, for it was sited by the shore of the lake.<sup>62</sup>

### Literary Sources

Here we have evidence from the New Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo and Josephus. (a) In the New Testament one place that might be relatively free of anachronism in relation to the synagogues—because of its apparently unnecessary detail—is Acts 6:9. Luke mentions τῆς συναγωγῆς (singular) of the Freedmen in Jerusalem.<sup>63</sup> The most natural reading of the text is that this semi-public synagogue involves Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others from Cilicia and Asia. The reasonableness of Luke's statement is seen in that the Theodotian inscription belongs to a synagogue accommodating foreign travellers in Jerusalem,<sup>64</sup> and rabbinic sources agree that there was a synagogue of the Alexandrians in Jerusalem.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Note Virgilio C. Corbo, *The House of St. Peter at Capernaum* (Jerusalem: Franciscan, 1969); Stanislaw Loffreda, "Capernaum: The Synagogue," *NEAEHL* 1:291–295, 296 and those cited; Stanislaw Loffreda, *Recovering Capharnaum*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> See the summary discussion by Binder, *Temple*, 186–193.

<sup>59</sup> See Loffreda, *Recovering Capharnaum*, 48.

<sup>60</sup> Strange, "Synagogue," 614. Cf. Loffreda, "Capernaum: The Synagogue," 1:292.

<sup>61</sup> Binder, *Temple*, 192 citing Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 148–149; cf. Loffreda, "Capernaum: The Synagogue," 1:292.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Susan Haber, n. 40 above.

<sup>63</sup> That only one synagogue is intended see, e.g., Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, WUNT 49 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), 176.

<sup>64</sup> On the speculation that the synagogue of Acts 6:9 is the Theodotian synagogue see the discussion by Riesner, "Synagogues," 205.

<sup>65</sup> See *t. Meg.* 2:6, 12, 17; *j. Meg.* 3:1:III D.



(b) From the Dead Sea Scrolls, what is most interesting to us is the material which is applicable to the Essenes—known to us only in Palestine<sup>66</sup>—who lived in the towns and villages. It can be gathered from the Scrolls that the worship of the Essenes included praise to God, confession, blessings, prayers, a sacred communal meal and hymns.<sup>67</sup> However, Heather McKay has argued that in the Judaism of the period there is no evidence that the general population was expected to be involved in worship nor that there was any distinctive Sabbath worship until well after our period.<sup>68</sup> At least the evidence from the Scrolls points in another direction. In particular, from 1QS VI, 2–5, which says that a priest shall always be present at gatherings, it can be assumed that both clergy and laity were involved in any worship.<sup>69</sup> Further, 4Q504, a non-sectarian document, clearly identifies songs for use on the Sabbath (4Q504 1–2 VII, 7:4). And there is a clear distinction between the petitionary prayers for the weekdays and the strictly doxological prayers for the Sabbath.<sup>70</sup> Thus we could expect that, at least among the Essenes across Palestine, distinctive Sabbath praise-orientated worship took place involving the general membership, as well as clergy. Along with the discovery of fragments of the Torah near one of the large rooms, the non-sectarian Damascus Document<sup>71</sup> referring to a house of the Torah (CD XX, 10, 13, see above) probably shows that Essene gatherings also involved the reading of the Torah (cf. Philo, *Prob.* 81).

Further, for those who used *προσευχή* for the synagogue,<sup>72</sup> there is the implication that it was a venue—either during the week or on the

<sup>66</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.124; Philo, *Prob.* 75–76; *Hypoth.* 11.1.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1997), 80–81.

<sup>68</sup> Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue* (Boston: Brill, 2001). See the detailed critical discussion by Pieter W. van der Horst, “Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship Before 70 CE?” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 18–43, at 23–37.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Binder, *Temple*, 466 n. 46.

<sup>70</sup> So E. Glickler Chazon, “On the Special Character of Sabbath Prayer: New Data from Qumran,” *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 15 (1992–1993): 1–21, esp. 12.

<sup>71</sup> See CD XII, 19, 23; Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective* (London: SCM, 1982), 97.

<sup>72</sup> The earliest evidence (third century BCE Egypt) for *προσευχή* being used for Jewish buildings see William Horbury and David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), nos. 22 (esp. pp. 36–37) and 117 (esp. p. 202). Also Philo, *Flacc.* 41, 45, 47, 48, 49, 53, 122; *Legat.* 132, 134 137, 138, 152, 156, 157, 165, 191, 346, 371; Josephus, *Life* 277, 280, 293; *Apion* 2.10; See Hengel, “Proseuche und Synagoge,” 157–83; Irina Levinskaya, “A Jewish or Gentile Prayer House? The Meaning of *ἱεροσέyxη*,” *TynBul* 41 (1990): 154–159. For a more nuanced and recent discussion on Josephus, *Ant.* 14.257–258 in particular see Stephen Catto, “Does *προσευχὸς ποιεῖθαι*, in Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 14.257–58, mean ‘Build Places of Prayer’?” *JSJ* 35 (2004): 159–168.

Sabbath—not only for spoken prayers but also for worship with singing. For in the Jewish tradition “prayer” could be expected to involve both speaking and singing,<sup>73</sup> a point confirmed when taking into account what has just been noted about Essenes referring to songs for Sabbath use.<sup>74</sup> Further to the point that worship took place in synagogues, Pieter van der Horst notes the corroborating evidence from *L.A.B.*, a document that may have been written in Palestine at the turn of the first century,<sup>75</sup> saying that, “You shall not do any work on it [the Sabbath], . . . except to praise the Lord in the congregation of the elders” (11.8).<sup>76</sup> This shows that, at least for some Jews, a Sabbath gathering involved worship.

(c) From Philo we learn that on the seventh day the Essenes “proceed to sacred places which they call synagogues” (*Prob.* 81). These “sacred places” (ἱεροῦς . . . τόπους) could be buildings or open spaces for meetings; but they are certainly not gatherings of people.<sup>77</sup> In any case, from the plural συναγωγῶν<sup>78</sup> we can suppose that Philo is not (only?) referring to a synagogue at Qumran but to synagogues of the Essenes across Palestine where their members lived,<sup>79</sup> at least in Jerusalem (which he had visited, *Prov.* 64), perhaps including in an Essene quarter,<sup>80</sup> and north west Judea (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.567), for example.

For at least some Essenes, worship in their semi-public synagogues was probably a substitute for that at the Temple. It is true that there is no evidence at Qumran of an altar or any sacrificial activities,<sup>81</sup> and Philo says the Essenes show themselves devout not by sacrificing animals but by “resolving to sanctify their minds.”<sup>82</sup> This might lead us

<sup>73</sup> Johannes Herrmann, “εὐχομαι, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 2:775–808 (785) notes that פָּרַחַת (“prayer”) is often a parallel for שָׁרַח (“sing”) in the Psalter, citing Pss 54:2; 55:1; 61:1; 84:8; 86:6; 102:1; 143:1. We can add that, in the cases of Pss 54, 55 and 61 stringed instruments are expected as accompaniment.

<sup>74</sup> See van der Horst, “Worship,” 23–37.

<sup>75</sup> See Howard Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1:199–211.

<sup>76</sup> van der Horst, “Worship,” 18–23.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Oster, “Anachronism,” 190–191.

<sup>78</sup> In Philo συναγωγή occurs in *Post.* 67 (x2) and *Agr.* 44 (x2) each citing Num 27:16–17; also *Prob.* 81; cf. *QG* 2.66; *QE* 1.19.

<sup>79</sup> Philo, *Hypoth.* 11.1; *Prob.* 76, 85 mentions their living in homes as they did not at Qumran (see above). Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.124.

<sup>80</sup> See Bargil Pixner, “An Essene Quarter on Mount Zion,” *Studia Hierosolymitana* 1 (1976): 245–84 and idem, “Jerusalem’s Essene Gateway: Where the Community Lived in Jesus’ Time,” *BAR* 23.3 (1997): 22–31, 64, 66.

<sup>81</sup> See the discussion by William Wesley Grashman, *Priestly Synagogue* (PhD dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1985), 425–426 reported by Binder, *Temple*, 464. On the general unlikelihood of sacrificial activity in synagogues, see Levine, “First-Century Synagogue,” 76.

<sup>82</sup> Philo, *Prob.* 75. Cf. *1QS* VIII, 8–9; IX, 4–5.

to conclude that the Temple still had a place for them. However, the Scrolls themselves say that their community was the sacrifice offered to God (1QS VIII, 4–5; 4Q265 frg. 7:2). Also, the *Damascus Document* uses language for Essene worship which is characteristic of the biblical terminology for the Jerusalem temple-cult.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, since there was probably an Essene synagogue in Jerusalem,<sup>84</sup> it shows that at least some Jerusalemites and, we can probably assume, others elsewhere in Palestine had developed the idea of a place of prayer, worship and study of the Law apart from the Temple.

Philo gives the impression that the Essenes go to the synagogue only on the Sabbath or, at least, that the Sabbath is the focus of attention, as he does when he says elsewhere that the Jews go to their “prayer houses” (προσευχαί) “mainly” (μάλα) on the Sabbath (*Legat.* 156). In any case, in the Essene Sabbath meetings Philo says: “There, arranged in rows according to their ages, the younger below the elder, they sit decorously as befits the occasion with attentive ears. Then one takes the books and reads aloud and another of especial proficiency comes forward and expounds what is not understood” (*Prob.* 81–82).<sup>85</sup> Elsewhere he describes this interpretation as allegorical (*Contempl.* 28). That the worship event involved singing is strongly suggested when Philo says that not only do they have the writings of men of old, but “they do not confine themselves to contemplation but also compose hymns and psalms to God in all sorts of metres and melodies which they write down with the rhythms necessarily made more solemn” (*Contempl.* 29). Even though this describes a sectarian situation, it is likely to be more widely representative of synagogue meetings for, apart from the singing, it is reminiscent of what is found in Luke 4:16–21 and Acts 13:14–16. Also, it is similar to a general description of synagogue meetings Philo gives elsewhere: “some priest who is present or one of the elders<sup>86</sup> reads

<sup>83</sup> Annette Steudel, “The Houses of Prostration CD IX, 21–XII, 1—Duplicates of the Temple (1),” *RevQ* 16 (1993–1995): 49–68, at 56 and nn. 38–41.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 13.311–313; 15.373–376; 17.347.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Philo *Contempl.* 28; Luke 4:20–21; Acts 13:15. It is puzzling that there is no reference in the Scrolls to the public reading of Scripture. Perhaps, in the light of the ongoing study of Scripture at Qumran or due to an aversion to imitate other synagogues, like the Samaritans, the people at Qumran did not have such public readings. See Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 64. More likely, in view of the mention of a house of Torah (CD XX, 10, 13), such reading was taken for granted, a point supported by Philo’s observation that the books were read aloud in the Essene meetings in the towns (Philo, *Prob.* 81–82).

<sup>86</sup> On the difficulty of pinpointing the function of the elder see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 432–434.

the holy laws to them and expounds them point by point till about the late afternoon, when they depart having gained both expert knowledge of the holy laws and considerable advance in piety” (*Hypoth.* 7.13; cf. *Mos.* 2.215–216).

The difference between activity associated with the sectarian and public synagogues is probably that the Essenes gave more attention to ritual purity<sup>87</sup> and, observing a different calendar,<sup>88</sup> would have been celebrating in their synagogues at different times to other Jews. However, this may not have been significant in the social landscape of Palestine for if, as Philo (*Prob.* 75) and Josephus (*Ant.* 18.21) tell us, there were only 4,000 Essenes spread across the country, their synagogues are likely to be few in number and, for the most part, small in size (perhaps in homes) and only semi-public.

(d) To Josephus we are also greatly indebted for literary evidence of public synagogues and their function in Palestine in the time of Jesus.<sup>89</sup> It is possible that, writing at a later time, Josephus could be taken as referring anachronistically to buildings as synagogues.<sup>90</sup> However, we have seen that archeological evidence shows there were public (and semi-public) synagogues in the time and place of Jesus; and as a native Palestinian Jew, Josephus was writing his *Jewish War* in the 80’s CE<sup>91</sup> as an eyewitness.

When Josephus mentions “temples (ἱεροί)<sup>92</sup> set on fire” among the depictions on the floats or moving stages in Titus’s triumphal procession into Rome (*War* 7.144), this suggests that there was a significant number of synagogues in Palestine. Since this passage is most probably describing the parade depicting events in the first part of the war (cf. 7.139–148), we can infer that Galilean synagogues are depicted.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>87</sup> E.g., Josephus, *War* 2.129, 150; CD-A XII, 21–22 and note the ritual baths at Khirbet Qumran at loc. 48–50, 56, 58, 68, 71, 85, 91, 138. See Joseph M. Baumgarten, “The Essene Avoidance of Oil and the Laws of Purity,” *RevQ* 6 (1967–69): 183–192 and the discussion by Jodi Magness, *The Archeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), ch. 7.

<sup>88</sup> See 11QT XIII, 9–XXX, 2 and Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll* (New York: Random House, 1985), 84–87.

<sup>89</sup> Oster, “Anachronism,” 189–190.

<sup>90</sup> Kee, “Response,” 282.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Josephus and Galilee and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 84, 89, 90, 180.

<sup>92</sup> Since it is in the plural, this is not to be confused with the Jerusalem temple which is mentioned subsequently (*War* 7.148). For the use of ἱερόν for synagogue see Wolfgang Schrage, “Συναγωγῆ, κτλ,” *TDNT* 7:798–855 (808 and n. 50) and Levine, “Second Temple,” 13.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Binder, *Temple*, 124–25.

Also, to gain an insight into the number of synagogues and how they were viewed we can note that in *War* 4.408 Josephus describes the Sicarii who had taken possession of Masada making night raids into the surrounding area, initially for supplies. But on hearing of the fall of Jerusalem the raids became more vicious and widespread, falling upon “synagogues (ἱεροί) and cities” throughout Judea. It is not possible to gauge whether Josephus means that these synagogues are sacred, since no distinction is made between the synagogues and the cities that are destroyed.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, from his report of Jews being greatly provoked by some young men bringing an image of Caesar into the synagogue at Dor we learn from Josephus that there was a synagogue building there and that it was considered sacred by both Jew and Gentile (*Ant.* 19.299–311).<sup>95</sup>

From what Josephus says about buildings and meetings in Tiberias we also learn something of the nature and function of the public synagogue. He says that at Tiberias there was “a meeting of everyone in the prayer [house]” (συνάγονται πάντες εἰς τὴν προσευχήν, *Life* 277) to discuss his military leadership. Immediately we see that, in first-century Palestine, synagogue meetings had a civic or communal as well as prayer function. This particular meeting included Jesus, son of Sapphias, the leader (ὁ ἄρχων, 294), earlier said to be “at that time leader of Tiberias” (ἄρχων τότε τῆς Τιβεριάδος, 134, cf. 66–67).<sup>96</sup> From this we can suppose that his leadership is not simply over meetings in the synagogue but that he is the Jewish community leader who probably convoked the synagogue meeting (271).<sup>97</sup> The leader could determine which individuals entered the building (294) and order the townspeople

<sup>94</sup> Against Binder, *Temple*, 125–26.

<sup>95</sup> See the discussion by Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 66–67, who also notes that “In contradistinction to the Jews living in the interior of Judea, those living in coastal areas as well as in the Diaspora ascribed to their synagogues a degree of sanctity, perhaps influenced by the ubiquitous pagan temples” (77).

<sup>96</sup> From the use of τότε (“then,” “at that time”) and from later evidence—especially *CII* 744 (third century CE, Ieos, Ionia): “Ioses, the head-for-life (διὰ βίου) of the synagogue”; *CII* 766.3 (first century CE, Akmonia, Phrygia): “Klados, the head-for-life (διὰ βίου) of the synagogue” and Baruch Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives*, *Cahiers de la Revue Biblique* 7 (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1967), no. 85 (third century CE, Cyprus): “[so and so], five times head of the synagogue, son of Ananias, twice archon”—it is likely that we have a hint that this is an elected position. See the discussion of this and other evidence by Brooten, *Women Leaders*, 25 who recognizes “the temptation to take one piece of evidence as applying to all places and for the entire period in question.” See also n. 28 above on the Theodotus inscription.

<sup>97</sup> On the difficulty of defining the role of the ἄρχων see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 427–428.

to withdraw, leaving only the council to deliberate (300). Josephus says the council numbered 600 (cf. *War* 2.641; *Life* 284) and, from what he says earlier, included “ten leading men,” perhaps with Capella as the leader (69).<sup>98</sup> Not surprisingly, the prayer house is said to be a large building (μέγιστον οἶκημα) capable of accommodating a huge crowd (277). The use of οἶκημα—which can mean a “building” (*Ant.* 14.455; *Apion* 1.198), but also a “room” or “apartment”<sup>99</sup>—could imply that, although large, it was not very different from other buildings.<sup>100</sup>

Although this particular meeting takes place on a Sabbath morning it is not a worship event but was called by those who wanted to discuss deposing Josephus as a military leader. Nevertheless, perhaps as did all such gatherings, the meeting started with τὰ νόμιμα<sup>101</sup> ποιούντων καὶ πρὸς εὐχὰς (perhaps to be understood as some formalities or readings and prayers, *Life* 295). That Jesus the leader stands and begins to question Josephus during these formalities and prayers suggests that although all might have been engaged in them they were carried out silently and privately.<sup>102</sup> Josephus says the meeting broke off at noon, the time it was customary to take the midday meal on the Sabbath (279).<sup>103</sup> If not generally all day, which is the impression both Philo (*Hypoth.* 7.13) and elsewhere Josephus give (*Apion* 1.209), then it was in the afternoon (cf. *m. Meg.* 3:6) until evening that the synagogue was used for worship and prayer.<sup>104</sup> In any case, Josephus says the building was not only used on the Sabbath for, by 7:00 a.m. over the following two days,<sup>105</sup> the people are reassembled for further discussions (*Life* 280). One of these meetings was said to be for a “public fast” (πανδημεί νηστείαν, 290). Josephus gives the impression that all of the meetings were such that anyone could speak in them.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>98</sup> On the relationship between Capella and the leading ten see Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 59 n. 351.

<sup>99</sup> *War* 1.420; 2.129; 7.287, 290, 290; *Ant.* 8.134, 137, 138; 14.463; 20.46, 189; *Life* 277.

<sup>100</sup> See Miller, “Number,” 56–57.

<sup>101</sup> On τὰ νόμιμα see Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 100–103.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Law* 73–74.

<sup>103</sup> In *Apion* 1.209 Josephus says that, on the Sabbath, Jews “pray with outstretched hands in the temples (ιεροῖς) until the evening.”

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 14.269–261 (and Philo, *Flacc.* 122–124), on which see the discussion by Flesher, “Prolegomenon,” 127.

<sup>105</sup> Possibly 9:00 a.m. See Mason, *Life*, 123 n. 1182.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Sanders, *Law*, 80 notes the corroborating evidence of the New Testament: Mark 1:14–15; 6:1–5; Acts 13:15; and Paul’s instructions about prophesying and exhorting in Christian worship.

In his story of the event which sparked the war with Rome, Josephus says the Jews in Caesarea had “a synagogue adjoining a plot of ground” (συναγωγὴν ἔχοντες παρὰ χωρίον, *War* 2.285) and “when the Jews assembled at the synagogue...” (τῶν Ἰουδαίων εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν συναθροισθέντων, 2.289). These statements make most sense if the word συναγωγή refers to a public building rather than to the gathering of people, and that it belonged collectively to the people.<sup>107</sup> That this is a significant structure, not a private dwelling, is clear from the willingness of Jewish “notables” (οἱ δυνατοί) and John the tax collector to offer eight talents of silver<sup>108</sup> to stop a building going up next to the synagogue (2.287). That “one of the Caesarean mischief-makers had placed beside the entrance [of the synagogue] a pot, turned bottom upwards, upon which he was sacrificing birds” (*War* 2.289) was probably intended to desecrate the synagogue. The success of this action is seen in that the Jews not only withdrew from the synagogue but also took their copy of the Law from a spot they deemed desecrated (2.291).<sup>109</sup>

In relation to the Diaspora, Josephus also tells us that Julius Caesar permitted the Jews “to contribute money to common meals” (*Ant.* 14.214).<sup>110</sup> This raises the question whether the synagogue was the focus of charitable activity in Palestine before 70 CE. We know from Josephus that in each city Essenes appointed one of their members to provide clothing and other necessities for travellers (*War* 2.125). Also, given that the synagogue was the focus of Jewish life and that later the synagogue was the focus of charitable activity,<sup>111</sup> we can assume it was so in Palestine before the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>112</sup>

We can note here that healing, charity of a different kind, might also have taken place in pre-70 Eretz Israel synagogues. Much later, in the fourth-century Diaspora, John Chrysostom lamented that Christians sought healing in the synagogues (*Adv. Iud.* 1.6.2; 8.6.6).<sup>113</sup> However, the situation earlier in Palestine is unclear to us. Apart from the synagogue as the focus of charitable activity, and the general reputation of

<sup>107</sup> So Oster, “Anachronism,” 189. Josephus uses συναγωγή of the meeting place of the Jews in Antioch (*War* 7.43–44) as well as in Dora (*Ant.* 19.299–305).

<sup>108</sup> Eight talents = 48,000 denarii or a day’s wages. See Binder, *Temple*, 156 n. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Brought to my attention in private correspondence by Susan Haber.

<sup>110</sup> At *Ant.* 16.164 the synagogue is referred to as a banqueting hall (ἀνδρών).

<sup>111</sup> E.g., *t. Ter.* 1:10; *t. B. Bat.* 8:14; *b. Šabb.* 150a. Cf. Justin, *Apol.* 1.67 for the practice reflected among Christians.

<sup>112</sup> Corroborative evidence of this conclusion is found in the daily distribution Luke reports in Jerusalem in the early days of the church (Acts 6:1–6).

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 83–94.

the Jews as healers,<sup>114</sup> as well as only a possible link between prayers for the sick and the synagogue in the Tosefta (*t. Šabb.* 16:22), we have no direct evidence.

### *Summarizing the Results so Far*

There is no doubt that public synagogue buildings existed throughout pre-70 CE Palestine. There was also probably more than one semi-public synagogue in Jerusalem,<sup>115</sup> as well as an unknown number across the country belonging to the Essenes.<sup>116</sup> These few so far identified, or which can reasonably be supposed to have existed across Palestine, are a long way short of even the relatively modest numbers in ancient reports,<sup>117</sup> let alone the hundreds rabbinic sources claim to have existed even in Jerusalem<sup>118</sup> in our period of interest. Of course, even taking into account the exaggerations glorifying the rabbinic past,<sup>119</sup> archeological work is unlikely to uncover the remains of even all the stone purpose-built structures, let alone those originally constructed for some shared or other purpose, or made of less durable material.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, given both the significance of the home in the life of faith for the Jews, as well as the way the early Christians are depicted as meeting in homes,<sup>121</sup> it could reasonably be conjectured that, if virtually all communities had a synagogue,<sup>122</sup> many (perhaps most) synagogue meetings were held in private homes<sup>123</sup> or buildings that had once been private homes (cf. *m. Ned.* 9:2), especially in smaller communities or among sectarian Jews.

<sup>114</sup> See, e.g., Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 409.

<sup>115</sup> Miller, "Rabbis," 59 notes that "only rarely have archeologists uncovered more than a single structure in a given town."

<sup>116</sup> Levine, "Ethos," 113 suggests that "In Jerusalem a synagogue probably had somewhat greater religious significance, since many communal needs were met in other ways."

<sup>117</sup> A Bordeaux pilgrim who visited Jerusalem in 333 CE and Epiphanius, later in the century, report the existence of seven synagogues in the city. See "Itinerarium Burdigalense," *Corpus Christianorum* (Series Latina) 175 (1965): 592.6–7 (page 16). Cf. F. E. Peters, *Jerusalem* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 125–126, 145.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. *j. Meg.* 3:1:III D; *b. Ketub.* 105a.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Miller, "Number," 54–55.

<sup>120</sup> In less affluent areas we could expect synagogues to have been constructed of fieldstones and mud, with thatched roofs. Cf. Jonathan L. Reed, *Archeology and the Galilean Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 2000), 132.

<sup>121</sup> For the earliest years see e.g. Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 14:16; 16:19; Phlm 2.

<sup>122</sup> So also Sanders, *Law*, 341 n. 25.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Miller, "Rabbis," 60; Carsten Claussen, *Versammlung, Gemeinde, Synagoge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 298, 304.



It was once agreed that the Pharisees dominated the synagogue<sup>124</sup> so that it was an institution competing with the Temple dominated by the Sadducees.<sup>125</sup> It is now a matter of debate as to who ran the synagogues.<sup>126</sup> Initially it is to be observed that the centre of interest of the Pharisees was Jerusalem.<sup>127</sup> Also, apart from John 12:42 (notably, written late in the first century),<sup>128</sup> the early sources tell us nothing of a relationship between the Pharisees and the synagogue.<sup>129</sup> More particularly, we have already seen that the Theodotian synagogue in Jerusalem was run by a priest. At Tiberias the leader of the synagogue was Jesus son of Sapphias, who appears to be a community leader, and Philo says a priest or elder present in an Essene synagogue reads and expounds the law (*Hypoth.* 7.13). Again, slender though this evidence be, it does not favour the view that it was the Pharisees who dominated the synagogues in pre-70 CE Palestine.<sup>130</sup> In fact, not only does the evidence from even a little later than our period suggest that the Pharisees did not find the synagogues congenial and that they looked askance at practices there,<sup>131</sup> but also, our evidence supports the view that the synagogue was a community-run institution,<sup>132</sup> with two of our sources indicating the leadership of priests.<sup>133</sup>

Some synagogues were only semi-public, or would have had limited appeal, as with the Theodotian synagogue, the synagogue of the Freedmen in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9) and those of the Essenes—particularly those maintaining celibacy (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.160–161). On the other hand,

<sup>124</sup> E.g., Kee, "Transformation," 12–14.

<sup>125</sup> R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 88–103.

<sup>126</sup> E.g., Miller, "Rabbis," 57–70.

<sup>127</sup> See Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1989), 23; Sanders, *Judaism*, esp. 448–451.

<sup>128</sup> R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. Francis J. Moloney (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 206–215.

<sup>129</sup> So Lester L. Grabbe, "Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Re-Assessment," *JTS* 39 (1988): 401–410, reprinted in *Ancient Synagogues*, ed. Urman and Flesher, 1:17–26, at 23.

<sup>130</sup> More generally on the Talmudic traditions' inflated view of rabbinic influence in Jewish society, see Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132–212* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), 93–94, 111–118.

<sup>131</sup> See the discussion in Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 472–473.

<sup>132</sup> E.g., Lee I. Levine, "The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee," in idem, *Galilee in Late antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 201–222; E. P. Sanders, "Common Judaism and the Synagogue in the First Century," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists*, ed. Fine, 1–17, at 13.

<sup>133</sup> So also Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 44, 136. Cf. 528 n. 56 on the lack of consensus on the role of the priests in the synagogue.

since the synagogue was centrally located and sometimes the only large building in a town, as well as sometimes being the object of derision and attack against the Jews (cf. Josephus, *War* 2.289), we have clear indications that there were public synagogues, which were seen by all sides as the focus of the life of the Jewish community<sup>134</sup> and attracting involvement from across the Jewish community.<sup>135</sup>

In ancient life it is not possible to distinguish religious and social spheres. Accordingly, we can expect that these functions coexisted in the synagogue.<sup>136</sup> The religious aspects—limited to the reading of the Torah and its interpretation, and also worship or prayers<sup>137</sup> (said or sung)—may have dominated the Sabbath meetings.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, in so far as our slender evidence permits us to draw conclusions, it is likely that public synagogues were used primarily for community activities, including on the Sabbath; for fasts, communal meals,<sup>139</sup> and political and council meetings, at which, probably, anyone could speak. The description Josephus gives of a weekday meeting beginning with “formalities (or readings) and prayers” (*Life* 295) both confirms the relatively limited liturgy as well as the overlap between the religious and the communal aspects of a synagogue.<sup>140</sup>

From the evidence we have discussed there is no direct evidence that there were primary schools associated with the synagogues from which Jesus could have received his elementary education. A directive—for the widespread appointment of school teachers—that is probably to be attributed to Jesus ben Gamaliel the High Priest (*fl.* 63–65 CE), assumes that at least some primary education already existed (*b. B. Bat.* 21a).<sup>141</sup> That this education took place in the synagogue or one of

<sup>134</sup> See the discussion by Flesher, “Prolegomenon,” 140–143.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Flesher, “Palestinian,” 1:30.

<sup>136</sup> Against Levine, “The First Century C.E. Synagogue,” 9–10, who argues that, regarding the first century CE, the archeological remains highlight the communal dimension of the building and the literary sources the religious dimension.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Flesher, “Prolegomenon,” 127, against Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 163–164 and those cited.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Lee I. Levine, “The Development of Synagogue Liturgy in Late Antiquity,” in *Galilee through the Centuries*, ed. Eric M. Meyers (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 123–144 (124–129).

<sup>139</sup> From the importance of communal meals to Jesus, and the fact that they are mentioned among the Essenes (Philo, *Prob.* 86), it can be fairly certain that the communal meals which, according to Josephus, Julius Caesar permitted the Jews to continue (*Ant.* 14.214–215) were known in pre-70 CE Palestine.

<sup>140</sup> There is just a hint in Josephus, *War* 2.287 (see above) that the synagogue may have been used as a bank, as it was in the Diaspora. See Flesher, “Prolegomenon,” 131.

<sup>141</sup> See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed.

the adjoining rooms<sup>142</sup> is quite likely, since these statements assume a formal setting and the synagogue was, at times, the only public building in a Jewish community.<sup>143</sup> Since we have no evidence of any kind of separate schools in Jewish society for children or adults, and neither Philo nor Josephus—who boast of all Jews knowing the Law—mentions any other form of education (such as a *bet midrash*) apart from the public reading of Scripture in the synagogues, it is reasonable to suppose the synagogues functioned as schools.

For this education to have been accessible to Jesus there would need to have been a synagogue at Nazareth. So far, apart from the New Testament (Luke 4:16), no such evidence of a synagogue has come to light.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, even with Nazareth's modest population,<sup>145</sup> consisting almost exclusively of Jews,<sup>146</sup> it is probable that there was more than one synagogue in the town.<sup>147</sup> Perhaps Josephus's words: "should anyone of our nation be questioned about the laws, he would repeat them all more readily than his own name" (*Apion* 2.178), allow us to assume that this education was dominated by, if not entirely concerned with, the Torah.<sup>148</sup>

The relationship between the synagogue and the temple was variously understood, though not in terms of direct rivalry.<sup>149</sup> For example, although there is no evidence of any sacrificial activity at Qumran, one of the rooms probably functioned as a place of worship. Also, the description of the Theodotian synagogue and its proximity to the Temple give no hint of its being seen as a substitute for the Temple. Further, even though we have seen the synagogue had a level of recognized sanctity, we have also found nothing to support the view that

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Geza Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:418–419. Cf. *m. Šabb.* 1:3; *m. Ketub.* 2:10.

<sup>142</sup> In relation to Gamla see Syon, "Gamla," 32.

<sup>143</sup> On the disputed value of the attribution of public schooling to Simeon b. Shata see, e.g., Schürer, *History*, 2:418.

<sup>144</sup> Reed, *Archeology*, 131–132 notes that "The modest architecture and scant building projects from the earlier [Roman] period leave little evidence... [and there] is no evidence of any public structures from the Early Roman Period" (131).

<sup>145</sup> Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 56 argue for 1,600 to 2,000 people, but James F. Strange, "Nazareth," *ABD* 4:1050, argues for a maximum of about 480 at the beginning of the first century CE.

<sup>146</sup> See Meyers and Strange, *Archeology*, 57.

<sup>147</sup> See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1:277 and 308 n. 137.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Schürer, *History*, 2:419.

<sup>149</sup> So also Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 44.

in the time and places familiar to Jesus the synagogue attained a level of sanctity rivalling the Temple.<sup>150</sup>

Our evidence has given hints of architectural variety across the synagogues. Also the Theodotian inscription with a priest as the leader and Josephus with a town leader overseeing matters relating to the synagogue show the variety in organization and leadership.<sup>151</sup> We have also seen an example of an *archon* excluding people from a meeting. We can only agree with those who have noted that we have no evidence of any organizational links between synagogues, even in such a small region as Eretz Israel; each community and synagogue—large or small—was autonomous.<sup>152</sup>

Before we are able to use this data to shed light on our understanding of the historical Jesus and his relationship with the synagogue we need to attempt to recover from the gospels what can be known about the relationship of the historical Jesus with the synagogue.

## 2. *The Gospel Data*

The synagogue is mentioned in relation to Jesus, or his attitude towards it, in a number of places in the gospels.<sup>153</sup> However, a critical examination of this material shows that many references cannot be traced back to the earliest traditions about Jesus.<sup>154</sup> This is most easily seen in the two references in the Fourth Gospel. First, John 6:59: “He said these things while he was teaching (διδάσκων) in the synagogue<sup>155</sup> at Capernaum,” which assumes Jesus has been teaching the Jews (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι). However, this verse is concluding a discourse within a dispute (μάχομαι, 6:51–52) that begins in what appears to be a meeting between the crowd (ὁ ὄχλος) and Jesus in the open air beside the sea at Capernaum

<sup>150</sup> Too generalizing is Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 43–44 citing Shaye J. D. Cohen, “The Temple and the Synagogue,” in *The Temple in Antiquity*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, Utah: Religious Study Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 151–174.

<sup>151</sup> Levine, “The First Century C.E. Synagogue,” 18.

<sup>152</sup> E.g., Levine, “The First Century C.E. Synagogue,” 19–20.

<sup>153</sup> Mark 1:21, 23/Luke 4:33; Mark 1:29/Luke 4:38; Mark 1:39/Matt 4:23/Luke 4:44; Mark 3:1/Matt 12:9/ Luke 6:6; Mark 6:2/Matt 13:54/Luke 4:16; Mark 12:39/Matt 23:6/Luke 20:46; Mark 13:9/Matt 10:17/Luke 21:12; Q: Luke 11:43/Matt 23:6; *M*: Matt 6:2, 5; 9:35; 23:34; *L*: Luke 4:15, 20, 28; 7:5; 12:11; 13:10; John 6:59; 18:20.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Becker, *Jesus*, 29: “Most of the statements that put Jesus in the synagogue are redactional.”

<sup>155</sup> That συναγωγή is anarthrous does not mean it should be translated “assembly,” for the article is often dropped following a preposition; so Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 2:455 n. 186.

(6:24–25). As this is an instance of the Fourth Gospel giving the scene at the end of a story (1:28; 8:20),<sup>156</sup> it is reasonable to assume that this is an editorial statement.<sup>157</sup> In John 18:20, the only other reference to the synagogue in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus says that he has always taught openly, i.e. in the synagogue and in the Temple. The similarity of this statement to that in Mark 14:49 (“Day after day I was with you in the Temple teaching”) is striking and may be an example of dependence on Mark or Markan traditions.<sup>158</sup> And since Mark does not mention the synagogue at this point, and the reference in John is in the singular (ἐν συναγωγῇ<sup>159</sup>)—perhaps intended to refer back to 6:59—this looks like an editorial note by the Fourth Evangelist.<sup>160</sup>

Of the gospel writers it is Luke who has the most references to Jesus and the synagogue, many of them taken up from Mark (see n. 145 above) and some from Q (see below). Of the six remaining references in Luke there can be little confidence in their connection with the *Sitz im Leben* of the historical Jesus. The first three are from the story of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth. (1) The statement, “he taught in their synagogues” (Luke 4:15),<sup>161</sup> is part of a summary for which Luke has used Mark 1:14, 28, 39.<sup>162</sup> (2) Luke 4:20 says: “The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.” As well as the grave doubts about the historicity of Luke’s story of Jesus preaching in the Nazarene synagogue (4:16–30),<sup>163</sup> the introduction (4:16), and indeed perhaps more of the

<sup>156</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 234 n. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St John* (London: SPCK, 1978), 300; also E. Haenchen, *John 1* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 196 following A. Loisy, *Le quatrième évangile* (Paris: Picard & Fils, 1903, 2nd edn, 1921), 244.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), viii; Richard Bauckham, “John for Readers of Mark,” in *The Gospel for All Christians*, ed. idem (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 147–171.

<sup>159</sup> On the anarthrous συναγωγή see n. 155 above.

<sup>160</sup> E.g., Barrett, *John*, 528.

<sup>161</sup> Against Gerd Petzke, *Das Sondergut des Evangeliums nach Lukas* (Zürich: Theologischer, 1990), 77, the phrase ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν cannot be taken to reflect the later perspective when Jewish and Christian meetings were distinguished, since this would be out of character with Luke’s emphasizing the Jewish orientation of redemption and locating the missions of Jesus and the early Church in the Jewish synagogues. See Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 205 n. 11.

<sup>162</sup> See, e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 113; Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge: Clarke, 1971), 31–32; J. Delobel, “La rédaction de Lc., IV, 14–16a et le ‘Bericht vom Anfang,’” in *L’Évangile de Luc*, ed. F. Neiryck (Gembloux: Duculot, 1973), 203–223, esp. 214–216. For a brief outline of alternative views see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981 and 1985), 1:526–527.

<sup>163</sup> See the discussion by Meier, *Marginal*, 1:270–271 and esp. 303 n. 93.

passage (e.g., 4:22, 24),<sup>164</sup> is probably modelled on Mark 6:1–6a,<sup>165</sup> so that this reference to the synagogue is dependent on Mark. (3) The reference to the synagogue in Luke 4:28 (“all in the synagogue were filled with rage”), along with the passage in which it occurs (4:28–30), shows little sign of being more than a free creation by Luke,<sup>166</sup> the mention of the synagogue being dependent on the setting taken from Mark 6:1–2. Even though it may not be possible to trace this pericope and the references to the synagogue back to the historical Jesus, it remains useful as corroborative evidence of first-century practices associated with the synagogue (see above).

(4) Luke’s Q-story of the healing of the centurion’s slave may have arisen in the reports of the witnesses of the historical Jesus (Matt 8:5–13/Luke 7:1–10).<sup>167</sup> However, the mention of the synagogue (“it is he who built our synagogue,” Luke 7:5) is most likely from Luke’s hand, for it comes in a section (7:3–6) telling of the delegation to Jesus which is easier to explain as an addition to Luke than as an omission from Matthew.<sup>168</sup>

(5) The material including Luke 12:11 (“When they bring you before the synagogues...”) is probably from Q (par. Matt 10:19–20). A variant of this tradition, dependent on Mark 13:11 and repeated in Luke 21:14–15, confirms that Luke has added the mention of the synagogues, perhaps from Mark 13:9.<sup>169</sup> In any case, the saying relates to his followers rather than to Jesus himself.

(6) The reference to the synagogue in Luke 13:10 (“he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath”) comes in a story that is likely to echo an event in the life of the historical Jesus.<sup>170</sup> However, once again, the origin of particular details is not easily determined, not least because only Luke reports this story. Added to our difficulty, the synagogue setting of this story fits Luke’s agenda of portraying the synagogue not only as a place where the religious devotion of Jesus and his followers is expressed but, at the same time, as a place where their

<sup>164</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:526.

<sup>165</sup> See, e.g., Dibelius, *Tradition*, 110; Bultmann, *History*, 32; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:526.

<sup>166</sup> See the discussion in R.C. Tannehill, “The Mission of Jesus According to Luke IV 16–30,” in *Jesus in Nazareth*, ed. E. Grässer et al., BZNW 40 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 51–75, at 61.

<sup>167</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Miracle Worker* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999), 296, 422 n. 33.

<sup>168</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:649.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, 680.

<sup>170</sup> Twelftree, *Miracle*, 296–97.

missions are challenged or rejected.<sup>171</sup> Tipping the balance in favour of seeing Luke as responsible for the synagogue setting of this story (13:10 and 14–17) is the fact that the synagogue ruler reprimands the crowd (13:14), not Jesus, and it is “the Lord” (ὁ κύριος, 13:15), not “Jesus,” who answers, so that an early church origin of this part of the story seems quite likely.

In Matthew, as in Luke, a number of the references to the synagogue have been taken from Mark (see n. 145 above). Of the remaining references that are unique to Matthew,<sup>172</sup> two have to do with Jesus’ attitude to the synagogue. First, Matt 6:2: “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.” Even if Matthew has not created this *ex nihilo*,<sup>173</sup> it contains so many Mattheanisms<sup>174</sup> (including συναγωγή / -αί)<sup>175</sup> that, at best, Matthew has probably rewritten catechetical material.<sup>176</sup> Thus we are most probably dealing with material that has its origin after the time of Jesus. Similar conclusions are to be reached concerning Matt 6:5: “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.” The beginning of this statement and the mention of standing to pray probably rely on Mark 11:25. The phrase “in the street corners” is unique in the New Testament, but adding it to “in the synagogues” completes a characteristic Matthean parallel (cf. Matt 6:2). The remainder of the verse takes up or echoes 6:2.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Joel B. Green, “Jesus and a Daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:10-17): Test Case for a Lucan Perspective on Jesus’ Miracles,” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 643–654, at 649–651, who argues for an early ambivalence towards the synagogue early in Luke’s gospel. However, that ambivalence can be traced only in relation to the followers of Jesus. Through the story in question, in Luke’s gospel, the synagogue remains a place both of devotion and of positive and effective ministry for Jesus.

<sup>172</sup> Matt 6:2, 5; 9:35; 23:34.

<sup>173</sup> For the view that Matthew has created this material see R. H. Gundry, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 102.

<sup>174</sup> See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 345 n. 10 for details.

<sup>175</sup> Συναγωγή / -αί and with αὐτῶ or ὑμῶν are to be counted among Matthew’s favourite words. See Gundry, *Matthew*, 648.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:575.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 103.

A third saying at Matt 9:35 has to do directly with Jesus and the synagogue: "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness."<sup>178</sup> However, since this has been created by Matthew, relying on Mark 6:6b<sup>179</sup> and possibly Q (Luke 8:1),<sup>180</sup> we are taken no further back towards the historical Jesus than Matthew's creativity.

The final verse mentioning the synagogue in Matthew ("I send you prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town," 23:34) is probably taken up from Q (Luke 11:49).<sup>181</sup> However, it has also been shaped in the light of Matt 10:17 (with the word *συναγωγαί* coming from Mark 13:9) so that the suffering of Jesus is seen to be mirrored in his followers.<sup>182</sup>

Q probably mentioned the synagogue only once. Reconstructed, the reference included at least the following statement: "Woe to you Pharisees for [you?] love the seat of honour in the synagogues" (Luke 11:43; cf. Matt 23:6–7).<sup>183</sup> Mark has a similar saying: "Beware of the scribes, who like...to have the seats of honour in the synagogues" (Mark 12:38–39), which forms part of what has long been argued to be a pre-Markan controversy collection.<sup>184</sup> Regardless of which saying is likely to be the more original,<sup>185</sup> given that at this point neither Mark nor Q is dependent on the other,<sup>186</sup> the double attestation lends weight to the view that such a saying may go back to Jesus.<sup>187</sup> Further,

<sup>178</sup> Matt 6:2, 5; 23:34 concern the followers of Jesus.

<sup>179</sup> See the discussions in Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:143–144.

<sup>180</sup> See H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium: Erster Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 1, 1–9, 50*, HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 447; for the contrary view, Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1:695–96.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. James M. Robinson et al., *The Sayings Gospel Q in Greek and English* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 114–15.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 316.

<sup>183</sup> See the discussion in Harry T. Fleddermann, *Mark and Q* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 186–89.

<sup>184</sup> See the discussion and assessment in M. J. Cook, *Mark's Treatment of the Jewish Leaders* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 34–51.

<sup>185</sup> See the discussion by Harry T. Fleddermann, "A Warning About the Scribes (Mark 12:37b–40)," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 52–67, at 60.

<sup>186</sup> Luke 11:43 is not dependent on Mark 12:38–39 (nor vice versa): see I. Howard Marshall, "How To Solve the Synoptic Problem: Luke 11:43 and Parallels," in *The New Testament Age*, ed. William C. Weinrich (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 2:313–225, at 322.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Bultmann, *History*, 113; Dibelius, *Tradition*, 236–37.



since this saying is consistent with Jesus giving praise to humility and condemning the opposite, it is reasonable to take it as reflecting a saying of the historical Jesus.<sup>188</sup>

We can now turn to consider the other references to the synagogue in Mark. His initial reference is part of the setting of the first miracle story in the gospel: “They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught” (Mark 1:21). Although there are clear signs that Mark wrote this introduction,<sup>189</sup> he may have taken the setting of Capernaum from the introduction to the following narrative complex if he added this story to it.<sup>190</sup> In any case, Mark shows no special interest in Capernaum (1:21, 2:1; 9:33) and Q has Capernaum as the focus of Jesus’ Galilean ministry.<sup>191</sup> Further, even if “synagogue” may be a word favoured by Mark,<sup>192</sup> the synagogue is so entwined in the story (1:23) that the setting is likely to be original to it. In turn, the core of the story itself—a demonic confronts Jesus while he is in the Capernaum synagogue, there is a dialogue between Jesus and the demoniac who is healed, and the crowd is amazed—is likely to have its origins in the eyewitness accounts of Jesus, so that it is reasonable to conclude that when Jesus was in the public synagogue at Capernaum a demoniac confronted him and was healed.<sup>193</sup>

Even if the next reference to the synagogue (Mark 1:29, “As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John”) is due to Mark’s redactional activity, it would add no new information to our knowledge of Jesus and the synagogue for it is dependent on the previous story. The following reference (“And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons,” Mark 1:39) is widely thought to be from Mark’s hand<sup>194</sup> and so can be of little interest to us.

<sup>188</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:275.

<sup>189</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 55 cites “the thematic (Jesus’ teaching, crowd’s astonishment, role of scribes), lexical (εἰσπορευεσθαι, εὐθους, διδασχῆ), and stylistic (dual use of related verbs, impersonal plural, historical present, periphrastic, γάρ-explanatory) characteristics of Mark.”

<sup>190</sup> So Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 55.

<sup>191</sup> Matt 11:23/Luke 10:15; cf. Matt 8:5/Luke 7:1. John 6:59 may be dependent on Markan traditions.

<sup>192</sup> E. J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Marcan Gospel*, SNTSMS 33 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 137.

<sup>193</sup> Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Tübingen: Mohr and Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 57–71.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 70.

Mark's story of a man's withered hand being cured begins: "Again he entered the synagogue" (Mark 3:1/Matt 12:9/ Luke 6:6). Elsewhere I have argued for the basic historicity of this story (Mark 3:1–6).<sup>195</sup> However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Mark is responsible for this opening statement which includes the mention of the synagogue.<sup>196</sup>

In Mark, the story of Jesus' so-called rejection at Nazareth begins: "He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue" (Mark 6:1–2/Matt 13:54/Luke 4:16). Once again, there are clear and considerable signals of Mark's creativity here.<sup>197</sup> Also, as well as possibly being responsible for the creation of the story as a whole,<sup>198</sup> it is more than likely that Mark has also given this story its synagogue and Sabbath setting. In any case, it is not a story of Jesus being rejected—that is how the story is told in Luke 4.

The final mention of the synagogue in Mark is 13:9: "As for yourselves, beware; for they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them" (Matt 10:17 par. Luke 21:12). This saying so obviously reflects the life of the early church that we are unable to place any confidence in its telling us about Jesus' attitude to the synagogue.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Twelftree, *Miracle*, 295.

<sup>196</sup> "Again" (πάλιν) is often used in Mark's introductions to link a story back to a previous one (in this case the synagogue in Capernaum of 1:21). See, e.g., 2:13; 3:20; 4:1; 5:21; 7:31; 8:1; 10:1, 10, 32; 11:27. So, Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 84. It is a word favoured by Mark: Matthew 17 times; Luke 3; Mark 28. See also John C. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae* (1909; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 13. Pryke, *Style*, 137 proposes that 25 of Mark's uses appear in redactional material.

The singular "he entered" (εἰσῆλθεν) rather than "they entered" (εἰσῆλθον) not only stands in tension with the previous story (cf. Mark 2:23) but also maintains the solitary mission of the Markan Jesus until after his choosing apostles "to be with him" (3:14). See also Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 84.

<sup>197</sup> Pryke, *Style*, 14 and those he cites. Note: ἐξέρχεσθαι (Mark 1:26, 28, 35; 2:12, 13; 4:3; 6:1; 8:27; 9:26; 11:11; 14:68. See Pryke, *Style*, 136); ἐκεῖθεν (see also Mark 7:24; 10:1, and 9:30 with καί); ἔρχεται (V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1959], 44; Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 34); διδάσκειν (Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae*, 12; Pryke, *Style*, 136); the phrase ἀκολουθοῦσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί which supports the theme of the disciples being with Jesus (e.g., 3:14) yet it plays no part in the story itself; the use of ἤρξατο with the infinitive (notably διδάσκειν; see also Mark 4:1; 6:34; 8:31); also these two verses are similar to Mark 1:21–22 (see above).

<sup>198</sup> See Erich Grässer, "Jesus in Nazareth (Mark VI.1–6a): Notes on the Redaction and Theology of St. Mark," *NTS* 16 (1969–70): 1–23, esp. 11.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Ernst Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 441 followed by Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 310.

### *Results*

This historical-critical examination of the gospel data that mention the synagogue in relation to Jesus has established firm if remarkably meagre results: (1) Jesus was critical of those who sought honour in the synagogues (Q/Luke 11:43; Mark 12:38–39) and (2) while attending the Capernaum synagogue Jesus healed a demoniac (Mark 1:23–27). Other results or implications will emerge as we seek a synthesis of what we have so far discovered.

### 3. *A Synthesis*

Since public synagogues—the buildings and the meetings—were the focus of the community in which Jesus grew up and lived, he would have been intimately familiar with them as well as with at least the buildings of semi-public synagogues. In a town the size of Nazareth there may have been more than one modest public synagogue building. In these public buildings, under the supervision of priests or community leaders, children—including Jesus—received their Torah-dominated education. People also met there on various days of the week, but especially on the Sabbath, for meetings, for public fasts, shared meals, to arrange charity, perhaps pray for the sick, as well as to worship and to hear the sacred books read and interpreted by a priest or an elder. It is highly unlikely that Jesus would have been excluded from these synagogues.<sup>200</sup> Even if he was once accused of being a *mamzer*, after the marriage of Mary and Joseph such a stigma would no longer be significant.<sup>201</sup> In any case, even the semi-public Theotodian synagogue was probably not exceptional in welcoming outsiders (cf. Acts 6:9)—and since synagogues were locally organized, even if Jesus was excluded from one he is likely to have been able to find a welcome in another. Moreover, from our examination of the New Testament data we have no evidence that Jesus was either rejected by the synagogue or that he abandoned it.<sup>202</sup>

On careful examination the gospel traditions contain surprisingly little information about the historical Jesus and his relationship with the synagogue. This is most probably not because he had little or nothing

<sup>200</sup> Chilton, *Jesus*, 16, 21.

<sup>201</sup> See the discussion by Scot McKnight, “Calling Jesus *Mamzer*,” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 73–103.

<sup>202</sup> *Pace*, e.g., Michael Grant, *Jesus* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), 87, 119.

to do with the synagogue.<sup>203</sup> First, as a member of the community he could be expected to frequent the synagogue. Secondly, in seeking an audience, perhaps on almost any day, the synagogue would have been the most obvious venue, but not simply as a place to preach but also to debate (cf. Josephus, *Life* 277)<sup>204</sup> and to perform healings. Keeping in mind that the synagogue was not an institution antagonistic to Jerusalem or the Temple, this could not be construed to mean that Jesus was setting himself up over against the holy city.

Nevertheless, what does seem fairly certain from the gospel traditions is that Jesus was critical of those who used the synagogue as a venue for seeking honour. On the one hand, this attitude would not have endeared him to the influential members of his community. Yet, on the other hand, there is no evidence that Jesus set himself over against or was in conflict with the synagogue as an institution.<sup>205</sup>

We can also be fairly confident of the reliability of the report that at least one of the miracle stories in the gospel traditions was set in a public synagogue. In that the public synagogue was the focus of the community, including a place where the needy and sick could be found, this is to be expected, and he is likely to have performed many of his miracles of healing in these synagogues. After his Jordan experience of the Spirit and a subsequent conviction of the arrival of the Kingdom or powerful presence of God—discovered after an initial experiment in healing in a synagogue (cf. Mark 1:21–28)—it can be expected that he would frequent public synagogues where people gathered<sup>206</sup> so that he could “win all to eschatological restoration.”<sup>207</sup> If his healings caused amazement (cf. Mark 1:27) it would not have been because he was successful. Although we would go beyond the evidence if we said more than that it is possible that healings had taken place in the synagogues in the time and place of Jesus, he himself acknowledged the success of his contemporaries in exorcism (Matt 12:27 par. Luke 11:19). Thus,

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<sup>203</sup> Contra Becker, *Jesus*, 29–30.

<sup>204</sup> Though portraying a Diaspora setting; see Acts 17:1–2.

<sup>205</sup> So also Richard A. Horsley, “Synagogues in Galilee and the Gospels,” in *Evolution*, ed. Kee and Cohick, 46–69, at 64 citing, for the contrary view, Kee, “Transformation,” 15–24, and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1968), 131–136.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Paula Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Knopf, 1999), 196; Dunn, “Synagogue?” 220.

<sup>207</sup> Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 242.

the amazed response was probably because of the manner and scale of his success.<sup>208</sup>

At least from his relationship with the synagogue he would have been neither an outsider nor marginalized in his community.<sup>209</sup> That so many stories of Jesus originally circulated without mention of a synagogue as a setting is probably because this was initially a matter of no consequence or, perhaps, an assumption that reports of his healing and teaching would have come from a synagogue. On the other hand, that so many references to the synagogue were subsequently introduced is probably to be explained by the early Christians in the more Hellenized world reading back into the Jesus tradition their experience of the importance of the synagogue as a focal point of interaction with others, preaching and teaching, as well as success and rejection.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Further see Graham H. Twelftree, "The Miracles of Jesus: Marginal or Mainstream?" *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 104–124 and idem, "Jesus the Exorcist and Ancient Magic," in *A Kind of Magic. Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Michael Labahn and Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, Library of New Testament Studies 306 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2007), 57–86, esp. 81–85.

<sup>209</sup> More broadly on the use of this term in relation to Jesus see Meier, *Marginal*, 1:6–9.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Bruce D. Chilton, *God in Strength* (Sheffield: JSOT, Press, 1987), 136.

# JESUS AND THE TEN WORDS

HERMUT LOEHR

## 1. Introduction

We have good reason to state<sup>1</sup> that contemporaneous sources reveal a certain knowledge of the concept and contents of the Ten Words (= Decalogue; Hebr.: עֲשׂוֹת הַדְּבָרִים; Gr.: οἱ δέκα λόγοι<sup>2</sup>) in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.<sup>3</sup> Therefore the question has to be raised if and in which way Jesus of Nazareth made use of this core text of the biblical tradition during his earthly ministry. The inquiry is part of the more general and much discussed problem of Jesus' attitude towards the (Jewish) Law.<sup>4</sup> What did Jesus in fact know of the Law? Did he make distinctions between different parts of the Law? Did he

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. my article: "Der Dekalog im frühesten Christentum und in seiner Umwelt," in *Judentum und Christentum zwischen Konfrontation und Faszination*, ed. W. Kinzig and C. Kück, *Judentum und Christentum* 11 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 29–43. The evidence of the sources does not allow for the thesis proposed by K. Berger and U. Kellermann that the Decalogue had to be rediscovered in Jewish Alexandria; cf. K. Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu: Ihr historischer Hintergrund im Judentum und im Alten Testament. Teil I: Markus und Parallelen*, WMANT 40 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), 138, 258; U. Kellermann, "Der Dekalog in den Schriften des Frühjudentums. Ein Überblick," in *Weisheit, Ethos und Gebot: Weisheits- und Dekalogtraditionen in der Bibel und im frühen Judentum*, ed. H. Graf Reventlow, BThSt 43 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 147–226.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Exod 34:28; Deut 4:13; 10:4. The (feminine) noun δεκάλογος was used for the first time in the second-century Christian letter of Ptolemy to Flora 5.3. Whether this neologism shows a marked awareness of the Ten Words as a separate textual unit cannot be determined with certainty.

<sup>3</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to provide once more a list of the citations and allusions to the Ten Words in the literature and archaeological remnants of the time. This has been done recently and quite exhaustively by Kellermann, "Dekalog" 147–226. Also worth studying is D. Sängler, "Tora für die Völker—Weisungen der Liebe: Zur Rezeption des Dekalogs im frühen Judentum und Neuen Testament," *Weisheit*, ed. Reventlow, 97–146. Shorter: G. Stemberger, "Der Dekalog im frühen Judentum," *JBTh* 4 (1989): 91–103.

<sup>4</sup> A clear epistemological distinction has to be made between Jesus' attitude to the Law and Jesus' attitude to the Law (or νόμος) as the early Christian sources conceived it. For the latter approach cf. my "Jesus und der Nomos aus der Sicht des entstehenden Christentums," in *Der historische Jesus*, ed. J. Schröter and R. Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002), 337–354. Cf. also the detailed analysis by W. R. G. Loader, *Jesus' Attitude towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels*, WUNT 2.97 (Tübingen: Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1997).

distinguish between more theological and more ethical commandments or prohibitions? Did he make different uses (cf. the different *usus legis* in the Christian theological tradition) of the Law? Answers to all these questions could help us to locate Jesus more precisely in the history of thought of Second Temple Judaism.

There is no direct way to answer their question and no eye-witness-account has come down to us (so far) of the earthly life of Jesus. The extant sources which inform us of him, i.e. of some aspects of his life—the canonical and extra-canonical gospels and gospel-fragments, some sparse notices in other parts of early Christian and Jewish literature—do this in retrospect. To reach solid historical ground in this situation necessitates: (a) to examine the relevant material with the instruments of historical criticism<sup>5</sup> and (b) to reconstruct the general background of the time which is the context of Jesus' relation to the Ten Words.

## 2. *Learning the Ten Words*

To start with the latter point demands that we first ask in which way a first-century Jew from a small village or town in Galilee like Jesus could have gained knowledge of the Decalogue.

The first, most obvious and least speculative answer to this question would be: by reading and studying the Torah. The Decalogue recurs twice in the Pentateuch. So every public or private lecture of the Torah could come across this text which, simply by virtue of its position,<sup>6</sup> signals its outstanding importance to the attentive reader or listener. However, it remains doubtful whether a piece of text, which could have been only a smaller part of a sabbatical lecture, could be learned by

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<sup>5</sup> In my opinion this means that we cannot trust our sources without further critical (not sceptical) examination; *pace* R. Swinburne, "Evidence for the Resurrection," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. S. T. Davis et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 191–212, who stipulates (192): "that memory as such, all memory, is to be trusted in the absence of positive counter-evidence that is untrustworthy." The task of the historian is to separate authentic memory from intentional constructions for some ideological or other aim. And even if such intentional shaping of the historical account cannot be argued for, there remains the task of testing the reliability of the author's memory, by internal and external comparison and by reflections on the general historical probability of the narration.

<sup>6</sup> In both the Sinai and the Horeb pericope the Decalogue precedes other collections of laws—explicitly (Exod 20:19; Deut 5:23–33) and implicitly (Exod 20: the *Bundesbuch* Exod 20:22–23:19; the *Privilegrecht* Exod 34; Deut 5: the deuteronomic laws); and it is uttered as God's direct speech (Exod 20:1; Deut 5:4, 22).

heart just by hearing it in the synagogue—whether in Nazareth<sup>7</sup> or in Capernaum—or in the Temple service.

For the Temple service, which could have been attended by Jesus several times (cf. Luke 2:41–42), we know from the Mishnah of a regular recitation of the Decalogue (*m. Tam.* 5:1; s. p. 219).

Unfortunately our information about the service outside the Temple in pre-70 Palestinian synagogues is very fragmentary.<sup>8</sup> So we cannot know for certain whether there was a regular (triennial?) lecture cycle or special lectures for the feasts. To this day, the Decalogue according to Exod 20 is part of the Torah lecture on *Shavuoth*.

It is also difficult to prove that in Second Temple Judaism a catechetical or proselyte instruction including the Ten Words existed. In fact there is literary evidence for various series of commandments and prohibitions recalling the Decalogue, especially the so-called social commandments. As their literary function is to communicate elementary theological and ethical teaching to the Jewish or the interested pagan reader, one can think of the instruction for youngsters or converts to Judaism as the original *Sitz im Leben* for those series. Possibly, for example, the narrative setting of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, *inter alia* the moral instruction recalling the Ten Words given by the father to the sons, had its parallels in the everyday life of ancient Judaism,<sup>9</sup> and the Decalogue may have had a prominent part in it. We know from notices

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<sup>7</sup> For first-century evidence for a synagogue in Nazareth cf. Mark 6:2 pars. Matt 13:54; Luke 4:16. For Capernaum cf. the short overview by C. Claußen, *Versammlung, Gemeinde, Synagoge: Das hellenistisch-jüdische Umfeld der frühchristlichen Gemeinden*, SUNT 27 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002), 180f.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. C. Perrot, “The Reading of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogue,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder and H. Sysling, CRINT 2.1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 137–159.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. K. W. Niebuhr, *Gesetz und Paränese: Katechismusartige Weisungsreihen in der frühjüdischen Literatur*, WUNT 2.88 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1987), 238: “In erster Linie waren für diese Art der Gesetzesunterweisung vermutlich die Oberhäupter der jüdischen Familie zuständig, entsprechend dem Gebot der Tora, Dtn 11,18–21.” We would have to suppose, then, that being their children’s first teachers parents were more likely to rely on oral tradition than on written Torah. Cf. C. Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr/Paul Siebeck 2001), 69: “Since only fathers who knew letters and were knowledgeable of the Torah themselves would have been able to teach Torah to their children, in the first two centuries, when few opportunities for an elementary education outside the home existed, children’s basic instruction in the Torah would have been restricted to certain educated circles.” With regard to Deut 11:18–21, the problem is discussed in *Sif. Dev.* 46 (Finkelstein, 104).

We should not forget, moreover, that, e.g., the deathbed scenes in *TestXII* are ideal ones which probably did not correspond to everyday experience.



in the works of Flavius Josephus<sup>10</sup> and Philo of Alexandria<sup>11</sup> that the Torah was the main object of instruction of younger children. But unfortunately the contemporaneous sources are silent about a regular instruction concerning in particular the Decalogue.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless textual evidence from Second Temple literature shows that and how the Decalogue was directly used in (literary) paraenesis. Evidence include, *Let. Aris.* 168, Pseudo-Phocylides 3–8 and Philo's *De decalogo*, a writing which might have been used as a proselyte catechism.<sup>13</sup>

Another hint is given by the phylacteries (*tefillin*) found among the Qumran texts. Some, but not all economy<sup>14</sup> of them contain—contrary to later rabbinic regulations<sup>15</sup>—the Ten Words in the version of Deuteronomy 5.<sup>16</sup> Used primarily for apotropaic reasons and certainly not *read* regularly, these *tefillin* nevertheless testify to a considerable use of the Decalogue in everyday life, though perhaps of a religious elite.<sup>17</sup> Since they were intended to contain words of prayer, they show that the Decalogue was probably recited in the Qumran community in the hour of prayer. A notice in the work of Jerome,<sup>18</sup> which attributes the use of the Ten Words in *tefillin* to the Pharisees at the time of Jesus, may indicate that this practice was not limited to the religious group who left their traces in the Qumran texts.

Possibly the Decalogue also formed part of the public cult at the Jerusalem temple. This could be derived already from the Hebrew Bible, especially Psalm 50 (cf. v. 7) and 81:9ff. The assumption is sup-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Apion* 1.60; 2:178, 204.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Legat.* 115, 210.

<sup>12</sup> The Theodotos inscription from Jerusalem (CIJ II 332) which may date back to the first century CE gives ΕΙΣ (Δ)ΙΔΑΧ(Η)Ν ΕΝΤΟΛΩΝ as one of the usages of the newly erected building.

<sup>13</sup> This suggestions was made by Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 261. He applies the same suggestion to the passages *L.A.B.* 11.1–13; 25.7–13 and 44.6f. (265). With regard to the literary context, this seems to me far less certain than in the case of Philo.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. 4Q130–133.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. S. C. Mimouni, *Les chrétiens d'origine juive dans l'antiquité, Présences du judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004), 95–97, who cites *m. Sanh.* 11:3; s. also *Sif. Dev. wa'ethanan* § 34 (Finkelstein 60f.); *Sif. Dev.* § 35 (Finkelstein 62); Jerome, *Comm. in Ezek.* 24:15 (ed. Glorie, CChr.SL vol. 75, 330).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. 1Q13; 4Q128; 4Q129; 4Q134; 4Q137; 4Q139; 4Q142; 8Q3; XQphyl 3. The phylactery 5Q8 was not opened and read by the editor J. T. Milik, cf. *DJD* vol. III, 178; 4Q147 and 148 were not deciphered; s. *DJD* vol. VI, 79. It seems that the Decalogue formed, together with Deut 6:4–6, one of the four texts contained in one group of the Qumran *tefillin*. This reminds of the partition of texts in the Nash Papyrus.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. L. H. Schiffman, "Phylacteries and Mezuzot," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2:675–677: 677.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jerome, *Comm. in Matth.* 23:5 (PL 26, 174).

ported by the evidence of the Mishnah: *m. Tam.* 5:1<sup>19</sup> stipulates that the Decalogue is to be recited before the daily whole-burnt offering by the priests on duty.

The famous Nash Papyrus, first published in 1903<sup>20</sup> and dated to the second century BCE by William F. Albright,<sup>21</sup> contains a version of the Decalogue combining Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 and showing some proximity to the Septuagint version. It might be a trace of public recitation of the Ten Words *outside* the Temple service.<sup>22</sup> Other experts have suggested that the papyrus was a text for a *mezuzah*, comparable to examples from Qumran such as 4Q149 with a mixture of Exod 20:7–12 and Deut 5:11–16 (Deut 5:27–29 and 10:12–20 in the *mezuzah* 4Q151),<sup>23</sup> or intended for instruction.<sup>24</sup> The addition of the introductory phrase “My people, children of Israel” (Hebr./Aram.: בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל<sup>25</sup> עִמָּא viz. עָמִי) in the rendering of Exod 20:2 in the targumic tradition<sup>26</sup> may also hint at a liturgical usage of the passage.<sup>27</sup> And in a Sabbath prayer which could stem from the early Jewish-hellenistic synagogue and which is preserved in the seventh book of the Apostolic Constitutions, the Decalogue is mentioned in the *invocatio* to God:

You gave to them a Law, ten oracles uttered by your voice, and engraved by your hand (*Const. Apost.* 7.36.13).

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the questions of historicity of this passage, see my article cited in n. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. A. Cook, “A Pre-Massoretic Biblical Papyrus,” *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 25 (1903): 34–56.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. W. F. Albright, “A Biblical Fragment from the Maccabean Age: The Nash Papyrus,” *JBL* 56 (1937): 145–176.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. F. C. Burkitt, “The Hebrew Papyrus of the Ten Commandments,” *JQR* 15 (1903): 392–408; idem, “The Nash Papyrus,” *JQR* 16 (1904): 559–561; W. F. Albright, On the Date of the Scrolls from “Ain Feshkha and the Nash Papyrus,” *BASOR* 115 (1949): 10–19 (photograph of the papyrus, 11).

<sup>23</sup> In accordance with later rabbinic usage, the texts Deut 6:4–9 and 11:13–21 were probably contained in the *mezuzot* 4Q150; 4Q152; 4Q153.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. N. Peters, *Die älteste Handschrift der Zehn Gebote* (Freiburg i.Br., 1905), 9 (*non vidi*); S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, Grundriß der Gesamtwissenschaft des Judentums (reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1966 [Leipzig, 1912]), 3:209 with notes (341 n. 63, reference to *y. Meg.* 4:5 fol. 75b).

<sup>25</sup> Not in *Tg. Neof. I.*

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Tg. Ps.-Jonathan*; *Tg. Neof. I ad loc.* MS Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Hébr 110 has עִמָּא בֵּיתָא יִשְׂרָאֵל (Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia II, 150–151).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2nd reprint of the 3rd edn, Frankfurt a.M., 1931), 1995, 188, 192; M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, *Analecta Biblica* 27 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), 138 with n. 38 (further evidence from the targumim).

So in the beginnings of Jewish synagogue worship in the Second Temple period, the Decalogue could have been part of the texts read out to the congregation. Later on, the role of the Decalogue in synagogue worship was highly disputed. In Palestinian synagogues the Ten Words were removed from the liturgy “because of the antipathy / arguments of the *minim*.”<sup>28</sup>

To sum up the evidence adduced, we can say that the Ten Words played a significant, if not prominent, part in the religious life of Second Temple Judaism. Apart from the individual’s study of the Bible, which presupposes a developed skill in reading the Hebrew or Greek texts,<sup>29</sup> one could come across the Decalogue in instruction at home or in school and in worship. Coming to a conclusion, we might say that the most probable way for the ordinary man to learn the Ten Words in first-century Palestine would have been by repeatedly *hearing* them.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. E. E. Urbach, “The Role of the Ten Commandments in Jewish Worship,” in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition*, ed. B.-Z. Segal and G. Levi, Publications of the Perry Foundation for Biblical Research (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990), 161–189: 168–169, who cites the relevant sources. In the Yerushalmi the saying runs: “because of the statement of the *minim* that they might not say: Only the ten words were given to Moses at Sinai” (*y. Ber.* 1:5 [3c]). For a comprehensive discussion of the saying cf. Mimouni, *Les chrétiens*, 93–95. The earliest rabbi referred to in this context is R. Nathan (140–165 CE). This may point to the Jamnia period; cf. W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 281.

*b. Ber.* 12a shows that in Babylonian Jewry of the third or fourth century attempts were made to reintroduce the Decalogue into the synagogue prayer. The idea that the Ten Words comprise the totality of the Torah found its way into medieval midrashim; cf. E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, Publications of the Perry Foundation in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, repr. 1987), 1:362–364.

<sup>29</sup> Whether Jesus of Nazareth was able to read cannot be said with certainty. The scene described in Luke 4:16–30, especially v. 17, presupposes this skill, but we should not build too much on it. John 7:15 is not concerned with the question of literacy, but with that of knowing the Scriptures. The general impression of the Jesus movement given by the sources is that of an illiterate group. For a more optimistic view of Jesus’ ability to read cf. J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus 1: The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 268–278.

<sup>30</sup> As a parallel from Roman education we may adduce Cicero’s statement that as a boy he learnt the “Twelve” (i.e. the Law of the Twelve Tablets) by heart (*discebamus enim pueri duodecim ut carmen necessarium*), cf. Cicero, *De legibus* 2.23.59–60. S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (London: Methuen, 1977), 88 with n. 118.

### 3. *Jesus and the Ten Words According to Early Christian Sources*

#### 3.1. *The Direct Quotations*

Direct quotations of the Ten Words in the mouth of Jesus occur in Matt 5:21 (Exod 20:13 = Deut 5:17); 5:27 (Exod 20:14 = Deut 5:18); 15:4 par. Mark 7:10 (Exod 20:12 = Deut 5:16) and 19:18f. pars. Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20 (Exod 20:12–16 = Deut 5:16–20).

Comparing the textual traditions, we observe that the series of commandments in Matt 19:18 follows the sequence of the Masoretic text of both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 against that of the Septuagint version. In Matt 15:4 and 19:18, the text differs from both MT and LXX in reading no possessive pronoun behind *πατέρα* and *μητέρα*, while Mark 7:10 and Exod 20:12 MT, Deut 5:16 MT/LXX, 4QDeut<sup>n</sup> IV, 7, Papyrus Nash l. 16, 4Q129 l. 8, 1Q13 fragm. 15, 4Q137 l. 23, 4Q139 l. 9 read “your father and your mother,” and Mark 10:19/Luke 18:20 and Exod 20:12 LXX have no pronoun after “mother.” Instead of the negation *οὐ* with the future tense of Exod 20:12–16 = Deut 5:16–20 LXX,<sup>31</sup> Mark 10:19/Luke 18:20 have *μή* with the aorist tense.<sup>32</sup> If Matthew read Mark, we would have to interpret the change from the aorist to the future tense in Matt 19:18–19 as a correction of the wording towards the Greek text of the Scriptures.

In the Jesus tradition (or elsewhere in the New Testament and other early Christian sources) the Decalogue is never quoted completely. Moreover, all quotations of parts of the Decalogue combine this text with other commandments of the Torah. The notion of the Ten Words as a separate textual unit seems to have been a restricted one.

In the first two antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount, which are Matthean *Sondergut*,<sup>33</sup> two commandments of the Decalogue appear in a series of other prescriptions which were “told” (Gr.: *ἐρρέθη*). These are taken from Deut 24:1–4; Num 30:3/Deut 23:22; Exod 21:24/Lev 24:20/Deut 19:21 and Lev 19:18. In Matt 15:4/Mark 7:10, the fifth<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. also Philo, *Decal.* 36.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jas 2:11.

<sup>33</sup> Matt 5:25–26 could have been taken from Q, cf. Luke 12:(57)58–59. It is more difficult to be certain that Matt 5:29–30 (cf. 19:8–9 par. Mark 9:43, 45, 47) was part of Q; Luke has no parallel. Whether the antitheses (or some of them) formed a pre-Matthean textual unit, is not certain. Cf. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 1–7)*, EKK 1.1 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchener Verlag, 1985), 244–250 for a short overview.

<sup>34</sup> In counting the commandments we follow Philo, *Decal.*

commandment is combined with the stipulation Exod 21:17/Lev 20:9. And in Matt 19:18–19 pars., the Decalogue series is again completed by the love commandment taken from Lev 19:18.

So while the Decalogue and its parts are certainly adduced as exemplary or even pivotal for the moral demands of the Torah, its combination with other commandments shows that exactness, completeness, or exclusiveness of the quotation were not judged decisive for the argument. With this selective use of the Decalogue, Jesus, as he is portrayed in the synoptics, is in the middle between the rare exact quotation of the Decalogue in Second Temple literature outside the Bible (as in Philo, *Decal.*, *L.A.B.* 11 and 44,<sup>35</sup> the Papyrus Nash and the Qumran *tefillin* and *mezuzot*), and the frequent occurrences of free citation or paraphrase (*Ps.-Phocylides* 3–8; *Let. Aris.* 168; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.91) or supposed allusion to it in other texts (*Wis* 14:22–31; *Ps.-Menander* 9–15; Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.1–9; Josephus, *Apion* 2.190–192; *2 En.* 10.5; *Apoc. Abr.* 24.5–8).

The citations of the Decalogue in the New Testament are never introduced as parts of a *written* text. It fits well into the context of the Sermon on the Mount that the scriptural passages cited are marked with the phrase “you heard that it was said” (Gr.: ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη; in v. 21 and v. 33 the text adds: τοῖς ἀρχαίοις).<sup>36</sup> This is not only apt with regard to the supposed illiteracy of the addressees, but it also underlines the contrast of the words formerly said (at Mount Sinai or in the instruction of the Jewish home) with the proclamation of Jesus’ new oral message. While in Mark 10:19 pars. no introductory phrase is used, in Mark 7:10–11 the things “Moses said” are in contrast with those “you said.” Matt 15:4–5 even sharpens this contrast by replacing “God” with “Moses.”

Though Jesus, as he is described in our sources, never contradicts directly the Decalogue, its authority seems relative. This is evident in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus juxtaposes his own commandments to those of the Torah, thus intensifying the obligation, but in two cases (Matt 5:31–32, 38–42) also openly contradicting the Torah. With regard to the Decalogue, the prohibition

<sup>35</sup> Even in Philo, *Decal.*, the Decalogue is never quoted completely (*Decal.* 36 cites only three commandments by way of example).

<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that the text uses this somewhat distanced introductory formula and thus does not present the texts taken from Scripture as directly addressed to (and valid for?) the contemporaneous generation. The gospel redaction seems to think of a mixed (not exclusively Jewish) audience of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt 4:25).

of killing (Matt 5:21) is radicalized by even forbidding anger against the “brother” and by the call to reconciliation. The sixth commandment (Matt 5:27) is interpreted in such a way that a lustful glance is already regarded as adultery. Thus the wording of the commandment is respected, but at the same time it becomes apparent that a merely literal understanding of it would not be sufficient to seize the “better justice” (Matt 5:20). With the use of ἐπιθυμῆν, the text alludes to the tenth commandment, which could be understood as the basis of the prohibition and the *ratio* of the whole Decalogue,<sup>37</sup> perhaps already in the Old Testament,<sup>38</sup> but certainly in Second Temple Judaism<sup>39</sup> and in early Christianity.<sup>40</sup>

Outside the antitheses, the pericope on the *korban* conflict (Mark 7:1–23 par. Matt 15:1–20) juxtaposes the commandment of God and the traditions of the Scribes and the Pharisees. Though the fifth commandment is confirmed, I cannot see that the text aims at an *admonition* to keep this commandment. The same is true for Matt 19:16–22: the commandments kept by the young man are certainly valid, but, nevertheless, there is something lacking to perfection (cf. 19:21: εἰ θέλεις τέλειος εἶναι).<sup>41</sup>

### 3.2. Further Evidence

Only five of the Ten Commandments are quoted explicitly (commandments 6 to 10 according to Philo’s counting), while the first four do not occur in the mouth of Jesus.

Closer examination shows, however, that the first tablet of the Ten Words also plays a certain role in the Jesus tradition, even if not quoted

<sup>37</sup> It may be noted that also a pagan listener or reader could understand ἐπιθυμία as the basic fault of human existence; see Maximus of Tyre, *Dialex.* 24:4a; Ps.-Lucian, *Cynicus* 15, and the title of Martha C. Nussbaum’s analysis of Hellenistic ethics: *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Martin Classical Lectures, New Series 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. D. N. Freedman, *The Nine Commandments: Uncovering a Hidden Pattern of Crime and Punishment in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); H. Sivan, *Between Woman, Man and God: A New Interpretation of the Ten Commandments* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 208–211.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Tg. Neof. I* Exod 20:17; *Tg. Neof. I* Deut 5:21; *Tg. Neof. I* Gen 3:6; *b. Shab.* 145b–146a; *b. Yeb.* 103b; *b. AZ.* 22b; see S. Lyonnet, “‘Tu ne convoiteras pas’ (Rom. vii 7),” in *Neotestamentica et Patristica: Freundesgabe O. Cullmann*, NovTSup 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 157–165.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Rom 7:7–8.

<sup>41</sup> In the version of the Gospel of the Nazarenes (Ps.-Origen, *Comm. in Matth.* 15:14, interpolation in the Latin text) of this scene, the fulfillment of the love commandment (Lev 19:18) is given priority.

explicitly. This is to say that the *separation* of two sets of commandments and their respective addressees, which has its place in Jewish thought,<sup>42</sup> is not decisive for the Jesus tradition.

Instead of the *first commandment*, in Matt 22:37–40 pars. Jesus adduces Deut 6:5 as the highest commandment and, together with Lev 19:18, as the conclusion of the whole Law and the Prophets. Subsuming the Law under two main commandments or virtues is not alien to Jewish literature of the time<sup>43</sup> and has a parallel in the pagan idea of two main virtues, those of εὐσέβεια and δικαιοσύνη.<sup>44</sup>

As we have seen above, *m. Tam.* 5:1 testifies to the existence of the *Shema* prayer including Deut 6:4–5 already in the Second Temple Period, but it is uncertain whether the enumeration of the *Shema* in the Mishnah passage *after* the Decalogue shows a historical development and shift of importance.<sup>45</sup> The most obvious reason for citing Deut 6:5 (only Mark 12:29 has the introduction Deut 6:4 which gave the name to the whole *Shema* prayer) in Matt 22:37, rather than the first of the Ten Words, is the verbal linkage to Lev 19:18 made possible by the word ἀγαπήσεις.<sup>46</sup>

In the story of Jesus' temptation by the devil (Matt 4:1–11 par. Luke 4:1–13), the former answers the last temptation by citing the commandment Deut 6:13/10:20 (Matt 4:10/Luke 4:8).<sup>47</sup> Though the citation and its context (Deut 6:4–25)<sup>48</sup> are close parallels to the first commandment, in the temptation story the opposition is not between the One God of Israel and other gods, but between God and the devil.

<sup>42</sup> For the idea of the two tables of the covenant containing not the whole Decalogue each (as in Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:9–15; 10:1–5; less explicit on this point are Exod 31:18; 32:15–16, 19; 34:1, 4, 27–29), but the two parts of the Decalogue, cf. Philo, *Decal.* 50–51, 106–107.

In *Pes. R.* 21.2–3 (Ulmer, 436–439), the question whether the social commandments are addressed to the nations is controversial between the emperor Hadrian and R. Joshua b. Hananiah. For Justin, *Dial.* 19.6, the prescription of the Sabbath (together with the circumcision, the food laws, the sacrifices, and the institution of the Temple) was a reaction to the people's disobedience. The social commandments are a natural law; cf. *Dial.* 93.1.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Let. Aris.* 128–132; *Jub.* 37.7; *T. Dan* 5.3; *T. Jos.* 5.2, 7.6; *T. Benj.* 3.3; Philo, *Decal.* 50, 106f.; *Spec.* 2.61–63, *Virt.* 95; *Her.* 168, 172; Josephus, *Apion* 2.206, 291. See also Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 142–165.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. A. Dihle, *Der Kanon der zwei Tugenden*, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen. Geisteswissenschaften 144 (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1968).

<sup>45</sup> This is the hypothesis proposed by Urbach, *Sages*, 1:19–21.

<sup>46</sup> This linkage can also be seen in the Hebrew text.

<sup>47</sup> The textual form of the quotation is that of the Codex Alexandrinus.

<sup>48</sup> In Matt 4:7/Luke 4:12, Deut 6:16 is cited.

John 10:33 is the only verse in the Fourth Gospel which uses the noun βλασφημία, while the verb βλασφημεῖν occurs once in v. 36. This can be interpreted as an allusion to the high priest's statement in Mark 14:64 par. Matt 26:65.<sup>49</sup> While βλασφημία and βλασφημεῖν have a range of meanings,<sup>50</sup> in the context of the Passion narrative the accusation is built on Lev 24:16<sup>51</sup> (cf. Exod 22:27; Num 15:30f.) and is a reaction to Jesus' confession in the preceding verse. This confession is not blasphemy in the strict sense,<sup>52</sup> but the positive answer to the high priest's question *together with*<sup>53</sup> the self-identification with the coming of the "Son of Man." The words provoke the high priest's reaction and the death sentence uttered by the Sanhedrin. This is not because of messianic expectation in general,<sup>54</sup> but because of *Jesus'* claim to be the Messiah. I cannot see that Jesus is condemned only for his prophecy of sitting at God's right hand and thus sharing divine authority.<sup>55</sup> It is the Johannine allusion and interpretation of this scene in John 10 which clearly sees God's uniqueness involved.

To decide on the historicity of the synoptic account is notoriously difficult. Apart from the thorny question of the legal procedure, the combination of three christological titles has led exegetes to see post-Easter Christian theology at work.<sup>56</sup> But this argument loses its strength

<sup>49</sup> Cf. H. Thyen, *Das Johannesevangelium*, HNT 6 (Tübingen: Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 2005), 501. In Luke 22 the verse is omitted.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. C. A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 453–455.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Exod 22:27; Num 15:30–31 and Str-B 1:1008–1012 for the history of interpretation.

<sup>52</sup> For the Mishnah, blasphemy in the strict sense involved the name of God, thus the third commandment; cf. *m. Sanh.* 7:5. But also the Jewish tradition after 70 CE had a wider notion of blasphemy; cf. Str-B 1:1013–1017.

<sup>53</sup> It is against the intention of the narrative to make a distinction between titles which would have been acceptable for the Sanhedrin and others which would not. Already the high priest's question in Matt 26:63/Mark 14:61 is intended to provoke an answer which could lead to condemnation. All three titles—"Messiah," "Son of God," and "Son of Man"—had their place in Jewish messianology, though questions of chronology, esp. concerning the "Son of Man," are highly controversial.

<sup>54</sup> While one can conjecture that the (Sadducean?, cf. Acts 5:17; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.199) high priest on duty would not be very open to messianic hopes, we cannot be sure whether this was the position of the whole Sanhedrin. For the composition of the council cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, ed. G. Vermes et al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 2:210–218.

<sup>55</sup> Pace M. D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark: A Study of the Background of the Term "Son of Man" and its Use in St Mark's Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1967), 172–173.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 26–28)*, EKK 1.4 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 197.



when we notice that a messianic claim, and not theology modified by christology, is at stake.

In John 10, both parties make reference to the Scriptures. While the Jews combine their accusation of blasphemy with an allusion to Lev 24:15–16, Jesus answers with the help of Ps 82:6.<sup>57</sup> The psalm verse probably had a polytheistic background.<sup>58</sup> The problem was still in view when in Second Temple Judaism, the expression אֱלֹהִים viz. θεοί was no longer understood of “gods,” but of angels, Melchizedek, the Judges, or the people gathered at Mount Sinai.<sup>59</sup> In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus shows, by referring to the psalm, that his self-understanding as “son of God” (and his way of addressing God as his “father”; cf. John 5:18) is not against the Scriptures. On the contrary, the Scriptures’ promise is fulfilled in Jesus, who was sent and sanctified by God (10:36). Far from being a parody of Jewish exegesis, the proof from Scripture is adduced for a christological purpose. The problem of the relation of christology to traditional biblical monotheism is obviously treated in a subtle way. The point is not that Jesus is not “God” or “God-like,” but that *he does not make himself* God-like (cf. 5:18; 19:7).<sup>60</sup> The solution offered in John 5 and 10 makes no direct appeal to the first commandment or the *Shema*. As the pericopes are formed by Johannine theology and may react to contemporary Jewish-Christian discussions of christology, it is difficult to reach sound historical conclusions with regard to the pre-Easter Jesus.

The occurrence of the *second commandment* in the Jesus tradition is not obvious. Explicit conflicts, e.g. with the Roman authorities about the veneration of pagan deities or their images, are absent from our texts, although other sources of the time have something to tell concerning that matter.

An allusion to such conflicts can be found in Mark 13:14. The expression τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως implicitly refers to the Danielic vision (cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) and its historical background in Maccabean

<sup>57</sup> As J. H. Neyrey, “‘I said: You are gods’: Psalm 82:6 and John 10,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 647–663, esp. 655–659, showed, later Jewish exegesis connected Ps 82:6–7 with the idea of the acceptance and fulfillment of the Torah, which led Israel to holiness and immortality. As John 10:35 also stresses a “word of God,” the midrashic tradition may help us to understand the pericope.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen. 2. Teilband. Psalmen 60–150*, 7th ed., BKAT 15.2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 734–739.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. A. Hanson, “John’s Citation of Ps 82 Reconsidered,” *NTS* 13 (1967): 363–367.

<sup>60</sup> As John 1:1.18; 20:28 show, the Fourth Gospel sees a unity of God and Logos, viz. the Son.

times (cf. 1 Macc 1:54; 6:7), but at the same time points to political and religious conflicts in first-century Judaea, which may have involved, on the Jewish side, the second commandment.<sup>61</sup> In Matt 24:15, the reference to Daniel's prophecy is made explicit, whereas in Luke 21:20 the expression mentioned is left out.

The pericope on the tax coin (Mark 12:13–17 pars. Matt 22:15–22 / Luke 20:20–26; diff. Matt 17:24–27) seems to allude clearly to the second commandment. Jesus points to the image (Gr.: εἰκών) and the inscription (Gr.: ἐπιγραφή<sup>62</sup> stamped on the coin. It is a (surely ironic!) argumentation with the help of the image, not openly against it. Both the theoretical possibility of God's image stamped on the coin and its practical impossibility and religious inacceptability contribute to the wit of the argument.

We can grasp the religious impact of the scene more distinctly when we envisage the image and inscription stamped on the coin mentioned (according to Mark 12:15 pars. a "denarius"). If we assume that Jesus was shown a specimen of the actual coinage of the time, then the most probable candidate would be a silver denarius issued by the Roman emperor Tiberius and minted in Lyons<sup>63</sup> showing, on the one side, the image of the emperor with a laurel and the inscription:

TI(berius) CAESAR DIVI AVG(usti) F(ilius) AVGVSTVS

and, on the verso, the female person (the Emperor's mother Livia?)<sup>64</sup> sitting on a throne with scepter and olive twig, and the inscription:

PONTIF(ex) MAXIM(us)<sup>65</sup>

The religious implications of the image, the symbols and the inscription are evident. So when Jesus, by looking at the coin and answering the Pharisees' and Herodians' question, seems to separate the political and the religious spheres and to acknowledge also the rights of the former one, at the same time this implies a strong opposition against

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Josephus, *War* 2.169–177, 184–203.

<sup>62</sup> The fact that the inscription is explicitly mentioned shows that its content is essential for the understanding of the scene.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. H. St J. Hart, "The coin of 'Render unto Caesar...'" (A note on some aspects of Mark 12:13–17; Matt. 22:15–22, Luke 20:20–26), in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 241–248.

<sup>64</sup> For various attempts to identify the figure cf. C. H. V. Sutherland, *Coinage in Roman Imperial Policy. 31 B.C.–A.D. 68* (London: Methuen, 1951), 84 n. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. C. H. V. Sutherland, *Roman Coins* (Freiburg: Office du Livre, repr. 1974), 144 (photograph), 147 (description).

the religious ambitions of the Emperor. By interpreting the image on the coin as a mere sign of its owner, Jesus ironically emphasizes a secondary aspect of the problem and intentionally overlooks the implicit postulate of religious reverence.<sup>66</sup>

It is almost certain that the fourth antithesis, Matt 5:33–36, is concerned with the *third commandment*,<sup>67</sup> although that text is not cited directly, and the name of God is not mentioned, either. Near parallels to the pericope, especially to the opening v. 33, can be found not only in the Old Testament (cf. Lev 19:12; Ps 24:4),<sup>68</sup> but also in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period,<sup>69</sup> where the problem of the oath is also explicitly connected with that of the misuse of the name of God.<sup>70</sup>

The synoptic scenes focusing on the Sabbath commandment (Mark 2:23–28 pars.; 3:1–6 pars.; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6)<sup>71</sup> are not just about Sabbath halakhah (that is: interpretation of the *fourth commandment* for practical purpose), but they seem to diminish the authority of the Torah commandment itself as against other aspects or principles. Whereas in Mark 3:1–6 pars.; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6, it is for the well-being of a human being (not to rescue a life from imminent danger!)<sup>72</sup> that Jesus ignores the prohibition of working, in Mark 2:23–28 pars. no such concern can be detected.<sup>73</sup> Jesus' question in Mark 3:4 builds

<sup>66</sup> This implication is seen by F. F. Bruce, "Render to Caesar," in *Jesus*, ed. Bammel and Moule, 249–263: 263. He restricts its significance, however, to the time and situation of later Jesus followers.

<sup>67</sup> Philo, *Decal.* 82–95 explains the commandment as a prohibition of oath; cf. *Spec.* 4.40.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. W. H. Schmidt, H. Delkurt and A. Graupner, *Die Zehn Gebote im Rahmen alttestamentlicher Ethik*, EdF 281 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), 80–81 with notes.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Ps.-Phocylides 16; *Sib. Or.* 2.68; Philo, *Spec.* 2.2–28.224; see also *Did.* 2.3.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Philo, *Decal.* 82–95, esp. 93; *Spec.* 4.40; CD XV, 1; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.91; see also *Pes. R.* 22.4–6 (Ulmer 520–525). Str-B 1:326–327 adds evidence from the targumic tradition.

Matt 23:16–22 comes back to the question of oaths. As the text cannot be read as an admonition for the readers of the Gospel, there is no contradiction to Matt 5:33–37; cf. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18–25)*, EKK 1.3 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag/Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 329.

<sup>71</sup> Mark 1:29–31 par. Luke 4:38–41 seems to take place on the Sabbath day, but is not a Sabbath conflict. In Matthew's version of the story (Matt 8:14–17), there is no marked link to the Sabbath problem. Mark 6:1–6 par. Matt 13:53–58 diff. Luke 4:16–30 tells us about a few healings which possibly took place on the Sabbath day. No stress is laid on this point. Matt 24:20 diff. Mark 13:18 presupposes Jesus' respect for the Sabbath commandment. The verse probably reflects, however, the position of a Jewish-Christian group. For the difficulties in harmonizing this verse with either Jesus or a Jewish-Christian group or the position of the redactor, cf. Luz, *Matthäus*, 3:428–429.

<sup>72</sup> But cf. Mark 3:4, where the situation is interpreted by Jesus as a matter of good or ill and life or death.

<sup>73</sup> The assumption that the disciples were starving to death and therefore plucked

rhetorically on a fundamental and evident alternative, which seems to leave neither choice nor room for Sabbath rest as a third option. While the introductory formula with ἔξεστιν could be typical of a halakhic discussion concerned with the Sabbath commandment,<sup>74</sup> the continuation of the question is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the argument. In terms of jurisprudence one could call this a permission to break the Sabbath for healing which is extended beyond imminent danger to life.<sup>75</sup> Jesus would thus appear as an authority recommending a more liberal Sabbath halakhah. Basically, however, it seems to be an appeal to an ethical and religious common sense which is available for everyone.

Jesus' question in Luke 13:15; 14:5 par. Matt 12:11, which might remind us of Sabbath regulations in the Damascus document<sup>76</sup> and its Qumran version,<sup>77</sup> rhetorically establishes the common ground for his argumentation, but not the matter of dispute. Jesus makes appeal to the (alleged) common Sabbath praxis of his audience, which might or might not have been recommended by the legal and religious authorities.

In Mark 2:23–28, Jesus answers a halakhic question with a (badly chosen) example from the Haggadah. As David Daube<sup>78</sup> and Alan Watson have pointed out,<sup>79</sup> in terms of later Jewish jurisprudence this

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the grains has no probability at all. In addition to Mark's account, Matt 12:1 mentions the disciples' being hungry. But there is no text from contemporaneous Jewish Sabbath halakhah which regards being hungry as a sufficient reason to break the commandment. Luke 6:1 adds the notice of the disciples' rubbing the ears of corn which could be interpreted as work or as preparation of food. Whether the halachic discussion between R. Judah and other sages in *b. Shabb.* 128a can be adduced as a parallel is not certain; cf. B. Schaller, *Jesus und der Sabbat*, FDV 3 (Münster: Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum, 1994), 9–11.

The phrase ὁδὸν ποιεῖν in Mark 2:23 has suggested the idea that the disciples, in the author's view, might have gone too far in a literal sense. But what about the Pharisees who are witnessing the scene? No stress is laid on the question of the Sabbath way in the pericope under scrutiny.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. L. Doering, *Schabbat: Sabbathalacha und -praxis im antiken Judentum und Urchristentum*, TSAJ 78 (Tübingen: Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1999) 450 n. 297 with reference to Mark 2:24; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.252 and John 5:10.

While there is evidence for a technical usage of "rescue of life" (Hebr. פְּקוּיֹת נַפְשׁוֹ) in Jewish sources on Sabbath halakhah from the Second Temple period onwards (cf. Str-B 1:623–629; 2:5,533–534; Doering, *Schabbat*, 566–567 with notes), "doing the good" is, as far as I know, not a technical term.

<sup>75</sup> In this extension of the Sabbath halakhah to healing beyond imminent life danger, Schaller, *Jesus* sees the historical kernel of the tradition on Jesus and the Sabbath.

<sup>76</sup> CD XI, 5–6 and CD XI, 13.16.

<sup>77</sup> 4Q265 frg. 7 l. 4–5 and 4Q265 fragm. 6 l 5–7; cf. *t. Shab.* 14 (15):3; *b. Shab.* 128b.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, JLCR 2 (London: Athlone Press, 1956), 68–71.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. A. Watson, *Jesus and the Law* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 38.

would be a very uncommon and unprofessional argument. It is, however, doubtful whether such a rule for valid argumentation had already gained general acceptance in first-century Judaism.<sup>80</sup>

The pericope in its final (redactional) form<sup>81</sup> cannot be understood, in my opinion, without acknowledgement of the messianic aspect of the argumentation. The action of Jesus is compared to that of King David (which, according to the biblical account,<sup>82</sup> did not take place on a Sabbath day). It is not necessary to see here priestly functions attributed to Jesus.<sup>83</sup> In vv. 27–28, which are built upon a word-play with “man” and “son of man,”<sup>84</sup> the concern for human need is set against the commandment of the Torah, an opposition which certainly would not be acceptable to the Pharisees involved in the scene. Although it is generally justified to see Jesus’ message concerned with the coming kingdom of God, I cannot see a specific reference to this in the Sabbath scenes.<sup>85</sup>

The Fourth Gospel mentions Jesus’ healings on the Sabbath day in three instances (John 5:1–18; 7:21–23; 9, especially vv. 13–17). In John 5 it is not only the healing which is incriminated (v. 16) but also Jesus’ advice to the lame man to take his bed and go (vv. 8–10). While this point is criticised by “the Jews,” it is the narrator himself who explicitly states that Jesus broke the Sabbath (v. 18: ἔλθεν<sup>86</sup> τὸ σάββατον), a statement which is repeated in different words by the Pharisees in

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Daube, *New Testament*, 69 (70: reference to *y. Yom.* 8:4 fol. 45b).

<sup>81</sup> The co-existence of two distinct Jesus *logia* in vv. 25–26 and 27–28 has provoked a plurality of hypotheses concerning the development of the pericope; see R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC 34A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 119–120.

<sup>82</sup> In later Jewish tradition the event could be dated to a Sabbath day, cf. *Yalq.* to 1 Sam 21:5 (§ 130) *b. Men.* 95b; cf. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, repr. 1998), 6:243.

<sup>83</sup> The comparison made in Matt 12:5–6 is not between Jesus and the priests, but the Temple.

<sup>84</sup> Schaller, *Jesus*, 16–20 argues for a non-christological understanding of the word-play and adduces convincing parallels from Jewish literature. In the Marcan context, however, the “son of man” in v. 28 is best understood in terms of christology. The title is used for the first time in Mark 2:10.

<sup>85</sup> Doering, *Schabbat*, 424, who sees here the decisive difference to the Jewish Sabbath halakhah, fails to give the evidence.

<sup>86</sup> It is not compulsory nor even recommended by the context to understand the verb in the more fundamental sense of “to dissolve; to abolish”; cf. S.-O. Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1995), 151 n. 18. Such fundamental statements belong to a later period of Christian literature, cf. *Barnabas* 2.5–6; *Actus Petri cum Simone* 1 (Lipsius/Bonnet, 1:45); *Passio Sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli* 1 (Lipsius/Bonnet, 1:118); *Acta Philippi* 2.10 (15) (Bovon/Bouvier/Amsler, 53).

John 9:16: Jesus “does not keep (Gr.: οὐ τηρεῖ) the Sabbath.” These basic statements about Jesus’ relation to the Sabbath are without parallel in the synoptic tradition. In John 7:22–23, Jesus compares his Sabbath healing to the Jewish practice of circumcision on the Sabbath day with reference to the episode of John 5 and using a conclusion *a minori ad maius*. This argumentation seems to subscribe to the logic of the Law and its interpretation. In the context of the gospel we must, however, understand this utterance as an *argumentatio ad hominem*, not as a fundamental statement about Jesus and the Torah. Already in the prologue, it is made clear that the Law and Moses are not on the same side or the same level with Jesus Christ (John 1:17). In speaking of “the Jews” (70 times) *together with* “their Law,” the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Jesus take a remarkable distance to the Jewish tradition while using it repeatedly.<sup>87</sup>

There is only one example in the Jesus tradition in which a commandment of the Decalogue (viz. its substance) serves as the main argument in a dispute: In the discussion on divorce (Mark 10:2–12 par. Matt 19:3–9; cf. Luke 16:18–19 par. Matt 5:32; John 4:16–19), Jesus explicitly reduces the problem to that of adultery, thus making reference to the Decalogue.<sup>88</sup> While this holds true for the synoptic tradition and, more implicitly, also for John 4, our earliest testimony to Jesus’ saying on divorce, 1 Cor 7:10–11, does not use the category of adultery. So Paul does not stress the relation of the *logion* to the Decalogue, although this background may have been evident to the author (and his readers in Corinth?) as well.

#### 4. *The Pre-Easter Jesus and the Ten Words*

Approaching the question of historicity, we have to make a distinction between the general attitude towards the Ten Words which is attributed

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<sup>87</sup> The formulation occurs in the mouth of Jesus in John 8:17; 10:34; 15:25; see also 7:19, 23, 51; 8:5; 18:31; 19:7. J. Augenstein, “‘Euer Gesetz’—Ein Pronomen und die johanneische Haltung zum Gesetz,” *ZNW* 88 (1997): 311–313 shows that the Johannine expression itself is not anti-nomistic or anti-Jewish. The positive relation to the Scriptures and Jewish traditions in John should not lead us to overlook the conflict between Johannine Christianity and Judaism which lies behind the gospel. It is conflict between two closely related groups. For other possible references to the Ten Words in John, see J. G. van der Watt, “Ethics and Ethos in the Gospel according to John,” *ZNW* 97 (2006): 147–176, esp. 152–157.

<sup>88</sup> But note that the pericope in its present context would be quite pointless if the Pharisees, who ask the question, had themselves no idea of a principle lying behind or even contradicting the stipulations of the Torah concerning divorce.

to Jesus in our sources, and the exact form and wording of the *logia* presented in the narratives.

With regard to the latter question it has to be repeated that, in a very simple and formal sense, no sayings of the “historical”<sup>89</sup> Jesus, whose preferred language most probably was Aramaic,<sup>90</sup> have been passed down to us. But we do come across reflections and traditions of Jesus’ own deeds and words in our sources. Radical scepticism would not be justified. On the other hand, the needs and interests of the early Christian writers, who tell us about Jesus, undoubtedly contributed considerably to the picture they draw of Jesus’ theology and ethics. The early Christians did not just remember Jesus for remembrance’ sake, but they saw a strong relation between their own time and problems and the way of life and faith Jesus showed to his followers. In seeing their lives as formed by Jesus’ words and deeds, they consciously or unconsciously formed the life of Jesus according to their opinions and needs. Different situations and communities may have contributed to the tradition of just *one* scene or *logion*, although our ability to make exact distinctions between the different shapes and levels of the tradition is rather limited, especially when we have no mutually independent sources testifying to the same event.<sup>91</sup> In this situation—which is not at all exceptional in the study of antiquity!—the task of the historian is to investigate the probability of the picture which the sources draw. Such investigations cannot start from a presupposed picture of the pre-Easter Jesus, but they have to argue for the inherent plausibility of the informations given in the sources.

With regard to the former question, i.e. the general attitude of Jesus towards the Ten Words revealed in our sources, we can isolate four main characteristics:

- a. The sources presuppose Jesus’ knowledge and acceptance of the Ten Words as normative for everyday life.
- b. No special stress is laid in Jesus’ words on the Ten Words as the most important part of the Law, as the main rule or a catechism of Judaism.

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<sup>89</sup> For methodological and theological reasons I prefer the expression “pre-Easter Jesus” to “historical Jesus.”

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:255–268.

<sup>91</sup> Whether Mark and the hypothetical source Q are independent of each other is a matter of dispute. It seems to me to be beyond doubt that John knew one or more of the synoptics.

- c. In the extant sources of early Christianity, Jesus never contradicts a commandment of the Decalogue directly, but he debates and even stipulates their interpretation and extension.
- d. Apparent conflicts on the Ten Words which seem to touch the substance of the rule arise only with regard to the Sabbath commandment.

A few concluding comments concerning the historical plausibility of these points may be added:

- a'. Jesus' knowledge of the Decalogue, as shown in the sources, is part of the broader theme of Jesus' knowledge of and relation to the Scriptures of Israel. While it is obvious that each of the gospels has an individual approach to the subject, it can be said that for all four canonical gospels the theme is an important aspect of christology. This fact may raise historical suspicion with regard to the narratives, but our investigation has shown that knowledge of the Ten Words is far from impossible for a first-century Jew, even if he was illiterate.
- b'. Our analysis of the extant sources has shown that the Ten Words could be understood as a prominent, but not isolated, part of the Torah in Second Temple Judaism. In the literature of the period, the Decalogue is not singled out as the only relevant prescription made by God to his people. But contrary to later tendencies in Jewish thought, an effort to minimize the special importance of the Decalogue cannot be discerned either. Jesus' attitude towards the Ten Words, as it is depicted in the sources, fits very well into this overall picture.
- c'. Apart from the Sabbath commandment, Jesus never extends his interpretation of the Decalogue to the limits or beyond. While in Mark 7:9–13 par. he criticizes a certain halakhah, in the antitheses of the Sermon on the Mount he spells out the positive intention of two of the prohibitions of the Decalogue in a radical manner, while a third commandment is probably in view. In addition to this, Jesus seems to ask for the internal thoughts and motivations which, in his opinion, are also aimed at by the Decalogue. In the context of the First Gospel this attitude towards some commandments of the Torah fits well into the general picture drawn of Jesus as God's representative. It is thus part of Matthew's christology. Nevertheless, the quest for the basic and positive ethical intentions of the



Law or some parts of it is not without parallels in Second Temple Judaism. With respect to this tendency, the historian is justified in interpreting the message of the Jesus movement as one of several attempts to put the Law into practice in everyone's everyday life in Palestine and outside the Temple courts in the first century CE.<sup>92</sup>

Jesus' Jewish opponents, as they are depicted in the Fourth Gospel, see an open conflict between his claim to authority and the first commandment. This picture, which may have been influenced by post-Easter Jewish-Christian controversy, does not allow us to draw any confident conclusions with respect to the pre-Easter Jesus. Early Christian theology laid stress on the conviction that belief in Jesus Christ does not contradict traditional monotheistic faith. The most probable conjecture is that Jesus himself held on to the first commandment and saw no conflict with his self-understanding.

- d'. While a fundamental opposition of Jesus to the Sabbath commandment is never spelled out clearly in the early sources, it is the Sabbath halakhah (together with some aspects of the halakhah concerning purity, the food laws and the *korban* practice) which is a matter of conflict between Jesus and some of his contemporaries. The position Jesus takes may be called "a-halakhic."<sup>93</sup> The fact that the Sabbath conflicts are not described as a fundamental conflict about the Torah/Nomos as such speaks, in my eyes, in favour of historical reliability.<sup>94</sup>

Our examination of Jesus' attitude towards the Ten Words leads us to a better understanding of why Christianity held on to the Ten Words<sup>95</sup> while other parts of the prescriptive Torah were dropped as irrelevant: In the collective memory of the church, Jesus, the Christ, was remembered as knowing and respecting the Ten Words. Historical inquiry casts no fundamental doubt on this way of commemorating Jesus.

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<sup>92</sup> Needless to say, this is not all that can be said about the Jesus movement and its message.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Doering, *Schabbat*, 424.

<sup>94</sup> Examinations of the reliability of the early Christian accounts on Jesus should be aware of the fact that, in any case, our sources are not—and do not intend to be—verbatim reports.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. W. Rordorf, "Beobachtungen zum Gebrauch des Dekalogs in der vorkonstantinischen Kirche," in *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, ed. W. C. Weinrich (Macon: Mercer, 1984), 2:431–442.

## JESUS AS MOVING IMAGE: THE PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS SCHOLAR IN THE AGE OF FILM

CLIVE MARSH

The use of film in theology and biblical studies is a relatively recent phenomenon (half a century old). How could it be otherwise, when film itself is little more than a century old? Compared with the history of the study of the Bible, and even of the interface between study of biblical texts and the arts, this is a mere moment. Analysis of the impact of the use of film in theology and in biblical and religious studies, however, is in its infancy. We are still largely at the stage of discovery. Imaginative approaches, from many different perspectives, to the exploration of film in theology, religion and biblical studies, jostle for position across the academy, overlapping with widespread use of film, for multiple purposes, throughout religious and cultural life. It has been like this since the 1970's.<sup>1</sup> However, whilst gospel texts are illustrated by, and compared with, scenes from *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, *The Last Temptation of Christ* or *The Passion of the Christ*, much else goes on besides. And some of it will be going on in biblical studies classrooms, even if left unexamined in that particular location.

Psychologists use film to help clients open up their lives as part of their therapy; youth workers use film to raise issues, emotional, political and developmental, on the part of young people; media lecturers use film to expose dominant cultural themes; ministers of religion show films to engage their congregations and to get a point across. What may count as 'abuse' in the midst of all this is sometimes difficult to

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<sup>1</sup> Though there are one or two earlier explorations, Neil Hurley's *Theology through Film* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) was something of a first. In biblical studies, Barnes Tatum was teaching "A Cinematic Quest for Jesus" with Henry Ingram from the mid-1970's (W. B. Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies: A Guide to the First Hundred Years* [Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 1997], vii). Ronald Holloway, *Beyond the Image: Approaches to the Religious Dimension in the Cinema* (Geneva: WCC, 1977) was comprehensive in its sweep through the possibilities opened up by careful scrutiny of what films could do. John R. May's published work began to appear shortly after that. For recent bibliographies, see S. Nolan, "Film and Religion," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. J. Mitchell and S. Marriage (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 369–374 and *Cinéma Divinité: Religion, Theology and the Bible in Film*, ed. E. S. Christianson et al. (London: SCM, 2005), 331–346.

determine. Film studies scholars and film critics occasionally throw up their hands in horror at what goes on, if they are aware of it at all, in religion departments and in churches. But film-watching and film-using continues, and will continue to do so, for purposes well beyond what films may have been intended for. In the case of the films with a religious subject-matter, furthermore, what such films actually do is very difficult to control. This is why they are recognized as so potentially dangerous.

In defence of such use, psychologists, media lecturers and religious leaders may respond: "But we are only responding to how films actually work." Indeed, whatever the intention of their makers, films frequently achieve much more than the entertainment of the audiences for whom they were made.<sup>2</sup> Even an intent to educate, shock, stimulate, or move viewers emotionally may not work out quite as planned. Despite the emergence of a critical perspective on the use of film, though, in biblical and religious studies we remain at the discovery stage. The realization that scenes from *Monty Python's Life of Brian* can unlock particular students' critical abilities vis-à-vis gospel texts remains more the norm than, say, a psycho-cultural or psychoanalytic reading of what may be going on for a viewer of *The Passion of the Christ* in a Western multiplex.<sup>3</sup> A fully interdisciplinary approach to the use of film in biblical, religious and theological studies has yet to emerge.

This chapter acknowledges that such interdisciplinary work is beginning. Its main purpose, however, is to consider what is entailed when the Jesus story is watched rather than read. What are Jesus-films doing to those who view them? And does, or should, the study of Jesus-films in any way affect the work of historical Jesus researchers and biblical scholars? In the context of this analysis, the complex, but limited, role to be played by the biblical scholar becomes apparent.

Jesus is a "moving image" in three senses. All of these senses are accentuated through the experience of watching portrayals of Jesus in film. The first and most obvious way of understanding Jesus as a moving image is the fact that he appears—portrayed by actors—as apparently

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<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, of course, entertainment may not be the sole aim, or at all a motive, for making a film (e.g. Gibson's making of *The Passion of the Christ*), though this is admittedly unusual.

<sup>3</sup> In other words, critical examination of the "film-viewing experience" (as appears, for example, in Crossan's and Goodacre's contributions to *Jesus and Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ"*, ed. K. E. Corley and R. L. Webb [London: Continuum, 2004]) is a new phenomenon in biblical studies.

literally moving on cinema screens. Second, images of Jesus “move” in so far as they change and develop through time. As the history of art shows, not all images attempt to be historically accurate. Nor do all seek to offer a theological interpretation of his life. Some are explicitly about relating his life, teaching and influence to a particular people or group (and he is thus portrayed as Maori, Black or whatever). Jesus’ moving image is therefore always being adapted for a variety of purposes to new contexts. Third, Jesus’ image moves people. Viewers of his image can be emotionally affected by what they see. “Seeing” happens in many dimensions.<sup>4</sup> Attention to viewer-reception of Jesus images thus requires analysis of how emotional reactions function within the context of aesthetic and/or ethical response, and within the framework of whatever ‘cognitive worlds’ are operative for viewers.<sup>5</sup>

All of these three senses of “Jesus as moving image” need examining with respect to the experience of watching Jesus-films. Only then will it be possible to consider what possible role a historical Jesus scholar might play in the task of assessing what filmic images of Jesus are actually doing to those who view them.

### 1. *Jesus as “Moving Image”: Experiencing a Screened Jesus*

First, then, we turn to the most obvious sense of Jesus as “moving image”: films about Jesus are made.<sup>6</sup> The concept of a cinematic “moving image”

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<sup>4</sup> “The act of seeing involves more than the eyes; it incorporates the fullness of the human senses in an orchestrated process of intellect and vision” (D. Apostolos-Cappadona, “On Seeing *The Passion*: Is There a Painting in This Film? Or Is This Film a Painting?” in *Re-Viewing the Passion: Mel Gibson’s Film and Its Critics*, ed. S. B. Plate [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004], 97–108, at 99).

<sup>5</sup> By “cognitive world” I mean the mental framework, or belief structure or system, within which people live and on the basis of which they make sense of the world and choose to act. Psychologists also use the term “schema.”

<sup>6</sup> An accepted list of the main Jesus-films has now almost attained canonical status: *The King of Kings* (1927), *King of Kings* (1961), *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (1964), *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1975), *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* (1979), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), *Jesus of Montreal* (1989), and (presumably now) *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) would appear on all lists. The first nine are examined in R. C. Stern, C. N. Jefford and G. Debona, *Savior on the Silver Screen* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1999). Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies*, considers eight of the ten (not *Life of Brian* or *The Passion*), though he does reflect briefly on the latter in “*The Passion* in the History of Jesus Films,” in *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ”*, ed. Corley and Webb, 140–150. Tatum also adds *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), *Intolerance* (1916), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Godspell* (1973), and John Heyman’s *Jesus* (1979)—the only non-commercial film included—in his study. Lloyd Baugh, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film* (Kansas

is instructive, for a fundamental deception may be at work here that turns film into an illusionistic and thus a deceptive, untrustworthy medium. As is often noted, cinematic images move only because the machinery moves them. In fact, the images are all still. The “movement” is therefore all part of film’s functioning as an illusionistic medium. Watching films about Jesus, it could therefore be argued, merely feeds off the illusionistic nature of the medium, in turn perpetuating the theological illusion of Jesus’ continued existence. The “life-like” portrayal on screen thus panders to the wish-fulfilment of believing cinema-goers. More than is the case with other historical figures, because of the theological traditions in which Jesus has been located and the cultural impact which has resulted, screen versions of Jesus perpetuate a cognitive illusion too. We do not believe that Jesus is in the cinema. But the “bringing to life” of the figure of Jesus does more than any other medium, perhaps, to encourage people to believe things which should not be believed. For film itself asks us to suspend disbelief in order to enjoy the medium in the first place.

As far as the basic question about “moving images” is concerned, however, Gregory Currie has offered a good case against “Perceptual Illusionism”—the view that on-screen images do not really move. With recourse to what he calls “cinematic motion,” Currie points out that though the images projected are indeed still, they move in so far as they are projected to different parts of a screen.<sup>7</sup> We know, therefore, that a

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City: Sheed and Ward, 1997), examines Rossellini’s *The Messiah* (1975), alongside seven of the canon in Part One of his book (*The King of Kings* receives only brief mention in his opening chapter), but he includes *Godspell*. *Jesus of Montreal* is treated separately as a “transition film” to Part Two of the work, where he considers Christ-Figure films. Other surveys of Jesus-films include P. Malone, *Movie Christ and Antichrists* (New York: Crossroad, 1990); R. Kinnard and T. Davis, *Divine Images: A History of Jesus on the Screen* (New York: Citadel Press, 1992); W. R. Telford, “Jesus Christ Movie Star: The Depiction of Jesus in the Cinema,” in *Explorations in Theology and Film*, ed. C. Marsh and G. Ortiz (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 115–139. R. Zwick, *Evangelienrezeption im Jesusfilm: Ein Beitrag zur intermedialen Wirkungsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Würzburg: Seelsorge/Echter Verlag, 1997), and R. Walsh, *Reading the Gospels in the Dark: Portrayals of Jesus in Film* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003) are biblical in focus. Zwick considers Pasolini’s *Matthew*, Rossellini’s *Messiah*, Zeffirelli’s *Jesus* and Stevens’ *King of Kings*. Walsh examines five of the canon of ten (*Jesus of Montreal*, *Godspell*, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, *King of Kings*, and *The Greatest Story Ever Told*). Adele Reinhartz, *Jesus of Hollywood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), and J. L. Staley and R. Walsh, *Jesus, the Gospels, and the Cinematic Imagination: A Handbook to Jesus on DVD* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), are further useful works on the Jesus-film genre, but appeared too late to be considered fully in this study.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory Currie, “Film, Reality and Illusion” in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film*

horse or a train (or Jesus) is not really “there.” We also know that the movement, such as it is, is created mechanically by the movement and projection of still images. But the positioning of the images changes; they do move across the screen. We may call this an “illusion” of movement if we wish.<sup>8</sup> The main point, however, is that the imagination of the viewer combines with this “cinematic motion” to enable film as a medium to work. This does not necessarily mean that what film presents is cognitively misleading. All that is being identified is the way that the medium works. It is being recognised that the viewer contributes to this process. And whether Currie’s case is accepted or not, it is one thing to talk about visual perceptions in a cinema, and quite another to talk about beliefs based on those perceptions. Perceptual Illusionism, if it occurs at all, has no direct link with Cognitive Illusionism.

Nevertheless, new interpretative challenges have arisen with the arrival of the Jesus-film. For the first time—some 1800 years after Jesus’ earthly life and 1500 years after the first artistic portrayals of Jesus emerged—Jesus began to be portrayed as a moving image in a mass-produced form of popular culture.<sup>9</sup> He could appear as fully human, walking and talking in the context of ordinary human interactions. As the history of the cinematic portrayal of Jesus has shown, film has sharpened awareness of aspects of the task of interpreting Jesus as a human figure. First, the “life-likeness” of cinematic portrayals suggests that film will emphasize the humanity of Jesus. Film presents the scandal of particularity—“God, contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man”—in the starkest of forms. Positively expressed, it provides the opportunity for directors and viewers to explore belief in the presence of God in frail, limited human form.

The scope for wrestling theologically with the humanity of Jesus has, however, arguably not been fully exploited. The medium of communi-

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*Studies*, ed. David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 325–344, esp. 334–339.

<sup>8</sup> And Currie is clearly not too worried if this part of his argument is not accepted. But he does want to counter the view that Perceptual and Cognitive Illusionism inevitably go together. His conclusion is clear: “. . . the concept of illusion is in fact entirely irrelevant to understanding the nature and function of film” (Currie, “Film, Reality and Illusion,” 341).

<sup>9</sup> Jesus had, of course, been portrayed in drama. The viewer/performer relationship in drama is, however, different from that experienced by the viewer in relation to film. Theatre raises some similar issues to what is now discussed, but the particularity of theatre (you know the actor is not Jesus) uses the imagination of the spectator in a different way. Film invites greater suspension of disbelief and the imagination can be even more engaged.

cation through which Jesus' humanity *can* be made most apparent in fact becomes one in which that humanity is rendered unusual, even freakish. Film demands facial close-ups and interactions with others. Yet in many Jesus-films Jesus rarely smiles or gets cross.<sup>10</sup> His awareness of God is too easily portrayed through his looking skywards or in the form of upward eye-movements.<sup>11</sup> Jesus is not quite human enough, and divinity thus becomes a distortion of the human rather than its potential transformation or completion.

Second, the need to cast an actor (never, of course, an actress) in the part of Jesus accentuates the maleness of Jesus. Film develops the emphasis evident throughout much Christian art upon a male *individual* to a considerable degree. There is little room for ambiguity in the portrayal of Jesus. Male actors play the lead role. Christian history and theology has long emphasized Jesus as an individual, and often solitary, saviour figure.<sup>12</sup> The "moving pictures" portrayal of Jesus thus leads, strangely, to further isolation of the individual, even though there is scope for locating Jesus more and more in the context of social interaction.<sup>13</sup> In film, Jesus is clearly an individual male, but his detachment from those around him is often more apparent than his similarity to other human beings. In a drive, it seems, to express divine "otherness," the filmic portrayals of Jesus too easily stifle his humanity. Furthermore, the fact that Jesus-films accentuate the saviour as isolated male leads may contribute to the perpetuation of the easy association of deity and maleness. Again, then, the potential of a medium to enable

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<sup>10</sup> As Baugh notes, this is one reason why Scorsese's Jesus (played by Willem Defoe) in *The Last Temptation of Christ* is so striking and fresh, even if, in Baugh's view, Scorsese's attempt is unsuccessful (Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, 55–56).

<sup>11</sup> And in this respect Jesus-films have remained constrained by the conventions of Western art.

<sup>12</sup> Again, the history of art provides more than a mere background. Film-watchers are already used to seeing Jesus as an abandoned, crucified figure. The portrayals by El Greco (1541–1614), or more recently by Craigie Aitchieson (1926–), of the detached, solitary figure come immediately to mind.

<sup>13</sup> There are exceptions, as I shall show below with reference to *Jesus of Montreal* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. But the point stands in general terms. On the limits of Scorsese's achievement, see Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*: "If Kazantzakis devotes much time to the relationships of Jesus with most of his disciples, thus creating a complex and vibrant community in which Jesus lives and matures in his vocation, Scorsese in effect reduces this community to one disciple, Judas, and gives Jesus an almost exclusive, and fundamentally unbalanced, relationship with his betrayer" (53). For further comment on the relationship between Judas and Jesus in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, see W. R. Telford, "The Two Faces of Betrayal: The Characterization of Peter and Judas in the Biblical Epic or Christ Film," in *Cinéma Divinité*, ed. Christianson et al., 214–235, esp. 231–232.

exploration of the intertwining of human and divine—which a full and adequate exploration of the doctrine of incarnation requires—appears not to be fulfilled. The opportunity to present and explore Jesus as a human being in terms of a social world is rarely taken up adequately in film versions of his life.

It is nevertheless important to recognize, third, that Jesus-films are influential in churches and cultures throughout the world. They bolster, challenge or distort the faith of some, remind others why they are not religious, and inform, entertain and provoke viewers who might have few explicit religious interests at all. They fit, if sometimes uneasily, into an identifiable genre (“biblical epic” or “religious film”).<sup>14</sup> And they do their work as films in continuity with the way in which the figure of Jesus already exerts a major cultural and religious influence.

All explorations of Jesus recognize they are interpretations of a historical figure. Given the broader cultural impact of Jesus, however, they are also aware that they are dealing with a figure who, in Hal Childs’ words, functions as “...a projection of the self...a symbol, or fantasy, of a potential of the conscious personality that comes from being itself.”<sup>15</sup> Childs claims further that: “...the influence of ‘the Christ,’ in terms of the presence of an unconscious archetype, is inescapable for anyone who approaches Jesus.”<sup>16</sup> The appearance of so important a projection, symbol, fantasy or archetype in a medium so popular and, frankly, entertaining as film raises a number of new questions, or old questions in new forms.<sup>17</sup> What is happening when Jesus-films are viewed in the cinema? Is this still entertainment? What might the way films work tell us about what is happening between image and viewer when *any* Jesus image is looked at? What other, as yet unforeseen, challenges are brought by the *mass-produced* nature of the moving images of Jesus

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<sup>14</sup> The challenge to a film director would be to try and create a Jesus-film which was more of a “biopic” than a biblical epic.

<sup>15</sup> Hal Childs, *The Myth of the Historical Jesus and the Evolution of Consciousness* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 155.

<sup>16</sup> Childs, *The Myth*, 171.

<sup>17</sup> Perhaps the real challenge has only been post-1968, as explicit religious authority still exerted a considerable influence on Jesus-films until then, and continues to do so more implicitly (on this, see e.g. Tatum, “*The Passion in the History of Jesus Films*,” 142). As Carl Dyke notes, this hidden pressure exerts influence even on such seemingly scandalous films as *Monty Python’s Life of Brian* which, in religious and theological perspective, proves conservative and, in its direct portrayal of Jesus, does not subvert the formulae of the biblical epic: Carl Dyke, “Learning from *The Life of Brian*: Saviors for Seminars,” in *Screening Scripture: Intertextual Connections between Scripture and Film*, ed. G. Aichele and R. Walsh (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002), 229–250.



which films convey?<sup>18</sup> How are religious traditions, Christianity especially, to respond to the evident impact of such images?

This first sense of Jesus as moving image—the fact that Jesus-films exist at all—invites us, then, to look afresh at what happens between “text” and receiver in the process of “reception.” Viewers undoubtedly bring material from the cognitive worlds (belief systems, worldviews, schemas) within which they live. But the process of interacting with images in the context of film-watching is more complex still. It is not merely cognitive.<sup>19</sup> In the case of Jesus-films, viewers are suspending their disbelief about one form of representation (Jesus is not “really there”) and one form of movement (the pictures move only because the projector makes them move) in their process of responding to what the film offers. Jesus-films are likely to be stimulating much more than by the mere transfer of cognitive knowledge from film to viewer (e.g. about first-century history, the Bible, or Christian belief).<sup>20</sup> The interaction between text and viewer thus demands, especially when the interaction occurs in a communal context (e.g. a cinema), attention to the multiple ways in which the figure of Jesus *per se* functions in human culture. Historical enquiry alone is inadequate to do justice to the task of interpreting Jesus and Jesus-films. Even historical and theological enquiry together will not suffice.

This first meaning of Jesus as moving image thus takes the interpreter of Jesus deep into questions about how the image of Jesus functions in human culture. “Jesus” is an historical figure who has been “mythicized.” Films purporting to present him either as a historical figure, or even in the form in which he is presented in one or more of the gospels, do not raise questions only about theology, or about the adequacy of any form of religious (esp. Christian) orthodoxy. The movement of still images to create “cinematic motion” invites analysis of how perceptual stimulus and entertainment, as well as religion, participate in the task of interpreting Jesus.

Furthermore, the appearance of Jesus as a figure in a mass medium of popular entertainment poses the question of how ethical and philo-

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<sup>18</sup> I.e. aspects of the Jesus-film which raise questions going beyond those raised by theatre in which actors play Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> A comprehensive exploration of the many dimensions of reception is Torben Grodal, *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings and Cognition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Though this may occur too. People might be stimulated to learn things about first-century Palestine and the gospel stories through Jesus-films.

sophical stimulus and cultural development occur in an age of declining support for organized religion. It has also been noted that a medium which might be expected to prove an ideal means through which to portray a human Jesus ends up rarely doing so. In fact the opposite has often been the case.

## 2. *Jesus as Developing Image*

A second meaning of the term “Jesus as moving image” is that of the existence of multiple Jesus images. There are many films about Jesus. Beyond film, there are many other images of Jesus visual and verbal—millions, in fact—to be found both across Christian history and in the world today. To talk of “the image of Jesus” is therefore misleading. For we can only ever deal with images of Jesus, or “an” image of Jesus.<sup>21</sup>

This is a commonplace observation even for a historian. Awareness that there was only one historical figure does not lead to the assumption that there can only be one true account of that person’s life.<sup>22</sup> History-writing thrives on the fact that narrative accounts of “what happened” or “who a person really was” are always contestable. Push that observation beyond historical research, however, and it becomes still more telling. Images of Jesus are created for all sorts of reasons: religious, theological, devotional, ethical, psychological, sociological, political.<sup>23</sup> The result is a plethora of images which may not be unhistorical, yet which are doing more than to represent Jesus as a past historical phenomenon, and therefore rarely purport to be “simply historical.” “Jesus” is therefore a moving image because the range of images discloses that Jesus is constantly in movement, changing, adapting to new circumstances, serving the different needs of those who create them. He inevitably reflects, for example, the many geographical contexts and ethnic backgrounds out of which images are produced. This now commonplace observation has

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<sup>21</sup> Or in Ernst Troeltsch’s memorable phrase, “the infinitely concrete and yet infinitely variegated picture of Jesus” (“The Significance of the Historical Existence of Jesus for Faith,” in *Ernst Troeltsch: Writings on Religion and Theology* [London: Duckworth, 1977], 182–207, at 194). Troeltsch was here referring only to what happens in Christianity, but his observation is just as applicable further afield.

<sup>22</sup> Even accepting that different philosophies of history immediately come into play here and the degree to which one should search for, and can have any hope even of partially attaining, a measure of objectivity in what a historian concludes would be disputed between historians (and thus, in our case, between historical Jesus scholars).

<sup>23</sup> For exploration of such interests, see my “Diverse Agendas at Work in the Jesus Quest” in Vol. II of this Handbook.

been the focus of many studies in cultural history and in the interface between theology and culture.<sup>24</sup>

The moving image of Jesus is therefore a site of permanent negotiation between the dangerous memory of the past historical figure and whatever drives the interpreter who fashions an image of Jesus to create that image in the first place. A quintessentially post-modern word—in the sense that it implies flux, constant instability, lack of fixed markers, unstable or non-existent “truth”—the concept of “negotiation” draws attention to incomplete understanding and to the limited nature of any image of Jesus. In the words of one theorist: “Negotiated meaning is at once both historical and dynamic, contextual and unique.”<sup>25</sup> To negotiate an image of Jesus thus entails fashioning an image of a past figure, in a new historical context, whilst reflecting consciously and unconsciously many other concerns. As a “site of struggle,” Jesus images thus function as a location for the negotiation of basic meanings and purposes in human living, predicated upon the task of narrating the life of a past figure. Wenger’s words are again useful:

By living in the world we do not just make meanings up independently of the world, but neither does the world simply impose meanings on us. The negotiation of meaning is a productive process, but negotiating meaning is not constructing it from scratch. Meaning is not pre-existing, but neither is it simply made up.<sup>26</sup>

This could easily be an account of how “tradition” works. There is always a “given” at work somewhere when the task of negotiating meaning is undertaken. In the task of interpreting Jesus, there is always some form of “given” existing in the form of past accounts (gospels, a harmonized historical or history-like account of his life, or at the very least historical data). Equally, because of the *de facto* function of the figure of Jesus across human cultures—as projection, symbol, fantasy or archetype—there is also a “given” of meaning at work. Those who

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<sup>24</sup> To cite some of the most well-known: J. Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, ed. J. M. Bonino (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1985); A. Wessels, *Images of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1990); *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, ed. R. Schreier (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991); J. R. Levison and P. Pope-Levison, *Jesus in Global Contexts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); *Asian Faces of Jesus*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993); and V. Küster, *The Many Faces of Jesus: Intercultural Christology* (London: SCM, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> E. Wenger, *Communities of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54.

<sup>26</sup> Wenger, *Communities*, 53–54.

interpret Jesus invariably have interests additional to the historical when narrating (or making a film about) his life.<sup>27</sup> “Jesus” will, to put it bluntly, always have something to do with a person’s perception of goodness, truth, justice.

“Goodness,” “truth” and “justice” are themselves contested concepts. They do not easily deliver precise, “transcendental” meanings. That they are concepts which signify values worthy of working towards is not in dispute. But life still has to be lived in the light of partial, working definitions. It is no different with the images of Jesus to which exploration of such concepts are related. As Troeltsch saw clearly, Christians work and re-work images of Jesus in a manner which interweaves historical recollection of a past historical figure (though in not too precise a form), and the needs and aspirations of identifiable but historical, embodied and thus limited communities of believers. This is no less true of all interpreters of Jesus, whether religiously interested or not.

Images of Jesus in film therefore participate, as do all Jesus images, in a complex field of negotiation. They accept their responsibility to interpret a historical figure. They reflect the circumstances of their origins. They serve multiple interests and purposes. They engage in the task of clarifying what it means to live a “good” life.

### 3. *Jesus as Emotionally Influential Image*

There is, however, a third sense in which Jesus is a “moving image.” Jesus moves people emotionally. Exploration of the figure of Jesus thus takes interpreters not only beyond historical research. It takes them beyond solely cognitive considerations too. Having a faith and living within a religious tradition entail both living within a particular cognitive framework and ordering one’s life in terms of that framework. But it is not simply a cognitive exercise. Being religious affects the whole person who chooses to live in this way: their ethical convictions, aesthetic sensibilities and emotional dispositions. This observation is crucial in identifying how the figure of Jesus functions within religion, especially Christianity.<sup>28</sup> When a religious believer reacts to an image of Jesus, it

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the historical interest may, of course, play a minimal role. For the purposes of this article, however, I am assuming that an historical interest will always be present.

<sup>28</sup> Especially, though not exclusively, given that a number of world religions hold the figure of Jesus in high regard. On this, see e.g. C. Bennett, *In Search of Jesus: Insider and Outsider Images* (London: Continuum, 2001), and the relevant articles on different

is neither simply a historical interest which is at work, nor cognitive factors alone. Believers receive confirmation of existing convictions and stimulus to fresh insight, but experience an emotional connection with the figure around whom their life is oriented and in relation to whom their commitments are worked out.

It should not, however, be thought that it is only in the context of explicit religious faith than such non-cognitive factors operate when the figure of Jesus is encountered. The cultural function of the figure of Jesus means that religion-like responses to Jesus operate throughout society more generally. In the context of watching films about Jesus, indeed, religion-like responses to Jesus are especially prominent. It is in this realm of analysis of “viewer-response” that the way in which films work—as a medium of the moving image—and religious response to the figure of Jesus come close together. Through being a medium which depends heavily on the evocation of emotional response, Jesus-films incorporate, but move beyond, purely cognitive interaction with the figure of Jesus.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that film as a medium works in both cognitive and non-cognitive ways is apparent to any regular cinema-goer, and confirmed by film analysis. Recognition that film works in this way explains both why it is treated so suspiciously and why it is so powerful, influential and entertaining a medium.<sup>30</sup> Psychoanalytical approaches to film have emphasized the degree to which viewers may be unaware of the nature and extent of film’s impact upon them. Film’s social and cultural function as entertainment also means that as a form of popular culture it

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religions’ treatment of the figure of Jesus in *Jesus in History, Thought and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J. L. Houlden, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003 = *Jesus: The Complete Guide*, London and New York: Continuum, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> I have explored the importance for *theology* of recognizing the emotional impact of films in *Cinema and Sentiment* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), though not with respect to Jesus-films.

<sup>30</sup> The use by the Nazis of film is often quoted as an example. Leni Riefenstahl created awe-inspiring films which had the effect of inspiring viewers to become “lost” as individuals in the overwhelming power of Nazism. The effect of film-watching coalesced with the ideology the film promoted. On this, see e.g. E. S. H. Tan and N. H. Frijda, “Sentiment in Film Viewing,” in *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition and Emotion*, ed. C. M. Plantinga and G. M. Smith (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 48–64, esp. 62–63.

is deemed a dangerous, mind-numbing medium. Such criticisms have come from within both sociology and psychology.<sup>31</sup>

Approaches to film which are critical of psychoanalytical approaches have, however, been more positive about the emotional impact of film. Viewers may be less duped than is often supposed in the way they interact with the films they watch. The therapeutic function which film-watching can have means that viewers actively “work with” the emotional responses they have (whether intended by film-makers or not) within the act of watching. Furthermore, though films entertain, not all films seek *only* to entertain. And films which intend to entertain, and which viewers themselves view as escapism, often achieve more than directors or viewers expect.<sup>32</sup> Both those who make films and those who watch, in other words, cannot predict exactly what films do to people once viewers’ life-experience and personalities are brought into contact with actual films. The emotions, ethical and political standpoints, aesthetic sensibilities, philosophical outlooks, religious backgrounds, social and ethnic origins of viewers—a mixture of cognitive and non-cognitive factors—are all at work when people watch films.

What do such considerations entail for the study of Jesus-films? Responses to *The Passion of the Christ* may not be the most reliable indicator of responses to Jesus-films in general. As many responses suggest, those who experienced the strongest, positive, life-transforming reactions to the film may already have had a considerable religious background to the film with which to work.<sup>33</sup> A strong emotional

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<sup>31</sup> This view was especially supported within the Frankfurt School for Social Research, the views of which are summarized in, for example, D. Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), ch. 2 or G. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), ch. 4.

<sup>32</sup> The task of gathering detailed empirical data from film-watchers in this important area of “viewer response” is still in its early stages. A small scale study undertaken by Charlotte Haines Lyon (funded by Epworth Fund of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, and supported by the Ster cinema chain) in the UK and Ireland in the Summer of 2004 provided evidence of some stark disjunctures between what viewers believe they go to cinemas for (“pure escapism, nothing else”) and what they themselves record films do to them, both cognitively and non-cognitively. On this, see C. Marsh, “On Dealing with What Films Actually Do to People: The Practice and Theory of Film Watching in Theology/Religion and Film Discussion,” in *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline*, ed. R. K. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 145–161. There is also more work to be done on exploring divergences between how regular cinema-goers respond immediately after viewing a film and when invited to respond, say, two or three months later about a number of films watched over a period of time.

<sup>33</sup> There are, for example, many web-sites of a Christian origin which enable people to discuss their responses to the film. One such ([www.TheLife.com](http://www.TheLife.com)) has a message

response to the stark presentation of the violence done to the body of Jesus may thus have been located within a religious sensibility already attuned to questions of the self-involvement of God in the world, or the extent of God's love. Such a background prevents a response to the violence as "pornography," a reaction felt by many viewers, religious and non-religious alike.<sup>34</sup> It is, however, beyond doubt that when analyzing responses to *The Passion of the Christ*, we are not dealing solely with the cognitive aspects of belief.

This is not a recent phenomenon, of course. Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* was a deeply influential film in Western culture throughout the late 1970's and 1980's following its release as a TV film at Easter 1977. Using extracts from the film in teaching during the 1990's, it became apparent to me when conducting training events in church contexts how important the film had been for the spiritual development of a generation of British Christians.<sup>35</sup> The complexity of film as a medium in conveying the Jesus story also became apparent. In the relative informality of church training events, with a wide cross-section of people present, and without some of the constraints which a more formal academic setting might have presented, aspects of Jesus as emotionally moving image came to light which rarely surface in discussions about christology.

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board containing many appreciative reactions, including this statement (from "rosebud," posted May 22, 2005): "... it reminded me of how thankful I need to be... for the many things that God has done in my life." The use of the word "remind" is significant here. By contrast, to viewers not already immersed in the religious imagery displayed, the impact may be quite different, even if no less emotional. Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times* is recorded as declaring the film to be "so narrowly focused as to be inaccessible for all but the devout," whilst Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* describes it as "powerfully moving and fanatically obtuse in equal doses" (both quotations from <http://www.rottentomatoes.com>).

<sup>34</sup> Examples can again be found on the <http://www.rottentomatoes.com> web-site (accessed 16 August, 2005). "Gibson seems determined to prove that Jesus suffered more than anyone who has ever lived, a tiresomely literal argument at best, an exercise in sadomasochistic bullying at worst" (James Verniere, *Boston Herald*). "Lost in a labyrinth of stomach-churning pugilism, the spectacle is a hefty cross for the audience to bear" (Phil Villarreal, *Arizona Daily Star*). "If Jesus actually received the amount of punishment dished out in this film, he would have been dead three times over before arriving at Calvary" (Jeffrey Westhoff, *Northwest Herald*, Crystal Lake, Il.). And most directly, Rick Groen of the *Globe and Mail* remarks that the film is: "So obsessively and so graphically bloody-minded that it comes perilously close to the pornography of violence."

<sup>35</sup> For studies of the film see, e.g., Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, 72–83, Stern et al., *Savior on the Silver Screen*, 197–229, Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies*, 135–145, and Zwick, *Evangelienrezeption*, 212–263 and 452–467.

Robert Powell's Jesus had, for example, proved sexually attractive for many women viewers.<sup>36</sup> This caused complications for some in their faith journeys, for they had supposed such feelings were off-limits and that Jesus had somehow to be supposed to be asexual. It was, then, the filmic portrayal which had caused the feelings to be had and the related questions to be raised in a way in which no still from the history of Christian art had prompted.<sup>37</sup>

Emotional involvement with Powell's Jesus was not confined to sexuality, however. His rather mystical portrayal of Jesus clearly presented to some viewers an ideal of the spiritual life. References to his "beautiful blue eyes" overlapped with his sexual allure, but also pointed to a "haunting" quality in the portrayal of Jesus. This echoed the kind of responses reported to still images of Jesus by such artists as Warner Sallman and Heinrich Hofmann in North America or, in the UK, Herbert Beecroft.<sup>38</sup> Such images could affect faith development in positive ways, cultivating a spiritual intensity and an appropriate otherworldliness which provided comfort and support and was worthy of emulation.<sup>39</sup> Negatively, of course, the haunting quality could also be intimidating. Rather than evoking a disposition to be emulated, the piercing eyes of such a Jesus could reflect a pursuing, judgmental God.<sup>40</sup> Allied to

<sup>36</sup> Possibly for some men too, of course, though I have no experience of this being declared in the contexts of the sessions I led.

<sup>37</sup> This is not to say that this could not have happened in response to still images from the history of art. I merely record what was reported in classes I taught. It is worth noting that these discussions were occurring *after* the appearance of Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). It was this film above all which provoked widespread public discussion about Jesus' sexuality due to the "dream sequence" in that film, in which Jesus is portrayed as having turned his back on the option of a fulfilled sexual life and domestic happiness in order to fulfil his religious vocation. There was clear evidence from the discussions in the sessions I led in the 1990's that the feelings and thoughts experienced by some women participants in response to Zeffirelli's film had not been expressed and reflected upon at the time. In other words, Scorsese's film enabled important discussions about Jesus and sexuality to be begun.

<sup>38</sup> On Sallman, see e.g. *Icons of American Protestantism: The Art of Warner Sallman*, ed. D. Morgan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), and idem, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), esp. ch. 4. See also idem, "Protestant Visual Piety and the Aesthetics of American Mass Culture," in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*, ed. J. Mitchell and S. Marriage, 107–120. On Powell's portrayal see esp. Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, 81–82 and Stern et al. *Savior on the Silver Screen*, 214.

<sup>39</sup> On what popular devotional images can and do achieve, see e.g. Morgan, *Visual Piety*, 45, 122–123, 126, 133–134, 141–142 and 150–151. Morgan refers to the "talismanic and protective power these items [such as Sallman's *Head of Christ*] were believed to possess" (172).

<sup>40</sup> This is certainly an emotion which many evangelical Protestants I have met report in response to the summoning up of a memory of Beecroft's image of Jesus "*The Lord*



the otherworldliness of this emotional impact of Powell's Jesus is the fact that *Jesus of Nazareth* can be accused of detaching Jesus from his immediate social and political world.<sup>41</sup>

A third aspect of the emotional impact of Powell's Jesus upon viewers—male and female—concerns the fact that it is *Powell's* Jesus. As all commentators on Jesus-films acknowledge, the difficulty of casting Jesus—though long an issue for those organizing Passion Plays—is taken to new heights by the mass medium of film. Baugh expresses this especially well:

Putting a well-known, popular star in the robes of Jesus may ensure profits at the box-office, but it creates major problems for the image of the Jesus thus created: an actor with well-known precedents in the intense psychological dramas of Ingmar Bergman inevitably embodies a Jesus full of existential *angst*; a good-looking blond teenage heart-throb becomes a California-surfer Jesus, the New York-bred, -trained and -accented method actor creates a confused, neurotic Jesus.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, it is not only prior work which creates difficulties. The fact that Powell moved on to act (in the late 1990's) in a sitcom (*The Detectives* on BBC TV in the UK) has meant a major confusion for viewers for whom his face "is" that of Jesus.

In terms of the emotional response of a viewer of a Jesus-film, then, the problem of casting poses very sharply indeed the question of exactly what (or whom) one is having an emotional reaction to. This is in many ways no different from what has been the case throughout the history of Christian art: viewers of images of Jesus may have been reacting to the devotional image of Jesus held by a particular artist, translated from a mental image to visual form.<sup>43</sup> The difference is that in film we are dealing with an actual person portraying Jesus.<sup>44</sup> Films present in a stark

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*turned upon Peter... and Peter remembered*" in churches from their childhood. Indeed, through its link with Peter's denial, the visual image almost appears designed to evoke guilt in those who view it. Morgan notes whilst the positive responses to Sallman's *Head of Christ* came mainly from women, the negative responses came mostly from ordained men (*Visual Piety*, 198–199).

<sup>41</sup> As noted in Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies*, 144.

<sup>42</sup> Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Recognizing also the fact that paintings were sometimes produced on demand (on commission). I have explored to a limited extent how the demands of the art market, the artist's integrity and background and the task of interpreting the gospels interweave in "Rembrandt the Etcher: Mission and Commission as Factors in New Testament Interpretation," *Biblical Interpretation* 6.3/4 (1998): 381–409 (reprinted in *Beyond the Biblical Horizon: The Bible and the Arts*, ed. J. Cheryl Exum [Leiden: Brill, 1999], 123–151).

<sup>44</sup> Except, of course, when Jesus appears in cartoon form, or as a puppet (e.g. in *The Miracle Maker*).

form the question of what occurs between viewers (their life-histories, psychological make-up, and worldviews), moving images, the context of viewing and the historical, aesthetic and theological traditions in which all responses to Jesus occur.

They therefore take, we may say in summary, the emotional element contained within viewer-response to Jesus images to a new level. Concerns about religious cognition—what is believed, and to be believed, theologically, about Jesus?—as well as adherence to gospel narratives and historical accuracy have never been far away in Jesus-films. But how viewers *feel* during and after watching Jesus-films is at least as important as what they are processing mentally. This feature of the way that films work cannot be neglected when Jesus-films are studied.

#### 4. *And What is the Historical Jesus Scholar to Do?*

In a *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, the task of historical Jesus scholars in response to the many images of Jesus which have begun to appear in film over the past century or so might seem clear. They are to be the sober voices who police the imaginative portrayals of Jesus dreamed up by scriptwriters and directors fired up by a whole range of interests and motives. At the very least, they must be amongst the cultural commentators who point out when films are resting more on gospel narratives than seeking historical accuracy, or on extra-biblical texts, when purporting to be either following canonical gospel texts or known historical data. For if it is Jesus, the first-century historical figure from Nazareth, who is supposedly being portrayed in film, then it is historical Jesus scholars who must fulfil their moral and cultural responsibility and be at the forefront of discussions about what can and cannot be known about that Jesus.

The role of historical Jesus scholars might seem, obviously, to be that played by the diverse contributors to *Jesus and Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ."*<sup>45</sup> As a team of scholars they have together critically examined Gibson's film with respect to what it purports to be, and the image of Jesus it presents. Crossan and Goodacre take different sides as to whether the film might be considered commendable. The heart of the collection of essays, however, is a series of studies of particular aspects of the film (i.e. how does the film handle Judas, Satan, women, Jewish leaders, Pilate, the various trials and the Passion). The film receives

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<sup>45</sup> *Jesus and Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ,"* ed. Corley and Webb.

about one-and-a-half cheers in the book. The extent to which Gibson is, in fact, profoundly dependent upon the nineteenth century text *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* by Anne Catherine Emmerich is well brought out.<sup>46</sup> But the main criticism of the film, summarized by the editors in their final contribution, is that the film presents itself as something which it is not: an “accurate” rendering either of the Jesus of history or of the content of the gospels.<sup>47</sup> In presenting this clear conclusion, the contributors have therefore fulfilled their responsibility as New Testament scholars: they have made clear to the public what can and cannot be regarded as reliable (historically, or with respect to the canonical gospels) about Gibson’s films.

So far, so good; and I wholly agree with the conclusion that Corley and Webb draw about Gibson’s film. But although their collection of essays is a good example of what Historical Jesus Research can contribute to the task of studying Jesus in the age of film, I am not sure it says enough. There is more to be said about how historical Jesus scholars must engage with how Jesus is presented and explored in contemporary culture. There is also something to be said to historical Jesus scholars about what the study of the figure of Jesus entails, and this may make uncomfortable hearing for some of those who contribute to Historical Jesus Research. In this section of the chapter I shall develop both these points.

What must be teased out about what Historical Jesus Research may be called upon to consider when handling Jesus-films? First, the complex functioning of Jesus-films sharpens an interpreter’s attention to the meaning of the term “image.” Historical Jesus scholars may be able to undertake their work in the knowledge that they work primarily with narrative sources and verbal images of Jesus.<sup>48</sup> But Jesus-films, like all visual art, remind biblical scholars of the interpretative, imaginative, constructive aspect of their enterprise.

Robert K. Johnston, in defending the extra-biblical embellishments of the gospel texts in Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*, suggests that some of its portrayal of violence is “biblically congruent.”<sup>49</sup> Whether he

<sup>46</sup> Esp. in Robert L. Webb’s essay “*The Passion and the Influence of Emmerich’s The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*,” in *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ*,” ed. Corley and Webb, 160–172.

<sup>47</sup> Corley and Webb, “Conclusion: *The Passion*, the Gospels and the Claims of History,” in *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ*,” ed. Corley and Webb, 173–7.

<sup>48</sup> Primarily narrative sources (gospels and literary fragments), though also archaeological finds (buildings and artefacts), as recent work by Reed and Crossan confirms.

<sup>49</sup> Johnston, “*The Passion as Dynamic Icon*,” 63.

is accurate in this judgment, and whether or not the implied meaning of the violence is theologically defensible, are not the issue here. The concept of “congruence” is applicable both historically and biblically to the task of interpreting Jesus. The interpreter—even the historical Jesus researcher—has to come up with some sort of “image” (even if not necessarily a “Life” of Jesus). Such an image must make sense of “hard evidence” and make judicious use of what we may call “soft” (always disputable) evidence. Such evidence is then located within an imaginative construal of Jesus’ person/life so that we can see “what Jesus was getting at.” Even when the historical concern is uppermost in the interpreter’s aim, then, there is still a role for the imagination.

Second, historical Jesus researchers are thus made starkly aware of their particular, but limited, place within the multi-disciplinary discipline which is biblical studies. Biblical scholars working out of a history, archaeology or classics institutional context may well home in on the figure of Jesus as a past figure in his socio-political and socio-economic context. This might be deemed as “pure” a form of Historical Jesus Research as you can get.<sup>50</sup> By contrast, biblical scholars operating within the world of religious studies may be looking at Jesus as a figure in the history of religion, or in the psychology or sociology of spirituality, or as a figure in media or culture. In such an institutional context, the “historical Jesus” may be accepted more readily as a mental construct even whilst a distinction between “Jesus as he was” and “what has been (and always is) done with Jesus” is maintained.

Different again are the biblical scholars working in seminaries and theological colleges rather than universities. Their Historical Jesus Research need not be less “historical” in its quest for maximum objectivity about the past, and no less attentive to the psychological and sociological factors present in religion, but their theological interests are explicit and need not be bracketed off from their work.

Historical Jesus Research might appear to belong best in the first of those three institutional contexts. However, it must occur in direct relation to the exploratory and creative work undertaken on gospel texts. As has long been recognized, these texts are not “history” in the modern sense, and serve a variety of purposes. Likewise, the diverse interests which arise in relation to Historical Jesus Research demand that many scholars in different disciplines and in various institutional locations

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<sup>50</sup> Though most scholars working in such contexts would avoid using the word “pure,” “objectivity” is still something to be aimed for, even if recognized to be unattainable.

participate in the interpretative task. Pure Historical Jesus Research does not exist.<sup>51</sup> Biblical scholars whose interest might therefore not be primarily “historical”—in the sense of discovering Jesus as he was—may nevertheless have something to offer to Jesus Research by virtue of their work on the gospel texts.

The imaginative element and the limited place that historical research plays in the task of interpreting the figure of Jesus together serve as a reminder, third, of the narrative element in historiography. The task of trying to “get at” Jesus of Nazareth historically demands that the historian construct a narrative. One need not be a self-confessed post-modern historian to acknowledge the truth of this observation. Jesus-films are thus different from what Historical Jesus Researchers are up to only in degree, not in kind. Historical Jesus researchers therefore do well not simply to bring a check-list of “known historical data” about Jesus to Jesus-films in order to tick (or cross) boxes accordingly. “Historical congruence” may demand that imaginative leaps have to be made. In the case of Jesus-films these will be visual, dramatized leaps too. What we see on screen may not be able to be linked with a biblical text or a known historical fact about Jesus. But it may make perfect sense of what we *do* know and what *is* present in the gospels, and as such contribute to our understanding of who Jesus was.<sup>52</sup>

A good example of this is Robert L. Webb’s comment on the ninth of the twelve flashbacks built into the screenplay of *The Passion of the Christ* (“Mary catches the child Jesus as he falls, and helps him up”). Webb writes:

Jesus as a growing boy would naturally have hurt himself falling, and Mary would naturally have done what mothers around the world do for their children when they fall. So while there is no explicit historical data [sic] to support this flashback, it is a realistic and reasonable conjecture.<sup>53</sup>

The “would haves” in that statement indicate just how easy it could be to become fanciful, rather than necessarily imaginative, in undertaking a historical task. And Webb himself recognizes that one purpose of this flashback is to emphasize the role of Mary in the Jesus story. It is legitimate for any historical Jesus researcher to ask what such a scene

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<sup>51</sup> In the same way as: “There is no innocent eye”: Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, “On Seeing *The Passion*,” 100.

<sup>52</sup> Understanding rather than “knowledge,” should the latter be confined to cognitive awareness of empirical data. But here we confront also the question of different definitions of “knowledge”!

<sup>53</sup> Webb, “The Flashbacks in *The Passion*,” 56.

actually adds to our knowledge of Jesus. It could, however, be argued that this particular example of imaginative embellishment stresses the human development of Jesus, something which the paucity of material in the gospels about Jesus' early life and the pressure of Christian theological interpretation run the risk of obscuring.<sup>54</sup>

If Jesus-films are different only in degree from what historical Jesus researchers are up to, this applies also to their difference from religious and theological interpretations of the life of Jesus. This fourth insight is also of relevance to historical Jesus researchers, however. For it reminds them again of the many frameworks of interests within which their historical work is undertaken. It is now clear that despite its past usefulness the framework of the "Jesus of history/Christ of faith debate" is inadequate to describe what is going on when people try to interpret Jesus. An example from film illustrates this point well.

Denys Arcand's *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) is called a "transition" film in Lloyd Baugh's study of Jesus and Christ-figures in film.<sup>55</sup> By this he means that the film contains the best elements of a Jesus-film (there is a Passion Play within the film), and a film which presents a Christ-figure in the form of the contemporary actor, Daniel Coulombe (played by Lothaire Bluteau). Arcand's provocative film is a satire on consumerism and the power of media. It interweaves two narratives. One is the contemporary story of a hastily-assembled theatre group, gathered together by the out-of-work actor, Coulombe, at the request of Father Leclerc. Leclerc wants them to revise a Passion Play he had written some years earlier for performance at the shrine of which he is warden. The second narrative is the Passion Play itself. Much of the film's effectiveness depends upon the way in which the two stories relate to each other. The characters, Daniel (Jesus) especially, begin to experience in their contemporary lives things that (must have) happened to Jesus and his first-century followers. This is not, then, an "updating" of the Jesus story, but a discovery in contemporary form of the dynamics which (must have) surrounded the Jesus movement.

For the purposes of this present essay, the way in which the Passion Play is presented is of particular interest. Daniel and his troupe are portrayed as doing their historical homework. In order to revise the script of the Passion Play, they investigate what contemporary scholars are saying about Jesus as a historical figure. Whether or not

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<sup>54</sup> And bearing in mind that Infancy gospels tend to go in the opposite direction, accentuating how astonishing Jesus' divine powers were in early life.

<sup>55</sup> Baugh, *Imaging the Divine*, 113–129.

this part of the film accurately portrays the latest finds of Historical Jesus Research is not here the issue.<sup>56</sup> It is more important to note that *within the film's plot structure* there is interplay between exploration of the Jesus of history and the actors' life-experience. To this interplay is added the further dimension of what the viewer can "see," i.e. the way in which characters in modern-day Montreal mirror those who gathered around Jesus.

The film thus suggests the possibility that reflection on life-experience alongside knowledge and exploration of the (hi)story of Jesus can enable a better understanding of Jesus the historical figure. This is offered as an aspect of the film narrative and becomes part of the viewing experience.

For the viewer, the modern-day story does not simply illustrate the gospel narrative. Its juxtaposition with the Passion Play invites the viewer to re-think the meaning of gospel stories about Jesus. For example, when Daniel is taken to the top of a Montreal skyscraper by lawyer Richard Cardinal (Remy Girard) and tempted with the possibility of celebrity, wealth and power, the viewer "gets the point" by seeing an analogy with the Matthean or Lukan temptation narrative.<sup>57</sup> But the juxtaposition causes the biblical narrative to be read in a new light: less about the testing of vocation alone, and as much about the power of the lure of economic reward.

It is helpful to explore this film as a "transition film," as Baugh does, for *Jesus of Montreal* offers two narratives in one film. It is both a Jesus-film and a Christ-figure film. As a Jesus-film it is underdeveloped, for as viewers we never see the whole Passion Play, only fragments. As a Christ-figure film, it is challenging but incomplete because there is much criticism of the institutional church throughout the film and its handling of resurrection is unsatisfactory for any orthodox Christian understanding. It is thus mainstream and orthodox neither in its Historical Jesus Research (for the Jesus-film) nor in its theology (in presenting its Christ-figure). It is for this reason, though, that it also reveals the limitations of the Jesus of History/Christ of Faith framework

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<sup>56</sup> This question is addressed, e.g., by M. Willett in "Jesus the Subversive: *Jesus of Montreal* and Recent Studies of the Historical Jesus," *Centerquest Adult Resource* 7 (July, 1991): 13–20, and R. Zwick, "Entmythologisierung versus Imitatio Jesu: Thematisierungen des Evangeliums in Denys Arcand's Film *Jesus von Montreal*," *Communicatio Socialis* 23.2 (1990): 17–47.

<sup>57</sup> This is clearly a point at which Arcand does draw on other gospels, even though he sought to be largely working with the Gospel of Mark. On exploration of the film in relation to Mark's Gospel, see Walsh, *Reading the Gospels in the Dark*, ch. 3.

for understanding how Historical Jesus Research relates to theology.

Jesus-films show how the (potentially) ethically transformative figure of Jesus may work within culture whether or not theological orthodoxy accompanies an exposition of his life and/or teaching. Neither concern for some form of historical accuracy nor concern for what theology has traditionally been interested in about Jesus can be ignored when Jesus is presented. But mere data will not be enough, and mere orthodoxy will not be enough. The Jesus-film as a genre exposes the fact that the Jesus story retains persuasive power for many purposes; but it must be interestingly narrated. Telling a “good version of the Jesus story” may, then, be less about pandering to the needs of the box-office or being entertaining (though these aspects of film-making are not to be ignored).<sup>58</sup> A version of the Jesus story will be “good” if it reflects Jesus’ own apparent purposes and makes clear in the telling why the story of his life merits re-narration. The Jesus-film thus suggests that it is good for any interpreter to make it clear *in their interpretation* why the storyteller has any interest in the historical Jesus in the first place.

The Jesus of History/Christ of Faith debate has thus been displaced by a more complex phenomenon: that of a cultural Jesus who is constantly being re-interpreted to serve many needs and purposes. This Jesus demands continual re-narration in a variety of forms—verbal and visual. He is a figure who lived a defined, limited, short historical life, but his life and memory are the property not of historians and theologians alone.

Building on the three ways in which Jesus as “moving image” is to be understood, I have suggested, then, that Jesus-films offer four insights about Historical Jesus Research. These are: the fact that it is images of Jesus that are produced; that historical research has a limited place within a variety of disciplines; that attention to narrative is crucial in historiography; and that “historical” accounts of Jesus are different only in degree from “religious,” “theological” or other “interested” versions of his life. Beyond these four insights, what do the findings of this chapter suggest needs to be said to historical Jesus researchers themselves? One final comment suggests itself. If historical Jesus research is never “pure,” because historical research is always “interested,” and if watching films about Jesus is—when cinema is at its best—a multi-sensory experience, then scholars are issued with a challenge. The task of interpreting Jesus should be seen as an exercise, an experience

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<sup>58</sup> The film industry is precisely that—an industry, and major financial backing has to be found for any project undertaken.



even, which affects the whole person of the interpreter. Emotions are roused by Jesus-films. But things do not rest there. Viewers are challenged not merely to be “moved” by Jesus-films any more than they are simply to “think about” (mentally process) what they see.<sup>59</sup> Devoting attention to the emotional impact of film does, however, highlight the fact that wrestling with the meaning of a historical figure is not a dispassionate undertaking. This applies to scholars who engage with the figure of Jesus no less than viewers who watch Jesus-films.

If interpretation really is a “whole person experience,” scholars are invited to consider what Historical Jesus Research actually demands of them. They must reflect on their own historicity (material well-being, physical context, embodiedness, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political inclinations). Even if they do not necessarily declare the result of this in their published Jesus Research, they are advised to take note of how it influences them.<sup>60</sup> Otherwise, to use Crossan’s already famous words, Jesus Research would indeed become “a safe place to do autobiography and call it biography.”<sup>61</sup> The experience of watching Jesus-films invites scholars to do the necessary work on themselves as scholars, so that who they are contributes to their interpretive task, without distorting inappropriately what they conclude about Jesus. It is a continuous task, because Jesus is a continually moving image, and historical research plays its part within the inter-disciplinary venture of interpretation. The historical Jesus scholar cannot be exempt from the task of going public about why the historical Jesus needs to be studied. If he needs to be studied historically, then he needs to be studied historically for some purpose, and individual scholars take up a range of interests as they undertake the task as objectively as possible. Jesus-films begin at a different point (with a gospel or a novel to be filmed, or a director’s vision). But the broad cultural task of interpreting (and using) the figure of Jesus in many ways demands that film directors, historical Jesus scholars (and many others) stay talking to one another around the same table.

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<sup>59</sup> And they may be “moved” in different directions, of course, as the respective responses of Crossan and Goodacre indicate (in Corley and Webb eds., *Jesus and Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ,”* 8–44).

<sup>60</sup> Though some may choose to be open about their background, interests and commitments, of course. John Dominic Crossan and Halvor Moxnes are examples of scholars who have reflected on the way their own lives may have informed their work, whilst nevertheless seeking to be as objective as they can.

<sup>61</sup> The irony being that the less the “whole person” dimension of historical enquiry is respected, the less “objective” it might have a chance of being.

# JESUS' "MAGIC" FROM A THEODICEAN PERSPECTIVE

TOM HOLMÉN

## 1. *Introduction*

The study of the theme 'Jesus and magic' has above all been confused by the difficulty of determining what can be regarded as magic. For example, some scholars think that the miracle and exorcism activity of Jesus puts him neatly in the category of magic practitioners,<sup>1</sup> for Jesus simply does the things that magicians do.<sup>2</sup> Other scholars, again, consider such a conclusion ill-founded. In their view, there may have been certain technical similarities between Jesus' activity and magical practices of the time,<sup>3</sup> but the similarities remain much too superficial to justify characterizing Jesus as a magician.<sup>4</sup>

Quite apart from attempts at historical categorization, disagreement on what can be considered magic blurs even the assessment of the question whether Jesus was ever branded a magician by his contemporary adversaries. According to some experts, Jesus' wonder-working activities would probably have prompted his critics to charge him with

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<sup>1</sup> M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 94–139; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 137–167, 303–353. See also D. E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," *ANRW II* 23.2 (1980): 1507–1557 (1523–1439). However, although Aune regards the wonder-working activities of Jesus as magical practices, he thinks that "historically and sociologically, the most appropriate designation for the role which Jesus assumed is that of messianic prophet" (1527; cf. also 1538–1539).

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *Jesus the Magician*.

<sup>3</sup> Such as touching, the use of saliva, and authoritative commands; see Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," 1523–1539.

<sup>4</sup> G. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus*, WUNT 2.54 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 190–207; J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the historical Jesus. 2: Mentor, Message and Miracles*, Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 537–552; G. Theissen and A. Merz, *Der historische Jesus: Ein Lehrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 276–277; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 689–694; B. Kollmann, *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum*, FRLANT 170 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 314–315.

magical practices.<sup>5</sup> In fact, these scholars point out, the accusations that Jesus was in league with Beelzebul<sup>6</sup> and was a deceiver who was leading people astray<sup>7</sup> amount to a charge of black magic or sorcery.<sup>8</sup> Other scholars, however, do not agree with this estimate, but think that no charge of magic can be discerned in the gospel tradition.<sup>9</sup> Instead, they suggest, the fact that “Jesus could be accused by his opponents of using the power of the prince of demons without any talk about ‘magic’ surfacing . . . simply underlines the point that there was no inextricable link between the two.”<sup>10</sup>

In general, I am not primarily interested in achieving an historical classification of Jesus vis-à-vis the practice of magic. The label of ‘magic’ / ‘magician’ was a social classifier<sup>11</sup> and, as rightly pointed out for instance by J.Z. Smith,<sup>12</sup> it has remained such.<sup>13</sup> In my view, however, the labels ‘magic’ / ‘magician’ and ‘miracle’ / ‘miracle worker’ can both be used as social classifiers, although in opposite ways. That is, ‘magic’ can be used to endow something with a negative value, ‘miracle’ with a positive one. Therefore, to my mind, scholarship does well to concentrate on unearthing and on trying to account for the views of, on the one hand, Jesus himself vs. his opponents and, on the other, his

<sup>5</sup> G. N. Stanton, “Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God’s People?” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology: Festschrift I. H. Marshall*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1994), 164–180 (178); N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 440.

<sup>6</sup> Mark 3:22–26; par. Matt 12:24–26/Luke 11:15, 17–18; cf. also John 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g. Matt 27:63–64; Luke 23:1–14; John 7:40–52.

<sup>8</sup> Stanton, “Magician and a False Prophet?”; Wright, *Victory of God*, 189–191, 440; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 458, 689.

<sup>9</sup> Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 198–204, 207; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:551–552.

<sup>10</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:574.

<sup>11</sup> A. F. Segal, “Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition,” in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions: Festschrift G. Quispel*, ed. R. van den Broek and M. J. Vermaseren, *Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain* 91 (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 349–375, at 369–370; J. Neusner, “Introduction,” in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. idem et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3–7, at 4–5; F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, *Revealing Antiquity* 10 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20–60.

<sup>12</sup> J. Z. Smith, “Trading Places,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Mayer and P. Mirecki, *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 13–27 (16).

<sup>13</sup> See also H. Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century*, *Patristic Monograph Series* 10 (Cambridge: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983), 52–54; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:539–540.

followers vs. their critics. To state this otherwise we can also speak of a subject oriented or 'emic' approach instead of an 'etic' or outsider's perspective.<sup>14</sup> Or, as A. Segal puts it:

The most interesting question for scholarship is to define the social and cultural conditions and presuppositions that allow such charges [sc. of magic] and counter-charges to be made.<sup>15</sup>

Consequently, the aim of this article is not to weigh the accuracy of the scholarly claims that Jesus was or was not a magician, i.e., to arrive at an historical categorization of Jesus. Instead, by taking a more modest (though perhaps not less meaningful) approach, I shall focus on the question of whether some of Jesus' deeds should be seen as having invited charges of magic from his contemporaries. My discussion thus moves on the 'emic' level and my elementary task is to try to ascertain whether a charge of magic was directed against Jesus. In the course of doing so, however, I will present some viewpoints about the 'conditions and presuppositions' (cf. Segal) of this charge which will also allow some brief comments on how Jesus himself saw his activity.

In pursuing the task I shall present a perspective which, I hope, has something new to offer in tackling the question about Jesus and magic; at any rate, this perspective leads to a new way of looking at Jesus and magic in connection with the theme of forgiveness. This perspective is contemporary thinking about theodicy. It is of course true that theodicy does not immediately come to mind as a framework for assessing the deeds of Jesus or the issue of magic. Therefore, to understand the relevance of this perspective, we must first consider the theodicean principle of 'action—consequence.'

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<sup>14</sup> See e.g. N. Jardine, "Etics and Emics (not to Mention Anemics and Emetics) in the History of the Sciences," *History of Science* 42 (2004): 261–278.

<sup>15</sup> Segal, "Hellenistic Magic," 370. See also the insightful discussion in A. M. Reimer, *Miracle and Magic: A Study in the Acts of the Apostles and the Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, JSNTSup 235 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 3–14. Cf. also a short presentation of four theories on which a study of magic can be based: S. E. Porter, "Magic in the Book of Acts," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. M. Labahn and B. J. Liertaert Peerbolte, European Studies on Christian Origins (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 107–121, at 108–115.

## 2. *The Action—Consequence Principle in Jesus' Context*

### 2.1. *A Theodicean Principle*

The principle of action—consequence denotes the idea that goodness / good deeds will lead to happiness while wickedness / wicked acts will cause one to suffer. The idea was shared by almost all people of antiquity and considered an indispensable element of their thinking about theodicy: If there is a just god who cares for human beings, his dealings with people will follow the action—consequence principle.<sup>16</sup> In other words, for good or ill, god(s) will see to it that ‘you reap what you sow.’<sup>17</sup> The claim here is not that the action—consequence principle would necessarily or always be found as an inherent element in human actions. On the contrary, the idea of divine providence, which was held almost universally in antiquity,<sup>18</sup> naturally posits god(s) as engaged in upholding the principle.<sup>19</sup>

The following examples will illuminate the great importance of this principle in various religious-philosophical spheres.

The principle was deeply rooted in the heart of Israelite belief, the covenant:

I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> R. C. Cover, “Sin, Sinners: Old Testament,” *ABD* 6 (1992): 31–40, at 38–39; J. Krašovec, *Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness: The Thinking and Beliefs of Ancient Israel in the Light of Greek and Modern Views*, VTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 785–792.

<sup>17</sup> Gal 6:7. For further instances of Jewish and Greco-Roman applications of this metaphor, see R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC 41 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 280. See also n. 61 below.

<sup>18</sup> A notable exception: the Epicureans.

<sup>19</sup> I share Y. Hoffman’s critique of some aspects included by K. Koch in his concept of “*Tat-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*”; see Y. Hoffman, “The Creativity of Theodicy,” in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, ed. H. G. Rewentlow and Y. Hoffman, JSNTSup 137 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 117–130; see also, for example, B. Janowski, “Die Tat kehrt zum Täter zurück,” *ZTK* 91 (1994): 247–271; P. D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis*, SBLMS 27 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 122–137. For Koch’s exposition of his views, see for instance idem and J. Roloff, “*Tat-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*,” in *Reclams Bibellexikon*, ed. K. Koch et al., 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1987), 493–495; K. Koch, “Is There a Doctrine of Retribution in the Old Testament?” in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. J. L. Crenshaw, Issues in Religion and Theology 4 (London: SPCK, 1983), 57–87.

<sup>20</sup> Exod 20:5–6. These words seal the covenant agreement. See also e.g. Exod 34:7;

In fact, sustaining this order was a criterion for the true God, a criterion false gods did not meet:

Whether one does evil to them [sc. false idols] or good, they will not be able to repay it. They cannot set up a king or depose one. Likewise they are not able to give either wealth or money; if one makes a vow to them and does not keep it, they will not require it.<sup>21</sup>

Further, a Hittite text tells about a god:

He/she [a deity] it is who always vindicates just men, but chops down evil men like trees, repeatedly striking evil men on their skulls...until he/she destroys them.<sup>22</sup>

Nearer to Jesus' time, we find for instance this statement in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* (3.85):

Destroy this, and everything collapses; for just as a household or a state appears to lack all rational system and order if in it there are no rewards for right conduct and no punishments for transgression, so there is no such thing at all as the divine governance [*moderatio*] of the world if that governance makes no distinction between the good and the wicked.

Of course, the harsh reality of life many times suggested that the principle did not quite hold true. This experience was a constant cause for struggle. In Seneca's celebrated tractate *De Providentia*, he seeks to "plead the cause of the gods" (1.1) by attempting to answer the question why "men who are good...labour and sweat and have a difficult road to climb" while "the wicked...make merry and abound in pleasures" (1.6).

Judaism also knew this struggle:

I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For they have no pain; their bodies are sound and sleek. They are not in trouble as others are; they are not plagued like other people....All in vain I have kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and am punished every morning.<sup>23</sup>

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Lev 26:39; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9–10; Pss 103:17–18; 105:8; Jer 32:18–19; Tob 3:3–5. Cf. Deut 7:9–10; 24:16; 2 Kgs 14:6; 2 Chr 25:4; Jer 31:29–30; Ezek 18.

<sup>21</sup> Ep Jer 6:34–35. See also for example Ps 82:1–4. Cf. also Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:2–10; Jer 10:2–16.

<sup>22</sup> According to H. A. Hoffner, "Theodicy in Hittite Texts," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. A. Laato and J. C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 90–107 (96–97).

<sup>23</sup> Ps 73:3–5, 13–14. See also e.g. Jer 12:1; Job 21:7–8; Eccl 7:15; 8:14; Hab 1:13; 4 Ezra 4.23. The sentiment was universal. See e.g. R. K. Williams, "Theodicy in the Ancient Near East," in *Theodicy in the Old Testament*, ed. Crenshaw, 42–56.

The apparent deviations from the principle which were manifest in real life were indeed acknowledged and often even accompanied by a complaint against the covenant God. Nonetheless, he was never ultimately pictured as unjust, nor was the ultimate validity of the action—consequence principle surrendered.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the book of Ecclesiastes concludes with an editorial statement which seems to take back previous utterances that in deep frustration had almost given up the principle:<sup>25</sup>

Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.<sup>26</sup>

These references must suffice here,<sup>27</sup> since the point is clear: the action—consequence principle should be regarded as one factor that is operative in the background when Jesus proclaims his message in word and deed. The healings of Jesus would have provoked thoughts in accordance with the principle, thereby eliciting questions about human guilt and suffering and the acts of the just God. Before studying gospel texts, we need to consider how the action—consequence principle links theodicy with magic.

## 2.2. *The Principle as a Link between Theodicy and Magic: A Deviation from the Principle*

As I have noted, the harsh experiences of life could challenge the validity of the action—consequence principle. Often—or at least sometimes—bad things appeared to happen to good people and *vice versa*, thus calling God's justice into question. This observation created an enduring theodicy problem and kindled an abundant philosophic and theological discussion.<sup>28</sup> A host of explanations were generated to solve the appar-

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<sup>24</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, "Theodicy in Early Jewish Writings," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Laato and de Moore, 470–508, at 507–508.

<sup>25</sup> A similar tension can be observed elsewhere in the book as well. Compare Eccl 2:26; 3:17; 8:10–12 with Eccl 2:14; 7:15; 8:12–13; 8:14; 9:2.

<sup>26</sup> Eccl 12:13–14.

<sup>27</sup> For a detailed exposition, see my forthcoming *Theodicy and the Cross of Christ: A New Testament Inquiry*. See also the major study by Krašovec, *Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness*, *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> In Judaism, the covenant belief greatly aggravated the problem; J. Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 7–14; J. L. Crenshaw, "Introduction: The Shift from Theodicy to Anthropodicy," in *Theodicy in*

ent deviations from the principle.<sup>29</sup> One particular type of deviation concerns us now: deliberate thwarting or getting rid of suffering that results from wrongdoings, i.e. averting the punishment for one's sins. I shall consider the issue mainly from the Jewish perspective.

'Why do the wicked prosper?' was the emphatic question voiced by religious minds generation after generation. Obviously, the wicked would try to avoid the consequences of their actions. Ideas of God as almighty and all-seeing would then be evoked to discourage the wicked. They would not be able to flee the just God. However, there was also a legitimate way to escape suffering punishment for one's sins: appealing to God's forgiveness. In other words, when wishing to cause a particular exception to the action—consequence principle, namely a default of punishment for misbehavior, one could hope that God would out of mercy exempt one from the proper consequences of one's doings.<sup>30</sup> In this way, since it was God's forgiveness that was involved, what would otherwise have been deemed a violation of the action—consequence principle could be regarded as acceptable. In fact, Yahweh's divinity and holiness could even be given as the reason why forgiveness sometimes took priority over the action—consequence principle.<sup>31</sup> The famous passages Isa 43:24–25; 63:9 and Jer 31:20 present Yahweh as suffering a kind of conflict within himself, since his justice and love demand diverging treatment of the people.<sup>32</sup>

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*the Old Testament*, ed. idem, 1–16, at 5. In other respects, scholars refer to the Greco-Roman discussion under the title of divine providence (e.g. Seneca, Plutarch).

<sup>29</sup> An excellent systematic arrangement of a wide variety of views can be found in A. Laato and J. C. de Moor, "Introduction," in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Laato and de Moor, vii–liv (xxx–liv). See also, e.g. Bowker, *Problems of Suffering*, 12–24.

<sup>30</sup> Lev 4, 16; see also e.g. Ps 103:3; Isa 43:24–25; Jer 31:20. On the theme of forgiveness in general, see, for example, J. S. Kselman, "Forgiveness: Old Testament," *ABD* 2 (1992): 831–833; J. H. Charlesworth, "Forgiveness: Early Judaism," *ABD* 2 (1992): 833–835; C.-H. Sung, *Vergebung der Sünden: Jesu Praxis der Sündenvergebung nach den Synoptikern und ihre Voraussetzungen im Alten Testament und frühen Judentum*, WUNT 2.57 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), 2–183. On the righteous and the sinners and the dynamics of forgiveness, see M. Winninge, *Sinners and the Righteous: A Comparative Study of the Psalms of Solomon and Paul's Letters*, ConBNT 26 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995), 181–208.

<sup>31</sup> See Hos 11:8–9.

<sup>32</sup> For the problems of interpretation and theological implications, see G. Hoas, "Passion and Compassion of God in the Old Testament: A Theological Survey of Hos 11,8–9; Jer 31,20, and Isa 63,9+15," *SJOT* 11 (1997): 138–159; P. S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 19–25. Cf. also Krašovec, *Reward, Punishment, and Forgiveness*, 469: "victory of God's love over the postulates of the law of retribution."



Obviously, knowing how to get a share of divine forgiveness was of crucial importance. Much was at stake simply because this knowledge would help one to get free from punishment. However, the knowledge was also crucial in respect to gauging whether God had indeed sanctioned a lack of retribution. For understandably, people would not have been eager to see wrongdoers exempt from the due outcome of their misdeeds. Although Yahweh was self-evidently the absolute controller of the divine pardon,<sup>33</sup> the Torah mentioned some ‘triggering factors,’ such as sacrifice and remorse.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, some ambivalence was always involved in judging their efficacy and appropriateness. We may recall for example Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s warnings against careless trust in sacrifices, and Jonah’s dissatisfaction with God’s decision to be merciful with the repenting city of Nineveh.<sup>35</sup>

A key question is: Were there any alternatives to the divine pardon in causing the exception to the action—consequence principle and averting bad things which result from doing bad? Let me make this more specific by means of an example related to healing, which is clearly relevant to the present essay. There was a wide-spread and long-prevailing conviction that ailments of various kinds were a form of punishment resulting from one’s misdoings.<sup>36</sup> As M.L. Brown correctly notes, the idea that punishment for sins often took the form of diseases does not mean that these were always automatically regarded as the

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Exod 33:19.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g. E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, reprint 1994), 103–118, 251–257, 270–278.

<sup>35</sup> See Isa 1; Jer 7; Jon 4. Cf. also e.g. Prov 21:27; Amos 5:21–24; 2 En. 45.3; Sir 34:19.

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g. Exod 15:26; 23:25; Lev 26; Num 12:1–15; Deut 28:21–22, 27–28; 2 Chr 21:12–19; 26:16–21; Ps 38:1–11; 103:3–5; Prov 3:7–8; Isa 53:3–5; Sir 38:9–10, 15; 1 En. 95.4; T. Reu. 1.6–8; Acts 12:21–23; 1 Cor 11:30; Jas 5:12–16; Rev 2:22. See also J. Z. Baruch, “The Relation between Sin and Disease in the Old Testament,” *Janus* 51 (1964): 295–302; G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 59–68; E. S. Gerstenberger and W. Schrage, *Leiden, Kohlhammer-Taschenbücher* 1004; *Biblische Konfrontationen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1977), 30–31; G. Fohrer, “Krankheit im Lichte des Alten Testaments,” in idem, *Studien zu alttestamentlichen Texten und Themen (1966–1972)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), 172–187 (177–182); H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times*, SNTSMS 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 26; P. Gerlitz, “Krankheit I,” *TRE* 19 (1990): 675–680 (677–678); J. Scharbert, “Krankheit II,” *TRE* 19 (1990): 680–683, at 682; M. L. Brown, *Israel’s Divine Healer*, *Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 236–237, 239–242; A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria*, *Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East* 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 231.

effects of personal sin.<sup>37</sup> As I have remarked above, it often appeared that innocent people were suffering; but this state of affairs was always experienced as problematic with respect to the notion that God is just. Therefore, at least for outsiders, it was easy to assume some guilt on the part of the ailing persons.<sup>38</sup> In general, for a sick person to get well it was imperative to settle accounts with God, to obtain divine pardon.<sup>39</sup> Everywhere in the Jewish tradition, then, it was ultimately the Lord who healed the sick.<sup>40</sup>

Was there any alternative to the divine pardon? Besides appealing to God's forgiveness, could anything else cause the particular kind of exception to the action—consequence principle that we have in mind here? In the case of healing, one might suggest medicine. Early Judaism attests to a turn from the older, rather negative attitude towards physicians to a more favorable and trusting position. However, despite the acceptance of the use of drugs and medicines, the atonement for sins through the appropriate means was still regarded as essential for healing.<sup>41</sup> Medicine could not be regarded as replacing the request for God's forgiveness when a person was suffering from ailments.

For this reason, in the case of healing, there was only one clear alternative to appealing to the divine pardon, viz. magic.

A number of sources make it clear that the alleviation of suffering—which was different in its forms and in relation to its causes, but often also caused by ailments<sup>42</sup>—was one of the major reasons why people engaged in magic.<sup>43</sup> Magical arts were widely known and practiced in antiquity; they were also known in the Old Testament and in early Judaism. While some religious-cultural traditions embraced magic specifically as a way given by god(s) for human beings to get rid of

<sup>37</sup> Brown, *Divine Healer*, 133–135, 229.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the case of Job. See the discussion of John 9 in section 4 below.

<sup>39</sup> Baruch, "Relation between Sin and Disease," 298–300; Brown, *Divine Healer*, 239–240.

<sup>40</sup> Exod 15:25–26; Pss 103:2–3; 107:20; Job 5:18; Hos 6:1; Sir 38:10; Tob 13:14–15; Wis 16:12–13; Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 12–21; Scharbert, "Krankheit," 682–683; Brown, *Divine Healer*, 237–238.

<sup>41</sup> See, e.g. Sir 38:9–15; Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 60–61; see further Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 19–26.

<sup>42</sup> Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 114–115; Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 230–235; P. Schäfer, "Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. idem and H. G. Kippenberg (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 19–43, at 34.

<sup>43</sup> Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 112; J. A. Scurlock, "Magic: Ancient Near East," *ABD* 4 (1992): 464–468, at 465–466; F. Graf, "How to Cope with a Difficult Life: A View of Ancient Magic," in *Envisioning Magic*, ed. Schäfer and Kippenberg, 93–114.

suffering,<sup>44</sup> others were more doubtful.<sup>45</sup> In a modern critical reading, the Old Testament view of magic may appear ambiguous. The Old Testament proclaims a ban on magical practices but includes neutral and positive references to means that seem no different from magic to an outside observer.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, the viewpoint represented by modern scholarly definition(s) of magic (entailing an ‘etic’ approach) naturally results in seeing magic as an indigenous and integral part of Old Testament religion.<sup>47</sup> Irrespective of this, however, the Judaism at the turn of the eras, like early Christianity (thus, now viewing things on the ‘emic’ level), regarded magic—or better, what they perceived as magic—as unambiguously proscribed by the God of the Scriptures.<sup>48</sup> This is the ultimate reason why the label ‘magic’ or ‘magician’ could function as a pejorative designation in Jesus’ time.<sup>49</sup>

In Jesus’ Jewish context the only legitimate procedure to bring about the exception to the action—consequence principle that we have been discussing here, viz. a release from punishment, was the appeal for divine pardon. While it was known and believed that magic could also

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<sup>44</sup> See E. F. Sutcliffe, *Providence and Suffering in the Old and New Testaments* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953), 22–25; Scurlock, “Magic,” 465; Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, 92–96; A. Loprieno, “Theodicy in Ancient Egyptian Texts,” in *Theodicy in the World of the Bible*, ed. Laato and de Moor, 27–56, at 32–33. Cf. *1 En.* 7, 8.

<sup>45</sup> For example, “official” Greek and Roman thought generally rejected magic; H.-D. Betz, “Magic in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” *Encyclopedia of Religion* 9 (1987): 93–97 (95); Aune, “Magic in Early Christianity,” 1518–1519. Nevertheless, the magical arts teemed; see H.-J. Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*, trans. B. McNeil (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 209–231; U. Riemer, “Fascinating but Forbidden? Magic in Rome,” in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Labahn and Lietaert Peerbolte, 160–172.

<sup>46</sup> Betz, “Magic in Greco-Roman Antiquity,” 98; J. K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Magic: Old Testament,” *ABD* 4 (1992): 468–471; Schäfer, “Magic and Religion,” 27–33.

<sup>47</sup> Thus, for example, in the recent study of Jeffers, which takes its point of departure in the “magic mentality” of the Semites (Jeffers, *Magic and Divination*, 4–16).

<sup>48</sup> Editorial staff, “Magic” *EncJud* 11 (1978) 703–707, at 704; Segal, “Hellenistic Magic” 371; Schäfer, “Magic and Religion” 27, 33–34. Exod 22:17; Lev 19:26; Deut 18:9–12; Isa 47:9–15; Ezek 13:17–23; Mal 3:3–5; *1 En.* 7, 8.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance, J. Neusner, “Science and Magic, Miracle and Magic in Formative Judaism: The System and the Difference,” in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. idem et al., 61–81, elaborating the “emic” point of view. Compare the statement: “Moses and Aaron are not called magicians, but they do the things that magicians do” (Neusner, “Science and Magic, Miracle and Magic,” 66) with that of M. Smith. Schäfer’s article (“Magic and Religion”) is a good example of how the change of point of view makes all the difference. From a scholarly perspective, it is quite clear to Schäfer that magic had an important foothold in the Old Testament (27–33). In estimating the ancient Jews’ standpoint on the issue, however, he is equally clear about their strict denial of the presence of magic (32–33).

be used to bring about the same effect, and could for example result in healing, this was clearly an unacceptable pursuit. I turn now to the gospel texts and the Jesus tradition, where I shall first review some teachings that are suspicious from the perspective of the action—consequence principle.

### 3. *Suspicious Theodicy in the Teaching of Jesus*

My treatment of the Jesus tradition cannot pursue a systematic analysis of authenticity, i.e., a verification of the historicity of the variegated information provided by the tradition.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, I shall attempt to relate the claims that will be put forward to the historical Jesus as well.

The Jesus tradition contains a number of teachings that would appear suspicious with regards to theodicy thinking. The issue of theodicy is reflected most explicitly in some sayings, e.g. in the beatitudes.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.<sup>51</sup>

These utterances go against what would have been the most obvious line of theodicy thinking. The blessed ones are not those living in happiness, but those who endure travails.<sup>52</sup> The difficulty is, however, quite easy to overcome by means of a deeper theodicean reflection which was well known at that time. For example, the fact that trouble was often the lot of good and righteous people could be explained by referring to the reward in the afterlife.<sup>53</sup> Still, it is noteworthy that Matthew tends to spiritualize the hardships of the blessed by calling them “the poor in spirit” and “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”<sup>54</sup> Matthew is perhaps not perverting the original (i.e. Lukan) unqualified “poor”

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<sup>50</sup> Considerations of space do not allow me to make a detailed analysis. For one model of authentication, see T. Holmén, “Authenticity Criteria,” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Craig A. Evans (New York: Routledge, 2008), 43–54.

<sup>51</sup> Luke 6:20–21.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. e.g. Deut 33:26–29; Ps 128; *Pss. Sol.* 15.7, 8.

<sup>53</sup> See, for instance, Dan 12:1–3; 2 Bar. 21.11–25; 44.11–15; 1 En. 38–39; *Sib. Or.* 4.179–190; R. J. Faley, *The Cup of Grief: Biblical Reflections on Sin, Suffering and Death* (New York: Alba House, 1977), 77–88; Bowker, *Problems of Suffering*, 26–32. Accordingly, the beatitudes affirm that the hungry will be filled and the weepers will laugh.

<sup>54</sup> Matt 5:3, 6.

since this term can also connote the idea of meekness.<sup>55</sup> Still, “the addition does... shift the emphasis from the economic to the religious sphere.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, the theodicy suggested by the beatitudes, although it might not be properly called bewildering, nonetheless displays a somewhat surprising attitude.

Greater puzzlement with respect to theodicean thinking is presented by the first verses of Luke 13, which relate two fateful disasters. Some people had been killed by a pagan overlord while they were bringing offerings to God.<sup>57</sup> Others, again, had abruptly been struck dead by the random cause of a falling tower.<sup>58</sup> Such exceptional calamities would normally have been seen as indicating that the people in question had drawn the wrath of God upon themselves in some special way.<sup>59</sup> For, naturally, the just God would repay each person according to his or her deeds.<sup>60</sup> Correspondence between the sin and the punishment was central to the expected justness of the Divinity.<sup>61</sup> Contrary to this, the theodicean viewpoint put forward by the Jesus of the text loosens the action—consequence principle by suggesting that the graveness of the punishment need not always be in proportion to the deeds committed.<sup>62</sup> Such thinking apparently lumps grave and petty sinners

<sup>55</sup> See Pss 9:18–19; 22:25–27; 40:18.

<sup>56</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew. Volume One: Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I–VIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 444. Likewise, satisfied hunger (or thirst) is an image of the eschatological salvation of the righteous who are oppressed; see Ps 22:25–27; Isa 41:17–18; 49:10; 55:1.

<sup>57</sup> One explanation of such a drastic injustice would have been that God found the sacrifices (and thus their offerers) unacceptable; see e.g. Amos 5:21–24; Isa 1:11–17; Prov 15:8; 2 *En.* 45:3; Sir 34:19. The mingling of the sacred blood of the sacrifices and the unclean blood of the killed human beings was an idea especially appalling to Jews; cf. *Spec.* 3.90–91.

<sup>58</sup> The sudden and fateful death corresponds to what was often seen as the inevitable end of wicked people. See, e.g. Ps 73:16–19, which describes the abrupt termination of the lives of the godless.

<sup>59</sup> I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 553; F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas. 2. Teilband: Lk 9,51–14,35*, EKKNT 3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 376. This follows the concept of “measure for measure”; D. L. Bock, *Luke Vol. 2: 9:51–24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3b (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 1206.

<sup>60</sup> 1 Kgs 8:39; 2 Chr 6:30; Neh 6:14; Ps 62:13; Prov 24:12; Ezek 36:19; Sir 16:12; 35:24; 1 *En.* 95.5.

<sup>61</sup> J. Barton, “Natural Law and Poetic Justice in the Old Testament,” *JTS* 30 (1979): 1–14. For the multifaceted correspondence between sin and judgement, see Miller, *Sin and Judgment*, 7–110. Cf. also the principle of poetic justice (Barton, “Poetic Justice,” 9–14) in e.g. Hos 8:7; 10:13; Pss 7:15–17; 9:16; 57:7; Job 4:8; 15:35; Prov 1:17–18; 5:22; 14:32; 22:8; 26:27; 28:10; Eccl 10:8–9; Est 7:10; 9:1; Dan 6:24; Wis 11:16; 12:23; Sir 27:25–27; Tob 14:10. See even Exod 20:5; Num 32:23; Job 8:4; Prov 10:24.

<sup>62</sup> J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, WBC 35b (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 718–719.

together in anticipation of mutual doom.<sup>63</sup> Would not God be more discriminating?

Some of the so-called parables of reversal are similarly confusing with respect to thinking about theodicy.<sup>64</sup> In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19–31, the words of Abraham to the rich man who after his death finds himself in Hades come close to the theodicean view which we have seen in the beatitudes:<sup>65</sup>

Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony.<sup>66</sup>

More puzzling theodicy can be found in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke 18:10–14. Many of the caricaturing elements of the parable can be discarded as secondary amendments.<sup>67</sup> The parable's vindication of the publican upon his appeal to God for forgiveness is not surprising; rather, without the caricaturing features, it is the picture of the Pharisee who thanks God for the good life he is leading that begins to provoke questions of theodicy. The Pharisee has followed the guidance of the Torah<sup>68</sup> and, at first, everything seems to hit the mark. Now, for once, it has become manifest already within the present worldly life that goodness / good deeds will lead to happiness. Now, for once, God has acted clearly and indisputably according to the action—consequence principle and given a person the good life he has promised in his justice to all who pay heed to his will. But then it appears, as the parable's comments on the Pharisee continue, that all this is somehow completely wrong! The publican is justified, not the Pharisee.<sup>69</sup> It seems—and indeed this may be the upshot of all the Jesus

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Luke 13:3 (ὁμοίως), 5 (ὡσαύτως).

<sup>64</sup> For the label and the relevant parables, see J. D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 53–78.

<sup>65</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (X–XXIV)*, AB 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1127–1128, 1133.

<sup>66</sup> Luke 16:25.

<sup>67</sup> See T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 118–125.

<sup>68</sup> See the tithing liturgy of Deut 26. The paraphrase of the liturgy in *Ant.* 4.242–243 intriguingly increases the parallelism with Luke 18:10–14. See C. A. Evans, "The Pharisee and the Publican. Luke 18:9–14 and Deuteronomy 26," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. idem and W. R. Stegner, JSNTSup 104 and Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 342–355.

<sup>69</sup> For example, J. Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesus*, 10th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 141 wants to understand (Luke 18:14) exclusively: "This one was justified, not the other." However, "more justified than the other" is also possible, which would mean that the Pharisee is not completely condemned. Cf. H. Kruse, "Die 'dialektische Negation' als semitisches idiom," *VT* 4 (1954): 385–400, at 392;

traditions we have now reviewed—as if the proper theodicean state of affairs should not be welcomed.

In addition, there are some broad, sweeping statements in the Jesus tradition that seem to turn the action—consequence principle completely upside down: “The tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Matt. 21:32); “I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness” (Matt. 8:11–12); and finally, “but many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Mark 10:31).

What we can learn from these short examples is that the Jesus tradition, and probably to some extent also the authentic teaching of Jesus, put forward ideas that would have appeared curious from a theodicean point of view. The existence of such teachings of Jesus, then, would have enhanced people’s sensitivity to seeing similar curiosities manifested by his deeds as well. I shall now turn to consider some features of the deeds that possibly, perhaps even probably, would have preoccupied the minds of Jesus’ contemporaries.

#### 4. *Healings Suspected of Magic because of a Suspicious Theodicy?*<sup>70</sup>

I shall begin with some remarks on the healing story in John 9. I realize that the story does not present an original compositional whole.<sup>71</sup> The current shape of the story does, however, illustrate what I believe can hold true even with respect to the historical healing activity of Jesus.

The story opens by mentioning a man who has been blind from birth. Jesus’ disciples pose a question which actualizes a problem of theodicy: who had sinned, the man or his parents? The disciples’ question plausibly reflects the contemporary understanding of the action—consequence

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H. Klein, *Barmherzigkeit gegenüber den Elenden und Geächteten: Studien zur Botschaft des lukanischen Sondergutes*, *Biblich-Theologische Studien* 10 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987), 66–67.

<sup>70</sup> The following discussion will not consider Jesus’ exorcisms. See the remarks in section 6 below.

<sup>71</sup> See e.g. C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 181–188; J. Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus: Historische Motive in den Jesus-Erzählungen der Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 135–141; R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 21st ed., *Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament* 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 250; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:694–698; M. Labahn, *Jesus als Lebensspender: Untersuchungen zu einer Geschichte der johanneischen Tradition anhand ihrer Wundergeschichten*, *BZNW* 98 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 373–374.

principle.<sup>72</sup> Since the man had always been blind and it was accordingly rather difficult to ascribe the sin, ultimately causing the blindness, to the man himself, the Torah passage quoted at the beginning of this article (Exod 20:5–6) became relevant. For some, it would have been easier to see the consequences of sin as having been transferred from the parents to their child.<sup>73</sup>

Somewhat like the opening verses of Luke 13 reviewed above, Jesus' answer to the disciples' question here rescinds the consistent application of the action—consequence principle. However, this time, according to Jesus, the evil that has come to pass is in no proportion whatsoever to the deeds committed: there is no sin that would have led to the man's blindness.<sup>74</sup> The important point to observe now is that the ensuing healing is unobjectionable only if we assume the truth of Jesus' estimation of the theodicy of the situation. While modern readers might perhaps feel inclined to embrace Jesus' estimation, for his contemporaries the view that no sin was involved would have made God suspect of a grave injustice. It would thus have been an unlikely interpretation of the situation, to say the least.<sup>75</sup> For them, therefore, the healing fails to acknowledge the problem of sin and guilt.

Before making any further comments, let us consider another healing story. The healing of a paralyzed man in Mark 2:1–12 also contains elements that a tradition-critical analysis may deem secondary in terms of their provenance.<sup>76</sup> My point is again that the story serves to

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<sup>72</sup> Brown, *Divine Healer*, 241. See, for instance, Lev 26:14–16 and Deut 28:27–28, both of which mention *inter alia* blindness as resulting from transgressions against the covenant stipulations. See further C. A. Evans, “‘Who Touched Me?’ Jesus and the Ritually Impure,” in *Jesus in Context: Temple, Purity, and Restoration*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, AGJU 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 353–376, 370–374, discussing some Targumic texts which suggest that the blind and the lame (cf. Mark 2 dealt with below) were especially regarded as sinners. See also Lev 21:17–23; 2 Sam 5:8. Cf. also Lev 22:18–24; Deut 15:21.

<sup>73</sup> See the references in note 20 above. This idea was in fact common in antiquity. Gen 25:22–23 had inspired rabbis to generate speculations about the possibilities of the fetus to sin in the womb; *Gen. R.* 63:6; see also *Ruth R.* 6:4. See also Wis 8:19–20; *T. Naph.* 2:2–4.

<sup>74</sup> John 9:3; cf. Luke 13:2–3.

<sup>75</sup> Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 187 (commenting on both John 9 and Luke 13) correctly notes: “The interlocutors tacitly assume the principle that suffering, under the dispensation of a just Providence, must be retribution for sin.”

<sup>76</sup> See e.g. H.-W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, SUNT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 53–57; H.-J. Klauck, “Die Frage der Sündenvergebung in der Perikope von der Heilung des Gelähmten (Mk 2,1–12 parr)”, *BZ* 25 (1981): 223–248, at 225–236; H. Hendrickx, *The Miracle Stories of the Synoptic Gospels*, Studies in the Synoptic Gospels (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 106–121; J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 218–224.



highlight some questions that can be relevant to the historical healing activity of Jesus.

Contrary to the healing story in John 9, here in Mark 2 Jesus' statements are consistent with the action—consequence principle. The connection between sin and the defect in question is evident in the words he addresses directly to the paralyzed (“son, your sins are forgiven”), in his comments on the unspoken thoughts of the scribes (“the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”), and in the subsequent healing itself. Contrary to John 9, it is evident in Mark 2 that Jesus seems to acknowledge the problem of sin and guilt. However, as the present form of the text suggests, although Jesus apparently thinks that the problem is not only acknowledged but also adequately dealt with by what he says and does, all do not concur. For some, Jesus' dealings remain questionable. Obviously, there is no sign or mention of the use of any of the means of atonement, which would have been necessary to indicate that this issue was subordinated to God's authority.<sup>77</sup>

The general historicity of Jesus' healing activity need not be doubted. No matter what origin or role in Jesus' ministry one ascribes to the healings, they form an integral part of the tradition and are nowadays regarded as one of the most reliable facts about Jesus.<sup>78</sup> Naturally, this statement is not an automatic endorsement of the authenticity of every individual healing tradition. Accordingly, I have uttered some reservation vis-à-vis the healing stories of John 9 and Mark 2. However, the features under inspection are not tied up with these precise traditions (although they are most recognizable here), but are well conceivable elsewhere too. As a comment on both John 9 and Mark 2, I would now like to pose three questions and bring them to bear on the historical level of Jesus' work as well.

(1) Did Jesus of Nazareth sometimes—by explicit denial or otherwise—appear to ignore the problem of sin and guilt when healing people? In my view, even if the direct statement of John 9:3 is deemed inauthentic, he probably did. There are numerous and widely attested healing narratives which through silence seem to bypass the question

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Mark 2:7.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. B. L. Blackburn, “The Miracles of Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 353–394, at 392; J. H. Charlesworth, “Jesus Research Expands with Chaotic Creativity,” in *Images of Jesus Today*, ed. idem and W. P. Weaver, Faith and Scholarship Colloquies 3; Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994), 1–41, at 12–13; C. A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies*, AGJU 25 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 213.

about the sin and guilt of the people who are cured.<sup>79</sup> There is no reason to think that this feature is entirely a secondary construction.

(2) When he practiced healing, did Jesus sometimes seem to deal with the problem of sin and guilt in a way that would have been deemed inadequate by those who regarded themselves as capable of and/or responsible for gauging such issues? It is not difficult to answer this question. Apart from the story of Mark 2, there is virtually no clear evidence that Jesus ever focused on the problem of sin and guilt when healing. Thus, if he never focused on the problem, this second question is inessential and we need only consider the first and the third questions. But if he did focus on sin and guilt when healing, all evidence suggests that he never consistently demanded the use of the means of atonement in the way that would have been regarded as appropriate.<sup>80</sup>

Hence, to summarize likely answers to these questions: Many times in Jesus' reported healings the problem of sin, reflecting the theodicean principle of action—consequence, seems to have been either ignored or solved in a way that to many of his contemporaries would have appeared inadequate.<sup>81</sup> This sentiment would have been strengthened by the suspicious-looking theodicy of some of Jesus' teachings.

(3) With the third question, we come to the central point of the present study. The fact that people were healed through Jesus' activity constituted visible and indisputable evidence that the kind of deviation from the action—consequence principle that was discussed in section 2.2. above had indeed taken place. Since, as was commonly believed, there was an intimate bond between sin and sickness, the healings obvi-

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<sup>79</sup> Matt 8:5–13 (John 4:46–54); Mark 1:29–31; 3:1–5; 5:22–24, 35–42; 5:25–34; 7:31–35; 8:22–25; Luke 13:10–17; 14:1–6; John 11:1–44. I have discounted instances where Jesus' exorcism activity is reported (see note 70 above).

<sup>80</sup> Healings which pay attention to the question of sin but which do not seem to deal with it in a proper manner: Mark 2:1–12; Jn 5:1–14. In addition, Luke 7:11–15 might be included.

<sup>81</sup> In fact, "many times" in this case means "almost always." Only in Mark 1:40–45, 10:46–52 and Luke 17:11–19 do we find a mention of remorse and/or sacrifice. Cf. the phrase "have mercy on me/us" in Mark 10:47 and Luke 17:13. In Mark 1:40–45 and Luke 17:11–19, again, Jesus sends the lepers to the priests and in Mark he even orders the healed man to sacrifice. This appears to be according to the law, which proscribes the following: "Thus [referring to various purification rites and sacrifices] the priest shall make atonement on his behalf and he shall be clean" (Lev 14:20). However, in the two stories the lepers are in fact already cured and cleansed before they get to the priests for the sacrifice (cf. Mark 1:42; Luke 17:14). The stories thus render the priestly purification and the sacrifices offered to God futile: merely pragmatic reasons require that the procedure of sacrifice be undertaken. The procedure was needed for the integration of the lepers into the ordinary social and religious life of the community.

ously attested to the fact that through Jesus' deeds people were getting rid of the suffering that sins had caused them. The question is: If those who viewed Jesus more critically could not or would not regard the healings (and the deviation from the action—consequence principle) as having taken place in the only legitimate way possible, viz. by appealing to God's forgiveness, what alternative interpretations could account for the things that evidently had happened?

I believe that the closest (if not the only) alternative was the idea that magic was involved.

### 5. *Jesus' Perspective on His 'Magic'?*

I sum up the conclusions so far in the form of a suggestion: the fact that some of Jesus' deeds appeared to revoke the action—consequence principle in an illegitimate way, i.e. in a way not being based on the appeal to God's forgiveness, opened the way to suspicions that they were magical in nature. This outcome would corroborate the scholarly interpretations that have suggested that the deeds were indeed labeled as magic by some contemporary people.

However, the 'emic' approach of the present study means that the outcome does not qualify as a historical categorization of Jesus. It cannot be translated into a scholarly claim that Jesus was a magician. Instead, it lends support to the scholarly view that Jesus' critical contemporaries accused him of magic. Moreover, to make the 'emic' approach more complete we would need to inquire into Jesus' own view of the issue, i.e. how Jesus himself regarded his startling deeds vis-à-vis the art of magic. The opinion of the critical contemporaries should not be allowed to stand for Jesus'.<sup>82</sup>

I will now attempt to complement the 'emic' viewpoint arrived at so far by adding Jesus' perspective to the picture. I will offer only some brief suggestions, mainly based on the conditions and presuppositions<sup>83</sup> that the specific perspective on theodicy employed in this study has brought to light.

First, some general remarks. The label 'magic' / 'magician' was a social classifier and dependent on a highly subjective assessment. Likewise, it

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<sup>82</sup> See the pertinent remarks of S. R. Garret, "Light on a Dark Subject and Vice Versa: Magic and Magicians in the New Testament," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. J. Neusner et al., 142–65, at 146.

<sup>83</sup> See the reference to Segal ("Hellenistic Magic," 370) n. 11 above.

was a highly pejorative label. In principle, therefore, despite the label he was given, Jesus himself may not have seen any of his deeds as based on magic. Further, while we cannot exclude as altogether impossible the idea that a religious first-century Jew would have openly consented to being branded a magician, such a consent must be termed exceptional. These general considerations call our attention to the striking fact that there are no discernible signs of Jesus' acceptance of the label, although the tradition does relate his acquiescence in the Pharisees' claim that he was breaking the Sabbath.<sup>84</sup>

More specifically, we can state that the opposite seems to be the case, viz. that we find traces of Jesus' rejection of the charge of magic. To my surprise, one of the clearest allusions to magic in the Jesus tradition has featured rather seldom in scholarly discussions: Jesus' words about the finger of God in Luke 11:20 (par. Matt 12:28).<sup>85</sup> Since these words must be taken as referring to Exodus 8 and to the Egyptian magicians who could not compete with the true God,<sup>86</sup> they can only mean: "I am not a magician, but God is working through me." The reference thus betokens just what was suggested above: Jesus had been accused by some people of practicing magic. It also reveals his firm rejection of such an accusation.

This conclusion seems clear, but it is not unproblematic. Much of the discussion in the present study has sought to narrow down the number of alternative interpretations Jesus' contemporaries could choose from in their endeavor to understand what was happening in Jesus' startling deeds. In this respect, our investigation of the thinking about theodicy thinking at that period has indicated that magic would have been the most obvious, or even perhaps the only possible interpretation. The question is: How did Jesus view his deeds, in particularly his healings, if he did not conceive of them as magic? In the light of the particular

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Mark 2:23–26 and Jesus' reference to David who "ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat." See S.-O. Back, *Jesus of Nazareth and the Sabbath Commandment* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1995), 82–86.

<sup>85</sup> Most scholars regard the Lukan phrasing, i.e. "finger," as original, over against Matthew's "Spirit"; see, for example, Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:410–411; M. Labahn, "Jesu Exorzismen (Q 11,19–20) und die Erkenntnis der ägyptischen Magier (Ex 8,15): Q 11,20 als bewahrtes Beispiel für Schrift-Rezeption Jesu nach der Logienquelle", in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. A. Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 617–633, at 619–629; cf. J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 44–46.

<sup>86</sup> H. C. Kee, "Magic and Messiah," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Neusner et al., 121–141, at 139; Labahn, "Jesu Exorzismen," 629–631; see also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 460.

perspective of this essay, only two solutions to this enigma exist, both somewhat extraordinary: Either Jesus would have regarded the action—consequence principle as not being (fully) valid, or he would have seen his work as occurring within a framework of God’s forgiveness that did not (always) require sin to be dealt with in the normal acceptable and/or perceivable way.<sup>87</sup> Can we make any reasonable decision between these two? At least some clues to an answer may be within reach.

Basically, it is easier to attribute to Jesus some particular view of forgiveness rather than to posit that he compromised God’s justice (which would be the implication of the substantial loosening of the action—consequence principle).<sup>88</sup> Unless something unambiguously speaks against this presumption, we should stick to it. Here, we must return to the teaching traditions discussed in section 3 above, for they do indeed seem to undermine the presumption: God would let both undeserved good and undeserved bad come to people.

Naturally, good happening to bad people could be explained as resulting from forgiveness. One particular tradition, the maxims Luke attaches to the command to love one’s enemies, appear to state this bluntly:

For he [the Most High] is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.<sup>89</sup>

But forgiveness, even an exceptional form of it, cannot explain those traditions which picture bad happening to good people. The scaring and abrupt deaths of those bringing offerings to God and those killed by the tower give the impression that God approves undeservedly harsh punishments (Luke 13). Lazarus does not seem to have deserved his miserable life (Luke 16). And, according to Jesus, the blind man had had no guilt at all (John 9).<sup>90</sup> Do these examples suffice to eliminate the

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<sup>87</sup> These solutions do not apply generally, i.e. in respect to the contemporaries of Jesus in their endeavor to get an approving grasp of Jesus’ healings. Jesus’ contemporaries cannot be thought to have collectively rescinded the action—consequence principle, nor can they be regarded as having generally recognized (and accepted) a new understanding of forgiveness behind Jesus’ activities.

<sup>88</sup> In other words, I find the solution based on the loosening of the action—consequence principle much more extraordinary than that building on some particular view of forgiveness.

<sup>89</sup> Luke 6:35–36. Matthew also combines the command to love one’s enemies with a similar maxim, “for he [God] makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous” (Matt 5:45), but appeals then to God’s perfection (5:48).

<sup>90</sup> We can perhaps accept this saying of Jesus in John 9:3 as contributing to the teaching tradition, although the story also incorporates a healing.

explanation in terms of divine forgiveness, by suggesting that Jesus had in fact compromised the action—consequence principle?

The few examples of bad happening to good people that we have pointed out here cannot prove that Jesus himself questioned the principle, especially because the relevant traditions also offer reasons for each individual exception to the principle (or what appears to present an exception). Second, we do not need to trace the origin of all suspicious theodicy found in the teaching traditions back to Jesus' own view of forgiveness. For if we confine ourselves to Jesus' healings, the forgiveness solution works without problems.<sup>91</sup>

We have therefore three alternatives: compromising the action—consequence principle, practicing magic, and working within a specific framework of forgiveness. I believe that the third alternative can explain how Jesus himself saw his healing activity (most clearly, he did not see himself as working as a magician). In the present article, the primary argument in favor of this choice has been the obvious improbability of the other solutions. The strength of this argument, however, is based on the fact that the specific perspective of the article has given us good reasons to limit the alternatives precisely to these three. Hence, while the label of magic would be appropriate on the lips of people critical of Jesus' healings, forgiveness is the best suited to express Jesus' own understanding of the issue. Since however it was not universally perceivable or acceptable, this form of forgiveness would not have been able to deflect the suspicions.

## 6. Conclusion

The theodicean perspective adopted in this study corroborates earlier scholarly evaluations and shows that Jesus was indeed accused by some of his contemporaries of using magic when he performed healings. Since Jesus himself did not consent to this accusation, but explicitly rejected it, the theodicean perspective also indicates that a distinct understanding of forgiveness was being operative in Jesus' healings, as he himself understood them.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> In other words, healings are by definition of the type "good happening to bad."

<sup>92</sup> It is impossible here to pursue further the question of how exactly Jesus understood this forgiveness was. But some important clues are discernible precisely in the fact that the form of forgiveness cherished by Jesus would not have been normally perceivable and/or acceptable. If it had not been not distinct (different) and particular, it would be

One final qualification. This discussion has not considered Jesus' exorcisms. In the Judaism of Jesus' time, illnesses were often connected with demons. In some such cases, the traditionally upheld bond between sin and sickness became blurred. Through being possessed by an evil spirit, a person could meet with an illness that was not a result of his or her wrongdoings. The model proposed by the present article is not applicable in such instances but, in my view, remains valid in other contexts.<sup>93</sup> Despite the belief in the activity of evil spirits, sin retained a role in explaining ailments in two ways: (a) diseases and defects were not always seen as connected with spirit possession;<sup>94</sup> (b) culpability could be regarded as a part of the problem, alongside the activity of the spirits.<sup>95</sup> Jesus' exorcisms may have inspired the accusation that he was in league with the prince of demons. However, this does not rule out other kinds of denunciations in other types of situations.<sup>96</sup>

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difficult to explain why the form of forgiveness in question was not perceived/accepted by people more generally.

<sup>93</sup> See e.g. the references in nn. 79–81 above. According to G. H. Twelftree, Jesus reserved exorcist language and technique for the removal of demons. "He does not rebuke sickness"; Twelftree, "Jesus the Exorcist and Ancient Magic," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Labahn and Peerbolte, 57–86, at 82.

<sup>94</sup> See G. Theissen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien*, SNT 8 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1974), 94–102; U.B. Müller, "Krankheit III," *TRE* 19 (1990): 684–686, at 684–685.

<sup>95</sup> Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 21–26; J. J. Rousseau, "Jesus, an Exorcist of a Kind," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers*, ed. E. H. Lovering, SBLSP 32 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1993), 129–153, at 142, 150.

<sup>96</sup> This article is based on a paper read at the joint meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature International and the European Association of Biblical Studies in Groningen summer 2004. A shorter and earlier version of the article was published as "Jesus and Magic: Theodicean Perspectives to the Issue," in *A Kind of Magic: Understanding Magic in the New Testament and its Religious Environment*, ed. Labahn and Lietaert Peerbolte, 43–56.

JESUS' "RHETORIC": THE RISE AND FALL OF  
"THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

JAMES M. ROBINSON

It may seem inappropriate to speak of the rhetoric of an Aramaic-speaking, unlettered blue-collar worker, a peasant from a Galilean village. The nearest Jesus came to writing was to scratch in the ground while waiting to see if anyone would consider oneself so free from sin as to cast the first stone at the woman taken in adultery. But even this story is a secondary addition to the New Testament, first attested in the fifth century.

The evangelists themselves wrote more than half a century after Jesus' public ministry. By that time the original disciples, made up largely of illiterate peasants and fishermen, had been replaced by second-generation Christians, at least a few of whom were educated enough to write the gospels in Greek. They would unconsciously have conceived of Jesus more like themselves than was actually the case—the first in the long line of those who imagine Jesus in their own image. The result was a Jesus learned in the scriptures. But such a Jesus probably did not exist in reality.

When one turns to the oldest layer of sayings ascribed to Jesus in the Sayings Gospel Q, instead of scribal learnedness in the Hebrew scriptures one finds a village peasant's acute and devout insight into nature. Indeed, he learned about God everywhere, for he saw it all: Sunshine and rain-showers sent to the bad as well as the good;<sup>1</sup> the contrast of a speck to a beam;<sup>2</sup> a tree known by its fruit (figs from thorns? grapes from thistles?);<sup>3</sup> houses built on rock or sand;<sup>4</sup> a reed shaken by the wind;<sup>5</sup> sheep among wolves;<sup>6</sup> the dust on one's feet;<sup>7</sup> the lamp on a lamp-stand;<sup>8</sup> the killing of sparrows worth only a dime a dozen;<sup>9</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup> Q 6:35.

<sup>2</sup> Q 6:41–42.

<sup>3</sup> Q 6:43–44.

<sup>4</sup> Q 6:47–49.

<sup>5</sup> Q 7:24.

<sup>6</sup> Q 10:3.

<sup>7</sup> Q 10:11.

<sup>8</sup> Q 11:33.

<sup>9</sup> Q 12:6.



hairs on your head;<sup>10</sup> ravens and lilies that do nothing, trusting in God to care for them;<sup>11</sup> God clothing so beautifully the grass of the field, there today and tomorrow thrown into the oven;<sup>12</sup> the flame-red evening sky pointing to good weather, but a flame-red morning sky pointing to wintry weather;<sup>13</sup> the tiny mustard seed or pinch of yeast becoming all out of proportion to the insignificant beginning;<sup>14</sup> salt becoming insipid;<sup>15</sup> the one lost sheep and the ninety-nine left in the mountains;<sup>16</sup> the flash of lightning;<sup>17</sup> vultures circling around a corpse.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, a saying in Q made the same distinction I am making between Jesus and Jewish scholars:<sup>19</sup>

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for you hid these things from sages and the learned, and disclosed them to children.

Jesus seems to have taught primarily by telling stories (what we call parables), and repeating memorable one-liners, like “turn the other cheek.” So modern theologians have had to focus on the only thing they could get, namely one rhetorical metaphor, “the kingdom of God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.

A stock in trade in our discipline is that, since Jesus did not define what he meant by the kingdom of God, it must have been so common in his day as to need no explanation. His illiterate, Aramaic-speaking audiences would have known what he was talking about, so he did not need to explain.

Everybody of course believes that the high God one worships rules everything. The Hebrew scriptures are full of it. So when we turn to Jesus’ favorite rhetorical metaphor, ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, we find Jewish literature of the time full of it, right?

Wrong! It is almost non-existent! For when we focus more pedantically on ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, the situation seems to be as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> Q 12:7.

<sup>11</sup> Q 12:24, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Q 12:28.

<sup>13</sup> Q 12:54–55.

<sup>14</sup> Q 13:18–19, 20–21.

<sup>15</sup> Q 14:34–35.

<sup>16</sup> Q 15:4–5a, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Q 17:23–24.

<sup>18</sup> Q 17:37.

<sup>19</sup> Q 10:21.

1. *The Kingdom of God in Early Judaism*

The Septuagint never *ever* makes use of the metaphor ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ!<sup>20</sup> The nearest it comes is included in the following short list:

Ps 22:28, "the Lord's (is) the kingdom," τοῦ κυρίου ἡ βασιλεία<sup>21</sup>

Ps 45:6, "the scepter of your kingdom," ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου<sup>22</sup>

Tob 13:1, "his kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ<sup>23</sup>

Wis 10:10, "kingdom of God" (without articles), βασιλεία θεοῦ<sup>24</sup>

Dan 3:33 *bis*, "his kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ,<sup>25</sup> plus "(is an) eternal kingdom," βασιλεία αἰώνιος<sup>26</sup>

Theodotion's Greek translation of Daniel provides one further instance:

Dan 4:34 *bis*, "his kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ<sup>27</sup>

Greek sapiential Jewish literature of the period has ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ two further times: The *Sentences of Sextus* 311; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 4.164.<sup>28</sup>

The use of ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ in the Pseudepigrapha is similarly minimal. There is only one instance of "the kingdom of God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ,<sup>29</sup> and one occurrence of "kingdom of the heavens," ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.<sup>30</sup> Now the Pseudepigrapha are a collection of Jewish texts from around the time of Jesus that is about as large as the whole of the New Testament.<sup>31</sup> So this limitation to one instance

<sup>20</sup> Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint and the other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (including the Apocryphal Books) in three volumes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897; reprint Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Book House, 1987), 192–194.

<sup>21</sup> Ps 21 (actually 22):28, NRSV "dominion belongs to the Lord."

<sup>22</sup> Ps 44 (actually 45):6, NRSV "Your royal scepter."

<sup>23</sup> Tob 13:1, "his kingdom."

<sup>24</sup> Wis 10:10, NRSV "the kingdom of God."

<sup>25</sup> Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance*, Dan 3:33 = NRSV 4:3, "His kingdom... his sovereignty."

<sup>26</sup> Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance*, Dan 3:33 = NRSV 4:3, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom."

<sup>27</sup> Hatch and Redpath, *Concordance*, Dan 4:34 = NRSV 4:34, "...his kingdom endures from generation to generation."

<sup>28</sup> Burton L. Mack, "The Kingdom Sayings in Mark," *Foundations & Facets Forum* 3, no. 1 (March, 1987): 3–47: "2.2 *Wisdom and the kingdom of God*," 13–17.

<sup>29</sup> *Pss. Sol.* 17.3.

<sup>30</sup> *2 Bar.* 11.2.

<sup>31</sup> Albert-Marie Denis, *Concordance grecque des Pseudépigraphes d'Ancien Testament* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, 1987), vii: "La dimension de la

each of kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven is striking. Where is the metaphor that is supposed to be so common that every peasant knows what it means?

This rapid survey of Jewish texts around the time of Jesus produces the surprising result that the metaphor barely existed, at best isolated in such scattered texts that neither Jesus nor other villagers in Galilee would have known them. Perhaps Jesus never defined the metaphor simply because he was not a professor.

## 2. *The Kingdom of God in Early Gospels*

The following statistical survey of early Christian usage shows that the metaphor ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ suddenly emerges in full force in collections of Jesus' sayings, as really the only thing approaching theological language in his vocabulary; but then, apart from the gospels, it rapidly fades from prominence. One could refer to this odd statistical phenomenon as the rise and fall of the kingdom of God.

The distinctions within the database are not important for our present purposes: Often the complete metaphor ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ occurs, but at times it is reduced to just ἡ βασιλεία, where the context makes it clear that the reference is to God rather than to some human ruler. And sometimes the metaphor is modified to ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (distinctive of Matthew), ἡ βασιλεία σου (in the Lord's Prayer), ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ πατρὸς (prominent in the *Gospel of Thomas*), or ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ. None of these fluctuations alters materially the basic insight into the sudden emergence of references to God's kingdom in sayings ascribed to Jesus.

Let me summarize the striking data for references to God's kingdom in the five Gospels containing most of the sayings of Jesus: Q, *Thomas*, Mark, Matthew, and Luke:

Q, 12 occurrences; *Thomas*, 20 occurrences; Mark, 13 occurrences; Matthew, 29 occurrences not taken from Q or Mark, plus 11 taken over from Q and 8 from Mark, a grand total for Matthew of 48 occurrences; Luke, 12 occurrences not taken over from Q or Mark, plus 13 taken over from Q and 7 from Mark, a grand total for Luke of 32 occurrences.

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Concordance (134,000 mots) est comparable à celle du Nouveau Testament (137,000 mots)."

The total in these five gospels is 86 separate occurrences, not counting borrowings from Q and Mark, or, including such borrowings, 125 occurrences. Thus the vast majority of references to God's kingdom at the time of Jesus are to be found in sayings ascribed to him in these five gospels.

There is really only one historical explanation for the sudden explosion of kingdom language between the rare usage in Judaism and the rare usage in Christianity, apart from the five gospels that use Jesus' language: ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ must have been a frequent metaphor used by Jesus. For when one turns to sayings of Jesus, the statistics are dramatically different. For suddenly "the kingdom of God" is everywhere!

### 2.1. *The Gospel of Thomas*

Let me begin with the *Gospel of Thomas*, for here the references to God's kingdom are the most dense for any single text in existence. It occurs 20 times in this short tractate of 114 sayings. Here are the specifics: In the Coptic translation, "of God" does not occur, though the reference is to God's kingdom. Instead, "of heaven" occurs twice, "of the Father" 6 times, "of my Father" once, and in the other instances God is implied. In the Greek fragments "of God" occurs twice where it is absent from the Coptic translation, suggesting that "of God" was probably much more common in the Greek original. The Coptic translator weeded out "of God," perhaps since in Gnosticism "God" could refer to the known bad God as well as to the unknown good God.

### 2.2. *The Sayings Gospel Q*

"The kingdom of the God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, occurs 12 times in the Sayings Gospel Q.<sup>32</sup> In addition, Q once reads "your kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία σου,<sup>33</sup> once "his kingdom," τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ.<sup>34</sup> Thus there are a total of 14 references to God's kingdom in the Sayings Gospel Q.

Half of the Q sayings, 6 out of 12, are among the 20 instances in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

<sup>32</sup> Q 6:20; 7:28; 10:9; 11:20; 11:52; 13:18; 13:20; 13:28; 16:16; 17:20; 17:20; 17:21.

<sup>33</sup> Q 11:2b.

<sup>34</sup> Q 12:31.

### 2.3. *The Q Sayings in other Gospels*

Matthew replaces “the kingdom of the God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, with “the kingdom of the heavens” in 8 of the 12 Q cases,<sup>35</sup> once retains Q’s “the kingdom of the God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ,<sup>36</sup> and in 3 cases does not have the Q saying as such.<sup>37</sup> Once Matthew may even replace Q’s “of him” with “of the God,”<sup>38</sup> and once follows Q in reading “the kingdom of you.”<sup>39</sup>

Luke retains “the kingdom of the God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, in 11 of these 12 Q cases,<sup>40</sup> but once changes “the kingdom of the God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, to read “the key of the knowledge,”<sup>41</sup> much like the *Gospel of Thomas*, which reads “the keys of knowledge.”<sup>42</sup> Luke once reads with Q simply “the kingdom of him,”<sup>43</sup> once follows Q in reading “the kingdom of you.”<sup>44</sup>

The *Gospel of Thomas* has 6 of the Q instances, reading “the kingdom of the heavens” in 2 of these cases,<sup>45</sup> “the kingdom of the Father” in one case,<sup>46</sup> “will know the kingdom” in one case,<sup>47</sup> and both “the kingdom” and “the kingdom of the God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, in one Saying.<sup>48</sup>

Mark shares only one instance of “the kingdom of God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, with Q.<sup>49</sup> In the *Gospel of Thomas*, the same parable uses “the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Matt 5:3 from Q 6:20; Matt 11:11 from Q 7:28; Matt 10:7 from Q 10:9; Matt 23:13 from Q 11:52; Matt 13:31 from Q 13:18; Matt 13:33 from Q 13:20; Matt 8:11 from Q 13:28; Matt 11:12 from Q 16:16.

<sup>36</sup> Matt 12:28 from Q 11:20.

<sup>37</sup> Q 17:20; 17:20; 17:21.

<sup>38</sup> Matt 6:33 from Q 12:31.

<sup>39</sup> Matt 6:10 from Q 11:2b.

<sup>40</sup> Luke 6:20; 7:28; 10:9; 11:20; 13:18, 20, 28; 16:16; 17:20 *bis*, 21.

<sup>41</sup> Luke 11:52.

<sup>42</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 39:1.

<sup>43</sup> Luke 12:31.

<sup>44</sup> Luke 11:2b.

<sup>45</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 20; 54.

<sup>46</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 96:1.

<sup>47</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 46:2.

<sup>48</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 3:1, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Mark 4:30 and Q 13:18.

<sup>50</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 20.

#### 2.4. *The Kingdom of God in Mark*

"The kingdom of God" ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, occurs 13 times in Mark spoken by Jesus,<sup>51</sup> and once by the evangelist himself.<sup>52</sup> Matthew replaces "the kingdom of the God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, with "the kingdom of the heavens" in 6 of these 13 Markan cases.<sup>53</sup> Once Matthew substitutes "the kingdom of him,"<sup>54</sup> once "life,"<sup>55</sup> once "the kingdom of my Father,"<sup>56</sup> and once Matthew retains Mark's "the kingdom of the God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.<sup>57</sup> Matthew lacks completely the Markan verse in 3 cases.<sup>58</sup>

Luke retains "the kingdom of the God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, in 7 of these 13 Markan cases.<sup>59</sup> Luke lacks completely 6 of these cases.<sup>60</sup>

#### 2.5. *The Kingdom of God only in Matthew*

Matthew has additional instances of "the kingdom of heaven," once spoken by John,<sup>61</sup> 24 times by Jesus.<sup>62</sup> Matthew has 5 instances of "kingdom" with "of heaven" understood,<sup>63</sup> 3 with "his" (Jesus'),<sup>64</sup> one with "of their Father."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Mark 1:15; 4:11; 4:26; 4:30; 9:1; 9:47; 10:14; 10:15; 10:23; 10:24; 10:25; 12:34; 14:25.

<sup>52</sup> Mark 15:43.

<sup>53</sup> Matt 4:17 from Mark 1:15; Matt 13:11 from Mark 4:11; Matt 13:31 from Mark 4:30; Matt 19:14 from Mark 10:14; Matt 18:3 from Mark 10:15; Matt 19:23 from Mark 10:23.

<sup>54</sup> Matt 16:28 from Mark 9:1.

<sup>55</sup> Matt 18:9 from Mark 9:47, where in Mark 9:43, 45 "life" is also used in parallel sayings.

<sup>56</sup> Matt 26:29 from Mark 14:25.

<sup>57</sup> Matt 19:24 from Mark 10:25.

<sup>58</sup> Mark 4:26; 10:24; 12:34.

<sup>59</sup> Luke 8:10 from Mark 4:11; Luke 13:18 from Mark 4:30; Luke 9:27 from Mark 9:1; Luke 18:16 from Mark 10:14; Luke 18:17 from Mark 10:15; Luke 18:24 from Mark 10:23; Luke 18:25 from Mark 10:25.

<sup>60</sup> Mark 1:15; 4:26; 9:47; 10:24; 12:34; 14:25.

<sup>61</sup> Matt 3:2.

<sup>62</sup> Matt 5:10; 5:19; 5:19; 5:20; 7:21; 7:21; 8:12; 13:19; 13:24; 13:44; 13:45; 13:47; 13:52; 16:19; 18:1; 18:4; 18:23; 19:12; 20:1; 21:31; 21:43; 22:2; 24:14; 25:1.

<sup>63</sup> Matt 3:23; 9:35; 13:19; 13:38; 25:34.

<sup>64</sup> Matt 13:41; 16:28; 20:21.

<sup>65</sup> Matt 13:43.

## 2.6. *The Kingdom of God only in Luke/Acts*

Luke only has “the kingdom of the God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, 13 times,<sup>66</sup> “the kingdom of him” once,<sup>67</sup> “the kingdom of me” once,<sup>68</sup> and “kingdom” once.<sup>69</sup>

In Acts, Luke has “the kingdom of God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, 6 times,<sup>70</sup> “the kingdom” twice.<sup>71</sup>

## 3. *The Kingdom of God in the Rest of the New Testament*

After this outpouring of the metaphor of God’s kingdom in the five gospels primarily responsible for sayings that go back to Jesus, it is remarkable to note the way the metaphor recedes in the rest of the New Testament. By way of summary: The Gospel of John adds only 5 instances, to which Paul adds 8, the Deutero-Pauline Epistles 5, Hebrews one, James one, Revelation one. That is to say, the rest of the New Testament, where the language of Jesus is largely absent, adds only 18 occurrences. This means that in the 246 Nestle-Aland pages of the synoptic gospels God’s kingdom occurs 93 times, whereas in the remaining 334 pages only 18 times.

The detailed statistics follow:

The Gospel of John has “the kingdom of God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, twice,<sup>72</sup> “my kingdom,” ἡ βασιλεία μου, three times.<sup>73</sup>

Paul has “the kingdom of God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, 2 times,<sup>74</sup> “kingdom of God,” βασιλεία θεοῦ, three times,<sup>75</sup> “God’s kingdom,” θεοῦ βασιλεία, once,<sup>76</sup> “the kingdom,” ἡ βασιλεία, once,<sup>77</sup> “his own kingdom,” ἡ ἑαυτοῦ βασιλεία, once.<sup>78</sup>

The Deutero-Pauline Epistles have “the kingdom of God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, 2 times,<sup>79</sup> “the kingdom of Christ and God,” ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ

<sup>66</sup> Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2, 60; 9:11; 10:11; 13:29; 14:15; 18:29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Luke 1:33; 6:62; 9:60; 10:11; 13:29; 14:15; 18:29; 19:11; 21:31; 22:16; 22:18.

<sup>68</sup> Luke 22:30.

<sup>69</sup> Luke 22:29.

<sup>70</sup> Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 18:8; 28:23; 28:31.

<sup>71</sup> Acts 1:6; 20:25.

<sup>72</sup> John 3:3, 5.

<sup>73</sup> John 18:36.

<sup>74</sup> Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 2:20.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Cor 6:10; 15:50; Gal 5:21.

<sup>76</sup> 1 Cor 6:9.

<sup>77</sup> 1 Cor 15:24.

<sup>78</sup> 1 Thess 2:12.

<sup>79</sup> Col 4:11; 2 Thess 1:5.

Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ, once,<sup>80</sup> "his kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, once,<sup>81</sup> "his heavenly kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ ἡ ἐπουράνια, once.<sup>82</sup>

Hebrews has "your kingdom," ἡ βασιλεία σου, once, quoting Ps 45:6.<sup>83</sup>

James has "heirs of the kingdom," κληρόνομοι τῆς βασιλείας, once.<sup>84</sup>

Revelation has "the kingdom of our God," ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, once.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4. *The Kingdom of God in the Second Century*

Throughout the second and following centuries, "the kingdom of God" ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, continues only the insignificant role it had in the bulk of the New Testament. What rose to prominence so dramatically in the case of sayings ascribed to Jesus fades from view equally rapidly.

The usage of kingdom terminology in the second century has been analyzed by E. Ferguson, where detailed documentation is available. Here only his basic conclusion needs to be cited:<sup>86</sup>

The overwhelming usage of "kingdom" in second-century Christian literature is eschatological. G.W.H. Lampe states that although the variety of meanings given the phrase "kingdom of God" in patristic literature is great, commonest of all is the idea of the kingdom as a present spiritual reality. This may be true for patristic literature as a whole, but it is clearly wrong for the second century, where the meaning is rare. The kingdom is almost uniformly future, heavenly, and eternal.

The earliest non-canonical documents set the pattern of a predominantly futuristic understanding of the kingdom.

Ferguson does note one striking exception, the *Gospel of Thomas*:<sup>87</sup>

The *Gospel of Thomas* (Coptic) presents a bold contrast to the view of the kingdom found thus far. Aside from sayings and parables similar to those in the *Synoptics* on the kingdom (sayings 22, 54, 57, 96–99, 107,

<sup>80</sup> Eph 5:5.

<sup>81</sup> 2 Tim 4:1.

<sup>82</sup> 2 Tim 4:18.

<sup>83</sup> Heb 1:8.

<sup>84</sup> James 2:5.

<sup>85</sup> Rev 12:10.

<sup>86</sup> E. Ferguson, "The Terminology of Kingdom in the Second Century," *Studia Patristica* vol. 17, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982), 669–676, at 670.

<sup>87</sup> Ferguson, "The Terminology of Kingdom in the Second Century," 672.



109, of which only 99 sounds possibly future, although 57 could have an eschatological element), this collection explicitly rejects the heavenly view of the kingdom in favor of a present, pervasive but invisible power (3, 113). To use modern terminology, the kingdom is existential, not eschatological.

That is to say, the *Gospel of Thomas* fits into the first-century usage!

There is another Nag Hammadi tractate that also fits into the first-century usage, though not mentioned by Ferguson, namely a dialogue of the Risen Jesus with James and Peter: *The Apocryphon of James*, Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex), Tractate 2. There are 13 references to the present kingdom, 2 as the kingdom of God, 8 as the kingdom of heaven, 3 simply as the kingdom.

### 5. *The Kingdom of God in Jesus' Own Usage*

Of course not all the instances of the kingdom of God in Q, *Thomas*, Mark, Matthew, and Luke go back to the historical Jesus. Many were added by the disciples and evangelists. But when one turns to the question of what kingdom sayings may well go back to Jesus, there tends to be considerable agreement.

Helmut Merklein perhaps qualifies as the leading authority on Jesus' use of the metaphor kingdom of God, thanks to his two books devoted to this topic, each reprinted in three editions.<sup>88</sup> He reached the following conclusion, to quote the latest:<sup>89</sup>

The logia or texts in which "God's 'basileia'" appears as an *active, dynamic entity* may belong to the oldest way of speech, from the point of view of the history of tradition (and thus most likely to be authentic). Alongside the parables (Mark 4:26–29 [the parable of the seed growing secretly]; 4:30–32 par Matt 13:31–32, Luke 13:18–19 [the parable of the mustard seed]; Luke 13: 20–21 par Matt 13:33 [the parable of the leaven] and the

<sup>88</sup> Helmut Merklein, *Die Gottesherrschaft als Handlungsprinzip: Untersuchung zur Ethik Jesu*, FzB 34 (Würzburg: Echter, 3rd edn, 1984); idem, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, SBT 111 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 3rd edn, 1989).

<sup>89</sup> Helmut Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, 3rd ed., 23: "Zur traditionsgeschichtlich ältesten (und damit am ehesten authentischen) Sprechweise dürften die Logien beziehungsweise Texte gehören, in denen die "'basileia' Gottes" als eine *aktiv-dynamische Größe* erscheint. Dazu ist neben den Gleichnissen (Mk 4,26–29.30–32 par; Lk 13,18f.20f par Mt 13,31f.33) und der ersten Seligpreisung (Lk 6,20b par Mt 5,3) der vor allem in Q belegte Satztyp zu rechnen, der die 'basileia' als Subjekt mit einem Verbum der Bewegung verbindet (Lk 10,9 par Mt 10,7; Lk 11,2 par Mt 6,10; Lk 11,20 par Mt 12,28; Lk 16,16ba par Mt 11,12a; vgl. Mk 1,15; 9,1)."

first beatitude [Luke 6:20b par Matt 5:3]), the type of sentence attested especially in Q is to be counted, which connects the ‘basileia’ as subject with a verb of motion (Luke 10:9 par Matt 10:7; Luke 11:2 par Matt 6:10; Luke 11:20 par Matt 12:28; Luke 16:16<sup>ba</sup> par Matt 11:12a; cf. Mark 1:15; 9:1).

Heinz Schürmann summarized with approval Merklein’s position:<sup>90</sup>

H. Merklein, *Handlungsprinzip*, speaks of the kingdom “standing out” [i.e. future] and “standing in” [i.e. present] “in Jesus,” and rightly distances himself from those who do not deny its “standing in,” but want to see, after all, only “signs” of the coming kingdom as present.

That is to say, the kingdom is present in more than sign only. In response Merklein pointed out with satisfaction that Schürmann came “to a similar result with regard to the *ipsissima verba* in the Q tradition.”<sup>91</sup>

If one may move to the other end of the theological spectrum, Burton Mack accepts as the most likely candidates for authenticity precisely the same four from the Sayings Gospel Q that Merklein had proposed: Q 10:9; 11:2; 11:20; 16:16.<sup>92</sup>

Q 10:9: And cure the sick there, and say to them: God’s reign has reached unto you.

Q 11:2: When you pray, say: Father—may your name be kept holy!—let your reign come:

<sup>90</sup> Heinz Schürmann, “Das Zeugnis der Redenquelle für die Basileia-Verkündigung Jesu: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung,” in *Logia: Les Paroles de Jésus—The Sayings of Jesus*, ed. Joël Delobel, BETL 59 (Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1982 [1983]), 121–200, at 185 n. 265: “H. Merklein, *Handlungsprinzip*, 166, redet von ‘Aus-Stand’ und ‘Ein-Stand’ der Basileia ‘in Jesus’ und setzt sich mit Recht ab von denen, die den ‘Einstand’ derselben nicht leugnen, aber als gegenwärtig doch nur ‘Zeichen’ des kommenden Reiches sehen wollen...”

<sup>91</sup> Cited by Helmut Merklein, *Jesu Botschaft von der Gottesherrschaft: Eine Skizze*, 3rd edn, 23 n. 36.

<sup>92</sup> Burton L. Mack, “The Kingdom Sayings in Mark,” 44–45: “None of the kingdom sayings in Mark is to be judged authentic.... [45] This means that the data in Mark is not a sufficient basis for deciding the question of Jesus’ use of the term kingdom of God. The analyses of both Q and the Gospel of Thomas will have to be taken very seriously. That is because each uses the term kingdom of God in ways that correspond to pre-Markan traditions. In all three cases (pre-Mark, early Q, Gospel of Thomas) the apocalyptic hypothesis must be set aside. Early usage will have to be determined by studying the overlaps among the three textual traditions. On the basis of the analysis of the sayings in Mark it is obvious that the Q texts will be crucial in the final adjudication. The Markan spotlight falls especially on Q 10:9; 11:2; 11:20; and 16:16.” Although Mack does not refer to Merklein, not even in his appended bibliography, dependence on Merklein would seem to be probable.

Q 11:20: But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then there has come upon you God's reign.

Q 16:16: The law and the prophets were until John. From then on the kingdom of God is violated and the violent plunder it.

In the case of Q 16:16, the Lukan alternative is considerably more appealing, and so it may be what is presupposed as the Q reading when "Q 16:16" is included: NRSV "...since then the good news of the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone tries to enter it by force." But the very fact that the Matthean reading is the *lectio difficilior*, and may still betray an allusion to the beheading of John, suggests that the Matthean reading is that of Q. The concept of "evangelizing" the kingdom is distinctively Lukan (Luke 4:43; 8:1; Acts 8:12). So 16:16 it is not included in the following discussion of the sayings in Q that have the highest chance of going back to Jesus himself.

The concept of these sayings characterizing the kingdom as an "active, dynamic entity," to use Merklein's language, suggests that the translation "God reigning" is more appropriate than the conventional translation "kingdom of God."

This active, dynamic meaning is spelled out in somewhat more detail by Dieter Lührmann's pupil Peter Kristin. For he speaks of what is present in the sense of what happens at individual points of time:<sup>93</sup>

They [the disciples] put these sayings into practice and understood themselves, on the basis of these performatively functioning sayings, and on the basis of being commissioned by Jesus, as messengers of the kingdom of God that is punctually present in their encounter with the "children of peace" and in the healings that accompany this encounter.

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<sup>93</sup> Peter Kristen, "Nachfolge Leben: Drei Modelle von Kreuzesnachfolge in Q und Markus," in *Text und Geschichte: Facetten theologischen Arbeitens aus dem Freundes- und Schülerkreis. Dieter Lührmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Stefan Maser and Egbert Schlarb, MThSt 50 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1999), 89–106, at 92, 93, 95: "Sie praktizierten diese Worte und verstanden sich, aufgrund dieser performativ wirkenden Worte und der Beauftragung durch Jesus, als Boten des in ihrer Begegnung mit den 'Kindern des Friedens' und in den diese Begegnung begleitenden Heilungen punktuell gegenwärtigen Gottesreiches. . . . Die Boten verstehen sich als legitime Nachfolgerinnen und Nachfolger Jesu und bringen denen, die sie aufgrund ihres Friedensgrüßes aufnehmen, die Gegenwart des Gottesreiches (10,9), indem sie das verkündigen und tun, was Jesus (selbst getan und) ihnen aufgetragen hat. Das Gottesreich ist in ihrem Wirken angebahnt und in den ihnen aufgetragenen Heilungen und der Sphäre des Heils präsent und erfahrbar. Dieses Heil entwickelt sich als Folge der gastlichen Aufnahme in ein Haus. In ihrem ganzen Leben stellen sie die Prinzipien des Gottesreiches dar, wie sie in Q<sup>1</sup> erkennbar werden. Gewalt- und besitzlos (10,4) leben sie die Realität der Gottesherrschaft paradigmatisch, wie es in Q 12,31 ausgedrückt ist, im Vertrauen auf die Fürsorge des Vaters. . . . Die charakteristische Vorstellung des punktuell schon präsenten Gottesreiches als einer alternativen Lebensform ist das Movens der Boten, die Sendung durch Jesus ihre Legitimation für ein Leben nach seinen Worten."

The messengers understand themselves as legitimate followers of Jesus, and bring the presence of the kingdom of God to those who take them in on the basis of their greeting of peace (Q 10:9), in that they proclaim and do what Jesus (himself has done and) commissioned them to do. The kingdom of God is prepared in their deeds, and is present and can be experienced as the sphere of salvation in the healings with which they are commissioned. This salvation develops as the consequence of the hospitable reception into a house. In their whole life they present the principles of the kingdom of God, as it is recognizable in Q<sup>1</sup>. Without using force and without having possessions (Q 10:4), they live the reality of God’s reign paradigmatically, as it is expressed in Q 12:31, as trust in the *care* of the Father.

The characteristic concept of the kingdom of God, as an alternative life style that is already punctually present, is the moving force behind the messengers, and their being sent by Jesus their legitimation for living according to his sayings.

That is to say, what we would in modern terminology refer to as “religious experience” was referred to by Jesus as “God reigning.” But by Paul’s time, or, as Luke would put it, after Pentecost, Jesus’ use of ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ to refer to “religious experience” seems to have been lost from sight. For religious experience was now referred to as the activity of God’s “Spirit.” More concretely, such things as healings and exorcisms, which Jesus had explained as “God reigning,” would now fall into the category of “spiritual gifts,” πνευμάτικα, as Paul so eloquently states:<sup>94</sup>

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

Thus, on a larger semantic field, the shift away from ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ and its replacement by πνεῦμα as the name for religious experience would clear the way for another meaning for ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, in a different semantic field—before the metaphor gradually faded into insignificance, replaced by emerging Christian doctrine.

<sup>94</sup> 1 Cor 12:7–11.

### 6. *The Kingdom of God as a Place or Community*

There are very many references, especially in the gospels, to ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ as a place or community “into” which one can “come”<sup>95</sup> or “in which” one finds oneself.<sup>96</sup> This usage of ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ to refer to a place or community is no doubt responsible for the standard modern translation, “the kingdom of God.”

This shift in meaning for ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ from religious experience to a place or community may also be understood on a broader semantic field: The original group of those who had been with Jesus in Galilee was designated “disciples” or “apostles” or “the twelve.” But later, when the Christian group had grown into a somewhat larger community, it lacked a name for itself.

The LXX term used for Jewish assemblies held elsewhere than at the temple, συναγωγή, seemed inappropriate. For that is the name of the place where Christians had been punished already by the pre-Christian Paul.<sup>97</sup> Jewish Christians had even become ἀποσυνάγωγος, “de-synagoguized,”<sup>98</sup> excommunicated. As a result, Christians could even refer to the Jewish meetings as the “synagogue of Satan.”<sup>99</sup>

The other LXX term for an assembly, ἐκκλησία, only gradually caught on. It occurs only three times in Matthew,<sup>100</sup> all in late additions, by which time the Q community had merged into the Pauline “church.” The designation ἐκκλησία never occurs in the other gospels.

This is particularly striking in the case of Luke, since “church” was clearly in his vocabulary. For it occurs 23 times in Acts! Thus, from Luke’s point of view, the church began at Pentecost. Jesus and his disciples did not constitute the “church.” This seems to have been the view of the other gospels as well.

Paul uses the term ἐκκλησία 44 times, and 18 more occurrences are found in the Deutero-Pauline Epistles. It occurs twice in Hebrews, once in James, 3 times in Third John, and 20 times in Revelation.

<sup>95</sup> Matt 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23, 24; 21:31; Mark 9:47; 10:15, 23, 24, 25; Luke 18:24, 25; 23:42; John 3:5; Acts 14:22; Col 1:13; 4:11; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Tim 4:18.

<sup>96</sup> Matt 5:19 *bis*; 8:11; 11:11; 13:43; 18:1, 4; 20:21; 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 7:28; 13:28, 29; 14:15; 22:16, 30; Eph 5:5.

<sup>97</sup> Acts 22:19; 26:11.

<sup>98</sup> John 9:22; 12:42.

<sup>99</sup> Rev 2:9; 3:9.

<sup>100</sup> Matt 16:16; 18:17; 18:17.

One must infer that the evangelists seem to have made use of "kingdom" to refer to the group of Jesus' Galilean disciples as a community that one could "enter" or be "in," so as to leave the term "church" to refer to the Jerusalem "church" and the Gentile church beyond.

This is somewhat similar to the situation with regard to the title "Christians," Χριστιανοί. For Acts reports that it was first in the Gentile church of Antioch founded by Barnabas and Paul that the designation "Christians" came to be used.<sup>101</sup> It is then put on the lips of Agrippa toward the end of Acts,<sup>102</sup> and recurs once in First Peter.<sup>103</sup> Thus it seems to have been surprisingly rare in the first century.

Before ἐκκλησία and Χριστιανοί became common, some equivalent had to be developed. The "Way," ὁ ὁδός, served this purpose, in which meaning it is used 8 times in Acts.<sup>104</sup>

The "poor," οἱ πτωχοί, seems also to have served this purpose. For the Sermon in Q began, no doubt intentionally, with a Beatitude blessing the "poor."<sup>105</sup> Then Q's reference back to the Sermon to validate Jesus to the Baptists refers to the Sermon as "evangelizing the poor."<sup>106</sup> Paul took up a collection for "the poor."<sup>107</sup> Similarly, his reference elsewhere to "the poor of the saints in Jerusalem"<sup>108</sup> seems to refer to the Jerusalem church as such, not just to its poorer members. Actually, the remnants of Jewish Christianity came to be known as the "Ebionites," which is based on the Aramaic word for the poor.

Similarly "Nazorean," Ναζωραῖος, is a term originally used of Jesus, but then also applied to Christians, even to Paul, "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazoreans."<sup>109</sup>

The Greek word αἵρεσις<sup>110</sup> did not originally have the negative connotation of "heresy," but rather just meant a choice among various options, a preference, a party or sect. It is used of "the party of the

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<sup>101</sup> Acts 11:26.

<sup>102</sup> Acts 26:28.

<sup>103</sup> 1 Pet 4:16.

<sup>104</sup> Acts 9:2; 18:25; 18:26; 19:9; 19:23; 22:4; 24:14; 24:22.

<sup>105</sup> Q 6:20.

<sup>106</sup> Q 7:22.

<sup>107</sup> Gal 2:10.

<sup>108</sup> Rom 15:26.

<sup>109</sup> Acts 24:5.

<sup>110</sup> 1 Cor 11:19; Gal 5:20; 2 Pet 2:1.

Sadducees”<sup>111</sup> and “the party of the Pharisees.”<sup>112</sup> So the Jesus people were also called “the party of the Nazoreans,”<sup>113</sup> “the Way, which they call a party.”<sup>114</sup> Paul’s religion is called “this party.”<sup>115</sup>

Of course the claim to be the true Israel led to the appropriation of terms Jews used of themselves, such as the “saints” and the “elect.”

Paul built upon the title for Jesus, “Christ”: People were baptized “into Christ (Jesus),”<sup>116</sup> and thus came to be “in Christ (Jesus),”<sup>117</sup> which could thus become a broader idiom for the Christian reality.<sup>118</sup>

In all of this plethora of designations for the Christian community, it is not surprising that ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, Jesus’ favorite metaphor, became one of them. But this was not its primary meaning, any more than the other terms for the Christian community were their primary meanings.

Thus the term for religious experience in Jesus’ rhetoric became, in Christian rhetoric down to the present day, one of the many terms used for the Christian community “into” which one could enter, and “in” which one could find oneself.

### 7. *The Kingdom of God as Still Future*

It used to be customary to assume that Jesus simply carried on John the Baptist’s apocalyptic message. But one can hardly base an apocalyptic “kingdom of God” on John the Baptist’s influence on Jesus:

First of all, there is no extant saying of John the Baptist that mentions the kingdom of God.<sup>119</sup> Then, with regard to John’s influence on Jesus, it is important to notice that Jesus clearly departed from John’s practice: clothing; food; not baptizing; not fasting; and locale: going door-to-

<sup>111</sup> Acts 5:17.

<sup>112</sup> Acts 15:5. See also Acts 26:5, where Paul says: “I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee.”

<sup>113</sup> Acts 24:5.

<sup>114</sup> Acts 24:14.

<sup>115</sup> Acts 28:22.

<sup>116</sup> Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27 (without “Jesus”).

<sup>117</sup> Gal 3:28; Phil 1:1; Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 1:30; 4:10 (without “Jesus”); 4:15 (without “Jesus”); 15:18 (without “Jesus”); 15:19 (without “Jesus”); 15:22 (without “Jesus”); etc.

<sup>118</sup> Rom 3:24; 8:2, 39; 9:1 (without “Jesus”); 12:5 (without “Jesus”); 15:17; 16:3; 16:7, 9, 10 (all three without “Jesus”); 1 Cor 1:4; 3:1 (without “Jesus”); 14:17; 15:31; 16:24; 2 Cor 3:14 (without “Jesus”); 5:19 (without “Jesus”); etc.

<sup>119</sup> Except for Matthew’s secondary adaptation to John of Mark’s summary of Jesus’ message: Matt 3:2.

door along the Sea of Galilee asking for bed and breakfast, rather than withdrawing to the purity of the wilderness along the Jordan.<sup>120</sup> This makes it probable that Jesus also departed from John's message.

Already Ernst Käsemann pointed out that apocalypticism was launched into the Christian tradition first by the Easter experience, not by John the Baptist:<sup>121</sup>

Jesus obviously speaks of the coming of the *basileia* in a different sense from the Baptist and contemporary Judaism, namely, not exclusively, or even only primarily, in relation to a chronologically datable end of the world.

Of course half a century or more ago there had been a debate between C.H. Dodd and his German contemporaries about the two verbs used of Jesus' healings and exorcisms, ἐγγίζειν<sup>122</sup> and φθάνειν.<sup>123</sup>

Cure the sick there, and say to them: God's reign has reached (ἐγγίζειν) unto you.

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then there has come (φθάνειν) upon you God's reign.

Dodd took this to mean "realized eschatology," the kingdom present in Jesus' ministry, but the German tradition, still following Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, took it to mean that the kingdom was basically future, with only anticipations, signs, occurring in Jesus' public ministry.

Mark put ἐγγίζειν programmatically at the opening of his gospel:<sup>124</sup>

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.

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<sup>120</sup> For specifics see my essay, "Building Blocks in the Social History of Q," in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996) 87–112; "John's and Jesus' Lifestyles and Practice," 90–95, and "The Secondary Rapprochement of Baptists and Christians," 95–98.

<sup>121</sup> See my essay, "Jesus' Theology in the Sayings Gospel Q," in *Early Christian Voices: In Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of François Bovon*, ed. David H. Warren et al., BIS 66 (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2003) 25–43, at 27–29, here quoting Käsemann, "Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik," *ZTK* 59 (1962): 257–284, at 260–262, ET: "On the Topic of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in *Apocalypticism: Journal for Theology and the Church* 6 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969): 99–133: 104.

<sup>122</sup> Q 10:9.

<sup>123</sup> Q 11:20.

<sup>124</sup> Mark 1:15.



In the light of Mark's usage elsewhere, this may not refer to Jesus' public ministry that was then beginning in Galilee, but rather to an apocalyptic event in the near future.<sup>125</sup>

Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.

This Markan understanding of the kingdom, as an imminently pending apocalypse, seemed to be what one should attribute to Jesus. For after all, Mark is the oldest gospel. The generally-conceded fact that Mark is constituted more by its non-historical "Messianic secret" than by actual historical tradition did not outweigh the claim of its priority—for there seemed no alternative.

Though Q's existence was largely conceded, it still did not function as a gospel in its own right. Its sayings of Jesus, identifying the nearness or coming of the kingdom with the activity of Jesus and his followers, were not given the priority they deserve. The result was that Jesus' good news about what God is doing in the lives of people now was lost from sight, replaced by the idea of a future apocalypse about to take place.

Incidentally, that eschatological interpretation leaves Jesus holding the bag, in having a message that centered in what was about to happen, but did not happen—a problem its advocates rarely mention. Fortunately, we do not have to cope with the problem that Jesus was basically mistaken, but only with the problem that eminent German scholars were basically mistaken.

This does not mean that Jesus thought the kingdom to be only present, fully "realized." Of course he knew that the poor were still poor, the sick still sick, the demon-possessed still having convulsions. Jesus himself must on occasion have gone to bed hungry, or even had to go to sleep without a bed. He realized that the mass conversion of Judaism was not taking place.

But what it does mean is that the classification of the kingdom in Jesus' sayings as primarily eschatological, in the sense of apocalyptic, is no longer a valid interpretation. He did not just announce the kingdom, anticipate the kingdom, promise the kingdom. What happened in his ministry was not just a "sign" of some future eschatological event. Instead, he talked about the kingdom as something happening now. He did not pronounce the poor blessed because in the afterlife or the

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<sup>125</sup> Mark 9:1.

eschaton "theirs is the kingdom."<sup>126</sup> He did not pronounce the hungry blessed because they will participate in the eschatological banquet "in the kingdom of God,"<sup>127</sup> even if in the meantime they starve to death. He could not have been that cynical! No, he *did* the kingdom in the here and now, or, as he would put it, God did it through people who hearkened to him. In any case, it was happening right now.

There are of course sayings that focus on the future kingdom, but they tend to be secondary. A good instance is Matthew's insertion into the Lord's Prayer: He interprets "Thy kingdom come" as meaning "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Of course we still have a long way to go before the kingdom comes in this sense, judging by conditions both then and now. But this interpretation of the coming of the kingdom, as a petition to be really fulfilled only in the future, is not the interpretation that petition had in Q, and presumably for Jesus. For in Q it is immediately followed by the petition: Our day's bread give us today. Then, immediately following the prayer in Q, there is the reassurance that the fulfillment will take place in the here and now:<sup>128</sup>

What person of you, whose child asks for bread, will give him a stone?  
Or again when he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? So if you, though evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, by how much more will the Father from heaven give good things to those who ask him?

Surely, if an evil father gives fish and bread in the here and now, the good Father from heaven will not do less. Jesus did not preach pie in the sky by-and-by.

There are of course sayings that put the kingdom only in the future, as in the eucharistic liturgy:<sup>129</sup>

Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

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<sup>126</sup> Q 6:20.

<sup>127</sup> Q 13:28.

<sup>128</sup> Q 11:11–13.

<sup>129</sup> Mark 14:25 par. Matt 26:29; see Luke 22:15–18.

The futurity of the kingdom of God is sometimes emphasized by interspersing a kingdom of Christ prior to the kingdom of God:<sup>130</sup>

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Here the kingdom of God can be expected only when death has been completely eliminated—still some time away! But all of this development in the timing of the kingdom of God should not obscure the fact that for Jesus the kingdom of God, or, more accurately translated, God reigning, is something that took place in his actions during his public ministry. It was, after all, his rhetoric for talking about religious experience, not a doctrine about last things.

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<sup>130</sup> 1 Cor 15:23–26. See also Luke 22:29; 23:42; John 18:36 *ter*; Eph 5:5; Col 1:13; 2 Tim 4:1, 18; Heb 1:8.

## JEWISH GALILEE

ETIENNE NODET

Galilee as such plays no appreciable role in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the Galilean milieu in which Jesus moves is rural: there is never any mention of Sepphoris or Tiberias. Nevertheless, it is very active in religious terms. We read of expectations, and debates and conflicts between various groups and tendencies. We must therefore inquire into the nature and the origin of this Jewish milieu which has no obvious biblical roots, remote from the big cities, and separated from Jerusalem by a hostile Samaria.

When Josephus wished to justify his claim to speak on behalf of his people, he wrote an autobiography ca. 90 CE. This *Life* or *Vita* paints a flattering picture of a man who in reality probably played a rather modest role. Curiously enough, he devotes most of this work to retelling his campaigns in Galilee from the uprisings in 66 onwards. This is obviously an apologia, but unlike his first exposé in the *Jewish War*, Josephus's second account of the events completely omits every direct military encounter of any importance with the Romans and concentrates almost exclusively on the divisions among the Jews. We may of course grant that such an omission may well be due to his present position as a notable man who had been set free by the emperor and is now defending the imperial policies; but the result, seen from the perspective of Rome, is that the political and social significance of the events which he relates seems limited to the strictly local sphere, with no contact with any important center. At the same period, when he describes the principal "philosophies" within Judaism, he is obliged to add a fourth tendency to the celebrated triad of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, viz. the Galilean Zealots, and he traces their origins back to the beginnings of the Roman domination. We may however wonder what led him to confer such a dignity on this movement—after all, he has just expressed a ferocious criticism of these Zealots, since it was they who bore the responsibility for the conflicts which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem. It seems, therefore, that there are specifically Jewish reasons which oblige him even in Rome to take seriously the distant Galilee and the Galileans, more than twenty years after the events

he is describing. Since the *Life* was first an appendix to the *Antiquities*, we may ask for whom he wrote this major work.

In a completely different context, we note that the Mishnah, the foundational collection of rabbinic Judaism, likewise comes from Galilee. It was edited ca. 200 CE, and alongside many recollections of Jerusalem and of the temple, its general atmosphere is rural. We also note that at a period when the Severan dynasty tended to show favor to the Jews, and after Caracalla had granted Roman citizenship in 212 to all the free subjects of the empire, whether Jews or not, this Mishnah could be brought to Babylon and adopted there ca. 219; but we never hear anything at this period of its diffusion in the Mediterranean countries. Subsequent generations of commentators produced two collections known as the Jerusalem Talmud (which in fact originated in Galilee) and the Babylonian Talmud, and these are cultural twins. Nevertheless, the Mishnah presents itself not as the work of Babylonians who had arrived in Galilee, but of schools founded by those who had escaped from Judea after the defeat of Bar Kokhba, the transformation of Jerusalem into the pagan city of Aelia, and the expulsion of the Jews from Judea. This leads to a further question about the nature and origin of this later Galilean Judaism and about what seems to be a Babylonian orientation—all of which appears marginal, or at least lateral, in relation to the Roman world.

### 1. *Galilee up to the Time of Jesus*

The name “Galilee” evokes the undulating hills which extend from the high valley of the Jordan to the Phoenician coast. The region of Galilee corresponds roughly to four tribes of biblical Israel, viz. Asher, Issachar, Naphtali, and Zebulon. Although the soil is fertile, it is a small rural province which hardly plays any role in the Bible as a whole, a part from the conquest of Hazor (Josh 11) and various important events mentioned in the period of the judges. From the reign of Solomon onwards, these tribes formed part of the kingdom of Israel, but not the coast (Acco), at least according to most of the relevant texts. 2 Chr 30:11–12 tells us that the people of Asher, Zebulon, and Manasseh (central Samaria) humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem in the reign of Hezekiah. This information is more appropriate to the historical period of the Chronicler himself, but at any rate it shows that the devotion of these persons to Jerusalem was a remarkable exception. The celebrated

designation “Galilee of the nations” comes from Isa 8:23 (according to the LXX), and is quoted at Matt 4:15. In the final scene of Matthew’s Gospel (28:16–18), the risen Jesus summons his disciples to meet him in Galilee, so that he can send them out to all the nations. Galilee is thus presented as the gateway leading to the other nations.

Nevertheless, what we have here is a play of words on the expression, since the original text in Isa 8:23 designates simply the “circle of nations” and has a hostile nuance:<sup>1</sup> it speaks of a small, exposed region which does not possess many fortified towns.

Josephus, who had fought there, knew Galilee well, but when he writes about Joshua’s division of the land, he does not make any precise link between this region and the corresponding biblical tribes (cf. *Ant.* 5.63f.). For Josephus (*War* 3.35–40), it extends from Carmel to Golan, as far as Tyre in the north and the city of Samaria-Sebaste in the south. In reality, he speaks of “two Galilees,” the Upper and the Lower (*War* 2.568); the extension which he gives to this region, on the east of the Jordan and to the south of the plain of Jezreel, goes back to the contours of the kingdom of Herod. Geographically, the term is more restricted: in the strict sense, it designates the region of rolling mountains situated to the north of the plain of Jezreel and to the west of the Jordan, i.e. in effect Upper Galilee.

According to Ezra-Nehemiah, those who returned from exile in Babylon were interested only in Jerusalem and Judea; at most, the term “Judea” extends to the north and includes Benjamin. Later, at the period of the Maccabean crisis, the reconquest properly speaking concerns only Judea itself, bordered by Emmaus on the east (by the hill country) and Bethzur to the south (halfway between Bethlehem and Hebron). Nevertheless, there are Jews in Galilee at this period: during the persecutions, they appeal for help to Judas and his brothers, declaring that they are the victims of a coalition consisting of Ptolemais, Tyre, Sidon, and the whole of Galilee (this corresponds well to the “circle of the nations”). This took place between 167 and 160 BCE. At the most, this was a scattered minority without any fortified town of their own—unlike the situation in other regions. Accordingly, when Simon is sent to provide reinforcement, he does not attempt to organize the security of the Jews in this region: instead, he prefers to take them with

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<sup>1</sup> In 1 Macc 5:15 (the original text of which is Hebrew), “Galilee of the foreigners” (*gelil ha-goyim*) is a circle of enemies, whom Josephus understands as “the foreigners in Galilee” (*Ant.* 12.331).

him to Judea (1 Macc 5:14–15). These scattered groups are certainly not émigrés from Judea, and there is no good reason to see them as direct descendants of the Israelites of earlier times, since in that case their natural attachment would have been to Samaria.<sup>2</sup>

The only notable event to which this precarious establishment of Jews in Galilee might be linked is the charter granted by Antiochus III to Jerusalem ca. 200.<sup>3</sup> The background is as follows: after the Lagids had dominated Coelestria (Palestine and Phoenicia) for a century, Antiochus had encountered some difficulty in seizing this territory from them, but the inhabitants of Judea (*Ant.* 12.133–134) and the Jews in general had taken his side.<sup>4</sup> This means that the charter which was granted to them was a reward. It gives Jerusalem a recognized status, and permits “all those who belong to the Jewish people” to live according to their national laws.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, this ordinance concerns a much larger area than Judea alone; for a long time, in fact, there had been a large Jewish population scattered throughout Mesopotamia and the Seleucid empire. And Antiochus, possibly in the context of a policy that had been traditional since the time of the Persians, is not afraid to

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<sup>2</sup> S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander to Hadrian: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1980), 1–44, follows earlier scholars and tries to show that the fidelity of Galilee to Jerusalem, bypassing Samaria, was due to the “Deuteronomist” reform of Josiah and to the small number of persons deported when the kingdom of Israel fell (at least according to the Assyrian sources). However, this view is certainly too “Judean” and poses more problems than it solves: (1) the historical substance of this reform is far from clear, since 2 Macc 6:1–3 shows that even at the period of the redaction of this book, the existence of two temples for one single nation did not present any major problem; (2) according to 2 Kgs 15:29, Galilee and the surrounding towns were seized and their inhabitants deported by Tiglath-Pileser more than ten years before Sargon conquered Samaria. Even if the numbers involved here have been exaggerated in the biblical narrative, it nevertheless indicates that social and religious cohesion had been destroyed. More recently, R. A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), attempts a more nuanced approach to Jewish Galilee, without however succeeding in offering a good explanation of the origins, and above all of the specific character, of its traditional culture. See too the essays collected by E. M. Meyers ed., *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> The authenticity of this charter has been established by E. J. Bickerman, “La charte séleucide de Jérusalem,” in idem, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 2:44–85; Eng. trans. in the 2nd edn, 2007, 41–80.

<sup>4</sup> Josephus’s source is a lost passage by Polybius, who speaks of “those of the Jews who dwell around Jerusalem”; this presupposes that there were many other Jews as well.

<sup>5</sup> These thus became the official laws of the Jewish *ethnos*. The project of the Seleucids, who were heirs to Alexander, was to establish an empire. This ordinance is similar to that quoted at Ezra 7:25–27, where Artaxerxes enjoins upon Ezra to establish authoritatively the “law of his God” for “all the people in the province Beyond the River.” This expression corresponds exactly to the Jewish *ethnos* in Syria.

make use of the Jews here as unarmed colonists in a distant country, in order to stabilize a disputed border (with regard to Asia Minor, cf. *Ant.* 12.148–149).

It is therefore natural to suppose that the Jewish colonists who were sent or who departed voluntarily in the aftermath of this charter arrived in the fertile region of Galilee and in the associated urban centers. We may also suppose that the journeys necessitated by pilgrimages and the bringing of sacrificial offerings led to the creation of places where travelers could spend the night, since the land route from Mesopotamia goes by way of Damascus and Scythopolis. These suppositions are strengthened to some extent by the results of archaeological investigations in Galilee, which have revealed that the region was very sparsely populated in the Hellenistic period before the second century. After this, there was a significant increase in the rural population, but their settlements were scattered and there was no appreciable urbanization.<sup>6</sup>

During the Maccabean crisis (167–164) and for some years afterwards, Judea remained a Seleucid province under direct administration. Politically, it began to move towards a measure of autonomy only when Jonathan, the son of Mattathias, became high priest in 152 in troubled circumstances: there was no civil government, and the high priesthood had remained a concession by the Seleucid authorities, but Jonathan, the heir to a family which had rebelled against Antiochus IV, succeeded in obtaining his office thanks to a civil war between Demetrius I and Alexander Balas (1 Macc 10:17–19), in which he opportunely took the side of one of the parties. Later, Jonathan also obtained the allocation to Judea of three districts in the region of Lydda-Lod (1 Macc 10:30; 11:34). These had been attached to a region called Samaria-Galilee. This implies that the jurisdiction of Judea did not include Samaria, and still less Galilee.

At a later date, John Hyrcanus (135–104), who succeeded his father Simon the brother of Jonathan, conducted an energetic policy of territorial expansion. In particular, Josephus relates the conquest of Sichem and the Judaization of Idumaea ca. 128 (*Ant.* 13.255–257) and notes that later, between 111 and 107, the towns of Samaria and Scythopolis were captured (13.275–277). This does not permit us to conclude that

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<sup>6</sup> E. Meyers, J. Strange, and D. Groh, "The Meiron Excavation Project: Archaeological Survey in Galilee and the Golan" (1976), *BASOR* 230 (1978): 1–24; E. Meyers, "Galilean Regionalism: A Reappraisal," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism 5: Studies in Judaism and its Greco-Roman Context*, Brown Judaic Series 32, ed. E. Meyers, J. Strange, and D. Groh (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 115–131.



the whole of Galilee was conquered at that date. After the death of Hyrcanus in 104, his son Aristobulus succeeded him in troubled conditions. He annexed a part of the territory of the Ituraeans ca. 103 and circumcised them by force (*Ant.* 13.319); here, Josephus does not have a direct source, and he is probably quoting Strabo (*Geogr.* 753–756), but his redactional work suggests to the reader that this “part of Ituraea” was none other than Galilee.<sup>7</sup> This means that the Galileans would have been Judaized by force and would thus be Israelites of the second rank, without a pedigree, with a provenance even more recent than that of the Idumaeans. One may even wonder whether Strabo, who was acquainted with an instance of enforced circumcision, may have committed the mistake of confusing Ituraeans and Idumaeans, since the two names are very similar. The extract in question does not name the king of Judea, and it may be that he was in fact John Hyrcanus, since we are told that he was a king who did good to his nation—something that cannot be said about Aristobulus, whose brief and lamentable reign never rose above the level of quarrels within the palace.

In 63, Jerusalem fell to Pompey (*Ant.* 14.48–76), thanks to a civil war: Antipater, the father of Herod and apparently the governor of Idumaea, supported the legitimate heir, the feeble Hyrcanus II, against the claims of Aristobulus, who had seized the throne in 67. Initially, the Romans supported Aristobulus, but later they pursued him and besieged him in Jerusalem. The victorious Pompey made a solemn entrance. Hyrcanus, who thus found himself on the winning side, remained ethnarch and high priest, but he was stripped of the royal title. Judea was severely amputated, losing a whole series of towns and their dependencies: to the west, the coastal villages from Raphia to Dora, which form a region to the south of Carmel; in the center, Samaria and Scythopolis; to the east of the Jordan, several towns as far as Pella, Gadara, and Hippos to the north. All these towns, with extensive adjoining territories, were attached directly to the Roman province of Syria which had just been created. It is worth noting that in this way, the Romans exercised direct control of all the routes leading to Galilee. Clearly, Galilee could no longer be a part of Judea, but this does not mean that the region (or any one of its cities) was specifically attached to Syria on this occasion. We have no evidence of any changes, even for the Jewish town of Sepphoris, the future capital. The obvious conclusion is that, with

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<sup>7</sup> This is the commonly held view; cf. E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. G. Vermes et al., 3 vols., (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1987), 1:141 and 562; 2:8–9, who assume without genuine proof that the conquered “part of Ituraea” means Galilee.

the exception of extensive regions to the east of the Jordan (Peraea), Galilee was not an integral part of the Judea which Hyrcanus and Jan-naeus had enlarged.

In 57, Gabinius, the new governor of Syria, put down a Jewish revolt at the time when Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, was trying to regain power (*Ant.* 14.82–97). Gabinius divided Palestine, or more exactly “the people,” into five districts, each of which was governed by a “Sanhedrin,” and Sepphoris became the capital of Galilee. This was a reorganization of the people, not just of Judea, as is evident in the case of Peraea, with the two districts of Amathontis and Jericho: there were many Jews there, but the region had not belonged to Judea since the time of Pompey. The same must be said of Galilee, about which Josephus says nothing explicit. From the perspective of Syria, it was important to give the Jews of the region a territorial organization, without however according too much importance to Jerusalem. Above all, the very notion of a kingdom of Judea had to be sedulously ignored. Accordingly, although a Jewish Galilee did exist, with Sepphoris as its capital, its political links to Jerusalem were tenuous at most. It was only in 47, when Hyrcanus II returned to favor, that Galilee was explicitly attached to Judea, and that the young Herod was given a mission there.

For our present purposes, the conclusion is that the Jews in Galilee were in a singular situation. They have no identifiable relationships with the former northern kingdom (Israel) or with the Samaritans; their origin is not in the political unit of Judea; they are not the effect of the enforced circumcision of local tribes. The only element in this picture which is reasonably clear is the policy of Antiochus III, but the Galilean Jews are certainly not the same as the Jewish *ethnos* which was scattered in Syria and Mesopotamia.

## 2. *Under Herod the Great*

In 47, Herod was “charged with” Galilee, in conditions about which we know little. He crushed a certain Hezekiah and his band, who were causing havoc on the frontier with Syria (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.159–161). This led to legal proceedings, with an accusation and a trial before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. If this had merely been a question of a police operation consisting in neutralizing robbers, there would surely have been nothing to merit a legal investigation.<sup>8</sup> This Hezekiah was not

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<sup>8</sup> The parallel account in *War* 1.209 simply says that plotters compelled Hyrcanus to summon Herod, by then a rising star, before the court. He was accused of having acted

just a simple bandit: he is regarded as the ancestor of the movement of the Galileans (*War* 2.56). This incident thus involved both political<sup>9</sup> and religious issues. In political terms, Herod's victims cannot have been partisans of Aristobulus, Rome's enemy in the time of Pompey, because the tearful mothers come to present their supplications during the trial to Hyrcanus himself, who was wholly a vassal of the Romans. One might argue that Herod was seeking to carve out a stronghold for himself against Hyrcanus, and that this was the cause of the jealousies at court; but his actions won the favor of the governor Sextus Caesar, who cannot have been an opponent of Hyrcanus (a protégé of Julius Caesar). Nor can Sextus Caesar have looked favorably on a sedition which threatened the *pax romana*. As things turned out after these exploits, Herod was appointed governor of Coelestria and Samaria by Sextus, and there is every reason to credit him with possessing exceptional political skill—as indeed his entire career shows.

The conclusion must therefore be that these “brigands” were anti-Roman Jews. The legal proceedings taken against Herod were prompted by Jews who defended the Law and were not in the least interested in allegiance to Rome. During the trial, the Pharisee Sameas was noteworthy for his frankness. This means that the difficult or legendary elements in Josephus<sup>10</sup> fail to conceal the fact that there existed a Galilean Judaism on which the Pharisees looked with favor. This Galilean Judaism may have given signs of irredentism, but there is no doubt that it was strongly opposed to Herod the Idumaeen, who was described as a “half-Jew” (*Ant.* 14.403): this is a principled stand which is taken without regard to the possible political consequences. The Galilean opponents of Herod were certainly not *marranos*, i.e. Ituraeans or

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in contempt of the “Jewish law” and the “national customs” by killing many persons without a trial. This redaction, which avoids stating that these schemers were partisans of Hezekiah, waters down the precise situation of the brigands and centers attention upon a monopoly enjoyed by the tribunal in Jerusalem.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Sean Freyne, “Bandits in Galilee: A Contribution to the Study of Social Conditions in First-Century Palestine,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 50–68, who emphasizes the socio-political circumstances. Helmut Schwier, *Tempel und Tempelzerstörung*, *Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus* 11 (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1999), 145–146, discusses various scholarly opinions about these bandits.

<sup>10</sup> In particular, it is difficult to know whether or not this trial conducted at Jerusalem for actions committed in Galilee presupposes the disappearance of the other provincial Sanhedrins. The scene of the trial is reported in *b. San.* 19a–b, with different names (Jannaeus instead of Hyrcanus, etc.), and with a special emphasis on the independence of the Pharisees.

others who had been circumcised by force: Hezekiah was defending a form of Judaism.

In 40, Herod had himself appointed king of Judea by the senate in Rome (*Ant.* 14:381–382), but he obtained this promotion only thanks to the war. Rome had need of local allies: Antigonus, the last Hasmonean king, had just obtained his throne thanks to the Parthians, who had forcibly driven the Romans out of Syria and taken Hyrcanus prisoner. In 39, Herod landed at Ptolemais-Acco to begin the reconquest of Judea. He was supported by the Romans, who were still fighting against the Parthians. After some initial successes, Herod encountered difficulties in Galilee and was obliged at once to deploy considerable numbers of soldiers against “brigands living in caves.” Josephus relates how this enemy was defeated all along the line. This was followed by the assault on the caves where the last survivors had fled. These caves are situated in the cliffs of Arbela, which overhang Magdala on the shore of the lake (*Ant.* 14.421–422). We hear a remarkable detail: on the point of being taken captive, an old man (or an “elder”) refused to let himself be taken prisoner and preferred rather to kill his wife and his seven children, before throwing himself off the cliff. Herod was present at this scene and offered him his pardon, stretching out his hand to the man. But he found the time, before throwing himself off the cliff, to hurl abuse at Herod, reproaching him for his origins. For the brigands, therefore, this was not an economic war, and the scene recalls the story of the prisoners at Jotapata a century later, or even the collective suicides at Gamala and Massada. These brigands were in a similar situation to Hezekiah, whom the same Herod had killed ten years earlier. The hand which Herod stretched out gives a glimpse of his hope, not only of conquering, but of being acknowledged. A century later, Josephus was motivated by the same concern, in somewhat parallel circumstances.

Josephus tells us in a later chapter (*Ant.* 17.23–25) that at a period which is not precisely specified (but was probably shortly after the beginning of his reign),<sup>11</sup> Herod wished to protect himself against bandits

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<sup>11</sup> Josephus places Zamaris’s appeal after he had been installed at Daphne near Antioch by Saturninus, who was the governor of Syria at the end of Herod’s reign (9–6 BCE), i.e. at a period when Herod was already submerged in domestic difficulties (cf. Schürer, *History*, 1:257). This is highly unlikely. We should rather think of the period when Herod was consolidating his authority, viz. 37–25. There was a governor named Calpurnius in 34–33, and this date is better; the names may simply have been mixed up.

in Trachonitis. Once again, these are Jewish “brigands” with political intentions, not nomads. The king wished to establish a buffer zone in Batanaea (Golan, to the east of the Jordan) by creating a settlement populated by Jewish subjects, so that he could protect both the region and the pilgrimage route. He installed a group of Babylonian Jewish colonists there who were already in Syria and enjoyed the favor of the Romans. He gave them ground to clear and exempted them from taxes. Their leader, Zamaris, built a city called Bathyra (most probably on the site of Qatzrin, the Rabbinic Cesarea) and a number of strongholds. He gathered together from many different regions “people faithful to the Jewish customs”; both the exemption from taxation and the remote location were very attractive, especially for people who had a strong religious motivation and had no interest in seeking power. Herod’s choice of Babylonian Jews without political ambitions was certainly prudent, bearing in mind the neighboring Galileans who had resisted him on the other shore of the lake, and who had the same Babylonian origin from a more distant period in time.

When Herod died in 4 BCE, the situation reverted to confusion, with quarrels about the succession focusing on Archelaus, abuses committed by the Roman army, and a number of revolts, especially on the occasion of pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the Passover and Pentecost. The religious factor played a significant role in the uprisings: at Jerusalem, people were demanding that the new ethnarch purify the cult, and revenge was sought for the Pharisaic teachers whom Herod had killed when they sought to remove a golden eagle from the temple (*Ant.* 17.206–207). Varus, the governor of Syria, hastened to Jerusalem with an armed force and restored order. He showed clemency to Jerusalem, but was implacable in dealing with the “brigands.”

In Galilee, Sepphoris was the center of a rebellion inspired by Judas of Gamala, who profited from the weakness of Jerusalem and attempted to take over the government. This revolt was crushed, and the city was destroyed by Varus’s son (17.289). This Judas is none other than “Judas the Galilean,” the founder *together with a Pharisee* of that “folly” which Josephus was later compelled to call the “fourth philosophy” (18.4–6).<sup>12</sup> This Judas is described as “the son of Hezekiah,” viz. of the man whom Herod had defeated more than forty years earlier. Obviously, Judas is one who continues the work of Hezekiah; he is not his “son” in the strict sense.<sup>13</sup> This is indicated not only by the gap between

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten*, AGSU 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 57–61 and 322.

<sup>13</sup> Similarly, “a certain” Menahem, “the son” of Judas the Galilean, appeared later, ca. 65 (*War* 2.433). Here too, we have an heir rather than a son, not only because of

the dates, but above all by his lack of pedigree. In other words, he is called “son” in order to affirm that he belongs to the same category of persons. During the fiscal census of Quirinius, in 6 CE, Judas was sufficiently influential to be able to stir up a large-scale resistance to the Roman power (and especially to its taxes) in the whole of Judea. This is why he was called “the Galilean”—a sobriquet which was certainly not bestowed by the Galileans on themselves, and attests a large-scale migration and influence beyond the borders of Galilee.<sup>14</sup> This influence was not born overnight, and the repressions by Varus had been directed to this profoundly anti-Roman group.<sup>15</sup> This means that Jewish Galilee was reinforced under Herod, until it acquired a national importance which continued to grow in subsequent years. We must bear in mind here the fact that the Pharisees were never willing to pay allegiance to Herod, who feared them and persecuted them (cf. *Ant.* 17.41–42).

### 3. *Hillel and Galilee*

The preceding section, which has related Herod’s actions vis-à-vis Galilee and the Pharisees, provides the framework for the activity of Hillel the Elder, and lends some credibility to the rabbinic sources which speak of him. Hillel is one of the great founding figures of normative Judaism (*m. Abot* 1:12), and the first to whom the tradition accords the title of “patriarch.”<sup>16</sup> It is also with Hillel that the rabbinic tradition

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the lengthy period separating the dates, which is highly unlikely if Menahem was the biological son of Judas, but also because of the contradiction between “a certain” (which presupposes that his genealogy was unknown) and the indication “son of” (which expresses exactly the opposite). Cf. É. Nodet, “Jésus et Jean-Baptiste selon Josèphe,” *RB* 92 (1985): 504–506, where I demonstrate *inter alia* that the doublet between Judas the looter and Judas the founder comes from a system of doublets in which the same episodes, after the death of Herod, are related twice and interwoven with each other in keeping with two different perspectives.

<sup>14</sup> This is attested by Luke’s reference to the Galileans whom Pilate killed (Luke 13:1–3). This passage shows that Luke understands the term *Galilean* in the secondary sense of “brigand.”

<sup>15</sup> The *Seder Olam Pabbah* (ed. Ratner, 145) has preserved the memory of a war by Varus which was just as important as that waged by Vespasian, although it ignores both the civil war and the arrival of Pompey. The first event (which it cites) concerned primarily Galilee; the latter, of which it knows nothing, concerned Judea.

<sup>16</sup> Or *nasi*. This title is certainly anachronistic, since it does not correspond to anything in Jewish society that can be identified before 70; at the most, Hillel had the rank of a recognized master. The patriarchal institution, properly so called, is not attested before Bar Kokhba, without any connection to the Tanaites. From Judah the Prince onwards, it was assuredly projected back onto the earlier generations: cf. A. Oppenheimer, *Galilee in the Mishnaic Period* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1991), 51–52.

begins to relate controversies. This disturbed later commentators and led to a fusion of originally distinct currents. Hillel was a Babylonian who lived in the days of Herod, but we have little precise information about him.

Josephus, who has eyes only for what counts in societal terms, ignores Hillel, but he knows the Pharisees Shemaiah and Abtalion (Sameas and Pollion) in Judea,<sup>17</sup> who were the immediate predecessors of Hillel and Shammai (*m. Abot* 1:10–11). The story of the elevation of Hillel to the patriarchate is supplied only by the rabbinic sources, and its principal concern is to demonstrate a pronounced discontinuity between him and his predecessors. The event is related in various analogous forms; I comment here on the longest and best documented recension (*j. Pesah.* 6:1 p. 33a),<sup>18</sup> omitting a few secondary developments:

This law was unknown to the elders of Bathyra.

This refers to the breaches of the sabbath law which were permitted in order to prepare the paschal lamb, such as we read in *m. Pes.* 6:1–2:

It happened one day that Nisan 14 coincided with the sabbath, and they did not know whether or not the paschal sacrifice took precedence over the sabbath. They said: “There is a certain Babylonian here whose name is Hillel, who has studied under Shemaiah and Abtalion. He will know whether or not the paschal sacrifice takes precedence over the sabbath.”—“Can he be of some use to us?” They sent people to look for him, and they said to him: “Have you ever heard whether or not Nisan 14 takes precedence over the sabbath, when the two days coincide?”

Hillel attempts to establish the point by means of various arguments, based primarily on the Bible and employing his own rules for inter-

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. L. H. Feldman, “The Identity of Pollion, the Pharisee, in Josephus,” *JQR* 49 (1958): 53–62. The transcription “Sameas” is ambiguous: it may come from Shemaiah, his colleague, or from Shammai, his disciple and the inseparable adversary of Hillel. However, the second form may be considered as an abbreviation of the first: cf. J. N. Dérenbourg, *Essai sur l’histoire et la géographie de la Palestine* (Paris: Impr. Impériale, 1867), 1:35 n. 1 and 95 n. 1. In *Ant.* 15.3, Josephus mentions “the Pharisee Pollion and his disciple Sameas,” and attributes to Pollion an intervention at Herod’s court which he has already attributed to Sameas at 14.172. He thus mixes up a colleague and a disciple of Pollion.

<sup>18</sup> The two other versions are in *t. Pes.* 4:13–14 and *b. Pes.* 66a. J. Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), offers a different analysis, which severs every link between Josephus and the rabbinic tradition. This is certainly simpler, but it is *a priori* arbitrary. Cf. also idem, *The Tosefta: Second Division, Moed* (New York: Ktav, 1981), 136–137.

pretation, but the others reject his arguments or refute them, and then conclude:

“There is nothing to be got out of this Babylonian!” Although he remained there all the day to provide them with explanations, they did not accept him until he said to them: “Woe is me! This is what I received from Shemaiah and Abtalion.” When they heard him say these words, they arose and appointed him patriarch.

The examination to which Hillel is subjected is remarkable for various reasons.

*First*, the body which interrogates Hillel has the power to appoint him “patriarch,” or at any rate head of the school. We are nowhere told that this body was a Sanhedrin: they are merely “the elders of Bathyra,” about whom we know little from other sources. They have links to Babylon, just like Zamaris’s group.

*Secondly*, the masters who are mentioned, Shemaiah and Abtalion, are the authorities whom everyone recognizes, but they are absent and they have not been replaced. Other passages too indicate a discontinuity between them and their successors (cf. *m. Ed.* 1:3); their authority is intact, but they are inaccessible. We must therefore assume that they have died, or have been killed. In any case, they have not been able to establish a succession which is recognized by the colony in Bathyra.

*Thirdly*, they are looking for a candidate with a particular profile: a Babylonian who has studied under these Judean Pharisaic masters. In the narrative, however, some cast doubt on the Babylonian precisely because he is a Babylonian—in other words, we have the problem of how to reconcile divergent currents in the tradition.

*Fourthly*, the context of the elders’ question is not academic, but practical. It concerns a specific urgency, for which no authority is accessible—on two levels.

*Fifthly*, the question itself is remarkable, because according to the customary lunar calendar, Passover falls on a sabbath roughly every seven years. It is therefore rather improbable that this entire assembly, which was entitled to confer promotion on Hillel (even if this authority was recognized only at a later date), should have forgotten a customary point which was of such universal relevance—and was therefore so simple.

This means that the redaction of the episode, although it is very condensed, presents a whole number of problems. We have seen the discontinuity which precedes Hillel, whose title of “patriarch” is certainly



a later addition. We can say a little about the emergence of the elders of Bathyra, who never appear in any of our sources as a permanent body: Josephus tells us that many persons came and settled in the city founded by Zamaris *because they felt safe there*. Herod persecuted the Pharisees, but he did not interfere with the statute of this colony, because of general political considerations relating to the Babylonians and the Parthians. This made it a refuge for very pious persons who could not hope for protection from the priestly milieu, which were forcibly subjected to Herod. As for the question of the Passover, which is posed far from Jerusalem, this raises issues that go far beyond the limits of the present study.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. *The Galilee of Jesus*

The elements which we have identified in the preceding sections permit an initial access to the Galilean milieu in which Jesus recruited his disciples. This is a rural milieu, a scene of intense and highly diversified activity<sup>20</sup> on both shores of the lake. This supplies a framework for many details in the gospels; at the same time, the gospels can help clarify some decisive points in the history of Judaism on the periphery of Judea, since both Christianity and the rabbinic tradition had their beginnings on the same soil. I limit myself here to a summary list of characteristic traits which identify more precisely the milieu from which Jesus and his disciples came.

*First*, scholars have seen a general opposition between the Zealot milieus to the west of the Sea of Tiberias and other milieus to the east which were more submissive. This lake plays an important role in Jesus' wanderings, not only as a geographical element, but also through symbolic effects linked to water and to fishing. Besides this, the theme of crossing the lake and the numerous allusions to "the other shore" take on a new significance (cf. John 6:1, etc.); the symmetrical curse of Bethsaida and Chorazin (Matt 11:21 par.) concerns the two shores; the first multiplication of the loaves takes place on the western shore (Matt 14:13–34 par.) with twelve baskets, while the second multiplication takes place on the eastern shore (Matt 15:32–39 par.) with seven

<sup>19</sup> Cf. É. Nodet and J. Taylor, *The Origins of Christianity: An Exploration* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1998), 138–144.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. S. Appelbaum, "Judea as a Roman Province. The Countryside as a Political and Economic Factor," *ANRW* II 8 (1977): 355–396.

baskets. Originally, these communications between the two shores are not a bridge between the Gentile Decapolis and Jewish Galilee,<sup>21</sup> but rather between two contrary tendencies in one and the same culture. This culture is very closed, and Jesus has come only “for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” The usual interpretation, which sees the twelve baskets as an allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel, and the seven baskets as a reference to the nations (recalling the “seven nations” of Canaan), accords with the spirit of a Christian redaction.

*Secondly*, when he writes about the town where Jesus “was brought up,” Eusebius cites an instructive legend (*Hist. Eccl.* 1.7.14): according to a letter of Julius Africanus, the “family of Jesus” originally came from the Jewish villages of Nazareth and Kokhaba. The latter town was in Batanaea (Golan). Let us begin by noting that this doubling of the locality accords with the doubling (on the east and the west of the lake) which Herod had organized. Our next point: this family is none other than the posterity of James, whose entourage formed the Jewish Christians in the strict sense of the word, or “Nazoreans” (the *nozrim* of the rabbinic sources). It is natural to associate this word with “Nazareth” (“Nazara”), but we may ask which name comes first, when we look at the parallel case of the other village: Kokhaba too is completely unknown,<sup>22</sup> but its name means “star,” and it is hard to avoid seeing a symbolic meaning in this word, inspired by the star of Jacob from Num 24:17, since Jesus—like all his family—is also a “Bar Kokhba.” It is therefore certainly possible that Nazareth, a village about which we know nothing from other sources, was initially a town of Nazoreans, i.e. a number of families or one group who eagerly awaited the Messiah. Finally, it is interesting to note that Africanus came from Emmaus-Nicopolis in Judea, which had been a prominent center (both really and symbolically) of active “messianism” since Judas Maccabeus. This was a place where more or less legendary Jewish Christian memories may have been elaborated, without precise links to the New Testament. Besides this, Jesus’ own town is Capharnaum on the lake, not far from Tiberias (Mark 2:1; 3:20; 9:33). Archaeological excavations on this site have shown that the fishing village predates Herod. Jesus was familiar

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the bibliography by A. Hennessy, *The Galilee of Jesus* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Four sites with this name have been identified up to now in the relevant territory, two to the west of the Jordan and two to the east, but it is difficult to follow their traces before the Byzantine period.

with this milieu, where he recruited his disciples, and he seems to have known something about fishing and navigation.

*Thirdly* and more generally, the milieu in question is rural and a scene of intense religious activity, with various tendencies engaged in debate or in conflict. The last question which the apostles put to Jesus is: “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to *Israel*?” (Acts 1:6). This scene is situated at Jerusalem, and this terminology, which resembles that of some rabbinic sources, completely ignores the real territory of Judea and the successors of Herod. It bears traces of a dream of independence, like that of the Zealots; we find the same in the third temptation (Matt 4:8–10), in the sadness of the two disciples who leave Jerusalem for Emmaus, and in the people’s choice of Barabbas, who is a “brigand”—i.e., not merely a common criminal, but a Galilean of the most genuine kind (to borrow Josephus’s terminology). We should note that although he moves around in Galilee and recruits his disciples there, Jesus remains far from the two Romanized capitals, Sepphoris and Tiberias (which was founded by Herod Antipas on the site of a cemetery, in honor of Tiberias: *Ant.* 18.37). The milieu of Jesus and his disciples lay certainly alongside the traditional Galileans.

*Fourthly*, the group which follows Jesus has a diverse composition. It includes Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot, men who were opponents *a priori* (and who correspond to the two shores), as well as Joanna, the wife of the steward of Herod Antipas—this represents a third pole opposed to the other two, linked to the ruling milieus of the cities, especially of the new capital, the despised city of Tiberias. Some disciples of John the Baptist leave him to follow Jesus. When Jesus celebrates the Last Supper at Jerusalem, he has access to a room in a hostelry about which the disciples know nothing, and this means that he has other relationships. He has adherents among the Pharisees, who warn him about the danger posed by Herod, but he counters the Pharisees by insisting on the primacy of scripture over the oral tradition; the scribes, irrespective of whether they follow Jesus or reject him, are the guardians of scripture and the opponents of the Pharisees. Taken together, these various tendencies form a spectrum of the Judaism in Galilee, where we find scarcely any Sadducees or priests. Jesus breaks all barriers—but within Judaism. He even joins the deviants, the lepers and the prostitutes, but his contacts with Gentiles do not go beyond a few symbolic gestures,<sup>23</sup> which were doubtless the maximum that his

<sup>23</sup> Cf. J.-F. Baudoz, *Les miettes de la table*, EB NS 27 (Paris: Gabalda, 1995), who

milieu could tolerate; and these gestures are always carried out in the presence of Jewish onlookers. This is the significance of the "sign of Jonah," a narrative meant for the people of Israel: even the most wicked of the prophets is capable of converting a Gentile city. We must add to this list of transgressions the visit which he receives from Samaritans, who follow scripture and await a new Moses, and who utter one of the most solemn acknowledgments of Jesus. All these crossings of boundaries form an ensemble of signs which show that Jesus is not afraid of ritual impurity.

*Fifthly*, just as John the Baptist is surrounded by disciples, so Jesus, in addition to all these occasional encounters, recruits and forms a group in which he is recognized as master ("Rabbi"), although this is not a school in the narrow sense of the term, since the apostles were subsequently regarded as "uneducated, common men" (cf. Acts 4:13); although they were not ignoramuses, they did not fit into any system of recognized doctrinal competence. At the same time, the group shared a common life and to some extent formed a closed unit. This is illustrated especially by the example of the Last Supper, which presupposes that the group habitually met for meals. What we see, therefore, is a more or less itinerant brotherhood with its own organization.

*Sixthly*, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem several times, alone or in a group. Although he is critical of the temple, he never ceases to regard it as the center of the promises. At the decisive moment, he insists absolutely on challenging the authorities, although the disciples disagree (cf. Matt 16:22 par.; according to John 7:8-9, he hesitates). And it is clear that some of them have never made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, because although they are already adults, they are filled with amazement at the architecture. There is a certain parallel in the trajectories of Jesus and the movement of Judas the Galilean, who was conceived in Galilee and later attempted to make Judea the base of his activity, which included a protest against the temple (cf. *Ant.* 18.3-4); similarly, Luke 3:1 relates that Jesus, who had been conceived in Galilee, came to Judea to start his public activity, which ended with an analogous protest. Gamaliel himself is said to have drawn this parallel (Acts 5:37), and Josephus tells us that Judas's movement was very close to the Pharisees in doctrinal terms. On the other hand, Jesus' confrontation with the civil and priestly authorities, which was followed by a discontinuity and a difficult succession,

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discusses especially the position of J. Jeremias, *Jesu Verheißung für die Völker* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956), who argued that the mission to the Gentiles can be found in the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus.

recalls the specifically Pharisaic problem (as Josephus uses this term) of the analogous confrontations and discontinuities at Jerusalem under Alexander Jannaeus and Herod, and perhaps as early as the period of the Maccabean crisis. On his way back from Judea, Jesus dismisses equally the temples of Jerusalem and Garizim in his conversation with the Samaritan woman (John 4:21–23), and then heads for Galilee: once again, the horizon is Galilean Judaism.

Finally, we should note that the sources studied here give particular prominence to the symbolic and religious factors, and that these explain very well why Josephus devotes so much attention to Galilee. Obviously, socio-economic circumstances, famines, and political oppressions also played a role, but it is remarkable that those studies of Galilee at this period which have centered on materialistic determinisms do not produce any coherent synthesis which can integrate the specific characteristics of the local culture, even when they make use of such concepts as the “people of the land” or “the poor”; they are often obliged to make the historical Jesus a somewhat unreal figure who emerges by chance in Galilee, without any deep links to tradition.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, these links were durable. Let us look at two important periods, that of the War of 70 and after the defeat of Bar Kokhba.

##### 5. *Josephus, Galilee, and the School of Jabneh-Jamnia*

In 66, following a long series of troubles with complex origins, Cestius Gallus, the governor of the province of Syria, arrived from Antioch with a body of soldiers to take Jerusalem. However, he failed to realize that the “brigands” were no longer the masters and that the people were ready to throw open the city gates to him. He did not dare to push his advantage and conquer the city at once (according to Josephus, this would have averted the subsequent wars). Instead, he withdrew, and this provoked the rebels to pursue him and finally to inflict a severe

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<sup>24</sup> S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988), who takes up anew the discussions of his predecessors, is typical of this tendency, which is heir to the nineteenth-century German liberal thought which saw Jesus as one who promoted emancipation from the Law. This tendency can be seen almost in the form of a caricature in the thesis of W. Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1940), 82–83, who attempts to show that Jesus was an Aryan. This tendency always detaches Jesus from his Jewish context. Cf. also W. Bauer, “Jesus der Galiläer,” in *Festgabe für Adolf Jülicher* (Tübingen: Mohr–Paul Siebeck, 1927), 16–34.

defeat on him between Beth-Horon and Antipatris (*War* 2.540–545). This tactical victory was a strategic disaster: the Romans must inevitably undertake reprisals, for otherwise they would have appeared weak. It was therefore necessary to prepare for war, and it was on this occasion that Josephus was once again in Galilee, charged with a mission.

It is here that the second narrative begins (*Life* 17–19), but with a very different presentation of the events. Josephus, who has just returned from a mission to Rome, sees the preparations being made for insurrection. He sticks close to the leading Pharisees and tries in vain to warn them against a military confrontation with the Romans. After the rout of Cestius, these leading men send him with two priests to Galilee, which has not yet completely risen up against Rome. In Galilee, Josephus attempts to calm the “brigands” and to gather in their weapons, so that these may be available to the leading Pharisees if—and only if—the Romans attack. We are then given a long account of the divisions among the Jews and of the conflicts (often bloody) between the various factions (*Life* 30–70). In his many attempts at appeasement, Josephus states several times that he is an emissary of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem; and he tells us that he cultivated the friendship of the seventy elders who governed the land, in order to ensure the faithfulness of the people.

This is not the place to investigate which is the better version of events.<sup>25</sup> In the conclusion to the *Antiquities*, Josephus proclaims his competence in doctrinal matters, and even the Jews acknowledge this. Despite his vanity, we must admit that he knows Judaism very well, certainly better than he knows history and philosophy. He then goes on to announce that he intends to write his autobiography. The *Life*, which is (or has become) an independent book, presents itself as an appendix to the *Antiquities* (*Life* 420). It is devoted almost entirely to the few months which Josephus spent in Galilee in 66–67 (*Life* 17–412), and the narrative stops just before a decisive military attack on the Romans. At this point, Josephus refers to the *Jewish War*, where he has already

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<sup>25</sup> S. J. D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), has shown convincingly (cf. the summary, 242) that one of the keys to understanding the new redaction of the *Life* is Josephus’s concern to portray himself as an observant Pharisee, and hence to disparage systematically the religious fidelity of the Galileans. Following other scholars, U. Rappaport, “Where Was Josephus Lying—In His *Life* or in the *War*?” in *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period: Essays in Memory of Morton Smith*, ed. F. Parente and J. Sievers, *Studia Post-Biblica* 41 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 279–289, accords priority to the *Life*.

written of this whole campaign and of ensuing events. This leaves us with a strictly provincial narrative about disputes between Jewish factions whom Josephus tries in vain to reconcile with one another. Such a work has no prospect of interesting the Gentiles, especially more than twenty-five years after the events. This means that Josephus is essentially writing for the Jews. This autobiography is the exposé of his entitlement, from the time he went to Rome onwards, to pose as the guide of the nation, with the Pharisaic note which was in accordance with the most popular tendency. He comes from a good family, and has studied in the principal schools; above all, his actions in Galilee were motivated by a perfect national loyalty which contrasted with the folly of the factions. Galilee, with its links to Babylon, was a major point of reference.

Josephus's principal adversary was John of Gishala, who had contacts with the leading Pharisees in Jerusalem, especially with Simon b. Gamaliel (*Life* 190–191). Although these men were not Zealots, they held views similar to those of the traditional Jewish Galilee, from which they may have originally come. At the period when Josephus was writing, however, this Simon was Josephus's main Jewish opponent, because he was the father of Gamaliel II, under whom the school of Jabneh-Jamnia, founded by Johanna b. Zakkai, came to its full flowering. We must look briefly at this foundation.

The town of Jabneh-Jamnia, situated between Jaffa and Ashkelon, was ten kilometers from the sea, to which it was linked by a canal, so that it had a maritime harbor. The town, which had belonged to Judea since the days of the high priest Simon, had been given by Herod to his sister Salome (*War* 2.98). When she died, this private property passed to the empress Livia, and subsequently became a personal property of Tiberius, her son and heir. Juridically speaking, therefore, it did not belong to Judea, although most of its population was Jewish (*Philo, Leg.* 200–203). It was here that the controversy about the statue of Caligula in the temple at Jerusalem began, following an insurrection: he wished to punish the Jews for seeking to establish their own law in his domains. In 68, when the Galilean war was extended to Judea, Vespasian took with him “numerous citizens who had surrendered themselves in contradiction of the laws,” and installed garrisons at Jabneh and Ashdod (*War* 4.130). He then installed “a sufficient number of Jews who had gone over to his side” as inhabitants of the town (4.444). These were probably compelled to take up residence there, and this means that he had imported Galileans.

The rabbinic sources allow us to suppose that Johanan b. Zakkai was a member of this group, and hence that he founded his school before 70. He had held a private school for about twenty years at Arab near Sepphoris (*j. Sabb* 16:8, p. 15d); a strange Christian legend relates—still in Galilee—that his father (Zakkai-Zacchaeus) was compelled to bow down before the knowledge of the child Jesus (*Infancy Gospel of Thomas* 6–8).<sup>26</sup> Finally, we are told that he was the last disciple of Hillel the Elder (*b. Meg.* 13a), the Babylonian from Bathyra. Later traditions relate that he surrendered to Vespasian and predicted to him that he would become emperor; Vespasian then permitted him to settle at Jabne with some teachers. Other accounts relate that after trying in vain to persuade his compatriots in the besieged Jerusalem to abandon a hopeless war, he fled the city, hidden in a coffin, and then made his way to Vespasian, who granted him concessions.<sup>27</sup> This is certainly a transfer, slightly modified, to Johanan of what Josephus writes about himself, with the intention of denying that Josephus played any role as founder, and of implying that Johanan actually came from Jerusalem. The links to Galilee are clear, despite various legends which make him a master of the Sanhedrin who was forced to go into exile from Jerusalem.

Johanan was succeeded by Gamaliel II ca. 90, at the period when Josephus was writing the *Antiquities*. He was a man of a different caliber. His grandfather Gamaliel I, the teacher of Paul of Tarsus, and his father Simon, whom Josephus criticizes, were well known and leading Pharisees from Jerusalem who accepted the Roman rule. Gamaliel II strengthened the prestige of the school in Jabneh, which he wished to make a point of reference for the entire people. He used his authority to bring together different groups or brotherhoods, and this is the source of the controversies about the law or about political action. Nevertheless, he always respected the Galilean customs. He maintained good contacts with the Roman authorities and visited the Jewish communities as far as Rome itself.

At a later period, when schools were developing around Jabneh, we know little about Galilee until the revolt of Bar Kokhba (132–135). The reasons for this gap in our knowledge are disputed.<sup>28</sup> The clearest

<sup>26</sup> This legend circulated, for it is known to Irenaeus: *Adv. Haer.* 1.20.1.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *ARN* A.4; these accounts are transmitted in several versions, which are presented and commented by J. Neusner, *A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai, ca. 1–80 C.E.*, 2nd ed., *Studia Post-Biblica* 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 152–154. I adopt rather different conclusions here, except with regard to the date of Johanan's arrival in Jabneh.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. S. Liebermann, "Persecution of the Jewish Religion," in *Festschrift Salo Baron*



elements in the picture concern the general policy of Hadrian, viz. the prohibition of circumcision by all those peoples in the empire who practiced this custom, the elimination of customs deemed barbarous, and projects for founding or rebuilding towns (Jerusalem was only one of these).<sup>29</sup> This was a reprimand of the civilizing policy of Alexander, but we do not know up to what date the temple had continued to function. In other words, we do not know whether Hadrian was a new Antiochus Epiphanes. At any rate, it was after this war that refugees from Judea emigrated to Galilee, in particular the disciples of Aqiba, the master who had believed Bar Kokhba to be the messiah, and who had been executed by the Romans. The documents found in the desert of Judah indicate that these disciples, who later became the masters of the rabbinic tradition, had been removed from the leading circles around Bar Kokhba.<sup>30</sup>

Subsequently, there are traces of an organization in Galilee around various centers: Usha, Shefaram, Beth-Shearim, Sepphoris, and Tiberias. Usha was the home town of Juda b. Ilai, one of the principal disciples of Aqiba, and the assembly which had its seat there joined up with the "elders of Galilee" (cf. *b. Ber.* 63b–64a), who are no longer the descendants of Judas the Galilean. When these Galilean schools began to expand, there were disputes with the leaders of the Babylonian communities about questions of precedence and the regulation of the calendar, but we cannot detect any organic links to the Greek-speaking Judaism in the Roman world, which Josephus had sought to address. A lapidary evaluation of this epoch says that to the west of Tyre, the western border of Syria, "one does not know Israel, nor their Father who is in heaven" (*b. Men.* 110). When the Mishnah was published ca. 200, it was immediately communicated to Babylonia, but not elsewhere. It had a posterity parallel to that which it had in Galilee, viz. the two Talmuds.

We must therefore conclude that at the end of the second century, Jewish Galilee had had a Babylonian culture for at least four centuries,

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(Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979), 3:214; M. D. Herr, "Causes of the Bar Kokhba Revolt," *Zion* 43 (1978): 6, with bibliography.

<sup>29</sup> According to Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 69.12,1–2; cf. the discussion by Schürer, *History*, 1:537.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Schürer, *History*, 1:544 n. 133. The rabbinic tradition, which banished the memory of Bar Kokhba and rejected 1 Maccabees, leaves a gap between the patriarchates of Gamaliel II and his son Simon II. This gap corresponds approximately to the reign of Hadrian.

although this does not exclude various evolutions linked to Judea; and this is how the situation remained until the Byzantine rule in the fourth century. Geographically speaking, this concerned primarily the region around the Sea of Tiberias, where the remains of synagogues have been found.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> English translation: Brian McNeil.



ON AVOIDING BOTHERSOME BUSYNESS:  
Q/LUKE 12:22–31 IN ITS GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT

GERALD DOWNING

Humans, like other animals, enjoy periods of repose. From the Greco-Roman world around the first century CE we have preserved for us evidence of commonplace reflections on ways to attain peace of mind, if only peace of mind, among the troubles, anxieties, pressures, and stresses of civic life. Some of these reflections are brief and gnomic, with perhaps only one or two motifs in illustration. Others we know of were much longer, dissertations of several thousands of words. Two such longer ones have reached us: Seneca's *De tranquillitate*, and Plutarch's essay, ΠΕΠΙ ΕΥΘΥΜΙΑΣ, known by the same Latin title, *De tranquillitate*.<sup>1</sup> Both writers refer to a much older piece by Democritus, the mentor of Epicurus, and both have been thought to depend on a work with the same title by the Stoic Panaetius. Plutarch explains that he went back through his notebooks for ideas on the theme that in the past he had found worthwhile, and Seneca tells us he is fully aware of Greek traditions on the topic. It is clear then that thinkers of different schools joined in the discussion. Both our authors alongside their Epicurean motifs deploy others from the Stoa, with Seneca also referring to a work by Athenadorus; and both include Cynics.<sup>2</sup> For insights into

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<sup>1</sup> Seneca, *De tranquillitate*, text and trans. in M. Rosebach, ed., *L. Annaeus Seneca, Philosophische Schriften*, II, *Dialoge VII–XII* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971), taken from A. Bourguery and R. Walz, eds. and trans., *Sénèque, Dialogues II, III et IV* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1961–65); text and trans. in J. W. Basore, ed. and trans., *Seneca II. Moral Essays II*, LCL (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press & Heinemann, 1932), 202–284. Plutarch, *De tranquillitate. Moralia* 464E–477F, text and trans. in J. Dumortier and J. Defradas, eds. and trans., *Plutarque. Œuvres morales VII.i* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1975); text and trans. in W. C. Hembold (ed. and trans.), *Plutarch's Moralia VI*, LCL (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press & Heinemann, 1939), 166–245. This present essay is now reprinted in F. G. Downing, *God with Everything: The Divine in the Discourse of the First Christian Century*, SWBA 2.2 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 91–114.

<sup>2</sup> On this literature, see I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 135–141; D. Babut, *Plutarque et le stoïcisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969), 97–102; H. D. Betz, “De tranquillitate animi (Moralia 464E–477F),” in *Plutarch's Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature*, ed. idem (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 198–230; E. J. Osler and L. A. Panizza, “Introduction,” in

explicitly Epicurean attitudes we have to rely here mostly on Lucretius, from the previous century.

The intention of this essay is to consider what light this “pagan” debate may throw on the “Cares” pericope found in Luke 12:22–31 and Matt 6:25–34<sup>3</sup> (and, before them, we may take it, in Q),<sup>4</sup> with echoes in *Gospel of Thomas* 36, P. Oxy. 655, Justin Martyr, *Apol* 1.15, and Clement of Alexandria, *Paid.* 2.1.5–6.

The motifs deployed are often not in fact individually peculiar to this topic, but can crop up again under other headings, singly or in clusters. So a discussion of freedom may involve the issue of retaining an inner freedom under pressure; the topic of friendship may include helping a friend to attain tranquillity.<sup>5</sup> One cluster of motifs that will figure in what follows comes from Musonius, *Discourse* 15, on raising children. Of two from Dio Chrysostom, Dio of Prusa, one, *Discourse* 6, is *Diogenes, or On Tyranny*, and the other, *Discourse* 10 is traditionally titled “*Diogenes, or On Servants*”; however, its subject matter is really “usefulness” (what is truly useful, serviceable, is what causes least trouble). A third comes from Epictetus’s *Diss.* 1.9, on our kinship with God, the God whose rational care pervades the world; convinced of this, our anxieties should depart. A comparison of the two long essays cited and along with them of a number of these shorter clusters and

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*Atoms, Pneuma and Tranquillity: Epicurean and Stoic Themes in European Thought*, ed. M. J. Osler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1–5; R. S. Smith, *Studies in Seneca, De Tranquillitate Animi (Roman Empire)*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> H. D. Betz, in his *Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 460, notes that although this passage “contains a comprehensive argument on several of antiquity’s most controversial subjects,” “no comprehensive investigation exists.” In fact in his “*De tranquillitate animi*” he himself refers to these gospel passages only twice, and only in passing. Other older and more recent discussions are also disappointingly superficial in their attention to the Greco-Roman context here. The most helpful that I have found have been M. F. Olsthorpe, *The Jewish Background and the Synoptic Setting of Mt 6,25–33 and Lk 12,22–31*, SBFA 10 (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975); U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus I, Mt 1–7*, EKK 1.1 (Zürich: Benzinger, 1989), 364–375; Betz, *The Sermon*, 459–486; F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas 2, Lk 9,51–14,35*, EKK 3.2 (Zürich: Benzinger, 1996), 292–318; and M. Ebner, *Jesus—Ein Weisheitslehrer? Synoptische Weisheitslogien im Traditionsprozess* (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 250–275.

<sup>4</sup> For a recent defence of the Q hypothesis, cf. F. G. Downing, “Disagreements of Each Evangelist with the Minor Close Agreements of the Other Two,” *ETL* 80.4 (2004): 335–369.

<sup>5</sup> Compare Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 21–27; Plutarch, *Quomodo adulator ab amico intinoscatur, Moralia* 49–74, at 68E–69E; and C. E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychogogy*, *NovTSup* 81 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 170–171, quoting Cicero, *De amicitia* 45.

individual apothegms on cares, excerpted from other near contemporary sources, allows us to discern what seems to be a fairly standard set of contributory themes that may elaborate the topic of “cares.” We shall find that a great many of these sub-motifs figure in the two gospel passages, which themselves, of course, form parts, respectively, of Matthew’s and Luke’s *bios* of the teacher, Jesus; just as an earlier version formed part of a shorter *bios*, Q. In each they represent this teacher’s mind on the commonplace topic of cares.<sup>6</sup>

The negative terms, the general words for what is either to be coped with or avoided, vary. Plutarch proposes being “storm-free” (465A), avoiding grief and disturbance (λυπή, ταραχή, 465D; cf. Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.9.7; Dio, *Disc.* 6.34, and 10.16; Ps.-Crates, *Ep.* 35.2).<sup>7</sup> Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.13.13, also talks of the exercise of concern (μελέω), as does Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 3. Diogenes Laertius includes care, caution (εὐλάβεια).<sup>8</sup> Seneca’s sage will not be “*sollicitus aut anxius*” (*Ep. mor.* 17.9), avoiding *iactatio* (*De tranq.* 2.8). Lucretius extols freedom from “*dolor*,” “*cura*” and “*metus*” (*De rerum natura* 2.18–19). Liddell and Scott list a number of uses of μέριμνα, μεριμνάω alongside citations from Matthew’s pericope, in one instance clustered with grief (and robbery), and note that these words are often used in philosophical contexts.<sup>9</sup>

1. *Concerns*.<sup>10</sup> Our two aristocratic authors allot most words to the pressures of social expectations, especially to the public affairs in which

<sup>6</sup> For the gospels as *bioi*, see R. A. Burrige, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, SNTMS 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and for Q as a *bios*, F. G. Downing, “A Genre for Q and a Socio-cultural Context for Q: Comparing Sets of Similarities with Sets of Differences,” *JSNTS* 55 (1994): 3–26; reprinted in idem, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century*, *JSNTS* 200 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 95–117; and on Greco-Roman philosophical *topoi* in early Christian writings, W. A. Meeks, “Judaism, Hellenism, and the Birth of Christianity,” in *Paul Beyond the Judaism-Hellenism Divide*, ed. T. Engberg Pedersen (Louisville: WJK, 2001), 17–27, at 26.

<sup>7</sup> Pseudo-Crates, *Epistles*, in A. J. Malherbe ed., *The Cynic Epistles* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), and so for the ensuing quotations from the *Cynic Epistles*; the translations are from F. G. Downing, *Christ and the Cynics*, *JSOTM* 4 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), as are the quotations from all the other Greek or Roman sources, with texts from LCL.

<sup>8</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (*LEP*) VI 22.

<sup>9</sup> H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., ed. S. H. Jones and R. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). R. Bultmann, μεριμνάω, κτλ, *TDNT* 4:589–593, ignores the two discourses on tranquillity, constricted as he is by a word-study approach.

<sup>10</sup> In my “The Jewish Cynic Jesus,” in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records*, ed. M. Labahn and A. Schmidt, *JSNTSup* 214 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 184–214, at 202–204, I offered a rather simpler analysis of this pericope, but I reproduce here some of the arguments, with kind permission.

they are willingly or unwillingly involved. Seneca's friend Annaeus Senecus explains that he feels impelled to a politically active life, yet finds he cannot settle in it, he is pulled in different directions (*De tranq.* 1.10–12). Seneca accepts that we should avoid busyness for its own sake, but duty must come first (*De tranq.* 13.1–2), and interprets Democritus to this effect. Plutarch interprets the same saying of Democritus as urging total retirement from public concerns, but then himself demurs (*De tranq.* 465c).<sup>11</sup> In many of the shorter sequences on the topic, however, the worry is much more basic. "Suppose I have lots of children, where am I going to get food for them all?" asks Musonius's interlocutor (*Discourse* 15), echoed in Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.9.7; cf. 3.13.13; 3.26.27). Plebeian Cynics clearly expect to have to deal with active concerns over hunger and thirst and exposure (Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 18; Ps.-Diogenes *Ep.* 7, 34; 36.5). Yet, interestingly, both Seneca and Plutarch also find room for reference to food and clothing, and bothering about them. Seneca, in fact, discusses the issue with reference to a Diogenes tradition (Seneca, *De tranq.* 8.8; cf. 1.7–10, 11.9–10; and *Ep. mor.* 17.9–10), and Plutarch with reference to both Crates and Diogenes, and then to a Socratic tradition itself elsewhere ascribed to Diogenes (*De tranq.* 466DE; 470F). "What shall we eat, what shall we wear?" are, unsurprisingly, fundamental.

In this discussion some fifteen sub-topics are picked out. It might well be possible to make further sub-divisions in many of them. For instance, in the foregoing I have myself distinguished social pressures and physical needs, and that might seem to warrant two headings, not one. And Seneca and Plutarch further contrast external and internalized social pressures of various kinds. My defence of the procedure adopted is provided by displaying, from other near-contemporary short passages, the analogies for just such sub-complexes.

2. *Body and soul.* It is also commonplace to find a contrast of values expressed in such opposed terms as  $\omega\chi\acute{\eta}$  and  $\sigma\alpha\rho$ , *animus* and *corpus*, urging a conviction that there is more to life than its basic physical needs. This might well not be unexpected from people with rich intellectual and social lives (and financial wealth and security), such as our two main authors, and that is what we find (e.g., Seneca, *De tranq.* 1.6; 1.12; 17.8–11; Plutarch, *De tranq.* 465A; 475BC; compare Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 2.18, *corpus* and *mens*). Yet a similar dualism is also to be found among the other sources adduced here. So in Ps.-Crates,

<sup>11</sup> Retirement is, of course, Lucretius' recipe: *De rerum natura* 2.1–19.

*Epistle 3* we read, μελέτω ὑμῖν τῆς ψυχῆς, τοῦ δὲ σώματος ὅσον ἀνάγκη, τῶν δ' ἔξωθεν μηδ' ὅσον ("take care of your life/soul/self; and of your body, but only as much as is really necessary; and to mere externals pay even less attention still" (compare Ps.-Crates, *Epistles* 10.3; 34.2; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 15; 31.4; Dio, *Disc.* 6.11). There is more to life than producing food, more to bodily well-being than producing clothes.<sup>12</sup> And if divine power pervades and sustains plants and bodies, even more must it sustain our lives/souls (Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.14.5–6).

3. *Inner resources.* However, here there is a significant contrast. Stoic, Epicurean and Platonic thinkers all agree that strength of soul must be attained first. With a strong soul established, a person (usually expected to be male) will be able to cope with both physical and social and spiritual troubles. What matters are "inner" resources, a "calm mind" that allows one "to be reconciled to one's lot" (Seneca, *De tranq.* 10.4; compare 3.9). "*Multum et in se recedendum est,*" he urges (*De tranq.* 17.3); one may also compare Epictetus: "We make a fuss about our little bodies, about our piffling property, about what Caesar thinks of us. And about what's going on inside? Not a thought!" (*Diss.* 2.13.11; cf. 3.26.2; 4.1.22). Only a well-trained rationality is of use, insists Plutarch (*De tranq.* 465B; compare 466F). Our resources are in the soul (473BC; compare Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 2.7–8). Notably, both Plutarch and Seneca portray even Cynic heroes in this same light. Seneca's Diogenes is "*vir ingentis animi,*" "great-souled" (*De tranq.* 8.4). It is inner reason, Plutarch surmises, that allows Crates and Diogenes to laugh at circumstances. Yet Cynics themselves take a very different stance. For them there is not the long haul of attaining mental self-discipline, but the short cut of physical *askêsis*.<sup>13</sup> To live well, you must "do philosophy, but not as others do; rather, as Antisthenes began to do it, and as Diogenes perfected it" (Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 6; compare e.g. Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 36.4–7). The emphasis on inner, mental training is

<sup>12</sup> Read thus, there is no call to imagine that Luke 11:23 deploys a quite different, and discrepant, dualistic usage of body and soul language, in contrast to the complementarity of v. 22. In fact, we may see that complementarity is retained.

<sup>13</sup> C. Gill, "Peace of Mind and Being Yourself: Panaetius to Plutarch," *ANRW* II 36.7 (1994), 4599–4640, discusses interestingly interpretations of authority, in relation to modern issues of "self." He does not discuss the ascetic practices involved, and makes no mention of the other similar clusters of ascetic motifs that constitute the focus here. See M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *L'ascèse cynique: Un commentaire de Diogène Laërce VI 70–71* (Paris: Vrin, 1986), 22–28; and "Le cynisme à l'époque impériale," *ANRW* II 36.4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 2720–2823, at 2759–2763, 2806–2812.



also missing from the gospel sequence. As in our Cynic instances, we are taken straight to the physical example of wild creatures.

4. *Wild animals*. In fact, both Plutarch and Seneca also allude to animals, Seneca disparagingly to the apparently random “*inconsultus*” activity of ants (*De tranq.* 12.3), Plutarch, unadmirably, to savage dogs (465C, 468D). Plutarch’s bees, however, are wise in their choice of unlikely flowers (467C), while the Nature that teaches animals their respective ways to acquire food is the Nature that instructs humans precisely to shepherd and plough and hunt and fish (473A). Lucretius is equally sure that “nature” taught humans to sow seeds, and even to graft; and is pleased with animals displaying a placid usefulness to humans, but not more than that (*De rerum natura* 5.1361–1362; 3.302–306; 5.871–877).

By contrast we may note Epictetus, with his leanings to an idealized Cynicism:

“Won’t having God as our maker and father and guardian be good enough to release us from grief and fear?”... “And what shall I do for food?”... “Are you going to be wretchedly inferior to the dumb beasts, when each of them is self-sufficient, and suffers no lack of food, nor of any other appropriate natural necessity for its kind of life?” (*Diss.* 1.9.7–9).

So, too, we may recall Musonius,

“Good God, that’s all very well, but I’m a poor man without property. Suppose I have lots of children, where am I going to get food for them all?” “Well, where do the little birds go to get food to feed their young, though they’re much worse off than you are—the swallows and nightingales and larks and blackbirds? Do they store away in safekeeping?” (*Dis.* 15).

And there are a great many more examples from more clearly Cynic sources, with Diogenes learning from a mouse (*LEP* 6.22) and from a snail (Ps.-Diogenes, *Epistle* 16); and, especially there are dogs, of course (Ps.-Crates, *Epistles* 16, 29, Ps.-Diogenes, *Epistles* 2, 7). Dio’s Diogenes, explaining his seasonal travels, cites the examples of storks and cranes, of deer and hares (*Disc.* 6.32–34). The most quoted example in this connexion is, of course, from another of Dio’s Diogenes *Disc.* 10.16 (more of the passage will be discussed later):

Why not consider the beasts and the birds, and see how much more painlessly they live than humans do, how much more pleasantly and healthily? They are stronger, and each lives the longest possible span for their kind—despite lacking hands or human intelligence.

And we may compare *Disc.* 6.13, 21, 32–33.

5. *Flowers.* I have not been able to find any passage other than the gospel one that directly invites us to emulate the easy life of flowers as such, and that despite their short lives. That divine care for plants is itself part of the whole scheme that includes divine care for humans is, however, forcefully asserted by Epictetus, who does include the fall of leaves and fruit (*Diss.* 1.14.3, already cited above). Looking at flowers and grass should induce tranquillity, suggest both Lucretius (*De rerum natura* 2.20–36) and Plutarch (*De tranq.* 469A); for the latter, contemplating the natural world, including “plants and animals” should help us put things into a divine perspective (477CD). The comparative beauty of simple Athens and Corinth is extolled by Dio’s Diogenes, over against the royal extravagance of Ecbatana and Babylon (*Disc.* 6.4–5).

6. *Kings and Wealthy Others.* However, an unflattering comparison with the clothing and other trappings of the wealthy, and especially of kings and tyrants, and “others” in general (“the nations”) is quite frequent in the longer pieces; we may include Seneca, *De tranq.* 1.8; 9.4–7; Plutarch, *De tranq.* 470B; 471EF; Dio, *Discourse* 6, *passim*.<sup>14</sup> We may also note “the Greeks” in Ps.-Anacharsis 9; the wealthy, in Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 7; various other peoples, Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 13; but also Lucretius (*De rerum natura* 2.20–36, again).

7. *Human worth.* It is also worth noting that in some of these passages, as in the gospel pericope, to humans is nonetheless ascribed higher status than that accorded the admired birds or beasts. “Have these creatures more intelligence than humans have? You’d not say so” (Musonius, *Disc.* 15; compare Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.9.9; 1.14.3; Dio, *Disc.* 10.16). (As we have seen, Seneca and Plutarch are also sure of human rational superiority, as is Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 3.753.)

8. *Women and men.* The longer essays include some specific reference to women’s likely attitudes to busy cares, and are disparaging (Seneca, *De tranq.* 16.2; cf. 17.4; Plutarch, *De tranq.* 465D). Lucretius approves of spinning and weaving, as originally male activities, men being cleverer than women (*De rerum natura* 5.1354–1360). Ps.-Crates rebukes his partner, Hipparchia, for weaving him a tunic and playing

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<sup>14</sup> On the splendour of kings, there is the well-known response of Solon when Croesus in full regalia asked if he had ever seen anything more beautiful. “Yes,” says Solon, “cocks, pheasants, peacocks, for they have their natural decoration and brilliance, a thousand times more splendid” (*LEP* 1.51).

the part of a conventional wife; but insists that the same excellence is available to women as to men (*Epistles* 28 and 30). When we come to the admired example of non-human animals, there is no distinction (Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 29; compare Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 36.4–5; Dio, *Disc.* 10.16, again).<sup>15</sup> In the gospel pericope we seem to have examples of typically male and female work paired for equal rejection (weaving and spinning; and perhaps sowing and reaping).

9. *Toil as such.* What is most deprecated is laborious work, toil, busyness. Seneca and Plutarch are sure that one may be trained to cope without undue disturbance. Lucretius sees no need for luxuries, but approves of moderate (and peaceful) human technological productivity: not only the spinning and weaving, sowing and grafting we noted above, but also metalwork (*De rerum natura* 5.1251–1456). For a disparagement of toil (πόνος) as such we have to turn to Cynic sources, for instance Ps.-Anacharsis 9. Dio's Diogenes talks of "many useless labours" expended on conventionally valued goods (πολλὰ πονήσεις μάτην, 10.16), Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 4, probably playing on the secondary use of *ponos* as "pain," urges that the only worthwhile toil (the painstaking Cynic *askêsis*) is that which averts toil.<sup>16</sup> The gospel pericope at this point appears to follow the distinctive Cynic line.

10. *Possessions.* Seneca's friend Serenus is already accustomed to relative simplicity: rural silverware rather than fashionable luxury (*De tranq.* 1.7–10). Seneca commends the standard Stoic stance on wealth: as long as one has no psychological need of it, one may safely enjoy it (5.4). It is only possessiveness that endangers peace of mind (8.3). Plutarch agrees: it is not circumstances that disturb, but wrong attitudes (*De tranq.* 466C; 471A). For Lucretius, the trouble lies in the urge to outdo others (*De rerum natura* 2.9–14); but an Epicurean simple sufficiency is clearly quite comfortable (one may compare Philodemus's mansion at Herculaneum). For Cynics, property itself enslaves (Ps.-Crates, *Epistle* 8; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 37.6; Ps.-Heraclitus 8.3), and dispossession is the only safe way (so, too, Epictetus, of the ideal Cynic, *Diss.* 4.8.31). And

<sup>15</sup> If we allow that Musonius's *askêsis* is Cynic (even though his metaphysics are Stoic), we may include the analogy of parent birds, the mother in particular, coping with the problems of parenthood, *Discourse* 15; for Musonius's *askêsis* as Cynic, see Goulet-Cazé, *L'ascèse cynique*, 187–188.

<sup>16</sup> Compare, of course, Lucian's satire on the artisans who adopt Cynicism as, he avers, simply work-shy, *Fugitivi* 17; compare Dio's Cynic Diogenes, *Disc.* 10.12; doing without a slave is better than having one, since it involves less work. On this, see Goulet-Cazé on "Les *ponoi* inutiles," in *L'ascèse cynique*, 53–57.

thus Musonius's parent birds do well to be without stores (*Discourse* 15, again); and Dio's Diogenes says that the beasts and birds "have one enormous advantage to counter-balance any ills they may suffer—they are free of property" (*Disc.* 10.16, again; cf. 6.34). Yet once more, the gospel pericope sides with the Cynics.

11. *Food there is.* A number of our responses to anxiety offer the (optimistic) assurance that there is no need to starve; food, if only the simplest, is readily available. "Lots of things grow from the earth and can satisfy hunger," insists Ps.-Diogenes (*Ep.* 36.4–5); and Plutarch quotes Simonides on "the fruit of the spacious earth" (*De tranq.* 470D; compare Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 5.11.19; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 37.5; Dio, *Diss.* 6.13, 22, 28, 62; and 10.16; and, probably, Seneca, *De tranq.* 9.2).

12. *Divine provision.* Yet quite a number of the sources (not Lucretius, of course) are also sure that such sustenance comes out of divine awareness and by divine provision (however variously "divine" is understood).<sup>17</sup> Epictetus is more ready than is Seneca to speak of deity in personal terms: "Another, whose business it is, provides food and clothing" (*Diss.* 3.13.13). This is "God our maker and father and guardian" (who also provides for the dumb beasts: *Diss.* 1.9.7, 9, again; compare 3.24.16). Seneca does have God's "*omnia dantis, nihil habentis*" (*De tranq.* 8.5), but will as readily talk of Nature as the giver (11.3), as does Plutarch (*De tranq.* 472F). Plutarch agrees with Plato that the world is to be contemplated for its beautiful representation of the divine mind (477CD), rather than as the setting for individual divine care (but perhaps compare 465B). On the other hand, Musonius's assurance of divine care for parent birds follows a reference to prayer to the Gods for human parents (*Discourse* 15, again). Cynicism as such ranged from near atheist to quite pious, and so to Diogenes can also be ascribed "human life had been made very easy by the Gods" (*LEP* 6.22); and the assurance that he can "roam the whole world as a free man under father Zeus" (Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 34.3; cf. Dio, *Diss.* 6.25).<sup>18</sup> The reference to divine care in the gospel passage leaves it well within the range of the other examples with which it is being compared.

<sup>17</sup> R. Bultmann, μεριμνάω, insists that in the gospel pericope God's lordship is made the human being's first concern, and "this thought distinguishes the admonition... from Stoic par. (Epictetus *Diss.* 1.9.7ff...)." The harder question, just how different, is not explained; but see below, on "seeking his kingdom" (14).

<sup>18</sup> On Cynic piety, see J.H. Moles, "Le cosmopolitisme cynique," in *Le cynisme ancien et ses prolongements: Actes du Colloque internationale de C.N.R.S.*, ed. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993), 259–280.

13. *Human limitations.* The gospel passage reminds hearers how little their anxiety can achieve. So Serenus keeps reminding himself to lower his sights, curb his ambitions (Seneca, *De tranq.* 1.11, 13–14); Seneca agrees, limitations must be acknowledged, “*ante omnia necesse est se ipsum aestimare, quia fere plus nobis videmur posse quam possumus*” (6.2; cf. 10.4–5; we may compare, again, Lucretius, *De rerum natura* 2.15–19). I do not find this motif clearly expressed in Plutarch’s essay, though one might include his aside on Alexander’s overweening ambition (*De tranq.* 466D). One might also note Dio’s observation that each living thing appears to have an allotted lifespan (*Disc.* 10.16; cf. 6.22); and compare Epictetus on seasonal growth and decline (*Diss.* 1.14.3, again).

14. *His kingdom.* For “seek first his kingdom” I found no clear or direct verbal analogy in either of the long essays. For Lucretius, the gods are real, but dwell apart in undisturbed tranquillity (*De rerum natura* 1.45–49). However, Plutarch does (with Plato, as noted earlier) end by urging his hearers above all to contemplate the divine reality mirrored in the natural world (*De tranq.* 477CD). Seneca also ends with an encouragement to seek divine inspiration and achieve sublime heights (*De tranq.* 17.11). The gospel passages are not alone in reaching a climax in reference to the divine. A Cynic who had taken the shortcut to a carefree existence is sharing the life of the Gods (Dio, *Disc.* 6.31) and/or might be expected to claim that he or she had entered her or his kingdom, seen as the returned Golden Age, the kingdom of Cronos.<sup>19</sup> (This is not to say that the words convey the same sense; but there is at least an overlap in usage.)

15. *Sufficient to the day.* Matthew’s sequence has an appendix with “each day has troubles enough of its own,” lacking in Luke. But a similar sentiment is expressed by Seneca’s Serenus, “*minore labore opus est studentibus in diem,*” “those who study for immediate use have less toil” (*De tranq.* 1.14 [1.13]). Plutarch actually quotes Epicurus, “The one who least needs the morrow goes on most happily to meet the morrow” (*De tranq.* 474C). Dio in *Discourse* 6 argues that much of the wretchedness of tyrants consists in their being unable to live one day at a time,

<sup>19</sup> Epictetus, *Diss.* 4.8.34, in a discussion (30–43) of attaining *ataraxia*; compare 3.22.79, and “you’ll not only share table-fellowship with the Gods, you’ll share their rule,” *Ench.* 15; Demetrius, in Seneca, *De beneficiis* 7.10.6; Lucian, *Fugitivi* 12, 17; and see F. G. Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches* (London: Routledge, 1998), 88–90.

36–37. It must be held significant that Matthew saw fit to add or retain 6:34 as entirely appropriate in such a sequence.

This brief survey has displayed fifteen distinguishable motifs relating to overcoming anxieties. That they are genuinely distinguishable is shown by the appearance of most of them singly or in different combinations in other near-contemporary Greco-Roman writings. A different reader might discover yet more themes in common in the two long essays and in other such brief or longer discussions of anxiety, or might, as noted earlier, sub-divide them differently. The motifs as here distinguished are ones for the most part found both in the gospel passages and/or also passages from roughly contemporary Cynic or near-Cynic sources that I collated some years ago.<sup>20</sup> They are not simply determined by the gospel set: we have, as an important example, the emphasis on “inner resources” (3), insistent in the longer essays, but entirely absent from the gospel passages. On the other hand, for urging the example of flowers (5) I have not been able to find any clear analogy elsewhere; nor any very close analogy for talk of “his kingdom” (14). And the final motif (15) in the list, while found in both the long essays, occurs in only one of the gospels.

The order in which the motifs are presented here is, with the exception of (3), that of the gospel pericopae. However, the order as such does not seem to be set: at least in Seneca’s and Plutarch’s respective essays the order differs, even though they both had access to some of the same sources. Their themes may still usefully be compared with each other, and with the gospel sets. Nor should the difference in length deter us. We know from the *progymnasmata* and from Quintilian that people learned from school days to “expand and condense.”<sup>21</sup> Dio’s *Discourses* 4 and 6, on Diogenes, can be read as expansions of some very brief *chreiai* found elsewhere (6 presents elaborate versions of themes in 10.16). Yet it is by no means clear that short *chreiai* are primary; 10.16 could represent a condensation of themes treated at length in 6.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, as we have already seen, many of our themes can themselves be stated elaborately or briefly.

<sup>20</sup> Downing, *Christ and the Cynics*, 50 and 68–71. In “The Jewish Cynic Jesus,” I had not yet analyzed as full a tally of motifs (202–204).

<sup>21</sup> R. F. Hock and E. N. O’Neill, eds. and trans., *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric I: The Progymnasmata* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Quintilian, *Inst.* 13.2.

<sup>22</sup> See J. F. Kindstrand, “Diogenes Laertius and the Chreia Tradition,” *Elenchos* 7 (1986): 219–243.

It seems now worth suggesting some interim conclusions. Among motifs that could in some if not all instances be used under various headings (as noted earlier), there would seem to have been in circulation in discussions of threatening busy cares and of tranquillity sought in the face of them at least fifteen motifs that can be discerned in the sources here quarried. All fifteen (and maybe more) could be brought together in extended discourses. Individual motifs or smaller selections could also be deployed in much briefer discussions of cares, troubles, fussy busyness, within explicitly distinct over-arching contexts.

Thus in the passage where Musonius (*Discourse* 15), discussing child-rearing, comes to debate potential parental concerns, we have reference to divine assistance (12), the need for food (1), the example of wild birds (4), gender inclusive (8), birds which are much worse off, weaker and less intelligent than humans (7), lacking stores (10), yet food there is for them (11): seven motifs. (One might possibly also compare the appeal to the “beauty” of a big family at festival with (6), the “glory” of flowers.)

Similarly, his pupil Epictetus, discussing human kinship with deity, raises the issue of inconsistent griefs and fears, and responds with trust in God as maker, father, guardian (12), instead of worrying about food (1), when food there is (11), for those without possessions (10), and cites the example of wild animals (4), gender inclusive (8), to whom humans are nonetheless superior (7): again, the same seven motifs (*Diss.* 1.9.7–9).

In *Discourse* 6, his discussion of tyranny (in effect, “uneasy lies the head that wears a crown”), Dio considers (1) trouble taken over food, drink and clothing (10–16, 26–28), and (for the tyrant) security, 38; cf. 60. Body and soul (2) are involved, 6.11. Wild animals (4), birds and mammals, appear frequently. The whole piece is about rulers, tyrants (6). Toil as such is described at length (5, 16, 29, 31, 34). Personal possessions (10), such as houses, 4–7, 28, 37, wealth as a lure (49), or to be bequeathed (34), are despised. Food (11) there is, 13, 22, 28, 62. Zeus begrudges nothing that is really good (12). Unlike self-indulgent humans, animals (barring violence) live their full life-span (13). Diogenes does not here speak of his kingdom, but he can live the life of the Gods (item 14, 6.31). But a tyrant is so tormented that he cannot live a day at a time (15), in the day longing for night, in the night for day (37). We have here 11 of our fifteen themes, seven of them at length and clearly, the other four only in passing.

Much more briefly, when debating trouble-free usefulness in a passage to which we have already frequently referred (*Disc.* 10.15–16), Dio talks of particular griefs (1; food itself was discussed earlier), and then the theme of useless toil (πολλὰ πονήσεις μάτην, 9), points to the wild beasts and birds (4), gender inclusive (8), to their span of life (13), despite their inferior intelligence and lack of hands (7), and commends their lack of property (μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ὅτι ἀκτήμονά ἐσπν, 10): seven motifs, with perhaps one more (11) implicit in the claim that wild things, if not humans, do live their full span of life.

There are, of course, shorter clusters still. Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 36.4–5 includes poverty (10), food and clothing (1), the availability of food (11), and the example of the beasts (4). Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.13.11, can consider bodies (2) as contrasted with the inner life (3), and property (10).

It happens that in the two gospels we have particularly rich examples of a quite brief admonition on the theme, with Luke including thirteen of our fifteen strands, and Matthew fourteen. In the words of H. D. Betz, “much thought has gone into it and is contained in an extremely condensed form.”<sup>23</sup> What is worth noting is that this seems to be our one and only example of such a full sequence from earlier or near-contemporary Jewish sources. Betz and his predecessors and successors are able to find just a handful of similar individual motifs scattered in the Jewish sources, but that is all. By the first century CE, other Greco-Roman encompassing topics had been adopted by Jewish writers, but not that of tranquillity in the face of troublesome concerns. Even Philo, who can write about “providence” and “freedom” and “the eternity of the world” and “the virtues” and more, and deploys the term εὐθυμία, gives it no extended treatment. He insists that εὐθυμία is sustained by a conviction of divine providential spiritual provision (*De plantatione* 90–92; compare *De migratione* 164–65, *De mutatione* 131).<sup>24</sup> That seems to be all. We may presumably take it for granted that Jewish people in ancient times did relish peace of mind. In the canonical scriptures we may note, for example, Deut 28:65, 1 Sam 4:13, Job 11:18, Eccl 2:23, and perhaps Prov 15:15; also LXX Ps 54:22 and Sir 40:1–7. Presumably, ancient Israelites had further ways to articulate their responses to harassing concerns. But no Jewish thinker of our period or before, other than the author(s) of this piece, produced (or, at least, have had preserved

<sup>23</sup> Betz, *The Sermon*, 460; Luz, *Matthäus*, 364; Bovon, *Lukas*, 295–297.

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion, see Betz, “De Tranquillitate Animi,” 204–205.



for us) such rich systematic (brief or extended) reflections on cares and tranquillity, either independently, or in reliance on alien sources

Some of the individual motifs are, as just noted, and as is well known, to be found in our Jewish sources. M. F. Olsthorpe, in *Jewish Background*, includes matter from *midrashim* which he takes to be early. Some, including the present author, are not convinced of the relevance of that material; however, in the event none of it as adduced by Olsthorpe provides any close parallels to the complex as a whole, or even to such smaller but still sizable selections of relevant motifs as we have found in the non-Jewish material.<sup>25</sup> There are coincidences of subject matter. (1) There is a very partial resonance with the Sabbatical Year question (Lev 25:20, LXX), “What shall we eat (τί φαγόμεθα) since we will neither sow (σπεύρομεν) nor gather the produce” (but here there is to be reliance on past sowing and gathering).<sup>26</sup> Rabbis can be quoted acknowledging the need for food and clothing: but are not criticized for it. The escaped slaves complain about lack of food in the wilderness (Exod 16:3), and that is reprehensible; although the good wife’s busy concern with food and clothing is commended (Prov 31:13–15; compare Sir 29:1). (4) Wild beasts are on occasion admired, ants, for instance, but precisely for their work and their storage systems (Prov 6:6 and 30:25), and not for any insouciance (nor in the Rabbinica). (5) Flowers are admired in the *Song of Songs*, but not to the disadvantage of Solomon in splendour (Cant 2:1–2; 3:7–10). (7) That humans are worth more than (other) animals is implicit, but not, I think, specifically stated. Toil, as already noted, (9) is encouraged, not disparaged. The poor who depend faithfully on God may have his special care, but, again as already noted, storing (10) is admired, and possessions are a blessing. There is only one important common motif, and that is the divine provision of food for beasts and humans (12; with 11 implicit); e.g., Ps 104:21–23, 27, etc.; compare 147:8–9, taken up in Rabbinic writings). But this is in no way an excuse to give up work (Ps 104:23), which is what the divinely provided sunshine encourages and regulates.<sup>27</sup> And clearly God is king

<sup>25</sup> Olsthorpe, *Jewish Background*. He accepts (6) that he had not been able to explore the wider Greco-Roman literature. Had he done so, he might have been less confident in presenting his specifically Jewish material as so immediately relevant.

<sup>26</sup> Noted, but uncritically, by S. Freyne, *Jesus: A Jewish Galilean* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 47.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Olsthorpe, *Jewish Background*, 26–27; dependence on divine provision there is for sure; but there are no injunctions on that basis to desist from toil; cf. *Pss Sol.* 5.8–11, adduced by W. Eckey, *Das Lukasevangelium unter Berücksichtigung seiner Parallelen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004), 2:589.

in canonical texts, and people are encouraged in the Psalms to seek him (14); yet “kingdom” and “seeking his kingdom” (14) are unparalleled. The only remotely close and possibly near-contemporary Jewish parallel to the saying on “the morrow” (15) comes in the very Greek Ps.-Phocylides (116–121).<sup>28</sup>

When we look carefully, some topics similar to those in our gospel pericope are touched on in the canonical texts (and in later rabbinic writings), but almost always to a quite different effect. As Betz concludes, of the version in Matthew, “One must see the position taken . . . in the context of this wider [Greco-Roman] debate.”<sup>29</sup> However, I shall argue, as already indicated, and on the basis of the examples surveyed above, that it is the specifically Cynic form of the debate, all but ignored by Betz, which is the most significant. In this we part company with Betz, who makes divine provision, “providence” (12), the dominant motif, and we concentrate rather on the life-style that is inculcated, and to which more of the sequence seems to be devoted.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, we may affirm F. Bovon’s initial assertion in the following passage, while finding ourselves in detailed disagreement with his ensuing emphatic qualifications of it:

Lukas scheint seinen hellenistischen und städtischen Lesern und Leserinnen [Hörern und Hörerinnen?] dasselbe Ideal vorzuschlagen wie die griechischen oder lateinischen Weisen seiner Zeit. Oder zumindest entscheidet er sich dazu, dieselben Fehler wie sie zu bekämpfen. Aber, im Unterschied zu ihnen zählt er weder auf die philosophische Meditation noch auf die persönliche Disziplin, um diese Befreiung zu erlangen und zu innerer Ruhe zu kommen; er setzt im Gegenteil auf das Vertrauen in Gott, der sich väterlich mit seinen Geschöpfen befasst.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Betz, *The Sermon*, 484 n. 481, also cites Prov 1:27; Sir 10:10; 11:18; 20:15, none of which seems particularly apposite. In this connection it was disappointing to find how meagre were the passages selected for comparison in K. Berger and C. Colpe, *Texte zum Neuen Testament I: Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 100–102.

<sup>29</sup> Betz, *The Sermon*, 464–65; see also Bovon, *Lukas*, 294–95, 309–310 (but see below). J. N. Jones, “‘Think of the Lilies’ and Prov 6:6–11,” *HTR* 88.1 (1995): 175–77, argues that our pericope is a direct reversal of the Proverbs passage. The ethos is certainly very different, but there are not enough of the relevant motifs in those verses in Proverbs for that to be taken as basic or particularly formative.

<sup>30</sup> Betz, *The Sermon*, 463–65. Cynics are noted in passing, 473 n. 393; 474 n. 396.

<sup>31</sup> Bovon, *Lukas*, 310. We may also note the conclusion of R. A. Martin, *Studies in the Life and Ministry of the Historical Jesus* (Lanham, MD and London: University Press of America, 1995), 76 that “this unit has clear original Greek frequencies”; as noted with approval by Robinson and Heil, “The Lilies,” 24, and J. S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 77 n. 33. I have not been able to assess Martin’s detailed arguments.

It may well be the case that both in intention and in effect in the gospel and Acts as a whole Luke was urging on his hearers a distinctive trust in God's parental care. However, had he meant to make any such distinctiveness clear here, he would have needed to phrase the whole very differently, for every motif, as we have shown, clearly echoes motifs readily found in contemporary Greco-Roman writings; as does not least the motif of trust in divine fatherly care. As a set of Greek words this passage in Luke is, of course, unique, as is Matthew's version; but so too is each of the illustrative passages adduced. In terms of recognizable motifs, there is nothing here that is distinctive, and we may assume that Luke (and Matthew) would be aware of that, and content with it. Taken singly and taken in this combination, the passage offers ground that overlaps with what listeners would be likely to have heard in public discourse in their Greek towns and cities. By adding or retaining 6:34, Matthew has signalled a clear awareness and acceptance of the family resemblance.

That this is so appears particularly clearly in Clement of Alexandria, who produces his own variation among the themes, using scriptural and non-scriptural wording, but to deal not with anxiety but (see the full context) with gluttony, fussing over exotic food:

No one is deprived of necessities (11), no human is overlooked, for there is one who feeds fowl and fish (4), and, in short, all the brute beasts, and that's God (12). They lack not a single thing, despite not fussing (μὴ μεριμνῶσι) (9) over food (1). And we are superior to them (7), as their masters, and more nearly akin to God, in so far as more temperate. We exist, not for eating and drinking, but as people coming to a knowledge (14?) of God (*Paid.* 2.1.5–6).

It is obvious that for Clement our gospel pericope belongs in this field, and can be mixed quite naturally with other variants. We may note such non-scriptural terms as “necessities” (τὰ ἀναγκαῖα), “brute/irrational beasts” (τὰ ἄλογα) “there is one who” (εἷς ἐστιν), “more akin to God in so far as more temperate” (θεῷ οικειότεροι, ὅσω σωφρονέστεροι), as well as the ready variant, ‘fish’. Ending with “knowledge of God” (rather than “kingdom”), aligns Clement, of course, with Seneca and Plutarch.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Text in O. Stählin, ed., *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte. Clemens Alexandrinus* (Leipzig: Heinrichs, 2005). In *Paid.* 2.11, Clement uses two themes of the passage to deal with fussing over dress styles; in *Strom.* 4.6, he quotes the ending rather more precisely, in order to persuade to “the gnostic

There are, however, various formal analyses of this passage that tend to occlude—by ignoring—its Greco-Roman resonances. In his collected studies on Q, C. M. Tuckett asserts,

It is widely acknowledged that Q 12:23 (the ψυχή is more than food, and the σῶμα more than clothing) does not fit well after the exhortation in v. 22 not to worry about food or clothing. The motives given in v. 23 on the one hand, and in vv. 22, 24, 26–28 on the other, for the general advice not to worry are different: in vv. 24, 26–28 there is no grading of concerns but simply an assurance that God will provide; v. 23 however introduces a contrast between the more important ψυχή—σῶμα and the less important food and clothing. It looks very much as if either v. 23 has been added secondarily to vv. 22, 24 and 26–28, or vice-versa... [This latter is judged less likely]... So, too, v. 25, interrupting the twin appeals to examples from nature (ravens/birds and lilies) and introducing a quite different kind of argument appealing to human inability to solve the problems of anxiety, is almost universally regarded as a secondary addition to the earlier tradition.

A third addition may occur in vv. 30a, 31, in the references to the gentiles and the kingdom... The easiest solution is to see vv. 30a, 31, with their national and eschatological appeals, as secondary.<sup>33</sup>

It does not seem necessary to tell us why these distinctions discerned by twentieth-century western Europeans would have been so striking that a first-century east Mediterranean speaker, Jesus or a follower, could not have combined themes such as these from the start; and this, despite the fact that some supposed early redactor did find them compatible and the sequence entirely coherent; as, obviously, also did Matthew and Luke. And such pulling apart must look particularly strange when we see how readily other near contemporaries could also assemble such motifs in various combinations; indeed, even more of them in the longer works of Seneca and Plutarch discussed above. The criteria deployed in such disruptive analyses are anachronistic.

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life.” Clement seems to be missing from such *Wirkungsgeschichten* of our pericope as I have encountered.

<sup>33</sup> C. M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 149–150, citing D. Zeller, D. Catchpole, U. Luz, J. S. Kloppenborg and P. Hoffmann for v. 23, and R. Bultmann, J. Jeremias, D. Zeller, J. S. Kloppenborg, R. A. Piper and P. Hoffmann for v. 25. Possibly vv. 25–26 are intended; compare J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 552; and J. M. Robinson and C. Heil, “The Lilies of the Field: Saying 36 of the *Gospel of Thomas* and Secondary Accretions in Q 12.22b-31,” *NTS* 47 (2001): 1–25. Tuckett’s attention, 389 n. 15, to “the paucity of Cynic parallels” in Berger and Colpe, *Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch* presupposes in that work a comprehensive aim and achievement, for neither of which is there evidence.

More attention is worth paying, for instance, to Quintilian, on “*inventio*,” bringing together from notes or from memory relevant arguments and illustrations. He contrasts brief utterances with those where one does need a good memory so as to be able “to say everything demanded by the subject (*omnia quae res postulat dicere*)” (*Inst.* 3.3.2).<sup>34</sup> Later he allows, “Even the unlearned often possess the gift of *inventio*, and no great learning need be assumed for the satisfactory arrangement of subject matter” (*Inst.* 8.3.2). “There are certain arguments which are light-weight and weak when they stand alone, but which have great force when produced in a body” (*Inst.* 4.5.7).<sup>35</sup> Quintilian’s primary concern is forensic oratory, but the advocate has to engage his audience, and so “must not the orator breathe life into the argument and develop it? Must he not vary and diversify it by a thousand figures, and do all this in such a way that it seems to come into being as the very child of nature, not to reveal an artificial manufacture and a suspect art?” (*Inst.* 5.14.32). An appeal to ordinary hearers cannot usefully deploy a strictly logical progression of inferences. “Eloquence therefore must not restrict itself to narrow tracks, but range at large over open fields” (*Inst.* 5.14.30–31). And this is precisely what we have found Quintilian’s contemporaries, Seneca and Plutarch, doing; as also the other authors on whom we have drawn, including the author(s) of our gospel pericope; and as we have seen Clement do, later.

If, nonetheless, we were to accept the suggested excisions, it would in fact not make a great deal of difference to the foregoing argument. We would retain (2), reference to body and soul/life, even if we lost v. 23. And, anyway, we argued above that vv. 22 and 23 are not in conflict in their use of body and soul talk.<sup>36</sup> (13), the note on the limits of human powers, would go completely with the loss of vv. 25–26. This theme is not one of those best evidenced in the illustrative sources adduced; however, for a brief argument in favour of seeing it at home in the text as a whole, see further, below.<sup>37</sup> An unfavourable comparison with others is implicit throughout, so the loss of 30a would make no difference to (6). The excision of v. 31, and the kingdom, would lose us theme (14).

<sup>34</sup> Quintilian, in H. E. Butler ed. and trans., *Quintilian*, LCL, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press and Heinemann, 1920–), slightly adapted.

<sup>35</sup> On this, compare *Ad Herennium* 3.10.18, but also on *inventio*.

<sup>36</sup> See above, pp. 328–329 and n. 12.

<sup>37</sup> See below, pp. 344–345.

We would, then, still be left with 12 or 13 themes strongly represented in this gospel passage and in our Greco-Roman sources.

J. M. Robinson and C. Heil argue for an even briefer original, on the basis of a reconstruction of the text of *Gospel of Thomas* 36 in P. Oxy. 655. This would leave us with (1), (5), (7), (8), (9), (11) and (12), still quite a full tally. Justin Martyr, *Apol.* 1.15, gives us (1), (4), (7), (9), (12) and (14). I would argue for both these as condensations; Justin's *Apol.* 1.15–17 clearly is an epitome of teaching ascribed to Jesus, here drawn from memory.<sup>38</sup>

Yet while the examples cited (whether the full 14/15, or one of the shorter ones) display together a common willingness to deploy common Greco-Roman themes in varying orders and connections, there is, as already indicated, a certain distinctiveness about the gospel sets, though not where Bovon finds it. The focus (1) on cares about food and drink and clothes, on very basic needs, to the exclusion of all else, is found in Cynic or Cynic-allied sources.<sup>39</sup> An emphasis on gaining inner mental resources (3) to rely on, however, found as it is in Epicurean, Stoic and Platonic reflections, is specifically refused by Cynics—and is absent here. A positive evaluation of the example of wild animals (4) is also distinctively Cynic.<sup>40</sup> A Platonist such as Plutarch could find occasional exceptions, but we have seen that his admired animals (like those in Proverbs) are those who teach shepherding and ploughing, not those who teach insouciance.<sup>41</sup> It is distinctive of Cynicism to urge that

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<sup>38</sup> In their “The Lilies,” Robinson and Heil continue the argument for preferring OY ZAINEI in Matthew's version (6:28) to the AYΞANEI that could lie behind the AYΞANOYΣIN of the received text. Although it is part of their argument for a shorter original, acceptance of this detail would make no difference to the case argued here. However, in majuscules the letters are more clearly dissimilar than in the minuscules that Robinson chooses; and relying on mis-heard dictation suggests a scriptorium setting implausibly early in transmission. It is also worth noting the reservations of S. E. Porter, “P.Oxy. 655 and James Robinson's Proposals for Q: Brief Points of Clarification,” *JTS* NS 52, no. 1 (2000): 84–92. See now also D. Jongkind, “‘The Lilies of the Field’ Reconsidered: *Codex Sinaiticus* and the Gospel of Thomas,” *NovT* 48.3 (2006): 209–216, suggesting an echo of Thomas or pressure of context as prompting an original ZAINEI in *Sinaiticus*.

<sup>39</sup> For Musonius, see n. 12 above; for Epictetus and his “idealized” Cynicism, see *Diss.* 3.32, and M. Billerbeck, *Epiktet* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), and “Le cynisme idéalisé d'Epictète à Julien,” in *Le cynisme ancien*, ed. M.-O. Goulet-Cazé and R. Goulet, 319–338; and on the issue of relevant Cynic sources and dating, Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches*, 26–54.

<sup>40</sup> Compare M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, “Les premiers Cyniques et la religion,” in *Le cynisme ancien*, ed. eadem and R. Goulet, 117–158, at 134–139.

<sup>41</sup> For more of Plutarch's exceptions, see *Bruta animalia, Moralia* 985D–992F.

“philosophical” *askêsis* is equally open to women and to men (8); and that too is significant, if we are right to see typically male and female toil equally disparaged in the gospel passages. Certainly, to reject productive work as such (9), wealth creation, is specifically Cynic; as is, of course, the refused accumulation of possessions (10). It is only Cynics who claim a “kingdom” (14) already in the carefree life they adopt. Thus in seven of the fourteen or fifteen motifs where Cynics adopt a distinctive stance, the gospel passage is aligned with the Cynics; and—save for (14)—these Cynic strands all remain, even if the excisions I have resisted are allowed, as in effect they also do in the versions in the *Gospel of Thomas* and in Justin; while the rest of the motifs, at least here in their unelaborated, un-expounded forms, remain entirely compatible with Cynicism, not excluding divine parental care (12).

Some at least of these analogies, as we have seen, are acknowledged; and yet the conclusion that the gospel pericope is Cynic in ethos, let alone Cynic-influenced, is stoutly resisted.<sup>42</sup> That resistance is supported by the emphasis we have seen on the motif of divine paternal care, along with a refusal to see that as itself a possible Cynic motif. And this emphasis on divine parental (or providential, so Betz) care is combined with a persistent and traditional preference for forcing what is in effect (and probably in distant origin) a Stoic reading onto a text that, as I hope now to show, resists it, and resists it with Cynic bluntness.

The injunction could on its own, as Bultmann showed, be used to dissuade from actively taking care, fussy busyness, or to dissuade from internalized worry, or both.<sup>43</sup> It seems widely, these days, to be taken—with little if any argument—for the second.<sup>44</sup> “The disciples are exhorted not to worry about material things.”<sup>45</sup> *Yet the birds and flowers are not commended for being un-anxious. They are commended for not working, and instead in practice relying on being supplied with “material things.”* Their life is lived fully without food production, their physical well-being is sustained without cloth making (v. 23, thus clearly at home here). In the saying, no one is being accused of relying on

<sup>42</sup> In addition to Luz, Betz and Bovon we may note as further examples Ebner, *Jesus*, 269 n. 104, and Tuckett, Q, 389.

<sup>43</sup> Bultmann, *μεριμνάω*, 589–90.

<sup>44</sup> Olsthorne, *Jewish Background*, 20, notes some older exceptions, citing A. Loisy, K. Bornhäuser, A. Schlatter, and J. Jeremias. The latter allows that it forbids active provision, but only to the twelve, in *The Parables of Jesus* (ET of 8th edn, of *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 2nd edn, London: SCM, 1970), 214–215.

<sup>45</sup> Tuckett, Q, 389.

anxiety itself to get fields sown and harvested and the harvest stored, or clothes produced; it is engagement in busy toil that is criticized, the busy toil that can, for instance, do so little to improve bodily stature (vv. 25–26, which thus are clearly at home here). Of course, in the way that linguistic polyvalence works, we may well assume implicitly that inner anxiety will also be avoided.<sup>46</sup> But what the birds and flowers are commended for, and therefore what is enjoined on the sayings' hearers, is simply abstaining from toil. And this is an explicit and distinctive Cynic message. It finds no parallel in the specifically Jewish material offered by the commentators, and none in the general run of Greco-Roman authors: but clear resonances among the Cynics.<sup>47</sup>

Tuckett further adduces the wider context in Q of "the imminent arrival of the eschatological kingdom of God" as an element distinguishing this saying (even without v. 31) from any such general urging of ascetic practice. In itself and in general this is an entirely apposite issue for reflection.<sup>48</sup> Yet there is no indication in the parable that hearers are to find a strange new behaviour pattern in birds and flowers, adopted in the face of some imminent crisis. Whether in crisis or not, they are to live, toil-free, as birds and flowers always have done—and as Cynics have long counselled, and commended as being "according to nature."

If the conclusion is allowed—or at least found plausible—that this text, in both versions, belongs firmly among the Greco-Roman examples cited, and belongs there specifically among the Cynics, we must also ask what further conclusions might follow. One might well be that this piece could stem neither from Jesus nor from an original form of Q, because, so many insist, Jesus could not have been open to Cynic influ-

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<sup>46</sup> Olsthorne, *Jewish Background*, 21, suggests that in 1 Cor 7:32–34 and Luke 12:11, New Testament usage supports his preferred internalized anxiety interpretation. At most, however, this could only further illustrate one of the two strands noted by Bultmann, as Olsthorne allows for other passages. In fact, 1 Cor 7:32–34 seems to many to reflect the warning against the busy distractions of married life noted by Epictetus (*Diss.* 3.22.67–76) and others; Luke 12:11 more likely dissuades from preparing speeches in advance. The tyrant imagined by Dio (*Discourse* 6) does have lots of anxieties, worries induced by his life-style; his Diogenes enjoys life by maintaining a simple life-style, not by quelling inner perturbation.

<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting that in alluding to this passage, Ambrose of Milan regularly combines it with Cynic themes of sharing the fruits of the earth in common: *De officiis* 1.28; 3.7; *De viduis* 1, 5; *In Luc.* 7.124 PL (the latter two references from J. L. González, *Faith and Wealth: A History of Early Christian Ideas on the Origin, Significance, and Use of Money* (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 191.

<sup>48</sup> Tuckett, Q, 390.



ence, nor could his earliest followers, who were responsible for at least the earliest elements of Q. And neither he nor they could have been open to Cynic influence, because we have no independent evidence for Cynic influence in Galilee (or in Judaea). So some scholars insist.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, we have little if any independent evidence at all for the details of the culture(s) of ordinary people in Jesus' Galilee (or Judaea), or that of the followers who survived him.<sup>50</sup> Josephus (hardly "independent") tells us something of the macro-politics of the area, mostly decades later, and from his own standpoint. We know from archaeological finds that villages in Galilee avoided pork and used the stone jars that later accounts tell us avoided contamination; and wealthy people in towns built *miqvā'ôt*, ritual baths: these external markers of Jewish committed allegiance were widely maintained. That does not tell us at all how they were interpreted.<sup>51</sup> And in fact all writers on Jesus' Galilee plunder the synoptic gospels for evidence; they are, after all, the only sources we have that even claim to be concerned with that time and place.<sup>52</sup>

So, to recapitulate, we have offered to us, and ascribed to Jesus, a complex saying for which we have no similar sequence in known contemporary Jewish sources, but plenty of contrasts there to its themes taken singly, and also with contrasting inferences drawn even from the one apparent and important-looking common strand: divine provision encourages not hard work (as in other Jewish sources), but here a toil-free existence. This complex piece, unparalleled in our near-

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<sup>49</sup> Among those who insist on this conclusion, H. D. Betz, "Jesus and the Cynics: Survey and Analysis of the Hypothesis," *JR* 74.4 (1994): 453–475; B. Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); C. M. Tuckett, "A Cynic Q?," *Bib* 70.2 (1989): 349–376, much of it recurring in idem, *Q*, 325–354; P. R. Eddy, "Jesus as Diogenes? Reflections on the Cynic Jesus Thesis," *JBL* 115.3 (1996): 449–469.

<sup>50</sup> See F. G. Downing, "The Jewish Cynic Jesus," 187–195; and "In Quest of First-Century C. E. Galilee," *CBQ* 66.1 (2004): 78–97; and "Jesus and Cynicism," in this *Handbook*.

<sup>51</sup> See, among others, J. L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-Examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), who adds this rider. He and others add ossuaries as further evidence of distinctive Jewishness, but that lacks archaeological support: M. Aviam and D. Syon, "Jewish Ossilegium in Galilee," in *What Athens has to do with Jerusalem*, ed. L. V. Rutgers (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 154–187, at 183 (with my thanks to Tamsin Lisius).

<sup>52</sup> As an example of this practice from an author who claims to eschew the use of the gospels as evidence for their own setting, R. A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 14 and 252; and idem, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 171, 181.

contemporary Jewish documents, in a very “natural” Greek,<sup>53</sup> is richly paralleled in non-Jewish Greco-Roman sources, and most closely in Cynic ones, where the Cynic instances are themselves distinctive among other Greco-Roman examples.

It is obvious that for Clement our gospel pericope belongs in this field, and can be mixed quite naturally with other variants. We may note such non-scriptural terms as “necessities,” “brute/irrational beasts.” If the community behind Q was originally non-Cynic, as claimed, what sorts of motives could one imagine for importing so blatant and complex a piece of Cynic teaching, socially disruptive, superficially naturalized by a token reference to Solomon? If the rest of Q was non-Cynic, and to all hearers clearly non-Cynic, lacking any of the socially disruptive thrust of Cynicism, this bit, with its elaborate assembly of commonplaces but urging a distinctive Cynic ethos, would stand out like a sore thumb (quite a large sore thumb, at that: one twentieth part of the whole collection, it would seem). It would only make sense to import so large a carefully formulated chunk if already Q in some measure had Cynic resonances that others could recognize, and with which even this would effectively harmonize. We might instance the mission charge, the opposition to Mammon and to treasures, and the apparent rejection of funeral rites, among much else.<sup>54</sup> But once we have allowed that the “Cares” passage could look at home in Q, we have discarded the non-Cynic Q anyway. Then, if these various Greco-Roman motifs, including distinctive Cynic motifs were assimilable by Jesus’ earliest Jewish followers, themselves Galileans or at least led by Galileans, it would seem plausible that they had been assimilable by Jesus too, living among the same fellow Galilean Jews.

(Here is not the place to argue the possibility of Cynic influence from Gadara with its Cynic heritage, or from the popularity of Diogenes in the teaching manuals and so among those literate in Greek.)<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See n. 23 above.

<sup>54</sup> Compare Downing, *Christ and the Cynics*, 9–87.

<sup>55</sup> See n. 40 above; and on Greek in Galilee, P. W. van der Horst, “Greek in Jewish Palestine in the Light of Jewish Epigraphy,” in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, ed. J. J. Collins and G. E. Sterling (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University, 2001), 154–176: “We may tentatively conclude that Roman Palestine was largely a bilingual or even trilingual society—alongside the vernacular Aramaic (and, to a much lesser extent, Hebrew), Greek was widely used and understood—but we have to add that the degree of use and understanding of the Greek language probably varied according to locality and period, social status and educational background, the occasion and mobility”

Of course, to defend the hypothesis of a quite non-Cynic Jesus, we could excise the “Cares” pericope and all the other matter in Q (and, presumably, in Mark and special Matthew and special Luke) with which it seems to harmonize as therefore also Cynic-sounding. It could leave us with a millenarian prophet, exorcist and healer. But we would still be left with the problem: “How” as well as “why” was this non-Cynic Jesus, in a Galilee impervious to Cynic influence, so soon “Cynicized” by his originally un-Cynic followers?

Of course it is very likely that if any are persuaded by the above characterization of the pericope, there will be some among them able to outline alternative hypotheses to explain such a Cynic intrusion into an originally non-Cynic tradition of what Jesus did in speaking and in other ways. And for some, their own rival hypotheses are likely to appear to them as certainties that sweep others from the field. But what I hope I have done in this essay and in its companion piece in the first volume, and in other writing referred to in the footnotes, is to show at least that there are real difficulties in framing any purely Cynic-free hypotheses to explain the origins of Christianity. However awkward, we may have to include in our reflections and reconstructions the possibility of a Jesus with a socially disruptive, largely anarchistic message, one which perhaps might disturb more than it does the practice and politics of those among us who claim to be his followers.<sup>56</sup>

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(166). All that is needed for the present case is the reasonable plausibility of Greek *topoi* having become known.

<sup>56</sup> R. A. Horsley and N. A. Silberman, in their *The Message and the Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 93–94, suggest that ancient Cynicism had no real socio-political bite, appealing only to people “alienated from, but still part of, the dominant culture” (93). It may even be that others who see Jesus in Cynic terms also interpret him so. But this is to misunderstand the socially disruptive thrust of Cynic teaching and practice, as it affected such fundamental issues as working for consumption (the issue here), but also family, authority, and cults. It is also to ignore the potential social attraction of a significantly egalitarian shared simplicity in living, in the context of the fraught antagonistic world of the ancient Mediterranean; on which see F. G. Downing, “Fairly Simple: The Impact of Life-style,” in *idem, God with Everything*, 64–90.

# POVERTY AND WEALTH IN JESUS AND THE JESUS TRADITION

HEINZ GIESEN

The kingdom of God, understood as an intimate fellowship between Jesus and his Father in which Jesus gives his adherents a share, is not just one central theme of his message: it is the theological center of his thinking, speaking, and acting.<sup>1</sup> This is why it is also the criterion which allows us to evaluate Jesus' position on poverty and wealth.<sup>2</sup> In the present essay, I shall study in detail five examples (Mark 10:17–22 par.; Mark 10:23–27 par.; Mark 12:41–44 par.; Luke 6:20 par.; and Luke 16:13 par.) which show us how Jesus and the Jesus tradition saw poverty and wealth, and then offer a general evaluation. Since it is important to come as close as possible to the message of the earthly Jesus himself, the first, third, and fourth examples begin with a synoptic comparison, I also discuss the question of historicity.

## 1. *Wealth and Discipleship (Mark 10:17–22 par. Matt 19:16–22 and Luke 18:18–23)*

### 1.1. *Synoptic Comparison*

When a man asks Jesus what he must do in order to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17), Jesus refers him to the commandments in the second table of the decalogue. As a pious Jew, the man proclaims that he has observed this from his youth. However, he still lacks one thing, before he can become an immediate follower of Jesus: he must get rid of his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. In return, he is promised a treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21; Matt 19:21; Luke 18:22). These words of Jesus horrify him, and he departs sadly. Since he possesses a

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heinz Giesen, *Herrschaft Gottes—heute oder morgen?*, BU 26 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1995), 5–6, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Heinz Giesen, "Eigentum im Urteil Jesu und der Jesustradition," in idem, *Jesu Heilsbotschaft und die Kirche*, BETL 179 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 231–244, at 232; Martin Hengel, *Eigentum und Reichtum in der frühen Kirche*, Calwer Paperback (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1973), 37.

great deal of property (Mark 10:22), he decides against becoming an immediate follower of Jesus.

Matthew and Luke do not tell us that the man was horrified; they say only that “he went away sorrowful” (Matt 19:22) or that “he became sad” (Luke 18:23). Matthew too explains the sadness of the man in terms of his great wealth, while Luke 18:23 emphasizes the extent of this wealth: “for he was very rich.” According to Mark 10:17 and Matt 19:16, the one who puts this question is simply “a man,” while Luke 18:18 tells us that he was a member of the Jewish ruling elite. Unlike Mark and Luke, Matt 19:21 introduces the demand that he sell everything with the redactional words: “If you would be perfect” (cf. Matt 5:48).<sup>3</sup> In Mark 10:17 and Luke 18:18, the man addresses Jesus as “Good teacher”; at Matt 19:16, he calls him “Teacher” and asks: “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” In all three versions, Jesus rejects this question, since God alone is “good” (Mark 10:18; Matt 19:17; Luke 18:19).

With the addition, probably redactional, of εἰς ὁδόν Mark 10:17 inserts the dialogue, which goes beyond a merely academic debate,<sup>4</sup> into the path that Jesus takes towards Jerusalem, thereby defining the following of Jesus as the following of his passion.<sup>5</sup> The act of falling to one’s knees, which is not customary before a teacher, and the address of Jesus as “Good teacher” (Mark 10:17) belong together.

As the synoptic comparison shows, the historical reconstruction must begin with Mark.

## 1.2. *Jesus’ Attitude to Poverty and Wealth*

### 1.2.1. On the historicity of the encounter between Jesus and the rich man

Although the evangelists present this story in a stylized form which is adapted to their own situation, I see no reason to doubt that they are

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Heinz Giesen, *Christliches Handeln*, EHS T.181 (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1982), 129–145.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Wilhelm Egger, *Nachfolge als Weg zum Leben*, ÖBS 1 (Klosterneuburg: Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1979), 187.

<sup>5</sup> This interpretation is discussed by Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* 2, HTK 2.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 137. However, the lack of an article means that we cannot ascribe this to a pre-Markan redaction, since the article can be omitted in prepositional phrases. Cf. Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, rev. F. Rehkopf (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 14th edn, 1976), §255.

basically relating an event from the life of the historical Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Paul S. Minear however maintains that the nucleus around which Mark 10:17–31 is constructed is the affirmation that it is hard for the rich to attain salvation (10:25).<sup>7</sup> This difficulty is illustrated with the help of a logion of Jesus about discipleship (v. 21), the negative example of the rich man, and (on the basis of Jesus' logion about the reward awaiting the disciples, vv. 28–29) the positive example of Peter. The dialogue about the commandments as the path to eternal life (vv. 18–20) was added subsequently, in order to make it clear that discipleship does not mean the abolition of the law of Moses. If this were correct, there would have to be a similar insertion into other vocation narratives too.<sup>8</sup> Since this is not the case, Minear's hypothesis has deservedly found little support.

Another hypothesis admits that the story relates the calling of a disciple. However, the vocation is not refused because of Jesus' demand that the man renounce his possessions; rather, in a secondary development, vv. 23 and 25 have utilized the apophthegm found in a pre-Markan stage of tradition to answer "the question of the relationship between being rich and being a Christian."<sup>9</sup> According to Nikolaus Walter, the original story related how a pious man comes to Jesus to ask about the path that leads to eternal life, but is then challenged to make the decision to follow him. The story was handed on, not as an example of a failed vocation story, but as testimony that the true path to life consists in following Jesus; the demand that the rich man sell his goods and give the proceeds to the poor is only a minor element in the story,<sup>10</sup> which is concerned with the soteriological problem in general. This proposal is based on an elaborate literary criticism, but it remains unconvincing. At any rate, the fact that the man's wealth is mentioned only at the close of the narrative does not mean that this

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<sup>6</sup> This position is taken, in the case of Mark 10:17–31, by Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966), 424–433; William L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 364; in the case of 10:17–27, cf. Egger, *Nachfolge*, 186–190; on this, cf. Vittorio Fusco, *Povert  e sequela (Mc. 10,17–31 parr.)*, SB 94 (Brescia: Paideia, 1991), 116–117.

<sup>7</sup> Paul S. Minear, "The Needle's Eye," *JBL* 61 (1942): 157–169.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Fusco, *Povert *, 129.

<sup>9</sup> Thus Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, SUNT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 151.

<sup>10</sup> Nikolaus Walter, "Zur Analyse von Mc 10,17–31," *ZNW* 53 (1962): 206–218, at 213. This would mean that Mark 10:22b is a later insertion.

is a late addition: this is due to the narrative strategy.<sup>11</sup> Other scholars question whether the original context of the story was a call to discipleship. It has been suggested that the renunciation of one's wealth in favor of the poor was not the condition for entry into the group of disciples, but a radicalization of the commandment to give alms.<sup>12</sup> The addition: "Follow me!" has turned this episode into a vocation narrative, probably in order to supply a negative counterfoil to the positive example of the disciples (vv. 28–31).<sup>13</sup> This literary-critical judgment is derived above all from the lack of a connection between the story of the rich man and the subsequent dialogue in which wealth is seen as a hindrance on the path to salvation (vv. 23–27). This, however, is far from convincing; the hypothesis of an early stage without the vocation context cannot be demonstrated.<sup>14</sup>

None of the literary-critical hypotheses is truly convincing. Everything suggests that we have here a narrative which from the very beginning contained both the dialogue about eternal life, and the vocation of the rich man and his rejection of Jesus' call.<sup>15</sup> A number of observations support the historicity of the episode. To begin with, it is improbable that a scene which emphasizes Jesus' lack of success would have been invented (cf. Mark 4:30–32). The same applies to unusual traits such as the address of Jesus as "Good teacher" and his brusque refusal of this title. There is no evidence of the use of the title "Good teacher" in Palestine,<sup>16</sup> but the Talmud offers possible parallels at a later date (*b. Taan.* 24b).<sup>17</sup> There is therefore no reason to dispute that Jesus' encounter with the rich man is an historical event<sup>18</sup> which preserves the memory of a lack of success on Jesus' part.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Fusco, *Povertà*, 128.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Dieter Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium*, HNT 3 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 175.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 140–141, 146; Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981), 294–301.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Fusco, *Povertà*, 130, who also discusses other hypotheses.

<sup>15</sup> Thus Fusco, *Povertà*, 131.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. the commentaries *ad loc.*

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Gustaf Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu mit Berücksichtigung des nachkanonischen jüdischen Schrifttums und der aramäischen Sprache* 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965 [= Leipzig, 2nd edn, 1930]), 277; Lane, *Mark*, 365 n. 41; Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 95.

<sup>18</sup> Fusco, *Povertà*, 133, 134.

## 1.2.2. Interpretation of the probably historical event

When the man asks what he must do in order to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17), Jesus refers him to the commandments in the second table of the decalogue, which stand for the decalogue as a whole.<sup>19</sup> When Jesus looks at the rich man with love, this not only expresses his sympathy, but signals a quasi-sovereign action “on the part of the one who gives instruction and formulates decisions about the law.”<sup>20</sup> It is usually supposed that “the one thing he still lacks” is, like the observance of the law, a necessary condition for inheriting eternal life, but this is not correct: it is a condition only for the immediate following of Jesus.<sup>21</sup> It is only such a disciple of Jesus who must go beyond the fulfillment of the law by renouncing his property and giving the proceeds of its sale to the poor. In return, he is promised a treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21; Matt 19:21; Luke 18:22).

When Jesus rejects the address as “good,” he emphatically directs the attention of the rich man in a positive sense towards God (Mark 10:18; Matt 19:17; Luke 18:19), who is goodness in person and who displays his goodness especially in his gift of the commandments (Ps 119:68).<sup>22</sup> In this way, he demands that the man imitate God, who alone is entitled to issue commandments and require that these be observed. This means that Jesus sees himself as totally at the service of God, and he insists that God’s commandments be obeyed.<sup>23</sup> People who at least sense this fact ask Jesus what they are commanded to do (cf. also Luke 10:25) in order to attain salvation, and even in the earliest strata of the tradition (Luke 6:46; Matt 7:24.26 par.), Jesus replies to such insistent questions on his own authority.<sup>24</sup> The broad attestation makes it probable that this

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<sup>19</sup> On this, cf. Bernhard Hose, “Reich Gottes contra Gesetz? Anmerkungen zur bleibenden Heilsrelevanz des Gesetzes in Mk 10,17–27,” in *Paradigmen auf dem Prüfstand: Festschrift K. Müller*, ed. M. Ebner and B. Heiniger, NTA NF 47 (Münster: Aschendorff 2004), 103–115, at 111–113.

<sup>20</sup> Klaus Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu* 1, WMANT 40 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1972), 398. It is improbable that Mark has in mind a kiss here, against Berger, *ibid.* 397–398; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 140; and with Dieter Sänger, “Recht und Gerechtigkeit in der Verkündigung Jesu,” *BZ* 36 (1992): 179–194, at 187 n. 42.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Hose, “Reich Gottes” 113; also Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1976), 249–250.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Édouard Trocmé, *L’Évangile selon Saint Marc*, CNT (N) II (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2000), 265; Lane, *Mark*, 365.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 400–401; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 138.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Herbert Braun, ποιέω, κτλ. *ThWNT* VI (1959), 456–483, at 478.



reflects the activity of the earthly Jesus. Jesus certainly does not wish to say that he himself is not good.<sup>25</sup> The address has been regarded as crude flattery,<sup>26</sup> but against this view, we must bear in mind that according to Mark (10:21), Jesus looks on the rich man with love and full sympathy. The decisive point is the theocentricity of Jesus' message: it is not his own self that he proclaims, but God his Father, who gives eternal life to those who follow his ordinances. At the same time, Jesus draws attention to his own unique mission.

The fact that Jesus assumes that the man will be familiar with the decalogue (Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20) is historically plausible, as is the demand that he should follow Jesus after selling his goods;<sup>27</sup> this is noted by all three synoptics (Mark 10:21 parr. Matt 19:21–22; Luke 18:22–23; cf. Mark 2:14; 8:34). The summons to follow the earthly Jesus means sharing in the life, and hence also in the poverty, of the itinerant preacher Jesus.<sup>28</sup> Only this explains the demand to sell *everything*. It is important to note that Jesus is not content to demand that the man sell his possessions. He demands in the same breath that he give the proceeds to the poor (τοῖς πτωχοῖς, Mark 10:21; Matt 19:21; Luke 18:22).

Unlike the πένητες (i.e., those who lack possessions), the πτωχοὶ are utterly destitute<sup>29</sup> and thus completely dependent on help from others. This narrow meaning of the word is not found in the New Testament; rather, the reference is to poor and needy persons in general, as in LXX usage.<sup>30</sup> For Jesus, poverty in itself is not an ideal, and wealth is not *per se* reprehensible. If however wealth presents an obstacle to disciple-

<sup>25</sup> Cf. also Evans, *Mark*, 96.

<sup>26</sup> Against Dalman, *Worte*, 277; Trocmé, *Marc*, 264–265; cf. also Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 401–402. According to Ben T. Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 282, it is difficult to decide whether this address is flattery or genuine reverence.

<sup>27</sup> With Egger, *Nachfolge*, 187–188; against Rudolf Bultmann, *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, FRLANT 29 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 8th edn, 1970), 20–21; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 140; Ernst, *Markus*, 295.

<sup>28</sup> For a similar position, cf. Eduard Schweizer, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 16th ed., NTD 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, Sacra Pagina 2 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 307; France, *Mark*, 403; against Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 437.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Friedrich Hauck, art. πτωχός, κτλ. *ThWNT* VI (1959), 885–888, at 886–887; Helmut Merklein, art. πτωχός, κτλ. *EWNT* I, 2nd ed. (1992), 466–472, at 467.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupont, “Jésus, Messie des pauvres,” in idem, *Études sur les Évangiles synoptiques*, BETL 70–A (Leuven: Peeters, 1985), 86–130, at 87–97; Marius Reiser, “Selig die Reichen!”—“Selig die Armen!”. Die Option Jesu für die Armut,” *EuA* 74 (1998): 451–466, at 463.

ship, it must be abandoned. It is striking that Jesus tells the man to give the proceeds from the sale of his property directly to the poor, not to a religious institution such as the temple.<sup>31</sup> The rich man who gives up all he owns becomes himself a poor man, dependent on others. If he gives up his wealth in favor of the poor, and above all in order to be able to follow Jesus, he is promised a treasure in heaven<sup>32</sup> (Mark 10:21 parr. Matt 19:21; Luke 18:22) which is not earned, but bestowed as a gift.<sup>33</sup> The renunciation of wealth in favor of the poor thus takes on an eschatological quality. The motif for this renunciation is not asceticism, but the missionary ministry.<sup>34</sup> The rich man is confronted with the alternative between earthly and heavenly riches. It is clear that the demand presented here does not apply to all who follow Jesus, but only to one particular individual,<sup>35</sup> although vv. 23–27 affirm that wealth *per se* is an insurmountable obstacle to entry into the kingdom of God.

When he is confronted with these alternatives, the reaction of the rich man is very plausible. He is clearly convinced that it suffices to have kept the ten commandments. According to Mark 10:19, the decalogue also includes the commandment not to “defraud,”<sup>36</sup> which may perhaps be a combination of the two prohibitions of coveting in the decalogue.<sup>37</sup> This could be an allusion to rich men who keep back part or all of the wages of the workers whom they hire on a daily basis, but it may also be a general reference to crimes involving property.<sup>38</sup>

The high point of this episode, the center of the narrative, is the demand to follow Jesus.<sup>39</sup> This is the only passage in Mark which explicitly

<sup>31</sup> This is noted also by Evans, *Mark*, 98–99.

<sup>32</sup> According to Klaus Koch, “Der Schatz im Himmel,” in *Leben angesichts des Todes: Festschrift H. Thielike* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968), 47–60, at 52–57, the “treasure in heaven” is understood as the store of good works that one lays up for oneself in heaven (cf. Ethiopic *1 En.* 39.5; Syriac *Baruch* 14.12; 24.1; etc.).

<sup>33</sup> With Johannes Eichler, “Armut/Reichtum,” *ThBNT* I, 2nd ed. (1997), 73–74, at 74; against Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 140.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 307; against Christopher S. Mann, *Mark*, AB 27 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 401.

<sup>35</sup> With Lane, *Mark*, 367; Mann, *Mark*, 401; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark. A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 388; France, *Mark*, 368.

<sup>36</sup> On the textual criticism, cf. e.g. Witherington, *Mark*, 281.

<sup>37</sup> Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 43–49; Evans, *Mark*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 139; Mann, *Mark*, 400.

<sup>39</sup> Thus also Walter Zimmerli, “Die Frage des Reichen nach dem ewigen Leben,” *EvTh* 19 (1959): 90–97, at 97; Lane, *Mark*, 368.

presents Jesus' demand that those who wish to follow him must give up all their possessions, but the same requirement is implied in the calling of the first disciples (Mark 1:16–20; cf. 2:13–17), since those whom Jesus calls immediately abandon their workplace and their home in order to follow him. It is therefore only logical that Peter, in the name of the group of disciples, affirms at Mark 10:28 that they have done what the rich man refuses to do: they have left everything, and now they want to know what their reward will be. Jesus assures them that they will be repaid a hundredfold in this life and will receive eternal life in the age to come (vv. 29f.)—words that correspond to his promise that the rich man will receive a treasure in heaven.

We may not infer from the mention of the house of the brothers Simon and Andrew at Mark 1:29 that “abandoning everything” does not in literal fact mean renouncing all one's possessions.<sup>40</sup> The following of Jesus does not demand that one's relatives too (Mark 1:30 mentions Simon's mother-in-law) must give up their possessions.

There is no parallel in the history of religions to the absoluteness and radicalism of Jesus' demand about the renunciation of possessions and discipleship.<sup>41</sup> After he calls Elisha, Elijah allows him to return to his house and bid his family farewell (1 Kgs 19:19–21); the pupils of the rabbis had secular occupations. But Jesus and his disciples are entirely at the service of the rule of God, which leaves no time available for other pursuits.<sup>42</sup> For the rich man, at any rate, Jesus' demand is completely unexpected. It shocks him and makes him sad. He is so attached to his property that he is not willing to give it up in order to become an immediate disciple of Jesus (cf. also Mark 4:19). This may also be expressed by the use of the word κτήματα, which is derived from κτάομαι and designates that which one has acquired—thus presenting an effective contrast to the act of selling. This in turn may imply that the rich man, who is unwilling to abandon his possessions, wants to acquire still more: in other words, it is an attack on his greed.<sup>43</sup> Instead of following Jesus joyfully and placing himself at the service of his mission, the rich man departs disappointed and downcast.

This narrative thus relates an unsuccessful vocation; its primary concern is not about the relationship between the Christian existence and

<sup>40</sup> This is however the position of Taylor, *Mark*, 433.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Evans, *Mark*, 100.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Evans, *Mark*, 100.

<sup>43</sup> Thus Gundry, *Matthew Evans, Mark*, 100, 555.

wealth.<sup>44</sup> The text as we have it was certainly formulated by Mark, but most scholars agree that it goes back to authentic Jesus tradition.<sup>45</sup> The fact that the name of the rich man is not mentioned does not necessarily mean that the narrative lacks an historical kernel,<sup>46</sup> especially since the rich man doubtless played no further role in the later community; it is of course also possible that his namelessness is meant to make it easier for the hearers to identify with him.<sup>47</sup>

## 2. *Wealth as an Obstacle to Entry into the Kingdom of God* (Mark 10:23–27 parr. Matt 19:23–26 and Luke 18:24–27)

The episode at Mark 10:17–22 seems incomplete,<sup>48</sup> especially if v. 22b, as is sometimes suggested, did not belong to the original narrative. This is why the commentary in vv. 23–25 must have accompanied this story from the beginning.<sup>49</sup> The theme here is no longer poverty in the context of the immediate following of Jesus, but the difficulty for rich people in general to enter into the kingdom of God (10:23–31). This discussion is detached from the call to follow the historical Jesus, and obviously (though not exclusively) reflects a problem in the Christian community. Although the disciples are not personally affected, they are shocked (v. 24a) to hear that it is difficult for rich people—who play the dominant role in this world—to be saved. From a Jewish perspective, it was impossible to understand how wealth could be an obstacle to entry into the kingdom of God.<sup>50</sup> Rather, wealth was seen as a sign of God's blessing (Ps 112:1–3; Prov 22:4).<sup>51</sup> A similar esteem for rich people and

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Egger, *Nachfolge*, 188, 190.

<sup>45</sup> Indeed, according to Reiser, "Selig" 453, there is a total consensus on this point.

<sup>46</sup> This is however the position of M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums mit einem Nachtrag von G. Iber*, ed. G. Bornkamm, 5th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1966), 47–48, who evaluates the narrative in form-critical terms as a "paradigm." Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 20–21, followed by many other scholars, sees the narrative Mark 10:17–22 as an "apophthegm."

<sup>47</sup> This is suggested by Schweizer, *Markus*, 113.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 17th ed., KEK 1.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 213.

<sup>49</sup> In its original form, the commentary comprised vv. 23a, 24c and 25. Cf. Egger, *Nachfolge*, 189.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Lane, *Mark*, 369; Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 201.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 399. This is expressed in a particularly impressive way by Sir 31[34]:8, "Blessed is the rich man who is found blameless, and who does not go after gold" (the Hebrew text speaks of "mammon" rather than "gold").

for wealth is also found among pagans.<sup>52</sup> Poverty was regarded as a disaster and an evil (Prov 10:15; Sir 40:28). Good health (Sir 30:14–15), the fear of God (Prov 15:16), and wisdom (Prov 16:16) were considered even more valuable than wealth.<sup>53</sup>

There were however two exceptions in classical antiquity to this general evaluation: an option in favor of poverty was maintained by the Essenes in Judaism and by the Cynics in paganism. While the Essenes contributed their possessions to the community and “formed a community in law and possession, the Cynics were individualists who led a simple, sparse life and despised wealth, prestige, and nobility of birth (Diogenes Laertius 6.104).”<sup>54</sup> They chose poverty in order to be independent. But Jesus’ verdict about poverty and wealth is entirely determined by his message about the rule of God, which has absolute priority.

Jesus’ affirmation that it is difficult for persons from the upper classes to gain admission to the kingdom of God culminates in the metaphor of the camel and the needle’s eye (v. 25), which certainly goes back to Jesus himself.<sup>55</sup> In this metaphor, Jesus posits a contrast between the largest animal known in the East and the smallest opening. It is to be understood literally; it cannot be toned down. It underlines in a penetrating manner the impossibility of acquiring salvation by oneself.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, many have attempted to make these words more palatable. For example, it has often been claimed that instead of κόμηλον, the text originally read: κόμιλον, which allegedly means a “ship’s rope,”<sup>57</sup> but this explanation does not in fact make things easier, since a ship’s rope is too thick to pass through the eye of a needle; and a decisive argument

<sup>52</sup> Cf. the examples in Reiser, “Selig,” 455–460.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the examples in Reiser, “Selig,” 454–455.

<sup>54</sup> Cf., 459–460; for a detailed study, cf. Hans-Josef Klauck, “Gütergemeinschaft in der klassischen Antike, in Qumran und im Neuen Testament,” in idem, *Gemeinde—Amt—Sakrament* (Würzburg: Echter, 1989), 69–100.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Reiser, “Selig,” 453: “It is one of the most impressive proverbs which Jesus coined.”

<sup>56</sup> Josef Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 4th ed., RNT 2 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1984), 195, correctly emphasizes: “This can be accomplished only through a miracle of God, but not in such a way that the rich man would retain his possessions while seeking to attain an inner attitude of freedom vis-à-vis these possessions.” Cf. also Lane, *Mark*, 369, 370.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. e.g. Raimund Köbert, “Kamel und Schiffstau: Zu Markus 10,25 (Par.) und Koran 7,40/38,” *Bib* 53 (1972): 229–233; Pinchas Lapide, *Jesus, das Geld und der Weltfrieden* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1991), 19.

against this is that the word κόμιλον is not attested in any Greek text.<sup>58</sup> Even more popular is the explanation that there was a little gate in Jerusalem which people called “The Eye of a Needle,” through which a camel could just manage to squeeze. Marius Reiser rightly dismisses this as a fairy tale intended to spare “oneself and others the salutary shock caused by these words of Jesus, which are formulated with perfect clarity.”<sup>59</sup>

As these attempts to tone down the metaphor themselves show, the evangelist is not primarily interested in the past, but about Christians in the post-Easter communities. The disciples’ shock in this passage shows what ought to be the reaction of all those Christians who want to be disciples of Jesus without giving up their wealth.<sup>60</sup> The answer which is given at the end of the passage to the disciples’ question about who can be saved (10:26) certainly corresponds to Jesus’ own intention: salvation is impossible not only for the rich, but for everyone (v. 24b),<sup>61</sup> but this is possible for God, “for all things are possible with God” (v. 27). There are no exceptions to this rule: salvation is a gift of God. This is how Jesus expresses justification by grace alone and by faith alone.

### 3. *The Gift of the Poor Widow (Mark 12:41–44 par. Luke 21:1–4)*

#### 3.1. *Synoptic Comparison*

The story of the poor widow and her gift is transmitted only by Mark and Luke. Its omission in Matthew is probably due to his desire to link the central importance of the theme of judgment in chs. 24 and 25 more closely to the cries of woe against the Pharisees in ch. 23.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Reiser, “Selig,” 462, is correct to call this a “product of the imagination, which was invented to explain away the present passage.” Cf. Gösta Lindeskog, “Das Kamel und das Nadelöhr,” in *Glaube und Gerechtigkeit: In memoriam R. Gyllenberg*, ed. Jarmo Kiilunen et al., SESJ 38 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1983), 109–122, at 116–122.

<sup>59</sup> Reiser, “Selig,” 463.

<sup>60</sup> Cf., 453.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Schweizer, *Markus*, 115; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mark 1–8,26)*, EKK 2.1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1978), 88; Trocmé, *Marc*, 265.

<sup>62</sup> Thus Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC 33B (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 686; cf. also Alexander Sand, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1986), 478, who however also thinks it possible that Matthew did not know this pericope.

The differences between the texts in Mark and Luke are irrelevant with regard to our present subject. The introduction in Mark 12:41a, "And he sat down," which is not found in Luke 21, is probably redactional; the same may be true of the words "opposite the treasury."<sup>63</sup> According to Mark 12:41b, Jesus sees "the multitude putting money into the treasury" and notes that "many people put in large sums"; according to Luke 21:1, he sees only "the rich putting their gifts into the treasury." In other words, Luke concentrates immediately on the rich. Both evangelists offer a powerful contrast to the rich, in the figure of a poor widow (Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2). Luke employs the term *πενιχρός* for "poor" (a *hapax legomenon* in the New Testament) instead of the *πτωχρός* in Mark's text (12:42), and omits the redactional explanation in Mark that "two *lepta* make a *quadrans*." In Mark 12:43, Jesus calls his disciples together in order to tell them that this poor widow has put more than all the others into the treasury chest. These words are introduced by the solemn affirmation "Amen, I say to you." Luke is obliged to omit this calling together of the disciples, since they are already present in the preceding scene. Instead of "Amen, I say to you," Luke has: "Truly, I say to you," and he does not even mention the treasury chest. There are indeed also a number of different formulations in the concluding verse of the two versions, but these do not amount to any substantial difference. It is unlikely that the addition "her whole living" in Mark 12:44b is due to Markan redaction, since this is the real reason for the positive evaluation of the gift which the poor widow makes.<sup>64</sup> It is also unlikely that this is merely a hyperbole on the part of Jesus,<sup>65</sup> who wishes to express his meaning as pointedly as possible. In the quest for the historical Jesus,

<sup>63</sup> With Ernst, *Markus*, 364; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 261.

<sup>64</sup> It is however improbable (against Schweizer, *Markus*, 142) that a frequently occurring motif "has been elaborated and given the form of a conversation of Jesus with his disciples or an exemplary narrative, thus producing the present story." Likewise, the suggestion that the narrative originated in a parable is pure speculation: against Emil Wendling, *Die Entstehung des Marcus-Evangeliums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1908), 153–154; Dibelius, *Formgeschichte*, 261; Ernst Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu*, de Gruyter Lehrbuch, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968), 432–433. Haenchen's hypothesis is rightly rejected by Gnllka, *Markus 2*, 176; Trocmé, *Marc*, 316; and by other scholars.

<sup>65</sup> Against Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 262; Johannes Beutler, "Die Gabe der armen Witwe. Mark 12, 41–44," in "Den Armen eine frohe Botschaft": *Festschrift Bishop Franz Kampenhaus*, ed. J. Hainz et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Knecht, 1997), 125–136, at 132.

therefore, we can take our starting point in the text of Mark, which has scarcely modified the tradition that the evangelist has taken over.<sup>66</sup>

### 3.2. *The Historicity of the Episode*

The action (Mark 12:41) and its interpretation (vv. 43b, 44) are so closely inter-related that one can scarcely make any distinction in terms of the history of tradition between the logion of Jesus and its narrative framework.<sup>67</sup> From the perspective of form criticism, Rudolf Pesch has called this episode a “logion narrative.”<sup>68</sup> Others see it as a “biographical apophthegm with the character of an ideal” or an “ideal scene,”<sup>69</sup> a “wandering anecdote” (*Wanderanedote*),<sup>70</sup> or an “exemplary narrative which was freely created to serve a specific purpose.”<sup>71</sup> Emil Wendling holds that the narrative goes back to a story which Jesus himself told by way of instruction.<sup>72</sup> When they define its genre, scholars point out that the historical Jesus could scarcely have *known* that the widow had put two small coins into the treasury chest and had thereby given “her whole living.”<sup>73</sup>

Jesus takes his seat *opposite* the treasury chest (γαξοφυλάκιον) in the temple (Mark 12:41). γαξοφυλάκιον is a loanword from Persian, which designates the treasury chamber in the northern part of the Court of the Women in the temple (Josephus, *War* 5.200; *Ant.* 19.294) with its thirteen treasury chests shaped like trumpets (*m. Shek* 6.5). Seven of these were for fixed contributions, five for specific purposes,

<sup>66</sup> Cf. e.g. Trocmé, *Marc*, 316.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Ernst, *Markus*, 364.

<sup>68</sup> Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 261.

<sup>69</sup> Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 32–33; Trocmé, *Marc*, 316; Gnlika, *Markus* 2, 176; Walter Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Markus. Kapitel 9,2–16,18*, ÖTK 2.2–GTB 504 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1979), 553.

<sup>70</sup> Emanuel Hirsch, *Frühgeschichte des Evangeliums 1: Das Werden des Markus-Evangeliums*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1951), 137; a similar position is taken by Schmithals, *Markus*, 552: “a floating narrative” (*Wandererzählung*).

<sup>71</sup> Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 266; Eduard Schweizer, *Markus*, 142.

<sup>72</sup> Wendling, *Entstehung*, 154.

<sup>73</sup> This suggestion has recently been reprinted by Gerd Theissen, “Die Witwe als Wohltäterin: Beobachtungen zum urchristlichen Sozialethos anhand von Mk 12,41–44,” in *Randfiguren in der Mitte: Festschrift Hermann-Josef Venetz*, ed. M. Küchler and P. Reinl (Lucerne: Edition Exodus, 2003), 171–182, at 181. If Mark 12:41–44 were a fictional text, Theissen can imagine Jesus as its narrator. This would mean that an original exemplary narrative, like the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14), had been turned into an historical narrative. Cf. also Beutler, “Gabe,” 132.



and one for general donations. The γαξοφυλάκιον may however refer to the thirteenth treasury chest for general donations. Since the donors had to inform a priest who stood by each chest the purpose of the donation, and the coins in all the treasury chests had to be checked to see whether they met a number of different criteria, all those present heard how high each donation was.<sup>74</sup> This would explain Jesus' knowledge of the amount the widow had contributed; the silence of Mark's text on this point is no argument against this hypothesis,<sup>75</sup> since it is also possible that the evangelist, or those who handed on the tradition before him, attributed such a knowledge to Jesus.

The public proclamation of the amount of people's contributions made it possible for rich donors to make a show of putting money into the treasury chest (cf. Matt 6:2). This is the background to the present scene.<sup>76</sup> Since the prohibition against sitting in the sanctuary is not yet attested for the period of Jesus' lifetime,<sup>77</sup> it is certainly historically possible that he sat in the Court of the Women—a posture that displays his role as teacher.<sup>78</sup> And this means that the fact that it was forbidden to sit in the temple does not lead to the conclusion that Mark's introduction is inexact and therefore redactional.<sup>79</sup> It is also historically plausible that many rich persons made large contributions; this need not be an indication of an "ideal" scene.<sup>80</sup>

The pre-Markan tradition already drew a contrast between the widow who was willing to give away all she possessed and the widow who has become the victim of the scribes' creed (v. 40). There is thus no reason to deny that Mark 12:41–44 reflects the recollection of the

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash 2* (München: Beck, 1924), 38. This means (against Ernst, *Markus*, 364) that we need not dismiss such details as historical inaccuracies and attribute them to the community catechesis. Schmithals, *Markus*, 553, suggests that the reference is to the collection which was taken up at the end of Christian worship, but this is extremely unlikely.

<sup>75</sup> As is argued by Lane, *Mark*, 442 n. 83.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Horst Balz, γαξοφυλάκιον, *EWNT I*, 2nd ed. (1992), 556; Thomas Hieke, "Schatzkammer," *NBL III* (2001), 466–467; Evans, *Mark*, 281.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. e.g. Trocmé, *Marc*, 317, and the scholars cited in n. 78 below; against Ernst, *Markus*, 364–367.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 33; cf. *ibid.*, 33–37; Simon Légasse, *L'Évangile de Marc 2*, *LeDiv—commentaires 5* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 771.

<sup>79</sup> Against Ernst, *Markus*, 364–365.

<sup>80</sup> With Ernst, Pesch, *Markus*; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 261.

story of Jesus,<sup>81</sup> especially because (as we shall see) it accords well with Jesus' thinking.

### 3.3. *The Widow's Willingness to Give Everything Away*

In Judaism and the New Testament, the "poor widow" is the embodiment of total destitution and helplessness (cf. Luke 18:3).<sup>82</sup> Since she herself depends on support from others, even the tiniest contribution on her part is surprising. The woman's status as a widow is probably recognizable from her clothing.<sup>83</sup> A *lepton* is the Greek name for the smallest Jewish coin, the *perutha*. The widow gives two *lepta*.<sup>84</sup> Since those for whom he is writing are not familiar with the economic background of the original narrative, Markus informs them that two *lepta* amount to a *quadrans*, the smallest Roman coin.

When Jesus now calls together his disciples (cf. also 6:7; 8:1, 34) in order to instruct them, and his words begin with the solemn introduction: "Amen, I say to you," this fits the situation described in the text. It is at this point that the disciples make their first appearance after the episode of the cursed fig-tree (11:14), and this suggests redactional work on the part of Mark.<sup>85</sup> The solemnity of the introduction is not due to an apocalyptic image of the visionary Jesus, on the pattern of Ethiopic Enoch (*1 Enoch*) 98.6; 103.1–2; 104.1.<sup>86</sup> Rather, it emphasizes the great authority of the following logion of Jesus about the value of the poor widow's gift. She has given more than all the others, i.e. those who are wealthy. There is a clear contrast between the πολλοὶ πλούσιοι . . . πολλά and the μία χίρα πτωχή, which may be underlined by the fact that the text, instead of using the indefinite pronoun τις which the reader would expect,

<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Lane, *Mark*, 442, writes: "The sequence of movement envisioned in Ch. 12:41–13:2 is natural and undoubtedly reflects what happened upon a single occasion." Evans, *Mark*, 281: "But there is no need to imagine any other form or setting than the one presented in Mark."

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Ernst, *Markus*, 365; Kiyoshi Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht und Almosen bei Lukas*, WUNT 2.163 (Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 205.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 45; Gustav Stählin, *ThWNT IX* (1973), 428–454, at 434; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 262; Gundry, *Mark*, 732.

<sup>84</sup> The use of the term λέπτα is not an argument against the historicity of the scene: with Gundry, *Mark*, against Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 266.

<sup>85</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, 732. There is no justification—against Gnllka, *Markus* 2, 176—for the view that Jesus originally addressed the bystanders rather than the disciples; cf. the arguments against this position by Ernst, *Markus*, 365.

<sup>86</sup> Against Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung*, 48; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 261; Gnllka, *Markus* 2, 177; with Ernst, *Markus*, 365.

employs the numerical word μία, thus creating the antithesis between “many” and “one” (vv. 41–42). The fact that the rich give large donations is underlined by the imperfect ἔβαλλον in v. 41, which implies repeated gifts; on the other hand, the aorist ἔβαλλον in v. 42 indicates that the poor widow gives a donation only once. She gives away all that she possesses (v. 44),<sup>87</sup> and it is clear that this constitutes her value in Jesus’ eyes. For the widow’s generous gift does not in the least mean that she is doing to herself what the scribes do to widows, according to Mark 12:40, when they “devour widows’ houses.”<sup>88</sup>

Many New Testament scholars see the point of the narrative in the positive relationship of the widow to God. The motif of love of God is not emphasized, but it certainly lies close at hand, since the widow offers her gift in the temple, with the intention of supporting worship there. Another argument which confirms this interpretation is that Jesus sees all ethical behavior as orientated to God. When the poor widow gives away everything, even her life,<sup>89</sup> she shows that she is “a living example of the carefree attitude which trusts in God’s loving care.”<sup>90</sup> And her action should also be seen as fulfilling the commandment to love one’s neighbor, since Jesus has just taught the double commandment of love of God and one’s neighbor (Mark 12:28–34).<sup>91</sup> Love of neighbor on its own is however not a sufficient motif, since the text does not speak of giving material support to the poor,<sup>92</sup> although it is of course true that love of neighbor, as a primary religious category, is the putting into practice of

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<sup>87</sup> This is pointed out by Camille Focant, *L'évangile selon Marc*, Commentaire biblique: Nouveau Testament 2 (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 474. Against J. Duncan M. Derrett, “The Rich Fool: A Parable of Jesus concerning Inheritance,” in idem, *Studies in the New Testament* 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 99–120, at 105–106, who argues that the widow gave what was superfluous to her needs on that particular day, in order to help others.

<sup>88</sup> With France, *Mark*, 493 n. 112. This is not in the least the natural inference from Mark’s text—against Gundry, *Mark*, 729.

<sup>89</sup> The expression ὅλον τὸν βίον αὐτῆς in v. 44 has a double meaning. Cf. Moloney, *Mark*, 247. It can designate both the material means necessary for the sustenance of life and life itself: “The double meaning is intended, for in doing one she has done the other.” Cf. Elisabeth Struthers Malbon, “The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 589–604, at 596.

<sup>90</sup> Ernst, *Markus*, 366; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 263.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Morna Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St Mark*, BNTC (London: Black, 1991), 296–297.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Gerd Theissen, “Jesusbewegung und charismatische Wertrevolution,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 343–360, at 351; Gundry, *Mark*, 729.

the love of God.<sup>93</sup> The example of the poor widow is proposed to the disciples and to the later Christian community as a model of unshakable trust in God's loving care.<sup>94</sup> Since both the scene as a whole and most of its details are very concrete, there is no reason whatever to accept the hypothesis of an adoption by Christians of a *Wanderanedote* based on parallels which the history of religions posits outside Judaism, or that the story is an illustration of the widespread principle that the gifts of the poor, though small, were valuable.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, there is no support in the text itself<sup>96</sup> for the hypothesis of a competition between church and synagogue about which of the two provided better care for widows.<sup>97</sup>

Since the story of the poor widow agrees with the preaching of Jesus (cf. e.g. Mark 10:23–26),<sup>98</sup> there is no reason not to regard it as a narrative which preserves the memory of the historical Jesus.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, the fact that it was handed down shows that it was significant for the Christian communities, in which the poor certainly outnumbered the rich.

#### 3.4. *Does Jesus Lament the Poor Widow's Behavior?*

There is no doubt that the widow's action is generous. The traditional interpretation, which sees Jesus praising her behavior as exemplary, has been called into question by Addison G. Wright.<sup>100</sup> He infers from

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<sup>93</sup> This is the position taken by Schmithals, *Markus*, 553: the story, as an "example of the service of *love* of one's neighbor," is "ultimately saying something about the quality of faith" (italics original).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Stählin, *χῆρα*, 438; Hans-Joachim Degenhardt, *Lukas—Evangelist der Armen* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1965), 96–97; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 263; Légasse, *Marc*, 774.

<sup>95</sup> With Degenhardt, *Lukas*, 96; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 263; against Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 32–33, who posits dependence on a Buddhist tradition. Similar positions are taken by Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 265–266; Hirsch, *Frühgeschichte*, 137; Schmithals, *Markus 2*, 552.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. also Gundry, *Mark*, 731.

<sup>97</sup> Thus Lührmann, *Markus*, 212.

<sup>98</sup> Thus also Gnllka, *Markus 2*, 178, who however believes that the story cannot be traced back to the historical Jesus.

<sup>99</sup> Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 263 remarks pertinently that no serious objection can be brought against the story from the perspective of tradition criticism. He envisages persons who handed on the tradition in Jerusalem.

<sup>100</sup> Addison G. Wright, "The Widow's Mites—Praise or Lament? A Matter of Context," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 256–265. This interpretation is accepted by Evans, *Mark*, 282; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X–XXIV)*, AB 28B (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985 [below: *Luke 2*]), 1320–1321; Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*

the context of the narrative that Jesus does not praise her conduct, but rather laments it: her action illustrates the dangers of religious institutions. The official religion has led her astray, so that she parts with even the small amount of money she possessed.<sup>101</sup> He supports this interpretation with the following arguments. (1) Jesus does not recommend her behavior, nor does he explicitly exhort his disciples to imitate her. (2) The principle that what counts in a donation is not how much one gives, but rather how little one retains for oneself, is very widespread (cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.33.3; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 4.1,19; Josephus, *Ant.* 6.149).<sup>102</sup> (3) There is no contrast in the text between the divine and the human evaluation. (4) There is no indication that the disciples found it difficult to understand the scene. (5) According to the testimony of Mark's Gospel, Jesus attaches higher value to human distress than to the observance of the commandments of Sabbath or Corban (Mark 2:23–3:6; 5; 7:10–13). (6) Finally, both the preceding context (in which Jesus affirms that the scribes devour the houses of widows)<sup>103</sup> and the immediately following context (in which Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple) offer support for the view that he laments the action of the widow.<sup>104</sup>

Wright emphasizes that he bases his verdict exclusively on the redactional level of the gospel. However, even on this level the arguments are unconvincing, since the widow is portrayed in a positive

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(Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 321; Rasiah S. Sugirtharaja, "The Widow's Mites Revalued," *ET* 103 (1991/1992): 42–43; Légasse, *Marc*, 774–775.

<sup>101</sup> Wright, "Widow," 263.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 45–46; Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1987), 375–376.

<sup>103</sup> Wright, "Widow," 262: "Her religious thinking has accomplished the very thing that the scribes were accused of." Fitzmyer agrees: *Luke* 2, 1321.

<sup>104</sup> Malbon, "Widow," 589–604, discusses Wright's position and seeks to show that this story can be interpreted in at least six different narrative contexts in the Gospel of Mark: (1) the behavior of the scribes (Mark 12:38–40); (2) the theme of the temple, which is announced as early as 11:11, with the story of the fig-tree which Jesus curses (11:12–14, 20–25); (3) the anointing of Jesus by an unnamed woman, at Mark 14:3–9; (4) in general, the position of women in Mark's Gospel; (5) the other women in their relationship to Jesus as teacher; (6) the descriptions of the persons in Mark. Légasse, *Marc*, 774 n. 25, rightly objects: "E. S. Malbon has been inspired by this, but the relationships which one discovers by means of this methodology ought surely to be more than merely artificial."

light.<sup>105</sup> Jesus neither laments nor recommends the widow's behavior: all he does is to compare it with the behavior of the rich. The lack of an exhortation to imitate her proves only that the text is not explicitly parenetic. The principle attested in ancient sources, whereby the one who retains less for himself pays more, is irrelevant here, since Jesus is not following these authors, but is pronouncing his own verdict; and he goes beyond the parallel statements in ancient authors, since the widow retains absolutely nothing—not even a small portion for herself. Since Jesus is pronouncing a judgment on his own authority, the lack of a contrast between human and divine evaluation is irrelevant. When he says: “Amen, I tell you,” he is assuring his hearers that his judgment is correct—all the more so, in that it contradicts an opinion which was widespread among the people. Finally, there is no indication that the widow makes her donation because religious authorities put pressure upon her to do so.<sup>106</sup> On the contrary, she does so voluntarily<sup>107</sup>—she is not bending the law, as others do with regard to the commandment of Corban. It may indeed be true that Jesus ultimately makes the temple and its cult superfluous through his message of salvation,<sup>108</sup> but that is not the point at issue in the present text. Besides this, the fact that Jesus introduces his verdict with the words: “Amen, I tell you,” makes it difficult to read this as a complaint about the widow's action; and this is not affected by the fact that the contrast in the text is between “more” and “less,” rather than between an authentic and an inauthentic gift,<sup>109</sup> since we may surely take it that Jesus does not intend to portray the “more” of the rich as something positive—although nothing in the text suggests that he condemns them for the size of their gifts.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Thus France, *Mark*, 490 n. 1; Witherington, *Mark*, 35 n. 160; Beutler, “Gabe,” 127; cf. also Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 206. On what follows, cf. especially Gundry, *Mark*, 730–731.

<sup>106</sup> However, this is affirmed by Wright, “Widow,” 262: “She has been taught and encouraged by religious leaders to donate as she does, and Jesus condemns the value system that motivates her action.” Fitzmyer agrees: *Luke* 2, 1321.

<sup>107</sup> This is correctly emphasized by France, *Mark*, 493, and Witherington, *Mark*, 335.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Giesen, *Herrschaft Gottes*, 87–91.

<sup>109</sup> This objection is made by Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2, 1321.

<sup>110</sup> Against Moloney, *Mark*, 247: “The condemnation of the scribes, who abuse the widows while parading their religiosity, continues with the wealthy who parade their large sums, in contrast with the poverty of the poor widow.”

### 3.5. *The Poor Widow—a Selfless Benefactress?*

We may therefore conclude that when Jesus makes a distinction between the action of the poor widow and the actions of the rich, he is not rebuking her, but rather praising her and exhorting the disciples to acknowledge what she does.<sup>111</sup> This most likely goes back to the historical kernel of the story;<sup>112</sup> but its position in the Gospel of Mark is certainly the work of the evangelist. We must identify the meaning of the original narrative independently of its context in Mark. Ancient parallels help to clarify and define more closely the way in which it is to be understood. Since these parallels never warn against making sacrifices or gifts, but invariably recommend these, the interpretation in terms of self-exploitation, which Addison G. Wright and other scholars have proposed, cannot be correct.<sup>113</sup> As Gerd Theissen has shown, religious sacrifices<sup>114</sup> and gifts from one person to another<sup>115</sup> were evaluated in classical antiquity with the help of four criteria: (1) the proportionality of the sacrifice or gift; (2) the attitude of the one who offers the sacrifice or makes the gift; (3) the sacrifice or gift as a vicarious gift of one's own self; and (4) the status of the one who makes the sacrifice or gift. The story of the poor widow must be evaluated against the background of the criteria that can be discerned in ancient texts.<sup>116</sup>

The widow gives away all that she possesses at this moment. It follows that her donation is not proportional to her possessions, and therefore breaks the rule of proportionality. Ancient texts offer no parallels to such conduct. In order to underline how exceptional it is, the narrator explicitly states that the widow possesses two *lepta*. In other words, she could at least have kept one of the coins for herself.<sup>117</sup> But this poor widow, who was herself dependent on support from others, does not keep back even the little that she possesses—nor even a part of this sum. The text does not in fact say anything about the intentions or the moral

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. e.g. Lane, *Mark*, 443. On the basis of the context, Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 365, leave open the question whether Jesus praises the widow as a model of generosity or expresses his sympathy with her as a victim of religious exploitation.

<sup>112</sup> This would be true, even in the unlikely case that the narrative goes back to a parable of Jesus.

<sup>113</sup> I agree on this point with Theissen, "Witwe," 172.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. the examples, Theissen, "Witwe," 173–175.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. the examples, Theissen, "Witwe," 175–177.

<sup>116</sup> On what follows, cf. Theissen, "Witwe," 177–178.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Schweizer, *Markus*, 143; Lane, *Mark*, 443; Hooker, *Mark*, 296.

qualities of the widow, but as we have seen, almost all exegetes ascribe good motives to her. The silence in the text invites such interpretations, which assuredly do not run contrary to the view held by the narrator himself. Nevertheless, her motivation must lie in the explicit affirmation that she is giving “her whole life”: her gift expresses the existential gift of her own self, since she parts with her property, which she needs in order to ensure her survival.

Obviously enough, a poor widow is a recipient of benefactions; but through her gift, this widow herself becomes a benefactress. Since the decisive criterion in the evaluation of the ethical quality of a donation is the capacity of the donor, she surpasses the rich, since the large sums they donate amount only to a small portion of their wealth. There is nothing similar to this point in the parallels from the history of religions.

It is striking that the widow’s donation is not called a “sacrifice.” Jesus’ argument is based only on the contrast between superfluity and lack. When he praises her gift, Jesus does not refer to God (as in the parallel texts from classical antiquity): it is not God, but Jesus who pronounces a verdict on the sacrifice in Mark 12. The “Amen” (12:43) shows that he is speaking in the name of God and that his verdict is authoritative.<sup>118</sup> He praises the widow’s gift for transcending the principle of proportionality and sees it as evidence of the gift of her own self. Since Jesus is not the recipient of the gift or sacrifice, he does not himself occupy the place of God.

The widow places her gift in the hands of the priests. In this way, the story occupies an intermediate position “between the parallels which speak of the religious sacrifices made by the poor and the examples of social donations.”<sup>119</sup> According to the traditional religious evaluation of sacrifice, the sacrifices of the poor can be more valuable in God’s sight than those of the rich. This evaluation is also a factor in the logic of the social donation, with the result that the poor, in their capacity as donors, are the equal of the rich; indeed, if they contribute their entire possessions, they are superior to the rich. As benefactors, the poor

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. Theissen, “Witwe,” 178; Klaus Berger, *Die Amen-Worte Jesu*, BZNW 39 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 49.

<sup>119</sup> Theissen, “Witwe,” 179.



acquire a new status. This is not only a question of how God sees them: other people too must be taught to esteem poor benefactors.

But how is the widow to survive, if she gives away everything that she needs for her sustenance? The answer is that she will fast on that day, becoming a model for the praxis of fasting in the context of *diakonia* which is attested at a later date.<sup>120</sup> In classical antiquity, members of the upper class acquired prestige and influence by means of their benefactions. This is applied to the poor widow in Mark 12:41–44. Instead of receiving benefactions, she becomes a benefactress. She is one who acts, not one who receives. Theißen's interpretation misunderstands the original intention of the narrative, but we may assume that those for whom Mark was writing could understand it in this way, thanks to the ideas which were current in their milieu.

### 3.6. *The Poor Widow as a Model for the Disciples of Jesus*

Jesus does not attack wealth, nor the rich as such. He inverts the widespread system of values which sees the size of the donation as more important than the generosity of the donor.<sup>121</sup> When he explains this to his disciples—who doubtless thought in this conventional manner—he is telling them what is important for *them*. By giving away all that she possesses, the poor widow becomes a model and pattern of true discipleship (cf. Mark 1:16–20; 2:13–14),<sup>122</sup> although the following of Jesus is not explicitly mentioned in this passage. This story thus recalls both the negative example of the rich man who was not willing to give up his possessions in order to follow Jesus (Mark 10:21) and the positive example of the disciples who have left everything in order to follow him (10:28).<sup>123</sup> Discipleship demands that one commit oneself to the will of God, which Jesus himself is about to fulfill in his passion.<sup>124</sup> This is why the good news is preached to the poor (Luke 4:18; Luke 7:22 par.

<sup>120</sup> On this, cf. A. Guillaume, *Jeûne et charité dans l'Église latine, des origines au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle en particulier chez saint Léon le Grand* (Paris: Éditions S.O.S., 1954), 21–27.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 489, 493.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. also Lane, *Mark*, 443; Louis Simon, "Le sou de la veuve. Marc 12/41–44," *ETHR* 44 (1969): 115–126; Malbon, "Widow," 595–601; Moloney, *Mark*, 247; Witherington, *Mark*, 335; Beutler, "Gabe," 133; Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 207.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. France, *Mark*, 493.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 287; Moloney, *Mark*, 248.

Matt 11:5).<sup>125</sup> Even more important, however, is the fact that the poor widow, who is dependent on support from others, becomes a benefactress—and one who surpasses the greatest benefactors by means of her gift, small as this is. “The great appreciation of the sacrifices of the poor in God’s eyes leads to a great appreciation of the poor as benefactors of their fellow human beings.”<sup>126</sup> Religious evaluations are applied to social evaluations, thereby laying the foundations for a Christian community of brothers and sisters: now that the quantity of the gift is not the central issue, it is possible to achieve a genuine equality among all the Christians in the community.

In this sense, the poor widow is a model for every person who enters into fellowship with Jesus and must learn that in following Jesus, it is necessary to leave everything,<sup>127</sup> in order to achieve a community of equals. On a secondary level, in the larger context of Mark’s Gospel, this scene can also be related to the confrontation between Jesus and the authorities in Israel, who are characterized not by the undivided gift of self but by an unchecked rapacity<sup>128</sup> which does not promote fellowship, but rather destroys it. However, the main concern is with the disciples, who are to imitate the example of the poor widow and turn to God with all their hearts, in an unlimited act of trust. This means that the present story is not about the option for the poor, but about the option for poverty.

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 7th ed., ThHK 2 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1977), 259; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 264.

<sup>126</sup> Theissen, “Witwe,” 182.

<sup>127</sup> Here, we may agree with Beutler, “Gabe,” (n. 65 above), 132, 134, that the exemplary function of the widow is not restricted to the narrower circle of Jesus’ disciples.

<sup>128</sup> Thus Beutler, 134–136, who sees the widow as “a kind of ideal disciple and at the same time a representative of what was noblest in her people,” since she is the only woman who is praised unreservedly during Jesus’ three visits to the temple. Focant, *Mark*, 474, rightly disputes this interpretation. He sees the words of Jesus as ambivalent: they can be understood both as praise and as a lament (475).

4. "Blessed are you Poor" (Luke 6:20 par. Matt 5:3)—  
"Alas for the Rich" (Luke 6:24)

4.1. *Synoptic Comparison*

In addition to the beatitudes pronounced on the mourners and the hungry, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke both transmit a beatitude concerning the poor. Almost all scholars agree that these macarisms in their original verbal form go back to Jesus himself.<sup>129</sup> Likewise, there is no reason to deny that the longer fourth macarism (Matt 5:11 par. Luke 6:22) goes back to Jesus,<sup>130</sup> especially since all the strata of the gospel sources of the gospel tradition contain warnings that the disciples of Jesus will suffer,<sup>131</sup> and since parallel series in Judaism often close like this, with a longer or more nuanced line which emphasizes the conclusion.<sup>132</sup> The four macarisms were combined no later than the pre-synoptic tradition;<sup>133</sup> three other macarisms (about the "meek," the "pure of heart," and the "peacemakers") which are transmitted only in Matthew are probably the fruit of exegetical work in the pre-Matthean tradition.<sup>134</sup> Matthew forms one further macarism about those who have mercy (5:7).<sup>135</sup> Most scholars trace the

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Klaus Koch, *Was ist Formgeschichte?*, 5th ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989), 50–55; Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 135; Siegfried Schulz, Q: *Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), 78; Giesen, *Handeln*, 84; Merklein, *Die Gottesherrschaft als Handlungsprinzip*, 2nd ed., FzB 34 (Würzburg: Echter, 1981), 50; Hans Weder, *Die "Rede der Reden"* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1985), 40; Werner Stenger, "Die Seligpreisung der Geschmähten (Matt 5,11–12; Luke 6,22–23)," in idem, *Strukturelle Beobachtungen zum Neuen Testament*, NNTS 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 119–153, at 150; Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Matt 1–7)* 5th ed., EKK 1.1 (Düsseldorf: Benziger, 2002), 271; François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas 1*, EKK 3.1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1989), 295; Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 16.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Bovon, *Lukas*, 295; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 553; against Heinz Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium 1*, HTK 3 (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 335–336; Merklein, *Handlungsprinzip*, 50 with n. 23.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie 1* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1971), 230; Bock, *Luke*, 577–578.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*, Jordan Lectures (London: University of London, 1952), 196–201; Bock, *Luke*, 578.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Gerhard Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas. Kap. 1–10*, ÖTK 3.3–GTB 500 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1977), 152; Schürmann, *Lukasevangelium*, 335; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 634–635.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. e.g. Koch, *Formgeschichte*, 53–54.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Bovon, *Lukas*, 295.

shared traditions in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke to Q.<sup>136</sup> Some suppose two different versions of Q (QMatt and QLk).<sup>137</sup> Greater historical reliability is attributed to Luke's version.<sup>138</sup>

The beatitude genre is found in many different cultures.<sup>139</sup> In Israel, we find the cultic and sapiential macarism which promises earthly prosperity. The eschatological macarism, promising future salvation, originated above all in early Jewish apocalyptic (e.g. *Pss. Sol.* 17.44; 18.6–7a). The best definition of the macarism is a congratulatory formula which proclaims present happiness and congratulates the person to whom it is addressed.<sup>140</sup> There can be no doubt about the eschatological character of the macarisms in the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain.

The usual form of a macarism is in the third person, as in Matthew; Luke uses the second person. It is difficult to decide which is original. It is probable that Matthew—or perhaps already a pre-Matthean redaction—has assimilated the macarisms to the customary third person,<sup>141</sup> in

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. *inter alia* Luz, *Matthäus*, 270; Bovon, *Lukas*, 295; Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2, 631; Walter Radl, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas. Kommentar 1: 1:1–9:50* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 370. Hans Theo Wrege, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Bergpredigt*, WUNT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1968), 11, postulates two distinct oral traditions.

<sup>137</sup> Thus e.g. Georg Strecker, *Die Bergpredigt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 10; Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:3–7:27 and Luke 6:20–49*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 43–44; Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 14–15.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. e.g. Schulz, *Q*, 76; Schürmann, *Lukas*, 330; Georg Braumann, “Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Problem der Seligpreisungen Mt v 3–12,” *NovT* 4 (1960): 253–260, at 253–255.

<sup>139</sup> On this, cf. e.g. Friedrich Hauck, μακάριος, κτλ. *ThWNT* IV (1942), 365–367; Georg Bertram, μακάριος, 367–369; William David Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* 1, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 431; Heinz Giesen, “Seligpreisung,” in *Münchener theologisches Wörterbuch* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1997), 329–331; Bock, *Luke*, 571–572; Radl, *Lukas*, 374–376.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalmen* 1, 3rd ed., BKAT XV 1–2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1966), 66; Heinz Giesen, “Heilszusage angesichts der Bedrängnis,” in *idem, Glauben und Handeln* 2, EHS.T 215 (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1983), 71–97, at 73–74; *idem, Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1997), 64–67, esp. 66.

<sup>141</sup> Thus e.g. Josef Schmid, *Matthäus und Lukas*, BSt(F) (Freiburg: Herder, 1930), 216; Hubert Frankemölle, “Die Makarismen (Matt 5,1–12; Luke 6,20–23),” *BZ* 15 (1971): 52–75, at 63; against Bultmann, *Geschichte*, 114; Dupont, *Les Béatitudes 1: Le Problème Littéraire*, reprint of 2nd ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1969), 271–272; Schulz, *Q*, 77; Helmut Merklein, *Handlungsprinzip*, 49; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 631–632; Stenger, “Seligpreisung,” 129; Bovon, *Lukas* 1, 297.

order not to restrict them to one particular group of persons, but to keep them open for all who behave accordingly.<sup>142</sup> This makes it more probable that Jesus himself employed the second person.<sup>143</sup> A further supporting argument is the addition of τῷ πνεύματι (Matt 5:3)<sup>144</sup> and διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, as well as the change from βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ to βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (Matt 5:3, 10): these are certainly redactional. Luke twice inserts a vñv into 6:21.<sup>145</sup> Matthew has probably assimilated the sequence of the first two macarisms to Isa 61:1–3; this means that the sequence in Luke is original.<sup>146</sup>

At Luke 6:24–26, four cries of woe form a counterfoil to the four beatitudes. The first three beatitudes promise salvation to those who are “blessed” (vv. 20f.), but those against whom the cries of woe are pronounced will not enjoy this salvation (vv. 24–25), since they have already received their reward. The fourth beatitude and the fourth cry of woe form an antithetical correspondence through the mention of the prophets (v. 23c) and the false prophets (v. 26b). While the first three corresponding pairs concern physical suffering or well-being, the fourth antithetical pair concerns an inner state of mind.<sup>147</sup> Scholars disagree about whether the cries of woe were in Q. Heinz Schürmann is certain of this: he argues that Matthew has omitted them because of the specific intention of his macarisms.<sup>148</sup> However, the cries of woe are probably the creation of Luke’s redaction, which may have been influenced by

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Giesen, *Handeln*, 87–88; a similar position is taken by Radl, *Lukas* 1, 373.

<sup>143</sup> Thus Schmid, *Matthäus*, 216; Frankemölle, “Makarismen,” 63; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 249; Giesen, *Handeln*, 87; Luz, *Matthäus* 1, 270. A different position is taken by Bovon, *Lukas* 1, 297; Bock, *Luke* 1, 573; Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 16–17.

<sup>144</sup> The early church understood the addition “in spirit” in the sense of humility, and this is probably correct. Cf. Jacques Dupont, *Les Béatitudes 3: Les Évangélistes*, rev. ed., ÉB (Paris: Gabalda, 1973), 457–471; Strecker, *Bergpredigt*, 262; Reiser, “Selig,” 464.

<sup>145</sup> On this and other points of difference, cf. the commentaries *ad loc.*

<sup>146</sup> Thus Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 336; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 372. A different position is taken by Dupont, *Béatitudes* 1, 271–272.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Radl, *Lukas* 1, 370.

<sup>148</sup> Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 336, 339–340; cf. Hans-Werner Bartsch, “Feldrede und Bergpredigt,” *ThZ* 16 (1960): 5–18, at 10–11; Frankemölle, “Makarismen,” 64–66; Schneider, *Lukas* 1, 280; Christopher M. Tuckett, “The Beatitudes,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 193–215, at 205. According to Dieter Lührmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle*, WMANT 33 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969), 54, they are traditional, but do not come from Q. A similar position is taken by Vincenzo Petracca, *Gott oder das Geld*, TANZ 39 (Tübingen: Francke, 2003), 69.

material that has been included in the Sermon on the Mount. One argument in favor of Lukan redaction is that the contrast between the poor and the rich is typically Lukan (cf. Luke 1:52–53; 16:29–31) and that the second person fits the Lukan form of the macarisms.<sup>149</sup>

#### 4.2. *The Kingdom of God for the Poor*

During the Sermon on the Plain, the twelve apostles and a great number of Jesus' disciples are present (Luke 6:17), as well as a great crowd of the people (vv. 17, 19) who want to hear Jesus speak and to be healed by him (v. 18). Although these persons are present, however, and hear what he says, Jesus addresses the double sequence of four beatitudes and four cries of woe (vv. 20b–26) to his disciples alone (v. 20a).<sup>150</sup> This is confirmed in v. 27 (cf. 7:1), when Jesus now speaks explicitly (cf. the ἀλλὰ) to “you who hear,” i.e. also<sup>151</sup> (but not exclusively)<sup>152</sup> to the crowd. From this point onward, the Sermon on the Plain is no longer addressed to the disciples alone.<sup>153</sup> Since the fact that the cries of woe are addressed to the disciples demonstrates that there were rich persons among them, the words of Jesus cannot envisage only those who have left everything in order to follow him. In the post-Easter period, these words are addressed to Christians.<sup>154</sup> Who are these “poor” persons

<sup>149</sup> With Dupont, *Béatitudes* 1, 341–342, 344; Edmond Jacquemin, “Les béatitudes selon Luc. Lc 6,17.20–26,” *AsSeign* 37 (1971): 80–91; Bovon, *Lukas* 1, 298; Peter Klein, “Die lukanischen Wehrufe Lk 6,24–26,” *ZNW* 71 (1980): 150–159; Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2, 627; Petracca, *Gott*, 84; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 371–372; against Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, *Glaube und Handeln in der Theologie des Lukas*, GTA 26 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 125–130, 132f.; Ingo Broer, *Die Seligpreisungen der Bergpredigt*, BBB 61 (Königstein-Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), 20–38.

<sup>150</sup> With Wrege, *Bergpredigt*, 3; Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 327; Marshall, *Luke* 2, 257; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 629; Walter E. Pilgrim, *Good News to the Poor* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981), 107; for a similar position, cf. Radl, *Lukas* 1, 366, 377; against Petracca, *Gott*, 80–82.

<sup>151</sup> With Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 14 with n. 5.

<sup>152</sup> Against Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus von Nazareth—Hoffnung der Armen*, UB 639 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978), 91–93; Bartsch, “Feldrede”, 7–8; Paul S. Minear, “Jesus’ Audiences according to Luke,” *NovT* 16 (1974): 81–109, at 104–109.

<sup>153</sup> Against Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 627; Betz, *Sermon*, 574–575, 592. It is absurd to interpret the “poor” as a reference to Israel in its need of salvation: against David Peter Secombe, *Possessions and the Poor in Luke-Acts*, SNTU vol. B.6 (Linz: Prof. DDR. Albert Fuchs, 1982), 88–92.

<sup>154</sup> Thus also Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 325–326; Secombe, *Possessions*, 92–93; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 377.

to whom the kingdom of God belongs? We are not told explicitly, but it is surely not wrong to identify them with those disciples who have abandoned everything in order to follow Jesus.<sup>155</sup> In other words, they are not “poor” in an exclusively material sense.<sup>156</sup> The fact that they are his disciples is demonstrated with particular clarity by the hatred and exclusion which are inflicted on them for the sake of the Son of Man (Luke 6:22).<sup>157</sup> This is in keeping with the widespread societal norms whereby the poor, sinners, the sick, and other groups of persons in society suffer exclusion. Such societal norms are even considered to have their basis in the will of God.<sup>158</sup> Jesus takes exactly the opposite view, since such an exclusion contradicts his image of God. Since it is with him that the rule of God comes, the poor may truly consider themselves blessed—all the more so, in that they always enjoy the special protection of God.<sup>159</sup>

Not only the word *πτωχοί*, but also the antithesis to the *πλούσιοι* in the first cry of woe (v. 26), shows that Jesus declares “blessed” people who are in need. Since those whom he is addressing are his disciples, we cannot exclude the religious accentuation of poverty.<sup>160</sup> The religious connotation of poverty is further strengthened by the fact that the poor are assured that they possess the kingdom of God even now: this is no consolation that points to the future, but an event which is already present<sup>161</sup> and presupposes faith on the part of the human person. As in Jesus’ healings of the sick, the kingdom of God demonstrates its presence even now in the poor (cf. Luke 11:20).<sup>162</sup> Since the next two beatitudes

<sup>155</sup> A similar position is taken by Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus*, 102. Pilgrim, *Poor*, 77, admits that there is an indissoluble link between genuine poverty and discipleship. Against Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 22 n. 58.

<sup>156</sup> Thus also Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 22.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Degenhardt, *Lukas*, 50–51; Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 327; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 378.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 268.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Dupont, *Beatitudes* 3, 669–670; Reiser, “Selig,” 463.

<sup>160</sup> Against Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 17–18. This point is correctly maintained by Karl Heinz Rengstorff, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 16th ed., NTD 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 87; Walter Schmithals, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, ZBK 3.1 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980), 80; Eduard Lohse, “Das Evangelium für die Armen,” *ZNW* 72 (1981): 51–64, at 55–56; Pilgrim, *Poor*, 77; Josef Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 6th ed., RNT (Regensburg: Pustet, 1993), 168.

<sup>161</sup> Thus also Bovon, *Lukas* 1, 300–301; Marshall, *Luke*, 250; Weder, *Rede*, 46; Schottroff and Stegemann, *Jesus*, 100; Bock, *Luke* 1, 572; against Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 18.

<sup>162</sup> On this, cf. Giesen, *Herrschaft Gottes*, 64–80.

promise future salvation, we see that the eschatological process will be completely achieved only in the end-time.<sup>163</sup> The beatitude pronounced on the poor also recalls Jesus' statement at Luke 4:18 that he has been sent by God to preach the good news to the poor (cf. Isa 61:1).<sup>164</sup> A religious accentuation of poverty is also strengthened by the comparison between those on whom blessings are pronounced and the prophets, the representatives of God's will who were treated by the ancestors of the Jews just as the disciples themselves are now being treated by the Jews (Luke 6:23). The second and third beatitudes make explicit Jesus' understanding of poverty. Hunger (v. 21a) is often a consequence of poverty, and can be a synecdoche for the distress a beggar experiences. This is why hunger is frequently coupled in the Bible with thirst (Job 22:7; Ps 107:5; John 6:35; 1 Cor 4:11; Rev 7:16), nakedness (Tob 1:17; 4:16; Job 24:10; Ezek 18:7, 16), homelessness and nakedness (Isa 58:7), and imprisonment (Ps 146:7).<sup>165</sup> Unlike Luke 1:53, the words of Jesus here do not promise that the hungry will be filled with good things: all he promises is that their hunger will cease. God himself will satisfy their hunger: this is expressed by the *passivum divinum* "you will be satisfied." This means that, unlike the blessing pronounced on the poor, the promise to the hungry is not for the present time. Jesus does not promise his disciples heaven on earth. The incipient experience of the rule of God does not preserve them from distress (cf. Rom 8:31–39).

"Those who weep" are people affected by a great distress (cf. e.g. Luke 7:13); weeping can also be a reaction to the experience of hunger.<sup>166</sup> Here too, although this weeping is not religiously motivated, but is the consequence of physical or mental pain,<sup>167</sup> we should not forget that those addressed are disciples of Jesus. This means that we should suppose them to be conscious of their dependence on God and on his mercy.<sup>168</sup> They are told that they will laugh, and the fourth beatitude makes it clear that this will happen here on earth. In the midst of hatred

<sup>163</sup> A similar position is taken by Bock, *Luke* 1, 572.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. also Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco: Word Books, 1982), 67–72; Bock, *Luke* 1, 573–574.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Wrege, *Bergpredigt*, 17; Bock, *Luke* 1, 575; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 380.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Bock, *Luke* 1, 550: "In particular, Luke's order seems to move from a general condition (poor), to a result (hunger), to a response to the result (weeping), to a cause (persecution)."

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Radl, *Lukas* 1, 380.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, κλαίω, κτλ. *ThWNT* III (1938), 721–725, at 722.



and enmity, they are to leap in exuberant joy, because their reward in heaven is great (vv. 22f.). When he assures them of a reward in this present time,<sup>169</sup> Jesus reminds his hearers of the experience of the presence of God's rule and thus of that fellowship with God which Jesus was sent to preach (Luke 4:43); this divine rule will be fully established in the eschatological future. The poor who are declared "blessed" are those who are willing to abandon all that they possess in order to follow Jesus (cf. Luke 14:33).<sup>170</sup>

#### 4.3. "Alas for the Rich!" (Luke 6:24)

The cries of woe are the reverse side of the beatitudes, to which they form an antithesis. The cry of woe against the rich observes that they have already found their consolation in their wealth (v. 24). Their doom is proclaimed, not because they are charged with special acts of injustice, but exclusively because they think only of themselves and enjoy their earthly life to the full, without thinking of the poor (cf. Luke 1:53). The same warning is present in the parable of the rich fool, for whom no further possibility of repentance exists, and the poor Lazarus.<sup>171</sup> Although this text too has no mention of a possibility of repentance,<sup>172</sup> there can be no doubt that the apodictic proclamation of doom has a parenetic accent, just as in the prophets of Israel (cf. Luke 16:28). It is meant to keep the rich from falling victim to a self-assurance which has disastrous consequences (cf. Luke 12:16–21).<sup>173</sup> Luke probably envisages prosperous Christians here.<sup>174</sup> It is possible that the earthly Jesus could

<sup>169</sup> The present dimension of the reward is emphasized by Bock, *Luke* 1, 581; for a different position, cf. Ernst, *Lukas*, 169–170; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 635.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Reiser, "Selig," 464. This is studied in detail by Hans-Josef Klauck, "Die Armut der Jünger in der Sicht des Lukas," in idem, *Gemeinde—Amt— Sakrament* (Würzburg: Echter, 1989), 160–194, at 184–185: "Historically speaking, Jesus confronted only individual persons with the call to follow him. These persons then took upon themselves the consequences, such as abandoning their professional work and leaving the place where they lived." After Easter, "the disciples' following of Jesus becomes the paradigm of all Christian existence." The directives had to be formulated anew to meet this changed situation.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Giesen, "Eigentum," 238–242.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 338; Petracca, *Gott*, 187; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 385.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Dupont, *Béatitudes* 3, 203; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 385.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Stenger, "Seligpreisung," 153; Pilgrim, *Poor*, 163–166; against Schweizer, *Lukas*, 80; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 386.

have proclaimed this cry of woe against the rich (v. 24),<sup>175</sup> since it is indisputable that he had adherents among the rich too (Luke 8:3; 19:2).<sup>176</sup> According to vv. 22–23, Christians are blessed because they are rejected by the people among whom they live; but a cry of woe is pronounced against the rich when they are praised by everyone. This means that we can dismiss the suggestion that the cries of woe are directed either to the crowd or to particular persons close to the group of disciples who had accepted the message of Jesus.<sup>177</sup> Even less convincing are suggestions that Jesus addresses the cry of woe to persons who are not even present at the scene,<sup>178</sup> e.g. persecutors,<sup>179</sup> scribes,<sup>180</sup> or rich Jewish enemies.<sup>181</sup> Nothing indicates a change of addressees before v. 27.<sup>182</sup>

In an antithetical analogy to the poor, the rich are characterized as persons who are now full and now laugh (v. 25); but their present state will turn into the opposite, since hunger, mourning, and weeping await them. As we have seen, the fourth cry of woe is also addressed to Christians: if everyone speaks (only) well of them, then they resemble, not the prophets (Luke 6:23), but the false prophets who tell people what they want to hear and seek to curry favor by what they say, instead of proclaiming the word of God (cf. Jer 5:12–14; Mic 2:11; etc.).<sup>183</sup> It is easy for false prophets to win the people over to their side (cf. 1 Kgs 22:26–28; Isa 28:7–9; Jer 5:31; etc.), but true prophets are rejected (Luke 6:23; cf. LXX Jer 6:13; 33:7–8; etc.).<sup>184</sup> Who then is the object of praise in these words of Jesus? Not those who are universally honored and recognized,<sup>185</sup> nor

<sup>175</sup> Thus also Petracca, *Gott*, 80; against Bock, *Luke* 1, 571. According to Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 21 with n. 50, Jesus originally spoke only to the poor.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. also Petracca, *Gott*, 60; Green, *Luke*, 266.

<sup>177</sup> Thus *inter alia* Degenhardt, *Lukas*, 53; Marshall, *Luke*, 255–256; Heinz Schürmann, *Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Evangelien*, KBANT (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968), 303–305; M. Dennis Hamm, *The Beatitudes in Context*, *Zacchaeus Studies* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1990), 41.

<sup>178</sup> Thus Erich Klostermann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, 2nd ed., HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1929), 80; Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 337; Radl, *Lukas* 1, 384.

<sup>179</sup> Thus Dupont, *Béatitudes* 3, 21–40; Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, 5th ed., ThHK 3 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1969), 146; Wolfgang Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas*, ThHK 3 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1987), 133.

<sup>180</sup> Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 340.

<sup>181</sup> Thus Horn, *Glaube*, 134.

<sup>182</sup> Thus also Mineshige, *Besitzverzicht*, 21; cf. Green, *Luke*, 266. See further under 3.1.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Green, *Luke*, 268.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Horst Balz, *πρὸς Ἰωάννην*, *EWNT* III 2nd ed. (1992), 1190–1191, at 1190.

<sup>185</sup> Against Radl, *Lukas* 1, 386; Bock, *Luke* 1, 585.

false teachers.<sup>186</sup> Here, Christians enjoy universal praise for conduct that is clearly false—and this is dangerous. This is why they must be warned, by means of a cry of woe, against letting themselves be praised for bad conduct.<sup>187</sup> Unlike the preceding cries of woe, this text does not speak of a reversal of the present situation in the eschatological future. This is surely not because the Christians are unable to prevent themselves from being praised<sup>188</sup>—for all they would have to do in order to stop this kind of praise would be to live as Christians. The text presupposes that the Christian existence is a stumbling block for outsiders and leads to hatred; and this is emphasized by the fourth beatitude.

Together with the beatitudes, the cries of woe are meant to inspire the wealthy not to be too much attached to their possessions, but to give up their wealth in favor of their neighbor, and above all in order to follow Jesus. If they are not willing to do so, God himself will ensure an equitable distribution.<sup>189</sup>

5. *The Service of God is Incompatible with the Service of Mammon*  
(*Matt 6:24 par. Luke 16:13*)<sup>190</sup>

For Jesus, God and his salvific rule have the highest priority, to the exclusion of everything else. This is expressed in a particularly pointed way in his logion about the service of God and of mammon. Like the logion about the camel and the eye of a needle (Mark 10:25 par. Matt 19:24; Luke 18:25), the relevance of these words cannot be restricted.<sup>191</sup> Since there were in fact slaves in classical antiquity who served a number of masters simultaneously (cf. in the New Testament Acts 16:16, 19), Jesus must have formulated this metaphorical logion in view of its application to two special “masters,” viz. God and mammon. A human

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<sup>186</sup> Against Schürmann, *Lukas* 1, 338–339; Degenhardt, *Lukas*, 53; Ernst, *Lukas*, 170; Wiefel, *Lukas*, 132–133.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke* 2, 637: “The Lukan Jesus warns that a widespread good reputation can be a deceptive goal in life for a Christian.” Cf. also Pilgrim, *Poor*, 105; Petracca, *Gott*, 84; Nolland, *Lukas* 1, 290; Bovon, *Lukas*, 305.

<sup>188</sup> Against Schneider, *Lukas* 1, 153.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Petracca, *Gott*, 85.

<sup>190</sup> On what follows, cf. Giesen, “Eigentum,” 233–234.

<sup>191</sup> According to Josef Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 5th ed., RNT 1 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1965), 140, this logion of Jesus is “one of the weightiest words anywhere in the Gospel.”

being finds it very difficult to serve two masters in the same way, if these masters are fundamentally different: he will love the one and hate the other. The love of the slave is expressed, not so much by a strong emotional affection for his master, but by his reliability in carrying out the tasks that are laid upon him; his hatred is expressed in negligent work. In other words, “hatred” means contempt, and “love” means loyalty.<sup>192</sup> The object of this love or hatred is God or mammon. The Aramaic word “mammon,” meaning property, money, possessions, and profit, is frequently attested in Jewish literature (e.g. Sir 31[34]:8;<sup>193</sup> CD XIV, 20; 1 QS VI, 2). Mammon is not *per se* reprehensible. It must be rejected only when it is personified as an idol, as an alternative to God.<sup>194</sup> This is probably why early Christian literature leaves the word untranslated.<sup>195</sup> With his exhortation to win friends for oneself with the “mammon of unrighteousness” (Luke 16:9), Jesus is telling the rich to use their wealth to remit debts (vv. 5–7) or to distribute it to the needy (vv. 19–31). He thus abandons *a priori* the principles of reciprocal ethics. One who acts in this way is assured of a heavenly reward.<sup>196</sup>

If however a person becomes completely possessed by his own possessions, instead of administering them responsibly (Luke 16:10–12),<sup>197</sup> they usurp the place of God and thereby infringe the first commandment of the decalogue. But one who serves God, the Father who loves unconditionally, becomes his son or daughter (cf. Matt 5:45) and experiences in faith the rule of God even now, although the full realization of this kingdom belongs to the future.<sup>198</sup> The correct service of God consists in the unconditional decision a person takes in favor of God.<sup>199</sup>

<sup>192</sup> Cf. Heinz Giesen, *μισέω*, *EWNT* II, 2nd ed. (1992), 1060–1062, at 1060.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. the quotation in n. 51 above.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Sand, *Matthäus*, 139; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1. *Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–13,58*, HThK 1.1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 243; Heinz Giesen, “Mammon,” *LThK* VI, 3rd ed. (1997), 1256; Reiser, “Selig,” 461; a similar position is taken by Petracca, *Gott*, 170–171.

<sup>195</sup> Thus also Hengel, *Eigentum*, 32.

<sup>196</sup> For further details, cf. Giesen, “Eigentum,” 234–236; cf. also Petracca, *Gott*, 169.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Giesen, “Eigentum,” 237–238.

<sup>198</sup> The correct attitude to property is motivated by the proximity of the kingdom of God, not by the imminent end of the world—against Schulz, *Q*, 460–461. On the imminent expectation, cf. Giesen, *Herrschaft Gottes*, 80–86.

<sup>199</sup> Thus also Gnilka, *Matthäus* 1, 243.

### 6. *Jesus' Sovereign Position with Regard to Possessions*

The radicalism of Jesus' critique of the rich is unsurpassable. Possessions are positive only when they are at the service of love of one's neighbor, or are given away in order to follow Jesus.<sup>200</sup> Jesus himself, as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), comes from the lower middle classes. His disciples, most of whom come from the same social class (cf. Mark 1:20; 2:14–15; Matt 9:9–10; 10:3), leave everything in order to follow him, an itinerant preacher without possessions.

Jesus' statements about poverty and wealth can be understood only in the context of his message about the rule of God, which liberates people from their slavery to possessions (Matt 6:24–33; Mark 10:28–31; Luke 10:3; etc.) so that they can serve their neighbor.<sup>201</sup> This means that the demand to take the right attitude to property, or to renounce it, is preceded by the gift of a share in God's rule. One who lets himself become a slave to his wealth fails to see the need of his neighbor: his wealth has become the unrighteous mammon, and it is this—not God—that is the determining factor in his life.

Jesus does not offer a theoretical reflection about when it is right to have possessions and when it would be better to distribute these to others. "Rather, he has the same offensive freedom and lack of prejudice in relation to possessions as he has to the powers of the state, the foreign Roman rulers and their Jewish accomplices."<sup>202</sup> Only one who lets himself be set ablaze by the love that is the kingdom of God can understand the radical demand to renounce one's possessions in order to follow Jesus, and to use one's wealth aright in order to help the poor. Jesus does not make a general demand of total renunciation, but he does demand that everyone deal responsibly with wealth.

Jesus' demand that one lend money without reckoning on getting it back (Matt 5:42; Luke 6:30.34) presupposes that one has possessions. The chief tax collector Zacchaeus is not required to renounce all his possessions (Luke 19:8–9). Jesus has no qualms about accepting rich men's invitations to banquets (Luke 7:36–38; etc.). Well-off women support him (Luke 8:2–3). He and his disciples do not fast, since this is inappropriate to the messianic age of salvation (Mark 2:18–22).

<sup>200</sup> On what follows, cf. especially Giesen, "Eigentum," 242–244.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Heinz Giesen, "Armenhilfe," *LThK* I, 3rd ed. (1993), 998–999, at 998.

<sup>202</sup> Hengel, *Eigentum*, 37.

He is mocked as a glutton and a drunkard (Matt 11:19/Luke 7:34). Without societal criticism, his parables often reflect the societal situation in Galilee with its great landowners, administrators of property, and tenant farmers. In his parables, he makes use of the social background with which his hearers are familiar in order to present vividly his message about the kingdom of God.<sup>203</sup>

Jesus' judgment about poverty and wealth is adopted by the early church. His evaluation is handed on to the Christians as a norm. Luke explicitly confirms this in his Acts of the Apostles, when he exhorts the rich to support the poor members of the community in keeping with their needs (Acts 2:45; 3:11; 4:35; 6:1–4; cf. Rom 12:9; 1 Pet 4:8–11; Jas 2:14–17; etc.).<sup>204</sup> The merciful God himself is the model to be imitated here (Luke 6:36; cf. also Matt 25:31–45). In this context, we should also mention the Pauline collection for the first community in Jerusalem<sup>205</sup> (Gal 2:10; Rom 15:26; 1 Cor 16:1–3; 2 Cor 8–9; Acts 24:17; etc.).<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Cf. Giesen, *Herrschaft Gottes*, 46–53.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. e.g. Giesen, "Almosen," *LThK* I, 3rd ed. (1993), 423–424, at 423.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. e.g. Giesen, "Armenhilfe," 998.

<sup>206</sup> English translation: Brian McNeil.



# THE QUESTION OF THE BAPTISTS' DISCIPLES ON FASTING (MATT 9:14-17; MARK 2:18-22; LUKE 5:33-39)<sup>1</sup>

RAINER RIESNER

## 1. *Redaction or Parallel Traditions?*

### 1.1. *More Dissent than Consensus*

All three synoptics tell the story of a question about the correct fasting praxis, which Jesus answers by means of several metaphors. There is widespread consensus about at least one problem of the pericope: the so-called “fasting question” is not one uniform tradition, but is a combination of at least two independent traditions. Jesus replies to the accusation that his disciples do not fast by means of a metaphor that contains a strong contrast: at a wedding, the friends of the bridegroom do not fast. But the joy of a wedding turns into mourning when the bridegroom dies (Matt 9:14-15/Mark 2:18-20/Luke 5:33-35). It is not possible, either in a genuine or in a fictitious conversational situation, for such a prediction of suffering to be followed immediately by metaphors of a garment and of wine, which are appropriate to a joyful feast rather than to a death (Matt 9:16-17/Mark 2:21-22/Luke 5:36-39). There is less scholarly agreement about whether these texts formed part of a pre-synoptic collection of five disputes (Mark 2:1-3:6/Luke 5:17-6:11).<sup>2</sup> If the two-sources hypothesis is presupposed, one can also make sense of the combination as a Markan creation.<sup>3</sup> A highly controversial question

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<sup>1</sup> This example illustrates my approach to the questions concerning the transmission of the Gospels and the so-called historical Jesus. I have set out the principles involved in “From the Messianic Teacher to the Gospels of Jesus Christ,” in the first volume of this Handbook. Cf. also R. Riesner, “Teacher, Teaching Forms”, in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. C. A. Evans (New York: Routledge, 2008), 624-630. I have presented the substance of the present essay on a number of occasions, e.g. in a guest lecture at the Protestant Faculty of the University of Basle in 1993.

<sup>2</sup> H. W. Kuhn, *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, SUNT 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 61-72; W. Thissen, *Erzählung der Befreiung. Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Mk 2,1-3,6*, FzB 21 (Würzburg: Echter, 1976), 45-257; J. D. G. Dunn, “Mark 2.1-3.6: A Bridge between Jesus and Paul on the Question of the Law,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 395-415.

<sup>3</sup> J. Dewey, “The Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mark 2:1-3:6,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 394-401; J. Kiilunen, *Die Vollmacht im Widerstreit: Untersuchungen zum Werdegang von Mk 2,1-3,6*, AASF 40 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia,



is whether (as most scholars argue) Luke 5:33–39 and Matt 9:14–17 are to be explained as redactional elaborations of Mark 2:18–22, or one must assume the existence of other sources. The answer to this question can also influence the verdict on how much of both traditions goes back to Jesus. J. Ernst calls the fasting question a “pericope which is highly obscure in terms of the history of tradition.”<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2. *Synoptic Phenomena*

The question of sources is complicated by at least three striking factors. (1) A. Ennulat calls “some of the agreements” between Matthew and Luke against Mark 2:18–22 “massive,”<sup>5</sup> and there are in fact no less than four strong minor agreements in the second part of the pericope. One argument against a redactional explanation<sup>6</sup> is that these minor agreements point to an underlying Semitic text (cf. 3.1 below). In the first part of the pericope, the *πολλά* (Matt 9:14b), which is probably original,<sup>7</sup> is a minor agreement which corresponds to the Lukan *πικνά* (Luke 5:33b; cf. Acts 24:26). Besides this, the clauses Mark 2:18a and 2:19b are missing in Luke and Matthew. The “western text” has also deleted the repetition of the rhetorical question at Mark 2:19a as a positive statement in Mark 2:19b. But the omission on two occasions in both Matthew and Luke of probably redactional Markan phrases in such a brief text remains striking.<sup>8</sup> A similar concentration of positive and negative minor agreements also characterizes the entire (pre-)Markan collection.<sup>9</sup> (2) In Matt 9:14–17, we can observe linguistic and formal Semiticisms which go beyond

1985); W. Weiss, *Eine neue Lehre in Vollmacht: Die Streit- und Schulgespräche des Markusevangeliums*, BZNW 52 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 20–25.

<sup>4</sup> *Johannes der Täufer*, BNZW 53 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Die “Minor Agreements,”* WUNT 2.62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 77.

<sup>6</sup> F. Neiryck, *The Minor Agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark*, BETL 37 (Leuven: University Press, 1974), 72–73.

<sup>7</sup> Although *πολλά* is missing in B and  $\aleph^*$ , it is difficult to explain as an addition in C D W L $\aleph^2$ , as is shown precisely by the *πικνά* in  $\aleph^1$ , which goes back to Luke 5:33b. Cf. B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 20. Matthew avoids the adverbial use of *πολλά* which is common in Mark.

<sup>8</sup> The periphrastic imperfect ἦσαν νησεύοντες (Mark 2:18a) is characteristic of Markan usage (V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, 2nd ed. [London: Macmillan, 1966], 62–63). Mark 2:19b is one of his typical duplications (Mark 2:8; 3:7.8, etc.). The construction with ἔχειν is unsemiotic.

<sup>9</sup> Ennulat, *Die “Minor Agreements,”* 58–93, declares all the minor agreements to be pre-Matthean/pre-Lukan redactional work on Mark. On this, see the critical remarks by A. Fuchs, “Bevormundung oder die Arroganz der halben Wahrheit,” *SNTU* 19 (1994): 161–172.

Mark (cf. 4.1 below). (3) It is difficult to explain the specific versions and the special material in Luke 5:33–39 as the redaction of a Markan text by the evangelist (cf. 4.2); for example, the traditional passage about the fasting question (Luke 5:33–35) and the metaphors of the garment and the wine (Luke 5:36–39) are also separated on the formal level by ἔλεγεν δὲ καὶ παραβολὴν πρὸς αὐτούς (Luke 5:36a). Although Luke has assimilated such catena-formulae more or less strongly to his own style, they are typical of his own special tradition (Luke 6:39; 12:16.41; 13:6; 14:7; 15:3; 18:1, 9; 19:11).<sup>10</sup>

### 1.3. *Products of Coincidence, or Influence from Sources?*

After presenting a brilliant analysis of how strongly Mark 2:18–22 is in keeping with the style of the evangelist (“duality,” repeated catchwords, inversions), J. P. Meier goes on to observe: “Once again, we see in Matthew’s and Luke’s redaction the *paradox* . . . : later pruning by redactors who wish to omit material because of their theological or stylistic preferences may result in these redactors *inadvertently* producing a text that *by accident* coincides with the primitive form of the tradition.”<sup>11</sup> Since not every scholar believes in the power of coincidence, the fasting pericope has been discussed in the light of the Griesbach hypothesis,<sup>12</sup> the influence of an Ur-Mark<sup>13</sup> or an Ur-Matthew,<sup>14</sup> a double transmission in Q<sup>15</sup> or the special Lukan tradition,<sup>16</sup> or even of a plurality of sources.<sup>17</sup> Our examination will show that the assumption of Markan

<sup>10</sup> Cf. T. Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas*, SNTSMS 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 107–108.

<sup>11</sup> *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:493–494 n. 178; my italics.

<sup>12</sup> C. S. Mann, *Mark*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 232–236.

<sup>13</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Lucae* (Berlin: Reimer, 1904), 18.

<sup>14</sup> L. Vaganay, *Le problème synoptique* (Paris: Desclée, 1954), 93–94; A. Feuillet, “La controverse sur le jeûne (Mc 2,18–20; Mt 9,14–15; Lc 5,33–35),” *NRT* 90 (1968): 113–136, 252–277.

<sup>15</sup> C. F. Burney, *The Poetry of Our Lord* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925), 140–141; only for Matt 9:15–17/Mark 2:21–22/Luke 5:36–39; E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, 11th ed., KEK 2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951), 61–62; F. Hahn, “Die Bildworte vom neuen Flicken und vom neuen Wein,” *EvTh* 31 (1971): 357–373, at 361–364; W. Schenk, *NovT Sup* 89 (1997): 262–264.

<sup>16</sup> T. Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas*, 105–111; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 222; D. L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, BECNT 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 502–504.

<sup>17</sup> M. É. Boismard, *Synopse des quatre Évangiles en français* (Paris: Cerf, 1980), 113–115; P. Rolland, “Les prédécesseurs de Marc: Les sources présynoptiques de Marc II,18–22 et parallèles,” *RB* 89 (1982): 370–405.

priority does not in fact suffice to give a satisfactory explanation of the phenomena.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. *The Interrupted Wedding (Matt 9:14–15/Mark 2:18–20/ Luke 5:33–35)*

### 2.1. *The Disciples of the Baptist as Questioners*

When Matt 9:14 mentions only disciples of John as questioners, this may be a clarification of the unclear expression καὶ ἔρχονται καὶ λέγουσιν (Mark 2:18b). In that case, however, Matthew would have departed from his redactional tendency (Matt 3:7 diff. Luke 3:7; Matt 12:24 diff. Mark 3:22; etc.) by singling out the disciples of the Baptist rather than the Pharisees from the groups mentioned at Mark 2:18a. In the (pre-)Markan collection of disputes, Pharisees appear as opponents of Jesus both before this passage (Mark 2:16) and after it (Mark 2:24; 3:6). Rudolf Bultmann supposed that an apophthegm (Mark 2:18b–19a) was formed out of a genuine logion of Jesus at a period “when the question of the relationship of the community to the Baptist sect was immediately relevant.”<sup>19</sup> But he too failed to discuss why it is precisely Matthew who then offers the best introduction. Not only critics of the two-sources hypothesis, but also a surprisingly large number of those who accept it,<sup>20</sup> regard the Matthean version as primary in terms both of history and of tradition history. The ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ τῶν Φαρισαίων in Luke 5:33 looks like a secondary addition (cf. Luke 5:10).<sup>21</sup> It is thus possible that the pre-Lukan tradition

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 8–17)*, EKK 1.2 (Zürich: Benziger, 1990), 46.

<sup>19</sup> *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 2nd ed., FRLANT 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931), 17.

<sup>20</sup> Thus e.g. J. Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 225–236; T. A. Burkill, “Should Wedding Guests Fast? A Consideration of Mark 2:18–20,” in *New Light on the Earliest Gospel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 39–47; J. C. O’Neill, “The Sources of the Parables of the Bridegroom and the Wicked Husbandmen,” *JTS* 39 (1988): 485–489 (an unconvincing hypothesis that a logion of the Baptist has been transferred to Jesus); J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 5th ed., EKK 2.1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1989), 112–114; R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, WBC 34A (Dallas: Word, 1989), 115–116; M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, BNTC (London: A. & C. Black 1991), 98. Unconvincingly, J. L. Jones, “References to John the Baptist in the Gospel according to St. Matthew,” *AThR* 41 (1959): 298–302, argues that there is in Matthew a concerted hostility to Baptist circles.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas*, 105–106.

also mentioned only the disciples of the Baptist. There are other indications that this tradition described only a discussion with disciples of John. For example, it is not obvious why Luke should have spoken at 5:33b of their regular prayers (καὶ δεήσεις ποιοῦνται), since this theme plays no further role in the text. It is possible that the use of καὶ to add this further item should be understood as a non-Lukan Semitic parataxis.<sup>22</sup> The additional characterization corresponds to the pre-Lukan tradition at Luke 11:1–4, according to which it was precisely a prayer that distinguished the disciples of Jesus from those of John.<sup>23</sup> In the expression δεήσεις ποιῆσθαι, δεήσεις is derived from the special Lukan tradition (cf. Luke 1:13; 2:37), since Luke otherwise writes προσευχή. Likewise, ἐσθίειν καὶ πινεῖν (Luke 5:33b)—instead of νηστεύειν (Mark 2:18b)—betrays the existence of a non-Markan tradition (cf. Luke 5:30; 7:33–34; 10:7; 12:45; 17:27–28; 22:30); this expression is not found in the Acts of the Apostles, where Luke instead writes φαγεῖν καὶ πιεῖν (Acts 9:9; 23:12.21). A Q tradition expresses the difference between Jesus and the Baptist by means of ἐσθίειν καὶ πινεῖν (Matt 11:18–19/Luke 7:33–34). One possible solution of the problem of sources is that Luke knew the fasting question (Luke 5:33–35) in an additional version which, like Matt 9:14–15, specified that it was disciples of the Baptist who began the debate; Luke then introduced the adherents of the Pharisees from Mark or from a tradition which resembled Mark.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.2. *The Bridegroom and his Friends*

Since the question concerns, not the conduct of Jesus, but that of his disciples, R. Bultmann regarded the situation indicated in Mark 2:18 as unhistorical. With J. Wellhausen, he supposed the projection back into the story of Jesus of a controversy about fasting in the early community. However, not only the answering question (Mark 2:19a, “Can the sons of the bridal chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?”) is in keeping with Jewish teaching praxis; the same is true of the responsibility of the teacher for his pupils.<sup>25</sup> A further indication

<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 247.

<sup>23</sup> The introduction (Luke 11:1) contains several Hebraisms (Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas*, 84–85).

<sup>24</sup> The problematical, but not necessarily false expression (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 13.288–289) οἱ μαθηταὶ τῶν Φαρισαίων (Mark 2:18b; cf. Luke 5:33b) may already be pre-Markan (cf. Matt 22:16).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. D. Daube, “Responsibilities of Master and Disciples in the Gospels,” *NTS* 19 (1972/73): 1–15.

of ancient Palestinian tradition is that “the sons of the bridal chamber” (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος) is the slavish translation of a standard Hebrew expression (בְּנֵי הַחֻפָּה); both the textual transmission (D οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφίου; Vetus Latina *fili sponsi*) and patristic exposition show how incomprehensible this phrase was to Greeks.<sup>26</sup> The “sons of the bridal chamber” are wedding guests (*t.Ber.* 2:10; *j.Suk.* 5 [53a]; *b.Suk.* 25b–26a); these were also designated by the more general expression אֲנָחְיָא (*Lev.R.* 28 [126b]). The context suggests that this term refers above all to the bridegroom’s friends, whose task is to ensure a joyful celebration.<sup>27</sup> One rabbinic affirmation runs: “As the sons of the bridal chamber rejoiced before the bridegroom (אָנְחֵי), so the angels leaped” (*j.Hag* 2 [77a]). The incompatibility of weddings and mourning was proverbial. Phrases such as “like a bridegroom among mourners” (*b.Sabb.* 114a) or “like a mourner among wedding guests” (*b.Nid.* 20a) described crass contradictions.

R. Bultmann held that only Mark 2:19a was a logion of Jesus,<sup>28</sup> but it is difficult to see why this isolated question should have been handed down.<sup>29</sup> Most scholars today regard Jesus’ answering question as genuine, because (unlike Mark 2:19b–20) it does not yet contain any messianic allegory of the bridegroom, but only uses the image of a wedding to speak of the age of salvation. J. Jeremias has been influential here: “Originally, the subordinate clause ἐν ᾧ ὁ νυμφίος μετ’ αὐτῶν ἐστὶν was probably a way of saying: ‘during the wedding’.”<sup>30</sup> However, the passage speaks not only about a wedding, but about the bridegroom and his friends. G.R. Beasley-Murray was right to object: “Jeremias’s interpretation has the effect of turning a statement about *relationships* in the unique situation of the present into an impersonal statement about the nature of *time*. The focus of the saying is not on the gifts of salvation that are inherited in the kingdom (cf. Matt 11:5) but on the privilege of the disciples to enjoy fellowship with their master at his festive table.”<sup>31</sup> J. Wellhausen had already pronounced the following verdict: “Already in [Mark] 2:19, the allegorical meaning shines through (also in the clause *as long as the bridegroom is with them*, rather than

<sup>26</sup> Cf. F. G. Cremer, “Die Söhne des Brautgemachs’ (Mark 2,19 parr) in der griechischen und lateinischen Schrifterklärung,” *BZ* 11 (1967): 246–253.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Str-B 1:500.

<sup>28</sup> *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:446.

<sup>30</sup> *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 49 n. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 140.

during the wedding), and one cannot cut 2:20 away from this.”<sup>32</sup> Nor can one adduce the argument of a breached form in favor of an isolation of Mark 2:18b–19a, if one accepts the claim by W. Schenk that an “elaborate *chreia*” is found in Mark 2:18–20.<sup>33</sup> It might therefore seem more consistent to assume a unitary composition.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, the Semitic stylistic forms of *parallelismus membrorum* and the *qinah* meter, which are recognizable behind the Greek text, argue for the unitary character of Matt 9:15/Mark 2:19–20/Luke 5:34–35, as well as for ancient Palestinian tradition.<sup>35</sup> The following hypothetical text<sup>36</sup> is intended only to display the possibilities:

Can the sóns of the brídál chámber fást  
 when the brídégroom is with thém?  
 But dáy's will cóme when the brídégroom  
 is snátched away from thém,  
 and thén they will fást  
 in thóse dáy's.

The *qinah* with its variation of four beats or three beats with two beats is the rhythm of the lamentation for the dead, where the two last beats imitate the shrill cries of the wailing women. Jesus often employed this meter in order to give an impressive and easily remembered form to utterances of great inner emotion.<sup>37</sup> Antithetic parallelism was also one of his most commonly used rhetorical devices.

Even if we grant that Mark 2:18b–19a is original, the contemporaries of Jesus would still have had to ask who the “bridegroom” was. A. Jülicher<sup>38</sup> denied that Jesus ever employed allegory, and this has led to the verdict that Mark 2:20 is not genuine; but this general verdict

<sup>32</sup> *Das Evangelium Marci* (Berlin: Reimer, 1903), 20.

<sup>33</sup> “Die rhetorische Funktion der Fastenwarnung Mk 2,20,” *NovTSup* 89 (1997): 251–276.

<sup>34</sup> Thus A. Kee, “The Question About Fasting,” *NovT* 11 (1969): 161–173; C. E. Carlston, *The Parables of the Triple Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975), 121–125; M. G. Steinhauser, *Doppelbildworte in den synoptischen Evangelien*, FzB 44 (Würzburg: Echter, 1981), 53–55; W. Schenk, *NovTSup* 89 (1997): 260–276; G. Kern, “Fasten oder feiern?—Eine Frage der Zeit (Vom Bräutigam/Die Fastenfrage) Mk 2,18–20 (Mt 9,14–15/Luke 5,33–35/EvThom 104),” in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. R. Zimmermann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2007), 265–272.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Burney, *The Poetry of Our Lord*, 140–141.

<sup>36</sup> Μὴ δύνασθε . . . ποιῆσαι νηστεύσαι is Lukan (J. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 247). Νηστεύειν in Mark and Luke is preferable to the Matthean πενθεῖν (cf. 2.7). ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις seems particularly redundant and therefore unusual in Luke (cf. 2.6).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie I* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 4th ed., 1988), 35–37.

<sup>38</sup> *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu I/II*, 3rd and 2nd ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1910).

is untenable.<sup>39</sup> Like other Jewish teachers, Jesus too could consciously employ this stylistic device,<sup>40</sup> and he could assume that his audience would understand him, on at least one of the following conditions: (1) if he was using conventionalized metaphors; (2) if there existed a spectrum of images which was known widely or at least to one particular group, and newly formed metaphors were understandable within this spectrum; (3) if the metaphorical meaning could be discerned through a comparison between the situation in question and the interpreting word. Jesus used the metaphor of the bridegroom to defend his disciples. If the questioners made the link between the offensive situation and his reply, then they would have recognized that Jesus clearly wanted to compare his disciples to the friends of a bridegroom—and that only he himself could be this bridegroom.

The Q-tradition mentioned above shows that the pre-Easter discussions concerned not only the beginning of salvation in general terms, but also the position of John and Jesus (Luke 7:31–34; cf. Matt 11:16–19):<sup>41</sup>

- [31] With whom shall I compare the people of this generation,  
and whom do they resemble?
- [32] They are like children who sit in the market place  
and call to one another, saying:  
“We played the flute for you and you did not dance,  
we mourned and you did not weep.”
- [33] For John the Baptist came,  
ate no bread, drank no wine,  
and you say:  
“He has a demon!”
- [34] The Son of Man came,  
ate and drank,  
and you say, “See,  
a man who is a glutton and drunkard,

<sup>39</sup> Cf. H. J. Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten*, 2nd ed., NTA NF 13 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1986), 1–147; C. L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), 29–70; K. Erlemann, *Gleichnisauslegung* (Tübingen: Francke, 1999), 45–50; K. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 1–31, esp. 15–16.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. D. Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzähler Jesus I* (Bern: Lang, 1981); B. H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables* (New York: Paulist, 1989); D. Stern, *Parables in Midrash* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1991), 188–205.

<sup>41</sup> On the question of authenticity, cf. R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer: Eine Untersuchung zum Ursprung der Evangelien-Überlieferung*, 3rd ed., WUNT 2.7 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 332–335; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew II*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 259–265; T. Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, BIS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 205–219.

a friend (φίλος) of tax collectors and sinners.”  
 And wisdom was justified by all her children.

This logion of Jesus has a number of points of contact with the fasting question. His contemporaries regarded the Baptist as a terrifying ascetic. With his disciples, he gave the impression of a mourning cortege. Jesus' adherents, on the other hand, appear on the scene as his friends, and he offers an explicit justification of their joyful behavior: the table fellowship is equated with the presence of the Wisdom of God, who in Prov 9:5 issues the invitation to a festal meal with wine. A wedding is employed explicitly as an image of the age of salvation on the occasion of the fasting question, and it is implied in the logion about the children at play.

### 2.3. *A Jewish Prehistory for the Metaphor of the Messianic Bridegroom?*

We find a wedding as an image of the age of salvation in the later parts of the Book of Isaiah (Isa 49:18; 61:10; 62:5) and in early Jewish writings.<sup>42</sup> One widespread expectation affirmed: “This world is the time of betrothal (קִדּוּמֵי) . . . , the wedding (יְשׁוּבֵי) will be in the days of the Messiah (*Exod.R.* 15:2 [79b]). Early Jewish texts describe the messianic banquet with “wine on the lees well refined” (Isa 25:6) as a wedding feast (*1 En.* 62.14; *m.Abot.* 4:16; *b.B.Bat.* 75a). This means that when Jesus spoke of the age of salvation as a wedding feast, his hearers could certainly grasp his meaning; but scholars dispute whether this also applies to the metaphorical designation of the Messiah as “bridegroom.” R. Zimmermann has made a comprehensive presentation of the imagery of the “wedding” in early Judaism and early Christianity,<sup>43</sup> and has disputed the view, held almost unanimously in the wake of J. Jeremias,<sup>44</sup> that the “bridegroom” was unknown as a designation of the Messiah at the time of Jesus.<sup>45</sup> Jeremias himself later pointed to the text *Pes.R.* 149a,<sup>46</sup> but this is no older than the third or fourth century CE at most:<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Str-B (1926), 1:517–518.

<sup>43</sup> *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, WUNT 2.122) (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 227–258.

<sup>44</sup> “νόμφη, νυμφίος,” *ThWNT* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1942), 4:1092–1099.

<sup>45</sup> *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis* (2001), 258–276. Cf. earlier D. E. Aune, “Bride of Christ,” *ISBE* (1979), 1:546–547.

<sup>46</sup> *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 49 n. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Thus A. Goldberg, *Erlösung durch Leiden: Drei rabbinische Homilien über die Trauernden Zions und den leidenden Messias Efraim (PesR 34.36.37)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978).



Another comment: *As a bridegroom putteth on a priestly diadem [Isa 61:10].* This text teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, will put upon Ephraim, our true Messiah, a garment whose splendor will stream forth from the world's end to the world's end... *And as a bride adorned herself with jewels [Isa 61:19].* Why is the congregation of Israel likened to a bride? To tell you that a bride can be singled out only by her jewels, even so the adversaries of the congregation of Israel can be put to shame only by her merit.<sup>48</sup>

R. Zimmermann attempts to show that the metaphor of the messianic bridegroom is found also in Psalm 45 (LXX 44), in the Targum to Zech 3:1–10, and in variants of the textual tradition of the Targum to the Song of Songs (e.g. *Tg.Cant.* 8:1).<sup>49</sup> In Psalm 45, an epithalamium with links in the history of tradition to Isa 61<sup>50</sup> and to the Song of Songs,<sup>51</sup> the messianic interpretation of the royal bridegroom is not inevitable, but it is possible; indeed, for the post-exilic period, it is in fact probable.<sup>52</sup> The Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:8–9) and the Targum (*Tg.Ps.* 45:3) interpreted it in this way, and there may be traces as early as Qumran (4Q171 IV, 22–27). The Targum to Zechariah speaks of the high priest Joshua as a bridegroom,<sup>53</sup> but he is at most a parallel figure to the Messiah. The further question, viz. how far the Targum traditions go back to the period before 70 CE, remains open. The Targum to the Prophets interprets Isa 61:10 eschatologically,<sup>54</sup> but identifies the speaker as the holy city:

Jerusalem hath said, I will greatly rejoice in the Memra of the Lord; my soul shall exult in the salvation of my God: for he hath clothed me with garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom (כַּרְתֻּנָּא) who is happy in his bride-chamber (בְּגִנוּנִיָּה), and as the high priest (וּכְכֹהֵנָּא רַבָּא) that is adorned with his garments, and as a bride who decks herself with her ornaments.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> W.G. Braude, *Pesiqta rabbati* II (New Haven: ASOR, 1968), 689.

<sup>49</sup> *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, 260–265, 269–273. J. C. O'Neill had already referred to these texts: *JTS* 39 (1988): 485.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. H. J. Kraus, *Psalmen*, BK 15.1 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1960), 494.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. R. Tournay, "Les affinités du Psaume 45 avec le Cantique des Cantiques et leur interprétation messianique," *VTSup* 11 (1962): 168–212.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. E. Zenger, in F. L. Hossfeld and E. Zenger, *Die Psalmen. Psalm 1–50*, NEB. AT 29 (Würzburg: Echter, 1993), 283.

<sup>53</sup> R. P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 191–192.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. B. D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1987), 118–119.

<sup>55</sup> Text and translation: J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), 204–205.

The addition by the scribes of the “bridal chamber” (cf. *Tg. Joel* 2:16) is interesting in view of Jesus’ metaphor. It is clear that Isa 61:10 could readily suggest this association. If “bridegroom” as a messianic predicate is attested from the post-exilic period in Psalm 45, and is explicitly employed in late rabbinic texts, but is not attested in rabbinic texts from the intervening period, this may be because these metaphors were used by circles that were suspect in the rabbis’ eyes.

Scholars disagree about whether Song 1:7 LXX [⌘] (πρὸς πρὸς τὸν νυμφίον τὸν χριστόν) and the messianic designation of the bridegroom in *Joseph and Asenath* are Christian interpolations. Christian influence has not been demonstrated in the case of the novel, which may come from Essene-Therapeutic circles.<sup>56</sup> The complete Isaiah scroll from Qumran, which very probably interprets Isa 61:10 messianically, was certainly written in the first century BCE. This prophetic text reads:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,  
 my soul shall exult in my God;  
 for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
 as a bridegroom (כַּחַתָּן) who does priestly service (יִבְהֵן)  
 with a headdress (פֶּאֶר).

Since the Masoretic text appears difficult to understand, instead of יִבְהֵן is often conjectured the hiphil of בָּנָה: “who puts on the headdress” (יִבְנֵן).<sup>57</sup> In 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> 61:10, the text reads: “like a bridegroom, like a priest (כַּכַּחַתָּן) in the headdress.”<sup>58</sup> W. H. Brownlee saw here an allusion to the priestly Messiah and noted the significance of this text for Matt 9:15/Mark 2:19–20/Luke 5:34–35.<sup>59</sup> According to J. Gnilya, the Qumran reading is only an attempt to make the difficult text comprehensible; there is no messianic interpretation here.<sup>60</sup> R. Zimmerman however finds here “a discreet allusion to the ‘Messiah of Aaron’,” and justifies this claim by appealing to the eschatological use of the expression “headdress”

<sup>56</sup> Cf. M. Delcor, “Un roman d’amour d’origine thérapeute: Le livre de Josèphe et Asénath,” *BLE* 63 (1962): 3–27.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. C. Westermann, *Das Buch Jesaja. Kap. 40–66*, ATD 19 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 293; for a different view, cf. J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 56–66, AB 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 228.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. M. Burrows, J. C. Trever, and W. H. Brownlee, *The Dead Sea Scrolls of St. Mark’s Monastery I* (New Haven: ASOR, 1950), Plate L.

<sup>59</sup> “Messianic Motifs of Qumran and the New Testament,” *NTS* 3 (1956/57): 195–210, at 205–206.

<sup>60</sup> “‘Bräutigam’—ein spätjüdisches Messiasprädikat?,” *TThZ* 69 (1960): 298–301.

(פִּאֵר—cf. *Tg. Isa.* 28:5).<sup>61</sup> It can also be pointed out that, unlike the fragmentary roll 1QIsa<sup>b</sup>, the copy 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> was consciously edited in keeping with the views of the Qumran community;<sup>62</sup> in this text, it is clear that Isa 52–53 is also understood messianically (cf. 4Q491; 4Q541).<sup>63</sup> Subsequently published texts have shown how important Isa 61 was as an eschatological or even messianic text (cf. 2.6).

#### 2.4. *Did the Baptist Employ the Metaphor of Bride and Bridegroom?*

The Qumran text is particularly noteworthy, because one can still argue that the Baptist had contacts with Essene communities before he received his prophetic call (cf. Luke 1:80).<sup>64</sup> According to the Gospel of John, one of his last logia ran as follows (John 3:29):

He who has the bride is the bridegroom;  
the friend of the bridegroom (φίλος τοῦ νυμφίου),  
who stands there and hears him,  
rejoices (full) of joy at the voice of the bridegroom.  
Therefore this joy of mine is now full.

This statement is clearly related to the synoptic metaphor of the bridegroom and his friends, but John 3:29 was not formed out of synoptic material. Rather, it was taken over from an autonomous tradition,<sup>65</sup> as we see in the un-Johannine, Hebraizing expression χαρῶ χαίρειν (John 3:29b).<sup>66</sup> The use of a dative to intensify the verb is found above all in the Hebraizing special tradition of Luke (Luke 22:15; Acts 5:28; cf. Jas 5:17). Similarly, ὁ ἑστῆκός καὶ ἀκούων corresponds to the Semitic mode of expression (עֲשֵׂה וְשָׂמַע). According to older scholars the Baptist is described as the one who gives the bride away (שִׁוֵּב בָּרַי); in the Mishnah

<sup>61</sup> *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, 268.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. A. van der Kooij, *Die alten Textzeugen des Jesajabuches*, OBO 35 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1980), 81–94.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. M. Hengel (with D. P. Bailey), “The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period,” in *The Suffering Servant*, ed. B. Janowski and P. Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 45–146.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. S. L. Davies, “John the Baptist and Essene Kashrut,” *NTS* 29 (1983): 569–571; O. Betz, “Was John the Baptist an Essene?” in *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. H. Shanks (New York: Random, 1992), 205–214; J. H. Charlesworth, *DSD* 8 (2001): 208–211.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. B. Lindars, “Two Parables in John,” *NTS* 16 (1969/70): 318–329; E. Trocmé, “Jean 3,29 et le thème de l’époux dans la tradition présynoptique,” *RevSR* 69 (1995): 13–18.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 385–386; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 21.

(*m.Sanh.* 3:4), this figure is also called “the friend” (הַאֲוִיבֵּי).<sup>67</sup> Recently this interpretation was challenged by other scholars understanding “friend of the bridegroom” as a designation for an ideal disciple of Jesus (cf. John 15:13–15).<sup>68</sup> Possibly, one should discern between the function of John 3:29 in the theology of the evangelist and an original logion of the Baptist. In such a logion the Jewish marriage custom should still be considered, but even more important is the Old Testament background of the imagery. The “voice of the bridegroom” may be an allusion to the dialogues of the Song of Songs and it is possible that the synoptic metaphor too has in mind the friends of the bridegroom in the Song of Songs (Cant 5:1),<sup>69</sup> whom he invites to a meal (φάγετε, πλησίοι, καὶ πίετε καὶ μεθύσθητε, ἀδελφοί). It is also noteworthy that Psalm 45, the royal wedding song which was interpreted messianically (cf. 2.3), plays an important role in the Gospel of John.<sup>70</sup>

It is not impossible that the Baptist already employed the metaphors of bride and bridegroom to speak of the renewed people of God, as John 3:29 claims.<sup>71</sup> The Baptist understood his mission in terms of Isa 40:3 (קוֹל קוֹרֵא בַּמִּדְבָּר), as a prophetic “voice crying in the wilderness” (Matt 3:3/Mark 1:3/Luke 3:4/John 1:23), and this means that, as the son of a priest and one who had been instructed in scripture,<sup>72</sup> John must have been interested in all those Old Testament texts which speak of the wilderness as an eschatological place. In apocalyptic Judaism, the prophetic words about the wilderness as the ideal bridal period of Israel were

<sup>67</sup> Cf. I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels* II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 213; S. Krauß, *Sanhedrin (Hoher Rat)—Makkōt (Prügelstrafe)*, Die Mischna IV 4/5 (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1933), 130–131; A. van Selms, “The Best Man and the Bride: From Sumer to St. John,” *JNES* 9 (1950): 65–75; M. É. Boismard, “L’ami de l’époux (Jo., III,29),” in *A la rencontre de Dieu* (Le Puy: Mappus, 1961), 289–295.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. M. and R. Zimmermann, “Der Freund des Bräutigams (John 3,29): Deflorations- oder Christuszeuge?” *ZNW* 90 (1999): 123–130; M. Kempter, “La signification eschatologique de Jean 3.29,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 42–59.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. A. Feuillet, *NRT* 90 (1968), 272; idem, “Les épousailles messianiques et les références au Cantique des cantiques dans les évangiles synoptiques I,” *RThom* 84 (1984): 166–211, at 196–197.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. G. Reim, “Jesus as God in the Fourth Gospel: The Old Testament Background,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 158–160.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. B. Witherington, *John’s Wisdom* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 109.

<sup>72</sup> On the scriptural exegesis of the Baptist, cf. R. Bauckham, “The Messianic Interpretation of Isa. 10:34 in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 2 Baruch and the Preaching of John the Baptist,” *DSD* 2 (1995): 202–216.

very much alive and remembered.<sup>73</sup> John may have seen his own task refigured especially in Hos 2:16–18:<sup>74</sup>

- [16] Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
and bring her into the wilderness (הַמִּדְבָּר)  
and speak tenderly to her [the bride Israel].
- [17] And there I will give her her vineyards,  
and make the Valley of Achor a place of hope.  
And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth,  
as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt.
- [18] And in that day, says the Lord, you will call me, “My husband,”  
and no longer will you call me, “My Baal.”

The people of God is portrayed as an unfaithful wife; and the Baptist too saw Israel under judgment (Matt 3:7–10/Luke 3:7–9). When he baptized to the east of the Jordan near Jericho (Mark 1:4–5/Matt 3:4–6), in Batanaea (John 1:28), and in the Gentile Decapolis (John 3:22–24),<sup>75</sup> he had in mind the exodus and the conquest of the promised land.<sup>76</sup> A period of repentance in the wilderness had to precede the eschatologically renewed marriage covenant with God. The Jewish wedding ritual included the bath of the bride before the marriage ceremony (Josephus, *Apion* 1.182; *b. Sabb.* 77b; cf. Eph 5:27). Here, John could have made a connection to his own activity as baptist.<sup>77</sup>

Another prophetic text on which the Baptist, as an eschatological preacher of repentance, may have pondered was the commission of God in Jer 2:2–3a:

- [2] Go and proclaim (וְקִרְאתִי) in the hearing of Jerusalem,  
Thus says the Lord,  
I remember the devotion of your youth,  
your love as a bride,  
how you followed me in the wilderness (בְּמִדְבָּר),  
in a land not sown.
- [3] Israel was holy to the Lord,  
the first fruits of his harvest.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *Die Zeloten*, 2nd ed., AGAJU 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 255–261.

<sup>74</sup> This possibility is suggested by W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, ThHK 2 (Berlin: EVA, 1959), 65–66; A. Feuillet, *NRT* 90 (1968): 132.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *Bethanien jenseits des Jordan: Topographie und Theologie im Johannes-Evangelium*, BAZ 12 (Gießen: Brunnen, 2002).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. also H. Merklein, “Die Umkehrpredigt bei Johannes dem Täufer und Jesus von Nazaret,” in *Studien zu Paulus und Jesus*, WUNT 1.43 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 109–126.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Boismard, “L’ami de l’époux (Jo., III,29),” 294–295.

It is striking how frequently the images of fruit and harvest occur in the few surviving logia of the Baptist (Matt 3:8–10.12/Luke 3:8–9.17); Jeremiah 2 links these metaphors to Israel's period as a bride in the wilderness. Especially near to the language and imagery of John 3:29 is Jer 33:10–11 (LXX 40:10–11). After the desolation of Jerusalem says the Lord:

- [10] There shall once more be heard (ἀκουσθήσεται)...  
 the voice of mirth  
 and the voice of joy (החמש),  
 the voice of the bridegroom (φωνή νυμφίου)  
 and the voice of the bride.

This happy outlook is closely linked to the messianic promise of “a righteous branch to spring up for David,” who “shall execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jer 33:15).

We shall encounter Isaiah 61–62 below (cf. 3.3). This passage is an important background to the metaphors of clothing and wine, and plays a significant role in the history of the transmission of the fasting question. Isa 61:1 speaks of the mission of a man “on whom the Spirit of the Lord is, because the Lord has anointed (משח) him.” This anointed one is to “bring joy to the mourners in Zion” and take away their “garment of mourning” (Isa 61:3). The age of salvation is depicted as a wedding feast, and both the one anointed with the Spirit (Isa 61:10) and God (Isa 62:5) are compared to a bridegroom. Isaiah 60–62 picks up many motifs from Isaiah 40. For example, this section ends with an exhortation which echoes the words in Isa 40:3 where the Baptist saw his own vocation, and at the same time applies the metaphor of a bride to the renewed Zion (“Sought out, a city not forsaken”: Isa 62:10–12). There is therefore some evidence to suggest that Jesus' metaphor of the bridegroom who is present and then is snatched away was not simply addressed to outsiders, but rather to a group such as that of John's disciples, who were familiar with such metaphors.

### 2.5. *Is the Metaphor of a Wedding Used in Other Baptist Contexts?*

In the first century, the Baptist movement posed a considerable challenge to early Christianity.<sup>78</sup> Some New Testament texts suggest that the metaphors associated with bride and bridegroom played a special

<sup>78</sup> Cf. K. Backhaus, *Die “Jüngerkreise” des Täufers Johannes: Eine Studie zu den religionsgeschichtlichen Ursprüngen des Christentums*, PaThSt 19 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1991).

role in the messianic debates between the two groups.<sup>79</sup> No matter how its authenticity is judged, John 3:29 shows at any rate that both the Johannine tradition and the special Lukan tradition (cf. Luke 3:15) were engaged in debates with Baptist communities who revered their executed master as the Messiah (cf. John 1:6–8.19–28).<sup>80</sup> The fact that a miracle involving wine at a marriage in Cana in Galilee is the first messianic “sign” in the Fourth Gospel (John 2:1–11) is probably connected with these debates: Jesus acts here in place of the bridegroom,<sup>81</sup> and—in contrast to the ascetic Baptist—the wine flows in streams, because the age of salvation is beginning. The Gospel of John also applies Jacob’s blessing of Judah (Gen 49:9–12) to Jesus (John 4:22b; 9:7).<sup>82</sup> Gen 49:11–12 says of the future king from the house of David:

He washes his garments in wine  
and his vesture in the blood of grapes;  
his eyes shall be red with wine...

According to a credible tradition in the early church, the Gospel of John was written in Ephesus (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.8.1–5),<sup>83</sup> where there was also a Baptist group (Acts 19:1–7).

The metaphor of the community as the bride of Christ finds its most extensive articulation in the Letter to the Ephesians, which was probably a circular letter to the communities in the vicinity of Ephesus.<sup>84</sup> The closest parallel to Eph 5:25–32 is the Baptist text at John 3:22–30 (cf. 2.4). It is well known that this letter contains a large number of parallels to Qumran.<sup>85</sup> Another text which brings us near to Ephesus is the Revelation of John (2:1), which contains a prominent description of the perfected community as bride (Rev 19:7, 9, 21:2, 9, 22:17). A great variety

<sup>79</sup> This was already suggested by A. Feuillet, *NRT* 90 (1968): 271; R. A. Batey, *New Testament Nuptial Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 61–66.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. F. Neugebauer, *Die Entstehung des Johannes-Evangeliums*, ATh 1.36 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1968).

<sup>81</sup> Cf. F. M. Braun, *Jean le Théologien III/2: Sa théologie* (Paris: Lecoffre and J. Gabalda, 1972), 99–103.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. O. Betz, “‘To Worship God in Spirit and in Truth’: Reflections on John 4:20–26,” in *Jesus der Messias Israels*, WUNT 1.42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987), 420–438.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM, 1989), 1–23.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 1–7.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. K. G. Kuhn, “The Epistle to the Ephesians in the Light of the Qumran Texts,” in *Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. J. Murphy-O’Connor and J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 115–131; F. Mußner, “Contributions made by Qumran to the Understanding of the Epistle to the Ephesians,” in *ibid.*, 159–178.

of Jewish and Jewish Christian groups competed for influence in western Asia Minor at the end of the first century.<sup>86</sup> Paul too speaks on one occasion of the community as the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2–3). The context points back to pre-Lukan tradition, and the false teachers against whom Paul inveighs may represent an erroneous development from the early circle of the disciples of the apostle John.<sup>87</sup> Paul claimed to have the function vis-à-vis the Corinthians of the one who gives the bride away; and this is the role ascribed to the Baptist at John 3:29. Apollos, who had earlier been a disciple of the Baptist (Acts 18:24–25), also worked in Corinth (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–6:22; 4:6; 16:12; Acts 19:1). According to J. Jeremias, Paul borrowed “the application of the image of νυμφίος to the Savior, which is derived from mythology and was widespread in Hellenism”<sup>88</sup> from Gnostic sources. Simple considerations of chronology make this questionable.<sup>89</sup> It is much more likely that Paul knew these metaphors from the tradition about Jesus, since we may assume with J. Roloff that Paul “possessed a fixed collection of logia of Jesus, which he adduced where necessary (cf. 1 Cor 9:14), and which were so well known in his communities too that he could refer to these logia in his letters.”<sup>90</sup>

## 2.6. *The Bridegroom Who is Snatched Away*

The wedding feast in Jesus’ metaphor has a tragic end: mourning breaks out, because “the bridegroom will be snatched away” (Matt 9:15c/Mark 2:20/Luke 9:35). Clearly, this means that he dies a violent death.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *Essener und Urkirche in Jerusalem*, BAZ 6 (Gießen: Brunnen, 1998), 136–137.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, “Genesis 3,15 in vorlukanischer und johanneischer Tradition,” *SNTU* 29 (2004): 119–178, at 162–164; idem, “Der ‚neue Bund‘ und die Überlieferungsströme im Urchristentum,” in *Jesus als Bote des Heils*, ed. L. Hauser et al., SBB 60 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008), 277–293, at 292–293.

<sup>88</sup> *ThWNT* IV (1942), 1098–1099. J.E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 207, incorrectly asserts that according to J. Jeremias the Gospel of John was the first to apply the metaphor of bridegroom to Jesus.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. J. A. Ziesler, “The Removal of the Bridegroom,” *NTS* 19 (1972/73): 190–194.

<sup>90</sup> *Jesus* (München: C. H. Beck, 2000), 15. Cf. D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); R. Riesner, “Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung,” in *Evangelium—Schriftauslegung—Kirche*, eds J. Ådna et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1997), 346–365; S. Kim, “The Jesus Tradition in Paul,” in *Paul and the New Perspective*, WUNT 1.140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 259–292; D. Häusser, *Christusbekennnis und Jesusüberlieferung bei Paulus*, WUNT 2.210 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).



This is not the only instance in the Jesus tradition of a wedding that is overshadowed by a sad, indeed a violent event. In Matthew's version of the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14), the rebellious guests are punished harshly (Matt 22:7), and the guest without a festal garment is excluded from the feast (Matt 22:11–13). The same happens to the foolish bridesmaids (Matt 25:1–13). Perhaps Jesus' lament at Luke 19:42–44 is occasioned by sadness that the royal bride Zion has rejected the messianic bridegroom.<sup>91</sup> Some scholars believe that the arrest or execution of the Baptist ca. 27/28 CE<sup>92</sup> prompted his disciples to put the question about fasting (cf. 2.7). At any rate, Jesus must assume that the same danger threatened him from Herod Antipas (Luke 13:31–33), and this is why he avoided the cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias. The present position of the fasting question says nothing about its original historical situation. The piece was included for thematic reasons at an early date in a pre-synoptic collection (cf. 4.1). It is clear that, precisely in the period of the "Galilean crisis,"<sup>93</sup> many compared the fate of the Baptist to that of Jesus (Matt 16:13–14/Mark 8:27–28/Luke 9:18–19) and he himself saw John's martyrdom as a presage of his own death (Matt 17:12/Mark 9:12–13). The evangelist too understood Mark 2:20 as a prediction of suffering, since the first decision to eliminate Jesus is taken at Mark 3:6, and Mark 8:32 (καὶ παρρησία τὸν λόγον ἐλάλει) does not exclude the possibility of earlier veiled predictions.

"The bridegroom will be snatched away (ἄπαρθῆ) from them," announces Jesus, clearly employing a *passivum divinum*, in a dramatic phrase. When modern exegetes see here an allusion to the "Servant of the Lord" in Isa 53:8 (cf. Acts 8:33),<sup>94</sup> or deny this,<sup>95</sup> they cite E. Lohmeyer;<sup>96</sup> but he was not the first to propose this view.<sup>97</sup> The most

<sup>91</sup> Cf. W. Grimm and K. Dittert, *Deuterocesaja* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1990), 455.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 41–43.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. F. Mußner, "Gab es eine 'Galiläische Krise'?" in *Jesus von Nazareth im Umfeld Israels und der Urkirche*, WUNT 1.111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 74–85; U. Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments I/1: Geschichte des Wirkens Jesu in Galiläa* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2002), 304–328.

<sup>94</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, CGTC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 110; R. P. Martin, *Mark* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 186–187; W. Eckey, *Das Markusevangelium* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1998), 105.

<sup>95</sup> W. L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, NLC (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1974), 111; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 140 n. 38.

<sup>96</sup> *Das Evangelium des Markus*, KEK 1.2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937), 60.

<sup>97</sup> J. Knabenbauer, *Evangelium secundum S. Marcum*, CSS NT 1.1 (Paris: Lethellieux,

detailed exposition of the supporting arguments has been put forward by A. Feuillet, but his work has gone largely unnoticed.<sup>98</sup>

Isa 53:8 MT	Isa 53:8 LXX
מעצר וממשפט לקח ואת דורו מיישוחח כי נגזר מארץ חיים מפשע עמי נגע למו	ἐν τῇ ταπεινώσει ἡ κρίσις αὐτοῦ ἦρθη· τὴν γενεάν αὐτοῦ τίς διηγῆσεται; ὅτι αἴρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἡ ζωὴ αὐτοῦ, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνομῶν τοῦ λαοῦ μου ἤχθη εἰς θάνατον.

As the Septuagint and 1QIs<sup>a</sup> show, the Masoretic Text is not unproblematic. Originally, the text probably had the following meaning:

By arrest and judgment he was snatched away,  
but who cares about his fate?  
He was cut off from the land of the living  
and put to death because of the crimes of my people.

With the exception of Feuillet, scholars who compare this passage to the logion of Jesus always quote the incorrect translation of Isa 53:8c LXX: “His life was taken away (αἴρεται) from the earth.” But an allusion to the beginning of the verse is more likely: “By arrest and judgment he was snatched away” (Isa 53:8a).<sup>99</sup> The verbal form ἀπαρθῆ (Matt 5:15/Mark 2:20/Luke 5:35) would be a correct translation of מִיַּד חֲקָלָה. The use of the compound form, which is unique in the New Testament, argues against a direct borrowing from the Septuagint. The verb αἴρω does not necessarily imply a violent end,<sup>100</sup> but the context of Isa 53:8 makes it clear that this is the fate awaiting Jesus, who announces a fasting that denotes mourning (cf. 2.7). If all that was meant was the departure of the bridegroom (in the sense that he “removed himself”), the intransitive active form of the verb (which is frequently found in the

1894), 83; H. B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1909), 44.

<sup>98</sup> NRT 90 (1968): 252–259.

<sup>99</sup> חֲקָלָה is employed for the (rather non-violent) “taking away” of the Teacher of Righteousness (CD XIX, 35; XX, 14).

<sup>100</sup> Because of Acts 1:9—Jesus “was raised up” (ἐπήρθη)—some scholars think that a rapture into heaven is meant here: cf. especially U. Mell, *ThZ* 52 (1966): 7–8. Cf. the critical remarks by Zimmermann, *Geschlechtermetaphorik und Gottesverhältnis*, 298–299.

Septuagint) would have been the obvious form to use, not the exceptional passive form.<sup>101</sup>

Those who believe for other reasons that Jesus interpreted his impending death as the suffering of the Servant of the Lord from Isa 53 (Mark 10:45; 14:23–24 and parallels)<sup>102</sup> will not wish to exclude the possibility that the messianic metaphor of the bridegroom contains an allusion to this. Jesus identified himself with the “one anointed with the Spirit” (Isa 61:1–3; see below), and most modern scholars see this “one anointed with the Spirit” as the speaker in Isa 61:10, a text that was already interpreted messianically at that period.<sup>103</sup> Jesus saw both the anointed liberator (Isa 61) and the Servant of the Lord (Isa 53) as models of his own messianic mission. In the metaphor of the interrupted wedding, he united the metaphors associated with a wedding (Isa 61:10) and the prediction of suffering (Isa 53:8), because scriptural scholarship in early Judaism read Isa 40–66 as one unit.<sup>104</sup> It may have been significant for Jesus that the metaphors of bride and bridegroom are applied to the renewed Jerusalem at Isa 49:14–21[18] and 54:1–8[5–6], in the immediate vicinity of the second and third Servant Songs. When we read that the Suffering Servant “shall see his offspring” after he is rescued (Isa 53:10), it is clear that he is thought of as a husband.

John 1:29 shows that Isaiah 53 played an important role in the discussions with the Baptist movement—perhaps already before Easter,<sup>105</sup> but at any rate after Easter; and we have evidence that at least Isa 61 played a decisive role for Jesus in this context. A Q-tradition relates the question put by John when he was in prison: is Jesus ὁ ἐρχόμενος (Matt 11:2–3/Luke 7:18–19), i.e. the Messianic Son of Man who is coming to judge the

<sup>101</sup> J. B. Muddiman, “Jesus and Fasting (Mark ii. 18–22),” in *Jésus aux origines de la christologie*, ed. J. Dupont, BETL 40 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1975), 271–281, assumes that the original verbal form was active, but he appeals here for support to the secondary *Gos. Thom.* 104 (cf. 4.3).

<sup>102</sup> Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, “Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” in *The Suffering Servant*, eds. Janowski and Stuhlmacher, 147–162; R. Riesner, “Back to the Historical Jesus through Paul and his School (The Ransom Logion—Mark 10.45; Matthew 20.28),” *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 171–199; U. Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments I/2* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 49–85.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66*, 231.

<sup>104</sup> On the technique of evoking lengthy Old Testament contexts by means of catchwords, cf. R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); J. White, *Die Erstlingsgabe im Neuen Testament*, TANZ 45 (Tübingen: Franke, 2007), 3–12.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. D. B. Sandy, “John the Baptist’s ‘Lamb of God’,” *JETS* 34 (1999): 447–459.

world (Dan 7:13 Theod.: ἐρχόμενος ἦν)? Matt 11:4–6 and Luke 7:22–23 transmit the implicitly affirmative answer in almost identical words:<sup>106</sup>

Go, tell John  
 what you see and hear:  
 the blind see,  
 the lame walk,  
 lepers are cleansed,  
 and the deaf hear,  
 the dead arise,  
 the good news is preached to the poor:  
 and blessed is the one  
 who does not take offense at me.

This list of saving works has a surprising parallel in a Qumran text which was published rather late, 4Q521:

[1] [for the heav]ens and the earth will listen to his anointed one... [5] For the Lord will consider the pious, and call the righteous by name, [6] and his spirit will hover upon the poor, and he will renew the faithful with his strength. [7] For he will honor the pious upon the throne of an eternal kingdom, [8] freeing prisoners, giving sight to the blind, straightening out the twist[ed]... [11] And the Lord will perform marvelous acts such as have not existed, just as he sa[id], [12] [for] he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the poor... (4Q521 2 II, 1, 5–7, 11–12).<sup>107</sup>

The text appears to speak of the priestly and the Davidic Messiahs and of Elijah who will announce their coming.<sup>108</sup> There is disagreement between scholars if the wonders are performed by God or a Messianic figure.<sup>109</sup> The Q logion displays a similar tension, since the working of

<sup>106</sup> For the authenticity, cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:131–137; E. P. Meadors, *Jesus the Messianic Herald of Salvation*, WUNT 2.72 (Tübingen: Siebeck Mohr, 1995), 162–168; J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 447–450.

<sup>107</sup> F. García Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition II* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1045.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. É. Puech, “Une apocalypse messianique (4Q521)”, *RevQ* 15 (1992): 475–519; idem, “Some Remarks on 4Q246 and 4Q521 and Qumran Messianism”, in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Technological Innovations, New Texts, and Reformulated Issues*, ed. D. W. Parry and E. Ulrich (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 545–565; J. Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, WUNT 2.104 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 343–388; A. Falcetta, “The Logion of Matthew 11:5–6 Par.: From Qumran to Abgar,” *RB* 110 (2003): 222–248.

<sup>109</sup> Summaries of the discussion in O. Betz and R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran, and the Vatican* (London: SCM, 1994), 90–93; J. J. Collins, “Jesus, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Qumran-Messianism*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 110–119; D. Zacharias, “Dead Sea Scrolls: Messianic Apocalypse (4Q521),” in *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Evan, 138–140.

God is indicated by the *passiva divina*, but it is Jesus who performs the miracles. The Qumran text and the logion of Jesus agree in interpreting Isa 61:1 as speaking of the final age.<sup>110</sup> The Melchizedek Fragment also understands Isa 61:1–2 eschatologically.<sup>111</sup> When Jesus replies to the messianic question of the Baptist with a summary of saving works which is so similar to Qumran, this can scarcely be explained only on the basis of a common recourse to the Old Testament: it points to a common exegetical tradition. C. A. Evans rightly asks: “One cannot help but wonder if it is more than a coincidence that in replying to an imprisoned and questioning John the Baptist (Matt 11:2–6 = Lk 7:18–23), who may very well have had some contact with members of the Qumran sect, Jesus not only alludes to Scripture that was important to this community (cf. 11QMelch II, 4, 6, 9, 13, 18; 1QH XV, 15; XVIII, 14–15); at points he paraphrases it as they did.”<sup>112</sup> There are some indications that Jesus’ extended family practiced an exposition of scripture reminiscent of that of Qumran.<sup>113</sup>

## 2.7. *Fasting as the Expression of Penance and Mourning*

Already in the Old Testament period, fasting was one of the most common mourning customs (1 Sam 31:13; Jdt 8:6; 1 Macc 1:25–28, etc.). The close link is shown by the first sentence of the Aramaic *megillat ta’anit*, which dates back to before 70 CE: “These are the days on which one is not to fast (לֹא לֵאֲתַעֲנָאָה), and on some of them one is not to

<sup>110</sup> Cf. H. Kvalbein, “The Wonders of the End-Time: Metaphoric Language in 4Q521 and the Interpretation of Matthew 11.5 Par,” *JSP* 18 (1998): 86–110.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. M. P. Miller, “The Function of Isa 61:1–2 in 11Q Melchizedek,” *JBL* 88 (1967): 467–469; É. Puech, *La croyance des esséniens en la vie future* (Paris: Lecoffre and J. Gabalda, 1993), 2:516–561; Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 389–412.

<sup>112</sup> “The Recently Published Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus,” in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans, NTTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 547–565, at 553.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 179–234. There are parallels to 4Q521 2 II, 5 (אֲדִנִי חֲסִידִים יִבְקֶר) in the special Lukan tradition (Luke 1:68, 78; 7:16; Acts 15:14), which was handed on by circles associated with James of Jerusalem and other relatives of the Lord. Cf. R. Riesner, “James’s Speech (Acts 15:13–21), Simeon’s Hymn (Luke 2:29–32), and Luke’s Sources,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*, ed. J. B. Green and M. Turner (Carlisle: Paternoster 1994), 263–278; idem, “Die Emmaus-Erzählung (Lukas 24,13–35),” in *Emmaus in Judäa*, ed. K. H. Fleckenstein, BAZ 11 (Gießen: Brunnen, 2003), 150–207.

mourn (לֹא לְמַסְפָּד).<sup>114</sup> The significance of fasting as an expression of repentance and penance because of guilt vis-à-vis God grew after the exile (Ezra 8:21–23; 2 Chr 20:3; Bar 1:5, etc.), and *a fortiori* after the Maccabean period (2 Macc 13:12; *Pss. Sol.* 3.8; *T. Sim.* 3.4, etc.).<sup>115</sup> Outsiders saw fasting as a typical element in Jewish piety (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.4; Suetonius, *Aug.* 76.3). Indeed, the “fasting scroll” had to specify on which joyful feast days it was forbidden to fast (cf. *Jub.* 50.12–13; CD XIII, 13). Pharisees fasted on two weekdays (Luke 18:12; cf. *b. Taan.* 12a) in vicarious penance, in order to ward off calamity from the people of God (*b. Git.* 56a).<sup>116</sup> Fasting of this kind for “the redemption of Jerusalem” is attested for the New Testament period (Luke 2:26–38). The Qumran Essenes saw their ascetic way of life, which included their meals, as a sign of the eschatological tribulation in which they lived (4QpPs37 III, 2–5). Circles close to the Essenes emphasized the link between fasting and humility before God (*1 En.* 108.7–9; cf. 1QS III, 8; *T. Jud.* 19.2).

Fasting was practiced in the Baptist’s penitential movement (perhaps on the model of Jon 3:5),<sup>117</sup> but Jesus and his disciples attracted notice by the fact that they did not fast.<sup>118</sup> Jesus interpreted his provocative behavior with the help of the metaphor of the bridegroom: one need no longer prepare oneself with fasting for the age of salvation, nor attempt to hasten its coming, because it is already present! The prophet Zechariah expected that the fasting days would then “be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts” (Zech 8:19). According to Jer 33:10–11, when God has mercy on his people, “there shall be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.” Jesus’ linking of the irruption of the age of salvation to his own presence, but without saying

<sup>114</sup> J. A. Fitzmyer and D. J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts*, BibOr 34 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 184.

<sup>115</sup> J. Behm, “νήστους κτλ.,” *ThWNT* IV (1942), 925–935, emphasized one-sidedly the meritoriousness of fasting. For a more balanced view, cf. H. A. Brongers, “Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times,” *OTS* 20 (1977): 1–21; J. F. Wimmer, *Fasting in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist, 1982), 7–30; Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 128–134.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Str-B, 2:241–244; D. Correns, *Taanijot Fastentage*, *Die Mischna* vol. 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 14.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. C. H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (London: SCM, 1964), 139–141.

<sup>118</sup> The references to fasting at Matt 17:21; Mark 9:29 are secondary (Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 35, 85).

this explicitly, is an example of the pre-Easter mode of speech which conceals the messianic secret.<sup>119</sup> A number of scholars have proposed that the arrest or execution of John the Baptist prompted the question about fasting,<sup>120</sup> and this would explain a number of things. The disciples of John must have seen these events as the sign of an intensified apocalyptic crisis—and nothing would have been more natural than to respond with an intensified fasting, in keeping with Joel 2:12–16:

- [12] “Yet even now,” says the Lord,  
       “return to me with all your heart,  
       with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning . . .  
 [16] Let the bridegroom (ἄνθρωπος, LXX νυμφίος) leave his room,  
       and the bride her chamber.”

If the disciples of the Baptist did indeed follow this passage of scripture, Jesus’ choice of metaphor would have been particularly appropriate, since his answer spoke not only of the present feast, but also of the sudden interruption of the wedding. The lamentation of a bride at the death of her bridegroom illustrates in Joel 1:8, as in intertestamental literature (1 Macc 9:39–41; 3 Macc 1:19; 4:6–8), the contrast between extreme joy and extreme mourning. A particularly close parallel to Jesus’ metaphor is found in *4 Ezra* 9.38–10.4. Here, a widow who is identified with Zion says: “But it happened that when my son entered his wedding chamber, he fell down and died . . . I will neither eat nor drink, but without ceasing mourn and fast until I die” (*4 Ezra* 10.1, 4).<sup>121</sup> Jeremiah often announces that God will put an end on the day of judgment to the exultation of bridegroom and bride (Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10). Jesus’ choice of metaphor supports the view that ἀπαρθῆ is a *passivum divinum*: it is God who will snatch away the bridegroom from the midst of his friends as they celebrate.

According to Matt 9:15, Jesus’ answering question is not: “Can the sons of the bridal chamber fast (νηστεύειν)” (Mark 2:19; cf. Luke 5:34),

<sup>119</sup> Cf. J. Schniewind, “Messiasgeheimnis und Eschatologie,” in idem, *Nachgelassene Reden und Aufsätze* (Gießen: Brunnen, 1987), 1–13; V. Hampel, *Menschensohn und historischer Jesus* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 101–127; M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 506–525.

<sup>120</sup> A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, 7th ed. (London: Westminster, 1947), 31; Taylor, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, 208; Mann, *Mark*, 232–233.

<sup>121</sup> B. M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 517–559, at 546.

but “mourn (πενθεῖν) while the bridegroom is with them?” J. Jeremias regarded these as variant translations of the Aramaic ܝܬܦܐܠ (Ithpaal of ܦܢܥ),<sup>122</sup> which in the Targumim can mean both “to fast” and “to mourn.”<sup>123</sup> This explanation would be impossible, if the logion had been formulated in Hebrew (cf. 3.1), since the Septuagint never translates פנע as πενθεῖν.<sup>124</sup> At any rate, Matthew’s chosen verb indicates that this fasting of the mourners lies in the future. Similarly, the indicative future νηστεύουσιν at Mark 2:19/Luke 5:34—“they will fast”—is not to be understood in a purely exhortatory sense (i.e., “they ought to fast”). In the Gospel of John, there is a close thematic link (cf. John 17:11) between joy at the bridegroom (John 3:29; cf. 15:11) and mourning at Jesus’ departure (John 16:20–24; cf. 20:11).<sup>125</sup> The prediction at John 16:20–23 is reminiscent of the logion of the children who play at funerals in the version in Luke 7:32 (ἐθρηνήσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἐκλάυσατε), and of the metaphor of the bridegroom who is “snatched away” (ἀπαρθῆ):

- [20] Amen, amen, I say to you,  
 you will weep and lament (κλαύσετε καὶ θρηνήσετε),  
 but the world will rejoice;  
 you will mourn (λυπηθήσεσθε),  
 but your grief will turn into joy...
- [22] So you have grief now,  
 but I will see you again  
 and your hearts will rejoice,  
 and no one will take (αἶρει) your joy from you.
- [23] In that day (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ) you will ask nothing of me...

The metaphor of the sorrow and joy of a woman who gives birth (John 16:21), which is inserted between these words about the reactions of the disciples, is related to a theme of the special Lukan tradition: the community of the disciples is seen as a woman who suffers the death and resurrection of Jesus as the messianic birth pangs, and in

<sup>122</sup> *Th WNT IV* (1942), 1096 n. 1. Like J. Jeremias (*ibid.* n. 42), E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 175, also regarded ἐφ’ ὅσον (Matt 9:15) and ἐν ᾧ (Mark 2:19) as variant translations from Aramaic (ܝܬܦܐܠ). For a contrary view, cf. H. W. Kuhn, *Enderwartung und gegenwärtiges Heil*, SUNT 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 198 n. 6.

<sup>123</sup> This had already been suggested by P. Joüon, “Notes philologiques sur les évangiles,” *RSR* 18 (1928): 345–359, at 345.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. J. Dupont, *Les Béatitudes 3: Les évangélistes* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1973), 552 n. 3.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. R. Infante, *L'amico dello sposo. Giovanni Battista* (Naples: Dehoniane, 1984), 119–148.



this event of giving birth brings the eschatological people of God into the world.<sup>126</sup>

The synoptic evangelists too describe the response of the disciples and adherents of Jesus to his passion as a deep mourning. The disciples are already sad in the upper room (λυπεῖσθαι, Matt 26:22/Mark 14:19). Peter weeps (κλαίω) after his betrayal of Jesus (Matt 26:75/Mark 14:72/Luke 22:61). The “daughters of Jerusalem,” who also represent the holy city (Zion), “lament” (ἐθρήνουν) over Jesus (Luke 23:27). Apart from these three contexts in Luke 7:32; 23:21 and John 16:20, the verb θρηνεῖν never occurs in the New Testament. According to the inauthentic conclusion to Mark, which is closely related to the special Lukan tradition,<sup>127</sup> the disciples “mourned and wept” (πενθοῦσι καὶ κλαίουσιν, Mark 16:10). Mark 2:20 is given a corresponding interpretation in the *Gospel of Peter*, when the disciples look back and relate: “Because of all these things we fasted (ἐνηστεύομεν) and sat there mourning and weeping (πενθοῦντες καὶ κλαίοντες) night and day until the sabbath” (*Ev. Pet.* 2.7 [SC 201, p. 52]). Unlike the Johannine passages, the synoptic metaphor of the “bridegroom who is snatched away” contains no allusion to the resurrection; this too is an indication of a pre-Easter provenance. If the metaphor had been created after Easter, it is extremely difficult to understand (cf. Acts 8:8; 13:52) why the earthly absence of Jesus should have been characterized exclusively as a period of mourning. Clearly, both the synoptic and the Johannine traditions have understood this metaphor as announcing the mourning of Good Friday, not as a justification for post-Easter fasting customs.<sup>128</sup>

## 2.8. *No Etiology of Early Christian Fasting*

The oldest exegesis understood this text surprisingly seldom as a justification for fasting.<sup>129</sup> It was held that the church’s praxis was already

<sup>126</sup> Cf. R. Riesner, *SNTU* 29 (2004): 144–152.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 4th ed., HThK 2.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 2:544–547.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 4th ed., NTD 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1947), 63; D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1972), 176–177; R. H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 185.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. F. G. Cremer, *Die Fastenansage Jesu: Mk 2,20 und Parallelen in der Sicht der patristischen und scholastischen Exegese*, BBB 23 (Bonn: Hanstein, 1965); idem, “Lukanisches Sondergut zum Fastengespräch: Lk 5,33–39 . . .,” *TThZ* 76 (1967): 129–154.

legitimated by the forty days' fast of the Lord (Matt 4:2/Luke 4:2), and one could also appeal to the conduct of the earliest church, as this is described in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 13:2–3; 14:23) and is perhaps presupposed by Paul (2 Cor 6:5; 11:27).<sup>130</sup> It is highly questionable whether, apart from some second-century gnostics (*Gos. Thom.* 6, 14, 104), there were ever any Christians who rejected fasting on principle.<sup>131</sup> The logic of classical form criticism inevitably led scholars to read such a group out of Mark 2:18–20. The weekly fasting can be traced back as far as the end of the first century (*Did.* 8.1); this is probably connected with the old Palestinian-Syrian chronology of the Passion (*Didascalía* 5), according to which Jesus was arrested in the night between Tuesday and Wednesday and was crucified on the Friday.<sup>132</sup> It is not possible to demonstrate any influence from our text on this fasting praxis;<sup>133</sup> at most, one could ask whether the striking singular ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ has some connection with fasting on Good Friday or on Fridays in general.<sup>134</sup> Both of these were common in Rome, where Mark's Gospel was written, at least as early as the second century (Hippolytus, *Traditio Apostolica* 25.1–4); however, when Hermas writes ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἧ νηστεύεις (*Sim.* 5.3.7; SUC 3, pp. 258–259), he refers neither to one particular date nor to Mark 2:20.<sup>135</sup> When he employs the singular, the evangelist may be referring to the historical Good Friday as the day of greatest mourning. The Septuagint uses this phrase for the “day of the

<sup>130</sup> Cf. R. P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, WBC 40 (Waco: Word Books, 1986), 174–175, 380.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. S. G. Hall and J. H. Crehan, “Fasten/Fastentage,” *TRE* XI (1983): 48–59; C. C. Mitchell, “The Practice of Fasting in the New Testament,” *BSac* 147 (1990): 455–469.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. E. Ruckstuhl, “Zur Chronologie der Leidensgeschichte Jesu I,” in *Jesus im Horizont der Evangelien*, SBA 3 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 101–139. D. Stöckl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity*, WUNT 2.163 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 212–218, believes that Jewish Christian groups continued to observe the only obligatory Jewish fast on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–31); cf. Acts 27:9. In that case—as with James the brother of the Lord (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.23,5–6) and the Quartodecimans (5.23.1–25)—this was probably a penitential fast for the conversion of Israel.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. K. T. Schäfer, “... und dann werden sie fasten, an jenem Tage’ (Mark 2,20),” in *Synoptische Studien* (München: Zink, 1954), 124–147.

<sup>134</sup> Thus Kuhn *Ältere Sammlungen im Markusevangelium*, 66–72.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. M. Leutzsch, *Hirt des Hermas*, SUC 3 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche, 1998), 470 n. 52. As R. T. Beckwith has shown (“The Feast of the New Wine and the Question of Fasting,” *ET* 95 [1984]: 334–335), it is impossible to link Mark 2:18–22 with Roman fasting customs in the early third century under bishop Callistus (*Liber Pontificalis* 7 [Duchesne 1:62–63, 141]), as was suggested by G. J. Brooke, “The Feast of the New Wine and the Question of Fasting,” *ET* 95 (1989): 175–176.

Lord,”<sup>136</sup> and Mark 15:3, 38 draws on the attributes of this “day” in its account of the execution of Jesus. In John, the same expression is used for the time of the cross and resurrection (John 14:20; 16:23.26). Even a purely stylistic variation between the plural ἡμέραι at the beginning and the singular at the close is possible (cf. Amos 8:11.13 LXX; Luke 17:22, 24; Heb 8:38–39). In Mark 2:20, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ refers to a *period* which is seen in eschatological terms. Similarly, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ at Luke 5:35 refers not to the time of the church, but to the time between the arrest and the resurrection of Jesus.<sup>137</sup>

In a late writing (*De ieiunio* 2.6; CSEL 20/1, p. 275), Tertullian justifies the annual fast on Good Friday and Holy Saturday with reference to Luke 5:35: *certe in evangelio illos dies ieiunium determinatos putant, in quibus ablatus est sponsus*. In an early writing (*De oratione* 18), he had employed a different argument. The letter of Irenaeus to Victorinus shows that the ecclesial praxis was not subject to any extensive regulation (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 5.24.12). Church orders of the third and fourth centuries justify the two-day paschal feast with reference to the plural ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις of Luke 5:35b (*Didascalia* 5.12.16; Apostolic Constitutions 5.18.2). However, the oldest Greek exegesis explicitly rejected this pericope as a justification for bodily fasting, since νηστεύειν was a metaphor for lacking the presence of the bridegroom (Origen, *In Matthaeum* 9.15; GCS 41, p. 85); and this got at least one aspect of Jesus’ answer right (cf. 2.7). Augustine too underlined that the Lord had not laid down any fixed day for fasting (*Ep.* 36.25). He understood Mark 2:20 and parallels primarily as a prediction of the mourning that would follow the death of Jesus (*Ep.* 36.32).<sup>138</sup> F. G. Cremer judges the situation in the first century as follows: “Just as there was no non-fasting community that could have justified its praxis by an appeal to Jesus’ reply in the reduced form of Mk 2:19a alone, so too a fasting community did not need to invent the sentence at Mk 2:20 in order to defend its praxis.”<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Cf. F. J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 66.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 248; Stein, *Luke*, 185–187.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. F. G. Cremer, *Der Beitrag Augustins zur Auslegung des Fastenstreitgesprächs (Mk 2,18–22 parr)* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1971).

<sup>139</sup> *Die Fastenansage Jesu*, 6.

3. *The Garment and the Wine for the Messianic Banquet*  
(Matt 9:16–17/Mark 2:21–22/Luke 5:36–39)

3.1. *Aramaic or Hebrew?*

J. Jeremias posited an Aramaic basis for the logion about the bridegroom (cf. 2.7), and M. Black posited a similar basis for the metaphor of the old garment.<sup>140</sup> J. Carmignac,<sup>141</sup> P. Rolland,<sup>142</sup> and D. Flusser<sup>143</sup> claim that the original form of the entire pericope about fasting was in Hebrew. The Qumran discoveries have made it clear that some groups spoke a Middle Hebrew, an intermediary form between biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew.<sup>144</sup> An original formulation in Hebrew might be indicated by the supposition that Jesus is addressing Jews who were well acquainted with the scriptures; all the metaphors presuppose the ability to identify Old Testament metaphors and eschatological images. The surest linguistic indicator is the obvious Hebraism οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος in the metaphor of the bridegroom (cf. 2.2). The expression ἐλεύσονται δὲ ἡμέραι imitates the prophetic יָמֵי בָּיִת וְיָמֵי (1 Kgs 2:31; Amos 4:2; Jer 19:6, etc.). In the logia of Jesus, the same or similar forms are found only in the Hebraizing special Lukan tradition (Luke 17:22; 21:6; cf. Luke 19:43; 23:29), where they announce the terror that will precede the day of the Son of Man. When in Matt 9:14 follows an interrogative pronoun with two coordinated clauses, with only the latter containing the actual question, this is a Semiticism.<sup>145</sup> The ἐφ' ὅσον which is attested only in Matthew (Matt 9:15; 25:40, 45) corresponds to the rabbinic לְמַן לְיָמֵי (Gen.R. 9:7 [6d]; MekExod. 17:10 [62a]).<sup>146</sup>

In the metaphor of the old garment, which refers to an outer garment (ἱμάτιον, תְּכָנִיף), the minor agreement ἐπιβάλλειν ἐπιβλημα (Matt 9:16/Luke 5:36) may be derived from the Hebrew phrase תִּלְחָטְמָהּ הִלְחָטְ (m.Kelim 26:2; 28:6). Paronomasia is so common in the logia of Jesus that one can speak here of a typical stylistic device.<sup>147</sup> The verb ἐπιράπτειν, which

<sup>140</sup> *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 94–95, at 133.

<sup>141</sup> “Studies in the Hebrew Background of the Synoptic Gospels,” *ASTI* 7 (1968/69): 64–93.

<sup>142</sup> *RB* 89 (1982): 381–383.

<sup>143</sup> “Mögen Sie etwa lieber neuen Wein?,” in *Entdeckungen im Neuen Testament I* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1987), 107–114.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. J. A. Lund, “The Language of Jesus,” *Mishkan* 17/18 (1992/93): 139–155.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. M. J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, 4th ed. (Paris: Lecoffre and J. Gabalda, 1941), 183.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1929), 312.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 160–185.

is chosen at Mark 2:21, avoids a redundancy which is ugly in Greek; it has no Semitic equivalent. Since there is likewise no Semitic equivalent to ῥάκος ἄγναφος (Matt 9:16a/Mark 2:21a), the adjective may be a secondary explanation:<sup>148</sup> the “unshrunk piece of cloth” shrinks when it is washed, and tears the old cloth at the seams.<sup>149</sup> Luke 5:36 contains a clarifying interpretation (“One will tear the new garment”),<sup>150</sup> but this may preserve a reminiscence of an expression such as ἐπίβλημα καινόν, which has a direct parallel (תִּשְׁרֹף תִּלְוָה) in Mishnaic Hebrew (*m.Kelim* 27:12). The occurrence of πλήρωμα in the sense of “a patch” (i.e., a completing piece) is un-Greek, but it corresponds to the Hebrew אִיִּמָּה or the Aramaic אִיִּמָּה or אִיִּמָּה.<sup>151</sup> In both languages, a play on words (עֲרַךְ/עֲרַךְ) behind χεῖρον σχίσμα would be possible.<sup>152</sup>

The metaphor of the new wine contains three minor agreements which point back to an underlying semitic formulation and therefore cannot be the product of Matthean-Lukan redaction:

Matt 9:17bc	Mark 2:22b	Luke 5:37b–38
καὶ ὁ οἶνος ἐκχεῖται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπόλλυνται· ἀλλὰ βάλλουσιν οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκούς καινοὺς	ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοί, ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκούς καινοὺς	καὶ αὐτὸς ἐκχυθήσεται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ ἀπολούνται· ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκούς καινοὺς βλητέον

<sup>148</sup> We may compare the explanation (not needed by Palestinians) in the parable of the mustard seed: μικρότερον πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων (Matt 13:32/Mark 4:31; not found in Luke 13:19).

<sup>149</sup> Cf. M. G. Steinhauser, “The Patch of Unshrunk Cloth (Mt 9:16),” *ET* 87 (1976): 312–313.

<sup>150</sup> At the same time, the adaptation in terms of contents to Luke 5:37–38 (both the old and the new will be destroyed) means that the formal parallel is abandoned. It is difficult to decide whether this is due to redaction (J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX*, AB 28 [New York: Doubleday 1981], 600–601) or to the influence of the special Lukan source (Schramm, *Der Markus-Stoff bei Lukas*, 108–109). The verb συμφωνήσει in Luke 5:36b may suggest the former (cf. Acts 5:9; 15:15), but (like Luke 5:33, 39) 5:36b offers “a rather clumsy parataxis” (Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20*, 248).

<sup>151</sup> Cf. 1:518.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel*, NovTSup 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 170. The lack of an article before σχίσμα need not be due to Aramaic influence: cf. E. C. Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Marcan Style*, SBLDS 51 (Chico: Scholars, 1981), 110–111.

The impersonal plural βάλλουσιν which occurs twice in Matt 9:17 may be either an Aramaism<sup>153</sup> or a Hebraism.<sup>154</sup> The elliptical formulation ὁ οἶνος ἀπόλλυται καὶ οἱ ἀσκοὶ (Mark 2:22b) cannot be translated back into a Semitic language. Matthew and Luke agree in giving each subject a verb of its own, as an underlying Semitic text would require; they also agree in their choice of verbs (βάλλειν, ἐχκύνειν). Similarly, Mark 2:22b—ἀλλὰ οἶνον νέον εἰς ἀσκοὺς καινοῦς—lacks a verb, contrary to semitic usage.<sup>155</sup> Matt 9:17c with its impersonal plural βάλλουσιν is the closest to Semitic usage; Luke 9:38 presents the only verbal adjective in the New Testament, viz. βλητέον from the same verb. In Luke 5:37, the position of the adjective after the noun with a repeated article (ὁ οἶνος ὁ νέος) could go back to the Hebrew שְׂתִּיבָה לְיַיִן, but the adjective seems rather to disturb the meter (see below). In both metaphors, εἰ δὲ μή after a negative protasis does not correspond to any Semitic original, although the Septuagint occasionally translates the Hebrew יִּפְּ in this way (Num 20:18 LXX, etc.).<sup>156</sup>

In the metaphor of the old wine, which is found only in Luke, the positive χρηστός in Luke 5:39 (instead of the comparative χρηστότερος)<sup>157</sup> is a Semiticism.<sup>158</sup> The participle πίων, like an underlying Hebrew participle (הִתְּשֵׁ), denotes a *habitual* drinking.<sup>159</sup> Accordingly, this metaphor was not formulated by the evangelist, and it is scarcely imaginable that he took it over as an isolated tradition: this logion was probably already attached by means of a catchword to the metaphor of the new wine. The logion is difficult to understand and is indeed open to misunderstanding (as one sees even in modern exegesis),<sup>160</sup> and this may explain why the *traditio triplex* omitted it; in a similar manner, Marcion's influence led codex D and the Vetus Latina to omit this logion. It is however more likely that Luke found at least the sequence of logia Luke

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 126–127.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Flusser, “Mögen Sie etwa lieber neuen Wein?” 113 n. 2.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. R. L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark* (Jerusalem: Dugith, no date [1973]), 93.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. K. Beyer, *Semitische Syntax im Neuen Testament* 1.1, 2nd ed., SUNT 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), 99–100.

<sup>157</sup> Manuscripts of the third (P4) and fourth (B, ⋈) centuries read χρηστός. Most later manuscripts read χρηστότερος.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. J. Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 103. The occurrence of this phenomenon only in logia of Jesus from the special Lukan tradition (Luke 5:29; 9:48; 10:42) argues against a loose Lukan usage: the redactional introduction at Luke 9:46 has μείζων, but the domonical logion at 9:48 has μέγας.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Flusser, “Mögen Sie etwa lieber neuen Wein?”, 109 n. 4.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. J. Dupont, “Vin vieux, vin nouveau,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 286–304.

5:36–39 in his own special tradition.<sup>161</sup> Matt 9:17b offers a summary (καὶ ἀμφοτέροι συντηροῦνται) of the kind attested occasionally in his redactional work (Matt 5:18 diff. Luke 16:17, etc.): the “new wine and new skins” are preserved. This probably refers to the new reality of the rule of God and to the new commandments of Jesus (Matt 5).<sup>162</sup> The fact that nothing in the metaphor of the old garment corresponds to the words about appropriate conduct with regard to the wine and the skins (Matt 9:17c/Mark 22c/Luke 5:38) may point to a parenetic expansion, but F. Hahn correctly observes that “a surplus element . . . at the end of a small collection of logia” is “conceivable.”<sup>163</sup>

### 3.2. *An Original Double Metaphor?*

On the basis of our linguistic and redactional observations, the original form of the metaphors may have looked like this:

No one púts a nów páтч  
 onto an óld gárment;  
 otherwise, the páтч téars away from the gárment  
 and the resúlt is a ríp.  
 They do not pút nów wíne  
 into óld skíns;  
 otherwise, the (nów) wíne búrst the skíns  
 and the wíne is spílt  
 and the skíns destróyed;  
 rather, they pút nów wíne  
 into nów skíns.  
 But<sup>164</sup> no one who drínks óld wíne  
 wánts nów,  
 for he sáys:  
 “The óld is míld!”

It is possible to infer a *qinah* meter with three and two beats in these metaphors of the old garment and the new wine—a meter that fits the drama of the warnings they express—but the metrical structure of

<sup>161</sup> This was already suggested by B. Weiß, *Die Quellen der synoptischen Überlieferung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 232–234; B. S. Easton, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (New York: Scribener’s, 1926), 72–73.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. C. L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 159; D. A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33A (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 224.

<sup>163</sup> *EvTh* 31 (1971): 363.

<sup>164</sup> For the adversative καί, cf. W. Radl, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 334.

the metaphor of the old wine is unclear, possibly because of original independence and/or redactional work by Luke.<sup>165</sup>

Some scholars have proposed that originally, the metaphors of the old garment and the new wine did not belong together, since the former concerns the preservation of what is old and the latter concerns the protection of what is new. However, the motifs of an old garment and wine skins are already linked in Job 13:28 (cf. 3.3). Repairing a garment and filling wine skins were typically female and male activities.<sup>166</sup> Jesus occasionally employed double metaphors and double parables, which were among his favorite modes of speaking,<sup>167</sup> in order to express the same idea in images that were appropriate respectively to the world of men and to the world of women; we find examples in various traditions (Matt 13:31–33/Luke 13:18–21; Matt 24:40–41; Luke 15:4–10). All of this, together with the common reference to Isaiah 61 (cf. 2.2), the broadly similar construction, and the consistent use of the *qinah* meter, indicates that the parables originally belonged together. On the other hand, it is clear that Luke 5:39, which does not fit this form, was added only in the pre-Lukan tradition.

### 3.3. *Secular Parables or Eschatological Metaphors?*

R. Bultmann regarded the metaphors of the garment and the wine as “originally completely secular *meshalim*.”<sup>168</sup> The Jesus Seminar too sees them as “undoubtedly secular proverbs, which may have been put on the lips of Jesus.”<sup>169</sup> Most scholars, however, regard the double metaphor as authentic.<sup>170</sup> The strong contrast between old and new indicates an eschatological significance. J. Jeremias, who otherwise follows the

<sup>165</sup> The difficulty of translating it into Hebrew is demonstrated by F. Delitzsch, מַפְרָי הַבְּרִית הַחֲדָשָׁה (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1954), 11.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. W. Eckey, *Das Lukas-Evangelium I* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 264.

<sup>167</sup> Jeremias, *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 89–91, and Steinhauser, *Doppelbildworte in den synoptischen Evangelien*, 406–408, both consider eleven examples as original (although they disagree about the identification of these examples). I believe that only the combinations in the typically Matthean mode of composition are secondary (Matt 5:13–15; 10:24–25). This means that we have twenty examples in four streams of tradition (the *traditio triplex* and *duplex*, and the special materials in Matthew and in Luke).

<sup>168</sup> *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, 102.

<sup>169</sup> R. W. Funk and R. W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 49.

<sup>170</sup> For the various positions, cf. Backhaus, *Die “Jüngerkreise” des Täufers Johannes*, 149 n. 217.



anti-allegorical approach of A. Jülicher, was happy to be inconsistent here, pointing out that these images could take on a metaphorical significance in Judaism.<sup>171</sup> J. D. M. Derrett has added further comparative material,<sup>172</sup> though this must be evaluated critically. An old garment can symbolize the past (Hos 5:12; Isa 50:9; 51:6, 8; Sir 14:17, etc.), and especially the past of the cosmos (Ps 101:27 LXX; cf. Heb 1:10–12). The fragility of the human person is compared to an old bag and a moth-eaten garment (ὁ παλαιούται ἴσα ἀσκῶ ἢ ὡσπερ ἱμάτιον σητόβρωτον, Job 13:28 LXX). New or bright clothing could symbolize an existence renewed by God (2 *En.* 22.8; *Joseph and Asenath* 14.12–15), and wine could be the symbol of the age of salvation (Gen 49:11–12; Amos 9:13–14; Isa 65:21, etc.).<sup>173</sup> The eschatological festal calendar of the Qumran community included a feast of the new wine (11QMiqd XIX, 14–15; XX, 4–10). Old wine, which was regarded as particularly good in the Old Testament (Isa 25:6), Hellenistic-Roman (Plautus, *Casina* 5–6; Lucian, *De merc. cond.* 26), and Jewish milieus (Sir 9:10; *b.Ber.* 51a), is sometimes employed in the rabbinic literature as a symbol of the doctrine of Torah (*Sof.* 15:6; *m. Abot* 4:27; *S. Ekev* 48 [Finkelstein 111]). The impetuous vigor of the new, fermenting wine was proverbial among both Jews (Job 32:19; cf. *b. Abod. Zar.* 30a) and Romans (Seneca, *Ep.* 83.16).

Like other logia (Matt 5:15; 15:14), the metaphors of the old garment and the new wine speak of an irrational conduct, whereas the metaphor of the old wine speaks of understandable behavior. The principal reason why these insights born of general human experience were understood to be more than simple rules of common sense was that it was *Jesus* who spoke in this way. His contemporaries realized that his intention was to make religious affirmations, and those among his hearers who knew the scriptures could reflect on the metaphors and on their relation to the rest of Jesus' preaching. The modern expositor is in the same situation. The metaphor of the old garment pronounces a judgment on this world, viz. that it cannot be saved by a partial renewal alone. We find the same radicality here as in the metaphor of the tree that no one can "make good" (Matt 12:33). In the metaphorical language of the synoptic gospels, the new garment is a sign of the divinely renewed existence that comes about when people repent. The

<sup>171</sup> *Die Gleichnisse Jesu*, 117–118.

<sup>172</sup> "Modes of Renewal (Mk. 2:21–22)," *EQ* 72 (2000): 3–12.

<sup>173</sup> This is shown in a little-noticed work by P. Lebeau, *Le vin nouveau du royaume*, ML.B 5 (Paris: Desclée, 1966), 33–65.

presence of this metaphor in both the special Matthean and the special Lukan material (Matt 22:11–13; Luke 15:22) points us back to one way in which Jesus spoke.

The metaphor of the new wine shows that the age of salvation which is now breaking in can pose a threat to the old order. This recalls the logion about those who “take the kingdom of God by storm” (Matt 11:12–13/Luke 16:16), which is connected to John the Baptist. The new age of salvation and fidelity to the old interpretation of Torah come into a particularly acute conflict when Jesus eats together with “tax collectors and sinners.” It is not by chance that the pericope about fasting follows the meal in a tax collector’s house in the (pre-)Markan collection (Matt 9:9–13/Mark 2:13–17/Luke 5:27–32). Jesus’ logion affirms that although the new may seem destructive,<sup>174</sup> it is nevertheless a gift of the age of salvation. The image of the old wine from Luke’s special material (Luke 5:39) is sometimes understood as an appeal to show understanding and tolerate what is old;<sup>175</sup> but C. L. Blomberg’s view comes closer to both Jesus and Luke: “It is better to interpret this verse not as a toning down of the force of the parable but as an ironic aside reflecting on the way many of the Jewish leaders actually did react to Jesus.”<sup>176</sup> The one who prefers to stay with the old wine of the customary exegesis of Torah is like the older brother in the parable, who does not go into the house for the meal that celebrates the return of the prodigal son (Luke 15:25–32). This supports the position of those scholars who see the metaphors of garment and wine as a summons to repentance.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Cf. B. H. Branscomb, *The Gospel of Mark*, MNTC (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), 55.

<sup>175</sup> Thus R. S. Good, “Jesus, Protagonist of the Old, in Lk 5:33–39,” *NovT* 25 (1983): 19–36; A. H. Mead, “Old and New Wine: St Luke 5:39,” *ET* 99 (1988): 234–235; J. B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 249–250.

<sup>176</sup> *Interpreting the Parables of Jesus*, 125. J. Flebbe, “Alter und neuer Wein bei Lukas ... Lk 5,39,” *ZNW* 96 (2005): 171–187, goes to great pains to justify the following translation: “Wer gerade neuen Wein trinkt, will keinen neuen” (“One who is drinking new wine at this precise moment does not want any [other] new wine”), but this does not lead to any fundamental alteration in our understanding of the passage.

<sup>177</sup> A. Kee, “The Old Coat and the New Wine: A Parable of Repentance,” *NovT* 12 (1970): 13–21; D. L. Tiede, “Luke 5:29–35,” *Interp* 40 (1986): 58–63; L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina 3 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991), 99–100. Any specific eschatological significance of the logia is denied by M. Leutzsch, “Was passt und was nicht (Vom alten Mantel und vom neuen Wein) Mk 2,21–22 (Mt 9,16–17 / Lk 5,36–39 / EvThom 47,3–5),” in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed Zimmermann, 273–277.

### 3.4. *The Metaphors and the Baptist Movement*

The metaphors of garment and wine can scarcely be related exclusively to Jesus' discussion with the Baptist movement,<sup>178</sup> but they assuredly possessed a particular impressiveness for its members because of the contrast between the Baptist, who wore a garment of camel's hair (Matt 3:4/Mark 1:6) and rejected luxurious clothes (Luke 3:11), and Jesus, who wore an outer garment "woven from top to bottom" (John 19:23) and employed new garments as an image of the age of salvation. Even more striking, in view of the Baptist's abstinence from wine (Luke 1:15)—which he had in common with the Therapeutae (Philo, *Contempl.* 73–74) and perhaps with Qumran<sup>179</sup>—is Jesus' celebratory drinking of wine, which he justified by appeal to the irruption of the kingdom of God. Hosea 2 was probably one of the texts which guided John in his ministry (cf. 2.4), and this text speaks of the time of the wilderness and of repentance as a time without wine (Hos 2:7–11.14); this is why John led a life of abstinence, like the Rechabites (Jer 35:6–7). Hos 2:17–24 proclaims that in the age of salvation, wine will once again flow for Israel (cf. 2.3). Isaiah 61–62, an important text for the discussion between Jesus and John and his disciples, likewise lies behind the images of garment and wine. The messianic messenger of joy brings to "those who mourn in Zion... the oil of gladness instead of a mourning garment" (Isa 61:3), and he is clothed by God "with the garments of salvation... with the robe of righteousness, like a bridegroom" (Isa 61:10). When "the bride Zion" is betrothed to her "(re-)builder" (Isa 62:5), "Those who garner the wine shall drink it in the courts of my sanctuary" (Isa 62:8–9). Some Baptist circles sought a Christological compromise: on the model of Qumran, they declared Jesus to be the Davidic Messiah and John to be

<sup>178</sup> Thus C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London: Nisbet, 1935), 88; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, AB 26 (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 108–109.

<sup>179</sup> The verdict of J. Jeremias still holds good: "The question whether the Essenes drank wine in their daily ritual at meals must remain open" (*Die Abendmahls Worte Jesu*, 4th ed. [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967], 46). The abstinence of the Therapeutae was justified with reference to the regulations for the priestly service in the inner sanctuary (Lev 10:9; Ezek 44:21; Philo, *Contempl.* 74), and this would have been an appropriate motivation in Qumran too. Augustine claims that the Essenes refrained from drinking wine (*Adv. Jov.* 2.14). It is unclear whether תירור at the fellowship meal means unfermented grape juice or wine (1QS VI, 4–6); but it is clear that wine was to be drunk at the messianic meal (1QSa II, 17–21), since it is "mixed" (García Martínez and E. J. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls I*, 102–103) 11QMiqd XIX, 15–15 and XXI, 4–10 likewise refer to the future.

the priestly Messiah who was his superior.<sup>180</sup> When Jesus interpreted Isaiah 61 as referring to himself, he was claiming to be the fulfillment of the expectation of a priestly Messiah. Scholars have for a long time paid too little attention to the role of this factor in the process of the tradition of the gospels.<sup>181</sup>

#### 4. *Tradition and Collection*

##### 4.1. *Jesus, Baptist Circles, and Christian Levites*

One consequence of the form-critical approach is that some scholars read whole epochs of earliest Christianity out of the pericope about fasting. According to M. Waibel, this pericope “can show how in a relatively brief space of time the Jesus tradition underwent large-scale changes.”<sup>182</sup> U. Mell discovers a history of earliest Christian theology from a logion of Jesus that should be interpreted existentially (Mark 2:19a $\alpha$ ) to the theology of Antioch which was freed from the law (Mark 2:14–22b).<sup>183</sup> The link between the image of Jesus which an author presupposes and his proposed historical reconstruction is particularly clear in M. Ebner.<sup>184</sup> As a building laborer, Jesus did not belong to any scribal-apocalyptic tradition, but spoke of the generosity of God in simple insights born of experience. Mark 2:18–22 is deconstructed until it fits this picture: (1) the “commonplaces” of the marriage logion (Mark 2:19a $\alpha$ ) and two prudential rules which exhort the hearers to make a well-considered decision to adopt the radical existence of a wanderer (Mark 2:21–22) go back to Jesus.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>180</sup> Cf. P. Böhle, *Jesus und der Täufer: Schlüssel zur Theologie und Ethik des Lukas*, SNTSMS 99 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>181</sup> Cf. G. Friedrich, “Beobachtungen zur messianischen Hohepriestererwartung in den Synoptikern,” *ZThK* 53 (1961): 265–311; T. Pola, “Die Gethsemane-Perikope Markus 14,32–42 im Lichte des Mischnatraktates Joma (mYom I 4.6f),” *ThBeitr* 25 (1994): 31–44; A. M. Schwemer, “Jesus Christus als Prophet, König und Priester,” in *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie*, ed. M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, WUNT 1.138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 165–230; and now especially C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah,” *JSHJ* 4 (2006): 155–175; 5 (2007): 57–79.

<sup>182</sup> “Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Fasten- und Sabbatpraxis Jesu in den urchristlichen Gemeinden,” in *Zur Geschichte des Urchristentums*, ed. G. Dautzenberg et al., QD 87 (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), 63–96.

<sup>183</sup> “‘Neuer Wein (gehört) in neue Schläuche’ (Mk 2,22c): Zur Überlieferung und Theologie von Mk 2,18–22,” *ThZ* 52 (1996): 1–31.

<sup>184</sup> *Jesus—ein Weisheitslehrer? Synoptische Weisheitslogien im Traditionsprozeß*, HBS 15 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 183–216.

<sup>185</sup> In the double metaphor, the “pictorial concept of the preparation for a journey”

(2) Radical wanderers after Easter defended their way of life against disciples of John by means of an apophthegm (Mark 2:18b, 19a $\alpha$ , 21–22). (3) Apparently, however, Jesus' words did not carry much conviction, for the fasting praxis of John's followers immediately became Christian praxis, with a Christological extenuation (Mark 2:18b–22). (4) The Q community sought a reconciliation with the disciples of John (Luke 7:31–34/Matt 11:16–19), but (5) the pre-Markan tradition took its distance from them, in order to accommodate the needs of "God-seekers" (Mark 2:14–22). However, before one assumes reasons for the invention of gospel material, or takes refuge in excessively complicated reconstructions, one ought to attempt an explanation with as few stages as possible intervening between Jesus and the gospels.

In the period before the "Galilean crisis," Jesus instructed his disciples not to practice any private fasts. This was a messianic sign on his part, intended to point to the irruption of the age of salvation. When the wider group of followers inquired about the correct fasting praxis, Jesus insisted that this must be marked by the same festal joy (Matt 6:16–18).<sup>186</sup> The non-fasting of the inner group of disciples corresponded to the festal table fellowship with "tax collectors and sinners" in which Jesus anticipated the messianic banquet. During the "Galilean crisis," he replied to the question put by John's disciples with a puzzling logion that contrasted the joy at the presence of the messianic bridegroom with the future mourning over his violent death. The Old Testament applied the metaphor of the bridegroom primarily to God; but Jesus applied characteristics and behavior of God to his own self in other metaphors and parables too.<sup>187</sup> The ground had already been laid in Essene and Baptist circles for the transfer of the metaphor of bridegroom to the priestly Messiah. Jesus may have seen his ministry before his execution as the period of betrothal,<sup>188</sup> assuming that the kingdom of God would be fully accomplished only after his death. The

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(M. Ebner refers here to Jos 9:1–15) comes "close to the actual situation" (*Jesus*, 214). But one may question whether a caravan laden with wineskins (Jos 9:4) was an image likely to provide motivation for radical wanderers who were not even allowed to take a bag with them (Mark 6:8 parr.).

<sup>186</sup> On the question of authenticity, cf. B. Reicke, "Die Fastenfrage nach Luk. 5,33–39," *ThZ* 30 (1974): 321–328; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew* I, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 617–618.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. H. Riesenfeld, "The Parables in the Synoptic and in the Johannine Traditions," in *The Gospel Tradition* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 139–170; P. B. Payne, "Jesus' Implicit Claim to Deity in His Parables," *TrinJ* 2 (1981): 3–23.

<sup>188</sup> Thus W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 7th ed., ThHK 2 (Berlin: EVA, 1977), 87; K. Berger, *Wer war Jesus wirklich?* (Stuttgart: Quell, 1995), 33.

prediction that the disciples would fast in mourning is in keeping with his refraining from drinking wine at the farewell Passover meal (Matt 26:29/Mark 14:25/Luke 22:18).

On another occasion, Jesus used the double metaphor of the old garment and the new wine to make clear the necessity of an eschatological new creation; at the same time, he defended the impetuous vigor of the kingdom of God. The debate about the question of fasting was linked at an early date to the double metaphor. This was suggested by the metaphor of marriage which was found in both traditions and has its primary background in Isaiah 61–62. Rev 19:7–8 likewise links the motifs of wedding (γάμος), festal meal (δεῖπνον), and new garment (βύσσινον λαμπρὸν καθαρὸν). It seems possible that these texts were joined together before the composition of the synoptic gospels, in the course of the dialogue with the Baptist movement. G.J. Brooke argues that a pre-Markan collection in Mark 2:1–3:6 particularly reflects the interests of Levites.<sup>189</sup> We know of at least two leading members of the earliest community in Jerusalem who were Levites, viz. Barnabas and John Mark (Acts 4:36–37; 12:12; Col 4:10). In Acts, Mark is portrayed as a bearer of traditions about Jesus (Acts 13:5 [ὑπηρέτης]; cf. Luke 4:16),<sup>190</sup> and the earliest tradition ascribes to him the Gospel of the same name (Papias *apud* Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15).<sup>191</sup> The independent metaphor of the old wine (Luke 5:39) formulates Jesus' experience of persons who refused to repent. It was probably united to the double metaphor already in the pre-Lukan tradition, which despite all its criticism was nevertheless still attempting to win over the Pharisees by means of a dialogue (Luke 7:36–50; 11:37–52; 14:1–14; 15:25–32).

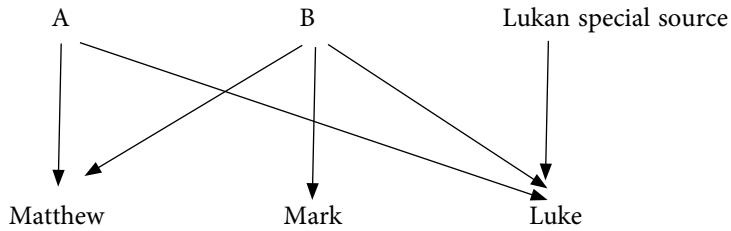
#### 4.2. *Several Pre-synoptic Sources*

The philological and historical investigation suggests that the Gospel of Mark was not the only source from which Matthew and Luke knew the pericope about fasting. The situation in the synoptics can be explained on the hypothesis that Matthew and Luke drew both on a pre-Markan tradition and on a second common tradition. Luke also found the material in his Hebraizing special tradition.

<sup>189</sup> "The Temple Scroll and the New Testament," in *Temple Scroll Studies*, JSPSup 7 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 181–200.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 63.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. M. Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 2000), 34–115.



Taken on its own, this pericope cannot decide whether the tradition similar to Mark was an Ur-Mark, nor whether the tradition common to Matthew and Luke was an Ur-Matthew or the collection of logia in Q. At any rate, the analysis of the pericope tends to point to a model of several sources (cf. 1.2–3).<sup>192</sup> Even one who does not wish to assume the existence of pre-synoptic sources (other than Q) ought at least not to exclude on principle the influence of variants in the oral tradition known to the synoptic evangelists, when a purely redactional explanation is problematical.

#### 4.3. *The Gospel of Thomas and Synoptic Tradition*

Two logia in this gnostic text offer parallels to the metaphors of the garment and the wine, and to the question about fasting. Some scholars see here pre-synoptic tradition, or a tradition independent of the synoptics.<sup>193</sup> This view was popularized above all by the Jesus Seminar.<sup>194</sup> Other interpreters argue that the apocryphal text presupposes the final redaction of the synoptic gospels.<sup>195</sup> Logion 104 reads:<sup>196</sup>

<sup>192</sup> I recall here with gratitude my work with the late Marie-Émile Boismard OP and Philippe Rolland at the symposium “De interrelatione evangeliorum” in Jerusalem in 1984. Cf. *The Interrelations of the Gospel*, ed. D. L. Dungan, BETL 95 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990). On the influence of oral tradition in the gospels see now A. D. Baum, *Der mündliche Faktor und seine Bedeutung für die synoptische Frage*, TANZ 49 (Tübingen: Francke, 2008).

<sup>193</sup> W. Nagel, “Neuer Wein in alten Schläuchen (Mt 9,17),” *VigChr* 14 (1960): 1–8; F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas I*, EKK 3.1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1989), 256; G. Riley, “Influence of Thomas Christianity on Luke 12:14 and 5:39,” *HTR* 88 (1995): 229–235.

<sup>194</sup> Funk and Hoover, *The Five Gospels*, 47–49.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (London: Mowbray, 1960), 77–79; M. Fieger, *Das Thomasevangelium*, NTA NF 22 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), 149–153, 260–262.

<sup>196</sup> H. Koester and T. O. Lambdin, “The Gospel of Thomas (II,2),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. M. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 129.

They said [to Jesus], "Come, let us pray today and let us fast." Jesus said, "What is the sin that I have committed, or wherein have I been defeated? But when the bridegroom leaves the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray."

The *Gospel of Thomas* indicts fasting as lying, false conduct (*Gos. Thom.* 6 and 14), and this is why the true gnostic will no longer leave the bridal chamber—for he has overcome the destructive division. Logion 47 presents the images of Luke 5:36–39 in reverse order and with a partly distorted meaning.<sup>197</sup> They became "the arbitrary illustration of the basic thesis that the unity of the gnostic does not tolerate any experience of being torn between spirit and world."<sup>198</sup> The synoptic tradition endeavors to understand and clarify, but the *Gospel of Thomas* engages in a radical reinterpretation. This means that there is little hope of finding a more original tradition here.

### 5. Methodological and Historical Consequences

Some scholars have rejected the pericope about fasting as completely inauthentic (cf. 2.2), and most modern exegetes see a post-Easter composition at least in the metaphor of the bridegroom who is snatched away.<sup>199</sup> The present investigation comes to a different conclusion, viz. that the tradition has preserved the memory of one specific situation in the life of Jesus and has also preserved his words in their basic substance.<sup>200</sup> The analysis was guided by the following historical and methodological insights, which would be helpful in the study of other gospel traditions as well:

1. In terms of literary criticism, one should assume the existence of parallel traditions to a greater extent than is allowed by a rigid two-sources hypothesis (1.1; 2.1; 3.1). The question about fasting was handed on in at least three streams of tradition (4.2), and this strengthens the criterion of multiple attestation.

<sup>197</sup> Koester and Lambdin, "The Gospel of Thomas (II, 2)," 123.

<sup>198</sup> Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese*, 174.

<sup>199</sup> The most important representatives are mentioned by Holmén, *Jesus and Jewish Covenant Thinking*, 144 n. 322.

<sup>200</sup> This position has been taken in recent years by R. H. Gundry, *Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 131–139; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 138–143; Bock, *Luke 1–9:50*, 502–504; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 136–140; K. Berger, *Jesus* (München: Pattloch, 2004), 174–185.



2. In evaluating the variant traditions, it often helps to look back for possible semitic origins. Here one should draw on Hebrew in addition to Aramaic (3.1).
3. The Johannine tradition is certainly not always dependent on the synoptic tradition. Sometimes, it offers an independent parallel tradition which can help to clear up synoptic problems (2.7).
4. Paul knew more traditions about Jesus than most exegetes are willing to accept. His attestation of a tradition is an important indication with regard to age and authenticity (2.5).
5. On the other hand, many scholars considerably exaggerate the historical value of the Jesus tradition in the gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*. It is usually possible to demonstrate a dependence on the synoptics (4.3).
6. In terms of the history of tradition, the Old Testament is the most important background for understanding the words of Jesus. In the biblical scholarship of his time, individual catchwords and images could evoke larger textual units (2.4; 2.6; 4.3).
7. In terms of the history of religion, Palestinian Judaism is the context for the understanding of Jesus. Because of their clear chronological position, the Qumran texts have a particular significance here (2.3; 2.7).
8. Jesus came from a family with a religiosity related to that of a pre-Essene Hassidism and to Baptist circles. Elements in the New Testament that have been regarded as signs of gnostic influence can usually be explained by reference to apocalyptic-mystical Judaism or Jewish Christianity (2.5).
9. Jesus summarized his preaching in brief teaching summaries and in longer parables. Through their poetical and mnemotechnical form, he himself ensured that they would be easily remembered, and that his hearers would begin to transmit them with care (2.2; 3.2).
10. The parables of Jesus are not to be judged according to alien aesthetic or theological criteria, but as masterly examples within a narrative tradition with its roots in the Old Testament and early Judaism. We may not assert that Jesus could *not* have consciously employed allegorical elements in the form of conventionalized or newly created metaphors (2.2).
11. The messianic secret is not a Markan construction, but agrees with the special way in which Jesus put forward his claims (2.6–7). Since the tradition of the earliest church understandably tended to clarify, the concealed manner of speaking about the Messiah is an indication of authenticity.

12. The so-called "Galilean crisis" is a decisive datum for the historical understanding of Jesus' ministry (2.6). The categorization of logia as belonging to the periods before or after this crisis, and to the public proclamation of Jesus or to the private instruction of the disciples, makes many theories about inauthenticity superfluous (4.1).
13. Many hypotheses about the earliest Christian developments in the first century can be evaluated critically by studying the impact made by New Testament texts in the early Patristic period (2.8).
14. When it is possible to understand traditions coherently on the basis of what is otherwise known about the history and the preaching of Jesus (4.1), this explanation is to be preferred to inferences (be they never so genial) from a post-Easter situation.



## RIDDLES, WIT, AND WISDOM

TOM THATCHER

Some readers may be surprised to find an entry on “riddles” in a volume dedicated to so serious a topic as the Historical Jesus. In modern Western societies, riddles are generally relegated to magazines, children’s books, jokes, and other forms of entertainment. “What’s black and white and re[a]d all over?” (a newspaper); “What room can’t be entered?” (a mushroom); “What has four wheels and flies?” (a garbage truck)—these and similar verbal tricks are typical of current Western uses of the genre. Thomas Burns calls such puzzles “leisure-time” riddles, word games that people exchange to amuse themselves. Although riddles perform a wide variety of social functions cross-culturally, Westerners tend to think that leisure-time riddles are the norm. This assumption is not limited to popular conceptions, as leisure-time riddles have been “the focus of the great majority of the [academic] literature on the riddle and riddling.”<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps for this reason, Jesus scholars have generally not explored the riddle as a speech genre in great detail—at least when compared to other oral-traditional forms—and have sometimes been hesitant to endorse the historicity of gospel texts that seem to include them. For example, at Mark 12:35–37, Jesus amuses a crowd by quoting Ps 110:1 and then asking how the Christ can be both “David’s son” and “David’s Lord” at the same time. Robert Funk, founder of the Jesus Seminar and apparently reflecting the collective opinion of that group, refers to this passage as a “piece of sophistry” and asks, “What would be the point of demonstrating that the Messiah was not the son of David?”<sup>2</sup> “Is this way of handling issues consonant with his [Jesus’ teaching] style?”—a rhetorical question which obviously assumes that Jesus did not talk this way.<sup>3</sup> Such comments reflect the fact that many Jesus scholars

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas A. Burns, “Riddling: Occasion to Act,” *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976): 144–145.

<sup>2</sup> Robert W. Funk with Mahlon H. Smith, *The Gospel of Mark Red Letter Edition* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1991), 188.

<sup>3</sup> Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York, NY: Polebridge, 1993), 237–238.

have failed to recognize the riddle as a cross-cultural speech form with sophisticated social and rhetorical functions.

This essay will counter this trend by locating riddles in a variety of sources for Jesus and, ultimately, in the ministry of the historical Jesus himself. It will first define the “riddle” as a speech genre and major categories of riddles in the gospels, then note the implications of the evidence for our understanding of both the sources and the historical Jesus.

## 1. *Anatomy of a Riddle*

### 1.1. *Definition*

A “riddle” is an interrogative statement that intentionally hides its referent (the thing that it is talking about) and asks the audience to name it. While many Western riddles take the form of questions, all riddles, despite their grammatical form, are interrogative in the sense that they seek an answer.<sup>4</sup> Thus, while the English riddle, “There is something with a heart in its head,” does not end with a question mark (?), it clearly requests a response (answer: “a peach”). But the audience’s ability to provide this answer is complicated by the fact that the language of the question is ambiguous, pointing away from the correct solution. Folklorists W. J. Pepicello and Thomas A. Green define “ambiguity” as “the situation which obtains in language when two or more underlying semantic structures may be represented by a single surface representation.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Jack and Phyllis Glazier describe a statement as “ambiguous” when “it [potentially] refers to two or more frames of reference depending on one’s interpretation of the term[s].”<sup>6</sup> Essentially, an “ambiguous” statement is one that could reasonably refer to more than one thing, and riddles are ambiguous statements that ask the audience to identify which of these possible options the riddler has in mind. Thus, the question, “What has four wheels and flies?”, is ambiguous in the sense that it could reasonably

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<sup>4</sup> W. J. Pepicello and Thomas A. Green, “The Folk Riddle: A Redefinition of Terms,” *Folklore* 38 (1979): 17; Elli Königäs Maranda, “Theory and Practice of Riddle Analysis,” *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1971): 54.

<sup>5</sup> Pepicello and Green, “The Folk Riddle,” 13.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Glazier and Phyllis Gorfain Glazier, “Ambiguity and Exchange: The Double Dimension of Mbeere Riddles,” *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976): 211.

refer to a very wide variety of items; the reader is challenged to identify the “correct” referent, “a garbage truck.”

Of course, ambiguity alone cannot categorize a statement as a “riddle.” Many questions admit more than one answer, and many statements are unclear simply because the speaker has done a poor job of communicating what she has in mind. It is therefore important to stress that riddles are *intentionally* ambiguous questions. Whereas language normally seeks a direct route to its referent in order to avoid confusion, riddlers seek to generate confusion by pointing their audience down the wrong track. Riddles use language that is ambiguous and confusing in an artful way. While all riddles are intentionally ambiguous questions, the genre eludes definition on the basis of form. The formal features of riddles can vary widely from culture to culture and even within a single culture, a fact that riddlers exploit to further confuse their audiences. Riddles evidence only one consistent formal feature: all riddles in every culture are composed of two structural components, the ambiguous question and the clarifying answer. The ambiguous question could potentially refer to more than one item and generally directs the audience’s attention to the wrong one—the question, “What has four wheels and flies?”, seems to point to “an airplane” while also accurately describing the correct referent, “a garbage truck” (playing on the fact that the English word “flies” can function as a verb or a noun). Building on this observation, folklorists such as Roger D. Abrahams and Elli Königs Maranda have fruitfully discussed the riddle as a subversive interactive metaphor. As subversive metaphors, riddles blur the lines between conventional ideological categories by bringing together concepts and/or things that are normally kept distinct. The audience is challenged to provide a solution that will anchor the question in established ways of thinking, or else to develop a new way of thinking if no solution seems possible. To explore this aspect of riddling further, it will be helpful to briefly describe the way that metaphorical language interacts with a group’s order of values.

As a figure of speech, the metaphor directly compares two things for sake of rhetorical effect. Thus, the common biblical metaphor, “God is my rock,” compares God (the subject under consideration) to another object (a rock) in order to make a particular point (see Pss 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14; et al.). But it is important to note that metaphors do not play on the relationship between words and their respective referents. When the Psalmist says, “God is my rock,” he does not thereby suggest that the word “rock” should henceforth be used as a synonym for the word

“God.” Rather, the metaphor plays on the distinct set of *ideas* that the word “rock” evokes in the mind of the audience, what I. A. Richards calls the “psychological context” of the term.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, a metaphor equates two (or more) things that normally fall into different categories in order to transfer the psychological context of one item to another item. Richards therefore defines the “metaphor” as “a borrowing between and intercourse of *thoughts*,” a figure of speech that mixes elements from different sets of ideas.<sup>8</sup> Returning to the example above, the metaphor “God is my rock” transfers qualities that one might normally associate with a “rock” to “God,” thereby creating a third conceptual entity that shares elements from the psychological contexts of two terms that normally fall into very different mental compartments.

Building on this approach, the riddle may be defined as a *subversive interactive metaphor*. Riddles are *metaphors* in the sense that they compare things from different mental categories: the first mental category is represented by the question and the second category by the answer.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the simple riddle, “What has a million ears but can’t hear? A cornfield,” compares something from the category “things that can hear” with something from the category “vegetables” by playing on a dual meaning of the English word “ears.” Riddles are *interactive* metaphors because the riddler provides one term in the comparison while the audience provides the second. In the cornfield riddle, the riddler refers, albeit indirectly, to something from the category “things that can hear,” while the riddlee must connect that item to something from the category “vegetables.” But riddles are *subversive* interactive metaphors because they blur the lines between conceptual categories by using ambiguous language to highlight common features of things that are viewed as categorically different. Animals that hear and cornfields seem to be very different things, yet both have multiple “ears”—perhaps the differences between them are more arbitrary than we tend to think? Or perhaps we use the word “ears” too loosely, allowing the term to cross conceptual borders that should be more closely guarded? The riddle’s ambiguous question highlights a common trait (“ears”) which points the audience toward something in the wrong conceptual category (i.e.,

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<sup>7</sup> I. A. Richards and C. K. Ogden, *The Meaning of Meaning*, 8th ed. (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace, 1956), 50–57.

<sup>8</sup> I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), 94.

<sup>9</sup> Köngäs Maranda, “Theory and Practice of Riddle Analysis,” 54.

toward the category “things that can hear” rather than the category “vegetables”), and in the process it temporarily brings “the whole idea of classification under question.”<sup>10</sup>

Riddlers can manipulate the inherently subversive dimension of riddles to suit their rhetorical purposes, depending on the extent to which they wish to actually challenge the group’s classification system. In many cases, riddles “play with boundaries, but ultimately to affirm them.”<sup>11</sup> Animals and cornfields are the same in that both have “ears,” but the observation that animals use their “ears” to hear while corn plants use their “ears” for reproduction ultimately underscores the otherwise vast differences between these two types of things. Some riddles, however, challenge conventional thinking to a much more significant degree, mediating “between [conceptual] sets that are not only different, but in many aspects opposed, and in this way it [the riddle] can form the basis for a differing system of classification, or allow contrasting classifications and conceptual frameworks to co-exist at the same time.”<sup>12</sup> The riddler may specifically wish to subvert group values by bringing things from different ideological sets together in a way that cannot easily be resolved, thus forcing a significant redefinition of terms or a realignment of mental categories.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2. *Riddles and Social Identity*

Because riddles play with a group’s foundational beliefs, many traditional cultures attribute high value to “wit,” the ability to ask or answer difficult ambiguous questions. The witty riddler can create verbal knots that are difficult to untie; the witty riddlee is gifted in providing answers.<sup>14</sup>

Wit is significant to intellectual status because it reveals one’s command of three types of cultural knowledge. First, the witty person knows the attributes of the subject of the riddle. The cornfield riddle above

<sup>10</sup> Kōngās Maranda, “Theory and Practice of Riddle Analysis,” 54.

<sup>11</sup> Elli Kōngās Maranda, “Riddles and Riddling: An Introduction,” *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976): 131; see also Roger D. Abrahams, “Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore,” *Journal of American Folklore* 81 (1968): 149.

<sup>12</sup> Ian Hamnet, “Ambiguity, Classification and Change: The Function of Riddles,” *Man* NS 2 (1967): 382.

<sup>13</sup> Dan Ben-Amos, “Solutions to Riddles,” *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976): 252–254.

<sup>14</sup> W. J. Pepicello and Thomas A. Green, *The Language of Riddles: New Perspectives* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1984), 5, 12–13, 22.



can be answered only by a person who knows basic facts about corn; a person from a culture that does not raise or eat corn could never hope to solve this puzzle. Second, the witty person evidences command of her culture's rules of logic and analogy, the acceptable means of moving from the ambiguous metaphorical description to the referent in question. This type of knowledge may be illustrated by the very ancient "Riddle of the Sphinx," supposedly solved by Oedipus: "What goes on four legs in the morning; two legs in the afternoon; and three legs in the evening?" To provide the correct answer, "a human being," one must know basic information about human anatomy and the fact that elderly people in some cultures walk with canes ("three legs"). But one must also know that the developmental stages of life can be defined in terms of physical capabilities, that the stages of life can be compared to the phases of a day, and that a "day" may be conceived in three distinct time periods (morning, afternoon, evening). A person who does not come from a culture that uses such analogies, or a person who lacks the wit to understand how such analogies operate in her own culture, will not be able to answer. On the other hand, the ability to pose the question, or to answer the question, reveals one's command of these key facts and channels of group logic.

In many instances, however, wit demonstrates intellectual prowess through command of a third type of cultural knowledge: knowledge of traditions. Folklorist Edgar Slotkin notes that many riddles cannot be answered on "rational grounds." This is the case because few riddles "admit to [purely] logical solutions where one and only one answer satisfies the descriptive grid imposed on the riddle topic."<sup>15</sup> Specifically, while knowledge of cultural items and logic may enable a person to identify possible correct answers, such knowledge does not necessarily explain why some possible answers are "wrong." For example, the popular children's riddle, "What's black and white and red all over?" can reasonably refer to more than one thing; "the acceptable reply is dictated by the rules of riddling, not by a rule which admits any logical response."<sup>16</sup> For this reason, "most riddles depend for their solution on either inspired guessing or simply knowing the riddle—which is to say,

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<sup>15</sup> Edgar Slotkin, "Response to Professors Fontaine and Camp," in *Text and Tradition: The Hebrew Bible and Folklore*, ed. Susan Niditch, SBLSS (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), 154.

<sup>16</sup> Glazier and Glazier, "Ambiguity," 216.

knowing traditions.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, in many instances the riddlee can provide the correct answer only if she has heard this riddle, or one very much like it, before. Her awareness of this tradition, evident in her ability to answer, affirms her command of cultural information that the group holds in common.

Because riddles play on foundational beliefs, and because one’s ability to pose or answer them depends on group knowledge, logic, and traditions, riddling can play a key role in identity formation. Riddles inherently create a community of knowledge, a group of people who are united by their ability to think about the same things in the same way. Not everyone knows that the correct answer to the question, “What has one eye and three legs?”, is “a camera”; those who do are united by this common knowledge and set apart from the ignorant. For this reason, in many societies riddles are performed in contexts that emphasize the group’s solidarity and continuity: greetings; rituals “involving initiation and death”; courtship and wedding ceremonies; and “the educational encounter between teacher and student.”<sup>18</sup> As an extension of this principle, riddles often function as the “underdog’s channel,” a means of establishing a subgroup within the dominant society. Elli Kõngäs Maranda’s extensive field work led her to conclude that “this art form [the riddle] is [often] utilized by those persons to whom other institutionalized expression is denied: women, commoners, unmarried men, and children.”<sup>19</sup> Riddles can, in other words, be used to maintain a sense of group identity, or to create a new group with a distinct identity, on the basis of shared knowledge that is not available to other people.

### 1.3. *Riddling Sessions*

Whatever form they take, riddles do not tend to support social cohesion. They explicitly seek to confuse people through ambiguous questions that play with foundational beliefs and values, and can therefore easily lead to misunderstanding and embarrassment. For this reason, riddles must be performed in carefully controlled settings that defuse their potentially negative impact. Folklorists refer to these controlled social settings as

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<sup>17</sup> Slotkin, “Response,” 154.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas A. Burns, “Riddling: Occasion to Act,” *Journal of American Folklore* 89 (1976): 145.

<sup>19</sup> Kõngäs Maranda, “Theory and Practice of Riddle Analysis,” 58.

“riddling sessions.” The implicit guidelines of the riddling session turn otherwise antisocial questions into a form of “play,” meaning that the verbal exchange is impersonal because the speaker and audience adopt stereotyped roles. One person plays the “riddler,” the character who poses the ambiguous question and determines the single correct answer; another person, or group of people, plays the “riddlee,” the character(s) who must provide that answer. As a scripted play environment, the riddling session allows people to express “motives we don’t normally allow ourselves under the circumstances of real life,” such as the desire to confuse people, the desire to overtly assert our intellectual superiority, and the desire to publicly direct people’s attention to taboo subjects. Play also determines the real-world consequences of such actions by regulating the stakes in the contest.<sup>20</sup>

The rules of riddling sessions are as localized, and therefore as diverse, as the forms of riddles themselves. A riddling session may include only one question, a series of questions posed by one riddler, or a back-and-forth exchange. The laws of riddling dictate the appropriate times and places for riddles, the appropriate people to share them with, and the appropriate rewards and consequences for the ability or inability to answer. These rules must always be observed, even when they are not explicitly stated. To take a well-known example from the Hebrew Bible, Samson clearly thinks that the Philistines have cheated him by forcing his fiancée to tell them the answer to his riddle about the “sweet eater.” He protests by killing thirty Ashkelonites, yet still satisfies the rules of engagement by paying on his earlier bet to the survivors (Judg 14:18–19). As is the case with so many social guidelines, people are often most conscious of the laws of riddling when they sense that they have been broken.

## 2. *Criteria for Detection*

Because riddles can take a wide variety of forms, they are often difficult to detect—especially difficult for people who are not members of the riddler’s group, and who therefore do not share the three types of prerequisite knowledge described above and/or the riddler’s inherent sense of how riddling sessions should be conducted. As a result, riddles

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<sup>20</sup> Roger D. Abrahams, “The Complex Relations of Simple Forms,” in *Folklore Genres*, ed. Dan Ben-Amos (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1976), 202–203.

are immune to form-critical criteria which focus on surface features of the text. Instead, riddles must be identified on the basis of their interaction with the immediate discourse context and/or their interaction with conventional systems of logic. Any criteria for detecting riddles in literary documents are essentially criteria for detecting statements that are intentionally ambiguous and that ask the audience for resolution. Four such criteria may be utilized to identify riddles in the sources for Jesus, three based on explicit statements in the texts and one that must be inferred from the presentation and/or the social context in which the source document was produced.

First, a statement in the sources may be classified as a riddle if the author/narrator explicitly indicates that the saying is intentionally ambiguous. In these cases, the reader is simply told that a character has just uttered a riddle. Perhaps the most obvious example appears at John 10:6, where the narrator states that Jesus' immediately preceding remarks about sheep, shepherds, and strangers were actually a *παροιμία* ("riddle"; "proverb") that his audience could not understand. Of course, such explicit statements are rare; more often, the author of the source will simply reveal that a character is not talking about the most obvious thing in a particular context, thus indicating that his or her words were ambiguous. Matthew, for example, explains to his readers that Jesus was not actually talking about "bread" when he warned the befuddled disciples to "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Rather, Jesus was using the word "leaven" metaphorically to refer to the Pharisees' insidious "teachings," most likely their recent demands for a "sign from heaven" (16:6, 12). By providing the correct answer, Matthew indicates that Jesus' initial statement was capable of more than one interpretation. While this criterion is essentially foolproof, it is also seldom applicable. Narrators do not often show their hand so readily, and the rhetorical effect of the ambiguity is ruined as soon as the reader is told what is happening.

Second, a statement in the sources may be classified as a riddle if it is delivered during a "riddling session," a social context that would be an appropriate venue for riddle performance. In these instances, the source contextualizes a saying with the type of framing signals that would normally be used in the "real world" to warn someone that riddles are to follow. At John 9:2, for example, the disciples ask Jesus whether a certain man is blind as a result of his own sins or of the sins of his parents. The author does not call this statement a "riddle," but the question is contextualized in a theological discussion between a

rabbi (Jesus) and his disciples, and the wording suggests that the issue is difficult to resolve. Both proposed answers assume a direct connection between illness and sin, and either would force Jesus to affirm this connection. Similarly, the synoptics sometimes indicate that riddles are about to be exchanged by noting, directly or indirectly, that a certain character is trying to “trap” or “test” Jesus in a contest of wits. Mark, for example, says that the Pharisees’ question about whether it is lawful to pay poll-taxes to Caesar was an attempt to “trap Jesus in a word” (12:13; see also 10:2; Luke 10:25). The same may be assumed of many other episodes in which a stereotypical opponent of Jesus—Pharisee, scribe, Sadducee, chief priest—suddenly appears and challenges his wisdom with an ambiguous question. In all these instances, the literary context of a statement corresponds to the real-world social contexts in which riddles would typically be exchanged.

Because riddles do not evidence a distinct form, many cultures supplement general contextual clues with special verbal formulae that signal that a riddling session is about to begin. Köngäs Maranda notes that the Lau people of Melanesia “do not have a marked riddle style”; to compensate for this lack, “the Lau riddle poser announces simply his intention by naming the genre he is about to present”—i.e., “This is a riddle.”<sup>21</sup> In a similar fashion, modern Americans typically introduce jokes or riddles by saying, “Here’s one for you,” or “Get this,” formulae that parallel the older British “Riddle me ree.” In the gospels, Jesus often alerts his audience that a riddling session is underway by framing a saying with the familiar formula, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear” (ὃς ἔχει ὅτα ἀκούειν ἀκουέτω). In every context in which it appears, this statement accompanies an ambiguous question or comment and indicates that Jesus expects someone to provide a clarifying answer and/or application. At Mark 8:18, for example, Jesus hints that the disciples need to look for a deeper meaning to his warning about the “leaven of the Pharisees” by asking whether their ears fail to hear, and the Parable of the Sower, explicitly presented as a mystery to crowds and disciples alike, is followed by some version of this formula in all three of the synoptics (see Mark 4:9; Matt. 13:9; Luke 8:8). A related phrase, “What do you think?” (τί σοῖ ὑμῖν δοκεῖ), appears several times in Matthew to introduce riddles, including the Parable of the Two Sons and Jesus’ question, How can the Christ be

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<sup>21</sup> Köngäs Maranda, “Theory and Practice of Riddle Analysis,” 58.

“David’s son” and “David’s Lord” at the same time? (21:28; 22:42). These formulae resemble the type of verbal signals that might occur in a real-world riddling contest, and as such they serve as clues for the identification of riddles in the sources for Jesus.

Third, a statement in the sources may be classified as a riddle if it intentionally generates confusion. In these cases, Jesus makes a statement and other characters react to that saying in a way that highlights its ambiguity (note that Jesus himself never reveals any confusion about something that someone else has said). The synoptics, for example, often indicate that the disciples and/or the crowds were “amazed” by Jesus’ words, prompting them to ask for clarification at a later time. Following this motif, the disciples must ask Jesus to explain just how it is that “nothing outside a person is able to make him unclean by going into him” (Mark 7:14–17), and how anyone can be saved if rich people are lost (10:23–26). This criterion is particularly relevant to the Fourth Gospel, where almost everything Jesus says is intentionally ambiguous and therefore opaque to both disciples and enemies alike. For example, at John 7:33 and 8:21, Jesus tells the “Jews” that he is going away to a place where they cannot come. The Jews explicitly indicate that this statement is ambiguous by naming several possible answers: Does Jesus mean that he will go to the Diaspora? And/or to teach Greeks? Or does he mean that he plans to kill himself? (7:35; 8:22). While the reader may detect that Jesus is alluding to his imminent death and return to God, the disciples are no more capable of coming to this conclusion than the Jews; at one point Peter interrupts Jesus and demands to know exactly where he is going (13:33–38). This criterion thus covers a wide variety of instances where the reaction generated by a statement indicates that it must have been intentionally ambiguous.

Fourth and finally, a statement in the sources may be classified as a riddle if it seems calculated to violate normal ways of thinking by blurring ideological boundaries. As noted above, riddles use ambiguous language to bring together things and concepts that are normally located in separate mental compartments, usually on the basis of a single shared trait and/or a play on words. Following this principle, when Jesus makes a statement that apparently challenges the conventional order of values, that statement may be classified as a riddle. For example, Jesus’ assertion that “nothing outside a man is able to make him unclean by going into him” (Mark 7:14–15) must be viewed as problematic by anyone who is even vaguely acquainted with Leviticus 11 and ancient Jewish purity standards. Similarly, Jesus’ teaching on divorce at Mark

10:2–12 suggests an inherent contradiction between Gen 2:24 and Deut 24:1–4, resolves that contradiction by dismissing the latter teaching as a mere concession to human weakness, and then redefines remarriage as a form of “adultery”—it is difficult to see how this train of thought would not seriously derail the thinking of many ancient Jews (and easy to see why it confuses so many modern Christians). Even Christian readers must pause to reflect on *Gos. Thom.* 14:1–3, where Jesus states that fasting, prayer, and almsgiving are all sinful acts that will ultimately lead to condemnation. Obviously, this criterion is more subjective than the first three, in that it requires a prejudgment about what ancient Jews and/or early Christians would consider “normal” thought patterns. But in many cases, it is impossible to imagine that Jesus’ words would not violate conventional standards, thus forcing his audience either to come up with an answer that resolves the tension or else to abandon their current sense of reality.

Criterion 4 is especially applicable to one of the most prominent themes in Jesus’ teaching: reversal of the current world order. In many instances, Jesus’ words seem to inherently defy basic social standards, forcing his disciples (and the reader) to identify an alternate meaning that would make them at least barely applicable to life in the present world. He states, for example, that “if anyone wants to be first, she must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35). This is clearly not the way that things are usually done, and Jesus does not explain how one could be first and last, master and servant, at the same time. The statement is obviously ambiguous and the disciples are left to resolve it, meaning that this saying is a riddle. The same is true of Mark 10:14–15, where Jesus says that the Kingdom of God belongs to children; Mark 12:43, where Jesus says that a widow’s two mites are worth more than a rich man’s treasure; Luke 6:20, which defies all common sense by claiming that “the poor are blessed”; and *Gos. Thom.* 18:2–3, where Jesus seems to contradict himself by telling the disciples that “the end will be where the beginning is.” Such sayings may be classified as riddles because, in each instance, Jesus uses an intentionally ambiguous statement to challenge conventional ways of thinking and asks his audience to provide a solution.

It should be stressed that these four criteria can only locate specific riddles in the various sources for Jesus, not in the ministry of the historical Jesus himself. They are, in other words, literary criteria, not historical criteria, and at best they could be used only to create a database of riddles and riddling sessions for further analysis. The historicity of

individual sayings within such a database must be evaluated on other grounds. At the same time, however, the fact that these criteria identify numerous riddles in a wide range of independent sources at least suggests that the historical Jesus regularly engaged in this type of verbal exchange, asking and answering riddles in a variety of settings.

### 3. *Riddle Types in the Gospels*

The riddles that appear in the sources for Jesus, identifiable on the basis of the criteria outlined above, could be sub-categorized in a number of different ways. But because riddles do not exhibit consistent formal features, any such scheme must be based on function rather than form, the way that riddles are used in the gospels rather than what they look like. Following this approach, three types of riddles appear in a variety of independent sources: dramatic riddles; sage riddles; and mission riddles. Each of these categories is based on the apparent function of the respective riddles in their current literary contexts: dramatic riddles function to add color to the narratives in which they appear; sage riddles function to portray Jesus as a person of unusual wit and wisdom; mission riddles function to establish some element of Jesus' unique identity. Of course, it is possible that specific riddles may have been used in various ways at different moments in the tradition, or even at different moments in the ministry of the historical Jesus. One can easily imagine that a certain sage riddle might have been used occasionally to highlight a christological theme, or that a mission riddle might have been stripped of its specifically christological significance to portray Jesus as an ethical model in early Christian preaching. It should also be stressed that these three categories overlap to a significant degree, and that a single riddle may serve more than one of these functions in a given context. All three categories are, however, consistent with the way that riddles might be used in oral cultures, in this case the oral cultures of both Jesus and first-century Christianity.

#### 3.1. *Dramatic Riddles*

An element of oral narratives, dramatic riddles add tension or suspense to a story, or sometimes develop characterization. They may draw attention to, or heighten the effect of, something that someone says or does. For example, two dramatic riddles appear at Mark 9:9–12, one that adds tension to the plot and another that develops a character



portrait. As Jesus descends the mountain with Peter, James, and John after the “Transfiguration,” he orders them to remain silent about what they have seen and heard until “the Son of Man should rise from the dead” (v. 9). The disciples indicate that Jesus has just uttered a riddle by expressing confusion and immediately asking him to clarify what the term “resurrection” implies (Criterion 3 above). This ambiguous statement about Jesus’ fate, and the disciples’ incomprehension, forecasts Jesus’ impending death and adds dramatic tension to Mark’s narrative (see also 9:31–32; 10:32–34). Jesus then follows this riddle with another, based on the disciples’ observation that “Elijah should come first” (either before the general resurrection and/or before the appearance of the Son of Man): “Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they wished” (9:13). This riddle apparently alludes to the story of John’s death at Mark 6:14–29 (see Matt 17:13) and further develops the character of the Baptist as Jesus’ forerunner. In a similar way, the Fourth Evangelist uses a dramatic riddle to build tension in the story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman. After she refuses to draw a drink for him, Jesus says that she should have asked him for “living water”; she proceeds to point out that the well is deep and he has no bucket, underscoring the irony of the scene and the ambiguity of the term “water” as a Johannine symbol (John 4:9–12). All three of these riddles add dramatic interest to their respective narrative contexts and color the characters that inhabit them in a deeper shade.

The sources for Jesus often add drama to an episode through the use of “neck riddles,” an oral narrative motif that is widely distributed cross-culturally. Neck riddles appear in riddling sessions with very high stakes: “the hero must pose a riddle that cannot be solved, or unravel one given him on penalty of death should he fail”—the protagonist must, in other words, use wit to “save his neck.”<sup>22</sup> A familiar Western example appears in the fairytale “Rumpelstiltskin,” where the princess must guess the troll’s secret name or surrender her firstborn son to him. In the gospels, neck riddles generally take the form of “traps,” challenges in which a character will suffer public shame if he cannot answer a difficult academic question. One of the more famous traps appears at Mark 12:13–14, where the Pharisees ask Jesus whether it is lawful to

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<sup>22</sup> James L. Crenshaw, “Riddle,” *IDBSup*, 749; Archer Taylor, “The Varieties of Riddles,” in *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies*, ed. Thomas A. Kirby and Henry Bosley Wolf (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Press, 1949), 6.

pay the poll-tax to Caesar. If he says “yes, pay” he will risk the ire of the masses who resent the tax; if he says “no, don’t pay” he will risk charges of sedition. Jesus himself sometimes poses neck riddles to humiliate his opponents and dismiss their charges against him. When, for example, the chief priests publicly challenge his credentials immediately after the Temple incident, Jesus demands that they tell him whether John’s baptism was “from heaven or from men.” Caught on the horns of the dilemma—they cannot admit that John was a prophet, but dare not assert in front of the crowds that he was not—they simply admit defeat and allow Jesus to continue teaching (Mark 11:27–33). The agonistic tone of such contests, along with their high stakes, inherently increases the dramatic tension of the scenes in which they occur.

### 3.2. *Sage Riddles*

Sage riddles portray Jesus as a person of unusual wit, one who is particularly adept at posing and answering ambiguous questions. They often emphasize his theological insight and command of the Scriptures, and thereby establish his credentials as a teacher. Within their respective contexts, sage riddles function in one of two ways, depending on the audience. When Jesus’ dialogue partner is friendly, they are used to communicate some aspect of his message in a particularly witty and/or memorable fashion. When the dialogue partner is hostile, they are used to demonstrate Jesus’ intellectual superiority, generally over the established religious authorities of the day (Pharisees, scribes, chief priests, elders, etc.). Neither type of sage riddle, however, makes explicitly christological claims. They establish Jesus’ wisdom and/or highlight the genius of his teaching, with no clear interest in his messianic mission.

The sources often use sage riddles to demonstrate Jesus’ advanced intellect, specifically his superior insight into theological and biblical matters. When, for example, the Sadducees ask Jesus to discuss the eternal fate of a woman who successively married seven brothers, he humiliates them by handily solving their proposed dilemma (dead people do not get married) and then proceeding to demonstrate that they do not understand “the Scriptures or the power of God” (Mark 12:18–27). He similarly rebuffs, without breaking a mental sweat, the Pharisees’ claim that his disciples are violating Sabbath by picking grain: if righteous David ate the sacred bread from the tabernacle in a moment of need, surely his disciples cannot be guilty when, in fact,

“the Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:23–27). One of the more remarkable instances of this theme appears at John 8:3–5, where the Pharisees ask Jesus whether a woman caught in adultery should be stoned in accordance with the Mosaic Law. Their question seems to place Jesus in a no-win situation: Should he affirm the Law and condemn the woman, thus jeopardizing his reputation as champion of the oppressed and possibly inciting a riot? Or should he release the woman, implying that adultery is not so serious and that Moses may have been in error? Jesus neutralizes the proposed dilemma by affirming the Mosaic ordinance but insisting that the executioner must be sinless. Of course, the Pharisees could point out that Moses never mentions such a stipulation, but this observation would immediately spring the very trap they had set for Jesus by implying that they themselves promote an immediate death sentence. This riddling session, like several others, ends with an editorial note that Jesus’ opponents, and/or the sympathetic crowds who witnessed the exchange, were so overwhelmed that they feared to ask him any more questions (John 8:9; see Mark 12:34; Luke 14:6).

Sage riddles often occur in Jesus’ interactions with his followers to stress the wisdom of his message. On one occasion, Jesus and the disciples are sitting in the Temple, watching worshipers drop money into the offering boxes. An old woman leaves two small coins, and Jesus informs them that “this poor widow gave the most of all those who put something into the box.” In its context, this statement is obviously ambiguous, because many rich people were also leaving gifts at that time; Jesus is clearly challenging conventional perspectives on wealth. After the disciples ponder this odd remark for a moment, Jesus explains that the widow’s gift is of greater value because “all of them gave from their leftovers, but she from her shortage gave all that she had” (Mark 12:41–44). Another memorable, and much more disturbing, example appears at Luke 14:26. There Jesus—in flagrant violation of Gen 2:24, Exod 20:12, Lev 19:18, and a host of other scriptures—informs a sympathetic crowd that they must “hate” their parents, spouses, and children if they wish to be his disciples. This ambiguous statement apparently requires the audience to redefine the word “hate,” but on this occasion neither Jesus nor Luke offers an explanation that would resolve the tension. As a final example, at Matt 17:25 Jesus asks Peter, as a commentary on the annual two-drachma Temple tax, whether “the kings of the earth receive customs and taxes from their sons or

from strangers.” The obvious answer, “from strangers,” seems to suggest that the Temple tax inherently alienates faithful Jews; its corollary, “the sons are free,” implies that faithful Jews should not have to pay a tax to God. This is obviously a dangerous dilemma, one that Peter apparently cannot resolve on his own; Jesus helps him by stating that a “son,” though technically exempt, should voluntarily pay the tax so as not to offend other people (vv. 26–27). Whether or not any of these specific episodes originated with the historical Jesus, there is no reason to believe that sage riddles of this type were not a typical feature of his teaching style.

It is relevant to note here that many of Jesus’ parables function as sage riddles in their current contexts in the sources—ambiguous stories that call the audience (and the reader) to search for a deeper meaning, often at the expense of cherished ways of thinking. As is now widely recognized, the parables make their primary points through contrast, highlighting absurd or exaggerated elements in a relatively familiar story to demonstrate ways in which the Kingdom of God differs from the normal world. Like riddles, then, many of Jesus’ parables blur the boundaries between conventional conceptual categories, challenging the audience to redefine key terms or develop new ways of thinking. For example, at Matt 21:28–31, Jesus tells a story about a man who sent his two sons to work in the family vineyard. Both children shamed their father, the first by defying his command and the second by lying to him. Jesus closes the parable by asking, “Which of the two did the will of the father?” (v. 31), forcing the audience to affirm the behavior of one or the other and, in the process, to redefine conventional thinking on obedience. As another notable example, the Parable of the Sower is presented as a riddle in Mark, Matthew, Luke, and Thomas. In Mark, the Sower meets all four criteria for riddle detection discussed above: the narrator explicitly indicates that the parable is difficult to interpret (4:33–34); Jesus closes the story with a typical framing signal for riddling sessions (“whoever has ears,” 4:9); the disciples reveal their confusion by asking for a private explanation of the story (4:10, 34); finally, the parable violates conventional expectations by stating that the seed on “good soil” produced a harvest at least four times larger than what should be expected. Especially for the crowds, who do not enjoy Jesus’ lengthy explanation in vv. 13–20, the Sower is an inherently ambiguous story that leaves the audience to make an application. Parables of this type may therefore be categorized as sage riddles.

### 3.3. *Mission Riddles*

Mission riddles function to establish some aspect of Jesus' unique identity and/or mission. Formally, they are identical to dramatic and sage riddles—i.e., they are subversive interactive metaphors that generate ambiguity and request a response—but their content betrays a distinctly christological interest. For example, John 12:32 (“Should I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself”) may be classified as a riddle both because it confuses the crowd by violating their messianic expectations (v. 34) and because the narrator intrudes to reveal that Jesus' words are ambiguous, actually referring to “the kind of death he was about to die (v. 33).” As the third of the Fourth Gospel's “lifted up” sayings, the riddle seems to build on the Johannine theme of Jesus' imminent ascension and heavenly exaltation, which is specifically mentioned in the two earlier occurrences of the phrase (see 3:13–15; 8:23–30). John 12:32 thus uses ambiguity to promote a specifically Johannine christology of descent/ascent, interpreting the cross as the moment of Jesus' return to the Father. Similarly, at *Gos. Thom.* 28:1–4, Jesus says that all people in the world are “drunk” and warns that they cannot repent until they “shake off their wine.” While Thomas sometimes evidences a strenuous ethical perspective, the word “drunk” here seems to be ambiguous, especially because the “drunken” people in this context are also “blind in their hearts”—Jesus is apparently not talking about alcohol consumption. Yet this teaching is explicitly connected to Jesus' personal sense of mission: “I took my stand in the midst of the world, and in flesh I appeared to them” (v. 1; Scholar's Version). As such, the riddle is used to develop a Thomasine christological theme relating to Jesus' identity and sense of purpose. Because mission riddles showcase the theological interests of their respective sources, they generally would not satisfy the rigorous criteria of authenticity utilized by most historical Jesus scholars.

Because historical Jesus scholarship tends to disregard material that reflects the theological tendencies of a source and, conversely, to attribute greater historical weight to information that does not seem to reflect such tendencies, it is important to carefully distinguish between sage riddles (which make no explicitly christological claims) and mission riddles (which do make such claims). The problem is perhaps more complicated than first appears, simply because it is often difficult to determine how a specific saying should be classified. To illustrate, one may compare Jesus' riddles at Mark 12:35–37 and John 10:34–36. Both of these sayings are typically deemed inauthentic on the basis of their

christological content,<sup>23</sup> yet a functional approach reveals that the two do not serve quite the same purposes in their respective contexts.

John 10:34–36 is, at the most basic level, a neck riddle. The Johannine “Jews,” frustrated by Jesus’ ambiguous statements about his identity, confront him at the Feast of Dedication and demand to know whether he claims to be the Christ (10:22–24). Jesus eliminates any doubt by informing them that, in fact, “I and the father are one”; the Jews reasonably interpret this claim as blasphemy and immediately grab stones to kill him (10:30–33). To buy time, Jesus poses a riddle that suggests a contradiction between the Jews’ beliefs and Ps 82:6–7. In the Psalm, God warns Israel’s unjust judges that their exalted status will not save them from his wrath: “I say, ‘You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals’” (NRSV). First-century CE Jews seem to have applied these verses to Moses and the Israelites on Sinai, who were sanctified and made immortal by the Law but immediately lost this status in the sin of the gold calf.<sup>24</sup> Jesus points out that “the Scripture cannot be broken” to remind the Jews that the terms of this Psalm must be accepted without debate, then asks how they can condemn him for calling himself “God’s son” when the sacred writings themselves sometimes refer to human beings as “gods.” Jesus is clearly in a dangerous situation, and is attempting to use wit to “save his neck” and escape a stoning. On this occasion, however, the Jews are too enraged to reason, and attempt to kill him before he eludes them.

But while John 10:34–36 is typical of all riddles in its use of ambiguity to challenge established ideological categories, and while this statement occurs at a very dramatic moment in the narrative, the Fourth Evangelist seems to be primarily concerned here with Jesus’ identity. Although Jesus’ citation of Ps 82:6 is ostensibly calculated to deflect the charge that he claims to be God, it is immediately followed by the statement, “the Father is in me, and I am in the Father” (v. 38). Further, the entire exchange is preceded by the “Good Shepherd” discourse, in which Jesus claims a special intimacy with God and a unique mandate to serve as the true leader of God’s elect (10:7–18). As one aspect of this role, Jesus bears the Father’s authority to grant eternal life and to preserve

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<sup>23</sup> Funk and Hoover, *Five Gospels*, 105, 435–36.

<sup>24</sup> Jerome Neyrey, “I Said: You are Gods’: Psalm 82:6 and John 10,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 647–649.

his sheep from damnation (10:26–28). Viewed against this backdrop, it seems clear that the narrator is particularly interested in the riddle's implications for Jesus' identity and mission: the ancient Israelites may have been God's children, but Jesus is "God's son" in a wholly unique sense. This passage should therefore be classified as a mission riddle, one that seeks to promote the christological agenda of the source.

At first glance, one might conclude that the same dynamic is at work in Mark 12:35–37. There, Jesus asks a crowd in the Temple how the scribes could claim that the Christ is "David's son," apparently a summary of popular thinking on the subject. Jesus generates ambiguity by contrasting this doctrine with Ps 110:1, where the Psalmist, apparently David, claims that "the Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" Taking "my lord" to be a reference to the Messiah, Jesus asks how the Christ could be both "David's lord" and "David's son" at the same time. While the logic of this argument may be unsatisfactory to modern readers, one could easily argue that Mark is less interested in its coherence than in its christological content: the passage clearly fits well within the larger Markan "secrecy" theme, serving as an illustration of the vague way in which Jesus spoke about his messianic identity when in the presence of nonbelievers. As such, the saying seems to function as a mission riddle in the sense that it touches on a key christological theme.

But despite its content—an explicit public commentary on a messianic Psalm by Jesus himself—closer examination reveals that the "David's son" saying is more likely a sage riddle. Mark 12:13–37 is a lengthy riddling session in which Jesus' wit is demonstrated by his ability to publicly answer and pose enigmatic questions. The session opens with the Pharisees' neck riddle about the poll-tax (12:13–15); Jesus responds with an ingenious counter-question whose referent and application are unclear: "Give Caesar's things to Caesar and God's things to God." Does Jesus have a purely economic solution in mind, or do his words have a deeper implication? The vanquished Pharisees cannot reply, and as they depart some Sadducees test Jesus' aptitude as a teacher of the Law with an elaborate riddle concerning the eternal fate of a woman with seven husbands (Mark 12:18–23). Mark hints at the Sadducees' intended strategy by noting that they "say there is no resurrection"—they apparently intend to trick Jesus into naming one of the woman's seven husbands as her eternal spouse, then reveal the "correct" answer, "there is no resurrection." Jesus outwits them by offering a third alternative: there

is a resurrection, but people will not be married there. The question of the scribe at 12:28 (“Which is the first of all the commandments?”) is a catechetical puzzle that requires Jesus to display his command of academic knowledge; the scribe clearly has a specific, “correct” answer in mind, as is evident from his positive assessment of Jesus’ response (12:32–33). Mark then notes Jesus’ complete victory: “and no one would presume to question him any longer” (12:34).

Within this context, Mark 12:35–37 seems to be simply the fourth and final round in a prolonged riddling session. Having demonstrated his skill at answering academic riddles, Jesus now entertains the crowd by posing a puzzle of his own. They “were listening to him gladly” because, presumably, they were impressed with his genius and his command of the Scriptures. It seems most likely, then, that Mark is more interested in Jesus’ wit, which the riddle simply illustrates, than in the theological implications of his remarks. Perhaps for this reason, scholars have been unable to identify a plausible context for this line of messianic speculation in the life of the early church.<sup>25</sup> As such, the saying is best classified as a sage riddle, one which plays on a messianic theme to generate ambiguity but is not immediately concerned with christological claims.

#### 4. *Riddles, Sources, and the Historical Jesus*

The presence of riddles in a variety of sources raises several significant issues for historical Jesus studies, some relating to the authenticity of the gospels and others to the method and message of Jesus. A full treatment of these issues is beyond the scope of this article, but two implications of the emerging portrait of Jesus the Riddler will be briefly explored here.

##### 4.1. *Riddles and Authenticity*

While the four criteria outlined above would identify a large number of riddles and riddling sessions in the sources for Jesus, very few of these sayings and situations would be accepted at face value by historical Jesus scholars. This is the case not only because many of the

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<sup>25</sup> Funk and Hoover, *Five Gospels*, 105.



riddles explicitly promote christological themes (the “mission riddles” described above), but also because the vast majority of them fail to meet the Criterion of Multiple Attestation. As noted earlier, riddles do not evidence consistent formal features, and they rarely appear in the same form in more than one independent source. It is therefore difficult to produce a database of specific riddles that Jesus *must* have asked or answered, or to reconstruct the original version of individual sayings through comparison of occurrences.

At the same time, however, *as a genre* riddles meet many of the “Criteria of Distinctive Discourse” utilized by Jesus scholars to identify authentic sayings. According to these guidelines, Jesus’ teachings tended to “surprise and shock” people, often frustrating “ordinary, everyday expectations” because they “cut against the social and religious grain.” He achieved this effect by using exaggeration, paradox, and questions with “unclear references”—i.e., by using ambiguous language that disrupted normal ways of thinking.<sup>26</sup> Whether or not these criteria accurately describe Jesus’ message—and it is hard to imagine that they do not—all are completely characteristic of the riddle genre. Further, while riddles sometimes reflect the specific purposes of the author of a source, they often do not promote an obviously christological agenda. Some of the dramatic riddles, for example, simply add color to traditional stories, while the sage riddles portray Jesus as a gifted teacher who offered many memorable insights. While the historicity of specific sayings must be determined individually, the overall portrait of Jesus the Riddler likely reflects the way that Jesus would have appeared to the masses in an oral culture where wit was a key academic credential.

#### 4.2. *Jesus the Riddler*

The sources suggest that Jesus asked and answered riddles both to communicate ideas about the Kingdom of God and to establish his credentials to offer such teaching. Regardless of the authenticity of specific sayings, this broad portrait of Jesus the Riddler can inform our understanding both of his social posture and of the nature of the Kingdom that he proclaimed.

Oral cultures often see “wit,” the ability to pose and answer difficult questions, as a form of giftedness. In the context of Roman Palestine,

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<sup>26</sup> Funk and Hoover, *Five Gospels*, 31–32.

Jesus' remarkable mastery of puzzling questions would likely be understood as a divine endowment, establishing him as a prophetic sage, a person of special expertise in spiritual affairs. This perspective is reflected in passages where the masses refer to Jesus as a "prophet" (Matt 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; John 4:19; 9:17), and also in episodes that portray Jesus in verbal contests with the recognized agents of religious authority. In all such scenarios, the authorities cannot outdo Jesus on his own terms and he refuses to engage them on theirs. It was this popular understanding of Jesus' credentials, not just the radical content of his teaching, that earned him an audience.

But while Jesus seems to have regularly displayed his wit in public settings, the riddles suggest that his teaching was not always transparent. Put another way, the accessibility of Jesus' person, evident in his lax interpretation of ritual purity regulations and his open table fellowship, was not necessarily matched by an accessibility of content: many of Jesus' proclamations must have seemed hopelessly ambiguous to the majority of his audience, at least until he himself provided the clarifying answer. As noted earlier, riddles can only be solved by those who possess the necessary prerequisite knowledge of cultural items, group logic, and group traditions; to those who do not possess this information, the answers to riddles will often appear arbitrary even after they have been revealed. For this reason, riddles naturally create a closed community of knowledge, a group of people who share the special insight necessary to provide the right response. Thus, while it is true that Jesus' personal practices would tend to integrate people from a wide range of social backgrounds, his use of verbal puzzles would intentionally *segregate* those whose wit did not enable them to grasp the interpretive grid he promoted. This observation may, in turn, call for a reconsideration of the general authenticity of passages such as Mark 4:10–12, 34, John 16:25, and *Gos. Thom.* 62:1, which suggest that Jesus revealed the deeper meanings of his teaching—i.e., revealed the correct "answers" to his ambiguous statements—only to a select group of his closest associates.

The fact that Jesus often used riddles, including parable-riddles, to establish his authority and disclose core elements of his teaching also carries significant implications for our understanding of the Kingdom of God. From the perspective of this study, the Kingdom of God may be defined as a community of knowledge, that group of people who were able to answer and apply Jesus' ambiguous statements. This community would include all people who possessed sufficient wit to

comprehend the logic of his analogies and/or sufficient knowledge of tradition—i.e., sufficient awareness of the correct answers to his riddles, based on past encounters with Jesus or his disciples. Membership in this knowledge community would be obtained through “repentance” (Mark 1:15), a “change of mind” that would enable one to grasp the new perspective—specifically, an internal taxonomic shift that would realign conventional ideological boundaries to coincide with the logic of Jesus’ riddles. Like Jesus himself, one need not leave normal society to join this Kingdom, for the simple reason that there is no distinct “group” to join; rather, the Kingdom exists “in the midst” (Luke 17:20–21) of everyday life in the form of those individuals who grasp this reality. Of course, this new perspective would express itself not only in the ability to interpret Jesus’ words, but also in an application of those words to a variety of social situations.

## THREE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LIFE OF JESUS

CHRISTIAN-BERNARD AMPHOUX

To write the life of Jesus has become a great challenge. For centuries, people were content with the confusion between history and sacred history: the life of Jesus was what the gospels said, with a few borrowings from the apocryphal literature to fill in the gaps of what they did not say. But from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, scholars became interested in the contents of the life of Jesus, in order to ascertain more precisely the nature of the link between his ministry and the birth of Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed true that the story of Jesus can be located in time by the presence of at least three personages of Roman history: (1) Jesus is born at the end of the reign of King Herod (40–4 BCE); (2) he receives baptism in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius (14–37 CE); (3) he is judged and condemned to death by Pontius Pilate, who was prefect of Judea from 26 to 36. In other words, he was born shortly before 4 BCE, received baptism in 28 CE, and died before 36, probably in the year 30.<sup>2</sup> This means that Jesus' life lasts roughly for thirty-five years and mostly covers the first three decades of the Common Era. But apart from these points of reference, how are we to read this history? What is the origin of this Jesus who disturbs the games of the mighty? What was at stake in his trial? If Jesus' ministry ends with his death, what does his resurrection mean?

The year 2000 came and passed away without resolving the enigma of the life of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> It seems at first sight as though the critical reading of the four gospels would leave no place for history: the *first*

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<sup>1</sup> This essay first appeared in French: "Trois questions sur la vie de Jésus," *Foi et Vie: Revue de Culture protestante* 2 (2006): 7–47.—The first critical study of Jesus, by H. S. Reimarus, was published by G. E. Lessing in 1774. Lessing himself was the author of the first critical examination of the genesis of the gospels, which was published posthumously in 1778.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. C. Perrot, *Jésus et l'histoire*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée, 1993), 72. Astronomical calculations allow us to identify the most probable date of his death as April 7, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the four volumes by J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); 2: *Mentor, Message, and Miracles* (1994); 3: *Companions and Competitors* (2001); 4: *Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (2009).

conclusion drawn by the historians was to deny the existence of Jesus. Nevertheless, Christianity was born of an indisputably historical event, and the existence of Jesus gradually won acceptance, despite all the difficulties. Under these circumstances, the *second* conclusion was drawn by German theologians at the beginning of the twentieth century, viz. that Jesus spoke and that his words are the only traces we have of his historical existence. However, the analysis of the logia shows that most of them are “post-Easter”: i.e., they were formulated by the disciples and placed by them on the lips of their master. The next step is to argue that Christianity is based less on the words of Jesus than on christology: if the words were in fact the only historical trace left by Jesus, how are we to explain the fact that Christianity has moved so far from these words?

It was the study of the manuscripts of the gospels that led me to the question of the historical Jesus. In this essay, I should like to look at the following three points. I wish to examine the social origins of Jesus; to restore the continuity which exists between the project to which his ministry was devoted and earlier Judaism (although traditionally, scholars have emphasized those elements that constitute his originality);<sup>4</sup> and to show that the ministry does not cease with Jesus’ death, but continues with a Jesus who now belongs to the heavenly realm. The four gospels, which form a homogeneous basis,<sup>5</sup> are the primary foundation of my examination. Where necessary, I shall attach most weight to the oldest form of their text, which is usually attested

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<sup>4</sup> The nineteenth century had a poor opinion of Jewish literature: civilization was viewed from the perspective of the Greco-Roman world, and everything else was seen as the domains of barbarism. This opinion, which went hand in hand with the colonial spirit, has the corollary that Christianity is detached from Judaism at the very outset, in order that it may enter the Greco-Roman world; and the nineteenth century is marked by the search for everything that can link the New Testament writings to the Greco-Roman world. The researches by R. Bultmann on rhetoric and G. Theissen on sociology are exemplary in this field; and the profound impact made by the writings of these scholars is very well known.

<sup>5</sup> The dominant scholarly presupposition is that the canonical gospels are four books composed separately, then united by means of a selection which eliminated other gospels. However, the manuscript tradition leads me to different conclusions: the primary fact—more important than the fact that they are separate books—is that they form a tetrad of gospels, i.e. four pieces of one single instruction. This is the reason for their coherence and complementarity. We can go so far as to define precisely the circumstances in which this tetrad was drawn up: the project features (in the second sense of this word) in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, and it was his successor, Polycarp of Smyrna, who realized it, doubtless ca. 120.

by Codex Beza.<sup>6</sup> I shall also have recourse to the second meaning of scripture, which was well known in classical antiquity and was linked to the work of redaction;<sup>7</sup> later, it was forgotten or concealed, and it plays no role in the contemporary exegetical tradition.

### 1. *The Social Origins of Jesus (4 BCE–6 CE)*

The gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus (Matt 1–2; Luke 1–2), which have nourished popular religion, have generated a sacred narrative in which Jesus is a divine infant born in a provincial family of modest means, and this picture has discouraged historical research, which sees only a legend here. This reductionist verdict is inadequate, since theology has never ceased to affirm the full humanity of Jesus. We are therefore justified in reading these stories afresh, in search of information about the person of Jesus. Humanly speaking, who is he?

#### 1.1. *The Date and Place of His Birth*

Two points of reference permit us to date precisely the birth of Jesus, viz. the death of Herod, mentioned above, and the long reign of Simon, the son of Boethus the Egyptian, who was high priest of the temple in Jerusalem from 22 to 5 BCE, and who provides a partial inspiration<sup>8</sup> for the figure of the righteous Simeon who is a witness to the presentation of Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:25–35).<sup>9</sup> This dates the birth of Jesus to 6 or 5 BCE. At that period, the Jewish religion was widespread throughout

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<sup>6</sup> This bilingual manuscript of the Gospels and Acts was copied ca. 400. It was kept first at Lyons, then at Geneva. Since 1584, it has been kept at Cambridge. The *apparatus criticus* refers to it as D. At Mark 8:10, it corrects the earliest reading *Dalmanutha*, but most often it preserves the older reading.

<sup>7</sup> In the *Peri archôn*, Origen says that this second meaning is inspired by “the Spirit of God.” He says in effect that this meaning is manifested by “roughnesses,” i.e. incoherences on the level of the first meaning, which are intended to draw attention to its presence. Later, Thomas Aquinas calls this second meaning the *sensus rerum*, which we might translate as “historical meaning” (in Latin, history is known as *res gestae*); P. Grelot explains that it contains “theological reflections on historical events” (P. Grelot, *Le langage symbolique dans la Bible* [Paris: Cerf, 2001], 199). This indicates the importance of this meaning for the historian’s work.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958).

<sup>9</sup> The other figure who can be glimpsed behind this Simeon is Simon the Just, who was high priest ca. 200 BCE.

the Roman empire, and had adherents among the aristocracy. Are we to suppose that every newborn child was entitled to such a ceremony? This means that Jesus was a privileged child.<sup>10</sup>

The place of his birth is more problematic, since Bethlehem is one of the elements which link Jesus to David and thus confer on him a legitimacy which will one day entitle him to become king of the Jews. This is why the historians have concluded that Jesus was quite simply born in Nazareth. However, this solution is no better, since we do not know for certain of the existence of the village of Nazareth at this date, and the name itself (which derives from the root *n-z-r*, “to consecrate”) creates a link between Jesus and the place of consecration, i.e. the temple. These two place-names mean that Jesus is a layman, born as a descendant of David (“at Bethlehem”), and that he subsequently grows up in the vicinity of the temple (“at Nazareth”).<sup>11</sup>

### 1.2. *The Family of Jesus*

Jesus is a descendant of David by means of the genealogy of his adoptive father, Joseph. But it is an aristocratic trait to preserve the memory of one’s ancestors, and this prompts the question whether Joseph belonged to the elite, i.e. to the caste of Sadducees.<sup>12</sup> The Talmud contains a list of nine families, seven of which belonged to the tribe of Judah, who were entitled to provide the wood for the altar in the temple on the occasion of an annual feast; one of these is the family of David.<sup>13</sup> Where does this wood come from? Is it linked to the profession of “carpenter”—which we are told was Joseph’s profession? Did this family of David own woodlands near Bethlehem—which would explain why Joseph was registered in the census in this village?

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<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the census of Quirinius poses a difficulty, since this is not attested until 6 CE. The start of the Christian era was fixed ca. 540 by the monk Dionysius Exiguus to the 753rd year after the foundation of Rome. In general, it is held that his calculation was erroneous. However, this dating could lie halfway between the birth of Jesus and the census of Quirinius (on this census, cf. the section “Jesus at the age of twelve,” below).

<sup>11</sup> The examples of Bethlehem and Nazareth show how the primary meaning, that of sacred history, is expressed, as well as the second meaning, that of history: a “roughness” invites us to look for a second meaning, although the first meaning is familiar to us.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, distinguishes between the lay nobility (the Sadducees) and the higher clergy.

<sup>13</sup> *b. Ta’an* 4:5.

Jesus has four brothers: James, Joseph (or Joset or John), Simon, and Jude, which were common names in the Sadducean families.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore tempting to situate the birth of Jesus in such a family. This Jesus would have come from the better districts in Jerusalem. He was born in the “family of David” and was brought up close to the temple.

Mary, for her part, is related to Elizabeth, who belongs to the tribe of Levi, like her husband, the priest Zechariah (Luke 1:5). Through his membership in this tribe, their son John, the future Baptist, is likewise a priest by birth.<sup>15</sup> Mary thus creates a link between Jesus and the priesthood; but Jesus is a layman by birth. It is only legends that affirm that Mary was born in the tribe of Judah,<sup>16</sup> but it remains true that she establishes a link of relationship between Jesus and a priestly family, in addition to his royal lineage.

This means that historical reality seems to speak in favor of Jerusalem. Jesus disturbs the centers of power because he has the qualities that can profoundly unsettle both the dynasty of Herod, who occupies without legitimacy the function of “king of the Jews,” and the chief priests, who have lost the dynastic succession to the profit of the Herodian family, which controls their nomination.

### 1.3. *Jesus at the Age of Twelve*

Luke’s infancy narrative closes with the episode in which Jesus, at the age of twelve, converses with the scribes, who possess and transmit the knowledge of the scriptures.<sup>17</sup> Can we imagine them having a meeting of this kind with a child from a modest background, whose education would necessarily have been very limited? The scene is improbable, and the historians discount it, regarding it as a page of “sacred history.”

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Matt 13:55 and Mark 6:3. These are the names of James (Jacob) and his principal sons (Simon, Jude, Joseph), of the first disciples (Simon, James, and John), and the last disciples (James, Simon, Jude/Judas), as well as of the future leaders of the Jerusalem community who were related to Jesus (James, Simon). We hear of the grandsons of Jude as late as the close of the first century (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.19–20).

<sup>15</sup> Let us recall that in Judaism, the function of priest is basically hereditary: it appertains to the tribe of Levi.

<sup>16</sup> “A very rich young man named Joachim lived at Jerusalem (...). At the age of twenty years, he took to his wife Anne, the daughter of Issachar, who belonged to the same tribe as himself; both were descended from the lineage of David” (A. Piñero, *L’autre Jésus: Vie de Jésus selon les évangiles apocryphes* [Paris: Seuil, 1996], 15 (following the Gospel of Ps.-Matthew 2)).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*.



But if Jesus comes from a Sadducean family in Jerusalem, the episode makes perfect sense: he receives his education from the scribes in the temple, whose task it was to train the children of the aristocracy, and at the age of twelve, this education is sufficiently advanced to allow Jesus to hold his own in a discussion with his schoolmasters. Like the upper class of the Jewish people, therefore, Jesus was educated in the temple at least until he was twelve years old.

If Jesus was born ca. 6 BCE, he would have turned twelve at the period of Quirinius's census, which was organized after the deposition of Archelaus<sup>18</sup> in order to assess the resources of Judea. Those who were recorded in the census had to pay the basic taxes which were collected by Rome. This is why Joseph was registered, together with his entire family—including Jesus. The Romans set up civil registers in 10 CE. Irrespective of his precise date of birth, Jesus was certainly born before this date, and this means that his birth was not declared officially. This means that the confusion between the date of his birth and the date of the census was a natural error about a hundred years later, during the redaction of Luke's writings.

#### 1.4. *Education*

Between the ages of twelve and thirty-four, Jesus received an education that was doubtless complex. (1) *The school of the scribes* sought to impart a full knowledge of Torah, and Jesus displays a knowledge of this kind in the episode of the temptation and on many other occasions. (2) *The school of the Pharisees* is the source of the principle that one must love one's neighbor, although the formula itself comes from Torah (Lev 19:18); in the generation before Jesus, the Pharisees had made this the basis of human relationships, although its original intention was only to regulate the conflicts between neighbors. This means that Jesus must have studied under the Pharisees. However, their teaching disappointed him, because it lacked the perspective of salvation. (3) *The apocalyptic movement* inspires his teaching about the coming of the "kingdom of God," the return of "the Son of Man," and the "last judgment" which will confound those who failed to make the right choice. This movement challenged the Herodian priesthood and awaited the return to the

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<sup>18</sup> Archelaus succeeded his father Herod in 4 BCE, but the Romans deposed him in 6 CE because of his prodigality. On the census, cf. C. Saulnier, *Histoire d'Israël*, 3: *De la conquête d'Alexandre à la destruction du temple* (Paris: Cerf, 1989), 489–491.

priesthood of the legitimate dynasty. Jesus studied in this school too, and the message that he brings is the message of this group.

After receiving a “Sadducean” education in the temple, then, Jesus attended the Pharisaic school, where he imbibed the principle of love of one’s neighbor, then the apocalyptic movement, especially the group around his cousin John, whose preaching was such a dramatic event in the 20’s of the Common Era. We may infer from this that Jesus had mastery of at least four languages: first of all Greek, since his name is the Greek form of “Joshua”;<sup>19</sup> then Hebrew, in order to be able to study Torah; then Aramaic, the language of the people of Judea; and finally Latin, the language of the legal system and of the Roman occupying power.

### 1.5. *The Question of Marriage*

Nothing in the gospels suggests that Jesus was married or had children. But like every young person in the Judaism of his time, Jesus must have envisaged marriage: Judaism accords to procreation an even greater value than is found among other peoples, and marriages were subject to a legislation which was so binding that it led to many illegitimate children.<sup>20</sup> In the school of the scribes, Jesus learned that one’s primary duty is to establish a family and have children; the first of the Noachic laws gives sexuality a decisive orientation towards procreation.<sup>21</sup> In the school of the Pharisees, Jesus learned the importance of the father’s role in the celebration of the sabbath and in the synagogue, and his own teaching shows that he retained a positive image of marriage. It seems, however, that his cousin John chose celibacy. In the Judaism which awaited and made ready for the return of the legitimate high priest, there was a tendency to asceticism and to sexual abstinence, which were influenced by Egypt rather than by the Nazirite consecration to God (which applied only to a limited period, without sexual abstinence).<sup>22</sup> This meant that John had neither wife nor child. As for Mary Magdalene, the gnostic texts which speak of her are concerned with symbolism rather than with history.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> In Greek, the Book of Joshua is called “Jesus.”

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*.

<sup>21</sup> “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1). On these laws, see below.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Num 6.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. Piñero, *Jésus*, 109–120, the chapter on “Jesus, women, and sexuality.”

## 2. *A Reform Project (28–30)*

Although the rest of the gospels is devoted to the ministry of Jesus, their picture does not present us with the historical Jesus,<sup>24</sup> unless there exists some coherence to which as yet we lack the key. My analysis shows that the gospels consist of two narrative series which were originally distinct but were then united in such a way as to constitute one sacred history. Nevertheless, they remain separable, and their separation supplies us with the keys to the genuine history of Jesus. In an Appendix to this essay, I present the list of the episodes and a rapid analysis of each series in Mark.<sup>25</sup> One of these series, which includes the episodes in the three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) set out in the same order, tells a story of Jesus' ministry which is close to the story told in John. The issue at stake was a project for the reform of the priesthood in the temple at Jerusalem. The second series, which includes the other episodes in the synoptic gospels, tells a different story in two periods, as we shall see below.

The first story is based on the link between the ministry of Jesus and that of John. After Jesus receives his investiture from John, he becomes his spokesman when the Baptist is imprisoned, and then his successor after his death. Let us now look at this story.

### 2.1. *The Investiture of Jesus*

Four narratives found in all four gospels present the stages by means of which we can relate the story of Jesus' ministry: (1) the baptism of Jesus; (2) the multiplication of the loaves; (3) the entry into Jerusalem; (4) the trial and the death of Jesus.

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<sup>24</sup> In the introduction to *Histoire du christianisme*, 1: *Le nouveau peuple (des origines à 250)*, ed. J.-M. Mayeur et al. (Paris: Desclée, 2000), 14–15, D. Marguerat writes: "Most of the words and actions attributed to Jesus cannot be located in space and time with an adequate guarantee of correctness. A few certain points of reference remain: the baptism of Jesus on the threshold of his public ministry; the concentration of his activity in Galilee; a widespread praxis of healings; an escalating conflict with the religious authorities of Israel; a final period at Jerusalem which was marked by the eruption of the crisis; and his execution, which was decided upon by the Romans in reaction to a Jewish denunciation."

<sup>25</sup> Cf. C.-B. Amphoux, "Quelques remarques sur la formation, le genre littéraire et la composition de l'évangile de Marc," *FN* 10 (1997): 5–34.

The story of the beginning of Jesus' ministry has two basic elements: (1) the baptism of Jesus (the principal narrative), which Luke dates in an emphatic manner (Luke 3:1-2); (2) the incarceration of John, a transition which marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry "in Galilee."

One day in 28 (Luke 3:1), doubtless between Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus receives the baptism which his cousin John the Baptist imparts. He is roughly thirty-four years old, and this event is remarkable in that it is the only event in his entire ministry which is dated. What then is so special about this baptism, that it should be dated in this way?

First of all, the baptism is a sign that Jesus is an adherent of the preaching of John the Baptist, and it therefore signals his breach with the caste from which he himself comes. It takes place in the Jordan and is imparted by John; the account closes with two images, one visual (the descent of the dove), the other aural (the proclamation by a voice from heaven that Jesus is the "Son of God").

#### 2.1.1. *The Descent of the Dove*

The first image plays on the proper names in the narrative. "To descend" is the meaning of the Hebrew *y-r-d*, which is the root of the word "Jordan"; and "dove," in Hebrew *ywnh*, gives the name Jonas, an anagram both of *Ioan-*, the name of John, and of *Onia-* (Onias), the last legitimate high priest, who was deposed in 175 BCE. In other words, this image tells us that a priestly investiture was conferred on Jesus when he was baptized. Obviously, this calls for some explanation.

The Judaism of Jesus' period was tripartite: (1) the *Sadducees* supported the priesthood which was in office at that time and which provided the livelihood of the priests and scribes of the temple; (2) the *Pharisees* had a system of teaching which was independent of the temple, but they respected it as a sign of unity and of Jewish identity; (3) the *apocalyptic movement* fought against the Herodian priesthood which was in office, since it regarded this as illegitimate, and wanted to re-establish a high priest who came from the legitimate dynasty. This movement was divided and rather ineffective. With the exception of the Zealots, who fought against Rome, the adversary was the Herodian dynasty, since the Roman sovereignty was in continuity with that of the Persian kings and later the Greek kings in the days of the former priestly dynasty. The principal question concerned the temple, rather than the palace: if the high priesthood is restored to the dynasty, the Herodian family will be obliged to disappear, and the chosen one of God who

is installed in the temple will be able to assume in his own person the function of “king of the Jews.” This means that a divine act of election is necessary—and for Jesus, his baptism is just such an occasion.

But how can this choice fall on Jesus, who is a layman? We find the required model in the Book of Ezra. After the return from exile, the first high priest to be installed is Joshua, whose legitimacy comes from his father Jehozadak, a descendant of the mythical high priest of Solomon, Zadok “the Just.” On this model, two related persons can found a dynasty: one is the founder, and the other is the first to exercise the function. John and Jesus are relatives; John founds the project of reforming the priesthood of the Jerusalem temple, then designates Jesus as the first legitimate high priest, once the temple has been reconquered. A prophecy in Jeremiah<sup>26</sup> envisages the installation of a third dynasty in Jerusalem, after that of the kings of Judah and that of the descendants of Zadok, which ceased with Onias in 175 BCE.<sup>27</sup> The fact that Torah includes Leviticus, which is the law of the priests, means that the Jewish people as a whole is called to become a holy people, i.e. the priestly people for the other peoples, in view of the establishment of a universal religion which will have Yahweh for its God and the sanctuary in Jerusalem as its temple. The choice of Jesus by John is first of all the choice of a relative, out of sheer necessity; but it is also the choice of a layman, to signal that the time has come for the Jewish people to assume its function vis-à-vis the other peoples. Jesus will be both the king of this people (since he is David’s descendant) and the high priest of the renewed religion (since he receives investiture from John).

### 2.1.2. *The Voice from Heaven*

The second image proclaims Jesus “Son of God,” and this is the expression which those who speak with Jesus choose when they speak about

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<sup>26</sup> This refers to Jer 33:14–26, which is not found in the Septuagint version. Biblical scholars and historians (Bogaert, Piovanelli, Römer, Sérandour) regard it as an addition which dates from the period when the Hasmonaeen dynasty was established, i.e. shortly after 150 BCE.

<sup>27</sup> Neither the Hasmonaeans, who supplanted the previous dynasty, nor the Herodians succeeded in winning acceptance for their legitimacy. This means that at the time of Jesus, the third dynasty remained a project; and it was from this project that Christianity would be born.

him.<sup>28</sup> As yet, this has nothing to do with christology (Paul, ca. 55) or biological sonship (the infancy narratives, ca. 100): this is a title of sovereignty borne by kings such as those of Alexandria who were heirs to the Pharaohs. It confers on Jesus legitimacy as sovereign. In the present case, this is a priestly sovereignty which is not opposed to Roman rule.

In the year 28, therefore, there exists a project for the reform of Judaism, for which John prepares the way.<sup>29</sup> The aim is to restore a priestly dynasty to the temple in accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah, and the first dignitary to hold this office will be Jesus. But just as David in the past had to win his kingly power after he was anointed by Samuel, so Jesus now receives investiture by John before he begins the struggle to achieve the right to exercise the functions that are his.

## 2.2. *Spokesman of John the Baptist*

### 2.2.1. *The Noachic Laws*

We are still in the year 28. John is alive, and perhaps he communicates with his disciples or with Jesus. In the eyes of the crowd, his succession is in preparation, but this is not an open question. The legitimacy still belongs to John; he has just demonstrated that Antipas is willing to break the Noachic laws about sexuality. John has underlined the centrality of these laws. Under the former priestly dynasty, the cult of Yahweh was linked to obedience to the Mosaic law. This law, however, concerns the Jewish people in a specific manner, since it seeks to bring about a holiness which is not envisaged for the other peoples. Accordingly, this law cannot be extended to apply to them: but the Noachic laws are appropriate for the other peoples, because they were promulgated in the days of Noah, immediately after the flood.<sup>30</sup> They propose a legislative

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<sup>28</sup> Jesus is frequently called "Son of God": by Satan in his temptation, by the demons whom he exorcizes, by his disciples, by the cloud when he is transfigured, by the crowd, and finally by the centurion at his death. The chief priests accuse him of having usurped this title.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. G. Theissen, "Jésus et la crise sociale de son temps," in *Jésus de Nazareth: Nouvelles approches d'une énigme*, ed. D. Marguerat et al., Le monde de la Bible (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1998), 143: "The proclamation of the forgiveness of sins through a baptism throws down the gauntlet to the temple, since the temple offered both sacrifices and opportunities for expiation, for the sins of the people as well as for the sins of the individual."

<sup>30</sup> Gen 9:1-17.

base which is common to all peoples and has two aspects, one moral (prohibition of idolatry, of murder, and of adultery), the other ritual (prohibition of certain kinds of meat).<sup>31</sup>

### 2.2.2. *John's Strategy*

When he comes to receive baptism, Jesus mingles with a new public, viz. John's hearers—mostly, these are simple people, but not exclusively. They are united by their common rejection of the Herodian priesthood and by the conviction that the mediation between God and his people has stopped and will be resumed only when the legitimate priesthood returns. This means that a better life depends on the reform of the priesthood. The relative prosperity of this period<sup>32</sup> changes nothing, since these people see the problem as lying on the level of institutions: the high priest cannot be legitimate if he is appointed by a prince who himself is controlled by a foreign sovereign. When he encounters this crowd, which is open to hope and looks for a profound change in society, Jesus' message consists in preparing it for the change through fidelity to the law, confidence in the project, and a firm assurance that the mediation with God will be restored. The crowd which had followed John now listens to Jesus, who must structure his words in keeping with two distinct groups. He must preach to the new-comers, but also give instruction to those who have taken the first steps and have asked for baptism. He does not alter the strategy of John, who had sought to challenge the authorities who had deprived the temple of its mediatory function and to install in their place the one who would be legitimately both "king of the Jews" and "Son of God."

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<sup>31</sup> We find a good overview of the Noachic prohibitions in Acts 15, in the draft of a (fictitious) letter sent to all the believers in the name of the communities of Jerusalem and Antioch. The text is initially oral (v. 20), and is then reproduced in its written form (v. 29). The manuscript tradition transmits two main forms. The form known as "western" emphasizes the moral meaning, including the "golden rule," a variant of the principle that one must love one's neighbor; the form known as "Alexandrian" emphasizes the ritual meaning, including meat "that has been strangled." Irenaeus of Lyons comments on the first form; Clement of Alexandria comments on the second form. The synthesis of the two traditions comes first with Origen.

<sup>32</sup> Theissen, "Jésus," 138: "The movement of Jesus was born in a relatively calm period. It is true that the situation was not without tensions, but there were no major conflicts." Cf. also 136–137.

### 2.2.3. *Cana and Capernaum*

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus leaves Nazareth, where he heals a leper, and settles in Capernaum, where he heals a paralytic (Mark 2:1). In John, Jesus goes from Cana, where he performs his first healing, to Jerusalem, where he heals a paralytic (5:1). The geography is different, but the healings are similar. In the second meaning, the journeys are superimposed on one another and correspond to the same story: the first town is the location of zeal for the temple, and the second town is the location of the apocalyptic movement. The passage from one town to the other is thus the image of Jesus' breach with the Sadducees and his adherence to the reform of the priesthood which John the Baptist had undertaken.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, Jesus is preparing his future ministry. He gathers a number of companions in order to meet the demands of a growing crowd, and he gives the first signs of his messianic identity by healing and teaching.

### 2.2.4. *The Companions of Jesus*

Jesus calls several persons to accompany him in his ministry, and these men become his disciples. In the synoptic gospels, Jesus calls disciples on two occasions. First, there are four fishermen, Simon and Andrew, James and John; then a tax collector ("Matthew" in Matthew, "Levi" in Luke, "James" or "Levi" in Mark, according to the manuscripts).<sup>34</sup> In John too, five disciples are called; the first disciples are likewise called in pairs, and the fifth is Nathanael. Once again, the first meaning presents us with two competing traditions; but the second meaning shows that what we have here are two different presentations of one and the same story. The tax collector is "seated" when Jesus calls him, and Nathanael is "under the fig-tree" when Jesus sees him—a well known metaphor for the study of Torah. In order to carry out his professional work, a tax collector needs the three qualities which are indispensable for the

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<sup>33</sup> There is a numerical equivalence between Capernaum and Jerusalem, and between Nazar[eth] and Cana<'an> (or Qana<'an>), according to a numerical code based on 7, which is found very frequently in the gospels and comes from the Hebrew of the Torah. According to this code, the value of Capernaum and Jerusalem is 33, and the value of Nazara and Qana'an (or Cana'an) 20.

<sup>34</sup> The oldest form seems to be James; then this name is replaced by "Levi," borrowed from Luke. This last disciple points to the importance of *writing*, viz. either the function of evangelist (Matthew, John) or the function of the master who inspires him (in Luke and Mark).



study of Torah: he must know how to read, to write, and to count. This means that the fifth disciple is a scribe, while the others are preachers who come from the same milieu as Jesus, since they bear the same names as his brothers.<sup>35</sup> Their activity, the ministry of preaching or teaching, is carried out in a standing position.

From this first phase of his ministry onwards, therefore, Jesus surrounds himself with a number of preachers and with a scribe. These first disciples were doubtless recruited from among young Sadducean men who broke with their caste, like Jesus himself. Here, there are five disciples; in the other tradition, where (as we shall see) the meaning is different, they become twelve (cf. the Appendix). Their functions are very significant. They give Jesus a decisive orientation to the *word*. At present, he is still transmitting the word of John, but he will be able to give this word a personal color and to give it a fixed form in writing. This will both prepare and legitimate the future.

#### 2.2.5. *The First Healings*

In the synoptic gospels, the first sick person to be cured by Jesus is a leper who comes to Jesus because he already knows of his saving power: in other words, this man has received instruction. Besides this, leprosy occupies a central position in Torah, at the heart of Leviticus (chs. 13–14), and this makes it a metaphor for the condition of the priests. In John, the man who asks Jesus to save his son is a *basilikos*, a “royal official,” or rather a *basiliskos*, a “basilisk,” if we accept the oldest state of John’s Greek text. A basilisk is a serpent; and in Genesis, the serpent is a metaphor for knowledge that is ambiguous, either good or evil. The serpent makes the man who bears its name a learned or wise man who is at odds with his own wisdom and is therefore incapable of ensuring the survival of his son. This unites the basilisk and the leper: they are the faithful in the temple. And they benefit from Jesus’ first healing action, which is an image of the precedence they enjoy in the kingdom of heaven. This means that Jesus does not present himself as an enemy of the temple—rather, it is the temple that will become his enemy.

The second sick man expects nothing from Jesus and asks for nothing. The similarity between the synoptic gospels and John is more visible. Both traditions speak of a paralytic, and Jesus pronounces the same formula: “Rise, take up your bed and walk!” The paralytic represents

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. n. 14 above.

the apocalyptic movement. He is afflicted by his own fault, and Jesus begins by pardoning him. The healing is thus in continuity with the preaching of John, and at the same time constitutes a sign of hope which confers a little more legitimacy on the project which Jesus has inherited from John. The reform of the priesthood has begun. At the moment, the milieu of the temple still takes precedence, but it is no longer this milieu that guides the course of events. This milieu benefits from the mediation between God and his people which has been re-established, and which is signified by the healing; as yet, the apocalyptic movement takes second place. It remains to be seen what each of the two will make of the grace which it receives in this way.

This story is therefore based on a reform project which was a response to the crisis of legitimacy which had affected the priesthood since 175 BCE and had intensified since the reign of Herod. And this means that Christianity was born in the wings of the temple and has a priestly origin, whereas the Pharisees developed their teaching without paying any heed to the teaching that was given in the temple.

### 2.3. *Successor to John*

John was assassinated early on, in the prison of Machaerus (according to Josephus). Jesus, initially his spokesman, now becomes his successor, and a new strategy is put in place. In the gospels, this is indicated by the replacement of the theme of water (baptism) by that of seed (the multiplication of the loaves).

#### 2.3.1. *The Death of John*

The circumstances of John's death<sup>36</sup> are reported immediately after the narrative of the multiplication of the loaves. On the occasion of Antipas's birthday, the daughter of Herodias charms her future father-in-law and obtains from him the head of John, thereby accomplishing the revenge of her mother, who had been outraged by John's attack. We might be tempted to see this as an historical anecdote, but in reality, the story is inspired by the Book of Esther, and its intention is to alert Herod to the future change of dynasty: in Esther, Ahasuerus is supplanted by Mordecai, after he has threatened to exterminate the Jewish people, and at the present day, it is his partisans who are threatened with

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<sup>36</sup> Mark 6:14–29 (= Matt 14:1–12; cf. Luke 9:7–9).

extermination.<sup>37</sup> For Antipas, the picture is complete: through the violation of the three principles of the Noachic law, Antipas—mockingly called “King Herod”—compromises his entire dynasty. This murder is a flagrant political error. Far from stopping John’s project, it hastens on the accession to power of the successor whom John had taken care to nominate.

### 2.3.2. *The Theme of Seed*

The section which centers on the death of John begins with two brief episodes: the ears of corn which the disciples pluck, and the healing of the man with the withered hand.<sup>38</sup>

Several details in the first episode allow us to date the death of John to the early spring of 29.<sup>39</sup> Literally speaking, the scene is set in a wheat field, but another place is suggested when Jesus compares himself to David and his companions, who ate the loaves of the Presence which were reserved to the priests,<sup>40</sup> at a period when he had been anointed and Saul was still in power. The setting is now a place within the temple, before the entrance to the holy of holies, at the season when the table of offerings is piled high with the first fruits of the harvest, which are laid on it in accordance with the law.<sup>41</sup> Jesus, in full consciousness of his ancestry, signals that he is starting to exercise the function of “king of the Jews.” And the place he chooses to make this known signals that he also envisages the priestly function with which John the Baptist has invested him.

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<sup>37</sup> The Book of Esther, which was written shortly before 80 BCE, may well allude to the massacre of the Pharisees by the Hasmonaean Alexander Jannaeus in 88 BCE, and Mordecai’s accession to power may announce revenge for this massacre in the form of a future accession to power by the Pharisees. However, when the Romans arrived in 63 BCE, it was Herod who became king. This time, it is John who is assassinated and who threatens Herod with loss of control over the temple: Herod will see a dynastic priesthood re-established there, with John’s successor.

<sup>38</sup> Mark 2:23–28 (= Matt 12:1–8; Luke 6:1–5) and Mark 3:1–6 (= Matt 12:9–14; Luke 6:6–11).

<sup>39</sup> The formula “at that time” (repeated at Matt 12:1 and 14:1) refers to the same event. This precision differs from the general formula “in those days” which is used at the beginning of the baptism narrative (Matt 3:1): the sabbath on which the ears of grain are plucked is linked to the death of John. In Luke 6:1, one word specifies that this was the “second first” sabbath, i.e. the sabbath of the week of unleavened bread (= the seven days following Passover). If the Passover falls on a sabbath day, it is the second. Otherwise, it is the first. This word is lacking in our modern Greek text, but it is an interesting detail.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. 1 Sam 21:4–7.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Lev 23:9–11.

The second episode is an action performed on the same day, involving the Pharisees. Jesus has just met them in the temple, where they have criticized the disciples' behavior in the name of the law—thereby refusing to associate themselves with the reform of the priesthood. Did Jesus intend to ally himself with them against the Herodian priesthood? One may well think so; but whatever the answer to this question may be, Jesus puts his question once again: ought not the law to take a back place vis-à-vis the reform of the priesthood? And the Pharisees respond by forming an alliance with the Herodians against Jesus. From now on, a new strategy becomes necessary, and Jesus soon reveals this to his disciples.

We can locate the multiplication of the loaves in the synoptic gospels (where it marks a close) at the feast of harvest. In John, it is a point of departure and is dated to the period of Passover. For this reason, loaves of barley are used. The bread is a metaphor of the abundance at harvest time, the gift of God—although when Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise, he demanded that they work hard to make food and cook it. At the same time, it is a metaphor for the word of the preacher, which emerges from one single mouth and enters thousands of ears. And this is given, not to the disciples, but to the crowd: Jesus gives it to the disciples in order that they may feed the crowd, not themselves, since *their* nourishment is the seed. The gift of bread to the crowd and Jesus' preferential treatment of the crowd are an indication of his strategy, which is made more explicit in John's words about the "bread of life":<sup>42</sup> by turning his back on a political career, Jesus reveals here to his disciples that the path he is now taking is the path of martyrdom, i.e. that he risks death.

### 2.3.3. *The Tabernacles and the Light*

As yet, the synoptic gospels present this dramatic strategy in veiled words. Thanks to the histories of previous dynasties we learn that violence engenders violence. In Jesus' eyes, violence does not offer a just solution. It is therefore better to suffer violence than to commit it. Jesus therefore sets out on a path which does not consist in a mere passive expectation of violence at the hands of the other, but rather in reversing its effect in such a way that it is used *against* those who commit it. He takes the risk of a death caused by the chief priests of Jerusalem—but a death that would discredit them.

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<sup>42</sup> John 6:26–59.

It is under these conditions that the tabernacles and the light are united. In the synoptic gospels,<sup>43</sup> Jesus appears *luminously* between Moses and Elijah, and the disciples suggest erecting *tabernacles*. In John, Jesus has gone up in secret to the feast of *Tabernacles*, where he reveals that he is the *light* of the world.<sup>44</sup> The summer has brought a harsh test for the disciples, which is echoed in the synoptic gospels by the triple announcement of the passion; the first prediction comes at the very moment when his disciples recognize in Jesus the Messiah, i.e. the legitimate high priest and the king of the Jews.<sup>45</sup> As soon as the disciples declare their readiness to follow Jesus in a work of reform, he tells them that he is soon to die. And he repeats this terrible prediction to them twice more, when he welcomes the children and when he utters warnings to the rich.<sup>46</sup>

To accept the risk of death is a reversal of ethics, and the gospel adds to this the rejection of power: “Whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (Mark 10:43). Jesus succeeds John the Baptist, not in order to rule, but in order to serve. In John’s gospel, we find another rejection, with regard to the leaders of Judea: they are no longer the children of Abraham, but of the devil. In other words, they pass from election to relegation, and are accursed. In the synoptic gospels, the children (the crowd) go before the rich (the adversaries). It is they who have precedence in the kingdom, without any active work of their own or any merit—but with so many privations that their hope is absolute.

The summer of 29 is the time of the birth of the Christianity of the heart, which unites the ethics of love of one’s neighbor to a gift of oneself that goes as far as martyrdom.

Obviously, the public words of Jesus did not leave people indifferent. On the one hand, the crowds were confirmed in their ever more intense expectation of a change; on the other hand, Jesus united the authorities against himself.

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<sup>43</sup> The transfiguration: Mark 9:2–13 (= Matt 17:1–13; Luke 9:28–36).

<sup>44</sup> John 7:1–13 and 8:12.

<sup>45</sup> Matt 16:13–20 (= Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–21). The first prediction of the passion comes immediately afterwards: Matt 16:2–23 (= Mark 8:31–33; Luke 9:22).

<sup>46</sup> Mark 9:30–32 (= Matt 17:22–23; Luke 9:43–45) and Mark 10:32–34 (= Matt 20:17–19; Luke 18:31–35) respectively.

### 2.3.4. *The Royal and Priestly Messianism*

This brings us to the feast of the winter solstice (John 10:22). Jesus returns here to the subject of messianism. (1) The good shepherd<sup>47</sup> is a metaphor for the royal Messiah, who lays down his life for the sake of his sheep. (2) The resurrection of Lazarus<sup>48</sup> is a metaphor of the return to life in the temple, where death reigns.

Jesus' teaching becomes ever less tolerable in the eyes of the local authorities, since he calls them into question more and more explicitly. But there is as yet no compelling argument to take a decision which would result *either* in his elimination (which by now seems the more likely outcome) *or* else in the reform of the priesthood which Jesus advocates (a reform which would in fact succeed, if his adversaries hesitated at the last moment to offer him resistance).

## 2.4. *The Death of Jesus*

### 2.4.1. *Jesus Enters Jerusalem*

A few days before Passover in the year 30, Jesus enters Jerusalem, riding on an ass. Here, Jesus has found the compelling argument, since the ass is found in two Old Testament texts. (1) The crowd gives the scene its first meaning, seeing it in the light of Zech 9:9, "Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass": Jesus is acclaimed as the messianic king. (2) For the chief priests, however, this scene is an allusion to Gen 49:10–11, where Jacob says: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah...until he comes to whom it belongs; *and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples*. Binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine..."<sup>49</sup> The correspondence is not so good, but my italics underline the essential point: this sign makes Jesus a rival to Caesar, no longer merely to Herod, and the chief priests can now use this text to accuse Jesus of sedition against Rome and to get Pilate to judge him and eliminate him in perfect accord with the law. Through this sign, Jesus both galvanizes the crowd in their hope and gives the chief priests a pretext for having him condemned legally.

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<sup>47</sup> John 10.

<sup>48</sup> John 11.

<sup>49</sup> RSV.

Historically speaking, the discussions which Jesus now has with the various leading figures in Jerusalem are not very probable in such a context, but they offer a perfect definition of the positions which each group takes, when seen from the perspective of Jesus' strategy. Only the apocalyptic movement is absent from these conversations; doubtless, it was on the side of the crowd at that time. After this, Jesus gathers his disciples and prepares to celebrate the Passover with them; the details of these narratives are well known.

#### 2.4.2. *Jesus' Trial and Death*

In the night of April 6–7 in the year 30, Jesus is arrested and brought before the various authorities: the Sanhedrin, the chief priests, Herod, and finally Pilate, the only one who condemns people to death. But how is Jesus' identity established, when he stands before Pilate? In the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, his illegitimate birth is recalled. Did the Roman administration produce on that occasion an extract from Quirinius's census? That would explain several things: first of all, that the fact that Jesus was mentioned in that census, was preserved; and secondly, that it was this extract that gave rise to the suspicion of an illegitimate birth. Jesus has enjoyed a relative measure of protection up to this point, thanks to his social status, but from now on he will be treated as if he were a slave—crucifixion was the form of execution meted out to slaves.

The charges leveled against Jesus are stated on Pilate's *titulus*:<sup>50</sup> he is a "Nazoraean" and "king of the Jews." In other words, he claims to be the legitimate high priest and king of his people.<sup>51</sup> But this does not suffice for a condemnation, and the high priests are obliged to insist that setting Jesus free will make Pilate an enemy of Caesar. Pilate must also be reminded of the text from Genesis 49. Finally, Jesus is condemned for having laid claim to priestly legitimacy, as if this meant that he had been guilty of subversion vis-à-vis the Romans.

Jesus is condemned and executed on the same day, the day of preparation, i.e. the day before Passover, a few hours before the sunset which marks the beginning of this feast day. This was Nisan 14, or April 7, in the year 30. The chief priests are triumphant. When they obtain a legal

<sup>50</sup> John 19:19, "Jesus the Nazoraean, the king of the Jews" (the source of the famous abbreviation "INRI").

<sup>51</sup> In the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, Jesus is accused of having made himself "king of the Jews" and "Son of God." Cf. R. Gounelle in *Écrits apocryphes chrétiens* 2:251–297.

condemnation of Jesus, they are putting an end to the entire project begun by John the Baptist. Jesus, who has not designated anyone to succeed him, cannot in fact have a successor, since both his project and his person are condemned. However, the crowd does not accept this unjust death, and the chief priests will enjoy only a brief respite.

#### 2.4.3. *The Resurrection*

To call the resurrection of Jesus a paradoxical event is an understatement. The narrative of the resurrection comes at the close of the gospel: it is as if the life of Jesus had finished with his death. It would however be only logical for the story of his ministry to continue here, relating the works accomplished by “the living Jesus.” What actually happened?

Some women from the disciples’ entourage, those who had been present at the foot of the cross to the very end, and some other women suddenly have the intuition or vision that he is alive. The disciples are informed, but they find it difficult to believe this; but as soon as the crowd hears this rumor, they accept this incredible idea. Nourished by the years of John’s and then Jesus’ preaching, the crowd creates in this way the first Christian community, and the disciples must cope with a question they were not expecting and for which they were not prepared.

The gospels only *seem* to stop at the death of Jesus. In reality, the resurrection sounds like a musical *da capo* which sends the reader back to the beginning, with a second series of episodes which we have left to one side while we were looking at the “earthly” ministry of Jesus. This brings us to the question of his heavenly ministry.

### 3. *The Heavenly Ministry (30–63)*

#### 3.1. *The First Decisions of the Community*

The disciples ask: Who then is Jesus? Their relationship to him had been that of disciples to a teacher, but now they ask questions about his nature: Is he only a human being? Can a human being rise from the dead? How are we to handle the resurrection, when this crowd expects things to continue? Gradually, the disciples were obliged to take their first decisions.

According to the Acts of the Apostles, their earliest decision is to explain the resurrection as a return to life which then leads to an



absence. The risen Jesus is still alive, but he is no longer there: he has ascended to heaven and has become a heavenly personage. The legitimate high priest thus takes his place in heaven: the ascension of Jesus occurs forty days after the resurrection. And the expectation is that the mediation with God, which had been interrupted, will be resumed on high.

But who is to lead the community? We find two ideas: either one of his brothers, if he is indeed dead; or else the disciples, if he is still alive and absent. For in the latter case, he needs spokesmen; he does not yet need a successor. Acts relates the dilemma and the choice which was made in an anecdote placed immediately before the story of the first Pentecost (Acts 1:23–26). The replacement for Judas is chosen by lot between two candidates whose names are open to a second meaning: one represents the family of Jesus, and the other represents the one who will put down Jesus' words in writing. For one side, the *death* of Jesus is the most important factor, and it is necessary to continue the dynastic systems, continuing the struggle to reform the priesthood, although of course this does not prevent Jesus from being alive and from inspiring the action taken by the new leaders. For the other side, his *life* is the most important factor, and they believe that the community must be entrusted to the care of Jesus' disciples, who are those best placed to receive his inspirations and to continue his ministry. The thesis of the disciples wins the day.

Two episodes in the gospels from our second series are open to a second meaning which expresses these two decisions, viz. Jesus' rejection of his family<sup>52</sup> and the passage which combines three logia about the lamp, the secret, and the final retribution.<sup>53</sup> There is thus good reason to read this second series not as an alternative presentation of the earthly ministry of Jesus, but in relation to the beginnings of the earliest community in Jerusalem, i.e. as a parallel to the Acts of the Apostles.

In this improvised context, the harvest feast takes on a particular solemnity. The ardor of the crowd who listen to Peter's words makes them experience Pentecost as a great eschatological feast, which some see as the reversal of the sign of Babel:<sup>54</sup> after the flood, God dispersed the human beings who had collaborated in the construction of a tower

<sup>52</sup> Mark 3:31–35 (= Matt 12:46–50 and Luke 8:19–21).

<sup>53</sup> Mark 4:21–25 (= Luke 8:16–18). In Matthew, the three logia exist separately, each inserted into one of the "discourses" of Jesus: Matt 5:15, 10:26, and 13:12.

<sup>54</sup> Gen 11.

that would reach up to him in heaven, and he made them speak different languages, so that they would no longer be able to understand one another. Now, we witness the opposite effect. In the joy of this rediscovered communication, the disciples establish an instruction, regulations, a cult consisting of prayers, and two rites, those of baptism and the eucharist.<sup>55</sup>

For the moment, their teaching is inspired by that of Jesus. They integrate the principle of love of neighbor into an ethic founded on the law, uniting this to faith in the imminent return of the risen Jesus who has ascended to heaven.<sup>56</sup> But this provisional situation cannot last; and as the period of waiting grows longer, the disciples are obliged to equip themselves to face the challenge. They choose to include a scribe in their group, and it is he who will take up the task of editing the words of Jesus.

In principle, the historian's work stops with the earthly ministry of Jesus; but he cannot ignore the fact (as it is indeed a fact) that the first Christians lived with the idea of a heavenly guide. The disciples and the brothers of Jesus were only his spokesmen, acting under his inspiration. I believe therefore that it is useful to break with the tradition which sees the life of Jesus as ending with his death. Instead, we should relate the beginnings of Christianity as still forming part of the ministry of Jesus, as we find them in those gospel episodes which are in the second series of episodes in the synoptics (cf. the Appendix).

### 3.2. *The Prologue*

In this perspective, an initial episode<sup>57</sup> serves as a prologue to the heavenly ministry by summing up the earthly ministry. Jesus arrives at Capernaum, where his legitimacy is immediately recognized. He goes to the synagogue, where he exorcises a demoniac, and then enters the house of Simon and Andrew, where he heals Simon's mother-in-law. When evening comes, he performs many healings and exorcisms on the sick persons who throng around his door. Then he disappears, and Simon and the others go out to look for him, and bring him back. Jesus

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<sup>55</sup> We find this in substance (though in a different order) in the *Didache*, with the exception of the final apocalyptic scene; and we read this résumé in Acts 2:41–42, immediately after Peter's discourse.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the *Didache*, including the final scene.

<sup>57</sup> Jesus at Capernaum: Mark 1:21–39 (= Luke 4:31–44).

then decides to set off on a mission in order to spread the message of salvation of which he is the bearer.

It is not very difficult to decipher the second meaning. Capernaum represents the apocalyptic movement, which recognizes the legitimacy of Jesus; the synagogue is the school of the Pharisees, which has understood Jesus' project but does not support him; Simon's house is a metaphor for the temple, which Jesus serves to the best of his ability, but which will ultimately provoke his departure; the door is the place of preaching, which proves very effective; and finally, Jesus' disappearance and his return in the company of Simon evoke the death and resurrection of Jesus. John the Baptist has no place here: the episode is oriented wholly to the heavenly ministry of Jesus.

### 3.3. *The Summary*

The second episode<sup>58</sup> gives us the structure of the ca. thirty years which follow the death of Jesus. This begins on the level of the crowd, whose origins are represented by three pairs of regions, with one central region between the first two pairs and the last:<sup>59</sup>

*A crowd which came from Galilee and Judea,  
and from Jerusalem and Idumea,  
and those beyond the Jordan,  
and those about Tyre and those about Sidon.*

This geography must be read anew in the light of history. The two first pairs represent the currents of Jerusalem, viz. the apostles (Galilee and Judea) and the hellenists (Jerusalem and Idumea); the last pair (Tyre and Sidon) is the direction of the journeys of Paul; between these groups, we find the region of the road to Damascus, where Saul of Tarsus was converted. A first reading might suggest that Jerusalem occupied the central position between two regions with a Jewish majority (Galilee and Judea) and four with a strong Jewish minority (Idumea, Transjordania,

<sup>58</sup> The crowd; the choice of the twelve: Mark 3:7–19 (= Luke 6:12–19; cf. Matt 4:23–25 and 10:1–4).

<sup>59</sup> This strange geography in Mark 3:7–8 is found in Codex Beza, the oldest form of the text. What we read today is a form that was fixed in the fourth century: "a great multitude from *Galilee* followed; also from *Judea* and *Jerusalem* and *Idumea* and from *beyond the Jordan* and from *about Tyre and Sidon*." The list has become completely opaque.

Tyre, and Sidon), but the syntax compels us here to recognize that the central position is held not by Jerusalem, but by the most important event of the heavenly ministry, viz. the road to Damascus.

The second insight is communicated by the list of the twelve apostles, structured by means of three groups of four disciples.<sup>60</sup> The disciples in the first group represent the apostles, or perhaps the first debate between the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and which ended in the choice of the apostles as leaders of the community. The second group represents the debate between apostles and hellenists about the words of Jesus. The last group represents the period when the brothers of the Lord were at the head of the community, including the period of Paul's missionary preaching. This structure is superimposed upon the earlier structure, since the two first groups point back to the time before the conversion of Paul and the last group is the consequence of this conversion.

The episodes which follow this summary concern the family of Jesus and the three logia;<sup>61</sup> we have touched on these above, in the context of the initial debate. As we read them in Matthew, each of the three logia corresponds to a specific genre. The first discourse of Jesus (Matt 5–7) collects “words” which are destined for everyone, the second (Matt 10) collects “instructions” which are destined for the disciples, and the third discourse (Matt 13) collects “parables” which contain a metaphor destined for the crowd and a second meaning destined for the disciples.<sup>62</sup> In other words, Jesus continues his ministry through his disciples.

#### 3.4. *The First Conflict*

The first conflict now arises: the apostles and the nascent group of hellenists take opposing views, most likely about the meaning of the words of Jesus, which have now been collected in a dossier. The episode which evokes this conflict (without specifying the issue at stake) is the

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<sup>60</sup> The list of the twelve (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; and Acts 1:13) is articulated in three groups of four disciples, where the first group is always the same. The order and the name of the others vary within the groups, but not from one group to another.

<sup>61</sup> Mark 3:31–35 and 4:21–25 respectively; see above.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. the concluding formulae of these Matthean discourses: 7:28 (words), 11:1 (instructions), and 13:53 (parables).

calming of the storm.<sup>63</sup> Jesus gets on board a boat with his disciples and sits at the rudder. When the storm begins, he is asleep, and his disciples awaken him, since they feel themselves at risk. Jesus surprises his disciples by calming the unchained elements. The well known picture in this scene has a second meaning that one would not suspect; it is echoed in the narrative of Acts 6 which speaks directly of the conflict with the hellenists.

When we read the logia of Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*, we see what this conflict was about—if we accept the hypothesis that this recently-discovered gospel is a good witness to the ideology of the hellenists. In their teaching, the apostles advocate a Judaism close to that of the Pharisees and defend an updated form of the law as the path to salvation; the difference is that they await the imminent return of Jesus. The hellenists follow a Judaism influenced by the hellenism of Alexandria and reject the law as a path to salvation, emphasizing instead wisdom or knowledge. This ideology was to have a great future, since it later gave birth to gnosticism; at the moment, however, the current represented by the apostles prevailed. According to the *Gospel of Thomas*, the hellenists are willing to recognize James, the brother of Jesus, as his successor,<sup>64</sup> and to accept the coexistence of a variety of teachings;<sup>65</sup> but it is from Jesus that the solution to the conflict comes. We are not yet told what this solution is, but the following episode will answer this question.

### 3.5. *The Regulation of the Conflict*

The next episode is that of the demoniac of Gerasa,<sup>66</sup> which begins with a new geographical oddness: when he reaches the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus arrives “in the land of the Gerasenes.” Gerasa in fact lies almost one hundred kilometers from this shore; but it was an obligatory stop on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. In this way, the central event which had been foretold is now before our eyes and takes the form of an exorcism by Jesus, where the demon is a metaphor

<sup>63</sup> Mark 4:35–41 (= Luke 8:22–25; cf. Matt 8:23–27).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *Gos. Thom.* 12: “The disciples said to Jesus, ‘We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Wherever you are, you are to go to James the Just...’”

<sup>65</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 13 juxtaposes the school of Simon Peter and Matthew with that of Thomas, who alone has the right to receive a special initiation.

<sup>66</sup> Mark 5:1–20 (= Luke 8:26–39; cf. Matt 8:28–34).

for bad teaching and the healing is a metaphor for the conversion to a better teaching.

This is the central event in the entire heavenly ministry of Jesus. Its dating is uncertain: according to the information given by Paul himself in a passage open to various interpretations (Gal 1), it took place ca. 35—perhaps as early as 34, but perhaps not before 36. This conversion does not appear at first sight to make any impact on the conflict between the apostles and the hellenists, for according to Acts, by the time of Paul's conversion (ch. 9) the hellenists have already left Jerusalem (ch. 8) to carry out missionary work both in Samaria, where Philip has a confrontation with the father of gnosis, Simon the magician, and to the south, where the same Philip meets and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch. This means that the adversaries have been separated. For the present, the apostles remain in Jerusalem, while the hellenists have left for Alexandria.

We must wait for Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, written some twenty years later, to see how the conflict was regulated. At that time, Paul was in Ephesus, where he reacted to the teaching of Apollos, the emissary of a school in Alexandria which can only be that of the hellenists.<sup>67</sup>

In this letter, we find two dicta of Paul which were later to become logia of Jesus in the gospels, and they are so important that each is stated four times: the logia about divorce (1 Cor 7:10–11) and about the faith that can move mountains (13:2).<sup>68</sup> The first logion is opposed to the principle of the union of the male and the female, as this was understood by the hellenists and as we find it in the logion at *Gos. Thom.* 22. The second proposes a principle of replacement: to be more than ever in relationship, through an unlimited love for other human beings and through faith in God. The solution to the crisis which is offered here is faith as a path to salvation, accompanied by the law—but not by wisdom.

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. Acts 18:24–28.

<sup>68</sup> The first logion is repeated at Matt 5:32 and 19:9; Luke 16:18; and Mark 10:11–12. The second logion is repeated at Matt 17:20 and 21:21; Luke 17:6 (in the oldest redaction); and Mark 11:23.

### 3.6. *The Missionary Vocation*

The disciples' departure for missionary work always has a surprising character when we read it in the gospel, because the disciples are still in a period of formation and the time for field work has not yet come. Since they are not ready for it, it ought not to be taking place. But in the context of the first community under the guidance of the heavenly Jesus, this departure becomes an historical reality: according to Acts, Peter receives a summons to set out for missionary work shortly after the conversion of Paul. At the same time, the other apostles leave Jerusalem, and the community is entrusted thenceforth to James, one of the brothers of Jesus. We know nothing about how he began to lead this community; all we know is that his leadership was in continuity with that of the apostles, since James does not claim to be the successor of Jesus (although he might perhaps have made such a claim initially). He presents himself as the spokesman of the heavenly Jesus, and he does not even claim the title of "brother" of Jesus, but is only his servant. According to Acts 15, James presides ca. 49 over a conference attended by the leaders of the communities of Jerusalem and Antioch. Later, in Acts 21 (in the spring of 58), it is he who leads the community in Jerusalem at the close of Paul's second Aegean voyage. Throughout this period, the apostles are far away, bringing the good news to other countries, both Greek- and Aramaic-speaking.

The mission lets them discover that others too are bearing the message of Jesus, for the disciples ask Jesus whether it is right to let such persons speak, or to prevent them from doing so.<sup>69</sup> Jesus invites them to respect the plurality of the teachings that are presented in his name—a stance which has not always been imitated!

### 3.7. *The Widowed Community*

After the departure of the apostles and the arrest of Paul, James becomes the sole leader of early Christianity. He is never dissociated from the celestial figure of Jesus; Paul had indeed attempted to reformulate this christology, but he had not yet found acceptance for his ideas. According to the testimony of an historian of the second century, reported by Eusebius of Caesarea at the beginning of the fourth century (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.23), James was even admitted to the temple in the closed circle of the

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<sup>69</sup> Mark 9:38–40 (= Luke 9:49–50).

chief priests ca. 60. This group comprised the high priest then in office, his predecessors, and those who aspired to this office. Scholars today doubt the historicity of this testimony, but this does not make it any the less interesting—since James, as the son of Joseph, is a layman, and his admission to the circle of the chief priests is an exceptional event. It makes sense, however, because a large sector within Judaism was receptive to James' teaching. According to this source, James is sounded out as a potential candidate for the high priesthood when a new Roman governor arrives in 63. This means that he must choose between a succession in full accordance with the law (which would mean the end of the heavenly functions of Jesus) and his fidelity to Jesus (which obliges him to be nothing more than Jesus' vicar). Clearly, James chooses the latter solution, and he is assassinated just as he assumes office: leaders of Judaism cannot accept a *heavenly* direction of the temple by Jesus, with the high priest only as his vicar—since a vicar of this kind would merely transmit the decisions taken in heaven, and there would be no possibility of entering into genuine negotiations with other human beings on earth about these decisions. James' death is dated to 63.

I believe that we find an echo of this event in the episode of the poor widow whom Jesus observes. He praises her fidelity to the temple.<sup>70</sup> On the level of the first meaning, this is a simple anecdote from the closing days of Jesus' ministry; but on the level of the second meaning, it is an echo of the community which was deprived of its leader and remained faithful to the temple after the death of James. This death produced a lasting trauma. James was not replaced, and the war against Rome broke out shortly afterwards, in 66. James' candidacy for the priesthood was the last attempt to save the temple, which was the symbol of the unity of Judaism. Its destruction in 70 meant the end of the Herodian high priests and the assimilation of their partisans, the Sadducees and the scribes, to the currents of the Pharisees and the Christians.

One last episode depicts an act of homage to the dead Jesus. It takes place in Bethany and is integrated in Matthew and Mark into the narrative of the beginning of the passion.<sup>71</sup> In this context, the community experiences the death of Jesus a second time, when James dies. It is at this point that the narrative of the heavenly ministry of Jesus ends, as if he had been buried for a second time, without a trial, and

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<sup>70</sup> Mark 12:41–44 (=Luke 21:1–4).

<sup>71</sup> Mark 14:3–9 (= Matt 26:6–13); in Luke, the episode is anticipated (7:36–50).



without having given the least sign of his return which the believers so urgently awaited. But their fervor does not weaken. With the passing of the years, their hope is transformed, since the time of waiting has not caused the believers to doubt. On the contrary, it has brought their faith to maturity. Now it is Paul's turn to die in Rome, at more or less the same time as James. And Peter, the historical founder of the first community, is left on his own. He is still the spokesman, and according to a number of testimonies, he now goes to Rome.

#### 4. *The First-Fruits of the Church (64–70)*

Peter made it possible to postpone facing the question of the direction to be taken by the movement; this would be the task of the second generation. At present, he teaches by telling stories which contain some of his own memories. According to the testimony of Papias, as recorded by Eusebius, it was on this material that the first redaction of Mark's book was based; ultimately, this book became his gospel. I believe that this first redaction is pretty well represented by the series of episodes which relate the heavenly ministry of Jesus—this would in some sense have been the earliest way of telling the story of Jesus. Before this redaction was interwoven with the narrative of his earthly ministry, it was expanded by means of sections which we will present here as an epilogue, since they form a transition between Jesus and the church. The two principal elements are the following.<sup>72</sup>

##### 4.1. *The Status of the Logia*

At the period when Mark is writing, Christians possess only one book written in their own group, viz. the collection of the logia of Jesus, which was made in a number of stages; Paul's letters had indeed been written, but they had not yet been brought together in a collection. The question was: What is the status of the logia of Jesus? Are they an exegesis of scripture (like the words of the rabbis)? Or else, given the heavenly nature of their author, ought they to be counted among the books of scripture (the canon was not yet closed)?

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<sup>72</sup> On the history of the redaction of Mark, which I have set out briefly here, cf. my article cited in n. 25 above.

We find in Mark, though not in Luke, several proper names with the numerical value of 22 or 24, i.e. the total number of the letters of the Hebrew or Greek alphabet; this is also the agreed number of the books of the Bible.<sup>73</sup> This may of course be a matter of chance, but we may also put forward the hypothesis that in the second meaning, these names indicate a debate among the Christians about the status to be accorded to the logia of Jesus. Some Christians held that they should be included in scripture and thus close the canon.

This is only a hypothesis, and it is difficult to set it out here in greater detail, but it seems already to be a part of the ministry of Jesus, and it is he who inspires in his disciples the idea of closing the canon: in other words, the logia will become scripture. As yet, however, this is only a project, and several decades must pass before this project begins to be realized.<sup>74</sup>

#### 4.2. *The Succession to the Apostles*

The second question which had been left in suspense becomes acute on the death of Peter, doubtless on the occasion of the massacre (attested by Tacitus) which followed the fire of Rome in July 66.<sup>75</sup> Who is to direct the Christian movement in the second generation? This question was neither irrelevant nor easy to resolve. The Christians were divided into a number of different currents, and the rivalries could be settled only if a legitimate claim could win acceptance.

This fundamental question—hidden once again beneath a complicated geography—seems to be the object of an episode in Mark<sup>76</sup> which assumes a choice between several possibilities. This is the story of the

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<sup>73</sup> The principal cases are “Boanerges” (3:17) and “Dalmanutha” (8:10); to some extent, this applies also to “Beelzebul” (3:22) and an ancient form of the formula “Talitha, cumi” (5:41). After the Pharisaic canon was drawn up ca. 90 CE (which established the contents of the Hebrew Bible as we know it today), the Bible was reckoned to have 22 or 24 books. This means in effect that its corpus is closed; up to that date, the canon had been open.

<sup>74</sup> This does not happen before the beginning of the second century, with Ignatius of Antioch and Polycarp of Smyrna.

<sup>75</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44.5.

<sup>76</sup> Jesus leaves Tyre and heads for the Sea of Galilee. Instead of taking the road to the south and following the coast, then striking off towards the east, he chooses for no apparent reason to travel by way of Sidon (which lies to the north), then to enter the Decapolis, which is further east than the Sea of Galilee. On the level of the second meaning, this journey offers the opportunity to bring together proper names which make sense when they are read in close juxtaposition.

healing of a deaf man who is also a stutterer, or incapable of speaking (Mark 7:31–37), and the reply to the question, which can be discerned in the formulaic word “Ephphatha” which Jesus pronounces, grants legitimacy to the successor of Peter...<sup>77</sup>

### 5. *Conclusion: History and Theology*

We can now see the history of Jesus, but there is still some way to go before we can extract from the gospels the entire substance of the second meaning. We may doubt whether the second meaning is relevant, and we will surely wonder at the discrepancies between the first and the second meanings—between the sacred history with which we are so familiar and this history which disturbs us with its novelty—but this is what happens with every advance in the study of the texts. Historical Jesus is not exactly theological Jesus. But Meier is right, when he insists on the importance of the Jesus of history.<sup>78</sup>

In the history which I have just presented, we are witnesses to a shipwreck, that of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee. Has the reader noticed this? This ministry disappears almost completely. For the second meaning, Nazareth, Capernaum, and Cana are not geographical points of reference; nor are the Sea of Galilee and the land of the Gerasenes. The idea of a “concentration” of Jesus’ activity in Galilee (cf. n. 24 above) comes from sacred history, not from history: in reality, Jesus seems mostly to have lived in Jerusalem. We cannot overlook the fact that Jesus goes up to Jerusalem for certain feasts, which thus function as points of reference; but the Gospel of John never tells us from where he sets out to go up to Jerusalem. Why does Galilee nevertheless occupy such a position in the accounts of his ministry? (I was once asked: “What is Galilee, if not the land where Jesus exercised his ministry?”)

I believe that this question discloses a new aspect of the second meaning, which writes history by means of images that point back to a model. This model is the history of Israel, from the entry into the promised land at the beginning of the Book of Joshua to the conquest

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<sup>77</sup> “Ephphatha” is a transcription of the Hebrew *hippatah*. The sum of the letters of this word is the equivalent of the sum of letters of “Peter” (*p-t-r*). This would mean that Matt 16:18 (“You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”) transposes to the first meaning what Mark has already said in the second meaning.

<sup>78</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*.

of Jerusalem at the end of 2 Kings. The history which runs between these two events is a lengthy suffering, indeed a descent into hell, which begins with the special place conquered by Joshua: at God's request, he erects a memorial of this conquest in the bed of the Jordan at Galil, i.e. Galilee. Galilee is the starting point of the history which closes with utter destruction at Jerusalem. The books which relate this history form a corpus:

Joshua—Judges—*Ruth*—1-2 Samuel—1-2 Kings

At the center of this corpus, a short book (*Ruth*) separates two single books and two double books, and this proportion of the single to the double governs the first narrative tradition, which relates the earthly ministry of Jesus from Galilee until his death in Jerusalem. This death is a fact of history, and Galilee is an image which gives this death a meaning by presenting it as the final event in a story. At the center of the structure, we find the metaphor of the tabernacles and the light (see the Appendix).

We may truly say that the language of the gospels has an astonishing complexity. One may perhaps wonder why things cannot be simpler, but my reply would be that "simplicity" is a wholly relative idea. What seems simple is that with which we are familiar; but are history, theology, or philosophy simpler *per se* than the Bible, when we read it bearing in mind the second meaning? The chief priests of the Jerusalem temple looked for a language adapted to their needs, and they focused on the biblical text with its constructions and its double meaning. The evangelists did the same, showing thereby that they were drawing on the same tradition. Later on, the nineteenth century thought that the Judaism antecedent to the gospels was mere barbarity; but in reality, it develops another branch of hellenism than the branch we find in the Greco-Roman world. This misunderstanding has not yet been wholly eradicated.

In these conditions, the silhouette of Jesus is full of ambiguity. For sacred history, he is a divine child who becomes incarnate in a pious family of modest circumstances, possesses the infused knowledge of God, and wanders along the roads of Galilee where he performs numerous miracles, then comes to Jerusalem where he dies, a victim of the wickedness of the leaders of his time; after his death, he rises again to inaugurate the kingdom of God. For history, he belongs without any doubt to the privileged young people of Jerusalem who dream of better times and accept the fashionable utopia, viz. a reformation of the

priestly institution which had been corrupted by the Herodian dynasty. The action taken by John the Baptist is not an isolated phenomenon. Already, on Herod's death, Judas the Galilean had launched a comparable project; the same happened when Archelaus was deposed, under a leader with an almost identical name.<sup>79</sup> The fate of these utopias was quickly sealed, thanks to the disproportion between the forces on each side. But Jesus has a destiny all of his own: after his death, a community is created within Judaism at Jerusalem, which sees in him its heavenly guide, and the first evangelists find words to affirm that his ministry continues, with his disciples as spokesmen. This community was to give birth to a new current in Judaism, and then to a new religion: Christianity. In the eyes of believers, Jesus gradually revealed himself to be God in person, and his divinity became a dogma. But in the eyes of the historian, the brevity of Jesus' ministry before his death is the most remarkable thing of all. In general, the founders of the great religions had thirty years for their ministry. Jesus had scarcely two years, and yet the face of the world was changed.<sup>80</sup>

### *Appendix*

#### The narrative series in Mark

1

The earthly ministry (in Matthew-Mark-Luke together: 40 episodes)

The baptism	1:2-11	summer 28	1st principal narrative
THE TEMPTATION	1:12-13		INITIAL VISION
Transition (John in prison)	1:14-15	autumn 28	
1. Vocation of the fishers	1:16-20	..	development (4 episodes)
2. Healing of the leper	1:40-45	..	
3. Healing of the paralytic	2:1-12	..	
4. Vocation of tax collector	2:13-22	..	
1. Ears of grain are plucked	2:23-28	Passover 29	
2. Healing of withered hand	3:1-6	..	
3. Parable of sower	4:1-9	..	
4. Explanation to disciples	4:10-20	..	development (4 episodes)
Transition (death of John)	6:14-16 + 17-29	..	
Bread for the crowd	6:30-44	Pentecost 29	2nd principal narrative

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Theissen, "Jésus," 135.

<sup>80</sup> Eng. trans.: Brian McNeil.

1. Disciples' confession	8:27-30	summer 29	
2. 1st prediction of passion	8:31-33	..	
3. The path of martyrdom	8:34-9:1	..	development (3 episodes)
THE TRANSFIGURATION	9:2-13	autumn 29	CENTRAL VISION
1. Healing of a boy	9:14-29	..	development (6 episodes)
2. 2nd prediction of passion	9:30-32	..	
3. Children as example	9:33-37 + 10:1-16	..	
4. Rich people at risk	10:17-22 + 23-31	..	
5. 3rd prediction of passion	10:32-34	..	
6. Healing of a blind man	10:46-52		
The entry to Jerusalem	11:1-10	Passover 30	3rd principal narrative
Transition (at Jerusalem)	11:11	..	
1. Cleansing of temple	11:15-17	..	development (8 episodes)
2. John as priestly Messiah	11:27-33	..	
3. Parable of vine-dressers	12:1-9	..	
4. The corner-stone	12:10-12	..	
5. Tax to Caesar	12:13-17	..	
6. Question of resurrection	12:18-27	..	
7. David as royal Messiah	12:35-37	..	
8. Changing teachers	12:38-40	..	
THE END OF TIME	13:1-37		FINAL VISION
Transition (the plot)	14:1-2	..	
1. Preparation of Passover	14:10-16	..	
2. Prediction of betrayal	14:17-21 + 22-25	..	
3. Prediction of denial	14:26-31	..	
4. Jesus' union with God	14:32-42	..	
5. Jesus is arrested	14:43-52	..	
6. Peter's denial	14:53-65 + 66-72	..	development (8 episodes)
Transition (in praetorium)	15:1		
Trial and death	15:2-39	..	4th principal narrative
Transition (women witnesses)	15:40-41	..	
7. Burial	15:42-47	..	
8. Empty tomb	16:1-8	..	
2a			
The heavenly ministry (in Mark-Luke together: 12 episodes)			
1. Jesus at Capernaum	1:21-39	28-30	prologue (earthly ministry)
2. Vocation of the Twelve	3:17-19	30-63	summary (heavenly ministry)
3. Rejection of the family	3:3-35	30	dynastic succession rejected
4. Inspiration of Jesus' words	4:21-25	30-32	collection of logia is made
5. Tempest calmed	4:35-41	33-34	conflict with hellenists
6. Exorcism of a demoniac	5:1-20	ca. 35	conversion of Paul
7. Jairus and healing of woman	5:21-43	ca. 40	new priority for prediction
8. Failure at Nazareth	6:1-6	49	breach with the temple
9. Departure for mission	6:7-13	50-54	Paul's 1st Aegean voyage
10. Logia about mission	9:38-50	55-59	Paul's 2nd Aegean voyage
11. Faithful widow in temple	12:41-44	62-63	after the death of James
12. Funeral homage	14:3-9		conclusion (cult maintained)

2b

The first-fruits of the church (additions in Mark: 12 logia or narratives)

Title: Gospel of Jesus Christ	1:1	The book of the words of Jesus
Introduction: By Beelzebul	3:20–26	words destined to become scripture
Logion 1: The strong man	3:27	Herodian dynasty rejected
Logion 2: Against the Spirit	3:28–30	Herodian priesthood eliminated
Logion 3: The seed	4:26–29	strategy of patience
Logion 4: The mustard	4:30–32	the fruits of patience
Conclusion: The parables	4:33–34	the double meaning of the parables
1. Walking on water	6:45–46	continuity of the heavenly Jesus
2. Against the Pharisees	7:1–23	rejection of the Pharisaic school
3. Preaching: the deaf man	7:24–27	preaching founded on Peter
4. Bread for the 4,000	8:1–10	in support of the closing of scripture
5. Teaching: the blind man	8:11–26	the theology based on Paul
Logion 5: The greatest one	10:35–45	1st principle: towards martyrdom
Logion 6: Fig-tree and faith	11:12–14, 20–26	2nd principle: faith, the path to salvation
Logion 7: Law and love	12:28–34	3rd principle: law, the path to salvation

*Note*

My researches suggest that this second tradition was written twice, before the first tradition was put into writing. It corresponds to the redaction of the “Roman Mark” attested by Papias, and to its amplification in Alexandria by this same Mark after the death of Peter, according to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria (or of a Ps.-Clement). The first tradition is however anonymous and was composed twenty years later.

## WHY WAS JESUS NOT BORN IN NAZARETH?

ARMAND PUIG I TÀRRECH

### 1. *Jesus, “the Nazarene”*

The evidence from the sources is unanimous about Jesus’ hometown: Nazareth. The sign or title placed above the cross seems to be definitive, as it is mentioned in each of the four gospels. Indeed, it was placed there on the orders of the Roman authorities. Likewise, the name “Jesus of Nazareth” is found in the gospels and the Acts of the Apostles (2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; and others). Nazareth is described as “his own country” (Mark 6:1; Matt 13:54), i.e., his city, and “their own city (that of Joseph and Mary)” (Luke 2:39), where his family lived. A Galilean, like Jesus, and a future disciple, Nathanael asks ironically “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Similarly, the crowds that accompany Jesus at his triumphal arrival in Jerusalem, a few days before the passion, state: “This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee” (Matt 21:11). The religious authorities in Jerusalem reply to Nicodemus, a Jewish leader who had dared to go and meet Jesus: “Are you from Galilee too? Search and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee” (John 7:52). Jesus’ name in the Talmud is invariably *ha-notsrí*, “the Nazarene.” Despite their differences, the adjectives *ναζαρηνός* and *ναζωραῖος* and the nouns *Ναζαρά* and *Ναζαρέθ*, its most common names in Greek, lead us in the same direction. In the Talmud, the usual name for Christians is still *ha-notsrim*, “the Nazarenes.” This use is also seen in Acts 24:5. There is no doubting then the link between Jesus and Nazareth, his hometown.

Faced with this amount of incontrovertible evidence, many authors have defended the idea, and with good reason obviously, that Jesus was born in Nazareth, and thus that no distinction should be made between his place of origin and his place of birth. The opposite would seem to have little evidence to support it; the narratives of Jesus’ childhood both in Matthew (2:1) and Luke (2:4, 6–7) distinguish between the place where Jesus was born (Bethlehem of Judea: Matt 2:1; Luke 2:4, 6–7) and the place where he was brought up (Luke 4:16) and spent his childhood, adolescence, youth and a good part of adulthood, until he was,



approximately, thirty years old: Nazareth in Galilee (Matt 2:22–23; Luke 3:23). Obviously, proposing Bethlehem as Jesus' place of birth requires explaining the reasons why Mary's son could not have been born in Nazareth, his parents' hometown.

## 2. *Some Reflections on Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2*

In Matthew, the report of the conception, birth and early years of Jesus the child is only associated with Bethlehem of Judea (2:1). The mention of the "house" (2:11) leads to the idea that Bethlehem is the town where Joseph and Mary are living at the time of Jesus' birth. Indeed, implicitly, it seems to suggest that they were living there before Jesus was born. Is this a house belonging to Joseph, descendent of David and a member of the family of the great king of Israel? Or are Joseph, Mary and Jesus being accommodated by one of Joseph's relatives, who, like him, belong to David's dynasty?

However, according to Luke, Nazareth is the town where Mary lives and where she is visited by the angel Gabriel, announcing her pregnancy (1:31). In turn, it is not stated explicitly where Joseph comes from nor where he lives. Luke merely says that he has to go to Bethlehem of Judea to comply with the legal obligations of the census decreed by Augustus, and, for this reason, he travels with Mary "from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth" (2:4), to register in "his own city" (2:3). Likewise, shortly after Jesus' birth, they return from Judea, "to their own city, Nazareth" (2:39). It seems then that Joseph had two hometowns: Bethlehem and Nazareth. In any case, Joseph is presented as belonging to the family of David, and, thus Bethlehem, David's city, is where he has to go to "register" (ἀπογράψασθαι). Is this irrefutable proof that Joseph was born in Bethlehem? And, if it is not, how many generations ago did his direct ancestors leave Bethlehem and move to Galilee? In any case, according to Luke, it initially seems that Joseph did not have his own house in Bethlehem, nor anyone to put him up, given, as Luke explains, that Mary, his wife, gave birth in a stable.

In terms of the legal situation of Joseph and Mary, Matthew and Luke both state that when Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb, she and Joseph were "betrothed," i.e., legally they were man and wife, but they were not yet living together (Matt 1:18; Luke 1:34). The question then is when they started living together as man and wife. According to Matthew, this came about before Jesus was born. Thus, in the middle

of her pregnancy, Mary and Joseph became man and wife in the fullest sense, legally and above all socially, as they both now lived under the same roof (1:24). However, according to Luke, when Joseph and Mary arrive in Bethlehem and Jesus is born, it seems that they are still to be found in the same situation they were in when living in Nazareth. They are legally married, but apparently they are not yet living together (compare Luke 1:27 and 2:5, where the same expression is used to refer to Mary: τῆ ἐμνηστευμένῃ). This implies a certain level of irregularity, at least from the point of view of the *vox populi*, as Joseph is to be the legal father of a child (the marriage agreement is to all intents and purposes valid), without having begun to live with his legitimate wife and the mother of the child.

Interestingly, neither in Matthew, where Joseph's and Mary's situation is completely in order before the birth of Jesus, nor in Luke, where there are still some irregularities, is there any mention of the event which, biographically speaking, would require recounting: the wedding of Jesus' parents. Is it insinuated in Matt 1:24, where it is said that Joseph "took his wife" (παρέλαβεν) Mary? Whatever the case, it is clear that a woman becoming pregnant before living with her husband was not condemned by the rabbis, but in social terms, it would have gone against the norm, or indeed may have led to doubts or gossip as to who the child's father was. In Jesus' case, there were doubts, as can be seen in Matt 1:19, regarding Joseph, who wants to legally annul the *ketuba* and secretly divorce himself from Mary, so as thus to save, or try to save, her honour. In turn, Mark 6:3 uses the unusual expression "the son of Mary," which shows that in Nazareth, people knew Jesus equally as Mary's (only) child and as "the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23, 4:22; John 1:45, 6:42; Matt 13:55: "the carpenter's son"). The reference to the mother on her own reflects the unusual social conditions surrounding Jesus' conception and likewise the ironic and somewhat disrespectful tone used by the people of Nazareth when discussing the affair.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from Matthew 2 and Luke 2, then, no clear mention is made of Bethlehem as Jesus' birthplace.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the statements from

<sup>1</sup> On Mark 6:3, see Harvey K. McArthur, "Son of Mary," *NovT* 15 (1973): 38–58.

<sup>2</sup> In the Gospel of Mark, there is no reference to Bethlehem. The first time that Jesus is mentioned, he is presented as coming from Nazareth of Galilee (1:9). This is a common fact in all four gospels, and should be accepted as proven: Nazareth is Jesus' hometown. However, Mark's *argumentum e silentio* in terms of Jesus' birthplace does not lead to any firm conclusions. As for the Gospel of John, the only reference to analyse is 7:42. J. P. Meier rightly highlights the ambiguity of this verse: "Has not the

these two gospels about Jesus as the Messiah and descendant of David (for example, Matt 1:20; 2:6; Luke 1:27; 1:32–33; 1:69; 2:4; 2:11) lead to the idea that the Bethlehem option fits as a theological event that cannot easily be considered a strictly historical fact. There is, however, an initial assertion, which is identical in Matthew (2:1) and Luke (2:4, 15) and acts as the foundation for both gospel stories: Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Where did they get this information from? Is it an apologetic detail designed to counter the Jewish objections to Jesus' messianity, arising from the fact that he was born in Nazareth (see *Contra Celsum* 1.51)? However, if it is designed to "prove" Jesus' Davidic lineage, and created by the early community, why are there not more similar references in the writings about his childhood and, in particular, the focus that these two gospels place on Bethlehem?<sup>3</sup>

Luke 2 offers an explanation of why Jesus was born away from Nazareth. The eventful journey to Bethlehem was brought on by a political decision—the census decreed by the emperor Octavian Augustus for the whole of the Roman Empire. This would have represented a difficult journey for the mother of Jesus, apparently at an advanced stage in her pregnancy, accompanying Joseph, her husband, from Nazareth, where they lived. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the place where Joseph and Mary had to formalize their registration in the census, Mary gave birth, without any help from anyone and in somewhat

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scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" See J. P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 214–216. This sentence, read ironically, leads to those answering affirmatively stating that which they wish to refute. Readers know that Jesus was actually born in Bethlehem; so, that which is meant to negate in reality affirms, as proof of Jesus' being the Messiah. This irony is seen on more occasions in the Gospel of John (see for instance 19:3 and 19:19).

<sup>3</sup> Faced with these difficulties, B. Chilton has proposed that Bethlehem may be located not in Judea but in Galilee (Chilton, *Jesus: An Intimate Biography* [New York: Doubleday, 2000], 5–13). Indeed, there is a Bethlehem mentioned in Josh 19:15 (see also Judg 12:8, 10), located some 12 km west of Nazareth. This is where Joseph, a widowed builder with children, would have lived, who knew a girl much younger than he was, Mary of Nazareth. Mary gave birth to a child in Joseph's house, in Bethlehem of Galilee, where she would have gone to escape the gossip of those in Nazareth. Subsequently, they would have settled in Nazareth, together with the children from Joseph's first marriage. Despite Chilton's proposed, there is no evidence, in either the Jewish or Christian traditions, to support his hypothesis. Chilton does, however, take the reference to Bethlehem, present in Matthew and Luke, seriously—a reference that is often overlooked historically, deemed simply a product of theology to ensure the prophecies are fulfilled.

precarious conditions—the child was born in a stable and his mother had to place him “in a manger” (ἐν φάτνῃ) (2:7). Is this explanation historically valid? Does Luke offer enough reasons for Jesus to be born away from Nazareth, “his own country” (τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ) (Mark 6:1 par. Matt 13:54)?

### 3. *A Roman Census Decreed by Augustus?*

Luke justifies Joseph’s and Mary’s journey with a “census” (ἀπογραφὴ) that would have affected the whole empire and had been decreed by the emperor Octavian Augustus, setting this census within the timeframe of Quirinius’s government, the imperial legate for the Roman province of Syria (2:1–2).<sup>4</sup> However, Flavius Josephus tells us that Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, the new *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, carried out the census in the year 6 CE in the Roman province of Judea, which had just been created following the deposition of Archelaus (*Ant.* 17.355, 18.1–2, 26; *War* 2.111). This census, decreed by Augustus, which affected only the province of Syria and the new Roman province of Judea, must have been one of Quirinius’s first tasks.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this census was to organize the payment of taxes in the new province of Judea, not the other two mainly Jewish territories of Galilee and Peraea, which continued to be governed by Antipas, nor Trachonitis and the surrounding areas, governed by Philip. Quirinius’s census provoked an immediate reaction from a scribe born in Gamala (in Gaulanitis), but called, *sensu lato*, Judas of Galilee, who was joined by a Pharisee called Zadok. Both acted in Jerusalem. The revolt that sprang from their doctrines, adopted above all by the young, was put down by Quirinius himself (*Acts* 5:37; *Ant.* 18.10; *War* 2.117).

However, in 6 CE (759 *ab Urbe condita*), when Quirinius carried out the Roman census in the province of Judea, Herod had been dead for ten years. On the other hand, both Luke and Matthew state that

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<sup>4</sup> This subject is debated in depth, with an abundant bibliography, in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, eds., Emil Schürer and Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 1:420–427. See the recent contribution by Stanley E. Porter, “The Reasons for the Lukan Census,” in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Festschrift A. J. M. Wedderburn*, ed. A. Christophersen et al., JSNTSup 217 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 165–188.

<sup>5</sup> As seen in an inscription referring to Q. Aemilius and the Syrian city of Apamea. See Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:259.

Jesus was born while Herod was king of the Jews. Indeed, Luke starts by placing the action: “In the days of Herod, king of Judea” (1:5). It does not seem that, according to the Gospel of Luke (and even less so Matthew), Herod had left the throne when Jesus was born.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, if we want to justify the information coming from *all* the historical sources available, we have to take into account that it is impossible to make Quirinius’s provincial census (6 CE) fit chronologically with the birth of Jesus whilst Herod is king (before 4 BCE, the date of the king’s death) and, even less with the census which, according to Luke, took place at the same time as the birth. The difference between the two is at least over ten years!

Faced with this problem, a good number of authors, including R. E. Brown, J. P. Meier and G. Theissen agree with the theses defended in Schürer and Vermes and Millar and conclude that the events seen in Luke 2:1–7 deserve little historical credibility.<sup>7</sup> There are three historical gaps that can be attributed to the events related by Luke in terms of the census:

1. There is no ancient source, not even Flavius Josephus, linking Augustus to a decree ordering a census for all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, to decree a general census for the empire would have implied an attack on the prerogatives maintained by the Senate in terms of the senatorial provinces and the territories that were under the jurisdiction of the client kings, such as Herod (should the census have been carried out in his lifetime, as Luke seems to state). It is true that Syria was not a senatorial province, but an imperial province, and thus Augustus would have been able to decree a census such as Quirinius’s, which affected the province of Judea, an imperial province as of 6 CE, directly, without having to involve the senate. However, Augustus as a ruler was rather prudent, and it seems unlikely that he would have ignored

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<sup>6</sup> The expression “in those days” in Luke 2:1, referring to the census, has to be related to that in 1:5 (“in the days of Herod, king of Judea”) and not to 1:80, which talks about Jesus growing up. For another view, cf. Michael Wolter, “Erstmals unter Quirinius! Zum Verständnis von Lk 2,2,” *BN* 102 (2000): 35–41. We see that the period of time between 1:5 and 2:1 cannot exceed 5 or 6 months, as indicated by the references to Elizabeth and Mary’s pregnancies (1:24, 26).

<sup>7</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 555; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM, 1998), 153–155; Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 1:412 n. 9.

the prerogatives of an allied king such as Herod. Thus, the idea of a decree for a census affecting all the inhabitants of the empire, ordered by Augustus during the reign of Herod (Luke 2:1), has no Roman historiographical evidence, found to date, to back it up.

2. In a Roman census, inhabitants are registered in the place where they live and where they have property (or in the city that acted as the headquarters for the fiscal district that includes the place). Likewise, it is not clear whether all the members of a family had to register personally. It may have been the case that only the head of the family needed to declare who lived with them. Only in Egypt do we know that, in certain cases, everyone had to turn up in person to register; but, in any case, it is not clear whether this rule affected the place of residence, the place of birth or the place where the census office was located. Therefore, the events in Luke 2:3–5 do not seem to fit with the conditions and circumstances usually seen in a Roman census.

3. The information provided by Flavius Josephus about Quirinius's census in 6 CE corresponds to a typical Roman census, the main reason being to assess the property of each person and set a value for this, so as to be able to apply the corresponding taxation.<sup>8</sup> Flavius Josephus explains that the Jews “did stop any further opposition to it” and “so they, being persuaded by Joazar's words, gave an account of their estates (ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀπογραφαῖς)” (*Ant.* 18.3). Thus, the account in Luke 2:1–7, which says that Joseph went to Bethlehem for the census and could not find room at the caravanserai, seems difficult to justify in terms of a Roman census, the principal aim of which is to declare property (houses, land and assets) to the Roman administration's officials.

In conclusion, in line with the well-founded majority opinion, the census that Luke talks about in 2:1–5 cannot be the Roman census led and carried out by Quirinius in 6 CE, nor can it be a Roman census in its strictest sense. Luke, then, seems to have failed his readers, whom he assures in the prologue to his work that he has “followed

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<sup>8</sup> This can be seen, for example, in Babatha's scroll, found in the Cave of Letters (P. Yadin 16), which reports a tax declaration for property to the Roman authorities in the province of Arabia by a Jewish woman who goes to the provincial office in Rabath-Moab with her husband, for the census ordered by the legate Sextius Florentinus (127 CE). See Klaus Rosen, “Jesu Geburtsdatum, der Census des Quirinius und eine jüdische Steuererklärung aus dem Jahr 127 nC.,” *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 38 (1995): 5–15. It should be noted, as Porter stresses (“Census,” 186–187), that two other tax declarations, made in the same year by Jewish men, can be found in two other scrolls from the desert of Judea (P. Hever 61 and 62).

all things closely for some time past” (1:3). Has Luke used a census from around the time of Jesus’ birth in order to construct a story with purely theological ends? Has he taken a source to be reliable that has provided information that is historiographically incorrect and which, furthermore, does not fit with the other events? Should we assume that Luke has simply got it wrong?<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. A more judaico *Census Decreed by Herod*

The alternative, in my opinion, can be seen in the following proposal: Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea and not in Nazareth, which would have been the normal case for two people, Joseph and Mary, living in this town in Galilee, because Joseph, whose ancestors came from Bethlehem, went there to register for a census that king Herod (not Augustus directly) decreed in the final years of his reign (probably, 7/6 BCE). This census by Herod has to be differentiated from another census, that of Quirinius, the census par excellence, carried out in 6 CE and mentioned in Acts 5:37; *Ant.* 18.1–10, 26; and *War* 2.118.

##### 4.1. *Herod’s Taxation System*

Herod’s census and taxation system was not an exact copy of the Roman census system, nor did Herod need to adapt to this system. The Jewish sovereign had freedom to plan and act when dealing with his subjects, who were divided into two groups: Hellenist and Jewish. This meant that each territory, whether large or small, in his kingdom needed a different fiscal and taxation system, above all in the case of his Jewish subjects, who were especially sensitive to the question of censuses: the king’s Jewish subjects paid their taxes *more judaico*, i.e., in a way that did not offend their religion and likewise did not involve too many problems for a skilful governor such as Herod.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Generally speaking, commentators “compensate for” the—assumed—lack of historical information in Luke 2:1–2 by emphasizing the depth of his theological concepts. Obviously, this is not the case in Luke 3:1–2, where no commentator doubts the historical accuracy of the information provided!

<sup>10</sup> The proposal presented here was already suggested by P. E. Huschke (1840) and taken up by K. Wieseler (1869). The latter (*Beiträge zur richtigen Würdigung der Evangelien und der evangelischen Geschichte* [Gotha: F. A. Perthes, 1869]) states that Herod’s census “an die althergebrachte jüdische Stammeseintheilung anknüpfte” (49).

Evidence of Herod's freedom to act in terms of his taxation system is seen in the writings of Dio Cassius. This historian relates that Augustus, travelling in Syria (20 BCE), granted the allied sovereigns or kings friendly to the Roman people, amongst whom was Herod, the most powerful client king in the eastern empire, the right to govern as had their ancestors.<sup>11</sup> A second text, from a non-Jewish source, points in the same direction. It is an inscription by the magistrates at Mesembria (Thrace), cited by W. M. Ramsay, according to which a census had to be taken of its inhabitants "according to the law of the city and according to custom" (κατὰ τὸν νόμον... καὶ τὸ ἔθος).<sup>12</sup> In Herod's kingdom, we only know of one direct action by Augustus in terms of taxes, and this was in the period of interregnum following the king's death, affecting the Samaritans, not the Jews.<sup>13</sup> There is no doubt, then, that Herod acted with complete freedom when it came to taxes and the taxation system, and, furthermore, there are no signs that any amount went to Rome during his reign.<sup>14</sup>

Herod governed in terms of grand projects, and this led to the need for ordinary and extraordinary taxation to finance them: whether splendid public works in his kingdom, or the no less splendid gifts sent to the cities of the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>15</sup> Among his projects the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem stands out. Work started during the winter of 20 to 19 BCE and was designed to ingratiate himself with his Jewish subjects (*Ant.* 15.380–423); but this grand work did not make Herod's subjects forget the heavy load of taxes that their king's ambitions and

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<sup>11</sup> The text from Dio Cassius is as follows: "Augustus administered the subject territory (the province of Syria) according to the customs of the Romans (κατὰ τὰ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἔθη), but permitted the allied nations to be governed in their own traditional manner (τῷ πατρίῳ τρόπῳ)" (54,9,1).

<sup>12</sup> The inscription can be found in *CIG* no. 2053. See Brook W. R. Pearson, "The Lucan Censuses, Revisited," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 262–282, at 275 n. 39.

<sup>13</sup> Samaritan cohorts successfully put down the popular revolt in Judea and Galilee led by a few Messianic pretenders to the throne (*Ant.* 17.271–281). As a reward, the emperor decided personally to apply a reduction of a quarter to their taxes (*Ant.* 17.319).

<sup>14</sup> This is the conclusion of Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:416: "Herod acted independently with regard to taxes." The annual income from taxes accounted for on Herod's death was some 1,300 talents (*Ant.* 17.318–320).

<sup>15</sup> Taxation policy under Herod's reign is handled in depth by Alfred Schalit (*König Herodes: Der Mann und sein Werk* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969], 262–298). Despite the lack of data in many areas, the overall view gained is of an organized and effective fiscal system, which infiltrated all parts of life. Obviously, many doubts remain as to the exact nature of the so-called crown levies (the gold crown offered to the kings; see 1 Macc 10:29; 2 Macc 14:4) or the existence, in the time of Herod, of a tax on urban property (such as that decreed by Agrippa I in Jerusalem; see *Ant.* 19.299).



desire for fame and glory required. “Since his expenses were beyond his abilities, he had to be harsh to his subjects; for the people on whom he (Herod) expended his money were so many, that they made him a very bad procurer of it (through taxes)” (*Ant.* 16.154). In short, “that happiness and those laws which they (the inhabitants of Judea) had anciently enjoyed” were lost (*War* 2.86).

Indeed, around the time of his death, there are constant references to the extreme state of the population’s taxation situation. Thus, the first petition addressed by the Jewish leaders to his successor, Archelaus, contained three points: the reduction of the annual tax, annulling the taxes on sales (the collection of which had been abused), and a decree for an amnesty on those people Herod had imprisoned (*Ant.* 17.204–205; *War* 2.4). In short, a lessening of the pressures of taxation was demanded, both officially and in terms of the bribes and extra payments required by the tax collectors and other administrative officials. After a few months, the Jewish ambassadors to Augustus, sent to denounce the massacre of three thousand people in the temple ordered by Archelaus, repeated the same complaints, whilst highlighting the bribes and gifts that had to be paid to the king, his family and friends, and to the tax collectors (τῶν φόρων), who acted with complete impunity (*Ant.* 17.308).

This description of the state of tax affairs when Herod died can be applied to the whole of his reign. The king had organized a taxation system based on the annual payment of the *tributum capitis* (a tax on individuals). Furthermore, there was a series of taxes on commercial transactions, harvests (grain and fruit from the trees) and salt, and internal customs payments had been set, so that the prices of products increased notably.<sup>16</sup> That the annual and individual *tributum capitis*, per capita or poll tax, was the keystone to Herod’s system can be clearly deduced from what the Jewish ambassadors say to Augustus when denouncing Archelaus’s dreadful behaviour: “the annual impositions (φόρους) which he laid upon everyone of them (ἐκάστοις)” (*Ant.* 17.308). It seems that this tax was already being paid in the time of Antioch III, the first Seleucid king (ca. 200 BCE), or even earlier, in

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<sup>16</sup> The taxes on grain and fruit from the trees increased by a third and a half the price of the product respectively. Herod collected them regularly (*Ant.* 15.303). The sale of farm products also levied another tax: Vitellius exonerated the inhabitants of Jerusalem for Passover in 37 CE (*Ant.* 18.90).

the Ptolemaic period.<sup>17</sup> Obviously, this annual and individual tribute to the highest political authority in the country was then paid to the emperor in the Jewish territories under direct Roman control (for example, Judea, but not Galilee and Peraea, subject to Antipas), as can be seen in the gospel account of the issue of the taxes for Caesar (see Mark 12:13–17). The episode involving the Jewish ambassador sent to Augustus may indicate the amount paid for the *tributum capitis* during Herod's reign and the Roman administration until 70 CE: one denarius, i.e. the equivalent to a day's work.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, it seems likely that during Herod's reign there was an annual and individual *tributum capitis*, within the framework of a strict tax system. The king put Ptolemy in charge of this system, a man who enjoyed the king's greatest respect.<sup>19</sup> Obviously, a tax system such as this could be applied only if there was an up-to-date census, i.e., thanks to a series of decrees for registration, published periodically and affecting all of the adult population—both men and women.<sup>20</sup> There must, then, have been several general censuses or decrees for registration throughout Herod's reign, not just one, and the main aim must have been solely to collect the *tributum capitis*. Herod did not, as we shall see, impose the

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<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Antioch III made the municipal council of Jerusalem and all those connected to the temple (priests, scribes and sacred singers) exempt from the payment of this tax, but maintained it for the rest of the population (ὑπὲρ τῆς κεφαλῆς τελοῦσιν) (*Ant.* 12.142). Despite this, some authors, such as Tcherikover, have reservations on the subject (Schalit, *Herodes*, 268 n. 420).

<sup>18</sup> Schalit proposes that the per capita tax would have been half a shekel per year or, perhaps, a third of a shekel, as with the temple tribute (*Herodes*, 272). In Syria, during Appian's time, 1% of the valuation of each person's property was paid as the (Schürer and Vermes eds., *History*, 1:402 n. 9).

<sup>19</sup> Ptolemy, "the king's dearest friend" (*War* 1.473), was Herod's minister of finances (*Ant.* 16.191) and, furthermore, the executor of his last will and testament (*Ant.* 17.195). The network of census agents could exceed or even become confused with the so-called "country scribes" (κωμογραμματεῖς), people with an average education who ensured the writing of public and private documents in rural and highly illiterate areas (*Ant.* 16.203; *War* 1.479). These scribes may have acted as leaders in the smaller Jewish towns (Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 2:186 n. 4).

<sup>20</sup> According to Ulpian (*Liber secundus de censibus* 50.15.3), the inhabitants of the Roman province of Syria (which often includes those of the province of Judea) were required to go personally to register for the census: men over the age of 14, and women over the age of 12, and, both, up to the age of 65. See Schalit, *Herodes*, 277 n. 441. However, in Egypt, the Roman model was more closely adhered to, in accordance with which only men (between the ages of 14 and 60) needed to register for the census; the women, along with the children and the old, were declared by the man and head of the family.

*tributum soli* or tax on rural land, a key element in Roman taxation, because this would have led to a violent reaction from the Jews, as was the case in the events surrounding Quirinius's census in 6 CE.

#### 4.2. *The Frequency and Characteristics of Herod's Censuses*

How often were the censuses decreed? Opinions are wide-ranging. According to A. Schalit, Herod would have decreed a census every six years during his reign, specifically in 20 and 14 BCE, coinciding with the two tax amnesties referred to by Flavius Josephus. There would have been a last census in 8 BCE, not mentioned by the Jewish historian.<sup>21</sup> According to M.-J. Lagrange, following W. M. Ramsay, the interval between one census and another would have been fourteen years, in line with the model seen in the province of Egypt.<sup>22</sup> However, recent research by Bagnall and Frier, and subsequently Pearson, and Palme's study, show that the cycle in Egypt lasted seven years.<sup>23</sup> Alongside this evidence from Egypt, the fact that Augustus decreed three censuses of Roman citizens should also be taken into account, in 28 BCE, 8 BCE and 14 CE, at intervals of approximately twenty years and for statistical reasons. Thus, though the Egyptian model cannot be applied directly to Herod's kingdom, the intervals are similar: the Egyptian cycle lasts seven years and according to Schalit's hypothesis on Herod's censuses, the interval would be six years.

However, it is difficult for this data to be considered rigidly exact. It is true, if we bear in mind the information provided by Flavius Josephus, that Herod decreed a reduction in taxes in 20 BCE, whilst in 14 BCE he proclaimed a pardon for the taxes that had to be paid. The reduction in taxation took place following Augustus's journey to the province of Syria, where Herod went to visit him; the pardon came following a joint journey by Herod and Agrippa, the empire's second in command, to Asia Minor. Herod returned home very satisfied on both

<sup>21</sup> *Herodes*, 274–275.

<sup>22</sup> Lagrange proposes starting the first cycle of fourteen years in 10–9 BCE. Ramsay, in turn, sets the cycle between 7 CE (Quirinius's census) and 7–5 BCE. See Marie-Joseph Lagrange, "Où en est la question du recensement de Quirinius?" *RB* 8 (1911): 60–84, at 61–62.

<sup>23</sup> Pearson, "Censuses," 274. On the censuses in Egypt, see also B. Palme, "Die ägyptische κατ' οἰκίαν ἀπογραφή, und Lk 2:1–5," *Protokolle zur Bibel* 2 (1993): 1–24; "Neues zum ägyptischen Provinzialzensus: Ein Nachtrag zum Artikel PzB 2 (1993) 1–24," *Protokolle zur Bibel* 3 (1994): 1–7.

occasions, due to his proven friendship with the imperial leaders and the attention he had received, and thus decided to reduce the taxation of his subjects. Schalit believes that the aforementioned reduction and pardon are signs of two decrees for censuses, which would have taken place around the same time. Indeed, they can be seen as a wise political decision, which combine, on the one hand, the updating of the census with the collection of the annual tax, and on the other, the reduction (20 BCE) or amnesty (14 BCE) of this tax.

Thus, in 20 BCE, at a politically complicated time, in which there is a notable level of disaffection in the Jewish community, Herod, quick to defend his throne, invokes a series of measures, the political incentive for which is plain to see. The king applies an appeasing measure (to reduce taxes by a third) with the excuse of encouraging an economic recovery following a series of poor harvests and to show his Jewish subjects that he does not want “the dissolution of their religion (εὐσεβεία) and [...] the disuse of their own customs (ἔθνη)”, i.e. the Jewish Laws (*Ant.* 15.365). As has been mentioned, the favourable measures culminated in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, which started in the winter of 20/19 BCE. However, Herod simultaneously decreed a series of repressive measures (prohibiting meetings, extreme police surveillance, execution of enemies), and he demanded that all his subjects take an “oath of fidelity” (ὄρκους ἡξίου πρὸς τὴν πίστιν) to him, accompanied by a declaration of “goodwill” (εὐνοία) (*Ant.* 15.368). Only the Pharisees and Essenes were exempt from this oath, no doubt due to the religious reason that God alone is worthy of an oath of fidelity (*Ant.* 15.370–371). In this context, Schalit’s proposal seems credible: 20/19 BCE is an appropriate date for a census, which would obviously be better received if accompanied by an important reduction in the taxes to be paid.

Six years later, in 14 BCE, a second measure affecting taxation was introduced. Herod decided to pardon (not reduce!) the taxes to be paid. In effect, faced with the crowds called to Jerusalem by the king, coming from the city and the surrounding area, Herod tells them, to their obvious enthusiasm, that the taxes for the previous year are to be reduced by a quarter (τὸ τέταρτον τῶν φόρων) (*Ant.* 16.64–65). This amnesty, however, did not represent a reduction of taxes. It was a populist decision from a king who was looking to increase his subjects’ loyalty towards him. It is, thus, questionable to assume that this tax pardon in 14 BCE would have been accompanied by a decree for

a census, as is very probably the case with the reduction in taxation decreed in 20 BCE.<sup>24</sup>

In the final years of Herod's reign, the complicated situation seen around 20 BCE repeated itself. There are three events to be taken into consideration, in three consecutive years. The first unusual warning sign came in 10 BCE. Faced with increasing costs from within and outside the kingdom, Herod decides to rob, personally and at night, the tomb of king David (*Ant.* 16.179–183). The second event, in 9 BCE, is also very unusual in terms of Herod's political career. Following a strange episode that includes a bloody attack on the Nabataeans, Augustus wrote a chastising letter to the king, saying: "whereas of old he had used him as his friend (φίλω), he should now use him as his subject (ὑπηκόω)" (*Ant.* 16.290). However, a short time later, they were reconciled, and Augustus wrote another letter to Herod in which he lamented the harshness of his reaction and admitted that the king had been the victim of slander (*Ant.* 16.352). Immediately, Herod's concerns are replaced by a renewed and enthusiastic loyalty to Augustus. The third event to take into account took place in 8 BCE. Augustus, for the second time during his reign, decreed a census that affected Roman citizens throughout the empire. This was a census ordered, fundamentally, for statistical reasons and to enhance the prestige of an increasingly great and large dominion. It took place during the time when Sentius Saturninus governed as legate of Syria (10/9–7/6 BCE).

Evidence of this imperial census, decreed in 8 BCE, seems to be given by Tertullian in somewhat confused information, provided in relation to Luke 2 and Jesus' lineage (*genus*): *Sed et census constat actos sub Augusto tunc in Iudaea[m] per Sentium Saturninum, apud quos genus eius inquirere potuissent* (*Adversus Marcionem* 4.19.10).<sup>25</sup> The

<sup>24</sup> The general reduction in taxes decreed in 20 BCE was a unique decision in the history of Herod, and it is likely that it was due to the recommendations of Augustus, to whom Herod felt closely linked. The pardon in 14 BCE was also exceptional. We only know of one other exceptional measure that benefited a small Jewish military colony in Batanea (*Ant.* 17.23–28).

<sup>25</sup> From the critical edition by C. Moreschini and R. Braun in SC 456 (Paris, 2001). On this text, see C. F. Evans, "Tertullian's References to Sentius Saturninus and Lukan Census," *JTS* 24 (1973): 24–39. Evans adopts a somewhat sceptical position with regards to the historical sources that Tertullian had available and tries to show the short-circuit established between the author and Luke 2. The problem is, however, the starting point: for Evans, Luke would know only of one census, Quirinius's (6 CE), not of a previous Herodian census. Likewise, as he himself admits, the information provided by Tertullian has a minimal apologetic content, as it comes from another perspective, in a context

interest generated by Tertullian's contribution is based on two facts: it shows the relationship between Augustus's census in 8 BCE with the governor Saturninus, and mentions Judea, Herod's kingdom (as in Luke 1:5: "In the days of Herod, king of Judea"). The most obvious imprecision contained in the information offered by Tertullian is that he makes Saturninus the executor, in Judea, of one of Augustus's decrees. However, as has been seen above, the only ruler who could have ordered a census in the Herod's kingdom was Herod himself, not the governor of Syria. Likewise, the census decreed by Augustus in 8 BCE differed fundamentally from a provincial census carried out in Syria or a census decreed by an allied king such as Herod. The latter were designed primarily for taxation reasons, whilst Augustus's census was intended to provide statistics and only affected Roman citizens residing in the Syrian and Palestinian territories. Thus, is there confirmation available of a census in Judea during Saturninus's time as governor (10/9–7/6 BCE), ordered (in the only case possible) by king Herod?

Firstly, it should be pointed out that, following the crisis of the war with the Nabataeans (9 BCE) and Augustus's severe reprimand, Herod had good reason to ingratiate himself with the emperor, at a time of great difficulties in his own family, culminating in the execution of his sons Alexander and Aristobulus, in the winter of 7/6 BCE—a decision he was advised against by Augustus himself (*Ant.* 16.356–394; *War* 1.536–551). A decree for a census may have satisfied the emperor, a man concerned about showing the strength and greatness of his empire—by carrying out constant censuses in the allied kingdoms and provinces.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, Herod boasted about his excellent relationship with Saturninus during the latter's final years in command as the governor of Syria (7–6 BCE).<sup>27</sup> Thirdly, Flavius Josephus tells of how in this period there was an act involving "all the people of the Jews" (παντὸς γοῦν τοῦ Ἰουδαϊκοῦ), which gave assurance "by swearing" (δι' ὄρκων), their "good-will (εὐνοήσειν) to Caesar, and to the King's government" (*Ant.* 17.42). This is a very similar situation to that seen fourteen years earlier in 20 BCE. Herod demanded for a second time that all his subjects swear their loyalty to Augustus and the king, with some subjects, the Pharisees, being exempted. The context for this oath,

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that does not directly talk about the birth of Jesus. Tertullian's contribution cannot, then, be quickly dismissed, as Brown seems to do (*Birth*, 553–554).

<sup>26</sup> See Schalit, *Herodes*, 276 n. 439.

<sup>27</sup> See *Ant.* 15.360; 17.23–28; 17.57; *War* 1.577.

likewise, was a period of political and social difficulties, seen in the complaints presented to Augustus immediately after the death of Herod. There were accusations of high treason and, subsequently, executions of some Pharisees and members of the court who sympathized with them, such as Carus and the eunuch Bagoas (*Ant.* 17.45). In this context of increasing subjugation, detentions, executions and suspicions, it is easy to see how a census decree would make sense, requiring, as with the previous census in 20 BCE, an act of loyalty to Herod and Augustus, whilst also updating the lists of registrations and ensuring the payment of the taxes.

In short, it would seem that, alongside the census decree ordered by Augustus in 8 BCE for all the Roman citizens throughout the empire, Herod, an ally to Rome and personal friend of the emperor, wanted to play his part in fulfilling the imperial desires, and decreed and carried out his own census, probably in 7/6 BCE, with political (swearing loyalty) and fiscal aims (updating the *tributum capitis*), affecting “Judea,” in other words, the whole of his kingdom.<sup>28</sup> It is true that there is no explicit reference to this Herodian census in Flavius Josephus, but he does mention an oath of loyalty to Caesar and Herod himself in 20/19 BCE and 7/6 BCE, which makes it highly likely that this oath has to be linked to the census.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, both require individual inscription or registration, both for men and women.

#### 4.3. *Jewish Customs in Herod’s Censuses*

The fundamental question centres on the type of census that Herod decreed. We need to ask if the censuses decreed by Herod involved the registration of people, adult men and women, in terms of tribe, lineage and family, in other words, in accordance with the Jewish custom, not in line with the Roman system.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> A Roman census, and no doubt a Herodian census, lasted at most a year: this is the opinion of Ramsay (see Pearson, “Censuses”, 275). Brown (*Birth*, 554) is right to refute the idea that the census could have started with Saturninus and gone on for a total of twelve years before being completed by Varus and Quirinius.

<sup>29</sup> We do not know if the censuses of 20/19 and 7/6 BCE, carried out, respectively, halfway through and at the end of his reign and with an interval of fourteen years, need to be supplemented by another census that Herod would have decreed around 36/35 BCE, at the beginning of his long reign. Note that the interval of fourteen years fits with the minimum age required to register in the census (see note 20).

<sup>30</sup> R. E. Brown accepts this possibility, referring to a Roman census (*Birth*, 549). If the Romans could do it, so too could Herod, king of the Jews!

It seems that there was still a register of genealogies in first-century Israel, at least in part, which included the sacerdotal tribe (of Levi) and the two tribes of the south, the ancient kingdom of Judah (the tribes of Judah and Benjamin). As is noted by J. Jeremias, a high level of awareness of the tribe to which one belongs is seen in those in exile, as the legitimacy of the dynasty or lineage was a guarantee to forming part of the authentic Israel.<sup>31</sup> It is obvious that in the case of the descendents of David, this awareness was kept alive, and thus also their links to Bethlehem, the origin of all the members of David's family.<sup>32</sup>

Likewise, tradition in Israel considered the census as the counting of people, a registration in terms of lineage and family, not as a cadaster which assessed land and assets, such as animals. In effect, the first censuses began before entry to the Promised Land so as to aid the equal sharing out of the land, in line with divine criteria (drawing lots), to ensure a fair and stable distribution of property (see Num 1 and 26). It is the Lord who commands that these two censuses be carried out on the adult men capable of fighting, as it is He who will give the land to the Israelites (Num 34:13–15). However, when king David dares decree a census to measure his military force and calls for the counting of all the men able to fight, divine punishment comes down on the people (2 Sam 24). Indeed, political authority is legitimized by carrying out censuses with military and/or fiscal ends, as in the measuring of the Lord's rights over Israel through the payment of the tribute to the temple (Exod 30:12–15). Following the exile, the census focuses on establishing lists of the repatriated and assessing the purity of the lineage of each, in terms of the name of the head of the dynasty or of their place of origin (see Ezra 2 and Neh 7). The figures from the census now included not only adult men, but also the women (no doubt, married), slaves and the temple's sacred singers.<sup>33</sup>

In consequence, if, as it seems, Herod organized or maintained for his Jewish subjects a fiscal system that respected their historical customs with regard to the census of the population and the payment of the tribute to the temple, the key aspect of a fiscal policy that would not

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<sup>31</sup> See J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu: Eine kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur neutestamentlichen Zeitgeschichte*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), IVth section.

<sup>32</sup> Jesus' genealogies presented in the gospels of Matthew (1:1–17) and Luke (3:23–38) provide evidence for this idea.

<sup>33</sup> The husband had to pay the corresponding tax for his wife or wives.



upset the Jewish sensibility would be the equal application of a *tributum capitis*, instead of the *tributum soli*. This is the essential difference between a Jewish census (such as Herod's) and a provincial Roman census (such as Quirinius'). They need to be carefully distinguished, as A. W. Zumpt, M.-J. Lagrange, and recently B. W. R. Pearson have suggested.<sup>34</sup> Whilst the former is based on the registration of individuals and is designed for the collection of the per capita tax, the latter is based on the valuation of property and introduces an element, the taxable value of land, that goes against the sensibility of the Jewish religion.<sup>35</sup> In the Jewish system, the bottom line for the *tributum capitis* is the atonement of the people and their belonging to God, which ensures the equality of all (see Exod 30:12–15): the per capita tax is the same for all. However, apart from this, there are other personal taxes that are calculated in terms of the valuation of their fixed assets (see notes 16, 17 and 18 herein). As I have mentioned above, the per capita tax derived from the census lists affected men and women between 14/16 and 12/14, respectively, and sixty-five years old (see note 21).

On the other hand, the *tributum soli* in its strictest sense, a tax deriving from the declaration of agricultural property owned and its cadastral valuation, was introduced only in 6 CE, around the time of Quirinius's census. This can be deduced from Flavius Josephus, who stresses that the *tributum soli* was something completely new in relation to the system used until then and maintained by Herod: "Such were the consequences of this, that the customs of our fathers were altered, and such a change was made, as added a mighty weight toward bringing all to destruction (τῶν πατρίων καίνισις καὶ μεταβολή)" (*Ant.* 18.9). Quirinius's census in 6 CE was undoubtedly *more romano* and not *more judaico*, with the intention of establishing a cadaster. Thus, as well as the individual registration, people also had to make a declaration of their agricultural property so as to allow for the "valuation" (ἀποτίμησις) of the land (*Ant.*

<sup>34</sup> A. W. Zumpt wrote his work, *Das Geburtsjahr Christi*, in 1869. See, on his position, Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:418. It is, in any case, true, that Zumpt underestimates the scope of Herod's Jewish census excessively and converts it into an almost inoffensive register of abode.

<sup>35</sup> Obviously, the Romans' income from taxes was not limited to the *tributum soli*. According to L. Neesen (cited by Philip C. Schmitz, "Census," *ABD* 1:883–885), the Romans' fiscal income coming from the provinces also included variable taxes on assets, a fixed per capita tax (*tributum capitis*), income from imperial and public property, taxes on Roman citizens (who benefited from many exemptions) and extraordinary fundraising.

18.1–2). The aim was to produce a cadaster of properties, carried out with a “sworn declaration” (ἀκρόασις) from the owners (*Ant.* 18.3)<sup>36</sup> (see note 15). However, the land belonged only to the Lord God, and a census that aimed to value the land was essentially an insult to his authority over the country and his people. This is the sort of theocratic argument used by Judas the Galilean: “After God, submit to mortal men (the Romans) as their lords” (*War* 2.118; or 2.433).<sup>37</sup> The Jews were convinced “not to submit to the taxation” (μὴ ποιεῖσθαι τὰς ἀπογραφάς), when Quirinius was sent by Augustus to Judea to carry out the “valuation” (τιμητῆς) of their land (*War* 7.253).

Furthermore, in the lists of taxes paid during the reigns of the Seleucid rulers Demetrius I (162–150 BCE) and Demetrius II (145–140 BCE) (see 1 Macc 10:28–30; 11:34–35; *Ant.* 12.42) there is no mention of the *tributum soli* or the tax on the cadaster of rural property. Likewise, there is no petition to Archelaus regarding this from the Jewish leaders in 4 BCE (*Ant.* 17.204–205; *War* 2.4). The first real mention of a *tributum soli* applied to a Jewish territory by the authorities in charge is provided by Flavius Josephus with regard to the census by the legate of Syria, Quirinius (6 CE). Herod’s censuses only affected individuals. This means that there is still the possibility, without this having to be obligatory, of registering in the town from which one’s family originates,

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<sup>36</sup> The term ἀποτίμησις or “établissement de l’impôt d’après un cadastre” (Lagrange, “Recensement,” 65), both in Flavius Josephus (*Ant.* 18.1–2) and in the Babatha texts (P. Yadin 16, l. 11), deals only with the cadastral valuation of rural land or agricultural property; in turn, ἀπογραφή, indicates, generically, any type of census or registration of people and/or property. Note that Luke (2:3) uses only the latter term. See Wieseler, *Beiträge*, 19; Schalit, *Herodes*, 281 n. 461; Brown, *Birth*, 554. On Quirinius’s census in Josephus, see M. Hirschsmüller, “Der Zensus des Quirinius nach der Darstellung des Josephus,” *Jahrbuch für evangelikale Theologie* 8 (1994): 33–68.

<sup>37</sup> According to Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:419, what would have offended the Jews would not have been the census on property, but rather “the Roman tax itself,” and they cite *War* 2.118 and 2.433. Indeed, in this latter example, Flavius Josephus censures the Jews for the fact that they “would after God submit to mortal men (the Romans),” as only God is worthy of submission. However, *War* 2.433 has to be interpreted in terms of *War* 2.118, where he says that the feeling of submission comes from the paying of the tribute (φόρον τελεῖν) to the Romans. Both very concise texts have to be read in terms of *Ant.* 18.3, which details that which really upset the Jews was the fact that they had to give a sworn declaration of their estates (ἀκρόασιν) in relation with the census (ταῖς ἀπογραφαῖς). As L. H. Feldman, in the LCL edition, translates: “Although the Jews were at first shocked to hear of the registration of property...”. In effect, this was Quirinius’s mission: ἀποτιμησόμενός τε αὐτῶν τὰς οὐσίας (*Ant.* 18.2), which Feldman translates as: “in order to make an assessment of the property.”

as opposed to registering in the place where one lives. This procedure would seem to correspond to the traditional organisation of the Jewish people, based on lineage and family.

### 5. *Interpreting Luke 2:1–2*

Herod's census merited direct reference from Luke, historian and evangelist. This can seemingly be deduced from Luke 2:2. The phrasing, which is somewhat cryptic, allows for two possible translations: "when this first census took place, Quirinius was governor of Syria" or "this census was prior to that which was carried out when Quirinius was governor of Syria." In the first translation, Luke would interpret that Jesus was born at the time of Quirinius's census (6 CE).<sup>38</sup> However, if the second translation is adopted, equally plausible from the point of view of the Greek language, it means that Luke, or the historical source he uses, distinguishes between two censuses: that of Quirinius and another, earlier census; both of which, obviously, would have been carried out during Augustus's reign. This earlier (or "first") census, which Luke does not identify, could correspond perfectly to the census decreed by king Herod in 7/6 BCE, when Saturninus was governor of Syria.

The grammatical possibilities for interpreting the adjective "first" (census) (πρώτη) as a comparative cannot be dismissed out of hand. From P. E. Huschke (1840) to B. W. R. Pearson (1999) and S. E. Porter (2002), including M.-J. Lagrange (1911), F. M. Heichelheim (1938), G. Camps (1963) and N. Turner (1965), many have stressed that the comparative sense applied to the adjective πρώτος is not infrequent. There are different examples of this use, where the adjective, followed by a genitive as the second part of the comparison, is used instead of πρότερος, which would be the more appropriate grammatically.<sup>39</sup> The adjective πρώτη, here practically a synonym of πρότερον, is used almost as an adverb. The syntactic problem is that it requires an elision

<sup>38</sup> Likewise, Justin (*Dial.* 78). From the present day, Palme, Rosen and Smith.

<sup>39</sup> The classic example is John 1:15, 30 ("he was before me" is the translation of πρώτος μου). Pearson ("Censuses," 280–281) takes a sentence from Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae* (Egypt, ca. 200 CE) where πρώτη (some manuscripts use προτέρα) means "prior" or "before." In turn, Lagrange ("Recensement," 81) remarks that Luke never uses the comparative adjective πρότερος (see Acts 1:1).

between the two different ideas being compared (i.e., “prior to [the census which was carried out] when”). Furthermore, the term for comparison is not a noun or a pronoun, but a sentence with a present participle as the verbal form, which would seem to make it a genitive absolute (“Quirinius governing [the province of] Syria”). However, elisions can be seen to be normal in comparisons, although in many cases there is an analogy or parallelism between the first and second term being compared.<sup>40</sup> The use of a participle phrase as the second term for comparison (“Quirinius governing Syria”) is unusual, but there are examples of similar constructions.<sup>41</sup> In short, the curious Greek syntax in Luke 2:2 does not rule out the solution proposed, which is admittedly more unnatural, but not beyond the boundaries of possibility for such a versatile writer as Luke.<sup>42</sup>

However, there is an obvious objection to this proposal: if the census mentioned in Luke 2:1–2 is not Quirinius’s, why is it linked to him, instead of mentioning Saturninus, who governed Syria when Herod ordered the census? It should be remembered that until 6 CE and Quirinius, the governors of Syria had no jurisdiction over the censuses in Judea. As a result, relating the legate or governor of Syria at the time, Saturninus, to Herod’s census would have been, historically speaking, inaccurate.<sup>43</sup> In turn, if Luke 2:2 dates Herod’s census in relation to Quirinius’s, it is because this is “the census” par excellence, the first Roman census decreed in Judea. Likewise, in Acts 5:37, Luke significantly uses the expression “in the days of the census” (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς ἀπογραφῆς) to date the rising led by Judas the Galilean (*Ant.*

<sup>40</sup> Thus Dan 2:39 LXX; Matt 5:20; John 5:36. See Lagrange, “Recensement,” 83 n. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Thus Jer 36:2 LXX. See Lagrange, “Recensement,” 83–84. In turn, S. E. Porter considers Κυρηνίου to be the genitive in the comparison and ἡγεμονεύοντος a participle modifying the noun (“Census,” 175). The use, or not, of the feminine article ἡ before the noun ἀπογραφή is not an element that pushes the interpretation of the sentence in one sense or the other. Some qualified textual witnesses (first hand of the Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Bezae) do not use it, and their reading seems preferable.

<sup>42</sup> This versatility leads him to use present participles with some unusual meanings, where they are translated with the particle “when” or “so.” This is the case in Luke 11:14, 29; Acts 7:30; 13:43; 14:20; 25:13. See Pearson, “Censuses,” 281. I. H. Marshall correctly writes: “The form of the sentence (Luke 2:2) is in any case odd, since it is hard to see why πρῶτος was introduced without any object of comparison” (*The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC [Exeter: Paternoster, 1978], 104).

<sup>43</sup> This is Tertullian’s mistake when he assumes that Saturninus carried out the census in Judea (*Adversus Martionem* 4.9,10). The possibility that Quirinius was legate of Syria twice is extremely weak (Porter, “Census,” 172–173).

18.4–10). As a result, it should not come as a surprise that in Luke 2:2 the last of Herod's censuses is described not on its own terms, but in relation to Quirinius's census, by definition *the* census in first-century Jewish history.

There is another point that would seem to pose a question mark against the historical accuracy of Luke 2:1 and/or his sources: the mention of an "edict" (δῶγμα) published by Caesar Augustus, according to which a census had to be carried out which affected "all the empire" (πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην). However, as has been noted, there is no evidence of a decree for a census that affected all the inhabitants of the empire, without exception, in the lifetime of Augustus, or, for that matter, Luke (!), i.e., throughout the first century CE.<sup>44</sup> Why does Luke then talk of a universal census, involving the whole of the Roman Empire?

From the point of view of the historical discourse, there are two possibilities. Luke may have grouped together a number of provincial censuses promoted by Augustus into just one, thus converting them into a general census of the empire, or he may be referring, specifically, to the census of 8 BCE, number seventy-two since the founding of Rome, which affected all the Roman citizens in the empire (but only the Roman citizens!).

Let us take the first possibility. It should be noted that Luke similarly grouped together a number of famines that affected many parts of the empire under Claudius's reign into just one: "Agabus (a prophet) stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the empire (ὅλην τὴν οἰκουμένην); and this took place in the days of Claudius" (Acts 11:28).<sup>45</sup> Likewise, it should be stressed that embellishing events (not making them up!) is common in ancient historiography. Thus, Flavius Josephus states that the emperor Tiberius expelled all of the Jewish community (πᾶν τὸ Ἰουδαϊκὸν) from Rome, and then we learn that those sent to the island of Sardinia to fight against the bandits were four thousand men of fighting age (*Ant.* 18.83–84).<sup>46</sup> Obviously, Rome had not expelled all the Jews! Indeed, in relation to the expulsion ordered by Claudius, Luke himself uses vocabulary similar to that of

<sup>44</sup> Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:410 n. 48. The use of δῶγμα as a technical term (= "imperial edict") is seen in P. Fayum 20.22 and *War* 1.393 (Porter, "Census," 180).

<sup>45</sup> Example cited in Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:426.

<sup>46</sup> This figure is corroborated by Tacitus (*Annals* 2.85), though he does include believers in the cult of Isis, who were also expelled.

Flavius Josephus, describing the imperial decree as requiring “all the Jews to leave Rome” (Acts 18:2).

The second possibility is that Luke wanted to refer to the seventy-second census of Roman citizens, decreed by the emperor alone (as Luke 2:1 indeed assumes!) in 8 BCE. Luke would know that this was a universal census, inasmuch as it affected Roman citizens throughout the empire, whether Italians or from colonies with *ius italicum*. Thus, the sentence in Luke 2:1 would be imprecise but not erroneous, as shortly before 7/6 BCE, the date when Herod would have ordered the last census of his reign, Augustus would have decreed one for the whole of the empire—despite its being addressed only to Roman citizens. In this case, Luke would have created one census from two, Herod’s and Augustus’s, which chronologically would have been very close together and not without some links, given the preferential treatment Herod gave the advice he received, directly or indirectly, from the imperial court.

In short, whether in terms of one or other of the possibilities, it is clear that Luke wished to accentuate the historical importance of the key events in his story: the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea during Herod’s reign. Luke connects this birth to a decree for a universal census issued by Augustus in 8 BCE and addressed solely to Roman citizens, which coincides, practically, with a census ordered soon after by Herod (7/6 BCE), to such an extent that the former overshadows the latter. However, Luke, as a good historian, provides another reference in terms of the censuses and mentions the census par excellence, the famous and controversial census of Judea, carried out by Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, Caesar’s legate in the province of Syria, in 6 CE. Luke’s intention is clear and it deserves to be emphasized, in his words: “for this was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26).

#### 6. *The Reasons for Joseph and Mary’s Journey to Bethlehem* (Luke 2:3–5)

If the census mentioned in Luke 2:2 was carried out according to Roman customs, those registering would have had to travel to the district headquarters, where the census offices were located, and present a sworn declaration of their property. This is how the censuses of Quirinius (6 CE) and Sextius Florentinus (127 CE) were carried out. In this case, Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem could be explained in this way: he would have had to register the property he owned in the town from which his

family came.<sup>47</sup> Matthew's silence on Nazareth would add to the plausibility of this solution. However, Luke's story presents Joseph and Mary arriving in Bethlehem and searching without luck for accommodation at an establishment open to the public: the supposed reason for this being that Joseph does not have a home of his own or accommodation in Bethlehem, nor anyone willing to put them up.<sup>48</sup>

The journey to Bethlehem fits with the framework of a *more judaico* census carried out by Herod, in accordance with the practice following the regulations deriving from the Old Testament, which aims only to register individuals. In effect, according to Luke 2:3, "all went to be enrolled, each to his own city" (ἐκάστος εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πόλιν).<sup>49</sup> This expression, on its own, is vague, as it may mean the current place of residence or the family's place of origin. Thus, Joseph and Mary were not obliged by law to travel to Bethlehem, as registration in a census of individuals could have been carried out both in Nazareth, where they lived, or in Bethlehem, the place that Joseph was descended from (or, more problematically, where he had been born).<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, regis-

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<sup>47</sup> On this hypothesis, the census office (Roman or in line with the Roman style) would not have been in Bethlehem, but perhaps in Herodium, the town which was the capital of the toparchy to which Bethlehem belonged, and thus probably the fiscal district's headquarters (*War* 3.55). In the case of Nazareth, the fiscal office would, without doubt, have been in Sepphoris.

<sup>48</sup> Rosen ("Geburtsdatum," 13) concludes, on the basis of Babatha's declaration, that Joseph would have owned fields and sheep (not houses!) in Bethlehem. Note, however, that Matthew mentions a "house" (2:11) at an unspecified time after Jesus' birth ("two years," if we are to go by 2:16). In turn, in Matthew, Joseph "took" his wife Mary, i.e., admits her into his house (1:20, 24). The corresponding mention of Bethlehem (2:1), Jesus' place of birth, would seem to show that Joseph's house is located in this town. In any case, Matthew does not explicitly affirm this: the coming of the angel to Joseph in his dreams is not located anywhere. In turn, Luke assures us that Mary has her home in Nazareth (1:56), and that she and Joseph "returned" (2:39) after their stay in Bethlehem (2:4). Babatha takes three days to carry out her cadastral declaration.

<sup>49</sup> Or "his own" (ἰδίαν) city, as is seen in part of the manuscript tradition (Alexandrinus, Byzantine and other families), should be interpreted to mean that Joseph was born in Bethlehem. Similarly, Justin (*Dial.* 78): "(Joseph) went up from Nazareth, where he lived (ἐνθα ᾤκει), to Bethlehem, to which he belonged (ὅθεν ἦν)." Note that the sentence in Luke 2:3 makes complete sense if the census involves a personal registration by the town's γραμματεὺς (in Nazareth or Bethlehem), in accordance with Jewish customs, and not the registration carried out at the district headquarters (Sepphoris or Herodium), as in Roman censuses.

<sup>50</sup> In a Roman style census where the key element is the cadastral declaration, women did not need to go physically to the census office. Their husband simply had to register them. However, in a Jewish style census, each individual, man and woman, had to register themselves. For this reason, Joseph and Mary had to register together and personally. As is stated in Schürer and Vermes, eds., *History*, 1:412: "There would have been no such necessity in a Roman census" (see note 20).

tering in Nazareth would have meant being able to avoid an onerous journey, especially given the fact that Mary was at an advanced stage of her pregnancy. Why, then, did they decide to go to Bethlehem to register and thus make Bethlehem Jesus' place of birth?<sup>51</sup>

The reason given by Luke to justify the journey to Bethlehem is apparently based on religious grounds: despite not living in Bethlehem, Joseph belongs to the "house (οἶκος) and lineage (πατριά) of David", and, thus, according to the traditional customs of Israel, as seen in the scriptures, he is linked to "his own city" (2:3), i.e. "the city of David, which is called Bethlehem" (2:4). The problems arising from the condition in which Mary, his legal wife, is to be found, do not dissuade a faithful and strict Jew, belonging to David's line, from going to register in the town from which his ancestors come: Bethlehem. The alternative solution, which would have seen them stay in Nazareth, would have been permitted by the Herodian authorities (not all the inhabitants of Nazareth could trace their ancestry accurately), and by the people of Nazareth, but this may not have been enough for a man of conviction and Davidic ancestry, such as Joseph. It is true that many other Jews must have remained in the towns in which they lived, even if they were descended from somewhere else: the Law was not always applied with the same intensity with which strict Jews, like Joseph, practised it. Likewise, Joseph's descending from Bethlehem could have been recent, and he should have known his relatives in Bethlehem.<sup>52</sup>

However, there is another reason (probably the main reason) that helps explain the surprising decision to have the child away from Nazareth. According to Luke 2:5, when Joseph and Mary start on their long journey to Bethlehem, Mary is his legal wife (τῆ ἐμνηστευμένη ἀὐτῷ), but they do not yet live together, nor have they celebrated their wedding; i.e., the solemn welcoming of Mary to Joseph's house, which is the culmination of the marriage. In effect, Luke 1:56 states

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<sup>51</sup> Mark D. Smith ("Of Jesus and Quirinius," *CBQ* 62 [2000]: 278–293) notes: "Joseph chose [his italics] to go to his ancestral home" (289).

<sup>52</sup> In Galilee, a land historically marked by important migrations, many Jews had migrated to Judea, which underwent problems of overpopulation, in the times of Aristobulus I and Alexander Jannaeus, Galilee's conquerors. In other words, Joseph's great-grandparents, grandparents, or even his parents (and, more problematically, Joseph himself) could have been among these immigrants who had moved to the re-conquered Galilee and settled down in Nazareth, a town neighbouring Sepphoris, the then capital of Galilee, and one of the centres with the highest population and economic movement in the territory.



that Mary, who is three months pregnant, returns from Judea, from the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth, to Nazareth, “to her home” (εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς), not to Joseph’s home. All this, then, leads us to think that Mary spends most of her pregnancy at her parents’ house, until the time when Joseph is to take her to Bethlehem.<sup>53</sup> This situation highlights the unusual and irregular circumstances surrounding Mary’s pregnancy, which must have shocked the inhabitants of the small town of Nazareth, many of whom would have been relatives. The social pressure would have meant that it was advisable for Mary and Joseph to leave the suspicious and suffocating environment of Nazareth. The child, yet to be born, would have been marked by the doubt and irony of the *vox populi*, and Joseph decided, wisely, that he should be born somewhere else and far away, so as to be sheltered from the slander of the inhabitants of the town they lived in. The decree for the census offered the perfect chance for Joseph to take Mary away from the small town of Nazareth, and together they could escape a stifling atmosphere of hostility.<sup>54</sup>

The situation, however, does not improve when they reach Bethlehem. Luke 2:6–7 tells us that Mary has her first child once they have arrived in the town of Joseph’s ancestors. We do not know when they arrived in Bethlehem, with the “official” intention of registering in the census decreed by Herod. It is clear, though, that, according to Luke 2, Mary gives birth in difficult circumstances, in a stable with a “manger” (φάτνη). The anomalous nature of this event shows that Bethlehem saw the uncomfortable situation that Mary and Joseph found themselves in repeat itself, surrounded by malicious gossip and doubts as to the father of the child that was to be born. If the child was born in a stable in Bethlehem, it must mean that Joseph, surprisingly, could not find accommodation with his relatives, who were of David’s lineage just like him. The reason why he was refused can only be the doubts over Mary’s pregnancy, which Joseph, despite everything and everyone, accepts. From the point of view of the *bien pensants*, Mary’s pregnancy,

<sup>53</sup> Matt 1:24, where it is said that Joseph “took his wife,” also implies that Mary spends part (a long or short period?) of her pregnancy not living with him.

<sup>54</sup> The suspicions concerning the father of Jesus, which Joseph himself initially shares (see Matt 1:18–19), do not go away when Joseph accepts Mary and the child is thus to be born as his own. The shadow of illegitimacy never leaves Jesus completely. See Armand Puig i Tàrrach, *Jesús: Un perfil biogràfic*, 5th ed. (Barcelona: Proa, 2004), 165–172. Bruce Chilton (*Intimate Biography*, 3–22) makes Jesus a *mamzer*.

beginning before Joseph had started to live with his wife, should have led him to divorce her, if he wanted “to save” his reputation as a pious and honourable Jew. Joseph, however, accepts the fact that a descendent of David is to be born surrounded by suspicion. Luke implicitly links the child’s birth with the disapproval of Joseph’s relatives living in Bethlehem. Indeed, even the option of the caravanserai does not resolve the problem of a place to stay (the *καταλύμα* is full of people) and the manger must have been a somewhat unusual crib for a descendent of David, born in his own town.

### 7. Conclusions

It seems likely that in the year 7/6 BCE, with Sentius Saturninus as governor of Syria, under the reign of king Herod, a census was decreed by the king that affected all his subjects. It was a census which was approved by Augustus, who had just decreed a census of the Roman citizens throughout the empire (reported in Luke 2:1), but which Herod was to carry out in accordance with Jewish customs (*more judaico*). For this reason, Herod’s census, unlike Quirinius’s Roman provincial census twelve years later (6 CE), did not require a tax declaration or valuation of property and thus did not see the ulterior application of a *tributum soli*. The census affected all adults, men and women, between 12/14 and 65 years old, and had both political (an oath of loyalty to Augustus and the king) and fiscal aims (payment of the annual, individual and equal *tributum capitis*).

It is not excessive then, either in terms of history or of philology, to distinguish between two censuses in Luke 2:2: “the first” (Herod’s census, in 7/6 BCE) and the census carried out “when Quirinius was governor of Syria” (6 CE). Jesus’ parents, Joseph and Mary, lived in Nazareth of Galilee, but decided to travel to Bethlehem for Herod’s census, in accordance with the Jewish customs for censuses (Luke 2:3). Joseph thus decides against Nazareth and chooses Bethlehem, where his family had emigrated from (Luke 2:4). This choice is understandable in the case of a pious Jew belonging to the lineage of David, the great king of Israel. However, the definitive reason for his decision can be seen in the anomalous social situation in which he and Mary are to be found—a subject for gossip in Nazareth. Mary, who is as yet only betrothed to Joseph (without ever having lived under the same roof together), was pregnant (Luke 2:5). Joseph, however, does not

divorce Mary and maintains the marriage agreement (Matt 1:19, 24). Nonetheless, the strong social pressures and malicious doubts over the identity of the child's father are decisive in leading to Joseph and Mary's leaving Nazareth, with the intention that Mary should have the child in Bethlehem—a more favourable setting. On arrival in Bethlehem, the reaction of Joseph's relatives cannot have been very positive, as, according to Luke 2:6–7, Mary gave birth to Jesus in precarious conditions, in a stable on the outskirts of the town where David had been born.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> An extended version of this study, entitled “The Birth of Jesus,” is to be published in the book *Studies on the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) (provisional title).

WORDS OF JESUS IN PAUL:  
ON THE THEOLOGY AND PRAXIS OF THE JESUS TRADITION

PETR POKORNÝ

1. *The Logia of Jesus on the Lips of the Apostle Paul  
and of the Christian Prophets*

One aspect of the investigation of the relationship between the Easter proclamation and the pre-Easter Jesus tradition is the examination of the role played by the words of Jesus in Paul. For the period before Paul, we can draw only on indirect reconstructions which examine the form and function of the traditional logia which were written down and collected later, and edited to a greater or lesser extent. Our sources here are the reconstructed Q, the synoptic gospels, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Gospel of John, and some other extra-canonical texts. The decisive material is contained in those post-Pauline texts; but if we wish to investigate the manner of its earliest tradition, we are obliged to take the Corpus Paulinum into account.

It is well known that although Paul presupposes Jesus in his theology, he appeals almost exclusively to the end of his earthly history: to Jesus' death on the cross, the factuality of which is proved by his burial, and to the resurrection, to which the apostle himself can bear witness on the basis of his personal experience of the exalted Lord. All that we learn about the life of Jesus is that he was born as a Jew (Gal 4:4) and was a descendant of David (Rom 1:3), that he had brothers (1 Cor 9:5), one of whom was named James (Gal 1:19; cf. 1 Cor 15:7), and that he gathered disciples, one of whom was named Cephas/Peter (Gal 2:14; 1 Cor 9:5, cf. 15:5a) and another John (Gal 2:9).<sup>1</sup>

Besides this, Paul cites some individual words of the Lord (κύριος). The context makes it clear that these are words of the risen and exalted Jesus, who is communicating with the apostle. Nevertheless, their contents and to some extent also their vocabulary correspond to the logia which were later written down as words of the earthly Jesus. For

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<sup>1</sup> For further details, cf. Victor P. Furnish, *Jesus according to Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 11–13.

Paul, the κύριος was Jesus, both as the exalted Christ and as the earthly Jesus of Nazareth, whose brother (ὁ ἀδελφὸς τοῦ κυρίου) he came to know personally (cf. Gal 1:19). In connection with the concrete words of the Lord, there is a striking link between these two dimensions of the concept of κύριος in 1 Cor 11:23–26a par., where Paul draws on liturgical tradition and declares that the Lord (most probably: the exalted Lord) who was “handed over” or “betrayed” (παρεδίδεται, v. 23) on the last night of his earthly life has communicated this to him directly (παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου).

Similarly, Paul proclaims two verdicts on questions of church law in the name of the exalted Lord (κύριος παραγγέλει/διέταξεν), both of which are also closely related to the pre-Easter tradition of the logia of Jesus. One of these verdicts forbids divorce (1 Cor 7:10–11; cf. Matt 5:32 par.; Mark 10:11–12 par.); the other concerns the apostles’ right to receive support from those who hear their word (1 Cor 9:14 [9:4]; cf. Matt 10:10b par.). Paul appeals here to words associated with Jesus, which he distinguishes from his own words (7:8, 10, 25) although he believes that he too is a bearer of the Spirit; and these are words which he has received at an earlier date.<sup>2</sup> This unchallengeable piece of evidence is highly significant. Luke attests that such quotations of the words of the Lord Jesus in Christian preaching were common, when he has Paul cite a logion of the Lord (probably an agraphon) in the apostle’s farewell discourse in Miletus (Acts 20:17–38, at v. 35c).

We must however also note that the apostle not only proclaims the words of the Lord with authority and in keeping with the tradition; he also works as a prophet and a bearer of the Spirit who places his own judgment almost on the same level as the words of the Lord (1 Cor 7:7, 8, 12, 17, 25), although he concedes that his opinion is not absolute (νομίζω, 7:26). He both hands on the words of the Lord and works as one who has the gifts of the Spirit. Indeed, he can even speak of his ecstatic voyage to the heavenly sphere (2 Cor 12:2–3), to which there is both a parallel in terms of the phenomenology of religion and a

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<sup>2</sup> H.-W. Kuhn, “Der irdische Jesus bei Paulus als traditionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem,” *ZThK* 67 (1970): 295–320, at 296–298; Nikolaus Walter, “Paul and the Early Christian Tradition,” most recently in *Paul and Jesus*, ed. A. J. M. Wedderburn, JSNTSup 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 51–80, at 54–55. On the distinction between the words of the Lord and the words of the prophet, cf. F. Neugebauer, “Geistsprüche und Jesuslogien,” *ZNW* 53 (1962): 218–228, esp. 227.

counterpart in Ascension of Isaiah 6–14.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that this close link between the prophetic office and the ministry of teaching was not found only in the apostle Paul. At 1 Cor 14:2–4, he emphasizes the importance of the edifying prophetic discourse, which he contrasts with speaking in tongues (itself surely also a gift of the Spirit). His Corinthian adversaries obviously held a different view; but Paul argues against them, not by relativizing prophecy, but by subordinating it to the criterion of building up the community. The conflict here is between two divergent views of the pneumatological gift of prophecy: one view saw a close link between this gift and the tradition of the logia of Jesus. These are authentic experiences of the Spirit, connected to the Easter upheaval; but it was inevitable that since those who had these experiences were persons of their own historical period, they would also interpret them in the hellenistic category of “inspiration.”

This means that a considerable portion of the Jesus tradition was transmitted by the prophets. And this in turn means above all that the prophet not only proclaimed the word, but gave an authoritative commentary. For example, Paul says as a prophet that if the unbelieving partner wishes to dissolve the marriage, he should be permitted to do so (1 Cor 7:15–16). Another example: it is the right, but not the duty of the apostle to live off the economic support provided by the community. It almost sounds like a general rule when he says that the believing marriage partner is not to be “enslaved” by the words of the Lord (οὐ δεδούλωται, cf. 1 Cor 7:15). Paul himself regarded the apostle’s right as a privilege, not as a duty, and this is why he made no use of it (... εἰς τὸ μὴ καταχρησασθαι τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ μου, 9:18), even though his opponents can misuse his conduct as an argument against his apostolic character (9:3ff., 15–17).

All this also means that the prophet has selected the words of Jesus in accordance with his own inspired judgment. Even in the case of a relatively faithful reproduction, this is a deep and creative incision into the Jesus tradition.

In many passages, the apostle can use his own words or an interpretative paraphrase of the tradition to express his conviction that something is in keeping with the will of the exalted Christ. The apocalyptic utterance in 1 Thess 4:15[-17] is sometimes interpreted in this

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Martin Hengel and Anna-Marie Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damaskus und Antiochien* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998), 47.

sense. Paul proclaims this ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου, “with a word of the Lord.” He does not say: “The Lord commands...” And this may mean that although the Lord with his authority stands behind these words (cf. 3 Kgs 13:1,3 [LXX]; Sir 48:3,5), they need not be a direct quotation from the tradition of the logia of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

There is thus a fluid transition between the literally transmitted and quoted words of Jesus and those utterances of the apostle (as a bearer of the Spirit) which are authorized by the Lord, although it is possible to distinguish clearly the two poles of the one axis. At one pole of the axis stand those words of the exalted Lord which are not connected with the Jesus tradition, e.g. the response of the Lord to the apostle’s prayer, which was received in a dream or in an ecstatic act of hearing: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9). These words are meant for the apostle alone, and thus clearly have a different function from the logia from the Jesus tradition which were meant for the whole community; nevertheless, the publication of these words in the framework of the epistle gives them a paradigmatic meaning for the addressees. The apostle is also a prophet who makes known the guidance which he has received from the exalted Lord, so that this may benefit the entire community.

In the center of the axis stand words which are not introduced as logia of the Lord, but are nevertheless different from the other apostolic instructions. In terms of their form, they are prophetic utterances which communicate the mystery (μυστήριον) as part of the all-embracing plan of God:<sup>5</sup> the word about hope in death (1 Cor 15:51) and the word about the eschatological salvation of the disobedient Israel (Rom 11:25). These are words with an apocalyptic character, which draw from the Easter confessions of faith inferences which belong in another category than the sayings of the Lord,<sup>6</sup> although the Jesus tradition is one factor that has influenced their formulation.<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor 15:51 resembles the word of

<sup>4</sup> Otfried Hofius, “Agrapha,” *TRE* 2:103–110, at 103; Peter Stuhlmacher, “Jesus-tradition im Römerbrief?” *ThBeitr* 14 (1983): 240–250, at 243.

<sup>5</sup> Petr Pokorný, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Epheser*, ThHKNZ 10.2 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1992), 140–142.

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard Delling, “Geprägte Jesus-Tradition im Urchristentum,” *CV* 4 (1961): 59–71, at 67; Fritz Neugebauer, “Geistsprüche,” 222; cf. M. Eugene Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 12, 34, 127.

<sup>7</sup> Boring, *Sayings*, 235; cf. 126.

the Lord at 1 Thess 4:15 and is related to Mark 13:26–27; Rom 11:25 has something of a parallel in Luke 21:24 (cf. Luke [Q] 13:34–35).<sup>8</sup>

Since 1 Cor 13:2 makes a link between Christian prophecy in general and the knowledge of mysteries (cf. 1 Cor 2:6–8)—and it is obvious that the real mystery is contained in the proclamation of Christ (1 Cor 2:6–16)—it is clear that the Christian prophets also preserved the sayings of Jesus. Inspired by the Spirit, they evaluated these and made a selection which they proclaimed, where necessary, in an adapted, interpreted, or concretized form.

The prophet and the teacher were two charismatic figures who were closely linked, and indeed often worked in a personal union (cf. *Did.* 11.1–6). This is no new discovery: M. E. Boring has made important studies of the role of prophecy in the transmission of the words of Jesus,<sup>9</sup> and he sees the Christian prophet as a spokesman of the risen Christ;<sup>10</sup> many sayings were derived from the Jesus tradition. Boring has attempted to restruct Christian prophecy on the basis of the Revelation of John, but methodological considerations argue against this approach: the detailed description of a vision, partly following already established literary forms, belongs to the prophetic ministry but is not the same thing as the proclamation of the words of Jesus in a sermon or instruction. Nevertheless, Boring has rightly underlined the fact that the prophet John genuinely writes his extensive apocalyptic text in his own name (Rev 1:4, 9). Through him, it is the risen Lord who addresses the communities and who concludes the letters with direct, specific exhortations: 2:7, 11, 17, 26–29; 3:5–6, 12–13, 21–22. Rev 16:15 is also a direct exhortation by the Lord, and the prophet even communicates the words of God the Father at 21:5–8. These are not words from the Jesus tradition. Here, it is the prophet himself whose own authority must guarantee the inherent authenticity of that tradition.

Basically, this corresponds to the Pauline data. Paul makes a distinction between the words of the Lord which he addresses to the community and his own personal ecstatic encounters with Lord (as at 2 Cor 12:2–4); paradoxically, the only words which Paul transmits

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Felix Flückiger, "Luk. 21,20–24 und die Zerstörung Jerusalems," *ThZ* 28 (1972): 385–390, esp. 389. On the link between teaching and prophecy, cf. 1 Cor 14:19, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. n. 6 above, and idem, *The Continuing Voice of Jesus: Christian Prophecy and the Gospel Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Boring, *Sayings*, 16.



from these encounters is the saying about weakness (12:9), which has a different form from other sayings of the Lord. 1 Cor 11:23–25 is a good example of how the words which come from the κύριος can at the same time be linked to the earthly Jesus.

Boring also recognized that the prophetic transmission of the words of Jesus tended to form groups of thematically related sayings (the core of the Sermon on the Mount, the instruction of the disciples, parables about the kingdom of God, etc.) which (like the Old Testament prophets) also contain sapiential sayings adapted to the apocalyptic context (e.g. [Q] Luke 12:22–34 par.). The prophets were conscious of being emissaries of the Wisdom of God (Luke 11:49).<sup>11</sup> M. Sato has very plausibly argued that the bearers of the Q tradition were early Christian prophets who had been close to Jesus before Easter.<sup>12</sup> At an early date, the Greek redactor of the *Gospel of Thomas* understood this text in a similar way, viz. as a collection and transmission of the words of the living Jesus (Ἰησοῦς ὁ ζῶν, Coptic *Iêsous etôn<sup>h</sup>*) which were received by revelation (prologue: P. Oxy. 654.1; NHC II 32.10), although more than half the logia are related to synoptic tradition. This means that prophecy transmitted the Jesus tradition, albeit in a creative way.

This allows us to draw some important conclusions. (a) Paul knew several logia of Jesus;<sup>13</sup> clearly, he learned these as a larger unit. (b) He distinguished these from other paraenesis, teaching, and prophecy, as well as from the words which Jesus addressed to him personally. (c) However, he himself selected and interpreted these sayings with the sovereignty of a prophet inspired by the Spirit. (d) The fact that he felt no need to comment on this process permits us to conclude that other prophets preserved and presented the words of Jesus in a similar manner. The form of individual, relatively self-contained logia, which is taken by most of the material about Jesus in the synoptic gospels, supports this conclusion. (e) This means that the transmission of the words of Jesus was not assured by instruction of a rabbinical nature (which would be an anachronism) nor by anonymous channels of the

<sup>11</sup> The debate about whether Q is a sapiential (John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 238–240) or a prophetic collection (Migaku Sato, *Q und Prophetie*, WUNT 2.29 [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1988], 105–107) is in reality a debate about early Christian Christology. Kloppenborg underestimates the importance of Easter as a fundamental datum of the Christian faith.

<sup>12</sup> Sato, *Q*, 409 etc.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. e.g. David L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Church of Paul* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 149–150.

collective community tradition.<sup>14</sup> Rather, this transmission was institutionalized to a significant degree (especially in the case of the logia) in the elementary manner which I have described.

These first indisputable conclusions prompt a serious question: Why do we find so few explicit quotations of the words of the Lord in the Pauline letters? As we shall see, Paul sometimes bases his arguments on the Jesus tradition without telling his readers what he is doing.

In literary terms, we are confronted on the one hand by the problem of religious pseudepigraphy, e.g. in the Johannine writings where we meet freely elaborated discourses of Jesus which are formulated by the authors with only a very indirect intention of corresponding to the words of the Lord. On the other hand, the anonymity with which several sayings from the tradition are cited is typical of the Corpus Paulinum. A more precise definition of the way in which Paul handed on the words of Jesus is closely linked to the explanation of this state of affairs.

## 2. *Relativizing the Problem*

We can solve this problem by calling into question what I have just said, and doubting the existence of words of Jesus in Paul. Frans Neiryck, a very conscientious scholar, has concluded that apart from the words in 1 Corinthians 7 and 9, the existence of logia of Jesus in Paul cannot be demonstrated:<sup>15</sup> the institution of the Lord's Supper is a liturgical tradition, and although one cannot exclude *a priori* the possibility that the other allusions are connected to individual logia of Jesus, these can just as well be analogous formulations. We must take this objection seriously, and bear in mind that our arguments in favor of Paul's knowledge of other words of Jesus rest only on the congruence of a number of indirect indications.

If Neiryck's conclusion were the last word on the subject, Paul's lack of interest in the Jesus tradition must be theologically motivated; it could not be the fruit of mere neglect or indifference. In this context, scholars have often quoted 2 Cor 5:16, where Paul writes that we

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<sup>14</sup> M. Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1965), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Frans Neiryck, "Paul and the Sayings of Jesus," in *L'Apôtre Paul*, ed. A. Vanhoye (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 265–321.

as believers know no one—not even Christ—“according to the flesh” (κατὰ σάρκα).<sup>16</sup> Although most scholars understand the κατὰ σάρκα to refer not to the person of Christ, but rather to a mode of knowledge which is not yet influenced by Easter,<sup>17</sup> it is clear that Paul concentrated his attention on the new post-Easter presence of the Christ who had directly intervened in his life (Gal 1:15; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8). Theologically, his principal argument is the Christ of the Christian confessions of faith, because the beginning of the new age is linked to him (Gal 4:4f.; 2 Cor 5:17) and because it is through the proclamation of Christ as the risen Lord that the God of grace reveals himself, the God who makes the dead alive (2 Cor 1:9). It is only this Jesus, recognized as Lord, who can be a model: but the model is not his conduct during his earthly life, but the reality of the incarnation to which the post-Easter confessions bear witness. This incarnation reaches its summit in his death on the cross (2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:5–7) and becomes the model of humility and of the willingness to sacrifice one’s life, as Rudolf Bultmann has convincingly argued.<sup>18</sup>

This priority of the Easter confession goes a long way to explain the fact that Paul does not quote the words of Jesus when he expresses the fundamental affirmations of the faith.

We can and must criticize Bultmann for underestimating faith’s need for orientation in the world, which always entails a concrete confrontation with existing traditions. And we must ask why Paul paid so little attention to the tradition of the words of Jesus, although this tradition was cultivated in the Christian communities and was very much alive there—and although he himself knew at least a part of it. All these are legitimate questions which we must put to Bultmann; but there is no

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<sup>16</sup> J. W. Frazer, “Paul’s Knowledge of Christ. II Cor V.16 Once More,” *NTS* 17 (1970–1971): 292–313, at 300–301; H.-W. Kuhn, “Der irdische Jesus bei Paulus als traditionsgeschichtliches und theologisches Problem,” *ZThK* 67 (1970): 295–320, at 307.

<sup>17</sup> Josef B. Souček, “Wir kennen Christus nicht mehr nach dem Fleisch” (1959), most recently published in *Bibelauslegung als Theologie*, ed. P. Pokorný and J. B. Souček, WUNT 100 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997), 183–197; C. Wolff, “The Apostolic Knowledge of Christ: Exegetical Reflexion on 2 Corinthians 5,14ff.,” in *Paul and Jesus*, ed. Wedderburn, 81–98.

<sup>18</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “Die Bedeutung des geschichtlichen Jesus für die Theologie des Paulus” (1929), republished in idem, *Glauben und Verstehen* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1933), 188–213, at 198, 202, 208, 211.

challenging the starting point. Paul's theology begins with an event, the substance of which is exceedingly difficult to grasp, viz. his encounter with the living Lord.

We can show what this means for our problem by looking at the way Paul speaks about the address of God as "Abba." Only a few scholars doubt the authenticity of the Lord's Prayer as a genuine prayer of Jesus, and it is probable that Paul too knew it. He quotes the address of God as "Abba" in worship (together with the Greek translation "Father") at decisive points in his argumentation (Gal 4:6a; Rom 8:15); this has a parallel in the Gethsemane pericope (Mark 14:36 par.) and is identical with the beginning of the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:2; Matt 6:9).<sup>19</sup> But he does not introduce this as a word of the Lord. Rather, he emphasizes that it is the Spirit (of the Son) of God through whom the exalted Christ inspires and empowers the Christians to address God in this way.

The absence of direct quotations of words of the Lord thus constitutes no fundamental contradiction of Paul's theology. Here, Bultmann's position has lost nothing of its relevance.

### 3. *Secondary Words of Jesus?*

As I have said, however, the life of faith must seek a point of orientation in the world, and we must therefore ask what role the words of Jesus play for Paul in this context. Only a naïve hypercriticism would maintain that he knew *no* logia other than those he directly cites, or that he was completely uninterested in this tradition. His conversion at Damascus, which he experienced as an encounter with the risen Christ, must necessarily also have awakened his interest in the earthly Jesus. He writes at Gal 1:18 that he went to Jerusalem—probably only three years after his conversion—in order to get to know Cephas (Peter), ἱστορήσαι Κηφᾶν.<sup>20</sup> This most likely means that he acquired information from Peter about Jesus and the beginnings of the Christian movement. This corresponds not only to the semantic investigation of the verb ἱστορεῖν (ἱστορήσαι = "to get information from")<sup>21</sup> and to the

<sup>19</sup> Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK 6.2 (Zürich: Benzinger, 1980), 57.

<sup>20</sup> The meaning "to get to know" is presupposed by Otfried Hofius, "Gal 1,18: ἱστορήσαι Κηφᾶν," *ZNW* 75 (1984): 73–85.

<sup>21</sup> The interpretation of ἱστορήσαι as "acquiring information" was proposed by George D. Kilpatrick nearly fifty years ago: "Galatians 1:18 ἱστορήσαι Κηφᾶν," in

substantially parallel use of προσανατίθεναι (“to consult” [an expert]) in v. 16, but can also be inferred from a simple reflection on the purpose of Paul’s visit to Peter.

It is therefore reasonable to assume that Paul knew some parts of the Jesus tradition, and this makes it all the more surprising that he does not appeal to sayings of the Lord at a number of decisive points in his letters where his argumentation runs close to such logia. The principal texts here are the paraenesis in Rom 12:14, 17–21, where Paul exhorts his readers to love their enemies, and Rom 14:14, about the relativization of the soteriological significance of observing the purity regulations. The striking parallels are Luke 6:27–29 and Mark 7:18 par.

One possible explanation is that Paul does not in fact cite any words of Jesus in such passages, but either elaborates the sapiential tradition (for the passages in Rom 12, cf. e.g. Prov 3:7; 25:21–22; Deut 32:35; *T. Benj.* 4–5) or makes a synthesis in brief maxims of what Christians had experienced in the aftermath of the apostolic decree.

Some scholars go so far as to suggest that the relevant logia entered the Jesus tradition only at a later date.

J. Sauer has attempted to demonstrate the secondary character of the appeal to love one’s enemies in Luke 6: this logion was generated in the early church and reached Paul via the preliminary stages of Q.<sup>22</sup> However, the development in the early church tended rather to make the instructions more specific; and the passages in the apostolic fathers (especially *Did.* 1.2–5 and Justin, *1 Apol.* 15.9–13) which cite the exhortation to love one’s enemies show that these words belonged to the core of the Jesus tradition. Because they were so radical, however, they were soon relegated to the background: for example, there is no allusion to them anywhere in the lengthy text of Hermas’s *Shepherd*.

The reflections by E.P. Sanders in his book *Jesus and Judaism* have found a greater echo. He argues that if Jesus had really called the law (Torah) into question in the radical form that we find in Mark 7:15, 18, 20 par. (cf. *Gos. Thom* 14), then it would not have been necessary for

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*New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 144–149; he is supported by J. D. G. Dunn, “The Relationship between Paul and Jerusalem according to Galatians 1 and 2,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 461–478, and idem, “Once More Gal 1,18 ἱστορήσαι Κηφῶν,” *ZNW* 76 (1985): 138–139.

<sup>22</sup> J. Sauer, “Traditionsgeschichtliche Erwägungen zu den synoptischen und paulinischen Aussagen über die Feindesliebe und Wiedervergeltungsverzicht,” *ZNW* 76 (1985): 1–28, esp. 25–27.

Paul to fight so vehemently to ensure freedom from the law as a path to salvation.<sup>23</sup> Jesus was a loyal Jew—not a Pharisee, but an apocalyptic representative of covenantal nomism, a “reform Jew” who limited his activity to Israel (Matt 10:5.23). Sanders has failed to notice the fact that the Christians of Jewish descent who lived among the Jews in a Jewish environment had the tendency to emphasize those traits in Jesus’ conduct which were faithful to Torah, and that a conflict within the community lies behind all that Paul has to say about these issues. When Paul affirms, in words closely related to Mark 7:18, that purity comes from within rather than from without, he introduces this aphorism with the words: “I know and am fully convinced in the Lord Jesus”<sup>24</sup> (οἶδα καὶ πέπεισμαι ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, Rom 14:14a). This does not mean that Paul is quoting a traditional logion of the Lord, but rather that he is drawing here the profoundest consequence of his encounter with the risen Lord. It is impossible to overlook the substantial analogy to Mark 7:1–23, a narrative which is surely not *wholly* the invention of the Christian communities. It remains most likely that Paul is alluding here to a logion of Jesus; but even if this is not the case, he was at least aware of the inner coherence between his maxims and what he knew about Jesus’ behavior. It is very improbable that Paul would have invented the maxims, only in order to relativize them at once, and that Mark (as his direct or indirect pupil) would have attributed them to Jesus without the Pauline relativization.

Scholarly studies of this kind have thus not signaled a radical turning point in the investigation of the relationship between Paul and the Jesus tradition. Nevertheless, they have shown how the Jesus tradition may have been influenced by post-Easter Christian prophetic instruction, with its tendency to the formation of clear regulations. And this makes it easier to understand Paul’s oscillating manner of citation: The Lord says, I am convinced in the Lord, etc.

Besides this, the present section has confirmed our reflections in section 2 above. Even if the words in question are a quotation from the tradition, the decisive point for Paul is their inherent correspondence to his own experience of Christ.

<sup>23</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 11–12, 264–266.

<sup>24</sup> Following the German translation by Ernst Käsemann, “Ich weiß und bin im Herrn Jesus völlig überzeugt”; see *An die Römer*, HNT 8a (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1973), *ad loc.*

4. *Hidden Polemic?*

At the beginning of the last century, A. Resch collected allusions and indirect quotations of the words of Jesus in Paul.<sup>25</sup> On closer examination, however, it can be seen that most of these passages belong only to the general treasury of Christian (and sometimes also Hellenistic Jewish) religious phrases.

In the 1960's, J. M. Robinson identified in 1 Cor 4:6–13 motifs and formulations which look like polemic against the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Plain or the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>26</sup> The Corinthian Christians regarded themselves as rich, wise, and replete, and believed that they already ruled as kings with Christ in the kingdom of God: clearly, they applied to themselves the promises in the beatitudes (Luke 6:20b–21; cf. Matt 5:3–6). The apostle objects ironically that he himself is still poor, hungry, thirsty, and weak: he faces death, but he would like to rule along with the Corinthians (συμβασιλεύειν, 1 Cor 4:8b). They believed that through faith they were already in the new aeon, and therefore judged (κρίνειν) the others ahead of time (πρὸ καιροῦ, 4:5).<sup>27</sup> This recalls the warning at 2 Tim 2:18 against heretics who say that the resurrection has already taken place—a warning that is likewise introduced by an emphasis on patience and on the dying which opens up the path to a share in Christ's rule (συμβασιλεύειν, 2 Tim 2:12).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> A. Resch, *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu*, TU 26 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904).

<sup>26</sup> James M. Robinson, "Kerygma und Geschichte im Neuen Testament," in H. Köster and idem, *Entwicklungslinien durch die Welt des Frühen Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck 1971), 21–66, at 41–43.

<sup>27</sup> The reaction to contempt, persecution, and slander is blessing, patience, and friendliness (1 Cor 4:12b–13a). This corresponds to the exhortations in Luke 6:27–29 par., making it clear that these are allusions to a version of the beatitudes from the basic stock of the Sermon on the Mount. Cf. also Fritz Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, NTD 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 65: "Words of Jesus echo in the antitheses in vv. 12b and 13a."

<sup>28</sup> This seems to be a synthesis of the experiences recorded in 1 Corinthians, if we follow W. Lütgert and R. Bultmann in interpreting those who deny the resurrection (1 Cor 15:12–14) and reject baptism on behalf of the dead (15:29) as gnostic enthusiasts. We can find later evidence of this kind of danger in Polycarp, *Phil.* 7.1, where the rejection of this position has already become a topos of paraenesis. More recent exegesis regards Paul's opponents as "spiritual" persons who believe in an immaterial immortality: cf. Gerhard Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten*, FRLANT 138 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 29–30, 36–37, 212. Christian Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther 2*, ThHkNT 7.2 (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1982), 212–215, takes a similar view, but he derives the position of Paul's opponents not from gnosis, but from Jewish-hellenistic wisdom teaching: wisdom is identical with the Spirit of God and can dwell in the souls of the pious (Wis 1:6; 7:7,

We can of course discredit the individual allusions<sup>29</sup> and question whether Paul knew the Jesus tradition, but the sheer number of possible allusions surely supports the view that the apostle's adversaries were arguing on the basis of logia from the Jesus tradition and that what we have here is a conflict about how the inheritance from the Lord was to be interpreted.

According to Dieter Georgi, Paul's polemic in 1 Cor 2:14–7:4 and 2 Corinthians 10–13 is directed against ideas which correspond to the Christology of some of the novelistic miracle narratives in the synoptic gospels; these ideas may have come from the enthusiasts.<sup>30</sup> Taking these hypotheses as his starting point, H.-W. Kuhn has attempted to explain why the words of Jesus are almost absent from Paul: the apostle refrains from quoting the logia of Jesus, and does not mention the miracle stories linked to Jesus' name, because he sees a contradiction between these and the Easter faith.<sup>31</sup> This negative assertion is however an inadequate explanation of the fact that Paul quotes so few words of Jesus, for the simple reason that he quotes such logia three times in 1 Corinthians. Nevertheless, we must take seriously the positive theological interpretation which Georgi offers: "In Paul's eyes, genuine Christian preaching is not concerned primarily with knowledge of Jesus, but rather with taking on oneself the fate of Jesus..."<sup>32</sup> The phenomenon to which he draws attention here is connected with the post-Easter orientation of faith in Paul, and is well known. It has not been sufficiently taken into account in the investigation of the Jesus tradition in Paul.

For Paul, the Christ who suffered in his life on earth, who died, and who was exalted is the Lord who leads him through his Spirit and who also inspires him occasionally to cite some words from the Jesus tradition.

Despite all their one-sidedness, these studies have brought to light a hitherto underestimated dimension of the spiritual battle that is reflected in the Pauline letters. W. Lütgert had already demonstrated that this

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22; 9:17). After death, the soul is in God's hand (3:1; 8:13, 17). Lang regards the basic position of Paul's adversaries as "pneumatic" (*Korinther*, 208, 218).

<sup>29</sup> Christopher M. Tuckett, "1 Corinthians and Q," *JBL* 102 (1983): 139–191.

<sup>30</sup> Dieter Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief*, WMANT 11 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964), 251. On perfectionism in the context of the question of salvation, cf. especially W. Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwärmergeist in Korinth*, BFChTh 12.3 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1908), 128–130.

<sup>31</sup> Kuhn, "Der irdische Jesus," 317, 320.

<sup>32</sup> Georgi, *Gegner*, 290 n. 3.



was a battle on two fronts: both against the Hellenistic enthusiasts with their insistence on perfectionism as the path to salvation, and against the Jerusalem “pillars” with their underestimation of Easter. At this point we can see that this also involved a conflict about the interpretation of the Jesus tradition.<sup>33</sup>

We will return in the last section of this essay to a number of logia from the Jesus tradition which Paul obviously relativizes. What we have said up to now suffices to show (a) that it is possible that Paul’s opponents employed logia of Jesus in their arguments, but at the same time (b) that this did not lead the apostle to reject the authority of the words of the Lord—since it is precisely in his correspondence with Corinth that he quotes them three times.

### 5. *A Tradition with Defined Boundaries?*

From the 1960’s onwards, a number of studies have been published of the rules of the rabbinic transmission from teacher to pupil, as these are recorded from the Tannaitic period. Some of these monographs are complemented by investigations of how the teaching of the founder was transmitted in the philosophical schools of classical antiquity. Following B. Gerhardsson,<sup>34</sup> R. Riesner formulated a theory about the reliable transmission of the sayings of Jesus. He assumes that Jesus himself initiated this transmission and supported it by means of narrative techniques which were easily memorized. Riesner is aware of the differences between Jesus and the rabbis. Jesus not only transmitted and commented on the ancient teaching; he also proclaimed the kingdom of God. Many saw him as a messianic teacher; after Easter, they saw him in a new light. Nevertheless, Riesner holds that the mode of transmission of Jesus’ teaching was derived above all from the Jewish environment.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt*, 129–130.

<sup>34</sup> Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Lund: Gleerup, 1961), 262–264; idem, *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1964, 39–41).

<sup>35</sup> R. Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981), 423; cf. D. M. Stanley, “Pauline Allusions to the Sayings of Jesus,” *CBQ* 23 (1961): 26–39; also Dale C. Allison, Jr., “The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 1–32; M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ. The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1*, JSNTSup 59 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

Peter Stuhlmacher has portrayed the Christian transmission of the words and deeds of Jesus in the framework of a catechesis organized on the lines of a school. He can appeal to the information in Acts 19:9b about the lectures which Paul held in the school of the philosopher Tyrannus in Ephesus and to the many possible allusions to the Jesus tradition in the Pauline letters, which can scarcely be a mere matter of chance. Stuhlmacher offers some interesting reflections on the post-Easter transformation of the proclamation of the kingdom of God into the Pauline doctrine of justification.

Why are the words of Jesus in Paul anonymous? Stuhlmacher suggests that the readers of the Pauline letters were so well informed about the words of Jesus through Paul's instruction that he did not need to mention the source explicitly. For example, at 1 Thess 5:2, Paul mentions a saying about the coming of the Lord (unexpectedly, "like a thief in the night") which recalls Luke [Q] 12:39–40 par. He introduces this in words which clearly refer to an instruction that had been given at an earlier date: "For you yourselves know well that..." (αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκριβῶς οἴδατε ὅτι...).<sup>36</sup> It is only in order to resolve specific individual questions that Paul explicitly quotes logia of Jesus with which not all his addressees were familiar.

Stuhlmacher has also drawn attention to the literary distinction between the synoptic tradition and the Pauline letters: these may have played different roles in the life and the liturgy of one and the same Christian community. This is not a sufficient explanation of the anonymity of some of the words of Jesus in Paul, but it certainly helps to explain the relative rarity of explicit quotations. To take a parallel case: if the text of the Gospel of John had not in fact survived, no scholar would suppose that the Johannine circle (or school) could ever have produced a gospel in the form of a *vita Jesu*.

It is wrong to dismiss the monographs which assume and emphasize a professionally regulated continuity in the Jesus tradition by seeing them as examples of "conservative" trends. In a number of ways, they have indirectly influenced contemporary scholarship, above all by pointing out a number of inconsistencies in the form-historical school. Its thesis that the form of the traditional units is related to the *Sitz im Leben*

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<sup>36</sup> Peter Stuhlmacher, "Jesu-tradition im Römerbrief," *ThBeitr* 14 (1983): 240–250, at 243; idem, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 304.

of the community leads to a romantic view of the collective tradition (comparable e.g. to the transmission of folk songs or fairy tales), since it leaves open the question of *who* transmitted the units and presupposes that they were transmitted in a liturgy which is not actually defined in any detail. It is only in an aside that Bultmann mentions the Christian prophets, whose role in the process of tradition also involved a creative dimension. On the other hand, he appeals to the rabbinic tradition as an instructive analogy which he clearly believes applies above all to the second or third Christian generation. The so-called conservative scholars have consistently asked *who* handed on the tradition in strictly historical terms; this does not resolve the problem of the anonymity of the words of Jesus in Paul, but it does supply an important presupposition for a more precise identification of these persons. These scholars argue that if Jesus was addressed as a teacher (“Rabbi”) and had disciples (i.e., pupils), then the community which depended on him must have handed on his teaching. One who posits the absence of this tradition in ancient Christian texts (other than the gospels) or who deliberately presupposes the existence of an anonymous process of transmission must show that this is correct: the burden of proof lies on him.

The second important presupposition which “conservative” scholarship has underlined is the fact that research into the New Testament must take seriously the character of tradition as *tradition*. In other words, the transmission of the words of Jesus was not a creation *ex nihilo*. It did indeed interpret, apply, combine, and bring up to date; it handed on Jewish and hellenistic material under the name of Jesus. But there existed a general awareness that the words and narratives which were handed on in the community could not be allowed to contradict the words and the behavior of the earthly Jesus. On this point, there is a much broader consensus, which is summarized and expressed in the work of scholars such as Heinz Schürmann or Traugott Holtz.<sup>37</sup>

This means that the transmission of the logia of the Lord that we encounter in Paul and in the collections in Q and the *Gospel of Thomas*, i.e. of the words which are guaranteed by the authority of the exalted

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<sup>37</sup> Heinz Schürmann, “Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition,” in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), 356–358; Traugott Holtz, “Jesusüberlieferung und Briefliteratur,” in idem, *Geschichte und Theologie des Urchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1971), 17–30, at 25–27.

Lord, was carried out in the conviction that the exalted Lord is personally identical with the earthly Jesus and that when his will is proclaimed, one must at least be inspired by those logia which have been handed down. To relativize the Jesus tradition, or to refrain from mentioning the origin of this tradition, would run counter to this tendency. We see this in Q from the fact that the words of the Lord are handed on together with the words of John the Baptist, and in Thomas from the occasional references to concrete situations in the earthly life of Jesus which introduce the words of the Jesus whom the prologue calls "living" (i.e., exalted), e.g. in the introduction to the logion about paying tax to the emperor (*Gos. Thom.* 100; cf. Mark 12:14–17 par.). In Paul, this awareness is indirectly present in the passage I have already mentioned, where he speaks of his meeting with James "the brother of the Lord" (κύριος, Gal 1:19—the word "brother" is surely meant in the physical sense here).

Those words of the Lord which individual persons received specifically after Easter as directives from the exalted Lord (e.g. the words addressed to Paul in 2 Cor 12:9, which we have already discussed) were not integrated into the community tradition, because they were words for individuals and as such could find no *Sitz im Leben* in the liturgical lives of the communities. They were handed on only in association with the name of their original addressee, who had made them known. We have seen that this is the case with Paul, and the same is true in principle of the Book of Revelation as a whole, which (unlike the other revelations) was linked to the name of a specific person known to his contemporaries (Rev 1:1, 4, 9). Paul shows that he is aware of the normative significance of the earthly Jesus in a reduced, post-Easter form. The model for his own behavior is the role of Jesus that is expressed in the post-Easter liturgical and hymnic affirmations about his vicarious death and his resurrection (e.g. 1 Cor 15:3b–5) and about his humiliation and exaltation (Phil 2:6–11). This too is of course a clear expression of the awareness that the earthly Jesus remains the normative source of orientation for Christians—and such an awareness is utterly incompatible with an intentional relativization, still less with a suppression, of the Jesus tradition.

Although it would be short-sighted to underestimate the fruits of this line of research, we must not overlook its limits.

*First*, it is clear that the rabbinic model can be used only with reservations to shed light on the teaching activity of Jesus. For example, the

parables—which call forth new interpretations in the Jesus tradition, as is evidenced e.g. in the transmission of the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1–9 and 13–20)—play only a small role in the rabbinic tradition, just as the rabbinic casuistry which we find in the Mishnah plays only a small role in Paul. Similarly, the comparison with the hellenistic philosophical schools has only a limited validity, since like Socrates, Jesus too may have taught by shaping the existential attitudes of his disciples and by his discourses, rather than by handing on traditions with a fixed form.

*Secondly*, Jesus saw himself as a (messianic) prophet and teacher.<sup>38</sup> After Easter, however, a wave of eschatological enthusiasm reshaped much of the material from the Jesus tradition. The first Christians were convinced that they had a share in the outpouring of the Spirit which was to take place in the last days, whereas in Judaism the current thesis (with its starting point in Ps 74:9) was that the prophetic Spirit had been taken away from the people of God and replaced by the oral tradition as its echo (*b. Sanh.* 11a). It was only in the second and third generations that the task of institutionalizing the transmission of the words of Jesus was taken in hand. Paul stands at the beginning of this period, when Christians were starting to collect the words of the exalted Jesus.

*Thirdly*, the words of Jesus were not collected in accordance with the principles of historical criticism. The popular tradition of the deeds and some words of Jesus gained a foothold in a number of Christian groups.

*Fourthly*, the principal bearers of that tradition were the prophets, who quoted from it as they saw fit. We have no convincing evidence that this was an element in community catechesis.

*Fifthly*, the words of the Lord were in principle the decisive authority, but they could be applied only in a few specific instances as a concrete answer to the question at issue. In other cases, especially where fundamental questions of the Christian life were at stake, the prophets were obliged to reinterpret them and bring them up to date, and sometimes also to protect the words of the Lord from abuse. S. Byrskog, a student of B. Gerhardsson, has made an impressive synthesis of most of what

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<sup>38</sup> D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 225.

we know about the teacher-pupil relationship in classical antiquity, and especially in the Judaism of the Hellenistic and New Testament periods. With methodological caution, he has then concentrated on the Gospel of Matthew, but in the almost two hundred pages of his introduction he has—unintentionally—called into question the entire picture of the conservative tradition of the words of the Lord. In many instances, he admits that the transmission was creative; in his discussion of the question of the transmission of the master's teaching in the school of the prophet Isaiah, he rightly maintains that Second and Third Isaiah made a substantially new interpretation of the most important themes of Isaiah in their own new situations. If Byrskog were to study the Gospel of John in this context, he would be obliged to relativize even more strongly the picture of "tradition as conservation."

*Sixthly*, the analysis of Pauline references to a common stock of material, which he assumes his readers already know, has led Hans Conzelmann to the conclusion that Paul taught a primarily post-Easter theology, viz. the interpretation of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the eschatological mystery (1 Cor 2:6–7).

We can summarize the results of his investigations as follows, and add a few further points. The doctrine which Paul received included above all the christological professions of faith (1 Cor 15:1–3) and the corresponding interpretation of baptism (Rom 6:3–5), the tradition associated with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23–25), teaching about the relationship between the church and Christ (1 Cor 11:2–3; cf. Eph 5:32 in context), and eschatological paraenesis (1 Thess 5:2). Paul's arguments drawn from scripture are subordinated to this kind of proclamation. This is in keeping with the description in Acts 17:3 of Paul's testimony in the synagogue at Thessalonica. The words about the unexpected coming of the day of the Lord "like a thief in the night" (1 Thess 5:2) are sometimes taken as evidence of the transmission of words in Jesus in the community catechesis, since there is a parallel at Matt 24:50–51. When however we bear in mind the apocalyptic context which links these words to the apocalyptic exhortation "with a word of the Lord" which we have already mentioned, and which almost immediately precede the allusion to the "thief in the night" (4:15–17), it is highly likely that what the addressees "know well" (5:2a) is a group of prophetic aphorisms about the "mystery" (μυστήριον). As I have said, the "mystery" in this context was a prophetic instruction about the last

times and about the key role played by Jesus, as the exalted Lord, in the transition from one aeon to another and in the new creation.

This does not mean that Paul knew only those logia of Jesus which dealt with the last days: we have already spoken of his meeting with Peter (and James). But it does mean that his teaching, as we have set this out above, concentrated on the significance of Jesus for the present day of the Christian community and for the future of the world. In his prophetic testimony to the risen Jesus, whose eschatological significance he had recognized when Jesus appeared to him outside Damascus as the exalted Lord, Paul quotes and interprets the words of Jesus. A didactic transmission of the words of Jesus was not a part of his community catechesis. The paucity of quotations from the dominical logia in the apostolic fathers shows that Paul was not an exception in this regard.

#### 6. *A Contemporary Parallel?*

Samuel Byrskog has studied the anonymity of the tradition in the Essene group at Qumran, which clearly likewise handed on words of the “Teacher of Righteousness” in an anonymous manner. Earlier scholars took seriously the possibility that the Teacher of Righteousness had himself composed the Temple Scroll (11Q19 and 11Q20) and the Hymns (1QH and 4Q427–429[frag.]), and Byrskog summarizes the results of their investigations. The Temple Scroll reproduces in the prophetic manner, in direct speech and the first person singular, the words of Yahweh on Sinai. Since this text in its present form goes back to several groups of sources, it is to be considered an authoritative document to which the Teacher of Righteousness could appeal. Nothing supports the view that the Temple Scroll is derived from his prophetic vision, and there is no evidence in the Qumran texts of the idea that he was present in an exalted mode after his death.

The Hymns are poetic prayers which the author has formulated in the first person singular. Byrskog holds it possible that the community instruction could have kept alive the link between these Hymns and the Teacher of Righteousness; the text itself is however anonymous. It has also been seriously suggested that the Teacher of Righteousness may be the author of the strange letter 4QMMT, which is addressed to a man who clearly held responsibility for Israel (4Q398 frag. 14 II)—perhaps to one who had usurped the high-priestly office. Since parts of six copies survive, this may well have been an important document, and it

may have begun with the name of the author. This cannot be proved; nor is it possible to prove (if the letter was in fact anonymous) that the community knew that its author was none other than the Teacher whom they revered in messianic terms.

This means that the Qumran texts belong to other literary genres than the Pauline epistles. We cannot indeed exclude the possibility of the anonymous transmission of words of the founder, but this cannot be demonstrated. All that is probable is that some of the texts which were handed on (or parts of these texts) had a particular importance for the group because the founder himself had used them, but this too is not mentioned. At most, therefore, we have here a very indirect analogy to the anonymity of the words of Jesus in Paul.

### 7. *Transmission and Interpretation*

This means that Paul may have handed on other words of Jesus in his instruction besides those that are contained in his letters. We may also suppose that he gave his fellow workers and disciples more precise information about the Jesus tradition—but this is only a supposition. All we know is that as early as the time of Paul, collections of dominical logia existed. These were the common core of the preaching of several prophets. Gradually, they were expanded, then transmitted in Greek (Q), and reinterpreted after the role of the prophets had diminished (*Gospel of Thomas*).

This does not yet resolve the question of the anonymity of the Jesus tradition in Paul, but we have taken a significant step forwards, since we now know that only a few of the dominical logia could be quoted literally as the highest authority in a particular situation: most of the logia reached the Christian community in a prophetic application or (re)interpretation. The measure of prophetic reformulation could be very considerable, including the *de facto* formation of new words of the Lord in cases where the prophet had the inner certainty that this was in keeping with the intention of the Lord. Such utterances are usually linked with the name of the prophet who is presented as the addressee or the emissary of the exalted Lord (cf. 2 Cor 12:9 and the words of the Lord in the Revelation of John). It is however also possible for a logion of this kind to be included at a secondary stage in a collection of dominical logia and to be integrated with this collection into a narrative composed at a later date, where it is presented



as a word of the earthly Lord. For example, Luke (Q) 12:11–12 may have been a prophetic logion from the post-Easter period which was freely formulated on the basis of words once spoken by Jesus. We have a striking example of direct speech of this kind in the revelatory discourses of Jesus in the Gospel of John, which are introduced by an “I am...” logion. It is obvious that these came into existence through the prophetic formulation of the impact which the risen Lord made on the community of believers.

Between the literally quoted logia and those words of the Lord which were newly formulated under the pressure of the Spirit, we find concrete words of Jesus which the prophets had learned from the tradition (i.e., from the first and second generations of apostles and prophets) but which they found it necessary to reinterpret.<sup>39</sup> The prophet responds to a problem by means of a clear word of the Lord. He knows this logion from the tradition, which consists of oral, or perhaps even already written collections of such words; and yet he dares to give it a new and different formulation so that it will fit the new context. He knows that he is changing the literal text of the logion, but he is convinced in the Spirit of the same Lord that it is his duty to do so. This makes it easy to understand the reticences which could lead to the proclamation of such a changed logion only in the name of the prophet—without mentioning the name of Jesus.

In order to strengthen this hypothesis, we must test its applicability to concrete texts.

We have already discussed the possibility that 1 Cor 4:6–13 contains polemic against an enthusiastic understanding of the beatitudes of Jesus. These have become a point of contention, and the various interpretations have given divergent orientations to the groups within the community. This means that Paul cannot simply quote them without a commentary, for that would only intensify the tension. In order to find a responsible solution to the problem, he appeals to the Lord, who will definitively settle the dispute when he comes in glory. This awareness is decisively important for the correct interpretation of the words of the Lord. This is the mystery (μυστήριον) of God, and by “administering” this mystery Paul himself is the servant of Christ (4:1). It is thus clear

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<sup>39</sup> We find comparable material in Ps.-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, e.g. in Joshua’s discourse, inspired by the Spirit, at 20.3; cf. J. R. Levinson, “Prophetic Inspiration in Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*,” *JQR* 85 (1995): 297–329.

that the enthusiasts have in fact usurped the eschatological judgment which belongs to Christ. As the “steward” (οἰκονόμος) of the mystery of God which is concentrated in Christ, Paul has no other authority than that of an apostle and prophet who knows more clearly than anyone else that the hope of every individual depends on the gracious verdict of the Lord (4:4). Accordingly, although he does speak in the name of the Lord, he must appeal to a higher authority than the individual logia of the Lord, because he is interpreting these logia in a way that his addressees do not expect.

At 1 Cor 13:2, we read about the faith that moves mountains. It is clear that “faith” (πίστις) here does not mean faith in the sense of an elementary trust in God, but rather faith’s ability to accomplish extraordinary things (miracles), as already mentioned at 1 Cor 12:9. The phrase “to move mountains” was used proverbially in contemporary Judaism, but the link with *faith* is attested only in the Jesus tradition and here in 1 Corinthians. Since a relevant logion is attested in Mark (11:23 par.), in Q (Matt 17:20 par.), and in the *Gospel of Thomas* (48 and 106), we can assume that it reached Paul as an interpretation of the meaning of Jesus’ miracles (cf. Mark 5:30 par., etc.). If we then link the following words about sharing one’s possessions (as alms) with Jesus’ words about alms in Matt 6:2—as is done in many lists of parables (cf. Nestle-Aland), the critical distance vis-à-vis the words from the tradition about Jesus becomes even clearer. Not only the faith which moves mountains, and the willingness to make material sacrifices, are called into question here, but also prophecy and the knowledge of mysteries: this too is of no avail, if love (ἀγάπη) is lacking. It seems that the apostle is relativizing in this passage his whole privilege as the steward of God’s mystery. If however we read the instruction about the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a whole, we see that this relativization of the prophetic mysteries is only a rhetorical instrument which Paul employs to emphasize that love is the core of God’s mystery. It is this love that the apostle represents in all that he says and all that he does. Ἀγάπη is the love of God which has become manifest in Christ (2 Cor 5:14). Not even the powers and mysteries of the apocalyptic future are stronger than the power of this love (Rom 8:31–39) which determines how human beings are to behave in relation to God and to one another (Rom 8:28; 13:10). This is what Paul underlines in the hymn of 1 Corinthians 13. Love will play the decisive role in the final judgment. This gives him a sure platform for the evalu-

ation of the utterances of some prophets who claim to have a special knowledge of the mysteries of God, or who could find support in a logion of Jesus when they boasted of the miraculous effects of their faith (1 Corinthians 13:2). Only this platform makes it possible for him in his following plea to emphasize the precedence of prophecy over all the other gifts of the Spirit. Irrespective of whether the injunction that women are to be silent (1 Cor 14:33b–36) is a non-Pauline insertion, the proclamation that what Paul writes is a commandment of the Lord (κυρίου ἐντολή, v. 37) seems to apply to the entire debate about spiritual gifts. This proclamation is addressed to the prophets or bearers of the Spirit (14:37a), since the theme of Paul's words from 12:1–3 onwards ("About gifts of the Spirit...") is their authority and how they are to be normatively evaluated. The "commandment of the Lord," which in the immediate context appears to prohibit disorders in worship (cf. especially vv. 32–33), is in principle a word which presupposes a comprehensible profession of faith in Jesus as the Lord whose lordship is defined by concrete love (ἀγάπη) and itself calls forth love. This is worth more than all the enthusiastic utterances of the Spirit, even when these appeal to the (dominical) saying about the faith that moves mountains (13:2).

One large section of the text of the Letter to the Romans, chapters 12–14, contains several possible allusions to the words of Jesus. In 12:14, 17–21, we find indirect parallels to the Sermon on the Mount or Plain (Luke 6:27–29, 35; Matt 5:39–47). These may go back to a collection of sapiential aphorisms with parallels in Prov 3:7; 25:1–2; Deut 32:35; and *T. Benj.* 4.2–5, but they may also be words of Jesus.<sup>40</sup> This paraenesis is closely linked to the prophetic proclamation of Jesus as the eschatological mystery of God (Rom 13:11–13). It may be that Paul himself did not know exactly what came directly from Jesus; but if what we have said above is correct, then the supposition that he was unaware that he was quoting words of Jesus is extremely improbable. Indeed, this possibility is an artificial hypothesis. M. Thompson has collected the various explanations that have been offered for Paul's failure to mention such an important source; these range from the Pauline orientation to the risen Christ, to the different situation of those he was addressing.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1961), 249–250.

<sup>41</sup> Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 70–72.

If we want a less ambiguous evaluation of this problem, we must begin by asking *how* Paul reproduces the Jesus tradition.

When we compare the words in Romans 12 with the indirect parallels in the Sermon on the Mount, we note that the exhortation to love one's enemies in v. 14 is freely reproduced and is then interpreted in the following verses (doubtless with the help of the sapiential tradition). This is not a purely sapiential composition, since there is no sapiential parallel to v. 15—which may however have been indirectly inspired by the blessing pronounced at Matt 5:4 on those who mourn. Surprisingly, v. 21 (which has a parallel in *T. Benj.* 4.3) seems like polemic against the exhortation at Matt 5:39 not to put up any resistance (ἀντιστῆναι) τῷ πονηρῷ. This probably means “one who is evil” (ὁ πονηρός) rather than Satan as “the evil one” or “evil” (τὸ πονηρόν). In this context, ἀντιστῆναι probably means treating the evil person in the same way, on the same (legal) level (LXX Deut 19:18; Isa 50:8), since that would only augment the evil.

I need not underline how often these words have been misunderstood in a quietist sense. They may be a later, pre-Matthaeian expansion of the exhortation to love one's enemies, intended to prohibit the settling of conflicts among Christians by recourse to the pagan courts (cf. 1 Cor 6:1–3), but they may also be a logion from the earliest tradition which Luke found unacceptably harsh. At any rate, the exhortation to love one's enemies can be concretized in a way which is not immune to quietist misuse, and it is very possible that this is what has happened here. It is even possible that Paul knew such a logion, since the verb ἀνθιστάναι (also linked to a negation) occurs in the immediate context, at Rom 13:2—one who resists the authorities is resisting (ἀνθέστηκεν) what God commands. It is obvious that Rom 13:1–7 is written for those who saw the civil authorities as their enemies. It is also well known that the verb ἀνθιστάναι is used elsewhere in the New Testament in a positive sense, in the exhortation to “resist the devil” (Jas 4:7; cf. 1 Pet 5:8–9); this is also found in the Pauline school (Eph 6:13). In such passages, the adversary is the devil (διάβολος, πονηρός at Eph 5:16); but it must have been very easy to understand the exhortation to love one's enemies as an exhortation to passivity in face of evil, i.e. as a capitulation before the devil and sin. The Sermon on the Mount is misunderstood in this way even today!

In the light of these observations, Rom 12:21 seems to be a conscious reinterpretation of the tradition associated with Jesus: love of one's

enemies is in fact *active* conduct, a weapon against evil (τὸ κακόν) and Satan (cf. Rom 16:20).

If this passage is a Pauline interpretation of the exhortation to love one's enemies, or not to resist evil, then it must also be constructed as a conscious transition to Romans 13; and Paul's words in 13:1–7 about the subordination of the Christian to the civil authorities must be a concrete instance of the power of this love. This hypothesis is supported by the context in 12:9, 21 and above all in 13:8, which is marked by the key word "love" (ἀγάπη). Paul does not maintain that the pagan authorities are the Christians' enemies: he goes so far as to call these rulers, whose office involved the public worship of idols, the "authorities appointed by God" (an affirmation which is explicitly corrected at 1 Pet 2:13). When he says this, however, Paul's intention is to affirm that these authorities are subordinate to God, the Father of Jesus Christ.

It is significant that he may once again be drawing here on a Jewish Christian tradition linked to the name of Jesus. This tradition is represented by the pericope about paying tax to the emperor (Mark 12:17 par.); cf. the verb ἀποδιδόναι in Mark 12:17 and Rom 13:7. Just as the pericope Mark 12:13–17 par. recounts an unexpected anti-Zealot statement in the framework of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, so Paul too reacts in a similarly unexpected manner here, although his position makes sense in the anti-enthusiastic context. This striking motif is scattered across various New Testament writings, and this makes it at least conceivable (though scarcely demonstrable) that we have here a radical reinterpretation of the older Jesus tradition,<sup>42</sup> in clear contradiction of all the scholarly ideas about the conservative rabbinic tradition. Under these circumstances, it is easy to grasp why Paul does not venture to call Rom 13:1–7 or any part of this debate a direct word of the Lord, but instead emphasizes the apostolic commission which he has received from the exalted Lord (12:3; 14:14a; 15:15–16; cf. 1:1 or Gal 1:1, etc.).

Leonhard Goppelt has drawn attention to striking similarities in the vocabulary of 12:19 and 13:4. At 12:19, Christians are forbidden to condemn, since this belongs exclusively to the eschatological judgment

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<sup>42</sup> Käsemann, *Römer*, *ad loc.* He also argues convincingly against scholars who see Rom 13:1–7 as a later insertion.

of God (μη̄ ἑαυτοῦς ἐκδικοῡντες, ἀγαπητοί, ἀλλὰ δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ), whereas in 13:4 the authorities will be ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργήν for the one who does evil. This means that the authorities are justified in punishing every enthusiastic failure to pay heed to reality, and Paul regards this as an echo of the judgment of God. He does not discuss the potential situations of conflict, but sketches a basic strategy which certainly does not lack its positive aspects. If the Christians take this strategy seriously, they themselves will be free of hatred, and it is possible that the empire will look on them as harmless subjects—something that can only benefit the people of God (σοι εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν). Some Roman officials may even convert to the faith. Another example of a missionary strategy of this kind is the subordination of women at 1 Pet 3:1.

Immediately after this, in v. 9b, Paul cites the second precept of the double commandment of love. He cites this separately from the first precept, as this is found in Lev 19:18, so that we cannot say whether he knows it from the Jesus tradition. In the next chapter, however, we once again find words which are also present in the Jesus tradition.

As in the preceding section (and in the polemic against the enthusiasts in 1 Cor 4 which we have already discussed), Paul's remarks about the injury done to a weak brother begin with a warning against judging, which would be an anticipation of the last judgment (Rom 14:13a). This is followed by arguments against the position that observance of the cultic law leads to salvation ("Nothing is unclean in itself," v. 14b), with an almost verbal agreement with the aphorisms from the Jesus tradition (Mark 7:15 par.; Luke 11:41b).<sup>43</sup> Paul introduces these words with a solemn affirmation: "I know and am fully convinced in the Lord Jesus..." (v. 14a), but he does not call them a word of the Lord (as in 1 Cor 7 and 9), for the obvious reason that he immediately subordinates this declaration to the higher commandment of love of one's fellow Christian—since Christ died even for the brother who is weak in faith (Rom 14:7–9). Once again, Paul argues here on the basis of the cross and resurrection, and of life in Christ (or τῷ κυρίῳ, v. 8). It would be contrary to his apostolic strategy to quote a word of the Lord *as a word of the Lord*, and then in the next breath to relativize it in the name of

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<sup>43</sup> T. Holtz supposes that Paul is drawing here on the Jesus tradition: "Jesusüberlieferung und Briefliteratur," 28. A different position is taken by C. Burchard, "Das doppelte Liebesgebot in der frühen christlichen Überlieferung," in *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde*, ed. E. Lohse (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 39–61.

the Easter faith. Paul is not relativizing his own position here. What is involved is a consistent application of the doctrine of justification by faith and by grace. This doctrine must not be watered down, either by the observation of the law or by the relativization of the law.

In a similar manner, v. 17 relativizes the term “kingdom of God.” This appears to be a polemic against Luke 6:21a, where the kingdom of God is promised to those who hunger: Rom 14:17 corrects this logion in the same way as the blessing Matthew pronounces on those who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” (Matt 5:6). Basically, however, Paul’s polemic is directed against the “strong ones” who regarded the freedom to eat everything as a sign of spiritual perfection. We have evidence of this tendency of the “strong” at a later date in *Gos. Thom* 14 (cf. section 6 of the present essay).<sup>44</sup>

It is difficult to deny that these texts bear witness to an internal Christian conflict about how to interpret the inheritance from Jesus. Let us only add one indirect but weighty argument. When systematic theologians (above all Eberhard Jüngel) discover an inherent analogy between Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God and Paul’s doctrine of the justification of the sinner by God’s grace, it is implausible to explain this as the effect of chance phenomenological parallels, and to see the Pauline theology only as a development of the Easter confessions of faith. These analogies must also be influenced by ideas which come from Jesus.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> P. Pokorný, “Die Herrenworte im Thomasevangelium und bei Paulus,” in *Carl-Schmidt-Kolloquium*, Wiss. Beitr. der M.-L. Universität (Halle: Martin-Luther-Universität, 1990), 157–163.

<sup>45</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *Paulus und Jesus*, HUT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1962), 263–265.

### 8. *Concluding Reflections*

1. We have seen that Paul knew more logia from the Jesus tradition than scholars have supposed.

2. Nevertheless, the Pauline material does not confirm the idea that the words of the Lord formed part of the community catechesis in the Pauline churches.

3. The words of Jesus were employed to a greater extent in paraenesis and preaching than in catechesis. The preachers, as bearers of the Spirit, handed them on creatively, i.e. by reinterpreting them and applying them.

4. The group of Spirit-inspired preachers who handed on the words of the Lord in this way consisted of those witnesses to his resurrection who had been his disciples before Easter, as well as their direct or indirect pupils—among whom, historically speaking (in keeping with Gal 1:18), we must also include Paul. At that time, they were usually called apostles or prophets. Although the words of the Lord did not form part of the core of community catechesis, their transmission was nevertheless institutionalized in this way.

5. Paul gives a literal quotation of the words of the Lord, which basically derive from the Jesus tradition, only where they were directly applicable in order to solve a problem. In such cases, he made a distinction between these logia and his own prophetic judgments.

6. Otherwise, he employed them anonymously in the name of his own apostolic authority. In such instances, he usually emphasized that this authority came from the exalted Lord.

7. Closer examination shows that in such cases, Paul reinterprets the words of the Lord and relativizes them to some extent. This interpretation is in keeping with the Easter experience, and it cannot be allowed to contradict the Jesus tradition. Specifically, this means the interpretation of the Jesus tradition in the light of the commandment to love, which Paul sees as the human response to God's grace. Within the Christian community, this protected the Jesus tradition from an enthusiastic interpretation which ignored the eschatological reservation.

8. Other bearers of the Spirit were less reticent than Paul when they handed on the words of the Lord. He was obliged to write polemically against their utterances—even when these were linked to quotations from the words of the Lord. Where they emphasized speaking in tongues (and this too did not happen in a completely arbitrary



manner, since such prophets had to be accepted by the community), Paul emphasized that a testimony must be comprehensible to outsiders (1 Cor 14:6, 23–25).

9. Even in the period before Paul, there was general agreement that the testimony of the prophets is not only subordinate to their own experience of the Spirit: it must also be in conformity with the confessions and the knowledge of the faith, as these have been received by the community which the prophets are addressing. Gradually, such norms came to occupy a more prominent place (*Didache* 11).

10. The collections of the words of the Lord which were made in various places at an early or a later date, and which took over a part of the function of the prophets in the third and later generations, consist mostly of words of Jesus which were transmitted and often interpreted by the prophets. The varied understandings of what it meant to possess the Spirit are reflected in the theology of the Jesus tradition which is contained in these collections. In general, the stage of the conservative tradition follows the stage of creative tradition, although we cannot exclude individual instances of a rabbinic transmission.

11. The profession of faith in the cross and resurrection of Christ was decisive for Paul's theology and ethics. The same is true of the writings of the apostolic fathers.

12. For Paul, scripture and the Lord were authorities of different kinds.

13. We cannot rule out the possibility that there were other groups of pre- or post-Easter adherents of Jesus who transmitted his logia according to completely different criteria. Since however they disappeared at a relatively early date, and without being removed by violent means, we must regard them both historically and theologically as marginal phenomena.

14. Although Mark and the later evangelists did not write in the modern historical-critical sense, their work means in principle the same as the demand at 1 John 4:1–3 and 2 John 7 that prophecy must not be detached from the earthly Jesus. Mark did not lack confidence in the tradition of the words of Jesus, since one third of his gospel too consists of logia of Jesus; all we see is that he did not wish to draw on one particular source, viz. Q. It is rather improbable that he did not know Q. Either he had reservations about it, or else he had so much respect for its authority in the church that he took it for granted that

Q would be used in parallel to his own biography of Jesus. In the present context, these are secondary questions. The decisive point is that the biographical framework protected the words of Jesus against an uncontrolled proliferation.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> [English translation: Brian McNeil.]



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3:1	4.3463	1	3.2440
3:2	1.345	5-19	2.1633
3:4	3.1967	9	4.3078
3:8	3.2044	11	3.2173
3:9	3.1967, 3.2043	14	1.413, 3.2289
3:14	3.1968, 3.2043	14-15	3.2247
3:18	3.2636	Rev	
3:19	2.1580	1-3	2.1613
3:22	3.1927	1:1	2.1580-1582, 4.3453
4:1-14	3.1967, 3.2043	1:3	2.1569, 3.1971
4:3-4	2.1633	1:4	4.3441, 4.3453
4:4-6	3.1968	1:6	2.1211
4:8-11	4.3303	1:7	3.2428
4:14	4.2967	1:8	2.1193
4:16	2.1202, 3.1968, 4.3215	1:9	4.3441, 4.3453
4:17	1.27	1:13	2.1552, 2.1582, 3.2476, 3.2880
5:5	3.2044	1:18	3.2428
5:8-9	4.3461	2:7	3.1971, 4.3441
5:12	1.142	2:9	4.3214
5:13	3.1841	2:11	3.1971, 4.3441
2 Pet		2:13-29	2.1633
1:14	3.2056	2:14	3.2173
1:16	3.2050	2:16	3.2279
1:16-18	3.2042	2:17	3.1971, 4.3441
1:17	3.2050	2:22	4.3186
2:1	4.3215	2:26-29	4.3441
2:1-22	2.1633	2:29	3.1971
2:15	3.2173	3:3	3.1944, 3.1971, 3.2490
2:20	3.2056	3:5	3.1971
3:3-8	3.2895	3:5-6	4.3441
3:8	1.350, 3.2254	3:9	2.1621, 4.3214
3:10	3.1944, 3.2042, 3.2043, 3.2053, 3.2056, 3.2490		

3:12	2.1215	17:14	2.1211
3:12–13	4.3441	18:23	4.3039
3:13	3.1971	19:7	4.3320
3:21	1.356	19:9	4.3320
3:21–22	4.3441	19:20	3.2536
3:22	3.1971	20:6	2.1211
4:8	3.2347	20:10	3.2347
4:14	3.2476	21	3.2884
5:5	3.2437	21:2	4.3320
5:10	2.1211	21:4–5	3.2137
5:11–13	3.2152	21:5–8	4.3441
6:15	4.3039	21:6	2.1193
7:15	3.2347	21:9	4.3320
7:16	4.3297	21:22	2.1215, 3.2636,
11:1–2	2.1215		3.2661
11:8–11	3.2417	22:7	2.1569
12:7	1.358	22:9	3.1971
12:10	3.2347, 4.3209	22:10	2.1569
13:9	3.1971	22:13	2.1193
14:11	3.2347	22:14	3.2444
14:14	2.1552, 3.2880	22:16	3.2437
16:13–14	3.2536	22:17	4.3320
16:15	3.1944, 3.1971,	22:18–19	2.1569
	3.2490, 4.3441	22:20	1.27

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<i>Acts Andr. Mth.</i>		<i>Apoc. Pet.</i>	
26	3.2086	2	3.2084
<i>Acts John</i>		<i>Apos. Con.</i>	
89	3.2130	7.36.13	4.3139
<i>Acts Pet.</i>	3.2084	<i>(Arab.) Gos. Inf.</i>	
5	3.2146	9–26	3.2122
8	3.2086		
<i>Acts Phil.</i>		<i>Ep. Apos.</i>	
2.10 (15)	4.3150	§19	2.1218
		§35	2.1218
<i>Acts Pil.</i>		<i>Gos. Eb.</i>	3.2121
Prologue 1	1.621	1	2.1751
		2	2.1751, 2.1767,
<i>Acts Thom.</i>			2.1774
20	1.621	3	2.1751, 3.2004
48	1.621, 2.1191	6	2.1213, 2.1214
96	1.621, 2.1191		
102	2.1191	<i>Gos. Heb.</i>	
104	1.621	2	1.563, 2.1751
106	1.621, 2.1191		
107	1.621, 2.1191	<i>Gos. Jud. Isc.</i>	3.1990
<i>Ap. Jas.</i>		33	3.2113, 3.2114,
8.6–10	4.3030	36	3.2115
			3.2114

39	3.2113	10	1.358, 4.3036
41-42	3.2113	12	1.24, 1.454,
43-44	3.2113		2.1090, 4.3398
56	3.2112	13	1.24, 3.1978,
58	3.2114		4.3398
<i>Gos. Naz.</i>		14	2.1260, 3.1943,
			3.2748, 3.2753,
			3.2758, 3.2762,
			4.3331, 4.3345,
			4.3446, 4.3464
frag. 2	1.563, 2.1751, 2.1760, 3.2004	14:1-3	4.3360
<i>Gos. Nic.</i>	4.3392	14:4b	1.180
18.2	2.1747	14:4a	1.180
		14:4	1.178, 1.179,
			1.271, 1.272
<i>Gos. Pet.</i>		16	1.178, 1.358,
1.2	3.2086		1.359, 4.3036
2.4	3.2086	17	1.178, 1.459,
2:7	4.3330		3.1946
3	3.2341	18	1.24, 1.254,
3.6-8	3.2023		1.357
3.7	3.2133		4.3360
4.10	3.2086	18:2-3	1.24, 1.178,
4.10-5.20	3.2023	20	1.272, 3.1978,
4.12	3.2134		3.2881, 4.3039,
4.14	3.2025		4.3206
6.19	3.2086, 3.2133	21	1.103, 3.2555,
6.21	3.2390		3.2881, 4.3035,
7.25-26	2.1213		4.3039
9.35-11.49	3.2418	21:5-7	1.178
10	3.2392	22	1.24, 1.256,
12	2.1255		1.272, 3.1978,
14.59-60	3.2027		3.2130, 3.2132,
			4.3209, 4.3399
<i>Gos. Thom.</i>		24	1.24
2	1.178, 3.1946	25	1.24
3	1.24, 1.497,	26	1.24, 1.178
	3.1978, 3.2881	27	3.1978,
3:1	4.3206		3.2751
3:1-3	1.178	28	3.1978
3:3	4.3206	28:1-4	4.3366
4	3.2059	30	1.254
4:4	1.180	31	2.1191, 2.1220,
5:2	1.178		3.2031, 3.2075,
6	1.24, 1.254, 3.2758, 4.3331, 4.3345	33	3.2076, 3.2079
6-7	3.1946	33	1.254
6:3	1.178	33:1	1.178
6:5-6	1.178	33:2-3	1.178
7-9	3.1979	34	1.178, 1.254
8	1.254, 3.1978, 3.2555, 4.3039	35	1.22, 1.178,
8:1	4.3023	36	4.2940, 4.3036
9	3.2074, 3.2079, 3.2554, 3.2881, 4.3039		1.24, 1.178,
			1.456, 4.3246,
			4.3263
		37	1.24, 3.2130

38	3.2141	65	1.274, 1.357,
39	1.24, 1.254, 1.455, 3.2096, 3.2765		1.456, 2.1090, 2.1152, 2.1212, 3.2074, 3.2075, 3.2079, 3.2555, 4.3023, 4.3024, 4.3039
39:1	4.3206		
39:1-2	1.178		
40	1.24, 1.254		
41	1.178	65-66	1.254
42	1.24	66	3.2075
43	1.24, 1.357, 3.2765	68	1.178, 1.261, 1.357
44	1.24, 1.178, 3.2482	68-69	3.197
45	1.178, 3.2095, 3.2765	69	1.24
46	1.178, 2.1752, 3.1978, 3.2498	69a	1.261
46:2	4.3206	69b	1.261
47	1.455, 3.2705, 4.3345	69:1	1.178
47:1-2	1.178	69:2	1.178, 4.3055
48	1.24, 1.343, 4.3459	71	1.503, 2.1196, 2.1213, 3.2400, 3.2638, 3.2646, 3.2648, 3.2649, 3.2667
50	1.24, 1.460	73	1.178
51	1.178, 1.455, 3.2062	76	1.254, 3.1978, 3.2881, 4.3023, 4.3035, 4.3039
52	1.455, 2.1752, 3.2062, 3.2072, 3.2765	76:3	1.178
53	3.1946, 3.2762	78	1.24, 1.178, 2.1752
54	1.24, 1.178, 1.256, 1.260, 1.261, 1.357, 3.1979, 4.3206, 4.3209	79	1.24
55	1.24, 4.2971	81	1.24, 1.455, 3.2062
55:1-2a	1.178	82	1.358, 1.408, 1.455, 3.1976, 3.2062, 3.2076, 3.2077, 3.2079, 3.2080, 3.2203, 4.3030
55:2b	1.178	83	1.24
56	1.24, 3.1946	86	1.178, 3.2478, 3.2482
57	1.254, 3.2554, 3.2569, 3.2570, 4.3024, 4.3039, 4.3209	89	1.178, 3.2765
58	1.455	90	1.254
61:1	1.178	92:1	1.178, 3.1978
61:3	1.178	93	1.254
62:1	4.3371	94	1.178, 3.1978
63	1.24, 3.1978, 3.2555, 3.2569, 4.3039	95	1.24, 1.178
63-64	3.1979	96	3.2881
63:1	4.3023	96-99	4.3034, 4.3209
64	1.24, 1.178, 1.345, 3.2555, 4.3039	96:1	4.3206
		96:1-2	1.178
		97	1.256, 1.455, 3.1982, 3.2064, 3.2555, 4.3023, 4.3025, 4.3035, 4.3036, 4.3039

98	1.24, 1.256, 1.455, 3.1982, 3.2555, 4.3023, 4.3024, 4.3035, 4.3036, 4.3037, 4.3038	<i>Prot. Jas.</i> 1-8 8-9 9 9.1-2 9.2 10 12	3.2376 3.2376 2.1800 3.2101 3.2100, 3.2436 2.1752 2.1752
99	1.24, 1.254	17.1-2	3.2100
100	1.352	17-18	3.2101
101	1.24, 1.178, 4.2971	18.1	3.2100, 3.2120, 3.2373
102	1.24, 1.178, 1.455	22.1-2	3.2362
103	1.178, 4.3035	22-24	2.1747, 2.1752
104	2.1752, 4.3324, 4.3331		
106	4.3459	<i>Ps.-Clem.</i>	
107	1.178, 3.1978, 3.2555, 4.3039, 4.3209	<i>Hom.</i> 2.17 2.23-24	2.1752 2.1752
109	1.254, 1.357, 3.1978, 3.2881, 4.3023, 4.3039	2.44.2 3.22 3.52.1	2.1214 2.1752 2.1214
113	1.178, 1.349, 2.1090, 3.1978, 3.2881	<i>Recog.</i> 1.53.5-1.54.9 1.60.1-4 2.1	2.1752 2.1752 1.429
<i>Inf. Gos. Thom.</i>		2.8	2.1752
6-8	4.3241	3.61	2.1752
7.2	3.2361		
13.1	3.2120		
16	3.2376	<i>Sec. Gos. Mk.</i>	
16.1-2	3.2100	frag. 1 frag. 2	3.1988, 3.2111 3.2111
<i>Pist. Sophia</i>			
1.7	2.1747		

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CD ( <i>Damascus Document</i> )		V, 17-19	3.2536, 3.2856
		VI, 10-11	2.1280
I, 5-9	3.2853	VI, 11	1.415
I, 9-11	1.415	VI, 15	2.1632
I, 18-20	2.1188	VI, 20-21	2.1267
II, 7-10	3.2581	VII, 3-4	2.1769
III, 12-16	3.2597, 3.2606	VII, 18	1.415
III, 18-IV, 4	2.1519	IX, 3	2.1257
IV, 4	2.1211	X, 7-9	3.2606
IV, 20-21	2.1266	X, 14-15	3.2605
IV, 20-V, 2	2.1141, 2.1142, 2.1266	X, 14-XI, 18	2.1265
IV, 20-V, 6	2.1713, 3.2759	X, 15-XI, 18	3.2605
V, 6-8	2.1214	X, 17-19	3.2606, 3.2610
V, 11	2.1769	X, 20	3.2607, 3.2608
		X, 21	3.2606



X, 22-23	3.2607, 3.2608	XV, 15	4.3326
XI, 3-4	3.2606	XVII, 35-36	3.2586
XI, 5-6	4.3149	XVIII, 14-15	4.3326
XI, 7-9	3.2606	XIX, 10-14	3.2589
XI, 12-16	3.2582		
XI, 13-14	2.1265, 2.1266	1QH <sup>a</sup> ( <i>Hodayot</i> <sup>a</sup> )	
XI, 13.16	4.3149	III, 20-23	2.1274
XI, 14	3.2591	III, 21-23	2.1272
XI, 14-15	2.1280, 3.2606	III, 25-36	2.1771
XI, 16-17	3.2606	III, 27-38	2.1274
XI, 17-18	3.2606	7 II, 2-3	2.1277
XI, 21-23	4.3112	VII, 6-7	2.1769, 2.1771
XII, 2-3	1.621, 3.2856	VII, 29-30	2.1276
XII, 11-15	2.1776	X, 10-11	2.1278
XII, 12	2.1776	X, 15	2.1278
XII, 15-17	2.1695	XI	2.1274, 2.1275,
XII, 19	4.3114		2.1276
XII, 23	4.3114	XI, 3-14	2.1274
XIII, 13	4.3327	XI, 10-14	2.1274
XIII, 14	2.1632	XI, 13	2.1272
XIII, 15-17	3.2759	XI, 20-37	2.1274
XIII, 17	2.1141	XI, 20-21	2.1277
XIII, 17-18	2.1266	XI, 21-24	2.1275
XIV, 20	4.3301	XI, 22-24	2.1272
XV, 1	4.3148	XIV, 12-13	2.1769
XVI, 5	3.2856	XV, 23	2.1278
XIX, 35	4.3323	XVI, 2-3	2.1769
XIX, 35-XX, 1	2.1278	XVI, 6-7	2.1769
XX, 1	1.415	XIX	2.1274-1276
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	4.3116	XIX, 13-17	2.1274, 2.1275
XX, 13	4.3112, 4.3114,	XIX, 16	2.1272
	4.3116	XIX, 18	2.1274
XX, 13-14	2.1278	XXV, 34-XXVII, 3	2.1277
XX, 14	4.3323	XXVI, 6-9	2.1277
		XXVI, 26-28	2.1277
CD-A			
XII, 21-22	4.3117	1QIsa <sup>a</sup>	4.3316, 4.3323
		61:10	4.3315
1QapGen ( <i>Genesis</i> <i>Apocryphon</i> )		1QIsa <sup>b</sup>	4.3316
XIX, 10-XX, 34	4.3069		
XX, 16	3.2714	1QM ( <i>War Scroll</i> )	
XX, 16-19	3.2857	I, 1	3.2856
XX, 22	2.1250	I, 2	2.1633
XX, 26	3.2714	I, 7	2.1632
XX, 28-29	3.2763	I, 10-11	3.2857
XX, 29 (SHR II.181)	2.1250, 4.3078	I, 14-15	4.3073
		(SHR VI:35-36)	
1QH ( <i>Hodayot</i> )	4.3456	II, 1-9	3.2897
3	3.2406	II, 5-6	2.1498, 3.2286
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III, 18	3.2857	III, 4	4.3112
XI, 19-20	3.2626, 3.2627	III, 13	3.2897
XI, 20-23	3.2627	IV, 1-2	3.2856

V, 1	2.1256	III, 13-IV, 26	2.1257
V, 3-4	3.2897	III, 15-16	3.2581
V, 16	3.2897	III, 19-21	2.1632
VII, 5	3.2856	III, 20-23	3.2856
VII, 6	3.2857	III, 23	3.2856
VII, 9-IX, 7	3.2897	III, 24-25	3.2857
X, 2-8	3.2897	IV, 9-14	2.1633
X, 9	2.1211	IV, 20-22	2.1769, 2.1771,
XI	3.2286,		3.2732, 3.2857
	3.2586	IV, 21	2.1769, 3.2409
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XI, 8	3.2856	V, 2-5	4.3112
XII, 7-8	3.2857	V, 10	2.1632
XIII, 5	3.2714	V, 22	2.1211
XIII, 11	3.2856	VI, 1	2.1257
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XIV, 7	3.2522	VI, 2-5	4.3114
XIV, 14	2.1276	VI, 2-7	2.1257
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XVIII, 1	3.2857	VI, 14-16	2.1263
XVIII, 3	3.2857	VI, 16-20	2.1263
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II, 8	1.415, 2.1278	VI, 27-VII, 2	3.2582
VII, 4-5	2.1278	VII, 5-6	3.2799
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IX, 3-5	3.2582	VIII, 4	2.1211
IX, 9-10	2.1194	VIII, 4-5	4.3116
X, 3-13	2.1771	VIII, 4-10	3.2736
XI, 4-8	2.1194	VIII, 5	2.1273
XII, 2-10	3.2582	VIII, 6	2.1211
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		VIII, 12-14	2.1771, 2.1776
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I, 10	2.1632	IX, 26	3.2688
I, 12-13	2.1257	X	3.2683, 3.2686,
I, 18	3.2856		3.2687
II, 4-10	2.1633	X, 10	3.2687, 3.2688
II, 5	3.2856	X, 10-14	3.2687
II, 19	3.2856	X, 13-14	3.2687
III, 4-6	3.2785	X, 13-16	3.2687
III, 6-8	2.1769	X, 11-13	3.2581
III, 8	4.3327	XI, 1	3.2522
III, 13	2.1632	XI, 2-9	2.1273
		XI, 19-20	2.1776

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I, 6	2.1211		
II, 2-10	3.2736	4Q130	3.2686
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II, 3-7	3.2717	4Q130-133	4.3138
II, 3-10	1.631		
II, 3-11	2.1263	4Q131	3.2686
II, 5-7	3.2541		
II, 9b-10 (11)	3.2717	4Q134	4.3138
II, 10	3.2717		
II, 17-21	4.3340	4Q135	3.2686
1Q13	3.2686, 4.3138	4Q136	3.2686
frg. 15	4.3141		
1Q28a		4Q137	4.3138
II, 3-4	2.1264	l. 23	4.3141
II, 11-22	2.1257	4Q139	4.3138
1Q32	3.2884	l. 9	4.3141
1Q174		4Q140	3.2686
III, 10-13	2.1199	4Q142	3.2686, 4.3138
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I, 11	1.415	4Q146	3.2686
4QH <sup>a</sup> (4Q427)		4Q147	4.3138
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4QH <sup>c</sup>		4Q149	4.3139
1a-d 3-10	2.1277, 2.1278		
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4QTLevi		4Q150	3.2686, 4.3139
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VIII, 3	2.1368	4Q151	3.2686, 4.3139
4QMMT	4.3456	4Q152	3.2686, 4.3139
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LV-LVII	3.2717	4Q153	3.2686, 4.3139
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4QpNah		III, 15	2.1278
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4Q128	4.3138	(4QFlorilegium)	
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4Q184	3.2269	VI, 2-4 VI, 5-6 VI, 6 VI, 6-8 VII, 7	3.2606 2.1266 2.1694 3.2606 2.1256
4Q196 frg. 16	2.1354		
4Q203 VIII, 12	2.1273	4Q266 9 III, 5-7	2.1266
4Q223-224 2 II, 48-49	2.1269	4Q267 9 II, 8	2.1279
4Q232	3.2884	4Q269 3:2 4 II, 2-3	2.1266 2.1267
4Q242 1-3	3.2529 2.1250	4Q270 6 III, 17-18 6 V, 18	2.1257 2.1280
4Q246	3.2475	4Q271 5 I, 9	2.1280
4Q249g 3-7	2.1264	4Q302 2 II-III	2.1249
4Q256 XI, 8-13 XI, 8 XI, 11 XI, 12-13 XI, 12 XVIII, 3	2.1255 2.1256 2.1263 2.1263 2.1264 2.1248	4Q381 frags. 14-16 frags. 76-77	2.1210 2.1210
4Q257 V-VI	2.1257	4Q390 I, 8-10	2.1214
4Q258 II, 5-6 II, 6 VI, 7 XII	2.1257 2.1247 2.1248 2.1273	4Q394 8 IV, 5 8 IV, 14	2.1267 2.1267
4Q259 III, 3-4 III, 19 II, 9-13	2.1248 2.1248 2.1256	4Q396 1-2 III, 4-5 1-2 IV, 2	2.1267 2.1267
4Q261 3:1	2.1255, 2.1263	4Q397 6-13:11	2.1267
4Q263 1-2	2.1257	4Q398 14 II	4.3456

4Q403 frg. li	1.151	4Q525 [4QBeat] 2 II, 1	3.2253, 3.2271 3.2271
4Q416 2 III 14–19a	4.2951	4Q541	1.415, 4.3316
4Q418 9–10	4.2951	4Q554–555	3.2884
4Q427 II, 18–V, 3 III, 6–13 IV, 7–9 IV, 8	2.1277 2.1278 2.1277 2.1276	4QDeut <sup>n</sup> IV, 7	4.3141
4Q427–429	4.3456	5Q8	3.2686
4Q431 II, 16–18	2.1277	5Q15	3.2884
4Q444	4.3069	6Q15 1.2–3 4.1–3	2.1266 2.1267
4Q462	3.2582	6Q18	4.3069
4Q491 8–10 I, 12	4.3316 2.1276	8Q3	3.2686, 4.3138
4Q503	3.2221	8Q4	3.2686
4Q504 ( <i>Words of the Luminaries</i> ) 1–2 VII, 7:4 V, 9	4.3114 4.3114 3.2580	8Q5	4.3069, 4.3138
4Q510	3.2530, 4.3069	11QMelch II, 4 II, 6 II, 9 II, 13 II, 18	4.3326 4.3326 4.3326 4.3326 4.3326
4Q511	3.2530, 4.3069	11QMiqd XIX, 14–15 XIX, 15–15 XXI, 4–10	4.3338 4.3340 4.3338, 4.3340
4Q521 ( <i>Messianic Apocalypse</i> ) 2 II, 1 2 II, 1–13 2 II, 5 2 II, 5–7 2 II, 11–12 2 II, 11–13 2 II, 12 5 II, 1–7 7 II, 1–7 II, 1 II, 8 II, 12	3.2529, 3.2857, 3.2881 3.2281, 4.3325 3.2589 4.3326 4.3325 4.3325 3.2261 2.1276 3.2589 3.2589 3.2858 3.2858 2.1198, 3.2858	11QPs <sup>a</sup> 154 XXVII, 2–11 XVIII XVIII, 5–8	2.1051, 2.1218 2.1048 1.411
		11QT ( <i>Temple Scroll</i> ) XIII, 9–XXX, 2 XXIX, 8–10 XLIV, 4–5 XLV, 8–18 XLV, 12–14 LIV, 4–5	4.3117 3.2851 2.1141 2.883 3.2716, 3.2717 2.1141, 3.2759

LVII, 5-6	3.2782	11Q13 (11QMelch)	
LVII, 15-19	3.2759	II, 1	3.2282
LVII, 17-18	2.1266	II, 6-8	2.1600
LVII, 17-19	2.1141		
LVII, 24-25	2.1266	II, 13	3.2584
LXIV, 6-13	3.2398	II, 15-16	2.1037
LXVI, 8-11	3.2859		
		11Q18	3.2884
11QT <sup>a</sup> , 1. Temple Scroll <sup>a</sup>			
XLV, 12-14	1.631	11Q19	4.3456
XLVIII, 3-5	2.1776	XXIX, 9-10	3.2651
LIV	1.621	XLV, 12-13	3.2541
LIV, 11-12	2.1266	XLVI, 10	3.2217
LXIV, 13-20	2.1280	XLVIII, 14-15	3.2541
		LIV, 11-12 [4-5]	2.1266
11QTS		LVII, 24-25	2.1266
XXIX, 8-10	2.1605	LXIV, 13-20	2.1280
11Q5 ( <i>Psalms Scroll</i> )	3.2530	11Q20	4.3456
XXVII, 9-10	3.2858, 4.3069		
		XQphyl 3	4.3138
11Q11	3.2530, 4.3069		
II, 1-2	4.3079		
I, 3	4.3070		

*Philo*

<i>Agr.</i>		82-95	4.3148
44	4.3115	98	1.411
		100	1.411
<i>Cher.</i>		106-107	4.3144
86-90	2.1699	106-120	4.2949
100-101	2.1214	107	4.2950
		165-167	4.2949
<i>Conf.</i>		<i>Flacc.</i>	
56	2.1211	1	3.2355
129	3.2460	83-84	3.2390
196	3.2580	41	4.3114
<i>Congr.</i>		45	4.3114
169	2.1776	47-49	2.1725, 4.3114
		53	2.1725, 4.3114
<i>Contempl.</i>		122	4.3114
8-9	2.1631	122-124	4.3119
10	2.1631		
28	4.3116	<i>Fug.</i>	
29	4.3116	198	3.2580
73-74	4.3340		
<i>Decal.</i>		<i>Her.</i>	
36	4.3141, 4.3142	78	2.1211
50-51	4.3144	168	4.3144
52	3.2580	186	3.2670
61	3.2580	206	3.2580

<i>Hypoth.</i>		<i>Plant.</i>	
7.1-9	4.3142	90-92	4.3257
7.13	4.3117, 4.3119, 4.3122	<i>Post.</i>	
11.1	4.3114, 4.3115	67	4.3115
<i>Leg.</i>		<i>Prob.</i>	
2.105	2.1776	21-27	4.3246
		75	4.3115, 4.3117
<i>Legat.</i>		75-76	4.3114
38	3.2158	76	4.3115
115	4.3138	79	3.2311
132	4.3114	81	4.3115
132-134	2.1725	81-82	4.3112, 4.3116
134	4.3114	85	4.3115
137	4.3114	86	4.3123
138	4.3114		
152	4.3114	<i>Prov.</i>	
156	4.3114, 4.3116	64	2.1726, 4.3115
157	1.411		
159-161	3.2355, 3.2356	<i>QE</i>	
165	4.3114	1.19	4.3115
191	4.3114		
200-203	4.3240	<i>QG</i>	
203-348	1.166	2.66	4.3115
210	1.428, 4.3138		
299	3.2358	<i>Somn.</i>	
299-304	3.2358	1.67	3.2580
299-305	3.2157, 3.2357	1.76	3.2580
300-303	3.2297	1.205	1.427
301	3.2358		
301-302	3.2354	<i>Spec.</i>	
315	3.2218	1.65	1.621
346	4.3114	1.67-77	2.1214
371	4.3114	1.69-70	2.1726
		1.77	3.2670
<i>Migr.</i>		1.291-292	2.1776
60	2.1210	1.303	2.1210
89-93	3.2604	1.315	3.2536
91	3.2610	1.315-317	1.621
113-114	2.1211	2.2-28.224	4.3148
164-165	4.3257	2.30	3.2580
		2.61-62	1.411
<i>Mos.</i>		2.61-63	4.3144
1.156	4.3082	2.63	3.2689, 3.2695
1.278	2.1210	2.198	3.2580
2.22	3.2607	2.224-241	4.2950
2.215-216	1.411, 4.3117	3.30	2.1721
2.228	2.1309	3.90-91	4.3190
2.288	1.502	3.159	3.2299
		3.208-209	1.270
<i>Mut.</i>		4.40	4.3148
29	3.2580	4.164	4.3203
131	4.3257		
		<i>Virt.</i>	
<i>Opif.</i>	3.2221	95	3.2689, 3.2695,
128	1.411		4.3144

*Josephus*

<i>Ant.</i>		8.45-49	2.1218, 3.2530
1-11	2.1660, 2.1673	8.46	3.2531
1.1-4	2.1645	8.46-48	3.2857, 3.2870
1.4	2.1645	8.46-49	2.1232
1.5	2.1641	8.47	4.3079
1.6-7	2.1679	8.95	2.1520
1.70	2.1604	8.95-96	3.2334
2.217-218	3.2589	8.134	4.3119
2.223	3.2521	8.137	4.3119
2.275-276	3.2582	8.138	4.3119
2.285	3.2521	8.280	3.2579
2.295	3.2521	8.381	4.3002
2.345	3.2521	9.7	4.3002
2.347	3.2521	9.58	3.2521
3.1	3.2521	9.60	3.2521
3.30	3.2521	9.288-291	3.2701
3.38	3.2521	10	2.1679
3.91	4.3142, 4.3148	10.152-153	2.1524
3.122	4.3002	10.214	3.2521
3.248	3.2348	10.235	3.2521
4.90-95	3.2352	10.268	1.29
4.202	3.2390	10.278	2.1504
4.210	1.412	10.279	2.1505
4.210-211	1.414	11.347	2.1499
4.212-213	3.2683, 3.2688	12.22	3.2579
4.224	2.1736	12.42	4.3427
4.225	2.1736	12.142	4.3419
4.242-243	4.3191	12.148-149	4.3225
4.253	2.1721	12.154-224	2.1460
5.23	2.1736	12.225-227	2.1501
5.28	3.2521	12.228-238	2.1460
5.44	3.2390, 3.2415	12.237	2.1508
5.63f	4.3223	12.257-264	2.1215
5.64	4.3002	12.275	2.1498
5.178	4.2976	12.331	4.3223
5.318	2.1524	12.387-388	3.2365
5.361	2.1524	13	2.1501, 2.1504
6.98	4.3002	13.61-64	2.1508
6.107	2.1524	13.65-70	2.1215
6.122	2.1524	13.74-79	2.1508
6.149	4.3286	13.166	2.1734
6.166-168	3.2858	13.171	2.1497
6.166-169	1.631, 3.2857	13.171-173	2.1500
6.242	2.1524	13.173	2.1504
6.247	4.3002	13.252	4.3149
7.110	2.1524	13.255-257	4.3225
7.284	4.3043	13.275-277	4.3225
7.305	4.3002	13.288-289	4.3309
8.12	2.1524	13.288-298	2.1501
8.42-49	1.631, 4.3070	13.288-299	2.1502
8.45	3.2858	13.294	2.1506
8.45-46	2.1232	13.297	2.1495, 2.1505



13.297-298	3.2453	15.370-371	4.3421
13.298	2.1496	15.371	2.1501, 2.1504
13.299	2.1502	15.373	2.1238
13.311-313	4.3116	15.373-376	4.3116
13.319	4.3226	15.380-423	4.3417
13.373	2.1520	15.409	2.1238
13.380	3.2395	15.411-416	3.2640
13.401	2.1503	15.417-420	3.2334
13.408	2.1495	15.421	3.2334
14.21	3.2365	16.1-3	3.2311
14.22-25	4.3067	16.64	3.2299
14.36	2.1238	16.64-65	4.3421
14.48-76	4.3226	16.136-141	1.168
14.82-97	4.3227	16.154	4.3418
14.159-161	4.3227	16.164	4.3120
14.163-184	2.1736	16.166-168	3.2218
14.168-180	2.1737	16.169-170	3.2218
14.172	4.3232	16.179-183	4.3422
14.175	2.1737	16.182	3.2266
14.214	4.3120	16.191	4.3419
14.214-215	4.3123	16.203	4.3419
14.227-258	4.3114	16.282-290	3.2320
14.269-261	4.3119	16.290	4.3422
14.374-389	3.1911	16.352	3.2320, 4.3422
14.381-382	4.3229	16.356-394	4.3423
14.381-385	3.2315	16.392-394	3.2379
14.389	3.2317	16.393-394	3.2379
14.403	4.3228	16.394	1.172
14.421-422	4.3229	17.1-10	3.2321
14.455	4.3119	17.20	1.171
14.463	4.3119	17.23-25	4.3229
14.465	3.2317	17.23-28	4.3422, 4.3423
14.470-480	3.2315	17.41	2.1683, 3.2605
14.475	2.1720	17.42	4.3423
14.487	3.2318	17.42-44	3.2379
14-18	2.1669	17.45	4.3424
15.3	4.3232	17.57	4.3423
15.6	3.2379	17.63-64	1.407
15.8-10	3.2379	17.116	3.2320
15.45-46	3.2365	17.146	1.171
15.53-55	3.2379	17.167	2.1606, 3.2315,
15.121-126	3.2221		3.2379
15.172-178	3.2379	17.182-187	3.2379
15.222-236	3.2379	17.188	1.171
15.230-231	1.172	17.191	3.2315
15.247-251	3.2379	17.195	4.3419
15.260-266	3.2379	17.204-205	4.3418, 4.3427
15.284-290	3.2379	17.206-207	4.3230
15.303	3.2299	17.219-249	1.171
15.331-337	1.168	17.224-340	3.1911
15.360	4.3423	17.271-276	3.2393
15.365	3.2299, 4.3421	17.271-281	4.3417
15.368	4.3421	17.273-274	2.1198
15.370	2.1496	17.273-276	1.408

17.278	2.1198	18.55-89	3.2157
17.278-285	3.2393	18.60	2.1662
17.289	1.169, 4.3230	18.60-62	3.2355
17.295	2.1240	18.62	1.569
17.299-314	3.1911	18.63	1.414, 3.2521,
17.299-323	1.171		3.2866
17.308	4.3418	18.63-64	1.59, 1.335,
17.317-318	3.2353		1.407, 1.486,
17.318-320	4.3417		1.619, 2.1190,
17.319	3.2821, 4.3417		2.1540, 2.1617,
17.327	3.2388		2.1647, 3.2168,
17.342	3.2318		3.2204, 3.2387
17.347	4.3116	18.64	1.569
17.355	4.3413	18.81-85	3.2356
18	2.1501	18.83-84	4.3430
18.1-2	4.3413, 4.3427	18.87-89	1.569
18.1-3	1.644	18.89	3.2297, 3.2353
18.1-10	4.3416	18.90	4.3418
18.3	4.3415, 4.3427	18.101-105	1.569
18.3-4	4.3237	18.102	1.172
18.4	2.1496	18.104-105	1.174
18.4-6	4.3230	18.106	3.2319
18.4-10	4.3430	18.109-115	2.1780
18.5	1.30	18.110	1.172
18.9	4.3426	18.116	1.175
18.10	4.3413	18.116-117	3.2829
18.11	2.1503	18.116-119	1.569, 2.1540,
18.11-22	2.1501		2.1752, 2.1756,
18.11-25	2.1627, 3.2224		2.1758, 3.2171
18.14	1.502, 3.2260,	18.117	2.1759, 2.1760,
	3.2452		2.1766, 2.1779
18.16	1.502, 2.1497,	18.118	2.1758
	3.2452	18.119	2.1780
18.16-17	3.2453	18.136	1.174
18.17	2.1497, 2.1505	18.163	3.2150
18.18	1.502	18.181-182	3.2356
18.19	2.1498	18.240-255	1.173
18.21	4.3117	18.250	3.2357
18.23	3.2319	18.252	3.2319, 3.2353
18.26	4.3413, 4.3416	18.256	3.2319, 3.2353
18.27	1.169	19	2.1683
18.28	4.2975, 4.2976,	19.294	4.3281
	4.3000	19.299	4.3417
18.29-30	2.1215	19.299-305	4.3120
18.32	3.2329	19.299-311	4.3118
18.35	1.569, 3.2352,	19.300-305	2.1725
	3.2353	19.332	2.1683
18.36-38	1.170, 1.569,	19.345	2.1523
	3.2730	19.351	3.2319, 3.2353
18.37	3.2792, 4.3236	20	2.1679
18.38	2.1259	20.10-14	2.1739
18.55-59	1.166, 1.569,	20.46	4.3119
	3.2297, 3.2354,	20.97-98	1.632
	3.2355	20.97-99	3.2789

20.108	1.224	1.401	3.2334
20.118	1.433	1.405-406	4.3001
20.164-165	1.166, 4.3043	1.408-414	1.168
20.167-168	3.2789	1.420	4.3119
20.168-172	1.632	1.443-444	1.172
20.169-172	3.2536, 3.2789	1.473	4.3419
20.179-181	2.1226	1.479	4.3419
20.181	3.2582, 3.2730	1.536-551	4.3423
20.189	4.3119	1.550-551	1.172
20.197-203	2.1499, 2.1515,	1.561	2.1683
	2.1541	1.562	1.171
20.199	2.1497, 2.1506,	1.571	2.1618
	3.2415, 4.3145	1.577	4.3423
20.200	1.59, 1.335,	1.623	3.2320
	1.407, 2.1209,	1.640	2.1530
	2.1280, 3.2168,	1.646	1.171
	3.2204, 3.2439	1.648	2.1683, 3.2605
20.205-206	2.1226	1.648-655	3.2620
20.206-207	3.2582, 3.2730	1.650	1.502
20.208-210	1.166	1.664	1.171
20.216-17	2.1738	1.665	3.2315, 3.2379
20.228	2.1524	2	2.1504
		2.1-100	2.1680
<i>War</i>		2.2	2.1683
1-2	2.1669	2.4	4.3418, 4.3427
1.1-30	2.1527, 2.1813	2.8-13	2.1618
1.1-369	2.1531	2.14-38	1.171
1.2	2.1645	2.14-100	3.1911
1.2-3	2.1646	2.16-18	2.1529
1.3	2.1646, 2.1649	2.23	2.1529
1.6-8	2.1645	2.37-38	2.1528
1.8-10	2.1646	2.39-74	2.1528
1.9	2.1645, 2.1646	2.42	2.1618
1.13-16	3.2177	2.55-56	3.2393
1.17	2.1645	2.56	1.408, 4.3228
1.30	2.1645	2.65	2.1618
1.33	2.1508	2.68	1.169
1.67-68	2.1502	2.75	2.1529
1.78-80	2.1506	2.80-100	1.171
1.89	2.1618	2.86	4.3418
1.97	3.2395	2.93-95	3.2353
1.110	3.2605	2.98	4.3240
1.110-112	2.1683	2.110	2.1532
1.150	2.1618	2.111	3.2318, 4.3413
1.209	2.1683, 4.3227	2.117	3.2158, 4.3413
1.230	2.1656	2.117-118	1.644
1.282	2.1238	2.118	3.2365, 3.2578,
1.282-285	3.1911, 3.2315,	2.119-166	4.3416, 4.3427
	3.2317		2.1500, 2.1627,
1.340	2.1530		3.2224
1.349-352	3.2315	2.124	4.3114, 4.3115
1.351	3.2318	2.125	4.3120
1.369	2.1531	2.128	2.1537
1.393	4.3430	2.129	4.3117, 4.3119

2.131	3.2579	2.409-410	2.1665
2.135	3.2590	2.417	2.1618
2.136	4.3068	2.433	4.3230, 4.3427
2.143-144	3.2730	2.455	2.1632
2.147	2.1537, 3.2606	2.463	2.1202
2.150	4.3117	2.466	2.1618
2.150-158	2.1505	2.503	2.1530
2.154-155	1.502	2.540-545	4.3239
2.160-161	4.3122	2.568	4.3223
2.162	3.2623	2.614-619	2.1681
2.162-164	2.1504	2.614-625	2.1681
2.163	2.1496, 3.2260	2.626	2.1681
2.163-165	3.2452	2.627	2.1516
2.164-165	1.502	2.641	4.3119
2.166	2.1506	3	4.3002
2.167-168	4.2976	3.1-3	2.1656
2.168	1.170, 2.1533	3.35-40	4.3223
2.169-170	2.1618	3.55	4.3432
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2.407	2.1740	5.227	3.2716
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6.288	2.1632	2.121	3.2579
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